Chapter 5

ISLAMIC MILITANCY DURING THE PERIOD OF VLADIMIR PUTIN

The province of Dagestan is situated on the southern borders of Chechnya and it has close cultural ethnic and historical ties with Chechnya. It is one of the republics of the Russian federation. This republic has also been traditionally practicing Sufi Islam. However in the post Soviet period it started feeling the impact of Islamic fundamentalism. In the 1990s Wahhabi emissaries and other Muslim radicals from Saudi Arabia and other Muslim countries indulged in propagating their beliefs. They appointed Imams and built mosque without the official consent of the local Muslim Religious Board and were sending young men to get religious education in colleges abroad. This became an eye sore for
traditional religious leadership. As a result two people were killed and several injured in the village of Chaban-Makhi in the month of May 1997 in the ensuing struggle between the two groups. These were not the first of clashes, similar ones had also occurred in the summer of 1995 and in 1996. Most of the population in the North Caucasus region including the people living in Dagestan have historically been Sufi, dominated by the Naqshabandi and the Qadiri Sufi orders (which became popular later). This particular order blended original pre-Muslim traditions with Islamic customs, this aberration was further strengthened through the decades of isolation from the rest of the Muslim world, during the Soviet rule. Sufi Islam survived even the darkest years of Soviet religious persecution and became closely intertwined with

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2 Ibid.
nationalism and with the existing social structures in most North Caucasus Republics, including Dagestan.  

However, there emerged some changes in nature of religious beliefs in the region. 'Wahhabi' missionaries and people believing in the fundamentalist brand of Islam gradually got entry in North Caucasus. The situation had been different earlier the fundamentalists and Wahabbis in the North Caucasus used to number a few, with minimal influence; but religious radicalization produced by the Russo-Chechen war, the arrival of former Arab Mujjahedin Khattab who had served in Afghanistan and, above all, Arab money. These groups made a strong impact and were openly hostile to the traditional Sufi Islam of the region. They particularly opposed the pre-Muslim traditions and peculiar local rituals of the North Caucasian Muslims. But just like in Chechnya here also the rise of the radical Islamic followers encountered

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considerable opposition from both local religious authorities and parts of population. They were suspected of having killed Dagestan's Mufti, the country's religious leader\(^6\). Deadly clashes between Islamic radicals and Sufis became a regular occurrence in Dagestan in the late 1990s.

In spite of this, Dagestan is a myriad of many ethnic nationalities and is too complex for simplistic solutions. Dagestan opens on the Caspian Sea and the coastal plain of Dagestan is the only North-South passage in winters.\(^7\) There are about 30 ethnic groups in Dagestan, the largest of which were the, Avars followed by Dargins, Kumyks, Lezgins, Russians and Laks.\(^8\) Dagestan is marred by interethnic conflicts. These include the conflicts between Laks and Chechens and Chechens and Avars. Chechens were deported along with the Ingush from their homes in Dagestan and

\(^6\) Elizabeth Fuller, no. 1

\(^7\) Shirin Akiner, *Islamic People of the Soviet Union* (London : Routledge and Keegan Paul), pp. 123

Chechnya at the time of the mass deportations in 1944. They were repatriated only in 1957 after Khruschev made his 'secret' speech to the twentieth part Congress exposing Stalin’s crimes and admitted that the treatment of the Chechen and Ingush had been a mistake. They have however experienced problems in returning to their old homes taken over by Avars and Laks. It is therefore imperative that the stability is maintained among the ethnic groups in Dagestan. Dagestan's highest executive authority, the State Council, is composed of one representative of each of fourteen major ethnic groups. The makeup of the Constitutional Assembly, which elects the State Council and makes amendments to the Constitution, also reflects the relative size of ethnic groups. Moreover, the Constitutional Assembly elects State Council candidates on a cross-ethnic vote, which encourages the office-

