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**Nation Branding in the Aftermath of a Military Conflict:
the Case of Chechnya**

Master Thesis

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Introduction

Research Premises. Around the turn of the 20th century, Chechnya was the theater of two devastating military campaigns, carried out by Russian federal forces against the Chechen separatist army. By the time pro-Russian Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov was appointed in 2007, the small Caucasian Republic had already made major steps on the path towards peace and stability: heavy-scale fighting had stopped and Chechnya was once again part of the Russian Federation. Under Kadyrov's leadership the remaining rebellious armed groups on Chechen soil were defeated and the Republic rebuilt from scratches. However, after peaceful life was reestablished in Chechnya, the local administration had still to face a deep image crisis: the reputation of the Republic and its inhabitants was severely damaged in the course of the conflict, during which Chechnya came to be associated with crime, separatism and Islamic terrorism. Most of these stereotypes are deeply rooted in Russian culture, due to centuries of conflictive relations between Chechens and Russians. In the last few years, the local administration has been promoting a new image of Chechnya through what can be defined as a process of nation branding. Theorized in the 90s by Simon Anholt, the concept of nation branding refers to all communication practices aimed at promoting the image of a nation among a specific audience. The purpose of our study is to analyze the current Chechen nation brand, in order to identify the nation branding techniques that have been adopted to improve the reputation of Chechnya within Russian society.

Novelty. Unlike most nation branding practices, which are carried out to influence foreign audiences, the case of Chechnya is an example of how nation branding can take place within a multinational State like the Russian Federation. Moreover, our study seeks to provide insights on how nation branding techniques can be deployed as means of reconciliation, useful to counter negative perceptions engendered during inter-ethnic and separatist conflicts.

Research Object. The primary objects of our study is the current Chechnya's nation brand and the nation branding practices adopted by the Chechen

administration to influence the Russian public. As a preliminary object of study, we carried out a diachronic reconstruction of the portrayal of Chechnya and Chechens in Russian literature and media, on the basis of which the contemporary brand of Chechnya can be interpreted.

Research Questions. What are the main features of Chechnya's current nation brand? What nation branding techniques have been adopted by the current administration of Chechnya in order to improve the image of the region among the Russian public?

Goal. The purpose of our research consists in defining the contemporary brand of Chechnya and pointing out the nation branding techniques adopted by the Chechen administration in order to improve the image of the Republic in the eyes of the Russian public.

Tasks. In order to accomplish our goal, we carried out the following tasks:

- Provided an adequate background on nation branding theory
- Reconstructed the diachronic evolution of the portrayal of the Chechen Nation in Russian culture, focusing mainly on Russian 19th century literature and Post-Soviet Russian media. Thus we provided the premises which allow an adequate interpretation of the nation brand currently promoted by the Chechen administration.
- Identified the main sources through which Chechnya's nation brand is communicated to the Russian audience.
- Carried out a content analysis of the selected sources in order to deconstruct Chechnya's nation brand and point out its main constitutive elements.
- Interpreted Chechnya's nation brand, highlighting the communication strategies which are being used to improve the image of the Republic in the eyes of the Russian public.

Chronological framework. The selected time framework embraces the history of Russian-Chechen relations starting from the Caucasian War (1817-1864), when most of the modern images and perceptions of Chechnya have

their roots. For reason of conciseness we did not consider representations of Chechnya in the Soviet Union, given the less significant impact of this period on the perception of Chechnya in Russia's mass consciousness. Therefore, we fasted forward to the last decade of the 20th century, when the media representation of Chechnya during two brutal separatist conflicts heavily influenced Russian public opinion. In order to analyze the contemporary brand of Chechnya we focused on Ramzan Kadyrov's government, which was established in 2007 and it is still in charge nowadays. However, the analyzed material is related to a more limited timeframe, roughly comprised between October 2016 and April 2017.

Theoretical foundation. The theoretical foundations of our study lie in the theory of nation branding, a relatively new field of study embracing elements of Marketing, Branding, Public Diplomacy, and National Identity Studies. In our overview of nation branding theory we relied upon the literature authored by experts in the field such as Simon Anholt and Keith Dinnie. To reconstruct the image of Chechnya in Russian literature and media, we relied on secondary sources. Academic articles by H. Ram were rather significant for our analysis of the representation of Chechnya in Russian 19th literature. Works by J. Russel and V. Tishkov provided us with extensive information on the media representation of Chechnya and Chechens during the last military conflict and their impact on the Russian public opinion.

Methods. Our research is founded on a mix of qualitative interviews and quantitative content analysis. In occasion of a short stay in Grozny in December 2016, we had the chance to interview two members of the Chechen administration: representative of the Ministry of information Islam Khatullev and Press Officer of the Chechen Government Committee of Tourism Murat Shakhidov. The interviews allowed us to identify the sources of nation branding for our content analysis: Ramzan Kadyrov's activity on Vkontakte (Russian Facebook) and the 'Komanda' TV show featuring Ramzan Kadyrov as the protagonist. The content analysis, aimed at deconstructing Chechnya's nation brand, was carried out by applying a readapted version of the Anholt's Nation Brand Hexagon Model to the selected

media content.

Sample. As a sampling method for Kadyrov's Vkontakte, we selected 200 recent posts, dividing them into two groups related to different timeframes. By analyzing separately the two groups, we could assess the degree of consistency in the content throughout time. Regarding 'Komanda', we considered the eight episodes making up the TV series, analyzing meaningful items of different lengths (from single sentences to longer thematic fragments).

Probation. In February this year, we presented an outline of our research during the conference: 'Research on media and communications: theories, practices research perspectives' (Исследования медиа и коммуникаций: теории, практики, исследовательские перспективы) held by the Faculty of Communications, Media and Design of the High School of Economics in Moscow. For its novelty and relevance our project was recognized as one of the best among those presented during the conference.

Structure. Our research consists of three chapters, each one including two paragraphs. In the first chapter we provided an overview of the theory of nation branding, focusing on the aspects we thought more relevant for our case study. In the very first paragraph we provided basic definitions from branding theory and we introduced the fundamental concepts of branding applied to places and nations. The second paragraph explores the constitutive elements of the nation brand according to Simon Anholt, the founder of nation branding theory. We also outlined the structure of the nation branding process, concluding the chapter with a comparison between nation branding and the related field of public diplomacy. The second chapter introduces the case study or object of research: the Autonomous Republic of Chechnya. In the first section of this chapter we provided a brief description of Chechnya from a geographic, demographic and cultural point of view, followed by an overview of the history of Russian-Chechen relations. The second section of the chapter is dedicated to a reconstruction of the portrayal of the Chechen nation in Russian culture. Drawing from Russian 19th century literary tradition we explored some of the first representations of Chechens as hostile and

fundamentally aliens. Fasting forward to the end of the 20th century, we showed how Russian media coverage of the Chechen wars contributed in reinforcing preexisting stereotypes and generated new, more negative ones. The third and last chapter of our study is dedicated to our empirical analysis of nation branding practices in contemporary Chechnya. A first paragraph is dedicated to a description of the methods adopted and the existing limitations. Then we outlined the categories and sub-categories to be used as a framework in the content analysis. After providing the main results of the interviews with two members of the Chechen administration, we presented the results of our content analysis. Finally we carried out an interpretation of Chechnya's brand in the light of its preexisting negative image, in the attempt to highlight elements of a nation branding strategy.

Chapter 1. An Overview of Nation Branding Theory

§ 1. Fundamentals of Nation Branding

1.1 Defining Branding and Place Branding

According to the American Marketing Association, a brand is 'a name, term, sign, symbol, design, or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors'[1]. Keller argued that a brand, to be defined as such, needs to create a certain awareness and reputation on the marketplace.[2] The brand is more than just a product since 'it is provided with dimensions that differentiate it in some way from other products designed to satisfy the same need'[3]. These differences are usually intangible and symbolical, so related to mental representations of what the brand stands for.[4] Even though the brand is rooted in a concrete product and service, its essence is located in the consumers' minds and consists in a set of associations which should be unique (exclusivity), strong (saliency) and positive (desirable). Besides acting on a cognitive level, strong brands should also generate emotional bonds.[5] Successful brands are bound with their target audience through a relationship of trust and loyalty. As Erdem and Swait pointed out, brands become the symbol of a certain level of quality which buyers can always rely on.[6] Branding is the process of building a brand, informing the audience about a product by labeling it and generating determined mental structures about it. Branding creates meaning for the product, explaining what kind of benefit it can

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[1] Dictionary (2017). *American Marketing Association*. Retrieved from https://www.ama.org/resources/pages/dictionary.aspx?dLetter=B

[2] Keller, K. (2013). *Strategic brand management*. Boston: Pearson.

[3] Ibid. P. 31

[4] Ibidem

[5] Kapferer, J. (2008). *The new strategic brand management*. London: Kogan Page.

[6] Erdem, T., & Swait, J. (1998). Brand Equity as a Signaling Phenomenon. *Journal Of Consumer Psychology*, *7*(2), 131-157. http://dx.doi.org/10.1207/s15327663jcp0702_02

provide to the consumer and what distinguishes it from other similar products.[7] Branding can apply to all kind of entities: from the most concrete, like physical goods and services, to organizations and people.[8] The additional positive value generated by branding a product is defined as brand equity. In order to achieve brand equity, marketers need to generate brand knowledge among the target audience. Brand knowledge is composed mainly by two elements: brand awareness and brand image. Brand awareness measures the ability of the consumers to identify the brand, distinguishing it from other products.[9]   According to Keller 'The more a consumer 'experiences' the brand by seeing it, hearing it, or thinking about it, the more likely he or she is to strongly register the brand in memory'[10]. Brand image indicates the way the consumers perceive the brand. In order to generate brand equity, a positive brand image needs to be conveyed by linking strong, favorable, and unique associations to the brand in memory.[11]

Place Branding. The practice of labeling, identifying, distinguishing certain products from others can be applied to geographical entities such as countries, regions and cities. The specialized fields of place marketing and place branding emerged in the early 1990s. A brochure titled 'Debate: A Global Brand for Germany' authored by the image consulting firm Wolff Olins, noted that even though brands have been mostly associated with products and corporate entities, branding techniques can be applied to every area of mass communication.[12]In the age of globalization, territories, like products and corporations, compete with each

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[7] Keller, K. Op. cit. P.36

[8] Ibid. P. 37

[9] Ibid. P. 69-73

[10] Ibid. P. 75

[11] Ibid. P. 77

[12] O'Shaughnessy, J. & O'Shaughnessy, N. (2000). Treating the Nation as a Brand: Some Neglected Issues. *Journal Of Macromarketing, 20*(1), 56-64. http://dx.doi.org/ 10.1177/0276146700201006

other on the global market.[13] However, Gold, J. and Ward, S. traced the origin of place branding in the mid-19th century, when cities, regions and other territories started being subject of promotion. They also argued that forms of place promotion were already existing in colonial times, when governments persuaded people to settle in newly conquered territories.[14] In the age of globalization, increasing competition and the need for product differentiation through branding strategies started applying to places as well.[15] Short claimed that place promotion involves 'the re-evaluation and re-presentation of places to create and market a new image for localities, to enhance their competitive position in attracting or retaining resources'[16]. According to San Eugenio Vela, place branding emerges from 'a manifest need to promote identity in times of globalization'[17]. Anholt argued that branding a place consists in improving its reputation in the eyes of a certain audience in order to achieve economic gains[18]. Destination branding is the most developed specialization of place branding which focuses on the development of

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[13] Dinnie, K. (2008). *Nation branding*. Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann. P.17

[14] Gold, J. & Ward, S.. (1994). *Place promotion*. Chichester: Wiley, pp.19-37, cited in Go, F. & Govers, R. (2010). *International place branding yearbook 2010*. Basingstoke: Palgrave McMillan

[15] Go, F. & Govers, R. Op. cit. P.xxii

[16] Short, J., Benton, L., Luce, W., & Walton, J. (1993). Reconstructing the Image of an Industrial City. *Annals Of The Association Of American Geographers*, *83*(2), 207-224. http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8306.1993.tb01932.x

[17] San Eugenio Vela, J. (2013). Place branding: A conceptual and theoretical framework. *Boletin de la Asociacion de Geografos Espanoles*, (62), pp. 189-211+467-47. P.469. Retrieved from http://repositori.uvic.cat/bitstream/handle/10854/2295/artconlli_a2013_san_eugenio_jordi_place_branding.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

[18] Anholt (2010), *Places – Identity, Image and Reputation*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.

the tourism sector.[19]   However, Avraham and Ketter noted that place marketing strategies are not aimed exclusively at tourists but also at potential residents, investors, exporters and importers. The marketing goals to be achieved by improving a place image are also different: to support the local tourism industry; to make the place more attractive for living; to attract capital and investments; to enhance the importance of a place in a municipal, regional , national, and even international hierarchy.[20] Generally, brands provide an additional value for places and their stakeholders.[21]

1.2 Nation Branding: Definitions and Origins

Our study focused on a specific type of place branding: nation branding. The term nation branding was coined in 1996 by British policy advisor Simon Anholt. His original intuition was that 'the reputations of countries (and, by extension, of cities and regions too) behave rather like the brand images of companies and products, and they are equally critical to the progress, prosperity, and good management of those places'[22]. Dinnie noted that branding tools are now increasingly used by governments all around the world as instruments for competing with other nations on the global market.[23] Fan defined the nation brand as 'the total sum of all perceptions of a nation in the mind of international stakeholders which may contain some of the following elements: people, place, culture/language, history, food, fashion, famous faces (celebrities), global brands

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[19] Szondi, G. (2007). The role and challenges of country branding in transition countries: The Central and Eastern European experience. *Place Branding And Public Diplomacy*, *3*(1), 8-20. http://dx.doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.pb.6000044

[20] Avraham, E. and Ketter, E. (2008) Op. cit. P.8

[21] Go, F. & Govers, R. (2010) Op. cit. P.xxii

[22]Anholt, S. (2011). Beyond the nation brand: The role of image and identity in international relations. *A. Pike, Brands and Branding Geographies*, 289. Retrieved from http://surface.syr.edu/exchange/vol2/iss1/1

[23] Dinnie, K. Op.cit.

etc.'[24] Dinnie described it as 'the unique, multi-dimensional blend of elements that provides the nation with culturally grounded differentiation and relevance for all of its target audiences'[25]. Nation branding consists in the application of marketing and communication techniques 'to alter or change the behavior, attitudes, identity or image of a nation in a positive way'[26]. The term 'nation branding' is often used interchangeably with the term country or state branding. Van Ham stated that the ultimate aim of nation branding is securing economic and political attention in an increasingly globalized world. This view is reinforced by the following rhetorical question : 'Why would we invest in or visit a country we do not know, and why would we pay attention to its political and strategic demands if we have no clue what the country is all about and why we should care?'[27].

Attracting tourism and foreign investments, increasing political influence, boosting the export are just a few examples of the benefits generated by nation branding. Szondi argued that nation branding can be also used by governments of transition countries to distance themselves from previous political and economic orders, like in the case of Eastern European countries after the collapse of the Soviet Union.[28] Dinnie highlighted the high level of complexity of the nation brand, which sets it apart from simple product brands and makes it more similar to corporate brands. This higher complexity lies in

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[24] Fan, Y. (2008). Soft power: Power of attraction or confusion?. *Place Branding And Public Diplomacy*, *4*(2), 147-158. http://dx.doi.org/10.1057/pb.2008.4,17

[25] Dinnie, K. Op. cit. P.16

[26] Szondi, G. (2008). *Public diplomacy and nation branding: Conceptual similarities and differences*. Netherlands Institute of International Relations" Clingendael". P.5. Retrieved from http://kamudiplomasisi.org/pdf/nationbranding.pdf

[27] Van Ham, P. (2008). Place Branding: The State of the Art. *The Annals of The American Academy Of Political And Social Science*, *616*(1), 126-149. http://dx.doi.org/ 10.1177/0002716207312274

[28] Szondi (2007) Op.cit.

1. A wider range of stakeholders
2. The multiplicity of communications channels used to reach the target audience
3. The difficulty of condensing a multifaceted entity into the distilled essence of a brand
4. The unlimited number of uncontrollable factors that can affect perceptions of the brand[29]

Ollin argued that, despite the relative novelty of nation branding as a field of studies, nations have been always branding themselves during history. As an example he pointed out the case of France and its transformation from the Absolutist State under Louis XIV to revolutionary Republic after 1817:

> The tricolor replaced the fleur de lys, the Marseillaise became the new anthem, the traditional weights and measures were replaced by the metric system, a new calendar was introduced, God was replaced by the Supreme Being and the whole lot was exported through military triumphs all over Europe. In other words the entire French package was changed. (...) if revolutionary France was not a new brand I do not know what is.[30]

Due to the multiple changes transforming French national brand through History, Ollin defined French politicians as 'the world's specialists at branding and rebranding the nation'[31]. Fan argued that nation brands exist independently from any conscious action of nation branding: all countries and nations are associated with specific images by the international audience.[32]

1.3 Core Elements of the Nation Brand

National Identity and Country-of-Origin. Dinnie located the theory of nation

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[29] Dinnie, Op.cit. P.193

[30] Olins, W. (2002). Branding the nation — the historical context. *Journal Of Brand Management*, *9*(4), 241-248. http://dx.doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.bm.2540075

[31] Ibid.

[32] Fan, Y. Op.cit.

branding in the confluence between the fields of national identity and the one of country-of-origin. The latter is defined as 'the effect that a product or service's origin has on consumer attitudes and behavior towards that product or service'[33]. Italian food and fashion, German cars, Japanese technology, French perfumes: these are all cases where the country-of-origin effect provides significant additional value to the product. Developing a strong COO was proved by researchers to be a very effective tool for reinforcing the nation brand. In particular COO is a very important component of every country's export sector. The COO is not necessarily static; it can change over time for the better or the worst. South Korea, Taiwan and Japan are all cases were a rise in the COO value has been registered in the last couple of decades.[34] However, the concept of the nation brand goes far beyond a country's products and services, encompassing the political, social and cultural specificities of national identity. Anholt defined nation branding as 'the dominant channel of communication for national identity'[35]. Therefore, national culture lies at the core of nation branding practices, elevating them from the status of superficial PR or marketing operations. Successful nation branding is only possible if supported by adequate awareness and knowledge of the main components of national identity: language, food, architecture, sport and music are just the most visible manifestation of this concept. Landscape is also a very important element of national identity: iconic locations such as Ayers Rock in Australia and the fjords in Norway acquired the status of national symbols. The national tourism sector can highly benefit from the promotion of these 'poetic places' which are identified as the historical home of a particular community.[36] Dinnie identified the key elements of national identity in 'the notions of a historic homeland, common myths, historical memories and a common, mass public

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[33] Dinnie. Op.cit. P. 84

[34] Ibid. P.84-86

[35] Anholt, S. (2003) *Brand new justice*. Amsterdam: Butterworth-Heinemann. P.139

[36] Dinnie. Op.cit. P. 113-114

culture'[37]. The identity of a nation changes across history: different aspects of it come into focus depending on the political, economic and social circumstances.[38] The same concept of nation is, according to Anderson, an imagined construct, since even in the smallest nation, the majority of its members will never know each other.[39]According to this view, national identity is not a static entity but 'produced and fluid'[40]. Therefore, the national past is often reinterpreted and reframed accordingly to contingent national interest in order to pursue political or economic ends. The processes involved in this operation of reframing are the following: *reiteration*, where historically positive features of national identity are mobilized*; recapture*, which stands for an aspiration to recover certain positive historical features of national identity that have lost their strength with the passage of time; *reinterpretation*, in which negative aspects of the national past are interpreted as positive or as largely neutral; *repudiation*, which consist in the omission of certain features of national identity that are not suitable for reinterpretation.[41]As Dinnie pointed out, the flexible nature of national identity is the core aspect of the nation-branding paradigm: the possibility to frame the identity of the nation (or at least some of its components) allows the implementation of nation branding practices. Using the above mentioned techniques, governments have the power to highlight particular aspects of national identity and shape the perception of it. However, Pittock noted the possible risks of conceiving the nation as an 'imagined community', which would give too much power to certain actors who may shape national identity in the pursue of their narrow interests.[42]In the landmark text

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[37] Ibid. P.113

[38] Ibid. P.116

[39] Anderson, B. (1982). *Imagined communities*. London.

[40] Dinnie. Op.cit. P. 116

[41] Bond, R., McCrone, D., & Brown, A. (2003). National identity and economic development: reiteration, recapture, reinterpretation and repudiation*. *Nations And Nationalism*, *9*(3), 371-391. http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/1469-8219.00102

[42] Pittock, M.G.H. (1999). *Celtic Identity and British Image*. Manchester: University Press.

'Invented Tradition', anthropologists pointed out that often in history power groups used fictitious traditions and interpretations of national identity as instrument of power in order to create social cohesion.[43] 'The fictitious nature of much invented tradition inevitably invites criticism on the grounds that such traditions lack authenticity or legitimacy, and are created in order to benefit the established social order'[44]. This view highlights the main ethical dilemma implied in all practices of nation branding: who has the right to frame the nation brand? Who is supposed to be the nation brand manager? Democratic society with a free press would not allow a state-sponsored narrative to be imposed from above. Dinnie argued that all citizens of the nation are to be considered as stakeholders of the nation brand, hence they should be included in the process of nation branding.[45]

Nation Brand Identity and Nation Brand Image. Brand identity and brand image are core concepts in the theory of branding and, consequently, of nation branding as well.[46] According to the Oxford Dictionary, identity means 'the characteristics determining who or what a person or thing is'[47]. According to the same dictionary an image is 'a mental representation or idea'[48]. While identity refers to what something truly is, an image indicates a mental perception. The challenge of nation branding mainly consists in filling the gap existing between the identity of the nation and the image of that same nation in the minds of a determined target audience. Therefore, no nation branding activity can take place without first determining the nation-brand identity and image as well as the

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[43] Hobsbawm, E. & Ranger, T. (1986). The Invention of Tradition. *Labour / Le Travail*, *18*, 313. http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/25142744

[44] Dinnie, Op.cit. P.117

[45] Ibid.

