Collective Political Violence in the North Caucasus: Chechen Conflict and Insurgency Analysis

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Abstract

This Bachelor thesis is a study of collective political violence in the context of the Chechen conflict which continues to this present day. The information gathered and analysed as well as the frameworks used in the analysis are taken from numerous academic texts written on the subjects of Chechnya, Terrorism and theories on conflict and conflict resolution.

The Chechen conflict is a decade long intra-state conflict which has its roots in a separatist movement for secession following the breakup of the Soviet Union. The dynamics of the conflict has evolved throughout the years, maintaining many of its fundamental elements whilst at the same time transforming as new actors and dimensions emerge.

Following an abductive approach, the analytical frameworks of John Burton and Ted Gurr as well as a theoretical perspective derived from Bruce Hoffman’s understanding of terrorism, have been used to recontextualise to information gathered through the selected academic texts relevant to the conflict. The aim of this recontextualisation is to attempt to identify hidden mechanisms that could be responsible for the occurrence of collective political violence in the context of Chechnya.

Numerous deprivations of the Chechen people’s basic human needs can potentially lead to frustration being perceived through a sense of shared group interest identity. Elites can then use this identity to mobilize the discontented masses in order to obtain political power for themselves whilst achieving the goals of the group they claim to represent. Russia’s Counterterrorism strategy does not seek to address these grievances and therefore violence is likely to continue to occur.

Key words: Chechnya; Basic Needs; Relative Deprivation; Terrorism; Identity; Political Violence; Provention
Table of contents

1. Introduction ........................................................................................................................................ 1
   1.1 Problem Formulation.................................................................................................................... 1
   1.2 Previous Research ........................................................................................................................ 4
   1.3 Research Aim.................................................................................................................................. 5
   1.4 Relevance....................................................................................................................................... 5
   1.5 Research questions........................................................................................................................ 6
   1.6 Theory and Method ........................................................................................................................ 6
   1.7 Disposition ..................................................................................................................................... 7
   1.8 Limitation....................................................................................................................................... 7
   1.9 Delimitations .................................................................................................................................. 8

2. Theoretical Approach and Analytical Frameworks ........................................................................... 9
   2.1 Overview of theoretical approach.................................................................................................... 9
   2.2 Terrorism ...................................................................................................................................... 10
      2.2.1 Ethno-nationalist/separatist terrorism ................................................................................... 11
      2.2.2 Religious terrorism .................................................................................................................. 12
      2.2.3 Characteristics and motivations of a terrorist.......................................................................... 13
      2.2.4 Suicide Terrorism .................................................................................................................... 14
      2.2.5 Analytical framework – collective violence from a political perspective........................... 16
   2.3 Towards a holistic approach to understanding collective political violence .............................. 17
      2.3.1 Politicisation of group interest identity .................................................................................... 18
      2.3.2 Group interest instrumentalisation of politics ......................................................................... 19
      2.3.3 Intersection between politicised violence and socio-psychological frameworks .............. 19
      2.3.4 Relative deprivation intersects with basic needs theory and prevention............................... 20
   2.4 Analytical frameworks – collective violence from a socio-psychological perspective............. 20
      2.4.1 Relative deprivation ................................................................................................................. 21
      2.4.2 Basic needs ............................................................................................................................... 22

3. Methodology ..................................................................................................................................... 24
   3.1 Methodological tools ....................................................................................................................... 24
   3.2 Sources ......................................................................................................................................... 25

4. Contextualisation ............................................................................................................................... 28
   4.1 Historical and Contemporary Background ..................................................................................... 28
      4.1.1 Historical grievances: Genocide, independence and the first Russo-Chechen war .............. 28
      4.1.2 Descent into chaos: Interim period and second Russo-Chechen war ................................. 31
      4.1.3 Stabilisation under Kadyrov: Economic growth amid human rights abuses ................... 32

5. Findings ............................................................................................................................................ 35
   5.1 Group interest identity – values and needs ...................................................................................... 35
   5.2 Changes in economic and political abilities – interests ................................................................ 37
   5.3 Growth in religious influence ........................................................................................................ 38
   5.4 Transition from separatist rebels to terrorist group ....................................................................... 38
   5.5 2010 Moscow suicide bombings ................................................................................................ 42
      5.5.1 Perpetrators .............................................................................................................................. 43
   5.6 Russian counterterrorism strategy and its effects ......................................................................... 44
      5.6.1 Counterterrorism strategy past and present ........................................................................... 44
      5.6.2 Effect on the Chechen people and the insurgency ................................................................. 46
6. Analysis..................................................................................................................49
6.1 Intra-state conflict - a state of negative peace.........................................................49
6.2 Acts of terrorism – continued violence through insurgency....................................51
6.3 Chechenization—success or failure?.......................................................................53
7. Conclusion.................................................................................................................56
7.1 Concluding thoughts...............................................................................................56

References..................................................................................................................59
Books.............................................................................................................................59
Electronic sources........................................................................................................59

Appendix I....................................................................................................................62
Map of Chechnya...........................................................................................................62
List of Abbreviations

UNDP  United Nations Development Program
FBI   Federal Bureau of Investigation
BBC   British Broadcasting Corporation
ASSR  Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic
RSFSR Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic
USSR  Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
IMF   International Monetary Fund
FSB   Russian Federal Security Service
GRU   Glavnoye Razvedyvatel'noye Upravleniye (Foreign Military Intelligence)
IDP   Internally Displaced Person
1. Introduction

1.1 Problem Formulation

On March the 29th 2010, during the morning rush hour, two suicide bombers blew themselves up inside Moscow’s metro system killing 39 people and injuring more than 60 others. Within hours government officials had condemned the attacks, understood to be those of a terrorist network operating in the troubled North Caucasus region. Rhetoric such as that from the Russian president Dmitry Medvedev who stated “we will continue the fight against terrorism unswervingly and to the end” and the Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin who promised that “the terrorists will be destroyed” (BBC, 2010) kept in line with Russia’s historically hard-line approach to terrorism and its perpetrators. This counter terrorism strategy is based primarily on a military solution, that is, the elimination through violent force of the terrorist network and its members. As part of this strategy, the Russian government has given free rein and immense public funding to the most powerful pro-Moscow warlord in Chechnya, Ramzan Kadyrov, in an attempt to quell any separatist movement within the region. However, despite Kadyrov’s strangle hold on the Chechen republic, achieved through major human rights violations (Hughes, 2007), there still exists a terrorist network capable and willing to plan and execute acts of mass murder.

The North Caucasus region has a long history of conflict; however the major escalation in violence has occurred since the Chechen republics declaration of independence in 1991 following the breakup of the former Soviet Union; a declaration which the Russian government subsequently rejected. Between then and the present day, there have been two major wars, both including allegations of war crimes and human rights violations against each side. The period between these conflicts has seen sporadic raids by the Russian military on villages in the region, as well as terrorist attacks carried out throughout Russia, both in small border towns close to the Chechen border and in Russia’s capital itself. Both conflicts have had devastating effects, not least in the loss of life with tens of thousands killed (mostly civilians) on both sides (Hughes, 2007), but also on Chechnya’s infrastructure resulting in extremely low levels of social and economic development (Hughes, 2007). According to the 2010 UN national human development report in the Russian Federation, the Chechen republic scored a human development index (HDI) of only .767, suffering from high levels of both infant mortality and youth unemployment, ranking 70th overall out of 80 regions.
However for development to occur, security in the region must first become a reality. This has been achieved to a certain extent by the Kadyrovtsy, a paramilitary group under the direct control of President Kadyrov. Effectively a private army, this force has been used to eliminate any elites attempting to retain power and control in the region, as well as intimidating the local population into compliance. This has severely limited the separatist movement’s ability to wage war in any conventional sense, to the point that the Russia government officially ended its counter-terrorism campaign in 2009, intending to withdraw troops in favor of allowing the Kadyrovtsy to police the whole Chechen republic. This newly established security combined with the Chechen republic receiving the highest amount of federal funding within Russia has allowed President Kadyrov to rebuild the Chechen infrastructure at an amazing rate. In addition the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), in its efforts to reduce poverty, initiated the Sustainable Reintegration and Recovery in the North Caucasus program in 2004. Running until 2007, the four main areas of focus were “economic growth and poverty reduction; rural development; effective and accountable governance; peace and tolerance” (UNDP, 2004).

Although the economic development occurring in the Chechen Republic is seen as positive, Kadyrov’s approach to security within the region, when looking at questions of social development and the threat of continued terrorist attacks, clearly has some failings. Human rights organisations claim that Chechnya is ruled by fear and intimidation, with kidnappings and torture routinely carried out to ensure President Kadyrov’s position of power and control remains unchallenged (Hughes, 2007). Whatever improvements have been made to security, the fact remains that a terrorist network is still active in the area, the proof of which are the 2010 suicide bombings carried out in Moscow. Russia has tried hard to draw a line under the conflict, apparently quite contempt with the balance of power which now exists in Chechnya, a status which leaves local elites without any legitimate access to political power as well as a larger population with unresolved social and political grievances.

Despite the fact that many in-depth accounts have been written on the conflict; given Russia’s recent declaration that it has ended its counter-terrorism campaign, and the tendency for contemporary research to paint the current violence as the work of religious fanatics, there is a concern that whatever initial grievances the Chechen people had that led to violent conflict are either resolved or are no longer relevant, replaced instead with a form of extremism with which it is impossible to reason with, leading to a situation where eradication instead of
negotiation is the only effective solution. With this in mind a recontextualisation should take place; why does terrorism continue to occur despite Russia’s claim that their counter-terrorism objectives have been completed? The aim of trying to answer this question is to identify possible causes of continued terrorism within the region in order to understand and potentially resolve the issues involved. Is it specific grievances or basic needs that are not met? Or is it a power struggle between elites using the masses to fight for their own egocentric goals? If looking at the continuation of terrorism in the region as a response to specific grievances felt by individuals or groups, then it is feasible that these attacks will continue until these grievances are resolved. From this perspective, it would seem that by simply demonising those involved in acts of terrorism instead of trying to identify possible motives will only ensure continued violence and loss of life. Furthermore, trying to solve terrorism through a military solution can only succeed if all those who have grievances are killed, which is not a plausible option either logistically or morally.

To attempt to answer the above questions, an in depth understanding of both terrorism and intrastate conflicts are needed (both features of Chechnya’s recent history), including any possible mechanisms that could contribute to the creation and continuation of both phenomena. In his book “Peach in our time” (1999) Anders Nilsson puts forward the view that violence carried out within a society can have both political and socio-psychological elements. Both elites and the masses are included in his understanding of the creation of politicised violence, a term which seems to fit with Bruce Hoffman’s description of terrorism in his book “Inside Terrorism” (2006). Both Hoffman’s and Nilsson’s work offer valuable insight into the areas which the above questions concern, and therefore seem a sensible starting point for an analysis.

Furthermore, whilst discussing John Burton’s theory of conflict resolution, a framework which will form an integral part of this study, Nilsson mentions three points which would seem to be relevant to Russia’s ongoing security problem. Firstly “If violent behaviour cannot be held back by force, a new strategy must be sought, built on another analysis and another theory of behaviour” (Nilsson, 1999:234). Secondly “It must work with the entire environment in which the conflict exists” and thirdly “It must seek the sources and the roots of the actual conflict” (Nilsson, 1999:234). In Russia’s case it would seem that declaring the conflict over despite continuing to fight a low-level insurgency as well as failing to address any of the above points does little to resolve any underlying issues which may exist.
1.2 Previous Research

James Hughes’s book *Chechnya: From Nationalism to Jihad* covers numerous areas which are also the focus of this thesis, including the historical and contemporary political, social and economic issues that form a context for continuing violence, as well as Russia’s involvement in the conflict, which it refers to as a counter-terrorism operation. He also addresses key problems associated with the study of the Chechen conflict, namely the potential to delegitimize and demonise actors involved given both the current political climate and concepts of terrorism following the 9/11 attacks.

Hughes analyses the “meaningfulness of the term terrorism in the conflict in Chechnya by examining how it is employed in the conflict idiom to frame perceptions, and by studying how the protagonists recognize each other” (Hughes, 2007:149) A central issue raised in this thesis is the use of the term terrorism when referring to specific acts of political violence occurring within Russia; as to whether this term is either accurate or useful when analysing aspects of a wider conflict as well as possible solutions to an ending of the ongoing violence. Hughes also indicates a gap in understanding when it comes to the Chechen conflict, stating “The question that is almost never posed is what turns law-abiding citizens into terrorists” (Hughes, 2007:148), alluding to an inability or perhaps unwillingness to identify those issues which could motivate an individual to commit or be involved in acts of political violence, which Russia as well as the larger international community generally refer to as terrorism. Hughes work analyses specifically the increasing significance of religion in the rhetoric used by both the Chechens and Russia, a shift which is also reflected in academic work on the conflict, of which Hughes book forms a part.

Mentioned before, the shift in research from a focus on both nationalism and ethnicity towards religion, as well as from separatist or intrastate conflict towards terrorism and notions of Jihad can be seen in the titles of numerous books on the conflict. The following books were written during the period following the first Russo-Chechen war and the 9/11 attacks; Svante Cornell’s *Small Nations and Great Powers: A Study of Ethnopolitical Conflict in the Caucasus* (2001), Stasys Knezys and Romanas Sedlickas *The War in Chechnya* (1999) and Georgiy I. Mirsky’s *On Ruins of Empire: Ethnicity and Nationalism in the Former Soviet Union* (1997). Although these works mention terrorist attacks, Islam and the notion of Jihad, the focus is very much on the ethnic and nationalist dimensions of the conflict. More recent titles, such as Paul J Murphy’s book *Allah’s Angels* (2010) as well as his earlier work *The
Wolves of Islam: Russia and the Faces of Chechen Terror (2004), and Sebastian Smith’s book Allah’s Mountains: The Battle for Chechnya (2009) shows a shift in the terminology used as well a change in the focus of contemporary research on the same conflict, one which seems to emphasise the Chechen peoples religious identity. This is not to say that this revised focus cannot be explained as simply due to a transformation of the conflict since its inception as there is no doubt that all long term conflicts evolve, including the introduction of new actors with their own unique motivations. However, it is important not to abandon or exclude previously identified sources of conflict potentially based upon alternate sources of identity.

1.3 Research Aim

The central aim of this thesis is to find out why terrorist attacks originating from the Chechen conflict continue to occur, and what effects the approach of the Russian government, namely its counter-terrorism strategy, has had on Chechnya and the greater region. By identifying underlying grievances and therefore potential causes of conflict, I hope to show that by dismissing the conflict as effectively resolved, and those who continue to fight as simply fanatics who need to be exterminated runs the risk of continued outbreaks of violence as well as continued human suffering.

