

**CHARLES UNIVERSITY**  
**FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCE**

Institute of Political Studies  
Department of Security Studies

**Master's thesis**

**2023**

**Bc. Tomáš Časnocha**

**CHARLES UNIVERSITY**  
**FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**  
Institute of Political Studies  
Department of Security Studies

**The Impact of Radical Islam on North Caucasus Insurgency  
Movements**

Master's thesis

Author: Bc. Tomáš Časnocha  
Study programme: Security Studies  
Supervisor: Aliaksei Kazharski, Ph.D.  
Year of the defence: 2023

## **Declaration**

1. I hereby declare that I have compiled this thesis using the listed literature and resources only.
2. I hereby declare that my thesis has not been used to gain any other academic title.
3. I fully agree to my work being used for study and scientific purposes.

In Prague on 1. 5. 2023

Bc. Tomáš Časnocha

## References

Časnocha, Tomáš. *The Impact of Radical Islam on North Caucasus Insurgency Movements*. Praha, 2023. **63 pages**. Master's thesis (Mgr.). Charles University, Faculty of Social Sciences, Institute of Political Science. Department of Security Studies. Supervisor: Aliaksei Kazharski, Ph.D.

**Length of the thesis:** 128 487 characters (with spaces)

## **Abstract**

This master thesis examines the impact that radical Islamic ideas had on the ideological and motivational narratives of North Caucasus insurgency groups. It aims to shed light on how radical religious notions interacted with nationalistic goals of originally separatist Chechen movement and Dagestani Wahabi movement. The thesis is focusing on examining legal documents such as constitutions and its changes, presidential decrees, or news outlets. It also examines in detail considerable number of interviews given publicly by leaders of insurgencies but also by foot soldiers. The analytical segment examines in detail the political and societal development within the movements at question focusing on the role of religious ideas within these domains. Subsequent chapter provides a discussion on these findings as well as comparison of Dagestani and Chechen cases. The final segment of the thesis then provides concluding thoughts and ideas for further research in the field.

## **Keywords**

Terrorism, insurgency, radical Islam, ultranationalism, North Caucasus.

## **Title**

The Impact of Radical Islam on North Caucasus Insurgency Movements

## **Abstrakt**

Tato diplomová práce zkoumá dopad radikálního Islámu na ideologické a motivační narativy severokavkazských povstaleckých hnutí. Klade si za cíl prozkoumat, jak interagovali radikální náboženská témata s nacionálními cíli původně separatistického Čečenského hnutí a wahábistického hnutí v Dagestánu. Tato práce se soustřeďuje na zkoumání legálních dokumentů jako např. Ústava a její změny ale také prezidentské dekrety anebo zpravodajské kanály. Také detailně zkoumá nemalý počet různých rozhovorů, které byly poskytnuty vedoucími figurami těchto hnutí, ale také svědectví řadových vojáků. Analytický segment detailně zkoumá politický a sociální vývoj těchto hnutí, zaměřujíc se především na roli, kterou v těchto oblastech sehráli radikální náboženské myšlenky. Následující sekce je diskusí zaměřenou na zjištění z předcházející kapitoly a také jsou zde porovnány případy Čečenska a Dagestánu. Finální kapitola obsahuje závěrečné shrnutí a návrhy pro další možný výzkum.

## **Klíčová slova**

Terorismus, povstalci, radikální Islám, ultra nacionalismus, Severní Kavkaz.

## **Název práce**

Dopad radikálního islámu na severokavkazská povstalecká hnutí

## **Acknowledgement**

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my thesis supervisor, Dr. Aliaxei Kazharski Ph.D, for constantly challenging my research perspective and helping me to shape this research project. I would also like to thank my parents, my partner, and my friends for constant support.

# Table of Contents

<b>1. INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 RELEVANCE.....	2
<b>2. LITERATURE REVIEW .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>3. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK .....</b>	<b>5</b>
3.1 RESEARCH QUESTION .....	5
3.2 (RELIGIOUS) CIVIL WAR.....	5
3.3 RELIGION AND CIVIL WARS .....	6
3.4 WHY RELIGIOUS? .....	7
3.5 WHY ISLAM?.....	7
3.6 FOREIGN FIGHTERS .....	8
3.7 RELIGION OR NATIONALISM. QUESTION OF A SHARED IDENTITY.....	10
<b>4. METHODS OF ANALYSIS .....</b>	<b>13</b>
4.1 RESEARCH DESIGN .....	13
<b>5. ANALYSIS .....</b>	<b>15</b>
5.1 RADICAL ISLAM IN CHECHNYA .....	15
5.1.1 <i>Before the war, Dudayev’s building of a secular state, 1991-1994.....</i>	<i>16</i>
5.1.2 <i>The First Chechen War 1994-1996. External factors coming into play. ....</i>	<i>20</i>
5.1.3 <i>Interwar period 1997-1999 interplay of external and internal factors. ....</i>	<i>24</i>
5.1.4 <i>The Second Chechen War 1999 – 2009 .....</i>	<i>27</i>
5.1.5 <i>Syrian Civil War .....</i>	<i>30</i>
5.2 RADICAL ISLAM IN DAGESTAN .....	33
5.2.1 <i>Before the intrusion in August 1999 .....</i>	<i>33</i>
5.2.2 <i>After the intrusion in August 1999 .....</i>	<i>38</i>
<b>6. DISCUSSION .....</b>	<b>41</b>
6.1 THE FIRST CHECHEN WAR.....	42
6.2 INTERWAR PERIOD .....	44
6.3 THE SECOND CHECHEN WAR.....	45
6.4 THE SYRIAN CIVIL WAR .....	47
6.5 COMPARING THE DAGESTANI AND CHECHEN CASES.....	48
<b>7. CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>LIST OF REFERENCES .....</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS .....</b>	<b>63</b>
<b>APPENDIX I .....</b>	<b>64</b>
MAP OF NORTH CAUCASUS.....	64



*“If a national revolution is concerned with state power, jihad is its antithesis, given its absence of a vision of the state and its concern with the a-national community of believers, Ummah.”*

(Hughes 2007: 95)

## **1. Introduction**

On the first day of a new academic year, September 1st, 2004, in Beslan, 33 fighters –among them two women – stormed the local school complex composed of a primary school and a kindergarten. The three-day hostage crisis resulted in over 300 civilian casualties, more than half of which were children. As of today, the event marked the deadliest single terrorist attack that took place on Russian soil and can undoubtedly be considered the most merciless one. Even though Putin blamed international terrorist circles, ignoring the nationalistic demands raised by the attackers. The reality was that only 2 of the attackers were not North Caucasus nationals (Baker 2004). The mastermind behind the attack was Shamil Basayev, a Chechen warlord, one of the leaders of the insurgency and a candidate in the 1997 Chechen presidential elections, in which he ended up in second place. The insurgency, which initially started as a secular separatist movement, was radically transformed. Attackers in Beslan wore Islamic headbands, shoulder patches and long beards. Women wore burkas and were strapped with suicide bomb vests. Nonetheless, their demands remained nationalistic. Even though they asked for the withdrawal of the Russian army from the Chechnya region and Putin's resignation, the execution of the attack was strongly marked by radical Islamic ideology (BBC 2004). The group that perpetrated the attack was later identified as Riyad-us Saliheen, the "brigade of martyrs" (BBC 2004).

The ideology of radical Islam was initially foreign to North Caucasus. Chechnya, for example, was mainly composed of moderate Sufis. However, the ideological narrative of the movement shifted in the 1990s, when secular nationalists fighting for the independence of Chechnya gradually adopted radical Islamic principles. In 2007, the Caucasus Emirate was established by Udugov – who subsequently became a first emir – and, a couple of years later, exclusively Chechen/ North Caucasus jamaats (fighting groups) were formed in the midst of the Syrian civil war. How does ideology change so radically? To what extent did it really change when the movement's demands stayed nationalistic? Did they really stay nationalistic even when North Caucasus nationals joined the Syrian civil war, far from their homeland? These inquiries are explored in the upcoming chapters. This work contributes by painting a concise image of the

development of the motivational and ideological narrative of the North Caucasus insurgency from the early 90s up to its involvement in the Syrian civil war.

After the introductory chapter follows the literature review, it examines the changes in the literature on the subject, shifting from nationalistic topics towards religious issues as the conflict progressed. It also elaborates on academic articles that contributed to this topic. As many interviews with insurgents and leading figures were used to support the arguments, the literature review also touches on these. The third chapter deals with theoretical background, explaining notions, phenomena and theories needed to draw a concise picture of the development of the insurgency in question. Concepts of religious civil wars or national outbidding are explored. However, the theoretical grounding of foreign fighters phenomena is touched upon, as foreign fighters played, and continue to play, an essential role in the insurgency. The fourth chapter deals with the methodological standpoint of this work, contemplating the use of a case study design. The fifth and sixth chapters represent the core of this thesis, analyzing and discussing the main topic. Firstly, the development of the Chechen case is examined and discussed. Secondly, the fifth chapter delves into Wahabism in Dagestan, and lastly, both cases are compared. The seventh chapter concludes the main findings and suggests possible areas for further research.

## **1.1 Relevance**

Crude yet effective Russian counterinsurgency operations in the 2000s heavily suppressed local insurgents in Chechnya and Dagestan. North Caucasus jamaats were suppressed and basically eliminated in Syria. Nevertheless, the North Caucasus insurgency is not dead. With the Ukrainian war entering a conventional stage in 2022, many Chechens came together to fight Russians, again creating exclusively North Caucasus groupings fighting the Ukrainian war, such as the Sheik Mansur battalion. By examining the factors that led to the changes within the movement's ideology, a lot can be learned about the dynamics of separatist movements and the changes and consistencies of their motivational and ideological narratives. Chechen and Dagestani cases also provide an excellent opportunity to study the influence of foreign fighters on an ideology of a conflict, as not only did such fighters join the Chechens during the First Chechen War, but later on, tables turned, and many North Caucasus nationals themselves became foreign fighters involved in the Syrian civil war.

## 2. Literature review

The titles of many publications on the Chechen conflict reflect the transition from an emphasis on nationalistic ideas and notions of ethnic identity to religion. But also a shift from separatism, self-determination or intrastate war to international and domestic terrorism and conceptions of holy war, jihad. Following the First Chechen War and the attacks at World Trade Center, these relevant publications were written on the topic: *Small Nations and Great Powers: A Study of Ethnopolitical Conflict in the Caucasus* by Svante Cornell, *The War in Chechnya* by Stasys Knezys and Romanas Sedlickas, and *On Ruins of Empire: Ethnicity and Nationalism in the Former Soviet Union* by Georgiy I. Mirsky (1997). Although terrorist attacks, Islam, and the idea of jihad are mentioned in these works, the ethnic and nationalist aspects are heavily emphasized. More recent books on the same conflict, like Sebastian Smith's *Allah's Mountains: The Battle for Chechnya* (2009) and *The 5 Wolves of Islam: Russia and the Faces of Chechen Terror* (2004) written by Paul J. Murphy, and additionally his later book *Allah's Angels* (2010), demonstrate a shift in terminology and the emphasis of current studies of the North Caucasus insurgencies. A shift that is focusing on the religious identity of the Chechen people. This is not to suggest that this updated focus cannot be described as merely the result of the conflict's evolution since it first arose; after all, there is no question that all protracted conflicts change over time, including the emergence of new parties with unique goals and motivations.

Part of reviewed literature covers the history of the North Caucasus during and after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, as this historical event created turmoil through which a long-lasting conflict in the region reignited itself. Such literature focuses on reasons behind the radicalization of the North Caucasus population, the socio-economic situation and other aspects which lead to a significant increase in the use and spread of radical Islam rhetoric. These topics are covered by security analysts, political scientists, sociologists, and academics focusing on Russia in general and journalists specializing in Eastern Europe and North Caucasus. Many of these experts write publications covering multiple aspects of the conflict itself and society as well. Aspects such as internal and external policies of both sides of the conflict and interconnections of such policies, the role of foreign fighters and terrorism tactics, but also specific cultural, ethnical and religious realities of North Caucasus. In this regard, especially helpful were publications *From Nationalism to Jihad: National and Ethnic Conflict in the 21st Century* (Hughes 2007) and *An*

Endless War: The Russian-Chechen Conflict in Perspective (Souleimanov 2007). Cultural aspects of the North Caucasus in connection to war are discussed in detail in Tishkov's book from 2004, Chechnya: Life in War Torn Society and Tumelty's work from 2006, Chechnya and the Insurgency in Dagestan. The second segment of reviewed literature focuses on academic articles dealing with relevant topics. Topics include foreign fighters, terrorism, religion and civil wars, nationalism, radicalization, shared identity and more. Such articles often cover only a portion of the conflict in question or explain a single theoretical or conceptual notion, but they tend to be much more detailed. (Karim 2013, Toft 2006, Fox 2004, Maoz & Henderson 2020, Dixon 2009, Perliger & Milton 2016, Hegghammer 2013, Malet 2013, Ratelle 2013, Souleimanov 2011, Souleimanov & Aliyev 2015, Svenson 2007, Zucker 2009 and many more). Therefore, academic articles covering relevant topics were a crucial source of information for this study. Different interviews with important figures of the movement, for example, by journalist Andrei Babitsky or Prague Watchdog, were also analyzed. In addition, interesting information was extracted from filmed documentaries such as Smell of Paradise from BBC or various TV news segments covering relevant topics in Russia and the North Caucasus and propaganda materials produced by Chechen insurgents or foreign fighters.

### **3. Conceptual framework**

#### **3.1 Research question**

Building on existing theories such as religious outbidding or a notion of politicized Islam, the author examines how North Caucasus insurgencies' ideology shifted from secular nationalism towards radical Islam. The way in which the Chechen insurgency, fighting for Dudayev secular Chechnya in the 1990s, ended in exclusively Chechen or Russian speaking jamaats fighting jihad in the Syrian civil war. The author chooses to examine a change of ideological and motivational narrative - why and what they fought for - of North Caucasus insurgencies. Analyzing the influence that ideas of radical Islam had on the way in which the insurgency publicly portrayed itself, pinpointing how these radical elements found their way in.

The research question therefore stands as: *How did radical Islamic ideology affect the development of motivational and ideological narrative of North Caucasus insurgency groups?*

In order to perform the analysis, a number of concepts and theories are utilized. First, academic inquiries into civil wars and religious civil wars can help us to understand if the narrative of the insurgency in question did move towards achieving religious goals. Secondly, defining foreign fighters and their standing in the modern literature helps to understand the differences between international terrorists and homegrown insurgents, their motivations and the parameters according to which we can distinguish such differences. Finally, theories of religious/ national outbidding further aid in examining the case and drawing conclusions.

#### **3.2 (Religious) Civil war**

The term civil war is often used interchangeably with other terms like intra-state conflict, internal violence or civil conflict. Civil war is, by definition, an internal conflict, but certain rules apply in order to classify such conflict as a war in general and civil war in particular (Karim 2013). The widely accepted definition proposed by the Correlates of War Project, standing on two main aspects, will do for the scope of this research. Firstly, civil war is fought over who will govern a particular political entity, usually a state, de-facto state or province. Secondly, at least two parties of organized fighters/soldiers/ combatants are active in the conflict, while one of the parties

represents the official government. Lastly, fighting resulted in at least 1000 casualties on average per year (Sarkees & Wayman, 2010).

Religious civil war is a bit more complicated to define. The fact that religious divides are present does not necessarily mean that the war is religious. A conflict between interstate actors who identify themselves as belonging to different religions can also be steaming from purely political or economic issues. According to Monika Toft (Toft 2006), the defining feature of a religious civil war is the aim of the religious group. Meaning that if the religious groups fighting the civil war are aiming - if they win the war in the first place - to govern the contested territory under specific religious rules, then the civil war is a religious one. If we look at the second war in Afghanistan, after the defeat of the coalition of Western forces and the Afghani government, Taliban established a religious rule of Sharia courts. That was a religious civil war as opposed to civil wars, which took place shortly after the dissolution of former Yugoslavia, where religion played more of a peripheral role, acting as a shared identity, while the core issues were independence, statehood and state borders (Karim 2013)

### **3.3 Religion and Civil wars**

Civil wars with religious context became increasingly widespread in international politics. Certain scholars promoted the idea that world religions, as they are, will inevitably transform into a new form of themselves or collapse into a new world religion (Masao 1980). However, this idea has not aged well. Quite on the contrary, in the case of the Muslim faith, the resurgence of traditional Islam in the second half of the 20th century and then the notion of Global Jihad found significant support to grow and expand not only within the scope of civil wars (Regan 1993). From 1940 to 2000, 133 civil wars were or still are fought around the globe, while 42 of them can be classified as religious civil wars. Fifty percent of still ongoing civil wars (7 out of 14) can be categorized as religious-based civil wars as well (Toft 2006).