[46] Ibid. P. 42

[47] Identity - Definition Of Identity In English (2017).*Oxford Dictionaries*. Retrieved from https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/identity

[48] Image - Definition Of Image In English (2017). *Oxford Dictionaries*. Retrieved from https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/image

distance separating the two.[49] National identity is something far too multifaceted and complex to be encapsulated in a brand. In order to be branded, national identity needs to be simplified by selecting only some of its constitutive elements and converting it into nation brand identity.[50] Dinnie argued that 'a key task of those engaged in constructing a nation-brand identity is to be selective in identifying which elements of national identity can usefully serve the stated objectives of the nation-branding campaign'[51]. Riezebos defined a brand image as a 'subjective mental picture shared by a group of consumers'[52]. This definition can be easily applied to the concept of nation-brand image, which indicates the mental representation of a country among a certain audience. Generating a positive nation-brand image is the goal of all nation branding campaigns. However, brand images usually are applied to places far before any conscious nation branding practice is undertaken. In fact, As Dinnie points out 'nations do not have the choice of being branded or not'[53]. The factors determining a nation-brand image are multiple. Firsthand, personal experience of a country by working or travelling is the most direct way through which nation-brand images are generated. Pre-existing stereotypes play an important role in shaping the nation brand image. Other factors include media representations, political events, and the quality of brands originating from that country or the behavior of people coming from that country. Nation brand images usually vary depending on the specific audience taken into account. As a consequence, nation branding campaigns need to be set up accordingly to the preexisting nation brand image cultivated by a specific audience.[54]

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[49] Dinnie. Op.cit. P.42

[50] Ibid. P.46

[51] Ibid.

[52] Riezebos, H., Kist, B., & Kootstra, G. (2008). *Brand management*. Harlow: Financial Times Prentice Hall, cited in Dinnie. Op.cit. P. 47

[53] Dinnie. Op.cit. P.170

[54] Ibid. P.47

§ 2. Branding the Nation: Structure and Practices

2.1 The Nation Brand Hexagon Model

In 2006, Simon Ahnolt formulated the Nation Brand Index where he ranked the reputation of nations, measuring the rise and falls of their image. In 2008 Anholt created an expanded version of the original index in collaboration with the research company GfK Roper Public Affairs and Media. Purpose of the new index was 'providing governments and their agencies with a one-of-a-kind resource for actionable insights needed to more effectively manage a country's reputation'[55]. The index measures the reputation of 50 nations by conducting 20 000 interviews every year. The ranking takes into account six dimensions, which make up the people's perception of a country/nation. These six dimensions are visually represented through the Nation Brand Hexagon.

- Exports - also known as the 'country-of-origin' effect, it determines on what extent knowing the location where a product was made increases or decreases people's likelihood of purchasing it.

- Governance - it measures the reputation of the nation's government, its honesty and competency. It evaluates a government's observation of human rights, behavior in international relations, and contribution in tackling environmental and social problems on a global scale.

- Culture - it evaluates the perception of a nation's cultural heritage taking into account different fields such as music, art, literature, sport.

- People - this factor evaluates the perception of national behaviors. It assesses how welcome people would feel in visiting the country. It evaluates whether people would like to have friends from that country; professional attitude are also evaluated measuring how willing employers would hire

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[55]2008 Anholt-GfK Roper Nation Brand Index Report Highlights (2008). Retrieved from http:// www.gtai.de/GTAI/Content/CN/Invest/_SharedDocs/Downloads/Studies/diw-wochenbericht-9-2010.pdf

professionals from that country.

- Tourism - it measures the appeal of the country's natural beauties and man-made attractions

- Immigration and Investments - the capacity of a country to attract human and economic capital. It includes factors such as economic prosperity, average quality of life; additionally it evaluates the business environment: whether it is stagnant or dynamic.[56]

2.2 Phases of the Nation Branding Process

Dinnie outlined a theoretical framework for the process of nation branding, highlighting its different phases. The first category of the framework is called *anticipations* and indicates the condition of the nation brand prior to the branding campaign. It describes the image of the nation shaped by two main factors: personal experience and stereotypes. While personal experience can be very diverse, stereotypes have usually a detrimental effect on the country image, and as a consequence, on its economy and reputation on the international stage. The central section of the framework consists in the categories of *complexity* and *cultural expressiveness*. *Complexity* indicates all the uncontrollable elements that have an impact on the nation brand, such as political events, calamities, wars. *Cultural expressiveness* includes all the cultural elements composing national identity such as language, architecture, traditions, landscape. *Complexity* and *cultural expressiveness* need to be synthesized through a process of *encapsulation*, which is the real essence of the nation branding practice. *Encapsulation* consists in managing the different often incoherent elements making up the nation brand, harmonizing the efforts of the different actors involved in the nation branding strategy and customize the efforts according to the different target audiences. 'The greater the diversity of the nation, the less controllable are its constituent elements and the more challenging it will be to develop a consistent, widely accepted nation-

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[56] Ibid.

brand'[57] argued Dinnie. The category of *complexity* also takes into account the urban and rural dichotomy: two souls of the nation which need to be adequately represented in a unified nation brand strategy. *Cultural expressiveness* is broken down into three components: *heritage*, *landscapes* and *the arts*. *Heritage* encompasses the national traditions*; landscape* is considered as a powerful iconic and symbolic element of national identity; *the arts* include music, food, and other cultural artifacts. The process of encapsulation includes three distinct sub-categories: *redefinition*, *branding* and *zeitgeist*. *Redefinition* is the crucial moment in the nation branding process, since it defines the new way the nation decides to present itself to the external audience. The redefinition of the nation brand is then communicated and made visible through the act of branding. *Zeitgeist*, the 'spirit of the time' stands for the global social, political and economic circumstances to which the redefinition of the nation branding should be adapted. The last phase considered by Dinnie is called *engagement*. This phase is crucial for making the nation branding project resonate within society at large by including the maximum amount of stakeholder. *Engagement'*s sub-section *inclusiveness* indicates the effort that need to be done to include all the relevant stakeholders and their respective values in the nation-branding campaign. If the campaign fails to include enough relevant actors, it will generate hostility in those stakeholder groups that are excluded. Dinnie mentioned the national diaspora as a key stakeholder group that should be included in the branding strategy. Diaspora networks are an invaluable resource for reputation-building and they can give a significant contribution in cultivating the nation brand. *Exemplars* is another sub-section included in *engagement*. It indicates the success stories which can be used to generate support for the nation-brand activities. For example the involvements of testimonials that can bolster the credentials of the nation brand. *Transparency* is also part of the section *engagement*. Different approaches can be adopted in regard to the degree of transparency of the nation branding process. A little transparent process will see less stakeholders participating while a very transparent and public strategy could

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[57] Dinnie. Op.cit. P. 146

generate a high degree of dissenting voices to derail the campaign before it gives its first results.[58]

2.3 Nation Branding and Public Diplomacy

As a field of study, public diplomacy has a far older tradition than the relatively new field of nation branding. However, despite the considerable amount of literature devoted to the field, the definition of public diplomacy has been object of long controversies. Szondi defined public diplomacy as 'government communication aimed at foreign audiences to achieve changes in the 'hearts or minds' of the people'[59]. Malone described the content of public diplomacy as 'activities, directed abroad in the fields of information, education, and culture, whose objective is to influence a foreign government, by influencing its citizens'[60]. The promotion of the national interest outside the boundaries of the nation is the ultimate goal of public diplomacy. Public diplomacy, differently from nation branding, is traditionally linked to situations of tension and conflict between nations.[61]Other commentators argued that while the main goal of nation branding is raising awareness of the nation, public diplomacy aims at creating mutual understanding. Frederick identified public diplomacy as 'a mean of low intensity conflict resolution'[62]. Both nation branding and public diplomacy can be considered channels of soft power. [63] While nation branding is usually aimed at

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[58] Dinnie. Op.cit.

[59] Szondi (2008). Op.cit. P. 6

[60]Malone, G. (1985). Managing Public Diplomacy. *The Washington Quarterly*, *8*(3), 199-213. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01636608509450301

[61] Szondi (2008). Op.cit. P.7

[62] Frederick, H. (1993). *Global Communication and International Relations*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing, quoted in Szondi (2008). Op.cit. P. 7

[63] Bátora, J. (2005). Public diplomacy in small and medium-sized states: Norway and Canada. *Netherlands Institute of International Relations 'Clingendael'*. Retrieved from https:// www.peacepalacelibrary.nl/ebooks/files/Clingendael_20050300_cli_paper_dip_issue97.pdf

highlighting the 'uniqueness' and 'otherness' of the nation, its culture, landscape and people, public diplomacy seeks to highlight shared elements in nations' history and culture, in order to improve international relations.[64] Nation branding derives from the field of marketing while public diplomacy is located at the intersection of international relations and international communication. Szondi argued that nation branding can be alternatively seen as the economic dimension of public diplomacy. Nation branding strategies usually target mass audiences, unlike public diplomacy, which is usually oriented to a narrower public, usually the cultural and political elites.[65] The government is by definition the main actor in public diplomacy operations. In nation branding, even though the government has usually the role of general supervisor, the private sector and civil society gives a significant contribution to the campaign. Szondi identified relation building as the common goal for both public diplomacy and nation branding. The two disciplines are therefore conceptualized as variations of *'international public relations'*.

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

This first chapter provided the theoretical foundations of our research. The concepts we outlined will be applied in the course of our analysis of the Chechen nation brand. However, in order to proceed with an interpretation of the current nation brand identity of Chechnya, we need first to outline the preexisting brand image cultivated by the Russian audience.

Chapter 2. The Case of Chechnya

§ 3 The Autonomous Republic of Chechnya

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[64] Szondi (2008). Op.cit. P.16

[65] Ibid. P.13

3.1 Geography, Demography, Culture

To provide a short description of the Republic of Chechnya and the Chechen nation we mainly relied on Jaimoukha's work 'The Chechens: a Handbook', the content of which is summarized in the following paragraphs[66]. The Autonomous Republic of Chechnya, also known as Chechnya, is a federal subject of the Russian Federation. It is situated in the area of the North Caucasus, in the southernmost corner of Eastern Europe. The region has an area of around 17 000 sq. ml. It borders with the Stavropol Krai and Dagestan in the north, with Dagestan in the east, North Ossetia and Ingushetia in the west, Georgia in the southwest and Dagestan in the southeast. Geographically, Chechnya can be divided in four regions: the Northern plains, the Terek-Sunzha ridges to the south of the Terek River, the Chechen plains in the center and the Caucasus in the south. Chechnya's climate is characterized by its diversity: it ranges from a continental climate in the semi-desert plains in the north, to the alpine weather in the mountains of the south. Chechnya has short cold winters and long warm summers.

Status in the Framework of the Russian Federation. Chechnya is one of the 22 republics of the Russian Federation. In virtue of its status of republic, Chechnya enjoys a higher degree of autonomy than other federal subjects of the Russian Federation: it has its own Constitution and official language. Republics are usually home of a specific ethnic minority. In the case of Chechnya, the Chechen nation gives the name to the region. The Parliament of Chechnya consists of two chambers: the Republic council (21 members, one for each district) and the People's Assembly (40 deputies 20 elected in party lists and 20 in single mandate electoral districts). Chechnya is part of the North Caucasian Federal district. The region includes 15 administrative districts: Achkhoi-Martan, Grozny, Gudermes, Itum-Kala, Kurchaloi, Nadterechny, Naur, Nozhai-Yurt, Shali, Sharoi, Shatoi, Shelkovsky, Sunzha, Urus-Martan and Vedeno.

Demographics. Chechens are the largest nationality inhabiting the North

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[66] Jaimoukha, A. (2005). *The Chechens: a Handbook*. London and New York: Routledge

Caucasus. According to *Goskomstat Rossia* the population of the Republics is 1 413 446. The 95, 3 % of the population is made up of ethnic Chechens while only 3, 7 % are Russians. Most of Russian residents left the Republic during the government of Dzhokhar Dudaev due to rising ethnic violence. Chechnya is mainly rural with just the minority of the population (34, 69%) settled in the urban areas. The most highly populated city is Grozny, with a population of 250 803 followed by Urus-Martan (52 399), Shali (46 073), Gudermes (43 969) and Argun (42 797).

      Economy. In the last few years the Chechen GRP increased more than three times: from 23 billion rubles in 2005 to 70 billions in 2010. Given the predominantly rural nature of the region, farming and cattle breeding play an important role in Chechen economy. The oil industry is another prominent sector of Chechen economy. Chechnya is ranked 24th in the list of subjects of the Russian Federation for extraction of oil and 18th for the extraction of natural gas. Despite the noticeable improvement compared to the early 2000s, unemployment remains high in the Republic.

      Culture. Chechens refers to themselves as 'Nokchii' (singular 'Nokchuo'). According to Russian sources, the word 'Chechens' came into use after a first skirmish between Nokchii and a Russian contingent on the shore of the Argun River in 1732. Chechens are part of the Vainakh people, an ethnic group also including Ingush and Kist. The Vainakh people, originally coming from the Middle East, have inhabited the Caucasus for thousands of years. Prior to the Russian conquest, Chechen people had already formed their national identity: they had their own language, definite territory and political structures. Chechen society has always been based on a conglomeration of clans called *teips* bounded together in larger confederations called *tukhum*. In case of external danger, the tribes would come together as once in defense of their common territory. Chechen society has been for many centuries a society of equals, where freedom is held as one of the highest values. Every clan is headed by an elder and decisions used to be taken by elected councils. Social life is very much regulated by a traditional code of conduct

called 'nokchallah', which can be rendered as 'the way of being a Chechen'. This set of rules includes obligation towards the clan and the safeguard of the honor of women. Love for the fatherland, bravery and hospitableness are some of the values held into highest account.

Language. Chechen and Russian are the official languages of Chechnya. Chechen, likewise Ingush, Kist and Tsova-Tushian belong to the Nakh branch of the North East Caucasian languages. The Chechen language has literary status. It is used in the government, media and education.

Religion. Prior to their conversion to Islam, Vainakh people believed in a multitude of deities, with elements of paganism, polytheism and animism. The veneration of trees and the cult of the dead used to play important role in the ancient Vainakh cult. According to the most accredited theories, Islam started penetrating into Chechnya from Dagestan starting from the 17th century. By the first half of the 19th century the overwhelming majority of the Chechen population had embraced Islam. Chechens adopted Sufism since it was the Islamic current that best fitted their social and cultural characteristics. Important pillars of Chechen Sufism are asceticism, submission to the sect leader and the glorification of *gazavat*, the holy war of resistance against foreign occupation. Chechen interpretation of Sufism soon acquired militant traits, becoming a powerful unifying element in times of aggression.

3.2 Brief History of Russian-Chechen Relations

From first encounters to the annexation of the Caucasus. The first encounter between Russians and Chechens dates back to the 16th century. After the conquest of Astrakhan, Russian tsar Ivan the terrible directed Russian expansionist efforts to the North Caucasus. Russian Cossacks established settlements in the Terek River Valley in 1577. Since then, the region was contested between the Ottoman Empire, Persia and Russia. Russian rulers tried several attempts to coopt the Vainakh people in the struggle with the other hegemonic powers. However, attempts to expand in the regions gave little results until the reign of Peter the Great

(1682-1725), when Russian took over a significant amount of Caucasian territory from Persia in one of the several Russian- Persian wars (1722-1723). Under the rule of Empress Catherine the Great, Russians' strategy in the Caucasus consisted in slowly pushing south the tribes of the region, erecting fortresses in defense of the conquered territory. Russian expansionism in the Caucasus eventually led to a full-fledged war with the mountain peoples: the Caucasian War (1817-1864). Russian commander Alexey Yermolov became notorious for his ruthless determination in subjugating the tribes of the Caucasus. Under his commands, massacres and rape became widespread practice in the Russian military campaign. Atrocities committed by Yermolov had the collateral effect to unite the mountain tribes, who set aside their rivalries in order to resist the Russian aggression. Sufi Islam, recently embraced by the mountaineer tribes, became a powerful source of cohesion in the struggle against the Russians. One of the most prominent leaders of the mountaineers, Avar-born imam Shamil unified the tribes of the Caucasus and led them in battle from 1834 and 1859. Despite the fierce resistance of the mountaineers, Russians eventually got the upper hand and annexed Chechnya in 1861. As a result of the war, more than half a million Chechens died, and many were forced to leave for Ottoman land. Despite the politics of relative cultural and religious tolerance adopted by the tsars, Chechens were never pacified and violent uprisings became a common phenomenon in the North Caucasus.

The Soviet period. The chaos engendered by the Russian Revolution in 1917 offered a first chance for the peoples of the North Caucasus to obtain independence. The North Caucasian Mountain Republic, including Ingushetia, Chechnya and Dagestan set apart from Russia in 1919. In 1921 The Red Army retook control of the region and absorbed it in the newly born Soviet State. The following process of sovietization was met by stubborn resistance in Chechnya and the regime had often to intervene to crack down on rebellions. In 1934 Chechnya officially became part of the Chechen-Ingush autonomous Socialist Republic. During World War II, more than 30000 Chechens and Ingush fought in the ranks of the red army while a minority sided with the German invaders. In 1944 Stalin

enforced a mass deportation of Chechen to the Steppes of Central Asia, justifying it as a punishment for their treason. A quarter of the deportees perished during the journey to exile and, in the following years, tens of thousands Russians resettled the empty Chechen lands. Only in 1956, as a consequence of the de-Stalinization process, Nikita Khrushchev allowed the Chechens to return from exile. The reintegration of the Chechens in soviet society was not an easy process because of frequent disputes arising with ethnic Russians on issues of land property. However, Chechens' resentment and will for self-determination were kept under control by Soviet authorities until the late 80s, the years of the perestroika, when liberalization allowed Chechen nationalistic sentiments to break loose.

Independence and First Chechen War. Perestroika reforms paved the way for the dissolution of the Soviet Union in December 1991. Many of the national enclaves composing the Soviet State asserted demands of sovereignty. The Government of the Chechen-Ingush ASSR was dissolved in 1991 by Dzhokhar Dudaev, former commander of Soviet air force who recently had become leader of the All-National Congress of the Chechen People. While the newly born Republic of Ingushetia joined the Russian Federation, Chechnya unilaterally declared its full independence from Russia in 1993. In the period between 1991 and 1994, frequent episodes of ethnic discrimination against non-Chechens compelled thousands of Russians to leave the Republic. Tensions between Grozny and Moscow steadily rose until November 1994, when Yeltsin sent the army to restore constitutional order in Chechnya. Despite the estimations of general Grachev, who said the operation was going to be a 'bloodless blitzkrieg', Russian forces quickly ended up in a quagmire. Despite the disproportionate superiority of Russian forces, Chechen resistance proved to be much better organized and inflicted heavy losses to the Russian. Indiscriminate airstrikes on Chechen soil and human right abuses quickly enraged the local Chechen population, who grew increasingly hostile to the federal forces and led many to join Dudaev's army. Russian assault on Grozny on New Year's' Eve 1995 ended up in a complete failure. Federal forces lost around 2000 men, most of which were inexperienced conscripts. After prolonged fighting,

eventually Chechen separatists were forced to abandon the capital in March 1995. In the following months the federal troops gained control of almost the whole Chechen territory. However, Chechens retreated to the mountains where they engaged the Russians in guerrilla warfare. In June 1995, Chechen field commander Shamil Basayev took more than 1000 people hostages in a hospital in Budennovsk. After negotiations, the Chechen leader managed to obtain a temporary ceasefire gaining some time for Chechen forces to reorganize. In August 1996 the Chechen rebels led by Basayev and Maskhadov launched a new offensive in the center of Grozny where Russian troops were soon rounded up and cut out from the rest of federal forces. To prevent a further bloodbath, General Aleksandr Lebed brokered a ceasefire and signed the Khasavyurt accord on 31 August 1996. According to the agreement federal forces had to leave the Republic by the end of the year and the relations between Russia and the Chechen Republic were to be defined by 2001. As a result of the accord Chechnya was de-facto independent.

Inter-war period and Second Chechen War. In the aftermath of the first campaign, the Republic was in ruin and its economy severely damaged. In 1997 presidential elections were held in Chechnya and former field commander Aslan Maskhadov was elected president. However, it became clear that the new government was unable to restore order in the Republic ravaged by war. Guerrilla groups previously united in the fight with the Russians started fighting each other. Law-enforcement was nonexistent and kidnapping became the most profitable business for many militants, unable to adapt to peaceful life. The Chechen field commanders became warlords with their own private militias, economic and political interests. Overspread misery, crime, and violence proved a fertile ground for religious radicalism to thrive. Maskhadov's attempts to normalize the relationships with Moscow were unsuccessful, mainly due to his inability to reign in the increasingly aggressive Islamic groups, the aim of which was achieving the independence of the entire North Caucasus from Russia and the constitution of an Islamic State. In August 1999, Shamil Basayev and the Saudi-born Ibn Al-Khattab at the head of 2000 militants attacked the neighboring Republic of Dagestan. In

September bombs went off in apartment buildings in Moscow, Volgodonsk and Buynaksk resulting in the death of over 300 people. The explosions, whose responsibility was attributed to Chechen terrorists, became the trigger for the Second Chechen War. While Basayev militants were pushed back from Dagestan into Chechnya, the federal army began carrying out airstrikes on Chechen soil. In October 1999, Russia's new Prime Minister Vladimir Putin declared Maskhadov's government illegitimate and proceeded to a full scale land invasion. A considerable amount of Chechen fighters led by former mufti Akhmad Kadyrov switched side and joined the Federal forces. By December, federal troops reached Grozny and targeted it with heavy artillery strikes and bombing.   When Russian troops captured it in February 2000, the city had turned into a wasteland. After the fall of Grozny, heavy fighting continued in the mountains and the Chechen conflict turned into a 'counter-insurgency operation', which would continue for almost a decade. Increasingly aware of the impossibility to end the war in a traditional way, Putin opted for the strategy of 'Chechenization' of the conflict: the direction of the counter- insurgency operations was passed on to pro-Moscow Chechens. In May 2000, federal forces established a transition pro-Moscow government with Kadyrov at its head. On 23 of March 2003 a national referendum was held in Chechnya which led to the signing of a new Constitution declaring Chechnya an integral part of the Russian Federation.