1.4 Relevance

The first decade of the 21st century has been to some extent defined by a global war on terror; where a coalition of powerful states has battled against militant Islamic groups in both Afghanistan and Iraq; groups who in turn believe they are fighting a global jihad. Russia’s conflict in Chechnya been seen by many as part of this same campaign, receiving support from the international community who believe solidarity is key to victory. Following the withdrawal of coalition forces from Iraq in 2011 as well as their projected withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2014, there is a sense that this global war is coming to an end, with political agendas turning inwards towards domestic issues following the 2007 global financial crisis as well as the growing unpopularity of both wars. In line with this trend, Russia has brought their particular war on terror to a close.

However, an insurgency remains in both Iraq and Chechnya, claiming the lives are hundreds of people, despite claims by both coalition forces and Russia that their respective missions have been successfully completed. As the 2014 deadline for the coalition forces withdrawal
from Afghanistan draws close, it seems likely that an insurgency will continue there as well. This thesis therefore looks at a global issue concerning modern intra-state conflict, the threat of terrorism and the problems which occur when conflicts are considered as over following the cessation of direct violence or simply the withdrawal of the primary belligerent.

1.5 Research questions

Two research questions have been formulated, helping me to fulfil the aim and purpose of this study based on the issues raised in the problem formulation.

1) What possible mechanisms can be identified behind acts of terrorism originating from the Chechen conflict when analysed from both a political and socio-psychological perspective?

2) Given these mechanisms, what effect are Russia’s counterterrorism strategy and wider political strategy having on the north Caucasus region and the threat of terrorism?

1.6 Theory and Method

Any act of violence, even one labelled as terrorism, cannot be taken and analysed in isolation, therefore the conflict prone history of the North Caucasus as well the resulting socio-economic issues facing the population should be analysed. The theoretical frameworks of Burton and Gurr, as well as a perspective based on Hoffman’s analysis of terrorism will be used in an attempt to highlight possible mechanisms behind the continued manifestations of violence.

Approaching my study based on Nilsson’s holistic approach, which looks at conflict from both a political and socio-psychological perspective, can hopefully provide greater insight and therefore understanding of the continuing conflict. Two statements made by Nilsson reflect my epistemological approach towards this subject, firstly that “demonization impedes empathic understanding of relative deprivation as a dynamic force in elite behaviour” (Nilsson, 1999:227) and that “Evilness means only that human beings under certain circumstances are capable of transgressing the most deeply rooted social and cultural norms for human relations in any given society. The demanding task is to try to uncover the context in which this may happen” (Nilsson, 1999:172). These conclusions emphasise the belief that people are not intrinsically evil, but that they can commit acts that are considered evil due to
a combination of certain circumstances, and these circumstances are what need to be
identified, if we are to prevent these acts from being committed again and again.

1.7 Disposition

The first chapter (1) presents the problem area being researched as well as my motivations for
choosing this particular conflict. Following this, any previous research that I deemed relevant
has been discussed. The section finishes with a description of the aim and purpose of my
study as well as the research questions formulated to help achieve this. Within the second
chapter (2), my theoretical point of departure has been explained, including the theoretical
frameworks of both Burton and Gurr which together with Hoffman’s analyse of terrorism,
will be used to analyse the conflict from a political and then socio-psychological perspective.
Chapter three (3) explains what methodological tools I have utilised in order to conduct this
thesis, explaining why I chose this method as well as the advantages and disadvantages that
come with it. My choice of source literature is also discussed along with any possible
limitations which result. Chapter four (4) provides the reader with a brief yet detailed
understanding of the intra-state conflict, including a historical breakdown of major events
that have brought about and ultimately fuelled the conflict. The fifth chapter (5) gives a
detailed account of my findings; covering the socio-economic and political environment prior
to the outbreak of conflict, the transformation of the rebel movement, the increasing
importance of religion, Russia’s counterterrorism strategy as well as a specific act of
terrorism. The sixth chapter (6) consists of an analysis the findings discussed in the previous
chapter, using my previously discussed theoretical point of departure in an attempt to uncover
mechanisms behind acts of collective political violence. Russia’s counterterrorism strategy is
also analysed, including its effects on conflict resolution both positive and negative. The final
chapter (7) includes my concluding discussions regarding the analysis, drawing on my
findings to help guide thought towards a holistic approach to an effective conflict resolution
based on prevention.

1.8 Limitations

The primary limitation with regard to this work is my inability, based on the practical issue of
security, to travel to Chechnya as well as the surrounding North Caucasus region in order to
interview those directly involved in and affected by the conflict. Unfortunately this makes it
impossible to obtain primary sources of information that could help answer my research
questions. Another significant limitation is the difficulty in obtaining accurate opinion polls from the either the general public in Chechnya or in Russia itself due to the rapidly decreasing press freedom which exists there (Hughes, 2007). The decline in accurate reporting from the region is due mostly to Russia’s successful control of the media following lessons learnt during the first Russo-Chechen conflict where an inability to manage the propaganda war played heavily into the hands of the Chechen rebels. Because of the above factors my study is therefore limited to a purely abductive one which uses secondary sources in the form of books and academic articles as a way of providing information on the phenomena to be analysed. Each work comes with its own pre-understanding along with possible biases and value premises which need to be considered when working with the texts.

1.9 Delimitations

The difficulty in any serious attempt to limit this study is the inability to study any of the recent terrorist attacks that have occurred in isolation from the context in which they have been bred. By requiring an understanding of the context, numerous aspects of Chechen history and culture need to be explored, as well as the economic and political situation before and during the conflict with Russia. However, given the vast amount of research and academic texts that have been written on the subject it is neither feasible nor practical to read as well as analyse every source which might have some relevance. I have chosen to read primarily those books which are available through Linnaeus University library, as well as select few others which appeared to offer the most relevant information with regards to the focus of the thesis.

An innumerable volume of books have also been written on the subject of terrorism making it counterproductive to try and read them all in an attempt to define the nature of terrorism as well as devise an analytical perspective to use in this thesis. I have therefore chosen one specific text; one that is cited in numerous works on the subject as well as being one of the primary texts that comprised the course literature of many academic courses taught on terrorism.
2. Theoretical approach and analytical frameworks

This second chapter attempts to explain Nilsson’s holistic approach to analysing collective political violence. I will explain the theoretical frameworks and perspectives I have chosen to included within this approach, the first being a politically based perspective whilst the later two form a socio-psychological based perspective, as well as justifying their relevance and the knowledge I hope to gain from using them. Attention will be given to the importance of contextualisation, as well as a thorough understanding of terrorism, both of which form integral parts of this thesis.

2.1 Overview of theoretical approach

As noted in the introduction, if considering the motivating factors behind acts of social violence from two perspectives, then Hoffman’s analyse of terrorism would follow a political perspective, whereas others, such as Gurr with his theories of relative deprivation and frustration would focus on a socio-psychological perspective (Nilsson, 1999:167). The first cluster of thought often relies on a “strong element of input-output rational calculation” (Nilsson, 1999:167) which would correspond with Hoffman’s view on the rational nature of terrorism, who cites the rational calculation involved in the planning and execution of acts of violence to achieve a given result (Hoffman, 2006). As I will be analysing acts of violence committed by groups referred to by the international community as a terrorist network, and who have a stated political aim, I will use Hoffman’s politically focused perspective in an initial attempt to understand the motivations and mechanisms behind these acts. However, it is important to understand that the terrorist network operating in the North Caucasus region does so in an area with a history of intra-state conflict. Although the first and second Russo-Chechen wars have long since ceased, it would be a mistake to view this intra-state conflict as over simply due to a reduction in direct violence. Therefore it is necessary to fully explore the context in which violence continues within the region by analysing the historical roots of the conflict, the cultural elements of those involved and the economic and political situation, both historically and currently. This leads us to a holistic approach which, if viewing the current violence occurring in the region as terrorism, and as a further development of a continuing intra-state conflict brought about by the intersection of both Group interest instrumentalisation of politics and Politicisation of group interest identity, should emphasise
the importance of prevention in reducing the threat of continued violence whilst developing a state of positive peace in the region.

2.2 Terrorism

Terrorism is a term that has long been difficult to define due to its frequently changing meaning throughout history, as well as the connotations implied by its use which effect how the term is applied and to whom. The term was first used in 1793 to describe acts of violence committed by the French government on its people or those it deemed “enemies of the state” during the French Revolution. However, contemporary use of the word Terrorism often describes “revolutionary or antigovernment activity undertaken by nonstate or subnational entities” (Hoffman, 2006). This view of terrorism as being primarily revolutionary in nature continued throughout the 1960’s and 1970’s but has since evolved with the advent of both “nationalist and ethnic separatist groups outside a colonial or neo-colonial framework as well as radical, entirely ideologically motivated organizations” (Hoffman, 2006).

The term Terrorism also has a definite negative connotation, and is thus “generally applied to one’s enemies and opponents, or to those with whom one disagrees and would otherwise prefer to ignore” (Hoffman, p.23). The term terrorist, that is one who commits or involved in acts of terrorism, has the same negative connotation, and is therefore often interchanged with various other terms, such as freedom fighter, rebel or guerrilla, each allowing for a different interpretation. The term “freedom fighter” became popular during the 1940’s and 1950’s as a politically correct term to describe the various groups within colonial nations that were fighting for their independence following the decline in empire building after the second world war. “Guerrilla” is a term often used to describe a terrorist due to their chosen nature of combat which often employs guerrilla tactics against technologically and numerically superior forces. These terms also allow for a less negative view of the terrorists aims, motivations and subsequent actions. According to Hoffman, the effect of using numerous terms when referring to terrorists has added to the difficulty in defining terrorism (Hoffman, p.30).

Today numerous definitions are available from various sources, often reflecting the interests and focus of the particular organisation or group using the term. For example several different definitions of terrorism are employed by their respective agency or department within the United States; such as the state department, the department of defence and the
federal bureau of investigation (FBI), all using terms which coincide with each particular agency’s area of focus.

In his book “Inside Terrorism”, Bruce Hoffman however offers some useful points which help define terrorism. Firstly he states that “Terrorism, in the most widely accepted contemporary usage of the term, is fundamentally and inherently political.” He also argues that terrorism “is also ineluctably about power: the pursuit of power, the acquisition of power, and the use of power to achieve political change.” He therefore concludes that “Terrorism is thus violence—or, equally important, the threat of violence—used and directed in pursuit of, or in service of, a political aim” (Hoffman, 2006:3).

**2.2.1 Ethno-nationalist/separatist terrorism**

This first sub-group is used to define the terrorist groups whose stated aim is the achievement of independence and often includes the expulsion of what they see as an occupying force from their land. From this perspective both the Palestinian terrorist groups operating in the occupied territories within Israel and the Chechen terrorist groups in the Chechen republic as well as the surrounding North Caucasus region can be seen from an ethno-nationalist/separatist perspective. Both are of a common ethnic background fighting for their right for self determination in what they argue to be their own homeland. Both groups believe themselves to be freedom fighters and seek to attain both sympathy and support from a wider audience to help achieve their goal of independence. Both have also been labelled terrorists by the states, Israel and Russia respectively, who are the primary targets of the group’s acts of violence, as well as the majority of the international community, who in turn support their fellow states.

The level of violence used by this type of terrorist group is highly calculated, the aim being “to determine an effective level of violence that is at once “tolerable” for the local populace, tacitly acceptable to international opinion, and sufficiently modulated not to provoke massive governmental crackdown and reaction” (Hoffman, 2006:233). This same calculated method is used when applying violence to members of their own ethnic group who are seen as supporting the enemy, so that they “strike another balance between salutary, if sporadic, “lessons” that effectively intimidate and compel compliance from their own communities and more frequent and heavy-handed episodes that alienate popular support, encourage
cooperation with the security forces, and therefore prove counterproductive” (Hoffman, p.234).

A common feature of ethno-nationalist groups is their longevity, that is, their ability to outlast most other forms of terrorist movement. There are two primary reasons for this; the first of which is the continued support available from the ethnic group that the terrorist group supposedly fights for. This support provides the finances, safe houses and manpower needed to keep a terrorist organisation functioning. The second reason is that most ethno-nationalist terrorist groups have a clear and easily defined aim or goal that they are working to achieve. The independence of one’s homeland is an easily graspable objective that is possible to rally, and more importantly maintain, support behind. However it is worth noting that despite the impressive sustainability of these terrorist groups, they have found it extremely difficult, if not impossible, to convert the publicity they have received into concrete political gains (Hoffman, 2006). However these ethno-nationalist/separatist aims, whether achieved or not, set this form of terrorism apart from the following sub-group as “it is the political, not the religious aspect of their motivation that is dominant” (Hoffman, 2006:82).

2.2.2 Religious terrorism

One of the factors which differentiates religious terrorism from purely ethnic-nationalist terrorism is the calculated restraint shown by the later when planning terrorist operations. As Hoffman explains, religious terrorists are not “interested in influencing an actual or self-perceived constituency or in swaying popular opinion; their sole preoccupation was serving God through the fulfillment of their divinely ordained mission” (Hoffman, 2006:239). This lack of restraint can unfortunately be seen in the disproportionate number of lives that are claimed by attacks carried out by religious terrorist groups when compared to their secular counterparts. This is a fundamental difference in the nature of the acts of violence committed by both types of terrorist, as the ethno-nationalist will attempt to minimise the number of casualties or the type to that of enemy combatants, as they understand that an act of mass murder aimed at civilians will often have a counter-productive effect on their goal. Meanwhile the religious terrorist will often seek to kill as many as possible from a certain group who are thought to be against or even just indifferent to their religion, the attacks therefore being seen “not only as morally justified but as necessary expedients for the attainment of their goals” (Hoffman, 2006:89).
Terrorists that are motivated by religion also have a very different value system to the secular terrorist including different “mechanisms of legitimation and justification, concepts of morality, and worldviews” (Hoffman, 2006:230) which enable them to target a wider range of victims in an attempt to achieve their objectives. The religious terrorist is in effect alienated from the rest of the world, treating all others who are not part of their religion or even their specific interpretation of that religion as potential enemies and therefore targets. This can be seen in the 2001 terrorist attack on the world trades centre in New York which claimed the lives of many Muslims, an act which would be perceived as justified to the religious terrorists who perpetrated the act. According to Hoffman, a strong sense of isolation, coming about from a tendency to rationalise in absolutes makes it difficult to reason with religious terrorists through political concessions, stating that “political concessions, financial rewards, amnesties, and other personal inducements—would be not only irrelevant but impractical, given both the religious terrorists’ fundamentally alienated worldviews and their often extreme, resolutely uncompromising demands” (Hoffman, 2006:128).