The impact of religion on civil wars is undisputable but its role in such conflicts can differ. It is widely accepted that religion, even though it can play a significant role in interstate wars, is generally not the actual main sole cause of these conflicts. Religious factors do not become influential unless a strong nationalism or ultranationalism in the shape of separatist ideas is already

present. Therefore, religion is not among the fundamental causes of interstate wars, but religion itself can act as a considerably strong intensifying factor (Fox 2004). Religious intrastate wars are also longer and more likely to reoccur; they are generally more violent and less likely to end in a peaceful agreement. They lead to more casualties, not only among soldiers or insurgents but especially those inflicted on local civilian population (Tusicsisny 2004).

### **3.4 Why religious?**

There is a lack of consensus on which factors are the most significant in initiating an interstate war. However, some of the most repeated are social fractionalization (ethnic and religious), economic prosperity (growth, investments), regime stability (democracy), mass education and the geography of a state, more precisely, an existence of significantly large portions of mountainous areas (Dixon 2009). Contrary to many popular beliefs, recent work from Michigan University, examining the civil wars between 1945 and 2010, suggests that the systematic refusal of ethnic groups from positions of power within the state governing structures is the persisting cause for civil conflicts (Maoz & Henderson 2020).

Building on Jack Snyder's model of nationalistic outbidding, it was argued that political elites during the midst of civil war would try to outbid each other to better their position not only by utilizing nationalistic or ultra-nationalistic ideas but also religious ones if religion is at least peripheral part of the societal identity. There are four variables which play a major role in the connection to governing elites choosing to play a religious card in a civil war. Firstly, state-leading elites or leaders themselves are physically threatened. Secondly, the population in question is experiencing historically rooted religious splits. Thirdly, the state has a monopoly on the spread of information and communication channels. And lastly, essential assets needed for the war are running out and available outside the geographic limits of the conflict, thus creating a bigger drive for the transnational appeals of religion. Even more so in the case of Islam (Toft 2006).

### **3.5 Why Islam?**

In connection to the dynamic of a civil war being influenced by a religion, it is important to note the asymmetrical distribution of Christianity and Islam in these cases as well. While

Christianity was involved in twenty interreligious civil wars out of 32 in total, Islam played a significant role in 25 civil conflicts. Ergo Islam was present in 78 percent of the cases while Christianity only in roughly 62 percent. Furthermore, more than 50 percent of interreligious interstate wars which took place between 1940 and 2000 were fought among groups, which were recognized as either Christian or Islamic. Also, an interstate war is two times probable to occur if the insurgents classify themselves as Muslims while the predominant religion in the country is Christianity (Fox & Sandler 2007).

Three aspects, further adding to the transnational appeal of religion, can shed light on why Islam has taken a disproportionately bigger role in interstate wars as in opposition to Christianity or Judaism. First aspect is political, in most of the states that identify as Islamic, religion and statehood are not separate, they are merged. Unlike in most of Christian countries, where religion and state stand separate. Second aspect is geopolitical. Holy sites of Islamic religion share their location with substantial concentrated oil reserves. Last aspect is structural. Referring to the structure of Islamic religion, to its component, Jihad (Toft 2006). Jihad is a complex topic, in its core it is not referring solely to the physical fight against the infidels, but also to spreading religion in a peaceful way and helping people in need. It is crucial to say that misinterpretation of Jihad is playing a significant role, perhaps a bigger one than the structure of Islam itself.

In reference to a resolution of civil wars with religious overlap, it was suggested that violent reaction and/ or political oppression of militant Islamic groups will lead to an increased popularity of such movements rather than leading to a discussion table. Furthermore, the main aspect of the proposed resolution of a religious war should not necessarily be a multireligious dialogue as religious wars among different religious groups are not more difficult to settle then those with groups identifying themselves as being of the same/ similar religion (Svenson 2007).

### **3.6 Foreign Fighters**

The phenomenon of political powers organizing volunteers and recruits from various foreign regions to help to achieve a universal goal is well-established in modern history. For example, Greek struggle for independence in the 1820s has seen substantial support from foreign soldiers and volunteers. The same applies to the Spanish Civil War, where international support



manifested in a considerably high number of foreign forces taking part in the interstate conflict on both sides. Famously, Ernest Hemingway and George Orwell bore arms. In the end, the phenomenon of international fighters has affected a broad spectrum of interstate wars throughout history (Perliger & Milton 2016).

The theoretical grounding of the phenomena is limited. It can be argued that these limitations stem from the fact that the definition itself is often too vague, as the concept of foreign fighters is stuck somewhere between international terrorists and homegrown insurgents. Literature is often prone to fusing the notion of Mujahideen foreign fighters with the notion of Islamic terrorism. Therefore, it is crucial to establish a clear differentiation of foreign fighters from both local insurgencies and transnational terrorism. (Hegghammer 2010). According to Hegghammer, four basic parameters have to be met in order to categorize the fighter as a “foreign fighter”. Firstly, such a person joined the insurgency in question and operated within its geographical limits. Secondly, he/ she does not have citizenship of the state where the conflict is taking place. Thirdly, a person in question is not a member of any official military organization. And lastly, a foreign fighter is unpaid (Hegghammer 2013). The author agrees with the fact that the last condition was disputed, and it won’t be taken into account throughout this work. Mercenaries should be excluded from the definition of foreign fighters, but many insurgency groups, especially Islamic, are known for remunerating their fighters (Carter, Maher & Neumann, 2014). When monetary reward is not the main motivational factor, as in the case of professional mercenaries, it should not be taken into account. Also, the third condition, where the affiliation to an official military organization is questioned, is not necessarily sound in all cases. It makes absolute sense to exclude foreign soldiers fighting the war under orders as a part of a national army or joint international force from the definition of foreign fighters. However, if a member of a foreign military chooses freely to travel and to join a conflict, on his/ her own expense, when it is not an order or professional obligation but rather a free choice, such people should be considered foreign fighters as well. Such a line of thinking will also be applied throughout this work.

The term itself - foreign fighter - is generally connected to the more modern notion of international religious groups. Commonly identifying themselves as Muslims, fighting a (Global) Jihad. Most of the analytical knowledge of modern Muslim foreign fighters comes from the examinations of Western foreign fighters in Syria and Iraq (Donely, Sanderson & Fellman, 2017).

However, the first modern conflict to witness a considerable amount of Muslim foreign fighters was the anti-Russian Jihad in Afghanistan during the Soviet-Afghan War from 1979 to 1989. It is fair to presume that during this conflict, the global Islamic militant community began to take a more solid shape, creating funding networks and training facilities and gaining international credibility. All these aspects were utilized a couple of years later in former Yugoslavian civil wars and then during the Chechen wars (Donely, Sanderson & Fellman, 2017). Although foreign fighters played a role in both of these conflicts, only in Chechnya did the initially secular war adopt religious notions to such an extent that the Second Chechen War is commonly referred to as a religious war rather than a nationalistic civil war, as opposed to the first Chechen war. However, that is an inquiry for later.

### **3.7 Religion or nationalism. Question of a shared identity.**

Transnational militancy is unquestionably driven by an ideology, among other drivers. This ideology, in a case of Islamists, can be labelled as “pan-Islamism” or “extreme pan-Islamism”. Arguably this ideology carries more similarities with nationalistic or ultra-nationalistic ideas rather than with purely utopian religious constructs, playing a crucial role in the motivation and recruitment of not only foreign fighters (Hegghammer 2010). Different author labelled this ideology as “pan-Islamic nationalism”, further pronouncing its similarities with patriotic sentiments of nationalism (Formichi 2010). Such similarities arguably stem from the idea that pan-Islamism, in its beginning, was the same as African or Asian nationalism, an answer to Western or Russian imperialism, rather than being a continuation of the broadly traditional belief of the unity of all believers, the Umma. Pan-Islamism took a new nationalistic outlook on the ideas of solidarity and cultural/ religious superiority found in more traditional Islam, hostility towards Imperialistic or Western cultures, the superiority of religious culture, and a certain identification with the golden age of Islam (Kedie 1989).

An important aspect of the Chechen civil wars, in connection to Islamization and foreign fighters, is the so-called “jihad through media” or “media jihad”. With new technologies, it became very simple to create propaganda material from the conflict zones, opting for very capable recruitment tactics. This notion was, for the first time to such extent, surprisingly successfully advocated during the Chechen wars. Later the infamous Daesh (ISIS) became masters in producing

gruesome, yet for many people intriguing, propaganda materials (Speckard & Akhmedova 2006). A pioneer of this technique during the Chechen conflicts was Samir Sáleh Abdulláh al-Suwailem, better known as Ibn al-Khattab. A Saudi national whose presence and tactics boosted the recruitment and Islamization of the Chechen radical wing and, later the society as a whole.

This recruitment strategy leads us to the question of motivation. Often pronounced are socioeconomic factors. Even though there was a long-time prevailing argument that foreign fighters or terrorists come from uneducated, poor, and unemployed backgrounds, more modern studies differ (Krueger & Malečková 2003). The study of foreign fighters from Syria and Iraq shows that contrary to popular belief, only between 6% to 17% percent of the fighters come from unemployment (Krueger & Malečková 2003). However, the educational level seems to play a more significant role as only 41% percent of the fighters finished education comparable to high school. Yet roughly 1 in ten completed a university education with either a bachelor's or master's degree. Over 50% of the fighters were between 18 and 25 years of age (Perliger & Milton 2016). The fact is that the majority of fighters were from the second or third generation of immigrants supports the socioeconomic factor as being an important part of the motivational narrative but also supports the ideological/ religious approach. (Perliger & Milton 2016).

Interestingly, the majority of foreign fighters, before joining the conflict, had restricted knowledge of the basic tenets of the Islamic religion. A minimum of the fighters had any religious education before joining the insurgency. Therefore, it seems that ability to establish a cognitive connection to the Jihadi community can be rooted somewhere else or at least is not entirely based on the shared religion. The narrative that is focusing on the ongoing hardships, suppression, and abuse of Muslim communities around the world, often worded as the genocide of Muslim nations in the international arena, makes sense in supplementing the religious narrative (Perliger & Milton 2016). This sort of pan-nationalistic identity, where Muslims are obliged to help Muslims, points to the fact that even though it is seemingly taking place within the religious imperatives, religion can often play a secondary role to a feeling of nationhood (Malet 2013). Therefore, it can be argued that cautious framing of the local conflict in the light of shared identity, religious, transnational or both will substantially fuel the influx of foreign fighters.

To conclude, four main motivational factors are established within the Syrian conflict in regard to the motivation of foreign fighters (Reem & PISOIU 2014). Firstly, grievances. The most

commonly cited motivations among the fighters were the horrific nature of the conflict, misuse of power against Muslims and lack of international support from the global community. Secondly, the collective identity of pan-Islamism/ pan-nationalism. Thirdly, an ideology. Referring to the notion of martyrdom or global jihad. Syria is indeed emphasized in the Islamist narrative as the country of jihad. Although, especially in such a diversified conflict as the Syrian Civil War, with numerous opposing groups fighting among each other, not all the ideologies were those of jihadists. And lastly, a subculture. Sense of belonging, adventure, fame, and a chance to be a part of something big and exciting.

## **4. Methods of Analysis**

### **4.1 Research design**

Since the objective of this work is to determine the relationship and dynamics between religious and nationalistic themes and concepts and their effects within the main narrative of the insurgency, this research adopts a case study approach in order to generate an in-depth understanding of a complex phenomenon of the ideological and motivational narratives of these groups. In other words, researching and analysing political scenery and connecting it with the communication patterns between the insurgents and the public but also within the movement itself. The subject of analysis is a phenomenon. The change, the evolution, of the ideological narrative. The North Caucasus insurgencies were chosen as an appropriate subject for the case study, as the change in the ideological narrative is strongly pronounced, clearly visible, yet intricate in its mechanism. The author argues that by analysing the development of the ideology within the boundaries of Chechen wars and the spillover of this ideology into Dagestan, interesting insights on how the ideologies of insurgency movements are influenced will be extracted. By examining the reasons behind the involvement of North Caucasus insurgents in the Syrian Civil War and by comparing why did Wahabi project in Dagestan fail in comparison to the Chechen insurgency, an interesting insight into the mechanisms behind the successful spread of radical ideologies can be drawn. Case study design pursues an in-depth analysis of the case at hand. The dataset collected and analysed in order to support the facts and notions supplied by written academic works consists of interviews, news segments and video footage from relevant terrorist attacks. The data was collected by first pinpointing the important political and military figures of the movement and then searching internet archives for relevant interviews, news segments, political speeches, official documents, war footage and so on. The focus lies in the individuals as the author argues that these figures can be considered to be bearing bodies of the ideology, who do not only present this ideology but also shape it.

Two cases are examined and analysed separately and then compared: the Chechen insurgency and the Dagestani Wahabi movement. The Chechen case is divided into four periods, Dagestani case is divided into two periods. The reasoning behind the division of the Chechen case into four subchapters follows. Firstly, the state of Dudayev's separatism policies and state-building

activities in the early 90s provides a starting point for the analysis to establish the initial state of the ideological and motivational narrative. The second chapter examines the First Chechen War and the interwar period, as according to preliminary research, it was during this time that the first significant radical Islamic notions started to occur in public and political domains and subsequently gained momentum. The subsequent time period is set to cover the Second Chechen War in order to be able to compare the change of narrative themes within the geographical confinement of the North Caucasus in general. But also to be able to pinpoint the changes in the motivational narratives of individual leading figures. The last time period focuses on the state of the Chechen insurgency during the civil war in Syria, with emphasis on Chechen foreign fighters involved in this conflict. This provides an opportunity to again compare the evolution of the motivational and ideological themes and possibly also the effect of the different social environments on the ideological aspect of the movement. The Dagestani case is divided into two subchapters. The first subchapter analyses the overall standing of radical Islam in Dagestan and then the development of the ideology of the local Wahabi movement up to August 1999, as this date marks the intrusion of Chechen and international militants into Dagestan. The author argues that this development marks a pivotal point after which Wahabism in Dagestan started to lose its momentum. The second subchapter is the analysis of the subsequent development up to October 2007. This date marks the establishment of the Caucasus Emirate, the political entity under which the Dagestani and Chechen movements cooperated very closely, basically merging into one movement. The development that followed after 2007 is therefore analysed as a part of the Chechen case.

## **5. Analysis**

The following chapters will present the analysis of the development of ideological narratives of Chechen and Dagestani insurgencies. This chapter is divided into subchapters following the logic presented in the research design.

### **5.1 Radical Islam in Chechnya**

Protracted conflicts are frequently characterized by a polarization of viewpoints and a radicalization of the protagonists. Long-lasting wars open doors for new players, new forces, and new ideas to emerge and take the spotlight in the fight. The Chechen insurgency movement originated in Dudayev's state-building activities in the early 90s and culminated in the Syrian civil war theatre, where North Caucasus insurgency groups in general and Chechen groups in particular played a significant role. This chapter focuses on the ideological narrative of the movement, its changes, the mechanism and reasons behind such developments.

The Islamization of the Chechen conflict was initiated in the political rather than the social sphere. It was the political scene rather than society itself that was initially radicalized. Olivier Roy (1989) was the first scholar to coin the term political Islam. It is a basis for political identity, representing political mobilization in the name of Islam, a tendency that emerged at the end of the 20th century. With this phenomenon comes a significant consequence for the domestic policies of countries that were subjected to political Islam. The emergence of political Islam in Chechnya is a good example of how difficult it is for Islamist movements to balance local and universal (de-territorialized) beliefs. In contrast to Islamic radicalism in general, which has occasionally combined with nationalism (probably best typified by Hamas in Palestine), Wahhabi (Al-Qaeda) reformism, which found its way into Chechnya, envisions a universal Ummah, an a-national community, creating a space for tensions and schisms within the ideology of the initially separatist movements that undergo such forms of radicalization (Tishkov 2001). Schisms between nationalists and more religious actors in the conflict resulted in a paradoxical situation. The instrumental use of radical Islamic thoughts by Chechen leadership inspired the population to fight and win against the Russian army in the First Chechen War. However, it also empowered the

radicals and created a political situation where they saw it appropriate to push the elites into imposing a model of Islam (Wahabism), which was strongly foreign to most Chechens.

### **5.1.1 Before the war, Dudayev's building of a secular state, 1991-1994.**

This section provides a contextualization and analysis of the political and ideological space connected with the establishment of the first Chechen independent state, focusing on the role religion played in these areas in the early 1990s. As the first Chechen president, Dudayev played a primary role in state-building, and for this reason, he represents a focal point in these paragraphs. The internal division of the political scene is also explored.

