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Policy Paper 16: Ethnic Conflict and Russian Intervention in the Caucasus

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<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/2c88p87t>

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### Publication Date

1995-08-01

# ETHNIC CONFLICT AND RUSSIAN INTERVENTION IN THE CAUCASUS

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# INTRODUCTION

*Fred Wehling*



**T**he collapse of the Soviet Union was remarkably peaceful, but its aftermath has been remarkably violent. To keep its multiethnic empire together, the Soviet regime used a mixed bag of political and economic instruments, developed over decades of Communist power and centuries of Russian imperial rule. The sudden end of the Soviet system destroyed most of these instruments and left the leaders of the new states of Eurasia holding the bag. As a result, these countries have become fertile ground for demagoguery, separatism, and ethnic strife. The ongoing conflict in Chechnya is the most visible manifestation of the potential for ethnic violence that exists throughout the region.

To assess the likelihood of further conflict in the former Soviet states, and to debate various approaches for its control and moderation, IGCC invited some of the region's leading specialists on ethnic affairs to a conference held at the University of California, Davis in March 1995. Part of the Institute's project "The International Spread and Management of Ethnic Conflict," the meeting featured an animated panel discussion on the causes and consequences of the war in Chechnya. The articles collected in this Policy Paper are based on presentations by panelists Sergei Arutiunov, Andranik Migranyan, Emil Payin, and Galina Starovoitova. Their contributions reflect the pronounced political and intellectual controversies over ethnic issues now underway in the former Soviet states.

Although they adopt widely varying perspectives and advocate very different solutions to problems of ethnic conflict, three major themes run throughout each presentation:

- **The legacy of imperialism.** As Migranyan and Arutiunov both emphasize, contemporary conflicts in the Caucasus and other regions cannot be understood without examining the effects of decades or centuries of rule from Moscow. Like all instances of imperialism, the history of Russian rule involves both coercion (armed conquest and resistance, arbitrary drawing of boundaries, and forced population movements) and accommodation (some level of political autonomy, maintenance of cultural identity, collaboration by local authorities, and investment for economic development). All of the authors agree that the rapid collapse of Soviet power led to political changes that were not fully recognized by many of the affected groups. They differ profoundly, however, over the degree to which imperialism served to moderate, and exacerbate, the conflicts among indigenous peoples and between and among original inhabitants and immigrants.

- **Federal supremacy versus local authority.** Almost all of the areas that are now most affected by ethnic tension enjoyed some degree of autonomy under the Soviet system. These arrangements facilitated co-optation of local elites by the Communist Party and forced

economic integration under Soviet central planning, but also helped preserve ethnic consciousness and gave local authorities a significant role and stake in the system. Payin, Starovoitova, and Migranyan discuss how different models of power-sharing between the Russian Federal structure, the governments of the other former Soviet states, and local or regional government may be applied to establish stable political and economic relationships. Issues of minority rights, including those of Russian minorities in many parts of the former union, are especially salient in this context. In some areas, notably Tatarstan, special regional arrangements have had considerable success and have defused potential conflicts. In other regions, notably Abkhazia and Nagorno–Karabakh (see map, inside back cover), the role of local, national, and supranational authorities (including the Commonwealth of Independent States) remains an open and violent question.

- **Russia’s role as peacekeeper.** This issue seems certain to be the most important political question in the post-Soviet space for the near future, and it has profound implications for the security of Europe and Central Asia. One school of thought contends that Russia should take on a hegemonic role in the region, as it is the only force both capable of and committed to maintaining peace and stability. As Migranyan and Payin elaborate, this hegemony need not mean a return to imperial domination by Moscow, as political and economic structures could be engineered to guarantee national independence and individual rights. In supporting this position, they note that Russian peacekeeping forces have been invited into and operate in Georgia, Tadjikistan, and other areas with considerable success. On the other hand, Starovoitova and Arutiunov argue that the war in Chechnya illustrates how Russian intervention into ethnic conflicts poses significant dangers. From their perspective, acquisition of the habit of intervention could both escalate local conflicts and undermine the prospects for Russian democracy. Implications of conflicts in the Caucasus for U.S. foreign policy fall into two categories:

- **The emerging structure of world politics.** International recognition of Russia’s role as primary peacekeeper in the Caucasus and throughout the former Soviet States could be viewed as accession to a Russian “sphere of influence” in the region. Moscow might then come to view outside intervention in the Russian sphere as illegitimate or aggressive. Of course, Russia can already prevent any such action by exercising its veto in the UN or OSCE, but consistent refusal by Moscow (or unwillingness by other major powers) to include significant international elements in peacekeeping forces could further erode the credibility of those organizations as mediators in future ethnic conflicts. Hopes for collective security in the new international environment may fade even more quickly unless the U.S. and other major states are prepared to commit at least some attention and resources to the many potential conflicts in the former Soviet space.

Moreover, the precedent of a recognized Russian sphere of influence could signal a return to the “Great Game” of competition for influence in Russia’s borderlands, into which regional actors including Iran, Turkey, Pakistan, and India, and global powers such as Germany, China, and Japan could easily be drawn. Other powers may be prompted to seek recognition for their own spheres, further undermining possibilities for concerted international action in transnational conflicts. If, as many argue, a multipolar structure for world politics in the 21st century is inevitable, establishment of “rules of the game” which promote peaceful conflict resolution will be critical, and the precedents for international action (or inaction) set in Chechnya, Nagorno–Karabakh, Bosnia, and similar conflicts will be vitally important.

- **Russian politics and U.S.–Russian relations.** In many respects, the viewpoints reflected in this policy paper cover the center section of the Russian political spectrum. Arutiunov and Starovoitova express serious concerns that regular and massive use of force to quell ethnic conflicts—even for the wholly legitimate purpose of maintaining Russia’s territorial integrity—may undermine the still-incomplete foundations of a stable democratic system. Migranyan and Payin, while they recognize these concerns, contend that stability and integrity are prerequisites for democracy, that the armed intervention is often a necessary evil, and that the proper constitutional arrangements can prevent political power from growing out of the barrel of a gun.

These views underscore the likelihood that until democracy matures in Russia and its neighbors, U.S. policy makers may face unpalatable choices between promoting democracy and maintaining stability. This dilemma is hardly a new one for a nation historically torn between idealism and realism, simultaneously pursuing pragmatic objectives of international order and idealistic goals of freedom and human rights. The Cold War provided many excuses to overlook this conflict, as Washington often found it easy to support

“our son of a bitch” in order to contain Soviet communism. As the differing prescriptions for resolving ethnic conflict collected in this paper illustrate, many tradeoffs in the post-Cold War world will not be so easy to make.

In relations with contemporary Russia, this traditional problem is compounded by the probability that the policies the U.S. pursues will be remembered for a very long time in a state whose strength and influence will almost certainly grow in coming decades. Extremists will be quick to brand any U.S. move which they see as contrary to their version of Russia’s vital interests as evidence of implacable hostility, and to denounce leaders who attempt to coordinate policies with the West as spineless, corrupt, or treasonable. At the same time, recent Russian calls for revisions to the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty, claiming that the fighting in the Caucasus requires the stationing of greater forces in southern Russia, show how nationality problems cannot be isolated from broader foreign policy issues.

