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The new Chechnya. What happened after the two wars.

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Abstract

“*A new Chechnya*” is aimed at explaining the post-war situation of the country, which was devastated by the two Chechen wars and which faced an uncertain future at the beginning of the 2000s. Russian President Vladimir Putin chose Akhmad Kadyrov, a powerful and respected Chechen man, as the leader of Chechnya in October 2003. The second Chechen war had started already in 1999, when Putin was Russian prime minister, and would officially end only in 2009, with the conclusion of the “counter-terroristic operations”. Kadyrov had to make Chechnya and its people reliable: terrorism had to be fought by any means, and the country had to be rebuilt in order to let Chechens start a new life and forget what had happened in the previous decade. Entire cities had been destroyed, human rights were not respected, thousands of people had died, and hundreds of men had chosen to fight within the resistance movement against the Russian oppressor.

In these conditions, Putin decided to heal Chechnya and make it a secure region of Russia, through the so-called “Chechenization policy” and a new president, Ramzan Kadyrov. Today Chechnya is definitely a different country, compared to a decade ago: Russian money helped the reconstruction of the modern cities that we can see nowadays; children receive instruction and go regularly to school; the main religion is still Islam, which is acquiring even a more significant place in the republic’s social life – sign of a certain degree of independence, which Chechen people had been fighting for; terrorists have been defeated and only a few are still fighting against Russia; human rights condition got relatively better.

But how did the overall situation get better? Is Chechnya really a more independent region, as Islam is the official religion and Kadyrov seems to have more power compared the other Russian regions’ presidents? As the situation is complex, mostly because of the history of the Caucasus region and its connection to Russia, I divided my dissertation into five chapters.

Chapter I deals with the history of Chechnya. Defining what the Caucasus region comprises and what characterized Chechnya (Islam; a society based on *tajpa*; the use of

two different law systems – the *adat* and the *sharia*), the profound gap within Chechnya and the Russian Empire in the XVIII century is understandable. The region was annexed after two great insurrections, which were considered holy wars (*Jihad*) by the Chechens – religion unified the people. 1944 will be remembered as the year of the deportation: Stalin decided to punish Chechens because of their alleged uncooperative behaviour in being part of an Empire (Chechens were allowed to return only in 1956, but Russians were ruling the country, as they were in majority). In 1991, Dudaev, a Chechen general of the USSR, became president with a coup d'état and Russian President Eltsin started the war on December 11th, 1994. Chechen resistance quickly was associated to terrorism because of Basaev, leader of the guerrilla. The war ended in August 1996; and the second war began in September 1999, with the pretext of an anti-terroristic operation.

The Chechenization policy, the Russian strategy based on local distribution of reconstruction aid, aimed at buying off Chechen leaders, is explained in Chapter II. Monetary aid is given annually from Moscow, creating discontent among the Russian population, who reckons Chechens should be financially independent. Indeed, federal subsidies are the main part of the local budget. Grozny and other cities were completely re-built with Russian money, and the wars' scarves disappeared. Corruption and money laundering, on the other hand, are problems which derived from the large amount of money given. The Chechenization policy gave also religious freedom: Kadyrov launched a crusade to promote morality and traditional Islam. Finally, Chechen president was authorized to lead a terror campaign with the purpose of maintaining the power and fighting the enemies.

The major issue of Chechnya, the one of the terrorist threat to Russia, is the object of Chapter III. Since 2000s, Chechen guerrilla has had links with al-Qaeda through its rebels' leaders, as Khattab and Basaev. Fundamentalist Islam groups wanted to create the Caucasus Emirate, a virtual entity with the purpose of spreading *sharia* and *Jihad* . Doku Umarov, who was responsible for many terrorist attacks within the Russian Federation, had been its leader since his death in 2014. There are three Chechen battalions connected to terrorism: IIPB, RSRBCM and SPIR. Along this chapter, I

enlisted most of the attacks led by terrorists coming from the North Caucasus region. Nevertheless, Kadyrov's strategy to fight terrorism has been working: Chechen rebels were stopped, and the terroristic threat now belongs to other regions, which are part of the so-called Emirate.

In Chapter IV, human rights condition was entered in details. There are humanitarian organizations which operate in Chechnya and whose work has helped hundreds of people denounce their condition, as their basic rights were not respected. One of the most important organization is the Russian group Memorial, for which journalist Estemirova used to write. Journalists have been pivotal in reporting what was happening to Chechen people during the war (they were abused and deprived of any right, they had no facilities and houses) and in denouncing Kadyrov's actions – Anna Politkovskaja is the most famous one. In order to fight terrorism, Kadyrov was at the head of operations which burnt down houses of alleged families of rebels, tortured “mountaineers” and civilians, killed and made disappear dozens of people.

Chapter V, on the other hand, is focused on President Ramzan Kadyrov and the future of this region. Kadyrov has started a cult of personality of himself, his father and Russian President Vladimir Putin, in order to legitimate his and his father government, but often this process has been compared to Stalin's era of propaganda and cult of personality. Using social media, Internet and television, Kadyrov is building an image of himself as a reliable Chechen man, who is trustable despite the young age. The Islamization policy he has carried on is another mean to make his people happy with Chechnya's position within the Russian Federation. At the same time, Kadyrov is allowed by the Kremlin to make propaganda and spread an idea of traditional Islam, so as to keep his country reliable at Putin's eyes. In conclusion, Chechnya will remain inside Russia and will not have any independence, as it is dependent on federal funds and investments – there are no foreign investors. Being the most developed Caucasian republic, the federal government is satisfied with the progress made, but Russians are asking to stop “feeding the Caucasus”. For this reason, Chechnya is now facing a similar treatment of all the other republics.

Introduction

After having attended an university course about Russian and Caucasian history, I became interested in Chechnya, a southern republic of the Russian Federation. Chechnya is a small country which has always struggled to be independent since it was annexed to the Russian Empire, and in particular after the USSR ceased to exist, until the beginning of the 2000s.

As much has been written on the period 1994-2008 – the period of the two Russian-Chechen wars, I decided to focus my work on the post-war situation: how did its presidents, Akhmad and Ramzan Kadyrov, pacified the country? Is Chechnya still facing any terrorist threat? What about the religious freedom, which Chechens fought for, or the human rights, which were not respected in war time?

All the information about current Chechnya's situation is available on newspaper articles and human rights organizations' websites. In order to respond these questions and delineate the current situation, I read books and did research on the Internet. Reading through newspapers, from Russian, Chechen, European/American and even Islamist sources, I gained knowledge of various points of view in order to have an objective research. Furthermore, as the news I was looking for are quite recent (from 2008 on), the books I read, except for one – published in 2014 and analyzing today's Chechnya –, were used to have information about history.

Firstly, I gave information about Chechnya past: the relation and the differences between this country and the Russian Empire and Federation are pivotal. This is the reason why Chechens always fought against their conqueror: they are Muslim, they were independent and sought for freedom, their society was based on clans and administrated by *sharia* law. These elements, which are not common within Russia, are the ones that kept Chechnya fighting until the beginning of the 2000s.

I was particularly interested in discovering what happened after 2008, the year when Russia officially ended the counter-terrorist operations, as Chechen rebels had been labelled as terrorists. The process of normalization, called Chechenization, started with the appointment as head of Chechnya of a former rebel and *mufti* (religion has always

been present in Chechen life, also in the political field, and as element of cohesion) of the region: Akhmad Kadyrov.

Russian President Vladimir Putin trusted the Kadyrov clan and gave Akhmad the mission of co-opting Chechen rebels and convincing them to change sides, as he and his family had done during the second Chechen war.

This is one of the aspects of the Chechenization process, which was led by Akhmad's son, Ramzan Kadyrov, current Chechen president. Federal money played an important role, letting the reconstruction of the country, but also made Chechnya be part of major Russian problems: corruption is today widespread, and unemployed is still at high rates.

Another interesting aspect is finding out what are rebels been fighting for, as Kadyrov claimed that there is no more any threat in his republic. Indeed, it is Dagestan which is dealing with this kind of threat, being today not as stabilized as it is Chechnya. The Northern Caucasian republics are part of a virtual Emirate, and rebels are within this entity. Chechen fighters have been either eliminated either co-opted by Kadyrov's men, the *kadyrovcy*, and just few are left in the armed groups.

Human rights violations are also connected to the terrorist groups: after the wars ended, the violations were committed in order to eradicate the terrorist units. Thus, violations still often happens, but the situation is relatively better.

Eventually, Ramzan Kadyrov is a key element of this Chechenization policy. He was the one who rebuilt his republic, introduced a more traditional Islam and made Chechen people's life normalized. His way of introducing a new cult of personality – through the media – is what allowed him to be legitimated as leader, and to balance Chechnya within the Russian Federation. The Islamization process, besides, is another interesting decision he took, in order to make Chechens and the Kremlin happy at the same time. He did manage to give some independence to Chechnya, but there is not much he can do on the economic side, as federal investments are pivotal to its investments.

Historic Background

1. Introduction to Chechnya: religion, society, law.

The Caucasian region, the territory southern to Russia and included between the Caspian Sea and the Black Sea, has always been the junction between two different cultures and worlds: “quello del Vicino Oriente, con le sue civiltà complesse e durature, e quello delle steppe eurasiatiche, a lungo dominato da popoli nomadi”¹.

North Caucasus and South Caucasus are two distinguished areas in this region, first of all because of their different geographical shape and dimension (North Caucasus was unreachable due to the high mountains), secondly because of their cultures and habits (South Caucasian people had been living for centuries near to the complex empires of the Near East – Persian and Ottoman Empires – thus being influenced by them; on the contrary, North Caucasian people suffered from the pressure of the nomads of the steppe), and finally because they are now facing two different situations.

South Caucasus is composed by Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan. All of these three countries managed to be independent from Russia when the Soviet Union collapsed, after having been part of the Russian Empire for almost two centuries.

Chechnya, instead, is part of North Caucasus.

North Caucasus is composed by Krasnodar Krai, a federal subject to Russia, and by other Russian republics, which are – from west to east – Adygea (landlocked in Krasnodar Krai), Karachai-Cherkessia, Kabardino-Balkaria, North Ossetia (South Ossetia is in Georgia), Ingushetia, Chechnya and Dagestan.

When Chechnya was conquered in the 18th century by the Russian Empire, there was no Chechen state, but only a land inhabited by Chechen people. They lived in a society which was divided in clans (*tajpa*), and the bond between these tribes was the fundamental basis of social relations.

¹ Aldo Ferrari, “*Breve storia del Caucaso*”, Carocci Editore, Roma, 2007, p. 11.

Islamism was the common feature among the clans, but “la sua penetrazione e la diffusione della legge islamica (*sharia*) non erano state tali da abolire il ricorso al diritto consuetudinario (*adat*). Le comunità seguivano le proprie tradizioni e una giustizia amministrata dagli anziani e fondata sulla religione islamica”².

Islamic religion played a crucial role in the unification of Chechen people during the 19th century, when they were fighting for independence against the Russian Empire. “E’ proprio in questo periodo che l’Islam si diffonde e si radica profondamente nelle coscienze, unendo sentimento religioso e lotta per l’indipendenza nazionale, soprattutto nella particolare variante detta muridismo, parola con la quale ci si riferisce a certi movimenti sufi e in particolare a quelli caucasici”³.

Sufism is a religious movement derived by Islam – believers despise assets, they seek for poverty and spiritual union with God; violence is not encouraged, but aggressiveness was present among the Islam congregations.

One of the most famous preacher of Islam was Shamil, an Avar from Dagestan who fought against Russian imperialism from 1824 to 1859 and who “costruì anche un sistema amministrativo, creando dei governatori che esercitavano il potere nel loro territorio affiancati da un *mufti*, interprete della legge islamica”⁴. Therefore, the diffusion of Islam had an initial political feature, which easily made *gorcy*⁵ accept this religion. In particular, Shamil contributed to the diffusion of Muridism, a branch of Sufism. Its believers are divided into congregations (*tariqat*); the main ones are Naqšbandiyya and Qadiriyya.

The success of Sufism and Muridism in Chechnya (“nonostante la ferma opposizione delle autorità prima zariste e poi sovietiche, il sufismo continuerà a diffondersi e a rimanere ben radicato nella popolazione fino praticamente ai nostri giorni”^{6,7}) is due to few of its features: believers could easily practice the religion in

² Marco Buttino, “Introduzione”, from “*Cecenia. Una guerra e una pacificazione violenta*”, Silvio Zamorani Editore, Torino, 2008, p. 17.

³ Aldo Castellani, “*Storia della Cecenia. Memoria, tradizioni e cultura di un popolo del Caucaso*”, Rubbettino Editore, Soveria Mannelli, 2008, p. 159.

⁴ Marco Buttino, “Introduzione” (2008), p. 17.

⁵ People who lived in the mountains.

⁶ Aldo Castellani (2008), p. 165.

⁷ For instance, after 1944, all mosques were closed until 1978 as an attempt to destroy Islam, but “this radical experiment failed. The Sufi brotherhoods (...) continue to yield the same prestige today that they enjoyed before the Revolution, and Chechnya-Ingushetia remains one of the strongest bastions of Islam”.

secret; Sufism has a strong anti-Russian component and is based on *tariqat*, which is similar to the Chechen society clan.

At first, the most popular *tariqat* was Naqšbandiyya (Shamil belonged to this congregation). Qadiriyya, on the other hand, arose in the mid of the 19th century thanks to Kunta Hagi, who preached about non-violence and non-resistance to the evil: the Russian occupation. Chechens were tired of fighting, and this *tariqat* became the most popular in the North Caucasus. He thought that “un’ininterrotta catena di violenze avrebbe alla fine decimato i popoli del Nord-Caucaso, avrebbe messo in pericolo la loro esistenza nazionale, la sopravvivenza della loro lingua e della loro cultura”⁸.

After a few years, in 1859, extremist groups in the Qadiriyya started emerging; violence could not be avoided any more, and believers of the *tariqat* adopted violence to fight again against Russian troops. In this manner, Muridism became a “movimento di resistenza a un’occupazione straniera, [...] per organizzare la resistenza alla conquista russa”⁹.

During the 1990s, instead, after the first Chechen war, the Wahhabi movement emerged, and is today identified with Islamic fundamentalism, even if it was born in the 18th century. The responsibility of the diffusion of this ideology is attributed to the first war and to the resulting contact with “guerriglieri provenienti da diversi paesi dell’Islam”¹⁰. The aim of Wahhabism was to get back to the original precepts of Islam and to fight the *adat*, because *adat* was competing with Islam in defining Chechens’ identity¹¹.

Wahhabites did not represent the whole Chechen population, but during Maskhadov presidency (January 27th, 1997 – March 8th, 2005) they gained popularity: as they had great amount of money, young people joined them due to the lack of alternatives in the post-war period. Their presence, though, “ha riaperto, tra gli stessi ceceni, il dibattito sull’identità nazionale”¹².

See: Marie Bennigsen Broxup, “Introduction. Russia and the North Caucasus”, from “*The North Caucasus Barrier. The Russian advance towards the Muslim world*”, Hurst & Co, London, 1992, p. 7.

⁸ Giovanni Bensi, “*La Cecenia e la polveriera del Caucaso. Popoli, lingue, religioni, guerre e petrolio fra il Mar Nero e il Mar Caspio*”, Nicolodi Editore, Rovereto, 2005, p. 77.

⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 83.

¹⁰ Aldo Castellani (2008), p. 176.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 177.

¹² *Ibidem*, p. 186.

As I have already written, Chechen society was based on *tajpa*, groups of people belonging to the same large family – the members of the family have a common ancestor who gave a patronymic to the *tajpa*. The ancestor was supposed to be a moral and social model for all the descendants, so the clan was based on psychological-behavioural features.

Chechen society is still based on these clans: for example, Akhmad Kadyrov, former president of Chechnya and father of the current president, belongs to Benoj *tajpa* and Maskhadov belonged to Alleroj *tajpa*¹³.

In ancient times, not only the *tajpa* was the base of the social organization, but it was the sphere where the first political aggregations were born. Every clan had its advisory body, made up by elder and wiser Chechens. Their election depended on their moral authority. The advisory council also elected the head of the military service, who used to become the leader of the community during periods of war. Everyone could attend meetings, except from women and slaves. Everyone had responsibilities and work to do: the *tajpa* had to guarantee peace and define identities.

“Il *tajpa* è un’unità autonoma che sussiste antecedentemente alla costituzione di un concetto di nazione cecena, al quale anzi si è spesso contrapposto”¹⁴. Thus, Chechen society has been traditionally divided into *tajpa*, within villages and districts, and has been strongly religious. “Si tende spesso a spiegare con queste divisioni l’attuale evidente frammentazione della società cecena”¹⁵.

Another element I have already mentioned, is the *adat*. By this term, we indicate a set of rules and laws which were formed by habits and which were preserved orally. *Adat*, in this manner, is closely part of the Chechen tradition. The word itself means “education”, and its adoption precedes the adoption of Islam and of the Islamic law, *sharia*.

These two law systems cohabited in all the territories of North Caucasus, often bringing to a merge of *adat* and *sharia*. *Sharia* was usually used in divorces cases, as

¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 301.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 240.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. XIX.

divorce was “introdotta proprio con la legge islamica e non previsto dall’*adat*”¹⁶ (before the introduction of Islam, Chechen society was also monogamous – it was Islam which introduced polygamy), in custody cases, and finally in hereditary and commercial law. *Adat*, instead, was used for criminal law. *Adat* was based on arbitration: arbitrators passed sentences and these became precedents, constituting the sources of law.

The presence of both *adat* and *sharia* created many problems in recent years, when the Wahhabi movement became established, in the last decade of the XX century. Believers of Wahhabism strongly believed that *sharia* had to be the only existing law in Chechnya, as it was the most direct link to religion, while *adat* was only confusing people’s identity in term of belonging to a society and of religion¹⁷.

Social relations are also regulated by habits which, like *adat*, were preserved orally. This way, after the Soviet era and the deportation, Chechens have been able to stay closed to their cultural identity. There are strict rules to be observed in the family and with elder people; home is a sacred place; families are patriarchal; women are well considered, especially if they are mothers; young girls are in the care of the family until the wedding, one of the most special events in their lives; hospitality is one of the main rules to observe, as often in the past it was necessary to welcome people who had got lost in the mountains¹⁸.

2. The Jihad and the Russian conquest.

“La Russia comincia a interessarsi al Caucaso nel XVI secolo, quando la conquista di Astrakhan’ nel 1556 ad opera di Ivan il Terribile pone il problema dell’accesso e del controllo dei *dikie polja* – i territori selvaggi –, come erano chiamate le steppe di frontiera ai piedi del Caucaso, oggetto di contesa della Russia zarista, degli imperi

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 248.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 177.

¹⁸ “In tutto il Caucaso, una delle regole più importanti da osservare è quella dell’ospitalità. Il clima e le asperità dei luoghi montani rendevano spesso necessario accogliere e sfamare i viandanti che si fossero persi o fossero stati tratti in tempo”. *Ibidem*, p. 271.

persiano e ottomano, del canato tataro di Crimea, vassallo degli ottomani, e degli šaybanidi uzbeki del Turkestan”¹⁹.

The Northern Caucasian territory was appealing to all these powers because of its strategic position – it could connect Russia to both the rich Persian Empire and the South Caucasus.

Tsar Ivan (who reigned from 1547 to 1584) tried in vain to conquer the wild region and, in order to succeed, fortresses were built along the main rivers of North Caucasus. In 1605, Tsar Boris Godunov followed his example, with unsuccessful raids. Even Tsar Peter the Great decided to fortify the control over that region, as he was leading military campaigns against Persia.

Ten years later, after his failure, Catherine the Great managed to build a new fortress, in 1735. From that moment on, Russians started colonizing the lands with Cossacks, who would push local people back to the mountains, as Catherine wanted²⁰.

This is why, during the Russo-Turkish war in 1768-74, Chechens and Kabardins chose to fight with the Turkish: they could not tolerate anymore any cruel actions of the Cossacks and of the Russian Empire. The policy of making people seek refuge in the hostile mountains, in order to die or to subjugate to the Russians, was harshly conducted by the well-known general Aleksej Ermolov. He colonized the lands with Cossacks and Russian farmers, destroyed woods (they were perfect places for ambushes) and built new fortresses.

“Under the tsars, two contradictory methods of assimilating the alien Muslim elements were used: conversion to Orthodox Christianity while retaining a national profile, without linguistic and cultural russification [...]; or conversion followed by full

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 29.

See also: Aldo Ferrari (2007), p. 51. “La Russia entrò direttamente a contatto con il Caucaso solo dopo aver risolto a suo favore la secolare contesa con gli antichi conquistatori tataro, vale a dire in seguito alla conquista dei khanati di Kazan’ (1552) e Astrachan’ (1556), che le aprì la strada verso sud”.

And: “Moscow opened the game after the annexation of Astrakhan by trying to occupy first the western, then the central, and finally the eastern Caucasus. All cards were used: settlements, cooptation, Christianisation and military conquest”. Bennigsen Broxup, “*Introduction. Russia and the North Caucasus*” (1992), p. 2.

²⁰ Russian governor of Caucasus, Grigorij Potëmkin, said Catherine that Russia had to attack the mountains, after pushing there the Chechens.

assimilation by the Russian *milieu*²¹. Catherine II, in 1783, preferred the cooptation of religious élites, gaining more cooperation from the Caucasian élites.

The first great Chechen insurrection was led by Sheik Mansur²² from the Islamic congregation (*tariqat*) Naqšbandiyya: he was considered a religious guide, an *imam*, and proclaimed the *jihad*, a holy war, against the Russian enemy. His aim was to unify all the Caucasian people, but his fight (1785-1791) ended with a defeat.

Thirty years later, the *jihad* started again. “Dal 1834, Cecenia e Inguscetia furono il centro della resistenza dei montanari del Caucaso Settentrionale e del Daghestan alla conquista russa. Esse opposero alle truppe russe un’acanita resistenza sotto la guida dell’*imam* Shamil, esponente del movimento islamico detto muridismo”²³.

Shamil, through the introduction of *sharia*, wanted to resist Russian occupation with moral and military discipline. He created a trained and equipped militia, introducing compulsory military service and establishing special military formations. He started succeeding in battles against the Russian army thanks to the ambush tactic, but also because of the particular weather and geographical conditions. Guerrilla would then become the main strategy adopted by the Chechens.

Chechnya became part of the Russian Empire only after the military defeat of Shamil, in 1859.

During the 1860s, the Qadiriyya *tariqat* started spreading in Chechnya, due to the sermons of Kunta Hagi, who came into conflict with Shamil, who did not accept his pacifism, and with Russian authorities, “che vedevano nella sua predica sul pacifismo un inganno e interpretavano il suo invito a combattere solo in difesa della nazione, della lingua e della cultura cecena come un pericolo ancora più grande della *jihad*, cioè della guerra confessionale, di Shamil”²⁴.

Throughout the second half of the 19th century, the tsarist army succeeded in moving villages from the mountains to the flat ground, so that Cossacks could easily control Chechens and prevent any form of dissent. As regards religion, hostile attitudes prevailed in Qadiriyya, even though this *tariqat* was supposed to be pacific. Indeed,

²¹ Bennigsen Broxup, “*Introduction. Russia and the North Caucasus*” (1992), p. 5.

²² Mansur was a military chief and a religious reformer. He realized that all the people of the North Caucasus needed to be unified and his preaching for Muridism led to the wish to fight the Russian Empire. See: Aldo Castellani (2008), p. 34.

²³ Giovanni Bensi (2005), p. 40.

²⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 78.

many Chechens had been expelled from their villages, in order to leave the most fertile lands to the Russian citizens. As a consequence, many of them started living surreptitiously, becoming bandits, *abreki*.

In 1893, the first oilfield was drilled in Grozny, leading to a huge demographic increment: labour came from both the Caucasus and Russia, but the city was not equipped to host so many people.

Being part of the Russian Empire, “la rivoluzione del 1917 venne accolta ovunque da ceceni e ingusci come una liberazione dal giogo zarista, come l’auspicata fine di un periodo in cui tutti i loro diritti erano stati calpestati”²⁵.

After the Bolshevik revolution, the first Congress of North Caucasus gathered and formed the Union of Mountaineers of North Caucasus and Dagestan. In autumn, the Union voted the constitution of a new republic, the Republic of the Mountains. This republic declared its independence on May 11th, 1918, being recognized by the former rivalries of Russia during First World War: Germany, Austria-Hungary and Turkey²⁶.

“Nowhere in the Russian Empire was the Civil War as confused and ferocious as in the North Caucasus. Between 1917 and 1920 it was fought by four main adversaries: the Bolsheviks, the Caucasian nationalists, the White Army of Denikin together with Kuban and Terek Cossacks, and the Muslim religious conservatives”²⁷. The politicians in the new born republic were mainly Mensheviks; the Cossacks fought the Bolsheviks and supported the White Army.

During 1918, the leadership of the Republic of the Mountains weakened: the White Army did want the unity of Russia – thus denying the auto-determination right that the Chechens wanted – and the leadership was conducting a policy against Russia, thus being accused of being antipatriotic.

After the war turned into guerrilla, it was the Muslims who managed to defeat Denikin and proclaimed again the independence of the North Caucasus, “istituendone l’emirato, uno stato indipendente che comprendeva Kabarda, Ossetia, Cecenia e

²⁵ Aldo Castellani (2008), p. 76.

²⁶ *Ibidem*.

See also: Abdurahman Avtorkhanov, “*The Chechens and Ingush during the Soviet Period*”, p. 152, from “*The North Caucasus Barrier. The Russian advance towards the Muslim world*”.

²⁷ Marie Bennigsen Broxup, “*The Last Ghazawat. The 1920-1921 uprising*”, p. 112, from “*The North Caucasus Barrier. The Russian advance towards the Muslim world*”.

Daghestan”²⁸. Bolshevik authority, willing not to have an Islamic and fundamentalist republic, offered the head of Chechen Muslim army to be a religious but not a political leader.

3. Stalin’s policy: the deportation.

Stalin, on January 20th, 1921, suggested the creation of a North Caucasus Soviet Republic. The mountaineers accepted, because *sharia* and *adat* would have been recognized as legal basis of the Constitution; central government would not have interfered with them; and because they would have got back all the lands that the Russian Empire had taken away from them²⁹. As a consequence, Chechnya and Ingusctia were annexed to the Gorskaja Respublika, the Republic of the Mountains, within the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR).

“The Chechen and Ingush regions had been part of the Soviet Mountain Republic until 1924, when separate Chechen and Ingush *oblasts* were set up”³⁰ by Russian government. After that, Chechnya and Ingusctia became autonomous regions (*Čečenskaja Avtonomnaja Oblast’* and *Ingušskaja Avtonomnaja Oblast’*). Later, in 1936, the two *oblast’* were upgraded to Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic according to the Soviet Union constitution³¹.

Short after Stalin had promised to the Chechens what they wanted, all the Islamic courts were closed; Chechen leaders were arrested; and lands were collectivized, leading to a severe food crisis. In addition, religious persecutions and the first purges (the worse were in 1937, when intellectual and religious élite were imprisoned) made the relation between Russia and Chechnya even worse³². In the same year, on July 31st –

²⁸ Aldo Castellani (2008), p. 79.

²⁹ Abdurahman Avtorkhanov, “*The Chechens and the Ingush during the Soviet period*” (1992), p. 154.

³⁰ Amjad Jaimoukha, “*The Chechens. A handbook*”, Routledge Curzon, London-NY, 2005, p. 21.

³¹ Abdurahman Avtorkhanov, “*The Chechens and the Ingush during the Soviet period*” (1992), p. 148.

³² Aldo Castellani (2008), p. 84.

See also: Aldo Ferrari (2007), p. 106. “Le purghe di questo periodo toccarono anche il Caucaso settentrionale, in particolare la Cecenia-Ingusctia (...) aggiungendosi ad un contesto repressivo che in quei territori era già particolarmente elevato e contribuendo al peggioramento dei rapporti delle popolazioni locali con Mosca”.

August 1st, 1937, the “General Operation for the Removal of Anti-Soviet Elements” took place. “People listed by the NKVD³³ were transported in lorries”³⁴ to Grozny, almost 14,000 among Chechens and Ingush were arrested.

During the Second World War, German army started Barbarossa Operation and Hitler decided to send one contingent in the Caucasus, as the insurrectional movements and the general dissatisfaction against Russia could help him. Within 1941 and 1942, part of the Caucasian people were involved in anti-soviet activities: “in odio al regime sovietico, accettarono di collaborare”³⁵ with Hitler.

Already in 1943, having observed the behaviour of Caucasian people towards the Soviet Union, Stalin had thought about “una soluzione drastica con la quale intendeva risolvere una volta per tutte il problema ceceno e di altre nazionalità caucasiche”³⁶.

On February 23rd, 1944, thousands of Russian soldiers encircled cities and villages in Chechnya and Inguscetia and deported all the population. 500,000 people were sent to Siberia and Central Asia – especially in Kazakhstan and Kirgizstan; many of them died during the three-to-six week journey, due to the inhuman conditions they were forced to live in.

Officially, Stalin decided to deport them because of Chechen and Ingush collaboration with Germans, but “in realtà l’accusa serviva da pretesto per colpire una popolazione giudicata inaffidabile, che si era mostrata poco incline ad accettare il processo di sovietizzazione e ad abbandonare le proprie tradizioni culturali e religiose”³⁷. Sure enough, some groups of people collaborated with the Germans, but it is difficult to say how many in reality they were. What was important was that “se molti hanno collaborato è un popolo intero a essere colpevole e a doverne subire le

³³ The People’s Commissariat for Internal Affairs, it was the secret police of the Soviet Union that executed the rule of power, including political repression.

See: <https://www.princeton.edu/~achaney/tmve/wiki100k/docs/NKVD.html>.

³⁴ Abdurahman Avtorkhanov, “*The Chechens and the Ingush during the Soviet period*” (1992), p. 174-174.

³⁵ Giovanni Bensi (2005), p. 40.

³⁶ Aldo Castellani (2008), p. 95.

³⁷ Alessandra Rognoni, “*Cecenia 1989-1992: la memoria della deportazione*”, from “*Cecenia. Una guerra e una pacificazione violenta*”, p. 36.

conseguenze”³⁸. Furthermore, the territories belonging to Chechnya and Ingushetia became part of the Russian region Stavropol’ or of North Ossetia.

After Stalin died, the situation changed: in 1956, during the XX CPSU³⁹ Congress, Khrushchev condemned Stalin’s excesses and rehabilitated who had been deported. Thus, the Chechen-Ingush republic was reconstituted and Chechens started going back to the Caucasus.

The return from the deportation was a painful process, “segnato da tensioni e scontri con la gente che era stata insediata al loro posto, e un’inevitabile concorrenza per le risorse e per i luoghi di abitazione”⁴⁰.

In the ‘60s, after the trauma of the re-establishment, Chechnya started being an industrial region, exploiting its own resources and refining crude oil coming from other regions of the Soviet Union.

4. The early Nineties: the first Chechen war.

By 1989, Chechens were finally in majority compared to the Russians in Chechnya, thanks to the gradual demographic increment. After Gorbačev introduced the *perestrojka*, informal groups of discussion started gathering to discuss about the democratization process in the Chechen-Ingush republic. This led to the fear that “le conseguenze del riemergere di questa memoria potessero avere ripercussioni sui rapporti tra le diverse nazionalità che abitavano nella repubblica”⁴¹.

In June 1989, Doku Zavgaev was elected first secretary of the Communist Party of the republic and finally introduced a period of liberalization: the informal groups became bigger and historical newspapers and journals⁴² started being published, in order to discuss and remember Chechen history.

On June 14th, the Congress of People’s Deputies of the Soviet Union approved the declaration “On Recognizing the Illegal and Criminal Repressive Acts Against Peoples

³⁸ Aldo Castellani (2008), p. 99.

³⁹ Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

⁴⁰ Alessandra Rognoni, “*Cecenia 1989-1992: la memoria della deportazione*” (2008), p. 36.

⁴¹ *Ibidem*, p. 39.

⁴² *Ibidem*.

Subjected to Forcible Resettlement and Ensuring their Rights”, thus approving the law “On the Rehabilitation of Victims of Political Repression”, “dichiarando illegale e criminale ogni atto di repressione e auspicando la completa riabilitazione di questi popoli e la ricostituzione *in loco* del loro territorio”⁴³.

Instead of helping Chechen and Ingush people, this created more problems: article VI said that the borders existing before 1944 had to be re-established, but it didn’t explain how. Thus bureaucrats decided to add the deliberation “Problems Related to The rehabilitation of Victims of Political Repression” to the law.

At the same time, the first national movement was formed: it was called *Bart* (Unity) – then recognized as Democratic Party, and it was composed by members of the *intelligencija*, such as Zelimkhan Yandarbiev⁴⁴, who later would become president of this movement. *Bart* constituted the basis of the Vainakh⁴⁵ Democratic Party, which asked for the abolishment of the Communist Party – Doku Zavgaev clearly opposed. In March 1990, Zavgaev was elected head of the Supreme Soviet of the Chechen-Ingush republic.

