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WHEN SEPARATISTS BECOME ISLAMISTS: THE CASE OF CHECHNYA

WILHELMSEN Julie

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This report analyses the radicalisation and Islamisation of the Chechen separatist movement.

Three developments have contributed to this radicalisation. Firstly, the 1994–96 war in Chechnya resulted in the personal radicalisation of several Chechen warlords and politicians. These actors formed a radical opposition to the moderate regime of President Aslan Maskhadov in the interwar period and pushed for the implementation of Islamist policies in Chechnya. Secondly, international Islamists have attempted to co-opt the Chechen separatist movement. They allied themselves to the radical Chechen warlords and acquired influence through supplying money and fighting skills. Thirdly, Russia's handling of Chechnya during the interwar period and the second war has contributed to marginalise the moderate forces in Chechnya that might have withstood the influence of the more radical warlords.

The combination of radical warlords aligned with international Islamists on the one hand, and hard Russian policies on the other, has trapped the conflict in a mode of interaction where a peaceful, negotiated solution now seems unlikely.

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PREFACE

This report is part of the FFI project "Russia – partner and challenger", which analyses the prospects for a future security community between Russia and the West. All the work is based on open sources.

The term "security community" describes a relationship that involves two or more states and is characterised by deep mutual trust and a common identity. In a security community, it is unthinkable for the partners to seek to solve conflicts among themselves by violent means. As a key foundation of such a relationship is a set of common norms, a future Russian –Western security community cannot be built on a strategic alliance alone. Such a relationship would also require the entrenchment of liberal democratic norms in the Russian political system.

The further radicalisation and polarisation of the Chechen conflict is a major obstacle to Russia's integration into the Western security community. The conflict in Chechnya has contributed directly to stifling the press in Russia and given impetus to the manipulation of democratic procedures, such as regional elections. Moreover, the enduring conflict has brought security concerns to the forefront in Russia, creating a society where the demand for order and security overpowers demands for democratic and human rights. This securitisation of Russian domestic politics has brought to prominence a significant number of actors from the military and security services. Many of them carry a heritage of Cold War suspicion against the West and tend to champion control and centralisation over civil society and liberty.

Altogether, a protracted conflict in Chechnya does not bode well for the prospects of liberal democratic norms taking root in Russia. Paradoxically, although Russia and the West have been united in the fight against international terrorism, Russia's fight against what it deems international terrorism on its own territory might eventually drive Russia and the West further apart.

It is in this context that a study of the radicalisation and Islamisation of the Chechen separatist movement is relevant. The radicalisation of the Chechen separatist movement and the uncompromising Russian policies have brought the conflict into a new stage, making a peaceful solution seem like a distant dream.

Oslo, February 2004

Julie Wilhelmsen

CONTENTS

WHEN SEPARATISTS BECOME ISLAMISTS: THE CASE OF CHECHNYA

1 INTRODUCTION

The conflict in Chechnya and its consequences are among the most serious challenges currently facing Russia – draining the country of valuable human and material resources, impeding democratic development and contributing to stall military reform. The most dramatic consequence of the nearly ten-year-long conflict is perhaps the radicalisation (in some cases Islamisation) of parts of the separatist movement, with international Islamist organisations apparently gaining a foothold on Russian territory. In the long-term perspective, the conflict in Chechnya raises the prospect of a growing divide between Muslims and Slavs in the sprawling Russian Federation. This would be an unwelcome development now that Russia, no longer an imperial power, is striving to create a new civic "nation" within the Federation borders.

Chechnya and The Caucasus Region. Map produced by the Office of The Geographer and Global Issues, US Department of State, http://lcweb2.loc.gov/ammem/gmdhtml.

Nationalism was the main motivation behind Chechen separatism in the early 1990s. In this nationalism the Chechen version of Islam played a role, as it has always done in the Chechens' fight against Russian power.[1] However, the role of Islam was limited. It was basically a small, power-seeking elite attempting to mobilise the Chechen population against the federal centre

[1] The Chechens were converted to Islam by Kumuk missionaries in the second half of the 17th. Century. These mystic missionaries preached Sufism. Two "roads to God", or *tariqat*, have been dominant in Chechnya: Naqshbandiya and Qadiriya. The organisation of the Sufi movement into brotherhoods suited the Chechen clan-structure well; and during the Russian conquest in the 18th and 19th centuries the Sufi movement was turned into more radical resistance movement. Although the Chechens were subjected to secularisation during Soviet times, the underground character of the Sufi brotherhoods secured their survival. During Soviet times the "official Islam" was established in addition to Sufism.

who used Islam as a tool. After nearly ten years of conflict and chaos, however, both Political Islam and Radical Islam, trends quite alien to the Sufi Chechens, have become part of the ideology and working method of many Chechen fighters and politicians.[2] There is constant talk of a link between Chechen separatists and international Islamist organisations such as al-Qaeda. Moreover, the moderate actors in the Chechen separatist movement seem to be losing ground to the more radical figures. How did this come about?

The Russian rhetoric on the conflict in Chechnya can give the impression that Islam in itself is the key conflict-generating factor. This report contests that notion, however. The Islamisation of the Chechen separatist movement has been a *consequence* of the ongoing conflict, rather than the reason for it. The reasons need to be sought in internal developments in Chechnya, in Russia's relations to Chechnya, and in the wider global context. This report will cover three developments that in different ways have contributed to radicalise and Islamise the Chechen separatist movement:

First, the *war itself* produced a radicalisation of a few central warlords and politicians, who came to play a crucial role in the interwar period. Also today, they greatly influence the way the separatist struggle is fought. Second, *foreign Islamist actors and organisations* have attempted to co-opt the Chechen conflict. Third, *Russia's strategy* towards Chechnya has served to strengthen the radical actors in Chechnya at the expense of the more moderate ones.

These three developments, running partly parallel in time, have acted to radicalise the Chechen separatist movement. In this report I will depict these developments as distinct from each other, while also illustrating how they have intertwined and reinforced each other. Of particular interest is how international Islamist forces in alliance with Chechen radical warlords on the one hand and the hard and uncompromising Russian policies on the other, have worked in tandem to trap the moderate Chechen actors. Although I draw lines both backwards to the first Chechen war and forward to the present situation, the primary focus will be on the highly formative interwar period (1996–99).

In the brief second chapter I substantiate the claim that Islam initially played a limited role in the Chechen separatist movement. The third chapter deals with the radicalisation of key Chechen warlords and politicians. I seek to answer the question "why", and also say something about the worldview of these men. Chapter four traces how foreign Islamist actors and organisations have sought to co-opt the Chechen conflict, and analyses how successful they

[2] Radical Islam is the trend within Islam that "demands fulfilment of violent jihad as a duty, rejects rival interpretations and makes war on governments, even when their rulers are Muslims". This trend is distinct from Political Islam, which can be defined as "the politicised doctrine of Islamic movements that seek a state governed by Islamic law". (Reuven Paz "Middle East Islamism in the European Context" p. 2, posted at http://gloria.idc.ac.il). Although it is difficult to put one label on the type of Radical Islam that is influential in Chechnya, the Radical Islamists in Chechnya are often referred to as Wahhabis or Salafis. I have opted to use the term Wahhabis in this report simply because it is the one most commonly used. Wahhabism (or Salafism) is a puritan Muslim reform movement that developed in Saudi Arabia in the 18th century, propagating a return to the pure version of Islam that existed at the time of the prophet Muhammad. The Wahhabis consider Sufism heretical, as it often merges with local customs and allows the worship of saints and mysticism.

have been in their attempts. Chapter five analyses the Russian strategy on Chechnya in the interwar period. In chapter six I argue that Russia's strategy, interplaying with the foreign Islamists' attempts at co-opting the conflict, has served to marginalise the moderate forces in Chechnya and bring the radical actors to prominence. Chapter seven follows this line of argument through the second Chechen war.

2 AN INSTRUMENT OF POWER: THE INITIAL ADOPTION OF ISLAMIC RHETORIC

The Chechens have a long history of opposing Russian power. In the 18th and 19th century Islam played an instrumental role in mobilising the Chechen population to fight. Under the leadership of Sheik Mansur (1785–93) and later Imam Shamil (1830–59) the Chechens met Russian conquest with *ghazawat* (holy war). Even the 1920–21 uprising in Chechnya and Dagestan was led by the Naqshbandi Sufi brotherhood, and the ideology of the rebels was that of *ghazawat*.[3]

However, many years under Soviet rule, which included the deportations of the Chechens to Central Asia in 1944, dramatically reduced the impact of Islam on Chechen society. Igor Malashenko claims that Islam was not a decisive factor for the survival of the Chechens in deportation.[4] National Chechen traditions, such as burying the dead in their native land, however, were important. The Chechens became rather indifferent to Islam. *Adat* played a more important role in Chechen society than *Shari'ah*.[5] The discontinuity of the 18th and 19th century *ghazawat* into the separatist movement of the early 1990 was therefore predictable.

The ideology of the Chechen separatist movement in the early 1990s was one of ethnic nationalism.[6] The proclaimed aims of the National Congress of the Chechen People (1990) were to resolve the problems facing the Chechen "nation". This approach included the elimination of discrimination against Chechens in their own country and the gathering of all Chechens on their own territory. Although independence was not an explicit goal to start with and held only a very limited appeal to the Chechen population, it was to become the main goal of the nationalist movement.

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[3] Marie Bennigsen Broxup (1992), "The last Ghazawat: The 1920–1921 Uprising", in Marie Bennigsen Broxup et al, *The North Caucasus Barrier*, London: Hurst and Company.

[4] Malashenko, Igor (2001: 297) "The glitter and poverty of Chechen Islam", in Genadiy Chufrin, ed., *The Security of the Caspian Sea Region*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Note, however, that the Chechens kept a form of legal system which was a hybrid between the *Shari'ah* and Chechen customs. Disputes were to be judged by a council of elders. This council would often consult a *mullah* in command of Arabic, who would give advice on how to settle the dispute according to the Koran.

[5] *Adat* are the customs, customary law, local norms and traditions at work in Muslim life alongside the *Shari'ah*, which is the Islamic jurisprudence (see list of Arabic terms posted on the website of *Central Asia and the Caucasus, Journal of Social and Political Studies*, http://www.ca-c.org/).

[6] See for example Carlotta Gall & Thomas de Waal (1997) *Chechnya: A Small Victorious War.* London and Basingstoke: Pan Original; or Anatol Lieven (1998) *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power*. New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press.

The National Congress of the Chechen People invited Soviet Air Force Major-General Dzhokhar Dudaev to be their leader, and in October 1991 he became president of the self-proclaimed Chechen Republic of Ichkeria (CRI).[7] The choice of Dudaev as leader testifies to the limited importance placed on Islam: Dudaev was a Soviet General, and not a practising Muslim. In fact he did not even know how many times a day a Muslim should turn to Mecca and pray.

This is not to say that there was no Islamic revival in Chechnya, as there was in the other Muslim parts of the Russian Federation after the collapse of Soviet power. There was, and parties such as the "Islamic revival party" and "Islamic Path" emerged in Chechnya the early 1990s.[8] The point is merely that Islam was not the major motivation behind the emerging separatist movement. Anatol Lieven claims that even for Shamil Basaev, Islam was initially more an aspect of Chechen national tradition, than the central motivating force in its own right.[9]

Dudaev ruled out any talk of an Islamic state in the first two years of his presidency. When he finally did start referring to Islam as a basis of legitimacy for his actions, it was in response to growing internal opposition and in the face of the Russian invasion of November 1994. Dudaev discovered that adopting Islamic slogans was a useful mobilising tool.[10] Like the hero Imam Shamil, he encouraged the Chechens to fight the Russian invasion under the slogan of *ghazawat.* Although the notion of *ghazawat* probably appealed to young Chechen men more in the interpretation of a fight against the *Russians* than against the *infidels* as such, the Islamic phrases were taken into use, becoming an ever-present ingredient in the Chechen struggle.

3 WARLORD STORIES

One way of understanding the radicalisation of the Chechen separatist movement is to study the stories of a few central actors in the movement. The individuals I have chosen for presentation here all underwent a process of radicalisation/Islamisation. Further, they all played a key role in the interwar period when more moderate actors, most importantly Aslan Maskhadov, were marginalised.[11]

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[7] 'Ichkeria' is the Chechen name for Chechnya that President Dudaev choose to adopt in place of the Russian "Chechnya".

[8] Dzabrail Gakaev (1999) "Put' k chechenskoy revolyutsii" in D. E. Furman, ed., *Chechnya i Rossiya: Obshchestva i Gosudarstva*. Moscow: The Andrey Sakharov Fund.

[9] Lieven, *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power* (1998:363).

[10] Julie Wilhelmsen (1999): *Konflikt i Den russiske føderasjon*. NUPI rapport no. 249. Dudaev is also said to have mustered support for his regime by engaging the Qadiriya brotherhoods in Chechnya (Gurya Murklinskaya, "Islam i Politika v Sovremennoy Chechne", 13 August 1999, posted at www.avar.narod.ru.)

[11] Aslan Maskhadov (b. 1951) is a former Soviet Colonel. He became Chief of Staff during the first Chechen war and was elected President of Chechnya in February 1997. He is not dealt with in this chapter because he did not become a radical Islamist during the first war. On the contrary, he was considered a moderate, reasonable actor by Russian officials and by the Russian press as well as in the scholarly literature. Concerning Wahhabism, he firmly stated that this ideology was destructive for Chechnya and foreign to the Chechen nation ("Chechnya na poroge grazhdanskoy voiny?", *Trud*, 18 July 1998.)

One problem with this approach is the risk of creating the impression that *all* central separatist leaders became Islamic radicals. This is not my intention. Rather, I have chosen to study these actors as a means to reach some general conclusions about the motivation for adopting Radical and Political Islam. This approach reflects my belief that the internal Chechen impetus toward Islamisation came from these warlords and leaders, and not from the Chechen population in general. In the next step of the analysis (chapter four) a central question will be how the Chechen radical actors presented in this chapter have connected with international Islamist actors.

3.1 Shamil Basaev (b. 1965)

Shamil Basaev was the most prominent warlord in the first Chechen war, as he is today. Basaev, at the time a computer salesman in Moscow, returned to Chechnya after the 1991 coup and took part in the Congress of the Chechen People. After Dudaev was elected president in November 1991, Basaev was given the task of building up a Special Missions Battalion. In 1992 he asked permission from Dudaev to fight on the side of the separatists in the Abkhas war, leading a group of volunteers from the "Confederation of Mountain Peoples".[12] When the war in Chechnya broke out in 1994, Basaev was given the order to organise an Intelligence and Diversion Battalion. His influence and responsibility grew steadily, and by the end of the war he was said to command eleven battalions and to be responsible for organising the basic military education of all new recruits.[13] Indeed, Basaev was crucial in the storming of Grozny in August 1996, which finally brought Russia to the negotiating table and ended the war. Basaev served as Prime Minister of the CRI for a few months in 1998. He was responsible for the attack on Dagestan by radical forces in August 1999. Basaev remains the most prominent Chechen warlord of the second Chechen war and has taken responsibility for many recent terrorist acts and suicide bombings.

Judging from interviews with Basaev before and at the beginning of the first war, his main goal and motivation for fighting was Chechen independence and the idea of uniting the North Caucasus, particularly Chechnya and Dagestan. He had few ideas of an Islamic state, nor did he employ the rhetoric of Radical Islam.[14] However, in an interview with *Izvestiya* journalist Igor Rotar at the end of the first war, Basaev claimed that "I was the first to introduce *Shari'ah* courts on Chechen territory" and that "we see ourselves as warriors of Islam and therefore don't fear death". When confronted with the question of why he was willing to commit terrorist acts that harmed innocent Russians, such as the Budennovsk hostage act, he retorted that he no longer considered any Russians innocent.[15]

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[12] This was an organisation that linked the various Muslim North Caucasian Autonomous Republics.
[13] Hans Krech (2002) *Der Zweite Tschetschenien Krieg 1999–2002.* Berlin: Verlag Dr. Köster.
[14] Lieven (1998:33–39): *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power;* Vakhtang Dzhanashya "Komanduyushchim voyskami KNK naznachen Shamil Basaev", *Segodnya,* 1 February 1994.
[15] "Chechnya: po obe storony fronta", *Izvestiya,* 24 November 1995. Basaev legitimised inhumane tactics by referring to the Russian tactics. During the Budennovsk hostage crisis in 1995 he warned that his forces would "build exactly the same filtration camps here, as the notorious filtration camps that the Russian forces built in Mozdok." When answering the questions about why they were not going to free the women and children, although they had said they would spare them, he retorted, "we will use the same methods as the federal forces use in Chechnya. Remember the hospital in Grozny, the family house in Shali." (*Segodnya,* 17 June 1995)

It was the war that produced this change in his perceptions. Basaev was himself responsible for atrocities, but he also experienced brutal Russian warfare at close range, losing his wife and six children in a Russian attack on their village in 1995.

However, the "choice" of ideology was not accidental. Basaev is said to have made contact with a Radical Islamist milieu earlier on. Several sources mention Basaev's trips to Khost in Afghanistan via Pakistan before the war in 1994. On his second trip he brought with him some forty Chechen fighters who allegedly received training in Mujahideen camps.[16] Most probably these trips were connected to Basaev's support for the Tajik opposition, who at the time were based in Afghanistan. It was also through the Tajik opposition that Basaev came into contact with Khattab, a Saudi-born *jihadi* fighter.[17]

Apart from the war itself, Khattab probably was a key source of influence on Basaev's views. Although varying accounts are given of how the two became partners, there is no doubt that Khattab stayed in the Basaev family home and became like a brother to Shamil.[18] According to Shamil Beno, who was Chechnya's representative in Moscow in 2000/01 and used to be a friend of Basaev, Basaev changed after meeting Khattab in 1995: "He started moving from freedom for Chechnya to freedom for the whole Arab world. He changed from a Chechen patriot into an Islamic globalist."[19]

Although there is something to this account, it probably overestimates the impact of Islamic globalist ideas in Basaev's perceptions and goals. Basaev's fight was always directed against the Russians, and his use of terrorism was always linked to specific goals that would further the independence of Chechnya. The hostage takings in Budennovsk in June 1995 and in Moscow October 2002 give evidence of such motivation. When presenting the hostage takers to the press during the Budennovsk crisis Basaev said: "We are fighters for the freedom and independence of Chechnya."[20] Basaev's words of thanks when he received a sabre as a gift from Khattab give another illustration: "The sabre will not hang on the wall, but serve the good cause of liberating the Caucasus."[21]

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[16] *Der Spiegel* reported this news in 1995, citing sources in the Pakistani security organs. According to Basaev himself, he "returned to Chechnya after 1991, formed several units, trained them in Afghanistan and dispatched to join the mujahideen in Tajikistan." Interview with field commander Shamil Basaev posted at *Azzam Publications* and quoted in Brian Glyn Williams (2003) "Freedom Fighters or Ethno-Terrorists? Critically Assessing the Pre-Sept. 11th links between the Chechen resistance and Al-Qaeda", paper presented at the annual ASN world convention, New York 2003. Also Armond Calgar, "In the Spotlight: The special purpose Islamic Regiment", posted at www.cdi.org/terrorism, 28 March 2003; and Krech, *Der Zweite Tschetschenien Krieg 1999–2002*.

[17] Sanobar Shermatova (1999), "Tak nazyvaemye vakhabity" in Furman, *Chechnya i Rossiya: Obschestva i Gosudarstva*.

[18] According to one account, Shamil's father Salman invited Khattab to his home and made him his "son". Evgeniy Krutikov, "Khattab: chelovek niotkuda", *Izvestiya*, 3 December 1999.

[19] Quoted in Sharon LaFraniere, "How Jihad Made Its Way to Chechnya", *Washington Post Foreign Service*, 26 April 2003.

[20] The demands made by the hostage takers in Budennovsk in 1995 were that the federal forces pull out of the region, that negotiations be initiated with Dudaev and that there be free elections in the republic (*Segodnya*, 17 June 1995).

[21] Vladimir Yachenkov, "Chechnya: smena figur", *Trud*, 8 July 1998.

In the interwar period Basaev's main goal was still the independence and unity of Chechnya and Dagestan. Indeed he hoped to become the Imam of Dagestan and Chechnya, as Imam Shamil once had been. Basaev's warnings in November 2002 to member states of OSCE, PACE, EU and NATO that they could become targets for future attacks were explicitly grounded in these states' pro-Russian stance in the conflict. Moreover, any future attacks on these other states would be directed against their embassies or other representation on Russian soil.[22] One of the tenets of Radical Islam is to attack "the distant enemy" (the USA, Israel, the West) – and this does not seem to figure on Basaev's agenda.

Thus, although Basaev has adopted the ideas of Radical Islam, they have primarily served his purpose of "liberating" the Caucasus. Importantly, his connection with Khattab brought an opening to big money, international contacts, training skills and recruits. Concerning the relation between Khattab and Basaev it is not obvious who co-opted whom: their causes seem to have melted into a symbiosis.

Even judging by the recent terrorist acts for which Basaev has taken responsibility, his focus is still the Chechen independence fight, and not "global terrorism". The two May 2003 suicide attacks in Chechnya were directed against the regional headquarters of the FSB and the head of the Moscow-appointed administration in Chechnya, Akhmed-hadji Kadyrov. In his statement on the website Kavkaz-Tsentr on May 19, Basaev said the targets were chosen because of their "special cruelty toward all who have fallen into their security sweeps *(zachistki)* … their refined tortures and insults and also their extra-judicial punishments". He defended the targeting of "Chechen traitors" by asserting the "right to take any means necessary in order to stop the genocide of the Chechen people and to liberate our nation from the foreign yoke."

3.2 Salman Raduev (1969–2002)

An economist by profession, Raduev was a Komsomol representative and served as the Administrative Chief of Gudermes until 1991. He married Dudaev's niece and was the warlord most devoted to Dudaev. In the interwar period he named his forces the "Army of General Dudaev", and even claimed several times that Dudaev was not dead, but would return. From interviews with Raduev, numerous accounts of his personality and judging from his deeds, it is also clear that he was a strange and cruel fanatic. Many questioned his sanity.[23] He never had any scruples about employing violent and terrorist methods when fighting the enemy, whether Russians or Chechen "traitors".[24] He openly stated that hundreds of explosions and terrorist acts would take place in Russia, and that he would make use of chemical weapons.[25] Raduev

[22] "Chechen Terrorist Organisations: Statement of the Case", posted at www.peaceinchechnya.org/, 28 February 2003.
[23] Both Aslan Maskhadov and Viktor Chernomyrdin seriously suggested that Raduev was mentally ill ("Novoe Poyavlenie Salmana Radueva", *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 29 April 1997).
[24] Salman Raduev was responsible for many hostage-taking acts, such as the January 1996 raid on Kizlyar, Dagestan, in which he and his forces captured the town hospital and took between 2000 and 3000 people hostage. He is also deemed to be responsible for several kidnapping incidents and killings in the period after the war, such as the killing of six Red Cross workers in December 1996.
[25] Dmitriy Belovetskiy, "Salman Raduev: S Pervomaiskim Privetom", *Ogonek*, 8 May 1997.

was the first field commander to be caught by Russian forces in 2000. He died in a Russian prison in 2002.