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11 Elizabeth Fuller, no. 1.
seekers to obtain support from outside their ethnic group.\footnote{Robert Chenciner and Magomedkhanov, "Dagestan Avoids Violence", Paper Presented at the conference on the contemporary North Caucasus, School of Oriented and African Studies, University of London, London, 22-23 April, 1999), pp. 12-13.} This system is built to maintain the ethnic stability in the region. In spite of this there are interethnic conflicts present in Dagestan. For example, the Chechen minority who had been deported from their homes in Dagestan, have been demanding the return of their ancestral lands which had been subsequently taken over by the Avars. Some Lezgins pursue unification with their kin in Azerbaijan\footnote{"More ethnic unrest in Dagestan, 07.10.98, Chronology of events, NUPI, Centre for Russian Studies, Database", (visited November 14, 2000), \url{<www.nupi.no/_vti_vin/shtml.exe/RUSSLAND-DATABASE>}}, and the Kumyks have called for an independent state. In such a complex situation where there are different ethnic nationalities and which are constantly fighting with each other the call of fundamentalism is not enough to bring them together. Where Sufism, which has deep roots in Dagestan failed to bring the different nationalities together it is unlikely that the call of Islamic fundamentalism will succeed.

Today the issue of Islamic fundamentalism and militancy has become closely linked with the Chechens in
Dagestan, known as Chechen-Akkins, which number around 70,000. In recent years the state of Chechen-Akkins' relations with Chechnya has fluctuated. For example, Chechens in Dagestan remained, for the most part, neutral during the 1994-96 Chechen-Russian war. Individual Chechens and another closely related ethnic group, the Ando-Dido, however, opened their territories to serve as supply routes for fighters in Chechnya. The latest conflict followed a similar pattern - official Chechen organizations took a neutral or opposing stance on the invasion, while the reaction among people ranged from quiet sympathy to support. The National Council of Chechens in Dagestan responded to the outbreak of fighting in early August, 1999 with sharply worded criticism. "Armed religious fanatics are trying to seize power...the Chechen people definitively condemn such methods of dealing with existing problems," read the Council's August 11 statement. The reality was more ambiguous. Chechen-Akkins have a number of outstanding issues with other ethnic groups in Dagestan. The returnees were forced to resettle elsewhere -and
have since harbored a grudge against the government of Dagestan. This act of injustice has a ground for driving the Chechen-Akkin population closer to Chechnya. Unable to recover the lost lands themselves, many Chechens-Akkins hope for a union of the defacto independent Chechnya with their original territories in Dagestan. But the official Chechen organisations have taken a neutral or opposing stand on the invasion. While the reaction among people ranged from quiet sympathy to support. The only support for the invading Chechens were the number of communities which had openly denounced the Dagestani government's policy and declared the rule of Islamic Sharia law on their territory. By some estimates, over 60 such localities existed in the republic, mostly in the central Dagestan region of Buynaksk. In August 1998, residents of Karamakhi and Chabanmakhi proclaimed

14 Akkin, Chechens call for border revision, 19.10.98, Chronology of events, NUPI, Centre for Russian Studies, Database, (visited on November 14, 2000) <www.nupi.no/_vti_vin/shtml.exe/RUSSLAND-DATABASE>
their villages independent Islamic territory. Following talks with then-Russian Interior Minister and later Prime Minister Sergei Stepashin, the rebels rescinded their declaration of independence, but they retained their weapons and control over the settlements. The 1998 showdown prompted to villagers to make a number of defensive fortifications, stockpiling weapons and digging underground structures. The extent of the preparations became clear a year later when Russian forces needed more than two weeks to subdue the villages with air support and heavy artillery. By August 1999 when fighting between militants and Russians began, some 10,000 residents lived under effective self-rule and villages governed by strict Islamic laws.

The link between the Islamic radicals of Dagestan and Chechnya goes beyond common goals. In December 1997 the militants from Karamakhi and Chabanmakhi allegedly joined a

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16 "Dagestan placates rebellious villagers, 03.09.98, Chronology of events, NUPI, Centre for Russian Studies, Database" (visited on November 20, 2000), <www.nupi.no/_vti_yin/shtml.exe/RUSSLAND-DATABASE>
17 Aleksei Malashenko, No. 5, pp.61
Chechen raiding party in an attack against the Russian armored brigade near Buynaksk, ending in three deaths. Shamyl Basayev has stated that he wants a union of Chechnya and Dagestan under an Islamic banner. There were at least three potential sources of assistance to Basayev - the local Chechen population of Dagestan, the Wahabbi community, and the fighters reporting to the Khachilaev brothers. The Khachilev brothers represented the gangster politicians in Dagestan. They were suspected of involvement in the terrorist attack on Makhachkala in which 18 people were killed, they had also captured the Parliament building in Makhchakala by force.

