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Definitions

Adat – a set of rules based on the tradition that existed among Turkic and several other peoples in the pre-Islamic period.

Aul – a traditional rural residential settlement of Turkic people, also typical to Middle Asia and Caucasus.

Boyevik – a member of an armed criminal organisation acting against the law.

Ghazavat – the war for faith against non-Muslims.

The FSK – the Russian domestic intelligence service.

Mekh-khel – a council of elders in Chechnya whose duty was to solve problems arising in a community and who represented this community.

Nomenclature – ruling positions in the USSR, for which people were assigned by the communist party.

Salafi jihadism – a school of thought of Salafi Muslims that supports a violent jihadist ideology.

Teip – Vainakh tribal organisation consisting of people self-identified through descent from a common ancestor and in which economic and political unities are based on blood relationships.

Tukhum – unification of teips for economic exchange and common resistance to the enemy. There are nine tukhums in Chechnya.

Vainakh – ethnic groups in the North Caucasus and Georgia speaking Nakh languages:
Chechens, Ingush and Kist.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Foreword

The conflict in Chechnya leaves a number of questions for scholars to be answered. This conflict is an ongoing one, and it is difficult to have a neutral and objective attitude towards it.

Many attempts have been undertaken by Russian and international authorities to put an end to inconceivable violence which already became almost a norm in Chechnya. Most of these attempts, though, did not prove to be successful or, in the worst case, led to a new wave of indignation and consequently, violence.

Still, the situation *has* to be taken under control as soon as possible, as the conflict is evolving beyond the borders of the Chechen republic. Such events as the terrorist acts in Moscow, in a Beslan school where almost 200 children died a violent death or recent incident in Vienna, when a former bodyguard of the President of Chechnya was killed by president's direct order¹, show that the conflict will not dissolve by itself and it is spreading and involving other nations and countries.

It seems that international initiative in contributing to problem solving is necessary here. But this point of view is not shared by some power structures, for example, by particular Russian authorities who see North Caucasus the area of their own responsibility.

Too many views – scholar, official and non-official – on the origin of violence in Chechen conflict and conditions that foster it do not let the international community find an optimal solution to this problem. Among these views there is a “bellicose” nature of Caucasians (especially those from the mountain area), the system of Chechen society itself and a struggle for power between clans, growing resentment in the recent decades by the USSR's inhuman policy of repressions and deportation of Chechen people from their motherland, influences of Islamic extremists, poor living conditions and the life in a war-torn society where violence generates violence. Some argue that Chechnya is a gold piece for corrupt authorities whose aim in the conflict is to protect their own interests, and until the rivalry of these authority groups exists, the civil population will never live in peace.

¹ This case is being investigated at the time of writing this work.

This list of opinions can be very long. But none of them became popular enough to win the recognition of majority of scholars. That encouraged me to start a research on this matter: how is a prescribed (or really existing) “bellicose” nature of these people is connected to the recent (or still taking place) ethnic conflict with Russia? How ethnic tensions could start in a society so famous for its hospitality? What are the possibilities of regulation of this conflict and which lesson the failed attempts gave us?

A number of various peace strategies have been applied in the recent time: from peaceful negotiation to the armed invasion. When Russian government started a military campaign in 1994 against Chechnya, it was supposed to put an end to the ethnic discrimination of a non-Chechen and in particular Russian population in Chechnya and to unite the countries like it was before. In this way “the war in the name of peace” began.

Those who gave an order to fight, made it without consulting any specialists in Caucasian region, historians and ethnologists. Such mistakes as, for example, leaving a huge weapon arsenal with the Russian army withdrawal from Chechnya in the beginning of the 1990s and its plunder and misuse by frightened citizens could be avoided if people who were responsible for it knew about the power weapon has over Chechens, their mastery at it and a living blood feud tradition at the time when social and political order turned upside down and people had to protect the life and honour of their families. And the price for this mistake was too high. No one and especially Russian authorities could expect that a “little Chechnya” is capable to withstand such a huge power as Russia. They were sure in a fast settlement of the problem without losses. Still, for soldiers and civilians it was a shock. On the one hand, for young inexperienced 18-year soldiers sent by Russian commanders and on the other hand, for Chechen citizens who watched Soviet people killing Soviet people, and that was too hard for them to comprehend.

The idea of independence spread fast from a small group of “new elites” to the majority of population supported by numerous ethnological and pseudo-ethnological works on the uniqueness and freedom-loving of *vainakh* people, and nation’s memory about past sufferings from the Russian Empire and the USSR regimes fostered it.

The tradition of blood feud did not allow people to put up with the deaths of their relatives and they fought in revenge to save their honour. Staying home protecting the family while other men are fighting is considered a big disgrace for Chechens.

All that was apparently not taken into account before the war and even today, a too complicated combination of factors hinders creating a single picture of the conflict and ways out of it. Each party in this conflict has composed their own picture: supporters of Dudayev, supporters of Russian authorities, supporters of the peaceful regulation of the situation and other – it is still hard to define how many parties did this war involve. And each of those live in their own world while the simple people keep suffering.

The most tragic in this war was its senseless. No one lost and no one won. Just a peace treaty was signed which was violated soon afterwards, and the second war began that also did not end with satisfaction of both sides. The war arose from nothing and ended in nothing, leaving around 100.000 deaths, broken families and vanished villages afterwards.

1.2 Personal interests in the research

My choice of the research area was based on several interconnected factors.

Peace studies and conflict resolution is the sphere I am interested in since human rights lessons maintained by the UN at the school in which many stories have been told about victims of wars. The world of violence, though, seemed to be too faraway because, as a rule, no one thinks about it until he or she is confronted with a war themselves. With globalisation, this world suddenly became very close through mass media, numerous refugees and thoughts that peace is a too fragile matter to feel safe wherever one lives.

Since I was born in the USSR in its turning point when my homeland – Belarus – like all of the fourteen republics separated from Russia, I constantly heard about “happy life in the USSR when we were freely travelling to one republic – for study, to another republic – for summer jobs or holidays, to the third one – to work, and people married to, made friends and work with people of all nationalities from every point of the USSR. And no one could even think of racism, not to speak about ethnic wars”. Every pupil in the RSFSR grew up with the books of Alexander Pushkin, Mikhail Lermontov and Leo Tolstoy where they learnt about severe, independent and brave Caucasians and were proud to be their countrymen until at some moment these people turned against the Russians.

At school we have learnt about such peculiarities of Caucasians as a tradition of blood feud, a clan system, a patriarchy and an age-old struggle with authorities; local people were

represented as hot-tempered and violent. Now I have a chance to consider all that from a scientific, anthropological point of view.

The Chechens and myself share the common language, common USSR history and common part of identity as “homo soveticus” which helped me a lot in the research.

1.3 Research questions and hypothesis

Basing on the results of theoretical research in Chechen conflict theories and of field research among the Chechens I will try to find answers to the following questions:

- What were the relations of Chechens with the foreigners before the colonisation by Russia?
- How did the USSR policies and the war affect intertribal relations, interethnic relations, and power relations of the Chechen society.
- Is the “bellicose” nature of Chechens a reality or a stereotype?
- What was the ground for the exceptional violence of Chechen fighters for freedom during the war?
- Where do Chechens themselves see the roots of violence in this conflict and do they believe in possibility to manage the situation and find the way out? And if yes, how?
- How did the relations with Russians change from the XVI century?
- How does the lack of ethnographical materials about Chechens which were destroyed during the war led to creating pseudo-ethnological works?
- Which role did these works play in the independence movement in Chechnya in the end of 1980s?
- Do Chechens have a right to require independence from Russia?
- How do the Chechens estimate a current situation in their country?
- What is the theoretical explanation for the ethnic tensions?
- How do the scholars and Chechen people see the possibilities of dissolving this conflict?

In finding the answers to these questions I will try to prove the hypothesis that violence in the Chechen ethnic war did not base on the “national character” of Chechens as it popularized in

Russian information flows – from mass media to the scientific works, but based on the external factors which might have influenced any other nation in this way. The possibility of resolution of this conflict lies in addressing these numerous factors by a multilateral conflict management approach.

1.4 Theoretical approaches

The theoretical part of this research will be based on the works of Chechen, Russian and foreign scholars specialising in ethnic conflicts which will help to analyse the situation from different angles.

First, I will make an overview the features of a traditional Chechen society, its inner tribal relations and relations with foreigners and show how inclusion into the Russian Empire and following its policies affected the social system of Chechnya.

Then some of the theories of violence among Chechens will be presented in attempt to understand whether the popular “bellicose nature” of Chechens led to the conflict or the conflict evoked the wild violent instincts in the people.

Next I will analyse how the celebrated “friendship of nations” in the USSR turned into a bloody rivalry between the Russians and the Chechens. Some observations of the few remaining after war time destructions sources of the ethnological data on the Chechen ethnicity from the pre-war time will be made in order to compare how the attitudes have changed, and in order to trace the influence of these changes on the development of racist ideology.

Subsequently, approaches to peacemaking in Chechnya, analyses of the efficacy in conflict regulation and of modern tendencies for problem management in ethnic conflicts will be discussed, and their strong and weak sides estimated.

Among the research literature I would like to single out some authors that are especially helpful for my research. First of all, these are Chechen professional and self-learned ethnographers, ethnologists and anthropologists who studied their nation “from inside” – *Abdurakhman Avtorkhanov*, *Ibrahim Aliroyev* and *Malik Sajdullajev*; *Dzhabrail Gakaev*, *Zarema Ibragimova*, *Majrbek Vachgayev*, as well as a Caucasian scholar *Amjad Jaimoukha*.

The work “Chechnya and the Chechens” by *Adolf Berzhe* written 150 years ago is also a valuable ethnographic source. From the western ethnographers I would like to mention *Frederic Coene*.

Russian theorists of the Chechen war are *A. Blinskij, Nikolaj Bugaj, Leokadia Drobizeva, Aleksandr Uralov, Valery Tishkov, Anna Politkovskaya etc.* The monograph of a Russian ethnologist Valery Tishkov was very helpful in that the author uses a big number of interviews conducted by him and on his behalf, which was useful in receiving information from the first hands of different sides involved, including terrorists and high-rank authorities. *Anatol Lieven, Tom de Waal, Robert Bruce Ware, John Russel and John Dunlop* are some of the most significant western authors of the Chechen issue.

The question of clan matters are discussed in the works of *Edward Schatz and Amjad Jaimoukha*,

The works of *Susanne Wong Scollon and Ron Scollon, Matthew Evangelista, Asaf Siniver, Richard Connaughton, Marshall B. Rosenberg, Martin Ross etc.* were helpful in the issues of ethnicity, conflicts and peaceful communication.

1.5 Methods of research

In this work I will analyse existing theories of ethnic conflict by Russian, Chechen and foreign ethnologists, anthropologists, experts in Caucasus field and compare them with the opinions of the Chechens themselves. The object of my work are the Chechens, their society, social behaviour, power relations, racism, conflicts and violence.

As a main method of empirical material collecting I chose a qualitative method of interviewing. Direct contact with the research objects allowed me to make a more exact and vivid picture of problem.

I used a circular strategy of maintaining interviews in the partly structural form. After each of the first interviews some corrections were made which means that every step in my progress modified all the following steps. In attempt to exclude subjectivity I crossed out the questions that seemed to lead the interviewee in defined by myself direction.

Particular remarks of my interviewees brought some changes to the further investigation, for example, when they stated that Chechens are not only victims of the war but they also make profit from it and that the war or military actions became an integral part of their lives.

I let my interview partners lead the conversation and speak freely on the issues they considered important. The text form in which I present excerpts from gathered stories and opinions suggests a number of hermeneutic interpretations by the reader (Flick 2004: 24), and thus excludes subjective intentions of a researcher.

My initial intention was to conduct fieldwork directly in Chechnya. While analysing pluses and minuses of participant observation in this country, I read some reports of foreign journalists and other concerned people who already made research there. Quite a number of these investigations/surveys/researches were conducted recently in order to change the situation with Chechnya's mythologisation and to present the objective data.

Since the Chechen conflict is still in action, as some of my interviewees noted, it is linked with various political issues that hinder investigations and researches. Thus, those who were gathering data for their works faced numerous difficulties connected with the secrecy of information. Many independent journalists and human rights activists constantly receive threats. Unfortunately for some of them it ended with a fatal outcome. Yuri Volkov, Galina Starovojtova, Anna Politkovskaya, Natalia Estemirova, Paul Klebnikov, to name a few.

Another minus for the research in Chechnya is that now the opinions of pro-Russian side and of fighters for independence in Chechnya are too influenced by their authorities. The conflict remains in force, and people's judgements are either those of their community or party, or rather they fear of expressing ideas openly.

From these reasons, I decided to conduct my interviews with the Chechens outside their homeland. I managed to arrange seven interviews with Chechens in Vienna and one with a Chechen migrant in Belarus to compare the opinions with those of Austrian Chechens.

Many of the interviewees live abroad for many years and having acquired a double or even multiple identity, they seem to be freer from others' opinions and to speak more openly. But even though dealing with fear of sharing information with the researcher in Austria went better as it would have been in Chechnya, I still had to undertake a particular strategy after I had received many refusals or the appointments were cancelled.

As the subject is highly political and topical, people need some assurance that expressing their thoughts will not negatively influence their lives and the lives their families, like it did in the case of Umar Israilov, recently killed in Vienna. Several meetings, telephone calls, communication through Internet were necessary to make people feel at ease and give agreement to talk on more "deep" subjects.

The advantage in my role as a researcher of the Chechen conflict I see in being of Belarussian nationality. Belarus was close enough to Chechnya in the point of common USSR history, identity and traditions and far enough not to be involved in the conflict and necessity to support one of the opposed parties.

During interviews I always kept in mind my “identity work” to remain compassionate and understanding to the losses and hardships my interview partners shared with me on the one hand, and to be objective and committed to the theme, on the other hand.

2 Traditional Chechen society: from early times until nowadays

2.1 Inner tribal relations

The phenomena of the Chechen ethnicity has not been thoroughly studied until now and there exist a lot of questions in its history. The Chechens did not undertake any large-scale attempts to study their own ethnicity until recently, and many of the recent works were destroyed during the war time. Thus, we learn from their history mainly from the works of foreigner writers who mentioned Chechnya in the histories of their countries and from scarce works entirely on Chechnya. Least of all from all North Caucasian nations it was written about the history of Vainakh people and thereby it became a victim of numerous subjective views (Jaimoukha 2005: 23).

Tribal system has been existing in North Caucasus for many centuries and it survived nowadays in a somewhat modified form. Egalitarianism of these tribes raises much interest among anthropologists. Was the freedom born by this system the reason of ungovernability and unrestraint so often prescribed to the Chechen national character? How did the tribes who spoke around 300 dialects and according to Herodotus and Strabon, lived separately without any contact with each other, let alone learning of neighbours' languages (Berzhe 1859: 18) managed to protect their territory from so frequent raids? How the intertribal conflicts were settled?

The Chechen society had represented segmentary lineages before its structure was distorted during the Soviet time. Genealogical knowledge played a major role among teips in determining the boundaries between segments. Division between segments was defined by kin relations knowledge of community members. Each person was expected to know his or her ancestors at least to the seventh generation. It was highly important, since there was a taboo on an endogamous marriage within seven generations of common descent, and this information was not written but transmitted orally (Schatz 2004: 27-28). It was also necessary for resolving land disputes when an errant claim could face a lot of independent, but roughly matching, counter-evidence (Jaimoukha 2005: 15).

Russian anthropologists compared Chechen society in terms of culture and tradition to classical Hellas. Chechens got rid of their great aristocracy a long time ago, and they are believed to have never had feudalism living in small autonomous groups, but due to their underlying social structure and traditions these groups proved to be capable of uniting formidably for war when threatened from outside. Hellas, too, was extremely divided and even anarchic but in the line of battle people were held in the line not just by loyalty to the *polis*, but by family and neighbourhood ties to the next man in the line (Lieven 1998: 327-330).

Teip unity had a particular value for Chechens as it was a kind of guarantee of their survival. Jaimoukha holds a view that upholding one's duty and honour with respect to one's family and teip had always been an important Chechen tradition: heroic selflessness, or sheer foolhardiness is an integral part of the Chechen psyche (2005: 90-91). This feature is sometimes considered characteristic of this kind of societies. But Malinowski doubts its existence:

The unity of the clan is a legal fiction in that it demands — in all native doctrine, that is in all their professions, and statements, sayings, overt rules and patterns of conduct — an absolute subordination of all other interests and ties to the claims of clan solidarity, while, in fact, this solidarity is almost constantly sinned against and practically non-existent in the daily run of ordinary life. On the other hand, at certain times, in the ceremonial phases of native life above all, the clan unity dominates everything and in cases of overt clash and open challenge it will overrule personal considerations and failings which under ordinary conditions would certainly determine the individual's conduct (Malinowski 1926, 119–120).

In other words, clan solidarity would be typical to clan members only in certain conditions. It is hard to find documented facts that prove this quality to be characteristic to Chechens. Only through the Chechen legends one could see that solidarity was not something that people chose but something that made up an integral part of their ethnic character. They give numerous examples where people were punished for not following the clan rules, even in minor everyday issues. Once again we can trace some similarities with Greece, and this is Spartan conditions in Chechen auls.

Russian classical writers often amazed their readers with the stories of a Chechen tradition to send their boys in other villages for foster care until they reach adolescence. In this way children were taught to accept their clan as a family and show respect and solidarity to all its members. Furthermore, the other family could not pamper and spoil a child which also played a role in forming boys' strong character.

The number of tribes in the Northern Caucasus and on the present Chechen territory differs in different sources. It is only known that their variety was so great as great was the difference between them. Russian ethnographer Yan Chesnov suggested that Chechens were originally one single undifferentiated people, or one clan not subdivided into smaller teips and that they separated after the attempt of Kabardin and Kumyk princes to subordinate them.