Reconstruction. In 2004 Akhmad Kadyrov was elected president of the Autonomous Republic of Chechnya. In exchange of a full amnesty, many former separatists were convinced by the new president to lay down arms and join the pro-federal forces.   However, the Chechen separatists were far from defeated and, under the leadership of President Maskhadov, they continued engaging pro-federal forces in guerrilla fighting. The unwillingness of Moscow to negotiate with Maskhadov moderate faction resulted in a general radicalization of the insurgency, which came to be driven by religious extremist ideology. The most radicalized factions of the resistance often resorted to terrorist strategies, carrying out suicide attacks across Russia. In 2002 a commando of Chechen terrorists seized the

Dubrovka Theater in Moscow and took the public as hostages. They demanded Russian troops to be withdrawn from Chechnya and the end of the Second Chechen war. The Russian government refused to engage in negotiation and Special Forces stormed the theater. As a result, all terrorists and 140 hostages were killed. Two years later, Chechen terrorists sent by warlord Shamil Basayev occupied a school in Beslan, holding captive around 1100 people, most of which were children. In the ensuing shootout, all terrorists were killed and more than 300 civilians died in the crossfire. On the 9th of May 2004, President of Chechnya Akhmad Kadyrov was assassinated during a bombing attack prepared in the occasion of the Victory Day parade. His son, Ramzan Kadyrov, was appointed head of the Republic in 2007. Kadyrov's personal militia, the so called *kadyrovtsy* took in their hands the fight against the remains of the Chechen insurgent army. By the end of the decade the most prominent leaders of the Chechen insurgency died or have been killed, including Khattab, Basaev and former President of Ichkeria Maskhadov. Internal disunity also contributed to weaken further the Chechen insurgence, with many leaders replacing Chechen separatism with pan Islamic ideology. On 16 April 2009 President of Russia Dmitry Medvedev announced the counter-terrorism operation in Chechnya was officially over.

§ 4 Evolution of Chechnya's Image in Russian Culture

4.1 The Chechen Nation in 19th Century Russian Literature

Edward Said defined the phenomenon of orientalism as a tendency, deeply rooted in Western society, to judge and misrepresent Eastern cultures on the basis

of preconceived archetypes. According to Said, Europe represented the Orient as its own 'other', using it as a mirror to define itself. This 'othering' discourse establishes the superiority of the rational, enlightened, technologically advanced West over a backward and irrational East.[67] Europeans largely adopted this representation of the Orient in order to justify their colonial ambitions.[68] According to Johnson and Coleman ''othering' of different places—of places viewed as 'modern' finding their inverse 'backward'—was established as a fundamental part of European thought at a time when nation-states and national identities were being formed and grounded within Europe'[69] . Russia, as an ex-imperial power, has a long tradition of Orientalism mainly related to the colonization of the North Caucasus. The Russian Empire established its control over this mountainous region only after a half a century- long war against Chechens and other belligerent tribes. The Russian official discourse justified the annexation of the Caucasus as part of a civilizing mission aimed at taming the barbaric inhabitants of the mountains.[70] The phenomenon of Russian Orientalism is well reflected in the literature of that time. According to Dziolkowski, literature is 'the main locus where national stereotypes are not only reflected, but also reinforced and even engendered'[71]. Ram and Wertz argued that 'Russia's literary tradition was the primary locus of Russian debate on the Caucasus until the media

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[67] Said E. (1979). *Orientalism.* New York: Vintage Books, cited in Shafee, F. (2016).

Misperceptions about the conflict in Chechnya: The influence of

Orientalism. *Securitologia*, *22*(2), 27-42. http://dx.doi.org/10.5604/18984509.1203724

[68] Johnson, C., & Coleman, A. (2012). The Internal Other: Exploring the Dialectical

Relationship Between Regional Exclusion and the Construction of National Identity. *Annals Of The Association Of American Geographers*, *102*(4), 863-880. http://dx.doi.org/

10.1080/00045608.2011.602934

[69] Ibid. P.13

[70] Shafee, F. Op.cit. P. 39

[71] Ziolkowski, M. (2005). *Alien visions*. Newark: University of Delaware Press. P.10.

revolution of the post-Soviet nineties'[72]. The two authors observed that, in absence of war reportages, a major source of information on the Caucasian War was the literary production of Russian writers such as A. Pushkin, M. Lermontov and L. Tolstoy.[73] Witnessing the Caucasian War at first hands, Mikhail Lermontov portrayed the people of the Caucasus as fundamentally barbaric, acknowledging no law except the one of violence. His famous poem 'Cossack Lullaby' (1840) reads: 'The wicked Chechen crawls onto the shore/ and sharpens his dagger'[74]. Among the traditions of the highlanders, Lermontov was particularly impressed by the blood feud, which obliged family members to take revenge on the killer of a kinsman and even on his relatives: 'Over there to strike an enemy is not a crime; / Friendship can be trusted, but vengeance is more reliable'[75]. Lermontov perceived the mountaineers'resistance to the Russians as 'an inchoate, predatory violence, based on an elemental sense of vengeance rather than on any evolved sense of justice'[76]. Lev Tolstoy defined Chechens' resentment towards the Russian invaders as 'stronger than hate'[77]. The resistance of the Caucasus tribes to Russian domination was embodied by the figure of the *abrek*, (in Chechen the word means 'avenger' while in Russian is a synonym for 'bandit'), the prototype of the indomitable and brave mountaineer fighter.[78]In the iconography of the time, he was

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[72] Ram, H. (1999). Prisoners of the Caucasus: Literary myths and media representations of the Chechen conflict. *Berkeley Program in Eurasian and East European Studies*. Retrieved from http://iseees.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/u4/bps_/publications_/1999_01-ram.pdf P.3

[73] Ibid. P. 1

[74] Lermontov, M. (1840). *Otechestvennie Zapiski*, quoted in Ram, H. Op.cit. P. 3

[75] Lermontov,M. (1832) *Sobranie sochinenii* quoted in Ram,H. (1999) Op.cit. P.5

[76] Ram, H. (2003). *Imperial sublime*. Madison: Univ Of Wisconsin Press. Op.cit.P.4

[77] Tolstoy L. (1912), *Hadji-Murat*. Moscow: Khudozhestvennaya Literatura, 1965, p 110, quoted in Russell, J. (2005). Terrorists, bandits, spooks and thieves: Russian demonisation of the Chechens before and since 9/11. *Third World Quarterly*, *26*(1), 101-116. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0143659042000322937

[78] Russell, J. (2005). Op.cit. P.103

portrayed as 'rifle in hand, on a hilltop silhouetted like a wolf against the moon'[79]. As Ram and Wertz noticed, even though Russian poets depicted the Caucasus as Russia's 'other', their representations were by no means a mere expression of colonialism: Russian poets were both attracted and unsettled by the primordial beauty of the Northern Caucasus and by its hot blooded inhabitants. The dichotomy freedom-violence inspired contrasting feelings in Russian Romantic poets, who alternated demonization and glorification of the Chechens.[80] The following verses from the poem Izmail-Bei (1832) well express this double-sided perception: 'And the tribes living in those gorges are savage/ Their god is freedom, their law is war'[81]. As the mountains they inhabited, highlanders were the embodiment of the romantic sublime, conveying simultaneously a sense of pleasure and fear. While visiting the Caucasus, Tolstoy wrote in one of his diaries: 'This savage land is indeed splendid: in it two entirely opposed things - war and freedom - are so strangely and poetically united'[82]. The inhabitant of the Caucasus came to be associated with the archetype of the Noble Savage, a popular figure in 19th century Romantic primitivism. According to this tradition, from being the uncultured barbarian of the orientalizing- colonial discourse, the savage becomes a positive symbol of resistance against the corrupted Western civilization.[83] Thus, sympathy expressed by Russian poets towards the freedom loving highlanders was indissolubly bound to the criticism of Russian imperial authoritarianism. The Caucasus became the symbol of the uncontaminated nature and boundless liberty, contrasting with the coercive nature of the Russian State.[84] A. Griboedov was also deeply critical of the bloody campaign launched by General Yermolov against the tribes of the Caucasus. In the poem 'Predators on the Chegem' (1825), written in

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[79] Ibid.

[80] Ram, H. & Wertz, A. Op.cit. P.3

[81] Lermontov, M. (1832). *Sobranie sochinenii* quoted in Ram,H, (1999). Op.cit. P.4

[82] Tolstoy L., (1854). *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii*, quoted in Ram,H.(1999). Op.cit. P.4

[83] Ram, H. (1999). Op.cit. P.6

[84] Ibid. P.8

the form of a war song, the topography of the Caucasus becomes allegory of resistance against the Russian aggression.

> The rites of our father live on within us, Their impetuous blood lives on. The same blue is in the sky, The same colossi of ice, The same thundering waterfalls, The same wildness, beauty Is spread throughout the ravines! The rocks are ours, the plunging slopes are ours! Russia! Why do you wage war against The age-old heights?—There above the cloud— The double-peaked and powerful [Mount Elbrus] Cuts through the clouds Above the heads of your regiments[85]

To sum up, the portrayal of the Caucasian War by Russian writers generated a long lasting image of Chechnya as Russia's oriental 'other'. As Ram argued, these representations 'were nominally superseded by the construction of the poliethnic Soviet nation (...) and then powerfully revived in the nineties, providing a ready precedent for the political anxiety of the Post-Soviet present.'[86]

4.2 The Chechen Nation in Post-Soviet Russian Media

Lieven argued that the romantic perception of Chechens as 'primordial and essentially unchanging' was still very strong in post-Soviet Russia.[87] With the rise of Chechen nationalism, the image of the proud, untamable savage was adopted by Chechen themselves in building a renovated sense of unity and independence from Russian rule.[88]Framing the events of the First Chechen War, both Chechen and Russian media drew on what Aurélie Campana defined the 'separatist narrative', based on the recurrent themes of Russian oppression and Chechen resistance. Trying to explain the origin of the conflict, many journalists and opinion leaders stressed the historical hostility that have always characterized Russian-Chechen relations since the times of the Caucasian War. According to this narrative, Chechens always lived in a society of equals, intrinsically hostile to all kind of centralized authority. Precisely because of their rebellious, freedom loving nature,

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[85] Griboedov, A. (1825). *Sochineniia*, quoted in Ram, H. (2003). Op.cit. P.139

[86] Ram, H. (1999). Op.cit. P.2

[87] Lieven, A. (1998). *Chechnya*. New Haven: Yale University Press. P.335.

[88] Ram, H. (1999). Op.cit.

Chechens have been continuously persecuted by Russians. The separatist narrative portrays Chechens as irreconcilably opposing Russian rule, thus presenting Chechnya independence as an historical necessity. This interpretation of history generated the image of Chechens as 'eternal victims' and 'eternal rebels', conveying a sense of their unity against the Russians. A sense of continuity with the past was created and the new incursion of Russian troops into Chechen land was described as the last of a long series of attempts made by Russian despots to subjugate the Chechens. After declaring independence in 1991, Dudayev adopted the term 'Ichkeria' to rename the Chechen Republic, thus reinforcing the idea of a new Chechnya, independent from Russian rule. The term 'Ichkeria' indicates the southernmost mountainous region of Chechnya which, in the collective imaginary, is perceived as a place of resistance, where traditions and customs are kept alive. The national symbol of Ichkeria was the wolf, which featured in the Chechen coat of arms and figured in the first line of the national anthem.[89] Tishkov argued that the wolf 'underlines a collective attachment to a mythical ideal of liberty and equity'[90], thus embodying the Chechen fight for independence. Separatist fighters were proudly calling themselves 'borz' (wolves) to stress their spiritual affinity with the animal. Also Russians came to identify Chechens with wolves, because of their wild, untamable and fierce nature. Russian adopted the image of the wolf to represent Chechen leaders: Aslan Maskhadov was 'the wolf with a human face'[91], Shamil Basayev 'the lone wolf'[92] and Salman Raduyev 'the loony wolf[93].   The image of the wolf was picked frequently by Russian media during the Second Chechen War. By that time the epithet had lost all kind of positive connotations, preserving just its meaning of an animal 'dangerous enough to warrant only death

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[89] Campana, A. (2006). The Effects of War on the Chechen National Identity

Construction. *National Identities*, *8*(2), 129-148. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14608940600703759

[90] Quote by Tishkov, V. (1997) cited in Campana, A. Op.cit. P.19

[91] *Moskovskie novosti.* (1995), quoted in Russell, J. (2005). Op.cit. P.86

[92] *Moskovskie novosti.* (1997), quoted in Russell, J. (2005). Op.cit. P.86

[93] *Izvestiya* (1999), quoted in Russell, J. (2005). Op.cit. P.86

and destruction'[94]. In the aftermath of the apartment bombings in Budennovsk and Moscow in 1999, Izvestiya headlines hinted at the alleged Chechen responsibility through the metaphor 'Wolf track'[95]. Later on during the conflict, the front page of the weekly newspaper *Argumenty i Fakty* read 'The Chechen wolves have been driven back to their lair, but for how long?'[96] .

The First Chechen War (1994-1996). With the fall of the Soviet Union, the disappearance of an inclusive, unifying ideology and the sharp fall of living standards were major factors leading to the rise of racism and ethnic strife within Russian society. Human Right Watch activists noted that, instead of representing the true causes of ethnic conflicts, Russian media described them as stemming from the intrinsic violent nature of these non-Russian people.[97] Chechens, as well as other people from the Caucasus and Central Asia, came to be colloquially addressed with the derogatory term *chernye* ('blacks').[98]Thus, even before the conflict erupted, Russian public opinion was far from sympathetic to Chechnya and its population. Since Dudaev took power in 1991 the breakaway republic was notorious for having turned into a lawless and corrupt enclave. The rising influence of Chechen criminal gangs in major Russian cities led the stereotype of the 19th century *abrek* to evolve into the figure of the modern bandit.[99] During his public speeches, President Yeltsin characterized Chechnya as a place of corruption and

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[94] Russell, J. (2005). Op.cit. P.86

[95] *Izvestiya.* (1999), quoted in Russell, J. (2005). Op.cit. P.106

[96]*Argumenty i fakty*. (1999), quoted in Russell, J. (2005). Op.cit. P.106

[97] Roman, M. (2002). Making Caucasians Black: Moscow Since the Fall of Communism and the Racialization of Non-Russians. *Journal Of Communist Studies And Transition Politics*, *18*(2), 1-27. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/714003604

[98] Eichler, M. (2006). Russia's Post-Communist Transformation. *International Feminist Journal Of Politics*, *8*(4), 486-511. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14616740600945065

[99] Russell, J. (2002). Mujahedeen, Mafia, Madmen: Russian Perceptions of Chechens During the Wars in Chechnya, 1994-96 and 1999-2001. *Journal Of Communist Studies And Transition Politics*, *18*(1), 73-96. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/725289009

lawlessness while Dudaev and his supporters were often referred to as 'bandits'[100]. Especially Chechen men were increasingly perceived as intrinsically aggressive and prone to crime.[101] This image of Chechnya and Chechens was greatly shaped by the media coverage of the two Chechen campaigns. In the 90s television became the most popular source of information in Russia and the first Chechen campaign is considered the first 'televised war'[102] and a 'war of representation'[103], where identity was largely used as 'a means of legitimizing power'[104]. As Dinnie pointed out, in a time of globalization and free flow of information, media narratives have a major impact on the outcome of political and military conflicts.[105]Petersson argued that during wars, each side of the conflict tends to dehumanize and demonize the opponent in order to justify extreme measures taken against it.[106] He identified two major discourses in the pro-government *Rossiiskaya gazeta* at the eve of the first conflict: 1.Chechnya had become a source of political instability and national extremism which threatened to spread to the rest of the Federation. 2. The Chechen regime actively supported criminal activity such as weapon and drug trafficking inside and outside the region.[107] Moreover, Petersson highlighted the racial components characterizing Russian official narrative during

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[100] Petersson, B. (2008). The Power of Stereotypes and Enemy Images: The Case of the Chechen Wars. In Petersson, B., & Tyler, K. (2008). *Majority cultures and the everyday politics of ethnic difference*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

[101] Eichler, M. Op.cit. P. 489

[102] Russell, J. (2005). Op.cit., P.82

[103] Ram, H. and Wertz, A. (1999). Op.cit. P.2

[104] Eichler, M. Op.cit.

[105] Dinnie. Op. cit.

[106] Petersson, B. Op.cit.

[107] Petersson, B. & Wagnsson, C. (1998). A State of War: Russian Leaders and Citizens Interpret the Chechen Conflict. *Statsvetenskaplig tidskrift* 101(2). P.167-181. Retrieved from http://www.statsvetenskapligtidskrift.se/cms/documents/3B2C2862-3968-4AA9-8A32-32A04220411E.pdf

those years. The mayor of Moscow Yuri Luzhkov repeatedly mentioned the possibility to expel all the ethnic Chechens from the capital. Eicher argued that, even though Russian authorities never officially framed the war in racial terms, they often linked Chechen leaders, and occasionally Chechen people in general, with criminality. Thus, Chechens became increasingly seen as the embodiment of the degradation and anarchy engulfing Post-Soviet Russian society.[108] On January 1996, during the hostage crisis in the Dagestani village of Pervomayskoye, director of the Federal Security Service Mikhail Barsukov uttered: 'One respected Chechen says of his people that a Chechen can only kill. If he cannot kill, he robs. If he cannot do that, he steals. There is no other kind of Chechen'[109]. In the spring of 1992 VTSIOM (Russian Center for Political Opinion and Market Research) surveyed 1566 respondents from 11 regions of the Russian Federation investigating the reputation of other nationalities. Chechens featured among the most disliked ethnic groups, although on a less extent than Armenian or Azerbaijanis.[110] In the aftermath of the First Chechen War, Russians' perception of Chechens had become much more negative. According to a similar survey conducted in 1996 by VTSIOM, Chechens, Chechnya and Dudayev were considered the major enemies of the country together with 'organized crime' and 'corrupted officials and bureaucrats'[111]. However, Chechnya's bad reputation was somehow counterbalanced by the equally low degree of sympathy enjoyed by Yeltsin and his government. The sudden decision to send troop to reestablish 'constitutional order' in Chechnya was seen from the majority of citizens as the wrong way to solve the crisis. The public opinion was totally unprepared for the conflict and the military started a public relation campaign only some months after the initial invasion. Russians' harsh criticism towards Yeltsin and its government exponentially increased because of authorities' inability to win the information war

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[108] Eichler, M. Op.cit.

[109] *Moskovskie novosti*. (1996), quoted in Petersson, B. & Wagnsson, C. Op.cit. P.172.

[110] *Omnibus*. (1992), cited in Petersson, B. & Wagnsson, C. (1998) Op.cit. P. 174

[111] *Express*. (1996), cited in Petersson, B. & Wagnsson, C. (1998). Op.cit. P. 175

against the Chechens. The fall of the Soviet regime had deprived the government of the powerful propaganda machine able to justify war, demonize the enemy and motivate soldiers. Citizens had the possibility to follow the events free of all the filters of soviet censorship and journalists could enjoy an unprecedented degree of freedom.[112] Due to the government inability to create effective media relations the First Chechen war was for Russia a 'public relation disaster'. Journalists were treated with little respect and they were often denied access to basic information on the military campaign. No guided press tours were organized other than those reserved to military and government journals like *Krasnaya Zvezda* or *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*.[113] The media-unfriendly attitude of the authorities led representatives of independent media to turn to the Chechen separatists as a source of information. The Chechen Ministry of Information and press headed by Movladi Ugudov set up an effective public relation strategy to support the separatist cause and discredit the Russian army. In the center of Moscow, the press agency 'Chechen press' was advocating the Chechen cause via radio and also facilitating the access to Chechnya to Russian and foreign correspondents. As a consequence, until February 1995, Russian correspondents received 90 % of the information about events in Chechnya from the separatist side.[114] The media portrayal of the Chechen leaders was deeply divided: Chechen field commander Shamil Basayev was labeled as 'ideological terrorist' and 'butcher' but also as 'Chechnya's greatest war hero', 'cybernetic superstar' and 'a rebel with a cause'[115]. Moreover, the coverage of independent media like influential NTV television drew attention to the destruction, abuses and disproportionate violence carried out by the Russian military. The war soon came to be perceived as a pointless massacre. Thus

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[112] Ram, H. (1999). Op.cit. P.2

[113] Lieven, A. (1998). *Chechnya*. New Haven: Yale University Press

[114] Ginos, N. (2010). *The Securitization of Russian Strategic Communication*. Fort Leavenworth: School of Advanced Military Studies, p.26. Retrieved from http://www.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a536578.pdf

[115] Ibid. P.76

feelings of compassion towards the Chechens grew among the Russian public together with an understanding of their struggle as one of national liberation.[116]The fierce Chechen resistance against an overwhelming Russian military might was increasingly perceived as the David's courageous fight against a brutal Goliath. The unpopularity of the First Chechen War reflected heavily on Yeltsin's reputation. In order to avoid defeat in the 1996 election, the president had to withdraw Russian troops and sign the treaty of Khasavyurt, which granted Chechnya de-facto independence.[117]

Interwar Period and Second Chechen war: from Freedom Fighters to Islamic Terrorists. As Ram pointed out, the interwar period was characterized by a de-romanticization of Chechens in the Russian media discourse.[118] This change of framing was due to the incapability of the new Chechen government to enforce order in the republic and impose its authority on radical armed groups. The infiltration of Wahhabism in Chechen high command ranks was a major factor in worsening the image of the breakaway republic in the eyes of the Russian public. President Maskhadov soon lost control over a significant part of the military and, under pressure of radicalized warlords, he enforced Sharia law in 1999. Doing so he

> *highlighted the weakness of the moderate position within the Chechen political arena, which tends more and more to overlap the radical Islamist one. Essentially, it gave a strong political visibility to an ideology few Chechens are following[119]*

As a result, all sympathy for the separatist cause quickly waned and mainstream discourse on Chechnya focused on the uncivilized and savage nature of its inhabitants. The romanticized struggle for freedom was over. De facto independence was achieved and it brought nothing but misery, crime and violence.