It was against this background that militants from Chechnya invaded Dagestan. Militants in Chechnya welcomed the holding out of few rebellious villagers. They saw this issue as an opportunity and a justification to invade Dagestan. Apart

18 'Situation in Dagestan Remains Tense, 16/0998, Chronology of events, NUPI, Centre for Russian Studies, Database', <www.nupi.no/_vti_vin/shtml.exe/RUSSLAND-DATABASE>,
from helping the rebellious villages the militants wanted to incorporate those regions in Dagestan where the Chechen-Akkins live, which are occupied by the Chechens. According to the words of Shamyl Basayev himself, he wanted a union of Chechnya and Dagestan under one Islamic banner.\textsuperscript{20} The militants were led by Shamyl Basayev himself and they entered Dagestan in the month of August 1999. The insurgents perhaps also timed the offensive to take advantage of political and economic instability in Russia proper. The present President and the then Prime Minister, Vladimir Putin, took office just days after the Aug. 7 invasion of Dagestan. These militants were very well-armed with antitank weapons. Stinger anti-aircraft missiles, heavy mortars and armored cars. This was a culmination of a series of violent raids that had been taking place on Chechen-Dagestan border since the past few years. The intrusion was led and masterminded by Shamyl Basayev. His involvement makes it clear that by the militant

\textsuperscript{20} 'EXCLUSIVE: Interview with Shamyl Basayev.', (visited on November 20, 2000),<musslimmag.org/webversion/caucasus/basayev_interview.htm>
activity in Dagestan is closely linked with internal politics in Chechnya and the gradual penetration of the Islamic militants in the North Caucasian region. Basayev is the opponent of the Chechen President Asian Maskhadov. He is one of the warlords in Chechnya who acts on his own independent authority. Through this conflict Basayev has put Mashkhadov in an impossible situation siding with Moscow against Basayev would expose to the wrath of the various field commanders who run Chechnya as their personal fiefdoms. While siding with Basayev Maskhadov runs the risk of provoking Russian military action against Chechnya. The armed men from Chechnya occupied a number of villages and strategic points in the Botlikh region of Dagestan. After days of fighting, a combined force of Russian Federation troops and self-defense units formed by local inhabitants dislodged the combatants from their positions.

21 "Dagestani Leadership protests Incursion, 7/9/90, Chronology of events, NUPI, Centre for Russian Studies, Database", (visited on November 25, 2000), <www.nupi.no/_vti_vin/shtml.exe/RUSSLAND-DATABASE>
But the trouble for Russian did not end, as they had to still fight the radical Islamic villages in the Buynaksk region of Dagestan. These villages had renounced the secular governments of Dagestan and Russia in 1998 itself. Enjoying a de-facto independent status since then. But this situation was now different as no longer the Russians were fighting the Chechen leaders rather they were attacking the native Dagestanis. This could result in widespread resentment against Russia in Dagestan. Perhaps thinking that the Chechen invaders could use this as an advantage they returned again in September. But as in the previous case, local resistance and federal troops repelled the invasion.

The territories controlled by the Islamic radicals i.e. the rebellious villages in the Buynak region, had remained largely quiet during the first invasion of militants from Chechnya. Their inactivity, however, did not spare the

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22 "Dagestan Placates Rebellious Villager, 3/9/98, Chronology of events, NUPI, Centre for Studies, Database", no. 16
23 "Islamic militancy expelled from Dagestan, 16.09.99, Chronology of events, NUPI, Centre for Russian Studies, Database", (visited on November 22, 2000), <www.nupi.no/_vti_vin/shtml.exe/RUSSLAND-DATABASE>
rebellious villages from near-destruction in the latter stage of the war. When the combined Russian and Dagestani defense troops forced Shamyl Basayev's forces to retreat for the first time, the Russians set about disarming the villages. Local population resisted, triggering a fierce battle concentrated primarily on the villages of Karamakhi and Chabanmakhi. At the height of the battle, in September 1999, the militant groups from nearby Chechnya reappeared to the north of the villages, prompting concerns in Moscow and Dagestan that their forces may become overstretched. The invading forces, however, could not be held off. Russian forces briefly occupied Karamakhi and Chabanmakhi on September 3 but defenders succeeded in forcing the troops to retreat few days later. The two villages finally fell on September 12th. While never directly linking up with Chechen insurgents, the Islamic radicals aided their cause nevertheless by tying down large numbers of Russian forces after the latter attacked villages in the Buynaksk region. The combined units of Russian military.