Initially, both Russian and Western observers had blown the importance of the Islamic religion in Dudayev's regime out of proportion. Focusing on only a few supposedly iconic facts, such as the fact that Dudayev swore his presidential oath on the Quran and said, *"By the will of Allah, and the people, I am the first president of the Chechen Republic."* (Hughes 2007: 65). Dudayev's decisive victory in the presidential election in 1991 – he won with over 80% of the votes – is stained by the fact that only approximately 20% of voting stations in the country were effectively opened (Ratelle 2013). This contrasts the fact that the next elections, which Maskhadov won after Dudayev's assassination, were recognized by OSCE as fully democratic. If we examine the first constitution of the Chechen state from 1992, it is apparent that it was created along the lines of a standard secular nationalist parliamentary political establishment. For this purpose, the first article of said constitution is worth being cited here in full.

*"Chechen Republic is a sovereign democratic legal state created as a result of self-determination of Chechen people. It has the supreme right concerning the territory and national riches; independently determines external and internal policy; adopts the constitution and laws having leadership in its territory. The state sovereignty of Chechen Republic is indivisible."* (ICL Project 1994)

Furthermore, the clear separation of religion and state is declared in the fourth article of the constitution, in which the right to freely worship any religion is granted, as well as freedom of



opinion and public speech (ICL Project 1994). Additionally, Hughes examined an extensive number of relevant documents authorized by Dudayev, from the second half of 1992, which was arguably a critical state-building period (Hughes 2007). These documents, such as decrees, acts, and orders, contain no attempt at the Islamization of Chechen social life or governmental structures. In April 1993, Dudayev published a lengthy essay contemplating the state-building processes, and his view was clearly secular (Radnitz 2006). The only religious remark was the opening sequence of this document, "with the will of Allah", but in the broader context of the essay, this can be considered a formal opening rather than a religious reference. More information can be acquired by analyzing non-textual sources. If we look at the emblem that was accepted as the official symbol of the Chechen republic, Dudayev's conception of the new Chechnya's symbology was essentially non-Islamic. The official emblem of the Chechen Republic, which depicts a wolf lying down beneath a full moon, draws inspiration from a historic animism tradition of Chechen society (Wainakh 2022). The flag and emblem can be interpreted as being in opposition to, or at least not in agreement with, traditional Islam, where aniconism, the avoidance of the use of images of animals (or sentient beings other than humans in general) in art forms, is often stressed. Virtually no Islamic nation, radical institution or movement has an animal depicted on its flag. An interesting insight is also provided by the work of foreign journalists in Chechnya, as proved by the interview, which took place between Dudayev and the Estonian film crew. This interview was taken in the spring of 1995, shortly after the start of the First Chechen War, but is highly relevant to the period preceding the first war as Dudayev comments extensively on the state-building process that preceded the first conflict. Dudayev explicitly stated that he is creating a democracy after being asked what system of governance is acceptable for Chechnya, saying that: *"Above all democracy. With lack of democracy no government over the Chechens will stay. It will be the easiest to accept for the Chechens to have this foundation – democracy."* (Georgann Heston 2018). Interestingly, the notion of religious governance was not even in question as journalists asked about either parliamentary or presidential systems. The documentary film was released in 1995 under the name "Freedom or Death". Perhaps relying on Dudayev's words, who said in the same interview: *"Freedom and independence mean either death or life for us."* (Georgann Heston 2018).

It is important to note that Dudayev did not always act as a textbook democrat. His position towards the independence of Chechnya was hardline. Even though, according to Hughes, the cooperation between Chechnya and Moscow did take place on numerous occasions in the early 90s, especially in the economic sector (Hughes 2007), Dudayev was uncompromising in the questions of absolute independency. This notion created a substantial rift in the president-parliament relations, as parliament asked for a compromise that would lead to a peaceful solution even if the price to pay would be a part of total independence, similarly as in the cases of Belarus or Tatarstan. Dudayev, as an answer, dissolved the Chechen parliament in April 1993 and the city council of Grozny as well (Freedom House 1998). Similarly, when the Constitutional Court legally found these actions unconstitutional, he disbanded the court just a month later, in May 1993 (Freedom House 1998), and became de facto a dictator. These steps could be interpreted in numerous ways, but democracy is not one of them. Dudayev was either trying to keep his power by any means, or he really believed that total independence was the only way. Judging by his actions that will be discussed later, in connection to Islamization, it was a combination of both. Interestingly, Yeltsin might have taken inspiration from Dudayev's action as he dissolved the Russian parliament just a few months later, resulting in an attack by the Russian army on the parliament house in Moscow, where former parliament members and protesters barricaded themselves. (Sokolov & Kirilenko 2013). The incident is widely recognized as the Russian constitutional crisis. Stark similarities connect these two political figures, which is interesting because their stern personal relationship, and their unwillingness to talk with each other on many occasions, are often credited to be one of the factors that ultimately lead to the start of the First Chechen War. For example, at one instance in January 1994, Yeltsin said in the interview with Russian journalists: *"We won't negotiate with Dudayev because he started the genocide of his own people."* (AP Archive 2015). Tishkov, further adds to this argument in his work, but this thesis does not necessarily agree with the extent to which, according to Tishkov, the personal relationship between the two politicians had an effect on the First Chechen War (Tishkov 1997). This fact is, however important in connection to Islamization of the conflict. The inability to settle at least a small common ground with Moscow led to the war and opened a door for radical religious ideology first to enter the battlefield and then cross to the political a societal scene of Chechnya.

Dudayev undoubtedly played a central role in the initial framing of the political identity of independent Chechnya in the early 90s. The time of Dudayev's ascent to power coincided with an increase in the prominence and significance of Islam. An important fact from the perspective of Islamization is that in 1991 when the Chechen autonomy was declared by Dudayev and his political supporters, particularly Yandarbiyev, there was already a rift between secular nationalists and more traditional Islamists on the Chechen political scene (Ratelle 2013). The formation of the Supreme Islamic Council in 1991 (Tishkov 2001), preceding the official constitution of Chechnya, seems to point towards the fact that Dudayev, indeed, was opened to Islamic governmental structures. However, in the overall context of presented facts, it was arguably rather an attempt to rein in and control public clan leaders and elders, an attempt to gain power over and cooperation from religious domains of the state, an example of politized Islam.

Another symbolic statement, for instance, was the fact that Yandarbiyev, Dudayev's close political ally and vice-president, was a member of a group that travelled to Mecca in June 1992 for the Hajj (Hertog 2007). This particular pilgrimage is a fifth pillar of the Islamic faith and was bordering impossible for average Muslims who lived in the Soviet Union. As the last resting place of Imam Shamil, the most significant historical figure associated with the Chechen struggle against Russian oppression, the trip to Mecca represented a position of crucial political importance for religious and political notions of the Chechen nation.

To summarize the first period. From 1991 to 1994, Dudayev, Yandarbiyev, and other leading political figures often symbolically referred to Islam while concentrating on secular nationalist ideology. Dudayev was sensitive to the necessity for the growth of the Islamic religion in Chechnya, which in the end, had been repressed for decades during the Soviet regime. The rise in religiosity occurred not only in Chechnya but across the rest of the former Soviet Union as well, in response to decades of religious repression. Dudayev engaged in secular state-building and was committed to maintaining a gap between the state and religion. Yet, it was far from the traditional take on democratic state building, as he dissolved parliament and the Constitutional Court rather than making a compromise when his policies were questioned. At this point, it is essential to acknowledge that despite the fact that Dudayev's state-building was secular, there was a continuous rise in Islamic religion in Chechnya, even before the outbreak of the armed conflict with Moscow.

Over time, these religious tendencies and sentiments served as a crucial tool for mobilizing against Russia.

### **5.1.2 The First Chechen War 1994-1996. External factors coming into play.**

This section provides a contextualization of the political and ideological space connected with the First Chechen War, focusing on the Islamization of those spheres. Firstly, general reasons for the outbreak of war itself will be presented. Further discussion is aimed at the fact that in this period, the external factors of Islamization became increasingly pronounced. Several crucial figures such as Basayev, Al-Khattab or Gelayev will be introduced, and their relevance to the Islamization explained. Finally, the impact of foreign fighters on the ideology of the movement is also explored.

The Russian invasion of Chechnya was justified by a number of reasons, including the region's political and economic instability and its overall geopolitical importance (Hughes 2007; Dunlop 1998). The largest oil refinery in Russia and a significant petrochemical business were both located in Grozny. Although minor by Russian standards, Chechnya has a large number of oil fields dispersed around the country. Chechnya was also traversed by the main railway line that connected Russia to Dagestan and Azerbaijan. Therefore, Dudayev effectively held control over important transportation networks, especially gas lines, that were vital to Russia's economy and geopolitical position. According to reports, Chechnya illegally sold around 20 million tons of oil between 1991 and 1994, and Dudayev's administration profited enormously from the deals (Dunlop 1998). The leaders of the Russian army felt that they would quickly put an end to the separatist movement and demonstrate to the Western world the power and capability of Russia's armed forces thanks to their technological and numerical advantage (Edwards 2012). However, they misjudged the insurgents' fighting capabilities, which proved to be fatal for the Russian army. The rebels were equipped with an in-depth understanding of the battlefield and an intense determination leading to the brutal failure of the Russian attack.

The crucial development regarding the Islamization of the movement was the increase of Wahabi's influence over Basayev and his soldiers. Forces under Basayev's command achieved a

significant victory not only during the first battle for Chechnya's capital. In general, Basayev's units were seen as prominent, courageous, disciplined, and efficient (Hughes 2007). Such reputation gave political Islam immense respect and credit and made it more appealing to the younger combatants. The militants led by Basayev were portrayed by Dudayev as an elite group of Chechen military, who would pioneer the deployment of shock and terror strategies such as terrorism and suicide bombings (Hughes 2007). These actions, alongside Dudayev's use of Islamic language regarding "ghazavat", the holy war, might be viewed as last choice measures to combine nationalism and Islam in order to sustain the national revolution. Basayev's gradual transition to radical Islam initially resulted from his firsthand combat experience as the commander of the Abkhaz Battalion, primarily consisting of Chechen fighters, during the Abkhazian War between 1992 and 1993, where he fought together with Hazmat Gelayev, another important figure in the movement. (Williams 2000). It is safe to assume that Basayev came across radical Islamic ideas before the start of the first Chechen war. He also underwent training in Khost, Al-Qaida's primary training facility, in the spring of 1994 (UNSC 2010). Such training camps were also focusing on ideological development. Arguably, these two instances, the war in Abkhazia and training in Khost, provided Basayev with an opportunity to build connections to Bin Ladin's Al-Qaeda, which promoted radical Wahabi interpretations of Islam. In regard to Basayev's presentation of the movement, an interesting dissonance can be seen when two interviews, which were just six months apart, are compared. This dissonance sheds light on the level of Islamization of the movement in that time and also on the political use of religion. The first interview was taken by Russian journalist Ilja Bogatirev shortly after the attack on the Budyonnovsk hospital, which was personally led by Basayev in June 1995. The second one was presented as a part of Turkish investigative journalism series called "PUSULA" (compass), which aired in January 1996. In the first interview, Basayev does not discuss religious matters. For example, when speaking about his soldiers who died during the Abkhazian war, he uses a French phrase, life is life, instead of talking about martyrdom. There is not a single mention of Allah during the whole interview, and when he was asked about his motivation, he stated: *"We dedicate our lives to the right cause until we get independence and freedom."* (NetFilm 2002). However, during the attack on the hospital, which preceded the interview, he sported a green headband with Islamic slogan and a symbol of a hand pointing upwards (towards God). If we compare this with the second interview he gave to the Turkish journalist just half a year later, significant changes are visible. Here he speaks about his

soldiers using an Arabic word, Mujahid. *"We are not terrorists. We are the Mujahideen who defend their land, their country."* (EnemyOFInjustice 2015). He mentions Allah numerous times (5 times) in reference to help from Turkey and how God is blessing his troops. Nevertheless, when he was asked about the motivation behind the insurgency, he stated that it is the independence of Chechen people, and the economic growth of Chechnya. These differences can be interpreted as Basayev presenting the same thing to two different audiences. For Russian listeners, he seems to be more down to Earth, addressing matters in a secular practical manner, while for the Turkish journalist, he puts in more effort to present the insurgency along the religious lines to gain further support from a more religious country, politicizing ideological narrative of the insurgency into a more religious look. Analysis of these interviews and factual data from different sources support the fact that during the First Chechen War, Islamic ideology was present to a considerable degree in the insurgency's narrative.

Later on, in 1995, the crucial figure in reference to the Islamization of the movement entered the war; he went by the alias Al-Khattab as a reference to a well-known historical Islamic figure, the second Caliph Ibn Al-Khattab (Hughes 2007). Al-Khattab's real name was Thamir Saleh Abdullah Al-Suwailem, the Saudi national with extensive connections to the Al-Qaida funding scheme and a well-experienced fighter from numerous Jihadi conflicts. He fought in Afghanistan, Tajikistan and most probably in Bosnia as well. He brought a group of capable fighters, who, even through small in numbers, would play an essential role in portraying the war as a part of global Jihad. He became a close associate of Basayev (Rashid 2001). The Chechen resistance undoubtedly welcomed Khattab, and because of his military capabilities and perhaps also his connections to Islamic financing, Dudayev assigned him to major military command and training roles, which allowed him further to spread ideas of radical Islam throughout the insurgency movement but also within the broader Chechen society as well. Islamic symbology starts to play a more significant role in this period. The propaganda movie that was made after Khattab's death called Contemporary Heroes of Islam shows a scene where after the liberation of Vedeno from Russian forces, born place of Basayev, Khattab is flying an Islamic flag and speaking in Arabic: *"And this day praise be to Allah is the day in which Vedeno was liberated, in the land of Chechnya in the mountains. The major center of the Mujahideen in the Caucasus. Praise be Allah and peace blessings be upon his Messenger."* (Rahma Arken 2013). The movie provides an interesting insight

into the situation in Chechnya in connection to foreign fighters' influence. Of course, these interviews cannot be taken at face value, it is propaganda material in the first place, but in numerous instances, serious questions are answered. Khattab openly says that conflict was not a religious struggle at the beginning and that he could not look at it from a religious perspective: So initially, you could not look at it from an Islamic perspective. But after we studied the situation, we arranged to visit the region for a week or two. We had to search for Chechnya on the map, it is very small state (jokingly),... (Rahma Arken 2013). This implies that the foreign fighters were asked to come rather than deciding to come on their own. In the same segment, he then adds that during the First Chechen War, he designed a simple training program with Basayev, ideological and military. The main hub for these activities became the Vedeno city. These training grounds would expand considerably during the interwar period.

One of the reasons why Chechnya looked for support from more radical actors was the attitude of the international community towards the issue of Chechen independence. Due to the lack of international support for the movement and the unwillingness of other countries to formally recognize it, the country was left in uncertainty (Zurcher 2007). Lack of international support in this stage of the conflict can be partially attributed to a number of vicious terrorist attacks, such as the one in the Budyonnovsk hospital complex, committed by members of Chechen insurgency.

Interesting information occurs in one of the interviews that Dudayev gave in 1995 (Georgann Heston 2017). Quite extensive evidence was given to support the idea that blood feuds played a significant role in the violent mobilization of Chechen society. (Souleimanov & Aliyev 2015) Blood feuds can be explained as a cultural or societal obligation to retaliate any mortal insult towards one's family by killing the perpetrator or his direct male relatives. Mortal insult refers to a murder or rape of a female family member. This notion is very deeply rooted in the Caucasus region (Souleimanov 2015). However, in above mentioned interview after being asked if blood feuds do apply to Russian forces Dudayev blatantly said: *"Blood feud does not apply to those of different belief, foreigners and aggressors. Blood feud is an exclusively internal matter. Intranational, intra ethnic. And doesn't expand further."* (Georgann Heston 2017). This is not to dispute the work of the above-mentioned authors; evidence given in Souleimanov's and Aliyev's work is hardly to be disputed. Dudayev was speaking to foreign journalists, Estonians, and probably did not want to give the impression that Chechens were fighting to fulfil their personal

vengeance but instead fighting for a bigger goal of national independence. This, however, supports the idea that Dudayev's policies, in many instances, were instrumental, and his words were not matching the realities of the local political scene. Similar to him dissolving the parliamentary structures in the face of disagreement yet speaking about democracy.

The Khasavyurt Accords, which de facto ended the violent hostilities between Grozny and Moscow, were negotiated in 1996, just a short time after Dudayev was killed by a Russian missile strike. The accords acknowledged Chechnya as an entity within international law and denied the use of violence to resolve future disputes between Russia and Chechnya but delayed a definitive decision on Chechnya's position until the end of 2001 (Wood 2007).

To summarize, during the prewar period, the main factor of Islamization was internal, Dudayev's instrumental use of political Islam. During the First Chechen War, however, the external factor gained importance as Basayev cemented his connections to Al-Qaeda, resulting in the arrival of Al-Khattab with his fighters and probably an influx of financial support. This opened a possibility for radical Islamic thoughts to grow massively within the narrative of the movement and Chechen society.

