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Occasional Paper

The Ingush Jamaat:
Identity and Resistance in the North
Caucasus

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The Jamaat's Formation

The Ingush jamaat's origins lie in the days of the first Chechen military campaign. At the time, the Ingush who were living in Grozny found themselves scattered among various Chechen units and realized that they needed to create their own separate unit. This drive was hugely assisted by Shamil Basaev, who had a number of Ingush fighters under his direct command. The speed at which external events unfolded at the time, however, combined with the ability of existing structures to adequately handle the situation, forestalled the process of creating a separate Ingush unit in the Chechen republic of Ichkeria (ChRI) military. In the 1996 storming of Grozny, for example, the Ingush were still fighting as separate individuals assigned to the units of Shamil Basaev and Ruslan Gelaev.

The main site of Ingush participation during the first military campaign (1994-1996) was the city of Grozny (which was home to thousands of ethnic Ingush), as well as the districts of Chechnya that bordered Ingushetia. It was with the help of the Ingush that Chechen fighters in the village of Bamut on the Chechen-Ingush border managed to withstand a prolonged siege by federal forces. The Russian commanders were convinced that the village was surrounded, even though help from Ingushetia came almost every day.

One of the most memorable moments of Ingush participation during the first campaign occurred when Magomed ("Malysh" – "the Infant"), one of the fighters in Shamil Basaev's unit, destroyed two Russian T-74 battle tanks in the center of Grozny on November 26, 1994 with a single RPG shot. The first tank was hit and exploded, with the primary explosion also destroying the second tank that had been providing cover fire from behind. This episode, captured on tape, became a symbol of the Chechen struggle and of the hope that the Almighty was helping the resistance fighters.

The Ingush were also the first to oppose the movements of the tank column commanded by General Babich and delayed the movement of troops on the Ingush-Chechen highway in the winter of 1994, thus destroying Moscow's plans for assaulting Chechnya simultaneously from Ingushetia, the Terek and Dagestan. Only the actions of President Ruslan Aushev prevented the widening of the conflict, since it was his personal authority that made Moscow view Ingushetia as a separate republic, instead of just another area settled by the Vainakhs [1].

Jamaat Structure

After the second military campaign began in the fall of 1999, many of the Ingush fighters that had left the ruins of Grozny for Ingushetia started rebuilding their military units. For them, the war in Chechnya was not a war involving their neighbors or a related people, but a war for the motherland they had left behind after it was demolished by the Russian military. They did not, and do not, consider themselves residents of Ingushetia, but to this day, declare that they are "Groznovites" ("Groznovtsy") [2].

By agreement with the Chechen leadership, in the fall of 1999 it was decided by the Ingush fighters to coordinate all of their actions with the Chechen President Aslan Maskhadov. However, they put most of their trust in Shamil Basaev, since he was responsible for creating their separate military unit. It is unsurprising that during the following years the Ingush jamaat almost always coordinated its actions first with Basaev, and only afterwards with the other Chechen commanders.

The first sizable losses were incurred by the Ingush during the battle for Grozny, especially during their withdrawal from the city through the minefields near the village of Alkhan-yurt. Following these events, the decision was made to move the Ingush battalion away from the fighting in order to recruit, reform, and send the wounded abroad for medical care. In 2000-2001 the jamaat was reformed along territorial lines in Ingushetia proper. For example, there was the Sleptsov jamaat (“Khalifat,” long led by Ruslan Sampiev), the Nazran jamaat (“Taliban,” led by Ilias Gorchkhanov, who was killed during the Nalchik attacks), along with the Karabulak and Malgobek units. This approach allowed for the creation of bases in almost all parts of the small republic. Freedom of movement was also possible for these jamaats since the authorities were focused on Chechnya and did not believe that independent units could be set up outside of its borders.