In the summer of the same year, the first National Congress of Chechnya (*Okçu*) was held, and lead to the creation of the *Ispolkom*, the Executive Committee, whose leader was Dzhokhar Dudaev⁴⁶. The Congress was a moderate political party, which opposed the Islamic fundamentalism of Yandarbiev. Its program was about cultural progress and auto-determination of Chechen people, but also about the wish of having

⁴³ Aldo Castellani (2008), p. 108.

⁴⁴ Yandarbiev was a literate and writer, he had signed up to the USSR’s Union of Writers and had published several collections of verse and short stories. Mainly, he was devoted to the independence movement and, by 1989, he became vice-chairman of the Association of Highland Peoples of the Caucasus; then he would enter the Chechen parliament as an ally of Dudaev.
See: The Telegraph, “Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev”, February 14th, 2004, (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/1454265/Zelimkhan-Yandarbiyev.html>).

⁴⁵ *Vainakh* means “our People” in Chechen and it is how Chechens call themselves.
See: Aldo Castellani (2008), p. 3.

⁴⁶ Dudaev was Chechen but he had grown up in Kazakhstan, due to the exile process. “Dudaev accusava solo Stalin per la deportazione della sua gente, rimanendo saldo nella sua fedeltà verso l’Unione Sovietica”. Georgi M. Derlughian, “Dalla rivoluzione alla guerra”, from “*Cecenia. Una guerra e una pacificazione violenta*”, p. 61.
He became member of the Soviet air force and fought in Afghanistan. He was the first Chechen to receive the rank of general and the command of a strategic base in Tartu. At that time, he was not interested in Islam or in Chechen traditions.

democratic parliamentary and presidential elections in order to declare Chechnya's sovereignty.

After the Congress declared the sovereignty of the Chechen republic, the Supreme Soviet approved the declaration that claimed that the Chechen-Ingush republic was a sovereign state that would sign agreements of the Union and of the Federation as an united country. The Chechen national movement did not agree, as the declaration did not specify whether the sovereignty was inside or outside the Russian Federation.

As a consequence, the Vainakh Democratic Party of Yandarbiev and other religious organizations asked to be excluded from Russia and to form a confederation of the North Caucasian republics.

In March 1991, Dzhokhar Dudaev moved back to Chechnya to take actively part in Chechen political life as leader of the Executive Committee of the Congress. After his comeback, he suddenly moved to more radical and extreme positions, getting closer to Islamic characters (like Yandarbiev) and farther from moderate politicians and members of the *intelligencija*.

The attempted putsch on August 19th, 1991, was the turning point for Dudaev position, as he received the political confirmation he was waiting for. During the turmoil, he exhorted people to sustain democracy and accused the president of the Supreme Soviet, Doku Zavgaev, of having taken part in the undemocratic putsch. "People were demonstrating, demanding the immediate resignation of the republican leadership which had betrayed its people during the days of the failed *coup*"⁴⁷.

As Dudaev was considered Russian and not Chechen, he was thought to be able to balance the relation between Russia and Chechnya. But as soon as he got power, he became hostile to Russia and tried to favour his original *tajpa*.

After the Supreme Soviet had been substituted by a temporary Soviet, Dudaev and his personal militia took control of the Parliament and announced presidential election to be held on October 27th, proclaiming "Cecenia una Repubblica sovrana, geograficamente costituita sulla base della ex Repubblica Ceceno-Inguscias, con

⁴⁷ Marie Bennigsen Broxup, "After the Putsch, 1991", p. 225, from "The North Caucasus barrier. The Russian advance towards the Muslim world".

l'esclusione di due sole province su quattordici, che vennero lasciate agli ingusci"⁴⁸. "L'Inguscetia non accettò la secessione e il 4 giugno 1992 si staccò dalla Cecenia, rimanendo leale a Mosca"⁴⁹.

Thus, Dudaev became the first president of the Chechen republic on November 1st. On November 8th, Eltsin announced the state of emergency, causing the mobilisation of the Chechens in favour of Dudaev and the enforcement of his power. The state of emergency was then withdrawn after a few days and Chechen people considered this decision as a *de facto* recognition of Chechen independence from Russia.

Russia was not capable of managing this crisis, especially after Georgia and Azerbaijan claimed their independence. At the beginning of 1992, Dudaev asked Moscow to remove all of the Russian troops from Chechen territory. Russia did not accept this request, so Chechens separatists illegally took Russian weapons from Russian military placements. Russian Defence Minister was forced to withdraw all the troops, and, as a consequence, Dudaev could organize his own regular army⁵⁰ without any Russian opposition. With these troops, Dudaev would later help the Ingush fight against the Ossetians because of border issues, and the Abkhazians against Georgia. Dudaev was fighting in these two cases against orthodox people, even if the conflicts had historical and not religious pretexts.

Dudaev made the institutions more Islamic: he took the presidential oath on a Quran and ratified Saturday as the week day to rest. "L'obiettivo è quello di costituire una leadership del Caucaso del Nord fondata sull'adesione alla religione islamica"⁵¹. During this first period, "impiegati e funzionari russi e delle altre nazionalità slave incominciarono ad abbandonare la Cecenia"⁵² due to the fear of nationalism and religious fundamentalism.

In the meanwhile, Eltsin had adopted a more authoritarian leadership to manage domestic policy issues, because he could not let Chechnya be independent. The first and main reason of this was that being independent would constitute a precedent for other republics – like Tatarstan – to ask for independence. A minor reason was connected to

⁴⁸ Alessandra Rognoni, "Cecenia 1989-1992: la memoria della deportazione" (2008), p. 46.

⁴⁹ Giovanni Bensi (2005), p. 40.

⁵⁰ On May 28th, 1992, Russian Defence Minister accepted to give half of the USSR arms to Chechnya; but as there was no regular army yet, most of the arms were given to the population and to the *tajpa*.

⁵¹ Aldo Castellani (2008), p. 119.

⁵² Giovanni Bensi (2005), p. 12.

Chechnya's strategic role: the oil pipeline that brought oil from the Caspian sea to the Black sea went through Chechnya. Therefore, Chechnya was geopolitically important for the oil transit from Azerbaijan⁵³, while it was not pivotal as regards its oil reserves. “Se prima della rivoluzione le zone petrolifere principali erano l'Azerbaijan e il Caucaso del Nord (segnatamente la Cecenia), [...] negli ultimi anni la produzione petrolifera cecena non ha superato l'1% del totale russo”⁵⁴.

Many Caucasus experts claim that “la guerra della Russia contro la Cecenia avrebbe potuto scoppiare da un momento all'altro dopo il novembre del 1991, ovvero dopo che la Russia respinse la dichiarazione di indipendenza della Cecenia e il presidente Eltsin dichiarò lo stato d'emergenza nella repubblica, inviando 2500 soldati”⁵⁵. Russian troops got closer to Chechen borders, excluding the country from the flow of goods and information. Ingushetia had not defined yet its borders with Chechnya, so Russian troops were actually already in Chechnya. To solve this crisis, Dudaev and Ingush President Aushev decided to leave the border as it was, not delimited.

Chechen domestic situation was troublesome as well. Dudaev was more focused on his *tajpa* and on the clan structure of the country than on the whole Chechen people, and he was trying to make Mansur and Shamil national symbols of the resistance against Russia. “In January 1994, Chechnya changed its name to Chechen Republic-Ichkeria, the suffix being the name of a large region in the southeast traditionally associated with the birth of the Chechen nation”⁵⁶, to recall the image of the fortress of Shamil in Ichkeria, the south-eastern part of the country.

Many were the people disappointed by Dudaev, starting from the Major of Grozny, then members of the *intelligencija*, and also politicians of the pro-Russia party (Doku Zavgaev was one of its leaders). Everyone was trying to help his own clan, leading the political crisis into an economical one and bringing the country almost in a civil war.

⁵³ Chechnya was important for oil until new and richer oilfield was discovered on the Caspian sea, in Kazakhstan, in 2000.

See: Andrew E. Kramer, “Kazakhstan oil field begins production after years of delay”, The New York Times, September 11th, 2013, (http://www.nytimes.com/2013/09/12/business/global/kazakhstan-oil-field-starts-production-after-years-of-delay.html?_r=0).

⁵⁴ Giovanni Bensi (2005), p. 263.

⁵⁵ Matthew Evangelista, “Le guerre”, from “Cecenia. Una guerra e una pacificazione violenta”, p. 66.

⁵⁶ Amjad Jaimoukha (2005), p. 21.

On May 25th, 1993, the militias of Dudaev and Mamodaev⁵⁷ fought against each other, and Dudaev succeeded in making his position stronger.

Dudaev still wanted the independence of Chechnya; so Eltsin, in July 1993, offered Chechnya to be part of the Russian Federation with a special *status* of autonomy. Dudaev did not accept the proposal, as he wanted a full independence; he did not even participate in the Duma election at the end of the same year. Being independent from Russia also implied “il controllo completo della produzione e della raffinazione petrolifera”⁵⁸.

As diplomacy was not helping Eltsin, he decided to secretly (“avvalendosi della collaborazione dell’FSK⁵⁹, i servizi di controspionaggio federale, per risolvere militarmente la situazione”⁶⁰) help Dudaev’s opposition in attacking Grozny, on November 26th. Dudaev’s militia managed to defend the city and take 70 Russian soldiers and officials as hostages, thus showing the role that Moscow was playing. Chechen public opinion immediately thought that it was not a domestic conflict, but clearly a Russian military invasion.

On November 29th, Eltsin gave an ultimatum to Dudaev: Chechnya had 48 hours to get rid of all the armies and leave the hostages. “A detta dei suoi consiglieri, Eltsin non si aspettava che le sue condizioni sarebbero state accettate”⁶¹. The day after, Russian Security Council gathered to discuss about the Chechen crisis, but later the Justice Minister said that the meeting had the purpose to “avallare una decisione che Eltsin aveva già preso”⁶². Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin and Minister of Foreign Affairs agreed with the military intervention; only a few people claimed not to be in favour.

On November 30th, secret provision n. 2137 was issued, authorizing the use of military force. During the following two weeks, when Russian troops were deploying along the Chechen borders, Russia and Chechnya did not find any compromise (Eltsin also thought that the war would be short and would help him with public opinion).

⁵⁷ Mamodaev was a politician who, supported by the Parliament, in the spring of 1993, organized a sit-in against Dudaev and formed his own government.

⁵⁸ Aldo Castellani (2008), p. 124.

⁵⁹ *Federal'naja Služba Kontrarazvedki*.

⁶⁰ Aldo Castellani (2008), p. 125.

⁶¹ Matthew Evangelista, “*Le guerre*” (2008), p. 67.

⁶² *Ibidem*.

Russian army intervened on December 11th, 1994, entering in Chechnya from three different directions to lead the operation of “disarmo di formazioni illegali”⁶³. The intervention led Russian people not to trust Eltsin anymore, as he had lied on the real reasons of the war and as he was bombing entire villages, killing Chechen innocent people.

Russian army was bigger than the Chechen one, but among Chechen soldiers there were also volunteers from Muslim countries. Russia could have won the war. Grozny had been destroyed by bombs; the main cities had been occupied; Chechen troops had hidden in the mountains: if Russian soldiers had not abused of the Chechens, Chechens could have helped them contrasting the rebel forces, but “le forze russe trattarono tutti gli abitanti della Cecenia indiscriminatamente come nemici”⁶⁴.

Chechen troops adopted the guerrilla tactic, hiding in the mountains; Russian troops killed thousands of civilians, thus many Chechens decided to ally with the separatists, the fighters who conducted guerrilla from the mountains.

Chechen resistance got to a turning point when some of the separatists “divennero quello di cui Mosca li aveva sempre tacciati d’essere: dei terroristi”⁶⁵. On June 14th, 1995, a group of Chechens led by Shamil Basaev⁶⁶ arrived in a city in South Russia, Budënnovs, and occupied a police station and a hospital, killing more than a hundred people. It was Chernomyrdin who solved the crisis, freeing the hostages and leaving Basaev a way of escape. Chechens wanted the war to end and Russian troops to leave Chechnya, but the peace talks between Chechen military commander Aslan Maskhadov and Russian military commander Anatolij Romanov were interrupted by other terrorist attacks.

In January 1996, Chechen fighters occupied another hospital in Dagestan and authorities tried to give terrorists a way to escape in order to avoid the death of the hostages; in September the personal spokesperson of Eltsin avoided a terrorist attack; in October Anatolij Romanov was killed; in November Zavgaev managed to avoid a bomb; in December the Russian governmental building in Grozny exploded.

⁶³ Aldo Castellani (2008), p. 126.

⁶⁴ Matthew Evangelista, “*Le guerre*” (2008), p. 70.

⁶⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁶⁶ A key Chechen rebel commander, who led many major attacks against Russia. See: BBC News, “*Chechen rebel chief Basayev dies*”, July 10th, 2006, (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/5165456.stm>).

On April 21st, 1996, Dudaev was killed after having been tracked down through his telephone signal. He was substituted by Yandarbiev; while Maskhadov got the full control over military decisions.

As Russian presidential elections were close, Eltsin understood he needed to end the war: he called general Aleksandr Lebed⁶⁷ and asked him to represent Russia in the peace talks. Though, once Eltsin was re-elected, he order a new attack in the mountains to capture Yandarbiev and Chechen officials and tried to kill Maskhadov.

On August 5-6th, Maskhadov managed to enter Grozny – which was occupied by Russians – and thousands of civilians and soldiers of both sides died. Eltsin finally let Lebed withdraw the army. At the end of the month, Lebed and Maskhadov signed the Khasaviurt Accord: Russia did not recognize *de facto* Chechen independence⁶⁸; Chechnya would behave as a sovereign country; the *status* of Russia-Chechnya relations would be discussed in 2001⁶⁹.

5. From the Independence to the Second Chechen War.

The period of independence corresponded to the break between the two Chechen war, and was characterized by bad economic conditions, an initial lack of political leadership, and widespread criminality. Already when Russian troops were going to leave Chechnya, new terrorist attacks were held, in order to start again the conflict: Russian soldiers were made hostages; a delegation from North Ossetia was kidnapped; members of the international Red Cross were killed. Eltsin claimed that these episodes were a provocation towards the peace progress. A key role was played by the oligarch

⁶⁷ “Lebed made his name as a Kremlin fixer, saving Boris Yeltsin in summer 1996, when the first war in Chechnya jeopardised the sick president's re-election bid”. He also said: “Diplomacy won. That's how we have to act now”.

Ian Traynor, “General Alexander Lebed”, The Guardian, April 29th, 2002, (<http://www.theguardian.com/news/2002/apr/29/guardianobituaries.russia>).

⁶⁸ See: Ekaterina Sokiriankaya, “State and violence in Chechnya (1997-1999)”, from “Chechnya at war and beyond”, Routledge, Oxon, 2014.

⁶⁹ Matthew Evangelista, “Le guerre” (2008), p. 72.
See also: Aldo Castellani (2008), p. 131.

Boris Berezovskij⁷⁰ who helped “pagando, a quanto si dice, i riscatti e rendendo così il fenomeno dei sequestri un affare lucroso”⁷¹.

Maskhadov won the presidential election in January, 1997, but both Basaev and Yandarbiev refused to join him in the government. The new president wanted to give sovereignty to Chechnya, cooperating with Russia. On the other hand, Basaev wanted an Islamic state to join all the Muslim people of North Caucasus. Thus, Basaev just knew that the only way to unify Chechnya and Dagestan was to continue the war. Dagestan was pivotal for two reasons: firstly, it was the biggest and most populated Muslim region of the Caucasus; secondly, it would have guaranteed access to the oil reserves of the Caspian Sea⁷².

Chechnya was suffering from unemployment and tough economic conditions: agriculture and sheep farming were impossible – also because of the presence of mines; there were many armed groups which started trafficking drugs and oil and kidnapping people. In the same years, Wahhabism was spreading all over in Chechnya. Wahhabites had fought during the war, but still the majority of the Chechens did not accept them, due to their fundamentalist religion and to their military groups. Many politicians near to Yandarbiev were Wahhabites, and hostile to Maskhadov⁷³.

In May, 1997, Maskhadov and Eltsin signed the Russia-Chechen Peace Treaty: the sides guaranteed that they would not use force to solve controversies in the transition period. The transition was supposed to last five years; after which a referendum would decide if Chechnya would become an independent or a federate republic. Yet, at the time of the signature, Chechnya aimed at being independent, whereas Russia only wanted to add the *status* of associate member of the federation, “un puro *escamotage* verbale che avrebbe dato alla Cecenia un’indipendenza molto limitata”⁷⁴. Just some time later, in August, the Chechen parliament voted a law to make Chechen language the official one, while the Russian constitution said Russian was the official language.

⁷⁰ The most powerful Russian oligarch during Eltsin presidency.
Michael Gillard, “*Boris Berezovsky obituary*”, The Guardian, March 24th, 2013,
(<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/mar/24/boris-berezovsky>).

⁷¹ Matthew Evangelista, “*Le guerre*” (2008), p. 73.

⁷² *Ibidem*, p. 74.

⁷³ Aldo Castellani (2008), p. 135.

⁷⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 132.

In July 1998, the militia of Sulim Jamadaev⁷⁵ fought against the Wahhabites in Gudermes. After tens of people had died, Maskhadov declared that Wahhabism was outlaw, but by that time the Wahhabites were too many and could not be expelled by the country. Even Basaev sympathized with them⁷⁶. Maskhadov proclaimed the state of emergency, set a curfew and placed police checkpoint along the main highways.

The opposition created the Council of the Commanders – Basaev was included – and it asked Maskhadov to resign. In order to save himself, Mashkadov introduced *sharia* as state law: as a consequence, the parliament ceased to exist and a consultative assembly was created, which was led by the president himself. At the same time, Basaev created his own consultative assembly. “È assai significativo il fatto che, almeno inizialmente, i wahhabiti ceceni non vennero affatto intralciati dai russi, che probabilmente si rendevano conto dei loro potenziali effetti destabilizzanti all’interno della Cecenia”⁷⁷.

Moscow got suddenly worried for the pipeline (opened in September 1997), for which it was paying high royalties as a guarantee against thefts. Russia stopped paying in August, 1998, and decided to transport oil through the train system in Dagestan, cutting off Chechnya. At the same time, Basaev and other Chechen and Dagestan leaders, included Khattab⁷⁸, organized a commando and occupied two villages in Dagestan. Maskhadov never publicly condemned these guerrilla actions. “La Russia aveva comunque bisogno di un pretesto per affermare che la Cecenia era venuta meno a quanto affermato nell’accordo”⁷⁹ signed with Lebedev, about the non-use of force. Prime Minister Sergej Степаšin revealed that “l’attacco contro la Cecenia era stato già deciso nel marzo del 1999, ovvero cinque mesi prima della sua apparente causa scatenante”⁸⁰.

⁷⁵ He was a leader of the Chechen guerrilla who, during the second Chechen war, allied with Russian government, as Akhmed Kadyrov did.

See: Maria Elena Murdaca, “*Un sogno dalla Cecenia*”, Osservatorio Balcani e Caucaso, June 3rd, 2009, (<http://www.balcanicaucaso.org/aree/Russia/Un-sogno-dalla-Cecenia-45906>).

⁷⁶ Basaev, in April 1998, had been elected President of the Congress of the People of Ickheria and Dagestan, which did not have a real political program.

⁷⁷ Aldo Castellani (2008), p. 137.

⁷⁸ A Jordan warrior, who had an active role in organizing Chechen resistance during the first Chechen war. See: BBC News, “*Obituary: Chechen rebel Khattab*”, April 26th, 2002, (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/1952053.stm>).

⁷⁹ Aldo Castellani (2008), p. 141.

⁸⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 142.

On September 30th, 1999, Russian army entered Chechnya, starting the second Chechen war, with a *kontrterrorističeskaja operacija*, an anti-terrorist operation. The day before, Putin⁸¹ had asked Maskhadov to condemn terrorism, to free Chechnya from army groups and to give Moscow the criminals.

Putin managed to be elected in 2000, after having spoken about the necessity of taking revenge from the first war and about the need to fight terrorism⁸². At the beginning, “questa guerra godette del sostegno dell’opinione pubblica”⁸³, as at the beginning of September four buildings in Dagestan, Moscow and Volgodonsk were blown up. Chechen terrorists were immediately blamed for the attacks.

War operations were quick and mostly held in Grozny, the Chechen capital which was soon destroyed.

What differed from the first Chechen war was the presence of mass-media⁸⁴. Many were the journalists who tried to report what was really going on and what civilians had to suffer: Russian authorities cut gas and electricity off; soldiers used to do *začistki* (military searches), which ended with executions, rapes or tortures (there were secret lagers); the army was not easy to control, as there were many independent troops.

“Local human rights groups estimate that between 3,000 and 5,000 people have “disappeared” since the beginning of the conflict in 1999. Russian governmental statistics put the figure at 2,090 persons. All of these people are either civilians or otherwise unarmed when taken into custody. Russian authorities deny all responsibility for their fate or whereabouts. [...] Human Rights Watch said that the vast majority of the “disappearances” are perpetrated by government agents—either Russian federal forces or, increasingly, local Chechen security forces who are ultimately subordinate to Russian authorities”⁸⁵.

⁸¹ Ex KGB officer, at the time he was prime minister.

⁸² “Tutto è cambiato dopo i fatti dell’11 settembre 2001 a New York. In quell’occasione Putin venne incensato dai vertici politici internazionali, che videro in lui un alleato per combattere il terrorismo internazionale. Bush, Blair, Chirac e compagnia chiusero gli occhi con indulgenza su ciò che faceva in Cecenia”. Anna Politkovskaja, *Cecenia, il disonore russo*, Fandango, Roma, 2009, p. 175.

⁸³ Matthew Evangelista, “*Le guerre*” (2008), p. 78.

⁸⁴ Still, despite the journalistic reports, the International community was not intervening, thus promoting the escalation of brutality.

⁸⁵ Human Rights Watch, “*Chechnya: “Disappearances” a Crime Against Humanity*”, March 21st, 2005, (<http://www.hrw.org/news/2005/03/20/chechnya-disappearances-crime-against-humanity>).

The war was not a war against terrorism, but a war against an entire population. The exodus of the Chechens had already started on October 21st, 1999, when a missile was launched on the biggest market in Grozny, killing more than a hundred civilians. Many ran away, either to Ingushetia, either to Georgia, where there were refugee camps had been set up.

In the summer of 2002, Maskhadov and Wahhabite leaders reconciled and organized the offensive actions in Dagestan and in Grozny. In the same year, the unfortunately famous terrorist attacks started: on October 23rd, 800 people were sequestered in the Dubrovka theatre⁸⁶ in Moscow and the way Russian authorities managed the crisis was hardly questioned, as hundreds died because of the poisoning gas; there were bombings in the Moscow metro line; and, in September 2004, 330 hostages died in a school in Beslan.

The referendum of March 23rd, 2004, gave Chechnya some autonomy and a new president, who had to be elected with Moscow's consensus. In October, Akhmad Kadyrov⁸⁷ won the elections. Only one year later he was killed in a terrorist attack, and he was replaced by Alu Alkhanov, Minister of Domestic Affairs, because his son, Ramzan Kadyrov, was too young to become president (he became prime minister).

Also Maskhadov was killed in Grozny in 2005; Basaev died in Ingushetia in 2006.

Ramzan Kadyrov had been responsible for the personal militia of his father (the so-called *kadyrovcy*), which was involved in illegal police searches and drug dealing. After having understood he could be president, he claimed he wanted not to have the militia anymore, to enter fully legality and be able to be elected president. In February 2007, he took the place of Alkhanov. Putin, in fact, had ratified a law which said that the Russian president has to propose the name of the Chechen president.

“Ramzan Achmatovič Kadyrov è diventato Ramzan “l’edificatore””: restituisce a una Cecenia sfinita il volto che aveva prima della guerra, eliminando i segni delle battaglie che, con brevi pause, si susseguono dal ’94”⁸⁸. He has been in charge of the

⁸⁶ The terrorists wanted two things. “Prima richiesta: Putin deve annunciare la fine della Guerra. Non vogliono un decreto o un ordine, solo la sua parola. Seconda richiesta: deve dimostrare di non limitarsi alle promesse, per esempio evacuando le truppe da un distretto”. Anna Politkovskaja (2009), p. 145.

⁸⁷ During the first Chechen war, he had fought with separatists, but during the presidency of Maskhadov he changed side – also because of its aversion towards Wahhabism.

⁸⁸ Anna Politkovskaja, “*Proibito parlare. Cecenia, Beslan, Teatro Dubrovka: le verità scomode della Russia di Putin*”, Mondadori, Milano 2007, p. 109.

reconstruction and of the pacification of the country. Despite the fact he promised to abolish his personal militia, he did not. “Human rights groups accuse Kadyrov of stamping his authority on the republic by using a feared private militia, known as the *Kadyrovcy*”⁸⁹. “Torture by government forces, including pro-Moscow Chechen forces under the leadership of Chechen President Ramzan Kadyrov, is widespread and systematic”⁹⁰.

⁸⁹ Steven Eke, “*Profile: Ramzan Kadyrov*”, BBC News, April 5th, 2007, (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/6530833.stm>).

⁹⁰ Human Rights Watch, “*Russia: Bush should press Putin on Human Rights abuses*”, June 28th, 2007, (<http://www.hrw.org/news/2007/06/27/russia-bush-should-press-putin-human-rights-abuses>).

What happened after the two wars?

1. The Chechenization policy.

“One of the most astounding vestiges of Putin’s 8-year rule is the Machiavellian pacification of Chechnya, which appeared close to triggering off secession of other territories”⁹¹. In April 2009, Russia claimed the conclusion of the counter-terrorism operations, bringing to an end one of the most brutal conflicts of the last decades, as “relative stability [...] has been achieved”⁹²: terrorism crushed, illegal armed groups were defeated, militant leaders had been neutralized⁹³. Finally, Chechnya could ease security restrictions, such as curfews, road blocks and searches, and start investing in order to encourage trade.

Putin managed to pacify Chechnya through the so-called Chechenization policy: “based on the local distribution of massive reconstruction aid from Moscow”⁹⁴, this policy aimed at “co-opting (buying off) Chechen leaders”⁹⁵. To do this, Putin had to choose a Chechen leader who would help him ending the terrorist threat, unite his people, and who would be loyal to Russia.

Aleksej Malashenko, co-chair of the Carnegie Moscow Centre’s Religions, Society, and Security Program, said that “the choice of Akhmad Kadyrov was perhaps the best move Putin has made here”⁹⁶.

Russian president appointed Kadyrov the head of Chechnya’s administration (the Kremlin organized orchestrated⁹⁷ presidential elections in 2003). Kadyrov, the most

⁹¹ Simon Saradzhyan, “*Putin’s pacification of Chechnya*”, The International and Security Network, April 1st, 2008, (<http://www.isn.ethz.ch/Digital-Library/Articles/Detail/?ots777=4888caa0-b3db-1461-98b9-e20e7b9c13d4&lng=en&id=54047>).

⁹² Matejova Miriam, “*Russian Chechenization and the prospects for a lasting peace in Chechnya*”, International Journal on World Peace, June 1st, 2013, (<http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1G1-334487303.html>).

⁹³ See: BBC News, “*Russia ends Chechnya operation*”, April 16th, 2009, (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/8001495.stm>).

⁹⁴ Pavel K. Baev, “*Has Russia achieved a victory in its war against terror?*”, Centre for Strategic & International Studies, December 2006, (http://csis.org/files/media/isis/pubs/pm_0415.pdf).

⁹⁵ Matejova Miriam, “*Russian Chechenization and the prospects for a lasting peace in Chechnya*”, June 1st, 2013.

⁹⁶ Simon Saradzhyan, “*Putin’s pacification of Chechnya*”, April 1st, 2008.

⁹⁷ *Ibidem*.

influential *mufti* in the region, since the beginning of 2000s had been also supported by the Jamadaev brothers⁹⁸ and by the others pro-Moscow factions, which helped him to incite divisions in the pro-independence camp.

Kadyrov has had support thanks to the “strong vertical power”⁹⁹: it involves the owing of armed units, the full support from the federal centre, and the loyalty to Putin.

Since 2001, the clans allied with the Kadyrov clan managed to hunt rebels across the republic, starting the process of Chechenization. Already in 2005, Ramzan Kadyrov had about 5000 servicemen¹⁰⁰ (the *kadyrovtsy*) integrated in the Interior Ministry structures and in the South and North battalion of the Interior Troops. These troops had to kidnap or kill suspects and “sometimes innocent people”¹⁰¹.

The policy of Chechenization involved also the instigation of internal quarrels, in order to make the opposite sides less secure and more dependent on Moscow. Akhmad Kadyrov had to recruit and deploy Chechen pro-Moscow militia in order to show his loyalty to Putin; his clan was constantly committing tortures and humiliations to combat the separatists, with the aim of recruiting them and making them pass on his side.

After his death, in 2004, it was clear that Doku Umarov¹⁰² was not as strong as Basaev: many rebels had surrendered in Chechnya and Dagestan. Few of them had

⁹⁸ Jabrail, Ruslan, Sulim, Isa and Badrudi were brothers belonging to a powerful clan which controlled Gudermes. Jabrail was killed by explosives hidden in his bed in 2003. Ruslan, like Akhmad Kadyrov, was a former rebel who eventually switched sides and became deputy to the State Duma from Chechnya. He was killed a few months after his relation with Ramzan Kadyrov had gotten worse (the two clans had started a feud), on September 24th, 2008, but Kadyrov denied all the accusations related to his involvement in the homicide. Sulim was killed in Dubai on March 30th, 2009. The following year, Isa said he normalized relations with Kadyrov.

See: Dmitry Babich, “A blast from the past”, Russia Profile, September 25th, 2008, (http://russiaprofile.org/politics/a1222358972/print_edition/).

And: Ria Novosti, “Yamadaye brother says no coercion in Kadyrov reconciliation”, August 27th, 2010, (<http://en.ria.ru/russia/20100827/160367766.html>).

⁹⁹ Zaindi Choltaev, “The failure of Chechenization”, The Jamestown Foundation, vol. 5, issue 31, August 4th, 2004,

(http://www.jamestown.org/single/?tx_ttnews%5Bsword%5D=8fd5893941d69d0be3f378576261ae3e&tx_ttnews%5Bany_of_the_words%5D=yamadaye&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=1999&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=7&cHash=b3e72c975f3df0622160f6b1555ee363#.U4wmw3J_ueM).

¹⁰⁰ See: Emil Soulimanov, “Russian Chechnya policy: “Chechenization” turning into “Kadyrovization”?”, The Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst, vol.8, n.11, May 31st, 2006, (<http://old.cacianalyst.org/?q=node/3976>).

And: Simon Saradzhyan, “Putin’s pacification of Chechnya”, April 1st, 2008.

¹⁰¹ *Ibidem*.

¹⁰² Doku Umarov had been the leader of the Chechen resistance from 2006 to January 2014. He was also head of Ichkeria, the secessionist part of Chechnya which does not accept the pro-Moscow leadership of Kadyrov. Umarov claimed to be responsible for the bomb attacks on the train Nevskij Ekspres (November 27th, 2009), on Moscow metro (March 29th, 2010), and in Domodedovo airport (January 1st,

changed sides, being enrolled among the *kadyrovcy*, as they did not have any other choice.

Since Akhmad's death, the influence of his son has been growing exponentially: he was supported by the Kremlin, because he had to protect the gains made by the "Chechenization", and he was also supported by the Chechen people. The reason of the people support comes from the propaganda in the country; the cult of personality of the Kadyrov clan and of Putin and Medvedev; and because Kadyrov started reconstructing Grozny, which had been devastated by the wars, with Russian monetary help. According to his decision, in 2008, "the architectural scars of war in Grozny will be removed [...], his capital will bear no more of the marks of war that made Grozny worthy of its name"¹⁰³.

Chechnya appeared finally as a pacified country, and Kadyrov began worrying about the "moral decline"¹⁰⁴ of his nation: he banned slot machines, casinos, fought prostitution and alcoholism.

In order to better understand what Putin's policy is about, what is the Chechenization, it is necessary to know where the money for the reconstruction comes from, how was the reconstruction of the country, which were the social changes and how the Kadyrov clan managed to get rid of its political opponents.

2011). He also ordered to all the warriors to fight against Russia in order to make Sochi Olympics fail. In March, it was said that Umarov had died, but the circumstances of the death and the exact date are not clear: the body has not been found. The new leader is Magomed Sulejmanov from Dagestan, who is called Ali Aby Muhammad.

See: Giovanni Bensi, "*Il mistero della morte di Doku Umarov*", Osservatorio Balcani e Caucaso, March 28th, 2014, (<http://www.balcanicaucaso.org/aree/Cecenia/Il-mistero-della-morte-di-Doku-Umarov-149776>).

¹⁰³ C. J. Chivers, "*Grozny, and Chechen history, being reconstructed*", The New York Times, October 19th, 2008, (http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/19/world/europe/19iht-chechnya.1.17074931.html?pagewanted=all&_r=1&).

¹⁰⁴ Emil Souleimanov, "*Russian Chechnya policy: "Chechenization" turning into "Kadyrovization"?*", May 31st, 2006.

a. Monetary aid from the federal government to Chechnya.