The urge to keep fighting, to stage cruel events and to put himself in the centre of things were probably the main motivating factors behind Raduev's actions. However, according to most accounts, he was also driven by an uncompromising belief in an *independent* Chechnya, and by his hate for the "empire" Russia. In an interview in 1997 Raduev boasted of all the wars of liberation he would fight, not only for Muslim populations such as the Balkars, but also for the Georgians, to deliver them from the Shevardnadze regime and for the Belorussians to deliver them from the Lukashenko regime.[26]

Raduev gradually adopted the rhetoric of Islamism. Just a few months after the arrival of the first Afghan Arabs in Chechnya, he was talking about "jihad as Allah's path" and the "duty of every Muslim to die while following that path".[27] Although radical Islamic ideology in many ways suited Raduev's notion of an uncompromising and violent fight for independence from the Russians, it seems reasonable to suggest that Raduev was less of a true believer than Basaev was, and that he adopted Radical Islam for more instrumental reasons.

His use of Islamist rhetoric gained strength in the interwar period, and was employed as leverage against the Chechen President Aslan Maskhadov.[28] Raduev made no secret of his ambitions of becoming Dudaev's successor, and the newly elected president obviously stood in his way. When describing the difference between himself and the Maskhadov regime he said, "my fight is for Islam, while they are just going for power"… "I am a man of deep religious conviction. I don't drink, I don't smoke."[29] However, Raduev did not only employ Islamist rhetoric to discredit Maskhadov. He also played on nationalist sentiment and Dudaev-nostalgia, often accusing Maskhadov of compromising the cause of Dudaev and calling Maskhadov's line "treacherous and pro-Russian", etc. Thus, it seems that Raduev employed Islamist rhetoric more as a weapon in his own fight for power and position.

Raduev's adoption of Islamist ideology also had a lot to do with the fact that adopting this kind of rhetoric would supply him with funding. According to his own account he received money from several different Arab countries, for example through the "Global Islamic Forum". He boasted that all money for Islamic affairs in the Caucasus from this organisation came to him. Another confirmation that Raduev did tap onto the stream of financial resources from the Arab world was that Maskhadov officially appealed to Muslim countries not to finance Raduev.[30] By pledging allegiance to Islam, Raduev also managed to strengthen his forces with foreign *jihadi* fighters. Although the number of such fighters in his troops is uncertain and probably

[26] Ibid.
[27] Aleksandr Kolpakov, "Polevye komandiry", *Moskovskiy Komsomolets*, 28 March 1995.
[28] Raduev also sought to distance himself from the other Islamist groups in Chechnya, fearing they would take his niche of radicalism (Ilya Maksakov, "Maskhadov pytaetsa spasti svoyu vlast", *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 17 July 1998).
[29] Dmitriy Belovetskiy, "Salman Raduev: S Pervomaiskim Privetom", *Ogonek*, 8 May 1997.
[30] Ibid.

not very large, there were some. Already in the raid on Kislyar in 1996 eight Arabs were observed among Raduev's fighters.[31]

3.3 Arbi Baraev (1973–2001)

Arbi Baraev grew up in a poor family and lost both his parents at an early age. He had no work after finishing school, and was finally helped to a post in the traffic police by his uncle, Vakha Arsanov. Arbi was recruited to Dudaev's national guard and served as bodyguard to Vakha Arsanov from 1991. Later he became the bodyguard of Vice-president Zelimkhan Yandarbiev.[32] In 1996, when Yandarbiev replaced Dudaev as president, Baraev formed and commanded the Special Purpose Islamic Regiment (SPIR), for which Yandarbiev reportedly paid him $200,000.[33] By the end of the first Chechen war, Baraev was a Brigadier General in the Chechen army and commanded approximately 1000 fighters based in Urus Martan. In the interwar period, Baraev's regiment was heavily engaged in hostage taking, smuggling and contract killings. During the second Chechen war Arbi had little to do with the fighting on the ground, but was deemed responsible for several sabotage acts by the Russian authorities. He was killed by Russian special troops in 2001.

Many Russian sources emphasise the influence of Yandarbiev on Arbi's conversion to "pure Islam".[34] However, it is doubtful whether Arbi ever really converted. He was probably more of an ally or a hireling of the Islamic extremists, than a devotee to their cause. Both an attempt to kill Maskhadov and the beheading of four British and New Zealand telecommunications workers in 1998, were executed by Arbi, but these actions were ordered and paid for by Islamic extremists.[35]

Maskhadov stripped Arbi Baraev of his rank and issued a warrant for his arrest in June 1998, after Arbi together with Wahhabis from Urus Martan led an attempt to take over the city of Gudermes. According to some accounts these events triggered a closer coalition with Islamist actors and attempts to enlist the support of various Islamic militants, notably Khattab.[36] The US State Department has referred to reports claiming that Baraev in 1999 received substantial amounts of money from Osama bin Laden and that he in 2001 sent his men to train in Taliban-controlled areas in Afghanistan.[37]

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[31] "Syuzhet Nedeli Marshrut Zalozhnika", *Kommersant*, 23 January 1996.
[32] Vladimir Barinov, "Klan Ubits", *Gazeta*, 30 October 2002 and Evgenya Krutikova, "Semeika Baraevikh", *Versiya*, 28 October 2002.
[33] Sanobar Shermatova, "Glavny rabototorgovets", *Moskovskie Novosty*, 29 October 2002.
[34] Vladimir Barinov, "Klan Ubits", *Gazeta*, 30 October 2002, and Evgenia Krutikova, "Semeika Baraevikh", *Versiya*, 28 October 2002.
[35] Mark Galeotti, "Chechen militants bring their war to Moscow", *Jane's Intelligence Review*, 1 December 2002. There has been speculation that the beheading of the four Western telecom workers was ordered by Osama bin Laden.
[36] Armond Calgar, "In the Spotlight: The special purpose Islamic Regiment". Arbi Baraev was not on good terms with Gelaev, however.
[37] "Chechen Terrorist Organisations: Statement of the Case", posted at www.peaceinchechnya.org, 28 February 2003.

This close alliance with radical Islamists can be seen as a departure in terms of ideology, as Baraev was never believed to be an Islamist and was considered more of a gangster. Moreover, he was even said to have despised all Arabs, including Khattab.[38] Thus, Arbi's alliance with Islamist actors was probably motivated by the prospect of foreign monetary support, and by the need for allies in a situation where he was threatened. The ideology would just have to be an accompanying factor.[39]

Other facts that testify to this highly "pragmatic relation" to Radical Islam is that Arbi indisputably had close links to the Russian Federal authorities. He was released by order of superiors in GRU (Russian Military Intelligence) after having been taken into custody in Grozny in November 2000. Villages where Arbi was present were spared of mop-up operations and he could travel freely through Russian checkpoints in Chechnya, showing documents of an officer of the Russian interior ministry.[40] The former FSB officer Aleksandr Litvinenko and the historian Yuriy Filshtinski have claimed that Arbi made money acting as a shield for FSB's shady businesses, such as the production of false dollars in Chechnya.[41] Arbi's story is therefore probably more one of how money buys ideas, than a story of conversion.

3.4 Movsar Baraev (1979–2002)

When Arbi Baraev was killed in June 2001, his nephew Movsar Baraev (formerly Suleimanov or Salamov) took over the leadership of the Special Purpose Islamic Regiment. Movsar grew up knowing only violence and war. He had no education whatsoever, except for the training programme in one of Khattab's Kavkaz camps and what he learnt in his uncle's regiment. After Arbi's death, Movsar was based in Argun and took the title "Amir of the Jama'at "("commander of the community of believers").

Movsar distinguished himself by his cruelty – just as his uncle – but he was not much of a commander. He only had a few fighters under his command, perhaps five to seven, and preferred committing sabotage acts in the cities rather than fighting guerrilla war. These acts often targeted Chechen "traitors" as well as Russians.[42] Because of this Movsar, just like his uncle Arbi, came into trouble with other Chechen commanders. He also refused to subordinate himself to Maskhadov. Movsar Baraev was one of the leading figures in the hostage act that took place in Dubrovka Theatre in Moscow in October 2002. He was killed when Russian Special Forces pumped fentanyl gas into the theatre and stormed it.

As in the case of Arbi, Movsar's adoption of radical Islam can probably to a large extent be ascribed to economic motives. It was crucial that Movsar and his fighters were steadily

[38] "Manery Aslana Maskhadova", *Russkiy Vestnik*, 23 July 2001.
[39] Calgar, "In the Spotlight: The special purpose Islamic Regiment".
[40] *Izvestiya*, 25 June 2001, *Moskovskiy Komsomolets*, 26 June 2001 and *Novaya Gazeta*, 26 June 2001. Also, Sanobar Shermatova, "Glavnyy Rabotorgovets", *Moskovskie Novosti*, 29 October 2002.
[41] Dmitriy Zhvanya, "Po sledam dyadi", *Smena*, 25 October 2002.
[42] Sanobar Shermatova, "Glavny Rabotorgovets", *Moskovskie Novosti*, 29 October 2002.

financed through Khattab and later Abu Walid, who were connected to sources from further afield. According to some sources, he received as much as $600,000 from Khattab in 2001, but failed to distribute this to the fighters.[43] Movsar was clearly a person who was fond of money. Apart from money, the wish to continue his uncle's mission must have been a motivation behind Movsar's actions and his adoption of Radical Islam: Movsar was simply following in his uncle's footsteps, taking over the "family business" in line with Chechen tradition.

Some have suggested, however, that Movsar was more of a true believer in the Wahhabi creed than his uncle was.[44] His comments during the hostage crisis in Moscow October 2002, where he expressed willingness to die a martyr for the sake of building an Islamic state in Chechnya, are taken as evidence of this. Such language does not necessarily testify to true belief, though, it can easily be adopted merely to satisfy a certain audience. In line with many other accounts, a former acquaintance of Arbi Baraev claimed that Arbi had in no way acted out of religious fervour in October 2002. Rather, Arbi had firmly believed he would survive and that the "brave act" would gain him approval. Someone else had masterminded the hostage drama; Arbi was just hired because of his name and his Russian connections.[45]

In the final event it is impossible to draw any firm conclusions about how much of "true believers" the two Baraevs were, and why they adopted the rhetoric of Radical Islam. In both cases, the lure of money and a life surrounded by violence and war seem to be important explanatory factors.

3.5 Ruslan Gelaev (b. 1965)

Gelaev is the warlord most difficult to find information about and place a label on. He has no formal education; as a young man he reportedly earned his living by seasonal work in Kazakhstan and Volgograd, and later at the oil base in Grozny. Like Basaev, Gelaev went to fight in the Abkhas war in 1992. He also fought in the war over Nagorno-Karabakh. During the first Chechen war he became the commander of the Southwestern Front and was second in the hierarchy of commanders after Basaev. Gelaev is thought to be a very tough warrior. He demonstrated this clearly at the beginning of the first war when he first threatened to kill three Russian prisoners of war if Russia did not stop the bombing of Chechnya, and then filmed their execution when his demands were not met.[46]

Although he kept a lower profile during the interwar period, Gelaev retained influence because of the troops under his command. He was named first deputy premier with responsibility for law enforcement in July 1997. In July 1999 he was appointed head of the *Shari'ah* Guard and he also headed the Ministry of Religious Affairs. During this second war he again commands

[43] Vladimir Barinov, "Klan Ubits", *Gazeta*, 30 October 2002.
[44] Calgar, "In the Spotlight: The special purpose Islamic Regiment"; and Andrey Babitskiy, "Who is Movsar Baraev", *Johnson's Russia List*, 25 October 2002.
[45] Interview with Buvadiy Dakhiev, *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, 3 February 2002.
[46] "Protivostoyanie", *MP-Ponedel'nik*, 29 November 1999.

the Southwestern Front. In-between the fighting in Chechnya, he is said to frequent the Pankisi Gorge in Georgia, which has been seen as a free haven for international terrorist organisations such as al-Qaeda.

Gelaev several times underlined that he was a field-commander and not a politician. His worldview during the first war was reportedly that of a nationalist, always fighting for the "freedom of his nation".[47] His statement after Dudaev's death in 1996 that "with Dudaev or without him, we will fight for his ideas of freedom and independence" also indicated that Gelaev was more a nationalist than an Islamist.[48]

Many Russian sources today portray Gelaev as a radical Islamist along with other warlords. Some facts support this conclusion. He did visit Afghanistan and Pakistan in July 1999, according to his own account to "study Islam".[49] Yandarbiev has claimed in an interview that Gelaev belongs to a specific Islamic movement in Pakistan.
According to Russian intelligence, Gelaev has been responsible for the transport of fighters from Arab countries to Chechnya. These sources also claim that fighters from Afghanistan and Pakistan have been placed under his command in Chechnya.[50]

However, many sources – probably the most reliable ones – contend that although Gelaev never opposed the radical actors, but rather ignored them, he never adopted Radical Islam.[51] Moreover, Gelaev, together with Maskhadov, signed a letter which was posted at Maskhadov's website in 2001 and which condemned the Wahhabis in Chechnya.[52] Gelaev has been deemed the warlord that Maskhadov should bet on to strengthen his moderate line, and well-informed analysts place him in the group of "Westerners" along with Maskhadov.[53] Moreover, Gelaev has continued communicating with Sufi leaders from both Chechnya and Dagestan. His troops are reportedly made up of young men who do not identify with the Wahhabis and foreign holy warriors in Chechnya. Rather, they are local men who belong to the traditional Sufi movement.[54]

Thus, it seems questionable to label Gelaev a Radical Islamist. This does not mean, however, that he has not taken advantage of the supply of resources that radical foreign actors can offer. There have been reports that Gelaev has mislead "Saudi Sheiks", merely to tap onto the resources they offer.[55]

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[47] Aleksandr Kolpakov, "Polevye komandiry", *Moskovskiy Komsomolets*, 28 March 1995.
[48] Gall & de Waal (1997:324), *Chechnya, A Small Victorious War*.
[49] "Protivostoyanie", *MP-Ponedel'nik*, 29 November 1999. Several other sources refer to such visits, some claiming that he held meetings with the Taliban leadership and the Pakistani secret services, e.g. "Taleban im tovarish", *Vek*, 26 May 2000.
[50] "Arabshim naemnikam nashli Chechenskogo komandira", *Vremya MN*, 13 October 1999.
[51] Andrey Mashukov, "Kto ubral Khattaba?", *Stringer*, 19 February 2003.
[52] "Manery Aslana Maskhadova", *Russkiy Vestnik*, 23 July 2001. His disapproval of the "aggressive type of Wahhabism practiced in Afghanistan" was also evident from references to Alla Dudaeva's conversations with Gelaev (Galina Akkerman, "Alla Dudaeva", *Novaya Gazeta*, 31 July 2000).
[53] Anna Politkovskaya, "Afghanistan and Chechnya: Hunting for Wolves or Dancing with the Wolves?", *Johnson's Russia List*, 3 October 2001.
[54] Denga Khalidov, "Drama Kadyrova", *Rossiya*, 11 January 2001.
[55] Andrey Kuzminov, "Pravilo Levoy Ruki", *Versiya*, 18 November 2002.

3.6 Movladi Udugov (b. 1962)

Although not a warlord like Raduev or Basaev, Udugov played a key role in the separatist movement. Udugov is an economist by profession and worked as editor of the newspaper *Orientir* until 1991. He took part in the organisation of the first Chechen Congress in 1990 and served as Chechnya's Minister of Information from 1991 to 1996. He was *the* chief propagandist and spin-doctor of the separatist movement in the first Chechen war. He campaigned for the presidency, and lost, after the war in 1997. Although he was appointed Deputy Prime Minister for a period in 1997, he became one of Maskhadov's opponents in the interwar period, using both Islamist rhetoric and accessible resources in the Arab world in his fight against the president. Udugov left Chechnya in 1999. Today Udugov runs the influential Kavkaz Centr News Agency (established in July 1999) from Qatar. Kavkaz Centr is the mouthpiece of the radicals in the Chechen separatist movement.

Sebastian Smith described Udugov as "a true believer in Chechen independence" during the first war.[56] Indeed, as the skilful propagandist he is, he probably appeared to be a true believer. However, the characterisation of Udugov as a person "who is capable of making anyone believe in whatever he chooses to make them believe"[57] seems to capture much of his personality and also his rationale behind adopting varying ideologies. His instrumental use of ideology was evident already before the first war. On the one hand, Udugov played on Islam in his efforts to mobilise the nation.[58] On the other hand, he used the fear of fundamentalist Islam to try to gain Western support, describing the creation of a democratic constitutional government as the aim of the Dudaev regime.[59]

During the first Chechen war, Udugov increasingly adopted Islamist arguments in his critique of Moscow and as justification for the separatists' actions. His transformation as a consequence of the war was visible in his change of drinking habits. Starting out as a heavy consumer, he became an advocate of strict abstinence.[60] During the electoral campaign in Chechnya after the first war in 1996, he established the union "Islamic Order" and in summer 1997 the movement "Islamic Nation". The vision he presented was that Islam would make up the new "cement" of society, not only in Chechnya, but also in Dagestan.[61]

Some have argued that a driving force behind adopting Political Islam was that this ideology could serve the ambitious political goal of uniting Chechnya and Dagestan into one state. Emphasising the Muslim identity would make the people of this region brothers in faith, rendering ethnic dividing lines less relevant.[62] The creation of an Islamic state in the Caucasus

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[56] Sebastian Smith (1998), *Allah's Mountains. Politics and Warfare in the Caucasus.* London: I.B Tauris.
[57] Inessa Slavotinskaya, "Kazhdyy Chechenets-President", *Profil*, 8 January 1997.
[58] "Situatsiya v Chechne", *Kommersant-Daily*, 27 August 1994.
[59] Interview with Udugov quoted in Lieven (1998:364) *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power*.
[60] Yoav Karny (2000:255) *Highlanders, A Journey to the Caucasus.* New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux.
[61] On the basis of "Islamic Order" the "Islamic Nation" movement was established in June 1997. The movement included organisations from both Dagestan and Chechnya; the aim was "uniting the Muslims of Dagestan and Chechnya in the Caucasus against the expansion of anti-Islamic forces."
[62] "Islamizatsiya po-Chechenski", *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 20 November 1997.

was also deemed the only way to defend the Chechens against the Russian threat. The argument that since "communism collapsed, orthodoxy in the present situation is doomed to fail and democracy obviously doesn't work in Russia…we have to fill the vacuum with Islam," attests to Udugov's instrumental motivation for adopting Islam.[63]

The adoption of Islam also brought very useful gains in terms of financial and human resources. Udugov openly stated that the Chechens could use the Afghan and Central Asian *Mujahideens* in their fight against Moscow. Some have argued that certain Wahhabi circles in Saudi Arabia chose Udugov, together with Islam Khalimov, as potential advocates of their ideology in Chechnya during the first war, and that money from Saudi funds was channelled to Udugov.[64] There was well-founded speculation that his campaign money in the first presidential elections in 1997 came from Saudi sources.[65] After fleeing Chechnya in 1999, Udugov has travelled extensively to Saudi Arabia and Egypt and is said to have received large amounts of money from the Arab world.[66]

Udugov has kept changing the content of his ideology. The articles posted on his website "Kavkaz-Centr" have focused not only on Islam and the Koran (often in Arabic), they have also propagated anti-Westernism. Udugov now portrays Russia as the enemy of Chechnya, but also the whole of Western civilisation as a threat to the Islamic world.[67] Thus, it seems that Udugov's ideas have been developing closer to the tenets of Global *Jihad*.

3.7 Zelimkhan Yandarbiev (1953-2004)

Yandarbiev was originally a teacher and nationalist poet. He established the Vainakh Democratic Party as early as in 1990 and was the chief ideologist of the first Chechen Congress.[68] He served as Dudaev's vice-president from 1993 to 1996, and then as president after Dudaev's death and until the presidential elections in 1997. Yandarbiev was part of the radical opposition that mobilised against Maskhadov in the interwar period. He left Chechnya after the invasion of Dagestan in 1999, but has continued to influence the situation in Chechnya by supporting radicals such as Basaev. Yandarbiev also served as the Personal Envoy of the President of the CRI and Plenipotentiary of CRI in Muslim Countries until November 2002.

Starting out as a radical Chechen nationalist, Yandarbiev developed an entire ideology around how to build the Chechen nation. His rhetoric circled around the resistance against Russian imperialism and he propagated the unity of the peoples of Caucasus in the fight against Russian colonisation.[69] Judging from his book published in 1996, "*Chechnya – the fight for freedom*," which contains little of the Radical Islamic rhetoric, but many references to the

[63] Interview with Udugov, "My Bzorem Rossiyu Iznutri", *Sobesednik*, p. 9, 23 November 2000.
[64] Aleksandr Zhilin, "Chechenskaya Filosofiya po-Kremlevski", *Nevskoe Vremya*, 17 September 1996.
[65] Gall and de Waal, (1997:366) *Chechnya, A Small Victorious War*.
[66] "Boevichki", *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, 14 March 2003.
[67] *Vestnik*, 31 August 1999.
[68] The Vainakh Democratic Party was Chechnya's first political party.
[69] "Situatsiya v Chechne", *Kommersant-Daily*, 27 August 1994.

"nation", Yandarbiev was initially no Islamist. However, he is said to have been the one who introduced Dudaev to the potential of Islamic politics.[70]

As acting president after the first war, Yandarbiev increasingly adopted Islamist policies.[71] In August 1996 he took decisive steps to establish an Islamic state in Chechnya by decreeing decreed the establishment of *Shari'ah* courts in which foreign Arab missionaries were invited to work. He introduced a new criminal law code copied from Sudan, opened an Islamic Youth Centre in Grozny where young people were taught the Wahhabi creed, and established a 200-strong Islamic Guard and Islamic security regiments.[72]

It is impossible to draw any firm conclusions as to why Yandarbiev chose to bet on Political Islam. However, as with the other leaders, it is clear that the war itself radicalised Yandarbiev and made him more prone to fundamentalist views. Moreover, as head of state, he probably deemed Political Islam a convenient tool to consolidate the war-torn and divided Chechen society. In the extremely chaotic and lawless situation after the war it must have been tempting to create order by importing a rigid and harsh ideology and political system. Emphasising Chechnya's Islamic identity also meant strengthening the divide between Orthodox Russia and Chechnya – and a strong divide here would bolster the cause of Chechen independence.