No matter what form of regime emerges in Moscow, America’s ability to affect political currents in Russia will remain limited. Nevertheless, the U.S. has several policy instruments, including market access, loan guarantees, currency stabilization, and civilian technology transfer, which could be effective if applied judiciously. Gentle but firm reassertion of U.S. interests, and the role of international institutions, in the conflicts on Russia’s periphery can help the center hold, promote the peaceful resolution of ethnic strife, and ease the full integration of Russia into the global community.

As with many contemporary conflicts, it remains to be seen whether ethnic violence in the former Soviet states will be a transitory artifact of the end of the Cold War or a defining feature of a new era in global politics. The persistence of ethnic conflicts in Russia and its neighbors, and their susceptibility to peaceful and violent means of resolution, will set major precedents for conflict management and other political questions far beyond the borders of the late USSR.

IGCC is grateful to all the participants in the Davis conference (see p. 28), and proud to acknowledge the contribution of the Pew Charitable Trusts, whose generous financial support provided this opportunity to exchange views on these pivotal issues. The uncopyrighted map of regional and ethno-linguistic boundaries found inside the back cover, which will be especially helpful to those readers not intimately familiar with the region, was originally produced by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, and downloaded from the University of Texas library Perry-Castañeda Map Collection World Wide Web site (at [http://www.lib.utexas.edu/Libs/PCL/Map\\_collection/](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/Libs/PCL/Map_collection/)). Finally, my special thanks go to Barbara Butterson, who transcribed many of the remarks collected in this policy paper.

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*June 1995*

# IS DEMOCRACY POSSIBLE IN RUSSIA AFTER CHECHNYA?

*Galina Starovoitova*



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## Worrisome Conclusions from Russia in 1994

**P**olitically speaking, last year started for Russia not on January 1, 1994, but rather on December 12, 1993, the day the first non-communist constitution was ratified by referendum and the first post-Soviet multiparty parliament was elected. The new State Duma not only restored its former name of the years 1906–1917, but it also reinstated the House of Romanov's imperial coat of arms as a symbol of Russian statehood and revived the inter-factional battles of the beginning of the century. It is not surprising that many (from the recent communist and current speaker, Ivan Rybkin, to Alexander Solzhenitsyn) are inclined to look upon this legislative body not as a completely new parliament, but as the fifth State Duma of Russia, which at least somewhat aspires to restore the thousand-year history of the country that was interrupted by the Bolsheviks. The 1994 political year likewise did not end on New Year's Eve, but rather on the day of the Russian Army's attack on Chechnya, i. e. on December 12, 1994.

Both events—the elections and the beginning of a war by the federation against one of its own subjects—have turned out to be unhealthy for Russian society. Not one of the parties that took part in the elections received a decisive majority, and as a result, neither the communists nor the democrats can assert their will legislatively. The unexpected success of a third power—the nationalists under the leadership of Vladimir Zhirinovskiy—has shocked many people, who have for decades been brought up on the slogans of internationalism. It has also forced pro-western democrats to feel for the first time the bitter disillusionment of their people, who, up to that point, had withstood the hardships of reform with unusual patience and wisdom and, as it seemed, quickly internalized the idea of democracy.

Later explanations (partial falsification of the election results, the absence of 47% of those having the right to vote, the protest vote after the strong-arm tactics of the dissolution of parliament in October 1993) change little the essence of the ominous fact: fifty years after the crushing defeat of fascism, in one of the European capitals, a numerous and influential faction that is close in platform and ideology to Nazism has legally formed in parliament. Having received access to a wide constituency and to the mass media, this party has begun to propagandize actively on the superiority of the Russian people over the other peoples of a multi-ethnic country, on the re-establishment of the empire, and on war. This peculiar feature of the new Russian organ of legislative power is more qualitative than quantitative (Zhirinovskiy's faction occupies third place in number of representatives, after "Russia's Choice" and "New Regional Politics.")

It soon became clear that the seeds of fascism and its propaganda in semi-underground publications were falling on well fertilized soil. Many aspects of the life of common people have fallen from the reformers' field of attention in the last few years; and it is not only the sharp drop in the standard of living and the unheard-of inflation that affect the mood of the people. Factors of morale were no less important than economic ones in Russia. Although the share of those who have profited as a result of the reforms is large (according to various sources, from 30 to 50% of the population), the share of those who have suffered is also substantial. Instead of rapid fruits of democracy, people have seen rapid social stratification, unemployment, the corruption of officials, the covert preservation of power in the hands of the nomenklatura and its brazen enrichment, the growth of street crime, and the appearance of the phenomenon of contracted political assassinations. The several decreases in the amount of western economic help promised for the transition period (down from the \$24 billion promised by the Bush administration) have intensified disillusionment in capitalization. Western sources themselves admit that even of that aid which has been distributed, so called "technical assistance," a significant portion remains in the hands of consultants.

In addition, the frustrated expectations of the supporters of perestroika are accompanied by a sense of national humiliation of a people who have been divided up by new state borders and who observe the limitation of the rights of their

compatriots beyond the new borders. In many countries of the CIS and eastern Europe, popular opinion places the burden of collective responsibility for all the sins of the communist empire on Russian ethnic minorities. As a result, Russians by the hundreds of thousands are forced to evacuate southern Muslim republics, and a majority of those in European Latvia and Estonia are deprived of their civil and voting rights.

Having correctly judged the nostalgia of many disoriented people who were deprived of a stable existence and a clear system of former values, Zhirinovskiy promised them something more substantive than cheap vodka. He promised to give them back a sense of national pride and a justification for that part of Russian history which is occurring during their lifetime.

Fortunately, the expected consolidation of the "Zhirinovskiyites," the communists, the agrarians, and the new party "Women of Russia" did not take place. Some initiatives of the reform factions ("Russia's Choice," "Yablo-ko," "Party of Russian Unity and Accord," the faction "December 12" and others) do influence the adoption of decisions by the State Duma, which has turned out to be a fairly well structured legislative body, although strongly dependent on the lobbying interests of various economic groups of society.

However, the constitution adopted in a referendum by a minimal majority of the population has left little power to lawmakers. An enormous amount of power is concentrated in the hands of the president. This unbalance of power represents a major transformation of the first edition of the text worked out by the Constitutional Assembly,<sup>1</sup> a transformation which occurred in a mysterious manner only after the Assembly had finished its work and the parliament had been violently dispersed.

Thus, for example, impeachment of the president is virtually impossible, since it demands a resolution of the Supreme Court and separate two-thirds majorities from both houses. Nevertheless, the new constitution has strengthened the rights of private property and has allowed the process of privatization to move forward more securely. The stage of voucher privatization in Russia concluded in July 1994. As a result, workers in medium and large scale industrial enterprises (a category of workers that did not yet exist in 1992), toward the end of last year, made up more than 80% of all

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<sup>1</sup> The author was a delegate of the party "Democratic Russia" for work in the membership of the Constitutional Assembly.

workers in similar enterprises.<sup>2</sup> According to the data of Vice-premier Anatolii Chubais, who is responsible for the economy, around 40% of workers in Russia are engaged outside the government sector. As is well known, 2–3% of the class of “new Russians” are very wealthy people, and under corresponding tax and legislative conditions, many of them are prepared to begin investment in the economy of their fatherland.