Anatol Lieven does not consider Chechens a „primordial ethnic nation“. According to him, their ethnic identity and unity emerged from two factors: conquest by the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union as well as adoption of Sufi Islam. Wars in the name of Islam became a „national myth“ and created for these diverse tribes a common identity and united them (Lieven 1998: 332).

The both theories prove though, that for a certain time, at least from subordination by Kabardin and Kumyk princes until the Russian Empire conquest, Chechen tribes existed separately in political, economical and social sphere.

Until the modern times these people saved their traditions, and in spite of the fact that the teip structure undergone significant change, it still influences to some extent peoples' social behaviour.

Egalitarianism and a tribal form of a traditional Chechen society have contributed to the peoples' ability to resist conquest and assimilation. The Chechens have been much less likely than their neighbours to be demoralised by the destruction or co-option of their elites since in the past four centuries they had never really had any, whether secular or religious (Lieven 1998: 341).

The behaviour of a person in a group was defined by a complicated structure of a segmentary lineage, where “me and my brothers are against the cousins and me and my cousins are against the world”. The identity of a Chechen was multi-layered as each person belonged to all levels of the segmentary hierarchy: starting from a family or a big family (dooezal) and finishing with a super-tribe (tukhum). Each level in this hierarchy – dooezal, neqe, gar, vaer,

aul, teip, tukhum – consisted of several elements of the lower level. The strongest affiliation of a person was with the lowest level – a family.

The everyday communication was limited by aul, occasional communication was held within a teip and rarely within a tukhum. As for relationships between tukhums that normally existed separately, they had acquired a peculiar ability to quickly organize their structures for joint collaboration when it was necessary.

It means that there existed a supra-tukhum identity as well which allowed people to mobilize the system's potential and resources when it was threatened from outside.

It proves the fact that Chechens did possess some features of an ethnic nation before they became a single political unit as a part of Russia, even though these features were not fundamental enough to become a base of a singular Chechen state.

2.2 Relationships with foreigners

It has been proved by many historians and anthropologists that Chechen society was egalitarian. Free communities sprang up based on the trinity of democracy, personal freedom and equality, and guided by the common law of Adat. (Jaimoukha 2005: 35). How then did they treat the foreigners who lived among them? Were strangers also accepted as equal tribesmen? And considering the fact that Chechen communities were quite closed for outsiders and relations with neighbour tribes were established only on rare occasions, how were the foreigners perceived?

Jaimoukha states that old-aged traditions of hospitality obliged Chechens to allow those who came with peace to stay on their land, while the aggressors were fought with vehemence (2005: 15). Below I will try to find out how Chechens treated different types of foreigners in order to further analyse the origin of modern ethnic tensions.

- **2.2.1 Foreign rulers**

The Chechen society was characterised by mediocracy where the society is governed by average people. There were never one singular ruler but a council of the elderly people and potentially everyone could become – and in fact was – an authority. Selecting one ruler from the tribe meant to put this person over the rest, which contradicted the tribal principles. But apparently, there were cases when problems could not have been settled

by the common decision, such as conflicts with surrounding states and intertribal conflicts. A chief was needed for some space of time, but it should be someone who did not have family ties in this community and could be sent back in peace if necessary. Most probably from the reason of society's egalitarianism Kabardian and Kumyk princes were invited to govern the Chechen land. The question remains open how the people who were not acquainted with the traditions of another society could govern it. It seems, that the ability to govern was not so important as the fact that this "governor" is not a Chechen and did not challenge the equality of the people.

This time of foreign rule was by some historians considered a feudalism époque in Chechnya, while others suppose that feudalism as such never existed there. Anyway, even if it existed – *first*, this period was not long enough to replace traditional way of life of the people; *second*, since the princes were foreigners, they were not bound to the community they were governing and in case of discontent could be banished; and *third*, after this stage Chechens returned to the previous tribal system instead of moving to the next stage – capitalism or socialism – like it happened in many other societies.

The princes were paid for their service and thanked when they had to leave. They were treated with respect, but at some point their help was not needed any more, or rather, Chechens chose to go back to their tradition. Although, subsequently there were some instances when foreign princes were occasionally invited to rule Chechen localities right up to the middle of the eighteenth century (Jaimoukha 2005: 35).

• 2.2.2 Guests

Traditions of hospitality obliged Chechen to receive at their house anyone who needed shelter or food. Hospitality made people responsible for their guests. A host could slaughter a sheep or even several ones to treat guests and then bring them to a safe place and take care of their private security.

If a stranger was robbed, offended or killed due to inattentiveness of the host or if a host did not welcome an unexpected guest, she or he lost respect of the community. In this case, this person received a stain of shame and a sand hill was erected in her or his yard as the sign of it. If the person destroyed the hill, next night it was erected again until the person managed to wash off this stain from the family's reputation.

There was also an old custom to put a pitcher of cool drinking water by the road near one's house so that a traveller can assuage his thirst (Tishkov 2004: 191).

It did not matter if a guest was a Chechen or someone from the rival tribe. If a person came with peace, he or she was always welcomed.

- **2.2.3 Slaves**

The history of slavery in Chechnya deserves a special attention as it may have some connections with the culture of hostage taking growing with a dreadfully rapid speed in the war and post-war years. That made Russians believe in inherent violence of a Chechen nation. Does this phenomenon really have roots in the Chechen national history?

Some Chechen interviewees of a Russian ethnologist Tishkov referred to a "centuries-old" tradition in Chechnya of abducting people, holding them prisoners, and trading them (Tishkov 2004: 108).

Jaimoukha writes the following:

Although the institution of slavery existed at some stage in Chechen society, it did not play a significant part in the latter Middle Ages, as it did among the neighbouring Circassians due to the dismantling of the cast system and relative isolation. Slaves were mainly taken from war captives or visitors with no bona fide hosts, and were mainly tasked with agricultural work and menial jobs. Some were redeemed (for ransom) and others sold to Ottoman harems. Slavery was officially abolished in 1846. (Jaimoukha 2005:92).

It is also worth to note that slavery was not considered dishonorable. If a slave was set free he or she did not leave the master. Since family and clan ties played a decisive role in the society and the more the clan was the more influence it had, both the master and his slave were interested in further cooperation. A freed slave could marry someone from the ex-master family and stay with them because being by oneself meant to be vulnerable.

If a slave escaped from his master to another person for fear of being punished, the latter had to offer him or her a shelter according to hospitality rules. This person acted in such

a case as a mediator between the slave and his master, and asked the latter about making the punishment milder and of being more merciful in the future (Berzhe 1859: 22).

There is no any proof that slavery existed longer or in a more severe form than in any other neighbouring country like, for example, Russia. But if we look at the year when slavery was officially abolished (1846) and the year Berzhe wrote his work about Chechens (1859) where he states that slavery was still present at that time, we may conclude that it continued to exist, possibly in a modified form where slaves were perceived as family members. And since the size of the family was crucial at the time of Russian conquest when many Chechens were killed, this practice could not be rejected.

In my view, the Russian stereotype about Chechens as a violent wild people for who taking prisoners and their exploitation was a norm was to a big extent based on the works of the three greatest and most popular Russian poets and writers – Alexander Pushkin, Mikhail Lermontov and Leo Tolstoy. All of them spent many years in the Caucasus which influenced greatly their works. All of them have a number of works about the life in this region. Most prominent, all of them have a work called “The Prisoner of the Caucasus” written in 1821, 1829 and 1872 correspondingly.

Tolstoy’s “The Prisoner of the Caucasus” about kidnapping of a Russian officer for ransom was written in 1872, long after slavery was officially forbidden. It also confirms the fact that prohibition of that slavery did not stop but just modified it.

But the image of Caucasians in these works is that of the freedom-loving, proud, belligerent and cruel people. Poems and novels of Pushkin, Lermontov and Tolstoy were and still remain the base of a school program in the post-Soviet countries.

Perhaps, the plot of these works was based on a single case they witnessed or heard about, or even on legends. But the stereotype acquired by children is hard to change and later, it would only intensify under mass media pressure.

Thus, there is not much reliable historical proof that could help to clear out if slavery really persisted and took violent forms in Chechnya but obviously, slavery existed in the history of almost every modern country, and it seems not likely that namely in Chechnya past slavery practices turned into the recent kidnapping boom.

- **2.2.4 New clan members**

Chechens were friendly with those who came with peace and needed shelter. In some cases, when such people entered the community in the search of a refuge, they stayed there for their lifetime. There was advantage for both sides: a stranger became a part of a teip and thus, became safe and protected; the community received a new member – new workforce and a protector of this family and teip interests.

Chechen clans were closed communities. But sometimes it happened that some member of a clan introduced his or her acquaintance or friend into the community. In this case this person took a full responsibility for a stranger. If the stranger violated the clan order, the responsible person was the one to blame and his family to be stigmatized. Naturally, the choice of new clan members was very careful as here one of the highest values among Chechens – reputation – might have been challenged.

This is what Mamakaev writes about new clan members:

If there was a danger of the extinction of the teip, that was thought a most terrible misfortune. This attitude open the way for the adaption of outsiders into the teip, after which they had the same rights as the existing members of the teip... Such adoptions were attended with great celebrations, including the ritual sacrifice of the bull (Lieven 1998: 340).

Sometimes people of other nationalities were encouraged to enter the clan. Visita says, *there have always been Dagestani in Chechnya. Usually they worked as shepherds because this occupation was considered dishonourable among Chechens. Thus, Dagestani were welcomed here.*

Still, there was a negative attitude toward mixed-nationality marriages even if a new person was recommended by a clan member, as blood played a big role in the community.

- **2.2.5 Enemy**

As respectful and benevolent Chechens were with their family, neighbours and peaceful strangers, so ruthless and cruel were they with the enemy. Some sources say that Chechens themselves lived only from their war trophies. Some argue that they never

attacked first. But when the fight did take place Chechens were relentless. They were not afraid to lose their lives and that made these people almost unconquerable. Those who dared to attack their land deserved in their view the highest punishment. And when Chechen warriors saw their relatives and neighbours dead in the fights nothing could stop them from a bloody revenge.

2.3 From teip system to the state. Emergence of a Chechen nation

The process of Chechnya's becoming a state started relatively recently. But it happened not as a result of internal factors, when the tribes themselves come to the point where a state-like system appears more advantageous for them than existing in separate tribes. It was forced from outside. From this reason, the whole tribal system, its age-old laws and traditions were severely violated and the consequences are felt until nowadays.

In the last two centuries Chechnya went through 6 major stages that changed each other by the external force, which badly affected the people and their culture:

1. Until the middle of the XIX century numerous Chechen tribes lived separately getting united only in the case of war. In spite of the fact that each tribe had its own dialect, traditions and laws, and that in the peace time they could even compete for resources, when there was a danger of foreign invasion they managed to quickly unite the forces and fight back any invaders.
2. After the Caucasian War the Russian Empire annexed the bigger part of Chechnya to itself and settled its rule there. The war led to the split between the plains Chechens and mountain Chechens. The former were called «peaceful Chechens» by the Russians and being exposed militarily and culturally to the Russians they had to submit and assume neutrality while their southern mountain kin remained fervently anti-Russian (Jaimoukha 2005: 46).
3. Incorporation into the Soviet Union. The policy of collectivisation when land was confiscated, and collective farms emerged disrupted traditional community life and economic structures (Jaimoukha 2005: 55).
4. Deportation in 1944 of the whole Chechen population to Kazakhstan as a punishment for cooperation with the fascists when from one quarter to the half of the deportees perished in the process or during the first months of exile.

5. After dissolution of the Soviet Union an independence movement for separation from Russia started in Chechnya. After gaining the desired freedom the weak system violated for one and a half century was not capable of peaceful self-organisation any more. Instability and regime change certainly epitomize political development in the whole Caucasus; all states in the region experienced political instability at the centre based on a rapid change from autocracy to democracy, and turned into weak transitional regimes en route (Zürcher 2007: 49).

6. In 1994 subethnic teips were trapped in Moscow's decision to launch a bloody invasion in Chechnya; some groups were more closely allied with Russian and others were supporters of independence (Schatz 2004: XVI) and the country got involved into the two wars that completely disrupted the state and the society.

Close kinship relations, power of authorities, absolute respect to the elders and the fact that each male member of the society could potentially become at some time «an elder» and be «influential», class and material equality — all these tribal features were undermined during the mentioned stages. *When I was young, says Narek, all what our fathers told us was a law. We couldn't imagine not following their orders. Today it is different. For my children I am not an authority any more.*

The survey of Sakharov centre showed how drastically respect to elders changed in just two conflict years:

	Mountain region		Lowlands		Grosny	
	M	F	M	F	M	F
1990						
young	83	71	76	61	57	53
elderly	79	72	63	69	74	63
1992						
young	12	11	15	16	18	14
elderly	16	12	14	19	20	14
1995						
young	18	9	18	19	16	16
elderly	15	20	20	18	21	18

Table 1. Attitude to respect for elderly people (in %). Source: http://www.sakharov-center.ru/chr/chrus11_1.htm

Besides manipulating Mekh-khel – a council of elders – to gain people's trust, which led to loss of its reputation, Bersanova, who conducted this research, has the following explanation for this: the generation that suffered the deportation as children or that was born in exile could not forgive its people this weakness – letting Soviet authorities treat them like animals without any resistance from Chechens' side. They grew up doubting the authority of their elders and losing trust in it.

Another reason is that Russian troops negotiated with village elders to convince Chechen resistance fighters abandon their positions and not to kill them during civil targets destruction. In 1996 when fighters retook these regions elders lost legitimacy and respect in their eyes because the latter negotiated with the enemy (Cheterian 2008: 343).

But to give tribute to this tradition, it should be noted that in spite of its weakening, respect to elders among Chechens remains higher than in many other societies. According to Ruslan, *there is no single Chechen in pensioners' house as well as children's home. This is beyond our tradition. Those that were build, were made for Russians.*

Traditional values of Chechens were affected by numerous external factors. First, the tribes appeared in the position of the colonised when they were ruled by the Russian Empire. Then they received imaginary independence with the beginning of the Soviet Union which turned into discriminating of people and treating them as minority in their own land by Russians who took all authority positions in the country. And finally, overwhelmed by the idea of long-awaited freedom and having got the chance for it in the nineties, they found themselves unable to restore the former equality and power relations. Both the restoration of traditional social system and an attempt to build a new democratic state failed while new emerging political grouping turned against each other. What was the reason for this failure?

In the pre-Soviet period, the “nation” was not institutionalized in the North Caucasus as a frame of reference for loyalty and source of identity. Instead, collective action and identity were rooted in kinship, clan and regional context, in religiously defined groups. The concepts of nation and nationality came to the Caucasus as a byproduct of its incorporation into the Soviet system (Zürcher 2007: 31).

The emergence of the nation from the Chechen tribes did not mean disappearing of tribal features. In culture, simple forms do not wholly disappear when a more complex stage of development is reached, nor do they survive fossil-like (Steward 1973: 51). The patterns of

the tribal behaviour among Chechens changed but, apparently, they were not ripe for existence in a new system. As one official quoted in 1931 at a meeting of the All-Union Central Executive Committee, the national republics saw «the creation of new nationalities out of tribes which had earlier never dreamed of national existence (...) [and] their transition in just six years through all the stages of development, which for other peoples required thousands of years» (quoted in: Schatz 2004: 55-56).

Egalitarianism, tribal relations and former economical patterns undergone particular changes in a socialist system, and having only partially adapted to it, with the decay of socialism and the conversion into capitalism, failed under such fast and radical transition and led to uncertainty.

Under uncertainty we understand here the conditions under which people cannot find a rule to guide their reactions. They cannot easily assimilate their present condition to some similar condition in the past and use this as a precedent for making a plan for action. And when several decisions are possible, each can have its own supporters and a debate can grow into a dispute, a competition or even a fight (Bailey 2001: 59).

For Chechnya, the result of this uncertainty was an armed struggle. The power in the country was concentrated for centuries not in the hands of one person but was shared among numerous teips and territories. This might be the reason for emerging of intra-Chechen conflicts in the nineties. (Guske 2007: 76). Chechens themselves see the loss of the nation's unity as a reason for war (URL 1).

In the first years of independence, teips were reconstructed and engaged through their various councils in active lobbying of state institutions. The chaos of this period was partly caused by tribal jealousies and jockeying for power (Jaimoukha 2005: 89).

When Dudaev came to power in Chechnya, we heard of Melkhistsins, Orstkhoi, and Akkin as separate nationalities for the first time. Some of Melkhistsins even tried to enter nationality on their passports. In the past, these groups may have been rated as separate teips, but they can scarcely be described as present-day nationalities. In 1988-1994 they gained much stronger standing among Chechens. They began to rise accumulating capital through control of the Grozny oil refinery, Later, when their "representative" Dzhokhar Dudaev rose to power, they brought the republic's entire petroleum industry under their control. That is why they wanted sovereignty for their teip above all others (Tishkov 2004: 50, interview with Rustam).

Vihita is also sure that *it was war that distorted clan relations in Chechnya. Today they don't play any significant role. And modern ideology continues to violate them.*

2.4 Power relations

When we try to follow the change of power relations in Chechnya, we may conclude that since the country was never a single political unit before the Soviet time, and since even being a part of the USSR governing of their own country was not performed by Chechens, it is natural that neither a distorted teip structure, nor a failed new state without authorities² was able to maintain an order in the country:

- *Before the Russian conquest* power and respect were gained by wisdom, achievements and also with the elderly age. During peace time, the elders would select a judge to govern relatively few encampments; during the times of external threat, the elders would select a judge at a higher level to govern more encampments (Schatz 2004: 29). In case of intertribal conflicts and other extraordinary events, leaders were often called from outside — Dagestan or Kabarda — to be a judge or to rule for particular space of time.
- *In the Soviet times* teip organisation was considered contradicting to the philosophy of the state (Jaimoukha 2005: 94) and authorities were appointed from above — almost never of a Chechen origin though.
- The idea of what happened *after the USSR collapse* we can get from the following passage from the official letter written by a member of the «Chechen cultural centre»:

«Regulating difficulties in the Chechen Republic are mostly caused by the lack of a broad political movement able to unite the population with the idea of national reconciliation (...). The level of disintegration of Chechen elites reached a critical level, which led to losing of a self-organisation ability. It is useless to expect that at least some part of isolated groups, clans, [etc.] will unite in a structure powerful enough to settle the situation under control» (quoted in: Bugaj 2006: 302).