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[116] Russell, J. (2002). Op. cit.

[117] Dannreuther, R., & March, L. (2008). Chechnya: Has Moscow Won? *Survival, 50*(4), 97-112. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00396330802329030

[118] Ram, H. (1999). Op.cit.

[119] Ibid. P.2

Russell noted: 'Chechnya lost its image internationally as a brave 'David' fighting 'Goliath' and became perceived as yet another failed state like Afghanistan or Lebanon when these were ruled by warlords'[120].The responsibility for barbaric actions of certain groups within Chechen society was extended to the entire Chechen nation. As pointed out by Belin, 'Journalist Sergey Dorenko from ORT TV channel blamed the whole Chechen civilian population for allowing crime flourishing in the Republic'[121]. As Shafee stated 'The chaos, brutality and banditry which characterized the interwar period (1996-1999) are brought to explain the need for Chechnya to be subjugated to a 'better' power – in this case, Moscow seems to be the only choice.'[122]   A new war with Russia seemed increasingly unavoidable when, in August 1999, Shamil Basayev launched an attack to the neighboring Dagestan, aimed at extending the rebellion against Russia to the entire Caucasus. In September 1999, later on called 'Black September', a series of explosions in Moscow, Buynaksk and Volgodonsk killed almost 300 people and injured more than 1000. Despite the lack of evidence, Russian authorities did not hesitate to hold the Chechens responsible for the massacre. The mayor of Moscow Yury Luzhkov publicly declared that 'Chechen terrorism' was behind the explosions. The media immediately aligned with the authorities supporting the allegations, and only a few newspapers like *Novaya Gazeta and Obshaya Gazeta* questioned the rush to judgment.[123] As reported by Russell 'A poll taken shortly after the bombings found that 64% of Russians wanted all Chechens expelled from the country and a similar percentage wanted Chechen towns and settlements to be bombed'[124]. By that time, as Tishkov argued, Russian public considered Chechens as the only responsible of the civil war, while Russian

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[120] Russell, J. (2005). Op.cit. P. 107

[121] Belin, L. (2002). *Russian Media Policy in the First and Second Chechen Campaign.* Paper prepared for presentation at the Political Studies Association, Aberdeen, Scotland

[122] Shafee, F. Op.cit. P. 38

[123] Belin, L. Op.cit.

[124] Russell, J. (2005). Op.cit. P.108.

responsibility was largely overlooked.[125] Because of the anti-Chechen hysteria fostered by the media, Chechnya was not perceived any longer as a peripheral problem, rather, as stated Tishkov: 'The Chechen war was everywhere'[126]. As a consequence, Russian public opinion unanimously supported the second military intervention in Chechnya. After the information disaster of the first Chechen war, Russian authorities had learned that media were an invaluable tool for shaping public opinion.Therefore, In order to rally the Russian people against the Chechen rebels, the Kremlin strengthened its grip on the press. A Media Ministry which did not exist during the first war, actively prevented journalists to access separatist sources.[127] Independent reporting was heavily curtailed and journalists' access to the war zone was strictly regulated. New strict rules were enforced on the media to guarantee a favorable coverage and demonize the enemy. Redactions received a list of parameters that had to follow in the coverage of the conflict. For instance, journalists were not allowed to use the words 'rebel' and 'insurgents' when addressing Chechen fighters, who had to be labeled exclusively as 'terrorists'.[128] In 2001, The Russian State Duma issued a law prohibiting journalists to publish interviews with Chechen separatists.[129] Being excluded from access to the media, the Chechen separatists often recurred to terrorisms as an alternative way to draw public attention to their cause. As it usually happens when media visibility is pursued by means of violent actions, the image of Chechen fighters further deteriorated.[130] As a result of Russian media campaign, the whole Chechen

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[125] Tishkov, V. (2001). Slova i Obraztsy v Postkonfliktnoi Reconstrukzii. In *Chechnya: ot Konflikta k Stabilnosti* (2001). Moscow: Institut Etnologii i Antropologii RAN

[126] Tishkov, V. (2001). Op.cit. P. 252

[127] Belin, L. Op. cit.

[128] Souleimanov, E., & Ditrych, O. (2008). The Internationalisation of the Russian–Chechen Conflict: Myths and Reality. *Europe-Asia Studies*, *60*(7), 1199-1222. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09668130802230739 P.1202

[129] Ginos, N. Op.cit.

[130] Avraham, E. & Ketter, E. Op.cit.

separatist movement came to be identified with Islamic fundamentalism: 'the words 'terrorist', 'Caucasian' and 'Muslim' had merged into one demonic figure'[131]argued Russell. Campana argued that the degree of religious radicalization in Chechen society was highly exaggerated by Russian propaganda and only a few radicalized leaders advocated a global jihaad.[132] Nevertheless, Aslan Maskhadov, representative of the moderate separatist faction, was presented by the media as indistinguishable from the radical warlords. After the terrorist attack on September 9/11 in New York, Putin was the first world leader calling the American President Bush to manifest Russia's solidarity in the 'Global War on Terrorism'. Thus, the Russian president implicitly linked the Chechen resistance with Al Qaeda Islamic radicalism. Federal media strengthened this perception, reporting that after the Afghan war, Osama Bin Laden and Mullah Omar found refuge in the mountains of the Caucasus.[133] By exaggerating the presence of foreign Islamic fundamentalists in the ranks of the separatists, Putin deprived Chechen leaders of legitimacy and excluded all kind of negotiations with them. Sergey Ivanov, Russia's defense minister stated it clearly: 'to those who recommend that we launch talks with Maskhadov, I always invite them to start talks with Mullah Omar. It's the same thing'[134].   The worsening of Chechens 'reputation in the second campaign was detected by opinion polls conducted in September 2000 according to which 'only 15 per cent of Russians thought that the Chechens were fighting for independence, against 38 per cent for money, 22 per cent for revenge, and 16 per cent because of their aggressive nature'[135]. In May 2000, the Committee on Conscience of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum has placed Chechnya on its 'watch' list for 'past persecution of Chechens

[131] Russell, J (2002). Op.cit. P. 79

[132] Campana, A. (2006). Op.cit. P. 136.

[133] Souleimanov, E., & Ditrych, O. (2008). Op.cit.

[134]Interview with Sergei Ivanov, Minister of Defense of the Russian Federation. (2003), quoted in Dannreuther, R., & March, L. Op.cit. 101

[135] Russell, J. (2002). Op.cit. P.88

as a people, the demonization of Chechens as a group within Russian society, [and] the level of violence directed against Chechen civilians by Russian forces'[136]. As Russel argued, the demonization of the Chechens during the second Chechen campaign exacerbated the phenomenon of 'Caucasophobia' within Russian society. In October 2002, Lyudmilla Alekseyeva, Chair of the Moscow Helsinki Group, defined 'Caucasophobia' as 'definitely the most serious problem that Russia is faced with today. It is very widespread among the population in general, at all levels'[137]. In the aftermath of the Second Chechen War, Tishkov underlined the heavy and long lasting impact of the war propaganda on Chechen-Russian relations: 'The Chechen war continues where it started: in the minds of people'[138]. Indeed, as Shields pointed out, media-generated reputation ,especially if associated with a crisis or a catastrophe, can last for years after the events that contributed to create it are not happening any longer.[139]'When a place is labeled by the media as one in which only a certain type of activities and events occurs, it becomes a symbol of such events'[140] he added.

Towards a New Brand for Chechnya: The Pro-Russian Narrative. With the establishment of a pro-Russian administration in Grozny in 2000, Chechnya undertook the slow and laborious path of reintegration in the Russian Federation. The election of pro-Moscow leader Ahmad Hadji Kadyrov and the introduction of a new Chechen Constitution marked the beginning of a new chapter in Chechen history, characterized by the renovated sense of belonging to the Russian State. At this point, Russian authorities realized it was time to mitigate the anti-Chechen sentiments in Russian society, drawing a distinction between the Chechen people

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[136] Jaimoukha, A. Op.cit., p.78

[137] Sikevich, Z. (2002). The Caucasus and 'Caucasus phobia', quoted in Russel, J. (2005), Op.cit. P.112

[138] Tishkov, V. (2001) Op.cit. P. 252

[139] Shields, R. (1992). Places on the margin, London: Routledge, cited in Avraham, E. & Ketter, E. (2012). *Media Strategies for Marketing Places in Crisis*. Hoboken: Taylor and Francis, P.35

[140] Ibid. P.31

and the Islamic terrorists: 'As far as the negative image of Chechens is concerned, the Chechen people are not to be blame for anything. (…) Our task is to destroy this image [of Chechens] as terrorists[141]said Putin in 2002. Campana defined 'the pro-Russian narrative' a new official discourse 'masterminded by Moscow' and adopted by the new Chechen government headed by Kadyrov.[142] This new narrative supports the vision of Chechnya as an inseparable part of the Russian Federation and Chechens as full Russian citizens. The separatist government led by Maskhadov was declared illegitimate and its supporters were demonized and discredited as 'terrorists' and 'criminals'.   The history of Russian-Chechen relations was revisited: elements of historical antagonism between Russians and Chechens were significantly downsized and more space was given to the positive aspects of the two people's coexistence. According to the new official discourse, the responsibility for the tragedy of the war was ascribed exclusively to the Chechen and Russian political elites in charge in 1994. The image of the wolf, elevated by the Chechen separatists to symbol of freedom and independence of the Chechen nation, was eradicated from the national symbology. Kadyrov motivated this choice arguing that the wolf 'has always been regarded as an animal which is hard to tame'. Consequently, in mid-2004 the pro-Russian Chechen State Council excluded the wolf from the new coat of arm adopted in mid-2004, which features less 'problematic' images like the mountains, a Vainakh tower and an oil derrick. The current leader of Chechnya, Ramzan Kadyrov became the embodiment of the pro-Russian narrative. In public statements he often describes Chechens as patriots of Russia and he never fails to assert his personal loyalty to Russian President Vladimir Putin.

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This chapter provided a diachronic reconstruction of the portrayal of the Chechen

[141] Russell, J. (2005). Op.cit. P.111.

[142] Campana, A. (2006). Op.cit.

nations in Russian culture. In particular, we defined the highly negative image of Chechnya generated in the course of the two Chechen Wars. As we pointed out in the first chapter, every nation branding effort aims at reducing the difference between a preexisting nation brand image and the nation brand identity. Now that we have identified Chechnya's preexisting brand image, we can proceed to deconstruct its current nation brand identity.

Chapter 3. Nation Branding in Contemporary Chechnya

§ 5 Methods and Limitations

5.1 Qualitative Interviews and Content Analysis

In the preliminary phase of our nation branding case study, we provided an overview of nation branding theory as theoretical backgroung. In order to interpret the contemporary brand of Chechnya, knowledge of the its preexisting brand image was required. Thus, we carried out a historical reconstruction of the portrayal of the Chechen nation in Russian culture. In particular, we addressed the

literary production of 19th century Russian writers, focusing mainly on poems by M. Lermontov, A. Pushkin and L. Tolstoy. For the sake of conciseness we limited our approach to an analysis of secondary sources, such as academic articles devoted to the representation of Chechens in romantic Russian literature. Regarding the reconstruction of the modern representation of Chechnya, we relied on secondary sources describing the portrayal of Chechens in Russian media during the last Russian-Chechen military conflicts. The empirical part of our research consists in a combination of qualitative interviews with the content analysis of media sources. Our choice of the sources to be analyzed is largely based on the results of interviews we took with the representative of the Chechen Ministry of Information, Islam Khatulev and the Press Officer of the Chechen Republic Government Committee of Tourism Murat Shakhidov, both met in Grozny in December 2016 (Appendix 3). The conversation with the two officials grounded our decision to identify Ramzan Kadyrov as the main manager and promoter of Chechnya's nation brand. Consequently, we focused on Ramzan Kadyrov's account on Russian Facebook Vkontakte and the TV show 'Komanda' as the object of our content analysis. Among the different social media platforms Kadyrov is using, we decided to focus specifically on Vkontakte considering our focus on Russian audience as the target of Chechnya's nation branding. We sampled a total of two hundred posts and divided them in two equal blocks counting a hundred each. The first block contains all the content posted from 28-01-2017 to 06-03-2017 (Appendix 2, Pic. 1), while the second relates to the period from 06-03-2017 to 12-04-2017 (Appendix 2, Pic. 2). We analyzed the two groups separately so that afterwards we could compare the results assessing the degree of consistency in the content. In our classification, we decided to take into account the text of each post, highlighting the leitmotifs which can be associated with a coherent branding narrative. As a primary tool of categorization we adopted Anholt's Nation Brand Hexagon, which represents the six dimensions composing the reputation of a nation: *Export*, *Governance*, *Culture & Heritage*, *People*, *Tourism* and Immigration & *Investments*. Given the broadness of the framework

provided by Anholt, we created a number of subcategories which are relevant to the specific case of Chechnya. For instance, within the dimension *Governance* we created the subcategories *Enlightened Leadership*, which relates to Kadyrov's personal leadership skills, and *Effective Administration,* which focuses on concrete examples of good administration carried out by Chechen officials. Taking into account the historical focus of our research, we added *Framing of the National Past* as an additional category adding up to the other six theorized by Ahnolt. A complete description of the additional category and subcategories is provided in the next paragraph. Each analyzed post was assigned to one (or more) of the brand categories, depending on the particular aspect of Chechen brand identity promoted in the post. After completing the categorization of the posts, we calculated the amount of posts dedicated to every single category and subcategory in order to evaluate their relative significance within the brand. In the analysis of 'Komanda', the same method of analysis was adapted to the different characteristics of the medium. In this case fragments of the TV were considered as items of analysis. Different values were assigned to every fragment according to the modality of representation: fragments conveying the message exclusively in a visual way (for instance, the frequent sequences showing the Chechen landscape) were given half a point; sentences and longer phrases uttered by the protagonists of the show received a full point; two points were assigned to entire thematic parts dedicated to a specific category (for instance, the episode 01-11 is largely dedicated to Chechen food). After that, we calculated the amount of points assigned to each category and subcategory. As a result of our analysis we outlined the nation brand identities conveyed by the two selected media (Appendix 1, Pic.1/6). Finally we compared the results from 'Komanda' and Vkontakte pointing out the common patterns conveying an overarching brand identity. The major limitation of our content analysis consists in its relatively high level of subjectivity. In particular, the changes we applied to Anholt's theoretical framework stemmed from our subjective interpretation of Chechnya's brand identity. Another limitation consists in the very narrow time framework selected for the content analysis, which

prevents us from verifying on what degree the brand of Chechnya has been changing during the 10 years-long Kadyrov's presidency.

5.2 Brand Categories and Subcategories

Governance

Effective Administration: examples of the successful administration of Chechnya, the competency of Chechen officials in administering the region.

Patriotism: the loyalty of the Chechen government towards the Russian State and Kadyrov's personal devotion towards Vladimir Putin.

Care for the Environment: Kadyrov's commitment to environmental issues and the safeguard of Chechen natural landscape.

Enlightened Leadership: portrayal of Kadyrov as a gifted and wise leader, fully committed to his duty as a civil servant.

War on Terror: content dedicated to Chechnya's involvement in the fight against international terrorism. Descriptions of the successes achieved in countering terrorism and radicalization in Chechnya and abroad.

Charity: Commitment of Kadyrov's administration to humanitarian issues at home and abroad.

International Relations: Content dedicated to the involvement of Kadyrov's administration in foreign affairs as well as the promotion of relations with foreign powers.

Culture & Heritage

Islam: promotion of a positive image of Islam and Chechen Muslims.

Sport: celebration of Chechen sportsmen's achievements and talents. Promotion of fitness and healthy lifestyle.

Family and gender roles: the importance of the family institution and traditional gender roles within Chechen society.

Architecture: examples of traditional Chechen architecture such asVainakh towers and mosques.

Folklore: traditional dance, clothes and rituals

Landscape: the mountainous territory of Chechnya as an iconic landscape closely linked to Chechens history and identity.

People

References to the Chechens' positive qualities; references to individual Chechens, their talents and achievements.

Tourism

Natural beauty: promotion of rural Chechnya and its natural landscape for the explicit purpose to attract tourists.

Infrastructures: promotion of Chechnya's tourism infrastructures and facilities such as hotels and resorts.

Investment & Immigration

Investment: descriptions of Chechnya as a fast developing region, a suitable location for investments.

Immigration: references to Chechnya as an attractive place for immigrants coming from other Russian regions as well as from abroad.

Export

Promotions of made-in-Chechnya products and services, strengthening of the Country-of-Origin effect.

Framing of the National Past

As we pointed out in the first chapter, myths and historical memories are fundamental aspects of national identity that needs to be taken into account during nation branding practices. The national past plays a crucial role in our case study, given the impact of the conflicted history of Russian-Chechen relations on the Chechen brand image cultivated by the Russian audience. Hence our choice to add this category to Anholt's theoretical framework.

Pre-Soviet Past: all events related to the Chechen national history before the establishment of the Chechen-Ingush Soviet Republic.

Soviet Past: events related to the Chechen Nation as part of the Soviet uUnion

Wars and Reconstruction: all events related to the Chechen wars in Post-Soviet Russia and Chechnya's difficult path towards peace and stability.

§ 6 Deconstructing Chechnya's Brand Identity

6.1 Interviews with Chechen Officials

In December 2016 we travelled to Grozny in order to collect information on the nation branding practices carried out by the Chechen administration to influence the Russian audience. In that occasion, we had the opportunity to interview Islam Khatulev, a representative of the Chechen Ministry of Information and Murat Shakhidov, the Press Officer of the Chechen Government Committee of Tourism (Appendix 3). Khatulev argued that anti-Chechen sentiments in Russian society significantly decreased over the last decade. He identified the

establishment of law and order as the fundamental precondition for the improvement of Chechnya's image. Among the main sectors contributing in the promotion of the Republic he mentioned tourism, agriculture and the energy sector. He also highlighted the importance of Chechen sport in attracting a positive attention to the region, mentioning the excellent results achieved by Chechen athletes. Khatullev denied the existence of PR agencies actively promoting the image of the Republic on a federal level. However, he pointed out the positive role played by social networks in spreading a positive image of Chechnya. He also noted that the Head of Chechnya, Ramzan Kadyrov played a major role in the reconstruction of Chechnya and its image: 'His energy, will and determination are changing everything for the better. His leadership talent, patriotism...all played a role (...) He transmits his energy to other people and every day there is a positive change' said Khatulev. Murat Shakhidov, told us that the Committee of Tourism is actively involved in the promotion of tourism in the region. 'We participated in all possible forums, exhibitions and fairs' said Shakhidov. The Committee regularly organizes events aimed at attracting the attention of the media. However, Shakhidov highlighted the limited resources of the Committee which do not allow the creation of large projects on a federal level. 'We cannot afford PR specialists on a federal level, he said, confirming Khatullev's statement. According to the press officer, the main challenge for the development of tourism in the Republic was convincing the Russian public of Chechnya's safety, removing the stereotypes of the region as a 'dangerous placed inhabited by wild people'. A starting point for promoting the region as a tourism destination was getting rid of all traces of war, countering the stereotype of Chechnya as a militarized place 'where people go around with guns'.   Shakhidov noted the major role played by the Head of Chechnya Ramzan Kadyrov in improving the image of the Republic. 'Our major source of advertisement is Ramzan Kadyrov. He is the engine informing people about the Chechen Republic. He is moving towards a specific direction. (...) He is a high ranking official, so he is more popular and 'accessible' than whatever ministry or committee' said Shakhidov. He also referred to the 'PR technologies'

used by Kadyrov to promote the image of the Republic. 'He contributes to our work organizing special events: opening fountains, inviting celebrities, all this attracts the media attention and conveys a feeling of safety' commented the press officer. Shakhidov mentioned the TV show 'Komanda' as a successful example of advertising project, which was realized mainly thanks to Kadyrov's influence on federal media. Shakhidov commented: 'I can't think about a better advertisement for Chechnya than the reality show 'Komanda'. The project was created by VGTRK (All-Russia State Television and Radio Broadcasting Company) and Ramzan Kadyrov. If looking at the general effect, the show described Chechnya as a beautiful, nice, and quiet place from a touristic perspective. It was great advertisement'.

6.2 Ramzan Kadyrov on Vkontakte

Khatullev's remark about the positive influence of social networks on the image of Chechnya convinced us to look at Ramzan Kadyrov's activity on social network as an example of nation branding practice. Ramzan Kadyrov enjoys a high degree of popularity on social networks: he has accounts on Instagram (2,5 millions followers), Facebook (784.947 followers) ,Vkontakte (513.000 followers) and also a blog on Livejournal. According to the media monitoring and analysis system Medialogia[143], Kadyrov has been consistently ranked as the most quoted blogger of the year in Russian media since 2014. His degree of popularity is ranked higher than those of other frequently quoted politicians like Maria Zakharova and Aleksey Navalny. Kadyrov posts several times per day, distributing similar content across different platforms. Usually his posts consist in a short text accompanied by a video or photo material. In the following paragraphs we described the structure of Chechnya's nation brand resulting from a content analysis of Kadyrov's Vkontakte page. The two Vkontakte sampled blocks taken into account gave fairly similar results, proving the consistency of the content (Appendix 2/Figure.1, 2).

