

Assessing the Russian-Chechen Wars and Their Impact on Regional Stability

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The present article aims to systematically examine the Russian-Chechen wars from diverse perspectives, with the goal of cultivating a comprehensive understanding of issues pertaining to the behavioral dynamics of involved actors. The primary objectives encompass an in-depth analysis of the wars' repercussions on regional stability, dissemination of awareness regarding the subject matter, and the formulation of discernible behavioral patterns within the Russian Federation. This article critically examines the influence of the Russian-Chechen wars that occurred in the 1990s and lasted for almost a decade. The conflicts between the Russian Federation and Chechen rebellions had a significant influence on regional stability during that period. Moreover, they have caused great disruptions and pivotal political disagreements. The wars can be perceived as a foundation of Russia's disregard for international law and explain the country's actions in the modern political realm. Efficient realization of the influence that the conflicts had on the region is crucial in order to understand Russia's modern political orientation, analyze the country's actions after the Chechen Wars, and predict its future activity in regard to conflicts. In pursuit of exhaustive analyses delineating the intricacies of the conflict and its ramifications on political stability, the research method includes the adoption of a qualitative approach. This involves meticulous scrutiny of pertinent journal articles, research papers, scholarly publications, and examination of legal and historical documents. The article observes wars from various perspectives and tries to bring a comprehensive understanding of the results.

Keywords: war; conflict; international law; independence; terrorism; human rights.

Research Problem Formulation

The Chechen Republic of Ichkeria and the Russian Federation engaged in several military encounters known as Russian-Chechen Wars ¹. The period 1994–1996 saw the First Chechen War, and the Second Chechen War occurred from 1999 to 2000. Long-standing ethnic and territorial conflicts, as well as more general geopolitical issues like the fall of the Soviet Union and Russia's desire to preserve control over its borders, were the key causes and historical elements that sparked the commencement of these wars. The wars continued for several years and were highlighted by many pivotal moments and significant occurrences, such as the siege of Grozny (1994–1995), the withdrawal of Russian forces from Chechnya (1996), and the outbreak of the Second Chechen War (1999). The Russian Federation and the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria were the main participants in the conflicts, and each had ambitions and drivers. It is important to examine the various aspects and outcomes of conflicts to understand their influence on regional stability.

The North Caucasian region has been the subject of Russian imperialism for many centuries ². The local geographical situation made it attractive for Russia to create a natural buffer zone. Each attack from the Russian side was causing more and more local hatred towards the aggressor country. The locals were forced to fight for their freedom throughout the centuries, and Chechens

were not an exception. Russia started its first military campaigns in the region in the 18th century, and it was the beginning of the “Caucasian Wars”. One of the most famous leaders of Caucasian rebellions was the Imam Shamil who united the Caucasian resistance. Chechnya fell under Russian rule in 1859 but never stopped resisting.

During Soviet times, in 1944, Chechen and Ingush people were deported from their homelands to Central Asia and Siberia ³. Joseph Stalin stated that the reason for exile was Chechen and Ingush's support for Germany during the Second World War, but there is no evidence for that. Many Chechens believe that the deportation was a form of ethnic cleansing, and it was intended to punish the Chechen and Ingush peoples and break their resistance to Soviet rule. The deportation ended in 1957, and locals could return home.

The situation became tense after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The environment created after the collapse allowed the development of various political movements and parties, and more independence-minded people started to gain power in Chechnya ⁴. Chechnya declared independence in 1991, which was not recognized by the Russian government. The Russian government wanted to keep its status as hegemon. However, internal political problems caused various conflicts between central power and regions, including Chechnya, as it was viewed as a threat to Russian territorial integrity. This disagreement led to the First War in Chechnya.

1 Nation R. C. Russia and the Caucasus. *Connections*. 2015. Vol. 14. No. 2. Pp. 1– 12. URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/26326394> (date accessed: 10.10.2023).

2 Ibidem.

3 Williams G. B. Commemorating “The Deportation” in Post-Soviet Chechnya. The Role of Memorialization and Collective Memory in the 1994–96 and 1999–2000 Russo-Chechen Wars. *History and Memory. Studies in Representation of the Past*. 2000. Vol. 12. No. 1. URL: <https://www.brian-glynwilliams.com/deportation%20article.pdf> (date accessed: 10.10.2023).

4 Olikar O. Russia's Chechen Wars 1994–2000: Lessons from Urban Combat. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2001. 121 p. DOI: 10.7249/MR1289 (date accessed: 10.10.2023).

The initial outbreak of hostility came in 1994 when the Russian government declared the invasion of Chechnya, the First Chechen War⁵. The Russian military started a large-scale December with the main goal of capturing Grozny, the capital city of Chechnya. Marvelous Chechen resilience caused heavy casualties for the invaders. The Russian attack was incompetent and poorly planned, with a lack of intelligence and reconnaissance. After the cease-fire in 1996, and the Russian military left the state, and Chechnya de facto independent⁶. The region was engulfed by violence, insecurity, and Islamic extremism. In addition, Chechen fighters who returned from Afghanistan were inclined to jihadist ideology.