Each local jamaat was responsible for its own territory, with the unity of the whole organization maintained by the council of emirs (the shura). Maintaining contact with the Chechen units and coordinating their activities accordingly always remained important. The Ingush jamaat was always the first to recognize the succession of the Chechen leaders following the deaths of Aslan Maskhadov, Abdul-Khalim Sadulaev and Shamil Basaev, with it being always understood that the Ingush were a part of the greater Caucasus resistance movement.

Following the changes in the organizational structure of the resistance forces, the structure of the Ingush jamaat changed accordingly, with all Ingush units working under the unified jamaat “Shariat” name (though the sub-units continued to be referred to by their old names of “Taliban,” “Khalifat,” “Shariat,” etc. for some time after). In 2004, in accordance with the wishes of Aslan Maskhadov, the Ingush unit was renamed as the “Shariat Special Operations Group.” In mid-2004, this changed into the “Ingush Sector of the South-Western front,” and finally in 2005 in an effort to adhere to the directive of then-president Abdul-Khalim Sadulaev, termed it the “Ingush Sector of the Caucasus Front”[3]. Despite the many name changes, the traditional term of “Ingush jamaat” will be used in this paper, since it becomes simpler to point out its unique characteristics and the geographic boundaries of its influence.

Today, the Ingush sector of the Caucasus Front is a unified military structure that is fully part of the greater Caucasus resistance movement. Every large settlement in Ingushetia has its own emir (leader), who directs a small operations group and is in turn led by the regional (Sleptsov, Karabulak, Nazran, Malgobek, Assin, etc.) leaders. The activities of the entire jamaat are coordinated by its sole leader Ahmed Evloev, better known as emir Magas, a figure that has become as hateful to the Russian authorities as Magas’ old idol, Shamil Basaev.

Numbers

Whenever the question of numbers is discussed, it should be remembered that all sides of the conflict have an interest in providing incorrect information to their opponents. Thus, the numbers given for the Ingush jamaat vary from 500 to the thousands of men referred to by “Kavkaz-Center” [4]. The jamaat is predominantly composed of ethnic Ingush, though it may include members from other ethnic groups including Chechens, Ossetians, Kabardians and Balkars. Given the group’s ability to create a network of cells across the republic, it is sensible to estimate the total membership at several hundred active members. Support from the local population allows these men to hide effectively from the FSB, GRU, local OMON divisions and other federal forces, despite Ingushetia’s small size.

The Ingush jamaat is well known for its military professionalism and readiness for mobile warfare as well as its use of guerrilla tactics. Several dozen members once completed the training camps of emir Khattab and these men are now the heart of the jamaat. These qualities have allowed the Ingush jamaat to conduct independent operations without seeking help from other units in the resistance movement. In fact, the Ossetian jamaat is currently guided by the Ingush leadership, with their combined actions indicating that the Ingush can increase fighter numbers if that becomes necessary. Similarly, the Ingush jamaat assists the Kabardino-Balkar jamaat “Yarmuk.” Thus, following the orders of Shamil Basaev, parts of “Yarmuk,” as well as the Ingush and Ossetian jamaats, infiltrated Nalchik during the famous attack on that city, while the Karachaevo-Cherkess jamaat should have arrived later to assist the guerillas, but remained stuck in the suburbs until the end of the incident because the city had already been blockaded.

Returning to the question of numbers, it is difficult to give a precise figure for the jamaat’s membership. A hundred active members, along with a numerous and enthusiastic “audience” willing to stand shoulder to shoulder with them if necessary, is probably the most likely number. A distinction should be drawn between active members and those that have never fought, but consider their convictions as similar to those who fight for their views with weapons in hand. The numbers of “mosque” members of the jamaat are always larger than those of the actual militants and these men are not always prepared to stand with the active fighters. Thus, the jamaat militants and the jamaat of the mosque are not the same. Only the Russian special services and certain scholars conflate the two, thus leading to official



Emir Magas (kavkazcenter.com)

repressions against all who preach Salafi teachings. This continues in spite of the fact that the laws of the Russian Federation do not consider Salafism to be dangerous and unwanted on Russian territory.