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[143] Reiting gubernatorov –blogerov (2016). Retrieved from http://old.mlg.ru/company/pr/4600/

Culture

Sport. Kadyrov promotes the excellence of Chechen sport, as well as fitness and healthy lifestyle. In particular, box, kickboxing and mixed martial arts are the most frequently promoted kinds of sport. Kadyrov often praises the talents and achievements of Chechen fighters, the majority of which are members of the 'Akhmad' fight club. A significant amount of posts are dedicated to the achievements of Chechen athletes in national as well as international tournaments. Sport plays an important role in the life of the Chechen leader, who often shares videos of his working out sessions. Kadyrov actively promotes the development of Chechen and Russian sport. 'Sport, physical culture, healthy lifestyle are extremely important, not just for single individuals but for the whole State' he argues (31-03). He highlights the excellence of Chechen sport: 'Thousands of youngsters are worthily taking part in international championships and tournaments on a regional and global level, achieving the highest awards' (31-03). Martial arts are an important part in the education of young Chechens. Kadyrov often brings the example of his sons, who intensively practice boxing despite the very young age: 'I always knew that children have to be educated to sport from an early age. It encourages the physical, psychological and spiritual growth. It cultivates fighting qualities' (11-03). In order to foster the development of Chechen sport, Kadyrov invests in modern infrastructures, such as the Grozny stadium, 'Akhmad Arena', hosting the Terek football team, or the sport palace 'Colosseum', which he defines 'one of the best in the country' (31-01).

Islam. Religion plays a prime role in Chechen society and in Kadyrov's life. Posts containing the preaching of the prophet Mohammed often embed videos featuring Kadyrov praying in the Mosque together with his fellow believers. Kadyrov displays Islam as a positive force perfectly compatible with Russia's secular institutions: 'Muslims are citizens of Russia; they area a worthy part of Russian society'. Mentioning the Russian Constitution, he points out that Muslims 'have the right to act according to their religious believes' (05-03). Kadyrov's references to Islam often aim at countering its overspread perception as a radical

religion. He often stresses the difference between his brand of Islam, which 'calls people to peace, kindness, mutual respect and support on this earth' (05-03) and the perverted ideology preached by ISIS militants who 'kill students and Islamic university teachers, destroy mosques, tombs of saints and other Islamic values' (11-03). The only sampled post lacking Kadyrov's comment is a repost of a video titled 'ISIS is not Islam, ISIS is not a Califat' (20-02). Kadyrov supports a traditional, peaceful Islam uniting Chechens and the 'brotherly' Syrian people in the fight against terrorism (26-02). One of the posts cites: 'One of the main duties of every Muslim is to help the needy and take care of the sick' (24-02). The philanthropic nature of Islam is promoted in the posts describing how the Akhmad Kadyrov Foundation provides humanitarian aid both in Chechnya and in Syria. Kadyrov conveys a modern and even glamorous image of Islam through the promotion of his daughter's fashion house Firdaws, specialized in luxury clothes for Muslim women.

Family and Gender Roles. The family institution and traditional gender roles are among the pillars of Chechen culture. Kadyrov often devotes posts to relatives or his friend's family members. In one post, he talks about his visit to the family cemetery in Tsentaroy, where he pays respect to his ancestors (23-02). Kadyrov projects a very traditional conception of gender roles. In occasion of the International Woman Day, he describes Chechen women as 'wise homemakers' (07-03). Humbleness, intelligence, and respect for the family are some of the quality which Kadyrov appreciate in his niece (05-03). On the other hand, the defense of the Motherland is the most important duty of every Chechen man (23-02).

*Architecture.*Tsoy Pede, 'City of the Dead' is a necropolis dating back to the Middle Age and an example of Vainakh architecture. The Mosques of Grozny, Argun and Gudermes became icons of the Chechen urban landscape.

Folklore. In one post Kadyrov celebrates the day of workers of the cultural field (25-03). He mentions Chechens dancers, actors and other creative people, praising their successful performances. Another post mentions the folklore dance

ensembles Vainakh, Nokhcho and Daimohk, which according to him 'are well known not only in Russia but also abroad' (07-02).

Landscape. The Chechen mountainous landscape is an integral part of Chechen culture and history. Describing the beauty of his father's home region Benoy, Kadyrov says: 'Our history is preserved among these cliffs (...) This is one of those sacred places for us, where the Chechen land generated our national heroes' (29-01). He underlines the strong relation bounding the Chechens to their own land and their past: 'Here it is, the land of my fathers, the land of the Chechen people' (20-02). In a few posts, embedded videos display the views of the Chechen mountains and the iconic Vainakh towers on their top.

Governance

Effective Administration. Kadyrov often congratulates Chechen State officials in occasion of their birthdays, highlighting their best achievements. Examples of good administration range from the field of healthcare (13-02) to the development of the fuel-energetic sector (13-02), ending with the efficiency of the Chechen transport police (18-02). Kadyrov also talks about the initiatives aimed at guaranteeing cleanness of the street in Grozny and in other urban areas (22-02). Members of Kadyrov's team are presented as high level specialists in their respective fields, reliable and capable to fulfill the most difficult tasks. Kadyrov shares information about the region economic growth and the several construction projects that are being developed (03-03). He highlights the efficiency of the administration in specific areas such as the Sunzha district (16-03). A significant amount of posts related to governance mentions the outstanding speed with which the Republic was rebuilt from scratches after the devastation of the war. In occasion of the 10th anniversary of his presidency, Kadyrov points out: 'Well-known economists and politicians argued that it would take us 50 years to cope with the devastation. We did it ten times faster'. Kadyrov reports that Chechnya is ranked among the top five best administered regions. Referring to data collected by the Levada Center, he ranks himself as consistently in 'the top ten list of the most trusted politicians by Russian people' (03-03).

War on Terror. Kadyrov is eager to underline the commitment of his administration to the fight with international terrorism. International terrorists are identified as 'the worst enemies of Russia' (31-01) and a major threat to the country's peace and stability. Kadyrov describes the security measures that have been employed to solve the problem of terrorism and radicalization in Chechnya. He describes the high level of professionalism and effectiveness of Chechnya's Special Forces in countering terrorism threats (19-03).   Kadyrov often presents Chechnya as one of the safest region of Russia. He defines the republic as 'the only region in the world that defeated terrorism' (14-03) and 'one of the most stable regions, not only in Russia, but in the entire world' (16-02). Another post quotes: 'The Chechen Republic has successfully solved the problems of combating international terrorism, organized crime and extremism. This fact is acknowledged by everybody' (06-03).   The war against terrorism has a central role the posts on Russia's intervention in Syria. Kadyrov points out the important role played by Russia and in particular, by the Chechen Special Forces in fighting ISIS. Chechens have considerable experience in dealing with terrorist threats. The example of Chechnya is presented as a model that should inspire other governments in the fight with international terrorism (07-03). In more than one occasion, Kadyrov argues that the only way to defeat terrorism is by creating unity among the people. (06-04), (08-04).

Charity. Kadyrov underlines the commitment of his administration to humanitarian issues in Chechnya and abroad. Charity initiatives are carried out by the Ahmad Kadyrov Foundation which is directly administered by Kadyrov's family. The Foundation provides humanitarian aid to Syrian refugees and finances the reconstructions of Syrian mosques (06-03). 'The extent of its activity in Syria and in the refugee camps is well known' says Kadyrov (06-03).Occasionally, the fund provides economic support to disadvantaged Chechen families (22-03).

Care of the Environment. Kadyrov shows his commitment to environmental problems such as the climate change: 'Our planet is incredibly small and fragile (...). Our duty is to treat it with care' (25-03) .In particular he describes how his

administration is involved in the preservation of the region's flora and fauna (27-02).

Patriotism. Through his frequent patriotic statements, Kadyrov combats the old perception of Chechnya as Russia's main source of instability. In occasion of the anniversary of the Chechen Constitution, Kadyrov remembers the Chechen people's free choice to preserve the unity of the State and keep Chechnya as an integral part of the Russian Federation (23-03). Chechen and Russian nationalism are perfectly compatible for Kadyrov as can be noted by the constant presence of the hashtags 'Russia' and 'Chechnya' in his posts. Kadyrov often refers to Russia as 'Fatherland'(Otechestvo) or 'our great Motherland' (14-03) (Rodina) , thus conveying a strong sense of patriotism. He often praises Chechen officials, highlighting their patriotism and their merits in 'serving the Fatherland' (12-03). In occasion of the 10th anniversary of his presidency, Kadyrov defines Chechnya as 'Russia's reliable stronghold on its southern borders' (03-03). By displaying a military parade on the streets of Grozny, he conveys the message that Chechen forces are able to repel any enemy of Russia (23-03). He expresses his full support to Russian foreign policies, for instance, in regards to the annexation of Crimea (16-03) or the intervention in Syria (08-04). In occasion of the International Woman Day, he congratulates the mothers of fallen Interior Ministry soldiers for 'raising true patriots of our Fatherland' (07-03). Kadyrov promotes patriotism as a unifying value for the multicultural Russian State, superseding differences in faith and customs. While defending the right of Muslim women to wear hijab he argues: 'We need to observe the Constitution and love our Motherland, then we will not need to talk about hijabs, and the attributes of other religions' (05-03).

International Relations. Kadyrov makes clear his own position regarding global political issues. In general, he fully supports the current Russian foreign policy especially regarding the war in Syria. He rejoices the inauguration of Donald Trump (29-02) believing it will improve the relationship between Russia and USA. A few weeks later he condemns the US missile strikes against Syrian government forces (09-04). Kadyrov is particularly concerns with the war in Syria

and he is often involved in meetings with Syrian religious leaders. He also show his ties with leaders of Muslim countries, and does business with them. An example is a series of post dedicated to his travel to the Arab Emirates, where he strengthens relationships with the local leaders (12-04).

People

*Sportsmen.*The majority of the posts about people are dedicated to Chechen sportsmen, mostly boxers or martial arts champions. Kadyrov praises them for their fighting skills and achievements in international competitions as well as for their strength, bravery and strong will.

Officials. Kadyrov praises Chechen officials for their high level of professionalism, expertise and efficiency in accomplishing tasks.

Patriots. Patriotism and the loyalty to the Motherland are among the most frequently mentioned qualities of Chechen men. Especially Chechen officials stand out for their patriotism and commitment in serving the Motherland. Kadyrov points out that Chechen young people are always ready to defend the Motherland (31-03). In occasion of the 74th anniversary of the battle of Stalingrad, Kadyrov highlights the Chechen soldiers' contribution to the defence of the city and he points out that still today Chechens 'continue to protect the southern borders of our Fatherland, valiantly carrying service in the Armed Forces of Russia' (02-02).

Warriors. Kadyrov underlines Chechens' military capabilities. He defines Chechen special forces as 'demonstrating excellent physical and fighting qualities and capabilities. They showed they are able to accomplish the most complicated tasks securing safety and order' (22-03). Remembering the Battle of Stalingrad, Kadyrov points out the merits of 'valiant Chechen warriors' who proved 'the highest degree of courage and heroism'. The military is among the institutions valued the most by Kadyrov. In a meeting with the royal guard of Bahrain he says: 'Great respect is deserved by those who have achieved excellence in the study of military affairs'(06-04) In one post , Kadyrov points out the combat bibliography of his friends as among their greatest merits (03-04).

Investments and Immigration

Investments. Kadyrov presents Chechen economy as rapidly growing, thus encouraging investments in the region. 30 billion rubles have been invested in the construction of a thermal power station in Grozny. European investments allowed the opening of a medical center and a new university is being built in Grozny thanks to investments from the Arab Emirates (04-04). Ongoing projects like the Ahmad Tower and the Grozny Mall are also presented as symbols of Chechnya's growing economy. Kadyrov argues that German specialists as well as engineers from other regions of Russia are working on these project which, according to his esteem, generated a thousand new jobs. Another post is devoted to the economic growth of the Sunzha district, where investments 'have blown new life into the district'. Kadyrov mentions that Moldovan investors began the construction of a garment factory, which will provide 200 new jobs (09-03).

Immigration. Chechnya's brand image is designed to attract professionals to come working in the republic. Kadyrov presents the region as capable to attract talents from other regions of Russia as well as from abroad. One example is the announcement of the opening of a new medical center in Grozny which attracted private investments from Europe. Kadyrov announces that 'not only local doctors will be working in the clinic but also we plan to invite leading specialists from Moscow and St Petersburg. Also experienced foreign doctors will be invited to work in some of the departments'(15-02).

Export

One of the posts devoted to export announces the launch of the war buggy 'Chaborz M-3' produced by the 'Chechenavto' factory based in Argun. A 'sport-tourist' version will be launched soon (04-03). The most frequently mentioned Chechen product is the fashion brand 'Firdaws', managed by Kadyrov's daughter Ayshat. 'Firdaws' produces luxury clothes for Muslim women, hence it is very much representative of Chechen traditions. In occasion of the presentation of the 'Firdaws' new collection Kadyrov that 'orders come from many countries in Europe, Asia, America and even from Australia' (02-03). Kadyrov show his appreciation for 'Firdaws' collections which embody both Muslim traditions and

contemporary glamour.

Tourism

Infasstructures. Kadyrov points out the fast growth of Chechnya's tourism sector, mentioning the growing amount of tourists visiting the region in recent years. 'Today on the streets of Grozny and on mountain sports and health-improving complexes, there are thousands of guests from other regions of Russia and other countries. There is not enough space already'. According to his data, 90 thousands tourists visited Chechnya in 2016 which he defined 'a record'(10-03). In another post he points out that by that time already 100 000 tourists visited Chechnya in 2017. Among the most frequently mentioned touristic facilities are the hotel 'Grozny City' and the resort 'Sernovodsk-Caucasus'. Other mentioned touristic spots include Grozny, the lake Kezenoyam and the Benoy district.

Kadyrov mentions the participation of the Chechen tourism committee in the International event 'Inturmarket 2017' where Russian high-ranking officials 'acknowledged the high attractiveness of the region on the international tourism market'.

Natural Beauty. Kadyrov shows the optimal conditions for extreme tourism in Benoy, where there is 'a lot of snow and amazing air' (30-01).

Framing the National Past

Wars and Reconstruction. As pointed out earlier, the framing of the national past is a major component of national identity building. Therefore, past events and the way they are interpreted play an important role in nation branding strategies. The interpretation of the past is often a politicized process since it serves the purpose of legitimizing the establishment in charge. Ramzan Kadyrov often evokes the national past and in particular the events of the two Chechen wars, framing it according to the pro-Russian narrative. A recurrent figure in this category is Ramzan Kadyrov's father, Hero of Russia Akhmad Hadji Kadyrov. Immediately after his death, Akhmad Kadyrov became the central figure of the pro-Russian narrative. He entered the collective memory as the saviour of the Chechen people, who brought the war to an end, bringing back Chechnya in the framework of the

Russian Federation. When praising Chechen officials, Kadyrov never forgets to point out the loyalty they demonstrated to his father. In occasion of the Woman Day, Kadyrov congratulates Chechen women for having raised 'brave and courageous sons who rose in defense of their native land when called by our First President, Hero of Russia Akhmad Hadji Kadyrov. They gave their lives for the sake of good and peace in the Chechen Republic' (07-03) Akhmad and his comrades 'forever eradicated the causes of war and tragedies, guiding the people along the path of peace and creation' (14-03) Celebrating the birthday of his comrade in arms Magomed Daudov, he remembers the times of the war which he defines 'the struggle under the leadership of the First President of the Chechen Republic, Hero of Russia Akhmad-Hadji Kadyrov with the worst enemies of Russia, Islam and the Chechen people' (26-02). Elements of the pro-Russian narrative are evident here: the militants fighting against Russian troops during the Second Chechen War are equated to enemies of the Chechen People and Islam. The same narrative can be noticed in the post announcing the opening of a memorial dedicated to the paratroopers of 76th Pskov Airborne Assault Division, fallen during the second Chechen war. The post quotes 'They have fulfilled their military duty to the end, protecting Russia from the gangs of international terrorists' (02-03). Kadyrov reinforces the pro-Russian narrative in his posts about Syria, where he equals the suffering of the Syrian people oppressed by the Islamic State with the past suffering of the Chechen people. Quoting the words of a Syrian cleric he points out that 'those people spilling the blood of the Syrian people and the Muslims of Syria are the same who killed thousands of Chechens, including our First President, Hero of Russia Akhmad-Hadji Kadyrov' (06-03). In occasion of the Defender of the Fatherland Day, Kadyrov remembers his father as 'an example of selfless service of the Fatherland' who 'gave his life protecting the integrity of Russia, achieving peace and prosperity in our Republic' (23-02). While he condemns Stalin for his crimes towards the Chechen nation he highlights, by contrast, the leadership qualities and selflessness demonstrated by his father, who 'at the cost of his own life, saved the Chechen people from complete destruction,

took responsibility for the fate of the nation'(23-02). Once Akhmad had saved the Chechen people, Ramzan continued what his father began rebuilding the region, securing peace, stability and wealth. In two posts dedicated to the 10th anniversary of Kadyrov's Presidency he enumerates the achievements of his administration, highlighting 'the consolidation of society' as the most important one . The post quotes: 'Such thing never happened anywhere else in the world. In a short time, people torn apart by deep contradictions, rallied together, became one fist, capable of solving difficult problems' (03-03). Through the remembrance of the past, Kadyrov conveys the image of a unified Chechen nation that, after abandoning all kind of anti-Russian sentiments, unanimously followed Akhmat Kadyrov along the path of peace and prosperity. Thus, he legitimize his own leadership, presenting himself as the natural prosecutor of his father's mission.

Soviet Past. Kadyrov devoted one post to the anniversary of the 1944 mass deportation ordered by Stalin. Here Kadyrov rejects the allegations according to which the Chechens collaborated with Hitler and harshly condemns Stalin for the genocide of the Chechens ('may he be cursed a thousand times') (23-02).

6.3 'Komanda' TV Show

'Komanda' is a TV show featuring Ramzan Kadyrov as the protagonist, which was aired in October and November 2016 on the federal Russian channel 'Russia 1'. The show consists in a competition during which 16 participants coming from all over Russia are called to show their personal skills and talents to Kadyrov. The winner will be assigned a position as personal assistant of the Head of Chechnya. The show is almost entirely staged in Chechnya. The participants have to undergo a variety of tests, proving their leadership skills, but also learning about Chechen culture and traditions. In fact, the TV serves largely as a promotional tool reshaping the image of Chechnya in a positive way. At the very beginning of the first episode Kadyrov states it clearly: 'Here there is place for everybody. Stereotypes need to be changed. They used to call us in many ways: extremists, terrorists, separatists. People would say all sorts of things about us. We

say we are citizens of Russia' (05-10). In the following paragraphs we deconstructed the nation brand identity of Chechnya as it is portrayed in the TV show (Appendix 2, Pic. 3).

Governance

Enlightened Leadership. Apart from being 'great advertisement' for Chechnya , 'Komanda' is mainly Kadyrov's opportunity to show his leadership talents. Kadyrov is represented as a wise and idealistic leader whose task is not just governing but rather serving the Chechen people. Since the very beginning he distances himself from traditional politicians. 'I take care of the problems of the Republic and its people; I don't do politics' (05-10) he states. Kadyrov underlines the exclusive relation bounding him to the Chechen people: 'Successful leadership means understanding the community. Allah the Almighty gave us the highest level of understanding of the community' (05-10). Thus, Kadyrov shows himself as a down-to-earth leader, who is able to talk the same language as his people. Kadyrov often mentions the high responsibility he is entrusted with and his full commitment to it. 'It has been 15-16 years that I haven't a single day for myself' he says (26-10).

Effective Administration. In several occasions, Kadyrov highlights the outstanding results achieved by his administration in the process of rebuilding the region. Celebrities and politicians invited to the show confirm the effectiveness of Kadyrov's administration. Talking about his arrival to Grozny, Filipp Kirkorov says: 'Honestly, I did not realize where I was. So many changes in just five years, that is impressive!' (26-10). deputy Prime Minister Igor Shuvalov points out the 'outstanding results' which transformed the Republic (08-11).

Care of the environment: Items belonging to this category are related to the initiatives taken by Kadyrov to preserve the environment, for instance repopulating the territory with wild animals or planting new trees.

Patriotism. 'Komanda' is replete of patriotic rhetoric. The participants are competing to become Kadyrov's assistants and serve Russia under his guidance. 'Being in the team means to be in the team of our President Vladimir

Vladimirovich' (05-10), says Kadyrov. Statements expressing patriotism are quite frequent in Kadyrov's speech as well as manifestations of loyalty to Putin: 'Nobody owns to president Putin as much as I do. He helped me, he helped my people, and he supported my father'. Kadyrov is eager to underline that Chechnya is an integral part of the Russian Federation: 'We have to underline that Russia is our common home' (08-11). Praising the competitors at the end of the show he says: 'They showed they are ready to serve in behalf of our motherland; we have one motherland: Russia' (22-11).

Culture & Heritage

Sport. In the second episode Kadyrov states: 'Every Chechen is a sportsman in his soul' (12-10). Kadyrov often highlight the importance of sport and healthy lifestyle: 'A man has to know how to ride a horse, to swim, to shoot' (08-11). The show's participants are often called to try themselves in sport competitions like football, box and archery. Healthy lifestyle and sport are mentioned among the elements representing the essence of contemporary Chechnya (08-11).

Islam: Religion plays an important role in Kadyrov's Chechnya. Kadyrov often shows the importance of Islam in his family: his father used to study and teach the Quran; his sons are also learning it. Short references to Allah are quite frequent in Kadyrov's speeches. The importance of Islam is represented visually through beautiful framing of the Chechen mosques. Kadyrov presents a tolerant image of Islam stating that visitors coming to the Republic are free to dress as they please (26-10).

