



**BA Thesis in Political Science**

**The Evolution of Russian Counterinsurgency Strategy  
in Chechnya 1994-2009**

Gunnar Bjarni Albertsson

**October 2019**



**HÁSKÓLI ÍSLANDS**  
**STJÓRN MÁLAFRÆÐI**

# **The Evolution of Russian Counterinsurgency Strategy in Chechnya 1994-2009**

Gunnar Bjarni Albertsson

Lokaritgerð til BA-gráðu í stjórnmálafræði

Leiðbeinandi: Dr. Page Wilson

Stjórnmálafræðideild

Félagsvísindasvið Háskóla Íslands

Október 2019

The Evolution of Russian Counterinsurgency Strategy in Chechnya  
1994-2009

Ritgerð þessi er lokaverkefni til BA-gráðu í stjórn málafræði.  
Óheimilt er að afrita ritgerðina á nokkurn hátt nema með leyfi rétthafa.

© Gunnar Bjarni Albertsson, 2019  
kt. 0504932539

Reykjavík, Ísland, 2019

## Útdráttur

Umbætur rússneskra yfirvalda á herkænsku og aðgerðum rússneska hersins í Seinna-Téténíustríðinu skiptu sköpum fyrir endanlegan sigur þeirra gegn hreyfingum téténskra uppreinsarmanna. Rannsóknarefni ritgerðar minnar er að kanna hvaða umbætur voru gerðar á herkænskunni og hvaða raunverulegu afleiðingar þær höfðu. Ég legg einstaka áherslu á þá herkænsku Rússa sem miðuð er að því að hemja og ráða niðurlögum uppreisna en einnig þá sem miðar að því að koma í veg fyrir hryðjuverk og skaða þeirra. Með því að fara yfir hernaðarlega og pólitískt baksögu átaka Rússa og Téténa, sem og greina aðgerðir og stefnu rússneska hersins í átökunum, er hægt að komast að niðurstöðu. Rússnesk yfirvöld drógu dýrmætan lærdóm af upphaflegum mistökum sínum í Fyrri-Téténíustríðinu og gátu beitt þessum lærdómi sér til hagnaðar í Seinna-Téténíustríðinu.

## Abstract

The Russian government's improvements to the Russian army's strategy and tactics during the Second Chechen War were essential to their eventual victory over the Chechen Separatist movement. In this thesis I analyze what improvements were made and what results did they achieve. I especially emphasize the Russian counterinsurgency strategy along with their counterterrorism strategy as well. By reviewing the military and political history of the Chechen conflict, coupled with analyzing the Russian strategy and tactics, a conclusion can be reached. The Russian government learned precious lessons from their previous mistakes in the First Chechen War, lessons which they were able to learn from and utilize for their gain in the Second Chechen War.

## **Preface**

This thesis is my final assignment for a B.A. degree in Political Science from the University of Iceland. The thesis is assessed at 12 ECTS out of a 180 ECTS degree and was written in the summer of 2019 for the graduation in October of 2019.

I would like to give my outmost thanks to Dr. Page Wilson, my supervisor, for her patience, understanding and helpful advice. I would also like to give endless gratitude to my friends and family who supported me unconditionally throughout this lengthy and demanding process.

# Table of Contents

<b>Útdráttur .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Abstract .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Preface .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>1 Introduction.....</b>	<b>6</b>
1.1 Thesis Organization .....	7
<b>2 Theoretical Framework.....</b>	<b>8</b>
2.1 Insurgency.....	8
2.2 Counterinsurgency .....	11
2.3 Terrorism .....	14
<b>3 The Chechen Conflict .....</b>	<b>21</b>
3.1 Prelude to war .....	21
3.2 The First Chechen War 1994-1996.....	22
3.3 The Interwar Years 1996-1999 .....	24
3.4 The Second Chechen War 1999-2000 .....	24
3.5 Insurgency Phase 2000-2009 .....	26
<b>4 The Evolution of Russian Counterinsurgency Strategy .....</b>	<b>29</b>
4.1 Russian Strategic and Tactical Shortcomings .....	29
4.2 Russian Counterinsurgency Strategy in the First Chechen War 1994-1996 .....	31
4.3 Russian Counterinsurgency Strategy in the Second Chechen War 1994-1996 .....	34
4.3.1 Counterterrorism element.....	38
<b>5 Findings.....</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>Bibliography.....</b>	<b>41</b>

## 1 Introduction

Chechnya is located in the mountainous region of the North Caucasus and is a federal subject of the Russian Federation. The Chechens are a proud people whose culture, history and traditions have been shaped by their strife for survival in the foothills of the great Caucasus Mountains. The geographical position of the North Caucasus has made it an important strategic area and as a consequence has a very long history of being the site of many campaigns and battles where foreign empires and armies made multiple efforts of conquering this strategically valuable land. This constant aggression from outsiders' attempts for control of the region has shaped the national character of the Chechen people and forged their renowned fierce fighting spirit and their undying thirst for independence. Chechnya has been a part of Russia since Russia's conquest of the Caucasus in 1864 and the relationship between the Chechens and the Kremlin has been stormy ever since. Cultural and religious differences between the Chechen and Russian people are significant. These differences, coupled with the distinctive Chechen national character, have resulted in the two peoples having more regularly shared times of mutual animosity than unity

The Chechen conflict, which started in 1994, was a result of Chechen separatist openly rebelling against Russian rule over Chechnya when they established the independent Chechen Republic of Ichkeria three years earlier. The Russian government, already dealing with a number of other significant political problems, needed to show that no one could defy their authority without impunity.<sup>1</sup> The subsequent conflict was heavily characterized by the asymmetry of military power between the two belligerent forces. The Russian forces outgunned and outmanned their Chechen foes but were however initially unsuccessful at quelling the rebellion due to Chechen tactical superiority coupled with the Russian forces' very own inabilities. The First Chechen War ended in 1996 in Russian defeat. Hostilities broke out anew in 1999 but this time the Russian forces were better prepared and in the following year a Russian victory was declared. That did not however mean that fighting has ceased and in the following nine years the Russian forces conducted a determined counterinsurgency and counterterrorism campaign in Chechnya, sweeping up and containing the remaining insurgent forces.

This thesis examines the evolution of the Russian strategy in the Chechen conflict of 1994-2009 with an emphasis on the counterinsurgency measures applied. In this thesis

---

<sup>1</sup> Galeotti, *Russia's War in Chechnya*, p.31

I seek to examine what methods the Russian government used to develop and better their counterinsurgency strategy throughout the conflict.

### **1.1 Thesis Organization**

In the second chapter of this thesis I review theoretical schools on the subject of insurgency and counterinsurgency, terrorism and counterterrorism. Theoretical knowledge of these concepts is vital when analyzing developments in Russian counterinsurgency strategy. In the third chapter I briefly summarize the political and military history of the Chechen conflict. In the fourth chapter I analyze the developments made to the Russian counterinsurgency strategy from 1994-2009. In the final chapter I provide the conclusions arrived at through the research.



## 2 Theoretical Framework

When researching and analyzing the Chechen conflict, knowledge of key theory is important. An understanding of the complexity of an insurgency and the various aspects of terrorism is crucial. This knowledge and understanding is vital in analyzing Russian attempts to quell the Chechen insurgency and which methods proved successful for them and which did not.

### 2.1 Insurgency

The United States Department of Defense defines an insurgency as “the organized use of subversion and violence to seize, nullify, or challenge political control of a region”.<sup>2</sup> Using a combination of various tactics of asymmetric warfare and political mobilization, insurgents seek to fight government forces to the extent of reaching their political aims which usually are the complete or partial control of the resources or population of a given territory. Most of the fighting in an insurgency is however not fought with conventional weapons or military tactics. The goal of an insurgency is legitimacy of control, acquired through a war of ideas in which the aim is gaining the populations support. An insurgency is not like conventional war where opposing forces put most effort in to occupying key positions in the terrain. In an insurgency, the key position is the will of the people, their “hearts and minds”.<sup>3</sup> An insurgency is therefore primarily a political struggle.

Usually fought between forces of unequal conventional military capacity, an insurgency has traditionally been resorted to by groups fighting against what they saw as foreign occupying forces in their fight for independence. These have been called “classical insurgencies” and were fought in the late-colonial era of 1944-1980.<sup>4</sup> In these cases the fighting originated with the insurgents themselves as they tried to expel occupying forces from their territory. Today, however, in what has been called “contemporary insurgencies”, the fight is often instigated by outside invaders and the insurgents are trying to preserve the status quo.<sup>5</sup> David Kilcullen, a strategist and counterinsurgency expert, additionally points out that unlike classical insurgencies, which had a clear political agenda, the main goal of contemporary insurgencies isn’t always to gain control or establishing an independent state.<sup>6</sup> They rather follow state failure where insurgents don’t seek taking over a functioning political body but rather dismantle it or fight for ungoverned spaces. Some contemporary insurgencies

---

<sup>2</sup>Department of Defence, *Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, p. 108

<sup>3</sup>Schaefer, *From Gazavat to Jihad*, p. 10.

<sup>4</sup>Williams, *Security Studies: An introduction*, p. 474

<sup>5</sup> Williams, *Security Studies: An introduction*, p. 474

<sup>6</sup> Kilcullen, *Counterinsurgency Redux*, p. 3

are also religiously motivated and without political aims but in spite of that, they most certainly do have political consequences.<sup>7</sup>

Robert W. Schaefer, a security analyst and retired lieutenant colonel of the U.S. Army, notes four prerequisites for insurgencies to develop: *lack of government control, ideology, available leadership* and a *vulnerable population*.<sup>8</sup> Without the control of a legitimate government basic institutions that focus on social, political, security and economic matters aren't provided. When people feel deprived of these basic institutions they can resort to mass mobilization or protest. This can be the perfect environment for the seed of insurgency to grow. Insurgencies need to have an ideology for their supporters to rally around. Insurgent groups have various political ideologies; some are communist, others are anarchist and others reformist. However they usually are quite vague or even contradictory in the start. This is to gain maximum flexibility so the insurgency can gain support from every direction without being too committed to a specific agenda. Most often aimed at the oppositions' weaknesses and inability to control, combined with promises of a better quality of life if the insurgents were in command. Insurgents set this up as a classic "us against them" argument, either you are with us or against us. It is imperative that the insurgency has a committed and effective leadership to plan and intertwine its tactical and political approaches. They usually are very charismatic individuals of experience, be it military or political. They need to be considered legitimate by the local populace and the populace needs to be open to economic, social or political change. Through a vulnerable population the insurgents are able to mobilize support through their ideology and take advantage of the lack of government control.<sup>9</sup> The inequality in military capacity between the insurgents' and the enemy determines the insurgent's way of fighting. Their goal is not the complete destruction of the enemy's military forces, which would be impossible. They rather apply a campaign of guerrilla warfare and terror tactics to inflict repeated casualties and damage to the enemy. The aim is to demoralize the enemy forces and stretch the conflict for as long as possible to weaken the enemy's will to continue fighting.