### **5.1.3 Interwar period 1997-1999 interplay of external and internal factors.**

This section serves as the conceptualization of the next period in the history of the conflict, again focusing on factors of Islamization. After Russia withdrew, the situation swiftly deteriorated owing to a severely damaged infrastructure, the inability to get international recognition and, consequently, financial support from any legitimate foreign organizations. In addition, Moscow threatened to sever diplomatic relationships with any country that recognized Chechnya. Holding a very limited authority over warlords, the newly appointed president, Maskhadov, struggled to keep order and eventually failed.

In January 1997, presidential elections took place in Chechnya, which the OSCE and foreign observers deemed democratic and fair. Maskhadov defeated Basayev with an overwhelming win after obtaining 60% of the votes, Yandarbiyev took third place (Hughes 2007).



Interesting to note that Basayev, scoring second place in the elections, was the same man that personally led a terrorist attack on Hospital in Budyonnovsk in June 1995 that resulted in over 140 civilian casualties (Bolotnikova 2015). Maskhadov's election validated his government's credibility on a global scale as well as within Chechnya, and Basayev's defeat pointed towards the fact that Chechen society was not very compliant with radical Islam. But a deal with Russia was still necessary for the acknowledgement of Chechen full independence. This deal never came. The rough economic, social, and political environment created a partial vacuum, which allowed prominent warlords like Basayev, Raduyev and Khattab to play a more significant role on the political scene. As Evangelista put it, abductions for ransom, public executions and general lawlessness were supported and to a high degree, produced by above-mentioned insurgency leaders (Evangelista 2002). Perhaps in order to destabilize the process of reconstruction, undermine the Maskhadov and keep their power. For example, four telecommunication workers from the UK were beheaded in 1998 by Barayev's group, a case which resonated in Western media (Lanskoy 2002). Maskhadov's administration was isolated internally and externally, and it was unable to handle these difficulties, there was no capacity for it. Maskhadov was not capable (Moscow probably believed that he never intended) of disarming numerous armed formations in Chechnya and specifically to thwart the Islamists' rising influence within the circles around Basayev and Khattab. Arguably, Maskhadov might have feared a civil war within Chechnya if he would directly confront these well-armed groups.

The training and ideological camps established during the First Chechen War gained importance and grew larger. Khattab said in one of the interviews: *"We prepared the camps and we started to teach and train the people. We established an Islamic educational institute and our reach extended to many hundreds of young men. We established structured programs, courses for memorizing Quran,.."* (Rahma Arken 2013). An interesting point is highlighted in the same segment as Khattab admits marriages between foreign fighters and local women, mixing of cultures going both sides. He himself married a Dagestani woman and later had two children with her (Hahn 2014).

Maskhadov had a choice, civil war or concession. He chose concession delivering a significant religious blow to Dudayev's secular constitution when he amended the 4th article of the constitution, making Islam the only official religion. Later on, in 1999, he accepted a decree that

further Islamized the constitution introducing Shari'a laws. He also suspended the parliament and created a committee which was supposed to deliver a fully Islamic constitution. (Hughes 2007) In connection to the establishment of Sharia courts, Yandarbiyev expressed his opinion in the interview for BBC in 2004, shortly before his death, saying: "... *only SHARIA could help Chechens with difficult economic, political and social pressures during 1996 and 1997.*" (1obsolete 2007). The interview was televised in 2005 as part of the documentary Smell of Paradise. Yandarbiyev comments point to the instrumental use of Islam, as Sharia courts were able to deliver a shift "justice" in a country where the judicial system was quickly failing. Maskhadov further allowed the links between Khattab and Basayev to culminate in the creation of military and ideological training camps in the south of Chechnya. These camps have a considerable impact on the Islamization of not only the movement itself but also broader Chechen society (Wilhemsen 2005). Chechens and people from neighbouring republics, including Dagestan or Ingushetia, were recruited due to oppression by their governments or simply because it provided them with income and covered basic human needs. These camps would have housed between 1600 and 2500 combatants, mostly Chechen nationals, Dagestanis or Arabs (Ratelle 2013). The radicalization culminated in August 1999 when Basayev's and Khattab's joined forces of couple of thousands of fighters invaded Dagestan (Tumelty 2005). This move can be interpreted as an attempt to stale any further consolidation of Maskhadov's government in addition to the establishment of North Caucasus Caliphate. This attack was, as seen in one of the analyzed videos, accompanied by an extensive propaganda effort and videos full of Islamic flags and religious symbols.

To summarize, during the interwar period, the external factors of Islamization grew stronger. More foreign fighters entered the conflict, and more locals from North Caucasus were trained and radicalized in the training camps established primarily by Basayev and Khattab, backed with financial support from radical Islamic organizations and perhaps governments as well. Maskhadov did not directly oppose this notion fearing an internal conflict. The growing strength of these external factors together with economical and societal instability pushed Maskhadov to internally promote Islamization as well, eventually culminating in the change of the constitution from a secular one to a religious one. The incursion of a couple of thousands of insurgents into Dagestan, which became one of the main reasons that eventually led to the renewal of the armed conflicts, marks the end of this period.

#### **5.1.4 The Second Chechen War 1999 – 2009**

The renewal of the conflict between Russia and Chechnya in 1999 was accompanied by dual radicalization that encompassed political scenes in both countries involved in the conflict. Chechnya was radicalized by Islamic ideas and harsh socio/economic realities of the de/facto independent yet isolated state entity, while Russia was radicalized by Moscow's changing attitude toward the conflict, as Hughes put it, perhaps best exemplified by Kulikov's mantras about "ungovernable," "bandit," and "terrorist state," (Hughes 1998) into which Chechnya presumably turned. Important to say that this was not far from reality as the socio-economic conditions were indeed dire.

The war can be divided into two stages; the conventional stage, from August 1999 to April 2000 and then the insurgency or partisan stage, from May 2000 to April 2009 (BBC 2009). By March 2000, after the gruesome bombardment and blockade of the Chechen capital, Moscow managed to install a puppet regime. Akhmad Kadyrov became the leader of the Russian-backed Chechen government. In 2004, Kadyrov, who had become a pro-Kremlin politician, was murdered. Three years later, Putin named Akhmad's son Ramzan Kadyrov to be the president of Chechnya, and he has held the position since. However, according to human rights organizations, Kadyrov leads Chechnya via brutality and intimidation and is to blame for years of serious violations of human rights, including kidnappings, torture, and executions (Lokshina 2021). This regime, however, had significant opposition, firstly in Mashkadov and then in his successor Sadulayev and later Udugov, with a considerable number of fighters, mainly in the southern mountainous regions of Chechnya. This opposition slowly withered away as leading figures of insurgency died in FSB raids and assassinations.

As of the summer of 1999, leading commanders on both sides no longer shared a similar conceptualization of the conflict as secular nationalist ambition for independence but rather perceived it as a conflict where the Islamic factor was dominant. The schism within the political sphere of Chechnya itself was stronger than ever. Warlords initially praised by Dudayev gained power and now posed a significant threat to Maskhadov. Outside invasion of Russian forces, to a certain degree, pushed both sides to cooperate again. Yet the differences in ideological policies,

Basayev's religious radicals on one side Maskhadov moderates on the other, were sensible in the tactical or strategical attitude towards the war as well. Maskhadov's men engaged in guerilla warfare when attacking regular Russian military personnel in similar operations that basically resulted in victory during the first Chechen war. Contrarily, Basayev's men, supported by Khattab's international fighters, encouraged violent, sensational terrorist actions against Russian citizens in Russian territories, such as the bombings of the Moscow metro, the Tushino concert, the Vnukovo airplane kidnapping, the Dubrovka theatre hostage crisis, and the infamous terrorist attack on Beslan school. These terrorist attacks, headline-grabbing as they were, drove nonradical international support even further away from Chechnya and in a sense allowed Moscow to further portray the insurgency along the lines of senseless religious radicals rather than self-determining separatists.

The short video segment aired on Chechen TV in July 2000 shows an insurgent's hideout in the south of Chechnya, focusing on a group of local fighters led by Ruslan (Hazmat) Gelayev. Gelayev reacts to the Russian officials announcing the end of war and admits that his troops are now ready to fight a partisan war. Multiple black Islamic standards are visible; many soldiers have heavy beards and wear additional Islamic symbology (AP archive, 2007). He also gave an interview to BBC the very same year, where he stated his motivation to fight was always nationalistic. *"We are fighting for peace and justice... they want to destroy us as a nation."* (Iobsolete, 2007b). The following scene shows Chechen fighters praying. The same kind of dichotomy is visible in the well-known interview taken by journalist Andrej Babitsky in 2005 when he talked to Basayev. Basayev, even though he paraphrases the Quran couple of times during the interview, says that: *"The first thing for me is a fight for freedom. If I am not a free man, I can't practice my religion.... .... The sharia law is on the second place.... I need the guarantees that tomorrow generations of Chechen won't be deported to Siberia how it was in 1944. To achieve this, we need independence. There is a fight going for our national independence."* (TheRamizra 2012). Babitsky adds his reaction to this interview as a part of the video segment, and while admitting that Basayev is taking a lot from Islamic fundamentalism, he is not aiming to destroy the Western world as part of global Jihad; his goal is the fight within the republic, kind of a national Jihad. An oxymoron statement as Jihad, by definition, is a national. Gelayev's son died fighting in Syria near Aleppo in 2012 (Gutterman 2013).

Islamization caring the ideology of the movement away from nationalism, was reaching its zenith. In the summer of 2002, the Chechen War Council (Madlijs Shura), led by Maskhadov, decided to legally Islamize the 1992 constitution. Chechnya was named to be an autonomous Islamic state, where the Quran and Sunna are sources of all decisions adopted in the political sphere. Article four was changed in such a manner that the only legally acceptable religion was Islam (Kavkazcenter 2006). This version of the constitution adopted in the face of renewed war with Russia was far away from Dudayev's initial propositions of a secular state. Maskhadov died in 2005 during the FSB operation aimed to catch him (BBC 2003). Sheikh Abdul Sadulayev became his successor, Maskhadov appointed him during the same council mentioned above. After analyzing some of the earlier decrees published by Sadulayev, available at chechenpress.com, it is notable that he was cautious towards further Islamization. Nevertheless, his decrees are more flourish in terms of using a religious language. In one of the decrees from 2005, he confirmed: *"The invariability of the course of the Chechen state is to protect State Sovereignty, Freedom and Independence"* (Chechenpress, 2005).

The Islamization of the insurgency culminated in 2007 when Doku Umarov, Ichkerian president of 2006, proclaimed the Caucasus Emirate de facto a religious state (Kavkaz-Center 2018). Interesting insight into Doku Umarov's reasoning before and after the establishment of the Caucasus Emirate can be gained via two interviews. One of them, he gave to Andrei Babitsky in 2005, and the second one to Prague Watchdog in 2009. In the interview with Andrei Babitsky in 2005, he said that he wasn't particularly religious before he joined the insurgency. *"I came as a patriot. Maybe I didn't know how to pray at the time, I don't remember. Today, to say that I am a Wahhabi or I am a person of radical Islam is ridiculous."* (Kavkaz-Center 2005). The fact that he denies radical Islam is not well supported as he sanctioned numerous terrorist attacks, which he admits in the same interview and Basayev, with links to Wahabi organizations, was under his direct command. While he speaks a lot with a religious tone, the motivation behind the insurgency is still stated to be nationalistic: *"until we are completely free of the Russian soldier's boot, I do not see any other way out, ... I think that any honest citizen, any patriot of his people also does not see a way out."* (Kavkaz-Center 2005). Adding just a few minutes later that he is obliged to wage Jihad and that he is taking a path of Allah. In the second interview, taken a four years later, he seems to hold a more hardline attitude. In his first speech as a president, he stated that no civilians would

be targeted anymore (Prague Watchdogs 2009). In the interview, he stated that: *"As far as possible we will try to avoid civilian targets, but for me there are no civilians in Russia."* (Prague Watchdogs 2009). Also, his rhetoric became more religious, frequently talking about Mujahideen's way of life, mentioning Allah in every reference, but more importantly, he now clearly states that the fight is going on for the creation of an Islamic state. *"Only now what we're fighting for is a free Islamic Caucasus, freedom for the Muslims of the Caucasus, the right to live according to Sharia, the laws of Allah, so that people won't have to obey the rules that are written by Putin and Surkov."* (Prague Watchdogs 2009).

### **5.1.5 Syrian Civil War**

Chechens were one of the most talked-about ethnic groups among foreign fighters in Syria. It is reasonable to conclude that after battling the Russian army for two decades, these combat groupings were quite skilled. On the other side, many fighters were young and had little to no prior military training. However, they were strongly motivated by Islamic preaching, pervasive anti-Russian sentiments, and often dire socio-economic situations in their native countries. Both sides in the Syrian War respected Chechen forces for their combat prowess and excellent military morale. Despite being less numerous than other Islamic groups, Chechens played a significant part in the civil war (Hauer 2018).

In the first half of 2012, Chechen militants entered the fight for the first time. Fighters from Chechnya initially joined already-established Islamic militant organizations, but this collaboration was often problematic since the majority of the Chechen, Ingush, or Dagestani fighters could not understand Arabic. These North Caucasian foreign fighters were seen as somewhat inferior in matters of faith and religion due to their inability to understand the original language of the Quran. Yet, these prejudices among Mujahideen were swiftly dispelled by the combat prowess of seasoned "Wainakhs" (Abdul-Ahad 2012). The first big Chechen-led fighting group was formed quite quickly in the summer of 2012. This evolution was probably influenced by the linguistic barrier. The well-known Chechen fighting group (jamaat), Jaysh al-Muhajireen, essentially became a slogan for Chechen participation in Syria. It's interesting to note that Tarchan Batirashvili, known as Ab Umar Al Shishani, a former Georgian soldier and veteran of the Russia-

Georgia war, was the head of the first Chechen militant group in Syria. He was killed by a US airstrike in Iraq in 2016 after rising to the position of top officer in the ranks of ISIS (Hauer 2018). Events in the summer of 2012, which came to be known as the Lopota incident, served as a catalyst for the exodus of fighters from the North Caucasus. Georgian security forces engaged a group of around 20 fighters who were attempting to cross the Russian border into Dagestan. The militants were killed during the firefight that followed. (Paraczuk 2018). This action can be interpreted as the final organized effort to revive the insurgency in North Caucasus. The Lopota incident can be perceived as the turning moment after which Chechen insurgents began to concentrate in the Syrian Civil War theatre.

Russian secret services provided an unexpected boost to Chechen extremists' attempts to enter the Syrian conflict. This procedure was said to have started in Dagestan, where FSB agents would get a list of names of males they suspected to be either involved in insurgency or at risk of doing so. These individuals were then moved to Turkey after getting passports. As the quickest method to join the battle, Turkey was often referred to as the "highway to the Syrian civil war." In fact, Erdogan's government gladly accepted any assistance in the struggle against Asad's rule, even if it came from Moscow. Authorities in Chechnya forbade the FSB from carrying out such actions because they were worried about the consequences. Moscow has never openly admitted to participating in de facto recruiting efforts for Syrian extremists (Aron 2016). However, an inside source from the FSB reportedly verified the concerns, according to the International Crisis Group. (Aron 2016).

It is noteworthy how the initial success of Jihad in Syria—or, more precisely, the success of one group leading it—led to conflicts amongst the militant organizations. Before entering the Syrian Civil War, almost all Chechen fighters swore allegiance to Al-Qaida. A close ally of the Caucasus Emirate, AQ assisted in funding and establishing the group. Umar Shishani was named the first defector. He changed his allegiance to ISIS at the beginning of 2013, at which time there was significant animosity between AQ and Daesh (ISIS). Many Chechen militants, however, saw this as a broken promise and opted to join the AQ affiliate in Syria, Al Nusra Front (Paraczuk 2013). In November 2013, open hostilities between erstwhile allies started. However, the idea of separate militant organizations became appealing to Chechen fighters. Even though these organizations mostly pursued their own objectives, they sometimes worked with both Al Nusra

and Daesh (ISIS). These organizations, like Junud al-Sham (Steinberg 2016) and Ajnad al-Kavkaz, were almost exclusively Chechen (Mamon 2016). The primary motivation behind their establishment was possibly an attempt to completely escape the bloody schism between Syrian rebels and ISIS. Even more intriguing is the fact that both sides of the divide acknowledged and appreciated these autonomous Chechen organizations. They were able to avoid official cooptation as opposed to many other factions, which oftentimes essentially dissolved into larger organizations such as ISIS.