The attempt to create an Islamic state can also be interpreted against the background of Yandarbiev's weak position as president, and his need for additional of support and legitimacy in the run-up to elections where he would face the moderate and popular Maskhadov. Yandarbiev is said to have been very ambitious and eager to keep his post as president. He several times proposed delaying elections, well aware that he was not the people's choice.[73]

There were also clear resource incentives for betting on Political and later Radical Islam. The creation of an Islamic state in Chechnya would attach Chechnya to the Islamic world, thereby triggering Islamic solidarity from Islamic states and/or Islamic international organisations and movements. This assertion is substantiated by the secret meeting held 3 September 1996 between Yandarbiev's representative, Satuev, and the Saudi representative to Russia Ali Dzhafar. At this meeting Satuev confirmed that the separatists were committed to establishing an Islamic state. Pointing out that that they needed the help of Saudi Arabia, he requested assistance to establish Islamic educational structures and the possibility of sending sick Chechen children to Islamic hospitals. However, this approach was rejected by the Saudi government, which opposed both Chechnya's independence from Russia and the establishment of an Islamic state in Chechnya.[74]

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[70] Lieven (1998:59) *Chechnya - Tombstone of Russian Power*.
[71] Said Hasan Abumuslimov, Yandarbiev's vice-president, probably influenced Yandarbiev strongly. He is deemed to have been a staunch defender of fundamentalist Islamic ideas who received funding from Jordan ("Chechenskaya Filosofia po-Kremlevski", *Nevskoe Vremya*, 17 September 1996).
[72] N.V. Volodina "Islam: Problemy Ideologii, Prava i Politiki", *Sotsial'no-gumanitarnye znaniya*, 31 December 2002.
[73] Inessa Slavutinskaya, "Kazhdyy Chechenets-President", *Profil*, 8 January 1997.
[74] Aleksandr Zhilin, "Chechenskaya Filosofiya po-Kremlevski", *Nevskoe Vremya*, 17 September 1996.

After being rejected at the state level, Yandarbiev turned to more radical Islamic organisations. In 2000 he toured Pakistan's radical Jamaat-i-Islamiya mosques to gather funds for the Chechen militants, also establishing links with many radical Pakistani militant factions and organisations. He is said to have collected a fair amount of money from groups such as Jamaat-i-Islami, Al Badr and Sipah-e-Sahaba. It was also reported that a group of holy warriors from the Harkat–i– Jihadi Islam militants were dispatched to Chechnya after Yandarbiev's visit.[75] Also in 2000, Yandarbiev paid an unofficial visit to Afghanistan, where he met with Taliban leader Mullah Omar.[76] Although Maskhadov denounced the visit, the result was that Afghanistan and Chechnya officially recognised each other.

An interview Yandarbiev gave to a Russian journalist in 2001 shows the kind of motivation that lay behind his overtures to Political and Radical Islam. In the interview he stated: "Islamic fundamentalism is not dangerous. It's a partnership, international relations. You don't consider it a problem that Western investors tour Russia, do you? One cannot divide help into help from Wahhabis and help from others […]"[77]

Whatever the true reasons for Yandarbiev's conversion, his worldview eventually included not only Political Islam – i.e. the belief in establishing an Islamic state – but also Radical Islam – the belief in violent holy war as a Muslim duty, with deep contempt for the West.[78] Yandarbiev felt strongly enough to resign from the post of Personal Envoy for the President of CRI because Maskhadov had criticised the hostage act in Moscow in October 2002. In Yandarbiev's eyes Baraev and his men were "a heroic group, who gave their lives on the righteous way of Allah".[79]

3.8 Why did they become Islamists?

One conclusion that can be drawn from the warlord stories is that their adoption of Political and/or Radical Islam was largely a result of the first war. On a general level, the strengthening of religious faith during a war is effected by a well-known mechanism: when in trouble, people turn to God. In the Chechen case, however, Islam was not only a source of comfort on the personal level, it also became politicised and served as a means of interpreting and organising an extreme situation. This is the same function that Islam had served in the 19th century Caucasian wars. Self-sacrifice in war was always inseparable from religious fervour in Chechnya.[80]

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[75] Vinod Anand "Export of Holy Terror to Chechnya from Pakistan and Afghanistan", posted at www.idsa-india.org/an-jun-700.html

[76] "Taliban Regime Recognizes Chechen Independence", as carried on *FRE/RL Newsline*, 17 January 2000.

[77] "Zelimkhan Yandarbiev:Islamskiy fundamentalism bezopasen", *Vremya Novostey*, 17 December 2001.

[78] During his visit to Pakistan, Yandarbiev proposed the formation of an international army of Islamic states to prepare themselves against Russian aggression and the challenge by others to the entire Islamic Ummah. *News (Pakistan)* 11 February 2000 in Anand ibid.

[79] "Yandarbiev explained the reason for his resignation", posted at http://kavkazcenter.com, 19 November 2002.

[80] Georgiy Derlugian (1999), "Chechenskaya revolyutsiya i Chechenskaya istoriya" in Furman, *Chechny i Rossiya: Obshchestva I Gosudarstva.*

The moral code of a stricter Islam was particularly suitable in a war situation, where discipline and order were vital. Hence, Lieven claims, the establishment of *Shari'ah* courts in the conservative south during the first war partly reflected a greater conservatism, but was also motivated by the need to discipline the soldiers.[81] Similarly, Yandarbiev's attempt to turn Chechnya into an Islamic state after the war should be understood against the background of the chaos and total devastation that reigned in Chechnya at the time. The total collapse of functioning state structures in Chechnya allowed for the introduction of Islamic policies, and Yandarbiev used Islam as a tool to try to revive the state.[82]

Islam was an expedient tool not only on the structural level, but also on the personal level. Politically oriented actors such as Udugov, Yandarbiev, Basaev and Raduev put Political and Radical Islam to use in their own fight for power in Chechnya, seeing ideologies as effective weapons to boost their own position and discredit their rivals. Stricter Islamic rule was presented as the salvation of the devastated republic. Throughout the interwar period Maskhadov was constantly criticised by the radical opposition for not being "Islamic enough", and this is still the case today.

A key motivation behind adopting Political Islam and Radical Islam was clearly also that willingness to commit to these ideologies paid off in financial and human resources. This motivation emerges in all the various warlord stories and is, in my view, an explanatory factor of major importance. Money can buy ideas. Finding themselves in a very isolated position, these Chechen warlords and leaders chose to tap onto the resources offered by Islamic actors and organisations in the Middle East and Asia. This also explains the adoption of Wahhabism – a strand of Islam foreign to Chechen tradition; it is not the natural development of Sufism.

Thus, there clearly was logic of expediency behind the adoption of Radical and Political Islam by Chechen warlords. Also the specific war situation and the individuals who became warlords explain why these radical ideologies took root. In the Chechen case, the radical and uncompromising Islamic worldview must be understood against the background of the particularly brutal character of Russia's warfare.

The atrocities committed during the military campaign are well documented. The bombing of Grozny in winter 1994/1995 has been labelled "terror bombing". It killed tens of thousands of civilians and devastated the city.[83] Warfare against the Chechen villages was no less brutal. In April 1995, for example, the village of Samashki was attacked by Russian Ministry of Interior troops. Although there were no fighters left in the village and the elders tried to negotiate, the "Russian troops stormed through the village, torching houses and cellars with grenades and flame-throwing rockets, burning residents alive or shooting them at point-blank range in the

[81] Lieven (1998:365), *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power*.
[82] He failed, however. Chechnya never became an Islamic state.
[83] *The NewYork Review*, 6 April 1995 reported that while the highest level of firing recorded in Sarajevo was 3,500 heavy detonations per day, a journalist counted 4.000 such detonations per hour in Grozny in February 1995.

streets and courtyards. Over 100 people were killed, all but four of them civilians."[84] Other well-documented atrocities during the first war were systematic use of torture in so-called filtration camps, rape and extra-judicial killings.

Although also the Chechen fighters were responsible for some atrocities, the experience of the Russian warfare cannot be have influenced the separatists' worldview. All fighters and warlords were witnesses to this Russian warfare, and most were directly affected.[85] As already mentioned, Basaev lost his wife and six children in a Russian attack on their village. The Chechens were shocked by what they deemed barbaric conduct that contradicted established Chechen traditions. For the Chechens, who always find and bury their dead according to custom no matter what the circumstances, it was horrifying that Russian troops would leave their dead soldiers to rot. Similarly, the widespread use of alcohol in the Russian army caused moral offence amongst the Chechens.

Against the background of all this, a radical interpretation of Islam with an emphasis on the *uncompromising* fight against the *infidels* emerged as highly relevant. The ideas of Radical Islam also fitted with the traditional Chechen notion of *ghazawat* (Jihad) as the only way to survive Russian suppression. According to Brian Glyn Williams, the ideas of the foreign Islamic *jihadis,* who joined the separatists in the first war, gained a hearing among many Chechen fighters. The Chechen fighters who came under influence of Khattab's fighting units started to grow Wahhabi-style beards and practise fundamentalist-style Islam. They renounced alcohol and set up *Shari'ah* courts in the mountains.[86]

On the more person-oriented level, we must take into consideration what kind of people these warlords were, in order to understand why they were susceptible to radical worldviews. For many of them, fighting had become their way of life even before the Chechen war. Basaev had founded and commanded a Special Forces Company already in 1991, and had fought in the Abkhas war in 1992. So had Ruslan Gelaev. Arbi Baraev had started his career as a bodyguard in 1991. Most of these men were nobodies in peacetime: it was fighting war that made their careers. In the case of Movsar Baraev, war and violence totally dominated his experience of adult life.

The description given by Rustam Khaliev, advisor to the Kremlin's representative on human rights in Chechnya, is biased but nevertheless has a grain of truth: "The warlords rose to power during the first war, and later turned to robbery, kidnapping and extortion. They are groups of crazy gunmen…and they are in favour of the war to go on and on. Because it's only the war that keeps them famous and preserves their authority in the country."[87] The point here is that

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[84] Gall & De Wall (1997:242), *Chechnya, A Small Victorious War*.

[85] One illustration of how cruelty engenders birth to radical worldviews and methods was the Ukrainian woman among the hostagetakers in Budennovsk: she had lost three children during the bombing of Grozny (*Moskovskaya Pravda*, 27 June 1995.)

[86] Brian Glyn Williams (2003:21), "Freedom fighters or ethno-Terrorists? Critically assessing the Pre-September 11th links between the Chechen Resistance and Al-Qaeda". Paper presented at ASN World Convention in New York 2003.

[87] Interviewed in "Islamic groups aiding rebels in Chechnya", *Baltimore Sun,* 30 October 2003.

the Radical Islamic concept of violent *jihad* as a holy duty was highly amenable to some of these warlords, for whom fighting had already become a way of life.

The analysis has shown that central warlords and politicians adopted Radical Islam both because Radical Islam was appropriate in the specific Chechen situation and because they saw Radical Islam an expedient tool for furthering their own interests. However, this analysis has also indicated the importance of looking at the wider context – the attempts by international Islamic organisations and actors at co-opting the Chechen conflict. This is the subject of the next chapter.

4 INTERNATIONAL ISLAMISTS CO-OPT CHECHNYA

The attack by Russians forces on Chechnya in 1994 made the Chechen conflict an attractive cause for international Islamist and terrorist organisations, as it pitted Muslims against non-Muslims. Various means were employed by these organisations in their attempts to co-opt the Chechen struggle. Below I will sketch out how these foreign actors gradually became involved in the Chechen conflict, and how the Chechen conflict was co-opted. Although these means, such as warriors, preachers and funding, are presented as distinct from each other, in reality they have overlapped. Moreover, it is necessary to underline that very many different actors and groups have sought to co-opt the Chechen conflict. We are not talking about one monolithic Islamist movement, though this often is the impression gathered from reading the news.

In general, Muslim governments have almost entirely stood aside in the Chechen conflict, preferring to pursue their longstanding political and trade relations with Moscow instead.[88] It is non-governmental organisations and networks that have attempted to co-opt the Chechen conflict, and these are the focus of the following presentation. Apart from tracing *how* foreign Islamist actors have gained a foothold in Chechnya, I will examine to what extent their efforts have been successful. I begin with a few words about Global Jihad, as it was this trend within Islam that produced the interest in conflicts such as the Chechen one. Then I will move on to discuss the influx and influence of foreign *jihadi* fighters and missionaries. Lastly, I will trace the flow of foreign funding, asking what kind of influence this money has bought.

4.1 The Global Jihad movement

According to the Israeli scholar Reuven Paz, Global Jihad implies the globalisation of the Islamist struggle – aimed against what is perceived as the global conspiracy against Islam, both as religion and as culture. Previously, emphasis was usually put on revolutions within specific Muslim countries seeking to overthrow their societies and regimes. In the 1980s the focus changed: priority was now to be put on a direct struggle against the United States, Israel, and, at times, European states. In the global struggle, violent concepts such as *jihad* are perceived a religious duty. Omar Abu Omar, a Palestinian based in London, was one of the founding

[88] All Arab Muslim countries refused to allow official Chechen representation on their territory.

fathers of this *jihadist* movement, which defined the movement as one of "Salafi worldview", totally cleansed from any remains of erroneous Sufi doctrine. To achieve this goal he proposed opening new arenas for the *jihad* outside Muslim countries.[89]

The Palestinian-born scholar from Jordan, Abduallah Yusuf Azzam, was also instrumental in reviving the *jihad* concept in the mid-1980s. Following the 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, many had rallied to defend their fellow Muslims, inspired by Azzam's ideas. After the withdrawal of Soviet troops in 1989 Azzam called for the creation of trans-national brigades to defend frontline Muslim communities around the world. The result was the establishment of the Ansar brigades or Azzam brigades, made up of holy warriors of the Afghan conflict. These brigades went to fight in several parts of the world, including Algeria and Bosnia.

4.2 The first war as trigger

On the verge of war, in December 1994, Dudaev said, "volunteers from countries in the Arab world are increasingly asking permission to come into Chechnya to fight the aggression. They are today already in the neighbouring countries, living in camps and await only permission from me."[90] Although this was said mainly to frighten the Russian authorities, it may indicate something about the eagerness of Islamist actors to make the Chechen conflict theirs. The Russian bombing of Grozny appealed to the international holy warriors. Not only was a small Muslim nation under attack: the aggressor was the same one that many of them had been fighting in Afghanistan.

The first Afghan Arabs to arrive in Chechnya were probably the group that came with Ibn al-Khattab[91] in 1995.[92] Saudi-born Khattab (1965) reportedly adhered to the extreme interpretation of Islamic Jihad developed by Azzam.[93] He had fought in Afghanistan from 1988 to 1993 and also took part in the war in Tajikistan.[94] According to some accounts, as many as

[89] Reuven Paz (2002), "Middle East Islamism in the European Arena", *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, Vol.6, No.3, September 2002.
[90] "O situatsii v Chechne", *Rossiyskie Vesti*, 2 December 1994.
[91] Other names used are Habib Abd al-Rahman, or Samer ben Saleh ben Abdallah al-Sweleim.
[92] Some accounts seek to link Chechens to the *jihadist* movement before the 1990, but there had been no Chechens in Azzam's Peshawer-based international mujahedeen network in the 1980s.
[93] Although Khattab met Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan in the 1980s, Khattab, as a follower of Azzam, is considered to have distanced himself from Osama bin Laden ideologically. Azzam emphasised the importance of being Holy Warriors and did not want to engage in terrorism, which he viewed as a "cowardly" tactic. Another indication that Khattab's fighters did not merge under the al-Qaeda umbrella was that Khattab's Islamic battalion was not a signatory when the World Islamic Front was formed in 1998. (Brain Glyn Williams (2003:31), "Freedom Fighters or Ethno- Terrorists? Critically Assessing the Pre-Sept. 11th Links Between the Chechen Resistance and Al-Qaeda". Paper presented at the ASN World Convention in New York 2003.) There is disagreement concerning Khattab's link to Osama bin Laden, however. Sanobar Shermatova (1999:410) for example claims that a Jordanian of Chechen decent named Fatkhi arrived with Khattab in 1995. This man is said to have been an emissary of bin Laden (*Chechnya I Rossiya: Obshchestva I Gosudarstva*. Moscow: 'The Andrey Sakharov Fund.) Russian authorities frequently claim that Khattab was closely linked to Osama bin Laden.
[94] Reuven Paz, "Al-Khattab. From Afghanistan to Dagestan", posted at www.ict.org.il, 20 September 1999.

300 Afghan-Arabs fought in Khattab's International Islamic Brigade (IIB) during the first Chechen war.[95] This figure, however, is difficult to ascertain and is probably overstated.

A crucial event during this time was that Khattab found a "native partner" in the prominent Chechen warlord Basaev. Subsequently Chechens began entering the IIB, and many of them adopted the radical Islamic worldview. A certain Sheikh Abu Umar from Saudi Arabia, who joined the ranks of Khattab in 1995, is said to have "set about teaching Islam with the correct Aqeedah to the Chechen Mujahideen, many of whom held incorrect and distorted beliefs about Islam."[96] Basaev for his part obtained an opening to big money, warriors and international contacts. This is how the merger between the idea of Chechen independence and Radical Islam started. As argued above, even today Basaev's ideology remains a mix of North Caucasian nationalism and militant Islam.

Also other Chechen warlords had a few foreign *jihadi* fighters in their troops during the first war. Both in Salman Raduev and Arbi Baraev's troops foreign *jihadi* fighters were observed, and, according to one source, there were also detachments of mixed veteran Pakistani agents and Chechens who had undergone sabotage and guerrilla warfare training provided by the Inter Service Intelligence in Pakistan. Other *jihadi* fighters reportedly arrived from countries such as Iran and Sudan, dispatched by the Armed Islamic Movement.[97] During the hostage drama in Budennovsk in 1995 there were at least ten Arabs amongst the hostage takers, as well as Slavs and others of clearly European origin.[98]

The foreigners were welcomed as fighters in the first Chechen war, but they never *controlled* the separatist movement. Their numbers remained limited and their influence is considered to have been minimal.[99] Still, the help that the foreign *jihadi* fighters supplied during the war obliged the Chechens to give them entry and recognition. In Maskhadov's words: "Defending our freedom, many of them have become Shahids [martyrs]. The Chechens will always remember them."[100] Thus, after the recapture of Grozny in summer 1996, Khattab was decorated as Brigadier General of the CRI.[101] Rather than expelling the foreign *jihadi* fighters, as was done did in Bosnia after the Dayton Accords, they were free to stay in Chechnya.

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[95] Smith (1998:152–53), *Allah's Mountains. Politics and Warfare in the Caucasus.*
[96] http://www.islam.org.au/
[97] Yussef Bodansky (1998), "Chechnya: The Mujahedin Factor", posted at www.americanfriends.org. I have not found any other source confirming this information. Moreover, Bryan Glyn Williams, who has investigated this question in depth, has cast doubts on the correctness of the claims made by Bodansky (see "Shattering the al Qaeda-Chechen myth", *Chechnya Weekly*, 6 November 2003)
[98] Indeed the scant attention paid to these foreign Islamic fighters in the literature on the first war indicates that they were seen as merely a subordinate part of the resistance. See for example Lieven (1998), *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power;* Gall & de Waal (1997) *Chechnya. A Small Victorious War;* John B.Dunlop (1998), *Russian Confronts Chechnya.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; and Venora Bennett (1998), *Crying Wolf: The Return of War to Chechnya*, London: Picador, and *Segodnya*, 17 June 1995.
[99] According to Shamil Beno, Chechnya's Foreign Minister in 1992 (LaFraniere, "How Jihad made its way to Chechnya"). Maskhadov reckoned that approximately 80 Arabs were fighting on the Chechen side during the first war (Maskhadov in an interview with RFE/RL's Russian Service, *RFE/RL Newsline* 7 February 2000).
[100] Interview with Maskhadov posted on a pro-Chechen website 23 October 2002.
[101] *Trud*, 15 September 1999.

4.3 The interwar period: failure or success of foreign Islamists?

In 1995 several Islamist charities established offices in Chechnya.[102] However, the main influx of foreign Islamist charities and missionaries came after the war. There are several reports of Wahhabi missionaries from countries like Saudi Arabia and Jordan arriving in Chechnya in this period. In general, it is difficult to distinguish between preachers and warriors because the same person frequently occupied both roles. Charities often mixed their charitable work with the pursuit of militant *jihad.*

In the interwar period, the Urus Martan region developed into a stronghold of Wahhabism in Chechnya. Both Afghan Arabs who stayed on after the war and Islamist missionaries contributed to this development. For example, a Jordanian of Chechen decent by the name of Sheikh Muhammad Fatih built fundamentalist mosques in Urus Martan and established boarding schools for Chechen orphans, where they were taught Arabic and strict Islamic codes of conduct. According to Shervanik Yasuev, the pro-Russian Chechen administrator of Urus Martan, Arab strangers from all over the Middle East began arriving one by one in 1997, until they numbered 500 or more.[103] Many of the Wahhabis who set up in Urus Martan allegedly got their training under Khattab.[104]

Although Urus Martan became a stronghold, Wahhabis such as the aforementioned Sheik Abu Umar set about building a structure for implementing Islamic law throughout Chechnya. Approximately 30 *Shari'ah* courts were established in the interwar period, with foreign Wahhabis often given the positions of judges.[105] As acting president until February 1997, Yandarbiev aided this development. So did the warlords Basaev, Raduev and Baraev. As I will argue later, the alliance with certain actors in the native Chechen elite was a crucial condition for the work of the foreign Islamists.

In general, however, the Wahhabis influence on Chechen society was limited. Attempts at introducing strict Islamic customs in the interwar period failed. Two factors seemed to work against the influence of radical Islamic preachers and militants. Firstly, most Chechens disliked the Wahhabis.[106] In some countries Wahhabi missionaries have become popular because they provide valuable social services that the weak state fails to provide. In the Chechen case, however, the Wahhabis showed a limited ability to perform social services. In

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[102] Before this time, there were various groups in Chechnya that called themselves *Salafites* and worked to spread "pure Islam". This movement, however, was much stronger in neighbouring Dagestan than in Chechnya (Igor Malashenko (2001: 298) "The glitter and poverty of Chechen Islam" in Gennady Chufrin ed., *The Security of the Caspian Sea Region*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.) Some sources say the first Wahhabi, a certain Adam Deniev, appeared in Chechnya already in 1990 (Gurya Murklinskaya, "Islam I Politika v Sovremennoy Chechne", 13 August 1999, posted at www.avar.narod.ru).

[103] Sharon LaFraniere, *Washington Post Foreign Service*, 26 September 2001.

[104] According to Shermatova, most of these men were young Dagestanis (Sanobar Shermatova (1999), "Tak nazyvaemye vakhabity", in Furman, *Chechnya i Rossiya: Obschestva i Gosudarstva*.