Insurgents cannot face the opposing forces head on and therefore actively avoid large scale confrontations. Insurgents apply guerrilla tactics where they maneuver quickly and with ease, attack vulnerable points by surprise and then retreat and blend in with the local

---

<sup>7</sup> Williams, *Security Studies: An introduction*, p. 475

<sup>8</sup> Schaefer, *From Gazavat to Jihad*, p. 13

<sup>9</sup> Schaefer, *From Gazavat to Jihad*, p. 19

population. By attacking the opponents areas of control and weakening or discredit its forces they undermine the oppositions' authority and capability to protect the populace. They utilize terror tactics like bombings, assassinations, sabotage and hit-and-run tactics to create chaos and instability. With instability comes a convenient environment for insurgents to mobilize support and encourage people to sympathize with their cause over the oppositions', as per the insurgents propaganda, the opposition is the blame for the instability. The United States Government Counterinsurgency Guide states four basic strategies that are typically applied in most insurgencies: *provocation, intimidation, protraction and exhaustion*.<sup>10</sup> Provocation refers to the insurgents committing violent acts for the purpose of prompting irrational or disproportionate response from the opposition. These responses usually end up harming the oppositions' interests and help the insurgents gain support. The opposition might end up harming, detaining or killing civilians which the insurgents will surely use against them. Insurgents apply intimidation by committing violent acts and acts of terror to dissuade members of the opposition from taking active measures against them. Protraction and exhaustion refers to the insurgents' will to prolong the fighting as long as possible to weaken the morale of the oppositions' forces. By attacking and heavily damaging or destroying the enemy's infrastructure and assets, insurgents can slowly exhaust their resources and their will to fight.<sup>11</sup>

Knowledge of tactics in this kind of asymmetric warfare is important to the insurgent's fight but for the insurgency to be ultimately successful the support from the local populace is vital. The insurgents require the active support of a few willing individuals and the sympathy, or at least the acquiescence, from the local populace. This is important for the insurgents as they require safe havens, support in intelligence gathering and often food or other resources from the locals. Insurgents often gain this support, or the acquiescence, by spreading propaganda about their political agenda, discrediting government action and "manipulating religious, tribal or local identity to exploit common societal grievances or needs".<sup>12</sup> They might claim to be fighting for the needs of the local populace but in reality these needs might have very little to do with the insurgents' true agenda. This is often claimed to simply gain favor from the local populace and exploit their conditions for recruiting new fighters, and acquire resources.

---

<sup>10</sup> U.S. Government Interagency COIN Initiative, *Counterinsurgency guide*, p. 10

<sup>11</sup> U.S. Government Interagency COIN Initiative, *Counterinsurgency guide*, p. 11

<sup>12</sup> U.S. Government Interagency COIN Initiative, *Counterinsurgency guide*, p. 7

## 2.2 Counterinsurgency

It is very clear that the insurgents' way of fighting can be extremely difficult to counter. Due to the political nature of an insurgency it cannot be met with brute military response alone. It requires a carefully orchestrated tactical and political approach from both military and civilian agencies, commonly referred to as counterinsurgency (often called COIN by specialists). The United States Department of Defense defines counterinsurgency as "comprehensive civilian and military efforts taken to simultaneously defeat and contain insurgency and address its root causes".<sup>13</sup> It requires a combination of political, economic and security measures that reinforce the control, legitimacy and effectiveness of the government while at the same time reducing the insurgents influence over the population and protecting them from insurgent violence. This is no easy task and carrying out a successful counterinsurgency campaign is an extremely difficult thing to do.<sup>14</sup>

Most of the applicable framework readily available today comes from the revising and analyzing of historical counterinsurgency failures and the US development of effective counterinsurgency methods in the Afghan and Iraq wars. Robert Thomson, a former lieutenant colonel in the British army and counterinsurgency expert, created *The Five Principles of Counterinsurgency* as a guideline for successful strategic approaches in counterinsurgencies. These principles are:<sup>15</sup>

1. The government must have a clear political aim: to establish and maintain a free, independent and united country which is politically and economically stable and viable.
2. The government must function in accordance with the law.
3. The government must have an overall plan.
4. The government must give priority to defeating the political subversion, not the guerrillas.
5. In the guerrilla phase of insurgency, a government must secure its base areas first.

(Thomson, 1972: 50-60)

*The Five Principles of Counterinsurgency* were first published in 1966 but in spite of how counterinsurgency strategies have changed and developed since then Thomson's principles

---

<sup>13</sup> U.S. Government Interagency COIN Initiative, *Counterinsurgency guide*, p. 12

<sup>14</sup> Schaefer, *From Gazavat to Jihad*, p. 195

<sup>15</sup> Thompson, *Lessons for Iraq*, p.

are still relatively valid today. Principle number 5, often referred to as “oil-spot” strategy, is considered especially effective and is still successfully applied in modern counterinsurgency campaigns. As previously stated insurgencies are primarily a political struggle. David Galula, a former lieutenant colonel in the French army, asserts that “the ideal counterinsurgency would be 80% political, 20% military”.<sup>16</sup> He further stated that the role of the military in counterinsurgency is to create space for political progress.<sup>17</sup> It is self-evident that due to the political nature of insurgencies, and the absolute importance of support or acquiescence from the population, that counterinsurgency campaigns should involve political, economic and social change.

Counterinsurgency approaches are often divided into being “population-centric” or “enemy-centric”. Population-centric strategies focus on the population and winning their “hearts and minds”. By accomplishing that the insurgents can be deprived of local population’s support which is crucial to their fight.

In enemy-centric strategies the defeat of the enemy is its primary task. This means viewing the counterinsurgency as more like conventional warfare and less emphasis is put on winning the hearts and minds of the local population.<sup>18</sup>

David Kilcullen, a former Chief Strategist in the Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism at the U.S. State Department, produces a framework for inter-agency counterinsurgency approach in his paper *The Three Pillars of Counterinsurgency*.<sup>19</sup> He first of all emphasizes the absolute importance of acquiring and applying intelligence as the basis and foundation for all other activities. It is imperative to have a comprehensive knowledge and understanding of every corner of the campaigns area of operation to effectively carry it out. This means gaining comprehensive intelligence about the local population and the insurgents, their culture and society, as well as monitoring the societal effects and impacts of the campaign. This requires a carefully designed inter-agency approach from both civilian and military authority. Kilcullen’s three pillars of counterinsurgency approaches, which stand in the dimensions of legitimacy and effectiveness, are security, political and economic measures. He states that it is imperative that these pillars be developed in parallel or the campaign becomes unbalanced and even more problematic to effectively carry out.

---

<sup>16</sup> Williams, *Security Studies: An introduction*, p. 479

<sup>17</sup> Williams, *Security Studies: An introduction*, p. 479

<sup>18</sup> Paul, Christopher et al, *Moving Beyond Population-Centric vs. Enemy-Centric Counterinsurgency*, p.1022-1023

<sup>19</sup> Kilcullen, *Three Pillars of Counterinsurgency*, p. 4

The security pillar includes military and police approaches to protect the population from insurgent violence or intimidation. It also includes building and maintaining a framework to achieve human security by protecting human rights, providing public safety and population security. The political pillar is comprised of political measures aimed at mobilizing support, marginalizing the insurgents and rebuilding the institutional ability of government and non-government agencies and institutions. Included in the political pillar are “social re-integration efforts such as the disarming, demobilization and reintegration of combatants”.<sup>20</sup> The economic pillar is comprised of economic measures like humanitarian relief and long-term assistance like agricultural, industrial and commercial development. This also includes supporting the efficient management of resources and infrastructure and the “construction of key infrastructure systems” which Kilcullen states being critically important.<sup>21</sup>

These three pillars then support the “overarching objective of control, which – as we have seen – is the counterinsurgent’s fundamental aim”.<sup>22</sup> The counterinsurgency’s aim is not to kill every last insurgent or bringing complete peace and harmony to the region, but establishing and consolidating control and then “transfer it to permanent, effective and legitimate institutions.”<sup>23</sup> Kilcullen clearly states that his model is solely a framework for action and not a template for guaranteed success in a counterinsurgency campaign. He even goes on to explain that making models like his is a “systematic oversimplifications of reality.”<sup>24</sup> It however creates a platform for further important development.