Landscape. The Chechen mountains are an important landmark of the region: they are integral part of the Chechen national identity. 'If we leave our mountains, we will lose more than a half of our history' (26-10) says Kadyrov. 'The mountains are the strength of the soul' he says, expressing the particular connection between the Chechen people and their historical territory (15-11). Views of the Chechen landscape, especially the picturesque districts of Shatoi and Benoi, are a recurrent leitmotiv of the show.

Family and Gender Roles. The family institution is one of the pillars of

Chechen society. Kadyrov identifies the family institution as one of the elements representing better the essence of Chechnya (08-11). Kadyrov himself is presented as a good family guy, a caring son, father and husband. He points out that in Chechnya, men who abandon their families inevitably lose their honor and respect in society. Family values are held in high account by Kadyrov. Responding to the critics who attacked him after his father's death he states: 'those people have no values (...) they don't understand what a father is, what a brother is' (08-05). Gender roles in Chechen family and society are very conservative. A man's duty consists in defending the woman's honor. 'The woman is considered holy and respectable in the highest degree' says Kadyrov (05-10). He argues that a man should be a leader and practice sport, while a woman 'does better as a housewife'. 'In Chechnya it would be hard for a woman to be a leader' (05-10) he says.

Folklore. A significant part of 'Komanda' is dedicated to Chechen folklore: clothes, dance and other traditions. Especially *lezginka*, the traditional Vainakh dance often appears in the show. 'Without *lezginka* we won't be Chechens any longer. It is the soul of the people'. The world record for the longest *lezginka* dancing performance is achieved in the streets of Grozny (26-10). In the same episode knowledge of traditional Chechen costumes is the subject of one of the competitions (26-10).

Architecture. The medieval Vainakh towers and the Mosques are examples of Chechen architecture. In one episode, competitors explain the characteristics of the Grozny mosque 'The Heart of Chechnya' and the high-tech style mosque of Argun to visitors. The Vainakh towers are historical landmarks of ancient Chechen culture. Kadyrov says that modern skyscrapers like the ones of Grozny city represent a continuation of the long Chechen tradition in tower-building (19-10).

Investments & Immigration

Investments. Investment-related fragments mostly refers to the city of Grozny as the major center for investments. Kadyrov defines the capital of Chechnya as 'young, fast developing city, with interesting projects going on' (12-10). In one of the tasks, participants have to find investors interested in

renting offices in the Grozny City business center. One of them intends to attract investments to Grozny,   promoting Grozny City as a setting for weddings and romantic proposals (08-11).

Immigration. The only potential immigrants mentioned in the series are the protagonists and their families who are ready to move to Chechnya working for Ramzan Kadyrov. The last chapter features interviews with the family members of the participants, who show their willingness to move to Chechnya. 'Grozny is a very beautiful city and from what my husband told me people are very nice, responsive, and always ready to help. I feel ready to move there' says one participant's wife (22-11).

Tourism

Natural beauty. The beauty of the Chechen landscape is often highlighted in the series. Alexander, one of the first competitors to be excluded from the competition, encourages people to visit Chechnya: 'bring your family with you, come to the mountains. Here is beautiful, safe and interesting (...) Similar places cannot be found even on the Alps' (12-10).

Facilities. 'Grozny City', the most exclusive hotel in Grozny, is described by Kadyrov: 'People are happy there, all comforts are provided…' (08-11). Besides the capital, other locations equipped with tourism infrastructure are the Sernovodsk mineral water resort and the city of Gudermes. Talking about the latter, one of the participants states: 'When compared to the many hotels I visited all around Russia, I would definetly include those in Gudermes in the top ten'(15-11).

People

The show is very much focused on the character of Ramzan Kadyrov. Hence, there are no other Chechen characters with a relevant role. However, the Chechen people are often praised to be very hospitable. Also, Chechens are described as people who know how to fight. 'They always win in fights, they will never give up their own territory, and they do not need territory of others...it is a national tradition…' (08-11) says one of the show guests.

Exports

The promotion of products 'Made in Chechnya' is almost absent in the TV series, with the exception of one episode, almost entirely dedicated to local Chechen food (01-11).

Framing of the National Past

Wars and Reconstruction. At the beginning of the show Kadyrov remembers the difficult path he followed in order to secure stability and peace to the Chechen people: 'I hoped, I prayed. I didn't sleep. I prayed and fought. I prayed and built. I asked the Almighty for help to obtain people's understanding and support'. (05-10) The military conflict that tore apart Chechnya is evoked to underline the sharp contrast with new peaceful Chechnya:

> 'We are post-war people (...) The infrastructure was totally destroyed, there was nothing in the Republic. We still managed to find a common language, we changed our positions, we look at life from a totally new perspective, we build a new Republic, we write a new book'(05-10).

Evoking the Chechen wars, one of the darkest periods in the history of Chechnya, Kadyrov underlines the endurance and the valor of the Chechen people that managed to move on and build a better future:'There was a war going on here. It is worth to know who these people are; people who went through two military campaigns without breaking, they recovered, got up again and now they live with dignity' (19-10). Kadyrov often underlines the important contribution given by his militiamen in restoring constitutional order in Chechnya: 'They showed they are true patriots, they are ready for everything (...) They protected the integrity of our State' (12-10). During the show, Kadyrov often remembers his father, Ahmad, as the wise leader who united the Chechen people and brought them peace. Remembering his father, Kadyrov presents himself as the natural continuator of Ahmad's mission: 'We will finish what our fathers started' he proclaims.

Soviet Past. Kadyrov evokes the deportation of the Chechens (19-10) and their return to the homeland.

Pre-Soviet Past. One of the protagonists describes the original function of

the Vainakh towers saying: 'Chechens never had a tradition of wars of aggression. They defended their own land (...) the tower is not for attacking , rather it is a defensive tool.

6.4 Interpretation of the Results

After determining the structure of Chechnya's brand identity we can interpret it in the light of our previous reconstruction of Chechnya's brand image within Russian culture. Comparing the findings of the two content analysis, some relevant patterns can be pointed out. In both 'Komanda' and Vkontakte, the brand identity of Chechnya is primarily based on the categories of *Governance* and *Culture* (Appendix 1, Pic.1/ 6). This focus can be explained if we consider that the brand image of Chechnya in Russia was negatively affected by stereotypes mainly related to Chechen culture and politics. As we pointed out in the second chapter, Russian literature and media portrayed Chechnya as a lawless and violent place, inhabited by terrorists and criminals. Thus, it is only natural that Kadyrov's nation branding is oriented to counter those stereotypes. In particular, the sub-categories *Effective Administration, Enlightened Leadership* and *War on Terror* are meant to convey a sense of stability and trust towards the Chechen administration. Likewise, the significant presence of *Patriotism* serves the purpose to counter the old image of Chechen separatism and the perception of Chechnya as Russia's 'other' (Appendix1, Pic.3/8). Kadyrov takes advantage of the current zeitgeist presenting himself as a patriot and defender of the State in a time when Russian nationalism and militarism are on the rise. Kadyrov's criticism of western policy is also concordant with Russia's increasing antagonism with the West. *Sport* is a central brand sub-category in both 'Komanda' and 'Vkontakte'. In particular, Chechens' excellence in martial arts conveys the centrality of fight and competition in male-centered Chechen society. *Islam* is probably the most problematic cultural element to be encapsulated in the brand, due to the past image of Chechnya as hotbed of Islamic fundamentalism. In both 'Komanda' and Vkontakte, Kadyrov tries to counter the old image of Chechnya as the source of

Islamic terrorism by presenting Islam as a peaceful and moderate religion. While Kadyrov dedicates equal space to both *Governance* and *Culture* on his Vkontakte page, in 'Komanda' *Culture* plays a dominant role (Appendix 1, Pic.6). This is due to the fact that 'Komanda' was realized to boost tourism in the region; therefore it represents the most colorful aspect of Chechen culture in order to attract visitors to Chechnya. While on Vkontakte the only relevant cultural elements are *Sport* and *Islam*, 'Komanda' gives a wider perspective on Chechen culture and habits (Appendix 1, Pic. 2/7). Subcategories like *Folklore* and *Landscape* conveys the sense of uniqueness which is likely to attract the tourists' interest. The brand categoriy *Family and Gender Roles* presents Chechnya as a conservative society where traditional values are preserved. This can be also seen as a skillful understanding of the zeitgeist: Kadyrov adapts the Chechen brand to the official Kremlin's discourse which has been promoting conservative values as the pillars of Russian society. The absence of the category *War on terror* in 'Komanda' could be interpreted as another sign of the tourism-focused nature of the TV show: Kadyrov wants to convey the image of Chechnya as a safe region, where the threat of terrorism belongs to the past. The category *People* is rather relevant in Kadyrov's Vkontakte. The high significancy of the sub categories *Officials*, *Patriots* and *Sportsmen* is closely related to the importance of *Effective Administration*, *Patriotism* and *Sport*. On the other hand, *People* is very little represented in 'Komanda' (Appendix1, Pic.1/6) where the absolute protagonist is Ramzan Kadyrov. This also explains the prominence of *Enlightened Leadership* over *Effective Administration* in the TV show (Appendix 1, Pic.8): while the first category relates to the concerted efforts of the Chechen officials, the second relates to Kadyrov's personal leadership talents. The relatively high significance of *Tourism, in* 'Komanda' reflects the importance of the tourism sector in Chechen economy. In particular, the brand focuses on the natural beauty of the Chechen territory (Appendix1, Pic. 10). Our interviewee Islam Khatulev confirmed tourism as one of the economy sectors playing a significant role in improving the image of the region. Murat Shakhidov states clearly that the show Komanda is a tool for

promoting Chechnya 'from a touristic point of view' (Appendix 3). During the show, Kadyrov defines the attraction of tourists as one of the priority of the Chechen administration (08-11). However, even in 'Komanda', *Culture* and *Governance* play a more prominent role than *Tourism*. This result can be explained by noticing that, as Murat Shakhidov said, the main obstacle for the development of tourism in the region was the media representation of Chechnya as a 'dangerous place inhabited by wild people'. It can be argued that, according to Kadyrov's strategy, the restoration of the heavily damaged image of Chechen culture and government has to precede the promotion of tourism facilities and attractions. Khatullev mentioned 'The establishment of order and law' as the prerequisite which allowed a new image of Chechnya to be established. He also argued that tourists are attracted to the region mainly by Chechens' hospitality, which, according to my analysis, is among the qualities featuring in the Chechen brand identity. The promotion of Chechen hospitality is clearly meant to counter the perception of Chechens as aggressive and dangerous. *Landscape* has also a very significant presence in 'Komanda' (Appendix 1, Pic.7). The beauty of the North Caucasus is displayed in all its majesty, countering the perception of Chechnya as a land scarred by war. The *Governance* sub category *Enlightened Leadership*, presenting Kadyrov as a wise and strong leader is also functional for encouraging tourism. In fact, as Shakhidov said in the interviews 'Kadyrov himself said that he is personally responsible for the safety of every single tourist'. In general, it can be argued that a welcoming culture, a safe environment and a stable political situation are the first and most important perceptions that Chechnya's contemporary brand seeks to convey. On the other hand, purely 'economic' sides of the nation brand like *Export*, *Investments and Immigration* are significantly less represented in the brand structure (Appendix 1, Pic.1/6). Therefore, it can be argued that Chechnya's brand is much more focusing on shaping national Identity than reinforcing the Country-of-Origin effect. *Framing of the National Past* plays a major role in both the branding channels taken into account (Appendix1, Pic.1/6), with a clear predominance of sub-category *Wars and Reconstruction* Appendix1,

Pic. 4/9). Kadyrov frames the last military conflicts to create a positive national myth. According to this narrative, the Chechen nation was victim of international terrorists' manipulation, who tried to use the Chechen people in their war against Russia. Chechens are portrayed as a strong nation that, enduring destruction and sufferance, fought its way to peace and stability under Akhmad Kadyrov's wise leadership. Kadyrov remembers the past military operations, highlighting his personal contribution to the restoration of peace. He evokes the past devastations of the war in order stress his achievement in rebuilding the Republic from scratches. Thus, through a process of *reinterpretation*, Kadyrov turns Chechnya's war-torn past from main source of Chechnya's negative image into a positive brand element. On the other hand, it is interesting to notice that Kadyrov never mentions the events of the First Chechen War, when he used to fight on his father's side against the Russian federals. The complete omissions of these events in Kadyrov's narrative can be defined as an example of *repudiation*.

<p align="center">***</p>

On a great extent, Kadyrov's nation branding is addressing the damaged aspects of the Chechen brand image in Russia. Focusing mainly on cultural and political aspects, Kadyrov aims at conveying a sense of reconciliation in the aftermath of the conflict between Russia and Chechnya. Therefore, it can be argued that Kadyrov's communication strategy effectively incorporates elements of classic nation branding with public diplomacy. While on one side he preserves the uniqueness and otherness of Chechen national identity, on the other he combats the stereotypes generated by the historical antagonism between Russians and Chechens, in the attempt to reconcile the two nations.

Conclusion

In the course of our research we reconstructed the portrayal of the Chechen nation in Russian culture as well as analyzed current attempts to modify that image by means of nation branding practices. Drawing from secondary sources on Russian 19th century literature, we reconstructed an early image of Chechnya as Russia's oriental 'other', a land inhabited by savage and violent people, unwilling to submit to Russian 'civilizing mission'. These romantic stereotypes remained engrained in Russian culture for several decades of Soviet rule, until the revival of nationalism in the years of perestroika provided them with new strength. In the 90s, the perception of Chechens as criminals and savage became widespread, especially because of the media coverage of the first and second Chechen Wars.

While during the first campaign government media portrayed Chechens as criminals and bandits and Chechnya as a lawless enclave, during the second war Chechens were commonly associated with Islamic terrorism. Negative stereotypes about the region and its inhabitants lingered on after the resolution of the crisis. In order to counter the negative brand image of Chechnya cultivated by the Russian audience, the Chechen administration has been actively promoting a new nation brand identity. Interviews with Chechen civil servants helped us to identify Ramzan Kadyrov as the main promoter of the Chechen brand, as well as the channels he has been using to communicate it to the Russian audience. Our analysis of the TV show 'Komanda' and Kadyrov's Vkontakte page allowed us to outline the structure of the Chechen nation brand, pointing out its main features. The predominance of *Culture* and *Governance* reflects a strategy aimed at countering the preexisting negative brand image of Chechnya. In particular *Patriotism* counters the image of Chechens as separatists and fundamentally alien to Russians; *Effective Administration* and *Enlightened Leadership* counter the image of Chechnya as a lawless enclave ruled by bandits; *Islam* and *War on Terror* dismiss the image of Chechnya as a hotbed of Islamic terrorism. Cultural aspects like *Sport*, *Family and Gender Values* convey the image of a patriarchal traditional culture which is largely in tune with a significant part of Russian society. Finally, *Wars and Reconstruction* plays an important role in framing the events of the last Russian-Chechen conflict, transforming the main source of negative stereotypes into a positive narrative to be included in the brand. The predominance of reconciliatory elements in Kadyrov's nation branding associates it with practices of public diplomacy. We believe this nation branding case study could serve as example for governments challenged by image crisis in the aftermath of inter-ethnic and separatist conflicts. A rather obvious example is the case of eastern Ukraine, which in recent years has been the theater of an analogous crisis. The governments of the breakaway Donbass republics might find useful the example of Chechnya for rebranding their territory once a stable agreement with Kiev will be reached. Finally, our research represents a starting point for further investigations

of nation branding practices applied to Chechnya. Indeed, a series of questions were left opened: how effective is Kadyrov's nation branding strategy? In what degree Russian public opinion has been affected by it? Moreover, considering the central role played by Kayrov in branding Chechnya, further studies may question the legitimacy of such a centralized nation brand management and identify other possible stakeholders of the Chechen brand.

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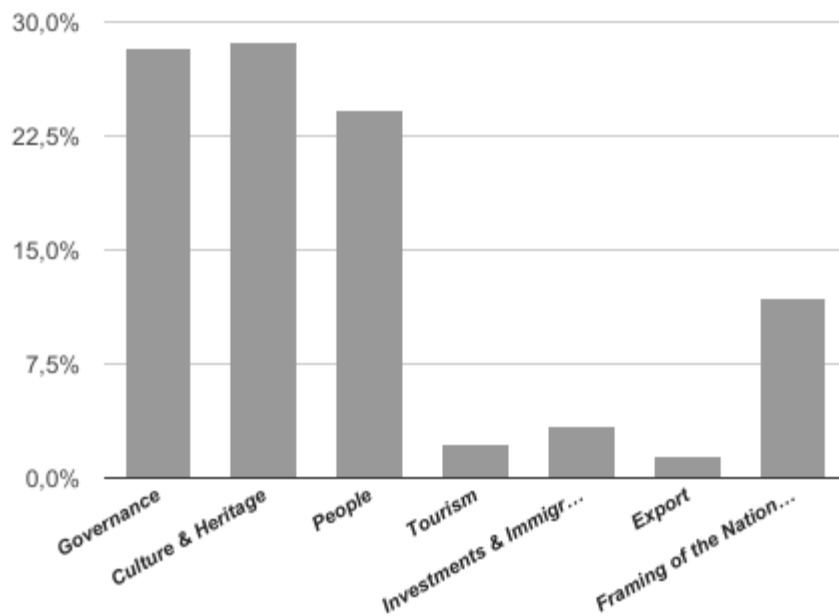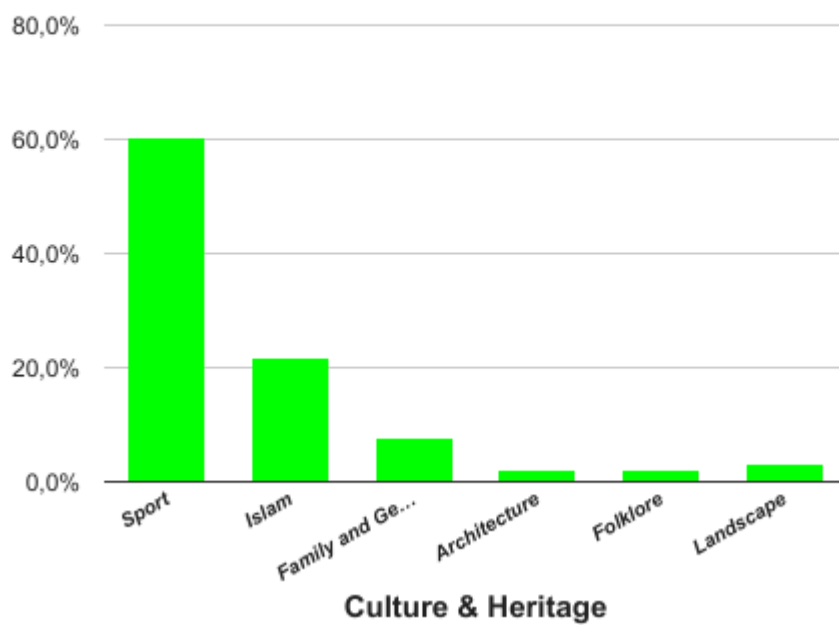**Sources**

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53. Vkontakte (2017)
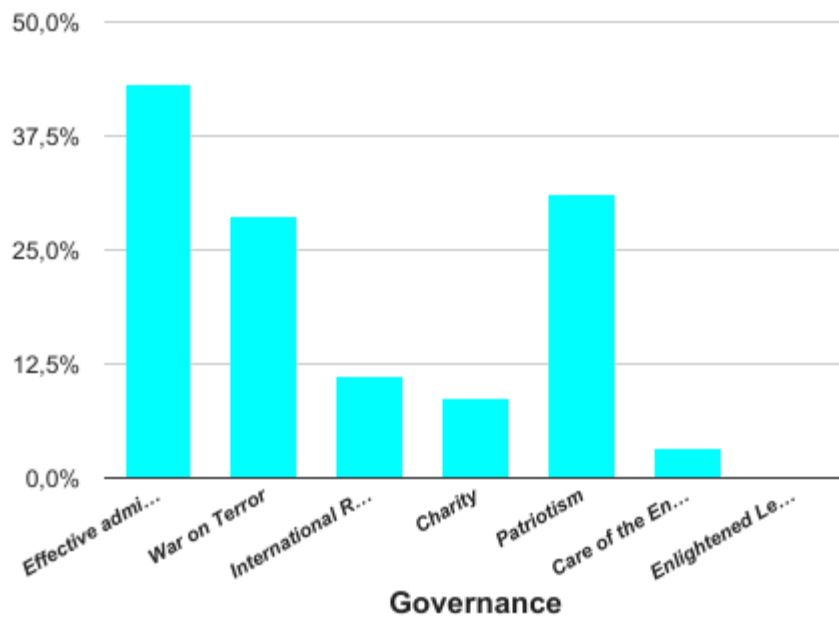
Appendices