Chechnya is one of the “subsidy regions”, one of the areas that periodically receives aid from the federal government. According to what Usman Rassukhanov, the republic’s finance ministry, said to Izvestia, “this kind of intense financial support is absolutely necessary to republic’s cohesion”¹⁰⁵. What Russia actually decided to do, was to invest large sums of money adopting the policy of “peace in exchange for money”¹⁰⁶: through Russian money, Chechnya could be rebuilt and show that the pacification had happened.

Between 2002 and 2006, the Kremlin had allocated almost 1.3 billion dollars in reconstruction, as Russia’s aim was the one of limiting the unemployment rate and creating new job places: one of the most dangerous consequences of unemployment was that young people would join terrorist groups¹⁰⁷, since this was their only opportunity, as I already wrote in Chapter I.

In 2008, Putin’s plan was to develop the territory, create new jobs, double production, develop social and transport infrastructure (including the airport in the capital, efficient hospitals and new roads to connect all the cities of the country).

For the reconstruction, Kadyrov managed to have financing from federal funds and “acted to prevent embezzlement of money from this heavily subsidized republic by hiring independent auditors for state-funding projects”¹⁰⁸. In addition to federal subsidies, “exports by oil, bypassing the official operations run by a Rosneft¹⁰⁹ oil

¹⁰⁵ Michael Zelenko, “Islam rises from Chechnya’s ashes”, World Policy Institute, Fall 2012, (<http://www.worldpolicy.org/journal/fall2012/Islam-Rises-Chechnyas-Ashes>).

¹⁰⁶ Mark Vatchagaev, “The year in Chechnya: reconstruction marred by lingering insurgency and inter-Chechen conflict”, The Jamestown Foundation, vol. 8, issue 15, January 21st, 2011, (www.refworld.org/docid/4d3d25cf2.html).

¹⁰⁷ Russia Today, “Russia to invest billions into Chechen reconstruction”, June 23rd, 2008, (<http://rt.com/news/russia-to-invest-billions-into-chechen-reconstruction/>).

¹⁰⁸ Simon Saradzhyan, “Putin’s pacification of Chechnya”, April 1st, 2008.

¹⁰⁹ Groznetgaz, the Grozny company of oil and gas, is owned by Rosneft with 51% of the shares. Rosneft also holds the oil extraction license. It pays Chechnya’s share of the revenues directly into the republic’s budget. Ramzan Kadyrov criticized Rosneft for not paying taxes in Chechnya and not allowing them to develop their oil and gas industry.

See: Bulat Tamaev, “Chechen parliament wants local control of oil company”, The Caucasus Times, March 22nd, 2006, (<http://www.caucasustimes.com/article.asp?id=8156>).

And: Liz Fuller, “Does Chechnya stand to lose out from Russian-Azerbaijani oil agreement?”, Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty, August 30th, 2013, (<http://www.rferl.org/content/russia-azerbaijan-oil-agreement-chechnya/25091138.html>).

subsidiary (which has license to extract oil in this republic), and sales of scrap material have also been sources of revenues”¹¹⁰. Also due to economic growth, local revenues – including local taxes – totalled 1.8 million rubles in 2004, data which was doubled in the following three years.

Since the creation of the North Caucasus Federal District¹¹¹, the government’s priority has been the one of developing the economy of this region, not only to highlight its need for development, but also to give stability to the area¹¹².

Federal subsidies are still the main part of the local budget (in 2007, 24.4 billion out of 28 billion rubles came from the federal government). In 2008, the whole budget was 33 billion rubles: 28 from the federal budget, 4.6 from local revenues. In 2012, 12.2 billion rubles came from federal budget, 644 million from local budget and 1.2 from other sources¹¹³.

In addition to that, Kadyrov, who is the responsible for Chechnya’s growth or decline, did not hesitate to take loans in Chechen banks using as guarantee future subsidies¹¹⁴. As subsidies are paid by the end of December and are calculated depending on implemented projects, loan are also a mean to evade federal control.

Khloponin¹¹⁵ has said¹¹⁶ that Russia wants to stimulate regional economic development creating centres of economic growth and, in order to do this, the government has approved a State Programme for the North Caucasus Through 2025.

¹¹⁰ Simon Saradzhyan, “*Putin’s pacification of Chechnya*”, April 1st, 2008.

¹¹¹ On January 19th, 2010, Medvedev created this district advocating a new approach to the problems of the North Caucasus: he argued that the region’s problems derive from economic backwardness, unemployment and high-level corruption.

See: Liz Fuller, “*Medvedev created new North Caucasus Federal District*”, Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty, January 20th, 2010, (http://www.rferl.org/content/Medvedev_Creates_New_North_Caucasus_Federal_District/1934705.html).

¹¹² Gregory Zalasky, “*The role of public relations in the economic development of the North Caucasus*”, The Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst, May 25th, 2011, (<http://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/12290-analytical-articles-caci-analyst-2011-5-25-art-12290.html>).

¹¹³ Ria Novosti, “*Chechnya’s unemployment plummets 40% as State pledges new investments*”, December 17th, 2012, (<http://en.ria.ru/russia/20121217/178215748.html>).

¹¹⁴ Tomas Shmid, “*Chechnya and Russian federal centre clash over subsidies*”, The Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst, April 17th, 2013, (<http://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/12704-chenya-and-russian-federal-center-clash-over-subsidies.html>).

¹¹⁵ Deputy prime minister and presidential envoy to the North Caucasus Federal District.

¹¹⁶ See: Ria Novosti, “*Chechnya’s unemployment plummets 40% as State pledges new investments*”, December 17th, 2012.

The State programme includes 11 sub-programmes: strengthening the investment attractiveness of the North Caucasus federal district; development of Kavkazskiye Mineralnye Vody as a specially protected environmental and resort area; development of the tourist cluster in the North Caucasus federal district, the Krasnodar territory and the republic of Adygea; seven sub-programmes on the effective long-term development planning and its regions' influence and resource sufficiency; the creation of institutional, information and strategic conditions for implementing the North Caucasus Federal District Development to 2025.

This programme requires 234.9 billion roubles from the federal budget (made up by 221.7 billion roubles of expenditure commitments and 13.2 billion roubles of additional funding)¹¹⁷.

“The objectives and responses outlined in the document are broadly oriented in the right direction. However, its priorities are numerous, loosely defined and insufficiently backed by personnel and expertise”¹¹⁸.

There are indeed many critics, both towards this project and the large amount of money that Russia is investing in this region, which historically has always fought against Moscow.

Some Russians “would rather see these resources spent in ethnically Russian regions [because] federal subsidies to republics like Chechnya are often spent without transparency”¹¹⁹: for instance, there were transgressions amounting to 7.9 billion rubles in Chechnya's budget in 2012 and 10,000 violations of budget law in 2008¹²⁰.

Those who thought this financial support was excessive were extreme nationalists. Among them, members of the Russian Public Movement, the Russian Civil Union, the

¹¹⁷ The Russian Government, “*State programme: North Caucasus federal district development to 2025*”, December 21st, 2012, (<http://government.ru/en/docs/7303>).

¹¹⁸ Anna Matveeva, Craig Oliphant, John Russell, Domitilla Sagramoso, “*The North Caucasus: Islam, security and politics*”, Chatham House, Russia and Eurasia Programme Meeting Summary, June 27th, 2012, (<http://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/files/chathamhouse/public/Research/Russia%20and%20Eurasia/270612summary.pdf>).

¹¹⁹ Tomas Schmid, “*Chechnya and Russian federal centre clash over subsidies*”, April 17th, 2013.

¹²⁰ See: *Ibidem*.

And: Liz Fuller, “*Is Chechen leader losing Moscow's trust?*”, Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty, April 22nd, 2014, (www.rferl.org/content/Is_Chechen_Leader_Losing_Moscows_Trust/1604006.html).

Moscow Defence League and the Slavic Union¹²¹. In October 2011, hundreds of them gathered in Moscow and Marched together shouting “Stop feeding the Caucasus!”¹²². “Experts believe that through this, nationalists want to promote the idea of separating the region from Russia”¹²³.

They were accompanied by anti-corruption leader Alexei Navalny¹²⁴ and Vladimir Milov¹²⁵. But while Navalny was explaining that “he had no intention to buy bandits from the North Caucasus new cars and finance foreign stars’ show in Grozny”¹²⁶, some nationalists expressed the fear that cutting the funds to the Caucasus would mean that millions of Chechens will go to Russia looking for jobs¹²⁷.

Indeed, saying how much money from the funds was actually allocated for reconstruction is impossible; or how much was misappropriated by corrupted officials, neither in Moscow nor Grozny¹²⁸.

“Nor has anyone dared to ask where Kadyrov finds the money to maintain”¹²⁹ his high quality standard of living: he has luxury cars, a private zoo and racehorses. When he was asked once where did his money come from, he answered “From Allah”¹³⁰.

¹²¹ See: Russia Today, “*Nationalists demand Moscow stop feeding the Caucasus*”, September 29th, 2011, (<http://rt.com/politics/moscow-stop-feeding-caucasus-651/>).

And: Russian Press Review, “*Nationalists hold rally in Moscow chanting: Stop feeding the Caucasus*”, Itar-Tass News Agency, October 24th, 2011, (<http://en.itar-tass.com/russianpress/663005>).

¹²² Michael Schwartz, “*Russian anger grows over Chechnya subsidies*”, The New York Times, October 8th, 2011, (http://www.nytimes.com/2001/10/09/world/europe/chechnyas-costs-stir-anger-as-russia-approaches-elections.html?pagewanted=2&_r=2&hp).

¹²³ Russia Today, “*Nationalists demand Moscow stop feeding the Caucasus*”, September 29th, 2011.

¹²⁴ Navalny is a lawyer who wrote about the corruption of the Russian establishment, mobilising activists on social media. He was found guilty (in a controversial trial) of stealing timber from a state-owned firm and sentenced to five years prison on July 18th, 2013. Released from prison, he is still organizing political protests against the government in Moscow.

See: BBC, “*Profile: Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny*”, July 19th, 2013, (<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-16057045>).

¹²⁵ Milov is a former deputy energy minister, often seen protesting against the authorities; he heads the opposition political party Democratic Choice.

See: Gregory Feifer, “*Vladimir Milov, the Russian opposition’s fresh face*”, Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty, June 25th, 2014, (http://www.rferl.org/content/profile_milov_russian_opposition/2325721.html).

And: Global Voices, “*Vladimir Milov on Khodorkovsky*”, December 28th, 2013, (<http://globalvoicesonline.org/2013/12/28/vladimir-milov-on-khodorkovsky/>).

¹²⁶ Russian Press Review, “*Nationalists hold rally in Moscow chanting: Stop feeding the Caucasus*”, October 24th, 2011.

See also Chapter V.

¹²⁷ See: Russia Today, “*Nationalists demand Moscow stop feeding the Caucasus*”, September 29th, 2011.

¹²⁸ See: Kevin Daniel Leahy, “*The global economic crisis: implications for Russian policy in the North Caucasus*”, The Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst, March 25th, 2009, (<http://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/11805-analytical-articles-caci-analyst-2009-3-25-art-11805.html?tmpl=component&print=1>).

Besides, “глава Чеченской Республики Рамзан Кадыров предоставил сведения о своих доходах, имуществе и обязательствах имущественного характера за период с 1 января по 31 декабря 2010 года. [...] Согласно декларации, в прошлом году доход Кадырова по основному месту работы составил 4 млн 191 тыс. 138 рублей. [...] Из недвижимого имущества за Рамзаном Кадыровым зарегистрирована на условиях договора безвозмездного социального найма квартира площадью 36 кв. м. [...] В 2008 году в декларации Кадырова значились "Жигули"¹³¹. Officially, the apartments where he lives belong to his wife, and the horses directly to Chechnya¹³².

b. The reconstruction of Grozny.

By the end of the '90s, Grozny had been described as the most destroyed city on earth by the UN. Ramzan Kadyrov has been called “the constructor” since he has overseen a construction booming in Chechnya, thanks to the federal subsidies. “The ruling elite as well as ordinary Chechens perceive the subsidies as a kind of tax that the federal centre pays for the complete devastation of Chechnya during two brutal wars”¹³³.

He ordered the construction of a 250 million dollar stadium, named after his father Akhmad; of a huge mosque in the heart of the capital – the Great Mosque – and of a business centre. In 2011, he even asked more federal money (about 17 billion dollars, according to Michael Schwartz of the New York Times), in order to rebuild the homes damaged or destroyed by the war.

¹²⁹ Liz Fuller, “*Is Chechen leader losing Moscow’s trust?*”, April 22nd, 2014.

¹³⁰ Michael Schwartz, “*Russian anger grows over Chechnya subsidies*”, October 8th, 2011.

See also: Walter Sperling, “*Grozny as it was before the war*”, p. 19, from “*Chechnya at war and beyond*”.

¹³¹ “The head of the Chechen Republic, Ramzan Kadyrov, made his revenue, assets and obligations for the period January 1st – December 31st, 2010, public. According to the declaration, last year Kadyrov earned 4,191,138 roubles (about 104,778.45 euro). As regards real estates, Kadyrov registered a rented 36 m2 apartment with a free social contract. In 2008, Kadyrov has registered a Ziguli”.

Newsru.com, “*Рамзан Кадыров отчитался о доходах - жил на зарплату 4 млн, квартиры и машины нет*”, April 29th, 2011, (<http://www.newsru.com/russia/29apr2011/kadymoney.html>).

¹³² The Moscow Times, “*Kadyrov says he has no car*”, May 7th, 2010,

(<http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/kadyrov-says-he-has-no-car/405537.html>).

¹³³ Tomas Shmid, “*Chechnya and Russian federal centre clash over subsidies*”, April 17th, 2013.

While reconstructing, Kadyrov put more efforts on the capital, compared to the villages. Grozny has no more the scarves of war: the buildings which had been destroyed during the war are now fixed, the roads are completed (there is even a high-quality road linking Grozny to Gudermes), the airport is fully working and perfectly connected to Moscow. In the city centre it is possible to see and enter Russian shops, there is the Zum¹³⁴, there are boulevards with trees, even an orthodox church near to the Great Mosque, modern hotels, and a residential neighbourhood. On October 5th, 2011, the skyscraper complex “Grozny City”¹³⁵ was inaugurated in front of famous hosts from all over the world, in order to celebrate the modernity of this city¹³⁶.

Grozny has become “a symbol for the rebirth of the Chechen people after the war”¹³⁷.

As regards the area far from the centre, Kadyrov “ha dato ordine che tutte le case private della città siano restaurate, a spese dei proprietari, entro la fine dell’anno, altrimenti vanno rase al suolo. Non deve restare traccia della guerra”¹³⁸.

To see some signs of the wars, people have to move from the city centre for a few kilometres and old ruined buildings will appear. Before Ramzan Kadyrov, Alu Alkhanov only made put plaster on old buildings and then had them painted. On the other hand, in a few years, Kadyrov managed to build new pipe, gas and electrical systems¹³⁹.

¹³⁴ A famous and big shopping mall existing also in Moscow.

¹³⁵ In January 2011, 2000 to 2500 JSC Penta-Story (a Turkish construction firm responsible for the construction on Grozny City, the Central mosque and other sites) employees gathered in Grozny, where they live, to complain due to the fact that they had not received their wages. The head of the company said that the reason for lack of finance was that the client, the Chechen Republic, had stopped paying him: the sum owed was about 13 million dollars. Chechen authorities blamed the firm’s management and claimed they had no debts. Ramzan Kadyrov, question in December by Turkish journalists, said he never had debts to any Turkish company. Eventually, all the workers were not paid for their work.

See: Memorial, “Where did the wages of the Grozny City go?”, January 17th, 2012, (<http://www.memo.ru/eng/news/2012/01/17/1701122.html>).

And: Алексей Дроботов, “В Чечне взяли в заложники турецких строителей, строивших «Грозный-сити»”, Комсомольская правда, November 23rd, 2011, (<http://www.kp.ru/online/news/1024878/>).

¹³⁶ Пресс-служба Главы и Правительства Чеченской Республики, “В Грозном состоялись грандиозные торжества в честь Дня города”, October 6th, 2011, (<http://www.chechnya.gov.ru/page.php?r=126&id=10012>).

¹³⁷ Walter Sperling, “Grozny as it was before the war” (2014), p. 21.

¹³⁸ Jonathan Littell “Cecenia, anno III”, Giulio Einaudi Editore, Torino, 2010, p. 31.

¹³⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 32.

Despite this, the rest of the reconstruction work is quite of poor work¹⁴⁰: there is no basic social infrastructure such as kindergartens, schools and quality health facilities; transport and industrial infrastructures also are not developed as expected¹⁴¹.

Meanwhile, Chechens are deeply impoverished and, in 2009, Kadyrov confirmed that the unemployment rate in his country was still above 50%¹⁴². The North Caucasus Federal District Administration said that the right data was 55%¹⁴³ in 2011.

Bribery and corruption, which are other serious issues in the country, as they also represent a problem in the rest of Russia, are related to the reconstruction and to the absence of control over flows of money. Chechnya, in fact, is Russia's leading region in terms of corruption and money laundering; not having a sufficiently developed banking system, many transactions are operated through the shadow economy¹⁴⁴.

Chechens, who do not get any money from federal subsidies, are concerned about the "quotidiana lotta contro la corruzione"¹⁴⁵. People cannot run small businesses without being blackmailed; there is limited social mobility and no system of education¹⁴⁶.

As reported by Majnat Kurbanova, a Chechen journalist, corruption and bribery are habits to get retirement funds, medical certificates, passports or even university degrees. Eventually, she explained that school teachers have an unusual method to round off the bill: private tutoring, term which is different from the Western one. Teachers are used to give lower grades to the schoolchildren, in order to force their parents to send their sons and daughters to tutoring, with the same teachers of the school¹⁴⁷.

In addition to this, public employees are obliged to give part of their salary to the Akhmad Kadyrov Fund, which is run by Ramzan's mother, Aimani¹⁴⁸. The better position a citizen has in a work place, the more he has to pay.

¹⁴⁰ Liz Fuller, "Is Chechen leader losing Moscow's trust?", April 22nd, 2014.

¹⁴¹ See: Tomas Shmid, "Chechnya and Russian federal centre clash over subsidies", April 17th, 2013.

¹⁴² Rupert Wingfield-Hayes, "Chechen problem far from over", BBC News, April 16th, 2009, (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7974652.stm>).

¹⁴³ Michael Schwartz, "Russian anger grows over Chechnya subsidies", October 8th, 2011.

¹⁴⁴ Tomas Shmid, "Chechnya and Russian federal centre clash over subsidies", April 17th, 2013.

¹⁴⁵ Majnat Kurbanova, "Cecenia, a scuola di corruzione", Osservatorio Balcani e Caucaso, January 25th, 2012, (<http://www.balcanicaucaso.org/aree/Cecenia/Cecenia-a-scuola-di-corruzione-110568>).

See also: Jonathan Littell (2010), p. 39.

¹⁴⁶ See: Tomas Shmid, "Ignoring all the problems involved, Kadyrov's Chechnya bets on tourism", The Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst, October 30th, 2013, (<http://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/items/12845-ignoring-all-the-problems-involved-kadyrovs-chechnya-bets-on-turism.html>).

¹⁴⁷ Majnat Kurbanova, "Cecenia, a scuola di corruzione", January 25th, 2012.

¹⁴⁸ Jonathan Littell (2010), p. 41.

The money taken by corruption is then reinvested in Chechnya, to create work places in the construction sector, to make purchases or gifts: Ramzan wants his policy to have well visible results, and do not want people to invest out of Chechnya¹⁴⁹.

Dmitrij Peskov, current press agent of Vladimir Putin, said during an interview that “quando tenti di ricostruire una Repubblica così gravemente danneggiata, dopo due guerre, l’importante è ottenere risultati il più in fretta possibile, per rendere il più confortevole possibile la vita dei poveri cittadini”¹⁵⁰.

On 10-15th April, 2009, information agency “Caucasus Time” held an opinion poll in Grozny to see what residents thought about corruption in Chechnya. 83% of them said they experienced a manifestation of corruption in these fields: education sphere (61%), health care (55%) and law enforcement agencies (44%)¹⁵¹.

Aware of this problem and talking about the North Caucasus Federal District, Medvedev said he would count on Khloponin to lower the level of corruption, which was “outrageously high” and he also emphasized the need for strict control over the federal funds allocated to the North Caucasus¹⁵².

c. The new, traditional Islam.

Together with the physical reconstruction of Chechnya, Kadyrov father and son changed also some social conditions. As Putin let the leaders partially free to act in their own country, the Kadyrov clan chose to follow a policy of Islamization. Even if this is not directly part of the Chechenization process, it is strictly related to freedom that Chechnya and Kadyrov have now due to this process: “with the Kremlin approval, Islam is flourishing in Chechnya”¹⁵³.

¹⁴⁹ See: *Ibidem*, p. 46.

¹⁵⁰ Jonathan Littell (2010), p. 49.

¹⁵¹ The Caucasus Times, “*Poll in Grozny, Chechnya, April 2009: 61% believe education sphere is the most corrupt, 45% consider local authorities to be the main source of corruption*”, June 29th, 2009, (<http://www.caucasustimes.com/article.asp?language=1&id=20091>).

¹⁵² See: The Jamestown Foundation, “*Rights Activists say corruption in Chechnya is an unwritten rule*”, September 27th, 2012, (http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=36936).

¹⁵³ Judith Matloff, “*Islam and Chechnya*”, World Policy Blog, April 19th, 2013, (<http://www.worldpolicy.org/blog/2013/04/19/islam-and-chechnya>).

In fact, Kadyrov efforts are focused “on three sectors: reconstruction and economic development; comeback of the independent warriors; promotion of a traditional Islam. [...] His power leans on five pilasters: support of Putin (it is the central pilaster), terror, reconstruction, cooptation and Islam”¹⁵⁴. Thus, the policy of Islamization is a fight against modernity and against the social *status* of women.

Since 2005, Sultan-Chadži Mirzaev has been the Chechen *mufti*. He also is a former rebel who “came out of the forest” in 2003. During an interview in 2012 to Islam-Today.ru, Sultan Mirzaev explained that the head of republic provides him financial assistance if needed. The aim of the *mufti*, he said, is to make schoolchildren know the ideology of traditional Islam, the basis of Islam, trying to escape from radicalization: children must know what a *jihad* is, what happened in Chechnya and that Wahhabites tried to disorganize Russia through Caucasus¹⁵⁵.

During his public preaches in the Great Mosque, the *mufti* “predicava di nuovo la linea ufficiale sul grande errore di chi va nella foresta per unirsi ai *šaitany*¹⁵⁶ nemici del popolo ceceno”¹⁵⁷: this sermon was the same for all the mosques in Chechnya, as every Friday the spiritual direction of Chechen Muslims uses to send the compulsory text to read to every mosque. The religious strategy is clear: promoting a traditional Islam (Sufism) in order to contrast Wahhabites, who are the Muslim fighters.

Kadyrov clan belongs to the *wird*¹⁵⁸ of the *tariqat* of Kunta Hagi: Akhmad often spoke about Kunta Hagi’s peaceful message in order to justify his policy of cooperation with Russia. Mirzaev also belongs to this *wird* but, while he was deciding which *wird* give the direction of the Great Mosque to, Ramzan Kadyrov chose to have every day a different *imam*, not to have conflicts among the *tariqat*¹⁵⁹.

To facilitate Sufism, Ramzan has financed the reconstruction (with the money of Akhmad Kadyrov Fund¹⁶⁰) of the most sacred place in Chechnya, the grave of Kunta Hagi’s mother. He planned for this site to become a pilgrimage destination. Besides, he

¹⁵⁴ Jonathan Littell (2010), p. 38.

¹⁵⁵ Islam Today, “Sultan Mirzaev: Unfortunately, the trouble Muslims of Russia are Muftis of Russia”, November 29th, 2012, (<http://eng.islam-today.ru/islam-in-the-world/islam-in-russia/sultan-mirzaev-unfortunately-the-trouble-muslims-of-russia-are-muftis-of-russia/>).

¹⁵⁶ Шайтан, *šaitan*, in russo significa “diavolo”.

¹⁵⁷ Jonathan Littell (2010), p. 69.

¹⁵⁸ Subdivision of *tariqat*.

¹⁵⁹ See: Jonathan Littell (2010), p. 71.

¹⁶⁰ See: *Ibidem*, p. 73.

inaugurated a Russian Islamic university, near to the Great Mosque, named also to Kunta Hagi¹⁶¹ on August 21st, 2009. Here students study the Quran and the Islamic science: they will be able to become *imam* or *sharia* teachers.

The main difference from the current religious programme and the extremist one is that now religious people near to Ramzan refuse the *jihad* against Russia, “almeno quando si esprimono in pubblico, [...] perchè anche i *mufti* hanno paura di Kadyrov, pur elogiandolo con convinzione”¹⁶².

Kadyrov launched a new campaign, in order to promote morality and the revival of Chechen traditions¹⁶³.

Authorities have discouraged the drinking of alcohol, gambling is forbidden, men and women cannot use the same sport facilities¹⁶⁴, smoking is banned in universities, and women must wear a veil in public buildings and school. “Women who go out uncovered are targets [even if] the dress code runs counter to Russian federal law, which at least in theory still reigns across Russia”¹⁶⁵. For instance, groups of masked men in military uniform “have patrolled the streets of Grozny and fired paintballs at any woman not wearing a head scarf in line with an edict issued by Kadyrov in 2007”¹⁶⁶.

The new Islamization is proceeding in not equal ways: alcohol is easily accessible, while “la dittatura che si va instaurando si fonda anche sull’umiliazione delle donne”¹⁶⁷, said well-know journalist Natalja Estemirova. Despite the warnings of Ramzan Kadyrov and his clan to make women well behave in society, men are usually polygamous: “В Чечне это необходимо, потому что у нас война, у нас, по статистике, больше женщин, чем мужчин. У нас это обязательно нужно, это важно для чеченского

¹⁶¹ Chechnya Today, “*The Russian Islamic university’s opening in Grozny*”, August 21st, 2009, (<http://chechnyatoday.com/en/content/view/2204/303/>).

¹⁶² Jonathan Littell (2010), p. 75.

¹⁶³ Institute for War & Peace Reporting, “*Dress code for Chechen women*”, January 9th, 2008, (<http://iwpr.net/report-news/dress-code-chechen-women>).

¹⁶⁴ Steve Rosenberg, “*Kadyrov’s Chechnya rises from the ashes, but at what cost?*”, BBC News, September 17th, 2012, (www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-19627632).

¹⁶⁵ Judith Matloff, “*Islam and Chechnya*”, April 19th, 2013.

¹⁶⁶ Liz Fuller, “*Holier than thou: Ramzan Kadyrov and traditional Chechen Islam*”, Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty, June 16th, 2010, (http://www.rferl.org/content/Holier_Than_Thou_Ramzan_Kadyrov_And_Traditional_Chechen_Islam_/2073626.html).

¹⁶⁷ Jonathan Littell (2010), p. 77.

народа. Я это приветствую”¹⁶⁸, Ramzan Kadyrov said during an interview. While looking for a second wife, Kadyrov said that “*sharia* allows a man to have four wives [and] allows a second marriage only if the first wife agrees”¹⁶⁹.

Furthermore, Kadyrov agrees with honour killings, as women also live under a strong social control. “Mosca vede benissimo cosa succede, ma lo archivia fra le tradizioni locale e chiude gli occhi, [...] la loro ossessione è di contrastare i wahhabiti, e delle donne cecene non gli importa niente, della società cecena in generale non gli importa niente”, said Professor Oliver Roy¹⁷⁰.

Starting from 2014, law enforcers detained and interrogate, as preventive measure, young people suspected to follow radical Islam: they are men with beards with shaved off moustaches and women in *hijabs*. The *imams* have been invited to monitor the appearance of their parishioners and CCTV cameras have been installed in the mosques, in order to prevent extremism. “We should give no chances to various pseudo-ideologists of Wahhabis, who have neither secular, nor religious education, to take over the minds of our young people”, Kadyrov explained in January, 2014¹⁷¹.

At the beginning of July, 2012, sixteen relics arrived in Grozny, as a gift from a United Arab Emirate Sheik. Chechen authorities said that the relics were moved to Chechnya because the Sheik had been inspired by the work of Ramzan Kadyrov in reconstructing the republic. Kadyrov said he never paid for them, like he had never paid for any famous guest to go to Grozny and celebrate him in public. It is also very unlikely that all of the relics really belonged to Mahomet.

¹⁶⁸ “In Cecenia [la poligamia] è necessaria, perché siamo in guerra e, secondo le statistiche, ci sono più donne che uomini. È assolutamente necessario, è fondamentale per il popolo ceceno. La approvo.”, Валерия Подорожнова, “Будет ли в Чечне многоженство?”, Российская газета, January 14th, 2006, (<http://www.rg.ru/2006/01/14/kadyrov-jeny.html>).

¹⁶⁹ Ria Novosti, “Kadyrov praises polygamy, says seeking beautiful 2nd wife”, February 24th, 2011, (<http://en.ria.ru/russia/20110224/162742989.html>).

¹⁷⁰ Jonathan Littell (2010), p. 80.

¹⁷¹ Muslim Ibragimov, Aleksandr Ivanov, “In Chechnya law enforcers detain young people because of their appearance, local residents report”, Caucasian Knot, January 16th, 2014, (<http://eng.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/26983/>).

See also: Muslim Ibragimov, “Grozny mosques to be equipped with video cameras”, Caucasian Knot, October 27th, 2013, (<http://eng.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/26191/>).

And: Muslim Ibragimov, Aleksandr Ivanov, “Kadi of Grozny obliges Imams to supervise the appearance of their mosque-goers”, Caucasian Knot, March 26th, 2014, (<http://eng.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/27660/>).

“L'impressione è che il vero scopo di queste iniziative, indipendentemente dal fatto che si tratti di reliquie autentiche o no, sia la sacralizzazione dell'attuale leadership, la legittimazione per via religiosa del potere di Kadyrov, anche se i metodi utilizzati appaiono tutt'altro che divini”¹⁷².

d. Cooptation and terror.

“Kadyrov's model of governance is regarded as more effective both by the federal authorities and societies in the neighbouring republics. [...] Kadyrov delivers what he is paid for: he fight terrorism in Chechnya and prevents its export to the rest of the Federation”¹⁷³. In order to be able to fight the terrorism, and to maintain the power, Kadyrov has adopted a policy of terror and “tyranny”¹⁷⁴.

One of the features of Kadyrov's way of governance is the fact that he has no enemies, as political opponents tend to disappear: Natalia Estemirova, human right activists and journalist at Memorial, denounced that Kadyrov was “connected to disappearances and deaths of political opponents”¹⁷⁵. She was found dead on July 15, 2009.

Oleg Orlov, director of Memorial, reported that Kadyrov had threatened the journalist just a few months before she died¹⁷⁶. Orlov blamed Kadyrov not for the killing or for having given the order to kill Estemirova, but “for fostering a culture of lawlessness and violence in Chechnya where law enforcement and security agencies could commit such heinous crimes with absolute impunity”¹⁷⁷.

¹⁷² Majnat Kurbanova, “*Cecenia, il potere è sacro*”, Osservatorio Balcani e Caucaso, July 16th, 2012, (<http://www.balcanicaucaso.org/aree/Cecenia/Cecenia-il-potere-e-sacro-120229>).

¹⁷³ Anna Matveeva, Craig Oliphant, John Russell, Domitilla Sagramoso, “*The North Caucasus: Islam, security and politics*”, June 27th, 2012.

¹⁷⁴ Sir Andrew Wood, “*Putin's next term*”, Chatham House, May 4th, 2012, (<https://www.chathamhouse.org/media/comment/view/183167>).

¹⁷⁵ James Novogrod, “*Not ready for prime time? Caucasus goes modern, fast*”, NBC news, February 16th, 2014, (<http://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/not-ready-prime-time-caucasus-goes-modern-fast-n31591>).

¹⁷⁶ Luke Harding, “*Chechen president threatened murdered campaigner, human rights group alleges*”, The Guardian, July 16th, 2009, (<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/jul/16/murder-chechnya-natalia-estemirova-russia>).

¹⁷⁷ Tanya Lokshina, “*Chechnya: president wins Estemirova defamation trial*”, Human Rights Watch, October 7th, 2009, (<http://www.hrw.org/news/2009/10/07/chechnya-president-wins-estemirova-defamation-trial>).

Another journalist who was murdered is Anna Politkovskaja, one the most famous critic to Vladimir Putin, to the Chechen wars, and to the Kadyrov clan. She wrote denouncing what she saw during the conflicts and about the condition of the Chechens, covering stories about corruption and human rights abuses. In October 2002, she accepted to be the negotiator during the siege of Dubrovka theatre in Moscow; in September 2004 she was almost poisoned on a plane while directed to Beslan, when the terrorists were sequestering the school. She was found dead in her apartment block on October 6th, 2006.

After a long process to find out who was guilty for her death, the verdict was announced on May 27th, 2014. Two men were convicted to life sentences for having organized the crime, three men received lengthy prison terms (one of them is a police officer). It is still unknown who ordered the crime¹⁷⁸.