[105] In 1997 Itar Tass reported that at least 20 *Shari'ah* courts were operating in Chechnya (*Itar Tass*, 24 April 1997.) By 1998 30 *Shari'ah* courts had been established in Chechnya, according to Islamist Internet sites (http://www.as-sahwah.com/)

[106] "Regional early warning report on North Caucasus", November 1998, posted at http://www.fewer.org/. This is also my impression from interviews with numerous Chechen asylum-seekers in Norway.

the view of most Chechens, the Wahhabis were associated not with good deeds, but with crime – for example, controlling the drug traffic into Chechnya.[107] Besides, warlords like Basaev and Khattab and their troops were often associated with robbing civilians and raiding the territory adjacent to Chechnya

Secondly, although there was a revival of Islam in Chechnya during the war, the majority of Chechens are Sufis belonging to either the Naqshbandiya or Qadiriya tariqat, and have little in common with the type of fundamentalist Islam preached by the Wahhabis. Many of the customs that the Wahhabis wanted to introduce – such as a ban on music, on traditional feasts and weddings, special ways of dressing for men and women – directly contradicted the strong traditions that regulate Chechen society. The introduction of extreme corporal punishment, such as cutting off fingers for drinking alcohol, was quickly abandoned and substituted by fines.[108] And despite the introduction of *Shari'ah* courts, secular courts continued to operate.

An FSB official stationed in Chechnya described how the foreign *jihadi* fighters were looked upon and treated by the Chechen population: "Chechen villagers refuse to bury the foreigners in their cemetery. The Chechens as a nation don't like foreigners. So it's difficult for foreign contract killers. They can't come into a village. People will recognize they are not local."[109]

It is impossible to give any firm answer as to how many Chechens support Wahhabism. No good statistics exist. However, it is clearly erroneous to assume that all Chechens have gradually turned into Islamic fundamentalists. Even today human rights workers in the area estimate that only 10% of the population are sympathetic to the Wahhabis.[110] The attempt at co-opting the Chechen conflict was not much of a success on the general popular level. It was more successful among a specific group: young men, whether unemployed or former warriors.[111]

The explanation may lie in the social conditions this group was living in. After the war there was hardly any other way of making money in Chechnya except selling or resorting to crime. Few farms were operating, and scarcely any industry. The war had destroyed up to 80% of the economic infrastructure, and there was hardly any rebuilding of the devastated republic.[112] Chechnya became a lawless zone. For example, more than 1,700 people were abducted between 1995 and 2000.[113] In such a situation, radical Islam will usually have an appeal: and indeed, the Islamists found natural recruits among the young fighters who had just come

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[107] Ilya Maksakov, "Tikhii Gosudarstvennyy Perevorot v Chechne?", *Nezavisimya Gazeta*, 15 July 1999.
[108] "Nesmotrya na Mir, v Groznom po Nocham Strelisyut", *Nevskoe Vremya*, 16 November 1996.
[109] Colonel Ilya Shabalkin, FSB official stationed in Chechnya, quoted in "Islamic groups aiding rebels in Chechnya", *Baltimore Sun*, 30 October 2003.
[110] Thomas de Waal, "The Chechen Conflict and the Outside World" 18 April 2003, posted at www.crimesofwar.org.
[111] "Regional early warning report on North Caucasus", November 1998, posted at http://www.fewer.org/.
[112] Only in 1998 were a few service industries revived. In summer 1998 sugar, cement and flour-milling plants resumed production three oil refineries became operational ("Regional early warning report on North Caucasus", November 1998, posted at http://www.fewer.org/).
[113] *Argumenty i Fakty* p.14, 5 March 2003.

through the war and among young, jobless people. Additionally, this was a group where the traditional Chechen customs and beliefs were not so deeply rooted.

Apart from the fact that radical ideology often has an appeal to people hardened by war or without any prospects for the future, a major attraction was money. There are numerous accounts of how the Wahhabis in the interwar period drove around in shining new Jeeps and paid with dollars in the market. In interviews with young people in Gudermes 1999, a correspondent was told that young people were following the Wahhabi principles because they were paid $100 a month.[114] Many of the Chechen soldiers who fought with the volunteer fighters of Wahhabi conviction from Arab countries later joined these forces because they were well armed, and later gradually they adopted the Wahhabi worldview.[115] Khattab was reported to have paid his fighters very well in comparison with other warlords. Raduev also recruited young people into his troops because he could pay them. In an interview with a Russian reporter he stated: "You have many such people, mostly Russians. You have many poor, drug-addicts and alcoholics […] *jihad* allows us to use such people. I give them the chance to get into working."[116]

Thus, there were recruits among the young Chechens, although it is difficult to assess the size of this group or their level of commitment to Wahhabism in the interwar period. However, it is important to note that we are not speaking of a general fundamentalist revival amongst this group. Rather, their conversion seems to have been closely linked to membership in an armed group. The authors of a recent book on Chechnya observe: "One does not join an Islamic battalion because one is an Islamist, but rather one becomes an Islamist in order to be integrated into the battalion in which one already wants to fight for other reasons."[117] As the Wahhabis' influence on Chechen society was limited, the mainstay of Islamism in Chechnya is probably to be found on the elite level, in the alliance between Chechen warlords and foreign Islamist actors.

4.3.1 The Khattab–Basaev alliance

In the chaotic situation that reigned after the first war, the warlords who had benefited from the alliance with foreign *jihadi* fighters were free to pursue their agendas. As mentioned, part of Basaev's agenda was to create a North Caucasian state that would include both Chechnya and Dagestan. Yandarbiev and Udugov also carried this dream. This was an ambitious plan, and the Chechen radicals accepted the help offered from Khattab and his international network.

Some sources say that as many as 2000 Chechen fighters were sent to Taliban camps in Pakistan in August 1996 for three months' training, which also included instructions in the basics of Islam and the *Shari'ah*.[118] At this time, training camps were also established in

[114] Fracesca Mereu, "Islam plays a fundamental role in North Caucasus life", posted at Johnson's Russia List, 5 January 2002.
[115] Akhmed-hadji Kadyrov, quoted in *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 26 December 1996.
[116] Dmitriy Belovetskiy, "Salman Raduev: S Pervomaiskim Privetom", *Ogonek*, 8 May 1997.
[117] "Book review: Ten keys for understanding Chechnya", *Chechnya Weekly*, 3 July 2003.
[118] *Kommersant-Daily*, 17 October 1996.

Chechnya under the leadership of Khattab in cooperation with Basaev. It is difficult to determine the extent of these camps, since many Russian sources seem to exaggerate their size and numbers. According to the Russian Secret Services, more than ten training camps existed in the interwar period, the main base being the "Kavkaz" camp in Serzhen-Yurt. The well-informed journalist Igor Rotar has claimed that at least four camps were operational.[119] Whatever the true figures, Khattab himself confirmed the existence of training camps for fighters.[120]

Approximately 1,600–2,500 persons – Chechens, but also Dagestanis, Arabs and Muslims from Central Asia and other parts of Northern Caucasus – are to have passed through these training camps from 1996 to 1999, according to Russian sources.[121] Again, other accounts give much lower figures and it is difficult to draw any firm conclusion. At any rate, the men who came to these camps received both religious training and combat training. The aim propagated was the establishment of a North Caucasian Islamic state: this aim suited the foreign *jihadi* fighters, but also served the ambition of Basaev and Yandarbiev. It is reasonable to suggest that the foreigners involved in this activity over a long period were probably as much co-opted for the cause of ambitious Chechen warlords, as the warlords were co-opted for the Global Jihad. Khattab was a clear example of this. He became a driving force in the effort to realise the Chechen radical oppositions' dream of uniting the Caucasus.

4.3.2 The Dagestan connection

In neighbouring Dagestan, the growth in Wahhabism was much stronger than in Chechnya, due to the efforts of several actors.[122] Dagestan's own Bagautdin Magomedov, a specialist in the Arabic language, started to propagate Islamic values and "pure Islam" in the early 1990s. Well-funded Wahhabi missionaries from Muslim countries also arrived in Dagestan at this time.[123] Moreover, radical Islamists from Dagestan fought in the Chechen war and later trained in Khattab's camps in Chechnya.[124]

Having acquired quite a few followers in Dagestan, Khattab also married a Dagestani woman, solidifying his ties with the republic. A certain network of Islamic radicals developed across the border. These people were mutually useful for each other, even if their ideological core and agenda often diverged. Thus, Khattab and Islamic radicals from the villages of Kara-Makhi and Chaban-Makhi, the stronghold of Wahhabism in Dagestan, carried out the December 1997

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[119] "Chast' Muselmanam Gotova k Gazavatu", *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 27 December 1998.
[120] *Trud*, 7 May 1998.
[121] Viktor Paukov & Eduard Lefko, "Voiny Allakha vybirayut Kavkaz", *Vremya MN*, 30 August 1999. This figuree is also mentioned in *Versty*, 6 May 1999.
[122] Although Wahhabism has had a stronger following in Dagestan than in Chechnya, the large majority of Dagestanis are neither Wahhabis nor sympathetic to them. See Robert Bruce Ware, Enver Kisriev, Werner J.Patzelt & Ute Roericht, "Political Islam in Dagestan", pp. 287–302 in *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol.55, No. 2, March 2003.
[123] Khabib Abdurrakhman was a Jordanian cleric who arrived in Dagestan in the early 1990s to preach *jihad*. He was a key person behind the attempt to establish *Shari'ah*-rule in the village of Kara-Makhi (Lafraniere, "How Jihad made its way to Chechnya").
[124] *Pravda*, 10 July 1998.

attack on Russian military troops in Buinaksk, Dagestan. This was perceived by Khattab as a first step towards the creations of an Islamic state in Chechnya and Dagestan.[125]

The "Congress of Chechen and Dagestani People" was convened in April 1998, by the efforts of Basaev, Khattab, and Udugov. The main aim of the Congress was to bolster efforts to unite Chechnya and Dagestan under the banner of Islam. Basaev was elected chairman, and was hoping to become the Imam of Dagestan and Chechnya. These were goals not easily achieved – especially when Maskhadov, who had gained a majority of the vote in the presidential election in 1997, strongly opposed such visions, placing his bets for Chechnya's future on improving relations with Moscow. Moreover, the Chechen population clearly did not support the radical opposition's agenda.

In this situation, crucial factors were the Chechen radicals' alliance with Khattab and the resources he commanded. Not only were his troops, trained in Serzhen-Yurt, a vital part of the plan for taking power in Dagestan, he could also supply money from the Middle East. Thus, in 1998, Khattab established the "Peacekeeping brigade of the Congress of Chechnya and Dagestan", or simply "Islamic Peacekeeping Brigade". In the ranks of this brigade were people of Middle Eastern and North African decent.[126] The increasing influence of the international Islamic milieu was visible in the build-up to the attack on Dagestan in 1999. According to the Russian media, Khattab in November 1998 took in 200 foreign *jihadi* fighters as part of the plan to attack Dagestan.[127] Although this figure seems inflated, it is probable that foreign *jihadi* fighters were indeed called to help execute the attack.

The August 1999 incursion into the Tsumandin and Botlikh districts in Dagestan by forces under the command of Basaev and Khattab was one of the events that triggered the second war in Chechnya. Initially there were 500 armed men in the group, amongst them a contingent of Chechen militants, Arabs, Central Asians and many Dagestanis of Wahhabi conviction. Apparently many Wahhabis from the Tsumandin and Botlikh districts joined their ranks, and eventually the group numbered 1,500.[128]

To what extent was this event initiated by Chechen actors and to what extent was it driven by forces further afield? According to Taifur Eldakhanov, a leading ideologue of the Dagestani Wahhabis, Basaev and Khattab had requested him and other Wahhabi leaders of Dagestan to issue a *fatwa* (an opinion on a point of law) that would "legalise" the *jihad* into Dagestan. When they refused, Basaev and Khattab got this *fatwa* issued from a Sheikh Abdullah in Pakistan and a Saudi named Abdul Omar. Apart from the "authorisation" from outside, they are also said to have received $25 million from abroad to finance the incursion.[129]

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[125] Sanobar Shermatova (1999), "Tak Nazyvaemie Vakhabity", *Chechnya i Rossiya: Obschestva i Gosudarstva*. Moscow: The Andrey Sakharov Fund.
[126] Ilya Maksakov & Igor Rotar, "Basaev podal v Otstavku", *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 7 July 1998.
[127] *Parlamentskaya Gazeta*, 25 December 1989.
[128] *Vremya* MN, 9 August 1999.
[129] Viktor Khlystun, "Koran ili dollary", *Trud*, 28 August 1999.

Although there clearly was foreign financial assistance for this action, the figure of $25 million is probably inflated. Moreover, French intelligence sources have claimed that Basaev was lured into invading Dagestan by the Russian authorities. They claimed that Basaev had received $10 million from Aleksandr Voloshin, chief of staff for President Yeltsin, in order to fund the invasion of Dagestan.[130] Thus, it is not easy to estimate the impact of foreign Islamist actors on this event, and we should be cautious about interpreting the incursion as proof that the Chechen rebel action was being run by foreign Islamic radicals.[131]

On the whole, however, this event illustrates much of the logic by which the foreign Islamists gained entry into the Chechen conflict. Ambitious Chechen warlords pursuing their own agendas in opposition to the elected Chechen president Aslan Maskhadov sought support wherever they could get it – and, increasingly, such support was to be found in the Islamic world. This aid, both moral and financial, was made conditional on adherence to Political Islam and the Wahhabi interpretation of Islam.

4.3.3 What about Osama bin Laden?

The year 1999 is reportedly the year in which Basaev and Khattab became aligned with Osama bin Laden.[132] According to Russian Secret Services and now also according to US accounts as well, representatives of Basaev and Khattab travelled to Kandahar province in October 1999 to meet with bin Laden, seeking military assistance, additional financial aid and fighters.[133] However, it is also from this time on that it becomes especially difficult to find reliable accounts and information, not least because the Russian authorities have had a great interest in defining the war in Chechnya as a war against international terrorism and not a separatist conflict.

Thus, we should not take at face value the various claims about the hand of Osama bin Laden in the Chechen conflict and the enormous sums that have been sent. It is, in fact, extremely difficult to find hard evidence of this connection. In those cases where there is hard evidence, it has often turned out that the sums received from abroad were much smaller than assumed, and that they did not stem from Osama bin Laden at all.[134] Several prominent analysts, both Russian and Western, have seriously questioned the existence of a close connection linking Basaev and Khattab with Osama bin Laden.[135] Although both Khattab and Basaev have spoken

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[130] Matthew Evangelista (2002:79), *The Chechen Wars. Will Russia go the way of the Soviet Union?* Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution.

[131] Support for the Wahhabis, Basaev and Khattab in Dagestan proved very limited. In fact, the Dagestanis called on Moscow for help and resisted the invasion (Evgeniy Mikhailov, "Basaev promakhnulsya", *Versti*, 26 August 1999).

[132] Some sources even claim that Khattab started to work together with bin Laden as early as 1997 (Viktor Paukov & Eduard Lefko, "Voiny Allakha vybirayut Kavkaz", *Vremya MN*, 30 August 1999).

[133] "Chechen Terrorist Organisations: Statement of the Case", posted at http://peaceinchechnya.org/, 28 February 2003, and Armond Caglar, "In The Spotlight: The Special Purpose Islamic Regiment", posted at http://www.cdi.org/.

[134] Sharon Lafraniere, "Moscow Eager to Tie Rebels in Chechnya to bin Laden", *Washington Post Foreign Service*, 26 September 2001.

[135] Among these are Thomas de Waal, who works with the British Institute for War and Peace Reporting and is author of several books on the North Caucasus and Chechnya; Paul Wilkinson, analyst with the British-based

favourably about Osama bin Laden, they have denied receiving any financial assistance or having any contact with him.

4.3.4 Other alliances?

Although Basaev and Khattab were the most visible examples of Chechen warlords' marriage with foreign Islamic radicals, other Chechen actors became entangled with foreign Islamists by a similar logic in the interwar period. Arbi Baraev's Special Purpose Islamic Regiment was initially a criminal organisation for kidnapping and smuggling. As described above (Baraev story), the close alliance with foreign Islamist actors came about because of funding and the need for allies in the fight against Maskhadov in the interwar period.

By 1998 Baraev was not only a hireling for foreign Islamists: he also headed *Shari'ah* courts in which foreigners were working. When, in July 1998, a group of foreign and Chechen Wahhabis tried to take over the city of Gudermes, Baraev supported the Wahhabis in their effort. After the fight, in which the Wahhabis sustained considerable losses, when Maskhadov tried to expel the foreigners, Baraev stepped in, and most of them were not sent out after all.[136]

In general we may conclude that it was crucial for developments in Chechnya in the interwar period that the foreign *jihadi* fighters had become closely tied to certain central warlords, most importantly Basaev, and to politicians such as Udugov and Yandarbiev. This radical Chechen opposition used the ideological and material resources the foreign *jihadi* fighters offered in their fight with the moderate Chechen president. Accordingly the radical opposition protected the foreign *jihadi* fighters from the attempts by Maskhadov to throw them out.

4.4 New war, new foreign *jihadi* fighters

With the outbreak of the new war in 1999, fresh recruits from abroad arrived to fight the Russians. Interrogations of Global Jihad fighters captured in various anti-terror operations show that these fighters often came individually or in small groups, not necessarily sent by an organisation. They also came from a range of countries. For example, Algerian militants arrested in France have confessed to have fought and trained in Afghanistan and Chechnya;[137] and Palestinian refugees from Lebanon have confirmed they left for Chechnya during the second war.[138] Several Kuwaiti al-Qaeda suspects went to Chechnya in 1999.[139] Some of the prisoners held at Guantanamo Bay from Kuwait, Sudan and Australia have confirmed that they had been trained to go to fight in Chechnya.[140] Extremist Imams in Europe have also directed "devout Muslims from their mosques to defend the Chechen realm from the Russian

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Centre for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence; and Alexei Malashenko, an expert on Chechnya at the Carnegie Endowment's Moscow Centre.

[136] Vice-president Vakha Arsanov was also instrumental in preventing the expulsion of the foreign Wahhabis (Vakhit Akaev, "Religious-political conflict in the Chechen republic of Ichkeria" *Central Asia and The Caucasus*, posted at http://www.ca-c.org/journal).

[137] "France Uncovers al-Qaeda bombers", *Insight on the News*, 15 April 2003.

[138] "Libanese Army Ousts Islamic Militants" *ICT News up date*, 5 January 2000.

[139] *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat* in Arabic p.7, 12 December 2002, via FBIS.

[140] *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, 19 February 2003.

Infidels".[141] Recently, Duma Defence Committee Chairman Andrey Nikolaev stated there was reliable information that *jihadi* fighters from Bosnia were fighting against Federal Forces in Chechnya.[142]

The Pankisi Gorge in Georgia, some 40 miles south of Chechnya, is considered to have become a meeting point for both foreign *jihadi* fighters and Chechen fighters. The Georgian security services have confirmed that the area was out of their control from 1999 until 2002, and that several hundred Chechen and 80–100 foreign jihadi fighters have been training there. The *jihadis* started to arrive in late 1999, reportedly using the Internet to recruit volunteers for Chechnya. After training, the volunteers were dispatched to fight in Chechnya under Khattab. Some sources have even warned that the Pankisi Gorge is becoming the new Afghanistan, and that al-Qaeda has chosen the Caucasus as the new battleground.[143] In fact, after the mop-up operation by Georgian security forces in Pankisi in May 2002, two mid-level al-Qaeda leaders were arrested.[144]

Thus, there clearly was an influx of *jihadi* fighters from 1999 onward. To some extent radical Chechen actors invited this influx. Former Chechen President Yandarbiev, who left Chechnya in 1999, continued to support the radical opposition in Chechnya from abroad and actively sought help from the international Islamic community. In 2000 Yandarbiev toured Pakistan's radical mosques to gather funds for the Chechen militants, apparently establishing links with many radical Pakistani militant factions and organisations. He is said to have collected a fair amount of money from groups such as Al Badr, Sipah-e-Sahaba and Jamaat-i-Islamiya, Pakistan's largest religious party. It has also been reported that a group of holy warriors from the Harkat-i-Jihadi Islam were dispatched to Chechnya after Yandarbiev's visit.[145]

However, the influx of foreign *jihadis* probably got its primary impulse from foreign actors with a global *jihad* agenda, be they al-Qaeda or others. Ever since the mid-1990s, Radical Islamic media outlets in many Arab, North African and European countries have commented on the Chechen conflict and portrayed it as "theirs", encouraging Muslims to defend their brethren in Chechnya.

These attempts have become even stronger with the second war. For example, the radical newspaper *Al-Hayat,* published in London, announced Basaev and Khattab's incursion into Dagestan as a "holy war". The paper also "endorsed" the 1999 bomb blast in Moscow and Buinaksk, although no one took responsibility for these terror acts and it still is unclear who

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[141] Interview with Abu Hamza al-Mizri, Imam of the Finsbury Park Mosque in London (Brian Williams "Unraveling the links between the Middle East and Islamic militants in Chechnya", *Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst,* 12 February 2003).
[142] *Interfax,* 1 April 2003.
[143] France's top investigative judge on terrorism cases, Jean-Louis Bruguiere, has made such claims several times (see "Anger on Iraq seen as new Qaeda Recruiting Tool", *New York Times,* 16 March 2003).
[144] "Al- Qaeda flourishes in far off spots", *Time,* 20 October 2002.
[145] Vinond Anand, "Export of Holy Terror to Chechnya form Pakistan and Afghanistan", posted at www.idsa-india.org/an-jun-700.html.

actually committed them.[146] Osama bin Laden employed video footage from Chechnya to recruit people for al-Qaeda and has made frequent references to the Chechen struggle as part of his broader struggle.[147] Chechnya is also constantly invoked by fundamentalist leaders in Pakistan. These various propaganda efforts have undoubtedly inspired many of the foreign *jihadi* fighters to set off to Chechnya.

It would be a mistake, however, to equate moral support and propaganda with real support and influence. Approval and praise for different acts committed by Chechen warriors are often interpreted as prove of a "link" between foreign actors and the Chechens, but this is erroneous. Although Osama bin Laden might try to give the impression that the international terrorist network is controlling the Chechen resistance, that is not necessarily the case. We must therefore also exercise caution in connection with figures on foreign *jihadi* fighters. As far as I can judge, the number of foreign *jihadi* fighters in Chechnya is actually not very big.

Many accounts have confirmed that the conditions for foreign *jihadi* fighters in Chechnya have been so difficult that they were forced to leave, quoting reasons such as "standing out, language problems" and even "winter weather".[148] Many Saudi-sponsored Arabs have reportedly relocated to the Middle East due to the failure of the Wahhabis to gain popular support in the Caucasus.[149] The US campaign in Afghanistan in 2001 contributed to cut off support for the Chechen separatists. The foreign *jihadis* in the Pankisi were scattered after the 2002 Georgian clean-up, although some probably remain.[150] Further, in the wake of the US-led war on Iraq have come reports that foreign *jihadis* have relocated to Iraq.