Appendix 1: Graphs

Pic. 1

Pic. 2

Pic. 3
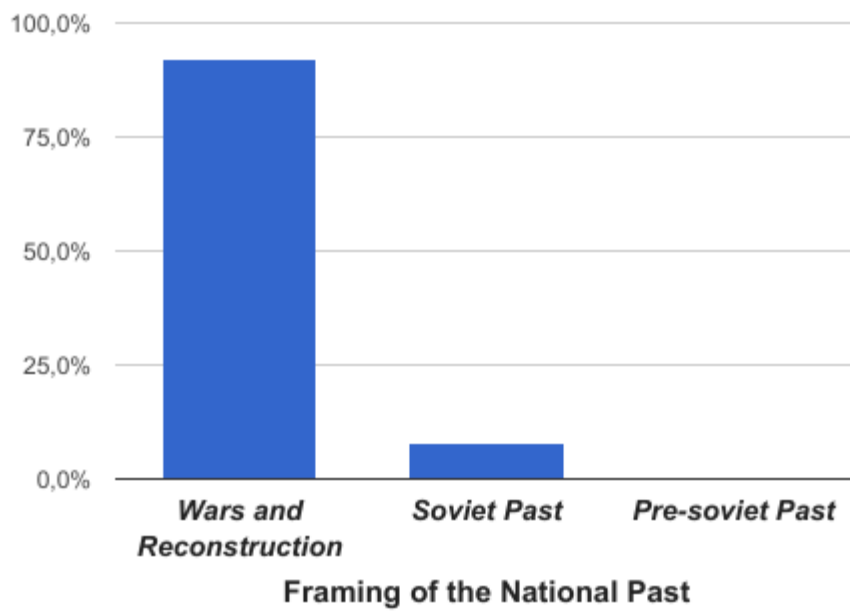
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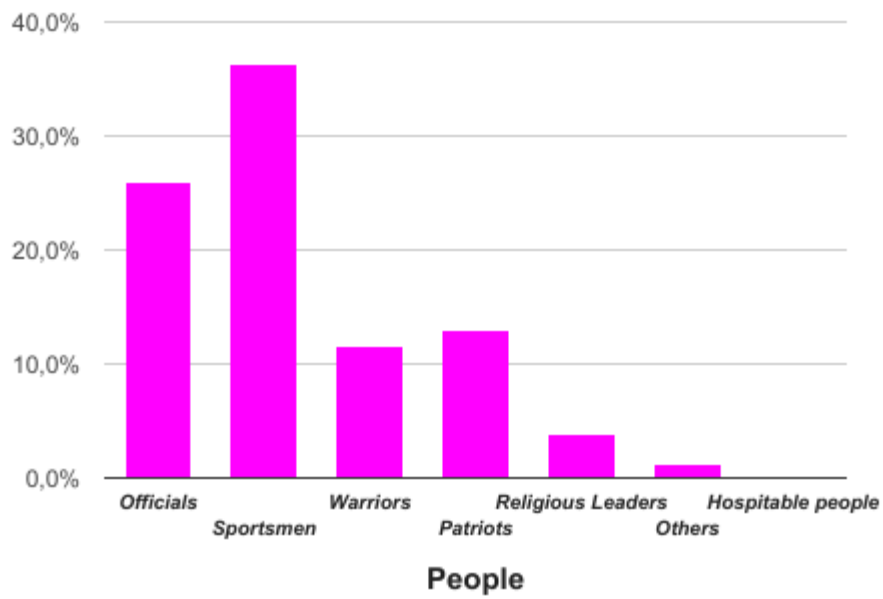
Pic.5

'Komanda' - Results
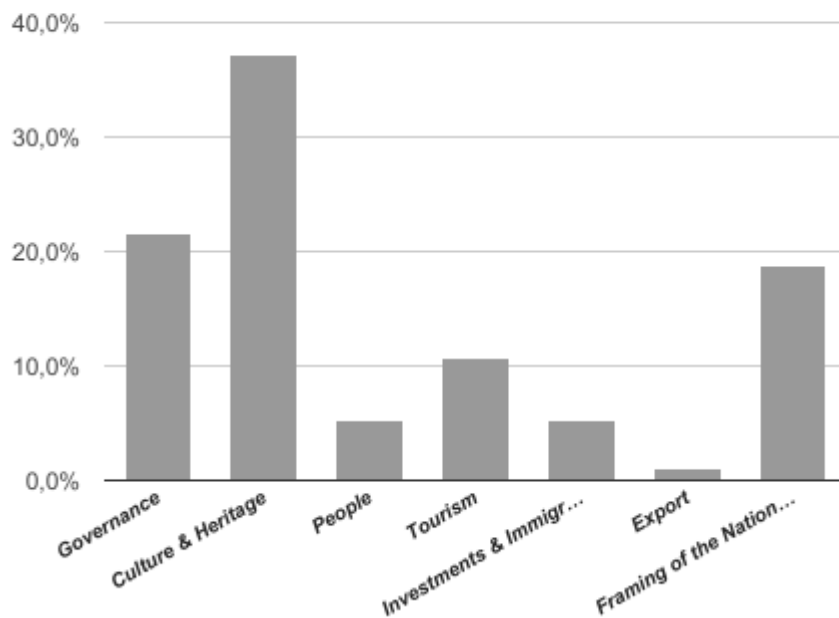
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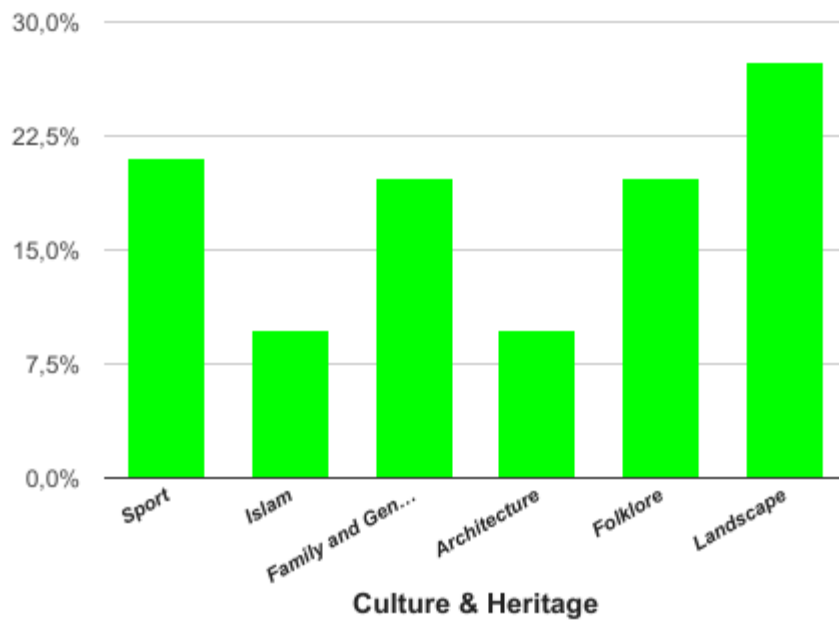
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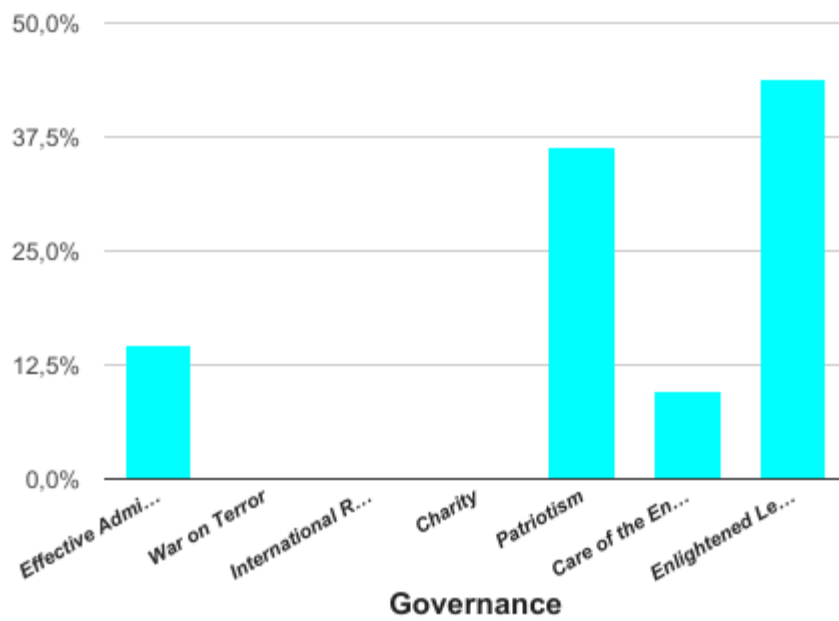
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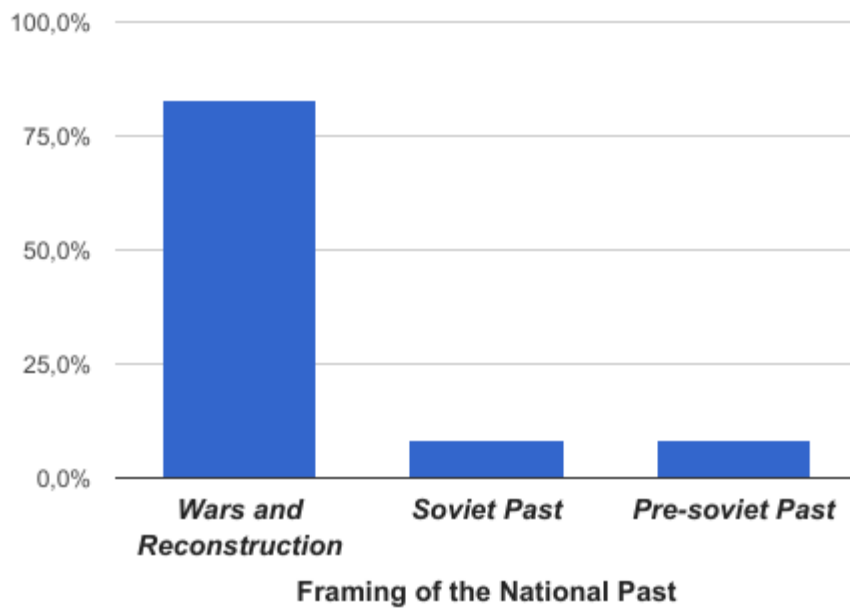
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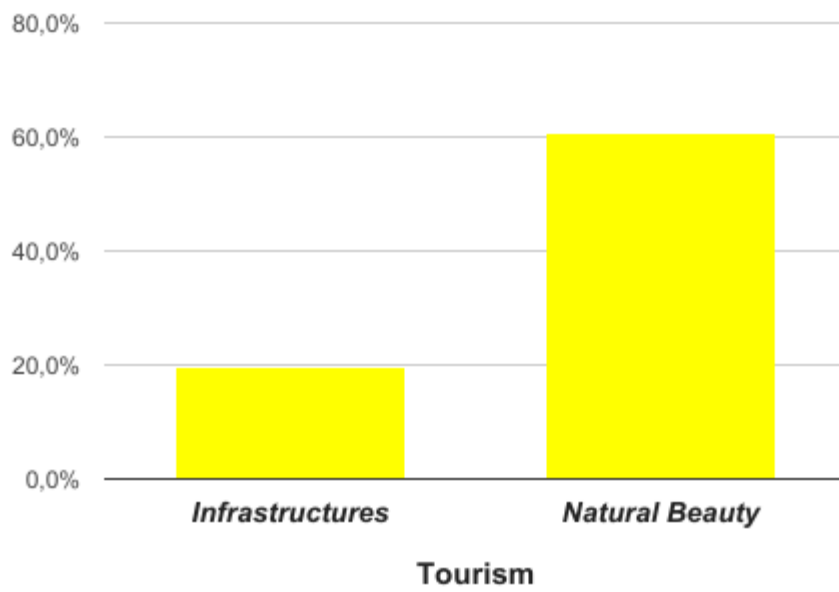
Pic.10

Appendix 2: Sampling

Pic.1

Position on the NB Hexagon	Framing of the National Past	Sub categories	Date	Link
Governance / Culture		Patriotism/ Sport	06-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_139423
Culture		Sport	05-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_139402
Culture/ Export/ Governance		Islam, Exports, Patriotism	05-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_139363
		Others	05-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_139321
Culture		Sport, Family and Gender Roles	05-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_139290
People / Culture		Family and Gender Roles / Other	05-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_139266
Governance		Patriotism	04-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_139226
Export		Export	04-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_139153
People/ Culture		Sport / Sportsmen	04-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_139087
Culture		Others	03-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_139056
Governance / People		Effective administration / Officials	03-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_139027

Governance/ Investments and Immigration	War and reconstruction	Effective administration / investments	03-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_138986
Culture		Islam	03-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_138976
Governance / People	War and reconstruction	Effective Administration, Patriotism	03-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_138911
Governance	War and reconstruction	Patriotism	02-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_138885
Governance		Effective governance	02-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_138834
Governance	War and reconstruction	War on terror, Patriotism	02-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_138795
Export / Culture		Islam	02-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_138772
Tourism / People / Culture		Sport, Infrastructure	01-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_138752
Export		Export	01-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_138708
Governance / People		Patriotism, Effective Administration/ Patriots, Officials	01-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_138677
		Sport	01-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_138676
Governance		Effective Governance	01-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_138646
Governance / People	War and reconstruction	Effective Administration, War on terror / Officials	28-02-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_138613

Governance / People		Effective Administration / Officials	28-02-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_138581
Culture		Sport	27-02-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_138562
Governance		Care of the Environment	27-02-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_138498
Government, People		War on Terror, Patriotism/ Warriors	27-02-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_138469
People/ Culture	War and Reconstruction	Family and Gender Roles	26-02-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_138413
Governance	War and reconstruction	Charity, Foreign Relations	26-02-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_138370
Culture/People		Sport / Sportsmen	26-02-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_138327
Governance /People	War and reconstruction	War on Terror, Patriotism / Patriots, Officials	26-02-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_138291
People/ Culture		Sport/Sportsmen	26-02-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_138282
People/ Culture		Sport/Sportsmen	25-02-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_138250
Culture		Sport	25-02-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_138241
			24-02-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_138196
Culture		Islam	24-02-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_138154

Governance/ Culture		Charity / Islam	24-02-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_138123
Culture	War and reconstruction	Islam, Family and Gender Roles	23-02-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_138096
Culture	Soviet Past,War and reconstruction		23-02-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_138028
Culture		Sport	23-02-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_138004
Governance		War on Terror , Effective Administration	22-02-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_137977
People	War and reconstruction	Patriots, Warriors	22-02-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_137933
Culture		Sport	22-02-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_137898
Culture		Language	21-02-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_137821
Culture	War and reconstruction	Landscape	21-02-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_137780
Culture/ Governance		Islam /War on Terror, International Relations	21-02-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_137754
Goverenance		Patriotism	20-02-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_137659
Culture	Soviet past	Landscape	20-02-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_137633
Culture		Islam	20-02-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_137612

Governance/ Culture		Sport ,Patriotism, Effective Governance	20-02-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_137574
Governance / People		Effective governance, Patriotism / Officials, Patriots	19-02-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_137547
Culture		Sport	19-02-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_137539
Culture/People		Sport/Sportsmen	19-02-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_137513
Culture/People		Sport/Sportsmen	18-02-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_137485
Governance /People		Effective Administration, Patriotism / Patriots, Officials	18-02-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_137454
		Others	17-02-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_137433
Culture		Islam	17-02-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_137410
Culture, People			16-02-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_137361
Governance	War and reconstruction	Effective Administartion	16-02-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_137334
Investments and Immigration		Investments, Immigration		https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_137314
Culture / People		Sport/sportsmen	15-02-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_137284
Governance / People		Effective Administration / Warriors	14-02-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_137248

Governance		Effective Administration	13-02-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_137233
Governance		Effective Administration	13-02-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_137204
Culture / People		Sport/Sportsmen	11-02-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_137174
Governance		Charity, International Relations	09-02-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_137149
Governance		War on terror	08-02-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_137096
Governance/People	War and reconstruction	Effective Administration/ Patriots, Officials	08-02-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_137070
Culture/People		Sport/sportsmen	07-02-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_137028
Culture	War and reconstruction	Folklore	07-02-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_137007
Government		Care of the environment	06-02-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_136981
Government /Investments and Immigration	War and reconstruction	Effective Administration/ Investments	06-02-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_136937
			06-02-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_136907
People		Warriors	06-02-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_136870
Culture/ Tourism		Architecture/ Infrastructures	06-02-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_136836

Culture / People		Sport / Sportmen	05-02-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_136814
Culture/People		Sport / Sportmen	05-02-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_136802
People/Culture		Religious leaders / Islam	04-02-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_136769
Government		Patriotism	04-02-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_136762
People			03-02-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_136736
Export		Export	03-02-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_136714
People	Soviet Past	Warriors, Patriots	02-02-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_136674
Culture / People		Sport , Landscape/ Sportsmen	02-02-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_136654
Culture		Islam	01-02-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_136618
Culture		Sport	01-02-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_136592
Culture / People		Spor/ Sportsmen	01-02-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_136572
Culture/People		Sport/ Spostsmen	01-02-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_136560
Governance	War and reconstruction	Effective Administration	01-02-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_136521

Governance /People		Effective Administration, Charity/ Others	31-01-2017	https://vk.com/ ramzan? w=wall279938622_1 36497
Culture/People		Sport/ Sportsmen	31-01-2017	https://vk.com/ ramzan? w=wall279938622_1 36477
Governnace	War and reconstruction	War on terror, Patriotism	31-01-2017	https://vk.com/ ramzan? w=wall279938622_1 36474
Governance		Effective Administratrion	31-01-2017	https://vk.com/ ramzan? w=wall279938622_1 36473
Governance / People	War and reconstruction	Effective Administration, Patriotism / Officials	31-01-2017	https://vk.com/ ramzan? w=wall279938622_1 36447
Culture		Islam	31-01-2017	https://vk.com/ ramzan? w=wall279938622_1 36431
Tourism		Natural beuty/ Infrastructures	30-01-2017	https://vk.com/ ramzan? w=wall279938622_1 36404
Culture		Landscape	29-01-2017	https://vk.com/ ramzan? w=wall279938622_1 36327
Culture		Islam	29-01-2017	https://vk.com/ ramzan? w=wall279938622_1 36322
Governance		War on terror, International Relations	29-01-2017	https://vk.com/ ramzan? w=wall279938622_1 36283
Culture / People	War and reconst6ruction	Islam / Religipous leader	28-01-2017	https://vk.com/ ramzan? w=wall279938622_1 36261

Pic.2

Position on the NB Hexagon	Framing of National Past	Sub categories	Date	Link

Governance		International Relations	12-04-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_142256
People/Governance	War and reconstruction	Effective governance/ Officials	11-04-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_142203
Culture/ People		Sport/ Sportsmen	09-04-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_142162
Culture/ People		Sport/ Sportsmen	09-04-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_142147
Culture/ People		Sport/ Sportsmen	09-04-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_142126
Governance/People		War on terror, Patriotism/ Patriots	08-04-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_142082
Governance		Patriotism, Foreign policy	08-04-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_141997
People/Culture		Language	07-04-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_141971
Culture		Islam	07-04-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_141959
Governance/Investments		International relations / Investments	07-04-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_141952
Culture/Governance/ People	War and reconstruction	War on Terror/ Family and Gender Roles /Warriors	06-04-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_141929
Culture		Sport	06-04-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_141866
Governance		Patriotism, International Relations, War on Terror	06-04-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_141834

Governance		International Relations	06-04-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_141825
Governance/Investments/ Culture		Effective Administration, Investments, Architecture	05-04-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_141786
Tourism		Infrastructures	05-04-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_141757
Investments			04-04-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_141739
Governance/People		Effective Administration / Patriots	04-04-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_141706
Governance/ Culture		Effective Administration/ Sport	03-04-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_141685
People/ Governance		Warriors	03-04-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_141661
Governance		War on terror, Patriotism	03-04-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_141546
		Celebrities	02-04-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_141512
Culture/People		Sport / People	01-04-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_141493
Culture/ People		Family and gender roles/ Officials	01-04-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_141487
Culture	War and Reconstruction	Sport,	31-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_141463
Governance / Investments		Investments, Effective Administration	31-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_141431

Culture / People		Sport/ Patriots	31-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_141428
Culture		Sport	31-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_141419
Governance		Others	30-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_141350
Governance /People		Effective Administration / Officials	29-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_141312
Culture		Sport	29-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_141296
Culture		Sport	28-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_141272
Governance		Effective Administration	28-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_141235
Governance		War on terror	27-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_141198
Governance		International Relations	27-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_141164
Governance/ People	War and reconstruction	Effective administration / Officials	27-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_141136
Culture		Sport	27-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_141116
Culture		Sport	27-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_141105
			26-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_141083

			26-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_141073
Governance/People		International Relations, Patriotism, War on Terror, Warriors	26-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_141044
Governance		Care of the Environment	25-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_141014
Governance		Effective administration	25-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_140984
Culture	War and Reconstruction	Folklore	25-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_140947
Governance	War and Reconstruction	War on Terror	25-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_140931
Culture		Sport	25-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_140915
People		Fighters	25-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_140890
Culture		Islam	24-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_140858
Governance		War on Terror, Charity	24-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_140824
People		Religious Leaders	23-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_140806
Governance	War and reconstruction	Effective Administration , Patriotism	23-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_140777
Governance	War and reconstruction	Patriotism	23-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_140755

Governance	War and reconstruction	Patriotism	23-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_140713
Governance	War and reconstruction	Patriotism	23-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_140705
Governance/People		Patriotism /Warriors	22-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_140681
Governance		Charity	22-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_140639
			21-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_140602
Governance		Effective Administration	20-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_140591
Culture/People		Sport/Sportsmen	19-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_140553
Governance / People		War on Terror, Effective Administration/ Patriots, Officials	19-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_140509
Culture/People		Sport/Sportsmen	18-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_140498
Culture/People		Sport / Sportsmen	18-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_140462
Culture/People		Sport / Sportsmen	18-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_140440
Culture		Sport	16-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_140414
Governance		Patriotism	16-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_140362

Governance/People		Effective Administration/ Officials	16-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_140325
People		Others	16-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_140288
Governance / People		War on Terror/ Warriors	16-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_140271
Governance		War on Terror	15-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_140242
Governance/people		War on Terror / Warriors	15-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_140221
Governance / People	War and reconstruction	Effective Administration / Officials	15-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_140210
Tourism		Infrastructures	14-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_140191
Governance / Culture	War and reconstruction,	War on Terror / Islam	14-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_140164
Governance		Patriotism	14-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_140130
Culture		Sport	14-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_140113
Investment and Immigration		Investments	13-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_140066
Governance		Charity, War on Terror , International Relations	13-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_140049
Governance		Effective administration	13-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_140002