As regards the disappearance of other enemies, who are not journalists, Umar Israilov is an example. He was initially a rebel fighting with the Chechen guerrillas against Russia; then he was obliged, “by means of torture and beatings”¹⁷⁹, to change sides. He managed to run away to Austria in 2004, where he became a political refugee and talked to the European Court of Human Rights: he said that Kadyrov took part in torture¹⁸⁰.

He was killed on January 13th, 2009. Three Chechens were eventually found guilty for the murder, one was sentenced to life imprisonment. “According to prosecutor Leopold Bien, [...] Israilov was killed because he was in possession of compromising material on Kadyrov”¹⁸¹. Shortly after the murder, a man called Artur Kurmakaev told Viennese police that President Kadyrov had ordered him to reach Israilov and bring him

¹⁷⁸ See: Allison Quinn, “Court gives life sentences for murder Russian journalist Anna Politkovskaya”, The Moscow Times, June 9th, 2014, (<http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/court-gives-life-sentences-for-murder-russian-journalist-anna-politkovskaya/501734.html>).

¹⁷⁹ Majnat Kurbanova, “Umar Israilov’s killers sentenced in Vienna”, Osservatorio Balcani e Caucaso, June 13th, 2011, (<http://www.balcanicaucaso.org/eng/Regions-and-countries/Chechnya/Umar-Israilov-s-killers-sentenced-in-Vienna-95652>).

¹⁸⁰ C. J. Chivers, “Slain exile detailed cruelty of the ruler of Chechnya”, The New York Times, January 31st, 2009, (http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/01/world/europe/01torture.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0).

¹⁸¹ Majnat Kurbanova, “Umar Israilov’s killers sentenced in Vienna”, June 13th, 2011.

See also: European Centre for Constitutional and Human Rights, “ECCHR background paper. Umar Israilov”, ([file:///C:/Users/Admin/Downloads/Kadyrov,%20Background%20paper,%20Umar%20Israilov,%202010-11%20\(1\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/Admin/Downloads/Kadyrov,%20Background%20paper,%20Umar%20Israilov,%202010-11%20(1).pdf)).

back to Chechnya. After Israilov refused to leave, Kadyrov told Kurmakaev to leave Austria; there are no information about Kurmakaev since 2009¹⁸². While at police station, Kurmakaev was talking also “о списке людей, которые воевали против Кадырова или привлекли его внимание и являются врагами, которых надо нейтрализовать”¹⁸³.

Also the Chechen militant Ali Osaev was killed in Istanbul on February 26th, 2009, by three men, two of whom were also believed to have killed other Chechens in 2011 in the same city. “The assassinations were part of a wave of killings of prominent Chechen separatists both in Russia and abroad”¹⁸⁴ between the ‘90s and the 2000s. Among these murderers, there was also the one of Sulim Jamadaev¹⁸⁵ in Dubai.

Jamadaev was the head of the Vostok battalion¹⁸⁶, an armed unit that did not profess loyalty to Kadyrov. The problems with Kadyrov worsened when the personnel loyal to Jamadaev, in April 2008, engaged in a shoot-out with Kadyrov’s guards. Many from the Vostok personnel joined the pro-Kadyrov Chechen police, after Kadyrov accused the Jamadaev clan of many crimes. He had survived nineteen attempts on his life before moving to the Emirates in 2009.

¹⁸² See: Human Rights Watch, “*Austria: press Russia on Chechen murder link*”, June 2nd, 2011, (<http://www.hrw.org/news/2011/06/02/austria-press-russia-chechen-murder-link>).

And: Human Rights Watch, “*Justice in Vienna and Chechnya*”, November 12th, 2010, (<http://www.hrw.org/ru/news/2010/11/12/justice-vienna-and-chechnya>).

¹⁸³ “About a list of people who fought against Kadyrov or who got his attention and were considered enemies who have to be neutralized”. Умар Исраилов, “*Я этого не говорил. Это подделка. Так же когда-то оклеветали Тухачевского*”, Новая газета, February 11th, 2009, (<http://www.novayagazeta.ru/society/46178.html>).

¹⁸⁴ Thomas Seibert, “*Can an Istanbul trial help solve Dubai golden gun murder?*”, The National, March 2nd, 2014, (<http://www.thenational.ae/world/turkey/can-an-istanbul-trial-help-solve-dubai-golden-gun-murder>).

¹⁸⁵ See: *Ibidem*.

And: Liz Fuller, “*Who wanted to kill Sulim Yamadayev, and why?*”, Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty, April 1st, 2009, (http://www.rferl.org/content/Who_Wanted_To_Kill_Sulim_Yamadayev_and_Why/1566142.html).

¹⁸⁶ North and South battalions were led by President Kadyrov. Vostok and Zapad battalions (East and West) were two other militias battalions directly belonging to the Ministry of Defence. After the escalation of tension with Kadyrov, he decided to dismantle Vostok battalion in June 2008, claiming that its soldiers were disrespecting human rights.

See: James Kilner, “*Russian army says to cut size of its Chechen force*”, Reuters, June 25th, 2008, (<http://www.reuters.com/article/2008/06/25/idUSL25377383>).

See also: Aleksandr Cherkasov, “*La Cecenia oggi, tra la guerra e la pace*”, from “*Cecenia. Una guerra e una pacificazione violenta*”, p. 109-110.

US state department and MI5 (Military Intelligence, Section 5, it is the UK's domestic counter-intelligence and security agency) believe that President Kadyrov "is behind a string of assassinations of Chechen exiles in Europe and the Gulf"¹⁸⁷.

Akhmed Zakayev is a Chechen actor who turned politician; he promoted peace dialogue in 2001 with Moscow representatives and resisted pressure from extremists. He was acting as Maskhadov's spokesman, but he was accused of being involved with Chechen rebels in the Moscow theatre crisis in October 2002. As prime minister of the Chechen republic of Ichkeria, the unrecognized separatist state, he decided to move to London to apply for political asylum¹⁸⁸. An alleged plot against him emerged during a hearing in March 2012, when IM5 found out that a man known as E1 was a threat to Zakayev's life: he may have been recruited by Kadyrov himself to get close to Zakayev (he lived near to him and Litvinenko¹⁸⁹) – Kadyrov's spokesman said it was nonsense¹⁹⁰.

There are other examples of men murdered in Chechnya or abroad, but most of them are connected to the rebel movement. As this regards the fight to terrorism, I will explain it in the next chapter, where I will enter in details also about the cooptation of Muslim leaders and of Chechen fighters.

¹⁸⁷ Luke Harding, "Chechen separatist allegedly targeted by president says he feel safe in the UK", The Guardian, April 4th, 2012, (<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/apr/04/chechen-separatist-akhmed-zakayev>).

¹⁸⁸ See: BBC, "Who is Akhmed Zakayev?", (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/today/reports/archive/international/zakayev.shtml>).

¹⁸⁹ Former officer of FSB, the Russian Federal Security Service. He denounced Vladimir Putin's actions: before moving to London, he had written the book "Blowing up Russia: terror from within", accusing FSB agents to be responsible for the bombings in Russia in 1999 (the pretext for the second Chechen war). He was also interested in Anna Politkovskaya's murder. He died due to poisoning by radioactive polonium-210 on November 1st, 2006.

See: BBC, "Who was Alexander Litvinenko?", July 12th, 2013, (<http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-19647226>).

¹⁹⁰ See: Luke Harding, "Chechen separatist allegedly targeted by president says he feel safe in the UK", April 4th, 2012.

2. Limits of the Chechenization process.

According to many scholars, though, the Chechenization process has turned into a Kadyrovization process. Kadyrovization was supposed to be only a part of the Chechenization process, meaning that Kadyrov clan's aim was to control a monocentric regime and to transform the counterterrorist operation in an internal conflict and in a battle against militants¹⁹¹, while being limited and controlled by the Kremlin.

Before giving legitimacy to Kadyrov's power, Vladimir Putin chose to adopt a policy of "check and balances"¹⁹²: not only he had promised Kadyrov a future in politics, but he had kept as well Beslan Gantamirov¹⁹³ as a trump card, in case Kadyrov would be unmanageable. Putin did not abandon this check and balances policy, otherwise the model of succession of the Kadyrov clan (transferring power from father to son) would have limited even more Moscow's ability to lead Chechnya¹⁹⁴.

The Kadyrovization model is indeed vulnerable: it concentrates power in one person, not allowing an opposition to exist; and this type of power "is tied umbilically to the Kremlin. The stability of the current power vertical depends in large part on the president of Chechnya. [...] This energy is impossible to keep track of and control in a civilized manner. [...] Internal opposition members dissatisfied with Kadyrovization will have no choice but to go up into the mountains"¹⁹⁵. The Kadyrovization, in fact, is not incorporating Chechnya in Russian structures, and is not caring about bringing social satisfaction among the people.

According to Nicolay Petrov, former chair of the Carnegie Moscow Center's Society and Regions Program, Moscow should stop promoting this model of government, which is archaic, and should also stop prohibiting residents to work in the law enforcement structures. The Kremlin should instead "conduct a balanced policy of progressive

¹⁹¹ See: Zaindi Choltaev, "*The failure of Chechenization*", August 4th, 2004.

¹⁹² Emil Souleimanov, "*Russian Chechnya policy: 'Chechenization' turning into 'Kadyrovization'?*", May 31st, 2006.

¹⁹³ Gantamirov was another pro-Moscow political leader, and was mayor of Grozny in the '90s.

¹⁹⁴ See: Zaindi Choltaev, "*The failure of Chechenization*", August 4th, 2004.

¹⁹⁵ Sergei Markedonov, "*Chechnya's war after the war*", *Russia Beyond the Headlines*, April 16th, 2010, (http://rbth.co.uk/articles/2010/04/16/chechnya_war_after_war.html).

modernization to the political system and resolve the bitter confrontation between society and law enforcement structure”¹⁹⁶.

The Kremlin has, as a consequence, little space for its manoeuvres, after having left Chechnya controlled by armed bands and not by federal forces. Thus, now Kadyrov has few enemies in his country, and Moscow has helped this by creating and consolidating his strong force. Kadyrov can finally promote his interests, and “the weaker the separatists become, the less dependent Kadyrov’s people become on Moscow”¹⁹⁷.

Moscow is indeed “annoyed with Kadyrov’s absolutism [and with] the murders in Moscow and Dubai of the Jamadaev brothers, or the killing of human right activist Natalya Estemirova in Chechnya. All of these murders have been linked in one way or another to Kadyrov”¹⁹⁸.

¹⁹⁶ Nikolay Petrov, “*A recipe for success in the North Caucasus*”, Carnegie Moscow Centre, March 1st, 2011, (<http://carnegie.ru/2011/03/01/recipe-for-success-in-north-caucasus/dqrw>).

¹⁹⁷ Emil Souleimanov, “*Russian Chechnya policy: “Chechenization” turning into “Kadyrovization”?*”, May 31st, 2006.

¹⁹⁸ Aleksey Malashenko, “*The Kremlin’s violent underbelly*”, The Moscow Times, July 29th, 2009, (<http://carnegieendowment.org/2009/07/29/kremlin-s-violent-underbelly/a5b?reloadFlag=1>).

Terrorism issue

1. Separatism and fundamentalism.

Since the end of the so-called counter-terrorist operations, Kadyrov has been managing to reduce violence to a large degree, but Chechnya is “still suffering from unrest and armed violence. Across the North Caucasus, Moscow’s response has been to counter force with force, and to sanction authoritarian local rule for fear of something worse – separatism”¹⁹⁹.

Separatist units²⁰⁰ have been labelled as guerrillas and they have links with the al-Qaeda network: since 2000, Moscow has been trying to find these connections, as “the Russian authorities wanted to prove to the world that they were fighting not Chechen militants, but international terrorism”²⁰¹.

Links between Chechen fighters and Islamist organization al-Qaeda go up to the end of the ‘80s²⁰²: Chechen warlord Khattab²⁰³ was said to have met Osama Bin Laden while struggling against Russian occupation in Afghanistan. Khattab moved to Chechnya in 1995 and fought against Russia during both the wars. As regards Russian accusations of having connections with Osama Bin Laden while fighting, he said “he had not seen him since his years in Afghanistan”²⁰⁴.

¹⁹⁹ Institute for War & Peace Reporting, “*Governing the North Caucasus*”, April 23rd, 2013, (iwpr.net/report-news/governing-north-caucasus).

²⁰⁰ Only part of the population decided to fight, while the rest remained passive to Russian power.

See: Mairbek Vatchagaev, “*Il fattore ceceno nel movimento di resistenza del Nord Caucaso*”, from “*Cecenia. Una guerra e una pacificazione violenta*”.

²⁰¹ Mairbek Vatchagaev, “*Statement by new leader of Caucasus Emirate created rift among Chechen groups operating in Syria*”, Eurasia Daily Monitor, vol. 11, issue 121, July 3rd, 2014, ([http://www.jamestown.org/single/?tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=42587&tx_ttnews\[backPid\]=7&cHash=af78595cf7cb3732319d514c41520fb6#.U7b6FkCLncs](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?tx_ttnews[tt_news]=42587&tx_ttnews[backPid]=7&cHash=af78595cf7cb3732319d514c41520fb6#.U7b6FkCLncs)).

See also: “*International ramifications*”, from “*Russia’s restless frontier. The Chechnya factor in post-soviet Russia*”, by Dmitri Trenin, Aleksej Maslashenko, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington, 2004.

²⁰² “Il radicalismo nella forma del salafismo esisteva già fin dai tempi dell’Unione Sovietica. Già negli anni ’80 questa forma di Islam cominciò a diffondersi in diversi angoli del paese, sotto l’influsso della guerra dell’Unione Sovietica in Afghanistan. [...] La lotta in Afghanistan ha mostrato chiaramente che si poteva resistere contro i carri armati e l’artiglieria pesante, l’importante era avere la forza e la volontà”. Mairbek Vatchagaev, “*Il fattore ceceno nel movimento di resistenza del Nord Caucaso*” (2008), p. 82.

²⁰³ See: Chapter I, p. 25.

²⁰⁴ BBC News, “*Obituary: Chechen rebel Khattab*”, April 26th, 2002.

Basaev²⁰⁵ “underwent training in Afghanistan and had close connections with al-Qaeda”²⁰⁶ too. As the leader of one of the three battalions²⁰⁷ (his group is named Riyadus-Salikhin Reconnaissance and Sabotage Battalion of Chechen Martyrs; the others are the Islamic International Brigade and the Special Purpose Islamic Regiment) which seized hundreds of hostages at Dubrovka theatre in 2002, his group “was listed as a terrorist organization linked to al-Qaeda by the US government and the United Nations”²⁰⁸.

In October 1999, “Bin Laden agreed to provide substantial military assistance and financial aid [to Basaev and Khattab], including by making arrangements to send to Chechnya several hundred fighters to fight against Russian troops and perpetrate acts of terrorism”²⁰⁹.

Zacarias Moussaoui, convicted for the September 2001 attacks, was a recruiter for al-Qaeda rebels in Chechnya²¹⁰ and was connected to Khattab. Indeed, hundreds of fighters working with Khattab and Basaev were trained in al-Qaeda camps²¹¹ in Afghanistan; and Khattab called fighters to arms also from Ingushetia, Dagestan and Ossetia, thanks to Bin Laden’s financial support²¹².

Basaev, who “mescolava terrorismo islamico, nazionalismo e il codice di vendetta tradizionale ceceno”²¹³, killed with a bomb Chechen President Akhmad Kadyrov; his militia led an incursion to Grozny in 1996 and killed 150 people, “la maggior parte delle quali collegate con l’amministrazione regionale russa”²¹⁴; and three suicide women

²⁰⁵ See: Chapter I, p. 22.

²⁰⁶ The United States Department of Justice, “*A review of the FBI’s handling of intelligence information related to the September 11 attacks. Chapter 4: the FBI’s investigation of Zacarias Moussaoui*”, Office of the Inspector General, November 2004, (<http://www.justice.gov/oig/special/s0606/chapter4.htm>).

²⁰⁷ The three battalions, , will be examined within this Chapter, at p. 53.

²⁰⁸ Shaun Waterman, “*Chechnya terror groups and ties to al Qaeda*”, The Washington Times, April 19th, 2013, (<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2013/apr/19/chechnya-terror-groups-and-ties-al-qaeda/?page=all>).

²⁰⁹ The United States Department of Justice, “*A review of the FBI’s handling of intelligence information related to the September 11 attacks. Chapter 4: the FBI’s investigation of Zacarias Moussaoui*”, November 2004.

²¹⁰ *Ibidem*.

²¹¹ Khattab also built other training centers in Chechnya, where classes of theology, *sharia* and mines were held. After having attended these centers, young people would return home to teach their people what they had learnt.

See: Mairbek Vatchagaev, “*Il fattore ceceno nel movimento di resistenza del Nord Caucaso*” (2008), p. 87.

²¹² Shaun Waterman, “*Chechnya terror groups and ties to Al Qaeda*”, April 19th, 2013.

²¹³ C. J. Chivers, “*Basaev, morte di un terrorista*”, The New York Times, July 11th, 2006, (<http://www.balcanicaucaso.org/Tutte-le-notizie/Basaev-morte-di-un-terrorista-33973>).

²¹⁴ *Ibidem*.

connected to him managed to kill more than 100 people in a bombing in Moscow metro and in two aircraft bombings in 2004.

Russian authorities, after having eliminated people close to Basaev²¹⁵, claimed that their military strategy had turned into a positive way after Basaev died during an explosion, in 2006²¹⁶.

Furthermore, also Ayman al-Zawahiri (who became leader of al-Qaeda after Osama Bin Laden died in May, 2011) had been in Chechnya in 1996 to fight against Russia. He was arrested that same year by Russian Federal Security Service (FSB), due to worries of connections to international terrorism, and released in 1997²¹⁷, when Russia withdrew from Chechnya.

The aim of the separatist groups would be the creation of an Emirate, thus the “establishment of an Islamic state in the North Caucasus [...]. The Emirate²¹⁸ was listed as a terror group by the Russian Federation in February 2010 and by the United Nations the following year”²¹⁹. Doku Umarov²²⁰ became leader of the Caucasus Emirate (CE) in October 2007. The Emirate – which is a virtual state entity – comprises Chechnya, Ingushetia, North Ossetia, Krasnodar Krai, Stavropol Krai, Dagestan, Kabardino-Balkaria and Karachai-Cherkessia.

The Emirate became member of al-Qaeda²²¹ after Osama Bin Laden died, in 2011.

²¹⁵ Such as Maskhadov on March 8th, 2005. He was shot in a bunker while hiding from Russian troops. See: BBC News, “Russia cleared over death of Chechen leader Maskhadov”, June 6th, 2013, (<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-22797930>).

Khattab had already been killed on March 20th, 2002, by a poisoned letter which had been given to him by FSB. See: BBC News, “Obituary: Chechen rebel Khattab”, April 26th, 2002.

²¹⁶ C. J. Chivers, “Basaev, morte di un terrorista”, The New York Times, July 11th, 2006.

²¹⁷ See: Joshua Foust, “The Chechen connection”, The American Prospect, April 19th, 2013, (<http://prospect.org/article/chechen-connection>).

And: Mairbek Vatchagaev, “Statement by new leader of Caucasus Emirate creates rift among Chechen groups operating in Syria”, July 3rd, 2014.

²¹⁸ The Caucasus Emirate is a Sunni nationalist organization born in 2007, after Doku Umarov resigned from his position as President of Ichkeria. The Emirate wants to be ruled under *sharia* and to abet a global *jihād*. See: Terrorism Research & Analysis Consortium, “Caucasus Emirate (CE)”, (<http://www.trackingterrorism.org/group/caucasus-emirate-ce>).

²¹⁹ Shaun Waterman, “Chechnya terror groups and ties to Al-Qaeda”, April 19th, 2013.

²²⁰ See: Maibek Vatchagaev, “Il fattore ceceno nel movimento di resistenza del Nord Caucaso” (2008), p.94-95.

²²¹ See: Mairbek Vatchagaev, “Statement by new leader of Caucasus Emirate creates rift among Chechen groups operating in Syria”, July 3rd, 2014.

In the first quarter of 2014, the head of FSB said that “the leader of the Caucasian Emirate terrorist organization, Doku Umarov, was neutralized as a result of a combat operation”²²².

As regards the Caucasus Emirate, it is known that fighters from this organization in 2012 “had joined the ranks of the armed opposition to Syrian ruler Bashar al-Assad”²²³. “В Сирии воюют около 150 моджахедов добровольцев из Имарата Кавказ. Среди них чеченцы, дагестанцы и представители других народов Северного Кавказа. Они разделены на 4 отряда и действуют в разных районах Сирии.”²²⁴

These Chechens are either veterans of the North Caucasus insurgency (“it has been suggested, but not proven, that Qatar and Saudi Arabia financed the recruitment of those experienced former insurgents because the Chechens are regarded as the best of the *jihadi* fighters”), either Chechens from the Georgian-Chechen border²²⁵, either Chechens who left Chechnya at the beginning of the first war, or young Chechens who left Chechnya for Syria with the aim of joining the opposition forces²²⁶.

In March 2014, the Caucasus Emirate announced its new leader had been chosen to succeed Emir Doku Umarov, who died: Ali Abu-Muhammad (Aliashab Alibulatovich Kebekov). Born in the district of Dagestan, Kebekov is an Avar who decided to join the insurgency after his nephew, an Islamic theologian, was killed²²⁷. Before becoming leader of the CE, he was *qadi* (supreme religious authority) and judge for the Supreme

²²² Alexandra Valiente, “Russia neutralizes Al Qaeda’s Caucasian Emirate leader, Doku Umarov”, Libya 360°, April 8th, 2014, (<http://libya360.wordpress.com/2014/04/08/russia-neutralizes-al-qaedas-caucasian-emirate-leader-doku-umarov/>).

And: Chapter II, p. 30.

²²³ Liz Fuller, “How many Chechens are fighting in Syria?”, Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty, June 19th, 2013, (<http://www.rferl.org/content/chechen-syria-fighting-kadyrov/25022321.html>).

²²⁴ “About 150 volunteer mujahedins from Caucasus Emirate are fighting in Syria. Among them, Chechens, Dagestani people and representatives of other people of the Caucasus Emirate. They are divided in 4 contingents in different regions of Syria”.

Кавказ-Центр, “В Сирии воюют отряды им. Джохара Дудаева, Хаттаба и Шамиля Басаева”, October 16th, 2012, (<http://www.kavkazcenter.com/russ/content/2012/10/16/93733.shtml>).

²²⁵ As a consequence of the two Chechen wars, hundreds of Chechen civilians became refugees in this area, the Pankisi Gorge.

See: Suzanne Murray-Jones, Anna Chelminska, “Chechen refugee finds an outlet for his talent in Georgia’s Pankisi Gorge”, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, September 29th, 2009, (<http://www.unhcr.org/4ac21f959.html>).

²²⁶ Liz Fuller, “How many Chechens are fighting in Syria?”, June 19th, 2013.

²²⁷ See: Terrorism Research & Analysis Consortium, “Ali Abu-Muhammad (aka Aliashab Alibulatovich Kebekov) – individual profile”, (<http://www.trackingterrorism.org/group/ali-abu-muhammad-aka-aliashab-alibulatovich-kebekov-individual-profile>).

Sharia Court of the Dagestan district list of terrorists, having been part of an armed formation²²⁸.

The CE easily accepted his leadership, but fighters in Chechnya will find this change difficult to accept, as this choice “is an affront to their traditional ideology”²²⁹: indeed, Kebekov had referred “to the Chechens’ nationalism and nationalist spirit – meaning the continued importance some of them still attach to the concept of an independent Chechen state – as unacceptable”²³⁰.

The new emir said the *jihad* had to be promoted also within the local community, in order not to arouse suspicion, and not only within the fighters in the mountains²³¹. In a video posted online in the website *kavkazcentre.com*²³² in March 2013, Kebekov questioned Ramzan Kadyrov’s knowledge of Islam and said that the police, not fighting against President Putin, is considered infidel; eventually he claimed he wanted to impose *sharia* and fight President Putin²³³.

Regarding links with al-Qaeda and terrorist organizations, the US State Department claimed that “the Islamic International Peacekeeping Brigade (IIPB) is the primary channel for Islamic funding of the Chechen guerrillas, in part through links to al-Qaeda-related financiers on the Arabian Peninsula”²³⁴. Also the Special Purpose Islamic Regiment (SPIR) and the Riyadus-Salikhin Reconnaissance and Sabotage Battalion of Chechen Martyrs are recognized as terrorist entities by the United States²³⁵.

²²⁸ See: *Ibidem*.

²²⁹ Terrorism Research & Analysis Consortium, “*Caucasus Emirate: new leader, an old choice, and an uncertain future*”, (<http://www.trackingterrorism.org/article/caucasus-emirate-new-leader-old-choice-and-uncertain-future/choosing-new-leader>).

²³⁰ Liz Fuller, “*Avar theologian named to succeed Umarov as insurgency leader*”, Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty, July 16th, 2014, (<http://www.rferl.org/content/caucasus-report-qadi-abumukhammad/25302543.html>).

²³¹ See: *Ibidem*.

²³² “A Chechen internet agency, which is independent, international and Islamic”, as written on its website (www.kavkazcenter.com). Its goal is to “report real events in Ichkeria under conditions of a total information embargo and to disseminate to world community the truth about the war, the war crimes”.

²³³ See: Liz Fuller, “*Caucasus insurgency’s religious authority, Russian Muslim cleric criticize Kadyrov*”, Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty, March 27th, 2013, (<http://www.rferl.org/content/kadyrov-chechnya-insurgency-muslim/24940772.html>).

²³⁴ Preeti Bhattacharji, “*Chechen terrorism (Russia, Chechnya, Separatist)*”, April 8th, 2010, (<http://www.cfr.org/separatist-terrorism/chechen-terrorism-russia-chechnya-separatist/p9181>).

²³⁵ *Ibidem*.

IIPB was established in 1998 by Shamil Basaev and Khattab, the latter of whom became its leader. Fighters from Chechnya and from the Middle East were fighting in order to have an independent Chechnya governed by Wahhabites. The US State Department believes that this organization is “the principal channel for Islamic funding of the Chechnya fighters by means of direct contact with Osama Bin Laden”²³⁶, as explained before.

The Riyadh-Salikhin Reconnaissance and Sabotage Battalion of Chechen Martyrs (RSRSBCM) has been associated to Bin Laden on March 4th, 2003, “for participating in the financing, planning, facilitating, preparing or perpetrating of acts or activities by, in conjunction with, under the name of, on behalf or in support of al-Qaeda”²³⁷. It was founded and led by Basaev in October 1999. This group is well-known for using “black widows, which are members of the Caucasus Emirate’s female suicide bomber group”²³⁸, and for bombing urban centres.

Like RSRSBCM, also SPIR had been associated to al-Qaeda on March 4th, 2003, being linked to both RSRSBCM and IIB²³⁹. This organization, on the other hand, is a “hostage-taking, kidnapping and oil-smuggling”²⁴⁰ group; it is formed by fundamentalist Sunni Islamic radicals²⁴¹.

²³⁶ Terrorism Research & Analysis Consortium, “*Islamic International Peacekeeping Brigade (IIPB)*”, (<http://www.trackingterrorism.org/group/islamic-international-peacekeeping-brigade-iipb>).

²³⁷ United Nations, “*Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999) and 1989 (2011) concerning al-Qaeda and associated individuals and entities. Q.E.R.100.03 Riyadhus-Salikhin Reconnaissance and Sabotage Battalion of Chechen Martyrs (RSRSBCM)*”, (<http://www.un.org/sc/committees/1267/NSQE10003E.shtml>).

²³⁸ Terrorism Research & Analysis Consortium, “*Riyad us-Saliheyn Martyrs’ Brigade (RSRSBCM)*”, (<http://www.trackingterrorism.org/group/riyad-us-saliheyn-martyrs-brigade>).

²³⁹ United Nations, “*Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999) and 1989 (2011) concerning Al-Qaeda and associated individuals and entities. Q.E.S.101.03 Special Purpose Islamic Regiment (SPIR)*”, (<http://www.un.org/sc/committees/1267/NSQE10103E.shtml>).

²⁴⁰ *Ibidem*.

²⁴¹ Terrorism Research & Analysis Consortium, “*Special Purpose Islamic Regiment (SPIR)*”, (<http://www.un.org/sc/committees/1267/NSQE10103E.shtml>).

2. Terrorist attacks.

Terrorist attacks led by Chechen fighters started in 1995, when the first war had just begun. The attacks escalated in the 2000s, and some of them have been briefly explained in Chapter I. For instance, the attack at the hospital and at the police station in Budënnovsk in June 1995; the occupation of another hospital in Dagestan in January 1996; the alleged bombing attacks in September 1999 which brought to the second Chechen war; the seizure of Dubrovka theatre in October 2002; followed by the sequestration of hundreds of hostages in a school in Beslan in September 2004.

Within this chapter, few other attacks were mentioned: in February 2004, a suicide bombing killed 39 people on a underground metro in Moscow; in August 2004, two suicide passengers killed 90 people in two different planes which left from Moscow airport Domodedovo.

After the second Chechen war finished and guerrilla leaders were killed, Moscow announced the end of the counter-terrorism operation²⁴², but terrorism did not end.

From April 2009 and March 2010, “85 law enforcement officers were killed in the republic and 168 wounded”²⁴³.

Already in 2009, in any case, it was clear that, in the terrorist scenario of the North Caucasus, Chechen separatists were not anymore the major problem, as they had been replaced “by an increasingly vicious Islamist insurgency that has struck in republics across the region. [...] The relative increase in violence in Ingushetia was seen as a symptom of Chechen President Ramzan Kadyrov’s success in crushing the rebels in Chechnya”²⁴⁴.

Here are a few and main terrorist attacks led by Chechens by 2009, when Russia claimed the end of the counter-terrorist operations. They were held both in Russia and in the North Caucasus.

²⁴² See: Chapter II, p. 29.

²⁴³ Sergei Markedonov, “*Chechnya’s war after the war*”, April 16th, 2010.

²⁴⁴ Roland Oliphant, “*Welcome back to arms*”, Russia Profile, August 17th, 2009, (www.russiaprofile.org/politics/a1250530347.html).

Grozny's Interior Ministry was the target of a bomb blast which killed two policemen and injured five others, including civilians, on May 15th, 2009. The suicide bomber was an elderly man who did not have any problems in getting near to the building. Not having the authorization to enter the Ministry, he detonated the bomb 300 metres from the target²⁴⁵.

Five people were killed in Grozny on July 26th, 2009, by a suicide bomber who blew himself up near to a crowd in front of a concert hall, where President Ramzan Kadyrov was going to. Four of the five men who died were policemen who tried to stop the bomber, while other 10 people were injured.

Kadyrov said that this attempt "to give up our active attempts to destroy rebel fighter [...] is in vain"²⁴⁶. According to him, the bomber wanted to enter the hall and kill all the people in there, including women and children²⁴⁷.

On August 17th, 2009, 24 people were killed and 136 injured by a suicide truck bomb at a police station in Nazran, the biggest Ingush city. The blast destroyed the police station, and damaged a nearby apartment building and several office buildings.

The explosion – estimated 400 kilograms of TNT²⁴⁸ – was linked to the "same armed underground groups that had staged similar attacks in recent years". The head of the Investigations Committee did not say who the suspects were, but the attack was the deadliest one in the region since 2005²⁴⁹.

²⁴⁵ The Jamestown Foundation, "Suicide bomber targets Interior Ministry in Grozny", volume 10, issue 19, May 15th, 2009, ([http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=34995&tx_ttnews\[backPid\]=228&cHash=d5eaab39b0#.U8p1PUCLncs](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=34995&tx_ttnews[backPid]=228&cHash=d5eaab39b0#.U8p1PUCLncs)).

²⁴⁶ Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty, "Suicide bombing kills five near Chechen concert hall", July 26th, 2009, (http://www.rferl.org/content/Suicide_Bombing_Kills_Five_Near_Chechen_Concert_Hall/1785791.html).

²⁴⁷ Russia Today, "Suicide blast rocks Chechnya's capital", July 26th, 2009, (<http://rt.com/news/suicide-blast-rocks-chechnya-s-capital/>).

²⁴⁸ Ria Novosti, "Russia's FSB has leads on who was behind Ingushetia's bomb attack", August 19th, 2009 (<http://en.ria.ru/russia/20090819/155857223.html>).

²⁴⁹ Tom Parfitt, "Suicide truck bomb in Russia's Ingushetia republic", The Guardian, August 17th, 2009, (<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/aug/17/russia-truck-bomb-ingushetia-nazran>).

According to Dmitri Medvedev, at the time president of the Russian Federation, the terrorist attack could have avoided, as “police admitted they had been warned on Saturday of a potential attack but had not succeeded in following up the information”²⁵⁰.

On August 21st, 2009, “a Chechen rebel group claimed responsibility for the attack”²⁵¹. The website *kavkazcentre.com*, acting as spokesman for the terrorists, wrote that the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) should have removed “their bases and posts away from the residence of civilians, rather than using them as human shields”²⁵². Indeed, Alexander Cherkasov, Memorial director in Nazran, had said the attack was monstrous, as also children were hurt²⁵³, and had blamed the terrorists.