² The ruling class, professionals in political, economical, technical sphere in Chechnya were mostly Russians, and they left the republic at the time of the USSR decay in fear of rising racism.

The national revolution shattered the foundations of the civic system and its former political frameworks. Many new political parties and public organisations emerged (Tishkov 2004: 191).

- The situation of disintegration led to the war which, in its turn, brought power relations into even bigger chaos. Official power in the country as well as Adat laws were shattered.

Gramsci (2006:71) gives the following reasons for the decay of hegemonic apparatus of the ruling power as a result of the war:

1. because great masses, previously passive, entered into movement — but also into chaotic and disorganising movement, without leadership, i.e. without any precise collective political will;
2. because the middle classes, who during the war held positions of command and responsibility, when peace came were deprived of these and left unemployed — precisely after having learned how to command, etc.;
3. because the antagonistic forces proved to be incapable of organising this situation of disorder to their advantage.

All these three reasons could be applied to the war-torn Chechen society:

1. People were apolitical in their majority before the eighties and only with the introduction of the *glasnost* policy dared to express their views openly. Ethnic distinctions started to emerge in the area as people observed the standards applied to one population sector was different from those applied to another (Barth 1970: 17).

The national movement was composed of diverse groups, often opposed to each other, who strived for “autonomy” hardly having any idea about it, let alone having common views on what to do in order to achieve it (de Waal 2003: 22).

At this time the figure of a national hero General Dudayev appears on the political arena. His biography was far from the one of an ideal national rescuer: he spent most of his lifetime outside Chechnya, hardly spoke any Chechen language, had a Russian wife and did not count with the respect to the elders that we can judge of from his answer to their criticism:

„You are not the parliament, you are not the government, you are nothing. Mind your own business. I didn't ask you here to tell me what to do“ (quoted from: Lieven 1998: 343).

Nevertheless, Dudayev managed to gather a lot of people around him. But many of them were confused: on the other side, they still felt themselves „Soviet nation“; and when Russian troops entered the country simple citizens felt a deep relief and joy that the federal army came to protect them from constantly rising chaos until the soldiers started to kill the civil population.

2. Commanders at war were not assigned on any consistent basis; the choice could be an older man, one with greater physical strength, reputed superior intelligence, or army service experience, or simply the man who brought the heaviest weapon (Tishkov 2004: 94). Having gained a commander position, it was difficult for these people to become an „ordinary person“ again after the war, especially considering the fact that the property of many fighters was ruined and family members killed. Thereby, those men turned into „boyeviks“ - „primitive fighters“ as they were called by Lieven. In terms of their lack of capacity for state military organization and mobilization, one could almost describe the Chechens of 1994 as a semi-tribal, loosely „anarchic“ people (Lieven 1998: 325).

3. Is it difficult to say which power was ruling and which antagonistic one, since Chechnya proclaimed itself independent in 1991 while other countries did not recognise it and its leaders, and Russia still considered Chechnya its territory; in 1996 the anti-federal coalition won the war, and in 2000 lost it. Fast radical changes, large-scale disintegration of the society split population into antagonistic groups not capable of gaining the support of broad masses.

Thus, I showed here that the teip features did not fully disappear after Chechnya became a state. *Even today, one is often asked which teip he or she comes from. It still says a lot about a person*, says Artur.

The teip system was only distorted in such a way that it, on the one hand, was not able to maintain the power and order in the country. In such circumstances, anarchic egalitarianism refuses to subordinate itself to its own legitimate authorities (Sakwa 2005: 9). And on the

other hand, it did not allow the new system to function properly (Cheterian 2008, Sakwa 2005, Lieven 1998, Ware 2005, de Waal 2005).

In the USSR teip divisions were considered contradictory to the state policy and neglected, or rather, acted against. Still it might have been a better way to take kinship peculiarities into account in shaping a country's policy. This may prove to be more effective in preserving stability, enhancing state performance and ensuring representative government than attempts to undermine pre-existing identity relationships.

The FSK policy in Chechnya of the rising revolutionary movement prevention failed as it was based on fundamental misconceptions about the nature of the Chechen clan system, about how it works today and about the importance of other factors in Chechen society (Lieven 1998: 338).

Soviet nationality policy drove kin identities out of the public sphere, deeply stigmatising clan belonging.

In the post-Soviet period the stigma of supra- and subethnic categories continued (Schatz 2004: 74):

1. supra-ethnic categories with questionable popular resonance were deployed in the attempt to harmonize interethnic relations.
2. subethnic categories and practices were routinely stigmatized in public discourse.
3. only ethnic categories were assumed to be the legitimate form of social organisation and nationality policy centred on harmonising relations among ethnic groups.

Selective efforts should be made to embrace kin divisions, because clan can be used for developmentally useful purposes. Clan ties can work on the level the state is not able to reach. But in the XXI century one can observe an opposite tendency in countries like Chechnya, Kazakhstan, etc.: toward greater opacity in government, away from meaningful elections, toward increasing crackdowns on independent media and toward greater disparities in wealth. The state has to deactivate clan divisions' explosive potential. A contest among kin units could contribute to national development instead of competing among kin networks to extract from the central state (Schatz 2004: 171).

3 Violence within and toward Chechens

In the context of contemporary Russian-Chechen wars atrocities of the Chechen boyeviks are often prescribed to the cruelty of the Chechen nation in general. A number of scholars and just those who claim to be acquainted with the history of the country state that the roots of widely spread violence – hostage taking, killing those who came to help Chechens, torturing, ignobility and not keeping their own promises in war negotiating – can be traced back to the early times of the Chechen history when such behaviour was a routine for constantly fighting people and that today these practices are re-born.

Some of them found arguments in blood feud tradition which has existed in Chechnya for centuries. “Blood for blood” law did not allow Chechen just forget their killed family members, and they had to take a revenge killing family members of the Russian soldiers. Soldiers and officers, in reply, misused their positions and treated Chechens in not less ferocious way like, for example, selling bodies of the killed Chechen fighters to their families.

In this chapter I will analyse whether such links between teip traditions and contemporary behaviour of Chechens really exist or we deal here with a modern phenomenon.

3.1 Violence as a feature of a traditional Chechen society

In the first chapter I mentioned that Chechens invited foreign rulers since principles of egalitarianism did not allow them to choose a leader among themselves. But is it that, as Jaimoukha puts it, “the mantra of “democracy, liberty and equality” turned against the invokers as these principles were taken to extremes and tenaciously adhered to, handicapping further social development” (2005: 35)?

Under the rule of a single governor Chechens for the first time felt their unity. When before people were protecting only their own aul, now they had to follow their leader and protect the whole nation. According to Blinskij, people relaxed under this rule and got richer. He argues that when Chechens realized their might, wild instincts were evoked in them and protection of the territory became not sufficient any more – they started to to seize the riches of the neighbours. Having felt the spirit of former freedom, Chechens soon afterwards got rid of their governors. (2000: 19).

In my view, interpretation of these events by Blinskij is too subjective. The fact that the foreign princes were invited and then driven out of the land (or, according to other sources, asked to leave with gratitude as there were no more need in them) is repeated in many ethnographical works and can be considered reliable. But Chechen conquering of neighbouring lands contradicts another popular view that these people used force only to protect their own native territory, and they never attacked first.

I suggest that violence is not an inherent feature of a human, society or nation. It is invoked or supported by circumstances in which a person, society etc. exist.

In the case of Chechens this circumstance might have been scarce land resources. Land was owned by teips which means that a person had a right for land only on the territory of his³ own clan. With too little people within one teip, it might have been unable to protect the territory from outsiders, while too many members meant competition for resources (Bailey 2001: 13). In the Chechen society, size of a tribe mattered a lot, since influence and power generally corresponded to how big the family, clan and tribe were, which explains partly the Chechen obsession with procreation and an enthusiastic welcome of the “asylum seekers” (Jaimoukha 2005: 85). Another factor was introduction of corn-growing to the mountains in the late XVIII century which also led to the rapid growth of population.

That means, the size of teips in the peacetime was constantly growing, and Chechens did not seize additional territories to provide people with the living. Being finally confronted with the scarce resources, young people were forced to acquire property by fighting in order to make their own families or support them. Raiding in Chechnya, as elsewhere, was for obvious reasons generally a function of young men, and a task through which they passed to full manhood, while older men played a sober and worthy role in their wider lineages. For many young men, raiding was the only way to make a family because only so Chechens could get money to pay the bride price (Lieven 1998: 350-351).

Young Chechen girls fostered raiding. As Baddley writes after visiting the region in 1890s:

Cattle-lifting, highway robbery, and murder were, in this strange code, counted deeds of honour; they were openly instigated by the village maiden – often, by the way remarkably pretty – who scorned any pretender having no such claims to her favour; and these, together

³ Women did not have a right for land.

with fighting against any foe but especially the hated Russian, were the only pursuits deemed worthy of a grown man (Lieven 1998: 351).

And here is a fragment from a folklore song of young Chechen women:

I will put a hand on the head of my brave young man,
Here is he coming to the Cossack land and jumping over the fence,
Here is he taking a little curly-headed boy,
Girlfriends, look! Here is a crowd of Cossacks running after my young man!
(...)

My brave young man will sell a boy in Enderi, in Dagestan and will bring me a present,
Then we will have a good life with him!

Mikhail Lermontov tells the following about Chechens:

Yes, sir, we had enough of those gangs – now, thank God, things are quieter, but there was a time when you didn't dare go out a hundred paces beyond the rampart without some hairy devil stalking you, ready to put a noose around your neck or a bullet through the back of your head the minute he caught you napping. But they were brave men anyway (Mikhail Lermontov 1839: „Bela“).

Blinskij's states that "Chechens were in fact not warriors as we used to understand this word, but bandits and barbarians who behaved at war like cruel and wild savages" (2000: 23). He is sure that banditry is a part of a Chechen culture and that they committed crimes for entertainment, vainglory and tradition rather than out of need. And from the above passages one could really be convinced that it is so.

But it should also be mentioned here that cattle-raiding, horse-theft, abduction and piracy formed at various times and places an integral, respectable and indeed central part of many societies and cultures, from Danes to the Dinkas and from Munster to Malakand (Lieven 1998: 350).

In a mountain region of Chechnya wars took place very often because of its geographical position: it was the crossroads of the mightiest powers – the Russian Empire, the Ottoman

Empire, the Golden Horde. Thereby, people had to be always ready for a fight. The statistical data indicate that mountainous terrain increases the risk of conflict, and that wars tend to be longer when they are fought in mountainous countries. It is assumed that mountainous terrain affords the rebels a military advantage by providing shelter and hideouts and that mountains increase the government's costs of organizing violence. Both may increase the opportunity for organizing violence. (Zürcher 2007: 56). This circumstance influenced the character of Chechens and as they were considered brave and skilful at war – losing life in a fight was not what they were afraid of but what made an honour to them – an image of relentless warriors was quickly prescribed to them.

3.1.1 Love for weapons

Weapon has been the main attribute and adornment of Chechen men for centuries.

“Chechens flaunted exceptionally their weapons, competing with Kabardians in that. They carry the weapon with that notable chic”, writes Blinskij (2000: 21). Speaking about equality between Chechens, Berzhe noted that there was almost no difference in the way of life of a poorer and a richer Chechen. The only thing that distinguished them was a better weapon and a better horse (1859: 21).

The collection of articles “Swords of paradise” (1915) is completely devoted to Caucasian weapon. Prozritelev writes that mastery at weapon production and at weapon handling was the main reason why Chechens managed to resist mighty armies of Russians, Turks, Tatar-Mongols etc. for such a long time. Weapons were considered a family treasure and was passed on from generation to generation. Men carried weapons almost from their birth. According to Chakhkiev, failing to keep to the trends of weapon production meant losing strength as well as independence, and for this reason this craft was considered crucial in the Chechen culture. Elashvili states that possessing a good weapon allowed to protect interests of the community, and that was the highest duty of its every member because peoples' existence depended on their community.

In the book “Chechen weapon” Askhahov describes how skilled Chechens were at producing a great number of various weapons, the role of which in their culture is hard to overestimate. The first Chechen ethnographer Laudayev explains that in the past no Chechens was sure if he or she would still be alive by the end of the day. Thereby, they did not make a single step

without a weapon. Even in the bed they checked if the weapon was in good order. Today, even when people's security is guaranteed by law, love for weapon still overwhelms Chechens and they spend a lot of money on acquiring and decorating it (Aliroev 1999: 42).

During the recent Chechen wars weapon did not lose its significance. Today every child in Chechnya knows how to handle a gun since they did not see anything besides war in their lives (Guske 2007: 78; Politkovskaya 2003: 104). And as they grow in a constant atmosphere of fear, hunger and disbelief, knowledge of how quickly and professionally to use a gun becomes a must from childhood.

Tishkov calls a Chechen society during the Russian-Chechen wars "Kalashnikov culture". A Kalashnikov rifle was a cherished possession, sometimes decorated with ribbons, and always handled with care. An automatic could cost more than a cow (2004: 97).

People were risking their lives only to get a desired acquisition that guaranteed them some safety and becoming a fully fledged soldier. When everyone around had a "Kalash", it was beneath dignity to be an outsider and not to be able to express oneself to the full in the fight.

The first Chechen war could have not taken place or could have resulted in much less victims, if not for the huge amount of weapons left carelessly by Russian soldiers in Chechnya as they left the country in June 1992. Had anyone known about the role of weapon in Chechen society, especially in those unpredictable times and the mastery of people at it, the tragedy might have been prevented. Vihita remembers that crucial day: *President Dudaev let us know that the attack on us was planned one of those days. People needed weapons to make an honourable defence, and they knew about the arsenal. So they started to ask the guards to help them and to give the weapons. But Sokolov (one of the chiefs) said: "I have an order to shoot anyone who dares to enter this territory". People were desperate – the war is about to begin, how would they protect their honour? And they rushed inside. Around 50 of them were shot dead but many took the guns.*

3.1.2 Blood revenge

Blood revenge is an inherent feature of Chechen teips. No offence can be made there without punishment. If a person sheds someone's blood, this person or anyone of his family is

expected to be killed by the family of the dead person unless the offender is forgiven by paying “forgiveness money”. This rule is particularly strict and allows no exception. It might be another reason why Chechens are usually perceived as ferocious and aggressive people. Still, this rule has a deep meaning: blood feud is rarely practised but the fear of inevitability of revenge restrains people from thoughtless deeds. This is what Solzhenitsyn writes about this tradition:

We, Europeans, at home and at school, read and pronounce only words of lofty disdain for this savage law, this cruel and senseless butchery. But the butchery is perhaps not so senseless after all. It does not sap the mountain peoples, but strengthens them. Not so many fall victim to the law of vendetta – but what power the fear of it has all around. With this law in mind no highlander will casually insult another, as we insult each other in drink, from lack of self-control or just for the hell of it. Still, less will any non-Chechen look for trouble with a Chechen (1992: 401).

The tradition was so strong that Russians even used it to disunite the society from inside, having lost all attempts to defeat it by force (Blinskij 2000: 24).

Blood feud was officially forbidden in the Soviet Union but it still continued to exist. One of the most powerful laws that regulated relations of the people for centuries could not be so easily discontinued without consequences. There existed courts of justice but majority of cases were solved by tradition and not by official law.

The proof that blood feud did not disappear but just hid from the officials, or that it was not widely practised but was inalienable for people, and that it is strongly rooted in the Chechen mentality – could be observed in the recent Chechen wars. As the second chapter of this work showed, the Chechen society was disintegrated politically and ideologically and separated into numerous groups. As a result, Chechens had to fight other Chechens. But in the words of Professor Vachargaev in 1994, “neither side wants to fire first, because whichever is the first to shed Chechen blood will lose prestige and support” (Lieven 1998: 325-326) and the murderer and his or her family will become a target of blood revenge from the family of the dead. As the country is small and people have broad connection, it is not difficult to find the offender.

While this chapter was being composed and while searching for the proof of existence of blood feud in modernity, the answer came by itself on 10.06.2011 when a murder of a Russian general, accused of kidnapping, raping and killing of a Chechen girl Elza Kugnaeva in 2000 became the news of the day. Elza's brothers were waiting 11 years until they could make a revenge for the humiliating the name of their sister.

As the journalists who fight for human rights like Anna Politkovskaya state, the Russian government does everything to protect the honour of its officers. And thereby in 2002 General Budaev was proved to be "of diminished responsibility" at the time of committing the crime and set free in spite of the apparent evidence. For many people it was clear that such result could have only been fabricated and they struggled for revision of this case until Budanov was finally accused for 10 years in 2003. He spent only 6 years in jail though. Four days after his release the lawyer of the Kugnaevs was killed in the centre of Moscow. And now, one and half year later, the General is killed, supposedly by Elza Kugnaeva's brothers. Apparently, nowadays Chechens still do not consider courts being able to impose a condign penalty, and Budanov's case proves that. Therefore, nothing can substitute an old trusted "blood for blood" law for them.