Reaching the overarching objective of an inter-agency counterinsurgency approach requires an effective military strategy. This strategy should not only include defensive measures but offensive as well. The fighting in modern insurgencies, as in most modern wars, is often predominantly fought in urban areas.<sup>25</sup> This kind of combat is quite difficult to carry out and military forces should avoid rash, large scale retaliation with possible civilian casualties as that would only prove counterproductive. Charles Krulak, a retired general of the US Marine Corps, states that allowing forces on the ground to respond and react to the situations they will encounter with certain autonomy, as one of the key aspects of

---

<sup>20</sup> Kilcullen, *Three Pillars of Counterinsurgency*, p. 4

<sup>21</sup> Kilcullen, *Three Pillars of Counterinsurgency*, p. 6

<sup>22</sup> Kilcullen, *Three Pillars of Counterinsurgency*, p. 6

<sup>23</sup> Kilcullen, *Three Pillars of Counterinsurgency*, p. 6

<sup>24</sup> Kilcullen, *Three Pillars of Counterinsurgency*, p. 6

<sup>25</sup> Williams, *Security Studies: An introduction*, p. 477

counterinsurgency.<sup>26</sup> This gives smaller military units flexibility and encourages initiative. This type of “learning on the ground” can then move upwards through the military hierarchy and influence doctrinal or strategic change. Information learned on the ground should also be shared and implemented by incoming units but this is not often the case.<sup>27</sup>

### **2.3 Terrorism**

Following the September 11 attacks in 2001 and the subsequent War on Terror, the terms “terrorism” and “terrorist” get thrown around quite a lot.<sup>28</sup> The terms are quite ambiguous and that is partly due to how emotionally and politically charged they are. They have gotten virtually synonymous with and almost exclusive to acts of violence carried out by militant Islamist groups. The term “terrorist” has even gotten manifested in the stereotypical image of a Middle-Eastern man. This kind of labeling is of course partly driven by ignorance and prejudice but also in part by the fact that defining terrorism from other acts of violence or warfare has proven quite precarious.

While most often used in the context of something or someone being morally wrong or evil, the ambiguity of the terms has made them a powerful political tool. Because of how charged these terms are, by referring to someone, a group of individuals or even a whole country, as a terrorist their actions, claims or fight for freedom or justice can be completely discredit as being wrong or evil. “One man’s terrorist is another man’s freedom fighter” has become a popular saying made in view of the ambiguity of the term.<sup>29</sup> It is therefore quite clear that a comprehensive universal definition of terrorism would be helpful in building a framework for dealing with, containing and nullifying terror threats around the world. It would also prove valuable in delegitimizing actual terrorists and terror groups and hopefully prevent them from gaining sympathy and support for their agenda. This single universal definition is however non-existent today and different theorists and institutions use various definitions, albeit often very similar ones. Bill Hoffman, a political analyst and terrorism expert, attempts to define terrorism in his book *Inside Terrorism* as:

... the deliberate creation and exploitation of fear through violence or the threat of violence in the pursuit of political change. All terrorist acts involve violence or the threat of violence. Terrorism is specifically designed to have far-reaching psychological effects beyond the immediate victim(s) or

---

<sup>26</sup> Liddy, *The Strategic Corporal*, p.140

<sup>27</sup> Williams, *Security Studies: An introduction*, p. 481

<sup>28</sup> The Guardian, *I released 2000 minks from a fur farm. Now I’m a convicted terrorist*

<sup>29</sup> Ganor, *Defining Terrorism* p.124

object of the terrorist attack. It is meant to instill fear within, and thereby intimidate, a wider “target audience” that might include a rival ethnic or religious group, an entire country, a national government or political party, or public opinion in general. Terrorism is designed to create power where there is none or to consolidate power where there is very little. Through the publicity generated by their violence, terrorists seek to obtain the leverage, influence, and power they otherwise lack to effect political change on either a local or an international scale.<sup>30</sup>

According to Hoffman, terrorism can therefore be briefly summarized as the act of deliberately creating or exploiting fear through violence or the threat of violence in the pursuit of political change or coercion. This can be attempted by various violent ways, including but not limited to, conducting or threatening to conduct bombings, mass shootings, assassinations, kidnapping or hostage-taking.

It might seem that terrorism is a rather modern phenomenon but the term originated in the 18th century during the French Revolution. Since then it has been, and can be, used by various groups and individuals for various political aims. It can even be used by the state against its own citizens, as was the case in the purges in Stalin’s Soviet Union in the 1930s and Mao’s China in the 1950’s.<sup>31</sup> Terror tactics have also been frequently applied by colonial powers in the form of detention without trial, torture and summary executions as a response to their colony’s subject’s demands for independence.<sup>32</sup> Terror groups can restrict their operation to their domestic aspirations and environment but some have an international agenda. This can be an international terror group that carries out acts of terror across the globe.

Paul Rogers, a professor of peace studies at University of Bradford, states that although terrorism “can originate in very different societies and with highly variable motivations and underlying drivers” it can be loosely divided into two orientations.<sup>33</sup> Firstly as terrorism that seeks fundamental political change in a state or society. This kind of revolutionary terrorism can be based on radical political and/or religious ideology. These groups aim for fundamental change in a particular state but might have international aspirations. Groups like Baader Meinhof and al-Qaida would fit into this category. Secondly as terrorism that seeks political change for a particular group of people or community, based on separatist or nationalistic ideology but might contain elements of some revolutionary

---

<sup>30</sup> Hoffman, *Inside terrorism*, p. 40

<sup>31</sup> Williams, *Security Studies: An introduction*, p.224

<sup>32</sup> Williams, *Security Studies: An introduction*, p.224

<sup>33</sup> Williams, *Security Studies: An introduction*, p.220



politics. These groups often arise as a response to a major political change that has negatively affected the prospects of their community. These include the Tamil Tigers, the IRA or the Chechen separatists. Acts of terror are widely applied by insurgents and guerrillas in their fight for their political aims. Daniel Byman, a policy analyst, states in his book *Deadly Connections: States that Sponsor Terrorism* that “Not all terrorist groups are insurgencies, but almost every insurgent group uses terrorism. The overlap between insurgents and terrorism has important implications for understanding state motivations and for effective counterterrorism”.<sup>34</sup>

Due to this connection combatting terrorism and insurgencies can require quite similar approaches. Counterterrorism, much like counterinsurgency, is very demanding, requires comprehensive intelligence gathering and a carefully planned inter-agency approach. The United States Department of Defense defines counterterrorism as “... activities and operations taken to neutralize terrorists, their organizations and networks in order to render them incapable of using violence to instill fear and coerce governments or societies to achieve their goals.”<sup>35</sup> As is the case with counterinsurgencies, there exists no one universal “correct” way of implementing and carrying out counterterrorism policies.

Paul R. Pillar, a retired CIA officer, states that the goal of counterterrorism is preventing terrorist attacks from taking place by tackling the root causes of terrorism and reducing the motivation for individuals to join terrorist groups.<sup>36</sup> The government might fight extremism in a battle of ideas by promoting political and social change and by creating incentives for groups to seek political change through peaceful and democratic means rather than with violent ones. This can prove effective in denying domestic terrorist groups a potential environment of gaining support for operations. Governments can even reach negotiated solutions with violent groups, like the Good Friday agreement in Northern Ireland which proved critical in bringing about the end of the IRA’s terror campaign.<sup>37</sup> This is however not a plausible path of prevention when it comes to international terror groups, like al-Qaeda for example, who’s goals are so extensive that they could never be mitigated by policy change nor negotiations by a government. When policy change or negotiations are not an option other defensive and offensive security measures are required.

---

<sup>34</sup> Byman, *Deadly Connections*, p. 23

<sup>35</sup> Pillar, *Terrorism and U.S. Foreign policy*

<sup>36</sup> Williams, *Security Studies: An introduction*, p. 458

<sup>37</sup> Williams, *Security Studies: An introduction*, p. 459

Defensive counterterrorism measures are designed to protect possible targets from attacks. This includes security checks at airports, train stations and government facilities. By increasing the security level, or implementing one, and increasing the amount of security forces at a possible vulnerable target can prevent it from being attacked by terrorists.<sup>38</sup> Offensive counterterrorism measures are designed to reduce terrorist's capabilities to operate. A powerful tool of offensive counterterrorism measures is diplomacy. International diplomatic cooperation can prove very effective in cracking down on international terrorist cells. Another powerful tool is financial control in the form of the government's ability to freeze or seize assets of known terrorists groups or individuals associated with them.

An essential part of offensive counterterrorism is the comprehensive gathering of intelligence of terrorist organizations and infrastructure. This provides police, military or internal security services the opportunity to potentially foil terror attacks by conducting raids and arresting suspects that can then be tried in a criminal court.<sup>39</sup> These measures, both defensive and offensive, are in no way a guaranteed prevention of terror attacks ever taking place, some offensive measures that include the disproportionate use of force can even prove quite counterproductive.<sup>40</sup>

Political scientists Andrew Kydd and Barbara Walter describe in their article *The Strategies of Terrorism* five primary strategies that terrorists employ and what responses, defensive and offensive, are best suited in the fight against them.<sup>41</sup> The strategies are *attrition, intimidation, provocation, spoiling and outbidding*.

The attrition strategy is designed to convince the enemy that the terrorist group is strong, resolute and capable of inflicting serious damage so that the enemy sees meeting their demands as a better alternative to perseverance. The greater the damage a terrorist group inflicts, the more credible their future threats are and the likelier the enemy is to grant concessions. An example of attrition is the Jewish insurgency in Mandatory Palestine in the 1930's and 40's. Among the approaches best suited to fight this strategy are conceding to inessential demands, carefully targeted retaliation (assassination of group leaders, destroying assets) and to minimize the probability of possible public overreaction over the actual level of threat.

---

<sup>38</sup> Williams, *Security Studies: An introduction*, p. 460-462

<sup>39</sup> Williams, *Security Studies: An introduction*, p. 463-465

<sup>40</sup> Woodworth, *Why do they kill?*, p.2

<sup>41</sup> Kydd, Walter, *Strategies of Terrorism*, p. 59

The intimidation strategy is designed to deter a certain political or social change from happening by demonstrating the group's ability to punish those who disobey them and that the enemy is powerless in stopping them. Most frequently applied when the group is fighting to overthrow the government and competing against them for social control over a certain population. This is done by targeting and assassinating government officials or supporters. An example of intimidation is the Taliban executing the headmaster of a girls' school as a deterrent from other schools providing girls with education. The most suitable approach in fighting this strategy is minimizing the ambiguity about who is in control by retaking territory from terrorist group in decisive and discrete fashion. This has been referred to as a "clear-and-hold strategy" the US Department of Defense.