24 Ibid.
Interior Ministry, and the Dagestani defense forces, however, proved strong enough to prevail in both places of fighting simultaneously. Despite the defeat of the insurgents there is still tension in the region. The Russian forces had repeatedly bombed the rebel bases in Chechnya during this campaign. As a result there were fears of another Chechen-Russian war.

Basayev's forces, were only around 1,200 strong, they could not have hoped to capture Dagestan without the help of the local population. For a variety of reasons, local support for the Chechens never materialized, at least not on the scale required for such ambitious undertaking as the conquest of Dagestan. The refusal of the Dagestanis to cooperate and their active resistance to the invasion was perhaps the single most important factor foiling the insurgents' plans. But the important question is that why did the Dagestani oppose the Chechen? The answer lies in the ethnic diversity of Dagestan. Radical Islam has failed to cut across the many ethnic divides in Dagestan.
While the marriage of nationalist and religious appeals fueled the Chechens' fight, the same link had undermined the efforts by Basayev and other radicals in Dagestan. Radical Islam has failed to cut across the many ethnic divides in Dagestan. If a fundamentalist Islamic state were to be formed in Dagestan, crucial issues would have to be solved: Which, if any, ethnic group, would dominate? Can the difference be solved without resort to violence? Thus Ethnic allegiances in Dagestan seem to supersede and sometimes directly contradict religious affiliations. The religious radicals in Dagestan are seen as too closely linked to specific ethnic groups, which elicits mistrust and suspicion among the rest. For example, the Khachilaev brothers Magomed and Nadyr, whose gunmen seized the parliament building Makhachkala on May 21, 1998 and briefly raised the Islamic green flag over the building, also represent the Laks - a relatively small but politically powerful ethnic group. Magomed headed the Laks' political organization, Kazi-Kumukh. 25 Some authors point out

25 'Dagestan's Laks demand their leaders' release, 17.09.98, Chronology of events, NUPI, Centre for Russian Studies, Database", (visited on November 24, 2000), www.nupi.no/ vti_vin/stylesheetRUSSLAND-DATABASE
that Islamic fundamentalists draw most support among Dagestan's most powerful ethnic groups - the Avars and Dargins, and the Chechen-Akkins. But such division inevitably sows mistrust among the Lezgins, Tats and other smaller groups. Consequently, it is very unlikely that any one religious school of thought will acquire hold over all of Dagestan. An attempt by the larger ethnic groups to impose religious rule on the rest of Dagestan would probably lead to the country's disintegration and inter-ethnic violence. Since most Dagestanis feared this violent scenario, they also opposed the intervention from Chechnya and actively resisted Basayev's fighters - with few notable exceptions. Until now, the people in Dagestan have opposed the Islamic militants who want Dagestan to separate from Russia. The continued presence of Religious radicalization, social tensions, and the increasing presence of armed militants, however, may yet cause this political contract to unravel. An important reason for Dagestani support to Russia is the Dagestani belief that Russia is a strong link that binds Dagestan's disparate ethnic groups together. The use of the Russian language and the
sense of belonging to the Russian Federation gives Dagestanis a degree of unity which the country would normally lack. Some observers go as far as predict that the "Russian withdrawal would inevitably trigger a disastrous struggle between Dagestan's around 30 different nationalities. The economic assistance provided by Russia has also been a consideration. This assistance, however, is far from sufficient to solve Dagestan's mounting economic woes. Social tensions Unemployment, poverty and popular anger at corruption are fueling the rising wave of radical Islam in Dagestan and elsewhere in former Soviet Union. More than 85 percent of the Dagestan's wealth is in the hands of 200 families, while most of its 2.2 million residents live far below the poverty line. Overall unemployment is about 30 percent, and tops 80 percent among workers younger than 25. In fact economic instability has increased resentment towards Moscow in Dagestan and this was another reason why Chechen and international Islamic groups began targeting Dagestan.²⁶