Although some accounts give the number of foreign *jihadis* as being in the hundreds, this is clearly not the case. In 2001 Major-General Alexander Zdanovich, who heads the department for interaction with the FSB, said that there were up to 100 foreign *jihadi* fighters on the territory of Chechnya.[151] Some two years later Colonel Ilya Shabalkin, an FSB official stationed in Chechnya, said at any given time there have been in Chechnya approximately 200 foreign *jihadi* fighters, mostly Arabs from the Gulf and Turks.[152] Aslan Maskhadov has

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[146] Konstantin Ivanovich Poyakov (2001), "Arabskiy Mir I Sobitiya na Severnom Kavkaze", *Arabskiy Vostok I Rossiys: Problema Islamskovo Fyndamentalisma.* Moscow: Editorial URSS.
[147] For example Osama bin Laden acknowledged the Moscow hostage takers in a November 2002 audiotape massage, saying to the Russians, "If you were distressed by the killing of your nationals in Moscow, remember ours in Chechnya." (Text of Osama bin Laden's audio statement broadcast by Al-Jazeera television, posted at http://www.robert-fisk.com/, 12 November 2002).
[148] See for example *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat* in Arabic p.7, 12 December 2002 via FBIS or Andrew Jack, "Links between Chechen rebels and al-Qaeda questioned", *Financial Times*, 21 February 2002.
[149] "Chechnya: Amir Abu al-Walid and the Islamic component of the Chechen war", *Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst*, 26 February 2003.
[150] LaFraniere, "How Jihad Made Its Way to Chechnya".
[151] *Itar Tas*, 18 April 2001.
[152] Colonel Ilya Shabalkin, quoted in "Islamic groups aiding rebels in Chechnya", *Baltimore Sun*, 30 October 2003.

confirmed this latter figure.[153] Also the independent journalist Anna Politkovskaya, who has travelled extensively in Chechnya, has claimed that the number in fact is very low.[154]

Although it is impossibly to draw any firm conclusions about the number of fighters on the Chechen separatist side, they today probably amount to between 1,500 and 3,000. Thus, the number of foreign *jihadi* fighters is too small to have any major impact on the fighting. What seems to be important in the second war, however, is the continuation of the alliance between Chechen warlords and foreign *jihadi* fighters in command roles, and also the fact that these foreigners have acquired positions in the top stratum of the Chechen resistance.

4.4.1 Foreign jihadi fighters in top positions

Khattab was of course a key player at the top level. As far as I can judge from the sources available, most of the foreign *jihadi* fighters joined the ranks of Khattab when they arrived in Chechnya.[155] With his death in spring 2002, there were many speculations as to whether the influx of money and fighters would halt. This did not materialise, however, as Khattab's deputy and fellow countryman, Abu al-Walid (b. 1967), took over his position.[156]

Like Khattab, Abu al-Walid is considered by Russian sources to be the envoy of the Muslim Brotherhood and the connecting link between activists belonging to this association in the Pankisi Gorge, Azerbaijan and Turkey and the centres in the Middle East.[157] At other times, however, he is said to be the envoy of Osama bin Laden or an agent of Saudi Intelligence. Whatever the truth, Abu al-Walid had controlled part of the foreign *jihadi* fighters and financial resources even before the death of Khattab, and has since then been seen as the primary junction in this flow.

Importantly, Abu al-Walid initially "inherited" Khattab's close relation to Basaev and also proved a valuable partner in the fight against the Russian forces.[158] Although Maskhadov has rejected both the ideology that Walid stands for and the terrorist methods at times employed by Walid and Basaev, he chose to align with these actors in the fight against the Russian forces. As we shall see in the next chapter, this choice was largely a consequence of the marginalisation of Maskhadov, who found himself with nowhere else to turn.

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[153] Aslan Maskhadov, in interview posted at http://www.chechen.org, 23 October 2002.
[154] In a conversation with her in Oslo, September 2002, she actually claimed that she never met any Arab fighters in Chechnya, she had just seen the graves of two.
[155] For example five young men from Kuwait arrived in September 1999 to fight under Abu Walid and Khattab *(Al-Sharq Al-Awsat* in Arabic p. 7, 12 December 2002 via FBIS).
[156] Abu al-Walid's real name is Abd al-Aziz al-Ghamidi. Abu Walid fought in Afghanistan together with Khattab and in Bosnia until he was expelled in 1995. He appeared in Chechnya shortly after Khattab in 1995 and led a group of fighters under Khattab in 1995/1996. His group took part in the storming of Grozny in summer 1996. He also helped build up the "Kavkaz Institute" and training camps after the first Chechen war, and was Khattab's *naib* (deputy) until his death.
[157] Andrey Mashukov, "Kto Ubral Khattaba?", *Stringer,* 19 February 2003. For a comment on the Muslim Brotherhood, see page 33.
[158] Amongst the "deeds" attributed to Walid are the April 2000 successful attack on the Russian 51st Paratroop Regiment, and the downing of a Russian MI-26 helicopter carrying 132 passengers in August 2002 (*Pravda*, 20 August 2000)

Thus, in a summer 2002 War Council, Maskhadov named Walid commander of the eastern front. The individual units of the Islamic International Brigade consequently joined the eastern front of the regular troops of the armed forces of Chechen Republic of Ichkeria. Walid, his troops and their sponsors further afield can thus plead that they represent the Chechen separatists, although their agenda clearly differs from that of many in the separatist leadership and troops. This version also suits the Russian leadership, who are keen to portray the Chechen separatists as international Islamic terrorists.

Indeed, Russian authorities sometimes seek to portray Chechen warlords as merely an extension of international Islamist organisations, and claim that their actions are controlled from abroad. Some Western accounts today are very similar to the Russian ones, and refer to groups such as the Special Purpose Islamic Regiment as hard-core Sunni Islamic radicals.[159] The US State Department has claimed that Baraev sent a group of fighters to train in Afghanistan in the spring of 2001.[160] Since February 2003 the Special Purpose Islamic Regiment has been on the US list of terrorist organisations.

It is probably incorrect, though, to portray Arbi Baraev's Special Purpose Islamic Regiment as an extension of international Islamist organisations. Arbi Baraev definitely had his own agenda. Moreover, as already mentioned, he was closely connected to the Russian Secret Service until he was killed in 2001. This is also believed to be the case with his nephew, Movsar, who led the group of hostage takers in the Dubrovka Theatre in October 2002. It is difficult to find reliable and concrete facts that confirm a tight link to international Islamic organisations. There have been claims that the hostage drama at Dubrovka Theatre was ordered from abroad,[161] but no proof of this has been presented. The Moscow hostage act looks more like a Chechen undertaking in line with the Budennovsk hostage act of 1995.

To sum up, there have been increasing efforts on the part of foreign radical Islamic actors and organisations to make Chechnya part of the Global Islamic Jihad. An important element of these efforts has been the dispatch of *jihadi* fighters. The immediate reason for this interest and urge to help "fellow believers" can be found in the Russian attacks on Chechnya in 1994 and 1999. The foreign *jihadi* fighters have gained access because they were needed as combatants in the war. However, their numbers have been and still are quite limited, nor have they gained any broad support in the Chechen population, as demonstrated in the interwar period. Their influence has been limited to the young Chechen fighters and hinges on a few central figures that have aligned themselves with Chechen warlords. This alliance has come about not least because Chechen warlords in the interwar period, seeking to pursue their own agendas, needed the ideological and military resources supplied by the foreign *jihadi* fighters. Moreover, their

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[159] See for example "Chechen Terrorist Organisations: Statement of the Case", posted at http://peaceinchechnya.org/, 28 February 2003, or Armond Caglar, "In The Spotlight: The Special Purpose Islamic Regiment", posted at http://www.cdi.org/terrorism, 2 May 2002.
[160] "Chechen Terrorist Organisations: Statement of the Case" *U.S. Department of State, 28* February 2003.
[161] For example FSB Director Nikolay Patrushev said at an international conference in Moscow on 23 April 2003 that the theatre hostage takers were linked to "well-coordinated international terrorist networks."

influence on the separatist movement is clearly connected to the much-needed funds that these fighters have brought to Chechnya. This aspect is the theme of the next chapter.

4.5 Co-opting by money

Also in terms of funding, the first war was nearly "purely Chechen", with the resistance movement financed primarily by the Chechen population inside Russia. In addition the Chechen diasporas in Jordan, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates were a key source of money and provided help for wounded fighters. Weapons were bought from the Russian troops or taken from former bases left over from Soviet times in countries such as Azerbaijan and Georgia.

According to Charles Blandy, a key factor restraining the influence of foreign Islamist actors and the increasingly radical warlords during the first war was Dudaev's control over nearly all sources of funding.[162] This control forced the warlords to keep in line with Dudaev's nationalist agenda. After Dudaev's death, many warlords acquired "independent" sources of income, such as organised crime, cattle rustling, and hostage taking. There also emerged the possibility of funding from foreign Islamic sources, and acting President Yandarbiev probably presented no obstacle to taking advantage of this.

Below I shall try to assemble some facts about this flow of funding from abroad, although firm conclusions are extremely hard to draw on this question. The main point is to show how the possibility of funding from abroad provided an incentive to adopt the radical agenda, and may well have tilted the internal balance of resources in favour of the radicals and not the moderates.

4.5.1 Charities funding fighters

A few Islamic charities were established in the North Caucasus already in the early 1990s. Now, with the benefit of hindsight, many claim that these charities were actually pursuing a violent agenda from the very beginning. Take, for example, the Saudi-based Islamic Relief Organisation set up in the region during the first war. This is a semi-official organisation that channels aid to fellow Muslims in war-torn countries. It is said to be funded largely by mosques and rich individuals for whom supporting the *jihad* is a religious duty. This organisation reportedly funded some Chechen fighters early in the first war.[163] However, judging from the sources available, it seems reasonable to claim that the trickle of *jihad* funding from NGOs and charities in the Gulf States did not start in earnest until the arrival of Khattab in 1995.

Khattab probably drew on various sources, but the Muslim Brotherhood is considered to have been a primary one. Of the many organisations that join under the umbrella of the Muslim

[162] Charles Blandy (1998), "Chechnya: A Beleaguered President", posted at the web site of the *Conflict Studies Research Centre*, http://www.csrc.ac.uk/
[163] Gall & de Waal (1997:307), *Chechnya. A Small Victorious War.*

Brotherhood, Al Haramain is deemed to have played a special role in Chechnya. The foundation, which has its headquarters in Riyadh, was originally established to support the *jihad* movement in Afghanistan and to spread Wahhabism. It is said to have supported fighters in Chechnya through Khattab in the first war, and to have helped finance the establishment of *Shari'ah* courts and religious education in the interwar period.[164]

Al Haramain was also a primary source of funding for Khattab's training camps in the interwar period.[165] So was probably the charity "Zam-Zam", likewise under the Muslim Brotherhood umbrella. Zam-Zam was run by the Egyptian El-Labban Saad El Din Saad Takha, who first came to Russia in 1993. Initially the charity financed Wahhabi literature and courses in Islam.[166] Money for the camps is also believed to have come from other charitable funds in Arab countries, as well as from charities in countries such as Australia and Great Britain.[167] Although sources closer to home, such as Wahhabis in Dagestan, Ingushetia and Kabardino-Balkaria, are also thought to have contributed substantially, there is no doubt that the flow of funds from further afield rendered possible the recruitment of fighters and the build-up of Khattab's professional camps.[168] As noted above, the relative wealth that the radical warlords could offer young recruits was a major reason for joining their ranks.

Chechen radicals' alliance with Khattab directed the flow of foreign money into their "projects" in the interwar period. Thus, the "Congress of Chechen and Dagestani Peoples" in 1998 was partly financed through foreign money. For example, El-Labban Saad El Din Saad Takha of Zam-Zam was present at the congress and contributed financially.[169] Further, the 1999 attack on Dagestan by Khattab and Basaev's forces was clearly made possible by funding from abroad.

Although money was channelled primarily to Khattab and Basaev, other warlords also tapped onto this flow in the interwar period, in some cases through Khattab. The surplus money that Khattab could provide was probably one of the reasons why Arbi Baraev cooperated with Khattab, despite their ideological differences. Khattab is believed to have supplied Arbi Baraev with sizeable sums of money.[170] After Arbi's death, Movsar Baraev continued to receive this money.[171]

However, Arbi Baraev is also said to have received money directly from foreign sources to commit various terrorist acts, such as the beheading of British and New Zealander telecom workers in 1998. Some say this was ordered by al-Qaeda.[172]

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[164] "Vtorzhenie v Rossiyu", *Voennyy Vestnik Yuga Rossii*, 10 September 2002.
[165] "Nashelsya Sponsor Chechenskikh Boevikov", *Kommersant*, 20 May 2000.
[166] Chechenskaya Piramida", *Gudok*, 13 November 1999.
[167] Viktor Paukov & Eduard Lefko, "Voiny Allakha vybiraiyut Kavkaz", *Vremya MN*, 30 August 1999.
[168] Interview with Dagestani vice-premier Ramazan Abdulatipov, *Ogonek*, 23 February 1998.
[169] "Chechenskaya Piramida", *Gudok*, 13 November 1999.
[170] Timofey Borisov, "Khattaba Predali", *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, 30 April 2002.
[171] Vladimis Barinov, "Klan Ubiyts", *Gazeta*, 30 October 2002.
[172] Calgar, "In the Spotlight: The special purpose Islamic Regiment".

As mentioned in the portrait of Raduev, he obviously understood that adopting Islamist rhetoric would gain him financial support from abroad. Raduev received substantial funds from the Middle East, although he clearly also had other sources of income. Consequently, the military structure that he built up in the interwar period was strong enough to pose a challenge to the Maskhadov regime. In his Kadi-Yurt camp Raduev boasted of having a body of armed support numbering between 1,000 and 3,000 men in the interwar period. He had his own intelligence and security service, educational structures and even his own laboratories.[173]

It is impossible to establish just how much foreign money was supplied to support the Islamist agenda in Chechnya in the interwar period. According to a senior State Department official in Washington DC, radical Muslims have funnelled close to $100 million to Chechnya since 1997.[174] Russian Security Service officials have set the sum much higher.[175] Whatever the true figure, it is quite clear that this money did not go to Maskhadov, nor did it help to build up a state structure in Chechnya. Although some money did go into building mosques and *Shari'ah* courts, the lion's share went to radical warlords and politicians, facilitating the build-up of their organisations and military structures.[176] Thus, the success of Radical Islam amongst the Chechen warlords in the interwar period owed a great deal to financial support from abroad. This financial support both bought an increase in Islamist rhetoric among the Chechen warlords and served to strengthen these actors as compared to the moderate Chechen president.

4.6 New war, new money

With the outbreak of the second war in Chechnya, funding from abroad seems to have increased. Al Haramain opened an office in Azerbaijan in 1999, and created the fund "Foundation for Chechnya" to support Chechen guerrillas. Fighters in Chechnya reportedly received $1 million from this fund in 1999. [177] According to the Russian Security Services, this money was channelled through Arab "emissaries" who established themselves in the rows of the different Chechen warlords, primarily in Basaev's and Khattab's, but allegedly also in Maskhadov's staff.[178] By controlling the financial flow they acquired influence over the warlords and the fighters.

Russian sources claim that Saudi charitable funds such as "Khayatul-Iga-Sa" and "Islamic Congress" started to dispatch large sums. Allegedly money also came from the Kuwaiti "Society for Social Reform" and Yemeni organisations such as "International Benevolence Association" and "International Islamic Organisation". Also various charities in Turkey,

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[173] Dmitriy Belovetskiy "Salman Raduev: C Pervomaiskom Privetom", *Ogonek*, 08 May 1997.
[174] "Russia and religious terrorism; Shifting dangers" by Ariel Cohen, posted 7 January 2003 at http://www.eurasainet.org/
[175] "V Chechne idet voyna deneg", *Vremya MN*, 4 February 2003.
[176] Sanobar Shermatova "Priznayut li Chechnyu Arabskie Gosudarstva?", *Moskovskie Novosti*, 22 February 2000.
[177] LaFraniere, "How Jihad Made Its Way to Chechnya", *Washington Post*, 26 April 2003.
[178] Names that are mentioned are Abdel Latif ben Abdel Karim al-Daraan, Aby Omar Muhammed As-Seif, Aby Sabit, Aby Salman Muhammed and Saleh ben Muhammed al-Dahshi (Oleg Kytasov, "Nashelsya Sponsor Chechenskikh Boevikov", *Kommersant*, 20 May 2000.

Egypt, Morocco, Central Asia, the USA and many European countries have been mentioned.[179]

1999 was also the year when, according to Russian intelligence officials and now American officials, Osama bin Laden sent a "substantial amount of money" to equip Chechen rebels.[180] Again, hard evidence is scant, but there is some. In February 2001 Jamal Akhmad al-Fadl, a former aide to bin Laden, told investigators in the United States that bin Laden had provided a local relief organisation with funds to assist the transport of Muslim fighters to Chechnya.[181]

Furthermore, in connection with the trial against the Chicago-based Islamic charity "Benevolence International Foundation," it was revealed that this charity had funded Muslim fighters in Chechnya. The foundation is believed to have links to bin Laden's terrorist network, although foundations director Enam Arnaught has denied this.[182] According to proceedings from the case "USA against Enam Arnaught," Arnaught was in close contact with Khattab. After having opened the website "Jihad in Chechnya" in 1999, Arnaught had offered Khattab to send volunteers trained in Afghanistan to Chechnya. Khattab had replied that they were in no need of warriors, but that they needed money. Subsequently, they received financial help. Of the $20 million that the foundation had sent abroad, it is believed that Chechnya received $300,000, not in cash but in military footwear and uniforms.[183] Also the foreign *jihadi* fighters in the Pankisi Gorge are said to have received funding from Al-Qaeda.[184]

Terrorism expert Rohan Gunaratna has concluded that, although bin Laden probably has helped finance the Islamists in Chechnya, Russia has exaggerated this contribution.[185] Mark Galeotti, who writes for *Jane's Intelligence Review*, supports this conclusion; "Yes, Khattab was in receipt of funds and support from bin Laden. The idea, though, that Khattab was the link man is completely wrong. We actually have no real evidence that the Chechen resistance as a whole were being supported by bin Laden."[186]

In general we should be cautious about taking at face value information about Muslim charities funding the Chechen separatist movement. First, it is not necessarily true that all organisations that claim to be doing charitable work actually are financing warriors and weapons, as Russian accounts often seem to contend. Second, it is highly disputable that all these organisations propagate Radical Islam. The Muslim Brotherhood, for example, is considered to be a

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[179] "Vtorzhenie v Rossiyu", *Voennyy Vestnik Yuga Rossii*, 10 September 2002, Yuriy Tyssovskiy "Islamskie dengi tekut v Chechnyu", *Vek*, 15 October 1999 and "Chechenskaya Piramida", *Gudok*, 13 November 1999.
[180] LaFraniere, "How Jihad Made Its Way to Chechnya".
[181] Gregory O'Hayon & Trifin Roule , "Wahhabism Creates Rifts in Chechnya's Rebel Government", *Jane's Terrorism and Security Monitor*, 1 June 2001.
[182] "U.S. gets OK to pursue trial of Islamic charity", *Chicago Tribune*, 14 May 2002. The Benevolence Fund reportedly had a representative in Chechnya in the late 1990s, Saif al-Islam al-Masri, who was was a member of the council of Al-Qaeda (*Izvestiya*, 07 March 2003, p.10)
[183] "Lider Islamskoy blagotvoritelnoy organisatsii pomogal Chechenskim terroristam dengami i obuvyu", *Izvestiya*, 11 February 2003.
[184] LaFraniere, "How Jihad Made Its Way to Chechnya".
[185] Ibid.
[186] Interview with Mark Galeotti, *Eurasia Insight* as carried on *RFE/RL*, 5 May 2002.

relatively moderate organisation. Third, once again it is difficult to find hard facts to confirm the enormous sums that these charities and organisations are alleged to have dispatched to Chechnya.

All in all, Russian security services have estimated that funding to fighters in Chechnya – largely from countries in the Gulf – amounted to $6 million a month in 2000.[187] The respected Russian analyst Alexei Malashenko has suggested that between $10 million and $200 million a year have reached Chechnya from foreign Islamic groups.[188] The flow of funds has diminished since US and Russian intelligence began jointly clamping down on terrorist financing after the 11 September attacks. For example, Al Haramain's office in Azerbaijan was closed down in 2001. Further, since the war in Iraq, some funds have reportedly been redirected to forces opposing the US-led coalition in Iraq.[189] Despite this new development, Russian Security Services say that between $500,000 and $1 million a month still reaches Chechnya.[190] Even if there is uncertainty attached to many of the claims made about funding of the Chechen separatist movement from abroad, there seems to be general agreement among analysts that this funding has been substantial.

4.6.1 Money buys language

I have tried to trace the stream of money from foreign radical Islamic sources. Clearly, the flow of money has been triggered by the wars and not vice versa. All in all, funding has probably been a relatively more important means of co-opting the Chechen separatist movement than fighters. Money fits into any setting, foreign faces do not – particularly not in Chechnya.

The funding has, however, had certain conditions attached to it. Most importantly, continued support has been made conditional on the use of Islamist symbols and rhetoric. This was made vividly evident during the October 2002 hostage drama in Dubrovka Theatre. People were astonished to see Chechen women in black Middle Eastern robes and with *shahid* belts around their waists. Typical Islamist words and expressions marked the language used by the hostage takers.[191]

However, the agenda behind the hostage act was still local, Chechen. This was not an al-Qaeda style attack of blind violence aiming to strike at the West. Like the hostage act in Budennovsk in 1995, which forced the Russians to accept a ceasefire and negotiations, the demands made in Dubrovka Theatre were linked to the Chechen fight for independence. The hostage takers were demanding a halt in military action and a withdrawal of Russian forces. Thus, there is a drawback with funding as a means of co-opting a conflict like the Chechen. Local actors may take the funding and "talk the talk", but they might not go on to implement the agenda of Global Jihad.

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[187] "Sredi Chechenskikh Sponsorov Oligarkhi ne Znachayut", *Izvestiya,* 26 January 2002.
[188] Quoted in "Islamic groups aiding rebels in Chechnya", *Baltimore Sun,* 30 October 2003.
[189] *RFE/RL Newsline* Part 2, 13 August 2003.
[190] LaFraniere, "How Jihad Made Its Way to Chechnya".
[191] See interview with Movsar Baraev on Russian television NTV,http://www.grani.ru/terror.

Even if one can question how successful the foreign sponsors have been at co-opting the agenda of radical actors in Chechnya, it is clear that the flow of funds has had an impact on the balance between radicals and moderates in the Chechen separatist movement. Although there are claims that the separatist leader, Aslan Maskhadov, receives funding from radical Islamic sources, this is probably not the case. Even the prominent FSB General Aleksandr Zdanovich has said that Maskhadov gets his money from quite other sources than Khattab, Basaev and Omar.[192]

It is also clear that funding has been short for Maskhadov in this second war.[193] Thus, although Maskhadov has not tapped onto the sources directly, he has become dependent on well-funded and equipped radicals in the fight against the federal forces. This has no doubt increased the leverage of the Chechen radical warlords over Maskhadov in the second war, as well as paving the way for actors such as Abu al-Walid into the Chechen War Council. The war itself, then, not only triggers the flow of *jihad* money, it also creates the very setting where such money buys influence.

