FEDERAL STATE AUTONOMOUS INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION
"MOSCOW STATE INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS (UNIVERSITY)
OF THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION"

B.A. in Government and International Affairs
School of Government and International Affairs

Department of Diplomacy

Graduate Qualification Work
in the field of study 41.03.05 International Relations (Bachelor level)

Topic:

«The Use of Religion by Political Leaders as a Tool to Gain Public support for Warfare »

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Moscow – 2020
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Оглавление

Abstract of the thesis

Abstract of the thesis "The Use of Religion by Political Leaders as a Tool to Gain Public Support for Warfare" by the student Misirov Nuraziz. This study illustrates the use of religion, in this particular case, Islam, by the Chechen political elite of those years to mobilize the Chechen people for war against the Russian Federation in order to separate Chechnya from it. The diploma thesis is also devoted to the study of the Chechen crisis in the context of international relations.

The student thoroughly studied the process of evolution of the methods of propaganda by Chechen politicians, and identified the reasons for the choice of the religious factor as the main emphasis for agitation of people to participate in the war. In carrying out this kind of research, the student analysed a large number of news articles obtained from the website of the " Kommersant " newspaper, as it turned out that among the other news resources, only the " Kommersant " has a convenient system for searching archive news.

During the study of this topic through the prism of international relations, the student discovered gross mistakes made by the government of the Russian Federation during the signing of a peace treaty with representatives of the self-proclaimed Islamic Republic. By making such mistakes, the Russian government actually recognized the independence of Ichkeria. Because of this, the second Chechen war can be considered an international military conflict in which Chechnya was a victim.

In the last chapter of the diploma, the author also studied the role of Islam in modern Chechnya and the possibility of new military confrontations between Russia and the Chechen Republic. In addition, the conclusion provides recommendations for further study of religion as a manipulative instrument in the context of the two Chechen wars.

Introduction

This thesis is dedicated to studying the use of religion as a manipulative tool by politicians to start a war and then justify it. The objects of study are the first and second Chechen wars that engulfed Russia in the 1990s. The aim of the thesis is to study and reveal how political leaders use religion as a bargaining chip when waging warfare against other countries to avoid backlash from the public. The purpose of this case study is to highlight the role of religion as an ideological and propaganda instrument during the first and second Chechen wars. I will use the case study method to study the two Chechen wars.

Religion in itself is a controversial and contradictory topic for study and discussion. Being a system of views based on belief in supernatural forces, including a set of moral norms and types of behavior aimed at containing the animal nature of man, religion has been often used by politicians as a tool to start wars and justify military actions. However, "slogans that are used to wage war" and "causes of war" are completely different things. The fact that absolutely any military propaganda declares that its participation in warfare is caused by kindness and justice does not imply that the cause of all wars is kindness and justice. Of course, officially wars are launched for the sake of restoring the violated justice, protecting the oppressed, punishing the villains, bringing peace and order, helping the victims, in other words, for

the noblest and most sublime reasons. It would be naive to think that these noble motives are the reason for wars.

In my opinion, the increased interest in religious wars and their leaders is a natural phenomenon of modern historiography. First of all, it is connected with those political processes that took place in the world in the last decades of the XX century and at the beginning of the XXI century: ethno-confessional conflicts in different parts of the world, strengthening of Islamic fundamentalism and local wars that broke out here and there. At the same time, the issue of participation of the army and the military in social conflicts remains relevant in modern conditions. When a social conflict takes the form of an armed confrontation, whether it is a riot, revolution or civil war, the way out of such crisis situations largely depends on the position of people who own weapons and are organized in a force designed to ensure the solution of state problems.

Secondly, increased attention to such realities of the past as manifestations of public consciousness and reflection of major historical events in it. This circumstance is determined by the peculiarities of modern culture, within the framework of which there is a growing interest in the humanitarian component of the historical process. It significantly influences the emphasis of cognitive interest and research attention from the events, phenomena and processes of individual reality to the phenomena of individual and mass consciousness, to the state of individual and public culture of certain historical epochs.

The relevance of the topic of the diploma thesis is largely determined by the increasing number of religious wars in the last few decades. However, very often religious wars are not at all what they seem.

Religious wars, however, are not only the history of ideological, social and political conflicts, but also the history of their amazing personalities. For this reason, I will pay special attention to the study of personalities, such as Dzhokhar Dudayev, who led to

unleashing the wars examined in my work. In my thesis I will analyze how the authorities use religion to manipulate people's minds and try to find out why in the cases I examined most religious people were easily manipulated.

My research work consists of three chapters. In the first chapter, I will discuss the theoretical part of my work. In it I will study the main features of the Chechen people, the role of religion in their life and the historical factors that led to the beginning of the conflict in this region of the North Caucasus. Also, in this part I will review Stalin's policy towards the Chechens in the 1940s, and analyze the weakening of the Soviet Union's policy towards religion in the 1980s, because in my opinion these two factors were one of the triggers for the revival of interest in religion in Chechnya and its further radicalization.

In the second chapter, I will focus on the analysis of the methods of propaganda that were used during the two wars in Chechnya. In it I will compare the agitation and propaganda styles of such leaders of the supporters of the independence of Chechnya as Dzhokhar Dudayev and Aslan Maskhadov. In this way, I will try to carefully analyze the words and messages they used at the beginning and the end of the Chechen conflict in order to put pressure on the weak points of their people to make it easier to convince them to take part in military actions. Here the main emphasis will be on news published during the period when all these events took place in the territory of present-day Chechnya and interviews with the heads of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria.

In the third chapter of my diploma thesis, these conflicts will be analyzed by me from the perspective of international relations and international law and I will consider the mistakes made by the Russian authorities, which in turn contributed to the escalation of the situation at the time and the strengthening of the role of Islam as one of the pillars on which the Chechen separatists relied. The positions of various international

organizations in relation to these wars will be considered by me in this part of my thesis. Also, in this chapter I will analyze the probability of a next Chechen war.

After that, at the end of my thesis I will write the conclusions that I made during my research on this topic.

As one of the main sources of information, I chose the monograph " Chechnya: Life in a War-Torn Society" by Academician-Secretary of the Department of Historical and Philological Sciences of the Russian Academy of Sciences V. A. Tishkov.

The book "Ethno-Nationalism, Islam and the State in the Caucasus", edited by Moshe Gammer, one of the major experts in the sphere of religious and political history of the North Caucasian region, also was a very useful source of information for me.

Another main source of information that I used to write my thesis was the book "CHECHNYA: TOMBSTONE OF RUSSIAN POWER" by Anatol Lieven.

- Some of the documents I used were:
- 1936 Constitution of the Soviet Union;
- Constitution of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria;
- The text of the Khasavyurt Accord;
- The text of the Moscow Peace Treaty.

I also used a lot of news articles published in the 1990s, during the Chechen crisis. To get access to them I used the website of the "Kommersant" newspaper.