As the recent survey about blood feud showed, the negative attitude of Chechens to this tradition changed rapidly to its approval in the years of conflict:

Elderly people	Mountain region		Lowlands		Grosny	
	M	F	M	F	M	F
1990						
positive	32	24	28	17	24	19
negative	60	70	62	69	60	72
do not know	8	6	10	14	16	9
1992						
positive	79	54	80	57	84	59
negative	13	40	10	29	10	12
do not know	8	6	10	14	6	29
1995						
positive	81	56	82	59	88	61
negative	10	30	10	29	10	12
do not know	9	14	8	12	2	27

Young people	Mountain region		Lowlands		Grosny	
	M	F	M	F	M	F
1990						
positive	28	21	32	14	32	16
negative	62	66	56	75	55	75
do not know	10	13	12	11	13	9
1992						
positive	78	51	82	54	82	46
negative	22	36	16	35	15	35
do not know	0	13	2	11	3	19
1995						
positive	82	58	87	59	89	56
negative	12	16	11	25	5	25
do not know	6	26	2	16	6	1

Table 2. Attitude to blood revenge - in %. Source: http://www.sakharov-center.ru/chr/chrus11_1.htm

The table shows striking differences between peoples' attitudes in the time when Chechens were full of hopes for independence and happy future (1990), when a number of conflicts emerged between various groups (1992) and after one year of war (1995).

If in 1990 the number of those who approved vendetta was from 14 to 32% depending on the age, gender and region, in just 2 years it rose rapidly as high as 51 to 84%, and then 56 to 89% in 1995.

Decrease in a number of those who disapproved it is also astonishing. The majority of population considered blood revenge inappropriate (55-69%) in 1990. Suddenly the views changed: in 1992 this parameter was already as low as 10 to 35%, and in 1995, 5 to 30%.

What was the reason?

For the answer, it will be necessary to follow one more change shown in the table. I have mentioned above in this chapter about highlands as of a zone more subject to violent conflicts. And in the mountain region of Chechnya blood feud generally had more advocates. As the conflict started to grow and the Chechen war began, flatlands were involved first, and in 1994 war actions began on a large scale in Grosny. And that is also reflected in the table: in 1992 lowlanders became evidently more revengeful, and in 1995 this parameter reached

95% in Grozny, while highlands it remained lower than in other regions as war actions started there later.

We also see from the table that young people became more revengeful during the conflict times and that women are traditionally more merciful.

Apparently, war actions influenced peoples' opinion on the necessity of blood revenge. If before, in the Soviet Union, there were institutions responsible for punishment of the guilty, after the destruction of the system, this control was lost. Growth of criminality which was not avenged led to return to the blood feud as a means of people's own "justice system" (Cremer 2007: 41). People were forced to make their own court of justice where everyone could be a judge. This tradition was not forgotten and it turned now with its opposite side: its function was not suppression of violence any more but, on the contrary, its spreading and stimulation.

3.2 War time violence

The Chechen proverb says «It is better when the blade rests in the scabbard». The results of my interviews show that Chechens do not consider themselves aggressive.

Yet, surveys among the Russian population give different information about aggressiveness of Chechens. Having the image of a ferocious Chechen from the school course of Russian classical literature in their heads, which is daily nourished by news bulletins blaming "cruel" Chechens for the death of Russian soldiers, it is hard to perceive them other than "savages" and "criminals".

The picture of Chechens' exceptional brutality in perception of Russians is based on several events from the war time, which are repeated again and again by mass media and which make people tremble from horror. Indeed, what has happened belongs not the usual understanding of war violence but to those rare cases performed with such *recherché* sophisticated inhumanity that it is often hard to imagine that a human being is capable of this cruelty. I would like to numerate some of the cases in order to make the analysis of the motives for committing these crimes:

- June 14-19, 1995: in the Russian town of Budyonnovsk 147 people were killed by Chechen terrorists who required cessation of war actions in Chechnya. 1600 citizens

were taken hostages to a hospital. Many patients died there without medical treatment, women had stillbirths, and people were used as live shields in shootouts.

- December 17, 1996: 6 people from the medical personnel working for the International Committee of the Red Cross were killed in a hospital in the Chechen town of Novye Atagi;
- December 19, 1998: 4 employees of a British telecommunications company were found beheaded with their heads put on the side road in Chechnya;

For Chechens themselves it is hard to believe that someone from their society is capable of such inhumanity. One of my interviewees, Visita, has his own opinion on this case: *This crime as well as many others were secretly committed by Russians in Chechnya in order to popularize the image of Chechens as criminals and approve their war actions in the country.*

- October 23-26, 2002: 129 people died out of 850 taken hostage by Chechen boyeviks in the Moscow theatre;
- September 1, 2004: at least 375 people (186 children among them) were killed after taking over 1100 people hostage at school during the Knowledge day celebrations in Beslan – a town in North Ossetia, Russia;
- Hundreds of civil Russians taken hostage for ransom, majority of them were tortured which was filmed on video cameras and sent to the relatives of the captured.

These cases are only a few of the big number of similar events, but they received the greatest resonance in the public due to their meaningless brutality. Naturally, there were ferocious crimes from the Russian side too, but considering the microscopic size of Chechnya in comparison with Russia, it is clear that its mass media possibilities were very limited. And what Russian great media power can perform in no time, in a small war-torn Chechnya would last for ages. The world learns about war crimes of the Russian army not from the Chechen media but from NGOs that are not interested in supporting any of the conflict parties. Many of these crimes were placed on the secret list in Russia, and only due to the dangerous work of journalists and international organisations employees became open to the public.

In the Russian media motivations of Chechens who committed the famous atrocities were often unclear, or they were not explained and not understood by the mass public, which also contributed to the image of Chechens as insensate murderers.

3.2.1 Theories of violence origin among Chechens

There exist several explanations for the origins of individual and mass violence. But there is no holistic theory that is able to explain this phenomenon in Chechnya case in its entirety, because too many social events have been put in the general category of violence (Tishkov 2004: 147). Only a united approach could be used for discovering connections between social, economical, political, ethnic and other factors – and violence sources.

Here is an overview of most popular opinions that would help to find a multilateral approach to explaining this phenomena:

3.2.1.1 One of the most popular explanations of violence origin is **poor living conditions**. According to Hecher, typically poorest regions are most disposed to secede (Sakwa 2005: 4). Violence threatens when distribution of goods and values reaches the degree of asymmetry that at least one party finds unbearable and can not see any practicable way of remedying. In general, regimes with grossly unequal distributions are less suited to peace (Müller 2005: 65, 68).

There is more violence if the depressed group is kept in physiological deprivation: poor food and housing trigger more aggressive action. Deprivations at the egoistic and status levels are less potent in releasing violence. Thus, wealthy minorities denied political power are less prone to physical aggression than impoverished minorities (Stanger 1987: 11).

The majority of scholars agree that economical situation in Chechnya was worse than in the USSR in general but better than in neighbouring Northern Caucasus republics. Soviet time brought definitely positive changes to the republic: rich natural resources and begin of industrialisation stimulated a rapid growth of production.

The first strike on the economy was deportation of the whole nation in 1944: sudden lack of work force, left households – and then rehabilitation of exiled peoples in 1956, their return to the farms which were given to Russians, extremely high birth rate in the post-exile years which led then to the surplus of work force.

The second strike was an imposed blockade on Chechnya by Russia after the USSR collapse. Like every ex-USSR country, Chechnya was interconnected with Russia in

all spheres, including economical one. What followed after 1991 was the mass emigrating of Russian population who occupied the majority of leading positions in economical, political and other spheres, which led to “beheading” of industries; cut off of Siberian oil supplies to Chechen refineries caused decline in the main economical branch of Chechnya – oil industry.

The third and the strongest strike was the physical destruction of most economic enterprises. *Today you have everything, and tomorrow you may have nothing*, says Artur. Unemployment reached 80% level; oil spillages polluted the land and water; economy started to revert back to agriculture and cattle-breeding (Jaimoukha 2005: 101-104).

Naturally, when the living conditions fall below the existence level, self-preservation instinct obliges a human being to fight for survival, even if it involves violence. The humane degrades in the humans, feelings are sharpened, there is a lack of companionship – due to war and hunger. The legendary inflexibility and viability of Chechens is not to be found any more (Politkovskaya 2003: 41).

But was the level of poverty in the country really so low that it forced people commit such inhumane crimes? Were these poor living conditions typical to the whole country or just to several single locations in Chechnya? The description of low life standards of the people by Anna Politkovskaya, a Russian journalist who fought for rights of Chechens and even paid her life for that, might have concerned just particular cases or particular regions spanned with acute war actions.

Some scholars still think that Chechnya did not reach *that low* limit of existence. Zürcher, for example, holds a view that Caucasian wars emerged in the societies that were not particularly poor, neither within the Soviet Union, nor compared with a global average, and it was not the poorest groups that sought to secede. And even if so, neither a general low level of development, nor an uneven distribution of wealth accounts for the onset of war (2007: 6). Even if the Northern Caucasus, as a largely rural and little industrialized region, could have qualified as economically backward, this does not explain why only one group, the Chechens, embarked on organized violence, while other groups in the Northern Caucasus did not (Zürcher 2007: 48).

According to Hale, on the contrary, richest ethnic regions are more likely to revolt than poor regions as they have more to lose if they are exploited by other groups (2000: 31-56).

In my view, not the fact that the people *were* poor, that the economy *was* weak and not able to sustain basic needs of population was the major role in the birth of violence in Chechnya but the fact that the situation suddenly *became* tough after decades of flourishing. Before falling under the rule of the Russian empire Chechens, especially highlanders lived in much more severe conditions and they were famous for their endurance and resistance to all environmental and human ordeals. After one and half century of “forced evolution” to a “civilized” nation these instincts were weakened and “reverting back to agriculture and cattle-breeding” and destruction of the new acquired lifestyle invoked “wild instincts” in people. Thus, in my view, not poor conditions by themselves, but a rapid change from better to worse could have provoked violence and struggle for human rights.

3.2.1.2 Another reason that is thought to give a start for intolerance of infidels and thereby to provoke violence is religion, and namely **influence of Islamic extremists**, Wahhabism being the most radical of them.

Before 1993, there were virtually no Wahhabists in the North Caucasus. Their number has grown considerably mostly as a result of war. In particular, young men seem to find this religious extremism attractive (Zürcher 2007: 89). Wahhabist fundamentalist flow, aimed at young generation and often funded by Saudi sources, was appealing to many of the Chechen combatants (Tishkov 2004: 172). Many of the present terrorists who were children during the first Chechen War 1994-1996 belong to the second generation of the Chechen resistance movement. They grew up in the anarchic atmosphere of violence and lost their family members as well as hopes for happy future, which made them especially sensitive to the impact of Islamic extremists (Leitner 2006: 21). De-tribalised, de-institutionalised, unemployed and hopeless youth was attracted by violent ideology of Salafi jihadism as a way to escape reality of failure of Chechen statehood; they needed a supra-natural interpretation of the situation and Wahhabism provided it (Cheterian 2008: 246-247).

Having realized the whole damage Wahhabists can bring to its own society, Chechen authorities answered with “violence to violence”. “These is no other way to deal with Wahhabists’ problem than to kill them all”, the President of Chechnya Akhmad Khadyrov claimed (Politkovskaya 2007: 288).

There is no generally accepted view about the time when Islam spread among Chechens. It is only known that Sharia law was never strictly obeyed in Chechnya: it existed along with Adat law of pre-Islamic period. One can hardly call this co-existence harmonic. Adat, for example, approved blood feud tradition, while Sharia strictly forbade it. Both laws had thereby their own scopes of application: civil cases were regarded by Sharia, and criminal cases by Adat law. Sunni Islam has never taken deep roots in Chechnya, as it was initially in earnest competition with native beliefs and traditions and later suspended by Sufism – a creed more akin to Vainakh esotericism (Jaimoukha 2005: 117).

As it follows from these facts, Chechens accepted only those Islamic traditions that corresponded their established way of life. In this context it is important to note that the “real” Islam came to Chechnya only at the war time. Narek says, *if I hadn’t left Chechnya 23 years ago I would have been for sure very religious now. When I was young, religion didn’t play a big role there like it does today. Most of the people after 40-45 years old are becoming real Islam followers.*

„We are not fundamentalists but the Russian aggression turns us into them,“ Shirvani Basaev, a younger brother of the famous Chechen terrorist Shamil Basaev, says (Buch 1990: p.141).

Only in 1997 Sharia was instituted as the law of the land. Radical Islam covered the country and put people under its pressure. For example, only recently it became a must for women to wear burqa in public places; not following this rule often causes acts of aggression from guardians of law, like shooting indecently clothed women with colour guns.

Idea of ghazavat fitted well into constant wars against foreign occupation. Its principles were often used for wars against colonialism in the world history (URL 2). And they were employed in the recent Russian-Chechen wars, too. But this time under the influence of Wahhabism.

Wahhabism arrived in Chechnya in the mid 1990ies brought by missionaries and the first Islamic university graduates who started to return to their home country, and it was financed by Osama bin Laden's money. Wahhabism happened precisely when more powerful means of mobilization were needed. The ordeals of war – fear, losses and horrors of fighting were heavily weighing on people, and the references to religion helped to justify the sacrifices being made for the “holy war in the name of Allah” (Tishkov 2004: 172).

Thus, religion became to some extent a “mask” for war atrocities. Combatants interpreted Islam in the way which let them justify violence.

3.2.1.3 According to the third popular approach, violence and criminality originated from **traditional way of life and the national character** of the Chechen society itself. Ware gives the following explanation for that:

President Maskhadov was not able to control warlords and teip leaders who confronted each other and to prevent Chechnya's descent into chaos and criminality. If Chechen social fragmentation tends toward radicalism which was the cause of both wars, then desperation, devastation and bitterness resulting from wars also contributed to the fragmentation and radicalisation of Chechen society. If this argument is true, then Chechen society tends toward violent extremism by virtue of its inherent dynamics regardless external factors (2005: 90).

Chechens are often blamed for their inclination for conflict and criminality. This is how the negative national characteristics of Chechens are often depicted: “insidious, revengeful, treacherous and even dangerous for each other when they forget themselves” (Blinskij 2000: 21); “not normads any more but still semi-wild: cruel, with love of gain, suspicious and revengeful” (Berzhe 1859: 20). These features of Chechens are often said to originate in their tribal system; and as many elements of this system have survived until now, violence is still considered to remain characteristic of Chechens.

Ahmed Nuhayew⁴, a Chechen, once noted, “Our organisation reflexes clan structures of the Chechen nation. Each clan keeps its business autonomy but they are still a single alliance” (de Waal: 2003: 21).

According to Lieven, Chechens are a nationality with no identification with the state and the society in which they live, and no motivation to follow its laws; equipped with ancient tradition which are in contradiction with liberalism; with social forms that make them resistant to outside investigation; internally coercive and remarkably efficient and ruthless in pursuit of their aims (1998: 353-354).

Blinskij even states that the war for independence (for Chechnya) and for protecting the unity of the state (for Russia) was only a mask. Real reason for it was the clash of oil interests of the Chechen criminal groups and those of the “centre”⁵, of the federal political elites (2000: 181).

The advocates of these theories missed, apparently, the Soviet time in their theories and create the feeling that the ancient tribal Chechen society jumped directly into the war of the end of the XX century. It is often not taken into account that those hardships that Chechens survived under the Russian rule – deportation, discrimination in the government structures of their own country, dramatic decay of economy directly before the war begin, to name a few – might have influenced society in much more violent way, producing reciprocal violence.

Perhaps, the Chechen social structure was not the cause of violence spreading in an unstable political situation but it was the one that suffered from it. Economical decay led to dismissive attitude to work, and people started to accumulate wealth through financial manipulations and robbery to support their large families.

The Soviet ideology attempted to create an “ideal person” with clear consciousness from each of its citizens, and it managed to do this to a certain extent. Hardly anyone of Soviet teachers, doctors, professors was capable of killing, robbing or cheating for their profit. Only the “outsiders” of the system, those who did not accept the high ideals and were punished by this system, received the opportunity after the USSR collapse to use their criminal energy for easy enrichment. And the weak state

⁴ One of the leading bosses of the Chechen mafia.

⁵ Soviet name for the main ruling power in Moscow.

blenched that as it was busy with power sharing between the new states and the “centre”. This was common not only to Chechnya but to all of the ex-USSR states.

Most successful of such people became from yesterday’s poorly educated ones to today’s “new elite” and to a social basis for the regime. Emergence of enormously rich elite destroyed the traditional way of life in Chechnya (Gakaev 2005: 24) and challenged its egalitarianism. In the traditional Chechen society, if someone’s wealth was deemed to have exceeded a set limit, a village council would confiscate the excess and give it to the other, less fortunate members of the community (Jaimoukha 2005: 90).

Crime and violence, for the first time in the Chechen history, created differences between the rich and the rest of population, thereby ending egalitarianism which composed the core of Chechen identity and undermining those Chechen rules of conduct which kept the country “an ordered anarchy” and not a Hobbesian chaos (Lieven 1998: 352).

These factors contributed to the rapid spread of criminality and violation of the Chechen social system. Thus, attributing violence to the national character can neither be approved.

War is usually considered a built-in defect of the human species. Indeed, the capability for individuals to use physical violence is innate. But organised violence is learnt behaviour – from instructors, on the training ground, from social values, including extremist religious views that justify war and armed violence. To avoid violence, learnt behaviour could be changed, social values that lead to violence modified (Forsberg 2005: 390-391).

This is certainly not the whole list the theories of violence. I chose only those that received the greater resonance in public. Each of them found its advocates and each of them was criticised.

In this overview I showed how wide and multilateral the problem of violence is. On the question *which* of these approaches can characterise Chechnya’s case I would say that all of the mentioned factors are interconnected, they may be a cause or a consequence of each

other. Low living standards which changed years of fast development after the USSR collapse made Chechens blame Russians for all attempts of their authorities to “kill the Chechen nation”, and a violent war began. Unbearable physical and emotional hardships, as it often happens, made people seek the answers for the question “Why?” in religion. And acute liability of religious influence at that time brought them to Wahhabism.

“Violence generates violence” - this is how the number of atrocities started to rise rapidly and reached an incomprehensible for a modern society scale. According to Blinskij, namely because the West explained the spread of violence among the Chechen fighters as an answer to atrocities of the Russian army, boyeviks felt free to continue and even widen their terrorist acts (2000: 298-299).