In the summer months of 1994, the government of Viktor Chernomyrdin was able to hold inflation to the level of 4–5% per month, but the sharp fall in the value of the ruble on October 11 of that year showed that the suppression of inflation was to a significant degree artificial (specifically, by deferring payment of salaries on government ventures). The autumn purchase of the harvest and the payment of debts led to a new upward spiral of inflation, which in December again reached 16.4% per month. An additional factor in the ruble’s decline against the dollar was the crash of joint-stock companies of the pyramid type (e.g., the well-known scandal with the company MMM), which had been buying up spare rubles; after their bankruptcy, people preferred converting their spare money into hard currency. In the same weeks of autumn, there began in the parliament a discussion of the budget for 1995, during which the main struggle revolved around military expenditures. (In February 1995, the budget was finally adopted by the Federal Assembly). The Chechen War, however, has led to a new spiral of inflation in the beginning of 1995: in January and February, inflation has again risen above 15%.

The worsening of the economic situation in October 1994 and the growth of prices have been accompanied by a sharp drop in the popularity of the leadership of the country—specifically, in the unprecedented fall in the approval rating of President Yeltsin (down to 16%). After his

improper conduct at the ceremony of the removal of troops from Germany and his non-meeting with the prime minister of Ireland, the problem of his competence for the post he occupies stood squarely before public opinion. The condition of his health could no longer be considered the personal affair of the president and his family.

The newspaper *Izvestiia* published in December 1994 documents proving the undue influence of the chief of the president’s guard, Aleksandr Korzhakov, both on the president himself and on the government. Specifically, the main bodyguard engaged in open lobbying for a strong quota system to govern the sale of oil outside the country, a position which corresponds to the interests both of Russian nationalists and of the former party nomenklatura.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, the president tried to protect the minister of defense Pavel Grachev and other generals from allegations of corruption and possible involvement in the assassination of a journalist who was investigating that corruption (Dmitri Kholodov). This corruption was connected with the Western Group of Russian forces deployed in eastern Europe. Such allegations were openly declared in the press.

Yeltsin’s movement to the right was helped by external political factors as well: the victory of the Republicans in the U.S. elections and the expectation of a harsher policy toward Russia, and also plans to extend NATO into eastern Europe without inviting Russia. Speaking at the Budapest summit in November to those who plan to move the borders of NATO to the western borders of Russia, President Yeltsin angrily declared, “It is too early to bury democracy in Russia!” At the same time, he decided to openly “clean things up” in his own country, not worrying about western opinions. As has been noted by some Russian analysts,<sup>4</sup> there is a certain connection between the events in Brussels and in Groznyy.

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<sup>2</sup>*The Economist*, January 7, 1995, p. 69.

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<sup>3</sup>*Izvestiia*, December 22, 1994, pp. 1-2.

<sup>4</sup>A. Pushkov, *Moscow News*, December 18-25, 1994, p. 3.



## The Chechen War and its Consequences

The conflict between Chechnya and the Russian Federation should not be considered an ethnic conflict. Not even the defense of Russian-speaking people was given as a pretext for the invasion by the authorities. Such a pretext would have been impossible, considering the fact that Russian-speaking people suffered at least as much as the native population from the bombing of Grozny. This war is connected more with the struggle for power in Moscow than with either economic or ethnic factors.

The Chechen invasion represents the pursuit (conscious or unconscious) of three goals:

- 1) to distract the attention of the disillusioned people with a “small victorious war,” especially in light of the fact that steps in the direction of long-term economic reform were not formulated;
- 2) to satisfy the appetites of the military, who have long dreamed of demonstrating to Russia their significance in the preservation of the integrity of Russia and of receiving at least some consolation for the defeat in Afghanistan;
- 3) to influence the decision regarding the route of the future international pipeline from the Caspian Sea.

The northern Caucasus variant would allow Russian oil exporters to insist on an increase in their share, but along this route lies recalcitrant Chechnya, which announced its sovereignty three years ago. Two alternative routes for the pipeline—through Iran or Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia—and then further through Turkey are also unpalatable for international corporations.

It seems, however, that this last pragmatic motive was not the main catalyst in the poorly advised decision on the forceful suppression of Chechnya (the negotiation process was rejected by Moscow, but not by Grozny). The yielding to the forces of militarism and nationalism, which do not take into account common sense, must have satisfied the offended vanity of many—including the president himself.

More than two-thirds of the population of the country have strongly condemned the military venture. Even those who have accepted the necessity of Chechnya’s submission for the sake of the preservation of the territorial integrity of Russia have condemned the harsh methods of the

operation and its lack of professionalism. The upper military leadership of the country has also split—the former comrades in Afghanistan Defense Minister Grachev, the generals Boris Gromov and Aleksandr Lebed, have openly condemned their minister. According to opinion polls, the latter (whose surname in Russian means “swan”) is the most popular figure in the Russian military.

The political makeup of Yeltsin’s support dramatically changed in December. Only Zhirinovskiy’s faction in parliament and the ultra-nationalists such as Aleksandr Barkashov and Aleksandr Nevzorov support the war in Chechnya. On the streets of Moscow for the first time in all the years of reform there have proceeded right next to each other protest demonstrations of the democrats (under the tricolor flag) and the communists (under red banners). Those who have supported Yeltsin (including Yegor Gaidar’s party, “Russia’s Choice,” and the author’s own party, “Democratic Russia”) have announced their switch to the opposition, and the leader of the parliament faction “Yabloko,” Grigorii Yavlinsky, has even demanded the immediate resignation of the president and new elections.

As stated earlier, however, the norms of the new constitution provide for such a complicated procedure of impeachment that it is almost impossible to accomplish in practice. In general, many parts of the constitution clearly need improvement (e. g., the expediency of the return of the post of vice-president and of the transfer of a larger amount of controlling power to the legislative branch of government is obvious), but the procedure for adding amend-ments is likewise extremely complicated.

The confused democrats do not yet want to admit even to themselves that, for the improvement of the new constitution, it may be necessary to violate it. In such a case, the beginning of the smooth development of democratic institutions in Russia and of the development of a legitimate framework will again be necessary to postpone. This would mean an additional loss of the faith of common people in democratic procedures.

At the same time, everybody has felt the weakness of today’s government power. Civil rights workers, native and foreign press, parlia-

ments of the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (Ukraine, Georgia, and others), and leaders of national republics within the Russian federation have all come out against the Russian policy in the Caucasus. Russia also served as a bad example to politicians in Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Ukraine, which have disobedient autonomous republics within their own borders. Extremists in Georgia even attempted to retake Abkhazia by force on January 13, 1995, but they were stopped by the Georgian government. The authority of the Russian leadership as the vanguard of democracy has fallen in the opinion of the leaders of newly independent states as well as the leaders of autonomous republics within the Russian Federation itself. On January 5, 1995, several leaders of these local regions gathered together in the capital of Chuvashia as guests of its president, Nikolai Fyodorov, and worked out a collective document protesting such methods of conducting ethnic policy. President Fyodorov even issued a decree which prohibits the drafting of recruits in his republic for service in Chechnya; but Yeltsin, in turn, overturned this decree.