The Second Chechen War (1999–2000) was much more forceful⁷. The first Russian campaign called “Anti-Terrorist Operation” started in October 1999 after Chechen fighters attacked Dagestan. Russians used heavy firepower, bombardment, and artillery to retake the territory. The second campaign was called the “Winter campaign”, with the main objective of retaking Grozny. The conflicts were extremely tense and caused significant casualties on both sides, but eventually, Russians captured the city. Subsequently, the mountainous regions of Chechnya stayed under the control of local authorities. In the spring of 2000, Russia started its third campaign in the mountains to pacify the regions. Russians defeated local militants in September, and the whole region was under the control of the central government. The Russian

strategy during the Second Chechen War combined military might with political and economic initiatives. Russian government aimed to split Chechen resistance while conducting military operations against militant groups. Russian government’s military operations were characterized by indiscriminate killings, which led to widespread hostility and mistrust among the Chechen populace.

During the wars, the independence movement also underwent changes⁸. Throughout the first war, Chechens’ main goal and mindset were political independence and sovereignty. In contrast, during the Second Chechen War, various political factions tried to capture power. A more severe and extremist Chechen resistance that aimed to create an Islamic state in the North Caucasus and wage terrorist activities against Russia was a defining feature of the Second Chechen War.

In the period between the two wars, the Russian government signed an agreement with the Chechen rebels in a town called Khasavyurt, but it was never implemented⁹. The agreement included a ceasefire and recognition of the independence of Chechnya. More international mediation attempts by organizations like the OSCE and Council of Europe were made during the Wars. In 2003, the Russian government signed an agreement with Chechen leader Akhmad Kadyrov and recognized the Chechen government. However, militants assassinated Akhmad in 2004 and the conflict continued.

5 Dash P. L. Russia’s War of Attrition in Chechnya. *Economic and Political Weekly*. 1995. Vol. 30. No. 7/8. Pp. 369–373. URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4402405> (date accessed: 10.10.2023).

6 Olikier O. Op. cit. DOI: 10.7249/MR1289 (date accessed: 10.10.2023).

7 Tsatsos A. Second Chechen War: Causes, Dynamics and Termination - A Civil War between Risk and Opportunity? (November 3, 2014). URL: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2518687> (date accessed: 10.10.2023).

8 Shah S. A. A. Genesis of the chechen resistance movement. *Strategic Studies*. 2004. Vol. 24. No 4. Pp. 84–110. URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/45242553> (date accessed: 10.10.2023).

9 Findley M. Path Dependence and Bargaining in Civil War Resolution (August 24, 2010). URL: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=1676556> (date accessed: 10.10.2023).

The active war phase ended after the Russians took full control of Chechnya in 2000, but the partisan fights continued even after the assassination of Akhmad Kadyrov¹⁰. Chechnya remains a politically unstable territory, with continued worries about human rights violations and political persecution.

The forensic examination of the North Caucasus conflict reveals historical resistance against Russian imperialism. The analysis scrutinizes legal aspects, highlighting potential self-determination rights for Chechens and questioning the legality of Russian military interventions. The examination underscores widespread violations of humanitarian and human rights laws by both sides, resulting in war crimes and crimes against humanity. Despite condemnation from the European Court, Russia's denial of accountability remains, emphasizing the urgent need for legal resolution to establish lasting peace in the politically unstable region.

Article Purpose

The present article aims to systematically examine the Russian-Chechen wars from diverse perspectives, with the goal of cultivating a comprehensive understanding of issues pertaining to the behavioral dynamics of involved actors. The primary objectives encompass an in-depth analysis of the wars' repercussions on regional stability, dissemination of awareness regarding the subject matter, and the

formulation of discernible behavioral patterns within the Russian Federation.

Research Methods

In pursuit of exhaustive analyses delineating the intricacies of the conflict and its ramifications on political stability, the research method includes the adoption of a qualitative approach. This involves meticulous scrutiny of pertinent journal articles, research papers, scholarly publications, and examination of legal and historical documents.

Analysis of Essential Researches and Publications

Numerous issues concerning different areas of international law were raised during the Russian-Chechen conflicts due to a lack of established legal frameworks¹¹. Many infractions raised tensions between Russia and the international community, which approached Russia's conduct critically. Wars can be analyzed from various branches of international law like self-determination, use of force, humanitarian and human rights law, refugee law, and international criminal law.

In international law, the notion of self-determination has a dual significance: internal and external¹². The internal component indicates the right of the people of a state to decide on their form of government, which is already recognized by international law. The exterior aspect

10 Roberson C. D. A small war: the development of the Russian-Chechen conflict 1994-2010 / United States Marine Corps Command and Staff College Marine Corps University. URL: <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/tr/pdf/ADA600545.pdf> (date accessed: 10.10.2023).

11 Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights. Opinion on the conflict in Chechnya / Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. Doc. 8631. 2000. URL: <https://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/X2H-Xref-ViewHTML.asp?FileID=8857&lang=EN> (date accessed: 10.10.2023).

12 Mustafa Z. The Principle of Self-Determination in International Law. *The International Lawyer*. 1971. Vol. 5. No 3. Pp. 479—487. URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40704674> (date accessed: 10.10.2023).

concerns people's right to decide their nationality and statehood.