Culture and national traditions did play a role here. But this role is no way in the violence as an inherent feature of Chechens. As my interviewee Timur says, *it is not typical in my country to blench an offence. If you are a worthy man you have to take responsibility for your words and your actions. Having lived in Austria for 10 years, I was surprised to realize that Austrians are unlikely to say or do anything in reply to offence, whether it is humiliating them or, let's say, their sister they are walking with. It can be called “politeness” or “fear”- whatever. But no Chechen would be able to look in the eyes of his sister any more if he didn't do anything about this. He can be alone against 5 people but he will fight to protect the honour of his sister. If he doesn't, he will lose his own.*

Artur holds the same opinion: *Many people say that Caucasians are hot-tempered people. Naturally, if someone makes a dirty joke about your family, this person will surely learn how aggressive a Chechen can be. There are some taboo topics on which respectful people will never talk. In Europe people could easily forgive such things. But for Chechens the honour of their families is everything, and we will fight for it.*

Ahmed is sure though that Chechen hostility is only a stereotype. *Before I came to Austria my image of all German-speaking people was that of cruel Nazis from one of those numerous films constantly produced and shown throughout the ex-USSR. The same image of Chechens is spread by Russian mass media. No wonder that if you say you are a Chechen, people start to ignore you before they even get to know you a little.*

Even on the official level the rule of revenge for offence is strictly followed. Chechen President Akhmad Khadyrov once said “If I do not punish the culprits (war criminals – my remark) I will not be able to face my people” (Evangelista 2002: 154).

As I mentioned in the section “Blood revenge”, inevitability of revenge in the case of insult played a crucial role in the society as a preventing social mechanism. Today, in the conflict years this mechanism played its part in popularising of the image of Chechens as of an aggressive and rancorous nation.

3.2.2 Present situation

According to Kaldor, violence is a form of political mobilisation. It is directed mainly against civilians and not against another army, since political control is the main aim rather than military success. And political control is maintained through terror, through elimination of those who challenge it. Population displacement, massacres, atrocities are not just side effects of war but a strategy for political control (2005: 334-335).

Sustaining violence depends on a constant supply of revenue. And organized violence requires a constant investment in the war action. Consequently, there is a need to generate profits during the course of violence. This necessity affects the dynamics of violence. Most notably, it leads to the emergence of a situation that can be called “market of violence”. Since sustaining violence is expensive, its organisers engage in economic activities that combine legal business, organised crime and warfare. And organisers of violence transfer into entrepreneurs of violence (Zürcher 2007: 60).

This characterises a present situation in Chechnya. Many people believe that their government is mafia, but *until they share this money with the people – building houses, contributing to social development, population will be satisfied*, says Narek. On the question about their attitude towards the present government, my interviewees, almost without exception told me how beautiful the country is, and how much the government makes in comparison with former ones. But on the further question about the crimes the ruling elites commit in order to destroy anyone who dares to raise a voice against it, a reply question sounded always the same “Is this interview anonymous?” And it was already the answer. Yes, people are afraid.

This is Marat’s opinion: *I always think that if I had come to Chechnya now, after many years in Europe, I would have made a big use for the country. For example, I know now how it is better to build a house, I am aware of many new technologies in this area. If everyone could*

bring a small piece of such knowledge, we would make the land flourish. But I will not go back, I am afraid. For the ruling people I am a betrayer, and I have to pay the price.

One may observe that violence is becoming a norm in the country. Recent case of a murder of Israilov in Vienna proves this. Having spent decades abroad, and not ever planning to go to their motherland again, people are still afraid to talk about political situation in their country. The law and order in the country is supported by violence. And now it reminds the society mechanism of the past – violence as a mechanism for preventing violence. But not structural violence as in democratic states with its fines, penalties and jails – instead, there rules the ancestors' law “insult for insult”, “blood for blood”.

4 Ethnic conflict with Russia

4.2 Ethnic tensions with Russia. Relations and attitudes

4.2.1 From the XVI century to the USSR collapse

Up to the XVI century Russia and Chechnya had been allies in the fight against the Tatars. The first tensions between them started when Chechens refused peaceful unification with the Empire, and they were connected with colonial ambitions of Russia. Attempts of tsars to offer their protection against enemy and subdue Chechnya peacefully were fruitless. And thus, Russians began bloody wars to conquer the Caucasus.

They did not bring much success as fighting was a routine for Chechen warriors: Russia was just one of the long list of states who wished to attach rich Chechen land to their territory. Resisting and protecting the land became the paramount duty of every Chechen, and there is no wonder that such a small land easily managed to beat off the attacks. Attempts of the best Russian tsars-conquerers – Ivan the Terrible, Boris Godunov, Peter the Great, Catherine the Great – were in vain. Russian persistence made it into a sworn enemy of Chechens, and when Chechnya finally fell under the Russian rule due to a growing asymmetry of forces in 1861, the attitudes of Chechens towards the colonizers became even more negative.

This is what Leo Tolstoy wrote about the hatred of Chechens for Russians in his novel: “What all these Chechens, from the youngest to the oldest, felt about Russians was stronger than hate. It was not hate, they just did not relate these Russian pigs with humans and felt such abhorrence and disgust and such uncomprehending amazement toward senseless ferocity of these creatures that the wish to destroy them was equal to a self-preservation instinct”.

For Russians, Chechens were presented as villains and robbers, dangerous fighters and ruthless enemies in popular culture and high literature (Cheterian 2008: 72). Such perceptions did not disappear as Russia started its “taming politics” on insuppressible Chechens. People were replaced by loyal Cossacks.

As for the cultural and traditional sphere, Russia did not interfere much which allowed people to preserve their way of life. The situation changed with the beginning of the Soviet time. A rural country turned rapidly into industrialized one. The education level rose significantly and

was not to be compared with the pre-revolutionary years when there were only 3 schools in the whole Checheno-Ingushetia. There were negative trends as well. Collectivisation, which at the first glance seems to be akin traditional distribution system where authorities took surplus wealth from a richer one and gave to a poorer one, disrupted customary economic patterns of Chechens. In the first years of implementing this policy property which was confiscated from people was not taken care of, and much of it became worthless.

In the USSR our life was also not sweet. Property was taken away, people disappeared, we lived in constant fear. People who were working before the rise of communism from dusk till dawn every day and little by little gathered the money for some purpose not only lost all they had after communists came to power, but were called “kulaks”, disgraced, sent to Siberia or killed, Marat says.

In the book “The killing of the Chechen-Ingush nation: Killing of nations in the USSR” the author Abdurakhman Avtorkhanov, a Chechen who experienced himself the Soviet racism, tells about numerous attempts of Russia to morally and physically annihilate the Chechens who even being fellow countrymen of Russians were perceived as bandits and “enemies of the nation”⁶. The peak of such attempts was deportation of Chechens to Kazakhstan in 1944. The official motif for this decision was “collaboration with fascists”. But, as Avtokhanov notes, first, there were never fascists in Chechnya during the Second World War, and second, Chechens could not join the German army as there was no obligatory mobilisation in Chechnya and partial mobilisation was soon cancelled. That means, deportation in such hard conditions was aimed at demoralisation and “taming” of the nation, undermining the foundations of its hostile activities by means of replacement of the whole population to another country.

There exist one more point of view. The scientists of the Nazi Germany developed a theory, from which it followed that Chechens are Arian people and in the seized Russia they had to be treated as equal. But perhaps, this “theory” was a trick of Nazi propaganda to find allies in the USSR (Sadulajew 2009: 25).

It is not proved though, that Chechens did not collaborate with the Nazis. If they did, this can serve as an argument that up until that time Chechens did not accept their status as a part of Russia, and they strived to be separated from it and to become independent. Still, there were Chechens who fought bravely for the USSR as for their motherland. But their achievements

⁶

Rus. “vragi naroda”.

seem to have been kept silent. Timur tells a story of the best friend of his grandfather who participated in seizure of Berlin in 1945. *Vesovitev, a friend of my grandfather, was the one who together with Marshal Zhukov took Berlin, thereby finishing the Second World War. Stalin named only Zhukov though as the USSR hero. There was no word said about Vesovitev – obviously, because he was a Chechen. Could it be tolerated that a Chechen would become a saviour of all the Soviet people?*

Chechnya was never a harmonious part of the USSR, and deportation proved it. (Soldatova 1996: 225). The borders of the country were changed several times only under the Soviet rule – in 1920, 1921, 1922, 1934, 1957. Naturally, it influenced the national identity – instability of their status did not allow people apperceive themselves as a single nation. Nobody was sure what would happen tomorrow with their state.

Their discontent is clear considering the fact that, as Marat says, *people felt themselves guests on their own land, on the land of their ancestors.*

Artur told me the story he cannot forget from the childhood: *We were in a bus near two young men who were speaking Chechen. Suddenly an old woman got very angry: “Stop speaking Chechen! You are in a public place, young men!”, like as if they were swearing... Luckily, there were almost no Russians or other foreigners in the village, and people kept speaking their native language.*

In the Soviet Union the “centre” and the republic’s governments were staffed with and dominated by ethnic Russians which contributed to “ethnicisation” of discontent (Walker 1996: 8). As the level of education was very low in Chechnya, ruling cadres were sent there from Russia. A Chechen could get a position in a government only if he had a Russian wife or criticised Chechens (Avtokhanov: 20). Low representation of Chechens in the communist *nomenclatura* reflected political distrust of the Soviet government to Chechens (Gakaev 2005: 24).

4.2.2 From the beginning of the revolution until nowadays

The survey among Chechens showed that their relationships with non-Muslims in 1990 were up to hundred percent free of prejudice, while during the war negative attitudes to orthodox Russians first of all were expressed by 40% of young and 12% elderly people (Cremer 2007: 41-42).

Attitude of Russians towards Chechens changed drastically too. Ethnosociological study of the All-Russian Centre for Public Opinion Research in August 1991 showed that Russians residing in Chechnya saw indigenous population not only as hospital, respectful of elders and energetic, but also power-hungry (38% of the surveyed), arrogant (37%), cruel (27%), hypocritical, sneaky (24%) and imposing their customs on others (16%) (Soldatova 1996: 214).

Before the revolution began, as Narek notes, Russians never used humiliating names for Chechens like they do now - "churka" (a wog), "swarthy" and so on. We were all equal.

The USSR was so big, says Marat, we could move easily throughout the country. Now, when a Chechen comes, for example, to Moscow, he has to hide. He cannot even go to the shop because if caught by police, he will get problems. I hate the Russian government. You know that Russia is ruled by a gang. Deputies are the richest people. They have money and power, while the rest of the country starves. And it is never enough for them. Poor people are robbed more and more. The government is just unable to rule such a big country. Russia is not mighty. It is just big.

Chechen society is regimented and closed to a great extent. Russians see them as "submissive", "introverted", "with a siege mentality" and "isolated from those around them", while Vainakhs see Russians as "lacking inhibitions", with "a great deal of freedom of action", with "no sense of constraint in social interaction" and "outgoing". Regimentation results in a strong need to avoid uncertainty and gives rise to aggressiveness in the face of deviant behaviour (Soldatova 1996: 223-224), which we can also consider as one of the factors contributing to the conflict.

Vihita tells a story from the war years in Chechnya: *One old lonely Russian woman who lived in our street died. It was strange that no one of her relatives came from Russia to bury her with honour. So we gathered money in the neighbourhood and organised a funeral. After some time her daughter came to sell her mother's house. She did it without the smallest "thank you". And it seems, she was not interested how and who buried an old woman. Such things are difficult for us to comprehend.*

Manipulation of hostile images, negative stereotypes and stories of wrongs suffered is instrumental for internal wars. It is also assumed that a large cultural distance between groups increases the potential for conflict, especially if within a group, narratives of wrongs suffered

and the negatively perceived threatening characteristics of another group are deeply rooted. In this context, conflicts can become prone to violent escalation and in case of war, ethnic tensions are reinforced (Zürcher 2007: 209-210).

Ahmed holds the following opinion: *one cannot say that Chechens hate Russians. We hate only those who hate us. According to our traditions, one cannot be rude to those who are respectful to you. Most of Russians are neutral to us, and we have to be neutral too. We are always responsible for the words we say and being rude for no reason is disrespectful for a Chechen himself, first of all. I can only imagine that in the village, people who were far from multiculturalism of Grosny, can have some prejudices against Russians who they “heard” or “read” to be cruel. Besides, people still didn’t forget the deportation there...*

From 1970s the number of Russians in the country started to decrease. Russians residing in Chechnya often become victims of violence acts of indigenous population starting from 1980s. As a result of mass violence acts toward them, people quickly started to leave the republic. They did not want to risk the prospect of being cut off from the Russian state in Chechnya (Soldatova 1996: 212, 214). According to Ruslan, *all these talks about discrimination of Russians in Chechnya are nationalist propaganda. In my neighbourhood people always kept together no matter what nationality they were.*

But in Moscow the situation was different. Artur told me that *in Moscow people would not even talk to you when you ask about the direction. Only because you are a Chechen.*

Interethnic tensions were also stimulated by intensification of criminality. Dudayev’s edict, according to which no criminal on the territory of the republic is to be turned over to a state who has recognized the independence of Chechnya, contributed to it (Soldatova 1996: 219). This, naturally, was followed by a rapid growth of criminality as well as by aggravation of relations between Russian and Chechen population of Chechnya.

Chechen leaders started to blame Russian authorities for everything taking place in Chechnya. People were aware about attitudes of Russians toward “aggressive Chechens”, and that approved their war for freedom. Chechen President Aslan Maskhadov expressed this in the following way “One Russian general said about Chechens: “They all have to be annihilated, everyone over 5 years old, and then circled with a barb wire and re-educated”. I also heard statements like “All of them have to pass a filtration post – everyone from 10 to 60 years old”. That means, to break everyone’s ribs and make people handicapped. More

“intelligent” ones said that “A Great Chinese Wall has to be build along the Baku highway”. This is what expects my people in case – Heaven forbid - we lose the war. In order to save my people from genocide, it remains only one: defend ourselves” (Politkovskaya 2007: 240). Marat told me, *Zhyrinovskij*⁷ said at that time (after the second Chechen war) that young people from 16 till 25 in Chechnya should not receive travel passports because their travelling to Europe and America would make them smart. And if they became intelligent, then Russia would have no one to rule at. Those were his exact words. Look up his interviews in 2002-2004 years and you will find it. Russia doesn’t want Chechens to develop morally and mentally because then it will lose a tasty piece of pie that it has under the total control now.

I have perceived myself as a part of Russia before. Now I hate it, Chechens say nowadays (Cremer 2007: 14, personal interview).

Idris Dokaev, a leader of a small group of volunteers in Chechnya says: *We are fighting to defend our homes from barbarians. Russia has never known God. She has always had evil men for a government* (Lieven 1998: 117-118).

Ordinary Chechens, Timur states, *have nothing to do with politics and struggle for power. In the USSR people lived peacefully side by side with Russians. It didn’t matter of which nationality you were – the main thing, one had to be a good person. Russians were proud to have a Chechen as a friend because friendship is of a great value for us according to our traditions. A Chechen will never betray a friend. Today this had changed. I can trust only my family. If you say you are a Chechen, people take a distance with you. I try not to communicate with strangers now.*

Nowadays when the war is over and the people are slowly getting back to the normal life, the ethnic conflict is not so acute as before. According to Narek, *Chechens who left the republic in the war time are now coming back after many years spent abroad. Even Russians who lived there in the Soviet time do.*

It proves once again the fact that the root causes of an ethnic conflict revolve around issues of resource control, political power, manipulations of the political elite and inability of the central state to address the needs of the periphery (McArdle Kelleher 1996: 339).

⁷

A Russian politician.

4.3 Role of education in ethnic relations

Education can play a very positive role in the development of ethnic relations unless it is used on purpose to spread nationalistic ideas.

First, an educated person is unlikely to easily believe and accept nationalistic ideas, they are more likely to question such ideologies. Second, modern education makes an accent on the fact of equality of all people. And finally, the international atmosphere at schools and universities in the modern global world practically proves this fact.

As a proof of this positive influence of education can be found in Chechnya where mostly people with higher education are members of the organisation struggling against violation of human rights.

In the Soviet Union people received modern educations which raised the size and ethnic diversity of intelligentsia capable of articulating national needs and expressing national interests. As a result, from 1970s on, members of non-Russian groups started to compete with Russians for political position, demand for participation and a greater share of the system's rewards (Drobizheva 1996: 131).

The level of education in Chechnya before the Soviet time was extremely low. But after it became a part of the USSR the situation has changed radically. Raising of an education level in the republics was considered a base for building of the Communist state. And indeed, the scale of this success was overwhelming: while in 1920 literacy of the population was only 0.4%, just in 20 years this index was raised to 85% of the population (URL 3).

However, in Chechnya, as well as in many other republics, the language was the main obstacle for that policy.

In 1930ies the system of social connections was completely formed where one could not occupy any significant social position without Russian. Bad Russian skills impeded education in the North Caucasus and thereby hampered economical and cultural development of the people. And "a people that do not know Russian will not have access to important political posts, it cannot be chosen for holding such posts. In fact, only the layer of this people who speak Russian can then take ruling positions" (URL 3).

This shows that the Soviet state pursued a double policy where, on the one hand, it aimed at and guaranteed equality and fraternity of all its people, and on the other hand, provoked incitement to ethnic hatred by itself.

The ideology of the USSR which was implanted in people's minds from the early years was based on the belief that with the begin of the socialist époque the conflicts between nations for power, territory and influence will cease and the famous "friendship of peoples" will triumph. As Chugaev notes, since the "national and social oppression" that Marx and Lenin identified as the sources of national antagonism and oppression were considered to have been abolished, ethnic conflict was deemed not to exist in the Soviet state (Walker 1996: 8).

One of the interviewees of this research, Narek, who attended school and university in the USSR remembers this time with pleasure. At school pupils would never think of someone from another republic or someone with a different appearance as of a second class, let alone humiliating and bullying of such children.