²⁶ "archive : Bin Laden helped bankroll Dagestan war, expert says", no. 19
Moscow cited these incursions into Dagestan in August 1999 as part of an attempt to set up an Islamic state in the region and therefore as an important reason to attack Chechnya again with massive force. In the process of trying to flush out the militants and take control of the rebellious Dagestani villages Russians started bombing the border areas of Chechnya and Dagestan. Russia soon reinforced its 15,000 soldiers in the troubled North Caucasus region. The war was highly popular in Russia as expressed by the President of Ingushetia Ruslan Aushev "The Caucasus in general is the testing ground for Russia's political forces. It is here that they score points before elections boost their ratings....."  

However an unfortunate and tragic aspect of the war became the refugee crisis of mammoth proportions. It resulted as the war moved further and the Russians starting bombing and attacking the cities. The Chechens started fleeing into the

28 Tracey German and Tamara Pataria, “Chechen Refugees”, The world Today, April 2000, pp-7
neighboring Ingushetia. The large-scale Chechen exodus to Ingushetia has compounded the situations till further. The effects of the war in Chechnya were felt by other republics of North Caucasus as well. The heavy influx of refugees into Ingushetia proved to be a heavy burden on it particularly. In November 1999, the refugee crisis prompted the President of Ingushetia Ruslan Aushev to sack his entire government for its failure to cope with the refugee crisis. Aushev declared that it was costing him more than 300 million roubles a day to feed the Chechen refugees which was much higher to the amount of aid received by Ingushetia from Moscow. Ingushetia was therefore not in a position to accept more refugees through its borders. The refugees poured into the neighbouring Stavropol Krai as well which also became overcrowded with displaced people, which according to an estimate numbered over 420,00029. There was a strong criticism of Russia by the international community for creating this refugee crisis in North Caucasus. The Russian government however

29 Ibid.
condemned the international criticism of its action in Chechnya. The Russian position was that its Chechen campaign was an internal matter of Russia. Hence it also took strong exception to the comparison of this refugee crisis with Kosovo as it felt that the movement of these refugees was within the borders of Russia but this was not completely true, people from Chechnya were fleeing into Georgia as well. Georgia was the only foreign country bordering Chechnya and the second Russian campaign in Chechnya made Georgia feel concern over its soft borders in Chechnya. According to an estimate about 70 refugees mostly women and children were daily pouring into Georgia. These refugees were taken to the Akhmeta district, which is home to the people of the Vainakh ethnic stock, to be settled there, particularly in the area of Pankisi Gorge an area adjacent to Russia.\(^{30}\) In this fashion about six thousand Chechen refugees according to official estimates reached Georgia, though unofficially the figure was as high as inflow of Chechen refugees has worsened the socio

\(^{30}\) ibid. pp.8
economic situation of these region as it has resulted in shortages of housing growing unemployment and crime rates. One of the major problems being faced by these regions bordering Chechnya is the movement of Chechen militants in the guise of refugees entering these territories. Their aim is to stage subversive terrorist acts. This along with the refugees' attempts to provide for themselves is resulted in the rise in kidnapping, smuggling in drugs and counterfeit dollars. An important outcome of cross border movement of the people was the escalation of tension between the militants of Chechnya who are believers in the fundamentalist form of Islam and local followers of traditional Islam i.e. the Sufi form of Islam.

The Russian response to the activities of the Chechen militants was in the form of massive all out assault which was not bound by any considerations about the amount of weaponry to be used or the use of force required. This was indeed remarkable as in a low intensity conflict for a limited war such factors play a role. The Russians had been
thoroughly humiliated in the previous Chechen campaigns. This campaign had therefore given them valuable lessons and they made adequate preparations and worked in detail the strategy to be adopted in the second campaign. They formulated a definite tactical planning of a counter offensive keeping in view the difficult circumstances existing in Chechnya. While the Russians were somber because of their previous defeat the Islamic militants operating in Chechnya were in a high moral because of the previous Chechen victory.