As Z. Mustafa¹³ explains, with respect to the second connotation (external), people of distinctive ethnic, religious, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds have the right to determine their political status, choice of government, and economic, cultural, and social development within a state in case if it does not disrupt state's national unity. This law is contradictory and works differently from case to case.

The main objective of Chechens during both wars was to claim independence¹⁴. They justified their aspirations with the right to self-determination under international law. While they met all criteria needed to determine their political wishes, the international community still did not show unilateral support for the uprising.

As mentioned before, the territory of Chechnya was annexed by the Russian Empire in 1859 after a long and severe war. After that, many uprisings were happening in the territory, and local people were not happy to be under Russian rule. After the Russian Revolution in 1917, the North Caucasus region became independent of the central government, and only in 1920, the Soviet Army returned to the region and took control¹⁵.

According to the author, the topic is doubtful, but Chechens fit every criterion

that is needed for a group to have the right to determine their political goals. Even though its aspirations greatly weakened regional stability and interfered with Russia's territorial integrity, a declaration of independence from the Chechen authorities may have been justified under international law based on self-determination.

Another law through which the wars will be analyzed is the use of force. Generally, any action that includes the use of force is considered illegal under international law, except in rare cases¹⁶. Such cases are self-defense if the action was authorized by the UN Security Council under Chapter VII of the UN Charter. Chapter VII of the UN Charter provides for action by the UN Security Council concerning threats to international peace, breaches of the peace, and acts of aggression. If the council decides that there are any of the above-mentioned threats, it might allow the use of force to regulate the situation. In international law, states have the right to act in self-defense against armed attacks.

In 1994, Russia entered the territory of Chechnya with the main goal of capturing the city¹⁷. This military campaign was not authorized by the UN Security Council and resulted in many doubts about the justice of this event. Similarly, the second interference in the territory of Chechnya in 1999 was not authorized.

13 Mustafa Z. Op. cit. URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40704674> (date accessed: 10.10.2023).

14 Garvie B. A. Chechnya and Russia: conflict and self-determination. Monterey, CA : Naval Post-graduate School, 2002. P. 75. URL: <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/ADA411370.pdf> (date accessed: 10.10.2023).

15 Reynolds M. A. Native Sons: Post-Imperial Politics, Islam, and Identity in the North Caucasus, 1917-1918. *Jahrbücher Für Geschichte Osteuropas*. 2008. Bd. 56. H. 2. Pp. 221–247. URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41052053> (date accessed: 10.10.2023).

16 Wood M. International law and the use of force: what happens in practice? *Indian Journal of International Law*. 2013. Vol. 53. Pp. 345–367. URL: https://legal.un.org/avl/pdf/ls/Wood_article.pdf (date accessed: 10.10.2023).

17 Hollis D. B. Accountability in Chechnya - Addressing Internal Matters With Legal and Political International Norms. *Boston College Law Review*. 1995. Vol. 36. Pp. 793–846. URL: <https://lira.bc.edu/files/pdf?fileid=b22bcd59-4ca5-44c4-97f8-f3e0c4c45c0e> (date accessed: 10.10.2023).

Furthermore, it may seem that Chechen's actions can be justified by self-defense as Russia invaded Chechnya in 1994. For a state, using force when another actor starts an armed campaign is justified, but Chechnya was not recognized as a state. Whether military actions taken by rebels can be justified with self-defense is a doubtful topic. Russia justified its actions as a counterterrorist mission. However, according to international law, they were only allowed to take armed action if they had authorization from the UN, which they did not.

Moreover, the most violated laws during the Chechen Wars were humanitarian and human rights laws. Humanitarian law regulates states' actions during armed conflicts while human rights grant human beings certain expected treatment¹⁸.

The Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights¹⁹ stated that during the Chechen wars, there were constant violations of international humanitarian law and human rights. The main reason for this was the lack of a legal framework. According to the committee, Russian intervention cannot be called an anti-terrorist operation due to its huge scale.

There were reports of Russian violations such as indiscriminate bombardments, some of which targeted the civil population and villages; various acts of terror towards the civil population; displacement without adequate conditions; and the prevention of humanitarian assistance to the population. There have been several incidents where civilian convoys carrying fugitives from the conflict were subjected to air strikes or artillery shelling, particularly those traveling on the main route out of Chechnya towards Ingushetia, known as the "Rostov-Baku highway". Another flagrant violation of international law was the Russian government's ultimatum to Grozny's civilian population on December 6, 1999, according to which, anyone still in Grozny on December 11 would be deemed a terrorist and get destroyed. Freedom of movement was also violated. Russian government restricted internally displaced people (IDP) from staying in safe places and pushed them to return to their homes despite all instabilities²⁰. This is a violation of international refugee law which is designed to protect displaced people²¹. Furthermore, Medecins Sans Frontieres²² explains that after taking control of the

18 International Humanitarian Law (2016) / Inter-Parliamentary Union and International Committee of the Red Cross. URL: <https://www.ipu.org/resources/publications/handbooks/2016-10/international-humanitarian-law> (date accessed: 10.10.2023) ; The International Bill of Human Rights (1948) / Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. URL: <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Publications/Compilation1.1en.pdf> (date accessed: 10.10.2023) ; International Human Rights Law - RAO Lesson Plan (2019) / U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. URL: https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/document/foia/International_Human_Rights_Law_RAO_Lesson_Plan.pdf (date accessed: 10.10.2023).