The provocation strategy is designed to provoke the enemy to retaliate to the terrorist group's violence with a disproportionate and rash military response that will result in civilian casualty. The terrorist group will then use this response as an example of how evil and untrustworthy their enemy is and to persuade the population that the terrorist group's radical agenda is justifiable and supporting, and even joining, them is the right thing to do. Author Paddy Woodworth states in his article *Why Do They Kill? The Basque Conflict in Spain* that "Nothing radicalizes a people faster than the unleashing of undisciplined security forces on its towns and villages. The litany of beatings, torture, and unpunished shootings that follows becomes a recruiting catechism for an armed resistance group."<sup>42</sup> This strategy is most often used in the pursuit of regime and territorial change. An example of provocation is ETA's strategy in Spain which sought excessive measure from the Spanish government against the Basque community to rally support from the community their agenda. The best response to a strategy of provocation is carefully devised strategic response that inflicts as little collateral damage as possible. Terrorists and their immediate backers should be identified, carefully isolated from the general population and destroyed to prevent future attacks.

The spoiling strategy is designed to sabotage any potential peace agreements between the terrorist group's moderate leadership and the enemy. This is done when there is the possibility of peace agreements being made and improving relations threaten the terrorist group from reaching their ultimate goals. The more hard-line members of the terrorist group want to make the enemy believe that moderates cannot be trusted to honor any agreement and that they have no real power to prevent further terror attacks from taking place. An example of this the Iranian hostage crisis where radicals kidnapped 52 Americans to prevent possible

---

<sup>42</sup> Woodworth, *Why do the kill?*, p.6

reconciliation from existing between the two nations after the Iranian prime minister had met with a US national security advisor and the two of them had been photographed shaking hands. The best response to spoiling is implementing strategies that are designed to build and preserve trust and reduce vulnerabilities that can emerge during peace processes. This can be done by including international institutions in the peace process, designing the peace agreements in ways guarantee power-sharing and making a costly signal of honorable intentions (this can be for example providing constitutional rights to minorities).

Outbidding takes place when groups compete for the support of the general population which is uncertain about what group best represents their interests. These groups can have similar goals but different ways of reaching them. One can seem a “strong and resolute defender of the cause (zealots)” while other can seem “weak and ineffective stooges of the enemy (sellouts)”.<sup>43</sup> Groups want to be seen as zealots and make the others seem as sellouts. They do this by being more militant and aggressive than the competition. An example of outbidding is the rivalry between Fatah and Hamas in Palestine. They compete for the support of the Palestinian citizens, who are unsure which faction to support. Outbidding is hard to fight but one possible solution is granting concessions to nonviolent (or less violent) groups and meeting some smaller demands made by their followers. This could persuade groups to abandon the strategy of outbidding and pursue potential nonviolent means to some of their goals.

One aspect of counterterrorism strategies is incident management “which includes anything done, once a terrorist incident occurs, to mitigate its effects.”<sup>44</sup> This can be responding to and managing hostage situations, communicating and dealing with the terrorists. Dealing with hostage takers is one by trained experts who rely on extensive framework for successful methods developed by years of experience in dealing with hostage crisis. The optimal results are weakening the hostage takers’ will and persuade them to surrender without them harming the hostages. This often relies on the authorities policy of dealing with hostage crisis, some governments have been willing to meet some demands by hostage takers while others refuse to give any concession as that might encourage further incidents.<sup>45</sup> Reaching the optimal results in hostage taking incidents is sadly a rare happening and these kinds of situations often require a more aggressive approach. These are hostage rescue attempts by police or military forces were they try to liberate the hostages by

---

<sup>43</sup> Kydd, Walter, *Strategies of Terrorism*, p. 7

<sup>44</sup> Williams, *Security Studies: An introduction*, p. 459

<sup>45</sup> Toros, *We don't negotiate with terrorists*, p. 407

overpowering the hostage takers, without there being done any damage to the hostages. Hostage rescues are extremely risky measures and have been conducted with highly contrasting results. Past failures have however contributed to a tactical framework being developed by highly trained security experts. Another aspect of incident management is emergency response to terror attacks. This includes giving medical attention to the wounded and containing and dealing with any continuing hazards at the scene of attack. Another aspect of incident management is to hinder public chaos and panic by restricting the amount of released information about the attack and limiting public attention.

There exists no single universal catch-all framework for implementing successful counterinsurgency or counterterrorism strategies. The knowledge and understanding of the existing theories mentioned here in this chapter have however proven useful. Using them as a paradigm in researching the Chechen conflict can prove paramount in analyzing the development, initial failures and eventual success, of the Russian responses to the insurgency and terrorism in Chechnya.

### 3 The Chechen Conflict

#### 3.1 Prelude to war

Following Mikhail Gorbachev's perestroika and glasnost policy reforms during the 1980's and the 1990's was an increasing demand for democratization and independence within the Union Republics of the Soviet Union.<sup>46</sup> These policy reforms are often credited with contributing heavily to the eventual dissolution of the Soviet Union in December 1991 when the independence of the Soviet socialist republics was acknowledged with declaration 142-H of the Supreme Soviet of the Soviet Union.<sup>47</sup> At its dissolution the Soviet Union was made up of 15 ethnically based national Union Republics and although the Soviet Union was a very centralized state each republic held a certain level of autonomy. They had their own party chapter of the Communist Party and their own commissariats, allowing them to have certain control over foreign affairs. They maintained their own defense and their own branch of the Red Army. They also had the constitutional right of ceding from the Soviet Union, which they exercised successively in 1990 and 1991. Some of the Union Republics were further divided into lower administrative levels, the Russian Soviet Republic having the greatest number of these lower levels. The largest of them were the Autonomous Republics, which held a certain level of autonomy within their respective republic but did not hold any autonomy towards the Soviet Union as the Union Republics did. They did not, for example, have the constitutional right of ceding from the Soviet Union or their appropriate Union Republic. That changed when Mikhail Gorbachev signed Soviet Union Law No. 1457-I on April 26, 1990, in the midst of his fight for power with Boris Yeltsin, which placed the rights of the autonomous republics equal to those of the Union Republics. This gave the autonomous republics the same legal right of ceding from the Soviet Union as the Union Republics had.<sup>48</sup>

In the aftermath of the political disarray following the coup d'état attempt in August 1991 and the subsequent political struggle within Russia and the Soviet Union, Chechen nationalist elements eager in reclaiming their independence seized government buildings in Grozny, Chechnya's largest city, and the local television station where their leader, Dzhokhar Dudayev, announced a Chechen rebellion on a live television broadcast.<sup>49</sup> On the 2nd of November 1991 the newly assembled parliament of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria declared its complete independence from Russia and the Soviet Union. After receiving a 90%

---

<sup>46</sup>Petrov, *The Fall of the Soviet Union from the point of view of conceptual history*, p.183

<sup>47</sup>The Soviet of the Republics of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, *Declaration no. 142-N*

<sup>48</sup>Schaefer, *From Gazavat to Jihad*, p. 110

<sup>49</sup>Schaefer, *From Gazavat to Jihad*, p. 114

support in the republics first ever presidential elections Dudayev, a former Soviet Air Force general, was sworn in as the first president at the new parliament's first ever session. The Chechen separatist movement did not sit well with Yeltsin. By signing Soviet Law No.1457-I he had hoped to deconstruct the Soviet Union—not Russia itself. He could not sit idly by as the Chechens were openly defying his power. However, the complexity and delicate nature of the political environment in the Kremlin at that time prohibited Yeltsin from taking assertive action against the separatists. It wasn't until 1994, three years after the establishment of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria and the dissolution of the Soviet Union and a year after Yeltsin had disbanded the Russian parliament, that the Russian government decided to take assertive military action to restore government order in Chechnya. The Russian invasion of Chechnya on the 11th of December 1994 marked the beginning of an era of devastation, terrorism, violence and lawlessness for the people of Chechnya.

### **3.2 The First Chechen War 1994-1996**

The First Chechen War lasted from December of 1994 until August of 1996. The decision to use military force against the Chechens proved to be an unpopular decision amongst the Russian population and even the Russian armed forces themselves. The campaign started with the Russian Air Force indiscriminately bombing both civilian and military targets, including Grozny, the capital and largest city of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria, resulting in high numbers of civilian casualties. The city suffered “the heaviest bombing campaign in Europe since the destruction of Dresden”.<sup>50</sup> The Chechen forces, although greatly outnumbered, were well trained, highly motivated and had the upper hand of being the defensive forces with extensive knowledge of the lay of the land. The Russian forces on the other hand were mostly fresh conscripts, unmotivated and undisciplined with little knowledge or understanding of why they were fighting. The Russian Army met fierce resistance on its way to Grozny. The Chechen forces utilized guerilla tactics and conducted devastating attacks on Russian forces en route to Grozny. The Russian forces captured Grozny after intense urban fighting and heavy casualties on both sides. The Chechen forces abandoned the city when it has mostly been reduced to rubble and retreated to their strongholds in the mountains and countryside. Russian forces advanced into the countryside where intense fighting continued and the bodies, both military and civilian, were piling up. They continued carrying out a heavy bombing campaign on Chechen targets and were slowly wearing the Chechens down.

---

<sup>50</sup> Williams, *The Russo-Chechen War: A threat to Stability in the Middle East and Eurasia*, p. 128

In June of 1995, after the war had been raging for over 10 months, Shamil Basayev along with a number of Chechen troops stormed a hospital in the Russian city of Budyonnovsk where they took over 1500 people hostage. Shamil Basayev was a guerilla tactics expert and a seasoned fighter who had been fighting with Chechen volunteers in the Nagorno-Karabakh and the Abkhaz-Georgian conflicts in the years before the Russian invasion of Chechnya.<sup>51</sup> Basayev's demands were a ceasefire in the war in Chechnya and his and his men's safe return back to Grozny. After a disastrously unsuccessful rescue attempt by Russian security forces Yeltsin finally decided to meet the hostage takers demands.<sup>52</sup> Unfortunately the ceasefire didn't last long and hostilities quickly resumed.