Although the above categories paint two quite different pictures of terrorist actions and those who plan, organise and carry out attacks for their cause, Hoffman does however provide an insight into some of the common attributes of a terrorist including an introduction to their mind set as well as how they perceive themselves and the reality around them.

2.2.3 Characteristics and motivations of a terrorist

Although commonly portrayed by the media as fanatical lunatics whose acts of violence are simply unplanned attempts to kill as many innocent people as possible, many terrorists do not follow this description. As Hoffman explains, many are “in fact highly articulate and extremely thoughtful individuals for whom terrorism is (or was) an entirely rational choice” (Hoffman, 2006:15). Acts of violence come about, not due to desire to commit acts of mass murder, but due to the belief that the use of force is the only option left remaining against an injustice that cannot continue. Furthermore, many terrorists see themselves as the ones forced to violence, in that they have to defend themselves, their people or their cause, and if not for this oppression they would be leading peaceful lives without violence. The main point here is that they don’t see themselves as terrorists, but rather that “it is society or the government or the socioeconomic “system” and its laws that are the real “terrorists,” ” (Hoffman, 2006:23). It therefore follows that the central aim of terrorist violence is “ultimately to change “the
Hoffman argues therefore that terrorists do not follow “purely egocentric goals; he is not driven by the wish to line his own pocket or satisfy some personal need or grievance” (Hoffman, 2006:37). This is important to understand when looking at individual terrorists who appear to be lone actors, avenging the death of a loved one by striking at the perceived enemy, as they are in fact, according to Hoffman, acting as part of a larger network whose actions are “serving a “good” cause designed to achieve a greater good for a wider constituency—whether real or imagined—that the terrorist and his organization purport to represent” (Hoffman, 2006:37).

This image of terrorists as lone actors, wreaking havoc for entirely personal reasons could partly have come about due to the ambiguous nature of a terrorist group organisational structure. This decentralised pattern of leadership is not incidental, but an attempt to prevent disruption by counter-terrorism organisations attempting to infiltrate and destroy the group. In the past, this was done primarily by disposing of the central leadership, whether through imprisonment or assassination, which would in effect remove the driving force behind the movement and its ability to effectively organise campaigns. Termed as a “leaderless strategy by Hoffman, it is “populated by individuals who are ideologically motivated, inspired, and animated by a movement or a leader, but who neither formally belong to a specific, identifiable terrorist group nor directly follow orders issued by its leadership and are therefore outside any established chain of command” (Hoffman, 2006:38). In this respect, leaders are often not in direct control of the terrorists who follow them, but their mission is more to motivate and inspire those who carry out acts of violence. These acts, although individually planned by autonomous cells, independent of a central leadership, are carried out to help the ultimate cause of the terrorist movement.

2.2.4 Suicide Terrorism

Since its inception during the Lebanese Israeli war, suicide bombers have become a common trait of many terrorist groups, including the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka, Hamas in Israel and now Chechen groups in Russia. The rise in the use of suicide bombers is due to the fact that they are “devastatingly effective, lethally efficient, have a greater likelihood of success, and are relatively inexpensive and generally easier to execute than other attack modes” (Hoffman,
Put simply, they are an extremely cost effective way of inflicting maximum damage to the perceived enemy, whilst ensuring a strong feeling of terror due to the nature of the attack. It is important to understand that suicide bombing is not born out of frustration and desperation by lone individuals with nothing left to lose, but a rational, tactical decision made by terrorist groups with great effect. This is not to say that the anger and desperation felt by many people within areas of continued conflict, such as the occupied territories and the Chechen republic, are not important aspects of suicide bombings, as it is these feelings that ensure a steady stream of people who are willing to die for their cause, but simply that these frustrations are not the reason why suicide attacks are carried out. Religious terrorist groups combine these feelings of desperation and anger with “religious and theological justification” as “it ensures a flow of recruits to these organizations that is needed to sustain suicide operation[s]” (Hoffman, 2006:132). This religious justification not only encourages men and women to join the ranks of suicide bombers, but often gives their families a sense of pride and heightened status in their community. In addition, economic incentives are often given to the family of a deceased suicide bomber, making sure that they are taken care of financially. When combined with the religious and theological justifications, “terrorist organizations have created a recruitment and support mechanism of compelling and attractive incentives” (Hoffman, 2006:163).

Contrary to the belief that suicide bombers are lone actors, most are part of a larger network; one which orchestrates the entire operation, providing the explosives and the planning needed to carry out the attack. The would-be suicide bomber is often isolated from his or her family and friends by “minders” for some time preceding the attack, whilst being made to produce a martyrdom video which has the dual purpose of both propaganda and recruitment, as well as ensuring the volunteer does not back out. The primary role of these “minders” is to ensure that the suicide bomber is transported as close to the target as possible, and then to remote detonate the explosives if necessary. The purposeful isolation of the suicide bomber follows the pattern found in religious terrorism; that of being alienated to the world around them, which in turn enables them to commit the acts of indiscriminate violence that they do.

There is an obvious tactical advantages of using suicide bombers, namely their ability to wage war on a technologically and numerically superior enemy with very little cost and planning involved compared to actual military engagement, which to be successful requires vastly more firepower and planning, and therefore cost. Suicide attacks on the other hand,
after the initial reconnaissance and planning, which is, neither the less extensive; only require a single explosive and no escape plan, often the most difficult part of a successful attack.

It would appear then, that the popularity and continual, if not increased use of suicide bombers, could be interpreted as a combination of both rational choice as well as frustration born from basic needs not being met. The terrorist organisations use of suicide bombers is a rational choice, using a cost benefit analysis based on the amount of investment necessary to carry out an attack and the expected damage that could be achieved. The suicide bomber themselves appear to be attracted to the role through a combination of frustration and anger, often after losing a loved one to the conflict, and a rational choice based upon the incentives put in place by the terrorist organisation, namely the economic and social benefits given to the victim’s families, as well of course as their guaranteed ascension of themselves and their family members into heaven.

2.2.5 Analytical framework – collective violence from a political perspective

Based on Hoffman’s understanding of terrorism, the primary driving force behind acts of terrorist violence is political in nature. Put simply he argues that those who commit such attacks seek to draw attention and coerce others through fear in an attempt to achieve a political aim. According to Hoffman “Terrorism is where politics and violence intersect in the hope of delivering power. All terrorism involves the quest for power: power to dominate and coerce, to intimidate and control, and ultimately to effect fundamental political change” (Hoffman, 2006:174).

If we are to categorise the recent violence originating from the Chechen conflict as terrorism, then following Hoffman’s interpretation, we should be focusing on the political aims of those involved as a basis for analysis. This focus fits in line with a general analytical approach which sees societal violence as primarily politically motivated, tending to focus on a rational choice and cost benefit analysis to explain violent conflict (Nilsson, 1999:167). The emphasis of this perspective is on “human aggressiveness and “self-interested decisions in [the] formation of collective actions”” (Nilsson, 1999:149) stressing that for an elite, collective action is not purely based on the desire to achieve collective goals, but rather the individual’s desire to achieve their goal.

If applied to actors within the North Caucasus region who are willing to use violence to achieve greater political strength and therefore access to power, the picture would most likely
be that of a purely intra-elite struggle, in which elites rationally pursue individual interests by manipulating the masses (Nilsson, 1999:150). However, this egocentric process can still be considered a form of Group interest instrumentalisation of politics, in that despite the objective being the acquisition of political power; the grievances of the group are nevertheless addressed.

2.3 Towards a holistic approach to understanding collective political violence

Following Nilsson’s argument, by focusing solely on motivations based on the acquisition and maintenance of political power to explain collective violence, leads not only to a demonization of the elites involved, but also that such an approach fails to “address the question of how it is, in fact, possible to mobilise the ‘masses’ for violent activities” (Nilsson, 1999:226). Based upon Nilsson’s understanding of collective violence; following a perspective which stresses egocentric political motivations has the potential to “ignore the socio-economic elements that often form the basis of an outbreak of social violence” (Nilsson, 1999:211). This is because, according to Nilsson’s argument, “any elite manoeuvre will be in vain, if it does not encounter a politicised (or in a process of politicisation) group identity around an issue which has a spatial and social extension congruent with or sufficiently inclusive of the identity base” (Nilsson, 1999:213). Simply put, any attempt by an elite to manipulate a larger group for his/her own personal political goals would not succeed unless there exists a genuine (or at least perceived as genuine) grievance or societal issue that a group has focused on through a shared feeling of identity. Following Nilsson’s reasoning, it would be beneficial therefore to “move from seeing power-seeking individuals as the main dynamic force in conflicts to giving more attention to unsatisfied needs at various levels of society as a moving force” (Nilsson, 1999:229).

An important issue raised by Nilsson in his work “Peace in Our Time” is the propensity to focus on a specific identity when analysing conflicts. The violence that has occurred in Chechnya, as well as other intrastate conflicts, is often referred to as an ethnic conflict by the media (BBC, 2004) as well as in some academic work (BCSIA, 2000). However, as Nilsson argues “ethnicity is only one among [many] conceivable identities that may be politicised and constitute an identity base for conflict mobilisation” (Nilsson, 1999:212), meaning that if collective violence requires a politicised group identity as a catalyst, then the above labelling runs the risk of downplaying other important identities and therefore potential sources of conflict. This argument can be directly applied to the growing focus given, both academically
and politically, to the religious identity of those involved in the violence originating from the Chechen conflict at the cost of other possible group identities.

Nilsson argues further that when looking at an intra-state conflict, relative deprivation is the static factor, and that any identity can be politicised based on this sense of deprivation, stating that these conflicts “have a base in socio-economic contradictions, but are expressed through a politicisation of the kind of group identity that is most adequate in the specific context” (Nilsson, 1999:214). Although it is true that this is most often an ethnic identity, it is neither the less important to remember that a whole spectrum of identities can be involved. In this sense Nilsson reasons that “it may therefore be even more misleading to emphasise the ethnic identity expression of a conflict, as if it was a specific kind of conflict, instead of directing attention toward the socio-economic base of politicisation of any group identity” (Nilsson, 1999:214). Furthermore, feelings of group identity can come about and be strengthened by a conflict, so to label a conflict ethnic and focus on that that single identity, one which is inherently static, could have a negative impact on attempts at resolution compared to focusing more on the socio-economic base of politicisation of any group identity (Nilsson, 1999).

With the above in mind, if we are to understand the transformation of perceived grievances, based on the theory of relative deprivation by both the elites and masses, into collective violence then the following two processes need to be understood and applied to the specific context and identities in question.

2.3.1 Politicisation of group interest identity – “the process in which, broader social groups have moved to make political demands in the name of a [group interest identity]” (Nilsson, 1999:213)

Nilsson defines this process as possibly taking place under the following conditions. Firstly when “a large part of a population is living in precarious conditions; or feels that its long term survival is threatened; or is culturally or religiously marginalised; or perhaps feel its human dignity to be under serious threat” (Nilsson, 1999:217). Secondly, if a group with a shared identity perceive these threats as being directed towards them and “when the threats can be interpreted by the individual as being directed against him or her specifically because he or she belongs to this group, then the political demands aimed at dissipating these threats may be raised in the name of the specific identity. The identity thus becomes politicised” (Nilsson, 1999:217).
2.3.2 Group interest instrumentalisation of politics – “the process in which, elites have formulated social and political revindications in the name of their possible [group interest] constituency” (Nilsson, 1999:213)

Simply put, this occurs where elites feel they have no ability to be involved or have an influence in the current political system, and therefore act outside the rules and norms of the society to achieve their goals. They can then use a politicised group interest identity as a catalyst to claim greater political power, therefore gaining a position where they can satisfy both their and their constituency’s needs.

2.3.3 Intersection between politicised violence and socio-psychological frameworks

Nilsson reasons that “In a conflict resolution perspective, it could be beneficial to make a clear distinction between social power and political power and argue that the immediate objective of collective violence may not necessarily be political, but social, power” (Nilsson, 1999:172). This implies that it is important to consider possible transformations taking place within a conflict, where expressions of collective violence which have progressed from simply a demand for social power, that is “the capacity that people require to satisfy their most important needs” (Nilsson, 1999:162), to politicised violence due to the states inadequate response to social issues. Before this point is reached, “increased social power may be sufficient to relegitimise governance” (Nilsson, 1999:227), however a failure to do this, combined with the politicised group interest identity being taken up by an elite for the purposes of claiming greater political involvement, results in a progression beyond a point of no return where granting of increased social power becomes insufficient, instead requiring no less than increased political power.

Therefore, when stated as a clear chain of events; collective political violence comes about from the transformation of collective violence due to an amalgamation between popular grievances felt by a shared identity group which fail to be resolved by the granting of increased social power, and dissatisfied elites searching for an identity group which can be mobilised to achieve their own political goals, ultimately requiring a more drastic political solution. If this the case, then the perceived grievances of both the masses and the elites need to be understood and well as identifying inadequate responses from those in power.

According to Nilsson, “politicisation of ethnicity, may build on both material considerations, and strong unsatisfied immaterial needs” (Nilsson, 1999:212), and therefore a socio-
psychological approach would seem valuable here. The benefits of such an approach are that we can avoid the isolation of a single group, as according to Nilsson, the “relative deprivation concept means we can analyse both elite processes and popular discontent within a common conceptual and theoretical framework” (Nilsson, 1999:226). Nilsson also argues that conflict does not come about due to the politicisation process but when there is the “perception that a certain identity group have no (or limited) access to constitutionally or legally defined representation in the political life of the state” (Nilsson, 1999:215). Again a relative deprivation approach seems valuable, as it is not simply the grievances felt by groups or elites that cause conflict, but also their perceived ability to resolve these grievances, perceptions that are included in this socio-psychological approach. As Nilsson states, a “quest for power should then be understood as a means of increasing capabilities in order to better satisfy aspirations and expectations, thus decreasing relative deprivation” (Nilsson, 1999:227). An individual’s quest for power should therefore be emphatically understood; possible from a socio-psychological approach which in turn avoids demonising those involved as well as their goals.

2.3.4 Relative deprivation intersects with basic needs theory and provention

Based on the above understanding of the transition from collective violence to collective political violence, the intra-state conflict and recent terrorist attacks seems to reflect the latter; in that violence has escalated beyond a point of no return, requiring solutions greater than just a granting of increased social power. In this case, a socio-psychological approach which includes a solution that focuses on fundamental changes to the social and political conditions in which conflict occurred seems highly relevant. Burton’s conflict resolution theory based on what he calls “provention” meaning “deep changes in the environment that initially contributed to the emergence of the conflict, in order to prevent the conflict resuscitating and stop new conflicts emerging from the unchanged circumstances” (Nilsson, 1999:231) has the potential to address the drastic changes needed.