It is hard to imagine and to find a right answer to how such [philanthropic](#) views would suddenly lead to an ethnic war with inhuman brutality.

Big efforts directed to raising of the literacy and education level in the USSR as well as upbringing young people in the spirit of «equality of nations» brought their positive and large-scale results. Still, a big delusion of this policy which the majority of citizens realized very late was that not the people and their well-being were its aim but fast economical development by means of «human material» that was far not first on the list of the Party's priorities.

Chechens were among the first peoples of the USSR who realized that «friendship of peoples» was just a myth which the Communist party created for the masses. Their deportation in 1944 ruined this myth.

The answer to the question above might, thus, lie in the people's reaction to the radical change in their homeland, and consequently in their minds. The decay of communism might have also meant to them decay in altruism, non-profitable relationships as well as simultaneous ruination of centuries-old Chechen tradition of love and respect to strangers.

It may also be stimulated by fast-growing radical Islamist groups that educated young people and even children in their warlike spirit.

And one of the most important issues was that, obviously, the Chechen population has become much more educated, which meant that they could then express their national needs more openly, they became more aware of people's rights and freedoms, and the "voice of the people" had become more articulate and clear, especially after with the decay of the Soviet

system the state decisions were not dictated “from above” any more. And Chechens were obviously not satisfied with the USSR policies in many spheres.

All these factors played their role in the beginning of the ethnic conflict with Russians.

Today, the Chechen government is very concerned with the question of education. The present President of Chechnya stated that in June 2007 during his meeting with the Youth Welfare Office that he is “ready to pay for the education and accommodation of 50 student in any country in the world on the condition that after they get their Diploma, they will come back and will work for the well-being of Chechnya”.

Obviously, education contributes to the personal well-being as well as to the country’s profit. But at the same time especially higher education in European countries so many Chechen young people are dreaming of helps to popularize the concept of equality of all people, to broaden their view of the world and become more tolerant.

As Ahmed mentioned in the interview, *there is a big difference between a Chechen from a village and a Chechen from a city. Those who grew up in the city in an international environment, most of who received good education at schools and universities are much more tolerant and patient, while villagers often see Russians as enemies only because they do not know history very well or get false information and made-up stories from rumors. Villages are in general more aggressive, may be also for the same reason. So we, city dwellers, do not have much contact with them.*

4.4 Past as a myth

Mythology of the past contributed greatly to the emergence of conflict in Chechnya. A lack of reliable historical and anthropological sources stimulated that. A number of various interpretations, even absolutely absurd ones were accepted as facts. The leaders of the Chechen revolution presented “new anthropology of Chechen people” which helped them to unite masses and make them believe in the national strength.

A bright example for this is the first Chechen President Dudaev. This is what Chechen Minister of economics and finance writes about him: “In Baalbek⁸ Dudaev saw an ancient

⁸ A town in Lebanon.

stone structure with giant columns resembling the masonry of the medieval towers in the mountains of Chechnya and Ingushetia. This site led him to assert that both were built by the same tribe – namely, the Vainakhs” (Abubarakov 1998: 17). Abubarakov also mentions Dudaev’s new version of the emergence of Islam: according to him, Islam appeared not among Arabs but in Chechnya, and the Vainakhs were its founders. In France the President announced that Noah’s Arc landed in the Chechen mountains and Noah himself had Vainakh ancestors, which meant that Vainakhs were actually ancestors of the whole Earth population (Abubarakov 1998: 17).

Dudaev was a real national hero of his time and “the saviour of the Chechens”. Naturally, people wanted to believe him, and they did. He was not a historian and had, in fact, little to do with Chechnya, having spent most of his life outside the country and hardly speaking Chechen. But Dudaev used statements of historians that Chechnya had always struggled for independence since the Russian conquest to justify his radical political position. Cheterian holds an opinion that it is an erroneous approach when historians see the events of two-three centuries as a single process (2008: 75).

Chechen historians, ethnologists and anthropologists became real political activists for defence of the nation (Cheterian 2008: 37). They used their methodology to explain present chaos by means of the past. As Eriksen notes, anthropologists concentrate on how history creates contemporary identities and how it is used in politics rather than on what has really happened. In anthropology, history is not a product of the past but a response to requirements of the present. Even by Malinowski’s time, what was available for anthropologists was not “tradition lived” but “tradition remembered” (Eller 1999: 30, 40).

Appeal to the tradition and nostalgia about some mythical or semi-mythical history gains strength in social upheavals associated with the opening up to global pressures. It is the deliberate manipulations of these sentiments, often speeded up by the electronic media, that is the immediate cause of conflict (Kaldor 2005: 334). The rising conflict provoked creating of such “mythical or semi-mythical histories” in Chechnya and they, in turn, supplied the conflict with “right” ideology.

Such contexts played a positive and negative role for the Chechen nation. On the one side, after almost a century of artificial creation of a “single Chechen nation” within the Soviet Union, Chechens came to this idea by themselves. They realized that in a modern world “staying united” is a prerequisite for having their own voice in global politics, economy, and

culture. People would not unite only in emergencies and would not be ruled by foreigners on their own land any more.

One of the uniting elements of an ethnic group is the belief that it had a common long and often glorious history of cultural distinctness (and often conflicts) that confer to them the rights of “a people”. The mere memory of having had a distinct culture in the past may be sufficient to create and maintain the sense of nationhood. Groups may manufacture and disseminate a past that is partly or wholly fallacious but which is thereby no less powerful or effective (Eller 1999: 25, 28, 41). Sakwa argues that the core of Chechen identity is more historical than ethnic in nature. Chechnya’s claim for independence rests on a distinctive “historicist” reading of its relationship with Russia (2005: 4).

On the other side, these ideas led people not only to unification but also created or fortified ethnic tension with Russians. In the post-revolutionary Soviet historiography the theme of voluntary incorporation of Caucasian people into the Tsarist realms became a repetitive archetype instead of showing long and bloody conquest and resistance (Cheterian 2008: 77). With the begin of independence movement, it was highly criticised by new Chechen authorities and “new real history” was presented for the people, which showed Russians as villains and murderers. The new idea was popularised that “Chechen antipathy to Russians is rooted in history: it has been a bone in Russia’s throat for almost 200 years” (Sharma 1995: 230).

In the strong belief in the myth, people are sure to find proofs for them. The religious legacy of a Chechen hero Imam Shamil has been greatly weakened but the myth he created – that of stubborn resistance against Russians, remains in the heart of the present Chechen struggle, and that struggle is in turn becoming a part of the heroic national myth (Lieven 1998: 304). Victory such as in 1996 affirmed the mythology of the Chechen culture. And this encouragement resulted in further struggle and more violence.

Journalists, scholars and other romantics celebrated Chechens for fierce warriors when they won and innocent victims when they lost (Ware 2005: 79). It is wrong to romanticise Chechens and call them mountain people with noble traditions untamed by modernity. This would have been the same prejudice as considering Chechens as “the wild” by Russians (de Waal 2003: 17).

Historical and ethnic factors were not the basis for conflicts in the former USSR, including Chechnya, and history can not serve as an argument for today’s political events and decisions

(Tishkov 2004: 17). Nor can mediation and conflict management focused on ethnic identities or age-old grievances ameliorate the situation, as they do not address the factors producing and sustaining conflict (Walker 1996: 11). And namely these invented histories and the sequential ethnic hatred ate some of the major factors sustaining the present conflict.

Now it has become a conventional wisdom that Chechnya's instability results from the long history of bitter grievances and brutal warfare between Russians and Chechens. But the neighbouring Dagestan undermines this explanation: after long fighting against Russian expansionism along with Chechnya, they finally managed to develop peaceful relations with Russia in the XIX century (Ware 2005: 88).

Indeed, almost every country in the North Caucasus had from minor to the most violent conflicts with Russia in their history. Wars of 1785-1865 were not Chechen-Russian ones, but Caucasian-Russian (Cheterian 2008: 76). But in modernity only in Chechnya past suffering were recalled in the national memory. And their power was so strong that, as we may suppose, they were the reason why the past violence repeated nowadays.

Myth of the past not only contributed to the begin of the war, but also hindered the construction of a viable state. And today many authors refer to it as an explanation for war. Chechnya failed to build a state not because of ancient cultural traditions but because of more "contemporary" factors (Tishkov 2004: 222-223):

1. Many Chechens found comfort in nationalist mythology and "Great Victory" that followed. It inspired them for fighting but hindered negotiations with the warring party.
2. Return of Islam in the wartime when people without religious education brought up in the atheist Soviet time accepted radical streams of this religion that helped them to comprehend the difficult situation in the country from spiritual view point.
3. Wahhabism and other outside influences reinvented teip cleavages that led to rivalries for power and resources.
4. The Chechen revolution indulged in an unrealised project of restoring an imagined order (based on clan structure and religion) that did not exist at least from Chechnya's incorporation into the Russian state. The society sought a future based on invented images of the past.

4.4 Nation's right for independence

The conflict in Chechnya began from the confrontation of interests of the Russian state and the Chechen authorities. The myth of the past grievances and “eternal hostility between Russian and Chechen” was used by Chechen elites to raise the people for fight for their nation. The argument that the war for independence served just a cover for mafia and a narrow circle of elites interests’ seems quite evidential. The majority of simple people, as interviews showed, are far from politics, and what is significant for them is just preserving their culture and traditions, stable economy and peace.

We don't need independence as such. If Chechens can speak their national language, if we can preserve our culture and traditions and use economical resources of our rich land for our own purposes, if we can be safe on our own land – then it doesn't matter if we are an independent state, a part of Russia or anything else, says Ruslan.

The similar idea was expressed by the Chechen President Akhmad Khadyrov in 2000: “In fact, simple people – including me – I am from a simple peasant family – don't need freedom. They need work as well as salary and security for this work. (...) This is what freedom for Chechnya means” (Politkovskaya 2007: 289). It should be mentioned people started to think that in this way only after the war had taken thousands of lives. Before the war, Chechens were made to believe that there is no other way to exist rather than in an independent state. And the past was presented as the main argument for that.

Russia was often portrayed as a coloniser, and Chechens regarded their opposition to Russians as an anti-colonial struggle. That was also expressed by the President Akhmad Khadyrov. In February 2000 he said “There is no a single document that proves that Chechnya voluntarily became part of Russia (Evangelista 2002: 148). Lieven states that the Chechens' struggle in 1994-1996 was the latest in a series of anti-colonial wars throughout the world, of which the past two generations have seen a whole series, from Indochina through Algeria and Portuguese Africa to Afghanistan (Lieven 1998: 301).

Chechnya's history counts 2000 year. And 150 years under the Russian rule is not a good argument for the right of Russia to our territory, says Ahmed.

That means, Chechnya was incorporated in the Russian Empire by force and now, when colonisation epoch is over and all dependant states became free, why should this country further remain dependant on Russia?

Besides, after the USSR collapse, many of the former USSR states became independent and Chechnya was striving for the same right. The advocates of Chechen independence argue that the republic was forced into the Russian Empire and that it has its own ethnic, religious and cultural identity. Thereby, the country requires the same right of national self-determination like other former Soviet republics did at the time of the USSR collapse (Sharma 1995: 227-228).

Within the USSR, Chechnya was a part of the autonomous republic of Checheno-Ingushetia. The union and autonomous republics were given the trappings of modern statehood, including flags, anthems, coats-of-arms, supreme soviets, ministries, state committees and supreme courts. In practice, the exercise of these rights was severely limited (Hill 2003: 211). The country was actually ruled by Russians who moved there as qualified cadres. But even they followed the directions of Moscow predominately.

That served an argument for the leaders of the Chechen revolution to present their struggle as an anti-colonial one; and such facts were used as a proof that the Russian rule in Chechnya had always been oppressive.

On the other side, Russia was looking for arguments to keep Chechnya as a part of the Federation. Many scholars think that the main reason why Russia fought so passionately for Chechen territory was its interests in oil. Gakaev holds an opinion that the Chechen national idea was betrayed by separatist leaders, and the war became lucrative business for all its participants (2005: 25, 41).

There is a view is that if Russia did not defend territorial integrity and Chechnya got independent, other ethnic territories could have followed this example, and Russian statehood would have been destroyed (Cheterian 2008: 74). So the war was just an effort to protect Russia's status as a global power. Why would the state that had de facto enjoyed independence from 1991 to 1994 suddenly become a threat to the integrity of the entire Federation (Siren 1998: 99, 144)? This question still remains open.

As for the second war, the reason for it could have been the first war. Having received the desired independence and left without Russian support, people observed that the political, economic and social situation had worsened. And as the second war began, federal forces found more support around local people. As it was described in the second chapter of this work, disintegration among Chechens themselves split the society and thus, pro-federal Chechens and anti-federal Chechens started to fight with each other. A survey among

Chechens showed that those with higher education consider union with Russia necessary for Chechnya, while the rest support separatist ideas (Cremer 2007: 186-187).

Putin saw Chechnya of 1996-1999 as a failed state whose instability threatened Russia. He thought that Chechnya's ideological vacuum was quickly filled by fundamentalist organisations (Hughes 2005: 284). And in light of 9/11 events in America, protection of the state and its people from the influence and attacks of Chechen radical Islamists fitted well into the world's "war on terror".

Anti-colonial insurgencies were often proclaimed as "terrorism" by imperial powers. Yet insurgent leaders were then appointed statesmen by the same powers (Hughes 2005: 266). And so it happened in Chechnya. Ramzan Khadyrov, a son of the President Akhmad Khadyrov was appointed the head of the Chechen Republic by Vladimir Putin himself.

Chechen leaders were striving to gain support of international community in their anti-colonial struggle for independence. But did Chechnya have this right by law? According to the international law, Chechens do not have a right to require independence from Russia because this case belongs to domestic affairs (Krech 2000: 143). Furthermore, there is a popular opinion that Europe and North America do not want to get involved since a conflict with Russia is not in their interests.

Now, when we look at the situation from the angle of domestic affairs, Chechnya has no chance to argue with the Federation about secession: article 67 of the Russian Federation Constitution proclaims the possibility of changing the subjects' borders only with the agreement of all the sides. The experience of national affairs was usually based on the national rights requirements. But this argument is not easily accepted by society and is hardly justified. Markedonov once said on the parliamentary hearings in 2002: "As for the historical right of an ethnic group for territory, I consider this idea dangerous. Its realization leads to violent interethnic conflicts" (Bugaj 2006: 415).

According to Sharma, self-determination by ethnic fragmentation can not be sustained by democratic principle. The main emphasis here is not on self-determination, but territorial separatism *per se*. As such states are less pluralist, further fragmentation of society is likely to continue (1995: 229).

Another question is whether this independence brings more benefit to the republic or is it just an unreasonable fight for idea. Gakaev states that proposition in favour of independent

Chechnya is a fiction and myth calculated to play on beliefs of ignorant people. In modern interconnected interrelated world existence of totally independent states is impossible. Chechens are aware themselves that to safeguard their interests they have to preserve unified political legal, economical and cultural space with Russia (2005: 22).

5 Theories and regulations of ethnic conflicts

Heartsick, I pondered the mystery.

I thought: poor people.

What do we want!

The sky is clear,

And under the sky

There a place for each of us.

But incessantly and needlessly

We fight. Why?

Mikhail Lermontov, „Valerik“, 1843.

This poem was written by a famous Russian poet Mihkail Lermontov who participated in the battle between Chechens and Russians in 1840 near the river Valerik. Lermontov, like all his Russian contemporaries did not think that Chechens would become more civilised, educated, humane and religious under the Russian rule, and they approved of its aggressive politics. Under the motto of promoting civilization southwards Russian citizens had particular national pride of their culture being better and stronger, and they were glad when new territories fell under the rule of the Empire.

But was seizure of new territories worth those sufferings that both sides experienced at war – deaths, orphans, violated psyche of the whole ethnic group? Lermontov's eternal question remains open.

5.1 From ethnicity to conflict

Globalisation gave a start to a new kind of conflict. In the majority of cases, modern wars are fought in the name of identity – claim to power on the basis of ethnic, linguistic and religious labels. New populist ideology emerges in order to maintain or capture the power, making use of pre-existing cleavages and the legacies of past wars. The appeal to tradition and nostalgia for some mythical or semi-mythical history gains strength in social upheavals associated with the opening to global pressures. In these wars violence is itself a form of political

mobilisation and is directed mainly against civilians and not against another army. And political control is maintained through terror and expulsion or elimination of those who challenge it. The atrocities here are not just side effects of war but a deliberate strategy for political manipulations (Kaldor 2005: 334-335).

It is interesting to note, that in very heterogeneous like in very homogenous societies risk of an ethnic conflict is low. Only in the states where the largest ethnic group makes up more than 45% this risk increases because in this case a dominant group is tempted to use its numerical superiority to gain power (Zürcher 2007: 52-53).

Where does the difference between ethnic and non-ethnic conflicts lie? A conflict is ethnic only if the involved sides are distinguished primarily on the basis of ethnicity (Kaufman 2011: 93). People who associate themselves with a particular group, also associate their interests with those of the group. The key interests are usually considered to be economical ones. But the fight for them often has particular cultural symbolic like for example, “national and cultural self-determination” in Chechnya case.

People may want to join the group and fight for its rights because with every new member the group becomes stronger and possibility of the victory rises. Varshney gives a contra-argument to this opinion: why shall a person cooperate with a group if its other members are already cooperating, and if this group is strong enough, it will win anyway without this person's contribution – unless his or her actions are monitored or non-participants are excluded from rewards in case of victory? He suggests that individual would like to participate because he or she can't live a “reduced mode of being” and feel less of a human being or not able to respect him- or herself otherwise. Self-respect and dignity are involved here (2005: 14, 21). And especially for Chechens this is of high priority.

But even if people mobilize as ethnic groups to look out for their interests, why do they follow extremist leaders who want violence, instead of following moderate leaders who work for peace? Symbolic politics theory suggests that when the group's myth-symbol complex points to the other group as an enemy, its members will be predisposed to be hostile to another group. And politicians will then be able to appeal to symbols of past hostility to rouse people's emotions against the enemy that symbol brings to mind (Kaufman 2011: 99).