The second campaign of Russia in Chechnya began when Islamic militants from Chechnya under the leadership of Shamyl Basayev and other foreign elements interfered in Dagestan seeing an opportunity in the unrest existing there in some of its areas. The real motive of these militants was to enlarge the battle zone to the neighbouring areas of Chechnya such as the pre Gordany region in North Ossetia, Ingushetia, Dagestan and hill areas of Georgia and established their control over these areas. Initially to dislodge these militants Russians launched artillery and air attacks on their bases in
southern Chechnya. However the Chechen also had artillery power and they retaliated appropriately. The initial Russian attempt was therefore unsuccessful. During the same time perhaps in a retaliatory mode a series of terrorist bombings were unleashed on Russia and behind which the hand of the Chechen militants were suspected. These included:

- The September 4, 1999 bomb explosion in Russian province of Dagestan in which 64 people were killed.
- The September 8, 1999 bomb explosion in Russian capital of Moscow in which 94 people were killed.
- The September 13, 1999 bomb explosion in Russian capital of Moscow in which 119 people were killed.
- The September 16, 1999 bomb explosion in Russian capital of Moscow in which 19 people were killed.  

Thus 286 civilians were killed in the space of just one month. This prompted Russians to increase the heat on the rebels in Chechnya, the Russians launched an all out military

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invasion in Chechnya to carry the war to the enemy territory and liquidate the Chechen Islamic fighters in their own backyard. There were two options available to the Russians as the Dagestan invasion had been launched in the south. Russians would have invaded through the southern Chechen hills in hot pursuit. Though globally it would have been more acceptable it was a difficult proposition as the operation would have proceeded at a very slow pace and would have led to heavy Russian casualties. The second option and which the Russians adopted was an all out air-land assault spearheaded by mechanized forces in North Chechnya. The strategy was to employ massive air power and artillery strikes against all major politico centers like Grozny, Gudermez Shali, Urus Martan and Vedeno where the Islamic fighters had been holed up in the built-up areas. These were invested and heavily bombarded.

Responsibility for the conduct of the campaign in Chechnya was given to General Lieutenant Gennadiy Troshev. The Russian army, its MVD units and Chechens loyal to
Moscow encircled the city of Grozny. The war in fact progressed in three phases: In the first phase a security zone on the river Terek was captured. In the second phase Grozny was attacked. Unlike the first war the Russians this time approached Grozny after adequate preparation, this was a hard fought battle in which Russian major general Michael Malofeyev was killed. This also led to exodus of the residents of the city which led to a refugee crisis. In the third phase the major cities of Chechnya were encircled and bombed by artillery and air attacks. The Russians finally captured Grozny by February 2000. Lechi Dudaev, the mayor of Grozny and nephew of former President Dudaev was killed. Shamyl Basev was seriously wounded in a Russian mine field. The militants fled to the south eastern hills in the fourth phase the battle was fought for the two critical Gorges, the Argun gorge and the Vedeno gorge in the east. These gorges are the

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33 G.D. Bakshi, no.31, pp.894
34 Jacob W. Kipp, no.32, pp.191
approaches to the south eastern hills and Chechens were strongly guarding these approaches. The village Shatoi\(^{35}\) in the Argun gorge was their main base. By end of February the Russians had captured both the gorges and occupied Shatoi. With this most of the areas of Chechnya came under the control of Russian forces.

However the war reverted to insurgency. The Chechen militants withdrew into the mountains and started using the territory outside Russia mainly the Pankisi gorge in eastern Georgia as a supply route and safe passage. This was a charge put in May 2000 by Colonel General Valery Manilov, first Deputy Chief of the General Staff of the Russian army. This even resulted in a diplomatic row between Georgian and Russian amidst Russian allegations of Georgian support to the Chechen rebels. Along with this the Russians were able to either capture, kill or forced to flee most of the important militant leaders. Salman Raduyev was killed in captivity.\(^{36}\)