2.4 Analytical frameworks – collective violence from a socio-psychological perspective

From a socio-psychological perspective I will be using both Gurr’s theory of relative deprivation and Burton’s basic needs theory. As stated, both frameworks feature a combination of psychological and social factors, in that they look to understand the
psychological interpretations of certain social circumstances (Nilsson, 1999:165). When applied to a given socio-economic situation, these frameworks can be used to identify possible structural forces that could potentially influence an individual’s or group’s actions, or more specifically, potential grievances perceived by either elites or masses that could manifest as collective violence. They also form the basis of a proventative approach to conflict resolution, which stresses not just the absence of direct violence but of the resolution of any underlying social-economic issues that could still exist, emphasising the importance of achieving positive peace, not just a conflict free state of negative peace.

2.4.1 Relative deprivation

Gurr’s theory of relative deprivation is based upon the basic argument that an individual’s feelings and how they perceive themselves and the world around them is the primary cause of instability (Conteh-Morgan, 2004). This instability is due to a sense of frustration which is simply “a human reaction based on our emotions and reactions to conditions and situations occurring in the world around us” (Nilsson, 1999:160). The concept of “instrumental aggression”, which is linked to the theory of frustration, will also form part of an overall point of departure whilst analysing the various socio-economic issues encountered. Instrumental aggression is defined as an act of violence in order to obtain such things as material goods, prestige or social approval, with the ultimate goal being the self-preservation or self-enhancement of one’s self (Conteh-Morgan, 2004).

Relative deprivation is basically a concept which seeks to explain the sources of possible frustration which in turn manifest into collective violence in the form of instrumental aggression. According to Gurr, relative deprivation occurs when an individual or group feel that they are missing out on something that they perceive to be rightfully theirs. Gurr argues that relative deprivation is experienced in relation to an individuals or groups past condition and that the resulting level of frustration felt is based upon the intensity of the deprivation and its duration (Conteh-Morgan, 2004).

Although Gurr differentiates between three types of relative deprivation, I will focus primarily on both decremental deprivation, which is based on a perceived loss of capabilities in comparison to relatively fixed aspirations, and incremental deprivation, which is when capabilities remain static at the same time as aspirations increase. Both of these are potentially applicable to the situation in the Chechen republic, due to the political, economic
and social transformations that have occurred throughout the last two decades following the breakup of the former Soviet Union. Aspirations can vary from mere wants and desires to other more fundamental needs that must be satisfied whatever the cost; and the loss of capabilities are simply the reduced ability of an individual to meet these desires or needs. As stated previously “politicisation of ethnicity [group interest identity], may build on both material considerations, and strong unsatisfied immaterial needs” (Nilsson, 1999:212) therefore to understand these aspirations is clearly important.

Two important points here are firstly the emphases on change rather than the static, and secondly that all social actors, regardless of their social-economic position are included in the analysis (Nilsson, 1999:172). This means that from a relative deprivation perspective, the focus is on change, that is, “change in social conditions and circumstances” as well as “changes in people’s perceptions of these changing conditions and circumstances” (Nilsson, 1999:172), hence the first word of the theoretical framework “relative”. This relativity is also applicable concerning the tendency to focus only on the absolute poor and most marginalised of society during an analysis. It is important to remember that elites can also be frustrated through a perceived lack of capabilities, and that this framework can therefore allow us to look also at elite’s levels of frustration regardless of their relatively high standard of living.

2.4.2 Basic needs

The above mentioned aspirations could fall under Burton’s definition of basic needs which, he argues, if not satisfied, will force individuals to behave in a manner outside of the normal laws and norms of society in an attempt to achieve these fundamental needs. Therefore these basic needs are potential sources of conflict if individuals are deprived of the opportunity or ability to meet them. In his book “Conflict: Resolution and Provention” (Burton, 1990), Burton argues that for a conflict resolution strategy to be effective and sustainable, major changes to the environment that deprived these basic needs from being met are required. This is what Burton means when he uses the term provention, that is, the prevention of renewed conflict through a problem solving analysis based approach that seeks to address the feelings, needs and perceptions of all actors involved, all of which Burton sees as the root causes of conflict. These root causes, although grouped together as basic needs, are split into three subdivisions by Burton depending on their nature.
According to Burton, the three categories are; interests, values and needs. Interests are “the economic, political and social aspirations of groups and individuals” (Nilsson, 1999:233) and relatively fluid in nature and considered negotiable. Values consist of “ideas, habits, customs and beliefs that are a characteristic of particular social communities” (Burton, 1990:37) such as “mother-tongue, identity of religion, class, ethnicity and other identity defining features” (Nilsson, 1999:233). Although an individual’s values can change quite rapidly, they are intrinsically linked to culture, and those of a larger social group often require a more substantial amount of time. Burton argues that in certain conditions, such as isolation and underprivilege, individuals will seek to defend these values as a way of meeting the needs of personal security and identity (Burton, 1990:37). Human needs are the final and most static of the three, as they are considered to be inseparable from us as human beings and are therefore non-negotiable and unchanging. They include not only the things essential for survival from a purely biological perspective, but also from a psychological perspective; including those considered part of basic human rights such as dignity, respect and identity (Nilsson, 1999:232).

From a conflict resolution perspective, one of the core principles behind this theoretical approach is the need for an empathic understanding of the needs of all actors involved in a conflict. This is particularly important to keep in mind, especially when analysing acts of terrorism, which due to both their nature, often involving the deliberate targeting of civilians including children such as in the Beslan School siege, and the established rhetoric which includes words such as “evil” to describe the actors involved, are rarely met with empathy (Hughes, 2007).
3. Methodological framework

In this chapter my chosen mode of inference is discussed along with its strengths and weaknesses. The second section of the chapter focuses on the source literature used whilst writing this thesis including any observations and criticisms of the chosen works.

3.1 Methodological tools

The scientific mode of inference most applicable to the aims and goals of this thesis is that of abduction. Abduction allows for a recontextualisation of events or phenomena by applying specific theoretical frameworks in an attempt to reveal hidden mechanisms and structures which could be behind the creation of such events. In this sense, as Danermark et al states, “redescriptions can provide a deeper knowledge about the particular case under study; [...], one can also gradually test, modify and ground theories about general contexts and structures by relating these theories to ever new cases” (Danermark et al, 2002:94). In the context of this thesis, not only can we use Nilsson’s holistic theoretical approach to understanding social violence combined with Hoffman’s theories on political violence to recontextualise the Chechen conflict, but we can also evaluate the strength of these theories and their applicability by analysing successive cases of terrorism. According to Danermark et al, “In a research practice guided by abduction, the interplay (dialectic) between theoretical redescriptions of cases and case-study-based theory development is absolutely central” (Danermark et al, 2002:95). Hopefully the structure, content and focus of this thesis allow me to accomplish both.

As stated before, although the more recent acts of terrorism will be analysed as specific cases, a detailed understanding of the context in which they occurred, that is the Chechen conflict, will be sought, fitting in line with Danermark et al’s argument that “cases should be studied in their natural contexts, since the case gets its particular signification as part of this context” (Danermark et al, 2002:158).

When using an abductive approach it is important to bear in mind that, as Danermark et al states, when we “interpret a phenomenon in the light of a frame of interpretation (rule), the frame of interpretation constitutes one of several possible frames and the interpretation of the phenomenon one of several possible interpretations” (Danermark et al, 2002:90). This indicates not only that we can apply numerous theoretical frameworks in an attempt to gain
deeper knowledge and understanding of certain events, but also and most importantly that any answers gained during this process are not a universal truth, but rather that any “conclusion is one of many possible conclusions” (Danermark et al, 2002:91). As such, no one answer gained through an abductive approach is more or less true than any other, they simply provide an alternate perspective on the reasons behind a particular occurrence or phenomenon.

This is not to say that the results of this thesis have no value. As Danermark et al argue, “Should the event imply that people have suffered, that their needs have been thwarted, or that false beliefs have emerged, then there is a reason to criticise the structures whose mechanisms have caused this” (Danermark et al, 2002:194). Put in the context of this thesis, if through a process of recontextualisation we can identify certain mechanisms that could potentially be behind continuing violence and therefore suffering then these mechanisms need to be highlighted and researched further as part of a process of operationalization in order to make them useful and applicable for policy makers.

3.2 Sources

As stated previously, due to the current security situation in Chechnya it is impossible to gain first hand information through interviews in the form of a field study. Therefore the only realistic way to gain an understanding of the context in which the conflict developed and continues as well as information and views on previous terrorist attacks is through second hand sources. These are books, reports and articles written by people or groups in an attempt to analyse the same events and phenomena as in this thesis. Just as I must be aware of my own pre-understanding and prejudices regarding the events being investigated, so too must these sources be handled with care keeping in mind any personal or political bias which could influence their research and therefore my understanding of the events I wish to interpret. One of the central issues raised during this thesis is the shift in focus by policy makers and governments following the 9/11 attacks and the start of the war on terror, which is reflected in a shift of focus on the nature of the Chechen conflict, the actors involved and their motivations. Although this dynamism could simply reflect transformations that have occurred during different stages of the conflict, it is important not to allow changing foreign policies or political agendas to influence what aspects of a phenomenon are prioritised.
Freedom House, “an independent non-governmental organization that supports the expansion of freedom in the world, [which] has been monitoring political rights and civil liberties in Chechnya since 1998” (Freedom House, 2007) produced a report that was used as a source of information for my contextualisation section providing a basic insight into the history of conflict within the region. Their description of the 2004 Beslan School siege highlights the issue of differing terminology when discussing terrorist acts. Their description, which states “anti-Russian guerrillas carried out a military assault in the neighboring republic of North Ossetia, taking over a school in the town of Beslan. Some 400 people-half of them children-died in the shootout that began after local citizens moved to rescue their relatives”, includes the term “guerrillas” and “military assault” to describe a hostage taking. The varying descriptions used to describe this event show clearly the ambiguity often present when reporting such acts, as well as the author’s reluctance to use the term terrorist or terrorism to describe those involved or the act itself.

Tony Wood’s “Chechnya: The Case for Independence” covers the history of Chechen resistance to outside rule from both a historical as well as contemporary perspective. He also offers insights into the motivation behind continued armed struggle as well as suggestions on a possible solution, which Wood argues is ultimately the right of self determination through the recognition of an independent Chechnya. His work helped me gain a better understanding of possible perceived grievances built up over a long period as well as insights into the Chechen culture explaining why these grievances are never forgotten.

John Dunlop’s “Russia Confronts Chechnya: Roots of a Separatist conflict” examines the historical context of the conflict, but also analyses in depth the transition from the “Chechen revolution of 1991” (Dunlop, 1998) to the developing situation between 1992 and 1994, including the peace process and its subsequent failure. Dunlop’s work provides a deep understanding of the economical and political problems faced by both the elites and the masses in the Chechen republic, before and after the 1991 declaration of independence, allowing for a solid understanding of the changes in the social, economic and political status of those involved.

As the majority of these books have been written by western authors I was conscious of a lack of Russian perspectives on the conflict. I chose Anna Politkovskaya’s Small Corner of Hell: Dispatches from Chechnya (Politkovskaya, 2003) to gain an insight into the realities of life within Chechnya as well as a frank look at the criminality and politics involved that have
created and at the same time fed off this situation. Politkovskaya’s quest for truth and refusal to tow official lines no doubt led to her death when she was murdered by unknown men outside her apartment. No one has been held responsible for her death and it seems unlikely that we will ever know who was ultimately behind the killing, but her work focused on human rights abuses and was highly critical of both Ramzan Kadyrov and Vladimir Putin. For up to date information surrounding more recent terrorist attacks I have primarily used the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) as well as some Russian news sources. I have chose the BBC as they have a long standing reputation as an objective news organisation which many other aspire to as a model for impartial and responsible reporting. According to their own guidelines, the BBC “place great stress on standards of fairness, accuracy and impartiality” (BBC, 2012).
4. Contextualisation

This fourth chapter takes an in depth look at the long history of conflict which has occurred within the Chechen republic beginning with the emergence of ethnic Russians in the region up until the present climate.

4.1 Historical and Contemporary Background

4.1.1 Historical grievances: Genocide, independence and the first Russo-Chechen war

Chechnya is small republic in the North Caucasus region of Russian. It has been a site of armed resistance to Russian rule for the larger part of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, with violence continuing till this day. The Chechens, “recognized as a distinct people since the 17\textsuperscript{th} century” (Shah, 2004) resisted Russian attempts to control the Caucasus during the 17\textsuperscript{th} and 18\textsuperscript{th} centuries, aiming themselves to establish an Islamic state within the region. The creation of an independent Islamic state ultimately failed, and it was not until the Russian Revolution of 1917 that the Chechens attempted another declaration of independence. Rejected by the Russian Bolsheviks, an autonomous Chechen-Ingush region was however created in 1924, becoming an autonomous republic, The Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (ASSR) in 1935 (Dunlop, 1998).

Following the Soviet Union’s pattern of defining subject regions along ethnic lines, “A new political map was imposed on the region. The new map was based on the territorialization of ethnicity: administrative units with a defined titular nation were created and slotted into the strict hierarchy of Soviet ethnofederalism (Zurcher, 2007:23)” According to Zurcher, “this system contrived an institutionalized coupling between a given group and a given territory. This created a foundation for modern (territorial) nation-statehood in the Caucasus for the first time” (Zurcher, 2007:31), and is fact expanded on later when Chechen identity is discussed.

During the Second World War, the Chechen-Ingush ASSR was partly occupied by German forces, who attempted to use the resentments built up over years of soviet rule to gain support from the local population by promising “full religious freedom and the opening of mosques, the abolition of collective farms, and the opening of schools conducted in the native languages of the mountain peoples” (Dunlop, 1998:58). However these attempts were met
with very little success, and by late 1942 the German army had only managed to occupy the
western border town of Malgobek, which would be liberated by the red army shortly after in
January 1943. Although very few Chechens actually collaborated with Nazi Germany and the
fact that some 40,000 Chechens fought against them as part of the Red Army, Stalin argued
that “as an entire people,” they had supported the Nazi invaders against the Soviet
government” (Dunlop, 1998:58) and therefore following the end of the war, the order was
given for the forced deportation of the Chechen population to Siberia as a form of mass
punishment. Although the republic was restored by Nikita Khrushchev in 1957, more than
20% of the Chechen population had died from disease and malnourishment during the forced
deportation, an act that most would now define as genocide, further fuelling feelings of
resentment towards their Russian rulers (Dunlop, 1998).