Culture		Sport	13-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_139992
Culture / People		Sport/Sportsmen	12-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_139974
Governace / People	War and reconstruction	Effective Administration, Patriotism / Patriots, Officials	12-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_139945
People\ Culture		Other	11-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_139930
Culture		Sport	11-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_139897
People / Culture		Sport /Sportsmen	11-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_139881
Culture		Islam	11-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_139873
Tourism/Investment and Immigration		Investments / Infrastructures	10-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_139853
People/ Culture		Sport/sportsmen	10-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_139840
Governance/Investments and Immigration		Effective Administration/ Investments	09-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_139816
People/ Culture		Sport/Sportsmen	09-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_139790
Governance / People		Effective Administration / Officials	09-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_139766
Governance		Charity	09-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_139724

Culture / People		Family and Gender Roles / Patriots	08-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_139664
Culture / People		Family and Gender Roles / Others	08-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_139625
Culture		Family and Gender Roles	07-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_139612
Culture\People		Sport / Sportsmen	07-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_139562
People	, War and reconstruction	Others	07-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_139551
Governance		War on terror	06-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_139503
		Others	06-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_139484
Governance / People / Culture		Effective Administartion/ Officials/ Sport	06-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_139464
Governance / Culture	War and reconstruction	Charity, War on Terror, International Relations / Islam	06-03-2017	https://vk.com/ramzan?w=wall279938622_139439

Pic.3

Episode	Governance	Culture & Heritage	Investments & Immigration	Tourism	People	Export	Framing of the National Past
05-10	Care of the environment, Enlightened Leadership (5), Effective Administration, Patriotism (2)	Landscape (3,5), Family and gender roles (2), Islam (2), Sport (2)	Investment, Immigration	Natural Beauty(1,5)	Hospitable People, Sportsmen		War and reconstruction (7)

12-10	Care of the environment, Enlightened Leadership Patriotism (2)	Sport (6), Islam, Family and gender roles (2), Folklore, Landscape (4), Architecture	Investments	Natural beauty (2), Natural beauty (1,5)	Fighters		War and reconstruction (5), Soviet time
19-10	Enlightened Leadership (3), Effective administration (2), Patriotism (2)	Folklore (1,5), Sport (3), Family and gender roles , Folklore (4), Islam, Architecture (3), Landscape (4)		Facilities (3), Natural beauty (2), Natural beauty (1)	Hospitable People (2), Sportsmen		War and reconstruction (6), Soviet time (2), Pre-soviet
26-10	Enlightened Leadership (2)	Landscape, Folklore, Islam, Family and gender roles (2), Sport, Folklore (4,5), Landscape (0,5)		Natural beauty	Hospitable People		War and reconstruction (3),
01-11		Food (2), Islam , Sport, Landscape (1,5) Family and gender roles (2), Folklore (0,5)		Natural beauty (1,5)	Hospitable People	Food	
08-11	Enlightened Leadership (2), Care of the environment (2) , Effective administration (2) , Patriotism (5)	Sport, Landscape (3,5), Architecture (2), Folklore (1), Sport (2), Family and gender roles (2)	Investments (2)	Facilities, Natural beauty (1,5)	Fighters		War and reconstruction (4), Pre-soviet
15-11	Effective administration. Enlightened Leadership	Landscape (2,5), Sport (2)	Investments	Facilities, Natural beauty (2)			War and reconstruction (5), Pre-soviet Time
22-11-2016	Enlightened Leadership (4), Patriotism (4)	Islam, Landscape (1,5)	Immigration (3) , Investments	Natural beauty, Natural beauty (1,5)	Hospitable People		Wars and reconstruction (1,5)

Appendix 3: Interviews

Interview with Islam Khatulev, Director of the Media Monitoring Department of the Chechen Ministry of Information, Chairman of the Union of Journalists of the Chechen Republic

The image of Chechnya changed significantly in a positive way. This is connected first of all to the changes that have been taking place in the republic. For a long time there were illegitimate authorities here, which were not recognized by the federal center of Russia and by the country's citizens. After the referendum which took place in March 2003 called by Ahmad Hadji Kadyrov the people voted in favor of being part of Russia, be a full member of the Federation. Since then, a process of rebirth had started in the social, economic, cultural sphere, sport, mass media. After that, legitimate presidential elections took place. A Constitution was adopted according to the referendum. Overcoming problems such as crime, abductions, violence, it already improved on a certain extent the image of Chechnya in the eyes of Russian citizens.

Did this process start right after the referendum?

Vladimir Putin appointed Ahmad Kadyrov, previously a mufti; he had a religious education, he was religious activist. He was compelled to enter the political arena since at the time Chechnya was on the brink of catastrophe. The federal forces were sent here, the fighting, the violence, terrorism, terror attacks, the economy was in ruin, Grozny was in ruins, together with other localities. All factories were destroyed as well as schools, media, redactions, everything. Something had to be done. The first step was the appointment in 2000 of Akhmad Kadyrov as the leader of the temporary administration of Chechnya. From there the first steps towards peaceful life were taken. Starting from elementary things such as electricity, gas, literally from zero. There was still violence, the terrorists, separatists did not recognize the authorities. Victims of attacks were not just the federal forces but also locals. Many officials working in the administration died together with policemen, religious activists who did not support Wahabism. In that time of uncertainty, Akhmad Kadyrov decided to call a referendum.

So was there a real possibility to choose whether to stay in the Russian Federation or secede?

Well in the period in between 1996 and 1999 Chechnya de facto was independent from Russia, right?   De iure it wasn't recognized as such but de facto was independent. But then with the terrorist attacks and the attack on neighboring Dagestan we had to take a decision. The federal center didn't recognize the authorities in charge in the 1996-1999 period. It was necessary to establish again a civil life, rebuild schools, hospitals, elementary conditions for life. Something had to be done. If the fight continued, it would have never stopped. A meaningful, legal action had to be undertaken in order to stop that. After the referendum and the elections were conducted, it was still complicated. Block posts were still

everywhere. From 2003 to 2009, when the counter terrorist operation was declared completed there were still terrorist attacks and so on. But after a while the amount of those who oppose the return to civil life became less and less. A part of them left for Western Europe. I am not saying that all those who left were our enemies. They left for different reasons. Still many of these enemies left. After that, when the situation became more or less stable there were no more block posts and other traces of war time started being removed. Measures such as the curfew were abolished. Other limitations were also abolished. The airport started working as well other connections. Besides, the majority of those who died for the integrity and the interests of Russia were Chechens. I mean public officials, members of the security forces. Many of our people died defending Russia, so Russians understood. Some of the mass media did not want to recognize that, they tried to show that there was still a conflict between Russia and Chechnya, that (all achieved) was temporarily, that (the conflict) was going to spark again.

What mass media exactly are you talking about?

For example 'The Caucasian Knot', 'Novaya Gazeta', 'Echo of Moscow' and others. Those media with a chauvinistic position. They were saying that the amnesty wasn't carried out in the right way. The guarantor of the amnesty was Akhmad Hadji. Even television channels expressed different point of views about the amnesty. On REN TV, MTV, a lot of talk shows transmitted the opinion of those who were against the amnesty, because considered it not trustworthy.

What about State-owned channels? What positions were they taking?

If talking about the thick of the military conflict, when still no positive steps towards peace was taken, practically all the mass media were talking about terror attacks, banditry, battles, Wahhabis and so on. Little by little, Russian media and Russian public opinion started changing. All the data can be found in open sources,

like Levada Center. About the attitude towards Chechnya for example. Not abruptly, but little by little the opinion of people changed in a positive way. It was a long, progressive, difficult process. The military conflict started towards the end of 1999 and now it is the end of 2016. It's not a short period of time. During this period the negative attitude towards Chechens changed significantly. The most important thing is the attitude of the law enforcement authorities in other Russian regions towards Chechens. Individuals of Chechen nationality used to attract automatically the attention of the law enforcement authorities. I mean document controls and so on...

Was that happening more with Chechens than with representatives of other Caucasian nationalities?

Yes, more than Dagestanis, Ingushes. Chechens were object of 'interest'. So we would be stopped, searched and so on. In 2004 or 2005 we were travelling by train to Moscow. The passengers of our train (from Chechnya) were brought to a special area where immediately the police searched us and controlled our documents. If the police found out that I was a Chechen they would have controlled, checked documents and so on. Of course that was humiliating. I knew I hadn't committed any crime, but they would constantly check, check, check. Now it is no more like that. Finally being Chechen does not mean that you are suspicious.

Do you think stereotypes about Chechens completely disappeared from Russian society?

Well, I don't know if they fully disappeared. Maybe they didn't, they already existed in Soviet times right? I mean that they significantly diminished. Not only regarding security forces or the media. I also mean the Internet. When social networks appeared, they also helped in improving the situation. Anti chechen statements became rarer.

What were the main instruments you used for the reconstruction of the image of Chechnya?

First of all the establishment of order and law. For instance, certain kind of crimes which are common in other regions, do not happen here. For instance we don't have cases of raping at all. Practically no car thefts, no hooliganism. Several kinds of crimes practically disappeared. That is also a noticeable achievement. Earlier our region was ranked in the first places for the frequency of car thefts. Now there are no car thefts at all. This is the first aspect. Another factor is the economical development. Now we have people assembling cars, we export very good quality mineral water, which is increasingly popular. Different industries are being developed. Our production is spreading into other regions. And people see our industry works. Many of our youngsters moved to other regions to study. Tourists started coming in great amounts. The head of the region, Ramzan Kadyrov is actively promoting the tourism business. We are build tourist resorts. The amount of tourists is increasing. If 5 or 6 years ago the presence of tourists was considered weird, surprising. Now tourists come from foreign countries and from other regions of Russia. More than beauty of places, tourists are attracted by the hospitality of the Chechens. We have always been hospitable people.

How much of the success is the personal merit of Ramzan Kadyrov?

The process started already with Akhmad Hadji Kadyrov and Ramzan Ahmatovic continued it. His energy, will and determination is changing everything for the better. His leadership talent, patriotism. All played a role. He assigned to administrative responsibilities to those who also want Chechnya to flourish and grow...He transmits his energy to other people and every day some positive change happens.

How important were federal funds for the reconstruction of the region?

Of course the federal center offered a huge help in reconstructing the region but also investments were and are still attracted from private companies. (...) Nobody is denying that the federal center gave a hand; likewise it did with other regions. Other regions did not endure such a degree of destruction, we endured horrible destruction. Now industry, agriculture and tourism are growing.

Can you mention the main sectors which you believe to be the most important for the improvement of the region's image?

The agricultural sector, we have traditions, we have the land. Tourism, industrial sector, especially the oil and gas sector. Culture, especially sport . Our athletes achieve more and more results (...) everything will go on successfully this way, as long as there will be no interferences. We don't want interferences, we want help. We want people to rejoice of our success together with us.

Who are you talking about?

I am talking about the terrorists, and those who don't like the idea of our republic to be part of the Russian Federation.

Interview with Murat Shakhidov, Press Officer of the Chechen Government Committee for Tourism

Could you please describe how the tourism industry developed in Chechnya in the last few years?

When the security issue was not anymore the first priority we founded the committee of tourism. When the committee was founded, the only tourists coming here were those individuals who took the risk to come here autonomously. No one was managing tourism at that time in the Republic. After 2015 determined organs started taking care of it. For example the tour operator 'Visit Chechnya' which started bringing tourists to the region. The tour operator is our creation and now it works autonomously. Currently it is the only tour operator of the Chechen Republic; there are no other tour operators in the region. When we found the committee, there were no touristic facilities. There were hotels, there was the five star hotel 'Grozny city', Kezenoyam was still not an equipped touristic site. Nevertheless, the necessary infrastructure was already there. Roads and other basic infrastructures had been already repaired. Gas and electricity was working all over the region. There was already some base to build on. The Chechen Republic is a mountainous republic. Some mountains are difficult to access. All the villages are accessible through roads. For example Zoy Pede is a place difficult to reach. No one fears this inaccessibility, this place still attracts people, and everybody wants to go there to see the necropolis. First you need to travel by car, and then you need to go by foot. This last part of the route is tough but despite the toughness everybody go there since the place has a powerful energy. It dates back to the times when the Vainakhs, Chechens and Ingush, were pagans. The most difficult task consisted in removing the paradox 'Chechnya is war, Chechnya is tourism'. Which one of them is prevailing in the minds of people? Chechnya is a militarized or a touristic region. It was a huge work; titanic efforts were made on every level. From the highest ranking officials to an everyday level. The committee participated in all possible forums, exhibitions and fairs where it showed the region (...) We had to convince people that Chechnya is safe. I am not talking about foreigners, but Russian citizens. Especially Russian citizens used to fear Chechnya. Europeans were braver, they would come, without problems. (...) So we had to convince people that Chechnya is open and convincing Russians was much more difficult

than convincing Europeans. Europeans were anyway willing to come to the Caucasus and to Chechnya.

What is the reason for that?

It could be because of a difference in media coverage (...) because of inertia the media still described Chechnya as dangerous place inhabited by wild people. This was a big obstacle for the development of tourism.

What media are you talking about?

Commercial TV, they understood that the Chechen theme is profitable, it attracted the audience, it generates rating. If you would pronounce the word 'Chechnya' or 'Chechens' everybody would turn to the screen. They played with it. The negative stories would bring money at that time. The State TV was different. they were working as usual, they weren't showing that kind of shocking material. (...) If a Ukrainian or a Georgian commits a crime, nobody would pay attention, if a Chechen did it, than all media would focus on it. And this negative image remains. To solve this issue the State Duma, the Parliament , on the local level we managed to convince the Tv channels that taking advantage of the Chechen issue is not a good choice.

How did you manage to solve this problem?

(...) Let's say that a newspaper wants to make a scoop about Chechnya. They create a sensationalist story. In that case authorities would take care of the issue and if they find out that the story does not correspond to the truth, this magazine or newspaper would be held accountable for its words. There was a fight with the media, it was necessary to ignore these businessmen who were trying to earn money by exploiting Chechnya. Until we solved the problem with the media, it

was impossible to do tourism, even ridiculous. 'Welcome to the Chechen Republic' sounded like 'welcome to the asylum'. It was ridiculous for a Russian citizen. We have an amazing nature. In Soviet times tourism was very developed. Soviet kids used to come to our summer camps from all the corners of USSR, people would to come to the Chechen Republic to relax and heal. There were many itineraries. On the shores of Kezenoyam could be found the base of the Soviet Olympic rowing team. It was absolutely normal to come to the Caucasus, to the mineral waters facilities. After the war the issue of tourism in Chechnya was something contradictory. The most important task was getting rid of this stereotype. The head of the region was given the task to develop the region and move ahead, which is what we started doing. We started studying the region. What it was preserved, what itineraries could be created. We created hiking routes, excursions around Grozny, around the museums. We started searching for tour guides who used to work here in the past. We restored old itineraries. It was a big amount of work. Taking some old stuff, doing something new. This activity started working, breathing, attracting people. The first tourists who started coming to Grozny were looked at with astonishment by the citizens of Grozny. I'm talking about 2014 and fully in 2015. In 2014 tourists started coming. For citizens of Grozny the appearance of tourists is a sign that everything is ok. They started feeling more confident. It was the signal that Chechnya became a peaceful region. There was no concrete advertisement promoting the region. Our major source of advertisement is Ramzan Kadyrov. He is the engine informing people about the Chechen Republic. He is moving towards a specific direction. He acts in the interest of the Region. He is a high ranking official, so he is more popular and 'accessible' than whatever ministry or committee. I can't think about a better advertisement for Chechnya than the reality show 'Komanda' . The project was created by Russia TV Channel and Ramzan Kadyrov. If looking at the general effect, the show described Chechnya as a beautiful, nice, quiet place from a touristic point of view. It was great advertisement. The committee of tourism of Chechnya cannot hope to initiate a several months long project on federal channels. Kadyrov enjoys a significant

authority on a federal level. His initiatives are usually supported on a federal level. It was hard to compete with 'monsters' of tourism like Sochi, Kabardino Balkaria, Elbrus. The opinion of Russian about Chechnya has changed, not completely of course but significantly. The best statistics proving that are the numbers. In 2015 according to Rostata Chechnya was the safest region of the country. According to these data, Chechnya featured the smallest amount of crimes.   Of course not everybody knows about that.   Statistics is never very interesting but I can always refer to it when people tell me 'it is not safe over there'. Another way to prove that the situation has changed is going to Moscow or Kazan and talking to people. Saying that I work for the tourism committee of the Chechen Republic. While earlier they would say 'What are you talking about? Tourism? If I go there I will be beheaded'. Now they say 'it is OK'. Ramzan Kadyrov is contributing to our work realizing special events: opening fountains, inviting stars, all this attracts the attention and conveys a feeling of safety. Kadyrov provides the direction. These are PR technologies. Gerard Depardieu came to Chechnya for shooting a movie and he gave some interviews about the shooting. That was the main reason, but all the rest was done for creating a positive image of Chechnya. We cannot afford PR specialists; everything is being done by Ramzan Kadyrov and us. We can't afford PR specialists on a federal level. We create events. For example in the summer 2017 we will organize an international regatta on the Kazenoyam Lake. There will be a competition. It will be the regatta on the highest altitude in the world, and it will be included in the Guinness world records. This will immediately attract the attention of the media. We can create these kinds of events which will reflect positively on the image of the region. Chechen cuisine is very simple but also very filling. A lot of meat, very manly cuisine. In April 2017 we will organize a gastronomic festival where we will cook the biggest shashlik in the world. (...)

How can you comment the rumors saying that in Chechnya the Federal law doesn't apply?

The media are responsible for this. The most important thing is determining what is true and what is not. Is Chechnya complying with the federal law or not? It is not possible that an entire region fails to comply with the federal law and the Constitutional tribunal does not know about it. If the Federal Constitutional tribunal, the most important Russian tribunal, doesn't say anything, than it means that everything is fine. It is impossible to deceive the tribunal. Of course there are individuals who still go on talking. If you listen to them, of course Chechnya is the most terrible place (...) the Russian law doesn't apply here ...Of course they do. This is the Russian Federation. The first article of the Chechen Constitution says that Chechnya is part of the Russian Federation (...) Of course we are afraid that people might be worried about that and that it can prevent them to come. That opinion is certainly an obstacle for the development of tourism (...). You know why that perception exists? Some author or newspaper writes that Chechnya does not comply with the federal law. Those who know about the topic are aware that this is not true. Of course who is not an expert would believe this author. Reality is established by law procedures and not by the authors of some articles who base their statements on some unproved facts. Today the Chechen Republic is the place where tourists can feel themself safer than in any other place. In no other place tourists are so well protected like in the Chechen Republic. Kadyrov himself said that he is personally responsible for the safety of every tourist. Right now thousands of people are working for providing safety to you. You don't notice that. My personal opinion is that it's a little bit like living in the past. These exaggerated security measures are not needed anymore. It reminds a bit of Israel, right? Another place which used to be dangerous and now there is a high level of security (...).

What is the price of security?

The price of security is very high. It costed the life of around 2000 Interior Ministry servants who died while restoring the constitutional order. Many families were deprived of their fathers, brothers. Some thousands Chechens sacrificed their life to ensure that Russian law will work in Chechnya. The terrorist attack that happened in Grozny in December 2014 was for sure a reason for negative news, that negatively reflects on the region, but they shouldn't weigh more than those happening elsewhere. But after all European countries are theaters of terror attacks as well. But they are single cases. Like not long ago in France, an amazing country, the most secure, touristy... but also there something can happen. Imagine yourself in Moscow, summer night. There is a match Spartak-Milan going on. You are Italian, going around Moscow alone, I guess you would feel a certain danger. Tonight go around Grozny, you are not going to experience the same in any corner of the city. If you are alone on the streets cars would stop asking if it is all ok. This kind of familiar attitude. Not like in big cities where people are alien to each other. Here you can knock at any door and say that you are hungry and you don't have where to sleep. You will receive food and a bed where to sleep.

What recommendation would you give to the administration of other war-torn regions, for instance Eastern Ukraine, to develop the tourism industry?

We immediately moved away from everything associated with negativity, weapons. We could have used all that of course. Poligony, armored vehicles, we could have cooperated with the federal troops, so that they would drive around tourists on armored troops carriers, tanks and so on. But too much was linked with guns, machine guns, pictures, videos where men in Chechnya go around with guns. Guns, tanks , machine guns are all negative images which is better not to use, otherwise Chechnya will remain forever known as a place where people shoot firearms. Absolutely no way, it is necessary to eradicate all that. In Donbass they could use all this imager if they want to, but it will attract just individual tourism.

There will be no mass tourism in this direction. They should get rid of the image of war like the Chechen republic did. In order to achieve that they need a program 'Donbass without traces of war' like the program 'Chechnya without traces of war'. Ramzan Kadyrov launched this program according to which everything that reminded of the war should be removed in 100 days. All the traces of bomb explosions, machine guns were removed. That helped us to develop tourism today. If the traces of war were still visible today, we couldn't develop tourism the way we do. Donbass should undertake this program 'without traces of war'. When nothing will remind of war anymore, of course infrastructure will need to be restored, roads ecc. and then work on the image. The first thing to do is remove the traces, rebuild infrastructure, and then determine what quality Donbass has. What is the most important thing in tourism? It is the tourist. The image of the region, our desires, nothing is worth the safety of a single tourism. Today we are responsible for every single tourist. If a tourist breaks his leg in Rome nothing would happen. If it happens in Grozny, all the headlines would read 'A tourist broke his leg in Grozny' or even worst 'a tourist was crippled in Grozny'. This tendency is not that strong anymore but there are still resources which are not subjected to any tribunal. They pursue their own political interest. They will publish that immediately. Usually state media provide a more impartial coverage. In other media what happens in Chechnya acquires more importance. We used Grozny TV Channel as a platform to promote the region. We used it as a platform for countering hostile media. If they show something, Grozny channel investigate too and transmit the correct version of the facts. It plays the same role as Russia Today, on a different scale of course. All the media in the region work with us. We established very convenient relations with all of them. We are always open to them, we always give them the information they need. In the region there are no media which have a negative attitude towards the Chechen Republic.