5 MOSCOW'S HAND

This chapter will address the policy that Moscow pursued towards Chechnya in the interwar period. I will start by establishing how power was divided between radical and moderate actors after the end of the first war. Then I will look at Moscow's financial and political support for the Maskhadov regime in the interwar period. The lack of support for the Maskhadov regime must be seen in light of the growing support for the radical opposition from international Islamists. The marginalisation of Maskhadov and the moderate line he represented contributed directly to the Islamisation of the separatist movement. Had Maskhadov's position been strengthened in the interwar period, he probably could have defeated the radical warlords and diminished the influence of foreign Islamists.

5.1 The division of power in postwar Chechnya

After the war ended in 1996 there was no decommissioning of the various warlords and their troops in Chechnya. This gave Maskhadov a rather weak position from the outset of his presidency in early 1997, although he had gained almost 60% of the vote in the presidential election. Maskhadov was Head of Staff during the war, but after the war ended he controlled only Grozny and its close surroundings. In practice there was a division of the Chechen territory into fiefdoms, with each warlord controlling his own bit of territory and his own troops.[194] This structure was a result of the wartime organisation of the Chechen resistance,

[192] Interview, *Trud*, 28 February 2002.
[193] Sanobar Shermatova, "Priznayut li Chechnyu Arabskie Gosudarstva?", *Moskovskie Novosti*, 15 April 1997.
[194] Basaev controlled the Vedeno area and bits of the Shali, Shatoy and Atchkhoy Martan regions. This was also the area where Khattab was based. Raduev controlled parts of Gudermes, the village of Koshkeldy and the area up to the Dagestani border. Estimates of Raduev's troops range from 1,000 to more than 5,000. The Bamut area was

whereby the warlords were given or took responsibility for their own territory. The men recruited to a warlord's troops originated from the towns and villages on this given territory and became closely tied to "their" warlord.

Sometimes overlapping with this "warlord structure", sometimes not, the traditional organisation of Chechen society into clans or *teips*, where loyalty primarily lies within the extended family originating from a certain village, also had an impact on the organisation of forces in wartime. Although the *teip* system was weakened by the war, it nevertheless strengthened the divided structure of power after the war.

Among the warlords, Basaev was in a special position: he was the hero of Ichkeria. Although he did badly in the presidential election in 1997, Basaev had the fighting youth behind him. He commanded a large number of troops and he had political ambitions.

The radicals presented in the second chapter had their different agendas. However, together with Basaev they gradually formed into what can be termed a radical opposition to Maskhadov's moderate line. However, this does not mean that they did not continue to pursue their separate agendas, and that they did not fight amongst themselves – they clearly did. They did agree in viewing Maskhadov as a puppet of secular Russia.[195] They opposed Maskhadov's line of communicating and cooperating with Moscow, and clearly wished to continue the violent fight, most of them aiming to create an Islamic state in Chechnya and Dagestan. I would argue that their motivation for creating this strong opposition must be understood against the background of their loss of status after the war. The warlords had acquired positions and authority during the war and because of the war. This was also the case with Yandarbiev, who only stepped in as President because of Dudaev's death in wartime. However, when the war ended with the Khasavyurt peace accords in August 1996, and Maskhadov was elected president, they found themselves deprived of much of their former status and power.[196]

Disappointed in their expectations of power and still equipped with fighters and arms, these individuals posed a serious challenge to the new Chechen regime. Moreover, as we saw in the previous chapter, they were strengthened by the foreign *jihadi* fighters who were not expelled from Chechnya, and by funding from abroad.

Maskhadov was not alone in the moderate camp. I already argued that Gelaev should be seen as a member of the moderate camp, than of the radical opposition. There were also other warlords who did not oppose Maskhadov's line, such as Lechi Islamov, second in command of

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controlled by Ruslan Kharkharoev (150 warriors). Gelaev controlled the area Achkhoy Martan and parts of the Shatoy region. Arbi Baraev had his headquarters in Urus Martan. ("Chechenkie rodovye priznaki", *Kommersant,* 30 June 1998 or "Lidery Chechni I Ikh Storonniki", *Segodnya*, 25 June 1998)

[195] Vladimir Yachenkov "Khattaba mogut vydvorit iz Chechni", *Trud*, 15 July 1998.

[196] The election results clearly showed that the Chechen population were not in favour of those who became the radical opposition. While Maskhadov gained 59.3% of the vote, Basaev got 23.5%, Yandarbiev 10.1% and Udugov less than 5%. ("Background Brief; Path to Political Settlement in Chechnya" *British Foreign and Commonwealth Office,* April 1997.)

the South Western front, and field commander Sulim Yamadaev. In the government, 1st Deputy Prime Minister, Turpal-ali-Atgeriyev, Deputy Prime Minister Kazbek Makhachev, Minister of *Shari'ah* State Security Aslanbek Arsaev and Deputy Procurator/Head of Special Anti-Kidnap Brigade Magomed Magomedov all supported Maskhadov's moderate line.[197] Akhmed Zakaev, who recently stood in danger of being extradited to Russia on charges of terrorism, was also a central player in the moderate camp. He was a field commander in the first war, and later a minister in Maskhadov's cabinet. Chechen Foreign Minister Iljas Akhmadov was yet another moderate player. It should also be noted that in the Chechen parliament the radical opposition had few representatives: the majority clearly supported Maskhadov's moderate line.

Even if Maskhadov enjoyed strong moral and political support, the dispersion of military power made it impossible for him to enforce order on the other parts of the territory and muster control over the different warlords.[198] Maskhadov was fiercely opposed to such actions as Salman Raduev's kidnapping of Russian policemen, and the killing of doctors and nurses of the Red Cross in Novye Atagi in December 1996, but could do nothing to punish him. In this situation Moscow's strategy toward the newly elected Chechen regime was of crucial importance. The Maskhadov regime was dependent on a handling by Moscow that would prove that the line of cooperation did not seem like "betraying Chechnya". First and foremost, the Maskhadov regime was dependent on funding to rebuild the republic and bolster state institutions that were facing general lawlessness and radical opponents who were armed.[199]

5.2 Moscow's policy in the interwar period

Moscow supported the election of Maskhadov. Of the candidates running, he was definitely the one Moscow could talk to and cooperate with.[200] Moreover, many representatives from the "party of war" on the Russian side were removed from their positions in early 1997.[201] In came the anti-war governor of Nizhny Novgorod, Boris Nemtsov, and the reformer Anatoly Chubais, as first deputy prime ministers. The official Russian side warmly greeted the Russo–Chechen treaty signed by Yeltsin and Maskhadov in May 1997. However, as time went by, Moscow did not seem to be pursuing a strategy, economic or political, that honoured the promises of that treaty and strengthened Maskhadov's regime.

[197] "Lidery Chechni I Ikh Storonniki", *Segodnya*, 25 June 1998.
[198] The Chechen *teip*-system and traditions such as blood feud contributed to this problem. For example when Raduev incited an uprising against the Maskhadov regime in June 1998, no steps were taken to punish Raduev, because of fear of bloodfeud with the Dudaev family. Instead Maskhadov declared a state of emergency.
[199] That Maskhadov opted for economic cooperation with Russia as the lifeline for Chechnya's future was made clear many times. After signing the May 1997 agreement Maskhadov said: "Russia is a great power. She is close to us and today we are linked to her economically in every way. That is why I am committed to Russia, much more so than to the West and the Muslim world," quoted in Smith (2001:267) *Allah's Mountains.*
[200] *RFE/RL Newsline*, 13 January 1997.
[201] E.g. Sergei Shakrai, Sergei Stepashin, Oleg Soskovets, Viktor Yerin etc.

5.2.1 No substantial reconstruction aid, no oil deal

Large-scale financial aid was required to rebuild Chechnya in 1997. Indeed, Yeltsin himself acknowledged the acute importance of bolstering Chechnya economically to achieve stability.[202] As in many other places in Russia at the time, however, the federal centre had limited capability to deliver funds to cover the basic needs of society. In the case of Chechnya, it may also be questioned whether Moscow actually had the will to cover those needs, bearing in mind that the regime in Grozny kept underlining that Chechnya could not be part of the Russian Federation.

Thus, in the interwar period in Chechnya there was no payment of pensions and little funding for resumption of education, schooling for children and health care from the federal centre. Hardly anything was allocated for the creation of new jobs. After the end of the war Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin had promised that the Russian government would send 40 billion rubles for wages and pensions. By the time of the elections in 1997, only 5 billion had actually been disbursed.[203] Moreover, a significant amount of the money allocated disappeared into the black hole of corruption committed both by Russian and Chechen officials.

Maskhadov complained repeatedly that Moscow was seeking to make economic aid contingent on the signing of an agreement that would define Chechnya as part of the Russian Federation.[204] In practise, however, Moscow treated Chechnya as a de facto independent state, and no funding was allocated to Chechnya for economic reconstruction in the 1998 Russian federal budget.[205]

After Yeltsin and Maskhadov signed the May 1997 treaty of peace and friendship, a plan was made for financing the reconstruction of Chechnya. It was proposed that Russian regions would bring in investments, and in return Moscow could write off part of its debts.[206] Another foundation stone in the Chechen economy was the Azeri oil pipeline, which would run through Chechnya to the Russian port of Novorossiisk on the Black Sea, providing Chechnya with a share of the tariffs from oil exports.[207]

As Matthew Evangelista argues, the radical warlords in Chechnya did their best to thwart the oil deal through abductions and threats.[208] Moscow on its side showed little will to realise the agreements, and eventually the young reformers in the Russian government went against establishing the oil pipeline through Chechnya. Energy Minister Andrey Kiriyenko refused to "include contributions to Chechen economic revival" in the oil tariff, and First Deputy Prime

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[202] This was evident from his expressions of concern that the agreements were poorly implemented: see for example *Interfax* (Moscow), 20 August 1997.
[203] Bennett (1998:512) *Crying Wolf*.
[204] *RFE/RL Newsline*, 3 April 1997.
[205] Felix Corley "Domestic dissent impacts on region" *Jane's Intelligence Review*, April 1998.
[206] *RFE/RL Newsline*, 5 June 1997.
[207] Smith (2001:265) *Allah's Mountains.*
[208] Evangelista, *The Chechen Wars* (2002:52–53).

Minister Boris Nemtsov threatened to build a bypass pipeline through Dagestan.[209] After lengthy negotiations an oil transport agreement was reached on 9 September 1997,[210] but only a week later, the Russian government decided to build an alternative pipeline through Dagestan and Stavropol, bypassing Chechnya.[211]

The agreement on oil transit fees expired at the end of 1997 and was not renegotiated. Although some oil did pass through Chechnya, the pipeline was not fully restored and Moscow did not honour its obligations. In October 1998 Moscow stopped pumping oil along the Baku–Novorossiisk pipeline via Chechnya.[212] In April 1999 Alkhazur Abdulkarimov, an official in the Chechen Ministry of Oil and Energy, complained that the Chechen government had not earned one rouble on oil for the past five months.[213] To be fair it was not only Russia's reluctance to follow through on the oil deal that thwarted oil revenues for the Chechen government. Flourishing illegal oil extraction and trading inside Chechnya added to the problem.

However, other measures undertaken by Russia served to undermine the Chechen economy further. In contrast to Yeltsin's efforts in 1997 to maintain negotiations with Chechnya on the question of status, Russian activity around the Chechen border in 1997 amounted to a *de facto* blockade. As Charles Blandy argued, this could have been interpreted as a precautionary measure taken to prevent chaos in Chechnya from spreading to other parts of Russia, but it could also be seen as an attempt to starve Chechnya back into the Russian Federation.[214]

All in all, the amounts of economic aid for reconstruction were small, the income from oil pipelines meagre, and the blockade placed major limitations on economic reconstruction. Even the Russian presidential envoy to Chechnya, Valentin Vlasov, said that Moscow should have provided more economic and political support to President Aslan Maskhadov in accordance with the agreements signed in May 1997. He criticised Yeltsin for not having monitored the government's implementation of those agreements.[215]

This is not necessarily to say that there was a deliberate strategy in Moscow to undermine the Maskhadov regime's economic base, although some circles probably had such an agenda.[216] Given the extent of crimes in Chechnya and Maskhadov's lack of control over the radical opposition, Moscow's uneasiness over implementing the deals was in many ways

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[209] "Neftyanaya Zapadnya", *Ekspert*, 22 May 2000.
[210] *Jamestown Monitor*, 10 September 1997.
[211] *Jamestown Monitor*, 18 September 1997.
[212] Dmitri Trenin (2002:172) *The End of Eurasia: Russia on the border between geopolitics and globalization.* Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution Press.
[213] *Novosti Razvedki i Kontrrazvedki*, 14 April 1999.
[214] Charles Blandy (1998:21) "Chechen status-wide differences remain" ,posted at http://www.csrc.ac.uk/
[215] Valentin Vlasov. speaking on Ekho Moskvy and referred by *RFE/RL Newsline*, 18 January 1999.
[216] Dmitri Trenin has claimed that several Russian government officials believed that the failure of Chechen state-building would naturally lead Chechnya back to the Federation. Chaos in Chechnya would allow Moscow to win in the second round. See *The End of Eurasia: Russia on the border between geopolitics and globalization* (2002:172).

understandable. There are even indications that the leaders in Moscow thought they could pressure Chechnya into stability by holding back the oil deal.

In connection with the pipeline negotiations Nemtsov said, "it was a strategy of the Russian government to make Grozny realise that Moscow is planning options, bypassing Chechnya, for the transport of oil, as an insurance policy against instability."[217] This statement revealed a lack of understanding of the correlation of forces inside Chechnya and Maskhadov's weak position. The result of Moscow's policy was not stability: instead, it served to weaken the Maskhadov regime, which had few other economic resources to build on. Maskhadov had nothing to show in terms of rebuilding; his line of cooperation had failed to bring prosperity to Chechnya.

Khattab stated in 1998 that it was not a problem that they didn't receive the money they were promised from Moscow, as other countries stepped in to fill their accounts. Amongst the countries he mentioned were Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan.[218] For Maskhadov, however, this was a serious problem. Faced with growing opposition from the radical warlords who could subsidise their small armies with funding from abroad, he had no money to counter this opposition. Although he several times threatened to crack down on kidnappings and to throw out foreign Wahhabis, he simply lacked the resources to establish control. Nor could he build up a society without tackling the grave socio-economic problems that created frustrated young, some of who joined the radicals. The strong support that Maskhadov enjoyed among the population was never converted into a political weapon, not least because the improvements in living standard that people had hoped for after the war never materialised.

5.2.2 Maskhadov discounted by Moscow

In the August 1996 Khasavyurt Accords it was agreed that the Russian troops would withdraw from Chechnya, and the decision on the status of Chechnya was postponed until 2001. In September 1997 Yeltsin signed a directive that provided for drafting a treaty with Chechnya on the mutual delegation of powers. He also stated that it would be possible to give something more to Chechnya "from the point of view of sovereignty" than was given to Tatarstan. Throughout 1997 there were several rounds of Russo–Chechen consultations in which Yeltsin seemed to be treating Maskhadov as an equal partner. He even defended Maskhadov against attacks from Russian critics.[219]

It was clear, however, that the distance between the negotiating parties was considerable. The official Chechen side was set on full independence for Chechnya, whereas for Moscow full independence was unacceptable. Although the parties seemed to reach agreement during talks, drafts submitted by Moscow after the talks were often substantially amended and included

[217] Referred in *RFE/RL Newsline*, 10 September 1997.
[218] *Kommersant*, 25 April 1998
[219] Russian Security Council meeting 21 August 1997, referred in *Rossiiskaya Gazeta*, 29 August 1997.

references to Chechnya as part of the Russian Federation.[220] Grozny replied by drafting its own alternative versions, which contained references to Chechen independence.

The Russian media increasingly criticised Yeltsin for being "soft" and giving in to Chechen pressure instead of stating firmly that Chechnya was part of the Russian Federation.[221] Also, Russian officials, making no distinction between the moderates and the radicals in Chechnya, started accusing Maskhadov of using the hostage takings and crimes as a policy of blackmail against the Russian authorities.[222] Oleg Panfilov, director of the Center for Journalism in Extreme Situations, has pointed out that there was strong pressure, particularly from the military, to revenge the defeat in the war. Thus, a powerful information campaign was launched shortly after the Khasavyurt Accords, aiming to portray the Chechens as bandits and link their name to all emergency situations.[223] With this agenda it was counterproductive for Moscow to keep cooperating with the Maskhadov regime.

The apparent deadlock in negotiations with Moscow undermined Maskhadov's credibility and authority at home. Chechen's radical actors could rightfully claim that Maskhadov's line of cooperation was leading nowhere, and this increased their leverage over him. Finally, at the end of 1997 Maskhadov dismissed his government, and Basaev was asked to form a new government. This, together with the generally poor security situation in Chechnya, was probably a main reason why Yeltsin never travelled to meet with Maskhadov in January 1998 as planned.[224]

Finally, in December 1998 Yeltsin annulled the 1997 directive on negotiations on the mutual delegation of powers.[225] This was a blow for Maskhadov, who only days before had underlined that, although he stood firm on the question of Chechen independence, he was ready for any dialogue with the Russian government, and hoped for the signing of "a full-fledged treaty" between Moscow and Grozny.[226] Maskhadov's line of cooperation with Moscow also lost credibility because of the blockade, consisting of a ring of troops, ditches and *blokposts* between Chechnya, Dagestan and Stavropol Kray. [227] This implied the threat of Russian use of force, and undermined Maskhadov's claims that Moscow was set on reaching a deal with Chechnya by peaceful means.

In January 1999 Alexander Lebed warned that unless Moscow took swift action in support of President Aslan Maskhadov, a new war would erupt in the Caucasus. He argued that forces opposed to Maskhadov were ready to start an armed insurgency. Lebed also blamed Moscow

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[220] *RFE/RL Newsline*, 1 April 1997
[221] See for example *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 18 August 1997.
[222] See for example former presidential press secretary Vycheslav Kostikov in *Izvestia*, 21 August 1997.
[223] *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 11 August 2003. Interior Minister Anatoly Kulikov suggested pre-emptive strikes against Chechnya already in January 1997 (See *RFE/RL Newsline*, 7 January 1997)
[224] Alan Philips "Yeltsin visit to Chechnya halted over terror fear", *The Electronic Telegraph* 5 January 1998, posted at *Johnson's Russia List*,5 January 1998.
[225] *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 3 December 1998.
[226] Interview with Aslan Maskhadov, *ITAR-TASS*, 2 December 1998.
[227] Charles Blandy (1999) "Chechnya: A beleaguered President", posted at http://www.csrc.ac.uk/.

for not having taken advantage of the opportunity offered by the peace agreement that he and Maskhadov had signed in August 1996 to stabilise the political and economic situation in Chechnya."[228]

When Interior Ministry General Gennady Spigun was abducted in Chechnya on 5 March 1999, Maskhadov sought to cooperate with Moscow to solve the case, as he had done in similar instances before.[229] This time, however, Maskhadov was clearly discounted by Moscow. Maskhadov was criticised for not having cracked down on crime.[230] Instead of consultation and cooperation, a plan for military action against Chechnya was worked out, beginning in March 1999.[231] Russian Interior Ministry Forces started to launch pre-emptive strikes against Chechen fighters in late June, under the pretext of hitting Basaev and strengthening Maskhadov. The result, however, was instead to undermine Maskhadov, substantiating accusations from the opposition that Maskhadov was Moscow's puppet.[232] The talks set to take place between Yeltsin and Maskhadov in June/July were never held. The scant support that Moscow had provided Maskhadov was redrawn. After having faced the radical opposition and threat in Chechnya, Maskhadov warned Moscow of the invasion into Dagestan in 1999. Moscow, however, did not choose to align with Maskhadov against these forces. Rather, they opted for all-out war against Chechnya.

6 THE INTERNAL STRUGGLE FOR POWER

I have already touched upon various internal developments in Chechnya during the interwar period, and I will not give a comprehensive account of all the events in the power struggle between Maskhadov and the radical warlords in this period. Instead, I focus on how Maskhadov tried to handle his difficult position and how the radical opposition managed to increase their influence. Throughout all this, the three developments analysed above – the personal radicalisation of the warlords, the increasing influence of international Islamist funding and individuals and Russia's strategy toward Chechnya – played into and decided the outcome of the power struggle.

In the face of a growing radical opposition, Maskhadov's strategy vacillated between trying to include and co-opt the radical actors and cracking down on them. His strategy of inclusion was evident from the very beginning, when he appointed Movlady Udugov as Chechnya's chief negotiator with Moscow, and made both Udugov and Shamil Basaev First Deputy Prime Ministers in April 1997.[233] He also included representatives from the pro-Russian former government of Doku Zavgaev. Facing a wave of crime and chaos in Chechnya, and knowing

[228] *Interfax*, 13 January 1999.
[229] *RFE/RL Newsline*, 10 March 1999. Maskhadov had sought to work together with Moscow to find the perpetrators when a group of Russian officers were killed in April 1998, and likewise in May 1998 when the representative of the Russian president Valentin Vlasov was kidnapped.
[230] *RFE/RL Newsline*, 9 March 1999
[231] Former Prime Minister Sergei Stepashin, quoted in "The tragedy of Russia's reforms" posted at *Johnson's Russia List*, 2 February 2001.
[232] *RFE/RL Caucasus Report*, 9 July 1999
[233] *RFE/RL Newsline* 2 April 1997.

how fragmented power was, he probably thought it expedient to attempt to create a broad alliance in the government.

However, the radicals were not successfully co-opted, but pursued their own agenda. The warlords in the so-called Field Commanders Council were outraged by Maskhadov's signing of the peace treaty with Yeltsin in May 1997, and in June 1997 Basaev resigned from his post as Deputy Prime Minister. Udugov launched the "Islamic Nation" movement in July 1997, propagating the unification of the peoples of Caucasus in an Islamic state. In August that year, Yandarbiev and Raduev founded a "Warriors of Freedom" movement, which was composed of 1,000 war veterans and opposed any compromise on the question of Chechnya's independence.[234] Although it is difficult to estimate the impact of information resources in the power-struggle that evolved, the radical opposition had at its disposal more such information resources than did Maskhadov.[235]

On 13 August 1997, Maskhadov reacted to these developments by issuing a decree prohibiting propaganda for a type of Islam that would "bring animosity and discord" to Chechen society.[236] But in reality he had no resources for taking concrete steps to counter the radicals' build-up of alternative organisations and structures. The election had clearly proved that the population supported his line, but in postwar Chechnya this no longer seem to matter. Guns and money were more decisive.