The president of Ingushetia, Yunus-bek Yevkurov, was not in his republic, because he had undergone many operations, due to the injuries got during another suicide bombing, on June 22nd, 2009²⁵⁴. In a statement, Yevkurov said the August attack was an attempt to destabilise the situation and create panic; he also blamed Umarov for the attack on his convoy in June²⁵⁵.

Not only the Chechen terrorists wrote about their responsibility on the internet about the attack in Ingushetia, but they also claimed responsibility for an explosion at a Siberian hydroelectric dam which killed 47 people. Eventually, the Battalion of Martyrs – another name to indicate RSRBCM – declared an economic war on Russia, as written on *kavkazcentre.com*, and threatened a wave of attacks on the country’s energy infrastructure²⁵⁶.

²⁵⁰ *Ibidem*.

²⁵¹ Sergei Guneev, “*Ingushetia’s president returns to south Russian republic*”, Ria Novosti, August 22nd, 2009, (<http://en.ria.ru/russia/20090822/155887435.html>).

²⁵² Kavkazcentre, “*Martyr attacks a base of puppet police in Nazran. Apostates and infidels are among the dead*”, August 17th, 2009, (<http://www.kavkazcenter.com/eng/content/2009/08/17/10895.shtml>).

²⁵³ Isabel Gorst, “*Bomb in Russia’s Ingushetia kills at least 20*”, The Financial Times, August 17th, 2009, (<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/5170fc84-8b01-11de-9f50-00144feabdc0.html#axzz37uds2Ss5>).

²⁵⁴ See: Sergei Guneev, “*Ingushetia’s president returns to south Russian republic*”, Ria Novosti, August 22nd, 2009.

See also: Tom Parfitt, “*Suicide truck bomb in Russia’s Ingushetia republic*”, The Guardian, August 17th, 2009.

²⁵⁵ *Ibidem*.

²⁵⁶ Isabel Gorst, “*Suicide attacks in Chechnya kill 4 policemen*”, The Financial Times, August 21st, 2009, (<http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/546fc3f8-8e5c-11de-87d0-00144feabdc0.html#axzz37uds2Ss5>).

On the website, the battalion wrote it had planted an anti-tank mine in the turbine room, causing more damage than they expected²⁵⁷. The incident happened on August 17th, 2009, in Russia's largest Sayano-Shushenskaya hydropower plant in Siberia²⁵⁸. Two water conduits broke and flooded the turbine room.

Eventually, Russian investigators found no evidence and trace of explosive material or terrorist acts: allegedly, it was an attempt from RSRBCM and Umarov to gain publicity²⁵⁹.

Few days later, on August 21st, 2009, four blasts were carried out by four suicide bombers who were biking in Grozny. Four policemen died and two were injured²⁶⁰.

President Medvedev said there would be tough reprisals for terrorists, but "growing poverty and police corruption in the North Caucasus were driving the rise in violence"²⁶¹.

A female suicide bomber – these women are generally referred to as "black widows"²⁶² – blew herself up in Grozny injuring six police officers, on September 16th, 2009. The blast "struck a symbolic blow against Russia's claims that stability is returning"²⁶³ to Grozny and Chechnya. Chechen president, Ramzan Kadyrov, denied

²⁵⁷ Kavkazcentre, "Statement of the Martyrs Battalion Riyad-us-Saliheen about the martyrdom operation in Nazran and sabotage in Russia", August 21st, 2009, (<http://www.kavkazcenter.com/eng/content/2009/08/21/10905.shtml>).

²⁵⁸ See: Ria Novosti, "Accident at Russia's largest hydropower plant kills at least 6", August, 17th, 2009, (<http://en.ria.ru/russia/20090817/155829097.html>).

²⁵⁹ Brian Whitmore, "Chechen group's claim of Russian power plant attack dismissed", Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty, August 21st, 2009, (http://www.rferl.org/content/Chechen_Groups_Claim_Of_Russian_Power_Plant_Attack_Dismissed/1804876.html).

²⁶⁰ See: Ria Novosti, "Suicide bombers on bicycles kill at least 4 police in Chechnya", August, 21st, 2009, (<http://en.ria.ru/russia/20090821/155878305.html>).

²⁶¹ Isabel Gorst, "Suicide attacks in Chechnya kill 4 policemen", August 21st, 2009.

²⁶² They are called this way because they may have lost husbands, brothers or other relatives during the two wars or in more recent clashes. They are then recruited by Islamist extremists, who train them up. They acted mainly at the beginning of the 2000s.

See: Terrorism Research & Analysis Consortium, "Black Widows – Chechen Republic – general terminology", (<http://www.trackingterrorism.org/group/black-widows-chechen-republic-general-terminology>).

²⁶³ The Moscow Times, "Chechnya suicide bombing injures 6", September 16th, 2009, (<http://www.themoscowtimes.com/mobile/news/article/383373.html>).

that security and stability were becoming an issue again, claiming that explosions happen everywhere²⁶⁴.

The Nevsky Express is a luxury high-speed train connecting Saint Petersburg and Moscow, the two main cities in Russia. On November 27th, 2009, its three last carriages were derailed because an explosive device: the investigators found “remnants of a homemade bomb, equivalent to 7 kilograms of TNT”²⁶⁵. The accident happened in the Tver region, near to the town of Bologoye.

FSB thought of a terrorist attack and not of a normal accident, because also in 2007 a bomb had derailed a train on the same line. An independent security analyst said that the train is the most vulnerable target if terrorists wanted to hit authorities²⁶⁶

27 people died and 130 were hurt in the blast. Among who died were Sergei Tarasov, head of the state roads company and former Saint Petersburg vice-governor, and Boris Yevstratikov, head of the State Reserves Agency.

The day after, a second but less efficient device went off, probably activated by a remote mobile, without killing anyone²⁶⁷. The ministry for the Emergency Situations said that the terrorists had planned to blow up two train in that night, but the second train had been earlier decommissioned²⁶⁸.

Moscow had already described the “attack as an act of terrorism”²⁶⁹ when, within days, “an Islamist group in the North Caucasus said it was behind the bombing, claiming it had been ordered by Russia’s most wanted man, Chechen separatist Doku Umarov”²⁷⁰.

²⁶⁴ *Ibidem*.

²⁶⁵ Clifford J. Levy, Ellen Barry, “*Russian train wreck tied to terrorist bomb*”, The New York Times, November 28th, 2009, (http://www.nytimes.com/2009/11/29/world/europe/29russia.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0).

²⁶⁶ Roland Oliphant, “*Nevsky Express train attack: Russian trying to uncover the terrorists behind the bombing*”, Rossiyskaja Gazeta, December 9th, 2009, (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/sponsored/rbth/society/6771546/Nevsky-Express-train-attack-Russia-trying-to-uncover-the-terrorists-behind-the-bombing.html>).

²⁶⁷ See: BBC News, “*North Caucasus group in Russia train bomb web claim*”, December 2nd, 2009, (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/8390258.stm>).

²⁶⁸ Nabi Abdullaev, “*Chechen rebels claim Nevsky Express bombing*”, The Moscow Times, December 2nd, 2009, (<http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/chechen-rebels-claim-nevsky-express-bombing/390777.html>).

²⁶⁹ BBC News, “*North Caucasus group in Russia train bomb web claim*”, December 2nd, 2009.

²⁷⁰ BBC News, “*Russia: ten jailed for Nevsky Express train bomb*”, May 22nd, 2012, (<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-18162643>).

The website *kavkazcentre.com* published “the statement sent by the command of the Caucasian *Mujahedeen* [...] without any cuts or corrections”²⁷¹. In the letter, the headquarters of the Armed Forces of the Caucasus Emirate (this is how the statement is signed) wrote: “we declare that we will do everything possible to spread *jihād* even greater in the territory of Rusnya²⁷² to undermine its economy, so that Rusnya will not have the opportunity to use the Caucasus as its raw material base”²⁷³. The author of the letter also said that he considered the Russian population as accomplices of its government, “which supports by its approval the bloody policy of occupation of the Caucasus and the brutal killings of peaceful Muslims whose only fault is their desire to keep at least basic norms of Islam. [...] We warn the leadership of Rusnya that unless they stop the killing of innocent Muslims of the Caucasus Emirate, and unless they terminate the activities of the death squads, we reserve the right to conduct appropriate military operations against the civilian population”²⁷⁴.

In March 2010, Russian forces led a raid on the village Ekazhevo, in Ingushetia, killing eight suspected militants and detaining ten men. Nine of them were from the same family, the Kartoyev one. Three men from this family and the other man were found “guilty of murder, organising an act of terrorism and illegal arms trafficking” and sentenced to life jail at to pay 134 million roubles to Russian railway (about 4.3 million dollars); the remaining six members of the Kartoyev clan were sentenced to eight years of prison²⁷⁵.

²⁷¹ Kavkazcentre, “*Caucasian Mujahedeen reported successful sabotage operation against the Nevsky Express*”, December 2nd, 2009, (<http://www.kavkazcenter.com/eng/content/2009/12/02/11221.shtml>).

²⁷² At the beginning of the letter, it is explained that Rusnya means Russia. Rusnya was Basaev’s favourite denigrating term for Russia. It was used to refer to Russia also to adequate it with Chechnya – albeit phonetically -, because the name Chechnya had been imposed by Russians.

See: The Jamestown Foundation, “*Basaev threatens to cross the Volga*”, January 12th, 2006, ([http://www.jamestown.org/programs/nc/single/?tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=31274&tx_ttnews\[backPid\]=188&no_cache=1](http://www.jamestown.org/programs/nc/single/?tx_ttnews[tt_news]=31274&tx_ttnews[backPid]=188&no_cache=1)).

And: John Russell, “*Chechnya – Russia’s war on terror*”, Routledge, Oxon, 2007, p. 53.

²⁷³ Kavkazcentre, “*Caucasian Mujahedeen reported successful sabotage operation against the Nevsky Express*”, December 2nd, 2009.

²⁷⁴ *Ibidem*.

²⁷⁵ See: BBC News, “*Russia: ten jailed for Nevsky Express train bomb*”, May 22nd, 2012.

See also: Russia Today, “*Terrorists behind Nevsky train blast jailed for life*”, May 22nd, 2012, (<http://rt.com/news/prime-time/nevsky-trial-life-sentence-897/>).

And: Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty, “*Nevsky Express train bomber dies in Russian jail*”, July 1st, 2013, (<http://www.rferl.org/content/bomber-train-death-jail-russia-nevsky-express/25032685.html>).

On March 29th, 2010, two black widows blew themselves up on the Moscow metro station of Lubyanka and Park Kultury, said the Mayor of Moscow, Luzhkov, killing 39 people and injuring more than 60²⁷⁶. Lubyanka station is in the centre of Moscow, located in front of the former KGB building, which today is occupied by the FSB headquarters.

In February, Doku Umarov had warned Russia that the zone of its operations would be extended to Russia, that the war would arrive in Russian cities²⁷⁷. An expert of the Chatham House thinkthank said to investigate in the North Caucasus, but not only in Chechnya, as “Ramzan [...] has achieved a reasonable level of control and [...] guerrilla activity has been squeezed out elsewhere to Ingushetia and Dagestan”²⁷⁸.

The rebels of the CE were immediately pointed out as responsible. Once again, Dokka Umarov made a statement through a video published on the website *kavkazcentre.com*, saying that the Moscow bombing “was a legitimate act of retaliation for continued killings of civilians in the Caucasus”²⁷⁹.

On March 31st, 2010, Dokka Umarov posted the video on the pro-Russia website, saying he was responsible for the Moscow attack. A few hours before, two suicide bombers killed 12 people in Dagestan. One of the two bombers was a 18 year girl, widow of a Dagestani militant who was killed “during a special law-enforcement operation”²⁸⁰.

The bombings in Kizlyar – the hurt Dagestan city – took place only 300 metres from the office of the FSB and the Interior Ministry. President Medvedev said he believed the two attacks were linked, as “the manifestation of same terrorist activity which has

²⁷⁶ Luke Harding, “*Moscow metro bombs kill dozens*”, The Guardian, March 29th, 2010, (<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/mar/29/moscow-metro-bombs-explosions-terror>).

²⁷⁷ See: Luke Harding, “*Moscow metro bombs kill dozens*”, The Guardian, March 29th, 2010. See also: BBC News, “*Moscow metro hit by deadly suicide bombings*”, March 29th, 2010, (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/8592190.stm>).

²⁷⁸ Luke Harding, “*Moscow metro bombs kill dozens*”, The Guardian, March 29th, 2010.

²⁷⁹ Kavkazcentre, “*Dokka Abu Usman: Moscow metro attack is a retribution for Russian crimes in the Caucasus*”, March 31st, 2010, (<http://www.kavkazcenter.com/eng/content/2010/03/31/11760.shtml>).

²⁸⁰ Ria Novosti, “*Moscow, Kizlyar bombers, organizers identified*”, April 2nd, 2010, (<http://en.ria.ru/russia/20100402/158412257.html>).

recently started to resurface in the Caucasus”²⁸¹. Indeed, the FSB announced that the two bombers responsible for Kizlyar attack were members of a group of suicide bombers “recruited and trained by a Chechen rebel leader, Said Buryatskiy”²⁸².

19 people died after the Islamist rebels attacked Tsenteroj, Kadyrov’s home village, on August 29th, 2010. The rebels occupied the village for one hour and burnt down few houses. According to the authorities, it was “a reminder [...] that Kadyrov and other local leaders have failed to stop the Islamist insurgency”²⁸³.

Alexei Malashenko also pointed out that it could have been an act of revenge, because it is largely known that President Kadyrov has his own prison in the home-village, where he made his men torture rebels²⁸⁴.

The attack on Grozny Parliament happened on October 19th, 2010. Three fighters, shouting Islamist slogans, launched a bomb and gun attack, killing two guards and an official. One attacker set off a suicide bomb, while the other two were fighting with the guards²⁸⁵. Deputies managed to escape, and the three fighters were killed. 17 people were injured.

Only a week before, Umarov had ordered commanders to renew their oath of allegiance to him. Even if the centre of violence has shifted to Dagestan and Ingushetia, the authorities admitted that “the situation in Chechnya remains highly volatile, despite assertions that the country is now peaceful”²⁸⁶.

Domodedovo airport was hit again by a bomb attack on January 24th, 2010. The explosion, caused by a suicide bomber, killed 35 people and wounded more 150 in the

²⁸¹ Luke Harding, “*Chechen rebel chief claims responsibility for Moscow underground bombings*”, The Guardian, April 1st, 2010, (<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/mar/31/suicide-bombers-moscow-dagestan>).

²⁸² *Ibidem*.

²⁸³ Luke Harding, “*Islamist rebels launch deadly attack on Chechen president’s village*”, The Guardian, August 29th, 2010, (<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/aug/29/chechnya-president-islamist-attack>).

²⁸⁴ See: *Ibidem*.

²⁸⁵ BBC News, “*Attack on Chechen parliament in Grozny leaves six dead*”, October 19th, 2010, (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-11571673>).

See also: Maxim Tkachenko, “*Suicide bombers launch deadly attack on Chechen parliament*”, CNN, October 19th, 2010, (<http://edition.cnn.com/2010/WORLD/europe/10/19/chechnya.parliament.attack/>).

And: Reuters, “*Rebels stage suicide attack on Chechen parliament*”, October 19th, 2010, (<http://www.reuters.com/article/2010/10/19/us-russia-chechen-parliament-idUSTRE69I0RM20101019>).

²⁸⁶ Luke Harding, “*Militants storm Chechen parliament*”, The Guardian, October 19th, 2010, (<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/oct/19/gunmen-storm-chechnya-parliament-building>).

arrival hall²⁸⁷. The power of the blast equal to 5 kilograms of TNT. After Doku Umarov claimed responsibility for the metro bombing of 2010 and the train bombing of 2009, the airports and the metro system had been tightly secured²⁸⁸.

Despite this, there was free access to the arrival gates, even though the security services were aware of a possible attack on an airport, but they could not locate and detain the suspects they were looking for²⁸⁹.

Suspicious fell on militant groups of the Caucasus, as they knew “how important the perception that the president and prime minister [Medvedev and Putin] provide a security city is, and to undermine that is a key aspect of their aims”²⁹⁰. There were immediately concerns about a possible market fall, but people were reassured by the fact that, after the attacks of 2010 at Domodedovo, the market had not reacted strongly²⁹¹.

Doku Umarov made a video message claiming he had planned the attack and warning of more terrorist acts to follow²⁹². It is not sure Umarov was the real responsible of the attack, as many terrorist cells operate in Russia and in the North Caucasus²⁹³.

In 2013, four men were condemned to lengthy sentences for their involvement in the terrorist attack²⁹⁴, having helped to prepare it and assisted the bomber in Moscow.

On December 29th, 2013, another female suicide bomber killed 16 people in Volgograd, a city with one million people, 700 kilometres away from Sochi and close

²⁸⁷ See: Alexei Anishchuk, “*Suicide bomber kills 35 at Russia’s biggest airport*”, Reuters, January 24th, 2011, (<http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/01/24/us-russia-blast-airport-idUSTRE70N2TQ20110124>).

²⁸⁸ Ria Novosti, “*Moscow reels as terrorism returns to capital*”, January 24th, 2011, (<http://en.ria.ru/russia/20110124/162277636.html>).

²⁸⁹ Ria Novosti, “*Moscow reels as terrorism returns to capital*”, January 24th, 2011.

²⁹⁰ BBC News, “*Moscow bombing: carnage at Russia’s Domodedovo airport*”, January 24th, 2011, (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-12268662>).

²⁹¹ Alexei Anishchuk, “*Suicide bomber kills 35 at Russia’s biggest airport*”, Reuters, January 24th, 2011.

²⁹² Russia Today, “*Chechen terrorist claims responsibility for Domodedovo airport bombing*”, February 8th, 2011, (<http://rt.com/news/umarov-domodedovo-blast-responsibility/>).

See also: Matthew Chance, “*Chechen claims responsibility for attack on Russian airport*”, CNN, February 8th, 2011, (<http://edition.cnn.com/2011/WORLD/europe/02/07/russia.airport.bombing/>).

²⁹³ See: Russia Today, “*Chechen terrorist claims responsibility for Domodedovo airport bombing*”, February 8th, 2011.

²⁹⁴ Ria Novosti, “*4 get lengthy jail sentences over Moscow airport suicide attack*”, November 11th, 2013, (<http://en.ria.ru/crime/20131111/184637205/Four-Sent-to-Jail-Over-Moscow-Airport-Suicide-Bombing.html>).

the North Caucasus²⁹⁵. Fear grew, related to the forthcoming 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi²⁹⁶. The explosion took place at the railway station, wounding 44 people.

The woman is supposed to have been a close friend of the woman who carried out the attack to Volgograd in October. Earlier in October, indeed, the Dagestani woman made a bus blow up²⁹⁷.

The FSB director said that Russia's secret services were striving to maintain security during the Sochi Winter Olympic Games²⁹⁸. Indeed, for the duration of the Games only vehicles registered in Sochi were allowed through the checkpoints that the FSB was overseeing. 40,000 policemen and armed services were involved in the security system²⁹⁹.

All these preventive measures were needed, as Umarov had said that he would "do everything they can to disrupt what he called these Satanic Games"³⁰⁰. In a video released in July, 2003, he announced he would target also civilians³⁰¹. In addition to this, some rebels consider that Sochi is an occupied area and needs to be freed³⁰².

From the beginning of 2014 to March, Russia conducted 33 counter-terrorist operations, eliminating 13 warlords and 65 active members of the terrorist underworld; more than 240 terrorists were also arrested by Russia's security services and 18 emissaries of the international terrorist organization have been detained³⁰³, as

²⁹⁵ Russia Today, "Suicide bombing kills at least 17 in Russia's Volgograd", December 29th, 2013, (<http://rt.com/news/volgograd-blast-victims-russia-937/>).

²⁹⁶ The Telegraph, "The moment a bomb blast hits Volgograd train station", December 29th, 2013, (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/russia/10541169/The-moment-a-bomb-blast-hits-Volgograd-train-station.html>).

²⁹⁷ See: BBC News, "Russia bus bomb: Volgograd blast kills six", October 21st, 2013, (<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-24608694>).

See also: Russia Today, "Consecutive Volgograd suicide bombing kills at least 15", December 30th, 2013, (<http://rt.com/news/russia-volgograd-trolley-blast-957/>).

²⁹⁸ Alexandra Valiente, "Russia neutralizes Al Qaeda's Caucasian Emirate leader, Doku Umarov", April 8th, 2014.

²⁹⁹ Daniel Sandford, "Russia's Olympic wall of security surrounds Sochi", BBC News, February 3rd, 2014, (<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-25985678>).

³⁰⁰ *Ibidem*.

³⁰¹ Terrorism Research & Analysis Consortium, "Caucasus Emirate (CE)".

³⁰² Alexei Anishchuk, "Suicide bomber kills 35 at Russia's biggest airport", Reuters, January 24th, 2011.

³⁰³ See: Alexandra Valiente, "Russia neutralizes Al Qaeda's Caucasian Emirate leader, Doku Umarov", April 8th, 2014.

See also: Itar-Tass News Agency, "People involved in Volgograd, Pyatigorsk terrorist attacks detained", April 8th, 2014, (<http://en.itar-tass.com/russia/726914>).

Bortnikov³⁰⁴ said. Furthermore, 250 kilograms of explosives and 50 firearms were seized, together with 79 homemade bombs.

Eventually, no terrorist attacks were attempted during the Olympic and the Paralympic Games, which were held in Sochi during the month of February, 2014, without the problem of facing terrorism.

3. How to end the terrorism.

I will here examine how Ramzan Kadyrov managed to reduce violence in Chechnya, even if the country is still facing some terrorist issues, as pointed out in the second section on this chapter. Chechen rebels are even now connected to the terrorist world because Chechnya is part of the Caucasus Emirate; but nowadays there are less domestic terrorist problems (related to the mountaineers' fight against the pro-Russia government within the republic) compared to the period in which Ramzan Kadyrov was not ruling.

At the beginning of the 2000s, Russian troops were leading the *začistki* (military searches), operations which could last days and which “si concludevano sistematicamente con decine di morti e di scomparsi, perlopiù colpevoli soltanto di essere giovani e maschi, nonché con stupri e saccheggi”³⁰⁵. Through these searches, authorities were trying to find those who were connected to the resistance in the mountains.

When Akhmad Kadyrov started ruling the country, he managed to have informers within the rebels: it is part of the cooptation policy. From that moment on, the *začistki* became *začistki adresnje*, which means “focused search”, as soldiers knew who and where the rebels were. “Essere più selettivi non significava agire secondo la legge. I metodi erano rimasti gli stessi. Sequestri, torture, prigionieri segreti, punizioni extra-giudiziali”³⁰⁶. Ramzan Kadyrov, as the head of his father's personal militia, was leading

³⁰⁴ Director of FSB since 2008.

³⁰⁵ Jonathan Littell (2010), p. 13.

³⁰⁶ Aleksandr Cherkasov, “*La Cecenia oggi, tra la guerra e la pace*” (2008), p. 114.

these searches³⁰⁷ with his men, the *kadyrovcy*³⁰⁸. The strategy used to end terrorism is part of policy of terror and cooptation explained in the previous chapter.

According to Memorial, “nel 2007, con l’arrivo al potere di Ramzan Kadyrov, il numero dei casi di tortura e di sparizione [connected to the illegal military searches] è bruscamente diminuito”³⁰⁹. Memorial, the only organization collecting data about murders and missing people every year, does not receive all the information about every case, as people have to report them and usually they do not, because they are afraid of consequences. Despite of this, Memorial associates said that “Ramzan stava instaurando pratiche di punizione collettiva [...]: incendiare la casa alle famiglie dei giovani che andavano nella foresta, cioè entravano nella resistenza islamica armata”³¹⁰. This form of punishment was part of Kadyrov’s plan to stop the insurgency and the rebel’s recruitment.

In 2006, Umar Israilov, former bodyguard and official under Kadyrov³¹¹, accused to the European Court of Human Rights that Ramzan Kadyrov used to participate in “abductions, torture and murder as part of a Kremlin-backed counterinsurgency effort against separatist”³¹².

Starting from the end of 2003, after the *začisti*, detained kidnapped people were held in the military base of Khakala. Khakala was not the only “illegal prison”³¹³: one of the most renown base is the one in Tsenteroj, the home-village of the Kadyrov family. “The evidence of the witnesses specifies that the kidnapers were the *kadyrovcy*”³¹⁴. In Grozny there is also the Bureau N. 2 for Operative Investigation (ORB-2), “a temporary isolator, [...] detention facility for suspects [...] to obtain by force the evidence needed

³⁰⁷ See: Chapter I, p. 26.

³⁰⁸ See: Aleksandr Cherkasov, “*La Cecenia oggi, tra la guerra e la pace*” (2008), p. 110.

³⁰⁹ Jonathan Littell (2010), p. 14.

³¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 15.

³¹¹ See: Chapter II, p. 44.

³¹² C. J. Chivers, “*Top Chechen ordered abduction, Austria says*”, The New York Times, April 27th, 2010, (http://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/28/world/europe/28austria.html?_r=0).

³¹³ Memorial, “*Illegal prisons today*”, September 4th, 2008, (<http://www.memo.ru/2008/09/04/0409081eng/part62.htm>).

³¹⁴ *Ibidem*.

by the investigators”³¹⁵. ORB-2 was led by Russian government, not directly by the Chechen one.

It was Ramzan Kadyrov himself who had denounced ORB-2 to the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe, after media found out the illegal detention system, saying he could not do much to fix the situation, as he was only prime minister at the time (January 2007): as president, “il regime personale instaurato nella Repubblica cecena da Kadyrov consentiva al suo detentore di utilizzare a piacimento o annullare il meccanismo delle sparizioni violente di persone”³¹⁶. Thus international organizations seemed to be allied with Kadyrov while asking to put down ORB-2.

Israilov was illegally detained in Tsenteroj, where he was tortured with electric shocks, beaten up and abused. After he decided to leave the country, his family was also detained in an attempt to convince Israilov to return to Chechnya³¹⁷.

After the imprisonment, as it happened with Israilov, detained people were either recruited by Kadyrov’s militia by the use of force (one of Kadyrov’s aim was to “convincerli a passare dalla propria parte per poi usarli nelle operazioni antiterroristiche”³¹⁸), or they went mysteriously missing³¹⁹.

If they accepted to change sides, they could “recycle themselves into legal criminal and continue their racketeering and criminal operations under the support of the state and the Russian Federation”³²⁰.

Lately, in 2008, Ramzan Kadyrov started asking help to the families of the rebels broadcasting on the television: he warned them that, being relatives with the evil³²¹,

³¹⁵ *Ibidem*.

³¹⁶ Aleksandr Cherkasov, “*La Cecenia oggi, tra la guerra e la pace*” (2008), p. 116-118.

³¹⁷ European Centre for Constitutional and Human Rights, “*EECHR background paper. Umar Israilov*”, (http://www.google.it/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=2&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0CCkQFjAB&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.ecchr.de%2Fchechnya.html%3Ffile%3Dtl_files%2FDokumente%2FUniverselle%2520Justiz%2FKadyrov%252C%2520Background%2520paper%252C%2520Umar%2520Israilov%252C%25202010-11.pdf&ei=VZ3LU5KVF4zU4QTYyoHoBg&usg=AFQjCNH1Wj6xWUoEAGNqoaSPhMjAe6KojA&vm=bv.71198958,d.bGE).

³¹⁸ Aleksandr Cherkasov, “*La Cecenia oggi, tra la guerra e la pace*” (2008), p. 113.

³¹⁹ Chechen Republic Ichkeria, “*Demonstration for missing people in Chechnya*”, December 1st, 2010, (<http://www.waynakh.com/eng/2010/12/demonstration-for-missing-people-in-chechnya/>).

See also: Aleksandr Cherkasov, “*La Cecenia oggi, tra la guerra e la pace*” (2008), p. 111-114.

³²⁰ Jean-François Ratelle, “*The North Caucasus insurgency*”, p. 186, from “*Chechnya at war and beyond*”.

they would pay the consequences if the rebels would return home. Sometimes relatives were able to convince the rebels to return home; then rebels were either beaten or reprimanded in public: “trattandoli non come terroristi, ma come ragazzini che hanno fatto una cavolata, probabilmente Kadyrov evita non poche recidive”³²².

The rebels who wanted to leave the mountains had to reveal names or positions of the other rebels, maybe under torture – as confirmed by Umar Israilov. If, on the other hand, rebels did not want to surrender, their family would suffer.

Ramzan Kadyrov ordered the police to “carry out campaigns against the insurgents’ families”³²³. Starting from that moment, few homes of the rebels’ families were burned down (according to Memorial, 26 houses were destroyed in 2008)³²⁴; relatives of the rebels were brought to the police station and threatened. Burning of the house as threat continued also years after, as in the case of 2012, were Kadyrov made three homes burn down³²⁵.

“Feeling that he had crushed the resistance, he turned on rivals in the pro-Moscow camp [...], but not all Chechens support him, and his uncompromising stance against opponents has driven many young men into the arms of opposition”³²⁶, especially in the arms of Umarov, the head of the Caucasus-wide insurrection.

The form of collective punishment of Ramzan Kadyrov, which also includes the destruction of the properties of the rebels, has been called the “Chechen model”: rebels, their families and friend are targeted as part of the counter-terrorism measures.

President Vladimir Putin, on September 27th, 2013, introduced amendments to the Civil and Criminal Codes and to the Law on Combating Terrorism. The new legislation is similar to the so-called Chechen model, as Chechnya was the main Caucasian republic facing and defeating – as claimed by Kadyrov – the terrorist issue.

³²¹ Tanya Lokshina, “*Another year of Ramzan Kadyrov*”, Human Rights Watch, March 31st, 2009, (<http://www.hrw.org/news/2009/03/31/another-year-ramzan-kadyrov>).

³²² Jonathan Littell (2010), p. 16.

³²³ Tanya Lokshina, “*Another year of Ramzan Kadyrov*”, Human Rights Watch, March 31st, 2009.

³²⁴ *Ibidem*.

³²⁵ Chechen Centre, “*Kadyrov burned three more houses in Chechnya*”, May 7th, 2012, (<http://www.chechencenter.info/n/breaking-news/34-breaking-news/1705-1.html>).

³²⁶ Oliver Bullough, “*Implications of Chechen Parliament raid*”, Institute for War & Peace Reporting, October 25th, 2010, (<http://iwpr.net/report-news/implications-chechen-parliament-raid>).

According to the legislation, people participating in training activities with the purpose of acts of terror will be responsible for criminal acts; police is authorized to seize belongings to the terrorists and to their families, and to get evidence on the origins of their money and properties (in order to understand if there are connection to terrorist activities)³²⁷.

Thanks to this new law, the “counter hostage-taking”³²⁸ of relatives was made legal, as this method, which is part of the Chechenization process, makes dozens of people abducted every year.

This law legalized the illegal methods used by Kadyrov, but also reduced the possibilities of resolving the conflict with the terrorists, including the North Caucasus. Besides, the fact that Russian government does not sanction Kadyrov’s illegal actions dents “the credibility of a Chechnya under control of Moscow and highlight open tensions”³²⁹.

As the reason why many young people join the resistance is the lack of possibilities of finding jobs, Khloponin thought that the already mentioned State Programme for the North Caucasus Through 2025 will end the terrorism. Indeed, the average salary should be doubled by 2025; 400,000 work places should be created; and Chechnya should be a touristic place with new appropriate infrastructures. Within the document, Khloponin did not mention the episodes of violence committed by the police: “un’occasione mancata [...] per dare un segnale di rinnovamento più profondo”³³⁰.

In conclusion, on the one hand the reduction of the guerrilla in Chechnya is due to the repression operated by Kadyrov and his policemen; while on other hand terrorism has been spreading all over the Caucasus region, involving mainly Ingushetia and

³²⁷ See: Huseyn Aliyev, “New Anti-Terrorism law to target families of North Caucasus insurgents”, The Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst, December 11th, 2013, (<http://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/12876-new-anti-terrorism-law-to-target-families-of-north-caucasus-insurgents.html>).

³²⁸ Anne Le Huérou, “State violence in post-war Chechnya”, p. 157, from “*Chechnya at war and beyond*”.

³²⁹ Anne Le Huérou, “State violence in post-war Chechnya” (2014), p. 156.

³³⁰ Giorgio Comai, “*Terrorismo in Caucaso, in cerca di strategie*”, Osservatorio Balcani e Caucaso, October 6th, 2010, (<http://www.balcanicaucaso.org/aree/Ossezia-del-Nord/Terrorismo-in-Caucaso-in-cerca-di-strategie-80857>).

Dagestan, two Chechnya's neighbour Countries. Indeed, the Chechenization process managed to “spostare il conflitto ceceno ai margini delle preoccupazioni dei russi”³³¹.

In order to pacify the all region, the CE, “pare che Ramzan Kadyrov [...] abbia intenzione di replicare nelle alter repubbliche caucasiche quanto già sperimentato in Cecenia per tenere a bada i separatisti, dove Kadyrov ha imposto una relative stabilità grazie a un mix di repressione e di sussidi finanziari garantiti dal governo centrale”³³².