19 The conflict in Chechnya / Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights. Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. 25.01.2000. Doc. 8631. URL: <https://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/X2H-Xref-ViewHTML.asp?FileID=8857&lang=EN> (date accessed: 10.10.2023).

20 War crimes and politics of terror in Chechnya, 1994-2004. *Medecins Sans Frontieres*. 2014. URL: <https://www.msf.org/sites/default/files/2019-04/MSF%20Speaking%20Out%20Chechnya%201994-2004.pdf> (date accessed: 10.10.2023).

21 Hathaway J. C. International Refugee Law: The Michigan Guidelines on the Internal Protection Alternative. *Mich. J. Int'l L.* 1999. Vol. 21. No. 1. Pp. 131–133. URL: <https://repository.law.umich.edu/articles/299/> (date accessed: 10.10.2023).

22 War crimes and politics of terror URL: <https://www.msf.org/sites/default/files/2019-04/MSF%20Speaking%20Out%20Chechnya%201994-2004.pdf> (date accessed: 10.10.2023).

territory, Russians reportedly tortured and sometimes killed the male population of some villages to find ones who participated in armed actions. Also, according to the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights ²³, the Office of the Secretary-General of the United Nations expressed concern about the intense military operation in Chechnya as it caused high casualties among civilians, including the elderly, women, and children, and urged the Russian leadership to take immediate action to protect the civilian population from further suffering, stop all violations of international law, and seek long-term resolution to the conflict through a political process.

Additionally, Chechen militants have violated various laws, notably by putting civilian lives in jeopardy by inciting Russian counterattacks on residential areas and by abusing and threatening those who tried to protect their towns from Russian bombing. There were also incidents of Chechen fighters torturing captured Russian soldiers. Furthermore, the Chechens captured some villages in Dagestan and announced an Islamic regime where they violated the rights of locals ²⁴.

Such violations of IHL and IHRL are also violating two branches of international criminal law, which are war crimes and crimes against humanity. These abuses were made by both conflicting sides.

The civilian population went through incredible struggles during the two Chechen wars, but unfortunately, most of the criminals stayed without punishment. The European Court condemned Russia for

researching all cases of violations and acting according to the law ²⁵. For many years, the Russian side denied humanitarian and human rights violations. Even now, tens of thousands of victims continue to be denied access to justice. On the Chechen side, most people who committed war crimes and crimes against humanity were either already dead or had received jail sentences. The Russian Federation has consistently disregarded its legal commitment to hold such individuals accountable.

Main Content Presentation

Influence of Wars on the Political Balance of Power in the Region

The massive conflict that lasted almost a decade between Russia and Chechnya was one of the important political events that occurred in the 1990s'. The dissolution of a great world power like the USSR left a lot of unsolved cases, and the situation in Chechnya was one of them. After the dissolution, many new countries emerged, and Russia aspired to hold the status of a great world power. On the other hand, ex-Soviet republics faced the harsh realities of the political world. Some republics wished to seek full independence from Moscow and find partners in the Western world, while others saw Russia as their main supporter. The Chechen people wanted to declare their independence and be free from Russian influence, but Moscow did not agree to lose its political power in the region. The wars caused shifts in the balance of power and political influence in the region.

23 The conflict in Chechnya URL: <https://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/X2H-Xref-ViewHTML.asp?FileID=8857&lang=EN> (date accessed: 10.10.2023).

24 War crimes and politics of terror URL: <https://www.msf.org/sites/default/files/2019-04/MSF%20Speaking%20Out%20Chechnya%201994-2004.pdf> (date accessed: 10.10.2023).

25 Justice for Chechnya: The European Court of Human Rights Rules against Russia / Human Rights Watch. 2007. URL: https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/related_material/justice_for_chechnya_2_0.pdf (date accessed: 10.10.2023).

During and after the wars, the political course of the region drastically shifted ²⁶. The first president of the “Chechen Republic of Ichkeria,” Dzhokhar Dudaev, won the 1991 elections with 80 % of the population voting for him. Dudaev was more nationalist- and tradition-oriented than religious. But later, he shifted his politics towards Islam to get help from other Muslim countries. He was assassinated in 1996 ²⁷. During the second Chechen war, the government of Chechnya was shifting towards sharia laws and supporting Islam. However, they did not have the support of the whole populations, and those shifts caused disputes in the region. One of the opponents of the Islamic regime was Akhmad Kadyrov ²⁸. The Russian side supported him. After Russia took control of the region in 2003, Akhmad was chosen as the leader of the region under suspicious circumstances. Akhmad died in 2004, and his son, Ramzan, took the position. Ramzan Kadyrov is also pro-Russian, and he fought against many small military formations of Chechnya’s old authorities who were trying to sabotage Ramzan’s rule and gain influence in the region. Eventually, Ramzan became the authoritarian leader of the region. Nearly all types of independent journalism were suppressed in Chechnya by Kadyrov. In addition, he instituted a religious code and a police force to uphold it, even though doing so plainly violates federal law ²⁹. Some of the rules in his religious

code oppose the Koran, but he justifies them with local traditions. Kadyrov implemented religious codes based on his perception of Islam. He continues to be a leader of the region.