In addition, I used the " Novaya Gazeta" newspaper archive for 1997 and 1998.

I.   Prerequisites for conflict in the Chechen-Ingush ASSR

1. Historical background. People who were expelled from their homes.

I decided to begin my theoretical analysis of the two wars in Chechnya with the clarification of the underlying causes of these conflicts. In order to cope with this task, I think it would be reasonable to draw attention to the historical factors that Ekaterina Sokirianskaia called " clusters of historical memory "[1], which had a strong influence on the emergence of Chechen identity as such, and on the attitude of both Chechens and Vainakh peoples in general to the Russian state. According to Sokirianskaia, there are three of such clusters: "memories of grievance", "memory of success" and "memory of life in a multicultural environment". It is not difficult to determine that the first of the above-mentioned areas is most involved in the events that took place in the 90s of the twentieth century.

In the context of the "memory of grievances", common memories of the military resistance of the Russian Empire and Turkey during the Caucasian wars can be considered. Forced collectivization and forced expulsion of Vainakh peoples in the 1940s could also be attributed to this memory area. However,

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[1] E. Sokirianskaia, "Ideology and Conflict: Chechen Political Nationalism prior to, and during, Ten Years of War," in: Ethno-Nationalism, Islam and the State in the Caucasus: Post-Soviet Disorder, ed. by M. Gammer, Routledge, New York, 2008, p. 104.

when we talk about these "memories", we need to keep in mind the fact that the other peoples of the North Caucasus, as well as Chechens, experienced these events throughout their history.

After the revolutionary events of October 1917 and the formation of a new socialist state instead of a monarchy, chaos and destruction reigned in Russia. At that time there were attempts to divide the territory of Russia, for example, to unite territories of the Dagestani and Tersk regions into the North Caucasian autonomy.

In December 1917, a joint declaration of the Military Government and the Central Committee of the Union of United Highlanders on the establishment of the Tersk-Dagestani government representing the Tersk Cossack army and the Union of United Highlanders of the North Caucasus, declared "autonomous states" of the South Eastern Union of Cossack Troops, Caucasian Highlanders and free peoples of the steppes was published. Their example was decided to be followed by other neighboring regions. The "autonomous states" themselves existed until the Bolsheviks' victory in the civil war, and in 1921 became part of Soviet Russia. By the second half of the 1920s, the North Caucasus region was divided and divided into administrative territories on the basis of nationality. The determining factor in that division was the numerical superiority of the ethnic group among the inhabitants of a given region. All that division was based on the principles of feudalism, which rested on ethnic superiority. This factor, in turn, only exacerbated the problems arising from the differences and disagreements between the regions, while sharpening mutual misunderstanding and animosity between representatives of

different nationalities. Of particular note is the fact that, unlike the Union Republics, autonomous regions and republics were not sovereign states as was written in the Constitution of the Soviet Union. Consequently, in comparison with their "older brothers", the autonomous republics and autonomous regions that were part of the USSR were severely curtailed in their rights, including cultural ones. The fact that in autonomous republics and regions education was available only in the Russian language is a proof of this fact. The situation was exactly the same for Chechens and Ingush, whom, by the way, in January 1934 the Soviet authorities decided to unify into an autonomous region, which, in turn, after the adoption of the constitution of the Soviet Union in 1936 was transformed into the Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Republic. Here, we can notice one extremely curious detail: The Soviet Union, like many states consisting of diverse parts, relied on the method of fomenting enmity between its parts; in other words, state power in the USSR was built on the principle of "divide and rule". In addition, despite the fact that the Soviet Union was declared as a socialist state, it formed a ruling class, the so-called nomenclature. And to some extent, it was the presence of these two factors that had a decisive influence on the concentration of power in the hands of the ethnically constructed establishment. If we talk about Chechnya in particular, the authorities there were mainly represented by well-educated people, who later had a strong influence on the political and ethnic mobilization of the population.

However, the Chechens themselves mainly refer to the deportation of their people by Stalin and Beria to Central Asia as the main factor in the emergence of protest sentiment. The mass

resettlement of the Vainakh people to Siberia and the territory of today's Republic of Kazakhstan, whom the Soviet authorities accused of assisting the enemy forces of Nazi Germany, took place from February 1944 to March of the same year. The Chechen-Ingush republic, as such, ceased to exist after that. However, one should not forget that the Vainakh peoples are not the only ones who were deported. Representatives of other ethnic groups such as Crimean Tatars, Koreans, Balkars and others were also resettled. The fact that to this day there is no reliable data on the total number of people who were deported or killed is disappointing. Nevertheless, according to official statistics of the USSR, in February and March 1944 more than 600 thousand people who lived in the North Caucasus region were deported from their historical homeland. Such a huge number of people were relocated in terrible conditions. The deportees were transported on trains that were heavily overcrowded. It is worth taking into account the fact that the entire process of expatriation took place in winter, which resulted in the death of more than 150,000 Ingush and Chechens in those inhuman conditions, due to illness, low temperatures and malnutrition, which at that time was one third of the total number of Vainakh population. The deported ethnic groups received permission to repatriate only in the 1950s after Joseph Stalin died and under the leadership of the General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee, Nikita Khrushchev, the process of eliminating Stalin's cult of personality began in the country.

Moreover, on February 26, 2004, the European Parliament recognized the deportation of Chechens and Ingush as an act of genocide.

In addition to the above, it should be added that the concept of freedom, the so-called " Marsho", plays an extremely important role in the life of Chechens. In his book "The Lone Wolf and the Bear: Three Centuries of Chechen Defiance of Russian Rule", Moshe Gammer, a major specialist in the history of Islam in the North Caucasus, describes this idea as "a central concept in both Chechen culture and the Chechen psyche. While Chechen nationalists attribute modern political meanings to this word, its traditional meaning goes far beyond the meanings typical of Western or Islamic culture. In the Chechen language, the word also has connotations of "peace" and "well-being"[2]. In his book, Gammer also reflects on the fact that for Chechens to accept Russian rule could mean "something more than a loss of freedom in its Western sense: it meant a loss one's of manhood and, more important – one's soul". I think it is quite plausible that an understanding of the mechanism of these ideas can help to understand the fierce nature of Chechens, and to clarify such a long history of Chechen resistance.

To sum up this paragraph, it is worth mentioning the importance and great role of these historical facts in explaining the enormous dissatisfaction of the inhabitants of this tiny region in the North Caucasus with the Russian authorities. These are the facts that allow us to see the true reasons and the quintessence of bloody armed confrontations between Chechens and federal troops of the Russian Federation. Without understanding these factors, it may become impossible to understand the root causes of these conflicts, because without this knowledge the entire

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[2] M. Gammer, The Lone Wolf and the Bear: Three Centuries of Chechen Defiance of Russian Rule, C. Hurst & Co. Publishers Ltd., London, 2006, pp. 6-7.

conflict in Chechnya will seem completely senseless. The facts and reasons I mentioned led to the formation of the psychology of the outcast nation in Chechens, which of course only played into the hands of those people who later tried to unite Chechens on the basis of their ethnic identity. Chechen self-identity is a manifestation of the so-called " multi-identity". As evidence, the religious affiliation of Chechens can be cited as an example. Islam, as the main religion in the North Caucasus, acquires its specific features in Chechnya. Here I am mentioning Sufism. The role of the religious factor, in particular Sufism, will be discussed in the next paragraph.