According to estimates given by Vladimir Putin in 2017, up to 3000 Chechens fought in Syria at the beginning of 2014. There are around 600 fighters who are directly from Chechnya and another 2400 who are from other diasporas in Turkey and Europe (Suchkov 2017). A Chechen fighter in Syria, Abdul Hakim Shishani, a veteran of the Second Chechen War, gave an interview in 2017, commenting on his motivations to fight. It was the inability to actively fight in Chechnya that he stated as a main reason. He interestingly added: *"The role of the muhajirs (foreign fighters) in Syria in the main is an auxiliary one. The main burden of the war in Syria is undoubtedly borne by local Muslims, the Ansars. Although the muhajirs are a fairly active part of the military conflicts and can influence the ideology of the military movements."* (Paraszczuk 2017). In a similar interview with another fighter from Chechnya, Khalid Shishani, motivation is cited along similar lines. He gave basically three reasons, the inability to actively fight in Chechnya, a religious motivation to help fellow Muslims, and the fact that Assad's regime is Moscow's old partner (Paraszczuk 2019). In comparison to interviews from the Chechen wars, these are filled with religious references, extensive paraphrasing of the Quran and mentions of Sharia. It is further noted, if not directly, that unsurprisingly this environment had an impact on the insurgency members, pushing them further down the line of radical Islam. *"Thanks to the jihad in Syria, we (Chechens) have gained invaluable experience, which was inaccessible in contemporary Chechnya, and we have understood many important Sharia issues, which were unknown to us before our participation in Syria."* (Paraszczuk 2019). Interesting connection to the first chapter of the analysis, where the Chechen national symbols proposed by Dudayev, were noted to be non-Islamic, can be seen in the interview with one of the Chechen fighters active in Syria, active on social media under the nickname "Chechen Tactical". When he was asked about the fact that many fighters wore the Ichcerian flag, he said: *"Myself, I am fine with it. In Sharia, it is allowed to have*



*the outlines of animals on flags, on condition that these are only outlines (silhouettes)."* (Paraszczuk 2020). This individual clearly puts Sharia laws above nationalism.

The battle of Kobane in 2014 resulted in a high number of combat deaths among Chechen ISIS members, and internal conflicts among Islamists severely weakened all the factions. After the Russian engagement in September 2015, Caucasian militants suffered significant casualties. After the government troops regained Aleppo at the end of 2016, Mosul turned into a tomb for hundreds of Chechen fighters. (Aron 2016). The morale of North Caucasus militant commanders was declining by the start of 2017, which indicates that the situation for lower rank "soldiers" was significantly worse. The fact may be verified by several Ankara media referring to the 2015 arrests of former ISIS members of Chechen descent on Turkish borders (Romashenko 2015). Additionally, a prominent Chechen insurgent who had fled the Syrian Civil War, Akhmed Chatayev, a former ISIS commander, was eliminated by government troops in Tbilisi in the same year (Kvakhadze 2018). No prominent, specifically Chechen jamaats existed in Syria as of the end of 2019.

## **5.2 Radical Islam in Dagestan**

The following paragraphs will address the development that led to the rise of radical Islamic thoughts in Dagestan. Admittedly, this development was nowhere near as dramatic as in Chechnya, as the scale of animosities did not reach the same level. Nevertheless, these differences in outcomes and input conditions can provide important insights into the development of the ideology of radical movements.

### **5.2.1 Before the intrusion in August 1999**

Islam came to Dagestan at the beginning of the eighth century. Historical religious development in today's Dagestan pretty much followed the already discussed development of today's Chechnya. These two states are geographically and ethnologically close. One particular social phenomenon, that of traditional Dagestani mountainous settlements or villages, combined with Sunni religious trends and helped to cement Islam as part of the Dagestani social system by

the end of the 15th century (Kisriev & Ware 2006). Generally speaking, political Islam gained momentum in the Soviet Union during the "perestroika" in the late 1980s. Political Islam found its way to Dagestan soon after, as it started to gain more solid ground in the early 1990s. This development is characterized by the establishment of the Islamic Revival Party (IRP), an early Islamist organization which became active during failing perestroika and gained even more momentum when the Soviet Union dissolved (Mc Gregor 2006). IRP was originally organized in Tajikistan but gained considerable popularity throughout North Caucasus with its powerful religious manifesto "Are We Muslims?" (Roshchin 2004).

By this time, two branches of local Dagestani Islamists started to emerge; one was relatively moderate, often represented by a more reasonable political core of IRP, while the second branch was more radical. Bagauddin Muhammed Magomedov gradually became the leading figure of the radicals while he was also a chairman of IRP (Mc Gregor 2006). By the middle to late 1990s, the radical wing of local Islamists had evolved into a formal structure. This structure is commonly referred to today as "Muslim Jama' at", and Bagauddin was its formal leader, the emir (Roshchin 2004), till his death in 2010 (Ratelle 2020). In order to better understand the political and religious standpoint of Bagauddin, it is worth citing in full part of the interview that was conducted in 1997 by Mikhail Roshchin in Dagestan:

*"We do not want to seize power; we want all power to be in the hands of Allah. For us, geographic and state borders have no significance, we work and act in those places where it is possible for us to do so. Dagestan is in a state of paganism. We would approve a total ban on sale of alcohol, but for us our faith and tawhid (Monotheism) are much more important. We would employ the services of moral police. For us the use of tobacco and drugs is considered to be forbidden."* (Roshchin 2004)

From this short segment, it is well visible that Bagauddin, in 1997, was already presenting ideas of an Islamic state body that would act independently within Dagestani borders.

After a wave of religious preachers came to Dagestan, Wahabism started to settle into local communities. These missionaries were funded extensively by organisations from the Persian Gulf, and they built religious schools, 14 of them, and also ran their own mosques. Wahabis also established a satellite communication module in Kizilyurt, which they used to communicate and also to distribute propaganda materials. For the first time in 1998, the Dagestani government

blamed radical Islamic groups from the Middle East countries, especially Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, for trying to launch Jihad in Dagestan (Ware et al. 2003).

Criticism from Wahabis towards local religious institutions highlighted the hostilities between the two sides but also pushed moderates towards a more radical position. For instance, the monument of Imam Shamil, which was supposed to be raised on the occasion of his 200th birthday, was never elected. Wahabi pushed on moderates, using DUMD (Spiritual Directorate of the Muslims of Dagestan) as a channel; radicals cited the Islamic ban on realistically depicting individuals or animals (Ware et al. 2003). Dagestani officials, despite the fact that they represented a moderate position, surprisingly accepted the complaint and the monument honouring de facto the founder of the North Caucasus emancipation movement was never elected on the basis of aniconism. The bone of contention among local Dagestani authorities, Dagestani Wahabis, Moscow, and later also Basayev's and Khattab's insurgents, would lie elsewhere, more precisely in the Kadar region.

Unlike in Chechnya, there were no secessionists in Dagestan, at least not in sense that Dagestani society or government as a whole were trying to gain independence. However, the independence of Dagestan certainly was on the program of local Wahabis. As Bagauddin said for a local TV in 1997: *"Dagestan can stay in Russia only if Russia becomes an Islamic state."* ("Underground Organisation" 1998). A region which consisted of four villages in the Buinaksk district region in Dagestan created an interesting situation. These four villages were Karamakhi, Kadar, Chabamakhi and Durangi (Ratelle 2020). Between August 1996 and September 1999, moderate Muslims and Wahabis engaged in a number of armed clashes in Dagestani mountainous villages. The most famous case refers to already mentioned Buinaksk district in the central foothills of Dagestan. Wahabis managed to sustain a rule over the set of four villages and violently resisted the Dagestani government. This area was proclaimed independent by Wahabis in August 1998, and local leaders started to introduce and enforce Sharia laws (Sagramoso & Yarlzkapov 2021). This clearly points towards the fact that Wahabis indeed had a significant power but only in specific small rural areas of Dagestan, which resulted in the creation of multiple Islamic enclaves. These were, however, very isolated communities as radical Islamic preachings were not widely accepted. According to Kisriev's research, as of March 1999, less than 3% of Dagestanis people – out of 2.1 million - identified with Wahabi ideology (Ware et al. 2003). Different research from

Roshchin suggests a higher number, from 6 to 7 percent of Dagestani population (Roshchin 2004). Nevertheless, these numbers are far from mass support for radical Islam in Dagestan. This lack of support from the local population partly stemmed from the differences between the basically folk version of Islam, to which most of the Dagestanis adhere, and the radical fundamental interpretations of Islam, which were presented by Wahabis. According to Roshchin's study of religiosity in the 1990s Dagestan, villages with Wahabi supporters often had two mosques, one for Wahabis and one for local moderate Muslims, often resulting in animosities (Roshchin 2004).

Direct involvement of foreign fighters in Dagestan became evident during the mid-1990s. Most of the foreign fighters who were involved initially came to Chechnya during the first Chechen war or later during the interwar period, and then they became active in Dagestan. Khattab – the important figure of the Chechen radical Islamic scene – spent some time in the Buinansk enclave and even married a local Karamakhi woman. More importantly, he – as in Chechnya – trained the local Wahabis in military and religious matters (Sagramoso & Yarlzkapov 2021). The fact that foreign fighters were openly active in Dagestan as well suggests that the expansion of the Chechen conflict, the expansion of radical Islam, was planned in the direction of Dagestan. The breaking point in the relationship between Dagestani Wahabis and local government – which up to this point was contentious but still not openly violent - came after the detachment of mostly foreign Arabic-speaking fighters raided a military barracks in Buinansk, a centre of the most prominent Wahabi enclave in December 1997. The raid was led by the already mentioned Saudi-born Khattab (Rotar 2017). This was not an isolated incident. Another incident earlier that same year took place in Kizlar. Dagestani Interior Ministry troops were targeted, resulting in 5 casualties. Important is the fact that the responsibility for this attack was taken by "Front of the Liberation of Dagestan" (FLD). This group was openly aiming for the creation of an Islamic state in the area. Attacks on Russian servicemen on the Dagestani-Chechen border by the end of 1998 were common occurrences, happening on monthly bases. Dagestan was Grozny's most vulnerable neighbour and, therefore, the most suitable and convenient target, not only for the Chechen government but also for foreign Islamists. Nevertheless, the relationship was mutual. In 1997 the Military Mutual-Assistance Treaty was signed between Salman Raduyev – well know Chechen warlord who was already mentioned in the Chechen case – and an organization of Wahabis in Dagestan called the Islamic Jamaat of Dagestan. Cooperation was, therefore, official to a considerable degree, not a covert operation ("Underground Organisation" 1998). This document – even though Raduyev broke this alliance

and later on criticized Wahabists (Rotar 2017) - confirms that at least some Dagestani Wahabis were pushing towards removing the republic from Russia, and they were attempting to do so with the well-armed support from Chechens and foreign fighters as well.

The government crackdown on the Wahabis in Dagestan gained intensity after August 1999. This date marks the intrusion of Khattab's and Basayev's forces into Dagestan. The attack shifted the situation into a new position, and it became obvious that radical Islamists were trying to expand from Chechnya. The intrusion was initially explained by the Dagestani Wahabis as the help of Chechen Islamists against governmental oppression of religion. Khalif Atayev, a leader of radicals in one of the villages in the Buinask region – a region that gained a de facto short-term independence – said to reporters of Prism magazine that:

*"The Dagestani government has now begun open repressions against Muslims. In this situation we are left with no other choice than to take up arms in self-defense. We totally support the Dagestani Central Liberation Front,..." (Rotar 2017).*

These words clearly point towards the fact that Wahabis in Dagestan were aiming for succession, and the armed clashes with Dagestani and also Russian forces show that military operations were underway. These attacks can be seen rather as provocations, as they achieved little to none in terms of military goals on a strategic or even tactical level. Similar to the Chechen case, Dagestani radicals were trying to push the governmental structure to initiate a crackdown that could alienate the civil population from the government and create a space for the further spreading of radical Islamic thoughts in Dagestan.

To summarize this subchapter, it is important to note that the religious schism was not pronounced before the dissolution of the Soviet Union. After the religious oppression lifted and religious organizations such as IRP were established first ideological divisions started to occur. The organization that was supposed to connect Muslims split into two, and the religious scene in Dagestan was divided between moderates and radicals. Foreign funding and Wahabi "missionaries" and preachers further fueled this development. The establishment of de facto independent Islamic microstates in the Dagestani mountains, especially in the Kadar region supports the fact that the ideology was gaining some momentum. By then, foreign fighters based in Chechnya started to get involved in armed clashes with government forces in Dagestan, supporting the local insurgency. The popularity, competence, and power of the Dagestani Islamists

were, however, far lower than in Chechnya. Nevertheless, there were instances in Dagestan when radical leaders were openly suggesting the creation of an Islamic state in the country. The culmination of the cooperation between the two movements took place in August 1999. The intrusion of Basayev's and Khattab's forces underlined the growing problem of radical Islam.

### **5.2.2 After the intrusion in August 1999**

Dagestan was invaded on the 2nd of August 1999 and then again on the 5th of September of the same year (McGregor 2006). Interestingly this intrusion was not perceived favourably by locals. The lack of support from the local population was arguably miscalculated by Basayev and Khattab, who were probably counting on much broader backing. In fact, the majority of Dagestanis did not extend any kind of support towards insurgents; some were even further and mounted an armed opposition. Numerous local militias were established in order to stop the advancement of the insurgents further into Dagestan. For example, in the Botlikh area, people of Andi ethnic blocked numerous mountain passages in considerably quickly established and well-organized militia (Roshchin 2004). It is important, however, that Andi people, as Sufi Muslims, were strong antagonists of Sunni Wahabism. By this time Dagestani government fully realized that Wahabism was a threat to stability and reacted accordingly.

Khattab's and Basayev's regiments were pushed out of Dagestan by the 16th of September 1999. On the same day, the People's Assembly of Dagestan enacted a law virtually prohibiting the practice of Wahabism (Sagramoso & Yarlzkapov 2021). The law was strongly supported by Surakat Asiyatilov, who was back then the head of the Islamic Party in Dagestan. This actively demonstrates how far Wahabi teachings were from the established religious practises of Dagestani Muslims. The legislation was followed by reprisal operations against suspected fighters or even supporters of Wahabis. These actions resulted in two developments. Firstly, most active radicals in Dagestan were pushed underground or terminated. Secondly, such reprisals always had, to a certain degree, radicalizing effects on those who were more moderate in their beliefs; the same happened in this case. Radical Islam, even though it gained a foothold in Dagestan, never really appealed to a broader public. This effort to export Chechen "ghazawat" (Jihad) to Dagestan was seen by most of the local society as aggression, which it indeed was. An aggression that was arranged mostly by Chechen extremist circles and supported by global Jihadi movements. Even

the Chechen government led by Maskhadov condemned this attack. In the late 1990s, Chechnya was becoming an Islamic state; its constitution and the way in which governmental bodies were set and operated left little room to doubt it. Nevertheless, Chechnya of 1997-1999 was everything but a good example of a functional Islamic state. Furthermore, the Chechen state in this period did not represent canonical Islamic behaviour by far. Interwar Chechnya was a criminal chaos, distant from even the loosest interpretations of the Quran. This example perhaps persuaded the Dagestanis that a vision of an Islamic state built around Wahabism does not represent a bright future or freedom. According to Roschin, the fact that Dagestanis - regardless of nationalities or ethnicities - collectively supported the official government in the fight against Khattab's and Basayev's forces constitutes a significant factor in the development of a Dagestani identity (Roshchin 2004).

Even though the crackdown on the Dagestani insurgency and the outright prohibition of Wahabism in the country, the movement continued. Important, in connection to violence perpetrated by Dagestani radicals, was the establishment of training camps that closely followed the model of training camps that Khattab established in Chechnya. However, only a small number of fighters were trained. According to Tumelty, only up to 100 fighters in three groups of roughly 30 finished the training before the camp was neutralized. These groups acted semi-independently, following the general agenda but choosing where and when to strike (Tumelty 2005). However small these platoon-like groups were, they would be liable for most of the violence that occurred on Dagestani territory between 2000 and the establishment of the Caucasus Emirate in 2007. The violence was relatively on a low level when compared to Chechnya. Even though attacks still happened considerably often, they were far from spectacular headline-grabbing terrorist acts such as the Moscow hostage crisis or the attack on the Beslan school complex. By 2006 Dagestani fighters became an inseparable element of the Chechen insurgency. This fact is confirmed by the statement of Makasharipov given in 2005 after Maskhadov's death. Makasharipov, who was in the centre of Dagestani radical Islamists and also stood behind the establishment of the training camps mentioned above, pledged alliance to the Sadulaev (Tumelty 2005). Sadulaev was Maskhadov's successor in the Chechen presidency. This alliance would continue as many Dagestanis would join Chechen fighting groups in the Syrian Civil War as the insurgency in North Caucasus would become increasingly difficult due to Russian counterinsurgency operations. Separating the Dagestani and Chechen insurgency after the establishment of the Caucasus Emirate, as for the scope of this thesis, is therefore unnecessary.