5.1 Facework in armed conflicts

In the recent time one can observe a paradox in countries' national identities. On the one hand, process of globalization is becoming more and more rapid and communication means are developing, social, economic and environmental problems are shared by the global community, common interests lead to merging and uniting of different nationalities and identities. On other other hand, we also observe that armed conflicts on the national base and confrontation "we vs. they" are continuing and in some regions are becoming even more acute.

These exist theses that peaceful relations are impossible in a culturally heterogeneous world, but destructive potential of modern weaponry leaves no other choice than to look for causes of peace that are compatible with heterogeneity (Müller 2005: 79).

In this section I will try to answer the following questions: Which role does facework play in armed conflicts? What are cultural and personal aspects of facework in conflicts? How can power be used in promoting violence for protecting "the face of nation"? Is there a possibility of creating shared identities of ethnic groups?

Face is the claimed sense of favourable self-worth in an interpersonal situation (Ting-Toomey & Oetzel 2004: 129). It is self-presentation based on our image of ourselves and on the expectation of our society.

A notion of *self construal* is close connected with the notion of face. Self construal is one's self image and is composed of an *independent self* and *interdependent self* (Ting-Toomey & Oetzel 2004: 129). While independent self emphasises person's uniqueness, interdependent self deals with one's involvement in social relations, with a need to be a part of a system. For each person combination of these components is individual. Gudykunst et al. (1996) state that independent self construal is more typical for individualistic cultures, while interdependent is associated with collectivistic cultures.

Ross expresses similar idea arguing that all humans have a strong desire for group attachment but at the same time they have a clear need to differentiate themselves from others on the group and individual level. For each person there exist the "golden mean" of separation and involvement. And when this balance is upset it causes fears of threatening the face and identity (2007: 318).

We build our communication strategies according to this model. On the one hand, we need to be involved in the communication and be a full-fledged member of a society. On the other hand, we have a contrary need to be independent of others' views and show our autonomy.

This face paradox Scollon & Scollon (1995) called *involvement* and *independence*. Here a notion of involvement means not only being involved but also *showing* this participation to the others. Independence suggests not just expressing one's own autonomy but also respect to the partners' independence as well (Scollon & Scollon 1995: 46).

Each communication act comprises both of these strategies. And we always balance them so that our face is not at risk of losing independence by too much involvement, or of lack of involvement by excluding others from communication while winning at independence. Not less important is balancing the other's face: giving a communication partner too much independence, his/her involvement can be threatened, and vice versa.

Thus, each communication act involves different face strategies or *facework* directed at protecting one's face and the face of one's communication partner.

5.1.1 Personal and cultural aspects of ethnic conflicts

In the process of socialization people acquire the above described strategies and specific knowledge and behaviours which are different for different cultures. Thus, there is a part of the face common to all people belonging to a particular ethnic group. This component makes up a *face system* of this ethnic group. Cultural knowledge establishes the way we communicate with the representatives of our and other cultures, our ethic and aesthetic views, attitudes towards power, resources sharing, properties, conflict behaviour as well as conflict resolution strategies.

Each person has one or two major conflict styles to manage everyday conflicts (Ting-Toomey & Oetzel 2004: 133). These styles are personally, culturally and situational anchored. Ting-Toomey and Oetzel (2004) analyse a cultural component of conflict styles using Rahim's (1983) classification, which include *dominating*, *obliging*, *integrating*, *compromising* and *avoiding* conflict styles. Their research showed connection of conflict styles with Hofstede's notions of individualism/collectivism and high/low power distance as well as with the notion of self construal.

Individualistic cultures prefer direct conflict styles – dominating, integrating and compromising – to obliging and avoiding styles. In **collectivistic** cultures obliging and avoiding styles are more common as there the face of the partner is more respected than in individualistic ones. Collectivistic cultures view more direct means of conflict communication as negative.

Dominating styles are associated with **independent** self construal, while avoiding, obliging and compromising styles are typical for **interdependent** self construal. And integrating style is associated with both, but more with interdependent self construal.

Another important parameter is **power**. For Scollon and Scollon, it is one of the 3 main factors that bring face systems into being. It is “vertical disparity between the participants in a hierarchical structure” (1995: 52). “Plus power” relationships mean realising by both persons with higher and lower social status a power distance between them. “Minus power” shows relationships between equal status sides. This parameter influences facework of both parties.

Hofstede’s **power distance** notion depends not so much on status as on culture. In Austria, Israel, Denmark, for example, which are countries with lower power distance, people think that they are close to power and they should have access to this power. The facework of people in power is directed at independence of their subordinates and they show more involvement towards them. In high power distance countries people in power use self-independence strategies more often.

The smaller the power distance is, the less frequent outgroup disagreements are and the more likely superiors would use subordinates to handle disagreements (Ting-Toomey & Oetzel 2004: 136-137) because their interests coincide, and superiors can rely completely on subordinates in protecting the face of the whole group. That means, in small power distance countries conflicts between groups happen more seldom.

Thus, the behaviour in a conflict situation is determined by personal and cultural factors⁹ where the cultural component is a part of the face system of an ethnic group. Conflicts are perceived as such by actors guided by culturally prescribed criteria of evaluation and rationality (Schröder & Schmidt 2001: 15).

⁹ I excluded situation factors here as this research deals more with personal and cultural ones.

5.1.2 Power and armed conflicts. “We vs. them” strategy

Ting-Toomey and Oetzel state that conflict is a face-threatening experience (2004: 129). Conflict arises when someone’s face is threatened. And the strategies we use in negotiation are face-saving, face-attacking and face-recouping (ebd.).

But how does this scheme work in the armed conflicts or wars? Whose face is threatened there?

Armed conflicts or wars involve usually a big number of people. Do soldiers or civilians who fight up to death protect their own faces or of someone else? Or may be an “imagined collective face” of their motherland? If this is a face of the whole country, how do those who fight learn that every citizen wishes death to those who dared to threaten their face?

Ahmed told me that *these people who commit these horrible terror acts are unlikely to be Chechens. A Chechen would do his best to preserve a good name of his teip, like teips are eager to preserve a good reputation of the Chechen nation. I cannot imagine that these individuals who stained the face of our whole people could have been real Chechens. I always think that if I had come to Chechnya now, I would have made a big use for the country. For example, I know now how it is better to build a house, I am aware of many new technologies in this area. If everyone could bring a small piece of such knowledge we would make the land flourish.*

When a society becomes too complex to remain self-coordinating, the power concentrates in hands of individuals or cliques who coordinate the life of people that are not able to be in daily face-to-face contact (Bowman 2001: 30). These individuals or cliques become representatives of the whole nation and they acquire the power to regulate this nation’s conflicts within itself as well as with other nations.

Thus, authorities have the power to maintain facework for the group they represent, by this group and in the name of this group. The group, in its turn, relies its image and face on the authorities.

But the question of power is very slippery. Often decisions that are made by authorities arise from their own personal interests under the mask of protecting nation’s face. Conflicts and wars occur when those who make the decision to fight estimate that it is in their material interests to do so (Schröder & Schmidt 2001: 4). The interests of those who is in power are

often too different and even contradicting to those under their power, and the more a cultural power distance parameter is, the more different their interests are.

How do people in power manage to persuade the whole nation that a violent action is the best strategy in conflict resolution? Why avoiding or obliging strategy, for example, will not save the face of the state, while the violence will do?

As Schröder and Schmidt put it, war is a game played by strategically planning leaders or elites in which those who actually commit acts of violence are no more than pawns for who that is a highly emotionally charged action (2001: 5). When conflicts last too long, original causes and motivation could be forgotten and acquire their own logic. Schröder and Schmidt (2001: 8) argue that there is no more important resource for ideology of violence than the representation of past violence, of former dead, former loss and former suffering. Violence, thus, acquires a symbolic meaning in society's collective memory. And in the collective cultural view it becomes legitimated. It becomes a norm, a part of culture and people's identities. Violence may constitute an integral element in a group's ideology of self-definition (Schröder & Schmidt 2001: 14).

In one of Melanesian tribes – Manambu – identities of men can be sustained *only* in the situation of war, while persistence of peace is antagonistic to their identities (Bowman 2001: 37).

Furthermore, citizens have civil and political obligations for their state. The individual rights citizens enjoy in the peacetime are exchanged for the abrogation of these rights and unlimited liability in case of war. In wartime, they become part of a collectivity, a nation, and have to be ready to die for the state (Kaldor 2005: 331).

Thereby, participation in armed conflicts will also be a part of facework, a strategy of protecting one's own and nation's face.

Another face strategy that authorities use to legitimize violence in conflict resolution is an ideology of "us" versus "them". Here the key of an ethnic conflict is seen in the development and reinforcement of "enemy image" (Siniver 2005: 190).

The boundaries of collective identity of the nation are clearly marked by people in power, and any threatening of its face legitimates "defending" it with violence (Bowman 2001: 42). In armed conflicts the *other-face concern* loses its significance when ideology of violence¹⁰ is applied.

¹⁰ See Section 5.1.3

The threat of “the other” (enemies, ethnic minorities, etc.) is often exaggerated (if not invented) by organs of the state so that it can expand over those it claims to protect (Bowman 2001: 31). This misuse of power is applied with the intention of creating a violent confrontation with a strict polarisation who is “us” and who is “them”. This, in its turn, gives a strong motivation for people in an armed conflict to forget about material or social profit from war and to fight “for protecting the face”. And the outcome of the struggle will not change anything. A defeat will not eliminate the rightness of “our” position (Schröder & Schmidt 2001: 11).

Returning again to the example of Mamambu men, it has to be mentioned that among these people it is common to “create” a threatening “outside” by dividing sociality into two opposed sectors – “us” and “them”.

Thus, in armed conflicts power is often misused and directed on protecting the interests of authorities rather than those of the nation. The nation fights for “the face of the country” created by people in power by establishing a strong “we-they” face-off in order to give motivation for violent actions. It explains, to some extent why the uniting power of globalisation cannot completely eliminate national conflicts. The authorities of the countries follow their private interests and act in an opposite direction making the nations separate and confront each other.

5.1.2 Uniting identities – creating a “new face”

Ross states that all cultures have ideas of peacemaking, and that can help opponents to see each other in a new light and to explore shared concerns and mutual benefits. (2007: 317). It can be achieved, he writes, by expressing and sharing ideas in emotionally evocative way through images and rituals. Negotiations are not enough. In long-term conflicts, opponents face the past, and past violence can become a source of a new ideology of violence¹¹.

Opponents, thus, have to redefine their incompatible identities and engage in rituals that express their new relationship. According to Ross, if we just get one (or both) side to give up their identity then conflict will diminish or disappear. In order to leave in peace and communicate in harmony people may try to create a united identity acquiring and appreciating new values and saving old ones. This sounds to be possible as people do possess

¹¹ See the citation of Schröder and Schmidt (2001: 8) in Section 5.1.3.

multiple identities, meaning that they accept and respect values of 2 or more cultures which make intercultural conflicts less likely. In the case of disagreements, communicants would act with face strategies of a shared culture.

Ross also makes an emphasis on the preference of symbolic actions rather than verbal communication in creating a common identity. Symbolic actions are less direct and work on the unconscious level. In the article “Creating a culture of peace” (2007) Skjellstad also underlines the importance of rituals and symbolic actions in promoting tolerance among schoolchildren. She suggests that prejudice rests upon emotional rather than intellectual ground (Skjellstad 2007: 378). Music, dance and theatre performed by children of different nationalities for each other play a crucial role in non-conflict ethnic coexistence because such kind of communication confronts with irrational and emotional bases of racist and discriminating attitudes and leads to more tolerance.

The role of authorities is significant in the process of building-up common identities (Ross 2007: 326). Using power of authorities for peaceful intercultural communication has to start from reciprocal gestures directed at promoting tolerance and creating shared identities.

Thus, shared face systems of ethnic groups might be created to diminish conflicts and even wars.

Like every individual has his own “face”, in such a way each ethnic group has its own common face system which influences the conflict behaviour and conflict resolution strategies within one group and between several ones.

I showed in this section how face works in armed conflicts where people protect the face of their nation rather than their own one, and how authorities protecting their private interests misuse power to motivate people to commit violent actions in the name of their nation.

Authorities are able to do this promoting ideology of violence with the help of representation of past violence and with establishing a strict face-off “we” versus “them” where the source of unification of people is creating of their opposition to “the other” – people of other ethnic origins.

As a way of diminishing intercultural conflicts I have presented the theory of Ross which suggests sharing of identities of ethnic groups where a part of one’s identity would comprise values of other group making outgroup conflicts less possible. In this way, a common face system could be created which could lead to improvement of intercultural communication

and elimination of disagreements. Skjellstad proposes a practical way of implementation of this theory by promoting music, dance and theatre by and for the children of different ethnic groups.

5.2 Ethnic conflict in evolutionary theory context (after Johnson)

Evolutionary theory suggests that there are conflicts of interests among all humans, because the ultimate interest of any organism is its genetic fitness. Genes are transmitted across generation, and they are the ultimate currency in natural selection. From this perspective, the objects of human conflicts – territory, property, resources, power privilege, wealth, security, status – are not ends in themselves. They are the variable and proximate means by which humans pursue their ultimate interest – maximizing the reproductive rate of the genes they carry (Johnson 2001: 20).

Conflicts are thus based on sexual reproduction. Even parents and their children may have conflicting interests, because each child is related to his or her parent by a factor of only 0.5. Monozygotic twins whose genes are almost identical are subject to conflicts as well, because they are still different due to genetic mutations and because genetically identical organisms will not “know” that their interests are identical and behave in an evolutionary competitive way.

Organisms compete more effectively in collaboration with other organisms. Among humans such alliances become families, clans, businesses, whole societies. Ethnic groups have potential to become such an alliance, and when it happens they become nations.

Nepotism, one of the collaboration types, is based on kin selection. Kin selection produces altruism among relatives, because they share genes. Cooperation with a relative may therefore enhance the reproduction of the shared genes. At the genetic level competition enhances individuals’ interest and at the phenotypic level, these behaviours become cooperative.

Individual protects his or her genetic interests, but he or she can unite with siblings to protect their common genes against, let us say, a clan. Together with the clan they protect a super-clan interest and so on. It reminds of the Chechen principle “me and my brother against our cousins, we and our cousins against the world”.

For centuries these behavioural mechanisms have been evolving in a Chechen society. People seldom found themselves within a group of strangers they never had contact with. Thrown into artificially created groups in the Soviet times with its collectivisation policy and a flow of foreigners into the country they quickly employed these behavioural mechanisms.

Groups based on common descent were gradually replaced by groups based on a myth of common descent. It was especially typical in the city where kinship relations started to lose its significance. But during the revolution in the beginning of the 1990s this myth became one of the key factors that united people in the fight for independence.

As the evolutionary analysis of ethnic conflict has shown, people are driven by selection mechanisms that “tell” them who is “one of us” and who is a stranger, who is a friend and who is an enemy. But we live in a society where the biological is often replaced by the social. The way of eliminating this division into “friends” and “enemies” could be the replacement of this schema by accepting communication partner without preliminary attributing to any of these groups. It can be achieved by means of educating and training.

Since ethnocentrism is an evolved trait, it should be subject to some challenging. And like economical and political views can contribute to the creating means for favouring cooperation, so do evolutionist ideas: not to create cooperation or eliminate conflict but rather to improve the environment for cooperation; to make it “cooperation-friendly” (Tkacik 2001: 220).

Tkacik supposes that such mechanisms of creating a “cooperation friendly” environment could be autonomy agreements. Although separation as a result of autonomy seems quite opposite to cooperation views of evolutionist theory, the final goal of both approaches is the same. Autonomy agreement, for example, can call for increased meeting of elites, both in terms of the number of elites meeting and the subjects on which they meet. This may have positive diffusion effects on the masses, thereby increasing cooperation.

5.3 Nonviolent communication

Nonviolent communication is a conflict resolution process developed by Marshall B. Rosenberg. This strategy became widespread and proved to bring significant results in personal, group as well as interethnic communication – in Israel, the Palestinian authority, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, etc. It is based on four components:

1. observation – what affects our well being,
2. defining our feelings towards it with the full responsibility for them,
3. realising our needs that create these feelings,
4. and formulating honest requests.

Rosenberg presents the results of Professor O.J. Harvey's research in that he showed that there is considerably less violence in cultures where people think in terms of human needs than in cultures where people label one another as "good" or "bad" and believe that the "bad" ones deserve to be punished. Violence comes from the belief that other people cause our pain and therefore deserve punishment.

A communicator, on his or her part, has to receive these requests empathically and try as hard as one can to understand the need of the requesting person.

In some cases, when, for example, one party is not willing to communicate or imminent danger does not allow time for communication, people may need to resort to force. It is important though to distinguish between punitive and protective force. Punitive action is likely to generate resentment and hostility and to reinforce resistance to the very behaviour we are seeking.

A special emphasis in Nonviolent Communication is made on responsibility for one's actions. One of the Nazi officers at the war crime trial to the question why he took a certain actions gave an answer: "Superior's orders", "Company policy", "It was the law" (Rosenberg 2003: 19). The consequences of the Second World War remind us how high the price for simple following someone's instruction without taking responsibility can be. People become dangerous when they are not conscious of their responsibility for how they behave, think and feel. It was especially typical for the soldiers of the Russian army who "followed the order"

in that they committed numerous war crimes in Chechnya. And in majority of cases did bear any punishment for that because “war is war”.

This point – taking responsibility for war injustice – is considered the base for establishing peace in Chechnya (Ware 2005: 90).