Chechen wars involved and influenced various regional or international actors ³⁰. Some of these actors had their interests in the conflict, while others feared the spread of instabilities in their regions. Countries like Georgia and Azerbaijan were highly affected by the war. Georgia became one of the places where refugees found the peace. Russia accused Georgia of letting Muslim militants go through the country, which was denied. These accusations raised doubts in the Georgian government about the possibility of the spread of the war in the country. One of the biggest threats to Russian political and cultural power over the region was the appearance of various Islamic and extremist militants. Muslim states saw the opportunity to spread their influence. Also, international organizations like the UN, OSCE, and European Council tried to interfere as mediators.

Russia is a multiethnic country and consists of many regions with their own culture, language, and traditions. If Russia lost control over Chechnya, other regions and ethnic minorities would see this as an opportunity to fight for their own freedom. For this reason, Russia used the most reckless methods to bring Chechnya under its rule at any cost.

26 Hughes J. Chechnya: the causes of a protracted post-soviet conflict. *LSE Research Online*. 2001. Vol. 4. No. 4. Pp. 11–48. URL: https://eprints.lse.ac.uk/641/1/Hughes.Chechnya.Civil_Wars.pdf (date accessed: 10.10.2023).

27 Chechnya After Dudayev. *Strategic Comments*. 1996. Vol. 2. Is. 4. Pp. 1–2. DOI: 10.1080/1356788960242 (date accessed: 10.10.2023).

28 Tomas A. S. Legitimacy, Success and Rebellion in Chechnya: The Rise and Fall of Chechen Independence. Chapel Hill. 2017. 92 p. DOI: 10.17615/n59e-6v23 (date accessed: 10.10.2023).

29 Tier 1. USCIRF-recommended countries of particular concern (CPC). Russia. USCIRF Annual Report. 2018. URL: https://www.uscifr.gov/sites/default/files/Tier1_RUSSIA.pdf (date accessed: 10.10.2023).

30 Oliker O. Op. cit. DOI: 10.7249/MR1289 (date accessed: 10.10.2023).

International efforts to bring peace to the region were constantly made and influenced the direction of the war³¹. Mostly, they brought platforms for negotiation. Diplomatic efforts frequently led to brief cessations of hostilities and intervals of reduced violence. These breaks in the fighting gave time for negotiations and consultations, as well as the delivery of humanitarian aid to the impacted districts. In post-war periods, various international organizations attempted to bring justice and peace to the region, but without significant results. Chechnya remains the region with one of the highest rates of human rights violations.

Terrorism Cases

Extremist groups had significant participation during the Chechen wars³². The idea of fighting against the oppression of Western Christian countries was popular in terrorist organizations of that period throughout the world, and Chechnya became one of the battlefields for extremist fighters³³.

V. A. Klimentov further explains that foreign fighters were attracted to fight in Chechnya due to the presence of prominent fighters like Shamil Basayev and Ibn al-Khattab, who fought in the Soviet-Afghan war. The opportunity to fight alongside such leaders as a part of the global jihadist movement made it fascinating for many extremists to participate in the Chechen

Wars. It is important to note that terrorism during the wars was used as a method of fighting and achieving independence rather than a final goal.

Russian brutal actions played a significant role in the development of extremism among the local population³⁴. A sense of revenge and grievance for all the human rights abuses that were happening on the Russian side fueled local people to use extreme methods of fighting. This was well used by Chechen rulers to promote their political objectives, primarily centered around Chechen separatism and retaliating against abuses by pro-Moscow security forces.

According to V. A. Klimentov³⁵, during and after the battles, extremist organizations in the North Caucasus used a variety of methods and strategies. Guerrilla warfare, terrorist assaults, and suicide bombings were among the strategies used. The terrorists chose high-profile civilian targets like Moscow and Stavropol Krai. Radical Islamists' explanations for suicide strikes went beyond logic, adding conceptions of martyrdom and fears about the afterlife.

The Author explains that extremist assaults contributed to the Chechen victory in the first war and resulted in a political settlement. This arrangement provided Chechnya with some sovereignty while also reducing the intensity of the fighting. Terrorism, as a strategy, did not, however, result in a total resolution of the disputes.

31 Freire M. R. Matching words with actions: Russia, Chechnya and the OSCE – a relationship embedded in ambiguity. UNISCI Discussion papers. 2005. N° 9. Pp. 159–171. URL: <https://www.ucm.es/data/cont/media/www/pag-72532/UNISCI9Freire.pdf> (date accessed: 10.10.2023).

32 Trenin D. V. The Forgotten War: Chechnya and Russia's Future. *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*. 2003. Pp. 1–8. URL: <https://carnegieendowment.org/files/Policybrief28.pdf> (date accessed: 10.10.2023).