Russia's aggression in Chechnya gained international attention and criticism. In the Muslim world many saw the war as a religious conflict and the Chechen's heroic defense of their home resembled Russia's war in Afghanistan, which had only ended 5 years prior, where Muslim volunteers from all over the world flocked Afghanistan to aid the Afghans. As an effort of turning the tide in the conflict Akhmad Kadyrov, the chief Mufti of Chechnya, declared the Chechen's war with the Russians a jihad—a holy war. Many Muslims heeded Kadyrov's call for jihad and foreign volunteers poured into Chechnya, not only Muslims but also many other groups sympathetic to the Chechen cause. In the springtime of 1996 Chechen forces were conducting progressively successful guerilla raids on Russian targets and even Grozny, were they were able to neutralize Russian positions within the city, capturing prisoners and equipment before leaving the city again.

On the 21st of April 1996 Dzhokhar Dudayev was assassinated by missiles fired from a Russian reconnaissance aircraft which was able to triangulate his position when he was talking on his cellular phone. This was seen by Yeltsin as a huge leap towards ending the war and over the summer Russian forces prepared for one final push against the remaining Chechen strongholds in the mountains. However, on August 6th of 1996 before the Russians managed to initiate their assault, Chechen fighters infiltrated Grozny in an extremely well planned and coordinated attack where they quickly neutralized Russian defensive positions and isolated small pockets of Russian forces throughout the city. Russian forces took heavy casualties and were ultimately unable to relieve the city. Negotiations were resumed and a ceasefire was agreed upon. On the 31st of August 1996 the war ended when both factions signed the Khasavyurt Accord where they mutually agreed on removing their forces from

---

<sup>51</sup> Pokalova, *Chechnya's Terrorist Network*, p. 36

<sup>52</sup> Pokalova, *Chechnya's Terrorist Network*, p. 43



Grozny and Russia agreed on removing all their forces from Chechnya by December 31st of that same year. The war was officially over, at least for now.<sup>53</sup>

### **3.3 The Interwar Years 1996-1999**

Although the Chechens were successful in retaining their independence The Chechen Republic of Ichkeria was a wreck after the war.<sup>54</sup> Government infrastructure was in shambles, crime became rampant and the unemployment became close to 80%.<sup>55</sup> The Chechen guerrillas proved so effective during the war because they fought in small decentralized cells but this became a huge problem for the Chechen government after the war had ended. The leaders of these cells became warlords, each controlling their own strip of land with their very own army. Adding to this problem were the foreign volunteers, the jihadist, who remained in Chechnya after the war and were becoming increasingly powerful and influential in the region. These foreign warlords were backed by transnational groups and were able to pay their fighters a salary, which was highly appealing for the average unemployed Chechen man. This resulted in many Chechens joining training camps run by the jihadist where they trained in guerrilla and terror tactics along with Wahhabism, a radical Islamic doctrine. In 1999 The Chechen Republic of Ichkeria, which had been established as a secular state, was heavily divided between competing power structures and transformed into an Islamic republic run by an Islamic State Council and an Islamic sharia court. This caused many Chechen secular warlords to look to Russia for aid in removing foreign Wahhabist forces from power in the region. This included Akhmed Kadyrov, the former Chief Mufti of Chechnya.<sup>56</sup>

### **3.4 The Second Chechen War 1999-2000**

The Second Chechen War began on August 26<sup>th</sup> of 1999 and lasted until April 30<sup>th</sup> of 2000. Hostilities resumed when radical militants from Chechnya invaded the neighboring Russian region of Dagestan in an attempt of establishing an independent Islamic state of Dagestan. The invading forces were mostly hardline jihadists from Dagestan who had been fighting in Chechnya, but among them were also Chechen fighters and other Muslim foreign volunteers. The leader of the invasion was Shamil Basayev. In the beginning of the war the invading forces were quite successful and managed to secure their foothold in the mountains of

---

<sup>53</sup> Galeotti, *Russia's War in Chechnya*, p.35-48

<sup>54</sup> Williams, *The Russo-Chechen War: A threat to Stability in the Middle East and Eurasia*, p. 132

<sup>55</sup> Schaefer, *From Gazavat to Jihad*, p. 172

<sup>56</sup> Galeotti, *Russia's War in Chechnya*, p.62

Dagestan. Their success was however short lived and by the middle of September the invading forces had been pushed back by Russian forces across the border and into Chechnya. In the period of the 4<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> of September four apartment blocks were bombed across Russia resulting in the death of 367 people.<sup>57</sup> The Russian authorities blamed the Chechen separatists for the bombings although the Chechen leadership strongly denied any involvement. Who the real perpetrators were behind these terror attacks was then, and still is, highly contested and some even believe that they were planned and executed by the Russian government itself.<sup>58</sup>

The bombings gave the Russian government and also the newly appointed Prime Minister and eventual President, Vladimir Putin, a huge boost in public support for another invasion of Chechnya. Putin had a successful career in the KGB and FSB and then working for the presidential administration. He was however relatively unknown to the public and needed “some dramatic opportunity to prove that the Kremlin was now occupied by a determined and powerful leader”.<sup>59</sup> Along with this public support the Russians also had support from within Chechnya; secular forces who opposed the radical Islamization of the region sided with the Russians in hopes of driving the Wahhabist from power.

In October of 1999 the Russian forces commenced their invasion. With the help of valuable intelligence from their Chechen allies, a much larger attacking force and having highly improved their combat operations technique the Russian forces quickly made their way around Chechnya, capturing village after village, despite facing heavy resistance.<sup>60</sup> On December 4<sup>th</sup> Russian forces had besieged the city of Grozny and after an intense bombing campaign they entered and close quarters fighting commenced; room by room, house by house, street by street.

Although the Russian forces greatly outnumbered the Chechens and were better organized and prepared than in 1994 and 1996 they still had a very difficult time gaining control of the city. However, Russian superior fire power, heavy casualties and relentless artillery and air bombardment left the Chechen forces within the city no options but to evacuate. During the night of February 1<sup>st</sup>, in the middle of a blizzard, the remaining Chechen forces, along with civilians and Russian prisoners, made an effort of breaking out of the besieged city. As they tried to make their way out they were ambushed by Russian forces and

---

<sup>57</sup> Tyler, *6 convicted in Russia Bombing That Killed 68*

<sup>58</sup> Evangelista

<sup>59</sup> Galeotti, *Russia's War in Chechnya*, p.54

<sup>60</sup> Grau, *Russian Urban Tactics*, p. 1-3

purposely directed into a minefield where the retreat turned into a massacre.<sup>61</sup> With the majority of Chechen forces dead or having escaped, Russian forces began mopping up the city which was riddled with booby traps. In the beginning of May 2000, after heavy fighting and securing the lowland areas of the region, the Russian government established direct rule of Chechnya. Large scale fighting had mostly ceased and Vladimir Putin appointed Akhmad Kadyrov, whose assistance had proven extremely valuable to the Russian forces during the fighting, as head of the new Chechen pro-Moscow government.<sup>62</sup>

### **3.5 Insurgency Phase 2000-2009**

Although large scale fighting had ceased by the summer of 2000, the hostilities were far from over.<sup>63</sup> Russian forces, along with Chechen forces now aligned with Moscow, conducted mopping operations in the region, finding and neutralizing remaining Chechen rebels, arms caches and hideouts.<sup>64</sup> Some Chechen warlords and fighters who opposed the ever increasing influence of Wahhabist and jihadist elements in the separatists' camp and those who simply saw their resistance in the mountains as a futile one either gave up arms or joined the pro-Moscow contingent.<sup>65</sup>

After losing political power and almost all of their territory in the region, along with a great deal of their manpower and ordnance, the Chechen separatists and their foreign jihadist allies were forced to adapt their strategy to their new position in the conflict. This meant continuing maintaining a guerilla-style insurgency campaign through raids and bombings but also resorting to terror tactics to a greater extent than ever before. Suicide-bombings (which had hitherto not been a part of the separatist repertoire), hostage takings and bombings of both Russian and Chechen military and civilian targets became ever more frequent.

This development in Chechen tactics meant that the Russian military leadership had to reassess their own tactical approach in bringing about the demise of the Chechen threat.<sup>66</sup> This resulted in the Russians implementing a comprehensive counterinsurgency and counterterrorism campaign throughout the region.

The Chechen separatists managed to inflict substantial damage to Russian and Pro-Moscow Chechen targets through their campaign of terror-tactics, despite having significantly

---

<sup>61</sup> Schaefer, *From Gazavat to Jihad*, p. 191

<sup>62</sup> Schaefer, *From Gazavat to Jihad*, p. 189

<sup>63</sup> Galeotti, *Russia's War in Chechnya*, p.63

<sup>64</sup> Galeotti, *Russia's War in Chechnya*, p.60

<sup>65</sup> Schaefer, *From Gazavat to Jihad*, p. 193

<sup>66</sup> Thomas, *Russian Tactical Lessons Learned Fighting Chechen Separatists*, p.732

fewer numbers,. In October of 2002 around 40 Chechen separatists stormed the Dubrovka theatre in Moscow and took over 800 hostages. After a two day siege Russian Special Forces stormed the theatre with devastating results. They managed to neutralize the hostage takers but over 100 hostages also perished in the assault.<sup>67</sup> A similar incident took place in September of 2004 when 32 Chechen separatists stormed a school in the city of Beslan in North Ossetia, taking around 1100 hostages most of who were children. Negotiations led nowhere as the Russian authorities refused to meet the hostage takers demands and after three days Russian Special Forces stormed the school. The hostage takers were neutralized but in the ensuing gun-battle 331 hostages were sadly killed.<sup>68</sup>

Earlier in 2004 Chechen Forces assassinated Akhmad Kadyrov, Russia's number one ally in the region, who had been sworn in as the president of Chechnya a year earlier.<sup>69</sup> The Russian counterinsurgency and counterterrorism campaign, with the assistance of pro-Russian Chechen security forces, had severely limited the separatists' scope for operating and maintaining their campaign in the region.<sup>70</sup> The Russian high-value target campaign started taking its toll on the separatist movement as the leadership started systematically dying off, one by one. Demoralized, dispersed and heavily weakened by internal schism the Chechen separatist movement had been reduced to a mere shadow of its former self.<sup>71</sup>