As a conflict management strategy, Judd suggests that both sides have to finally hear the needs of each other: Russians – the need of self-respect, dignity, aspiration for representative self-governance, preserving the culture; Chechens – legitimate anxieties of the Russian Federation about its survival and the security of the southern flank. And the EU, OSCE, NGOs have to provide opportunities for Russians and Chechens to get to know each other's needs, become more imaginative about the road to peace or at least finally stop and ask Lermontov's question – “Why?” (2005: 293).

5.4 Approaches to conflict management in Chechnya

For a Russian ethnologist Tishkov who took part in peace regulations in Chechnya such measures are elimination of doctrines that perpetuate violence, social therapy of returning former combatant to a civilian life, termination of external manipulation on Chechen state issues with Chechens taking the whole responsibility for them, establishing a code of behaviour of the Russian army in the conflict zones and control of international organisations of Russian government's activities in Chechnya (2005: 176-180).

Leitner (2006: 21-22) sees granting of independence for Chechnya not helpful as the country will then become a shelter for North Caucasian terrorists. Thereby, he proposes the following:

- It is especially important to combat Chechen rebels-terrorists and exclude their possibility of moving to the neighbouring areas. Besides, guarding Russian borders would help to avoid arriving new terrorists in the state.
- Civil reconstruction program is urgently needed to alleviate humanitarian catastrophe and to discourage civil population from the armed struggle.
- Power in the country has to be given to reliable ruling circles and a clan structure is to be considered at that.

- Chechnya needs financial and economic autonomy within Russia. And it is important that it has own regional oil production, oil processing and oil transportation.
- The EU Russia should take part in economical and social stabilisation of life in Chechnya and it is especially required that those from the Russian Army who violated human rights of Chechens are judged and punished.

Politkovskaya (2007: 230-233, 236), a Russian journalist who fought passionately for human rights of Chechens and established contacts with each of the numerous sides of the conflict offered her own plan of fifteen steps for peacemaking process in Chechnya. The emphasis of her program was on the following:

- Creating a special organisation responsible for resolution of the Chechen conflict consisting from civilians who worked as human rights observers at war and from activists with anti-war conflict resolution position.
- Federal centre has to take responsibility for military crimes and punish war criminals.
- Demilitarisation under the control of international non-government organisations. The third side is absolutely necessary for a Chechen case.
- Russian government has to chose a head of temporary ruling committee in Chechnya respected by Chechen society who will organise all-nation discussion on the form and responsibilities of Chechen government and then undertake all-nation vote.

Measures issued by the government of the Russian Federation directed on the conflict resolution in Chechnya involve (Bugaj 2006: 426-429):

- ceasefire and demilitarisation of Chechnya
- restoring authority organs in the republic based on the free vote
- humanitarian help and reconstruction of economical infrastructure
- supply of information technologies and mass media regulated by federal authorities in Chechnya, including spreading of brochures about the crimes of Dudaev regime for Russian and foreign readers.

Ware names obstacles for successful management of conflict in Chechnya (2003: 197-198):

- Legacy of the recent past has to be overcome as attempts of peace building in Chechnya has never brought positive results.
- Because of high fragmentation of Chechen society, any settlement with Russia is unlikely to be achieved.

- International peacekeeping force proved to be ineffective in Chechnya and it suffers from hostage industry.
- Establishing of *cordon sanitaire* around Chechnya is unrealistic due to ruggedness of the highland terrain and widespread bribing of border guards.

As for the problem of terrorism, Putin put it into the following phrase on the press conference in 2004: “We don’t negotiate with terrorists, we destroy them”. But as experience shows, any attempt to exclude “radicals” from negotiations, and to accommodate only the interests of moderate parties in the conflict settlement, is bound to fail. Conflicting interests must be accommodated so that the incentives for non-violence and compromise outweigh benefits expected from a further politics of violence (Marco 2011: 243).

Stepanova (2005: 370-373) notes that the main emphasis in anti-terrorist activities should be on discouraging local population of supporting extremist organisations by:

- introducing reintegration and rehabilitation programs. The reintegration of ex-combatants, internally displaced persons, returnees and other war-affected populations might help to erode recruitment opportunities for groups involved in terrorism.
- public educational and awareness programs informing about public danger posed by terrorism and its counterproductive effects for the local population. They can have some impact on younger children but hardly on young people already involved in extremist organisations because for indoctrinated members of Islamic groups, for example, the way out is almost impossible.
- influencing media and public information providers in order to reduce its negative impact contributing to violence and use it for peace-making purposes.

For Bugaj an important measure is integration of Chechnya in North Caucasus programs of unified cultural development of the nations living there, which can also contribute to establishing economical contacts (2006: 413).

And this is how Chechens see peace in their motherland:

Ahmed: *Any decision is well for peacemaking in the country. But only unless it contradicts Chechen religion, traditions and customs. If the traditions are violated, one day we will not be Chechens any more.*

Vihita: *Russia and the West have their own interests in Chechnya, and until they finally agree to consider interests of Chechens, the conflict will continue.*

Ruslan: *I am against the Russian influence in Chechnya. In order to finally come to peace we need to stop the total federalists' control over our politics and make a new free vote. It is better that Russian and Chechnya live like a family than "milking" each other like now.*

My attitude to war is negative. There are no issues that can't be settled over the negotiating table. (Tishkov 2004: 128, interview with Ramazan Dzh.).

Chechen women see the way out of the conflict in the following: withdrawal of Russian armed forces (53%), peace negotiation (33%), cessation of hostilities (16%) (Cremer 2007: 23).

The majority of authors agree that complete independence from Russia will not bring any positive change to Chechnya but only worsen the situation. Restoring of the social, political and economical spheres has to be maintained by Chechens and for with the respect to their traditions and Russia as a mother state has to support the revival of the republic. Until there exist tensions between the two countries, this process has to be controlled by NGOs.

The conflict of interests between the federal state and Chechnya, between Chechen ruling class and the citizens could be overcome with nonviolent communication methodic. There is a necessity of meeting each other's needs and using proved strategies of NVC such as, for example, exchanging the roles between rivalry parties on a negotiation meeting and trying to protect the interests of the opponent.

The element of trust – mutually among citizens and between them and the institutions could also be considered a basic element non-violent civilization (Müller 2005: 78). My research showed that Chechens do not trust their government and see it rather as an enemy than a partner. Marat's story proved that: *The wild laws that exist there made the whole country wild. The government doesn't care about the people and the people don't want to follow the law. (...) I noticed a funny detail in my attitudes after many years of life in Europe. And I noticed it when I was in the Ukraine – also an ex-USSR country – in 2008. I acquired a number of good qualities, I became another person to some extent. I don't cross the street on the red light, I don't throw rubbish in the streets, I don't understand how people just can jump in the queue in a shop ... and many other small details.*

The peace education in conflict zones has to start early at school and involve activities engaging children of various nationalities in order to develop tolerance and respect to multiculturalism from childhood.

The question remains if the radical Islamic extremists which are often referred as “terrorists” have to be annihilated or there exist a way of meeting there needs, too and their integration into the social life. Until a big part of the sources for reconstruction of the country’s infrastructure and individual families’ support will be supplied by extremist Islamic organisation, their influence will continue to spread and new members will be indoctrinated.

Conclusion

The Chechen society is unique in its adherence to the traditions of free, egalitarian, tribal life that existed until recently almost unchanged. A custom of inviting “third party”, foreign princes, who united the teips in case of danger astonished the observers and showed that egalitarian society does not need a leader in the peacetime. Conflicts inside a tribe were solved by a council of elders who were respected by each member of the community. And potentially anyone could become a part of the council with the gain of experience and respect.

With the loss of independence, incorporation in the Soviet Union, the Chechen revolution and the recent two wars these features were violated and played against the coloniser – the Russian state and the Chechen society. The Soviet policy of collectivisation damaged the age-old economical practices. Together with some positive changes like developing of oil industry, growth of education, a broad trade system among numerous USSR republics, the Soviet authorities strongly discredited the Chechen nation in that the ruling class of the republic was composed almost without exception from native Russians, in mass repressions and in the deporting of the whole nation to the Kazakhstan violating in this way the basic human rights.

This research shows that in spite of all that there were almost no tensions between ethnic groups in Chechnya, like in the whole USSR. Even if such precedents happened, the strong belief in the “friendship of all nations and peoples” imposed by the Communist party made people regard them as weird exceptions. Chechens in particular were famous for their hospitality, loyal attitude to newcomers and even slaves. Such notion as racism is unknown to many Chechens, even nowadays.

The Chechen wars originated among Chechen and Russian elites, and then spread among the population. The rivalry between Chechen clans started from the necessity of choosing a single leader to rule the country which had never been characteristic to this society – the egalitarianism did not fit into the system of the modern world, councils of elders lost their credibility, Russian authorities that were presented as enemies, and Chechen teips and tukhums felt the danger of discrimination.

Russian ruling class had its own interests in the “black gold” industry of Chechnya and their establishing of relations with new Chechen elites led to the spread of mafia. Intelligentsia was not involved in the pursuit of power and easy money being educated in a strict honest Soviet system. Only the outsiders of this system – mostly former criminals who were granted freedom by Dudaev in exchange for the recognition and fight for the independence of the republic seized ruling positions – as it was typical to many ex-USSR countries.

New elites used the myth of the past to assure people that their natural form of existence is independence, that Russia has always been the sworn enemy of Chechnya and that the victorious past of Chechens guarantees them a victory in this war, too. Chechens ethnologists created a scientific base for this beliefs and used in the fomentation of interethnic discords and racism. Interviews showed that those who emigrated from Chechnya before the war have no prejudices against Russians while those who left the country during or after war have ambiguous attitudes toward them.

There are still a lot of disputes around the topic whether Chechen may or may not require their separation from the Russian state. International law refuses this right. But the opponents say that Chechnya was seized and colonised by Russia and thus, like all ex-colonies, has a right for freedom. Both theories were used by the rivalry parties and spread among the adherents of both ideologies. Simple people were just marionettes of the elites’ facework strategies and were influenced by creating of “us” versus “them” images in the pursuit of power by several groups.

The war spread wild laws among the people who started to live under the motto: the world is ruthless and to survive you must become ruthless too. Unprecedented wave of war atrocities of Chechen fighters and boyeviks is often staged in Russian media and science as “typical” for Chechens who had always been known as bandits and cruel people. The research proved that there were really “noble bandits” who were highly regarded in their communities, but as the world history and mythology shows, such “heroes” and “bad guys” were typical to many other societies and Robin Hood can be a bright example for this.

Some other factors, like poverty, mass conversion into Islam/strict following of its regulations, including its most radical forms, loss of family members etc. played their role in numerous terror acts that fixated an image of “born criminals”.

There exist a lot of theories of resolution of the Chechen conflict and reconstruction of the republic and its society. A multilateral approach has to be used for conflict management in

order to consider the interests of each of the numerous opposed sides. Experience showed that leaving one of the sides unsatisfied, even if it is radical religious organisations, can have drastic consequences for all of the parties.

Violence in the Chechen ethnic conflict depends not on the national character and not on the strong ethnic hatred but on the numerous factors that could lead any nation to such expression of violence. Chechens do have traditions and national traits that fostered the conflict – such as requirement of the apology for offence, blood feud which is not a “law of the wild” as it is widely viewed, but serves a strict regulation of mutual respect, etc. – yet these traits cannot be regarded as factors of the ethnic conflict, but rather as side effects that evolved in the course of continuous violation of basic human needs.

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Appendix

List of interviews

<u>Name</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Country</u>	<u>Years abroad</u>	<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Interview date</u>
<u>Rustam</u> (name changed)	36	<u>Austria</u>	6	<u>Worker</u>	29.10.10
<u>Marat</u> (name changed)	35	<u>Austria</u>	12	<u>Worker</u>	12.02.11
<u>Ruslan</u>	29	<u>Austria</u>	8	<u>University graduate</u> (Political sciences)	06.04.11
<u>Visita</u> <u>Ibragimov</u>	60	<u>Austria</u>	9	<u>Representative of the</u> <u>Chechen Republic in</u> <u>Austria</u>	12.04.11
<u>Narek</u>	52	<u>Belarus</u>	23	<u>Seller</u>	06.05.11
<u>Ahmed</u> (name changed)	28	<u>Austria</u>	11	<u>University of</u> <u>Ecomony student</u>	12.05.11
<u>Artur</u>	25	<u>Austria</u>	1	<u>German language</u> <u>course student</u>	07.06.11
<u>Timur</u> (name changed)	26	<u>Austria</u>	12	<u>Vocational school</u> <u>graduate</u>	11.06.11

Abstract English

The purpose of this study was to investigate about the stereotype of aggressiveness and violence nature prescribed to the Chechen national character in mass media and scientific works. Another aim was to analyse which role the national traditions and character of Chechens played in the recent ethnic wars with Russia and whether they were prerequisites of these wars. And finally, the possibilities of ethnic conflict resolution were examined in this study.

The works of Chechen, Russian and western authors on the Chechen conflict were compared and used as a theoretical basis of the work. A qualitative method of interviewing in a partly structural form was applied in order to gather the empirical material.

This work gives an overview of the features of the traditional Chechen society, relationships with foreigners, power relations, egalitarianism in order to project these characteristics on the modern conflict in Chechnya and to analyse whether these could have been the triggers of the recent wars, or whether the role of these factors was exaggerated by media and falsified by science for certain political reasons.

Since there exist too many contradictory opinions on the origin of the Chechen conflict and on the personal profits of the numerous parties involved in it, the attempt was made in this work to investigate the reliableness of the sources and to critically analyse the information presented by them.

It was found that due to the geographical position and numerous wars, the Chechen national character indeed acquired the features of bellicoseness and aggressiveness. Such traditions as blood revenge and love for weapons were – and are – part of the Chechen culture. Still, the foreigners who came to Chechens with peace were never rejected the exceptional hospitality of these people.

With the destruction of the historical structure and relations of the Chechen society under the Russian rule, the above mentioned “features of violence” that in the peace time served only as regulating and restraining means, in the war time were with all their destructive force directed against the enemy who dared to challenge the honour of the Chechen warriors and their families. Behind the struggle of the simple people there were political and religious interests

of the elites who used their authority to assure the people that it was not the conflict of interests but an ethnic one by creating and popularising political and anthropological myths. The management of such ethnic conflicts should have a multilateral approach and aim at considering the needs of each party by means of negotiating. The elimination of the party with contradicting views and interests is often seen by Russian and Chechen political leaders as the only way out, but such attitude proved to bring opposite results.

Zusammenfassung Deutsch

Ziel der vorliegenden Arbeit war es, das von Massenmedien und wissenschaftlichen Arbeiten dem tschetschenischen Nationalcharakter zugeschriebene Stereotyp von Aggression und Gewalttätigkeit zu analysieren. Weitergehend sollte untersucht werden, welche Rolle Nationalcharakter und nationale Traditionen in den jüngsten ethnischen Kriegen mit Russland spielten und inwieweit sie Voraussetzung dieser Kriege waren. Abschließend wurden Möglichkeiten zur friedlichen Lösung ethnischer Konflikte geprüft.

Als theoretische Basis dieser Untersuchung wurden Untersuchungen russischer, tschetschenischer und westlicher Autoren verglichen, die sich mit dem tschetschenischen Konflikt befassen. Für die Sammlung des empirischen Materials wurde die qualitative Interviewmethode in teilstrukturierter Form angewandt.

Diese Arbeit gibt zunächst einen Überblick über die Charakteristika der traditionellen tschetschenischen Gesellschaft wie sie im Verhältnis zu Ausländern/Fremden, Machtverhältnissen und Egalitarismus deutlich werden, um diese Charakteristika dann auf den modernen Konflikt in Tschetschenien zu projizieren und zu analysieren, inwieweit sie Auslöser für die jüngsten Kriege gewesen sein können bzw. ob die Rolle dieser Faktoren aus politischen Gründen in den Medien übertrieben und von der Wissenschaft verfälscht dargestellt wurde.

Da die Ansichten über den Ursprung des tschetschenischen Konfliktes und die jeweiligen Vorteile der zahlreichen involvierten Parteien zahlreich und widersprüchlich sind, wurde in dieser Arbeit der Versuch unternommen, die Verlässlichkeit der Quellen zu überprüfen und die von ihnen präsentierten Informationen kritisch zu analysieren.

Ergebnis dieser Untersuchung war, dass aufgrund der geographischen Lage und der unzähligen Kriege der tschetschenische Nationalcharakter tatsächlich kriegerische und aggressive Facetten erworben hat. Traditionen wie Blutrache und Waffenliebe waren – und sind – Teil der tschetschenischen Kultur. Doch trotz alledem wurde Fremden, die mit friedlichen Absichten kamen, niemals die außergewöhnliche Gastfreundschaft dieses Volkes verwehrt.

Mit der Zerstörung der historischen Strukturen und Verhältnisse der tschetschenischen Gesellschaft unter der russischen Herrschaft richteten sich die oben genannten „gewalttätigen Charakteristika“, die in Friedenszeiten lediglich regulierende und hinhaltende Funktion

hatten, in Kriegszeiten mit all ihrer destruktiven Kraft gegen den Feind, der es gewagt hatte, die Ehre der tschetschenischen Krieger und ihrer Familien anzugreifen. Hinter dem Kampf der einfachen Leute standen jedoch politische und religiöse Interessen der Eliten. Diese nutzten ihre Autorität und vermittelten dem Volk, dass es nicht um eine Interessenkollision gehe, sondern um einen ethnischen Konflikt. Zu diesem Zweck wurden politische und anthropologische Mythen in Umlauf gebracht.

Das Management derartiger ethnischer Konflikte muss von einem multilateralen Ansatz ausgehen und darauf hinzielen, die Bedürfnisse der beteiligten Parteien in Verhandlungen einzubeziehen und zu berücksichtigen. Von den politischen Führern Russlands und Tschetscheniens wird bislang die Eliminierung von Gegnern mit nicht akzeptierten Positionen und Interessen als einziger Ausweg aus dem Konflikt betrachtet. Die Erfahrung beweist jedoch, dass diese Einstellung zu genau gegenteiligen Ergebnissen führt.

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