To summarize this subchapter. The movements of radical Islamists in Dagestan lacked the support of the wider population. On the contrary, armed militia units formed on their own accord to fight against the intrusion of Islamists from Chechnya in 1999. Intrusion, which was supposed to ignite the insurgency in Dagestan, did the opposite. Subsequent reaction of Dagestani officials virtually prohibited Wahabism, and this prohibition was strongly supported by moderate Muslim circles in Dagestan.



## 6. Discussion

The evolution of the ideology of the movement in question was a long process. We can divide this process into three stages. Initially, a clearly nationalist ideology with very soft religious notions was followed as Dudayev tried to build an independent Chechen state. The next stage is defined by the gradual growth of the importance of religious thinking via internal or external channels, culminating in the establishment of the Caucasus Emirate. The final stage of the insurgency was its more or less complete submersion into the Jihadi ideology, which was omnipresent in the Syrian civil war. Following paragraphs will be used to analyze this development.

The insurgency started as a separatist movement in the early 90s, as the Chechen struggle for independence gained solid political and societal backing culminating in the unilateral announcement of an independent Chechen state. This notion was not a new one; North Caucasus was contested by Moscow numerous times throughout history, be it Sheik's Mansur war against Tsarist Russia or Stalin's deportation under the name of Operation Lentil, struggle for independence against an outside enemy with Moscow's face was not a brand-new story. Neither was the political use of religion as a solid mobilization or motivational strategy. Nevertheless, it is hard to argue that Dudayev was trying to build something other than a secular state. The first Chechen constitution was definitely built along the lines of a democratic parliamentary state, freedom of religion and self-determination. Even the Chechen state symbology, which was, of course, approved and medialized by Dudayev, was far from Islamic tradition in the sense of aniconism. Dudayev, however, realized the power of religion and its significance in the nation, which is confirmed by the fact that even before the constitution was Islamized, Dudayev established religious state organs. However, Dudayev's outlook on the future of the Chechen state never changed; he was using a politicization of Islam to build a secular state, which proved to be a double-edged weapon. On the one side, Dudayev managed to mobilize the population to take up arms. On the other, he ultimately opened a door for radical Islamic teachings that led to the slow but steady corrosion of his nationalistic hardline.

Certain kind of schism on the domestic political scene that Dudayev addressed by dissolving the parliament and later the Constitutional Court, will keep reoccurring. It is safe to say that during the First Chechen war radical religious groups of foreign fighters were already active,

numerous propaganda materials collected from that time period clearly show a certain level of Wahabi influence. But how did the political scene in Chechnya initially come into contact with radical Islam? The fact that international support from the Western world was minimal, definitely played a role. The lack of such support in the opening phase of the conflict can be attributed to a number of things. Chechnya was often presented as a lawless criminal state, and the role of Islamic religion in Dudayev's regime was inflated by the media on the Western and Russian sides. Also, the West was probably trying to keep its hands away from a hot mess, letting Russia deal with its own problems. Yandarbiyev's interview with BBC suggested that he indeed played a role of an emissary, contacting international organizations and world leaders to gain support for the movement. If he failed within the boundaries of legal organization, he might have turned towards radicals. Although he never confirmed it per se. Another interesting role was played by Shamil Basayev; he fought in the Abkhazian war in the early 90s, a conflict where he fought alongside radical Islamists. Basayev later underwent training at Al-Qaeda facilities in Khost, cementing his ties with radical Islam. His involvement in Al-Qaeda, however, must have been approved or, to a certain degree, even facilitated by Chechen command structures. We can safely assume that a certain level of radical Islam was present even before the start of the First Chechen War. However, the ideology was indeed presented along the lines of nationalism and a fight for independence.

## **6.1 The First Chechen War**

During the First Chechen War, the ideology of the movement started to absorb more Islamic ideas. Perhaps the most important factor was the involvement of foreign fighters in the conflict. Not only did they start to spread the ideology, but they also slowly began to change how the international community saw the war. Their leader Khattab became an important figure in relation to the Islamization of the movement. He personally confirmed that foreign fighters, even though small in numbers, had a strong impact on the ideology of the separatists. He was placed into an important military and ideological position as he became the head of training and ideological camps. According to one of the interviews, high circles of Islamic radicals in Al-Qaeda were not able to recognize the conflict as a religious struggle before the involvement of Khattab's regiment. This development also confirms that Dudayev presented his state-building activities along secular lines. Training and ideological camps were built during the First Chechen War,

mainly in southern regions of Chechnya, and religious radicalization of mostly local recruits from the North Caucasus started to gain momentum. These camps were built with Dudayev's approval, who realized that Khattab's connections were bringing results, battlefield victories by seasoned fighters, and most probably an influx of financial support from religious radicals' funding schemes. Dudayev spoke highly about these training camps and Khattab's forces' strategic victories. Chechen mountains, similar to Afghanistan, provided a perfect opportunity for utilizing guerilla tactics. Military victories, together with high praise, brought more young people into these training camps and further supported the spread of radical Islamic thoughts. The author believes that Dudayev's position was opportunistic; he saw the value of the foreign fighters and the support they brought. Nevertheless, many of these ideas were foreign to the broader Chechen population; they were moderate Sufis, and Wahabi interpretations of Islam were hard to apply to everyday life in Chechnya. This incompatibility would later reoccur, forming another rift on the domestic political scene between Maskhadov moderates and more radical warlords. Dudayev, however, was never meant to see the consequence of calling in for the support of foreign radicals, as he was eliminated by a Russian rocket strike before the First Chechen War concluded. Another interesting notion is that after every dead leader or a commanding figure, a seemingly more radical person would step up, and the political scene got radicalized even further as a result. Basayev, Raduyev, and Gelayev were presented as religious radicals, but they still followed the rhetoric of national struggle for independence which does not rhyme with global Jihad really well, but after they died, Udugov established the Caucasus Emirate, and then later Omar Shishani, a Georgian veteran together with other veterans from Chechen wars became a high-ranking ISIS member. In that sense, Basayev or Gelayev were not really that keen on Islamic radicalism. Even though Basayev especially presented his fight along the lines of Mujahedin's struggle, but again took an opportunistic attitude and changed the way of self-presentation based on the audience. His rhetoric was more flourish in regard to Islam when talking to Turkish TV, while when he was addressing Russian journalist, his words were more pragmatic with little to no reference to religious matters.

The reasons behind Dudayev's decision to play a religious card can be further analyzed using the theory of religious outbidding built by Toft (Toft,2006), presented in a previous chapter. Four conditions, according to the theory, should be met in order for governing elites to use religion as a tool for cementing their position and "outbidding" the opposition. Firstly, state-leading elites are physically threatened. Taking into account numerous assassination attempts on Dudayev and

the fact that, at the end, he was eliminated by a Russian rocket attack, this condition is fulfilled. The second condition is the presence of deeply rooted religious splits. This condition is not necessarily fulfilled per se as Chechnya was composed of moderate Muslims, and in the early 90s, there was no persistent internal religious split. However, the religion itself was suppressed by Moscow for decades, and a sudden relief from this pressure caused an upsurge in religious thoughts. Combined with internal splits, not between religious groups but between more nationalistic orientated Dudayev and more religious orientated opposition, created a dissonance that can be effectively considered to act in a place of a religious split. The third condition, the monopoly of a state on the spread of information, was also fulfilled. Chechen elites were able to control the national TV and newspapers; also, an internet connection was not really spread and easily accessible in the 90s Chechnya. Finally, assets running out within the geographical confinement of the conflict is the last condition. With the blockade of Chechen borders and increasingly dire socio-economic conditions, it is safe to say that Dudayev's government was indeed running out of resources. These were the main motivations behind the instrumental use of Islam as a political tool to cement the Dudayev position and gain new resources to wage a war.

## **6.2 Interwar period**

During the interwar period, Islamization gained momentum, together with the growing power of the warlords. Maskhadov was trying to put war-torn Chechnya together while keeping tabs on warlords and attempting to settle an agreement with Moscow. The internal schism became visible again, resulting in a short but deadly open clash between Maskhadov forces and local warlords. In comparison to prewar Chechnya or the First Chechen War, religious radicals gained considerable power and were able to oppose the president openly. Even though Maskhadov won the elections over Basayev, due to harsh socioeconomic conditions, kidnapping for ransom, drugs and arms trade became an increasingly widespread issue. Another reason behind such activities was to discredit Maskhadov's presidency, prevent him from striking a deal with Moscow and lower his international standing as a moderate option. One of the demands of Moscow was the disintegration of armed grouping around the local warlords and foreign fighters. Maskhadov's win in the elections was recognized internationally, yet the poor state of Chechnya and his inability to disarm warlords were not adding to the credibility of his governance. Maskhadov was stuck

between a hammer and an anvil. Warlord on the one side Moscow on the other. Unable to address the problem of the growing influence of Islamic radicals and perhaps fearing the civil war within Chechnya, he chooses to work together with the religious radicals. This decision can be seen in Maskhadov's consensus on changing the initially secular Dudayev's constitution into a more religious one, with Islam as the only official religion of the state. Maskhadov also approved of Sharia courts. The establishment of religious courts, however, could also be seen as a more pragmatic move. The judicial system was unable to function due to dire social situation, and Sharia courts, therefore, provided a certain degree of a substitute for swift justice. In the interwar period, Islamization gained so much momentum that Maskhadov could not stop it, so he chose to join it. By this time, Islamic radicalism was fairly deeply rooted within the ranks of many Basayev's and Khattab's forces and was clearly visible as a part of the self-presentation of these radicals. The initial call for the involvement of foreign radicals came from within. Due to the initial praise of these groups by Dudayev himself and subsequently, the space which was provided for them to grow in the form of training and ideological camps turned up to have dire consequences for Chechen independence. Deal with Moscow became unachievable as a result of the growing political power of radicals. Instead of finally pushing for a peaceful solution in the form of a bilateral agreement, Islamization resulted in yet another violent phase of the conflict as the warlords refused to lay down weapons and let go of their power, invading the Dagestan with a formidable insurgency force.

### **6.3 The Second Chechen War**

The intrusion of religious radicals under the command of Basayev and Khattab marked the beginning of the Second Chechen War. This act alone shows how much fighting strength and political power did these groups have, as this move was not sanctioned by Maskhadov. The ideological pressure that culminated during the First Chechen War and especially during the interwar period has to be released. Radicals needed an outlet; the growing strength of Islamic radicalism was clearly showcased in the propaganda material created before the attack. Islamic flags and banners flew above the insurgency forces, and fighters wore heavy beards and Islamic insignias on their uniforms. This intrusion into Dagestan crumbled any remaining, even if flimsy, possibilities for a peaceful solution to the conflict. However, even Moscow, by that time, was

probably not looking for a peaceful solution anymore but rather for an opportunity to crack down on the defiant Chechnya. Analysis of the changes to the Chechen constitution, which were made by Maskhadov during the interwar period, proves that Islamization was gaining more and more momentum not only among the insurgents but also on the political level. Islam was now the only acceptable religion, and the state laws and political decisions on the highest levels were subordinate to Sharia laws and Quran. Using Toft's reasoning (Toft, 2006), civil wars turn into religious civil wars if the main objective of the insurgents is to establish a religious state. Therefore, if we follow Toft's theory, Maskhadov's changes in the constitution turned the separatist war into a religious one. The main task was no longer formulated as an independent Chechnya but rather as the Islamic state of Chechnya. Furthermore, the establishment of the Caucasus Emirate adds more credibility to this notion. An emirate, by definition, is a territory ruled by an emir, basically a Muslim monarch.

Chechen nationalism was gaining more and more Islamic flourish. During this time, Islamic and nationalistic notions became hard to distinguish and morphed into one mixture of religious nationalism. It is hard to argue, even though the constitution changed and later on, the Caucasus Emirate was established, that religion was really at the centre of the movement's ideology. If we look deeper into the self-presentation of the insurgents, the interviews with Basayev, Gelayev or Udugov himself, it becomes apparent that the fight for independence was still presented as a prevailing motivating factor up to 2007 when the Caucasus Emirate was established. However, after the Islamic nationalist were eliminated, Basayev and Maskhadov in 2005, Gelayev in 2004 and others in the early 2000s, insurgency again was Islamized to an even bigger extent. As mentioned before, it seems like a reoccurring pattern that after every dead quasi-nationalist, a more religious figure would step up. Radical Islam influenced the narrative, at this stage, to a very high degree. Seemingly it helped the movement in the beginning, bringing finances and skilled fighters. However, in the end, it inevitably helped Moscow to portray the separatists as religious zealots, which subsequently led to the loss of international credibility of the movement. Terrorist attacks such as the Moscow bombing, Dubrovka theatre or Beslan further cemented the religious outlook of the insurgency. During these attacks, suicide bombers were utilized, and Islamic symbology was strongly pronounced. However, the main demand of the attackers remained the same, the withdrawal of Russian forces.

## 6.4 The Syrian Civil War

Islamization of the movement reached its peak in the theatre of the Syrian civil war. Exclusively Chechen fighting groups were established swiftly during the first two years of the civil war. All these groups had Arabic names even though most fighters did not speak Arabic. The fact that all of the Chechen insurgency organizations that emerged in Syria had Arabic names gives a clear indication of how popular fundamentalist Islam had become among the combatants, pointing towards the assimilation of the Chechen fighters to the new ideological environment. Language barrier certainly played a role in this situation and contributed significantly to the formation of exclusively Russian-speaking jamaats. Some of the interviews with North Caucasus nationals fighting in Syria confirmed this issue, as the assimilation of Chechens into Syrian society was noted to be a lengthy generational process in those cases where fighters were planning to stay.

Foreign fighters played an important role during the development of the insurgency's ideology. During the Chechen wars, foreign fighters influenced the homegrown insurgency. Even though they were small in numbers initially, their presence helped to plant the seed of Wahabism in Chechnya, which grew larger and larger in the next two decades. In the Syrian Civil War tables turned; Chechens now became foreign fighters. Their influence on the Syrian conflict in the ideological sense was far from being as pronounced as the influence that mostly Arabic-speaking foreign fighters had on the Chechen insurgency in North Caucasus. The reason is that by the time Chechen fighters started to join the Syrian insurgency, and then later formed their own fighting groups in Syria, they were already ideologically significantly closer to the Syrian rebels, in comparison to the ideological gap that occurred when Wahabi fighters first came to Chechnya in the 1990s. This development also supports the notion that the ideology of the Chechen insurgency shifted significantly. However, the main reasons for joining the Syrian conflict, voiced by many of the Chechen fighters, were still anti-Russian grievances. Syrian civil war provided an outlet to fight the Russian enemy rather than an outlet to achieve martyrdom in Jihad. However, some of the younger foreign fighters who joined the Syrian conflict cited more religious motivations, such as helping fellow Muslims or fighting infidels. The author believes that the age difference played an important role. Older fighters, often veterans from both Chechen wars, were keener on anti-Russian grievances even though they underwent radicalization processes in regard to Wahabism. One might therefore suggest that anti-Russian grievance would die off with the upcoming generations of the Chechen insurgency, which suffered huge blows in the 2010s. However, the

fact that Chechen foreign fighters are now actively fighting purely secular conflict in Ukraine, opposing not only Russian but also Kadyrov's forces, points towards the fact that anti-Russian grievances became almost a part of Chechen culture, "Wainakh" culture. Ukrainian conflict lies, however, outside of the scope of this thesis.

## **6.5 Comparing the Dagestani and Chechen cases**

There are several differences between these two cases, the sources of radical thinking, the role of international fighters and the outcome of ideological pressures towards the official government.

Why did radical Islam not establish itself in Dagestan as firmly as in Chechnya? In the case of Chechnya, radical Islam was openly promoted by official governmental structures. Namely, Dudayev who was the first to use the ideology, politicizing Islam for a number of reasons. It attracted much-needed international support and finances and cemented his position against internal opposition. In Dagestan, no official governmental structure promoted radical Islam to such an extent as the country was much more stable, and officials lacked the reasons and willingness to push such a narrative. The narrative that was a mixture of nationalism and religion. In Chechnya, radical Islam found its way into official government, while in Dagestan, it mostly stayed within religious structures or at lower levels of administration, such as village leaders. Even though Dudayev's successor Maskhadov was initially opposed to radical Islam, his attitude changed. He was forced to realize that he lacked the power to subdue the radical elements in Chechnya as the power of warlords grew with the failing country. On the other hand, the Dagestani government was much more stable and managed to suppress the Wahabis after the intrusion of August 1999. Internal political stability and better economic conditions were crucial in hindering the spread of radical ideas in Dagestan.