2. The role of religion in Chechen life and its influence on the formation of ethnic identity

At the beginning of this paragraph, I would like to underline the fact that, compared to other nations such as Azerbaijanis, Tatars and Central Asian nations, North Caucasians converted to Islam much later. The adoption of Islam in Chechnya took place in the late 18th century. This situation leads to the idea that Islam itself did not play a decisive role in the emergence of Chechen identity. Much more interesting is the fact that Islam, which underwent various transformations in Chechnya, found a new form there, becoming a Sufi Islam. Sufism, being a mystical movement within the framework of traditional Sunni Islam, renounced some Sharia laws, preferring "adat" to them, which is the set of rules for Muslims, used as a counterbalance to Sharia. In the 19th century, a system of Sufi tariqats - Naqshbandiya and Qadiriya provided for the establishment of an Islamic state called the

Caucasian Imamate[3]. This state was one of the few examples in the history of the region when the Sufi traditions there were able to acquire a fundamental religious status. It should be noted that Sufi tariqats are strikingly different from one another. There is no need to go far for an example: in the 20th century, the tariqat of Naqshbanidiya was fully supportive of jihad, while Qadiriya's tariqat was skeptical about the ideas of jihad but loyal to Russia. Surprisingly, in the last decade of the 20th century, these two branches of Sufism experienced significant ideological changes. Supporters of the Qadiriya supported Dudayev and his followers, and actively supported the idea of jihad, while the Naqshbandi branch opposed the regime of Dudayev and other separatists[4]. Particular attention should be paid to "gazavat" declared by Chechen separatists against Russia and federal troops, as it differs from canonical jihad in its focus on attacking non-believers, while jihad is declared in case of need to protect their possessions, homeland, etc. from an external aggressor. The second difference between gazavat and jihad is the source of decision making. The leadership of a tribe, city or state must make a decision before engaging in armed conflict. The decision to start a jihad rests solely with the highest clergyman, who may be the High Mufti, Shaykh al-Islam or another cleric of the highest rank. This is explained by the fact that it is the spiritual leader who, having great knowledge in the field of religion, is able to adequately assess the possibility and necessity of starting an armed struggle. The decision to declare a gazavat can be made not only by a cleric, but also by a secular ruler.

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[3] U. Halbach, "Islam in the North Caucasus, available at [https://journals.openedition.org/assr/18403]
[4] Ibid

It is important to emphasize the fact that after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia, in terms of religious and domestic policy, faced the rebirth of the old and the emergence of many new religious communities after decades of Soviet atheism. This sudden process of reviving faith in God was subject to politicization. This was particularly clear in regions where religious clashes were taking place. Speaking specifically about Chechnya, Gammer writes in his book that the religious renaissance was accompanied by four main processes:

- Islamic renaissance;

- the use of Islam by both the authorities and many opposition groups;

- the involvement of the Sufi leadership in politics, usually against their will;

- and the on the stage of the Wahhabis[5].

The use of Islam as a factor that could consolidate the masses of the people was justified by political motives, the cornerstones of which were the precariousness and insecurity of Chechen society and the painful experience of Chechen people over the long history of this ethnic group.

Summing up all the above in this paragraph, it can be concluded that the inhabitants of Chechnya, and the Caucasus as a whole, being very loyal to their traditions and customs, managed to adapt Islam to themselves, creating a new branch of this religion, which they used several times to bring together the society in which they lived.

[5] M. Gammer, "Between Mecca and Moscow: Islam, Politics and Political Islam in Chechnya and Daghestan," Middle Eastern Studies, Vol. 41, No. 6, 2005, p. 834.

Political science professor Edward Walker argues that the Islamic Renaissance in the Caucasus has become "politicized, fundamentalist, anti-Russian and probably anti-Western in its orientation[6]. In order to get to the true reasons why the separatist movement leaders turned to radical Islamic, anti-Russian and anti-Western ideas, it is necessary to briefly analyze the policies of Dzhokhar Dudayev, Aslan Maskhadov, and Shamil Basayev. This will be done by me in the next chapter of my diploma thesis, which is devoted to an empirical analysis of the events that took place on the territory of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria then.

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[6] E. Walker, Islam in Chechnya, available at [https://iseees.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/shared/walker_1998-islam.pdf]

II. The politicisation of Islam in Chechnya
1. The use of religion during the presidency of Dudayev. Chechen Wahhabism

Talking about Dudayev, it is necessary to keep in mind the fact that he originally did not intend to unite Chechens on the basis of Islam. Dzhokhar Dudayev was a controversial figure in and of himself, and his actions were illogical in many ways. He lived most of his life outside Chechnya, served in the Soviet army, had the rank of general and was married to a Russian woman. It is important that Dzhokhar hardly spoke Chechen, and as a non-religious man he did not live as Islam dictates. Dudayev flattened his failure as a religious figure with the skill of manipulating people. His speeches always consisted of simple and understandable words to the ordinary people' ear. In his speeches and interviews, he always focused on such psychologically painful topics as religion, freedom and the oppression of the Chechen people by Russia. In his scientific monograph, Tishkov cites the Chechen resident's words about Dzhokhar as an example: "Unlike the others, Dudayev was good because when he spoke on television, all the thoughts he wanted to convey to people were clear to everyone[7]". It should be noted that Dudayev also benefited from the fact that he was the first Chechen in the USSR to be given the rank of general. That fact undoubtedly helped to unite the masses of people around his persona.

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[7] Тишков. В.А. Общество в вооруженном конфликте (этнография чеченской войны). – М.: Наука. 2001., с.257

After Dudayev approved the constitution and declared Chechnya independent, Chechnya was positioned as a state based on democracy with all its values, including the right to choose religion. In many interviews Dzhokhar said that he saw Chechnya as a secular country with rule of law and order. However, there was no stronger ideological factor in Chechnya for consolidation of the population to fight for independent Ichkeria than religion. That is why Islam was the platform that Dudayev and his supporters used to justify the properness of the separatist movement that they had started. In his work "Islam in Chechnya" Edward Walker wrote that the countries of the Western world discredited themselves in the eyes of Chechens due to the refusal of the same Western liberal democracies to help Chechnya in the civil war after the death of communism ideas. However, if we look at it from a different perspective, it is not difficult to see that liberal ideas do not fit into the framework of Chechen culture, which is based on the tradition of Chechens to build everything around a long-established system of teips. When Dudayev realized that assistance from developed countries in separating Chechnya from the Russian Federation was not worth waiting for, he decided to drill a window to the Islamic world. Thus, he paid an official visit to Iran, where he called for a holy war against Russia[8].