During the breakup of the Soviet Union, all the ethnic republic within the Russian Soviet
Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR), apart from Checheno-Ingushetia and Tatarstan,
declared their sovereignty from the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) but made it
clear that they would remain within the RSFSR (Hughes, 2007). According to Zurcher, “For
most union republics, sovereignty in this context did not yet mean independence, but it did
mean control over resources, property rights, taxation, and legislation” (Zurcher, 2007:33).
Eventually even Tatarstan entered into negotiations with the Russian Federation in order to
agree upon a new constitution that provided them with autonomy with regards to their own
economy, political system and legislation whilst stressing that they would remain
“associated” to the new Russian federal system. Chechnya remained absent during these
negotiations; refusing to sign the Federal treaty of March 1992 and halting tax payments to
Moscow (Hughes, 2007), however according to Hughes, “Despite the refusal of Chechnya to
participate in either the constitutional discussions, or the referendum and election in
December 1993, Russia included the “Chechen Republic” in the list of federal “subjects” in
Article 65” (Hughes, 2007:44)

Chechnya’s strive for independence was met with very little support from the international
community, and with no willingness by foreign governments to recognize their
independence, Chechnya was left in a state of limbo (Zurcher, 2007). Effectively independent
in the sense that they were in control of their own social and political institutions, they had no
control over their own airspace or borders nor could they receive international support from
the International Monetary Fund (IMF) or other organisations designed to help state building
and the economies of fledgling nations. Yeltsin’s response to Chechnya’s outright determination for independence was to turn to “a policy of blockade of Chechnya” (Hughes, p.62). The resulting economic collapse and political instability occurring in Chechnya was actively encouraged by the Russian government, who sought to destabilise the republic, and ultimately remove Dudayev from power (Dunlop, 1998). According to Hughes, “Russia launched a sustained campaign of political, economic, and military subterfuge to undermine Dudayev by supporting Chechen proxies” (Hughes, 2007:62).

Having neither economic nor administrative experience, the Dudaev government was “ill-equipped to deal with the multiple challenges of creating a new Chechen nation state and creating a functioning market economy” (Dunlop, 1998:125). The oil industry, which until that point had formed the basis of the Chechen formal economy, had been run and maintained primarily by the ethnic Russians living in the region, but following their mass exodus during Chechnya’s attempt at independence, oil production fell by nearly 60%. According to Dunlop, combined with 61.4% and 46% reduction in industrial and agricultural production respectively, the region was “incapable of generating lawful sources of revenue” (Dunlop, 1998:126). With a sharp rise in unemployment, and the migration of all who could afford it, those that remained turned to unlawful activities in an attempt to survive. Oil flowing through Chechnya from other parts of Russia was illegally siphoned off, turning into a black-market industry worth billions of roubles (Hughes, 2007). A huge black-market dealing in both weapons and narcotics thrived within the Chechen republic, taking advantage of Grozny’s international airport, which saw hundreds of unsanctioned flights from both outside and inside Russian, allowing criminals and their cargo to enter and leave the area with impunity (Dunlop, 1998). Dunlop argues that it is important to understand that none of these criminal enterprises could have operated successfully without the authorisation and involvement of officials and mafia in Russia, stating that the Chechens were in fact only “junior partners in a wave of corruption and criminality emanating from the Russian capital of Moscow” (Dunlop, 1998:130). According to Dunlop, it was more a case of the newly formed Chechen government’s inability to control the numerous illegal activities originating from inside Russia which took advantage of the chaos brought about by the recent breakup of the Soviet Union as well as the independence of the Chechen republic (Dunlop, 1998).

Various reasons have been given for the Russian decision to invade Chechnya, such as the destabilised condition of the region both politically and economically, both of which Russia
was complicit in, as well as the belief that Chechnya’s succession would cause a domino effect with other ethnically diverse regions. Wood argues that the actual trigger for the invasion was the last of many failed coups, in which Russian forces had provided increasing amounts of support, until finally Russian tank crews were caught by Dudaev’s forces and showed on national TV (Wood, 2007). Two days later Yeltsin made the decision to invade, sending in 40,000 troops in early December 1994 to occupy the Chechen capital Grozny. Based on the technological and numerical superiority of the Russian army, commanders believed that they would achieve a decisive victory, ending the separatist movement quickly as well as showing the western world the strength and ability of Russia’s armed forces. However they underestimated the ability of the Chechen rebels who, armed with a detailed knowledge of their fighting environment plus a strong desire to defend themselves against an outside aggressor, proved more than a match for the advancing Russian forces. This first Russo-Chechen war continued with mounting casualties on both sides until, shortly after the assassination of Dudayev in a Russian missile attack, the Khasavyurt Accords were signed in August of 1996. The agreement “rejected the use of force to settle future disputes between Russia and Chechnya and recognized Chechnya as a subject of international law, but postponed a final decision on its status until the end of 2001” (Wood, 2007:75), allowing for the withdrawal of the majority of Russian troops from Chechnya marking the end of this particular conflict. The overall cost of the war in terms of human losses is estimated at “7,500 Russian military casualties, 4,000 Chechen combatants and no less than 35,000 civilians” as well as the almost complete destruction of the Chechen capital Grozny.

4.1.2 Descent into chaos: Interim period and second Russo-Chechen war

The Chechnya that was left after Russia’s withdrawal had little chance at economic recovery. With a heavily damaged infrastructure and unable to receive international recognition and therefore financial assistance from any foreign institution due to Russia’s threats of ceasing diplomatic ties with any state who recognized the Chechen state, things quickly went from bad to worse. The newly elected president Aslan Maskhadov failed to maintain order and security within the region, having little control over powerful warlords and former rebel commanders. As a result Chechnya soon fell into chaos (Wood, 2007). Kidnapping became a principle way of earning money, preventing foreign aid workers from working safely in the region as well as scaring off any potential investors, who were unsurprisingly not willing to
set up shop in the region due to the lack of security as well as the uncertain future of the Chechen republic.

A second military offensive was initiated by then Russian president Vladimir Putin in September 1999, after continued unrest in the region including numerous incursions into neighbouring Dagestan by Chechen rebel groups as well as the bombing of apartment buildings in Moscow which the Russian authorities stated were committed by Chechen terrorists. This second Chechen war was especially brutal and indiscriminate, starting with a massive Russian aerial bombardment of Chechnya forcing over 200,000 civilians to flee the area, as well as numerous human rights offenses committed by Russian security forces on the local population as they swept the area searching for rebel fighters. After a costly battle for both sides, Russian security forces eventually took control of Grozny enabling Putin to gain direct control over Chechnya by May 2000 (Hughes, 2007). However, an insurgency by Chechen rebels continued in the southern border regions, with sporadic guerrilla attacks on Russian and pro-Russian forces.

4.1.3 Stabilisation under Kadyrov: Economic growth amid human rights abuses

In October 2003 Akhmad Kadyrov, a separatist militia leader during the first Chechen war who switched sides, supporting the Russian federation during the second Russo-Chechen war, became president of the Chechen republic. However he was in office for less than one year before being assassinated in a stadium bombing carried about by Chechen rebels in May 2004. Pro-Russian politician Alu Alkhanov was elected president of the Chechen republic following the assassination, although de facto power was actually passed to Kadyrov’s son Ramzan Kadyrov. Due to the minimum age of an elected president being 30, Ramzan Kadyrov would first be appointed deputy prime minister in 2005, then prime minister in 2006, finally replacing Alkhanov as president in 2007 after receiving the support of both Vladimir Putin and the Chechen parliament. Since taking power, Ramzan Kadyrov has positioned men loyal to him in all the major political positions within the Chechen government securing his position of power within the republic.

Since being in power, numerous assassinations have taken place, strengthening Ramzan Kadyrov’s position of power in the Chechen republic. Examples include the assassinations of Movladi Baisarov and Ruslan Yamadayev, both of whom were gunned down by Chechen security services in central Moscow in 2006 and 2008 respectively, as well as Sulim
Yamadayev who was recently killed in Dubai. Movladi Baisarov, a former rebel commander during the first Russo-Chechen war who switched sides during the second Russo-Chechen war, became the leader of a paramilitary group which provided protection for then president Akhmad Kadyrov. However following his assassination, this paramilitary group reformed as “the Gorets”, a Special Forces unit under the jurisdiction of the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB). Allegedly responsible for numerous kidnappings and forced disappearances, Ramzan Kadyrov came into conflict with the group when a dispute between the Gorets and one of his relatives led to a standoff in which the Kadyrovtsy surrounded Baisarov’s stronghold (Guardian, 2006). The dispute ultimately ended when Kadyrov was forced to back down, after Baisarov received support from then Chechen president Alu Alkhanov as well as Said-Magomed Kakiev and his powerful Zapad battalion. Less than half a year later, following the official disbandment and therefore loss of support from the FSB, Baisarov was assassinated in Moscow.

The two remaining independent armed groups, the Vostok (East) and Zapad (West) battalions, which fall under the jurisdiction of Russia’s foreign military intelligence agency, the GRU, were also facing immense pressure to disband and reform under Kadyrov’s oversight. Following a confrontation between the Kadyrovtsy and the Vostok Battalion in 2008, Kadyrov ordered his forces to surround the military compound used by the Vostok Battalion, issuing an arrest warrant for Badruddi Yamadayev, younger brother of Ruslan Yamadayev, and commander of the unit involved in the confrontation earlier that day. Badruddi managed to escape, and is now in hiding, however his two brothers Ruslan and Sulim have been killed and the Vostok Battalion disbanded. The Zapad battalion suffered a similar fate, although its leader Said-Magomed Kakiev chose to relinquish control and take a military position under Kadyrov as opposed to the likelihood of suffering the same fate as that of the Yamadayev brothers.

Although Ramzan Kadyrov has not been directly implicated in the killings, it is not difficult to see a pattern of power consolidation by Kadyrov based upon the disbanding of military groups outside of his control and the elimination of their commanders. Now with almost absolute control in the region, Chechnya has been kept in state of limbo, with huge federal grants for reconstruction, but no oversight as to how the funds are spent. According to Politkovskaya “new Chechen officials, who arose in close contact with the military, strive to keep things in the “no war or peace” zone. Here, everything is allowed under threat of
violence: illegal oil businesses, the fifty-fifty rule, humanitarian aid being sold in the markets” (Politkovskaya, 2003).
5. Findings

In this fifth chapter both the socio-economic and political status of the region prior to the implementation of Russia’s ‘Chechenization’ strategy are discussed. Following this a possible transformation of the conflict is addressed, focusing on the growth of religion and the increased use of terrorism both in the conflict dynamics and the rhetoric surrounding it. The focus then shifts to a specific act of terrorism; the 2010 Moscow metro suicide bombings, detailing those involved in both planning and carrying out the attack. Finally, Russia’s counter-terrorism strategy is discussed, focusing specifically on the process of Chechenization and its effects on the region.

5.1 Group interest identity – values and needs

First it is important to remember that an actual Chechen national identity was not a historical reality but rather a phenomenon brought about through years of soviet influence. As Zurcher states “In the pre-Soviet period, the “nation” was not at all institutionalized in the North Caucasus as a frame of reference for loyalty and source of identity, and it was only weakly institutionalized in the South Caucasus. Instead, collective action and identity were rooted in kinship, clan, and regional contexts, in religiously defined groups, or, in the South Caucasian cities, in class consciousness. The concepts of nation and nationality came to the Caucasus as a byproduct of its incorporation into the Soviet system” (Zurcher, 2007:31). In the absence of a strong national identity, according to Hughes, “The Chechens, however, have been forced into a violent struggle to secede from Russia, and consequently have mobilized more around ethnoreligious myths of the nineteenth century and Islamist resistance to Russian imperial conquest” (Hughes, 2007:37). These sources of identity have over many generations formed a common sense of culture which could influence the contemporary conflict. As Zurcher states, “Regardless of the ethnic, religious, and linguistic differences, a value system developed, based on independence, physical strength, courage, self-sufficiency, and high individual ideas of honor and demanding strict loyalty to family and clan” (Zurcher, 2007:13). These historical values will be discussed as well as the more recent national identity formed during the 20th century.

According to Dunlop, “At the beginning of the Gorbachev era, the Chechens were a people with a formidable list of grievances” (Dunlop, 1998). These grievances, many of which have
been identified in the previous chapter, have not been forgotten by the Chechen people. Dunlop states that "For a Chechen," Caucasus specialist Sergei Arutyunov has observed, "to be a man is to remember the names of seven generations of paternal ancestors . . . and not only their names, but the circumstances of their deaths and the places of their tombstones. This constitutes an enormous depth of historic memory, and in many cases the deaths remembered occurred at the hands of Russian soldiers - under Catherine the Great, under Nicholas the First, under Stalin." "[E]ven the smallest Chechen boy," Arutyunov has noted, "already knows well the whole history of the deportations [of 1944] and the entire history of the sufferings of his people" (Dunlop, 1998:211). This cultural value, which has placed an emphasis on remembering that which could be considered as a denial of the basic needs of the Chechen people; namely the human need of survival, but also that of dignity and respect, could serve as a major source of conflict.

Russia’s management of the region gave priority to Russian speaking people in the economic sector and political sectors whilst denying Chechens the right to have their mother tongue as the official language or have it taught in schools, leading to the denial of Chechen needs and values respectively. Further threats to the Chechen people’s basic needs can be seen in the growing resentment aimed at them from the Russian people. According to Dunlop the “Perceived mistreatment of Chechens in Russia was thus a factor behind Dudaev's decision to focus exclusively upon the well-being of Chechens living in Chechnya. It should also be noted that public opinion polls taken among Russians in the post-1991 period document a marked rise in animosity toward Chechens and other "peoples of the Caucasus" (Dunlop, 1998:134). However according to Zurcher, “The rising interethnic tension between Russians and Chechens, Georgians and Abkhaz or Ossets, Armenians and Azerbaijanis, did not “automatically” translate into civil war. It took organization, resources, opportunity, and leadership by organizers of violence to turn interethnic tensions into sustained and organized violence” (Zurcher, 2007:39).