In December 1997 Basaev openly stated at a congress of the "Islamic Nation" that they wanted to "liberate Dagestan". Later that month a group under the leadership of Khattab attacked a tank depot belonging to the Russian army in Buinaksk, Dagestan.[237] All Maskhadov did was denounce the attack as a provocation: he did not (and probably could not) hand over the perpetrators, as demanded by Dagestani officials.[238] Moreover, the threats of launching pre-emptive strikes against Chechnya made by Interior Minister Anatoly Kulikov in the wake of the attack prompted Maskhadov to engage the warlords in the Field Commanders Council to reinforce the borders.[239] As a rule, the threat of military action always acted to push Maskhadov into alliance with the warlords.

Also in December, Salman Raduev established an alliance with the Islamists in the "Fighting squad of Jamaat of Dagestan" by signing a treaty on mutual military assistance to fight for a unified Islamic state in the Caucasus.[240] He held rallies in Grozny, threatening to kill Yeltsin if

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[234] Liz Fuller, "Who controls Chechnya?", *RFE/RL Newsline* 12 January 1998.
[235] Raduev had his own private television station, YTV and his own newspaper "Terrorist". Yandarbiev established a television centre in 1998, allegedly funded from Muslim countries. There was also another television centre in Shatoy financed by the Dagestani Wahhabi leader Bagaudin Muhammed. All in all, the opposition had more newspapers than there were official newspapers. The reason given by the Chechen representative in Moscow, Mairbek Bachagaev, was simply that the radical opposition had money, while the Maskhadov regime had none at all. (*Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 23 July 1999.*)*
[236] *Kommersant*, 2 September 1997.
[237] *FRE/RL Newsline*, 18 December 1997.
[238] *FRE/RL Newsline*, 23 and 30 December 1997.
[239] *FRE/RL Newsline*, 9 January 1998.
[240] "Raduev otmetilsya v Buinakske", *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 3 February 1998.

he came to Grozny for negotiations, and passing votes of no confidence in Maskhadov.[241] Under pressure from the radicals, Maskhadov dismissed his government and asked Shamil Basaev to form a new cabinet in January 1998.[242] Shamil Basaev was given the position of First Deputy Prime Minister; Udugov was appointed Foreign Minister; and Shamil Basaev's brother Shirvani was also included in the new cabinet.[243] The mounting pressure from the opposition, especially from Raduev, also forced Maskhadov to push hard the demand that Moscow accept Chechen independence. This contributed to the deadlock in negotiations with Moscow.

After Raduev took responsibility for an attempt at assassinating Georgian President Eduard Shevardnadze in February 1997, Maskhadov tried to take Raduev to task by summoning him to the Chechen Prosecutors Office. Raduev, however, failed to meet, and after a show of support for Raduev by a congress where as many as 10,000 fighters allegedly participated, Raduev was instead given the offer of becoming Deputy Defence Minister.[244] This Raduev declined.

While seeking to co-opt the radicals, Maskhadov tried to keep cooperating with the Kremlin to counter the radical forces. After a group of Russian Officers had been killed in April 1998 and the blame put on Chechen groups, Maskhadov offered to work together with Moscow to find the perpetrators. However, only two days later, Basaev, acting as First Deputy Prime Minister, stated that such cooperation would not take place on Chechen soil. The same story repeated itself when the representative of the Russian President, Valentin Vlasov, was kidnapped in May 1998.

The events of spring 1998 clearly demonstrated that the radical opposition possessed more resources to pursue their agenda than Maskhadov did to pursue his. On 26 April 1998 the first Congress of Chechen and Dagestani People was held in Grozny, partly financed from abroad. Foreign Minister Udugov, First Deputy Prime Minister Basaev and also Maskhadov's vice-president Vakha Arsanov were the initiators. Khattab was also an important player in the establishment of the Congress.[245] The Congress openly supported the radical Islamists in Dagestan under the leadership of Nadir Khachilaev, who fought in violent clashes with the police in Makhachkala 20–21 May.[246]

Maskhadov did nothing to prevent the Congress; he merely stated afterwards that he "had deep respect for Dagestan's wish to stay within the Russian Federation".[247]
Although the crucial personalities in the radical opposition were not targeted, Maskhadov fired the Minister of Shari'aht Security, Islam Khalimov, who was a leader of the Wahhabi movement in Urus Martan. Even this small move incited an uprising. In May 1998 a group of

[241] *RFE/RL Newsline*, 22 December 1997.
[242] *Interfax*, 1 January 1998.
[243] *FRE/RL Newsline*, 16 January 1998.
[244] *FRE/RL Newsline*, 18 February 1998 and *Interfax*,16 March 1997 .
[245] *Novoe Vremia*, 22 July 1998.
[246] Anton Syrikov, "Rossia dobrovolno kapituliruet na Kavkaze", *Pravda*, 23 May 1998.
[247] *ITAR- TASS*, 11 May 1998.

Wahhabi fighters from Urus Martan, allegedly financed by money from Saudi Arabia, went to attack a pro-Maskhadov village. In the aftermath Maskhadov did not have the power to go into Urus Martan and take control of the area.[248]

In addition to building up alternative structures outside the government, Basaev and Udugov used their positions as Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minster to push their agenda and undermine Maskhadov's line of cooperation. Basaev several times stated that cooperation between Moscow and Grozny could not solve the problems of crime and abduction; instead, he introduced an Islamic peacekeeping force to deal with the "problems of Muslims" at an official news conference.[249] Udugov insisted staunchly on the question of Chechen independence and made negotiations with Russia impossible, at one point even threatening to expel the OSCE mission. Maskhadov shortly after tried to disavow that statement.[250]

Also other actors in the radical opposition continuously threatened Maskhadov's line. On 21 June 1998 Raduev, not acknowledging Maskhadov's leadership, incited an uprising. A huge crowd gathered in the centre of Grozny and tried to take over the television centre. The uprising was put down, and Maskhadov declared a state of emergency on 24 June.[251] Although an arrest order was issued for Raduev, it proved impossible to implement – probably not only because Raduev commanded a large number of fighters and that there was fear of triggering blood feud, but also because Yandarbiev supported Raduev. Even Khattab had promised to free Raduev by all means if he was captured.

In July 1998 fighting erupted in the city of Gudermes between Wahhabis, some of whom were foreign *jihadi* fighters, supported by Arbi Barajev and Abdul Malik Meshidov on the one side, and field commander Sulim Yamadaev and Sufi supporters on the other side.[252] The Wahhabis sustained considerable losses. Maskhadov appeared on TV and for the first time condemned the Wahhabi movement "stemming from the Arab countries". He accused them of seeking to ignite civil war in Chechnya and promised that he would expel from Chechnya all those who "came to spread the ideology so foreign to the Chechen nation". Maskhadov mentioned specifically the need to expel people from Arab countries, from Tajikistan and from Pakistan. He further acknowledged that there were several armed formations of Wahhabi conviction, that they were financed from abroad, but also that people with official positions in the CRI supported these groups.[253] He also took specific action, stripping Abdul Malik Meshidov and Arbi Baraev of their ranks by presidential decree and disbanding the Islamic Special Purpose Regiment and a subdivision of the *Shari'ah* National Security Ministry. He even threatened to send Khattab out of the country, if he did not end his "divertive activity".[254]

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[248] *Kommersant* 30 June 1998.
[249] *FRE/RL Newsline,* 15 June 1997.
[250] *FRE/RL Newsline,* 30 June 1997.
[251] Charles Blandy (1998) "Chechnya: A Beleaguered President", posted at http://www.csrc.ac.uk/
[252] Vakhit Akaev (1999) "Religious political conflict in the Chechen republic of Ichkeria" in Central Asia and the Caucasus, Journal of Social and Political Studies posted at http://www.ca-c.org/
[253] Ilya Maksakov "Maskhadov pytaiotsa spasti svoio vlast", *Nezavisimaya Gazeta,* 17 July 1998.
[254] *Trud*, 18 July 1998.

These steps led nowhere, however, and instead resulted in Maskhadov's isolation. Basaev, who had just resigned as Acting Chechen Prime Minister in order to concentrate on leading of the Congress of Chechen and Dagestani People, disagreed with the order expelling Wahhabi missionaries and Arabs from Chechnya.[255] Also Vakha Arsanov and Zelimkhan Yandarbiev protected the foreigners. Members of the disbanded Islamic Special Purpose Regiment called on Yandarbiev to lead an uprising against Maskhadov. The Russian newspaper *Novaya Gazeta* even claimed that it was Yandarbiev who had encouraged the Wahhabis to stage a violent revolt.[256] Khattab was never expelled. The radical warlords protected him. Moreover, Maskhadov was reluctant to expel Khattab because of his wartime contribution.[257]

Although it is not clear who stood behind it, there was an assassination attempt on Maskhadov in late July. Basaev, having left his position as Acting Prime Minister, has chosen to pursue his agenda from outside the government, employing alternative power structures to this end. For one thing he nurtured his partnership with Khattab who was running the training camps. He openly supported the Islamists in Kara-Makhi and Chaban-Makhi (Dagestan) who declared their villages independent Islamic territory in September 1998.[258] From summer 1998 he also came together with the other radical warlords to launch an offensive against Maskhadov.

The strength of this offensive clearly did not lie in any support from the Chechen population. Indeed, a rally organised by the Maskhadov opposition in November gathered no more that 1,000 people.[259] Rather, the Supreme *Shari'ah* Court together with the military forces of the warlords became important means to pressure Maskhadov.[260] Together with Raduev and the warlord Khunkar-Pasha Israpilov, Basaev called for the impeachment of Aslan Maskhadov, accusing him of having jeopardised Chechen independence through his negotiations with Moscow.[261] Although both the Parliament and the Supreme *Shari'ah* Court dismissed the impeachment plea, the Supreme *Shari'ah* Court eventually called on Maskhadov to dissolve the Chechen Parliament because it deemed its legislative activities to contravene Islam. The court also demanded that an Islamic council of warlords *(Shura)* replace the Parliament.[262]

Attempts were made by the Parliament to get the Supreme *Shari'ah* Court decision declared unconstitutional, and Maskhadov desperately called for Moscow to acknowledge Chechen independence.[263] He also issued a presidential decree disbanding the armed formations not under control of the republic's General Staff and tried to replace the head of the Supreme

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[255] *RFE/RL Newsline*, 16 July 1998.
[256] Ilja Maksakov "Oppositsio Maskhadovu vosglavil Yandarbiev", *Nezavizimaya Gazeta* 22 July 1998.
[257] *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 23 July 1999.
[258] *RFE/RL Caucasus Report*, 8 September 1998.
[259] *RFE/RL Newsline*, 10 November 1998.
[260] A clear illustration of the weakness of Maskhadov's forces was the failure of the Security Forces to apprehend Raduev after he had been sentenced to four years in prison for an attempted coup against the Maskhadov regime (*RFE/RL Newsline*, 5 November 1998)
[261] *Kommersant*, 23 October 1998.
[262] *RFE/RL Newsline*, 28 December 1998.
[263] *RFE/RL Newsline* 30 December 1998.

Shari'ah Court.[264] However, the decrees were not carried through, and Maskhadov finally gave in to the demands of the radical opposition.

Interestingly, he abolished the Marsho Charitable Foundation headed by his wife, because the Supreme *Shari'ah* Court had dismissed her, arguing that women should not hold positions of influence.[265] In January 1999 Maskhadov established a commission to draft a new Islamic constitution, and on 3 February he imposed *Shari'ah* law throughout Chechnya, stripping Parliament of its legislative powers. He also sacked Vakha Arsanov as Vice President, arguing that leadership structures should confirm with Islamic norms.[266]

In another concession to the radical warlords Maskhadov decreed the establishment of a *Shura*, but stipulated that this body would only have consultative powers. The field commanders on their side announced the creation of a *Shura* with 34 members that would perform as a government. They demanded Maskhadov's resignation, claiming that he did not live up to the norms of Islam. Maskhadov was invited to join the *Shura*, but would then have to step down as President. Basaev was elected leader of the *Shura* on 19 February, whose members included Raduev, Udugov, Yandarbiev and Arsanov.[267]

Maskhadov, as noted, never received any support from Moscow during this period. With the Parliament dissolved, his diminishing powerbase consisted of the Security Ministry and the Cabinet. He issued threats of arresting Khattab, but could not put the decision into force.[268] Having failed to co-opt the radicals to his agenda and unable to neutralise them, he finally chose to try to play the role that the radical opposition wanted him to perform. In April 1999 Maskhadov travelled to Yandarbiev's stronghold in Starye Atagi to address a rally. In the course of his speech Maskhadov said, "A secular, democratic or any other form of government invented by man does not suit Chechnya." He pledged not to deviate from the objective of transforming Chechnya into an independent Islamic state.[269]

In now-familiar concessions to the radicals, Maskhadov in July 1999 decreed the establishment of a National Security Council as the highest organ of state power, and appointed Gelaev head of the *Shari'ah* Guard and of the Ministry of Religious Affairs. In the National Security Council the radical warlords were given a seat together with Maskhadov; decisions would be taken in a "collegial manner". According to *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, Maskhadov had been threatened at gunpoint by Basaev and Khattab only days before: act as they wanted, or be killed.[270]

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[264] *Izvestiya,* 23 October 1998.
[265] *Interfax,* 3 January 1999.
[266] *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 9 February 1999, and *RFE/RL Caucasus Report*, 10 February 1999.
[267] *RFE/RL Caucasus Report* 23 February 1999.
[268] *Interfax,* 10 March, 1999.
[269] *RFE/RL Caucasus Report,* 13 April 1999.
[270] Ilya Maksakov, "Tikhiy gosudarstvenny perevorot v Chechne?", *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* 17 July 1999.

Maskhadov distanced himself from Basaev and Khattab's attack on Dagestan in August 1999 and held a rally in Grozny gathering 5,000 people against the invasion. He also declared a state of emergency and dismissed Udugov from the National Security Council.[271] In the final event, however, he had no power to stop Basaev and Khattab from attacking Dagestan. In the eyes of the Russians, the radicals were now the face of the entire Chechen leadership.

And so the opportunity to build up a moderate Chechen regime in the interwar period failed. Although the radical warlords did not manage to oust Maskhadov fully, they were strong enough to force him to adopt their Islamist agenda. Their upper hand over Maskhadov rested not on their popularity in the population, but on their troops and financial resources, and on Maskhadov's corresponding lack of resources and support from Moscow.

7 THE SECOND CHECHEN WAR: HARDLINERS DEFINE THE AGENDA

The anti-terrorist campaign initiated by Prime Minister Vladimir Putin in September 1999 targeted not only the radical Chechen opposition and their fighters, but also the Maskhadov regime as such. A natural consequence of the new war has been that the various actors in Chechnya joined together to fight the invaders.[272] The majority of the population have rallied around Maskhadov, and the warlord enemies have recognised him as their leader in the war.[273] The war has forced them into an alliance. The skills and the resources of the warlords, whether supplied by foreign Islamists or not, were needed to defend Chechnya against Russian forces, and Maskhadov chose to use these forces. The fighters' ideology was less importance, now that he needed their guns. [274]

Within the joint separatist forces that have resisted the Russian forces, the distribution of power between moderate actors and radicals has largely followed the pattern that developed in the interwar period. Indeed, it seems that the dominance of the radicals has increased further. Together with the foreign Islamist funding and engagement triggered by the second war, Russia's handling of the conflict has contributed to this development. This final chapter will focus on how Russia has chosen to deal with its adversary in the second Chechen war.

Once again, a very brutal war has itself created fertile soil for radical ideas and methods. This will not be dealt with in detail here, however. Rather, the account will concentrate on the neglect of negotiation as a policy option, and on the promotion of a political process bypassing the adversary. I will also point out how Russia's policy has worked together with the increasing influence of radical Islamists to confine Maskhadov's space for manoeuvring.

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[271] *RFE/RL Newsline,* 31 August 1999.
[272] There were exceptions ,however: the Yamadaev brothers, Sulim Khalid and Dzhabrail, warlords from the first Chechen war, sided with the Russians, as did the Chechen Mufti Akhmed-hadji Kadyrov.
[273] *Obshchaya Gazeta,* 27 April 2000.
[274] According to Mark Galeotti, Maskhadov controlled about 1/3 of the rebel movement; 1/3 were indirectly controlled through Basaev. The last third is made up of independent warlords and Islamic radicals. (Mark Galeotti, "Chechen militants bring their war to Moscow", *Jane's Intelligence Review,* 1 December 2002)

7.1 No negotiation with terrorists

Vladimir Putin was appointed Russian Prime Minister in August 1999. His was the decision not only to get the invaders out of Dagestan, but also to continue the war into Chechnya and launch a full-scale war. This intention was clear from the build-up of Russian forces around Chechnya in August and the fact that Putin made no attempt to initiate contacts with Maskhadov before these forces started their attacks on Chechnya.[275]

It was also highly expedient to put the blame for the September nighttime explosions in apartment buildings in Moscow and Volgodonsk on the Chechens, although it still remains unclear just who stood behind these atrocities. After the explosions in September a entire new vocabulary was put to use.[276] The Chechen enemy was portrayed as either a terrorist or a bandit. As the "anti-terror campaign" turned into all-out war, killing more civilians than "armed bandits," the entire Chechen population became identified as the enemy and hence as terrorists.[277] Not only government officials, but also other prominent members of the Russian political elite, such as Communist Party leader Gennadii Zyuganov, State Duma Speaker Gannadii Seleznev and Moscow Major Yurii Luzhkov and the Russian media, helped foster the conception that the war against Chechnya was solely an effort to contain the putative "Islamic terrorist threat".[278]

I would argue that this rhetoric has contributed to radicalise the separatist movement. It has brought the radicals to centre stage as the opponent in the conflict, allowing them to define the agenda in the Chechen separatist movement. At the same time it has cast the moderate actors as "terrorists", thereby excluding the option of negotiating with them and strengthening them. This in turn has pushed them into reliance on the radical actors in the separatist movement.

The possibility of negotiations before the war passed the point of no return in October 1999 was quickly written off by Moscow, despite appeals by Maskhadov and international pressure.[279] Maskhadov called for negotiations to prevent an all-out war on 1 October, and initially desisted from joining the regular Chechen army troops with the Chechen field commanders who were resisting the advancing Russian troops. He also offered to hand over Basaev and Khattab, as Moscow had demanded. On the same day, however, Putin stated that he did not consider Maskhadov the legitimate president of Chechnya.[280] Continuing its heavy air and artillery bombardment of northern and eastern Chechnya in October, Moscow decided to establish a temporary Russian government representation in Chechnya under the leadership

[275] Sergei Kovalev "Putin's War", *The New York Review of Books*, Vol.47, Number 2, February 2000.
[276] Putin became famous for his vow to "wipe them out in the shithouse".
[277] According to Sergei Kovalev, military reports from Chechnya used expressions such as "A group of three thousand terrorists has been surrounded in Guddermes " and "two and a half thousand terrorists were liquidated in Shali". (Sergei Kovalev, "Putin's War", *The New York Review of Books*, Vol.47, Number 2, February 2000.)
[278] *RFE/RL Newsline*, 4 October 1999. There were, however, some Russian politicians who kept calling for negotiations with Maskhadov, among them Grigory Yavlinsky and the Ingushetian President Ruslan Aushev.
[279] Calls for restraint and dialogue both from the USA, the Council of Europe and from Germany (*FRE/RL Newsline*, 4 and 5 October 1999.)
[280] *Interfax*, 1 October 1999 and *RFE/RL Newsline*, 5 October 1999.

of Nikolai Koshman.[281] Maskhadov then countered by calling on the religious leaders of Chechnya to declare a holy war "to defend the country's sovereignty".[282]

In response to continued international pressure during autumn 1999, Russian officials claimed that they wanted to negotiate – but this was clearly not a priority. Maskhadov was defined as part of the terrorist problem,[283] as were the members of the Chechen parliament.[284] In December 1999 in connection with investigations of the deaths of up to 1,000 Russians in Chechnya between 1991 and 1999, the Russian Prosecutor General even tried to implicate Maskhadov in genocide.[285] This irreconcilable stance probably stemmed from Putin, who had invested considerable prestige in putting Chechnya into order once and for all. There was, however, also strong pressure from the side of the Russian military not to negotiate with Maskhadov, but rather neutralise the enemy completely this time, as they had failed to do in 1996.[286]

It is a fact that Maskhadov, during the four years that the war has now lasted, he repeatedly called for negotiations to end the war. He has even said that he is prepared to reconsider long-standing demands for Chechnya's independence.[287] Apart from brief talks between Putin's Envoy to Southern Russia, Viktor Kazantsev, and Maskhadov's representative, Akhmad Zakaev, in November 2001, Moscow has never said yes to such a dialogue.[288] Conditions for holding talks, such as total disarming and the handing over of the radical warlords, have been so strict that Maskhadov could not possibly accept them. Moscow has cited various reasons for dismissing unconditional talks, such as that there is nobody to talk to, since the radical warlords control Maskhadov, or simply that Maskhadov himself is a criminal.[289]

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[281] Also in October Malik Saidullaev was made head of a Chechen State Council seated in Moscow and supported by members of the pro-Moscow Chechen Parliament that had been elected in summer 1996.
[282] *Reuters*, 6 October 1999.
[283] Putin's statement in an interview with a regional TV station in November made clear how he viewed Maskhadov: "Russia is ready to work with all political forces in Chechnya, but we will never sit down at the negotiating table with bandits whose arms are in blood up to the elbows." (*Itar Tass* 2 November 1999.)
[284] Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Aleksandr Avdeev explained to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in November 1999 why negotiations were not possible. It would be difficult for Maskhadov to severe ties with field commander Shamil Basaev, a terrorist, since Maskhadov was "financially dependent" on Basaev. He also characterised the members of the Chechen Parliament who were present in Strasbourg at the time as "illegitimate" and "Basaev's people" (*RFE/RL Newsline*, 5 November 1999.)
[285] *Reuters*, 30 December 1999.
[286] Major General Vladimir Shamanov threatened that if the military was not given the chance to fight the war to the end, civil war could erupt in Russia. (*Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 4 November 1999.)
[287] *FRE/RL Caucasus Report*, 13 September 2002
[288] Also dialogues initiated by other actors on the Russian side have not been welcome. Talks between representatives of Maskhadov and a group of Russian and Chechen pro-Moscow politicians in Lichtenstein in August 2002, which ended with the proposal of a peace-plan, were ignored by the Putin administration.
[289] For example, Chechnya spokesman Sergei Yastrzhebsky's office stated in August 2000: "the only dialogue with no preconditions that Maskhadov can have is that with the Russian prosecutor general's office as part of a criminal case that had been opened against that leader of Ichkeria" (*Pravda*, 9 August 2001.) On Maskhadov's offers to negotiate and Moscow's refusals, see e.g. *Reuters*, 10 October 1999; *Vek*, 28 April 2000; *Moskovskie Novosty*, 19 November 2000; *AFP*, 20 November 2000; *Pravda*, 9 August 2001; *RFE/RL Cauasus Report*, 13 September 2002.