The inauguration of Dzhokhar Dudayev took place on November 9, 1991, during which he, in the presence of a large number of representatives of various Islamic religious institutions, put his hand on the Koran, swore to observe and protect the Islamic faith. But this did not prevent him, during one of the press

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[8] E. Walker, op. cit

conferences that took place that year, from making a mistake several times in a row and saying that Islamic practice is to pray four times a day, whereas in reality the number of prayers that a person who considers himself a Muslim has to do is five. The seemingly unremarkable mistakes actually showed a deep indifference to religion of a man who had ambition to create a Sharia state.

Despite all the above facts, until the beginning of the first Chechen campaign in 1994, Chechnya was still a country where religion was separated from power. It can be seen that the radicalization of religious ideas held by the political elites of Ichkeria took place with the escalation of the Chechen crisis. While during his first speeches and interviews Dudayev spoke mainly about his intentions to build a democratic state in Chechnya, after the beginning of the war he began to mention more and more jihad, Sharia law and the like in his statements. Moreover, the political leaders of Chechnya began the process of establishing ties with other states living under Sharia law.

It should be also mentioned that the influx of foreign mujahideen, especially from Arab countries, contributed to the infiltration of an ultra-radical religious ideology of Wahabism, previously unknown to Chechens, into Ichkeria[9]. Wahhabism emerged in Ichkeria at a time when the Chechen authorities needed more effective means and methods of involving the masses in combat operations than government decrees. In other words, it occurred during a time when fear, loss and hardships of participation in the armed conflict required religious therapy. Islamic symbols on separatists helped them to distinguish their like-minded from

[9] M. Gammer, "Between Mecca and Moscow... p. 836.

their opponents by external attributes. This could explain the appearance of green headbands on militants, the click "Allah Akbar!", joint performing of namaz by terrorists and other forms of religious unity. According to what Moshe Gammer writes in his work "Between Mecca and Moscow", it was this war that started the integration of Islam into politics in Chechnya, which as a consequence pushed the Wahhabis and their ideology upwards, which grew into the main problem both in Chechnya and in the neighbouring republics.

Movladi Udugov and Shamil Basayev were among the most influential representatives of Wahhabism idea. Udugov, better known as "Chechen Goebbels[10]", was an essential element in the propaganda of radical religious ideologies. According to some allegations, during the first Chechen war Udugov was the person who won the information war against Russia. Movladi took an active part in protest actions in Chechnya with statements about the superiority of Chechens over all other nationalities. I was interested by the fact that Udugov, even after establishing contacts with the people in power in his homeland, did not take advantage of the moment to obtain a position in the Chechen state structures. I think this may be due to the fact that he probably wanted to be at the forefront of the information war. After coming to power, Dzhokhar Dudayev, who was deeply in need of a man of outstanding propagandist talents, chose Movladi to play the role of a certain " retranslator[11]" of such ideas, endowing them with a form as accessible to the masses as possible. When war broke out in Chechnya, Udugov came to

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[10] Удугов, Мовлади Саидарбиевич, available at [https://clck.ru/NiFuX]
[11] Мовлади Удугов: куда пропал «чеченский Геббельс», available at [https://clck.ru/NiMQi]

President Dudayev with a detailed plan of ideological attacks against the Russian army. As key part of the strategy he underlined the special role of the mass media as a war instrument of information warfare. According to him, the emphasis should have been on "creating events" rather than informing the domestic and foreign public about the ongoing events. In the language of the security services this means conscious deception, misinformation of people in order to create the necessary conditions for the life of the Chechen authorities that have managed to concentrate power, money and weapons in their hands. Dzhokhar was completely satisfied with the plan, and he gave his permission for its implementation. Since the beginning of the first Chechen campaign, Udugov has held many positions, but the essence of his work has remained the same as before: the popularization of the policies of Chechen armed groups, which are densely implicated in religiously and politically separatism seasoned with anti-Semitism.

Another prominent Wahhabi was Shamil Basayev. Together with Udugov in 1998 he created so-called "Congress of Peoples of Dagestan and Ichkeria" that was called to unite peoples living in the North Caucasus into one Islamic state. The most brutal terrorist acts during the first Chechen campaign took place under Basayev's leadership. Here, I am talking about the hostage-taking in the city of Budyonnovsk in June 1995 and in the city of Kizlyar in 1996. During these tragic events, the terrorists wore green headbands with religious utterances, all of which were a sign that the militants adhered to the ideology of radical Islam. Both of these terrorist acts were carried out to attract attention and pressure on the Russian authorities.

Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev, who was one of the main supporters, along with Udugov, of the exploitation of Islamic values as a propaganda tool and a means of struggle for power on the ideological field, also contributed to the process of merging Islam and politics. Whether intentionally or not, Yandarbiyev played the role of some sort of lightning rod that defended Dudayev, who was illiterate in terms of religion, from possible misunderstandings from the ordinary inhabitants of Chechnya who were familiar with Islam.

The radicalization of Islam was the result of such factors as a sudden removal of the decades-old atheist paradigm, economic decline, and a reassessment of traditional social institutions such as the Council of Elders. There was a strong decline in trust towards the Ichkerian authorities, as exemplified by the refusal of opposition forces to participate in the negotiation process of the Council of Elders, as they had reason to believe that it was formed by Dudayev to increase his political influence. In addition, the opposition accused Dudayev of exploiting the religion as well as the traditions of the Chechen people for his own benefit.

It seems to me that this accusation described the whole essence of Dudayev's policy at the beginning of his rule with absolute precision. This is confirmed by the fact that in the early 1990s he tried to mobilize people based on ethnicity, and with the beginning of the first Chechen war, an Islamic factor was added to this process.

Analyzing Dudayev's policy and taking the above facts into account, it can be concluded that Dudayev did not care much

about his authority and image in the Middle East countries. This is confirmed by the wide scope of his foreign visits, as well as by the reaction of the international community to the Chechen crisis and to Dudayev as a political leader.

Moreover, in terms of funding from Muslim countries, Dudayev was inferior to various religious propagandists and others. The use of religion by Dudayev was intended to increase political influence and increase prestige among the population of Ichkeria. It should be admitted that he was indeed a highly respected official and had a huge credibility, even though he was more of a military than a political figure. Nevertheless, all this did not help him to keep the power in his hands. The democratic orientations had no effect. The Russian authorities continued to consider him only a terrorist and not the head of Chechnya. Realizing that the focus on democracy did not help in any way to propagate his ideas, Dudayev began changing the direction of the republic's political and ideological course towards radical Islam. It is noteworthy that the Islamization of politics, unlike the past ideas of Chechen political leaders, proved to be incredibly resilient and capable of consolidating a large number of people around itself. Simultaneously with the Islamization of political processes, the politicization of Islam was also taking place in Chechnya. I think that to some extent Dudayev himself, or rather his self-distancing from religion, allowed Islam to be used as a political tool.