33 Klimentov V. A. Bringing the war home: the strategic logic of 'North Caucasian terrorism' in Russia. *Small Wars & Insurgencies*. 2021. Vol. 32. Is. 2. Pp. 374–408. DOI: 10.1080/09592318.2020.1788749 (date accessed: 10.10.2023).

34 Alonso S. Islamic extremism in the North Caucasus: What kind of threat for regional security? URL: http://iugm.es/uploads/tx_iugm/sonia-euroeste.pdf (date accessed: 10.10.2023).

35 Klimentov V. A. Op. cit. DOI: 10.1080/09592318.2020.1788749 (date accessed: 10.10.2023).

Negotiations with extreme Islamists were never approved by Russian authorities, and the extremist organizations' strategic goals were not completely realized.

Economic Influence on the Region

The wars in Chechnya had significant effects on the regional economy. Massive bombardments, which destroyed most of the region, ruined infrastructure, including factories, businesses, and agricultural land ³⁶. The wars led to a rapid decline of the region's economy and an increased struggle for the population to bear the environment.

Various aspects of Chechnya's economy suffered. Due to the destruction, industries and businesses in the region stopped working. This caused increasing rates of unemployment, which went up to 90 % ³⁷. Constant violence and a threatening environment damaged investments and economic growth; therefore, GDP drastically dropped. She further explains that the conflicts also had a significant influence on transportation networks. Infrastructure disruptions, such as roads, trains, and pipelines, hampered commerce and transit networks. Many Chechen roads were destroyed, and the rail network was severely damaged.

Chechnya's oil production has crucial importance for the economic situation

of the region. The federal Ministry had control over Chechen oil resources, which limited the local population's revenue ³⁸. Massive oil resources might be one of the motivating factors for Russia to carry out massive wars. President of Chechnya Aslan Maskhadov tried to put oil resources under his control in 1997 but without success. Later, during the early 2000s, conflicts over oil were showcased better. The Russian-Chechen war turned into an internal conflict between the former authorities of Chechnya in the 1990s, which was won by Ramzan Kadyrov with Russian support. In the conditions of modern globalization, Russian aggression has once again entered a new stage of development. Russia's aggression in Ukraine and Georgia has triggered the greatest security crisis in Europe since the Cold War. In nearly three decades of independence, Ukraine and Georgia have sought to forge their paths as sovereign states while looking to align more closely with Western institutions, including the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. The aspiration of Georgia and Ukraine for Euro-Atlantic integration and adherence to Western values has been a serious reason for discontent for Russia. As a result, Russia occupied 20 percent of Georgia's territory, and in 2021 an unprovoked war of aggression began against Ukraine's peaceful neighbor ³⁹.

36 Elbuzdukayeva, T. U. Economic Recovery in Chechnya: History and Modernity. Chechen Scholars on Chechnya / eds. J. Wilhelmsen & E. Fatland. Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI), 2010. Pp. 41–62. URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep08066.5> (date accessed: 10.10.2023).

37 Ibidem ; Walker E. W. (1998). Chechnya and the Economic Consequences of Secession. *Contemporary Caucasus Newsletter*. 1998-1999. Is. 7. URL: https://iseees.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/walker_1998-econ.pdf (date accessed: 10.10.2023).

38 Vendina O., Belozerov V. S., Gustafson A. The wars in Chechnya and their effects on neighboring regions. *Eurasian Geography and Economics*. 2007. Vol. 48(2). Pp. 178–201. DOI: 10.2747/1538-7216.48.2.178 (date accessed: 10.10.2023).

39 Abuseridze G., Grasis J. Legal and Economic Consequences of Russia's Expansionary Policy / Handbook of Research on Ethnic, Racial, and Religious Conflicts and Their Impact on State and Social Security. IGI Global, 2022. Pp. 243–256.

Additionally, the wars caused a loss of human capital. O. Vendina et al.⁴⁰ explained that a tremendous amount of the Chechen population left the republic and migrated to other regions of Russia. Moreover, ideological leaders, commanders, and other educated and developed members of society died, emigrated, or were captured by Russians. All skilled citizens stayed out of the region, which caused the downfall of the local economy and limited future possibilities for quality restoration of the economy. Massive migrations also affected the situation in bordering regions of the republic. As demand for housing, healthcare, and social services increased, local governments were put under pressure. Furthermore, the arrival of migrants boosted job competitiveness and lowered employment opportunities for locals.

After the wars in 2001, the Russian government implemented a plan for the restoration of Chechen infrastructure and economy⁴¹. The Russians started restoring all aspects of infrastructure, like schools, hospitals, roads, and others. In the academic year 2000/2001, 357 schools and three higher education institutes were in operation in Chechnya. The main focus was on the restoration of oil production. Even though big efforts were made to restore the region's economy, businesses and investments are not developing well

because of the unstable situation and the autocratic rule of Ramzan Kadyrov.

World Feedback

The Russian-Chechen war had a considerable influence on world perceptions of the central Russian government's attitude toward dealing with separatist groups and territorial disputes⁴². The Russian army's cruel and indiscriminate acts during the Chechen conflict drew worldwide criticism and created major doubts about Russia's adherence to international law.