Perhaps realizing the danger that radical Islam posed to the country's stability, the Dagestani government cracked down on the movement. Wahabism was prohibited in Dagestan, and subsequent counter-insurgency operations resulted in the elimination of most of the Dagestani insurgents. The same fate would meet Chechnya later in the late 2000s and early 2010s. The critical factor that played a role in the failure of the Dagestani radicals was the lack of local support



towards radical Islam, which was visible in the reaction of the local population towards the rebel forces that attacked Dagestan in August 1999. Same as for Dagestanis, radical interpretations of Islam were foreign to Chechens. However, a long-lasting media campaign, dire socioeconomic conditions, strong anti-Russian grievances, cultural realities of Chechen people (such as blood feuds), and the establishment of jihadi training camps but mainly support of the official governing structures towards Islamists led to the gradual spread of radical religious thoughts. Islamists simply did not gain enough space in Dagestan to operate freely and establish themselves.

Radical Islam initially came to both countries from the outside and later established itself through internal channels. Wahabism came to Dagestan first, but it found much more fruitful ground in Chechnya. Unlike in Dagestan, training/ ideological camps stayed active in Chechnya for many years. As stated before, only up to 100 fighters came from Dagestani training camps established by Islamic radicals. The finite number from Chechen training camps is unknown, but it is relatively clear that it was in the hundreds, possibly thousands, as of the early 2000s.

## 7. Conclusion

Research question: *How did radical Islamic ideology affect the development of motivational and ideological narrative of North Caucasus insurgency groups?*

The ideology of radical Islam undoubtedly affected the North Caucasus insurgency. In the case of Chechnya, it helped at first to keep the insurgency alive as Dudayev started to adopt this ideology in order to attract foreign support, equipment, manpower and finances but also to cement his position; the position which was in danger not only from outside but also internal struggles between moderates seeking the peaceful solution, and more radical hard-line separatist.

As the conflict progressed, radical Islam slowly but surely took over the initially secular separatist movement, which aimed for an independent Chechen state. The fact that Dudayev was initially building a secular state is confirmed by the first Chechen constitution, which clearly followed a model of secular presidential democracy. However, the constitution gradually changed from a presidential democracy model towards a model of an Islamic state. Firstly, Dudayev changed the constitution slightly to accommodate religious notions. Later Maskhadov changed the constitution even more, naming Islam as the only acceptable and official religion and basing the judicial system on Sharia laws. However, the difference between these two politicians is that Dudayev changed his attitude to keep the insurgency going and cover his position on his own accord. On the other hand, Maskhadov was basically pushed to act in such a manner as he was confronted by powerful warlords, such as Basayev or Khattab. As Maskhadov recognized the influence and resources these radical elements within the country had, he chose consensus over risking a civil war.

The leaders of the insurgency such as Basayev, Gelayev and even Umarov, stated numerous times that the fight for independence was the main aim of the movement even though the movement took on an Islamic outlook and rhetoric. A similar change from nationalistic to religious narratives can also be seen in literature as it mirrors the conflict. However, leaders of the insurgency would often change their rhetoric according to an audience as certain discrepancies were clearly noticeable in their public self-presentation. For example, Basayev often changed his terminology from more religious to more pragmatic as he addressed different media, such as Turkish, local Chechen or Russian. These leaders, who were part of the insurgency from the start

of the struggle, were gradually eliminated one by one. Every new "generation" of the insurgency leaders seemed to be more and more orientated towards religious questions rather than focusing on the fight for independence. This development is reflected in the establishment of the Caucasus Emirate and then again in the Syrian Civil War. In Syria, North Caucasus groups were fighting far from home. Some of the fighters, as described in the analysis, did state that their motivation was to fight Russians, as the insurgency activities in Chechnya were impossible due to the heavy crackdown of the authorities. However, a second group of mainly younger fighters from the North Caucasus in Syria stated religious motivations along the lines of Jihad. This difference might partly explain the internal schism within the movement, as some of the fighters or even leading figures, such as Omar Shishani, joined ISIS, and some refused to do so. For many North Caucasus fighters, the struggle for national independence was therefore done; they were fighting infidels in Syria, not occupants in Chechnya. Therefore, it is possible to say that the ideology of radical Islam, in the long run, hindered the main initial task of the insurgency.

Evident changes were visible in the narrative; insurgents presented themselves differently. If we compare Basayev's interviews from the early 90s with those from the early 2000s, we notice different rhetoric and attire. Nevertheless, his demands stayed nationalistic. Islamic flags in the videos started to occur more often than Chechen national symbols. This trend continued with the Caucasus Emirate and was later even more pronounced in the Syrian Civil War, while the main goals of the insurgents shifted from nationalism, as the Russian-speaking fighting groups in Syria were adopting Arabic names. The same happened with many fighters; Gelayev himself adopted an Arabic name, Khamzat.

The ideological narrative in question undoubtedly shifted. However, the fight for independence remained to be the central issue for the local insurgents even after the establishment of the Caucasus Emirate. Religious motives were heavily present by that time, but motivational narratives were still returning to national independence. Nevertheless, a relatively strong change in the appearance and rhetoric of the leading figures of the insurgency occurred during the 1990s. Foreign fighters, especially those from Arabic-speaking countries, who participated in the Chechen wars were fighting a different conflict. For them, it was a jihad, a fight against infidels, a religious war. The ground forces of insurgents were therefore motivated by a number of different reasons, from nationalistic grievances, personal vendettas, social and economic problems or religion. Even

though the establishment of Jihadi training camps during the 90s definitely helped to shift the narrative, a more pronounced change, and in some cases a definite one, occurred after the North Caucasus insurgents started to join the Syrian Civil War. A very different environment, saturated by radical Islamic thoughts, changed the insurgency. At that time more pronounced shift was also visible in the motivational narrative. More fighters, North Caucasus nationals, started to list religious reasons behind their choice to join the insurgency. Jihad became a focal point of the narrative.

Further research that would shed light on how the movement's ideology developed after the Syrian Civil War should focus on foreign North Caucasus fighters in the Ukraine-Russia War. Can we still consider these fighters part of the insurgency that culminated in the creation of the Caucasus Emirate? Are these fighters veterans from the Syrian Civil War or even the Chechen wars, or is it an entirely new generation? What are their motivations for fighting?

## List of References

- Al'Ubaydi, M. (2015) Khattab (1969-2002). Military Academy, West Point, NY. Combating Terrorism Center. Available at: <https://ntrl.ntis.gov/NTRL/dashboard/searchResults/titleDetail/ADA622453.xhtml> (Accessed: 15 February 2023).
- AP archive (2007) CHECHNYA: RUSSIA/CHECHNYA CONFLICT: REBELS. Available at: <https://newsroom.ap.org/editorial-photos-videos/detail?itemid=9d44583079be0d3129a2888604d6df61&mediatype=video&source=youtube> (Accessed: 1 February 2023).
- Arslanbenzer, H. (2019) Dzhokhar Dudayev: Fighting for a free Chechnya, Daily Sabah. Available at: <https://www.dailysabah.com/portrait/2019/11/14/dzhokhar-dudayev-fighting-for-a-free-chechnya> (Accessed: 2 February 2022).
- Askerov, A. and Vatchagaev, M. (2020) Chechnya: Interrupted Independence. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.15701.17121> (Accessed: 2 January 2023).
- Baker, M. (2004) Russia: On Beslan, Putin Looks Beyond Chechnya, Sees International Terror, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. Available at: <https://www.rferl.org/a/1054720.html> (Accessed: 15 January 2023).
- BBC News (1999) Khatab: Islamic revolutionary. Available at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/460678.stm> (Accessed: 15 December 2022).
- BBC News (2002) 'Chechen warlord dies in jail', 15 December. Available at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/2577065.stm> (Accessed: 1 August 2022).
- BBC News (2004a) 'Excerpts: Basayev claims Beslan', 17 September. Available at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/3665136.stm> (Accessed: 2 February 2022).
- BBC News (2004b) 'Remembering Stalin's deportations', 23 February. Available at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/3509933.stm> (Accessed: 2 February 2022).
- BBC News (2009) 'Russia "ends Chechnya operation"', 16 April. Available at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/8001495.stm> (Accessed: 3 February 2023).
- BBC News (2013a) 'Russia cleared over death of Chechen leader Maskhadov', 6 June. Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-22797930> (Accessed: 3 February 2023).
- BBC News (2013b) 'Syria crisis: Omar Shishani, Chechen jihadist leader', 3 December. Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-25151104> (Accessed: 1 February 2023).

- Bolotnikova, S. (2015) Remembering Budyonovsk, Available at: <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/odr/remembering-budyonovsk/> (Accessed: 1 February 2023).
- Carter, J.A., Maher, S. and Neumann, P.R. (2014) ‘#Greenbirds: Measuring Importance and Influence in Syrian Foreign Fighter Networks’. Available at: <https://icsr.info/2014/04/22/icsr-report-inspires-syrian-foreign-fighters/> (Accessed: 20 January 2022).
- Celik, G. (2022) 26 years since assassination of Dzhokhar Dudayev, symbol of independence struggle in Chechnya. Available at: <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/life/26-years-since-assassination-of-dzhokhar-dudayev-symbol-of-independence-struggle-in-chechnya/2570468> (Accessed: 20 January 2023).
- Citini, R. (2018) Death of the Wehrmacht. HistoryNet. Available at: <https://www.historynet.com/death-of-the-wehrmacht/> (Accessed: 2 January 2023).
- Coffey, L. (2016) Death of an ISIL commander. Al Jazeera. Available at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2016/3/10/abu-omar-al-shishani-death-of-an-isil-commander> (Accessed: 15 February 2023).
- Coll, S. (2004) ‘Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and Bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001’, Wilson Center. 24 February. Available at: <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/event/ghost-wars-the-secret-history-the-cia-afghanistan-and-bin-laden-the-soviet-invasion-to> (Accessed: 2 January 2023).
- Dixon, J. (2009) ‘What Causes Civil Wars? Integrating Quantitative Research Findings’, *International Studies Review*, 11(4), pp. 707–735. Available at: <https://academic.oup.com/isr/article-abstract/11/4/707/1814907?redirectedFrom=fulltext> (Accessed: 2 February 2023).
- Donnelly, M.G., Sanderson, T.M. and Fellman, Z. (2017) *Foreign Fighters in History*. Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS). Available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep23304> (Accessed: 15 February 2023).
- Dunlop, J.B. (1998) *Russia Confronts Chechnya: Roots of a Separatist Conflict*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511612077>. (Accessed: 13 January 2023).
- EnemyOfInjustice. (2015). A journalist's interview with al-Mujahid Shamyel Basayev 1996. YouTube. Available at: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lcx1GFFX\\_NQ&lc=Ugj4OgIAIwQf4HgCoAEC](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lcx1GFFX_NQ&lc=Ugj4OgIAIwQf4HgCoAEC) (Accessed: 19 January 2023).
- Evangelista, M. (2002) *The Chechen Wars: Will Russia Go the Way of the Soviet Union?* 1st edition. Washington, D.C: Brookings Institution Press.

Flag, Emblem and Anthem – Waynakh Online (n. d.). Available at: <https://www.waynakh.com/eng/chechnya/flag-emblem-and-anthem/> (Accessed: 15 February 2023).

Formichi, C. (2010) ‘Pan-Islam and Religious Nationalism: The Case of Kartosuwiryo and Negara Islam Indonesia’, pp. 125–146. Available at: <https://ecommons.cornell.edu/handle/1813/54517> (Accessed: 11 January 2023).

Fox, J. (2004) ‘Bringing Religion into International Relations’. Available at: [https://www.academia.edu/22298689/Bringing\\_Religion\\_into\\_International\\_Relations](https://www.academia.edu/22298689/Bringing_Religion_into_International_Relations) (Accessed: 6 February 2023).

Fox, J. (2004) ‘The Rise of Religious Nationalism and Conflict: Ethnic Conflict and Revolutionary Wars, 1945-2001’, *Journal of Peace Research*, 41(6), pp. 715–731. Available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4149714> (Accessed: 19 January 2023).

Freedom House (1998) Refworld | Freedom in the World 1998 - Chechnya, Refworld. Available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/5278c695b.html> (Accessed: 15 February 2023).

Freedom House (2014) Refworld | Post-Mortem Photograph and Video of Doku Umarov Emerge, Refworld. Available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/53e8afd84.html> (Accessed: 5 February 2023).

Georgann Heston. (2018) The first president of Chechnya Djokhar Dudaev about Russian Caucasian War (Estonian film). YouTube. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Md7BpxSkt98> (Accessed: 1 January 2023).

Hahn, G.M. (2014) *The Caucasus Emirate Mujahedin: Global Jihadism in Russia’s North Caucasus and Beyond*. Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company.

Halbach, U. (2001) ‘Islam in the North Caucasus’, *Archives de sciences sociales des religions*, (115), pp. 93–110. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.4000/assr.18403> (Accessed: 19 January 2023).

Hegghammer, T. (2010) ‘The Rise of Muslim Foreign Fighters: Islam and the Globalization of Jihad’, *International Security*, 35(3), pp. 53–94. Available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40981252> (Accessed: 11 January 2023).

Hegghammer, T. (2013) ‘Should I Stay or Should I Go? Explaining Variation in Western Jihadists’ Choice between Domestic and Foreign Fighting’, *American Political Science Review*, 107(1), pp. 1–15. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055412000615> (Accessed: 10 January 2023).

Hertog, K. (2005) ‘A Self-fulfilling Prophecy: The Seeds of Islamic Radicalisation in Chechnya’, *Religion, State and Society*, 33(3), pp. 239–252. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09637490500225029> (Accessed: 16 January 2023).

Hughes, J. (2007) Chechnya: from nationalism to Jihad. National and ethnic conflict in the 21st century. Philadelphia, USA: University of Pennsylvania Press. Available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt3fhzhw> (Accessed: 11 April 2023).

Hughes, J. and Sasse, G. (2002) 'Comparing Regional and Ethnic Conflicts in Post-Soviet Transition States', *Regional and Federal Studies*, 11. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/714004705> (Accessed: 11 January 2023).

Human Rights Watch (2000) Arrest of Journalist, Blanket Media Restrictions on Chechnya Condemned. Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2000/01/31/arrest-journalist-blanket-media-restrictions-chechnya-condemned> (Accessed: 5 February 2023).

ICL Project (2020) Chechnya Constitution 1992. Available at: [https://www.servat.unibe.ch/icl/cc01000\\_.html#A001\\_](https://www.servat.unibe.ch/icl/cc01000_.html#A001_) (Accessed: 10 February 2023).

ISIS Says 'Minister Of War' Abu Omar Al-Shishani Killed (2016) Reuters. Available at: <https://www.ndtv.com/world-news/isis-confirms-abu-omar-al-shishanis-death-report-1431223> (Accessed: 9 February 2023).

ISLAMIC INTERNATIONAL BRIGADE (IIB) (2010) United Nations Security Council. Available at: [https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/sanctions/1267/aq\\_sanctions\\_list/summaries/entity/islamic-international-brigade-%28iib%29](https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/sanctions/1267/aq_sanctions_list/summaries/entity/islamic-international-brigade-%28iib%29) (Accessed: 28 February 2023).

'Khamzat (Ruslan) Gelayev' (2008) Waynakh Online. Available at: <https://www.waynakh.com/eng/2008/05/khamzat-ruslan-gelayev/> (Accessed: 15 February 2023).

Karim, M.F. (2013) 'How Civil War Transforms into Religious Civil War'. Available at: [https://www.academia.edu/3406410/How\\_Civil\\_War\\_Transforms\\_into\\_Religious\\_Civil\\_War](https://www.academia.edu/3406410/How_Civil_War_Transforms_into_Religious_Civil_War) (Accessed: 8 February 2023).

Kavkaz-Center. (2005) Doku Umarov: "Russkaya armiya v chechne vydokhlas", Kavkazcenter.com. Available at: <https://www.kavkazcenter.com/russ/content/2005/07/15/36133/doku-umarov-russkaya-armiya-v-chechne-vydokhlas.shtml> (Accessed: 11 January 2023).

Kavkaz-Center. (2006) Zayavleniye Prezidenta CHRI Sheykha Abdul-Khalima, Kavkazcenter.com. Available at: <https://www.kavkazcenter.com/russ/content/2006/02/13/42038/zayavlenie-prezidenta-chri-shejkha-abdul-khalima.shtml> (Accessed: 3 February 2023).

Kavkaz-Center. (2018) Dokku Abu Usman: Shamil sprosila menya: Kogda ty stanesh Amirom, ty obyavish Imarat? Kavkazcenter.com. Available at: <https://www.kavkazcenter.com/russ/content/2018/10/06/117370/dokku-abu-usman-shamil-sprosila-menya-kogda-ty-stanesh-amirom-ty-obyavish-imarat.shtml> (Accessed: 15 February 2023).