Summing up this paragraph, it can be said that Dudayev, who initially wanted to use only the consolidating power of Islam to strengthen primarily the nationalist sentiments among Chechens, probably did not notice that he himself had let out of the lamp a

terrible gin, which in the course of further events took the lives of thousands of people.

2. The incompetent policy of Aslan Maskhadov.

After the end of the first Chechen war, Aslan Maskhadov, dumbfounded by the incredible consolidating potential of Islam, which proved its effectiveness during the fierce battles against Russian government forces, decided not only to cement the success achieved by the militants, but also to achieve new, even more impressive results. The political elite of Chechnya, which had already been left without General Dudayev, was extremely impressed by the potential of the new ideological basis, which was essentially a consequence of the merger of ultra-radical Wahhabi ideology with the nationalist ideas of the first president of Ichkeria that were injected into the minds of Chechens. Due to its impressive power and formidable utility, the new ideology earned the sympathy of terrorists and was used by them as a political tool for a long time.

In 1997, during the elections, which were called the most honest and most open by observers, all the leading candidates, who were Aslan Maskhadov, Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev and Shamil Basayev, stated in their election programs the intention to give Islam the status of the state religion[12]. I think that the process of division of Islam that was taking place at that time was, in its essence, a consequence of the reluctance of the political players of that time to give up the new complicated religious ideology. Also, the split of Islam was at the same time combined with an urgent need to somehow separate from political competitors.

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[12] Малашенко А. Русские голосовали за меньшее зло // Независимая газета. – М.,1997. – 31 января.

This is where the well-known properties of Islam come into play: "openness to different interpretations[13]" and the ability to "successfully adapt to different cultures, situations and changes[14]".

Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev, who worked in the administration of Dzhokhar Dudayev, who did not attach much importance to the political beliefs of the first, after the end of the first Chechen campaign held the post of vice-president and then became acting president from 1996 to 1997. For Zelimkhan, religion was a decisive factor in his political career. It is interesting that neither he nor Movladi Udugov, despite their long political careers, were able to become an alternative to Dudayev in the eyes of the Chechen people, although they were very influential persons. This can be seen from the fact that in the 1997 elections they both won very few votes. Yandarbiyev received just over 10% of the vote, while Udugov could not even get 1%. It should also be noted that people started turning away from Zelimkhan after the end of the armed conflict in 1996 and signing of the Khasavyurt Accord. He failed to establish close contacts with either the Council of Elders or the armed groups. As a result, he did not have much choice but to gain power legally. Yandarbiyev understood that in order to continue to have weight in the political arena, he needed intensive Islamization of Chechnya. Despite the fact that the majority of Chechens didn't like him, Yandarbiyev, without even considering the option of gradually increasing his attractiveness to voters as a politician, began to

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[13] Кудряшова И.В. Исламская цивилизационная доминанта и современное развитие мусульманских политий // Политическая наука. – 2003. – № 2., С. 91

[14] Мирский Г.И. Исламизм, транснациональный терроризм и ближневосточные конфликты. – М.: Изд. дом ГУ ВШЭ, 2008.

subjugate Islam to himself. His aim was to gain control over much of the religious movement in Chechnya. By doing so, he wanted to be at the head of radical Muslims. This makes it clear why Zelimkhan is considered to be the man who managed to make Wahhabism in Chechnya a super powerful political force. Being a Wahhabi leader, he managed to bring to the North Caucasus a huge number of foreign Islamists who after coming to Chechnya were used to spread Wahhabi ideas among young people.

In September 1996, a new criminal code which was almost entirely repealed from the Sudanese Criminal Code was published in a local newspaper[15].

At that time the Chechen authorities were hastily establishing Sharia in the territory of Ichkeria, at the same time introducing many bans and restrictions. The school curriculum was changed. According to the new laws, the study of Arabic language and Islamic laws became mandatory. Moreover, in November 1996, Zelimkhan, who was then acting president of the republic, submitted to the parliament a bill to amend the constitution adopted under Dudayev. Specifically, the bill proposed that Islam should be made a state religion. Eventually, Islam was announced to be the state religion. In 2004, in an interview with the ChechensPress agency, Yandarbiyev said that "the introduction of Sharia law did not lead to a value devaluation, but, on the contrary, contributed to the value development of the idea of national independence and a natural restoration and revival of the spirit in the struggle itself.   After taking such

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[15] Р. Беккин, В. Бобровников. Северный Кавказ - не царство благородных разбойников// Татарский мир. - 2003. - № 19 (29). - декабрь. - С. 8., available at [http://www.bekkin.ru/index.php?art=28]

measures aimed at total Islamization, there was a surge of religious interest among the population, which was quite natural. Subsequently, before the elections of January 27, 1997, the people were already under the influence of Islamist ideas.

Islam, as a political instrument at the time when Aslan Maskhadov and Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev were in power in the Chechen Republic, was used to fulfill several tasks. Firstly, to emphasize the ideological and legislative independence of Chechnya from Russia; secondly, to integrate into the system of Muslim countries as quickly and smoothly as possible; thirdly, to unite the people, as well as for military purposes; and fourthly, to make it easier to establish contacts with neighbouring North Caucasian republics, where Islam was also the main religion[16]. Despite the fact that both Askhadov and Yandarbiyev were supporters of Sharia, they did not get on well with each other. As a result, it is very difficult to find examples of their joint actions. One of the few cases of their joint actions that comes to mind is an agreement on cooperation between one unrecognized state of Ichkeria and another unrecognized country, the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. Askhadov dismissed Yandarbiyev when latter was on the territory of Afghanistan. Zelimkhan himself said the following about this occasion: "Aslan Askhadov did not accept what I was doing abroad. He didn't say it, but did some unnecessary things that I found offensive and stopped acting on his behalf. Let's say we weren't incompatible[17]".

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[16] Игнатенко А. Исламизация по-чеченски // Независимая газета. – М., 1997. – 20 ноября.

[17] Яндарбиев З. Исламский фундаментализм безопасен // Время новостей. – М., 2001. – 17 декабря. – № 230., available at [http://www.vremya.ru/2001/230/4/17592.html]

Aslan Maskhadov, as a politician, reminded Dzhokhar Dudayev very much. Especially this similarity was noticeable when comparing him with Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev. Just like Dudayev, Aslan had in his biography the experience of serving in the armed forces of the Soviet Union. Moreover, Maskhadov's attitude towards religious values was identical to that of Dudayev. Aslan Maskhadov also had popularity among the people, as evidenced by the majority of votes he received and, as a result, his victory in the 1997 presidential elections. Maskhadov's advantage was the fact that, unlike Dudayev, the legitimacy of his position in power and the system he had established on the territory of Chechnya had not been challenged by anyone, including the federal authorities. However, all these advantages of Maskhadov did not help him in any way to take control of the events that were taking place in his country, and over time he became just a nominal political figure.