In an effort to unite the nationalistic elements and jihadist elements throughout the North Caucasus, Dokka Umarov the leader of the surviving Chechen separatists, established the Caucasus Emirate in the fall of 2007. The Caucasus Emirate's activity in Chechnya has always been minimal, they were however more active in Chechnya's neighboring regions, and almost entirely limited to terrorist attacks such as suicide-bombings.<sup>72</sup> In 2007 Vladimir Putin installed Ramzan Kadyrov, Akhmad Kadyrov's son, as President of Chechnya. He quickly asserted his dominant and aggressive stance against any Chechen separatist elements and has been vital to the Russian strategy of re-stabilizing the region, establishing government control and then handing the reins to a legitimate Chechen leadership.<sup>73 74</sup> In 2009 the Russian government declared its counterterrorist operation in Chechnya to be over and effectively

---

<sup>67</sup> Pokalova, *Chechnya's Terrorist Network* p. 128

<sup>68</sup> Pokalova, *Chechnya's Terrorist Network* p. 134

<sup>69</sup> Galeotti, *Russia's War in Chechnya*, p.63

<sup>70</sup> Galeotti, *Russia's War in Chechnya*, p.79

<sup>71</sup> Galeotti, *Russia's War in Chechnya*, p.79

<sup>72</sup> Pokalova, *Chechnya's Terrorist Network* p. 164

<sup>73</sup> Pokalova, *Chechnya's Terrorist Network* p. 169

<sup>74</sup> Schaefer, *From Gazavat to Jihad*, p. 252-253

their victory in the war against Chechen separatism.<sup>75</sup> Since then there have been very few terrorist attacks in Chechnya and the Chechen people have experienced relative stability.<sup>76</sup>

---

<sup>75</sup> Pokalova, *Chechnya's Terrorist Network* p. 169

<sup>76</sup> Pokalova, *Chechnya's Terrorist Network* p. 169

## 4 The Evolution of Russian Counterinsurgency Strategy

### 4.1 Russian Strategic and Tactical Shortcomings

The Chechen separatist movement under Dzhokhar Dudayev's leadership began their push for independence amidst the political chaos that erupted during Gorbachev's and Yeltsin's struggle for power in the Kremlin.<sup>77</sup> It wasn't until the smoke had settled in the Kremlin that Yeltsin could start attending to the matters considering the Chechen separatists. By that time the Chechen separatist movement had already established its control of the region and Yeltsin's options for regaining control were limited. Prior to the invasion in December 1994 Yeltsin's attempts to regaining control over the region were limited to removing Dudayev from power by backing anyone he thought could muster enough support in the region to oppose and eventually topple Dudayev.<sup>78</sup> Yeltsin and his ministers knew that the political situation in Chechnya was unstable and thought that toppling Dudayev would simply be a matter of time.<sup>79</sup> These attempts however failed again and again and in the autumn of 1994 the Chechen independence movement had gained such momentum that a political solution ending with Chechnya returning to the fold was not a very probable one. When that became clear to Yeltsin and his minister the decision to invade and restore constitutional order in the region, although never a desirable option to Yeltsin, became ever more inevitable.<sup>80</sup>

The Russian forces that rolled into Chechnya on the 11<sup>th</sup> of December in 1994 were not destined for failure simply due to Chechen superior strategic or tactical capabilities. Contributing heavily to their eventual failure was the intricate interplay of their very own strategy, heavily limited by their tactical shortcomings along with the inadequate preparation and organization of the forces themselves.<sup>81</sup> Valuable lessons learned in past conflicts were ignored or simply forgotten. The Russian military leadership was grossly overconfident and failed to anticipate the asymmetric nature of the conflict ahead. Ill-prepared and undertrained Russian forces were unable to effectively adapt to and counter the Chechen guerrilla-style of fighting.

The First Chechen War, which took place from 1994 until 1996, was the first major conflict involving the newly established Russian Federation after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union conflicts broke out in several

---

<sup>77</sup> Schaefer, *From Gazavat to Jihad*, p. 108-113

<sup>78</sup> Schaefer, *From Gazavat to Jihad*, p. 121

<sup>79</sup> Schaefer, *From Gazavat to Jihad*, p. 121

<sup>80</sup> Schaefer, *From Gazavat to Jihad*, p. 122

<sup>81</sup> Grau, *Russian Urban Tactics*, p. 1-3

former Soviet states and Russian forces were indeed involved in those conflicts but that involvement was minor and rarely were Russian forces directly involved in combat operations. Prior to the First Chechen War the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, which lasted from 1979 until 1989, was the last major conflict involving Russia (the Soviet Union). Soviet forces were unable to quell the Afghan insurgency due to several reasons and were eventually forced to withdraw from the country after roughly 9 years of fighting.<sup>82</sup> One reason was that the Soviet forces had no comprehensive counterinsurgency doctrine to rely on. Throughout the conflict they were however in some cases able to adapt to the mujahedeen's way of fighting but this was mostly limited to Special Forces who were very limited in manpower and those tactical adaptations that regular forces were able to adopt were simply not comprehensive enough.<sup>83</sup> The Soviet Army leadership was unsuccessful in developing and applying an effective counterinsurgency doctrine throughout the conflict and there was little incentive to do so after the conflict had ended.<sup>84</sup> The Soviet army learned a very hard but valuable lesson in Afghanistan that unfortunately got forgotten over time. This meant that when Russian forces found themselves in similar situations during the conflict in Chechnya there was no applicable doctrine available to the military leadership.<sup>85</sup>

Another very important knowledge that seemed to have gotten forgotten was that of urban warfare. During the Second World War the Soviet army became experts in urban warfare and in the years following the war Soviet army analysts carefully studied the tactics of urban fighting so they could be correctly applied if needed again.<sup>86</sup> However as time went on this knowledge got forgotten and deemed unimportant by army officials. Therefore when hostilities broke out in 1994 regular Russian forces had received severely limited, if any, training in urban tactics. An exception was the highly trained Russian Special Forces who had substantial knowledge in urban tactics but their manpower was limited and they were therefore unable to make a significant difference in the outcome of the conflict.<sup>87</sup>

---

<sup>82</sup> Grau, *The Bear Went over the Mountain: Soviet Combat Tactics in Afghanistan*, p.xi

<sup>83</sup> Smith, *Lessons learned or mistakes repeated?* p.5

<sup>84</sup> Grau, *The Bear Went over the Mountain: Soviet Combat Tactics in Afghanistan* p.75-76

<sup>85</sup> Smith, *Lessons learned or mistakes repeated?* p.6

<sup>86</sup> Oliker, *Russia's Chechen Wars 1994-2000* p.6

<sup>87</sup> Oliker, *Russia's Chechen Wars 1994-2000* p.8

## 4.2 Russian Counterinsurgency Strategy in the First Chechen War 1994-1996

General Pavel Grachev, the Russian Minister of Defense in 1994, expected minimal resistance and anticipated that capturing Grozny would take approximately eight days.<sup>88</sup> The Russian military leadership believed Russian superior man- and firepower would exhaust and demoralize the Chechen forces and eventually force them to surrender. This would however not be the case. This false confidence resulted in failing to thoroughly plan and carry out an effective strategy for the invasion and subsequent fighting. Russian forces suffered heavily due to poor planning. They were also inadequately geared, organized and trained. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union the Russian army was merely a shadow of what the Soviet army had been. Severely underfunded and undermanned the army was unable to modernize or reform. When hostilities broke out in December of 1994 the Russian Army relied on out-dated equipment and an out-dated strategic doctrine, inherited from the Red Army which was designed to fight “mechanized mass wars on the plains of Europe or China.”<sup>89</sup> The bulk of the Russian forces were ill-equipped, inexperienced and unmotivated conscripts who were highly undertrained.<sup>90</sup>

The initial Russian strategy in Chechnya was a coercive one. It was to overwhelm the Chechens and force their compliance through fear by an awesome show of force with greatly superior fire- and manpower. Preventing them from applying a more tactically eligible strategy was both the Russian’s forces aforesaid shortcomings and, frankly, the political will to do so. Chechnya was to be made an example of, victory was to be claimed soon without any unnecessary prolonging of the conflict.<sup>91</sup> The Russians thought that by indiscriminately bombing and attacking cities and towns with huge subsequent casualties, both military and civilian, the Chechen forces would give in and surrender to stop the casualties from piling up.<sup>92</sup> It is true that this strategy can in fact work up to a certain degree. Russian forces were slowly but surely gaining ground and in February of 1995 Grozny had been overrun. This coercive strategy ended up creating more problems for the Russians than it was supposed to solve. Growing casualties only motivated the Chechens to fight harder and helped them to gather increasing support, both national and international.<sup>93</sup> It also made the Russian forces extremely vulnerable in situations where they could not utilize their true strengths, which

---

<sup>88</sup> Oliker, *Russia’s Chechen Wars 1994-2000* p.9

<sup>89</sup> Galeotti, *Russia’s War in Chechnya*, p.24

<sup>90</sup> Small Wars Journal, *Winning the Battle, Losing the War*

<sup>91</sup> Galeotti, *Russia’s War in Chechnya*, p.31

<sup>92</sup> Schaefer, *From Gazavat to Jihad*, p. 130

<sup>93</sup> Schaefer, *From Gazavat to Jihad*, p. 130



were their superior fire- and manpower. Russian forces were tactically outmatched by the Chechen fighters in ambushes and guerrilla-raids, in urban fighting and other close-quarter fighting and as a consequence regularly suffered heavy casualties in these scenarios. The ever increasing casualties, both Russian and Chechen, along with the brutal Russian bombing campaign brought national and international attention to the conflict and Yeltsin started feeling the pressure.<sup>94</sup> The hostage taking in Budyonnovsk hospital in June of 1995 and the following disastrous rescue attempts were the final straw, the Russian strategy had to be improved.<sup>95</sup>

In the autumn of 1995 The Russians changed their strategic approach to something that resembled a possibly successful counterinsurgency strategy, where the emphasis was put on winning the hearts and minds of the Chechen populace.<sup>96</sup> The new strategy resembled what is known as “clear, hold and build” where government forces clear areas of insurgents’ control, stay there and keep it clear and then begin rebuilding and establishing government control of the area.<sup>97</sup> The government’s forces mission is to gain the populations trust by providing them with safety and security and showing them that the government is a better candidate than the insurgents. If the population’s trust has been gained, the government can deny the insurgents a safe haven and the populations’ support. The Russians figured this out and the indiscriminate bombing stopped and a pro-Russian Chechen administration was brought into areas of Russian control to provide some sort of government control and basic services and, most important of all, security.