According to experts, Kadyrov would be waiting a chance to become leader of the North Caucasus as to pacify the whole area³³³. The position is currently occupied by Khloponin. Scholars also said that the North Caucasus cannot have a local leader; while other experts argued that the position is “about ties and influence between the region and the federal centre”³³⁴, and Kadyrov has a strong support from President Putin.

Ramzan Kadyrov has managed to drive the Islamist insurgency into neighbouring republics and dissuade other Chechens from joining them³³⁵. Even though his *kadyrovcy* are impuned, and did violate human rights, without respecting human security, there is no doubt that Kadyrov has transformed his dangerous country in a “relative stable and secure society”³³⁶, with only low-level conflicts.

³³¹ Alexis Berelowitch, “*I russi e le due guerre in Cecenia*”, from “*Cecenia. Una guerra e una pacificazione violenta*”, p. 165.

³³² Nicola Del Medico, “*Caucaso del Nord: violenza e l’ombra di Kadyrov*”, Osservatorio Balcani e Caucaso, September 20th, 2012, (<http://www.balcanicaucaso.org/aree/Daghestan/Caucaso-del-Nord-violenza-e-l-ombra-di-Kadyrov-122463>).

³³³ See: Nikolaus von Twickel, “*Imagine Kadyrov in charge of the North Caucasus*”, The Moscow Times, August 24th, 2012, (<http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/imagine-kadyrov-in-charge-of-the-north-caucasus/467067.html>).

See also: Nicola Del Medico, “*Caucaso del Nord: violenza e l’ombra di Kadyrov*”, September 20th, 2012.

³³⁴ Nikolaus von Twickel, “*Imagine Kadyrov in charge of the North Caucasus*”, August 24th, 2012.

³³⁵ See: John Russell, “*Ramzan Kadyrov’s illiberal peace*”, p. 144, from “*Chechnya at war and beyond*”.

³³⁶ John Russell, “*Ramzan Kadyrov’s illiberal peace*” (2014).

Human rights

1. Memorial and human rights activists' situation of hostility in Russia.

Memorial is an organization arisen during the *perestrojka*³³⁷ with the aim of the “awakening and the preservation of the societal memory of the severe political persecution in the recent past of the Soviet Union”³³⁸. Nowadays, the association has offices both in Russia and in the former USSR Countries. It informs and collects material about human rights condition in the former Soviet Union.

This organization has been working in Chechnya since the ‘90s and is the most important human rights group in the region: it collected information, it denounced violations of laws and human rights and helped hundreds of victims in the region.

Right after Natalia Estemirova was killed³³⁹ (July 2009), her colleagues of Memorial suspended their work in Chechnya and closed the office in Grozny³⁴⁰, because Chechen authorities “continued to intimidate and persecute human rights defenders, [...] several were forced to leave Russia due to threats to their lives”³⁴¹. Journalists and human rights activists did not feel safe and protected in this region.

In November 2009, Russian human rights organizations asked Memorial to go back to Chechnya to continue its work: disappearances, tortures and executions were continuing, houses of alleged fighters' families were being burnt down, and authorities were not punishing anyone³⁴². Memorial continued publishing annual reports about

³³⁷ The reconstruction progress aimed at adopting political and economic reforms, started by Gorbačev in 1985.

³³⁸ Memorial, “*Who and what is Memorial?*”, (<http://www.memo.ru/eng/about/whowe.htm>).

³³⁹ See Chapter II, p. 43.

³⁴⁰ See: BBC News, “*Rights group halts Chechnye work*”, July 18th, 2009, (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/8157454.stm>).

And: The Moscow Times, “*Kadyrov’s spokesman denies stories of midnight interrogations over missing phone*”, August 19th, 2014, (<http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/kadyrov-s-spokesman-denies-stories-of-midnight-interrogations-over-missing-phone/505416.html>).

And also: Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty, “*Memorial talks about Chechnya shutdown*”, July 20th, 2009, (http://www.rferl.org/content/Russian_Rights_Group_Memorial_Suspends_Work_In_Chechnya_/1780816.html).

³⁴¹ Human Rights Watch, “*Memorial, international human rights groups return to Chechnya*”, December 16th, 2009, (<http://www.hrw.org/news/2009/12/16/memorial-international-human-rights-groups-return-chechnya>).

³⁴² *Ibidem*.

human rights in Russia and other regions – Chechnya included, but did not re-open its office in Grozny. Memorial, indeed, operated from an office in Nazran, Ingushetia³⁴³.

Only a few weeks after the murder of Natalia Estemirova, on August 11th, Zarema Sadulayeva and Alik Dzhabrailov, two activists of a local Chechen charity which provided assistance to disabled children and orphans³⁴⁴, were found dead in the trunk of their car³⁴⁵. Witnesses said they had been led away by members of security services: “independent activists are not tolerated in contemporary Chechnya”³⁴⁶, as this and Estemirova’s case can confirm.

Zarema had organized a silent procession in memory of Estemirova in Grozny; while her husband was probably arrested because he knew the identity of a rebel, and refused to reveal the information he had about him³⁴⁷. Employees of Memorial visited the Russian Federation Investigation Department of the Investigation Committee of Chechnya in Grozny and they learnt that it took two years to identify the suspect, who had been killed in February 2010 and was a member of the police³⁴⁸.

These cases and the absence of proper investigations testify how Russian authorities are failing in respecting and safeguarding the work of human rights defenders. This continuing failure is “in breach of their international obligations”³⁴⁹, as we will see along this chapter.

In December 2009, Oleg Orlov, Sergei Kovalev and Lyudmila Alexeyeva – three representatives of the Russian civil rights defence organization Memorial – were

³⁴³ Chechnya Advocacy Network, “*Human rights. Organizations reporting on Chechnya*”, (<http://www.chechnyaadvocacy.org/humanrights.html>).

³⁴⁴ Frontline Defenders, “*Russian Federation : assassination of human rights defender , Ms Zarema Sadulayeva and her husband Mr Alik Lechayevich Dzhabrailov*”, November 8th, 2009, (<http://www.frontlinedefenders.org/node/2123>).

³⁴⁵ See: Amnesty International, “*Russia must end impunity for murder of human rights activists*”, August 12th, 2009, (<http://www.amnesty.org/en/news-and-updates/news/russia-must-end-impunity-murder-human-rights-activists-20091208>).

³⁴⁶ Tanya Lokshina, “*Killing with impunity in Chechnya*”, Human Rights Watch, August 13th, 2009, (<http://www.hrw.org/news/2009/08/13/killing-impunity-chechnya>).

³⁴⁷ Jonathan Littell (2010), p. 25.

³⁴⁸ See: Memorial, “*Two years after the murder of Zarema Sadulayeva and Alik Dzhabrailov: the circle of suspects is known, but there is no political will to punish the killers*”, August 19th, 2011, (<http://www.memo.ru/eng/news/2011/08/25/2508111e.html>).

³⁴⁹ Amnesty International, “*Russia must stop persecution of rights activists*”, December 8th, 2009, (<http://www.amnesty.org/en/for-media/press-releases/russia-must-stop-persecution-rights-activists-20091208>).

awarded with the European Parliament's 2009 Sakharov³⁵⁰ Price for Freedom of Thought³⁵¹, as a sign of their effort in promoting "the truth about the political repression of the Soviet Union and [in fighting] against current human rights"³⁵². The price is given each year to whom who distinguished himself in the struggle for human rights.

In 2013, Memorial offices "were searched by the Public Prosecutor's office [but] Memorial resisted the coercion to register as a foreign agent"³⁵³. Indeed, on November 21st, 2012, Russian State Duma had "easily"³⁵⁴ approved a bill which requires any NGO financed by foreign funds to register as a "foreign agent [due to its] political activity"³⁵⁵.

Putin's opponents said it is a way to silence the organizations which are trying to undercut his international credibility. President Putin responded that he has the duty of controlling people who conduct political activities within Russia and receive money from other countries: Russian people have the right to know which kind of organizations are working on their territory and who does sponsor their activity³⁵⁶.

As Memorial "challenged the prosecutor's notice of violations"³⁵⁷ regarding the 2012 law, Memorial was listed in the "black list of NGOs"³⁵⁸. Being considered foreign

³⁵⁰ Andrei Sakharov, a Russian physicist, developed the Soviet hydrogen bomb. Having realized the moral problems connected to his work, he committed to the defence of human rights and of victims of political trials, from 1970 onwards. He received the Nobel Prize in 1975. Persecuted by the KGB due to his denounce of the soviet invasion in Afghanistan, he was exiled to Nizhnij Novgorod. He was also one of the Memorial's founders in 1988 (Gorbačev had let him return in 1986).

See: Nobel Prize, "*Andrei Sakharov – Biographical*",

(http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/1975/sakharov-bio.html).

³⁵¹ European Parliament, "*Sakharov price 2009 awarded to Memorial*", December 16th, 2009,

(<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+IM-PRESS+20091207FCS66069+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>).

³⁵² European Parliament, "*Sakharov prize. Memorial*",

(<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/aboutparliament/en/00f3dd2249/Sakharov-Prize-for-Freedom-of-Thought.html>).

³⁵³ Sakharov Prize Network, "*Memorial. Sakharov Prize Laureate 2009*",

(http://www.europarl.europa.eu/intcoop/sakharov/laureates/memorial_en.html).

³⁵⁴ Russia Beyond the Headlines, "*NGOs refuse to confirm their agent status*", (http://rbth.com/ngo_law).

³⁵⁵ Amnesty International, "*Russia: a year on, Putin's foreign agents law choking freedom*", November 20th, 2013, (<http://www.amnesty.org/en/news/russia-year-putin-s-foreign-agents-law-choking-freedom-2013-11-20>).

³⁵⁶ See: Russia Today, "*Foreign agents law is here to stay - Putin*", July 4th, 2013, (<http://rt.com/politics/putin-foreign-agents-ngo-667/>).

See also: Andrei Ostroukh, "*Russia's Putin signs NGO foreign agents law*", Reuters, July 21st, 2012, (<http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/07/21/us-russia-putin-ngos-idUSBRE86K05M20120721>).

³⁵⁷ Human Rights Watch, "*Russia: foreign agents law hits hundreds of NGOS: updated August 29, 2014*", August 29th, 2014, (<http://www.hrw.org/news/2014/08/29/russia-foreign-agents-law-hits-hundreds-ngos-updated-august-29-2014>).

agents means that NGOs have to be careful when publishing documents; every statement must be followed by a note saying that the speaker is representing a foreign agent; NGOs have to give a report twice a year about their activities and four times a year about their finances and foreign funds; once a year they are audited by the government³⁵⁹.

Despite the threats after Estemirova's death, Memorial continued its work in Chechnya, even though its work had been temporarily suspended in December 2009³⁶⁰. Oleg Orlov headed the Hot Spot Programme, which consisted of three agendas: Information and Analytical Centre on the North Caucasus matter; Struggle against criminal cases falsification in the North Caucasus; and Database creation on the persons abducted in the conflict zone of the North Caucasus.

The first programme monitors and analyzes data on the human rights situation in the region; the second deals with falsifications of violent actions against authorities, which are enlisted as terrorist acts, as confessions of terrorist actions are extorted by torture; the latter programme gives information about detained or missing people in Chechnya, Dagestan and Ingushetia³⁶¹ (even though most cases were reported in Chechnya).

The programme Human Rights Protection Through International Mechanisms, on the other hand, is aimed at giving legal consulting to Chechen victims who want to appeal to the European Court of Human Rights.

By 2010, Memorial had not been able to restore its representation in Chechnya: other journalists were forced to leave, and authorities had "been purposefully creating an atmosphere of hostility around Memorial's work"³⁶². Indeed, Memorial had to start cooperating with the Joint Mobile Groups³⁶³ of different human rights organizations,

³⁵⁸ The list of NGOs identified as foreign agents (two of which were suspended by their activity) and the law suits or court cases are available at: <http://www.hrw.org/news/2014/08/29/russia-foreign-agents-law-hits-hundreds-ngos-updated-august-29-2014>.

³⁵⁹ Robert Coalson, Tom Balmforth, "*Leading Russian NGOs muzzled by foreign agents label*", Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty, July 23rd, (<http://www.rferl.org/content/russia-muzzles-ngos-foreign-agent-law/25467789.html>).

³⁶⁰ Memorial, "*Annual report 2009*", (<http://www.memo.ru/uploads/files/469.pdf>).

³⁶¹ See: *Ibidem*.

³⁶² Memorial, "*Annual report 2010*", (<http://www.memo.ru/uploads/files/613.pdf>).

³⁶³ A "group, coordinated from NGOs and human rights defenders from across Russia, joined together to investigate the human rights violations, including torture and enforced disappearances", World Without Torture, "*From our members: when human rights defenders continue the fight*", March 14th, 2012,

while trying to establish its authorities in other North Caucasus republics, such as Dagestan and Kabardino-Balkaria.

Still in 2011, Orlov warned about the particularly difficult situation for human rights organizations in working in Chechnya. Because of the “totalitarian regime”³⁶⁴, “human rights conditions in the republic are serious and systematic, but it is extremely difficult to obtain information [...] due to the fact that people are afraid. [...] The work of independent structures, not only NGOs, but also, for example, jury members, is made practically impossible”³⁶⁵.

In the summer of 2012, as reported by Memorial, a group of women accompanied by activist lawyers (“Данная группа [Сводная мобильная группа³⁶⁶] была сформирована с целью получения достоверной и проверенной информации о нарушениях прав человека в ЧР”³⁶⁷) manifested in Grozny against enforced disappearances. In the meanwhile, President Kadyrov accused the Joint Mobile Group of destabilizing the situation in his republic³⁶⁸.

The Joint Mobile Group, on the other hand, denounces that “the investigative authorities are actually deprived of the possibility to investigate cases”³⁶⁹ and these ineffective investigations cause Russia’s “disgrace in the international arena and is one of the most serious violations of the commonly recognised provisions and principles of

(<http://worldwithouttorture.org/2012/03/14/from-our-members-when-human-rights-defenders-continue-the-fight/>).

³⁶⁴ Memorial, “*Annual report 2011*”, (<http://www.memo.ru/uploads/files/730.pdf>).

³⁶⁵ *Ibidem*.

³⁶⁶ The Joint Mobile Group received in 2013 the annual Martin Ennals Award for Human Rights Defenders, since they faced adversities in bringing Chechen human rights violations into the spotlight. See: Human Rights Watch, “*Russian group wins Martin Ennals Human Rights Award*”, October 8th, 2013, (<http://www.hrw.org/news/2013/10/08/russian-group-wins-martin-ennals-human-rights-award>). See also: Ria Novosti, “*Russian human rights group wins international award*”, October 9th, 2013, (<http://en.ria.ru/russia/20131009/184021158/Russian-Human-Rights-Group-Wins-International-Award.html>).

³⁶⁷ “This group, Joint Mobile Group, was formed with the purpose of obtaining accurate and reliable information about violations of laws protecting the people in the Chechen Republic”.

Memorial, “*Report Spring 2012*”, (<http://www.memo.ru/uploads/files/788.pdf>).

³⁶⁸ *Ibidem*.

See also: Human Rights Watch, “*Russia: protect human rights defenders in Chechnya*”, June 7th, 2012, (<http://www.hrw.org/news/2012/06/07/russia-protect-human-rights-defenders-chechnya>).

³⁶⁹ No Torture, “*Committee against torture*”,

(http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CAT/Shared%20Documents/RUS/INT_CAT_NGO_RUS_13010_E.pdf).

law”³⁷⁰. As a consequence, federal authorities cannot make Chechnya observe the Constitution and the federal laws.

2. The European Court of Human Rights and the UN Committee against Torture.

Despite the fact that human rights organizations are (and always have been) obstructed by Chechen authorities and by President Kadyrov himself – especially after the Chechenization process, which gave him the authority to start a terror policy – in the period following 2008, the searches have become specific and thus involved only a minority. As the war ended, there were not anymore problems concerning war crimes and refugees; but human rights abuses, use of force, torture and illegal detention still continued, being perpetrated by Chechen security forces, who were not punished.

As Russia had ratified the European Convention, Chechen victims had the opportunity to appeal to Strasbourg Court since the beginning of 2000 – before there were no courts in Chechnya³⁷¹.

One of Memorial supervisors, Aleksandr Čerkasov, said that, since the reconstruction of Chechnya following the Chechenization policy, “il numero di persone uccise o scomparse ogni diecimila abitanti sarebbe [...] proporzionalmente superiore a quello delle vittime delle grandi purghe staliniane”³⁷². Despite this data, the overall human rights situation got better if compared to the years of the two wars.

What made the situation better, indeed, is the fact that Russian Federation became part of the European Court of Human Rights, in February 1996 (Russia asked to be a member already in 1992, but the Chechen situation made the entry process longer³⁷³).

³⁷⁰ *Ibidem*.

³⁷¹ See: Lidiya Yusupova, “*La Corte Europea dei Diritti dell’Uomo: una speranza di giustizia*”, from “*Cecenia. Una guerra e una pacificazione violenta*”, p. 179-180.

³⁷² Jonathan Littell (2010), p. 10.

See also: Laura Aldamova, “*Chechens suffer torture hell*”, Institute for War & Peace Reporting, February 15th, 2010, (<http://iwpr.net/report-news/chechens-suffer-torture-hell>).

³⁷³ Ludovica Poli, “*Le violazioni dei diritti fondamentali in Cecenia al vaglio della Corte Europea dei Diritti dell’Uomo*”, from “*Cecenia. Una guerra e una pacificazione violenta*”, p. 185.

Russia has been addressed to directly by the Court and Chechen violations have become known thanks to the possibility of Chechen citizens to denounce abuses.

Since that moment, the European Court have found Russia “responsible for violations in over 800 cases. The first judgement regarding Chechnya was handed down in 2005, and in over 150 cases concerning the North Caucasus (mainly the Chechen republic) the Court has ruled against Russia”³⁷⁴.

The European Convention on Human Rights³⁷⁵, considering the Universal Declaration of Human Rights proclaimed by the General Assembly of the United Nations, specifies that “no one shall be subjected to torture or to inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment”³⁷⁶. By August 2014, 230 violations of the Convention in connection with Chechnya had been found, and 350 cases were pending³⁷⁷. Most cases concerned disappearances, illegal detention and torture, but also killings of civilians (during the wars’ period).

The European Court determined that Russian security forces committed human rights abuses and were negligent during the investigations, and as a consequence the Court judgements are the only way to provide victims with justice³⁷⁸. This form of justice, though, is incomplete, because the European Court is not a criminal court with the power of prosecuting criminals. Its decision obliges Russian government to investigate and prosecute the perpetrators. Thus, the European Court for Human Rights has been doing what NGOs and human rights organization cannot do: when facing accusations from NGOs, for instance, Russia refused to investigate properly, whereas now “Russia is obligated to implement the final judgments of the court”³⁷⁹, making sure that the judicial system in Chechnya is available to all the victims.

In the majority of cases documented by the European Court, *kadyrovcy* were the ones detaining and torturing people in order to get information or confessions about alleged

³⁷⁴ European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights, “*Chechen cases at ECtHR*”, (https://www.google.it/search?q=Chechen+cases+at+ECtHR&oq=Chechen+cases+at+ECtHR&aqs=chrome..69i57.2816j0j7&sourceid=chrome&es_sm=93&ie=UTF-8).

³⁷⁵ Russian Federation ratified the European Convention on Human Rights in 1998.

³⁷⁶ European Court of Human Rights, “*European Convention on Human Rights*”, Article 3, (http://www.echr.coe.int/documents/convention_eng.pdf).

³⁷⁷ European Court of Human Rights, “*Armed conflicts*”, August 2014, (http://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/FS_Armed_conflicts_ENG.pdf).

³⁷⁸ Human Rights Watch, “*Justice for Chechnya*”, (http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/related_material/justice_for_chechnya_2.pdf).

³⁷⁹ *Ibidem*.

rebels; in other cases tortures were connected to the ORB-2³⁸⁰. Abuses are still perpetrated in Chechnya because “Russian government has continuously failed to investigate and prosecute crimes committed by state agents”³⁸¹.

One of the latest European Court decisions has determined the Russian government has to pay 1.2 million euro to 13 Chechens, whose relatives were murdered in 2000 during a bombardment. This case the first in which Russia acknowledged a violation of the European Convention on Human Rights³⁸².

Victory of cases at the European Court is a mixed experience³⁸³ for relatives of victims: they receive financial compensation from the Russian government, but they have to keep fighting to receive full justice, as often they have no knowledge of who is the killer – who thus is not punished – or they do not know for sure what happened to the disappeared ones.

According to Amnesty International, in 2007, Russia made progress following the Convention against Torture of the United Nations Committee against Torture, but “the practice of torture and other ill-treatment remains widespread”³⁸⁴.

Among the positive aspects, Russian legislation contains procedural and practical safeguards against torture (even though law enforcement agencies can easily circumvent these mechanisms); the functions of criminal prosecution and investigation are distinguished; special departments were created to investigate whether the crime is committed by police or other law enforcement officials. This initiative “could lead to real progress in combating impunity for human rights violations, [...] however, the effectiveness still remains to be seen”.

Furthermore, the Russian Code of Criminal Procedures now limits the detention period of suspects to 48 hours; the detained persons must be informed of their procedural rights and of the reason of detention (their families must also be informed).

³⁸⁰ See: Chapter III, p. 66.

³⁸¹ Human Rights Watch, “*Justice for Chechnya*”.

³⁸² Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty, “*ECHR rules against Moscow on Chechnya shelling*”, October 4th, 2013, (<http://www.rferl.org/content/russia-chechnya-rights-echr/25126609.html>).

³⁸³ Human Rights Watch, “*Who will tell me what happened to my son?*”, (http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/russia0909web_0.pdf).

³⁸⁴ Amnesty International, “*Russian Federation: briefing to committee against torture*”, United Nations Human Rights, (http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=INT%2fCAT%2fNGO%2fRUS%2f13005&Lang=en).

At the time of the custody, the detained must be physically examined and his condition must be described in a register.

Despite these improvements, Amnesty International received information about cases of people being detained, and tortured, in the North Caucasus, cases which are connected to combating armed groups³⁸⁵. The lack of improvements in lowering the torture cases is due to a technical problem in the Russian legislation.

The European Court, awarding compensations to Chechen families (and also of other regions of the North Caucasus) “has been seen as a lifeline”³⁸⁶ for those whose relatives disappeared or died after torture.

Russian law prohibits the use of torture, but the definition of torture in the Constitution, in the Criminal Code and the Federal Law on Police is “inconsistent with article 1 of the Convention”³⁸⁷. The Convention defines torture as “any act by which sever pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person for such purposes as obtaining from him or a third person information or a confession, punishing him for an act he or a third person has committed or is suspected of having committed, or intimidating or coercing him or a third person, or for any reason based on discrimination of any kind, when such pain or suffering is inflicted by or at the instigation of or with the consent or acquiescence of a public official or other person action in an official capacity. It does not include pain or suffering arising only from, inherent or incidental to lawful sanctions”³⁸⁸.

Article 21 of the Russian Constitution says that “nobody should be subjected to torture, violence, or other severe or humiliating treatment or punishment”³⁸⁹. The Criminal Code defines torture as “the infliction of physical or mental suffering by

³⁸⁵ Amnesty International, “*Russian Federation: briefing to committee against torture*”.

³⁸⁶ Torocheshnikova Mariana and Sindelar Daisy, “*Strasbourg seeks to limit Russia cases, but rights-watchers say that’s a good thing*”, Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty, June 15th, 2012, (<http://www.rferl.org/content/strasbourg-cuts-caseload-but-russian-activists-say-that-is-good/24615534.html>).

³⁸⁷ Amnesty International, “*Russian Federation: briefing to committee against torture*”.

³⁸⁸ United Nations Human Rights, “*Convention against torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment*”, Article 1, (<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CAT.aspx>).

³⁸⁹ President of Russia, “*The Constitution of Russia*”, Article 21, (<http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/articles/ConstMain.shtml>).

means of systematic beating or by any other violent actions”³⁹⁰. Article 5.2 of the new Federal Law on Police (signed in February 2011), says that “ Деятельность полиции, ограничивающая права и свободы граждан, немедленно прекращается, если достигнута законная цель или выяснилось, что эта цель не может или не должна достигаться путем ограничения прав и свобод граждан”³⁹¹.

None of the three definitions above contains any reference to the role that a public official can play in the act of torture. In 2009, the Committee was concerned about human rights abuses inflicted with the consent or with the acquiescence of public officials in Chechnya³⁹².

As this is one of the biggest limits that do not allow the persecution of criminals, the Committee against Torture listed the implementations Russia has to do by 2016, concerning the Convention. Russian Federation has to provide information about how its definition of torture has brought into full compliance with article 1 of the Convention and if any police personnel has been prosecuted under article 117; Russia also has to inform about how it is planning to avoid torture and which measures have been taken to protect the detained person (access to lawyer, contact family member, being informed of accusations and have medical examination)³⁹³.

Regarding more into details the Chechen situation, Russia has to “provide data on the number of official subjected to disciplinary measures for not adequately investigating complaints of torture or ill-treatment or refusing to cooperate in any such investigation. [...] Provide information about the number of Chechen law enforcement or MVD”³⁹⁴

³⁹⁰ Legislationline, “*Criminal Code of the Russian Federation*”, Article 117, (http://legislationline.org/download/action/download/id/4247/file/RF_CC_1996_am03.2012_en.pdf).

³⁹¹ “Police activity, which limits citizens’ rights and freedom, will immediately stop if the legal aim is reached or if it is clear that this aim cannot or must not be reached by means of limiting citizens’ rights and freedom”.

Российская газета, “*Федеральный закон Российской Федерации от 7 февраля 2011 г. N 3-ФЗ “О полиции”*”, February 8th, 2011, (<http://www.rg.ru/2011/02/07/police-dok.html>).

³⁹² See: Convention against Torture, “*Concluding observations on the fifth periodic report of the Russian Federation, adopted by the Committee at its forty-ninth session (29 October – 23 November 2012)*”, (http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CAT/C/RUS/CO/5&Lang=En).

³⁹³ See: Committee against Torture, “*List of issues prior to submission of the sixth periodic report of the Russian Federation due in 2016*”, (http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CAT%2fC%2fRUS%2fQPR%2f6&Lang=en).

³⁹⁴ Minister of Interior.

officials prosecuted for acts in violation of the Convention, the number found guilty, and the punishment or discipline that followed”³⁹⁵.

In addition to the complaints made by the European Court, the UN and the NGOs, Russia received even more critics after a Russian lawyer – Sergei Magnitsky – who worked for an American society was imprisoned in Russia and died during custody, allegedly for torture³⁹⁶.

The Office of Foreign Assets Control added under the Sergei Magnitsky Rule of Law Accountability Act of 2012 a list of people³⁹⁷ who are not anymore allowed to travel in the United States, due to the fact that they were connected to his death. Even though these sanctions remind of the Cold War disputes (Moscow replied to the US shutting down adoptions of Russian orphans)³⁹⁸, two Chechens were enlisted: Kazbek Dukuzov and Letscha Bogatirov, two police officers linked to human rights abuses³⁹⁹. Dukuzov is linked to the murder of an American journalist in 2004 and to the murder of Chechnya’s former Deputy Prime Minister Sergunin⁴⁰⁰. Bogatirov is believed to be the killer of Israilov⁴⁰¹.

According to the US government, this case is “illustrative of the negative aspects of official corruption on the rights of an individual citizen, appears to be emblematic of a broader patter of disregard of the numerous domestic and international human rights commitments of the Russian Federation and impunity for those who violate basic

³⁹⁵ Committee against Torture, “*List of issues prior to submission of the sixth periodic report of the Russian Federation due in 2016*”.

³⁹⁶ See: Miriam Elder, “*Sergei Magnitsky verdict most shameful moment since Stalin*”, The Guardian, July 11th, 2013, (<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jul/11/sergei-magnitsky-russia-trial-verdict-tax-fraud>).

See also: The Economist, “*More on Magnitsky*”, November 29th, 2011, (<http://www.economist.com/blogs/easternapproaches/2011/11/torture-russia>).

³⁹⁷ See: US Department of the Treasury, “*Magnitsky sanctions listings*”, April 12th, 2013, (<http://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/OFAC-Enforcement/Pages/20130412.aspx>).

³⁹⁸ See: Peter Baker, Ellen Barry, “*US penalized Russians for human rights violations*”, The New York Times, April 12th, 2013, (http://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/13/world/europe/us-issues-penalties-against-russians-for-rights-violations.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0).

³⁹⁹ See: Elias Groll, “*A guide to the Russian officials on the US Magnitsky list*”, Foreign Policy, April 12th, 2013, (http://blog.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2013/04/12/a_guide_to_the_russian_officials_on_the_us_magnitsky_list).

⁴⁰⁰ See: “*Kazbek Dukuzov*”, Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty, (<http://www.rferl.org/content/popup/24956512.html>).

⁴⁰¹ See: Chechen Center, “*Ramzan Kadyrov’s killings*”, April 26th, 2012, (<http://www.chechencenter.info/n/breaking-news/34-breaking-news/1695-1.html>).

human rights and freedom”⁴⁰². Indeed, Russia should support its people and “advance democracy, human rights and the rule of law”⁴⁰³, because it voluntarily committed to the UN and the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

In reality, Estemirova, Politkovskaya, Israilov’s deaths and many others, according to human rights activists – who are clearly hostile to Moscow and not neutral –, show “the grave danger of exposing the wrongdoing of officials of the Government of the Russian Federation, including Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov, or of seeking to obtain, exercise, defend, or promote internationally recognized human rights and freedoms”⁴⁰⁴.

3. Human rights violations connected to Islam and other examples.

Spokesman of the European Court of Human Rights, Dick Martin, said that the concept of human rights is not included in nowadays Chechnya: people are terrified and live constantly fearing theirs and their families’ lives⁴⁰⁵.

Fear is a valuable element to keep the order in Chechnya, according to Kadyrov’s strategy, but Memorial and human rights activists know that it is not possible to reconstruct a country over deaths and torture.

Not only human rights activists are concerned with the disappearance of alleged rebels or acquaintances of rebels. As a consequence of the Islamization process, women have been forced to wear veils and have been marginalized by the society.

Nowadays religion is at the centre of the social and political life of the republic, but at the same time it is a destabilizing factor: it creates social and psychological pressure

⁴⁰² US Government, “*Sergei Magnitsky Rule of Law Accountability Act of 2012*”, Sec. 402 (12), Public Law 112-208- December 14th, 2012, (http://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/Programs/Documents/pl112_208.pdf).

⁴⁰³ *Ibidem*, Sec. 402 (1).

⁴⁰⁴ *Ibidem*, Sec. 402 (15).

⁴⁰⁵ Majnat Kurbanova, “*Kadyrov chiamato a testimoniare a Vienna*”, Osservatorio Balcani e Caucaso, December 1st, 2010, (<http://www.balcanicaucaso.org/aree/Cecenia/Kadyrov-chiamato-a-testimoniare-a-Vienna-84498>).

on citizens, as the government uses Islam to create a real society and bond among the Chechens.⁴⁰⁶

2014 Ramadan, as an example to testimony how authorities use the official religion, has become “un omaggio al presidente Ramzan Kadyrov. [...] I riti prescelti sono stati celebrati nella moschea centrale di Grozny denominata Cuore della Cecenia”⁴⁰⁷.

Anyway, in Chechnya there is no religious freedom and women feel constantly threatened if they are not dressed up as Kadyrov and his men want. There are have cases of women who were shot with paintball guns and who only after found out the following message on the streets of Grozny: “Care Sorelle! Vogliamo ricordarvi che, in conformità alle regole e alle usanze islamiche, ogni donna cecena è obbligata a portare il velo. Non vi disgiusta sentire gli indecenti complimenti e le proposte che vi vengono rivolte perché vestite in modo così provocatorio e non vi coprite il capo? Pensateci! Oggi vi abbiamo spruzzato di vernice, ma questo è solo un avvertimento! Non costringeteci a ricorrere a misure più pervasive!”⁴⁰⁸.

President Kadyrov said to media that he agreed with the action of these men – allegedly his *kadyrovcy*⁴⁰⁹ – and insisted that women have to be modest, decent and pure in order not to make their family or the society embarrassed by their behavior. Some women thus may feel this imposition as “humiliating”⁴¹⁰.

In addition to this, if a woman is attacked, the men of her family have to react and seek for revenge, leading to a feud – Chechnya “has been bred on the blood, [...], blood feud still holds sway”⁴¹¹. Chechen society is still traditional and connected to old customs⁴¹². Because of this, women tend to protect their families also by avoiding public judgments, thus wearing the veil, and leaving home short skirts or dresses.

⁴⁰⁶ Bastianello Francesca, “*Il ruolo dell’Islam nella vita politica del Nord Caucaso*”, Osservatorio Balcani e Caucaso, October 1st, 2013, (<http://www.balcanicaucaso.org/Tesi-e-ricerche/Il-ruolo-dell-Islam-nella-vita-politica-del-nord-del-Caucaso-142443>).

⁴⁰⁷ Giovanni Bensi, “*Caucaso del Nord: è ramadan*”, Osservatorio Balcani e Caucaso, July 9th, 2014, (<http://www.balcanicaucaso.org/aree/Cecenia/Caucaso-del-Nord-e-Ramadan-154095>).