Before his presidency, while serving as Prime Minister in the government headed by Acting President Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev, Aslan Maskhadov did not show excessive fanaticism about the establishment of an Islamic regime in Ichkeria, as it was done by Yandarbiyev, for example. However, by the beginning of the election campaign, as a candidate for the president of Ichkeria, he went along with the then political conjuncture and, like the other candidates, promised to build a state based on Sharia law. Analyzing this situation and taking into account Maskhadov's manipulative actions aimed at constructing the reputation of a faithful Muslim, such as the refusal of his real name Aslan in favor of an arabic Khalid, we can say that Maskhadov was going to play a political game, the rules of which were not set by him.

It is quite logical that Maskhadov hardly found himself in a situation of zugzwang right after he took office as president of Ichkeria. Unlike his former rivals in the electoral race, Aslan Maskhadov did not perfectly know how to influence the people through religious propaganda. Moreover, Maskhadov's victory in the election turned out to be in the hands of his opponents, they were no longer bound and could now fully use the ideas of Wahhabism as a propaganda tool to launch a new war in future. Thus, the political elite of Chechnya was divided into three main groups:

1. The Moderates. This group included people who supported the political course of the newly elected president Aslan Maskhadov;

2. Radicalists. This group included followers of Shamil Basayev and Movladi Udugov;

3. Ultra-radicalists. This group consisted of people who advocated the integration of Islam into all spheres of life, including the political. Representatives of this group consolidated around Salman Raduyev and Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev.

It should also be noted that the system of Sharia courts, established in 1996 when Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev was in power, also evolved into a separate influential political power.

Hoping to take control of the chaos that was then reigning in Chechnya, Aslan Maskhadov, figuratively speaking, sat down at the helm of a supersonic fighter jet, although he rode a bicycle all his life, which made his political course excessively chaotic, rushing from one extreme to the other. Due to the turbulence of

Maskhadov's politics, all his potential allies abandoned him. Among such allies was the Russian government, which, knowing about the internal political instability in Chechnya, supported Maskhadov, hoping to take him on its side in the future. The culmination of their cooperation was the signing of the " Russia–Chechnya Peace Treaty", also known as the Moscow Peace Treaty on May 12, 1997. Shamil Basayev and Movladi Udugov were not happy with this, and both resigned afterwards. The obsession with Sharia and its laws, which was demonstrated by all political forces, could not stop the domestic political struggle in Chechnya. The members of the opposition political forces began to form political structures to force Aslan Maskhadov to resign from his office.

Despite the active support of the Chechen Mufti, Akhmat Kadyrov, who was an opponent of the Wahhabis, Maskhadov did not stop his chaotic policy and continued to make concessions to the radicals.

I think it is acceptable to assume that at the initial stage Aslan Maskhadov was not against the abolition of Sharia law and regulations in Chechnya, despite the fact that under his leadership the ideas of Islam continued to be propagated to the population, for example, the ban on men and women sitting together in public transport and the ban on the sale of alcoholic beverages. I fully agree with journalist Igor Rotar, who in his book "Under the Green Banner of Islam. Islamic radicals in Russia and the CIS" writes that "Aslan Maskhadov's attempts to Islamize Chechnya were not very impressive[18]". By the way, this

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[18] Ротарь И. Под зеленым знаменем. Исламские радикалы в России и СНГ. – Вып. 12. – М.: АИРО-XX, 2001., с.32

is confirmed by the words of Akhmed Zakayev, who at that time was the assistant to the President of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria on national security and at the same time the secretary of the Security Council of Ichkeria, who in one of his speeches said that he wanted to be a Muslim, not an Arab. In his commentary on this statement to a journalist from the Kommersant newspaper, he equated the concepts of "Wahhabism" and "Arabization" with each other: "I believe that Wahhabism, i.e. Arabization, will not work in Chechnya. We are Muslims, but we are first and foremost Chechens[19]".

Aslan Maskhadov's desire to pursue a productive policy was expressed in the prohibition of the spread of those Islamic movements that could lead to division and enmity in Chechen society, the abolition of the Sharia Guard and the Islamic Special Purpose Regiment, the extradition order for the expulsion of certain foreigners, as well as the consultant to the Chechen Sharia courts Bagautdin Kebedov, who originally came from Dagestan; reorganization of personnel in the highest Sharia court of the Chechen Republic; launching a campaign to discredit Islamic doctrines unacceptable to Chechnya; and formation of promising religious and political alliances, etc[20]. However, the intensified activity of Shamil Basayev and his subordinate Wahhabis at that time brought its own corrections to the efforts of Aslan Maskhadov to restrain ultra-radical Islamists. Due to the extra-radical incidents with Basayev, Maskhadov in February 1999 established a full-fledged Sharia[21] in the republic and reshuffled his team with the aim of its complete Islamization.

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[19] Москва-Грозный: фундаментальное взаимопонимание, available at [https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/13730]
[20] Игнатенко А. Исламизация по-чеченски // Независимая газета. – М., 1997. – 20 ноября.

In addition, at that time there began a sharp change in the direction of Ichkerian foreign policy towards the Muslim world. Using the "Islamic card" was a very wrong decision made by Maskhadov. Nevertheless, despite all the work done to maintain control over the situation in Ichkeria, Aslan Maskhadov began to lose his power. This can be confirmed by the entry of Chechen Islamists into Dagestan in August 1999 and the subsequent development of those tragic events.

At that time Aslan Maskhadov and other politicians who were in senior positions did not oppose Shamil Basayev and Amir ibn al-Khattab, organizers of the attack on Dagestan, but only condemned them. This act led to Moscow's disappointment in Maskhadov. After some time, the Chechen leader explained his act by thinking that the attacks were organized by the Russian government[22]. However, it seems to me that at that time Maskhadov wanted to consolidate Chechens by his actions, creating a threat of a new conflict with the Russian Federation.

However, the beginning of the second Chechen war did not lead to the unification of Chechens or to their mobilization. On the contrary, under the leadership of the country's Mufti Akhmad Kadyrov, an anti-war opposition emerged in Chechnya, which openly opposed both Wahhabits and the official authorities of Chechnya represented by Aslan Maskhadov. Akhmat Kadyrov managed to consolidate people, because most Chechens, despite the rather high popularity of Wahhabism ideas in society and the large number of adherents of its extremist ideas in the power of

[21] Указ Президента ЧРИ №39 от 3 февраля 1999 г. О введении полного шариатского правления на территории Чеченской Республики Ичкерия, available at [https://clck.ru/NiMkC]

[22] Умалатов У. Чечня глазами чеченца – М. 2001. – с 230-231

the republic, were disposed against the establishment of Sharia in their country and the total Islamization of society as a whole. This was explained by the fact that Sharia law contradicted centuries-old and highly valued traditions of the people of Chechnya. The adoption of these ideas, absolutely alien to them, could lead to the extinction of their ethnic self-identification, which had already suffered so much during mass deportation and the life of most Chechens outside their historical homeland. Akhmat Kadyrov, on the basis of these facts, called on people to take action aimed at rapprochement with the Russian Federation and at depriving Maskhadov and others like him of power, as this could enable Chechens to return to their usual way of life based on the customs of Sufism and teips division.