\(^{35}\) G.D. Bakshi, no.31, pp.894
\(^{36}\) "Chechen rebel Leaders killed, Report says", (visited on January 24, 2003), <cnn.com/World/9603/raduyev_dead>
Former Chechen president Aslan Maskhadov also fled from Chechnya. The infamous Jordanian Khattab also died. The Russians held elections in 2003 and Akhmed Kadyrov former Mufti of Chechnya, who had been earlier named as head of Chechnya was officially elected the President.\(^{37}\) There was a high percentage of Chechens who voted in these elections and this was proclaimed by Russia as a referendum of its policies in Chechnya. However the foreign media and human rights groups doubted the fairness of the election. Nevertheless Kadyrov was firmly seated in power until his death recently. The Russians also wound up the refugee camps in the border regions of Chechnya.

After open hostilities the Chechen militants attacks continued and the resistance has entered another phase which may be described as outright terrorism. As the militants attacked a maternity hospital in Grozny in which hundreds of innocent people were killed in September 2000. In October

2002 rebels took about eight hundred people hostage in a Moscow theatre threatening to kill them if Russia did not withdraw its forces from Chechnya immediately. About 150 hostages and 50 Chechen rebels died when Russian special forces stormed the building on the third day of the siege. The responsibility of the attack was taken by Shamyl Basayev.\(^38\)

Recently in a major blow to Russian efforts to bring order to Chechnya, Chechen rebels in an explosion in a stadium at Grozny killed Chechnya’s President Akhmad Kadyrov.\(^39\) The responsibility of this attack too was taken by Shamyl Basayev.\(^40\) After this Chechen militants attacked the interior ministry building and police headquarters killing 48 people.\(^41\) The clandestine activities of the militants continue. Kadyrov naturally does not talk of secession of Chechnya. The troubles for Russia however have not ended, though pushed

\(^{38}\) “Chechen warlord claims theatre attack” (visited on December 2002),<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/2388857.stm>

\(^{39}\) “Obituary: Akhmad Kadyrov”, (visited on June 8, 2004), <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/3160962.stm>

\(^{40}\) “Chechen rebel claim Grozny blast” (visited on June 8, 2004), <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/3720375.stm>

\(^{41}\) “48 die in Chechen rebel attack”, The Times of India, (New Delhi), Wednesday, June 23, 2004
back to the hills these militants have been launching terror
attacks in Chechnya and in the other regions of North
Caucasus and even Russian cities. Quite recently they killed
Akhmed Kadyrov and recently bombed a building in
Ingushetia. Whatever semblance of economic order and
employment opportunities there were got ruined. Most
institutions of modern state including education, health dare
and the power industry have been devasted. There is lack of
basic sanitation, sewage system and water supplies.
Tuberculosis is rife in the federal controlled district of
Gudermisky.Russia through the war has created a huge
economic problem.It spent millions of dollars to subdue the
rebellious republic, destroying its infrastructure in the process.
Moscow would now require vast sums in the reconstruction
the area. According to Nikolai Koshman Russian envoy to
Chechnya an allocation of 3 billion roubles $67 million would
be required for the reconstruction of Chechnya.42 Inspite of the

42 Tracey German and Tamara Pataria no. 28, pp.8
Russian claims that it would finish of the war in a brief period, the conflict seems to be along drawn one. According to Alexander Iskandaryan, head of the Center for Caucasian Studies in Moscow. "The Russian authorities were not quite sincere when they were saying this war would soon be over". There are also larger issues at stake. Russian President Vladimir Putin has sought this as an opportunity to increase his prestige amongst the Russians. In seeking a victory in this war he wants to present Russia both to its citizens to the world as a country which has not collapsed completely and can still restore order.

As discussed above the people of North Caucasus have not fallen prey to Islamic fundamentalism their Sufi roots are to be mostly credited with this. There is no guarantee that this scenario will continue in perpetuity, the emergence of new elements are producing a transition which may produce momentous results. Islamic fundamentalism is one of these elements. The only way it can be checked is through

43 "archive : bin Laden helped bankroll Dagestan War", no. 19
strengthening the traditional Sufi beliefs of the people and the democratic structures in their society. Both these elements have been hitherto neglected in fact they have been harmed. What course North Caucasus takes will depend on the success of the above two.