⁴⁰⁸ Tanya Lokshina, “*Cecenia, il velo che soffoca*”, Osservatorio Balcani e Caucaso, October 19th, 2010, (<http://www.balcanicaucaso.org/aree/Cecenia/Cecenia-il-velo-che-soffoca-81482>).

⁴⁰⁹ *Ibidem*.

⁴¹⁰ *Ibidem*.

⁴¹¹ John Russell, “*Chechnya: monster in the mountains*”, *The World Today*, vol. 66, n. 5, May 2010, (http://www.justicefornorthcaucasus.com/jfnc_message_boards/war_in_chechnya.php?entry_id=1272133677&title=chatham-house%3A-chechnya%3A-monster-in-the-mountains&comments=comments).

⁴¹² See: Chapter I, p. 9-10.

Only in October 2010, Chechnya introduced a law which banned the “bride kidnapping”⁴¹³, an illegal practice (for both the Quran and the Russian law) which became more popular in recent years, introducing a fine of a million roubles (about 200.000 euro). According to a BBC documentary, one out of five Chechen women have been kidnapped and then “forced to marry their kidnappers to preserve the family honor and avoid triggering a blood feud”⁴¹⁴.

The honor killings are still spread in the region, and Kadyrov encourages men that “women should be treated as a man’s property”⁴¹⁵. Several activists reported that there were cases of women being murdered because they had been seen holding hands with a man, or even because of rumors⁴¹⁶.

Different human rights organizations also believe that thousands of women in the North Caucasus, where Islam is the main religion, are forced to get married against their will⁴¹⁷ – nevertheless, the tradition of bride kidnapping was outlawed already on the 19th century.

Despite this, “in Chechen tradition it’s a woman husband, her father, or her brother – not the government – who can tell her what and what not to do”⁴¹⁸. However, Ramzan Kadyrov decided that he and his men can dictate their new moral.

I will now enlist few cases of human rights violations in Chechnya, to show which cases the humanitarian association were involved in and why people were deprived of their basic rights.

In 2009, Human Rights Watch documented 15 cases in which “house belonging to families of alleged insurgents have been deliberately targeted and burned, apparently by Chechen law-enforcement personnel”⁴¹⁹. While authorities did not find anyone responsible, Ramzan Kadyrov said that insurgents’ relatives must expect to be

⁴¹³ Ria Novosti, “*Bride stealing case launched in Russia’s Chechnya*”, November 3rd, 2010, (<http://en.ria.ru/society/20101103/161201746.html>).

⁴¹⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁴¹⁵ Tanya Lokshina, “*Virtue campaign for women*”, p. 249, from “*Chechnya at war and beyond*”.

⁴¹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 248.

⁴¹⁷ Ria Novosti, “*Bride kidnapping tradition on the rise in North Caucasus*”, October 10th, 2007, (<http://en.ria.ru/society/20071016/84145392.html>).

⁴¹⁸ Tanya Lokshina, “*Another year of Ramzan Kadyrov*”, March 31st, 2009.

⁴¹⁹ Human Rights Watch, “*Human Rights Watch’s concerns and recommendations on Russia*”, September 8th, 2009, (<http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2009/09/08/human-rights-watch-s-concerns-and-recommendations-russiasubmitted-united-nations-hum>).

punished: they can avoid the punishment only if they make the rebels surrender. This way, Kadyrov allowed and encouraged lawless punitive actions.

Other houses were burnt also in 2012. Owners were warned to leave their homes but did not have the time to collect their belongings⁴²⁰.

According to official versions, Kadyrov never explicitly ordered these actions. He probably felt “very frustrated with young men joining rebels and made some comments about family responsibility. [...] Then, some people in the law enforcement agencies misinterpreted and misused his words to promote their own objectives”⁴²¹. Kadyrov has no responsibility.

In October 2009, Sayd-Salekh Ibragimov, a 19-year old boy, was conducted to a police station and never came back. The European Court said that his presumed death violated the right to life, the prohibition of torture and of inhuman or degrading treatment and the rights to liberty and security⁴²². His uncle was told by officers that threatened to kill the young boy “in blood revenge in connection with the death of their comrade in a combat operation” which took place in his village.

Also Abdul-Yazit Denilbekovich Askhabov disappeared after being abducted by unidentified people. His family had to call lawyers of the Joint Mobile Group because police officers were not conducting any research.

In December 2009, the mother of Apti Ramazanovich Zainalov denounced that her son had been wounded during his arrest and had disappeared from the hospital. Joint Mobile Group lawyers found out that the investigator had hidden a bullet from the scene of arrest and that the hospital staff did not report his presence in the hospital register, because he accompanied by police officers.

During the same month, Islam Irisbayevich Umarpashayev was abducted from Grozny by unidentified armed people. He was found guilty after having “posted a

⁴²⁰ Chechen Center, “*Kadyrov burned three more houses in Chechnya*”, May 7th, 2012.

⁴²¹ Human Rights Watch, “*What your children do will touch upon you*”, New York, 2009, p. 26-27, (<http://www.hrw.org/reports/2009/07/02/what-your-children-do-will-touch-upon-you-0>).

⁴²² European Court of Human Rights, “*Russia*”, July 2014, (http://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/CP_Russia_ENG.pdf).

comment online accusing the police of cruel treatment of Chechen residents”⁴²³. After he was released due to international pressure, he said he had been detained in a base of the Chechen Special Police Task Force (OMON)⁴²⁴. The investigator said he could not go to that place because officers denied him the authorization.

In March 2010, Joint Mobile Group found out that three Chechen men had been forced to confess a crime (specifically a bombing) that they had not committed⁴²⁵.

The cases above are all noteworthy because the involvement of Joint Mobile Group lawyers denote the “passivity of the Chechen investigative authorities”⁴²⁶, and the fact that authorities cannot ensure the observance of the Constitution.

Together with Joint Mobile Group, Memorial declared the association would continue to push for effective investigations of the crimes⁴²⁷.

In 2013, Memorial reported that one person went missing after being abducted by security forces which act under Kadyrov’s control⁴²⁸. Memorial knew about only one victim, as people usually refuse to denounce authorities, leaving abuses unpunished. The following year, on March 3rd, *kadyrovcy* organized a “punishment operation”⁴²⁹ in a village and abducted four Chechen boys, who ended up in ORB-2. They were tortured and forced to confess that they had helped members of the insurrection movement.

In October 2012, a man was beaten up by policemen after having tried to defend his wife and his minor son during an arrest at a check-point. After speaking to Memorial journalists, the man learned that those “policemen were fabricating a criminal case [...] in order to take vengeance on him for defending” his family⁴³⁰.

⁴²³ World Without Torture, “*The case of Islam Umarpashayev: enforced disappearance, torture and detention in Chechnya*”, October 5th, 2012, (<http://worldwithouttorture.org/2012/05/10/the-case-of-islam-umarpashayev-enforced-disappearance-torture-and-detention-in-chechnya/>).

⁴²⁴ See: Memorial, “*Chechnya: investigators examine information about the torture of the residents of Urus-Martan*”, July 8th, 2013, (<http://www.memo.ru/d/166458.html>).

⁴²⁵ For these cases, see: No Torture, “*Committee against torture*”.

⁴²⁶ *Ibidem*.

⁴²⁷ Memorial, “*Strasbourg court gives first judgment on a crime in Kadyrov’s Chechnya*”, January 25th, 2013, (<http://www.memo.ru/d/144180.html>).

⁴²⁸ Human Rights Watch, “*World report by Country*”, (<http://www.hrw.org/world-report/2014/country-chapters/russia>).

⁴²⁹ Save Chechnya Campaign, “*Chechnya: torture in ORB-2*”, March 30th, 2014, (<http://savechechnya.org/archives/733>).

⁴³⁰ Memorial, “*Chechnya : resident of Tolstoy-Yurt village who defended his wife beaten up by the policemen*”, October 26th, 2012, (<http://www.memo.ru/d/134771.html>).

In July 2013, a Chechen woman was abducted by the *kadyrovcy*, but her fate is still unknown. Her mother spoke with the police, but a serious criminal investigation started late. According to the woman, the abduction may be related to fact that one of their relatives was a member of the Zapad battalion, dismantled in 2008⁴³¹.

4. “No wounds of war in Chechnya”.

The post-war slogan “No wounds of war in Chechnya”⁴³², containing the goal of the reconstruction project, tries to make Chechnya appear as a peaceful country where people can conduct a normal life without fearing for the war. In 2009, with the end of the “counter-terrorist operations”, Kadyrov claimed terrorism had been defeated and only few rebels were still in Chechnya – according to the Chechen president, they were only 70, according to the Russian Government they were 480⁴³³.

It would have been up to Kadyrov, since the operations ended, to neutralize the last fighters. Indeed, the rebels had “effettivamente perso il sostegno popolare che avevano qualche anno fa, e nella situazione attuale Kadyrov ed i suoi uomini, per quanto utilizzino mezzi quantomeno discutibili, sono in grado di contrastare le formazioni ribelli attive nella regione in maniera più efficace rispetto alle forze federali”⁴³⁴. Furthermore, the presence on the Chechen territory of federal forces was not pleasant to the local population, who would sustain more the rebels than Russian troops.

What emerges from these reports is that the human rights condition in Chechnya got relatively better since 2008. Chechens had been deprived of their basic human rights⁴³⁵ during the period of the two wars – many were killed by bombings as civilians, others

⁴³¹ See: Memorial, “*Young woman abducted in Grozny*”, July 30th, 2013, (<http://www.memo.ru/d/167194.html>).

⁴³² Agnese Riva, “*Cecenia: la guerra, il male, la memoria*”, Osservatorio Balcani e Caucaso, January 25th, 2013, (<http://www.balcanicaucaso.org/aree/Cecenia/Cecenia-la-guerra-il-male-la-memoria-128931>).

⁴³³ Giorgio Comai, “*Fine della guerra in Cecenia*”, Osservatorio Balcani e Caucaso, April 7th, 2009, (<http://www.balcanicaucaso.org/aree/Russia/Fine-della-guerra-in-Cecenia-45298>).

⁴³⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁴³⁵ See: Ludovica Poli, “*Le violazioni dei diritti fondamentali in Cecenia al vaglio della Corte Europea dei Diritti dell’Uomo*” (2008).

had to escape and became refugees in neighbour countries⁴³⁶, the war destroyed houses and buildings, there was no water or electricity. Many cases of tortures, kidnapping or raping were registered, and they did not involve only Chechen fighters, but also civilians and innocent people.

Since Ramzan Kadyrov became president, people whose human rights are not respected are those involved in the resistance movement, that is now connected to the virtual Caucasus Emirate, and not anymore only within the domestic Chechen fight. Russian Federation, despite the warnings received by the United Nations and by the European Court of Human Rights, do not stop Kadyrov's unlawful actions concerning torture and illegal detentions, because it was President Putin himself who gave Kadyrov the power to act in order to keep the republic safe.

Although armed conflicts ended, "cases of illegal detention and abuse of human rights are still frequent. [...] Chechnya is full of traumatised people who have suffered torture but are wary of seeking assistance"⁴³⁷.

The Chechenization process was aimed at destroying the terrorist factions, thus Kadyrov is authorized to find by any means the terrorists. This involves the detention and torture of people allegedly familiar with the terrorists, but these acts are legitimated by Putin's Chechenization policy. As Russian Federation refuses, until now, to improve its legislation as suggested by the UN, the European Union and ONGs, Kadyrov will continue to act as he is authorized.

Alaudinov, Chechnya's deputy Interior Minister, uses illegal methods (killings and planting of false evidence) "in an effort to remove Islamic fundamentalists"⁴³⁸, as "he had been granted limitless power by Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov"⁴³⁹.

In conclusion, it is not difficult to notice how Chechen authorities violate Russian law: "Kadyrov runs Chechnya as a state within a state and Russian law is not applicable to Chechnya"⁴⁴⁰, said a researcher for Human Rights Watch. Even though Chechnya is

⁴³⁶ About Chechen refugees, see: Svetlana Gannushkina, "La Russia è grande, ma non è luogo dove rifugiarsi", from "Cecenia. Una guerra e una pacificazione violenta".

⁴³⁷ Laura Aldamova, "Chechens suffer torture hell", February 15th, 2010.

⁴³⁸ Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty, "Chechen Deputy Minister threatens executions for militant suspects", December 13th, 2013, (<http://www.rferl.org/content/chechnya-official-kill-frame-militants/25200041.html>).

⁴³⁹ *Ibidem.*

⁴⁴⁰ *Ibidem.*

only a region of the Russian Federation, collective responsibility and punishment are widespread – “Kadyrov is not even encouraging, but rather, ordering personally”⁴⁴¹.

The “Stalin-era principles of collective guilt and collective justice”⁴⁴² are currently working, as critics (human rights activists) of Putin say. In November 2013, Putin signed a new legislation that requires relatives or acquaintances – a term that in Chechnya may refer to a whole clan – of terrorists to pay for the damages of the terrorist acts. This policy is related to the hardening line in the North Caucasus, which anticipated the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi.

There is only one person⁴⁴³ nowadays with the power of choosing who to torture, who to imprison: Ramzan Kadyrov. In other words, violence has become selective, as Kadyrov’s militia is targeting rebels and their families⁴⁴⁴ (during the two wars, also innocent civilians were targeted or searched, or victims of abuses, even if not connected to rebels’ activity). On the other hand, Kadyrov accused Memorial of focusing on the negative elements and not on the positive ones, as the development and the reconstruction⁴⁴⁵.

Having seen those human rights cases and investigations, it seems eventually that the prosecutor’s office and the investigative committee – subdivisions of the internal affairs’ institutions – are not included in the sphere of application of the Russian law and are not subject to control by the state. This kind of situation, where “requirements and instructions of high-ranking investigators and prosecutors are ignored by police officers is merely inconceivable in any law-governed and democratic state”⁴⁴⁶.

We could thus say that “Moscow has produced something of a monster in the North Caucasus mountains”⁴⁴⁷.

⁴⁴¹ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁴² Tom Balmforth, “Critics call new Russian counterterror law a return to collective justice”, Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty, November 4th, 2013, (<http://www.rferl.org/content/russia-terrorism-rights-sochi-putin-legislation-punishment/25157845.html>).

⁴⁴³ Jonathan Littell (2010), p. 13.

⁴⁴⁴ See: Brenna Owen, “Russia’s foray into Ukraine: lessons from the Chechnya conflict”, August 4th, 2014, (<http://www.geopoliticalmonitor.com/russias-foray-ukraine-lessons-chechnya/>).

⁴⁴⁵ Jonathan Littell (2010), p. 17.

⁴⁴⁶ No Torture, “Committee against Torture”.

⁴⁴⁷ John Russel, “Chechnya: monster in the mountains”, May 2010.

Ramzan Kadyrov and the future of Chechnya

1. Ramzan Kadyrov and the cult of personality.

Speaking of Chechnya and its present or future prospective, it is compulsory to explain who Ramzan Kadyrov is and how he holds the power in his republic. The personality cult of him, of his father Akhmad Kadyrov and of Vladimir Putin, accompanied by propaganda, are distinctive marks of his power and also clarify how he behaves and balances his Chechnya with President Putin.

Ramzan Kadyrov was born in Tsenteroj on October 5th, 1976. In 1996, he became the responsible of the bodyguard's team of his father, Akhmad Kadyrov, the head *mufti* of Chechnya. During the first Chechen war, he and his family had fought for his country independence leading a "unit of rebel fighters"⁴⁴⁸. During the second war, instead, his clan switched side: in June 2000 Putin named Akhmad Kadyrov head of the Chechen administration. From that moment, Ramzan led the presidential security service, "a 1,500-strong paramilitary force that was accused of sowing fear throughout the republic and guaranteeing the president's grip on power"⁴⁴⁹ – the so-called *kadyrovcy*.

Just hours after his father was killed by a bomb⁴⁵⁰, in 2004, Ramzan Kadyrov was seen on Russian televisions speaking with President Putin. These scenes were "interpreted as a vote of confidence in the young Chechen"⁴⁵¹ by the Russian administration.

Despite this fact, Alu Alkhanov became the new Chechen president: the minimum age requested to become president in Chechnya is 30, and Kadyrov was 27 years old when his father died. In 2005, during Alkhanov's first year of presidency, Chechen Prime Minister Sergei Abramov was injured in a car accident and was operated on kidney and lung.

⁴⁴⁸ The Moscow Times, "Ramzan Kadyrov", March 25th, 2011, (http://www.themoscowtimes.com/people/article/ramzan_kadyrov/433775.html).

⁴⁴⁹ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁵⁰ See: Chapter I, p. 27.

⁴⁵¹ The Independent, "Ramzan Kadyrov: the warrior king of Chechnya", January 4th, 2007, (<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/profiles/ramzan-kadyrov-the-warrior-king-of-chechnya-430738.html>).

At the beginning, “the [Sergei Abramov’s] crash [...] raised concerns about a possible assassination attempt, but Chechen officials later insisted it was an accident”⁴⁵², as confirmed by Alkhanov. Even though his life was not in danger at the time of the recovery in the hospital, Abramov needed several weeks to fully recover and he resigned from his post. His predecessor, Anatoly Popov, claimed he was “poisoned”⁴⁵³ and could not accept the offer to take Abramov’s position. As a consequence, in March 2006, Ramzan became prime minister⁴⁵⁴.

Kadyrov immediately started working on his image as a strong leader, in order “to convince the world that the 29-year-old son of Akhmad Kadyrov [...] is in full control of the region”⁴⁵⁵. His Islamization process was part of this image-construction and managed to make him more popular among Chechens.

As premier, he criticized local media for broadcasting immoral programs, implemented censorship, made Quran and *sharia* law lessons compulsory at school and forced women to wear veils. Eventually, he encouraged children to memorize the Quran and thus become *huffaz*, as a way to stop enemies brainwash Muslim people and convince them to fight in some holy wars, which he considers only struggles for power⁴⁵⁶.

He even promised he would improve Chechnya’s situation and fight corruption (within three months from his appointment as prime minister) and criticized those Chechens who had families in other Russian regions and not in Chechnya: he commented that either they brought families back to Chechnya, either they had to leave their jobs⁴⁵⁷.

⁴⁵² The Moscow Times, “Abramov injured in Moscow car crash”, November 21st, 2005, (<http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/abramov-injured-in-moscow-car-crash/208474.html>).

⁴⁵³ Nick Paton Walsh, “Warlord named as Chechen PM”, The Guardian, March 6th, 2006, (<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2006/mar/06/chechnya.nickpatonwalsh>).

⁴⁵⁴ BBC News, “Chechnya Profile. President: Ramzan Kadyrov”, November 12th, 2013, (<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-18190470>).

⁴⁵⁵ Andrei Smirnov, “Chechnya rocked by desertions, sex scandal”, The Jamestown Foundation, March 16th, 2006, (http://www.jamestown.org/programs/nc/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=31491&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=188&no_cache=1).

⁴⁵⁶ See: Deana Kjukan, “Latest school for huffaz opens in Chechnya”, Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty, June 4th, 2013, (<http://www.rferl.org/content/chechnya-hafizes-kadyrov-chechnya/25006922.html>).

⁴⁵⁷ See: Ria Novosti, “Chechen PM says all militant groups eliminated”, March 10th, 2006, (<http://en.ria.ru/russia/20060310/44128238.html>).

He decided to establish a moral discipline which would accompany traditional Chechen values⁴⁵⁸ not only to be perceived as an adequate leader, but also in an attempt not to be seen as the most feared and hated man in Chechnya.

He “advocated polygamy, banned gambling and clamped down on the sale of alcohol”⁴⁵⁹ (without causing any protest). He also claimed he was looking for a second wife, as *sharia* allows him⁴⁶⁰, and even issued “an order for women’s mobile phones to be monitored to ensure that wives are not in contact with ex-boyfriends”⁴⁶¹.

Ramzan Kadyrov wants to be perceived as a good and devoted Muslim who introduced elements of *sharia* in his regime, especially after a short movie on the internet showing him in a sauna with two prostitutes became viral – Kadyrov replied the video was a provocation (he is married with children) and the man was someone who resembled him, but was not him⁴⁶².

Already from 2004, it was known that “he covets the presidency of Chechnya”⁴⁶³. At the age of 30 – the minimum age requested to be president –, Ramzan Kadyrov was a feared man, close ally of Vladimir Putin and the “object of a Stalin-style personality cult”⁴⁶⁴.

In his office, near to Russian and Chechen flags, next to his father’s portrait, a Che Guevara picture stood on the main wall: Ramzan Kadyrov identifies himself with the Argentinean leader⁴⁶⁵ and his fan club⁴⁶⁶ reckons him with this paragon. “The subtext is clear: Kadyrov wants to be seen as a former freedom fighter who has swapped his camouflage fatigues for a suit”⁴⁶⁷.

⁴⁵⁸ See: Liz Fuller, “Russia: Kadyrov looks set to become Chechen republic head”, Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty, February 16th, 2007, (<http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1074746.html>).

⁴⁵⁹ The Independent, “Ramzan Kadyrov: the warrior king of Chechnya”, January 4th, 2007.

⁴⁶⁰ See: Ria Novosti, “Kadyrov praises polygamy, says seeking beautiful 2nd wife”, February 24th, 2011.

⁴⁶¹ Andrew Osborn, “Chechen PM in sauna sex scandal”, The Independent, April 3rd, 2006, (<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/chechen-pm-in-sauna-sex-scandal-472565.html>).

⁴⁶² See: Andrei Smirnov, “Chechnya rocked by desertions, sex scandal”, March 16th, 2006.

⁴⁶³ The Independent, “Ramzan Kadyrov: the warrior king of Chechnya”, January 4th, 2007.

⁴⁶⁴ *Ibidem*.

See also: Aslan Doukaev, “Moscow’s tactics in Chechnya draw on Stalinist legacy”, Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty, April 13th, 2009, (http://www.rferl.org/content/Moscows_Tactics_In_Chechnya_Draw_On_Stalinist_Legacy/1607746.html).

⁴⁶⁵ Jonathan Littell (2010), p. 55.

⁴⁶⁶ See: Majnat Kurbanova, “Ramzan Kadyrov, father of the nation”, Osservatorio Balcani e Caucaso, April 13th, 2011, (<http://www.balcanicaucaso.org/eng/Regions-and-countries/Chechnya/Ramzan-Kadyrov-father-of-the-nation-92026>).

⁴⁶⁷ The Independent, “Ramzan Kadyrov: the warrior king of Chechnya”, January 4th, 2007.

Slogans all over Grozny say that people are proud of him, “We’re proud of you!”⁴⁶⁸; even if he may have ordered Politkovskaja’s murder and personally tortured men together with his *kadyrovcy*. TV shows of Chechen televisions show programs⁴⁶⁹ in which schoolchildren are asked to participate in nationwide essay competition with the title “Ramzan: A Hero of Our Time. Discuss”, followed by a program awarding the “Person of the year”.

During the rare interviews he gives, journalists can ask him only questions that have been previously accorded. Throughout an interview, he said that “personality cults are an insult to Islam. [...] It’s non-friends who spread such speculation. I am a son of the Chechen people. I am no different from anyone else”⁴⁷⁰.

He has got a lion and a rare tiger; he is friend of Mike Tyson – they were seen together in Gudermes during the second All-Russian Boxing Tournament in honor of Akhmad Kadyrov⁴⁷¹ – and usually hands banknotes of 1,000 roubles (20 euro) to his subjects. Furthermore, he is president of the Ramzan boxing club⁴⁷² and of the local soccer team.

In 2005, Ramzan had already two degrees, a PhD in economics and had the professor *status*. Kadyrov told Anna Politkovskaja that he graduated from a branch of one of Moscow’s universities, but did not say in which subject⁴⁷³. He even graduated from Makhachkala University (Dagestan university) in economics and law⁴⁷⁴.

On April 5th, 2007, Ramzan Kadyrov became the new Chechen president, after having taken a oath in front of thousands of people. When Alkhanov had taken Akhmad Kadyrov’s place, three years before, “sembrava evidente che Alkhanov aveva accettato

⁴⁶⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁶⁹ See: The Herald, “*Kadyrov: sinner or saviour?*”, December 30th, 2006, (<http://www.heraldscotland.com/kadyrov-sinner-or-saviour-1.829264>).

⁴⁷⁰ The Independent, “*Ramzan Kadyrov: the warrior king of Chechnya*”, January 4th, 2007.

⁴⁷¹ See: Kommersant, “*Mike Tyson visits Chechnya*”, September 17th, 2005, (http://www.kommersant.com/p609297/r_500/Mike_Tyson_Visits_Chechnya/).

⁴⁷² See: Steven Lee Myers, “*Even Chechnya’s dream street is a dead end*”, The New York Times, March 23rd, 2005, (http://www.nytimes.com/2005/03/23/international/europe/23letter.html?_r=1&).

⁴⁷³ Majnat Kurbanova, “*Ramzan Kadyrov, father of the nation*”, April 13th, 2011.

⁴⁷⁴ Pietro Sinatti, “*Chi è Ramzan Kadyrov, l’uomo di Putin nominato presidente della Cecenia*”, Il Sole 24 Ore, April 6th, 2007, (<http://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/SoleOnLine4/Attualita%20ed%20Esteri/Esteri/2007/03/cecenia-kadyrov-putin.shtml?uuid=0cb65dfa-c8cb-11db-b7ce-00000e251029&DocRulesView=Libero>).

l'incarico ben consapevolmente di dover tenere in caldo la poltrona"⁴⁷⁵. As Alkhanov was forced to leave, Putin chose Ramzan because he helped Chechnya and could "proseguire l'opera di risanamento sociale ed economico"⁴⁷⁶.

Article 76 of the Chechen Constitution, indeed, says that if the president of the republic dies or steps down, the prime minister will be devolved with his duties⁴⁷⁷.

Many, on the other hand, said that Ramzan Kadyrov was not the right man for Chechnya: he was too authoritarian, a despot⁴⁷⁸.

Baisarov, a former rebel who became one of Akhmad Kadyrov's body guards, criticized Ramzan Kadyrov's work after his father, Akhmad, died. Baisarov said Kadyrov was like a medieval tyrant acting with total impunity, he knew also where his victims are buried⁴⁷⁹. Baisarov denounced his tortures and clan and then escaped in Moscow, where he was killed just after his revelations⁴⁸⁰.

There are also rumors about Kadyrov's enemies in politics⁴⁸¹: after having found out about billionaire bank accounts of Grozny's Major, Kadyrov dismissed major Muslim Khuchiyev for "violations in the distribution of land plots in the capital"⁴⁸² and replaced him with one of his relatives.

Kadyrov rules his country knowing that Putin gave him "carte blanche in Chechnya only because – and as long as – he guarantees at all costs the rebel region's submission

⁴⁷⁵ Jonathan Littell (2010), p. 36.

⁴⁷⁶ Pietro Sinatti, "*Chi è Ramzan Kadyrov, l'uomo di Putin nominato presidente della Cecenia*", April 6th, 2007.

⁴⁷⁷ See: Liz Fuller, "*Russia: Kadyrov looks set to become Chechen republic head*", February 16th, 2007.

⁴⁷⁸ Pietro Sinatti, "*Chi è Ramzan Kadyrov, l'uomo di Putin nominato presidente della Cecenia*", April 6th, 2007.

⁴⁷⁹ See: The Independent, "*Ramzan Kadyrov: the warrior king of Chechnya*", January 4th, 2007.

⁴⁸⁰ See: The Jamestown Foundations, "*Movladi Baisarov killed in Moscow*", November 22nd, 2006, (http://www.jamestown.org/programs/nc/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=32265&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=188&no_cache=1).

See also: Zheglov Alexander and Mashkin Sergey, "*Chechen commander killed in Moscow*", Kommersant, November 20th, 2006, (http://www.kommersant.com/p723010/Movladi_Baisarov_Gorets_Chechnya_liquidation).

⁴⁸¹ Majnat Kurbanova, "*Miti e leggende della Cecenia contemporanea*", Osservatorio Balcani e Caucaso, November 25th, 2011, (<http://www.balcanicaucaso.org/aree/Cecenia/Miti-e-leggende-della-Cecenia-contemporanea-107822>).

⁴⁸² Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty, "*Chechen leader replaces Grozny mayor*", October 9th, 2012, (<http://www.rferl.org/content/chechen-leader-replaces-grozny-mayor/24733562.html>).

to the central power”⁴⁸³. This is the so-called Kadyrov-system: he can continue abusing human rights in order to dismantle the terrorist units, but has to be loyal to Putin.

For the same reason, Kadyrov assured Putin that, during the parliamentary elections in 2012, Chechen people would “honor their civic duty”⁴⁸⁴: United Russia, Putin’s political party, got 99.48% of votes in Chechnya. As a local reporter explained, Chechen residents are instructed on who to vote: people have no choice in this “Soviet-style practice”⁴⁸⁵ but to vote President Putin, or they will attract authorities’ attention.

The Islamization policy (which includes the building of the mosque inspired to the Istanbul one) was possible only because “in cambio dei suoi servizi, Ramzan ottenne il permesso di venire incontro alle richieste degli independentisti per quanto riguarda le concessioni all’Islam”⁴⁸⁶.

Thus, Kadyrov has to “keep both his people and the Kremlin happy”⁴⁸⁷.

Victory Prospekt, the main thoroughfare running from the Kadyrov Square, was renamed after Putin, on October 5th, 2008. This date is also Ramzan’s birthday, and it was an occasion to celebrate “the 420th anniversary of the establishment of good-neighborly between Russia and Chechnya”⁴⁸⁸.

As reported by Kommersant, Putin could not prevent a street being named after him, but did not welcome this step. Indeed, during the Soviet period, but also in present times, there were laws which forbid to name streets after living people. Even though many criticized this action, it was one of Ramzan Kadyrov’s decision, which was not subject to agreement from Moscow⁴⁸⁹.

⁴⁸³ Majnat Kurbanova, “*The Kadyrov system: neither Russia nor sharia*”, Osservatorio Balcani e Caucaso, October 21st, 2011, (<http://www.balcanicaucaso.org/eng/Regions-and-countries/Chechnya/The-Kadyrov-system-neither-Russian-nor-sharia-104736>).

⁴⁸⁴ Majnat Kurbanova, “*Russian elections and the wonders of Chechen arithmetic*”, Osservatorio Balcani e Caucaso, March 1st, 2012, (<http://www.balcanicaucaso.org/eng/Regions-and-countries/Chechnya/Russian-elections-and-the-wonders-of-Chechen-arithmetic-112474>).

⁴⁸⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁸⁶ Giovanni Bensi, “*I Kadyrov tra i due fronti*”, from “*Cecenia. Una guerra e una pacificazione violenta*”, p. 126.

⁴⁸⁷ Majnat Kurbanova, “*The Kadyrov system: neither Russia nor sharia*”, October 21st, 2011.

⁴⁸⁸ The Jamestown Foundation, “*Kadyrov renames Grozny Street in Putin’s honor*”, October 12th, 2008, (http://www.jamestown.org/programs/nc/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=5215&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=169&no_cache=1).

⁴⁸⁹ The Jamestown Foundation, “*Kadyrov renames Grozny Street in Putin’s honor*”, October 12th, 2008.

When the “counter-terroristic” operations ended in 2009, the battalions of the ministry of defence (Vostok and Zapad) were disbanded, leaving all the other forces under Kadyrov’ control. Medvedev, at that time Russian president, was said to have made a “purely populist move, [as] the Kremlin has crowned Ramzan Kadyrov to reign in the region and given him total freedom as the rightful and personal master of Chechnya. A Chechnya where one thing is already clear: his word is law”⁴⁹⁰.

It has been clearly an administrative declaration: Kadyrov administration got more power, and federal serviced lost their control⁴⁹¹.

Dudaev⁴⁹² had claimed that the 23rd of February was the “official day of the renaissance of the Chechen people”, but also the day to mourn the deportation of 1944. In 2011, Ramzan Kadyrov decided to move the mourning day on the 10th of May, which also happens to be the anniversary of Akhmad Kadyrov’s burial: this date suddenly became the “day of memory and mourning”⁴⁹³, named “Day of Memory and Grief of the nations of the republic”. Thus, the 6th and 7th of May are devoted to celebrate the 1945 victory and the 9th is devoted to mourning Ramzan’s father⁴⁹⁴.

On 9th May, 2010, a museum dedicated to Akhmad Kadyrov and the Great Patriotic War was opened, “in a mix of eclectic symbols – a celebration of the life of the first president and a tribute to the Chechen veterans of the Great Patriotic War”⁴⁹⁵.

The link between Akhmad Kadyrov and the II World War is a new kind of rhetoric, considering the role that Chechens played in this war⁴⁹⁶. Being linked to this war, Akhmad Kadyrov is made a hero; Ramzan can legitimize his and his father’s regime, and improve the cult of personality of Akhmad⁴⁹⁷.

A statue dedicated to his father was put in the centre of the city, in the Akhmad Kadyrov Square. All around the city, many are the references to Akhmad Kadyrov, the

⁴⁹⁰ Arkady Babchenko, “Russia’s decision to pull out of Chechnya is overdue and overplayed”, The Guardian, April 16th, 2009, (<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/apr/16/chechnya-russia-analysis>).