By doing this the Russians wanted to show the Chechen populace that they and the pro-Russian Chechen administration could provide for their basic needs and keep them safe and secure. If they would succeed in doing that, the population could rather support the Russian forces and not the separatist.<sup>98</sup> However, this newly appointed strategy did not produce its intended results as both the pro-Russian Chechen administration and the Russian forces failed to properly provide security and safety to the population. Firstly, the leaders of the pro-Russian Chechen administration were not respected by the local population and were therefore unable to gain their full trust. Secondly, as has been previously stated, the Russian forces were undertrained and undisciplined and regularly treated the Chechen population

---

<sup>94</sup> Schaefer, *From Gazavat to Jihad*, p. 131

<sup>95</sup> Schaefer, *From Gazavat to Jihad*, p. 134

<sup>96</sup> Schaefer, *From Gazavat to Jihad*, p. 134

<sup>97</sup> Fair, “*Clear Build, Hold, Transfer*”: *Can Obama’s Afghan Strategy Work?* p.117

<sup>98</sup> Schaefer, *From Gazavat to Jihad*, p. 135

poorly and disrespectfully resulting in the local population not deeming the Russian forces properly qualified to provide them with safety and security.<sup>99</sup> A major setback was also the divide between institutions and officers over which aims and tactics were best suited in the fight.<sup>100</sup>

The Russian response to the hostage crisis and following siege of the village of Pervomayskoye in January of 1996 decimated the Russian chance of being seen as a legitimate provider of safety and security among the Chechen populace.<sup>101</sup> Chechen separatists had raided a Russian military airfield in Dagestan and retreated to the village of Kizlyar where they took hostages at the local hospital. A few days of negotiations ended with the Russians allowing the Chechens a safe-passage back into Chechnya where they would then in return release the hostages. However, Russian forces ambushed the convoy when they were heading back into Chechnya and the Chechens, along with the hostages, were forced to seek cover in the village of Pervomayskoye. In the ensuing siege, which ended with the complete destruction of the village by Russian tanks and artillery, Chechen forces were eventually able to break through Russian lines with some of the hostages. Both Chechen and Russian casualties were high along with the civilian casualties, the former residents of the village and the hostages. The Russians had stated, falsely, that the Chechen fighters had executed all the hostages and they were the only ones left in the village.<sup>102</sup> After the fighting had ceased Russian authorities tried to control and cover up any information released about the destruction and devastation delivered by their forces but eventually failed. Russian news reporters that had witnessed the ordeal managed to interview some of the hostages who appeared in Russian news outlets condemning the Russian response and stating that the Chechens, their own hostage takers, had in fact saved them from certain death at the hands of the Russian artillery.<sup>103</sup> The siege at Pervomayskoye clearly showed the Russian military's leadership inability to implement a comprehensive and effective counterinsurgency strategy.

When conducting counterinsurgency strategies it is imperative that the government's way of fighting and dealing with the insurgents is neither disproportional nor illegal.<sup>104</sup> A disproportional military response with consequent civilian casualties and then attempting, and failing to, manipulate or cover up news or information produced by media outlets will only do

---

<sup>99</sup> Schaefer, *From Gazavat to Jihad*, p. 135

<sup>100</sup> Galeotti, *Russia's War in Chechnya*, p.43

<sup>101</sup> Schaefer, *From Gazavat to Jihad*, p. 139

<sup>102</sup> Galeotti, *Russia's War in Chechnya*, p.42

<sup>103</sup> Galeotti, *Russia's War in Chechnya*, p.42

<sup>104</sup> Galeotti, *Russia's War in Chechnya*, p.42

the government harm and work in the insurgents favor. This was precisely the case in 1996 and following increasing media and public outrage Russian politicians started to publicly condemn the war and putting pressure on Yeltsin to bring an end to the hostilities. Yeltsin did not give into the pressure until he got an opportunity to claim some sort of victory which came to him with the assassination of Dudayev on the 21<sup>st</sup> of April 1996. Striking at the insurgency's leadership can be very effective and is important in counterinsurgency strategy, however for that to be significantly likelier to be effective to the strategy it requires other already implemented and effective counterinsurgency approaches which were non-existent in Russia's strategy in Chechnya.<sup>105</sup> At the end of the conflict on the 31<sup>st</sup> of August 1996 the Russian counterinsurgency strategy had not gone through any more significant developments. However, unlike in prior conflicts, the hard lessons learned in almost two years of brutal fighting would not be forgotten when Russian forces invaded Chechnya again three years later.<sup>106</sup>

### **4.3 Russian Counterinsurgency Strategy in the Second Chechen War 1994-1996**

Hostilities resumed in August of 1999 following the Chechen jihadist's invasion of Dagestan and a series of bombings of apartment buildings throughout Russia by, allegedly, Chechen terrorists. The fact is that the Russian leadership had been planning an invasion of Chechnya since March 1999.<sup>107</sup> The Russian tactical approach had been revised and improved and Russian forces situated in the North Caucasus had been training rigorously for months prior to the conflict in large scale counterinsurgency operations.<sup>108</sup> Force coordination and cooperation between different branches was highly improved. One of the key improvements that the Russian leadership made was focusing on winning the "war of information." The improved Russian counterinsurgency was an "enemy-centric" approach where the Russians emphasized the use of military force to defeat the insurgents, rather than winning the hearts and minds of the Chechen population.

In the First Chechen War the Chechen separatist brilliantly utilized the media and the constant stream of negative news coming from Chechnya that ultimately broke the Russian national will, is considered by many Russian military officials to have heavily contributed to the eventual Russian defeat.<sup>109</sup> Another very significant improvement was the Russian

---

<sup>105</sup> Schaefer, *From Gazavat to Jihad*, p. 217

<sup>106</sup> Olikier, *Russia's Chechen Wars 1994-2000* p.33

<sup>107</sup> Schaefer, *From Gazavat to Jihad*, p. 177

<sup>108</sup> Galeotti, *Russia's War in Chechnya*, p.54

<sup>109</sup> Olikier, *Russia's Chechen Wars 1994-2000* p.34

emphasis of gathering and effectively utilizing intelligence. One of the major benefits of having pro-Russian Chechen forces fighting on their side was the knowledge and information that they gave the Russian forces on the local population and the lay of the land.<sup>110</sup> This resulted in the Russian forces being able to circumvent Chechen positions and more easily capturing strategically important terrain without sustaining heavy casualties.<sup>111</sup> This was in stark contrast of the First Chechen War where first units to enter Grozny didn't even have maps of the city.<sup>112</sup>

Not only had improvements been made on the tactical level but also had the Russians constructed a comprehensive multi-institutional counterinsurgency strategy.<sup>113</sup> The new Russian counterinsurgency strategy was shaped to the Russian forces' strengths as despite improvements on the tactical level the Russian forces were still suffering from tactical inabilities and shortcoming. However, in 1999 the Russian leadership was highly aware of what these shortcomings were and this new counterinsurgency strategy was created with that in mind. This made the Russian counterinsurgency strategy relatively different in some ways from other Western approaches. In his book, *The Insurgency in Chechnya and the North Caucasus*, Robert Schaefer offers a comprehensive analysis of the history and strategies of the Russian-Chechen conflict. In it he details the six major aspects of the Russian counterinsurgency strategy which was developed and applied in The Second Chechen War and onwards into the 2000s.<sup>114</sup> These are:

1. Undermining the Chechen government's leadership in the region and weakening their ability to establish an effective society. The Russians wanted to keep instability and disruption in Chechnya to reduce solidarity among the population. This was done by implementing economic measures aimed at keeping the Chechen economy weak and an aggressive information war where the Russians utilized the discord between the jihadists and the nationalistic Chechens who opposed them. This would make it easier for the Russians to convince the Chechen population that the Russian government was a more viable option for maintaining an effective and stable administration of the region.

2. An information campaign was also aimed at the Russian population to maintain the national support for the war. The Russian leadership used the invasion of Dagestan and the

---

<sup>110</sup> Schaefer, *From Gazavat to Jihad*, p. 187

<sup>111</sup> Schaefer, *From Gazavat to Jihad*, p.187

<sup>112</sup> Lieven, *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power* p. 110

<sup>113</sup> Schaefer, *From Gazavat to Jihad*, p. 199

<sup>114</sup> Schaefer, *From Gazavat to Jihad*, p. 199

apartment bombings as a tool to frame the war as one of national survival. The First Chechen War had been hugely unpopular among the Russian population and the Russian leadership did not want to repeat the same failures. They heavily emphasized legitimizing their actions and at the same time delegitimizing the Chechen actions. The Chechen separatist movement was framed as a movement of international terrorists and the Russian operations in the region as strict counterterrorist operations. The Russian leadership did not want to lose the peoples support like in 1996, so they heavily emphasized maintaining the national will and it became one of their top priorities.

3. Disrupting the Chechen external support by obstructing the movement of ordnance, manpower and money into the region. The Russians also wanted to limit the Chechens ability to utilize international aid groups or the press to make their voices heard and garner sympathy and support for their cause. In the interwar period from 1996-1999 kidnappings for ransom was an everyday occurrence in Chechnya. In the First Chechen War international aid groups regularly reported to the press on Russian human rights violations but in the interwar period these aid workers were regularly targeted for kidnappings which made these groups eventually stop working in the region. When hostilities resumed in 1999 Russian forces forbid these international press and aid groups of venturing into Chechnya on the grounds that it was not safe for them there. In this way the Russian leadership utilized to their advantage the previous lawlessness in the region and as a consequence international aid groups and journalists had a much limited presence in the 1999 than they had had in the First Chechen War.