Often these pronouncements, especially from the Russian democratic press, have the character of pronouncements against the regime of the current leadership as a whole. Yeltsin's personal responsibility for the bloodshed in Chechnya is emphasized, as well as for the death of young draftees and peaceful civilians. People point to the fact that, at one time, Yeltsin superficially believed in the principles of representative democracy, but later, his faith in his personal mission as a savior and leader of Russia allowed him to forget the means of achieving his goals.

Thus, having not connected himself with any democratic party or political trend, wanting to remain "president of all Russians," he has ended up today in political isolation, and he can lean only on those surrounding him who are personally committed to him: i.e., the top level of the bureaucracy and power structures. From the point of view of these bureaucrats, Chechnya has simply turned out to be the most suitable object for demonstrating the leadership potential of the president—but the oligarchy made a mistake in its calculations. The army will long remember the shameful failure of the Chechen "blitzkrieg."

Losing power, losing connection with society, a leader feverishly looks for a way of asserting himself—and returns to the traditional party methods of the order, the command, the lie, and fear. The last appointments in the cabinet of ministers also bear witness to the readiness for the

partial restoration of neo-Bolshevism. Before their removal from office, the former vice-premier Nikolai Yegorov (who is still responsible for ethnic policy) was trying to command the military and the director of the State Property Committee Vladimir Polevanov was beginning the nationalization of ventures that had already been privatized. Polevanov related especially negatively to the presence of foreign stockholders and advisers in his own department, but also to those in defense, the energy industry, and the production of aluminum. Fortunately, he now occupies a different position in the government. Nikolai Semyonov, who belongs to the old nomenklatura in the northern Caucasus, has been named to a responsible position connected with the Chechen situation. We have already mentioned the role of personal bodyguards and other members of Yeltsin's inner circle. These new people of the president are much different from his previous team—that retinue, which made the democratic king in the years 1990–1991.

The historic time of Yeltsin the reformer has passed, and his new regime can turn out to be dangerous not just for Russia. This danger now forces various politicians to conduct among themselves consultations on the future of power in Russia, and it helps the leaders of "Democratic Russia" and "Russia's Choice," Yavlinsky, the mayor of Moscow, Yuri Luzhkov, Marshal Shaposhnikov, and Gavril Popov search for new tactics.

The meetings behind closed doors of the speakers of both houses of parliament with Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin are worth noting: according to the constitution, he is the second person in the government called to fulfill the duties of the president when the president himself is not able. A conflict between Yeltsin and Luzhkov has recently come out into the open. The assassination of the popular television journalist Vladislav Listev in early March was used as an excuse for the dismissal of the heads of powerful structures in Moscow government, a change which weakens the position of Luzhkov.

But the generals are breathing down the backs of all their necks. The longer the war in Chechnya continues, the more influence the military will gain. All the more so, considering the fact that any war, once begun, eventually becomes a "sacred war." For some people, it is necessary to justify so many senseless deaths, while for others, it is necessary to avenge the loss of their loved ones.

The current tragedy of the Russian reformers lies in the fact that, in contributing to the

displacement of the former power, they were forced to turn it over to a third party, again under the conditions of a risky compromise, as it was with Yeltsin. The issue is not only that they cannot reach an agreement among themselves on whom to place their stake: on Gaidar, Yavlinsky, Sergei Kovalev (the Chairman of the Duma's Human Rights Committee and a civil rights worker of Sakharov's circle, whose moral authority grew considerably during the weeks of his voluntary presence under the bombers in Groznyy), or on one of the women politicians. It is difficult to guess today with much certainty for whom all of Russia will vote tomorrow.

We must also remember that those who today have in their hands real, raw power will not ask the democrats about their choice. The question is, will the West adhere to the principle of non-intervention in internal affairs? Even if those who have power begin to introduce prefabricated criminal proceedings against the westernizers and throw them in prison? If contract killers begin to await them, one after another, at their doors? If a Russian Pinochet organizes his gulag at the stadium, but promises stable development in the direction of a market economy, will the West coldly observe the agony of democracy's lost opportunity?

# ETHNICITY AND CONFLICT IN THE CAUCASUS

*Sergei Arutiunov*



The Caucasus area is comprised of three newly independent states, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan, which form together the Transcaucasus or the southern Caucasus, and the northern Caucasus, an integral part of the Russian Federation, consisting of nine territories including Krasnodar territory, Stavropol territory, the Republic of Adygea, the Republic of Karachay–Cherkessia, the Republic of Kabardino–Balkaria, the Republic of North Ossetia, the Republic of Ingushetia, the Republic of Chechnya and the Republic of Dagestan. There are also five formerly autonomous territories: Abkhazia, Ajaria and South Ossetia in Georgia, plus Karabakh and Nakhichevan in Azerbaijan. With the exception of the Nakhichevan republic, all of them today are practically independent of their respective central governments (Ajaria has not proclaimed independence, but in reality successfully effectuates it).

All these territories together are slightly smaller than France (about 500,000 km<sup>2</sup>), and has a population less than that of France (less than 30 million). But this population is divided between a dozen nations numbering from one-half million to seven million, plus some forty smaller aboriginal peoples and more than a dozen large immigrant groups.

The general trend in national and social differences in the Caucasus goes from West to East. In this direction, as the fertility of soils and abundance of arable land decreases, aridity increases, as does traditionalism and the role of Islam in the life of the population, while the degree of urbanization and westernization decreases. The share of Russians decreases from West to East too, from 60% in Adygea, to a meager 8% in Dagestan. In Transcaucasia Russians are not numerous, and recently have emigrated back to Russia *en masse*. In any case, they comprise 15% of the population of Abkhazia and only 1 or 2% in Armenia and Azerbaijan. Islam is the dominant religion of the aboriginal population. Georgians and Ossetians are predominantly, and Armenians exclusively, Christian, while there are also a small number of Judaic and quasi-Zoroastrian groups.

The three millennia of known history of the Caucasus have been filled with incessant wars fought under tribal, dynastic, religious and other banners, and now these wars are fought under ethnic banners. However, the true reason for all these wars has been a competition for property, especially arable lands and pastures. The iron rule of Tsarist Russia and later the Bolshevikist USSR brought some kind of forced peace to the Caucasus, but with the collapse of the USSR the struggle resumed with a new force, especially because there is today so much property to be privatized, i.e. partitioned and distributed, and the competition for decision-making authority in its distribution is naturally aligned along ethnic lines.

So far, there have been three major conflicts in Transcaucasia (Abkhazia and South Ossetia seceding from Georgia, and Karabakh seceding from Azerbaijan). So far the separatists have been victorious, and their victory has resulted in hundreds of thousands of refugees of Georgian and Azeri ethnicity. In the Northern Caucasus the main conflicts are between North Ossetia (supported by the federal government) and Ingushetia, and between the federal government and Chechnya, which proclaimed its independence in 1991. As the result, among some 250 thousand people living in Ingushetia, nearly 50 percent are refugees, mostly Ingushetians, partly Russians and Chechens, and an equal number of refugees, mostly ethnic Russians, has left Chechnya for Stavropol territory and other areas in Russia proper. The latest conflict, the one in Chechnya, has been the shortest (though it is still far from being ended) but the most destructive, since it has been waged by the heavily armed Russian army. So far it has brought about 30 thousand dead and ten times more homeless people, more than the horrible earthquake of 1988 in Armenia and several times more than the 1995 Kobe earthquake in Japan.