To understand and explain the motivation behind the elites involved in transforming mass discontent into violent action it might be beneficial to shift the focus away from values and basic needs and instead look more closely at interests. As stated before, interests are the economic, political and social aspirations of groups and individuals. According to Zurcher, “The incentives and opportunities that shaped and constrained the actions of these organizers of violence were quite different from those of the hundreds of thousands who rallied on the
main squares of the capitals, demanding national independence” (Zurcher, 2007:39). A dramatic transformation in both the economic and political sectors occurred in Chechnya prior to, during and after the soviet breakup, followed by an emergence of what Zurcher calls entrepreneurs of violence – those who seek to create and maintain a “theatre of violence” in order to pursue their own interests.

5.2 Changes in economic and political abilities – interests

According to Dunlop, the Chechen economy had historically been split into “two sectors: a 'Russian' one (the oil-extracting industry, machine-building, systems of social maintenance, and infrastructure) and a 'national' one (small village production, seasonal work, and the criminal sphere - and the ranks of this second 'national' sector were continually increasing as new contingents of young people came of working age)” (Dunlop, 1998). The collapse of the ‘Russian’ sector that occurred once the majority of ethnic Russians had fled Chechnya amidst growing interethnic tension was in stark contrast to the expectations of those who presumed that they would benefit from these once exclusively Russian industries. Wood argues that, “Political opposition to Dudaev came initially from former Party officials and pro-Moscow Chechens in the lowlands, but was soon augmented by business elites dissatisfied with the slump in economic fortunes after 1991” (Wood, 2004:19). Former party officials and pro-Moscow Chechens found themselves with zero or limited access to the new political system, whilst elites who, due to the historically clan based political structure of the region, lost their influence and positions of power following the transition to a single leadership under Dudaev’s control.

The dramatic increase in criminality following the first Russo-Chechen war can be interpreted as the result of elites pursuing their own economic interests, who used the destruction of infrastructure and lack of formal security to create and maintain a “market of violence” (Zurcher, 2007:61). Zurcher argues that once “established, there is a strong rationale for the warlords to stabilize the status quo. If government officials receive a share of the revenues from the market of violence, or are themselves acting as warlords, they have an interest in prolonging the violence at low levels. In such cases, sustaining low-level violence with reduced risks becomes a rational objective of both the “rebels” and the “state.” (Zurcher, 2007:61) This argument is supported by Anna Politkovskaya, who states “The only thing Moscow demands of Chechnya is to maintain the lack of order. The bedlam here is
commercially profitable, since controlled chaos brings much higher dividends” (Politkovskaya, 2003).

5.3 Growth in religious influence

Although religion was a central part of the Chechen cultural identity, its significance in the region politically was not substantial. According to Wood, “The 1980s saw a religious revival and, for the first time in Chechnya since 1944, the construction of mosques; but it was only during the war of 1994–96 that Islam emerged here as a political phenomenon, a tool for mobilizing and providing discipline in the resistance to Russian occupation” (Wood, 2004:26). This is a clear example of a politicised identity, in this case religion, being used by elites to serve themselves as well as the group who perceive their identity as under threat, allowing them to achieve their individual goals, which again correspond to the maintenance and acquisition of basic needs. Despite the politicisation of the Chechens religious identity and its subsequent exploitation by elites for mass mobilisation, Wood states that “For all the claims of international Islamic involvement in Chechnya, the cause in which resistance has been mobilized there remains that of national independence” (Wood, 2004:27).

As discussed earlier, there is evidence to suggest that elements of traditional Chechen culture, namely the prevalence of clans as a form of societal structuring, has made it difficult for elites to mobilise the masses into a single collective group. According to Zurcher, “To circumvent this dilemma, the leaders of separatist resistance in the North Caucasus have sought to offer society a new, superior framework for loyalty. One such framework was and is provided by Islam, which has always competed in the Caucasus with traditional values and behavioral codices” (Zurcher, 2007:14). According to Zurcher, Islam can be seen as kind of “social putty” (Zurcher, 2007:17) that was used in the absence of strong civil and political institutions as a way of forming national unity, as well as a supplement to traditional symbols of nationalism which were also lacking in Chechnya. As Zurcher states, “[in the] absence of any common national sentiment, (...) the military and cultural defense came to be organized in the name of Islam” (Zurcher, 2007:17).

5.4 Transition from separatist rebels to terrorist insurgents

From the initial stages of the conflict, which began as secular nationalist movement for secession, there has been a gradual shift towards a more religiously motivated movement that
has seen an increase in both extremist Islamic rhetoric as well as the use of spectacular terrorist attacks. This transformation was partly in response to Russian aggression which included the targeting of civilians in indiscriminate shelling and aerial bombing as well as the abduction, torture and murder of individuals as a form of collective punishment. As discussed earlier there was also a rise in religiosity following the brutalisation of the population that occurred during both Russo-Chechen wars, as well as through a conscious effort by elites to mobilize the masses through a shared religious identity. These trends of increased Islamisation and shocking terrorist attacks were embraced by Russia, who used the events of 9/11 to frame a historically secular nationalist conflict as an internal terrorism problem and part of a larger global war on terror, allowing for a demonization of the enemy and international support from various western governments.

The increased Islamisation of the conflict from the Chechen side as well as the growing use of terror tactics reflected the “split between Maskhadov’s largely secular nationalist “governmental” forces, and the radical Islamic forces under Basaev and other commanders, assisted by a small number of Arab Islamists” (Hughes, 2007:157). Maskhadov was careful to distance himself from the more extreme acts of terrorism organized by Basaev, ultimately removing him “from his post after the particularly horrifying Dubrovka theater attack in September-October 2002” (Hughes, 2007:157). According to Hughes “The Dubrovka attack was immensely damaging to the international support for the Maskhadov government” (Hughes, 2007:157) as it would seem this event as well as others crossed the line of what was considered acceptable to the larger community. However the use of terror tactics was not a phenomenon that came about following the increasing importance of religion to those involved in the conflict, rather they constituted a minor part of the initial political violence.

According to Hughes, terrorist attacks have formed part of a larger campaign of political violence from the start of Russia’s military reaction to Chechnya’s attempt at secession, stating that “An acceptance of the use of terrorism as part of the armed conflict with Russia has been consistent under successive Chechen leaderships, but it has been reactive to Russian aggression against Chechen independence” (Hughes, 2007:153). The first clear use of terrorism from the Chechen side was the hijacking in November 1991 of a Russian domestic airliner taking 178 passengers hostage. The plane was flown to Turkey and then to Grozny where all the passengers freed and the hostage takers were welcomed as heroes (Hughes, 2007). Another example is the Budennovsk Hospital siege where hundreds of patients were
taken hostage within Stavropolskii Krai in Russia by Chechen forces under the leadership of Shamil Basaev. The siege resulted in the deaths of over 100 hostages following numerous failed attempts by Russian security services to end the situation by force, as well as a huge political fallout ultimately leading to the military truce agreement of 30 July 1995 (Hughes, 2007). According to Hughes, both the “airline hijacking of 1991 and the Budennovsk raid of 1995 demonstrate some of the rational criteria under which Basaev operation in the first phase of the armed conflict” (Hughes, 2007:156). However, this relatively strategic use of terror to achieve solid tactical and political objectives altered following “The shift to a greater use of terrorism [which] was brought about by the renewal of armed conflict and the increasing Islamization of the whole resistance movement” (Hughes, 2007:157). This transition became fully developed following “The killing of Maskhadov in March 2005 [which] removed the only authoritative voice preventing the Basaev strategy from becoming a more pronounced philosophy of the Chechen resistance, reflecting the new dominance of the Islamists over the national movement” (Hughes, 2007:159).

At the same time there has been a deliberate effort by Russia to frame the conflict as part of the so-called global war on terror, allowing them to justify a particularly brutal counter-terrorism strategy whilst gaining increased support from numerous foreign governments who themselves have formed an international alliance against a perceived militant Islamist threat. This has had the dual effect of both delegitimizing the various Chechen actors and groups involved in the conflict, as well as decreasing the political weight of independent human rights group’s reporting and condemnation of abuses by Russian security services (Hughes, 2007). As Hughes states, “[Putin] has largely succeeded in tarnishing the whole Chechen insurgency and covering his policy of coercion under the idiom of the “war on terror”” (Hughes, 2007:135) and that this “has been incorporated into Western foreign policy approaches to Chechnya, and Chechen groups and leader have been placed on the U.S. and UN lists of “terrorist” organizations” (Hughes, 2007:131).

Seen as part of this escalation of extremism is the prevalence of suicide bombers in many of the more recent terrorist attacks. However, as Hughes argues, we should understand that although the “Russian government is keen to attribute the motivation of Chechen suicide bombers to Islamists” (Hughes, 2007:151) in actual fact “The concept of suicide attacks was encouraged by Dudaev from the beginning of the armed conflict in late 1994” (Hughes, 2007:155). This would indicate that tactical rather than ideological motives were behind the
introduction of suicide attacks; however the rational calculation involved in such actions is often overlooked in favour of theories based on desperation (Hoffman, 2006). This is illustrated by rhetoric surrounding female suicide bombers in which, according to Hughes, “Studies of the Chechen suicide attacker phenomenon have focused on the personal motives and have also genderized the issue in a manner that stresses that women are acting out of despair and are seeking revenge of the loss of male relatives” (Hughes, 2007:150). This explanation is offered by Wood, who argues that “Such methods are, of course, above all an expression of utter desperation, perpetrated by people with nothing to lose but their lives” (Wood, 2004:31). Both Hoffman and Hughes would dispute this in that, according to Hughes, “any explanation for suicide bombing which stresses the personal motivations oversimplifies the complex mix of personal, political and religious elements involved in such acts of resistance” (Hughes, 2007:152).

The more recent string of suicide attacks have followed the reinstating of the Riyadh-us Saliheen Brigade of Martyrs and the declaration by the current leader of the rebel movement, Doku Umarov, that “The zone of military operations will be extended to the territory of Russia” (Kavkazcenter, 2010). Umarov came to power following the killing of Khalim Saydullayev, the 4th president of the unrecognized Chechen Republic of Ichkeria in 2006 by Russian security forces, later being declared the Emir of a new Caucasus Emirate in 2007 (BBC, 2011). Since his time in power he has claimed responsibility for ordering the most recent suicide attacks carried out within Russia. Umarov, who also served as Chechnya’s security minister from 1996 to 1999, fought in both Chechen wars becoming commander “of the "south-western front" of the rebel armed forces in 2002 (BBC, 2011). Although not overtly religious until relatively recently, Umarov has been instrumental in the transformation of the rebel movement in recent years.

Umarov has claimed in interviews that the rebel movement is no longer concerned with gaining independence for Chechnya, instead focusing on independence for the wider Caucasus area based on more religiously motivated political goals seemingly rooted in Islamic scripture, stating that “The days when we wanted to secede and dreamed of building a small Chechen Kuwait in the Caucasus are over. Now, when you tell the young Mujahedeen about these stories, they are surprised and want to understand how those plans related to the Koran and the Sunnah” (Kavkazcenter, 2011). In one of his interviews with the Kavkaz Center, when discussing the political aims of the rebel movement under his command,
Umarov states clearly that “Our final goal is the establishment of Sharia in the Caucasus, the independence of the Caucasus and free Islam in the Caucasus” (Kavkazcenter, 2010).

The decision to expand the scope of the movement and recruit from areas outside of Chechnya was, according to Umarov, a decision based on the apparent apathy of the Chechens themselves, stating that “the country has slid into a kind of a private farm to feed and support Zakayev and others who are residing abroad” (Kavkazcenter, 2011). More specifically Umarov argued that it was no longer possible to mobilise the masses under a Chechen national identity, claiming that “it was clear that the people would not follow us, our numbers would not be replenished under the flag of Ichkeria” and again that “the youth, who never heard of Ichkeria, was not going to gather under its national flag and to wage the jihad” (Kavkazcenter, 2011). As argued before, if unable to mobilise mass support around a particular group interest identity, then a new identity must be sought by elites; in this case abandoning the purely ethnic Chechen identity in favour of a broader Muslim identity which appeals to a wider pan-Caucasus constituency.

Akhmed Zakayev, who is the current Prime Minister of the unrecognized Chechen Republic of Ichkeria, represents the government in exile whose stated goal remains that of secession and the establishment of an independent Chechen state. Cautious of the increasing influence of Islamists in the rebel movement in Chechnya, Zakayev has distanced himself from Doku Umarov as well the Caucasus Emirate, however he argues that dialogue is needed with the rebel leader, stating “we need to speak to Dokka Umarov. It doesn’t matter whether we recognize him as the Caliph or Amir of the Caucasus or not – this man exists, and behind him there are certain forces” (Prague Watchdog, 2009). Whilst recognizing the change in group interest identity being utilised for mobilization by the rebel leaders, he argues that the their grievances are ultimately the same, stating “they are only bearers of the ideas of Chechen independence, even if in the course of military action that basic doctrine has acquired different forms and is trying to distance itself from its true roots. [...] the people who march under the banner of religion are also people who are not willing to put up with the current situation in Chechnya” (Prague Watchdog, 2009).

5.5 2010 Moscow suicide bombings

The attacks that occurred on the morning of the 29th of March in the Moscow Metro system were not a unique event, but rather a continuation of attacks starting in 1996 that have
claimed numerous lives. Nor was this particular attack more deadly than previous ones, as in February 2004 a suicide bombing on the Zamoskvoretskaya line, which links the main airports in Moscow killed 40 people (BBC, 2010). However, this most recent attack occurred following Russia’s public declaration that it “has ended its decade-long "counter-terrorism operation" against separatist rebels in the southern republic of Chechnya” (BBC, 2009). This gives rise to questions over who were those behind the attacks, what were their motives, and perhaps most importantly why and how was this attack carried out if Chechen President Ramzan Kadyrov’s claim that the Chechen Republic “is a peaceful, developing territory” (BBC, 2009) is in fact true?

According to reports two separate explosion occurred within an hour of each other as two female suicide bombers detonated themselves; the first at the central Lubyanka Station, which lies beneath the headquarters of the Federal Security Service (FSB) headquarters, and the second six stops away at the Park Kultury station. Both attacks were carried out during the morning rush hour and the bombs used were, according to security services, “filled with chipped iron rods and screws for shrapnel” (BBC, 2010) no doubt in order to inflict as many casualties as possible. The attacks took the lives of 40 people and injured more than 80, however despite the death toll, damage to the Metro system itself was not substantial and both stations were reopened in time for the evening rush hour (BBC, 2010).

Following reports that the suicide bombers were both female, the term “black widow” began to be used as a label for the perpetrators as well as reiterating their involvement in previous attacks that involved women (BBC, 2010). As we have discussed earlier, the use of the term “black widow” runs the risk of trivialising possible political motivations or any rational choices made by the women involved, instead focusing purely on explanations based on grief and helplessness as the reasons behind their actions, therefore I shall avoid this term along with its connotations.