Russia's heavy military attack with disregard for international law displaced the country's preference for military force over diplomacy⁴³. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Western world hoped to build a partnership with Russia. Yeltsin's attitude towards the West was positive, but this war became the root of the disagreement⁴⁴. The author concludes that Russia's unwillingness to cooperate and disregard of international laws showcased its realistic approach to international relations, which completely opposes Western countries' liberal values.

The responses of other states around the world to the conflict varied. At the beginning of the conflict, some Western countries, like the US, were supporting Russia and its desire to restore territorial

40 Vendina O., Belozarov V. S., Gustafson A. Op. cit. DOI: 10.2747/1538-7216.48.2.178 (date accessed: 10.10.2023).

41 Elbuzdukayeva, T. U. Op. cit. URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep08066.5> (date accessed: 10.10.2023).

42 War crimes and politics of terror ... URL: <https://www.msf.org/sites/default/files/2019-04/MSF%20Speaking%20Out%20Chechnya%201994-2004.pdf> (date accessed: 10.10.2023).

43 Cornell S. E. International Reactions to Massive Human Rights Violations: The Case of Chechnya. *Europe-Asia Studies*. 1999. Vol. 51. No. 1. Pp. 85–100. URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/153547.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3Aad890aaac925518e0248368271c37ee6&ab_segments=&origin=&initiator=&acceptTC=1 (date accessed: 10.10.2023).

44 Relations with Russia / North Atlantic Treaty Organization. 03.08.2023. URL: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_50090.htm (date accessed: 10.10.2023).

integrity⁴⁵. As the conflict went on and violations of human rights became obvious, the US government felt the need to criticize Russia's actions⁴⁶. Criticism stayed weak, and they did not impose any sanctions. Unlike the US, European countries were stricter on Russia. Alain Juppe, France's foreign minister, recommended using economic pressure to persuade Russia to uphold human rights norms. Some European nations, notably those in Scandinavia and the Baltic states, have even called for sanctions against Russia. It should be noted that in modern times, sanctions have played a crucial role in Russia's response to the invasion of Ukraine. Taken together, the full sanctions package against Russia is a very effective and efficient means of preventing Russia from providing operational logistics and sustaining its military aggression against Ukraine⁴⁷. S. E. Cornell⁴⁸ further explains that Eastern European nations, mainly Poland, and free republics of the former Soviet Union, including Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Ukraine, have condemned Russia's activities in Chechnya. They regarded Russia's invasion of Chechnya as part of a wider trend of imperialist policies and involvement in neighboring governments' affairs. Poland enthusiastically backed Chechnya's liberation fight and urged for acknowledgment of its right to self-

determination. The Baltic countries demonstrated solidarity with Chechnya, while Ukraine was a major opponent of Russia during the conflict. As S. E. Cornell⁴⁹ states, the response of the Muslim world was varied. Some of the largest Muslim countries, like Turkey and Iran, did not criticize Russia. Turkey was concerned that their criticism of Russia's actions would cause problems with Kurdish aspirations for independence in its territory. Iran views Russia as one of its biggest partners in the international community. There were rumors about Saudi Arabia's military support for the Chechen population, but they were not proven. Additionally, there were efforts from international organizations like Human Rights Watch to document violations committed during the wars.

Overall, it is clear the world's response to the conflict and violations of international law was present, but it was not enough to have a factual effect on Russia. European countries were using terms like "abuse" instead of calling violations "war crimes". They should have insisted on making Russia accountable for its crimes and seeking a ceasefire as soon as possible.

Action Analysis and Future Threats

The actions taken by the Russian Federation during the Chechen wars were

45 War Crimes In Chechnya and the Response of the West: Testimony before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations / Human Rights Watch. 29.02.2000. URL: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2000/02/29/war-crimes-chechnya-and-response-west> (date accessed: 10.10.2023).

46 Cornell S. E. Op. cit. URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/153547.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3Aad890aaac925518e0248368271c37ee6&ab_segments=&origin=&initiator=&acceptTC=1 (date accessed: 10.10.2023).

47 Abuseridze, G., Agapova, O. The Effect of Sanctions Against the Background of the Russian Occupation of Ukraine. *Integrated Computer Technologies in Mechanical Engineering-2022 (ICTM 2022). Lecture Notes in Networks and Systems*. 2023. Vol. 657. Pp. 475–481. DOI: 10.1007/978-3-031-36201-9_41 (date accessed: 10.10.2023).

48 Cornell S. E. Op. cit. URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/153547.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3Aad890aaac925518e0248368271c37ee6&ab_segments=&origin=&initiator=&acceptTC=1 (date accessed: 10.10.2023).

49 Ibidem.

keystones for the country's future political action. These wars could have been used as a prediction for Russia's political orientation and interest.