⁴⁹¹ Maria Elena Murdaca, “Non è un mio problema”, Osservatorio Balcani e Caucaso, November 20th, 2009, (<http://www.balcanicaucaso.org/aree/Russia/Non-e-un-mio-problema-47584>).

⁴⁹² See: Chapter I, 17.

⁴⁹³ Aude Merlin, “Remembering and forgetting”, p. 45, from “Chechnya at war and beyond”.

⁴⁹⁴ See: *Ibidem*, p. 46.

⁴⁹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 41.

⁴⁹⁶ See: Chapter I, p. 14.

⁴⁹⁷ See: Aude Merlin, “Remembering and forgetting” (2014), p. 43.

“first President of the Chechen republic, Hero of Russia”⁴⁹⁸. An inscription saying “Eternal Glory to the heroes” is a few steps from a bas-relief dedicated to him.

In March 2011, a Chechen football team led by Kadyrov himself played in Grozny’s stadium against an all-star team from Brazil. The match was organized “by the attention-hungry Kadyrov, who enjoys a flourishing personality cult in this southern Russian republic, and [was] an attempt to portray Chechnya as stable and safe from insurgent violence”⁴⁹⁹. The game ended 6-4 to Brazilians.

The 280 million dollar soccer stadium was built in memory of Akhmad Kadyrov. It comprises two training fields, swimming pools, tennis courts, boxing and wrestling rings. To develop soccer culture, Kadyrov invited former captain of the Dutch national team to coach FC Terek Grozny team. The stadium is mainly a symbol of how Kadyrov is planning to lead “his war-torn republic in Russia’s North Caucasus region into the international limelight”⁵⁰⁰.

At the inauguration, on May 11th, he organized a friendly match between the FC Terek Grozny and a team in which Maradona, Luis Figo and Franco Baresi were included. Authorities denied having paid the foreign players, but there is no clue on why they would have been in Chechnya otherwise⁵⁰¹.

Later on, he welcomed in Grozny a cup which had belonged to Prophet Muhammad – without any evidence – and drunk from it in front of all Chechen officials.

In occasion of his 35th birthday anniversary, the government, “just recovered from the mystical rapture caused by the prophet’s cup”⁵⁰², organized an event, inviting music and movie stars. Kadyrov denied the celebration was connected to his birthday and

⁴⁹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 41.

⁴⁹⁹ Tom Parfitt, “*For football fans in Grozny, it’s just like watching Brazil. No, really*”, The Guardian, March 9th, 2011, (<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/mar/08/brazil-chechnya-grozny-ramzan-kadyrov>).

⁵⁰⁰ Amina Umarova, Daisy Sindelar, “*In Chechnya, Kadyrov spared no expense in making his soccer dreams come true*”, Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty, May 12th, 2011, (http://www.rferl.org/content/chechnya_kadyrov_soccer_football_new_stadium/24098175.html).

⁵⁰¹ *Ibidem*.

⁵⁰² Majnat Kurbanova, “*The Kadyrov system: neither Russia nor sharia*”, October 21st, 2011.

banned public celebration⁵⁰³, forbidding any event to be devoted to him⁵⁰⁴, but his birthday happens to coincide with Grozny Day, the city's founding anniversary.

One of the guests, American actress Hilary Swank, went to the birthday celebration not expecting critics from human rights associations: she did not know who he was, and then fired her assistants for having accepted the invitation⁵⁰⁵. Violinist Vanessa Mae, who performed, is claimed to have been paid 500,000 dollars. When asked where the money came from, Kadyrov said as usual that Allah gave it to them⁵⁰⁶.

Even though Mr. Kadyrov is believed to be implicated in human rights abuses and torture, he loves animals and has his personal zoo. Shortly after the news that a Danish giraffe was going to be killed, Kadyrov used his Instagram account⁵⁰⁷ – a social media used to share pictures and video on the internet – to let his followers know that “on humanitarian grounds, I am ready to take Marius [the giraffe] in. We can guarantee him good living conditions and care for his health”⁵⁰⁸.

Kadyrov is used to posting pictures of his ordinary life on the application, and has now quite an impressive number of followers: more than 520,000. Ramzan Kadyrov is using this application to show the world that he is a normal Chechen man, a good ruler of a normalized country, but at the same time a strong man.

⁵⁰³ BBC News, “*Hollywood stars fly in on Chechen leader's birthday*”, October 7th, 2011, (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-15197717>).

⁵⁰⁴ Andrew Osborn, “*Chechen warlord enjoys a quiet birthday*”, The Telegraph, October 5th, 2011, (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/russia/8809581/Chechen-warlord-Ramzan-Kadyrov-enjoys-a-quiet-multi-million-pound-birthday.html>).

⁵⁰⁵ Ben Child, “*Hilary Swank sacks manager and staff following Ramzan Kadyrov PR disaster*”, The Guardian, October 31st, 2011, (<http://www.theguardian.com/film/2011/oct/31/hilary-swank-sacks-manager>).

⁵⁰⁶ BBC News, “*Hollywood stars fly in on Chechen leader's birthday*”, October 7th, 2011.

⁵⁰⁷ To see his profile and his pictures: http://instagram.com/kadyrov_95.

And also: Elizabeth F. Ralph, “*Ramzan Kadyrov's 11 weirdest Instagrams*”, Foreign Policy, May 15th, 2013, (http://blog.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2013/05/15/chechen_leader_ramzan_kadyrov_s_weirdest_instagram_s).

⁵⁰⁸ Shaun Walker, “*Ramzan Kadyrov offers to adopt Marius giraffe facing slaughter*”, The Guardian, February 13th, 2014, (<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/feb/13/ramzan-kadyrov-marius-giraffe-adoption-offer-denmark>).

Using as example Putin's photographs⁵⁰⁹, which capture him fishing, fighting, or handling a gun, or with a tiger, Kadyrov did the same. The use of social media is coherent with his personality cult⁵¹⁰, and also an "opportunity to monitor public opinion"⁵¹¹, as he admitted.

Kadyrov decided to challenge one of his employees, the Culture and Sports Ministry, in the boxing ring. Showing pictures of the match, Kadyrov explained that the match was needed to explain to the minister that "he has to work with his head"⁵¹². He also added: "whether Akhmadov [the minister] will be punished in the ring or not will only be clear after tomorrow's meeting"⁵¹³.

He posted photos of him with movie stars in Grozny, with his children, and even with Bekkhan Ibragimov, a Chechen involved in the murder of a Russian soccer fan in 2010. Ibragimov was believed to be in jail⁵¹⁴ at that time, as he was convicted of hooliganism and was responsible of the fatal knifing (he received a sentence of five years, but had been released on parole).

Despite the critics related to this last picture – coming mostly from Moscow – Kadyrov initially threatened to close his Instagram account but, after the web sarcastic comments⁵¹⁵, he decided to continue using it.

On May 27th, 2013, during a press conference, Russian journalists asked Ramzan Kadyrov many questions about all his portraits placed on the streets and in public buildings, saying "Спасибо за Грозный!; Спасибо за Гудермес!; Спасибо за район!;

⁵⁰⁹ The Telegraph, "In pictures: Vladimir Putin – man of action", (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/picturegalleries/worldnews/10353374/In-pictures-Vladimir-Putin-man-of-action.html?frame=2691631>).

⁵¹⁰ See: Tom Parfitt, "Chechnya dictator Ramzan Kadyrov's Instagram becomes web hit", The Telegraph, February 19th, 2013, (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/russia/9880403/Chechnya-dictator-Ramzan-Kadyrovs-Instagram-becomes-web-hit.html>).

⁵¹¹ Miriam Elder, "Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov bemoans the burden of Instagram", The Guardian, March 4th, 2013, (<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/mar/04/ramzan-kadyrov-struggles-instagram>).

⁵¹² Deana Kjukan, "Chechen leader has his ministers on the ropes", Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty, April 23rd, 2013, (<http://www.rferl.org/content/chechnya-kadyrov-boxing-ministers/24966206.html>).

⁵¹³ *Ibidem*.

⁵¹⁴ Tom Balmforth, "After photo scandal, no more Instagram for Kadyrov?", Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty, May 17th, 2013, (<http://www.rferl.org/content/kadyrov-chechnya-instagram-controversy/24989034.html>).

⁵¹⁵ *Ibidem*.

Верим и поддерживаем!”⁵¹⁶. Kadyrov decided to remove all of them, because these portraits “were practically everywhere and produced nothing apart from anger and ridicule among the public”⁵¹⁷. Despite this, portraits of Akhmad Kadyrov and Vladimir Putin stayed at their place, as the cult of personality of these two cannot be stopped.

In 2009, Kadyrov had bought a talented run horse called Bankable and hired a South African trainer to train him in England. The horse was not his first and only runner, but Kadyrov decided to make him run at Royal Ascot. Human Rights Watch was worried that Ramzan Kadyrov could show up representing his country and accepting the trophy from a member of the royal family. The British Horseracing Authority responded that it had set limited criteria⁵¹⁸ to decide who to accept in the competition: the horse owner must have never declared bankrupt nor have had criminal conviction.

Kadyrov owns a stable of horses worth 2 million euro and, when asked about where the money comes from, he always replies that he doesn't know, it must be Allah's⁵¹⁹.

On the occasion of another horse race in Australia, Australian authorities said they would not give Ramzan Kadyrov a visa to enter their country “because of Chechen ruler's brutal politics”⁵²⁰. Kadyrov was planning to send his horse compete in the 2009 Melbourne Cup. They also added that his probable victory would be a “public relations disaster”, as the cup is awarded by a representative of Queen Elizabeth II.

Furthermore, one of his groomers was standing trial in Dubai for the murder of Sulim Yamadayev⁵²¹.

⁵¹⁶ “Thank for Gornzyj! Thank you for Gudermes! Thank you for the district! We believe and support”. Ибрагимов Муслим and Иванов Александр, “*На улицах городов и сел Чечни резко сократилось число портретов Рамзана Кадырова, сообщают местные жители*”, Кавказкий Узел, June 12th, 2013 (<http://www.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/225572/>).

⁵¹⁷ Valery Dzutsev, “*Moscow orders crackdown on Kadyrov personality cult*”, The Jamestown Foundation, June 17th, 2013, (http://www.jamestown.org/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=41032&no_cache=1#.VB1WC5R_si4).

⁵¹⁸ Chris Cook, “*Royal Ascot awaits Stalin of our times and his Bankable lot*”, The Guardian, May 27th, 2009, (<http://www.theguardian.com/sport/2009/may/27/royal-ascot-chechnya-president>).

⁵¹⁹ Deena Kjuka, “*Chechnya's Kadyrov expands his equine empire*”, Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty, September 13th, 2012, (<http://www.rferl.org/content/kadyrov-expands-equine-empire/24707109.html>).

⁵²⁰ Nikolaus von Twickel, “*Kadyrov and his horses under fire in Australia*”, The Moscow Times, September 21st, 2009, (<http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/383713.html>).

⁵²¹ Asher Byron, “*Aussies outraged over Kadyrov's horses*”, Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty, September 21st, 2009, (http://www.rferl.org/content/Aussies_Outraged_Over_Kadyrovs_Horses_/1827772.html).

Gérard Depardieu – who became a Russian citizen in January 2013⁵²² – went to Chechnya⁵²³ and said he was impressed by Kadyrov’s leadership; the Chechen president tried to convince him to move to Grozny and gave him the title of honorary citizen and an apartment in the capital⁵²⁴. Indeed, the French actor said that the quick rebuilding of Grozny was inspiring, and that he would like to make a movie about the reconstruction, as he was sure that Chechen people are happy about the new cities and lives⁵²⁵: the movie name was “Heart of my father”, Kadyrov wrote on Instagram.

Kadyrov was seen and photographed in Depardieu and Elizabeth Hurley’s company⁵²⁶, in the occasion of the movie presentation in Chechnya. On September 4th, 2014, Depardieu’s movie “Viktor” was presented in Russian theatres. The movie was eventually said to have highlighted “the extraordinary redevelopment of Chechnya in Russia’s restive North Caucasus”⁵²⁷.

Chechen president became popular once again on the news when, after having attended an opening ceremony of a museum and a traditional wedding (during which Kadyrov gave the couple 1,000,000 roubles, equivalent to 20,000 euro), he realized he had lost his phone⁵²⁸. His guards called the organizers and got the list of names of the events’ participants. Eventually, more than a thousand people were gathered and

⁵²² The Moscow Times, “Actor Gerard Depardieu eyed for Crimean wineries job”, July 28th, 2014, (<http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/actor-gerard-depardieu-eyed-for-crimean-wineres-job/504190.html>).

⁵²³ See: Walter Sperling, “Grozny as it was before the war” (2014) p. 19.

⁵²⁴ Lyudmila Alexandrova, “Gerard Depardieu gets more property in new motherland”, Russia Beyond the Headlines, March 1st, 2013, (http://in.rbth.com/arts/2013/03/01/gerard_depardieu_gets_more_property_in_new_motherland_22611.html).

⁵²⁵ See: Howard Amos, “Depardieu inspired by Kadyrov’s leadership”, The Moscow Times, February 25th, 2013, (<http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/depardieu-inspired-by-kadyrovs-leadership-video/476022.html>).

⁵²⁶ Tom Parfitt, “Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov welcomes Gerard Depardieu and Elizabeth Hurley to Grozny”, The Telegraph, May 21st, 2013, (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/russia/10071866/Chechen-leader-Ramzan-Kadyrov-welcomes-Gerard-Depardieu-and-Elizabeth-Hurley-to-Grozny.html>).

⁵²⁷ Luke Johnson, “Sex, torture, and Chechnya: new Depardieu movie hits Russian theatres”, Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty, September 5th, 2014, (<http://www.rferl.org/content/sex-torture-chechnya-depardieu-movie-hits-/26569063.html>).

⁵²⁸ See: Tom Balmforth, “It takes a village to find Ramzan Kadyrov’s phone”, Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty, August 19th, 2014, (<http://www.rferl.org/content/russia-chechnya-kadyrov-cell-phone/26539203.html>).

See also: Alec Luhn, “Chechen leader has 1,000 wedding guests questioned after losing phone”, The Guardian, August 19th, 2014, (<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/aug/19/chechen-leader-wedding-phone-ramzan-kadyrov-instagram>).

questioned about the mission phone. It is not known whether he did find his phone or not.

In August 2014, Ramzan Kadyrov was included in the Night Wolves club, a motorcycle group which is also referred to as the Russian Hell's Angels⁵²⁹: they combine anti-Soviet sentiment with love for rock music, bikes and Vladimir Putin. Putin, in 2011, had invited these bikers for a show near to the Black Sea and gave to their president a Medal of Honor for “activity in the patriotic education of young people”⁵³⁰. Of course, Kadyrov posted pictures and videos of the event on his Instagram.

2. Chechnya's future within the North Caucasus region.

What emerges from this analysis, considering the Chechenization policy and its main effects (the defeat of the rebels, the violations of human rights being diminished and targeted, the economic dependence on Russia), is that Chechnya will not be able to change any time soon its *status* within the Russian Federation and become independent. Chechen president managed to help his country, and emerged as the “virtually unchallenged [...] arbiter of Chechnya's fate”⁵³¹. Dependent on Putin's support, Kadyrov has spent all his political life reconstructing Chechnya and making all the war scarves disappear. Cities are modern, tourism is planned to expand, Chechens' life seems back to normality.

Despite this, corruption and unemployment are already spread through all over the country, as corruption is widespread throughout Russian Federation. Without Russian federal money, nothing would have been reconstructed, and people would still be suffering of the war consequences: no houses, no water, no gas, no school.

Thus, as we have seen, Kadyrov has been making the Kremlin happy (the terrorist threat is no longer present, thanks to violent measures taken by the *kadyrovcy*), and has

⁵²⁹ The term refers to the Hells Angels of the US, the first ever motorcycle club (which is today considered a criminal organization).

⁵³⁰ Alide Naylor, “*Chechen leader Kadyrov joins Night Wolves motorcycle gang*”, The Moscow Times, August 25th, 2014, (<http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/chechen-leader-kadyrov-joins-notorious-night-wolves-motorcycle-club/505779.html>).

⁵³¹ John Russell, “*Chechnya: monster in the mountains*”, May 2010.

given the Chechens their religious freedom – even if with strict rules – with a sort of political and cultural freedom as well. He is the guarantor of peace⁵³².

Chechnya will not be able to become a separate country, even though Russians do not care anymore about its presence in their country. The Kremlin is not willing to let its regions go, as it was not in the past, and Chechnya will not be able to be alone, without federal money.

Vladimir Putin is not going to let the North Caucasus independent: he has been planning a way to strengthen the Kremlin's control over the region. When the New North Caucasus Federal District⁵³³ was created in 2010, Ramzan Kadyrov did not seem to be enthusiast. Kadyrov commented that Khloponin⁵³⁴ had been chosen to resolve the region's issues and would focus on economic problems (the project was born with the aim focused on the economic problems of the region); Kadyrov hoped the district would help “raise living standards in the North Caucasus, but [he feared] it might deter potential investors”⁵³⁵.

Khloponin, appointed as envoy to the North Caucasus Federal District by then-President Medvedev, was dismissed from his post. Analysts had already anticipated this resignation, as his project of attracting investments and businesses in the region did not work: he had been advertized by Russian authorities “as a multi-millionaire who would not embezzle government funds in the North Caucasus, but steer businesses to the region”, however eventually he did not invest his own money nor attract investors. Even if Russia assured that the potential investors would receive 100 percent guarantees to offset the risk of armed militant opposition's attack, foreign businesses never arrived.

Moreover, the fact that Vladimir Putin chose Kadyrov over Khloponin, further diminished his authority⁵³⁶. As a consequence, all the leaders of North Caucasian republics continued referring directly to the Kremlin and not to Khloponin, who wanted

⁵³² The Independent, “*Ramzan Kadyrov: the warrior king of Chechnya*”, January 4th, 2007.

⁵³³ See: Chapter II, 33.

⁵³⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁵³⁵ Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty, “*Medvedev creates New North Caucasus Federal District*”, January 20th, 2010.

⁵³⁶ Mairbek Vatchagaev, “*Appointment of General Melikov to replace Khloponin points to Kremlin bid to subdue Dagestani insurgency*”, The Jamestown Foundation, Vol. 11. Issue 92, May 16th, 2014, (http://www.jamestown.org/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=42375&no_cache=1#.VB6xaJR_si4).

to establish himself as “a regional decision maker”⁵³⁷. Thus, his bureaucratic structure had little influence: he did not have any important impact of the region’s situation.

Putin named Sergei Melikov⁵³⁸, the Minister of Interior and Lieutenant General, to replace him. Melikov’s career within the Ministry of Interior was spent entirely in the North Caucasus: “his career was built on his experience fighting the rebels in the North Caucasus, which made him a specialist in this field”⁵³⁹.

Therefore, Melikov’s task may be the one of fighting armed underground opposition movement and this would be a signal for North Caucasus leaders that they have to “submit to the Russian military general”⁵⁴⁰ once again.

Putin’s priority in the North Caucasus is Dagestan, not Chechnya anymore, as the resistance has spread the neighbor republic. Indeed, since Doku Umarov was killed, and considering Kadyrov’s “brutal and unscrupulous counterinsurgency policies”⁵⁴¹, it is believed that the insurgency will “Dagestanize”⁵⁴² and the process of shifting the rebellion away from Chechnya will be completed – but Chechnya will not cease to be “an arena for armed attacks against the state’s power”⁵⁴³.

Kebekov⁵⁴⁴, Umarov’s successor, is an ideologue of the North Caucasian resistance and is an opponent of terrorist suicide attacks. He is associated to acts of sabotage on checkpoints, military bases and convoys. Dagestan is also more favorable to insurgency, as Kadyrov’s vertical power is not possible, Dagestani society is poly-ethnic and there is greater freedom speech which allows propaganda⁵⁴⁵.

⁵³⁷ *Ibidem*.

⁵³⁸ See: Кавказский Узел, “Меликов Сергей Алимович”, August 7th, 2014, (<http://www.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/242445/>).

⁵³⁹ Mairbek Vatchagaev, “Appointment of General Melikov to replace Khloponin points to Kremlin bid to subdue Dagestani insurgency”, May 16th, 2014.

⁵⁴⁰ *Ibidem*.

⁵⁴¹ Tomas Shmid, “Umarov’s death and the future of the North Caucasus insurgency”, The Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst, July 5th, 2014, (<http://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/12971-umarovs-death-and-the-future-of-the-north-caucasus-insurgency.html>).

⁵⁴² *Ibidem*.

⁵⁴³ *Ibidem*.

⁵⁴⁴ See: Chapter III, p. 52.

⁵⁴⁵ Tomas Shmid, “Umarov’s death and the future of the North Caucasus insurgency”, July 5th, 2014.

Khloponin, still Vice-Premier, was appointed as supervisor of a new Ministry⁵⁴⁶, the one for Development of Northern Caucasus, which is headed by Lev Kuznetsov, former governor of the Krasnodar Krai. The main functions of the new Ministry are “the implementation of the state policy in the sphere of socio-economic development and coordination of the respective federal programs”⁵⁴⁷.

Analysts claim that the creation of a new ministry is associated to the decision of separating responsibility for socio-economic development from the campaign to stamp out the insurgency⁵⁴⁸.

The “Socio-economic development of the Chechen republic 2008-2012”⁵⁴⁹ is one of the three federal programs (with “South Russia”, which ended in 2012, and “Socio-economic development of the republic of Ingushetia 2010-2016”) which were incorporated within the larger state program of “Development of the North Caucasian Federal District through 2025”⁵⁵⁰.

Until 2011, more than 130 billion roubles was spent within these three programs’ framework. Most of the money came from the federal budget (110-120 billion roubles) and was spent on the development of infrastructures: 120 schools, 100 hospitals and medical centers, 50 sport facilities, road and houses were built in the North Caucasian Federal District⁵⁵¹, as confirmed Prime Minister Medvedev⁵⁵².

Thanks to the Socio-economic program in Chechnya for 2008-2012, Kadyrov said that his government managed to commission the construction of a hospital and a clinic,

⁵⁴⁶ See: Кавказский Узел, “Премьер-министр РФ: Александр Хлопонин будет курировать работу нового министерства по делам Северного Кавказа”, May 13th, 2014, (<http://www.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/242483/>).

⁵⁴⁷ Caucasian Knot, “Week in the Caucasus: review of main events of May 12-18”, May 19th, 2014, (<http://eng.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/28166/>).

See also: Кавказский Узел, “Путин заявил о создании министерства по развитию Северного Кавказа и о смене полпреда президента в СКФО”, May 12th, 2014, (<http://www.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/242444/>).

⁵⁴⁸ See: Liz Fuller, “Putin tries new approach to imposing order in North Caucasus”, Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty, May 13th, 2014, (<http://www.rferl.org/content/caucasus-report-melikov-envoy/25383584.html>).

⁵⁴⁹ See: Russian Government, “Prime Minister Vladimir Putin chairs a meeting of the government commission on the socio-economic development of the North Caucasus Federal District”, (<http://archive.premier.gov.ru/eng/events/news/13920/>).

⁵⁵⁰ See: Chapter II, p. 33-34.

⁵⁵¹ See: Memorial, “Human rights activists’ appraisal of the situation in the North Caucasus conflict zone”, Winter 2012-2013, p. 1-5, (<http://www.memo.ru/uploads/files/1056.pdf>).

⁵⁵² Musa Basnukaev, “Reconstruction in Chechnya”, p. 84, from “Chechnya at war and beyond”.

and 27 institutions for instruction; at the end of 2011 other hospitals and 16 schools were already operational⁵⁵³.

Another goal of the Chechen program was to invest in tourist facilities. As reported in February 2014 by the Committee on Tourism, Chechnya was visited by 35,000 tourists in 2013 (they were only 7,000 in 2011)⁵⁵⁴. They were either pilgrims, interested in saints' tomb and in the Grozny mosque, either tourists who went to sightsee the highest lake of the region, Kezenoi-Am. The opening of a ski resort and of a spa complex should also make "the inflow of tourists [...] grow by several orders of magnitude"⁵⁵⁵ in the next years.

"On the whole, the results of the 2008-12 programs were evaluated positively by Moscow"⁵⁵⁶.

For this reason, in 2012, Kadyrov asked the Kremlin to extend the Socio-economic development program until 2017, but this request was not accepted as it was considered high and because Chechnya will be helped through the Development of the North Caucasus Federal District to 2025. Officials eventually decided to finance Chechnya at the same level of the other republics⁵⁵⁷.

The main federal program for the development, which will end in 2025, is divided into three stages. The first one (2013-2015) is aimed at attracting investments; the second one (2016-2020) wants to use the investments to modernize industries, agriculture and agricultural projects; the last one (2021-2025) will be clearly addressed when the results of the first two stages will be known and completed.

"First of all [the program's] success depends on whether the region will manage to attract investors"⁵⁵⁸. As we do know now, Khloponin did not succeed in bringing new investors to Chechnya. Indeed, even if major Russian monopolies (among which there

⁵⁵³ See: Russian Government, "Prime Minister Vladimir Putin meets with Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov", December 13th, 2011, (<http://archive.premier.gov.ru/eng/events/news/17376/>).

⁵⁵⁴ See: Caucasian Knot, "In 2013 Chechnya received more tourists", February 8th, 2014, (<http://eng.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/27224/>).

⁵⁵⁵ Caucasian Knot, "In 2013 Chechnya received more tourists", February 8th, 2014.

⁵⁵⁶ Musa Basnukaev, "Reconstruction in Chechnya" (2014), p. 84.

⁵⁵⁷ See: Mairbek Vatchagaev, "Kadyrov seeks to retain privileged financial position for Chechnya in North Caucasus", The Jamestown Foundation, October 25th, 2012, (http://www.jamestown.org/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=40019&no_cache=1#.VCV1I2d_si4).

⁵⁵⁸ Memorial, "Human rights activists' appraisal of the situation in the North Caucasus conflict zone", Winter 2012-2013.

are Gazprom and Rosneft) declared their will to support some projects, the state did not participate in the implementation of the business projects, so this program was “not so interesting for external investors”⁵⁵⁹.

Funds were allocated “on the basis of estimated costs for specific needs [and] on a project-by-project basis”⁵⁶⁰. Chechnya is currently the republic which is receiving less funds, compared to Stavropol Krai, Dagestan, North Ossetia, Kabardino-Balkaria, Ingushetia and Karachai-Cherkessia. Each republic has a specific budget, coming from both private investors and federal funds. In 2013, Chechnya received 5.2 billion roubles; but no budget support is foreseen for 2014-2015: its government has to attract investments from private sources⁵⁶¹.

The Ministry of Regional Development of the Russian Federation has decided that Chechen republic will face now the same treatment of the other Northern Caucasus republics⁵⁶², even though it is to remember that the economic development is a priority for Chechnya. The plan to withdraw federal funds is possible only with certain conditions, like the fact that oil taxation should be transferred to the Chechen republic⁵⁶³: Chechnya does not receive any direct income taxes from the Open Joint Stock Company “Grozneftegaz”⁵⁶⁴.

Not being one of the main beneficiaries of federal grants, Chechnya is facing a paradoxical situation: Russian government wants to “stop feeding the Caucasus”⁵⁶⁵ to please the political opposition, but on the other hand the federal government recognizes that the funds allocated to Chechnya have been effective over the last few years. Furthermore, more federal investments could help Chechen residents to have a job and good living standards, without the need of moving to big Russian cities⁵⁶⁶.

⁵⁵⁹ *Ibidem*.

⁵⁶⁰ Musa Basnukaev, “*Reconstruction in Chechnya*” (2014), p. 76.

⁵⁶¹ Memorial, “*Human rights activists’ appraisal of the situation in the North Caucasus conflict zone*”, Winter 2012-2013.

⁵⁶² Musa Basnukaev, “*Reconstruction in Chechnya*” (2014), p. 78.

⁵⁶³ *Ibidem*, p. 81.

⁵⁶⁴ “Grozneftegaz is an oil-and-gas production enterprise of Rosneft operation in the North Caucasian Federal District”. Rosneft, “*Grozneftegaz*”, (http://www.rosneft.com/Upstream/ProductionAndDevelopment/southern_russia/grozneftegaz/).

⁵⁶⁵ See: Chapter II, p. 35.

⁵⁶⁶ Musa Basnukaev, “*Reconstruction in Chechnya*”, p. 85.

Russians are “in maggioranza contrari a destinare tante risorse pubbliche verso un enorme buco nero. [The Chechen program being shut down in 2013] è un segnale per ridimensionare le pretese della Cecenia”⁵⁶⁷.

In conclusion, Chechnya has been using federal funds to improve its tourist sector and economy in general – there was also a plan called “Program of Agricultural Development and Regulation of Markets for Agricultural Products, Raw Material and Food”, which finished in 2012 – and managed to receive benefits: tourists increased, Grozny is a major city attracting funds and investments, but the main problems are unemployment and weak development in economy sectors⁵⁶⁸.

Chechnya showed an effort to attract foreign investors (due to some large projects, as the mosque, the skyscrapers, the stadium) and Kadyrov also found some private investors in the Middle East⁵⁶⁹; but now needs to focus on its problems.

As creating more jobs is the way to fight unemployment, Chechnya is continuously depended on Russian federal money in order to have investments and new projects. For the next future, Chechnya – even being the more and better developed country of the North Caucasus – is going to need Russian support and will not be able to be economically independent (not receiving money for its oil being a reason for this).

Chechnya and Russia, besides, have a “dipendenza biunivoca”⁵⁷⁰. Indeed, even if gas and oil extraction in Chechnya is not very consistent, it may lead to bigger discoveries and project in the region⁵⁷¹.

The future of Chechnya depends now on Kadyrov’s presidency. His regime may not last “for long time”⁵⁷², and this is decided by President Putin, who also is in charge of allocating federal funds. Putin can choose whether Kadyrov can stay in power in Grozny, or not, depending on his results and conditions. If something should change, Kadyrov’s regime may become more authoritarian, thus creating tensions with the Kremlin and not letting Chechnya modernize anymore⁵⁷³.

⁵⁶⁷ Cecilia Tosi, “Kadyrovstan: come farsi un mini-impero con i soldi del Cremlino”, from “*Limes. Grandi giochi nel Caucaso*”, n. 2/2014.

⁵⁶⁸ Musa Basnukaev, “*Reconstruction in Chechnya*”, p. 85.

⁵⁶⁹ Cecilia Tosi, “Kadyrovstan: come farsi un mini-impero con i soldi del Cremlino”.

⁵⁷⁰ Cecilia Tosi, “Kadyrovstan: come farsi un mini-impero con i soldi del Cremlino”.

⁵⁷¹ See: *Ibidem*.

⁵⁷² John Russell, “*Ramzan Kadyrov’s illiberal peace*” (2014), p. 147.

⁵⁷³ *Ibidem*.

There is also little evidence that Chechnya is moving from the current position to the one of liberal form of law-based government. Until that moment, Chechen ruler will continue building his state.

Conclusion

Ramzan Kadyrov is not a democratic leader, and Chechnya is far from being considered a democratic country. Despite this fact, analysts are forced to admit, as evidences suggest, that Grozny recovered from its problems.

The Chechenization process has worked, and it is finished. A Chechen president is ruling Chechnya, Russian troops are not present anymore to control the governance in the country, rebels have been defeated, the country is normalized: there are schools, hospitals, roads, the two main cities (Grozny and Gudermes) are business and touristic centers.

Chechens can live according to the *sharia* rules: the Islamization policy allowed religion to play such an important role in the society, and Kadyrov himself has built and legitimized his image of strong leader thanks to religion, which made Muslim sympathize for him and not seek for more religious freedom.

There still are violations of human rights connected to the search of rebels and to the fact that Kadyrov detains all the power with no limits, but the Kremlin seems to accept it, as the Chechenization policy was made in order to normalize the country and end the terrorist problem, which now belongs to Dagestan.

Kadyrov's peacebuilding process – which requires no violence and improvement of social institutions and human rights – is irregular: as we have seen, the method used to track and capture rebels is connected to illegal detentions, torture and kidnappings. On the other hand, looking at the overall results, violence has been reduced only to those cases related to the rebels.

Ramzan Kadyrov is the head of the government and of his militias – which respond only to him – and did manage to achieve a certain degree of peace, hybrid peace.

Chechnya is not anymore a dangerous state, but a country which is now tolerable by Russia, despite the level of criminality and corruption of the Caucasian republic. Kadyrov is popular within Chechnya, he is supported by internal consensus and by Putin himself.

Efforts must be made in the economic field, in order to create jobs and increase the living standards. Doing this, Chechens will not be forced to move to other republics or to join the rebels as they have no other choice.

With the federal funds it was possible to rebuilt an entire country, but now Ramzan Kadyrov should keep looking for investments abroad, as he is doing in the Middle East. Tourism is already improving, however the Kremlin cannot give this republic more funds, as Chechnya must be treated as the other Caucasian countries and Russians are fed up with this monetary assistance.

Chechnya will for sure be dependent on the central government, but there is a chance that Chechens may have better living standards. It all depends on the relation between Putin and Kadyrov, as Kadyrov is a strong leader but is legitimized by the Russian president.

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