There are no right sides in ethnic wars, and there are always many guilty parties, each of whom has more or less contributed to the eruption of conflict. But the origins of present conflicts in the Caucasus are in many ways comparable to those of World War I. As we all know, although World War I was triggered by a fanatic nationalist intellectual, the basic responsibility for the war lies with the designs of the great powers—Germany, Austria–Hungary, and others as well—to establish their domination over ever-larger territories. The same is true of the conflicts in the Caucasus today. They are all *triggered* by extremist statements and irresponsible actions of local ethnic minority patriots, but the basic responsibility for them lies with the central governments and ruling elites of larger nations such as Russia, who still hope to solve their problems by force. And in the end, most will probably be defeated as were Germany and Austria in WWI.

The main reason for their probable defeat is that Georgian, Azeri, and Russian troops hate to fight for their governments' domination on lands which are very far from most soldiers' native lands. The aboriginal peoples of Karabakh, Abkhazia, Ingushetia, and Chechnya are fighting for their national survival, and there is no other means to win over them than to exterminate all of

them completely. A certain exception may be seen in the Ossetian Ingushetian case, where the Ingushetians are the defeated side. But, in the hotly contested Prigorodnyi region, in spite of all obstacles most probably the Ingushetian population will reestablish itself, and the Ossetians will have to leave, because the tombstones there belong to Ingushetians, not Ossetians. It is sad to say, but probably many decades will have to elapse before Ingushetians and Ossetians, Armenians, an Azeris, and probably Georgians with all the rest will be able again to live as peaceful neighbors as they did before, in spite of the feuds of their lords and rulers.

What is happening now in Chechnya is, unequivocally, a genocide. Everyone who wishes to call himself a liberal democrat (or whatever nice-sounding name) must realize that the killing of Chechens by Russians in Chechnya is no more Russia's internal affair than the killing of Jews in Germany was Germany's internal affair. Chechnya is not Russia; Chechnya is no more an integral part of Russia than Algeria was an integral part of France. Russian troops now in Chechnya are doing exactly the same in form and content, in quality and quantity, that the German *Wehrmacht* did in Belarus in 1941. And the response now in Chechnya will be the same as it was then in Belarus: partisan warfare. It will resemble what happened for decades in Ulster, or will be similar to the West Bank *intifada* and other guerrilla wars.

This response will not be rooted in simple ethnic hatred. Chechens do not nurture any hatred towards the average Russian. If anything, they are disposed for benevolence, friendship, and good relations with these people with whom they live side by side. There have been conflicts of course, there have been mutual assaults, but there has also been intermarriage. Many Chechens have Cossack grandmothers, many Cossacks have Chechen grandmothers, and consider themselves cousins related by blood.

But for a Chechen, as for every Caucasian, to be a man is to remember the names of seven generations of paternal ancestors: the father, grandfather, great-grandfather and seventh great-great-grandfather; and not only their names, but the circumstances of their deaths and the places of their tombstones. This constitutes an enormous depth of historic memory, and in many cases the remembered deaths occurred at the hands of Russian soldiers—under Catherine the Great; under Nicholas the First; under Stalin. So for every Chechen, there is a Russian soldier or general who is viewed as evil incarnate; as the devil himself.

Furthermore, Chechnya was and is a society of military democracy. Chechnya never had any kings, emirs, princes, or barons. Unlike other Caucasian nations, there was never feudalism in Chechnya. Traditionally, it was governed by a council of elders on the basis of consensus, but like all military democracies—like the Iroquois in America or the Zulu in southern Africa—Chechens retain the institution of military chief. In peacetime, they recognize no sovereign authority, and may be fragmented into a hundred rival clans. However, in time of danger, when faced with aggression, the rival clans unite and elect a military leader. This leader may be known to everyone as an unpleasant personality, but is elected nonetheless for being a good general. While the war is on, this leader is obeyed.

Dzhokar Dudaev is an example of this type of leader. His presidency is, in this sense, a historical accident. In peacetime, in cooperation with corrupt Russian generals, his circle conducted gigantic smuggling operations of arms and drugs through Chechnya from Russia to Iran, Iraq, and elsewhere in the Near East. Before the Russian invasion, he had lost a great deal of prestige and popularity—by September 1994, perhaps no more than 20% of the total Chechen population supported him, and this support was mostly limited to his own clan and others related by clan ties.

Despite Dudaev's transgressions, because of the military leadership tradition many Chechens will fight under him (or another like him) as long as they feel threatened by Russian invaders. Chechens will fight against Russian occupation even if there will be no wholesale Caucasian war (as would have been inevitable if the Russian intervention in Chechnya had occurred two or three years ago); even if, as is likely, other nationalities in the Caucasus render only lip service to the Chechen fighters. Thus, the war and its atrocities will probably continue for a very long time.

It should be noted, however, that situation has considerably changed in the last two years. Two years ago there was a real danger that a minor provocation might lead to a wholesale Caucasian war, launched first of all by the KNK (Confederation of the Nations of the Caucasus) against the central government in Moscow, their ex-communist puppets in local governments, and all Russians in general. This is not the case now. In most areas of former fighting a cease fire, no matter how shaky, is more or less observed. Only in Chechnya and the ethnically closely related areas of Ingushetia and Northern Dagestan is

resistance to the Russian occupation is really widespread and irreconcilable. Here a situation like the conflict in Northern Ireland may be expected for many years to come

However, all other nationalities of the Caucasus will probably render only lip service to the Chechens. There may be some fanatic nationalists and even small organized groups that will side with Chechens in their struggle—just as the IRA recruited its members not only from among the ethnic Irish and the PLO not only from Palestinian Arabs. But a massive anti-Russian movement, which could have been expected only a couple of years ago, is now impossible.

There are a number of reasons for this. First, people are sick and tired of politics and cheap nationalist propaganda. The nationalist leaders have largely discredited themselves. The former communist puppet presidents in many republics have proved that they are not puppets any more, and have succeeded in consolidating 70–80 percent popular support. This is largely because these presidents (Yarimov in Adygea, Khubiev in Karachay–Cherkessia, Kusev in Kabardino–Balkaria, Galazov in Ossetia–Alania), maintaining good relations with the federal government, have proven very adept at bargaining certain financial donations and other benefits for their republics. Also, the tragic example of Abkhazia, and of the Ingushetians in the Prigorodnyi region of North Ossetia, has demonstrated that any attempt at changing the status quo by force may result only in thousands of lost lives, in total destruction of villages and property, and hundreds of thousands of homeless refugees. Today most people vote for the status quo.

Government by Balkars in Kabardino–Balkaria is a striking example. Their nationalist leader, General Beppaev, organized a lot of action and violence for a separation of Balkaria from Kabardina and formation of a separate Balkar Republic. At times it seemed that bloodshed between Balkars and Kabardins was inevitable. But when the time came to vote on a referendum in January 1995, 94 percent of voters (with 75 percent of eligible voters participating) voted for the maintenance of the status quo, against separation. This probably reflects the ratio between silent majorities and noisy minorities in most areas of the Caucasus. The number of Dudaev's supporters in Chechnya would very soon have dropped to a low level, had not the stupid policy of Yeltsin's generals turned 90 percent of Dudaev's bitter enemies into his adamant supporters. Without this intervention, Dudaev soon would have

become, like his colleague Beppaev, a general without an army.