5.5.1 Perpetrators

According to official statements, the two women who carried out the attacks were 17 year-old Dzhennet Abdurakhmanova and 28 year-old Mariam Sharipova; both from Dagestan. Abdurakhmanova “had been married to a leading Islamist militant, Umalat Magomedov, who was killed by Russian security forces at the end of last year” (BBC, 2010) and Sharipova was
the wife of Islamist rebel commander Magomedali Vagapov (BBC, 2010). Little is known about the background of the two women, other than that “Sharipova graduated with honours from a local university in 2005 and since 2006 had taught computer science in Dagestan” and that Abdurakhmanova had met her husband on the internet (BBC, 2010). Explanations as to the motives behind the two women’s involvement tend to fit into two categories, one being religious extremism and the other revenge. The religious aspect focuses on their desire to become martyrs thereby earning themselves a place in heaven for making the ultimate sacrifice in the name of their faith. The other explanation focuses on the revenge theory; simply the desire to kill and maim those they see as responsible or simply complicit in the loss and abuse of loved ones and relatives.

By May of 2010 Russian security forces had killed three men which they claim were directly involved in the attack after they resisted arrest. According to Russian officials, one of the men had escorted the two women from Dagestan to Moscow, and one of the others brought one of the women to the station on the morning of the attack. These men fit the role of “minders” that Hoffman discusses in his analysis of suicide terrorism, and where responsible for isolating the women before the attack and making sure that they were delivered along with their explosives to the target area (BBC, 2010).

Doku Umarov, who claimed responsibility for ordering the attacks stated that they “were an act of revenge for the killings of poor Chechen and Ingush civilians by the Russian security forces near the town of Arshty on 11 February” victims that Umarov claimed were “massacred by Russian occupiers” as they were gathering wild garlic to feed their families” (BBC, 2010). He went on to warn that "The war will come to your street... and you will feel it on your own skins," (BBC, 2010).

5.6 Russian counterterrorism strategy and its effects

5.6.1 Counterterrorism strategy past and present

Following the Chechen government’s initial calls for secession the Russian government made minor attempts at diplomacy, hoping that an offer of increased autonomy on the lines of that agreed between Moscow and Tatarstan would ease tensions. However with neither side willing to make substantial compromises on the fundamental issue, that of Chechnya’s sovereignty, Russia adopted a policy of supporting proxies with the intention of overthrowing
the existing regime with one that could be controlled from Moscow. As discussed before, numerous unsuccessful attempts were made to supply rival elites with arms and support, eventually including Russian troops, in an effort to grab power away from Dudayev. These failed coups only helped to solidify Dudayev’s control in Chechnya, who fearing competition and the threat of losing his position of power, began to dissolve various parts of the Chechen government, effectively bringing about an autocratic regime. By this point Chechnya had gained de facto independence as it stopped the transfer of taxes to Moscow and governed itself, a situation which Russia exploited as it modified its strategy to one of destabilisation through its complacency if not involvement in the wave of illegal activities that gripped the region. Following the failure of a direct military solution to the question of Chechen secession during the first Russo-Chechen war, Russia continued its strategy of destabilisation by allowing the region to fall into chaos and lawlessness. Following the incursion into Dagestan by Chechen rebels and the Moscow apartment bombings which Russia stated were the work of Chechen terrorist, Russia once again attempted a military solution to the still unresolved question of Chechen sovereignty, however this time it was carefully described as a “counter-terrorism operation”.

As part of this new counter-terrorism operation, Russia began its policy of Chechenization where it sought to transfer responsibility for governance and security from its administrators and security personnel to pro-Moscow a strongman who could gain the support of the larger population whilst curtailing the power of local field commanders. Their choice was Akhmed Kadyrov, who had strong ethnic ties in the region and opposed the rising Islamisation occurring in the rebel movement. Akhmed Kadyrov was assassinated by Chechen rebels before he could successfully limit their ability to carry out attacks, a mistake his son Ramzan Kadyrov was careful to avoid. His systematic removal of all potential threats through the forced demobilisation of rival field commanders as well as the conducting of frequent and bloody counter-terrorism raids allowed Kadyrov to gain a state monopoly on the use of violence. This monopoly of violence has allowed Kadyrov to efficiently remove much of the threat of rebel violence through combat operations and an overall campaign of intimidation towards the local population as well as any would-be rebels waiting to be recruited. As discussed, Kadyrov’s ability to use violence with impunity has secured his position at the cost of mass human rights abuses where locals live in daily fear of suffering violence towards themselves or their families.
6.3.2 Effect on the Chechen people and the insurgency

Russia’s claims to the success of their counter-terrorism strategy focus primarily on the normalisation of security as well as the infra-structural reconstruction and economic development that is supposedly occurring in the region. It is true that Kadyrov has had great success in curtailing the power of rival elites through a program of forced demobilisation of numerous rebel field commanders following the end of the second Russo-Chechen war. According to Hughes, “Ramzan Kadyrov’s approach of mixing brutality towards fighters who persist with the resistance, and especially against their relatives, with leniency for those who surrender (often rewarding and reemploying them in his own forces) had been an effective instrument for demoralising and containing the insurgency” (Hughes, 2007:124).

It is true that a state monopoly on violence is essential for the stabilisation of any fledgling state, and in the case of Chechnya, was necessary not only for development to occur but also for Kadyrov’s survival after the assassination of his father. One of the core problems facing Maskhadov during the period between the two Russo-Chechen wars was his inability to control rival warlords, a situation which prevented development and helped fuel the criminality which bloomed during that time. Kadyrov’s complete military supremacy has allowed him to reduce the spread of religious extremism that Maskhadov was powerless to stop whilst at the same time making it almost impossible for rebel forces still fighting for secession to operate in Chechnya itself. This has forced rebel groups to recruit outside of Chechnya, shown clearly by the fact that both the suicide bombers in the Moscow metro bombing originated from neighbouring Dagestan. This policy of curtailing the spread of more conservative brands of Islam is part of a broader strategy employed by Russia throughout the North-Caucasus region (Economist, 2006). However, the reality is that this monopoly of violence in the form of the Kadyrovtsy has, Hughes argues, “allowed this force to operate with impunity in terrorizing the civilian population of Chechnya” (Hughes, 2007:124).

The economic recovery and development which Russia claims is transforming the region is, in reality, crippled by obscene levels of corruption, where reconstruction funds of “almost $700 million dollars in 2003 and about $600 million in 2004 were lost in “financial violation”” (Hughes, 2007:126). It can also be argued that whatever state funds allocated by Moscow that are actually managing to reach genuine development projects are minor in comparison to the wealth that is being taken out of the region by the same government, as according to Hughes, “Russia is extracting profits from the restoration of oil production in
Chechnya which significantly exceed federal budgetary allocations for reconstruction” (Hughes, 2007:126).

The Chechen people themselves have suffered greatly from the effects of Russia’s counterterrorism strategy. Hughes argues that “the management of civilian populations” was an essential part of Russia’s strategy, with the result being that “The homes, property, and livelihoods of several hundred thousand people were destroyed, and they were forced to become IDPs” (Hughes, 2007:121). Given the corruption which is preventing the efficient reconstruction of housing and the creation of services and jobs; the loss of the above things, all of which are essential to meeting the basic needs of an individual, is unlikely to be addressed any time soon. As Hughes states, “Understandably, there was an “accumulation of hatred” among refugees” and it is likely that these feelings can only increase given the continued denial of these basic needs (Hughes, 2007:121).

These physical losses are but one part of the larger deprivation of their needs and values that the Chechen people have been forced to endure since the implementation of Russia’s counterterrorism strategy. According to Hughes, when questioned in 2004, Chechen IDPs stated that “More than one in five had seen killings, and nearly half had seen maltreatment of family” on top of this “About two-thirds had experienced the death of a neighbour, while about half the IDPs in Chechnya and one-third in Ingushetia had experienced the death of a close family member” (Hughes, 2007:125).

As part of Russia’s Chechenization policy, not only have the Chechen people been victim to a deprivation of their fundamental rights in the form of physical abuse to themselves and their property, but also their right to legitimate political involvement and representation resulting in Chechens being “frustrated by their inability to elect their own leadership” (Pape et al, 2010:283). According to Hughes, in an effort to maintain direct political control over Chechnya, a fundamental part of its counter-terrorism strategy, “Russia continues to build a facade of local political structures in Chechnya [...] and conducted new parliamentary elections in November 2005, which were widely declared internationally to be a sham” (Hughes, 2007:121). The removal of access to a legitimate political process combined with the other abuses suffered by the Chechen people since Russia’s implementation of their Chechenization strategy, are all potential sources of frustration, an argument that Pape et al mirrors when arguing that since its inception “The fact that violence resurfaced three years
later, in 2007, suggests that political restrictions matter most in combination with corruption, abuse, or oppression” (Pape et al, 2010).

When looking at the conditions which the Chechen people must endure it seems that little has changed in the socio-economic and political situation before the soviet break-up compared to now. Due to the corruption problem, Chechens are excluded from the economic sector unless they have family connections or are willing to pay bribes, whilst having no access to legitimate political representation. Elites are in a similar position, in that some are dependent on the current power structure and relationship with Moscow, and therefore stand to lose out if the situation changed, whilst other elites are excluded from the current system and therefore have an interest in regime change.

The normalisation of security within Chechnya is possibly the biggest claim to the success of Russia’s counterterrorism strategy. According to Hughes, Russia’s “strategy was to secure control and reduce the insurgency to what is classically known as an “acceptable level of violence” (Hughes, 2007:122). However, this policy of securing control began to alter the tactics used by the insurgency. According to Pape et al, “In 2002 Russians implemented a new and especially brutal counterterrorism program” the result of which was that “In response, separatists increased the number of suicide attacks and began to target civilians in 2003” (Pape et al, 2010:271). Given the rational nature behind planning terrorist operations, this change can also be explained as a tactical consideration given the increasing security under the Kadyrov regime which “necessitated a change in separatists’ tactics. Suicide bombers, therefore, may have transitioned to soft targets in order to ensure the continued efficacy of their attacks” (Pape et al, 2010:272). Either way, an indirect result of the success of Kadyrov’s increasing ability to reduce violence within the region had resulted in a spill-over affect within Russia itself. According to Hughes, “If acts of terrorism can be contained within Chechnya proper, Putin and Russian political class and public opinion more broadly would consider this a success” (Hughes, 2007:122). This raises the question as to whether Russia’s counterterrorism strategy, given the recent Moscow metro bombings, can be considered a success even in Russia’s eyes.
6. Analysis

During this sixth chapter the issues raised during the previous section will be analysed using the chosen theoretical frameworks, whilst bearing in mind the research questions formulated.

6.1 Intra-state conflict – a state of negative peace

According to the theories of both Burton and Gurr, violence can occur if individuals or groups perceive that their values, needs or interests are or have been threatened. These perceived threats felt by both elites as well as larger groups can lead to frustration through the process of relative deprivation. This frustration, when expressed as the specific grievances of a shared identity group can escalate and become politicised making them much more difficult to resolve, as the granting of increased social power as a response is no longer sufficient. In the case of Chechnya, there are numerous grievances brought about through a historical subjugation of the ethnic Chechen’s basic values and needs which continue even today.

Already a potential source for conflict, from the perspective of relative deprivation, the strength of these grievances could have grown rapidly following the breakup of the Soviet Union and Chechnya’s subsequent struggle for independence; a period where both the elites and masses had increasing expectations but an ever decreasing ability to realise them. In the case of elites, this was evident in their inability to obtain legitimate political recognition from Moscow as well as the international community, and the masses who faced a deteriorating economy as well as increasing instability in the region. Through a process of politicisation of group interest identity, the grievances of the masses which had become to be perceived as a attack on a shared group interest identity, albeit one constructed on ethno-religious grounds, were taken up by elites who in a process of group interest instrumentalisation of politics, transformed them into a national struggle based on a Chechen national identity. Through this process, Chechen elites sought to increase their own access to political power whilst addressing the grievances and therefore the threat perceived by their constituency- the Chechen people.

As stated, the previous lack of access to the formal sector of the economy could constitute an area of frustration for the Chechen people, due to interests not being possible to acquire. These potential feelings of frustration could have intensified through a process of incremental deprivation when, during the attempt independence in which Dudayev sought to prioritise the
needs ethnic Chechens, aspirations increased only to be met with a static if not decreasing ability to benefit from the formal economic sector following the subsequent failure of both the oil and manufacturing industries within the region. Russia’s historical subordinating of the Chechen people’s values as well as increasing violence aimed towards them could be perceived as a threat to the Chechen people’s group interest identity resulting in a politicisation of group interest identity, which was then taken up by Dudayev, using this politicised identity to achieve greater political influence.

In both these cases, where group interest identities became politicised following the Russian state’s failure to provide increased social power and therefore re-legitimise themselves in Chechen eyes, violence however was not the direct result. It could be argued that violence came about following the decision by the Russian state to cease negotiations with Dudaev in favour of a military solution, effectively removing both the group and the elite’s “access to constitutionally or legally defined representation in the political life of the state” (Nilsson, 1999:215).

According to Dunlop, “The threat of a Russian invasion served palpably to unite the people of Chechnya around their new president. In the middle of the day, the newly elected Chechen parliament administered the oath of office to President Dudaev” (Dunlop, 1998). This process in which an elite uses the politicised identity of a group to achieve greater political involvement whilst providing the social rights sought by his/her constituency, can be applied to this situation, with Dunlop stating that “Once he had solidified his grip on power, General Dudaev began the construction of an ethnocratic Chechen state” (Dunlop, 1998:147). Through this process multiple basic needs are met; firstly the human needs of self determination and preservation, secondly the protection of values, in this case the Chechen ethnic identity, and finally the interests of the elite who achieve power through a strengthening of their political position.

During the period of instability that followed the first Russo-Chechen war, elites used violence to pursue their own economic and political interests in an environment where a legitimate economy or government authority was almost non-existent. This violence can be defined as a form of instrumental aggression, where an individual uses violence in order to obtain set rewards which can be both material such as wealth, or social such as increased influence or respect. In the context of Chechnya, numerous field commanders, fearful to lose whatever influence and power they had achieved during the war, maintained control of their
units, becoming entrepreneurs of violence who engaged in professional kidnapping and other lucrative criminal activities.