Keddie, N.R. (1969) 'Pan-Islam as Proto-Nationalism', *The Journal of Modern History*, 41(1), pp. 17–28. Available at: [https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Pan-Islam-as-Proto-Nationalism-Keddie/456f7202bfff5022ca3e2b445ceeca48e247c10c\\_](https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Pan-Islam-as-Proto-Nationalism-Keddie/456f7202bfff5022ca3e2b445ceeca48e247c10c_) (Accessed: 11 January 2023).

Kirilenko, A., Sokolov, M. (2013) 20 Years Ago, Russia Had Its Biggest Political Crisis Since the Bolshevik Revolution, *The Atlantic*. Available at: <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2013/10/20-years-ago-russia-had-its-biggest-political-crisis-since-the-bolshevik-revolution/280237/> (Accessed: 11 January 2023).

Kisriev, F. E., Ware, B. R. (2006). *Russian Hegemony and Islamic Resistance: Ideology and Political Organization in Dagestan 1800-1930*. Available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4284465> (Accessed: 18 January 2023).

Krueger, A.B. and Malečková, J. (2003) 'Education, Poverty and Terrorism: Is There a Causal Connection?', *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 17(4), pp. 119–144. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1257/089533003772034925>. (Accessed: 11 February 2023).

Lanskoy, M. (2002) 'Daghestan and Chechnya: The Wahhabi Challenge to the State', *SAIS Review (1989-2003)*, 22(2), pp. 167–192. Available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26996418> (Accessed: 17 February 2023).

Lokshina, T. (2021) 'Kremlin Endorses Another Term for Kadyrov and His Brutal Chechen Regime' *Human Rights Watch*, 24 June. Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/06/24/kremlin-endorses-another-term-kadyrov-and-his-brutal-chechen-regime> (Accessed: 19 February 2023).

Magazine, S. and Schultz, C. (2013) *Chechnya, Dagestan, and the North Caucasus: A Very Brief History*, *Smithsonian Magazine*. Available at: <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/chechnya-dagestan-and-the-north-caucasus-a-very-brief-history-26714937/> (Accessed: 4 February 2023).

Malet, D. (2013) *Foreign Fighters: Transnational Identity in Civil Conflicts*. 1st edition. New York: Oxford University Press.

Maoz, Z. and Henderson, E.A. (2020) 'Religion and Civil War', in *Scriptures, Shrines, Scapegoats, and World Politics*. University of Michigan Press (*Religious Sources of Conflict and Cooperation in the Modern Era*), pp. 283–343. Available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3998/mpub.11353856.10> (Accessed: 15 February 2023).

Masao, A. (1980) 'The End of World Religion', *The Eastern Buddhist*, 13(1), pp. 31–45. Available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44361555> (Accessed: 7 February 2023).

McGregor, A. (2004) *The Assassination Of Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev: Implications For The War On Terrorism*. Jamestown. Available at: <https://jamestown.org/program/the-assassination-of-zelimkhan-yandarbiyev-implications-for-the-war-on-terrorism-2/> (Accessed: 9 February 2023).

McGregor, A. (2006) Military Jama'ats in the North Caucasus: A Continuing Threat? Available at: <https://www.aberfoylesecurity.com/?p=3819> (Accessed: 30 January 2023).

Mite, V. (2005) 'Chechnya: Was Maskhadov A Terrorist Or A Legitimate Leader?', Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. Available at: <https://www.rferl.org/a/1057883.html> (Accessed: 24 February 2023).

Moore, C. and Tumelty, P. (2009) 'Assessing Unholy Alliances in Chechnya: From Communism and Nationalism to Islamism and Salafism', *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, 25(1), pp. 73–94. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13523270802655621> (Accessed: 15 February 2022).

NetFilm. (2002) Footage interview with Shamil Basayev Ilyas Bogatyrev. (2002). NetFilm. Available at: <http://www.net-film.eu/film-71243/> (Accessed: April 23, 2022)

Nichols, J. (1995) Who are the Chechen? Available at: <http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/63/077.html> (Accessed: 10 February 2023).

Ojeda, E. (2005) 'Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences'. Available at: [https://www.academia.edu/19264308/Case\\_Studies\\_and\\_Theory\\_Development\\_in\\_the\\_Social\\_Sciences](https://www.academia.edu/19264308/Case_Studies_and_Theory_Development_in_the_Social_Sciences) (Accessed: 7 February 2023).

Paraszczuk, J. (2013) The Dispute Between Umar Shishani & His Deputy, Seyfullakh Shishani Available at: <http://www.chechensyria.com/?p=14798/> (Accessed: 15 November 2022).

Paraszczuk, J. (2017) Interview with Abdul Hakim Shishani Emir of Anjad al-Kavkaz (Rustan Azhiev). Available at: <http://www.chechensyria.com/?p=25394> (Accessed: 15 November 2022).

Paraszczuk, J. (2019) Interview with Khalid Shishani. Available at: <http://www.chechensyria.com/?p=26305> (Accessed: 12 November 2022).

Paraszczuk, J. (2020) Interview with "Chechen Tactical". Available at: <http://www.chechensyria.com/?p=26387> (Accessed: 9 November 2022).

Perliger, A. and Milton, D. (2016a) Motivations and Radicalization of Jihadist Foreign Fighters. *Combatting Terrorism Center at West Point*, pp. 15–33. Available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep05619.7> (Accessed: 26 February 2023).

Perliger, A. and Milton, D. (2016b) The Phenomenon of Foreign Fighters – Conceptualization and Review of Existing Explanations. *Combatting Terrorism Center at West Point*, pp. 4–9. Available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep05619.5> (Accessed: 4 February 2023).

Prague Watchdog. (2009) "Our possibilities are endless..." (interview with Dokka Umarov). Prague Watchdog. Available at: <https://www.watchdog.cz/?show=000000-000024-000007-000002&lang=1> (Accessed: 27 February 2023).

Radnitz, S. (2006) 'Look Who's Talking! Islamic Discourse in the Chechen Wars', *Nationalities Papers*, 34(2), pp. 237–256. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00905990600720328>. (Accessed: 8 February 2023).

Rahma Arken. (2013) Khattab 1 Mujahid speech part. YouTube. Available at: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lbLZrTm7j2E&list=PLlpPz\\_weRgn\\_0rKgd9T72bHMUvZ3k9Sxy&index=8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lbLZrTm7j2E&list=PLlpPz_weRgn_0rKgd9T72bHMUvZ3k9Sxy&index=8) (Accessed: 15 February 2023).

Ratelle, J.-F. (2013) *Radical Islam and the Chechen War Spillover: A Political Ethnographic Reassessment of the Upsurge of Violence in the North Caucasus Since 2009*. Thesis. Université d'Ottawa / University of Ottawa. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.20381/ruor-6448> (Accessed: 28 February 2023).

Ratelle, J.-F. (2020) *Jihad at Home or Leaving for Syria and Iraq: Understanding the Motivations of Dagestani Salafists*. Available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26910407> (Accessed: 28 February 2023).

Regan, D. (1993) 'Islamic Resurgence: Characteristics, Causes, Consequences and Implications', *Journal of Political & Military Sociology*, 21(2), pp. 259–266. Available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/45293947> (Accessed: 2 February 2023).

Reuters (2012) 'Son of late Chechen warlord reported killed in Syria', 23 August. Available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-syria-crisis-russia-chechen-idUSBRE87M0RD20120823> (Accessed: 1 February 2023).

Roshchin, M. (2004) *Sufism and Fundamentalism in Dagestan and Chechnya*. Available at: [https://www.persee.fr/doc/cemot\\_0764-9878\\_2004\\_num\\_38\\_1\\_1742](https://www.persee.fr/doc/cemot_0764-9878_2004_num_38_1_1742) (Accessed: 3 February 2023).

Rotar, I. (2017) *Islamic Radicals in Dagestan*. Available at: <https://jamestown.org/program/islamic-radicals-in-dagestan/> (Accessed: 3 January 2023).

Russia - Yeltsin Rejects Talking To Dudayev | AP Archive (1995). Available at: <http://www.aparchive.com/metadata/youtube/a5d52bcc2ce01a988e65614cc7a24f72> (Accessed: 15 February 2023).

Sagramoso, D., Yarlzkapov, A. (2021) *The Impact of Foreign Salafi-Jihadists on Islamic Developments in Chechnya and Dagestan*. Available at: [https://www.interanalytics.org/jour/article/view/395?locale=en\\_US](https://www.interanalytics.org/jour/article/view/395?locale=en_US) (Accessed: 7 January 2023).

Sarkees, M. and Wayman, F. (2010) *Resort to War, 1816-2007*. Washington, DC. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781608718276>. (Accessed: 22 January 2023).

Souleimanov, E.A. (2011) 'The Caucasus Emirate: Genealogy of an Islamist Insurgency', *Middle East Policy*, 18(4), 2011. Pp. 155–168.' Available at: [https://www.academia.edu/9062279/Souleimanov\\_Emil\\_A\\_The\\_Caucasus\\_Emirate\\_Genealogy\\_of\\_an\\_Islamist\\_Insurgency\\_Middle\\_East\\_Policy\\_18\\_4\\_2011\\_Pp\\_155\\_168](https://www.academia.edu/9062279/Souleimanov_Emil_A_The_Caucasus_Emirate_Genealogy_of_an_Islamist_Insurgency_Middle_East_Policy_18_4_2011_Pp_155_168) (Accessed: 29 January 2023).

Souleimanov, E.A. (2016) 'Blood revenge in Chechnya and Ingushetia' in Alena Ledeneva (ed.), *The Global Encyclopedia of Informality*, London: University College London Press, forthcoming.' Available at:

[https://www.academia.edu/16354875/Souleimanov\\_Emil\\_A\\_Blood\\_revenge\\_chir\\_in\\_Chechnya\\_and\\_Ingushetia\\_in\\_Alena\\_Ledeneva\\_ed\\_The\\_Global\\_Encyclopedia\\_of\\_Informality\\_London\\_University\\_College\\_London\\_Press\\_forthcoming](https://www.academia.edu/16354875/Souleimanov_Emil_A_Blood_revenge_chir_in_Chechnya_and_Ingushetia_in_Alena_Ledeneva_ed_The_Global_Encyclopedia_of_Informality_London_University_College_London_Press_forthcoming) (Accessed: 15 February 2023).

Souleimanov, E.A. and Aliyev, H. (2015) 'Blood Revenge and Violent Mobilization: Evidence from the Chechen Wars', *International Security*, 40(2), Fall 2015. Pp. 158-180.' Available at: [https://www.academia.edu/15047667/Souleimanov\\_Emil\\_A\\_Aliyev\\_Huseyn\\_Blood\\_Revenge\\_and\\_Violent\\_Mobilization\\_Evidence\\_from\\_the\\_Chechen\\_Wars\\_International\\_Security\\_40\\_2\\_Fall\\_2015\\_Pp\\_158\\_180](https://www.academia.edu/15047667/Souleimanov_Emil_A_Aliyev_Huseyn_Blood_Revenge_and_Violent_Mobilization_Evidence_from_the_Chechen_Wars_International_Security_40_2_Fall_2015_Pp_158_180) (Accessed: 2 January 2023).

Speckhard, A. and Akhmedova, K. (2006) 'The New Chechen Jihad: Militant Wahhabism as a Radical Movement and a Source of Suicide Terrorism in Post-War Chechen Society', *Democracy and Security*, 2(1), pp. 103–155. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17419160600625116>. (Accessed: 15 February 2023).

Steele, J. (2006) 'Shamil Basayev', *The Guardian*, 10 July. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2006/jul/11/guardianobituaries.chechnya> (Accessed: 15 February 2023).

Svensson, I. (2007) 'Fighting with Faith: Religion and Conflict Resolution in Civil Wars', *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 51(6), pp. 930–949. Available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27638586> (Accessed: 10 February 2023).

TheRamizra. (2012). Shamil' Basayev. Interv'yu A. Babitskomu. YouTube. at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RtQq-OstY5A> (Accessed: 15 February 2023).

Tishkov, V. (1997) *Ethnicity, Nationalism and Conflict in and after the Soviet Union: The Mind Aflame*. London. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446279427>. (Accessed: 7 January 2022).

Tishkov, V. (2001) *Understanding Violence for Post-Conflict Reconstruction in Chechnya - Russian Federation*, ReliefWeb. Available at: <https://reliefweb.int/report/russian-federation/understanding-violence-post-conflict-reconstruction-chechnya> (Accessed: 15 February 2023).

Toft, M.D. (2006) 'Religion, Civil War and International Order'. Available at: [https://www.belfercenter.org/sites/default/files/legacy/files/toft\\_2006\\_03\\_updated\\_web.pdf](https://www.belfercenter.org/sites/default/files/legacy/files/toft_2006_03_updated_web.pdf) (Accessed: 8 January 2022).

Toft, M.D. (2007) 'Getting Religion?: The Puzzling Case of Islam and Civil War', *International Security*, 31(4), pp. 97–131. Available at: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/240678274\\_Getting\\_Religion\\_The\\_Puzzling\\_Case\\_of\\_Islam\\_and\\_Civil\\_War](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/240678274_Getting_Religion_The_Puzzling_Case_of_Islam_and_Civil_War) (Accessed: 18 December 2022).

Tumelty, P. (2005) CHECHNYA AND THE INSURGENCY IN DAGESTAN, Jamestown. 15 January. Available at: <https://jamestown.org/program/chechnya-and-the-insurgency-in-dagestan-2/> (Accessed: 21 December 2022).

Tusicisny, A. (2004) 'Civilizational Conflicts: More Frequent, Longer, and Bloodier?', *Journal of Peace Research*, 41(4), pp. 485–498. Available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4149685> (Accessed: 17 November 2023).

Twickel, N. von (2012) Son of Chechen Warlord Dies Fighting Assad, *The Moscow Times*. Available at: <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2012/08/22/son-of-chechen-warlord-dies-fighting-assad-a17218> (Accessed: 15 February 2023).

Underground Organisation Claims Responsibility for Buinaksk Raid. (1998) *Monitor Volume: 4 Issue: 17*. Available at: <https://jamestown.org/program/underground-organization-claims-responsibility-for-buinaksk-raid/> (Accessed: 2 February 2023).

UNPO: Chechnya: European Parliament recognises the genocide of the Chechen People in 1944 (2004). Available at: <https://www.unpo.org/article/438> (Accessed: 15 February 2023).

Ware, B. R., Kisriev, E., Patzel, J. W., Roericht, U. (2003) Political Islam in Dagestan. *Europe-Asia Studies*, 55(2), pp. 287-302. Available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/3594528> (Accessed: 10 January 2023).

Wilhelmsen, J. (2005) 'Between a Rock and a Hard Place: The Islamisation of the Chechen Separatist Movement', *Europe-Asia Studies*, 57(1), pp. 35–59. Available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/30043851> (Accessed: 2 January 2023).

Williams, B. (2000) SHAMIL BASEYEV, CHECHEN FIELD COMMANDER: RUSSIA'S MOST WANTED MAN. Available at: <https://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/7180-analytical-articles-caci-analyst-2000-8-2-art-7180.html?tmpl=component&print=1> (Accessed: 15 February 2023).

Wilson, J., Jacobson, C. (2012) Chechnya: A Difficult Cornerstone in Russian Security. Available at: <https://geohistory.today/chechnya/> (Accessed: 15 February 2023).

World, A. (2009) Abkhazia, Georgia and the Caucasus Confederation, by Stanislav Lakoba, *Abkhaz World | History, Culture & Politics of Abkhazia*. Available at: <https://abkhazworld.com/aw/history/710-abkhazia-georgia-lakoba> (Accessed: 15 February 2023).

Zurcher, C. (2009) *The Post-Soviet Wars: Rebellion, Ethnic Conflict, and Nationhood in the Caucasus*. New York: NYU Press. Available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27640729> (Accessed: 4 January 2023).

1obsolete. (2007) The smell of paradise. part 1 documentary Chechnya Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev. YouTube. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RxixdF2Mjlg> (Accessed: 23 January 2022).

1obsolete. (2007b) The smell of paradise. part 2 Chechnya Hamzat Gelaev. YouTube. Available at: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1\\_z6KozvJDg&t=12s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1_z6KozvJDg&t=12s) (Accessed: 2 February 2022).

## List of abbreviations

AQ	Al-Qaida
DUMD	Spiritual Directorate of the Muslims of Dagestan
FLD	Front of Liberation of Dagestan
HRW	Humans Rights Watch
IRP	Islamic Revival Party
UNPO	Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization
IIB	Islamic International Brigade

# Appendix I

## Map of North Caucasus



Source: Galeotti, M. (2014). Russia's Wars in Chechnya 1994–2009. Available at: <https://eurasiangeopolitics.com/north-caucasus-maps/#jp-carousel-1610> (Accessed on: 24 April 2023)