What is stable and what is unstable in the Caucasus? The configuration of relations between ethnic groups, their mutual claims, and their aspirations are stable. But the readiness to fight or to compromise, or to conform with the status quo, and sympathies towards certain leaders are extremely unstable and may be changing rapidly. The prevalence of shame as a motivation is stable over millennia. The inability of Russian governments (and ethnic Russians in general) to understand this basic fact is also very stable. Hence the constant failures to find mutual understanding. But the Caucasus needs Russia—Russian technology, Russian money, Russian education—much more than the present Russia needs the Caucasus. In spite of all the conflicts and contradictions, the centripetal tendencies will prevail over centrifugal ones. But the way to reintegration is going to be painful and slow.

Ossetia is and will be loyal to Moscow, and territories west of Ossetia will remain more or less peaceful. The only distortion of peace here may result from the arrogance and extremism of Russian Cossacks. But east of Ossetia, rebellious Ingushetians and Chechens will cause trouble for many years, and may ignite a conflict in Dagestan, where thirty ethnic groups are at each other's throats. But since the contradictions between various tribes of highlanders are stronger than between highlanders and Russians, Russia may have some success in playing the peacemaker.

Religion plays a minor part in the Caucasian events. People align on ethnic lines, not on religion. But Islam and *sharia* may to some extent prevent Muslims from killing Muslims. One has to differentiate, however, between the educated clergy and ignorant, fanatic, self-proclaimed Mullahs.

The paradigms of ethnic conflicts in Caucasus find many parallels in the world. These conflicts resemble the situation in Bosnia least of all. But there are striking parallels with Ulster, Algeria in

the 1960's, Palestine, and even South Africa. And though the Caucasus is relatively small, its unrest may be extremely disruptive for the general situation Russia at large.

But regardless of the political fate of Russia in the immediate future, there are only two alternatives for every trouble-stricken area in the Caucasus. If there is not a total extermination or expulsion of the aboriginal population (Abkhazians, South Ossetians, Chechens, Karabakh Armenians), the indigenous peoples will become the unequivocally dominant (or even the sole) population of their respective territories. Ingushetians have been completely squeezed out of the Prigorodnyi region, but may well return. But there is very little probability for Georgians to return to Abkhazia or to Southern Ossetia, for Russians to Chechnya, or Azeris to Karabakh. An ethnic cleansing occurs automatically as soon as a conflict erupts, and refugees usually never return. So more and more territories in the Caucasus are turning from ethnically hetero-geneous into ethnically homogeneous areas, which is achieved at the expense of Karabakh and Stavropol territories as well as of Rostov province and Republic of Kalmykia, which receive a huge number of refugees and immigrants (Russians, Armenians, Jews, Meskhetian Turks, even Koreans, and in Kalmykia also Chechens and Dagestanis). In these areas, by contrast, heterogeneity is rapidly increasing, with all its accompanying problems.

Nevertheless, there are all reasons to believe that the already shrunken territory of Russia is not going to shrink any more. When real democracy finally wins in Russia, there will be room for all minorities and autonomies, as there is room for them in modern democratic Germany or Spain, where not so long ago the most horrible totalitarianism reigned and all minorities were ruthlessly suppressed or even exterminated. But the way towards this relative democratic stability in Russia may be even more prolonged and painful than it was in Germany or Spain.

# ETHNIC CONFLICT IN THE CAUCASUS: CAUSES AND SOLUTIONS

*Andranik Migranyan*



I would like to discuss the political aspects of ethnic conflict. I will consider the processes creating ethnic conflicts, the consequences we can expect from them, and the possibilities for resolving them. To do this I will turn away from the areas of anthropology and ethnology to ethnopolitics and international relations.

In Russia, we are now reassessing the nature of the Soviet Union. Essentially, this means that we are redefining our nation. After participating in many conferences in many nations, I have come to realize that if the Soviet Union was an empire, it was an empire of a very specific type. It was an empire of a type very similar to Great Britain, which consists of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. By now, several years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia has realized that the ties among the former Soviet states are far stronger and more organic than they were previously thought to be.

What happened after the collapse was very serious, very tragic. No one expected the consequences of the collapse of the so-called Russian empire. All current conflicts which Russia faces today, all of these are the result of a change of regime and the collapse of the Soviet Union. That does not mean that the Soviet regime caused that conflict or created the problems. What the Soviet regime did do, and here I agree with Dr. Arutiunov, was freeze the process of nation-building after the first collapse of the Russian Empire. At almost the same time conflicts erupted not only in the Caucasus, but also in the Baltic, Ukraine, and other areas. After the collapse of the Russian empire in 1917, there was a border war between Armenia and Georgia. There was a war between Armenia and Azerbaijan because of Nakhichevan and Karabakh. There were conflicts and fighting between many different groups in the North Caucasus region. In order to put an end to this conflict and bring stability to the region, the Soviet regime froze the situation and in doing so imposed a kind of solution. But none of these ethnic groups ever recognized the divisions and borders of the proto-states or nations which emerged as a result of restoration of the Soviet Union.

As a result, after the weakening and the eventual collapse of the regime, none of the participants in the new process of state building, and none of the ethnic groups, respected any border. Nor did they recognize the legitimacy of any newly formed state. Abkhazians never recognized Georgia's current borders. Neither Karabakh nor Armenia ever recognized the borders of Ajaria, and the same is true regarding the Abkhazians, Ossetians and many other ethnic groups. As a result, Russia found itself in a situation



where all ethnic groups are fighting to build their own nation-states. The world community made a grave error in giving all of these quasi-state formations the recognition of real states and in so doing shouldered serious problems and enormous difficulties.

The League of Nations had foresight and wisdom enough not to recognize Armenia and Azerbaijan. The League of Nations had a special regulation which provided that if any state did not control its own territory, or if it had territorial disputes and conflicts with the other states, it could not join the League. Based on this regulation, the League refused to allow Armenia and Azerbaijan to join. Today, recognition of proto-state formations inside the former Soviet Union as fully independent states constitutes recognition of the territorial integrity of many countries that have never controlled all of their own territory. This was especially true in Georgia. Georgia never controlled Ossetia, Abkhazia, or Ajaria, and at the moment it attained independence it almost lost those territories. The same was true, at that time, of Karabakh. Azerbaijan didn't control Karabakh, but all those territories and borders were recognized.

A grave mistake was made concerning ethnic problems in the Baltics. The Russian government extended unequivocal, unconditional recognition to the Baltic Republics. That error created many conflicts and contradictions and resulted in all of the current problems in the Baltics. I am very critical of Gorbachev and his policies, but I agree with him on one point. He once said, referring to recognition of the Baltic republics, that the marriage was a very bad one, but divorce can be tragic. That is why, you may remember, he proposed the idea of a five year divorce process, whereby problems of property, nationality rights, human rights, political rights and related issues could be negotiated step by step. Instead, the Baltics became independent overnight. The result of the dissolution was a renewal and resurfacing of ancient conflicts. The result is that Russia is now embroiled in a conflict that few of those involved can solve by themselves.