6.2 Acts of terrorism - continuation of violence through insurgency

During the course of this intra-state conflict the Chechen rebels have used acts of violence, which from Hoffman’s description would be described as acts of terrorism, in order to achieve both tactical and political goals. This has included the deliberate targeting of civilians resulting in the deaths of hundreds of men, women and children, either through the direct actions of the terrorists involved or as a result of both poorly planned and executed rescue operations by Russian security services. As stated previously, empathic understanding is crucial when analyzing the motivations behind these acts of terrorism, even when they claim the lives of numerous civilians, which as Hughes argues, account for only a fraction of civilian deaths during the conflict - Russian aerial and artillery strikes accounting for the overwhelming majority (Hughes, 2007).

When analyzed from a perspective built on Hoffman’s understanding, the initial use of terrorism was clearly rational, delivering concrete results based on predetermined goals. These goals were to force Russia to the negotiating table whilst raising awareness from the international community as well as sympathy from like minded groups. The Chechen government was complicit in these acts and actively encouraged the use of terrorism so long as it remained in its present form - as an element of larger political violence resulting from an ethno-nationalist struggle employed to achieve specific rational aims whilst not alienating sympathetic or at least impartial outsiders.

The transformation which occurred during the conflict from ethno-nationalist terrorism to a more religious based terrorism, exhibiting the characteristics of this more extreme form as discussed in Hoffman’s work, reflected the rift in the Chechen leadership between the elites in power at the time, which saw acts organized by some whilst being condemned by others. Opponents within the Chechen government to some of the more extreme attacks were concerned over the damage done to the image of Chechen cause in the eyes of the international community, a concern that proved legitimate following the “Beslan hostage crisis, which dramatically eroded separatists’ popular support” (Pape et al, 2010:274). Despite the horrific example of Beslan, there is evidence to suggest that the rebel groups committing these acts were not yet following the pattern of what Hoffman would describe as
truly religious terrorism in that, as stated earlier, religious terrorists are not concerned with “swaying popular opinion” (Hoffman, 2006:239.). This is indicated by the sharp decrease in terrorist attacks targeting civilians following Beslan, a rational choice showing concern for the their cause, at argument which Pape et al support, stating that “refraining from civilian targets may have been a tactical decision to attempt to regain some of the popular support lost when separatists targeted children at Beslan” (Pape et al, 2010:271). Pape et al support this argument, stating that “Despite the influence of Wahhabism, however, hostage operations clearly retained the original and secular goals of the resistance: political independence and freedom from foreign occupation” (Pape et al, 2010:268).

When analyzing the Moscow metro suicide bombings, from a politically focused perspective, Dokku Umarov is clearly stating that this act of violence was carried out under his orders as a response to acts of violence towards the constituency he claims to represent. As discussed earlier, the use of violence against individuals who have a shared group interest identity can be taken up by elites in order to pursue their own political aims whilst serving the needs of the group, in this case against the threat of violence and death from pro-Russian forces. Despite the ever present threat to the safety of family and loved ones, Umarov downplays possible socio-psychological motivations behind the individuals involved in the attacks, stating that “Those who came to avenge their killed fathers, brothers, sisters [...] were not needed by us. We need only those who act with the pure intention for the sake of Allah” (Kavkazcenter, 2011).

From a socio-psychological perspective, both the women’s basic needs had been violated by acts of violence towards their families; Abdurakhmanova who had recently lost her husband when he was killed by pro-Russian forces in December 2009, and Sharipova whose brothers had been victims of intimidation in which one of her brothers was abducted and tortured (Al Jazeera, 2010). Russia’s policy of supporting the traditional Sufi brand of Islam in an attempt to curtail the growing strength of the more conservative Wahhabism led to situation where “Anyone who practised Salafism was outlawed by the authorities” and that “Torture, disappearances and killings became commonplace” (Economist, 2011). Given the women’s apparent strong religious beliefs, Russia’s backing of one religious sect over the other could have been perceived as an attack on their values, namely their right to religious freedom. Based on the theory of relative deprivation, the routine use of violence towards the women’s families as part of a system of collective punishment by Russian security forces, could have
created frustration through a process of decremental deprivation, where their ability to live without fear of violence had been decreasing following “the de-legitimisation and crumbling of the Russian state and its inability to rule by law” (Economist, 2011).

In both these cases it would be difficult to explain the choices made by the two individual bombers as a rational calculation based on incentives. Both women were from Dagestan, a region whose security is loosely enforced by Russian security services acting in an atmosphere of impunity, and it is therefore likely that her family would suffer collective punish due to the women’s involvement in terrorism, an argument supported by Pape et al, who state, “When a suicide bomber elects to carry out a suicide mission, he or she invites a harsh backlash upon his or her family and community members” (Pape et al, 2010:281). Other than their belief that they would receive a life of bliss by dying as martyrs, it is unlikely that a support system exists which would help the families involved or raise their status like in other conflict zones such as Palestine. On the contrary Pape et al state that, when discussing the practice of suicide bombings, the majority of Chechens “generally feel that [the] bombers were manipulated by terrorist groups and do not express widespread support” (Pape et al, 2010:281). In fact there is evidence to suggest that pictures of new rebel volunteers are leaked to security services by the rebels themselves in order to make it extremely difficult for them to return to their families if they wished to do so (HRW, 2009).

A theory based on a combination of political and socio-psychological motivations is supported by Hughes, who argues such attacks are likely to “involve a mix of personal and political motives” and argues that it is mistake to assume that women only carry out suicide attacks “because of the loss of male relatives, given that women have been targets of attacks and humiliations such as rape, and may just as readily be ideologically motivated” (Hughes, 2007:151)

6.3 Chechenization – Success or failure?

Russia’s response during the chaos brought about by the soviet breakup can been seen initially as a limited attempt at granting increased social power, which had the potential to address some of the perceived grievances felt by the Chechen people, by negotiating with the Chechen leadership with regards to greater autonomy. However, as Russia was unwilling to contemplate outright secession, this offer of increased social power evidently fell short of what the Chechen elites and masses felt was necessary to ensure their interests, needs and
values were fostered. Past the point of concessions based on social power, the identity which the Chechen people had grouped around became politicised, being taken up by the Chechen leadership who claimed political power through their declaration of independence in the name of a new Chechen national identity, a process which Russia responded to by implementing a policy of destabilisation.

The obvious destruction done by Russia’s military along with the more subtle undermining of stability through supporting proxies whilst encouraging and participating in criminal activity before, during and after the first Russo-Chechen war is responsible for an increase in the grievances felt by the Chechen people. Through a process of decremental deprivation, frustration would have grown following the rapid decline in the Chechen people’s ability to pursue their interests, meet their basic needs and protect their values whilst their expectations remained fairly static. From this perspective, the growth in grievances would only have grown under the Kadyrov regime establish after the end of the second Russo-Chechen war, where a climate of corruption and violence severely reduces the ability of the Chechen people to achieve their basic needs, values and interests.

Russia’s current Chechenization policy, which functions by supporting an autocratic regime whilst failing to address problems of both corruption and institutional violence, deprives both the elites and the masses the ability to pursue their interests as well as satisfy their basic needs. Corruption which permeates both the economic and political system has created a system where individuals lack the ability to participate or benefit politically or economically unless they have personal connections to the Kadyrov regime, resulting in an inability to pursue their interests. They must also live with the threat of violence and damage towards themselves, family or property, constituting a constant threat to their basic needs. On top of these grievances, the fundamental question of Chechnya’s right to self determination is yet to be addressed which is arguably the greatest deprivation of the Chechen people’s values.

As discussed previously Kadyrov’s successes in internal security and economic development are negated by the corruption and lack of accountability that permeate the autocratic regime and might in fact even increase the potential for violent conflict. If individuals perceived that their potential to pursue their own interests or fulfil their basic needs was increasing due to positive changes occurring following the devastation brought about after a decade of conflict then their expectations could increase whilst being met with the reality of the continuing levels of corruption and systematic violence. This form of incremental deprivation could
constitute a source of frustration that would increase as people’s aspirations grew but their abilities remained static or even decreased.

From a politically focused perspective based on Hoffman’s understanding of terrorism, a by-product of Kadyrov’s autocratic regime and his strangle hold on power is the inability of rival elites to compete for influence. As Hoffman states, “Terrorism is where politics and violence intersect in the hope of delivering power” (Hoffman, 2006:254), and in an environment where elites are denied the ability to gain power through democratic means then following the above perspective they will potentially use violence as a tool in the absence of a legitimate political system. This argument is supported by Pape et al, who argue that “If Chechens continue to lack legitimate political recourse within the Kadyrov administration, they will likely continue to pursue violence as a means to nationalist ends” (Pape et al, 2010:283).

It is quite clear Russia’s counter-terrorism strategy does not seek to achieve the kind of changes that Burton would argue are necessary in order to avoid the risk of continued conflict. The key idea behind Burton’s theory of prevention is to identify and resolve grievances which serve as the source of conflict, yet the Russian leadership make no attempt to understand actors on the opposite side of the conflict. President Medvedev declared that "We must deal sharp dagger blows to the terrorists; destroy them and their lairs," rhetoric which reflects a complete demonization of those involved in violence against the state and subsequently neither their motivations nor their grievances are ever addressed. According to Medvedev, Russia’s response to terrorism needs to be “tough, severe and preventative” stating that “We need to punish” (BBC, 2010). The fact that the strategy revolves around the idea of punishment illustrates that president Medvedev’s interpretation of preventative has little to do with Burton’s understanding of how to prevent the reoccurrence of violent conflict.
7. Conclusion

7.1 Concluding thoughts

Russia’s efforts to transform a decade long intra-state brought born from both historical and contemporary grievances into a campaign of terrorism reflect not only the changing political climate following the 2001 September 11th attacks but also a common policy to demonize and delegitimize used by many governments who are unable or unwilling to understand the motives behind collective violence aimed towards them. As Hughes argues, “States have traditionally denied the political motivations and aspirations of nationalist resistance, and defined such prisoners as “criminals,” “gangs” “bandits” and “terrorists” though generally not employing ordinary criminal procedure but special legal or security regimes to repress such resistance” (Hughes, p.144). At the same time, the growing trend to declare these groups as being motivated purely by religious fundamentalism lends support to a counterterrorism strategy that excludes negotiation- given Hoffman’s assessment that “political concessions, financial rewards, amnesties, and other personal inducements—would be not only irrelevant but impractical” for religiously motivated terrorist groups (Hoffman, 2006:127).

Russia’s overall conflict resolution strategy has been based on the use of an overwhelming military force in an attempt to quell mass discontent whilst eliminating uncooperative elites. Not only has this approach cost the lives of tens of thousands of civilians whilst devastating Chechnya’s infrastructure, but has also done little but add to the resentment and grievances upon which the initial conflict was based. The emergence of the current Chechen president Ramzan Kadyrov as part of Russia’s Chechenization policy is not part of a new approach following the failings of the first and second Russo-Chechen wars, but rather a continuation of its original strategy to place and support a proxy that was capable of maintaining order, through violence if necessary, whilst remaining loyal to and safeguarding the interests of Moscow.

The relative success of this strategy following Kadyrov’s rise to power says more about the man’s ability to preserve his position through the elimination of potential rivals as opposed to its effectiveness at managing the conflict itself. Despite the economic development, increasing security and overall rejuvenation of the region, Chechnya could be said to be in state of negative peace. The conflict itself has de-intensified to infrequent clashes between the remaining rebel groups- operating in and around Chechnya as well as neighbouring republics
such as Dagestan, and Chechen security services supported by Russia. Not only do the grievances remain, but are being intensified by the abuses committed by an autocratic regime that uses violence and intimidation to remain in power.

Based on Burton’s theory of prevention, for a conflict resolution strategy to succeed, and by this he means the prevention of continued or renewed conflict through the creation of conditions which maintain a state of positive peace, then fundamental changes need to be made in order to address specific grievances which led to violence in the first place. From the theories of both Burton and Gurr, we can reason that these grievances are often the result of perceived threats to the interests, needs or values of an individual or group; and as potential sources of conflict, all can lead to varying degrees of frustration based upon the deprivations perceived. In the context of Chechnya, numerous threats to the interests, needs and values of the Chechen people have been identified, and following Burton’s basic needs theory, can be interpreted as potential sources of conflict.

We have also seen that given inadequate access to political power, the Chechen elite has taken the grievances of the Chechen people, perceived as a threat to their shared group interest identity, in an attempt to gain access to political power whilst meeting needs of the group by addressing the issues raised. It stands to reason that so long as there remains both a group who perceive their shared group interest identity as under threat as well as elites unable to gain political power; then this interaction between politicisation of group interest identity and group interest instrumentalisation of politics will continue to manifest itself in the form of collective political violence. This reasoning is supported by Hughes, who argues that although “the political mobilization of identity is usually articulated most obviously in exchanges between elites, and between elites and other social groups” that “By focusing on the actual demands at the center of a particular conflict we can better understand what forces are driving a mobilization and what it is intended to achieve” (Hughes, 2007:173).

Given the perspective of political violence based on Hoffman’s understanding of terrorism, it seems reasonable that elites who lack access to the political process and therefore the ability to gain both power and influence will use violence to achieve the same result. The use of terrorism from a strategic level also reflects the rational decision made by many actors who lack the material resources to wage an effective campaign against a militarily stronger opponent. This is evident by its inclusion from the start of the first Russo-Chechen war as a means of achieving both tactical and political gains. An observation of Hoffman is that those
who commit acts of terrorism argue that they do so in response to actions against themselves, and that they are forced into committing acts of violence that they would otherwise not wish to. It would seem that many of those involved in acts of terrorism argue that they do so based upon acts of violence towards themselves or groups they claim to represent. It is certainly true that the two women who committed the Moscow metro bombings had suffered personally from violence aimed at them and their families whilst Doku Umarov, the man responsible for ordering the attack, claimed he did so in response to violence actions committed against his fellow people. Whether these motives are justified or not is difficult if not impossible to say, but rather that creating an environment where people are subjected to such frequent and extreme cases of abuse that they believe that taking their own lives as well as the lives of an unknown number of strangers is an adequate response is surely not an effective solution. It would follow therefore that by providing a forum for legitimate political participation as well as preventing the kinds of human rights abuses which no doubt breed further violence would be a preferable strategy. Just as Pape et al argue, “As long as Chechens feel themselves under occupation- either directly by Russian troops or by their proxies- the cycle of violence will continue to wreak havoc across Russia” (Pape et al, 2010:283).

The above conclusions could be applicable to numerous other modern day conflicts, be it Afghanistan or even Syria, where the local population over time have accrued a substantial list of grievances, whilst living in an environment characterised by poor levels of socio-economic development. This combined with a perception that they lack the ability to be represented or participate in a legitimate political process has the potential to lead to collective political violence.
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Appendix I

Map of Chechnya

Source: University of Texas library