To sum up, the bloody and destructive first Chechen war that took place on the territory of Chechnya from 1994 to 1996, which had the greatest impact on the strengthening of Wahhabism and its adherents in the political and ideological sense, accelerated the process of destroying the moral and ideological norms and attitudes traditional for Chechen society. Radical slogans put forward by Wahhabism followers were most often attractive to the younger generation of Chechens living at that time. Another important factor was that the Wahhabi community had considerable financial possibilities. This ideology did not resonate in the hearts of both highly educated and most religious Chechens, becoming popular only among young Chechens with little cultural baggage.

III. The Chechen crisis in terms of international relations. The Probability of the Third Chechen War

1. **The Second Chechen War from the perspective of international relations**

The Chechen crisis, in all the works I have studied, is presented only as a civil war, so no one looks at the events of almost thirty years ago from the perspective of international relations and international law. However, having carefully studied everything that happened at that time, I came to the conclusion that these wars, at least a second Chechen company, can be considered a full-fledged international conflict. Further, in this paragraph I will explain my point of view and try to substantiate it.

On May 12, 1997 the "Treaty on Peace and Principles of Relations between the Russian Federation and the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria" was signed between the Government of the Russian Federation, represented by the President of the Russian Federation Boris Nikolaevich Yeltsin and the President of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria, Aslan (Khalid) Aliyevich Maskhadov. According to paragraph 2 of the agreement, both parties were to "Build their relations in accordance with universally recognized principles and norms of international law, with the parties cooperating in areas defined by specific agreements". Here, it is worth paying attention to the terminology that was used. As we can see, the treaty did not provide for the establishment of contact between its subjects under the Russian constitution. All relations between the parties that signed this treaty were to be based on the basis of international law. In other words, by signing this treaty, the Russian Federation de facto recognized the sovereignty of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria. In addition, the treaty says that the party represented by Maskhadov is called the "Chechen Republic of Ichkeria", i.e. as it was written in the constitution of Ichkeria, not Russia. Moreover, the treaty states that it comes

into force on the day it is signed, from which we can conclude that Boris Yeltsin himself, as the President of the Russian Federation, legitimized the independence of Ichkeria on May 12, 1997. Furthermore, from all the above it turns out that Russia seized power in a sovereign country by arbitrarily appointing its man as the head of the republic, and killing the legitimately elected president of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria - Aslan Maskhudov, who had to join terrorists and wage guerrilla wars because of the invasion of Russian troops in an attempt to regain legitimate power according to the results of the 1997 elections, which, incidentally, were recognized as legitimate by absolutely all observers and even the Russian government.

The seizure of power in Chechnya can be considered absolutely illegal also because Russia did not declare war before invading Ichkeria. The attack on Chechnya cannot be considered as a response to the armed conflict that took place on the territory of Dagestan, even though Maskhadov did not agree to participate in a joint counter-terrorism operation with Russia. Even the fact that he did not take measures to counter Basayev and his militants does not give foreign states the right to invade the territory of the country where the terrorist comes from and to overthrow the existing legitimate administration. If we take a closer look at the events that took place then, we can see that the attack on Dagestani territories by Basayev and his troops began on August 7 and lasted until August 14 and Russian troops entered Chechnya on September 30th. I consider admissible, that Maskhadov simply did not have enough time for catching terrorists as after the Dagestani tragedy they could simply hide in mountains of Ichkeria.

One can certainly argue with the thesis I voiced, saying that the separation of Chechnya from Russia itself was illegal, since the Russian constitution does not provide for the withdrawal of its subjects. As a counterargument, I can cite Russia's annexation of the Crimean Peninsula. Because the Ukrainian constitution also does not provide for the separation of its administrative units. While Chechnya's independence was in fact confirmed by the Russian President himself when he signed the agreement on May 12, 1997.

The most interesting thing is that in the case of the Chechen conflict, there was no reaction from the international community, which at the time when the Crimean events took place overwhelmed Russia with sanctions, although there were no human rights violations during those events, while during the second Chechen campaign, Russian aviation bombed Chechen cities, thus killing not only the so-called separatists, but also innocent civilians.

Summing up this paragraph, I have found that the Second Chechen War can be considered a real international conflict. Moreover, there is no known reason why international organizations did not attempt to resolve that conflict.

2. The Probability of the Third Chechen War

After being appointed as the head of the Chechen Republic, Ramzan Kadyrov resumed the process of Islamization in Chechnya. A very conservative form of Islam dominates the territory of Chechnya. For example, it is impossible to buy alcohol or tobacco products in Chechnya. As the INOSMI website writes: "The role of women is also very low, and if you see girls

without kerchiefs, then they are a minority, and they are increasingly receiving 'advice' from men to dress up in accordance with Islamic norms, which was not so common in Chechnya before.

During Ramzan Kadyrov's administration, Sufi Islam, or rather the ideas of this religious movement, became the basis on which Chechen society is being built. All Chechen life, including politics, is based on the canons of Sufism. Thus, the Sufi Islam became the most important factor and the centre of the creation of the identity of Chechens. Religion-based value creation gives the political elite of Chechnya a great amount of space for manoeuvres and manipulations, allowing them to solve many tasks, in the political sense. A society brought up only on the values of Islam has difficulty in integrating into Russia, where the absolute majority of the population professes a different religion, and in general is based on cultural values different from those in Chechnya.

Ramzan Kadyrov realizes that as long as Vladimir Putin, who according to him treats Kadyrov as his own son, is in power, he can afford to do whatever he wants. In fact, after the Kadyrov clan came to power in Chechnya, Chechnya basically remained an independent state, only formally part of the Russian Federation. A closer look allows one to notice that the laws of the Russian Federation do not work well in the territory of the Chechen Republic. This is clearly demonstrated by the confrontation between Kadyrov and the FSB. For example, in 2015, when Dzhambulat Dadayev was killed on Chechen territory by the FSB agents, along with policemen from a neighbouring region of Chechnya, Kadyrov ordered to open fire on them. By

doing so, Ramzan Kadyrov openly stated that he was ready to use violence to make his implicit independence from the government visible.

According to the director of the extremism research center "SOVA": "The interests of the Chechen police, which is transforming into an organized criminal syndicate, lie far beyond Chechnya[23]". This means that Ramzan Kadyrov is so influential today that if the FSB officers come across bandits under his personal patronage, they risk being severely harmed.