4. Improved fighting tactics, equipment, training and coordination in direct military actions made the Russian forces ability to fight and defeat the Chechens to a greater extent than before. The Russian forces still relied on their superior firepower as they had done before and heavily bombarded Chechen targets. The use of artillery and tanks was however much better coordinated and effective than it had previously been.

5. Sever the ties to the international community that the Chechens had made during the First Chechen war. The Russian leadership had been seeking to broaden their presence in the geopolitical sphere, increase trade and better their relationships to other countries. As Russia became more influential they had an easier time acquiring support for their operations in Chechnya from the international sphere. Russia's power as the energy provider for many countries in the Middle East has made it impossible for those countries to criticize Russia's policies at the risk of having their energy shut off or severely limited. After 9/11 and Beslan and the Dubrovka theatre terrorist attacks Russia received sympathy, support and public

validation from both Europe and the US for their operations in Chechnya to a greater extent than before. Their operations in Chechnya were framed as strict counterterrorist operations against international terrorist and as the US and its allies initiated their War on Terror in the early 2000's the Chechen hope of receiving support or sympathy from legitimate international state or non-state actors was next to nil.

6. Gaining support of the local population, winning their hearts and minds, was not a priority to the Russian leadership at the start of the conflict in 1999. Establishing and providing safety and security of the local population is today considered a crucial aspect of a successful counterinsurgency strategy. It takes expensive economic measures and yields slow returns which resulted in it not being a top priority for the Russian leadership to begin with. In 1999 the Russian method was one of "divide and rule" where they gave power to different groups loyal to them who were able to offer the Chechen population, which was already heavily divided, an alternative ideology and compete with the radical Islamists for their support. The Russian-backed groups, most notably the ones led by Akhmad Kadyrov, were tasked with providing security to the Chechen population and gaining support for the Russians. They had mixed results to begin with as they were essentially nothing else than private militias but they represented the start of the so-called "Chechenization" phase which refers to the Russian policy of establishing control, authority and government institutions in the region with the help of pro-Russian Chechens and eventually hand them the control. Although winning the Chechen heart and minds was not a top priority in the beginning, it progressively became a vital part of the Russian counterinsurgency campaign following the end of The Second Chechen War.

After the Russian government established direct rule over Chechnya in May of 2000 and large scale fighting ceased the conflict was brought into a new phase where terror tactics became an ever prevalent modus operandi of the Chechen insurgents. As the Russian forces grip on the insurgents continued to tighten and their influence in the region grew the Chechen separatists were forced to resort to more drastic and desperate measures.<sup>115</sup> Hostage taking, bombings and suicide-attacks became ever more frequent, even in parts of Russia outside Chechnya. Up until 2005 this terror campaign became the main aspect of the Chechen separatist movement. As a result the Russian leadership supplemented their counterinsurgency strategy with the addition of a counterterrorism campaign designed to prevent terrorist attacks,

---

<sup>115</sup> Schaefer, *From Gazavat to Jihad*, p. 211

aimed at eroding the Russian national will, taking place on Russian soil.<sup>116</sup> This included an intense information operation campaign, a strict policy of not negotiating with terrorists and high-value target campaign.<sup>117</sup>

#### 4.3.1 Counterterrorism element

Putin enforced a strict censorship policy on journalists, news outlets and political critics reporting on the situation in Chechnya. Entry for journalist into Chechnya is heavily restricted and news coverage in Russia about the situation in Chechnya is under strict control.<sup>118</sup> This control of the media gave the Russian government the chance to manage incidents like the hostage crisis at Beslan, to hinder public chaos and stopping the terrorists from potentially spreading their message. This also made it possible for the Russian government to frame the conflict in every way they deemed fit. After the hostage crisis at Beslan the Russian press openly broadcasted that the 10 out of the 20 hostage takers had been from Arab countries, when in fact they had all been native Chechens apart from two of them.<sup>119</sup> It also made it possible for them to put the blame entirely on the terrorists when incidents like the hostage crisis at Beslan went out of hand.<sup>120</sup> The Chechen separatists were never referred to as Chechen separatists in the media or in government statements, but always as foreign terrorists and their separatist movement as an international terrorist organization. The Russian government went on what was essentially a huge public relations campaign at the Russian population, highlighting Chechens, especially pro-Russian Chechens like the Kadyrovs, as heroes and defenders of the motherland against foreign invaders. This indicated to the Russian public that: a) The Chechens were no longer the problem and b) Chechnya is an integral part of Russia.<sup>121</sup>

Vladimir Putin's unflinching stance on refusing to negotiate with terrorists proved to be a huge blow to the Chechen terror campaign.<sup>122</sup> The Chechens had hoped to gain an advantage in the conflict by returning to large scale hostage takings like they had previously done. On the contrary, the hostage taking at Beslan turned out to be a disaster for the Chechens when Putin refused to negotiate with them even though hundreds of lives of innocent children were at stake. Putin's policy effectively removed the tool of hostage taking

---

<sup>116</sup> Schaefer, *From Gazavat to Jihad*, p. 213

<sup>117</sup> Schaefer, *From Gazavat to Jihad*, p. 215-221

<sup>118</sup> Schaefer, *From Gazavat to Jihad*, p. 221

<sup>119</sup> Schaefer, *From Gazavat to Jihad*, p. 230

<sup>120</sup> Schaefer, *From Gazavat to Jihad*, p.230

<sup>121</sup> Schaefer, *From Gazavat to Jihad*, p. 224

<sup>122</sup> Pokalova, *Chechnya's Terrorist Network* p. 176

from the Chechen repertoire and demonstrated his aggressive and unrelenting stance against Chechen terrorism.<sup>123</sup> To gain the upper hand by striking at the terrorists pre-emptively Russian Special Forces targeted the Chechen leadership in a ruthless high-value target campaign and by 2006 the majority of the most notorious Chechen commanders had been killed, including Shamil Basayev.<sup>124</sup>

The Russian government did not make any significant developments in their counterinsurgency strategy in Chechnya prior to April of 2009 when they declared their counterterrorism operations in the region to be over. Increasing stability in the region promoted the supporting and empowering of local Chechen elements by largely transferring the responsibility of maintaining civil security to them.

---

<sup>123</sup> Schaefer, *From Gazavat to Jihad*, p. 216

<sup>124</sup> Schaefer, *From Gazavat to Jihad*, p. 218



## 5 Findings

After reviewing the political and military history of the Chechen conflict along with analyzing the Russian counterinsurgency strategy during the conflict, one can quite confidently state that the improvements made to the Russian counterinsurgency strategy before and during the Second Chechen War were crucial to their eventual success.

The initial Russian defeat in the First Chechen War was a consequence of the turmoil in Russian politics following the collapse of the Soviet Union. This resulted in the army neither being adequately fitted nor trained for the campaign ahead.

The defeat proved to be a very valuable lesson in military learning that the Russian leadership used to improve both their strategic and tactical approach in coming conflicts. The Russian military leadership was able to design a relatively successful strategy based on their strengths and weaknesses. The improved Russian counterinsurgency strategy was however by no means perfect, it even initially ignored winning the hearts and minds of the local population which most Western counterinsurgency experts deem extremely important.

The ruthless enemy-centric Russian strategy or the absolute zero-tolerance stance of Vladimir Putin would hardly be considered to be an example of the ideal counterinsurgency strategy but in the case of Russia and its conflict with the Chechen separatist it seemed to have led them to relative success. The improved Russian strategy however implemented approaches considered very important by counterinsurgency strategist. The use of intelligence, which David Kilcullen stated was vital in any counterinsurgency strategy, was highly emphasized by the Russian leadership. .

## Bibliography

- Byman, Daniel. *“Deadly Connections: State that Sponsor Terrorism.”* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005
- Fair, C. Christine. ““Clear, Build, Hold, Transfer”. Can Obama’s Afghan Strategy Work? *Asian Affairs* 37, no.3 (2010)
- Galeotti, Mark. *Russia’s Wars in Chechnya 1994-2009.* New York: Osprey Publishing, 2014
- Grau, Lester W. “Russian Urban Tactics: Lessons from the Battle for Grozny.” *National Defence University Strategic Forum* 38.
- Grau, Lester W. *The Bear Went Over the Mountain: Soviet Combat Tactics in Afghanistan.* Washington D.C.: National Defence University Press, 1996
- Hoffman, Bruce. *Inside Terrorism.* New York: Columbia University Press, 2006.
- Kilcullen, David J. “*Three Pillars of Counterinsurgency*” Remarks delivered at the U.S. Government Counterinsurgency Conference, Washington D.C., 28. September 2006
- Kydd, Andrew H. and Barbara Walter. “The Strategies of Terrorism” *International Security* 31, no.1 (2006)
- Oliker, Olga. *Russia’s Chechen Wars 1994-2000: Lessons from Urban Combat.* Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2001
- Pokalova, Elena. *Chechnya’s Terrorist Network: The Evolution of Terrorism in Russia’s North Caucasus.* Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2015
- Schaefer, Robert W. *The Insurgency in Chechnya and the North Caucasus: From Gazavat to Jihad.* Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2011
- Smith, Shane A. “Lessons Learned or Mistakes Repeated?: A Study of Soviet Performance in Afghanistan versus Russian Performance in the Chechen Wars” *The Culture & Conflict Review* 2, no.1 (January 2008)
- Timothy, Thomas L. “Russian Tactical Lessons Learned Fighting Chechen Separatists” *Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 18, no.4 (2005)
- Tyler, Patrick E. “6 Convicted in Russia Bombing That Killed 68.” *The New York Times*, March 20, 2001 <https://www.nytimes.com/2001/03/20/world/6-convicted-in-russia-bombing-that-killed-68.html>
- U.S. Government Interagency Counterinsurgency Initiative. *U.S. Government Counterinsurgency Guide.* Bureau of Political Military Affairs: 2009

Williams, Brian Glyn. "The Russo-Chechen War: A Threat To Stability in the Middle East and Eurasia?". *Middle East Policy* 7, no.1 (2001)

Williams, Paul D. *Security Studies: An Introduction*. New York: Routledge, 2013

Woodworth, Paddy. "Why Do They Kill? The Basque Conflict in Spain." *World Policy Journal* 18, no. 1 (2001): 1-12.