Firstly, the Chechen wars were an open disregard for various branches of international law from the Russian side. Even though Chechen rebels used various tactics including some terroristic attacks during the wars, Russia, as a member of the European Council state should have obeyed obligations that it holds for the international community. Russian violations of international laws are indicators of the country's political direction. Such actions showcase that Russia is ready to use every method possible to achieve its self-interests. Russia has proved its narcissistic nature in various political actions after the Chechen wars. Various examples include Russia's trade embargo on Georgia in order to push the last-mentioned to agreement regarding Russia's accession to the World Trade Organization, expanding trade with Iran, and situations in Ukraine, Syria, and others⁵⁰. As experience shows, it is reasonable to think that Russia will continue pursuing its self-interests at any cost and disregard any international norms.

Moreover, the Chechen wars had a serious influence on the face of Russia as a newborn superpower state. Since the early days of the Russian Empire, the political orientation of the Russian government has always been directed towards the expansion of territories and influence on bordering regions. The same thing was expected after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Even though, in the first years of its existence, Russia was trying to have friendly relations with the West, the Chechen wars should have been a strong indicator for future shifts in attitudes. Russia proved its power over the region during these wars as it

was necessary to keep the country. In case Chechnya gained independence, it could have caused a snowball effect and spilled over the other ethnically distinct regions of Russia. Moreover, other actors like Islamic countries, saw Chechnya as an opportunity to spread their influence over the majorly Muslim north Caucasus region and create insecure, extremist states in Eastern Europe (EE). Such a state would give them more access and influence over other EE states or Russia. Also, unsuccessful attempts of international actors to bring peace and justice to the victims of these wars tarnish their names and create an image that they do not have actual influence and power. This is used well for anti-western and anti-globalization propaganda.

Chechen Wars should have been a red flag for the Western countries towards Russia. Instead, critics and punishments for violations were not harsh enough. This should become a lesson that it is important to take seriously the actions of the states, predict their future steps, and do everything to prevent unpleasant outcomes.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Russian-Chechen wars were disastrous events that sacrificed political relations, economy, reputation, and most importantly, thousands of lives. The conflicts in the Caucasian region between Russians and local populations have been present for hundreds of years and some of them, are still blowing up. Such conflict exists between Chechens and Russians, which resulted in two Chechen Wars a couple of decades ago. The war had various interpretations, and some legal frameworks like the use of force in international law and self-determination in international

⁵⁰ Abuseridze G. Trade War: Georgia vs. Russia. *Socrates: Rīga Stradiņš University Faculty of Law Electronic Scientific Journal of Law*. 2020. No. 3 (18). P. 150. DOI: 10.25143/socr.18.2020.3.147-154 (date accessed: 10.10.2023).

law could not explain it clearly. On the other hand, violations of other laws like humanitarian law, international human rights law, international refugee, and international criminal law were present from both sides. Such violations caused massive negative feedback towards the Russian Federation and destroyed the country's reputation in the eyes of the West. However, by keeping Chechnya, Russia proved its position as a regional hegemonic power. In addition, various terrorism cases from the Chechen side disrupted the rebels' possibility of obtaining strong support from other countries. Economic destruction that was caused by the wars became disastrous for the Chechen population as they were not able to completely recover. Moreover, although international criticism was present towards Russian violations of various international laws, some countries held on to be very harsh due to their political situations.

The wars were one of the first and loudest cases of Russian disregard for international law and stability, for the country's self-interest. The Chechen Wars are a good explanation for the actions that Russia has been pursuing in the international system for the last decades including the war in Georgia and Ukraine, and an efficient depiction of the country's main international interests. Actions taken by Russia during the Chechen Wars should have resulted in drastic steps from the international community to prevent further expansion of Russian ignorance. This case should become a valuable lesson for the world.

Оцінка російсько-чеченських війн і їхній вплив

на регіональну стабільність

Теодор Джорджобіані

Ця стаття має на меті системно проаналізувати російсько-чеченські вій-

ни з різних позицій із метою розглянути проблеми, пов'язані з поведінковою динамікою учасників конфлікту. Основні завдання наукової роботи полягають у глибинному аналізуванні наслідків війн для регіональної стабільності, поширенні поінформованості щодо цієї теми та формулюванні пізнаваних моделей поведінки Російської Федерації. Ця стаття критично аналізує вплив російсько-чеченських війн, які відбувалися у 1990-х роках і тривали майже десять років. Конфлікти між Російською Федерацією та чеченськими повстанцями значно впливали на регіональну стабільність протягом того періоду. Судові експертизи у справах, пов'язаних із північнокавказьким конфліктом, сприяють встановленню істини. Докладно розглядаючи правові аспекти, підкреслюємо потенційні права чеченців на самовизначення, ставимо під сумнів законність російського втручання. Висновки судових експертів фіксують часті порушення гуманітарних законів і прав людини обома сторонами, що призвели до військових злочинів і злочинів проти людяності. Із метою вичерпного аналізу, що розкриває складнощі конфлікту та його наслідки для політичної стабільності, методи дослідження потребували якісного підходу, що полягав у ретельному дослідженні відповідних журнальних статей, наукових праць, наукових видань і аналізуванні юридичних та історичних документів. У статті розглянуто війни з різних позицій із метою певною мірою осягнути їхні наслідки.

Ключові слова: війна; конфлікт; міжнародне право; незалежність; тероризм; права людини.

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