It is not clear how long the confrontation between Kadyrov and the FSB can last. Also, it is unclear how long the "Putin's infantryman" will be able to get away with it, using his intense loyalty to the Russian president. If Chechnya continues to remain a "special region", living by its own laws and not in accordance with the Russian constitution, it will not be difficult to imagine the worst outcome: the beginning of the third Chechen war.

It is reasonable to assume that the FSB and other law enforcement agencies do not like the excessive independence of the head of Chechnya at all. According to Andrei Piontkovsky: "the special services felt "devoid of fame[24]" in Chechnya when Kadyrov made a deal with Putin that ended the war, and that now they are " almost openly" provoking him by organizing leaks of information about his activities".

Verkhovsky also confirms the reality of the confrontation between Kadyrov and security services. According to him, the

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[23] Is Putin's elite security service feuding with his own puppet regime in Chechnya?/ available at [https://www.vox.com/2015/5/11/8585661/putin-kadyrov-fsb]
[24] Ibid

FSB is now trying to prevent the expansion of Kadyrov's criminal activity outside Chechnya.

The new war in Chechnya can be much worse than the previous two, because now the military training of Chechens is much higher than that of those who took part in military conflicts in the 1990s. Most likely, in case of a new war, the losses on both sides of the conflict will be greater in scale.

Summing up all of the third chapter, I want to say that because of their short-sightedness, Russian politicians of those years hung up a gun on the wall, a rifle that could shoot in the future. It seems to me that even Vladimir Putin, after taking control of the situation in Chechnya, felt how gradually, instead of integrating into the Russian state, Chechnya began to turn into a specific region of it. Time passed; Chechen society did not become any less religious. The generation of people that in the 1990s were sown a seed of religiosity in their heads by the then Chechen authorities grew up. And now they are raising their own children, who are also being taught Islam. A striking example of such a person is the current head of Chechnya, Ramzan Kadyrov, who in almost all his speeches and posts in various social networks refers to religion, mentioning the name of Allah. If we're talking about young North Caucasians, I can say that even among them there is the cult of personality of Dudayev, Maskhadov, Basayev and even the Chechen Goebbels - Udugov. I made sure of this by looking at the interviews with the personalities I listed, more precisely by looking at the comments under the video of their interview.

Conclusion

In the concluding part, I summed up the results of my research, formulated the main findings, and identified the peculiarities of using the religious factor as a political tool to unite and mobilize Chechen society during the two Chechen wars that took place at the end of the last century and the beginning of the present one.

The wars that took place in Chechnya in the 1990s showed that religion is an extremely powerful tool that can both unite people and divide them. The uniqueness of this case lies in the fact that the Chechen political elite, perhaps unaware of it, created a powerful propaganda tool during the first war, which actually brought them victory, leading to the signing of the Khasavyurt Accord.

The Khasavyurt Accord signed in 1996 for the Russian side was a forced step and the actual transfer of power in the Chechen Republic to the leaders of the then separatist movement. However, the signing of this document could not stop the internal political struggle in Chechnya between moderate, radical and ultra-radical forces, which only intensified after Dudayev's death.

The 1997 presidential election, recognized as legitimate by all observers, also failed to consolidate the opposing political forces.

Newly elected that year, the president and government of Ichkeria were supporters of the independence of their republic from the Russian Federation. The ongoing internal political war between the representatives of the Chechen authorities resulted in a very rapid decline of the entire system of state institutions within Chechnya. That period was also marked by an unprecedented activation of proponents of radical Islamic ideas such as Wahhabism, who refused to obey anyone and wanted to wage a new war.

It is worth to mention separately the various political parties that emerged at that time, which were created by many different warlords in order to concentrate around their personality, the people who supported them, as well as to create a type of political activity.

During the period of calm between the two wars, the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria was plunged into a state of deep crisis that affected the public and political spheres of life of the Chechen people. There was also a state of total anarchy in the country due to confrontations in Chechen society itself and the struggle of various political groups aimed at taking the control of the republic. The conflict with the Russian Federation has also contributed to this situation to some extent.

It should be noted that the process of modernization of Chechen society was very fast and took place in an extremely short time. That was the reason why Chechens retained centuries-old traditions and customs, since they simply did not have time to disappear.

The level of interest in religion among Chechens increased greatly at that time. As a consequence, a small part of Chechen society adopted Sunni Islam. However, Sufism, as well as other elements of centuries-old Chechen culture, did not allow Wahhabism to take root in their life.

During the second Chechen campaign, Akhmat Kadyrov cooperated with Russian authorities. The Russian government, for its part, supported him in every possible way, which later helped to bring Chechnya back into Russia. And by early 2006 the entire territory of Chechnya was subordinate to the Russian political system. The system of power in Chechnya was built on the Russian constitutional model.

Of course, the role of socio-economic factors should not be disregarded during the analysis of political processes that took place in Ichkeria. The decline in the standards of living in Chechnya has led to the popularity of radical ideas in society. The success of the Russian Federation in the war against the separatists, in my opinion, was largely due to Maskhadov's chaotic policy. It was his failure as a leader, I believe, that helped Akhmat Kadyrov to come to power in Chechnya.

The important role of religion in the life of Chechen society and nationalist ideas were decisive factors that influenced the political processes of the time. Moreover, the factors I have mentioned are still present in Chechnya, and therefore have not yet exhausted their potential, and can be used by the current political elite of Chechnya in the future.

The second Chechen war was many times more destructive than the first one. The Chechen people were on the verge of mass extinction in both the physical and cultural senses of this word.

Fortunately, the threat of loss of national identity has been eliminated, and the ideology of Chechen nationalism and the Sufi Islam which is traditional for the Chechen society has been used as the basis for modern spiritual life in Chechnya.

The study of this topic was extremely difficult and emotionally stressful for me. The difficulties arose because of the very few sources of information that describe the events of those years from the Chechen point of view. A very small number of newspapers and magazines, as well as video fragments of the public speeches of Chechen leaders, remained, which made it very difficult to study the separatist propaganda methods. The work was also complicated by the fact that all the interviews I could find with political leaders of the then Chechen Republic of Ichkeria were posted on websites and YouTube channels with questionable content, for example, calling for the separation of Chechnya from Russia. The solution to this problem would be to create official websites/sources, with all the documents, news articles, etc., in order to make it easier for people who decide to study this topic to have access to such important materials.

In general, the prospects for further study of the use of religion as a propaganda tool in the Chechen conflict, I see in a more detailed study of media materials during the period when these two wars took place, paying particular attention to the words spoken by Chechen separatist leaders, and finding among them the key ones. In my opinion, the methods used by Movladi

Udugov are worth a separate study. Moreover, since my research describes the use of religion as a political tool only by Chechen militants, I think it is important to write a study that would, on the contrary, reveal the methods of propaganda used by the Russian federal troops. By the way, it is also possible to investigate the propaganda techniques used by Dzhokhar Dudayev at the very beginning of the Chechen crisis, when he tried to consolidate the people only on nationalist ideas.

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