I would like to concentrate now on the problems in the Caucasus and Transcaucasia area, but from a different perspective. I agree with Professor Arutiunov that you cannot distinguish the Caucasus from Transcaucasia. It is a unified system. It follows that the problems in the Caucasian area cannot be solved piece by piece. Attempts to stop unrest in the Caucasus must take into account the situation in Transcaucasia because, to put it simply, Russia is involved

through Northern Ossetia in problems in Southern Ossetia, and through its North Caucasus territories, in Abkhazian affairs and the problems of Karabakh.

In Georgia there are several somewhat independent state formations. Tbilisi isn't really controlling anything except maybe Tbilisi. In this situation the Azeris are interested in controlling a large part of their territory *vis à vis* Karabakh. And Armenia suffers from a blockade. Armenia cannot solve its problems without solving the problems of Karabakh. Clearly, Armenia cannot survive without solving the problems Georgia faces, because all roads into Armenia by way of Georgia are blocked. In this situation, there now exists a blatant and almost institutionalized legalization of stealing. Armenians are forced to pay tribute, and this is an officially sanctioned practice. Armenia must pay Turkmenistan for gas, but the Georgians are just taking a portion of it. They are not paying for it at all, they are stealing it. The same thing is true of goods going to Armenia through the Georgian port of Batumi.

So we can see that the situation in the Caucasus and Transcaucasia is characterized by old conflicts and the resulting political, economic and cultural instability. Practically all of the routes into and out of the region are blocked. No one can solve any of these problems Internally. Is there a solution?

I believe that there is a solution that will prove acceptable. It might not be well understood by the world community right now, but in the future I hope that it will be welcomed by both the local population and all affected ethnic groups. I hope that our partners in the Near and Far Abroad will come to both understand and support it. We cannot consider any solution without considering the role of Russia, which is inherently involved in these conflicts. Russia is the only force which is interested in and can take the responsibility for solving the region's problems. Because the central fire of inter-ethnic conflict is a serious threat to Russia's internal stability, it is Russia's internal political problem. It is not an internal political problem for any other country. Russia, to protect its vital interests, has to take an active role in finding a solution.

In the current situation there have been several years of negotiations on the Karabakh issue under the OSCE. Ongoing negotiations between Abkhazia and Georgia show that there is only one way to solve this problem. As Professor Arutiunov suggests, the Caucasus area should become a single federalized structure, devolving power from

the top to the bottom. Russia is not seen as evil in the eyes of the people of the Caucasus. Practically all of the autonomous areas have declared voluntarily that they want to be part of Russia, some of them many times. Abkhazia, Karabakh, Ossetia, and Ajaria have declared this on several occasions. This would not constitute imperialism on the part of Russia. This is the will of nations.

Who opposes this kind of solution to the problem? I think that everybody remembers the remarks made by Academician Sakharov, who said that Georgia fought against a big empire but turned out to be a small empire. The leaders of small groups and factions who are trying to exploit, control, and dominate the population in the Caucasus are in reality following the famous Orwellian principle that all nations are equal, but some nations are more equal than others. These groups could gain independence, though this is highly questionable, but they certainly cannot grant it to any other proto-states.

It is quite evident that now neither in international law nor in international politics is there any consensus about what kinds of ethnic groups are entitled to statehood and which are not. That is why everything is being solved by force. When Slovenes repelled the attack of the Yugoslavian army, the Croats did the same, and recognition of Slovenia and Croatia by Germany followed, Yugoslavia collapsed. For twenty years Cyprus has been divided and partially occupied by the Turkish army. For 5 years Karabakh has not been under Azeri control. Abkhazia has been liberated for two years and is practically independent from Georgia. We are witnessing a situation where the solution is contingent on how far people are determined to go in fighting for their rights.

In this case, the Karabakh problem is particularly interesting and illuminating. Initially when the Karabakh Armenians voiced the problem, nobody wanted to talk to them. Later, after they achieved some victories and conquered additional territories, their conflict gained international attention. This leads many people to believe that increasing the pressure results in more recognition. But I do not intend to exaggerate this part of the problem.

The best solution for nationality questions of the peoples of the Caucasus and Transcaucasia is the general and overall federalization of these territories, but they cannot achieve this themselves. They cannot hope to be organized into an artificial harmony or externally imposed consensus without the presence of a third force because

the area has never existed as an autonomous region. For 3,000 years, this region was stabilized by an external force. Today all the preconditions exist for this kind of solution. Georgia is almost ready for this kind of federalization. By the way, in its long history, Georgia was always federalized; there were Karachay, Kartli, Kakheji, and Mingrelia. Today all these areas are almost independent. Azer-baijan is not ready for federalization but could be ready fairly soon because all the necessary preconditions are present. In Karabakh and Nakhichevan there are the Kurdish and Lezgin problems and a number of other conflicts. Armenia is small and weak, and could easily be part of this kind of future federation.

I cannot agree with my friend and colleague Professor Arutiunov that the Chechnya problem should be characterized as a genocide, and that what is happening there is comparable to what the Nazis did to the Jews. These are all very emotional statements. The situation is fundamentally different and more complex, and undoubtedly Emil Payin and Galina Starovoitova will try to touch upon this matter. Chechnya is divided internally, and was shaken by two years of internal civil war. Practically all former allies of Dudaev are among the opposition fighting against him today. There is no real comparison to be made between Chechnya and the Germans' treatment of Jews in World War II. If during World War II Jews had organized in Bavaria, armed themselves, declared independence, and fought against the central government there might have been a valid comparison, but as it stands there is not. In Chechnya, the Federal Government was compelled to put an end to a large scale civil war. The world is acutely aware that there is rampant criminal activity, corruption, arms sales, and drug trafficking through Chechnya, and no civilized state can tolerate such activities on its own soil.

Finally, I would like to say plainly that the establishment of a federalized structure for the Caucasus is the only option that can lead to long-term peace and stability in this region. It is necessary for the world community to understand that this is precisely what the Russian leadership is trying to achieve. I cannot tell you that the effort to do this has been efficient. In any event, it is very important that our partners not block this process, but instead support Russia in this effort, because it is in the best interests not only of the peoples of the Caucasus and Russia, but it of the world community as well.

# UNDERSTANDING THE CONFLICT IN CHECHNYA<sup>\*</sup>

*Emil Payin*



In addition to my work in the Russian Presidential Administration, I am a part-time teacher at the Institute of International Affairs, where I teach the course “Political Analysis of Interethnic Relations.” I usually begin this course with this advice to my students: “Don’t be so sure that you understand any complex situation. Be doubtful, because the doubt will help you think twice before you accept simple explanations for a complicated situation.” So maybe I should subtitle my presentation today “Against the Absolutization of Friends In the Analysis of Complex Situations.”

In analyzing ethnic and national conflicts, we commonly speak of two kinds of rights, the right of territorial integrity and human rights. And we talk as though these rights were in opposition. In my opinion, however, these rights are complimentary in modern times. Why? When a government says that it wants to maintain territorial integrity, they are not talking about an empty territory but an inhabited area. That is why the main task in maintaining territorial integrity is to keep the trust of the population. So the war in Chechnya, which was officially proclaimed to preserve territorial integrity, may in the long run work against it. This may be the case even in Chechnya, to say nothing of the consequences in other regions. This is one side of this connection between the two kinds of rights.