Even before 11 September 2001, Russia exaggerated the role of international Islamist actors in Chechnya and tried to link the war in Chechnya to the broader context of fighting international terrorism.[290] After 11 September this became the prevailing version.[291] Moreover, the Western states acquired a new understanding for Russia's war in Chechnya, and demands for a peaceful, negotiated solution to the conflict became muted.[292] The new worldview promoted by the US administration after 11 September depicts the main cleavage in international politics as one between the civilised world on the one side, and evil terrorists on the other. In this polarised global conflict there is little room for negotiation. The destruction of the opponent is presented not merely as legitimate, but as the sole viable option for survival.

This new worldview has been cited in support of the claim that one could not talk to Maskhadov. One illustration would be Defence Minister Sergey Ivanov's statement: "to those who recommend we launch talks with Maskhadov, I always invite them to start talks with Mullah Omar. It's the same thing. Currently on Chechen territory there are around 1,200 to 1,300 active rebels, uncompromising bandits, with whom you can only have one conversation – their destruction."[293]

The alienation of Maskhadov both from Russia and from the Western states as well was probably an important factor in tipping the balance of power in favour of the radicals within the Chechen separatist movement. Clear signs of Maskhadov's weak position in comparison to the radicals were the naming of Basaev as head of the State Defence Committee in July 2002, Udugov as head of the Department for External Information and Yandarbiev as Chechnya's official representative in the Middle East.[294] Akhmed Zakaev presented the move as a means of gaining control over the radicals. Judging by the events that followed in October, however, this was evidently not the result. One immediate result of the closing of ranks was an upsurge in military success on the separatist side, including the destruction of two Russian military helicopters that autumn.[295]

Although negotiations with Maskhadov were not a priority for the Russian regime, the 2001 talks had proved that such negotiations were not totally excluded. Particularly the prospect of public opinion turning against the war as it dragged on,[296] and the waning, but still present, demand for such talks from the Western states, probably preserved negotiations with

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[290] Vladimir Putin told reporters in Oslo on 1 November 1999: "terrorists there are armed and trained by other countries"; furthermore, that it was Russia's "task to free the Chechen people of those unwanted guests" (*FRE/RL Newsline*, 2 November 1999.) Talking to Russian and French journalists in October 2000, Putin said that there were "thousands of rebels in Chechnya, trained and equipped abroad" (*Interfax*, 26 October 2000.)

[291] Immediately after the 11 September attacks Russian prosecutors passed on data to European states that allegedly linked Chechen rebels to Osama bin Laden (Russia TV, Moscow, in Russian 1300 GMT, 13 September 2001, on *BBC Monitoring).*

[292] See for example "Straw backs Russia over Chechnya", *The Times* (UK), 1 November 2001, and "Rice sees New Impetus to US-Russia Relations", by Jeffrey Thomas, as carried on *Johnson's Russia List*, 5 October 2001.

[293] *AFP*, 16 July 2003.

[294] *RFE/RL Caucasus Report*, 4 September 2002.

[295] Ibid.

[296] According to the All-Russian Center for the Study of Public Opinion (VTsIOM), 59% of the respondents in a Russia-wide poll conducted in August 2002 were in favour of peace negotiations and only 31% in favour of continuing the war (*Chechnya Weekly*, 9 September 2002.)

Maskhadov as a policy option. However, the theatre siege by Chechens in Moscow in October 2002 dealt a devastating blow to Maskhadov's legitimacy, in the eyes of the Russian population, Russian liberal politicians and the West as well. Maskhadov became inextricably linked to the radical wing of the Chechen separatist movement.[297]

Although Maskhadov condemned the theatre debacle and claimed that he was not responsible for it, an effort was made to tie him to this act of terrorism. Moreover, the hostage act was promoted as final proof that the war in Chechnya was one against the international terrorist network. Putin compared Maskhadov to Osama bin Laden.[298] Chechnya spokesman Sergei Yastrzhembsky ruled out any talks with Maskhadov, adding that it was necessary to "wipe out all the commanders of the movement".[299] Akhmed Zakaev, the very person who had taken part in talks with Moscow in November 2001, was arrested in Copenhagen on charges of terrorism. Video footage showing Maskhadov planning the siege together with Movsar Baraev and Aby Omar was shown on Russian television.[300] Although it is difficult to draw any firm conclusions, the footage did not appear very convincing.

On the other hand, it is difficult to imagine that Maskhadov had known nothing about the siege in advance. It is possible that he, although not initiating the siege, accepted it, hoping that it would yield dividends in the war, as the Budennovsk hostage act had done in 1995. This highlights the dilemma of a weak separatist leader who, although initially disagreeing with both ideology and methods of the radical actors, becomes dependent on them to win the war. Although Moscow had reason to fear that Maskhadov would become a hostage of the radical warlords, it is precisely the launching of an all-out war and the policy of alienation and non-negotiation with Maskhadov that has forced him into a coalition with them.

7.2 A new puppet regime

Parallel with the gradual elimination of Maskhadov as a negotiating partner, Moscow has sought to build up a rival pro-Moscow Chechen regime, forcing through a new legal foundation for Chechnya. This has not contributed to the normalisation of the conflict as hoped. Rather, it has served to polarise the conflict and radicalise the separatist movement even further.

Plans for establishing a pro-Russian Chechen administration probably started back in autumn 1999. The Chechen Mufti Akhmed-hadji Kadyrov, who had fought on the side of the separatists during the first war, travelled to Moscow to meet with Russian officials in November 1999.[301] During the winter he was sent to meetings in Berlin, Vienna and Geneva, actions that can be interpreted as an attempt by Moscow to present him as the new Chechen

[297] The West's understanding of the Russian version of "Maskhadov the terrorist" was expressed by a senior US diplomat in this way: "Our policy on Chechnya has moved closer to the Russian. This attack has substantially damaged the Chechen cause." (*Moscow Times*, 1 November 2002.)
[298] *Izvestiya*, 11 November 2002.
[299] *AFP*, 16 July 2003.
[300] "Ne ostalos somneni v prichastnosti Maskhadova k teraktu v Moskve", *Rossiskaya Gazeta*, 4 February 2003.
[301] *RFE/RL Newsline*, 22 November 1999.

leader. In early June 2000, shortly after his inauguration, Putin imposed direct federal rule in Chechnya and appointed Akhmed-hadji Kadyrov interim leader of the pro-Moscow administration in Chechnya.

Moscow's imposition of direct federal rule and appointment of an interim leader was meant to deprive Maskhadov of the status of Chechnya's legitimate leader. Moreover, the choice of Kadyrov contributed to cast the war as a religious war. Kadyrov, being a Sufi Mufti, had developed a relation of deep animosity with the Wahhabis in Chechnya in the interwar period. Perceiving Maskhadov as a hostage of the radical warlords, he chose to side with the Russians in the second war.[302] Kadyrov depicted the war against the joint separatist forces as a war against the Wahhabis. In his view, all Wahhabis had to be extinguished: it was either "they, or we".[303]

Moreover, although Kadyrov initially said he would negotiate with Maskhadov, the strong animosity between the two men has been evident. Since Kadyrov sees Maskhadov as "a traitor of the Chechen people," Kadyrov can hardly be considered the optimal negotiating partner.[304] He is not a figure to promote concord in Chechnya.[305] Moreover, Kadyrov has taken to using the same methods of waging war that inevitably make young Chechens more susceptible to Radical Islam. According to several accounts, Kadyrov's troops stand responsible for many of the *"zachistkis"* in which young men disappear. His forces, commanded by his son Ramzan, are accused of committing crimes such as the use of torture and extra-judicial killings.[306]

During spring and summer 2002 Kadyrov's administration was bolstered by granting him the right to appoint local authorities and by the building up of the Chechen militia. It was only after the hostage crisis in Moscow that the so-called "political process" gained speed, however. Putin announced the launching of a new "constitutional process" in Chechnya – one in which Maskhadov would have no place.[307]

The first step in this political process was a referendum over a new constitution, held in Chechnya on 23 March 2003. The new constitution, written in Moscow, stated firmly that Chechnya was a secular state and an "inalienable part of the territory of the Russian Federation".[308] It was highly controversial to hold a referendum when there still was a war

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[302] RFE/RL *Caucasus Report*, 16 June 2000.
[303] This was his expression when addressing a session of the OSCE in Vienna in February 2000 (*Vek*, 28 April 2000.)
[304] Kadyrov, quoted in *Moskovsky Komsomolets*, 11 November 2002. In June 2003 Maskhadov again offered talks and said he no longer demanded complete independence for Chechnya. There was no official reaction from the Kremlin. Kadyrov, however, stated that any compromise with the Chechen rebel leader was "impossible as a matter of principle. What compromise can there be with a criminal and a terrorist who…is the cause of the Chechen people's tragedy?" he asked. *ITAR-TASS*, 16 June 2003.
[305] With the appointment of Kadyrov a new frontline was opened in the Chechen war, as Chechens became targets for the Chechen separatists. Shortly after Kadyrov's appointment on 11 October, a remote control bomb, aimed at pro-Moscow Chechen policemen, killed 15 people.
[306] Tanya Lokshina of the Moscow-Helsinki Group, quoted in *Economist*, 9 October 2003. See also several articles in *Novaya Gazeta* summer 2003.
[307] *Vremya MN*, 12 November 2002.
[308] *Chechnya Weekly*, 13 February 2003.

going on. Moreover, independent reports hinted at serious fraud in the referendum.[309] All the same, it was announced that 89.48% of the eligible voters had taken part and that of those, 95.97% had voted for the new constitution.[310]

The second step in the political process was the announcement of an amnesty on 6 June 2003, to convince fighters on the separatist side to lay down their arms. The amnesty was criticised because it excluded the Chechen leadership, Maskhadov and other warlords. It was also highly unclear whether separatist fighters who gave up their arms would face prosecution after all, given that the amnesty excluded all those engaged in "banditism", defined by the criminal code as participation in any "stable armed group" other than those controlled by the Russian state.[311] Further, the amnesty included federal service men accused of atrocities against Chechen or Russian civilians.[312] Not surprisingly, few Chechen separatists accepted the amnesty.[313] Rather, it was announced both from Maskhadov's and Basaev's side that the fight against the Russian Federal forces would be intensified.[314]

The presidential elections in Chechnya on 5 October 2003 triggered a similar reaction. Maskhadov had been excluded from standing, and boycotted the elections. Any hopes among Chechens that the elections could mark a new start were quickly dashed. The three candidates who had proven popular among the electorate were "removed" from the race in the weeks preceding the election.[315]

In the run-up to elections, Kadyrov was in total control of the media, and there were reports of threats and violence being used to get rid of opponents and to force people to vote for Kadyrov.[316] It was also reported that refugee camps in Ingushetia were shut down in order to force refugees back to Chechnya to vote.[317] Despite reports that polling stations were nearly empty and despite Kadyrov's documented unpopularity,[318] official figures declared that about 81% of the electorate had voted, and that 80% of them had cast their vote for Akhmed-hadji Kadyrov as Chechnya's new president.[319]

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[309] Amongst them Human Rights Watch, Memorial and independent journalists (*Chechnya Weekly*, 27 March 2003.)
[310] *Interfax*, 26 March 2003.
[311] Memorial report 20 May 2003, cited in *Chechnya Weekly*, 29 May 2003.
[312] *Prava Cheloveka v Rossii*, 23 May 2003.
[313] By the time the amnesty ended on 1 September 2003, some 143 members of "illegal armed formations" had received amnesty, according to head of the Northern Caucasus directorate of the Russian procuracy Sergei Fridinsky. The main beneficiaries were pro-Moscow servicemen accused of military atrocities or other crimes; some 226 soldiers and police were granted amnesty in the same period. (*Kommersant*, 2 September 2003.)
[314] *RFE/RL Newsline*, 2 June 2003.
[315] These three were Duma Deputy Aslambek Aslakhanov and the Moscow-based businessmen Malik Saidullaev and Khusein Dzjabrailov.
[316] *Novaya Gazeta*, 28 August 2003.
[317] Representatives from Union of Forced Migrants and Doctors Without Borders, referred in *Chechnya Weekly*, 14 August 2003, also *Agence France-Presse*, 20 September 2003.
[318] According to pre-election polls conducted by the Obshchestvennoe mnenie ("Public opinion") fund, Kadyrov's popularity rating was only 14.4% (*Chechnya Weekly*, 14 August 2003.)
[319] *RFE/RL Newsline*, 6 October 2003.

This obviously fake political process, which has sidestepped both the question of contention and the adversary in the conflict, has served to further polarise the conflict, again bringing the radical actors in the separatist movement to prominence. Moscow's efforts to sidestep Maskhadov have once again forced him into an alliance with the radical warlords at the top level. After the hostage crisis in Moscow, Maskhadov not only fired Basaev from government, but also opened a criminal case against him. However, by June 2003 there were indications that Maskhadov and Basaev had met face to face, and that they were joining forces again.[320]

Further, it seems that the political process, rather than satisfying the Chechen population, has left them with the feeling of being deceived yet another time. Although it is difficult to verify such reports, there has allegedly been a recent increase in the number of young Chechen men wanting to fight on the separatist side.[321] And, as has been noted in this report, it is precisely in the ranks of the warlords that the ideology of Radical Islam most easily can gain a foothold.

It is also striking to note how the upsurge of suicide bombings in 2003, mostly carried out by Chechen women in the name of Allah, has coincided with the promotion of the "political process". Once again, however, it is difficult to establish any clear causal link, and the reasons behind this development are many.[322]

Today, the prevailing image of Chechen separatists is that of radical Islamists. A regular guerrilla war is still going on – indeed, more lives are lost in regular fighting than in suicide attacks – it is the terror attacks we hear of, and it is Basaev we hear from. The Putin regime keeps embellishing on the picture in which the radical Islamists occupy centre stage. After a suicide attack at a pop concert in Tushino, Moscow, on 5 July 2003, Putin said: "Suicide attacks not only prove that Chechens are part of a global terrorist network, but that they are perhaps the most dangerous part of the international terrorist web." [323] Evidently, both the "rock" and the "hard place" have an interest in keeping and nurturing the image of the Chechen conflict as one between the "Islamist terrorists" and the "infidels".

A serious problem is that this image is becoming true, as a consequence of the efforts by the radical Islamists on the separatist side and Moscow's handling of the problem.

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[320] Conclusions about this reunion were drawn from a taped statement by Maskhadov, given to Agence France-Presse (*Chechnya Weekly*, 19 June 2003.) It must be noted, however, that Maskhadov's representative Salambek Maigov has reiterated that the tape is not authentic.

[321] *Assosiated Press*, 16 August 2003. Former Council of Europe rapporteur for Chechnya, Lord Frank Judd said his sources indicated that young recruits joining the rebel guerrillas in the districts of Chechnya adjoining Ingushetia had doubled in number since the crackdown on the refugee camps in Ingushetia in 2003 (quoted in *Chechnya Weekly*, 26 September 2003.)

[322] More than 150 people have been killed in suicide attacks since the October 2002 theatre siege. Results of investigations into the motivation behind the suicide attacks mostly point to "domestic roots": the women committing these desperate acts have had their families and lives destroyed by the war and seek revenge. Some of them have, however, been married to Radical Islamic fighters and have allegedly been "indoctrinated" with Radical Islamism (see for example "Deadly secret of the black widows" by Luba Vinogradova, in *The Times* (UK) 22 October 2003; "Female suicide bombers unnerve Russians", *New York Times*, 7 August 2003; "Young, female and carrying a bomb", *International Herald Tribune* 8 August 2003; "Wish me luck", *Sunday Times* 17 August 2003)

[323] Quoted in *Chechnya Weekly*, 10 July 2003.

Maskhadov has continued to state that he does not accept methods such as suicide bombings, but he also underlines that these attacks are the revenge for lost Chechen lives.[324] Either he has no power to stop these attacks, or he quietly accepts these tactics as part of the resistance he has to wage.[325]

8 CONCLUSION

The conflict in Chechnya is still a separatist conflict – not a religious war, not a war against international terrorist networks. As the conflict has dragged on, however, Islam has come to play an increasing role in the Chechen separatist movement. Several Chechen warlords and politicians turned to Radical Islam and Political Islam as a consequence of the first Chechen war. At times they adopted Radical Islam and Political Islam because it suited their interpretation of the world. Mostly, however, there were more pragmatic reasons, such as funding and fighters, and their version of Radical Islam is still dominated by their personal or local agendas. The radical Chechen warlords are not *global* jihadis: in fact, they are still pursuing the Chechen separatist cause.

The radical warlords and politicians would probably never have managed to gain the upper hand over the more moderate actors in Chechnya, had it not been for the attempts by international Islamist actors to co-opt the Chechen conflict. The wars sparked these actors' interest in Chechnya, and ever since, they have tried to make this conflict "theirs". Jihadi fighters, missionaries and money have been dispatched. Although the amount of aid supplied has been exaggerated, it has had an important impact on the separatist movement.

After the end of the first war, the radical warlords found themselves deprived of much of their former prestige and power. In order to secure influence and pursue their own agendas, they tapped onto the flow of resources offered by international Islamists. Their growing influence in interwar Chechnya and in the second war has not rested on their popularity among the Chechen population, but on their guns and their money. In return, the close alliance between Chechen warlords and a few well-funded foreign jihadi fighters has secured positions for these foreign Islamists at the top of the separatist movement.

The limited but still significant success of the international Islamist actors in co-opting the Chechen separatists' agenda in the interwar period coincided with a misguided Russian policy on Chechnya. The failure to rebuild Chechnya economically and to support the moderate Chechen President elected in 1997, reinforced the tilted balance of power between moderates and radicals within the republic. As such, the first period of the interwar period represented a lost opportunity. Maskhadov and his policy of cooperation initially enjoyed wide popular support. However, both Maskhadov's own lack of skill and Moscow's failure to back him up

[324] Videotaped address from Maskhadov, referred to in *The Chechen Times*, 3 June 2003.
[325] The resignation of the moderate Salambek Maigov as Maskhadov's representative in Moscow in August 2003, was allegedly triggered by Maskhadov's disagreement with Maigov's very harsh condemnation of the suicide bombings (Anna Politkovskaya, *Novaya Gazeta*, 18 August 2003).

prevented this support from being transformed into political and military control over the radical warlords. Instead, already in the interwar period, Maskhadov increasingly seemed to become a hostage to the radicals.

Moscow's launching of an anti-terror operation that took the form of an all-out war secured the re-alliance of moderates and radicals on the Chechen side. The war itself has tilted the balance further in favour of the radicals, because of Maskhadov's reliance upon them to resist the Russian forces. Moreover, Russian authorities have pursued a policy of non-negotiation, branding all Chechen separatist leaders as terrorists. This policy has acquired a certain degree of legitimacy in the West after the events of 11 September.

The final component of the Russian policy on Chechnya has been the promotion of a political process that has excluded the adversary, seeking instead to settle the issue by dubious democratic procedures. The consequence of these policies has been a further marginalisation of the Chechen separatist leader. On top of that, the combination of these policies and the brutal way in which the war has been waged has created fertile ground for further recruitment into the ranks of the radical warlords.

Although the radical Chechen warlords have not fully adopted the radical Islamist ideology, continuation of the war will ensure that they do so. The appeal of this ideology increases with the war, as does the demand for Islamist funding and fighters. The problem with the radical Islamist ideology is that it operates with vague long-term goals, propagating an eternal global mission. This ideology gives little space for pragmatism in compromising and settling conflicts. Similarly, the problem with the Russian policy on Chechnya is that it has excluded any possibility of communicating and negotiating with the enemy. According to official rhetoric there is no other way out than to fight to the bitter end.

Russian policy and radical Islamist ideology thus seem to reinforce each other. In between this rock and this hard place, any possibility of a peaceful solution to the conflict is trapped. There can be no viable solution to the intractable Chechen conflict as long as radical Islamists and uncompromising Russian policies continue to define the modus operandi in the conflict.

I started out by indicating that the Chechen conflict could pose a threat to improving Russian–Western relations. The findings in this report clearly show that is the case. The "new understanding" that Western countries, including the United States, have acquired for Russia's policy in Chechnya since 2001 seems to have linked Russia more closely to the West – but only on the strategic level. In reality, the West's new understanding has served to reinforce the very policies that are contributing to radicalise the Chechen separatist movement and render impossible any negotiated solution to the conflict.

The continuation of the Chechen conflict in its present modus will in a long-term perspective pull Russia further away from the West. It will ensure the degradation of Russia's human rights record, through continued efforts to "eradicate the enemy". It will hamper the

democratic development of Russia, through the need to manipulate elections. It will stifle the freedom of the press, through the need to nourish the images of the enemy. And finally, Moscow's present policy will ensure that the international Islamist movement gains a firmer hold on Russian soil, and might well contribute to the radicalisation of Islam amongst other groups of Russia's huge Muslim population. This could create a cleavage similar to the one we are witnessing today in Chechnya, straight through the Russian Federation.

APPENDIX

Population and casualties in Chechnya

Number of Chechens, 1989 census	957.000
Number of Chechens, 2002 census[1]	1080.000
Number of Chechens in Chechnya 2003[2]	416.000
Number of Chechens displaced by the fighting since 1999[3]	371.000
Civil inhabitants of Chechnya killed during the two wars[4]	180.000-250.000
Number of Chechen fighters killed during the second war according to official Russian accounts[5]	15.000
Number of Russians in Chechnya before the wars[6]	293.770
Number of Russians in Chechnya 2003 (Naurski and Shelkovski Rayons)[7]	17.000
Number of Russian soldiers killed during the first war according to official Russian accounts	5.000
Number of Russian soldiers killed during the first war according to Soldiers Mother Committee.	14.000
Number off Russian soldiers killed during first three years of the second war according to official accounts[8]	4.700
Number of Russian soldiers killed during the second war according to Soldiers Mothers Committee[9]	12.000

[1] This number is highly disputed. It is deemed to be much higher than the actual number of Chechens today.
[2] According to the Chechen Labour Minister (*ITAR-TASS*, 19 November 2003)
[3] According to World Refugees Survey 2002. According to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees some 91.700 of the Chechen refugees stayed in Ingushetia in April 2003. Some have returned to Chechnya since then, but the number is difficult to estimate since many have settled in private homes in Ingushetia and others travel back and forth.
[4] It is impossible to draw any firm conclusion on the total number of civilians killed during the two wars. This number has never been officially disclosed. Conservative estimates for the two wars together are 180.000. Russian and Chechen NGOs suggest that the number is closer to 250.000.
[5] *AFP* 11 August 2003.
[6] According to Lars Funch Hansen and Helen Liesl Krag (2002: 148) *Nordkaukasus- folk og politikk i en europeisk grenseregion*. København: Museum Tusculanums Forlag.
[7] *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* 23 May 2003.
[8] *Lenta.ru* 17 December 2002
[9] Other independent accounts, such as one from the German Intelligence Service confirm the number from the Soldiers Mothers Committee.