But there is another side to the equation. In some cases, especially in the newly independent nations of the post-Soviet world, maintenance of territorial integrity is a precondition for protecting human rights, including the right to life. Why? Because ethnic and interclan conflicts erupted in many of these states immediately after they became independent. In Turkmenistan, for example, interclan conflict killed 100,000 people in six months in 1992. The number of people killed in all interethnic conflicts in Russia and the newly independent states is about 200,000. This situation is not historically unique—we know, for example, that many more people were killed in interclan and interethnic conflicts in postcolonial Africa than died in the struggle for independence. So in some situations keeping territorial integrity is also a precondition for safeguarding human rights.

Two explanations of ethnic conflict are commonly advanced. The first is based on fatalistic historical determinism. According to this view, ethnic violence is the inevitable consequence of self-determination of nations. Another explanation contends that all the conflicts are a result of a conspiracy, the hand of Moscow, the hand of international

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<sup>\*</sup> Original statement in Russian; t translated by Arthur Khachikian and transcribed by Barbara Butterson.

imperialism, and so on. But both of these explanations are too simplistic. To my mind the historical tendency toward fighting for self-determination will diminish as the historical trend of fighting for national independence nears its end, and will weaken as another trend gains force: the trend of individualism. As individuals' well-being grows, they are less and less willing to fight to achieve some collective goods or ideas. Compare the readiness of the Quebecois, the Scots, or the Flemish to fight for independence with that of the Afghans.

In Russia, I don't think we have to wait until the level of economic well-being reaches the standard of living in Great Britain or Canada, due to the experience of the breakup of the Soviet Union and widespread disillusionment as to future individual wealth after succession from the USSR. The collapse of the idea of nationalism, the decline in popularity of almost all the leaders who led the national independence movements—all this reduces the willingness of people to fight for their independence. There are some exceptions, such as more prosperous territories that are part of less wealthy nations. People in these areas do indeed strive for independence and succession. Examples of this include the movement in Abkhazia to secede from Georgia, which is much poorer than Abkhazia, or of Transdnestria to succeed from Moldova.

There is another factor as well: people do not want to fight for unrealistic objectives. This is why the leaders of Transdnestria, Abkhazia, and Crimea, who met recently in The Hague, declared their support for different forms of federalization. Moreover, the Tatarstan model, which was tested and implemented in the Russian Federation, may serve as an example. Abkhazian President Vladislav Ardzinba has stated his support for this model.

It is important to remember that the Tatarstan model was offered to Chechnya a year earlier than it was offered to Tatarstan itself. I know this for certain because I was the one who put it in President Yeltsin's declaration in 1993. I authored a statement in that document declaring that Chechnya and Tatarstan will have special relationships with the Federal government. Two attempts were made to conclude a federal relationship between Moscow and Chechnya. In December 1992, Yegor Gaidar, then Prime Minister of Russia, met with the Prime Minister of Chechnya, Yaragi Mamodaev, and the two leaders signed a

preliminary memorandum for a treaty on a division of powers. The formula in that memorandum later became the basis of the Tatarstan model. A few months later, in March 1993, representatives of the Russian parliament met their counterparts from Chechnya and signed another preliminary memorandum for a treaty on power-sharing. According to the Chechen constitution, the parliament of Chechnya has the authority to conduct foreign policy, including power-sharing. Nevertheless, the Chechen leaders who tried to sign this treaty were declared enemies of the people. As one might expect, this greatly complicated the further development of Russo-Chechen relations.

It is easy to explain why Dzhokhar Dudaev was not ready to sign this treaty. He was and is a military leader, and his ability to consolidate Chechnya is based on his ability to juxtapose Chechnya against an external enemy. The course of events in Chechnya was the same as that in other republics. As economic conditions in the Republics continued to decline, the authority of their leaders declined as well. In order to continue the mobilization and consolidation of these peoples, one could only resort to the threat of an external enemy. I also think Dudaev is the last among the constellation of political leaders who are romantic idealists and at the same time have totalitarian tendencies within themselves and their regimes. Zviad Gamsakhurdia, the former President of Georgia, and deposed President Abfulaz Elchibey of Azerbaijan are other examples of this type of leader, but I think that Dudaev will be the last one.

By 1993, Dudaev's popularity had declined to its lowest level. Twice, he canceled a referendum authorized by parliament, and he was later forced to dismiss the parliament. If Russia had not sent the troops and if it had supported the democratic, peace-loving forces in Chechnya, there was a real chance to eventually get somebody like Mintimer Shaimiev [the President of Tatarstan] elected. When I am asked, "How come you're signing a treaty with Tatarstan, but you're not signing the same treaty with Chechnya?" my answer is because Dudaev is not Shaimiev.

I am not saying that all opportunities for negotiation between Moscow and Grozny were exhausted before the invasion started or before the troops were deployed. A complex relationship requires a complex approach, but the low level of professionalism and the weak structure of the executive in Russia made it

difficult to formulate a complex, nuanced policy. Under such conditions, simple solutions are more probable than a complex step-by-step approach. Nevertheless, the situation is not black and white, although this notion is unfortunately widespread. I think that Professor Arutiunov is right in saying that there are no parties in this conflict who are right. One can only say that Dudaev was more wrong before the troops were introduced. And I think the deployment is best described in the words of Talleyrand: "It was more than a crime, it was a mistake."

What are the likely consequences of the conflict in Chechnya? I think that although the deployment of troops in Chechnya was extremely dangerous and very harmful, the concern shared by democratic forces in Moscow in the early stages of the conflict has weakened to a degree. Had the military operation been successful, the chances of resolving domestic issues by coercive force would be much higher, but the operation has not been successful. It is quite evident today that the forces who were planning to use these methods to come to power

now have no chance. So as this concern diminished, public interest in these events and their importance in Russian politics diminished as well.

Chechnya may become independent, or it may not. There are more arguments against its becoming an independent state. Neither the current Russian government nor any authorities in the future will support independence for Chechnya. Not even Gaidar is in favor of this idea. As for Grigory Yavlinsky, he has declared on television that he rules out Chechen independence. This is quite understandable, because in the present situation, as I stated earlier, maintenance of territorial integrity is a prerequisite for protecting human rights. It should not surprise us, therefore, that Russians' attitudes toward the conflict in Chechnya are very different from their attitudes toward the collapse of the Soviet Union. It was much easier for Russians to accept the breakup of the USSR in 1991 than it would be to accept the disintegration of Russia today.

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## THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA INSTITUTE ON GLOBAL CONFLICT AND COOPERATION



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In addition to projects undertaken by the central office at UC San Diego, IGCC supports research, instructional programs, and public education throughout the UC system. The institute receives financial support from the Regents of the University of California and the state of California, and has been awarded grants by such foundations as Ford, John P. And Catherine T. MacArthur, Rockefeller, Sloan, W. Alton Jones, Ploughshares, William and Flora Hewlett, the Carnegie Corporation, the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, the United States Institute of Peace, and The Pew Charitable Trusts.

Susan L. Shirk, a professor in UC San Diego's Graduate School of International Relations and Pacific Studies and in the UCSD Department of Political Science, was appointed director of IGCC in June 1992 after serving for a year as acting director. Former directors of the institute include John Gerard Ruggie (1989–1991), and Herbert F. York (1983–1989), who now serves as director emeritus.





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