Emir Magas stated in November 2006 that although there are certain smaller groups outside the jamaat that are not yet part of the unified Caucasus front, work is underway to integrate them [5]. Apparently, this is a reference to those who categorically disagree with the Salafi ideology and chose to act separately because they are members of various tarikats. This is one of the causes behind the many disagreements about who exactly is responsible for attacks on specific officials [6]. This means that any number given for the size of the jamaat does not fully reflect the reality of all those who currently oppose the pro-Russian authorities in the republic. The Sufi factor, though not as crucial as it is in Chechnya, is still an important factor in considering the situation in Ingushetia.

Political Conflict in the Ranks of the Pro-Russian Authorities

Following the proclamation of an independent Chechen Republic of Ichkeria on the same territory as the old Chechen-Ingush Soviet republic, the Ingush had no choice but to declare the existence of a separate Ingushetia and hope for a close relationship with Moscow. The unresolved border issues, both with Chechnya and with Ossetia, left the Ingush with no choice in pursuing an independent policy.

Leaders of civic organizations were sure that by showing their loyalty to a unified Russian Federation they would be able to have the ancestral lands, currently part of North Ossetia, returned to them.

It was under these circumstances that Ruslan Aushev, a very popular politician in Soviet Checheno-Ingushetia, came to power. He was able to create a brand new republic with no personal experience in state building, but by using the great trust placed in him by the populace. He was able to do things that few thought could be done. During his tenure, the government was greatly respected, and all activities needed to be cleared with Aushev himself. He was originally from Grozny (born in Kazakhstan during the exile, but having lived in Grozny since the age of two) and always carried with him a respect for the Chechen people. His frequent returns to Grozny for various celebrations in honor of his friends, neighbors, and acquaintances were very touching.

This deference for the Chechen people underpinned Aushev's respect for their right to leave the Russian Federation. He understood what the Chechens wanted, but stated that it was not presently possible. Whenever Aushev met with Aslan Maskhadov, he always tried to reconcile as many conflicts as possible. His actions were never aimed at separatism, but were always guided by the principles of nobility, even though such behavior is frequently a double-edged sword in politics. The Aushev-Maskhadov relationship was fatal to Ruslan, since Moscow concluded that it reflected his sympathetic view toward separatism. Both in pro-Russian Chechnya and among the rapidly created Ingush opposition, Aushev was accused of abetting, and even openly assisting, the resistance fighters.

Aushev's policies were directed at keeping Ingushetia out of the war, and while he was in power, he succeeded. During the same time, events in neighboring Dagestan were already spinning out of the government's control. President Vladimir Putin, however, continued to carry out his policy of appointing his old FSB cronies to positions of power. Ruslan Aushev chose to leave his post early and was replaced by FSB general Murat Zyazikov. Unknown in the republic and with no real authority among the people, Zyazikov has brought about a slow disintegration to Ingushetia since he has been unable to control the corruption and inter-clan warfare that have plagued the republic.



Murat Zyazikov (www.ingushetia.ru)

Paradoxically, while both Murat Zyazikov and Ramzan Kadyrov were given power in essentially the same way, the results have been very different. Despite unlimited personal support from President Putin, Zyazikov continues to reveal how poorly Ingushetia fares, while Kadyrov continually demonstrates how life has purportedly improved in neighboring Chechnya. Both men have chosen to use the trump card of Putin's favor differently. Ramzan Kadyrov has implemented a harsh dictatorship paired with a "cult of personality" ideology purportedly aimed at unifying the Chechen people. Murat Zyazikov has failed to achieve comparable results and has lost his chance forever. His authority in the republic is purely nominal, it is unsafe for him to travel, and during periods of unrest such as the guerrilla attack on Ingushetia and the capture

of the school in Beslan, he has simply fled the Caucasus. Whereas Zyazikov prefers to spend most of his time in Moscow, rather than in his foreign homeland of Ingushetia.

During Aushev's presidency, one could only question the existence of an Ingush jamaat, but Zyazikov's time in office has made the Ingush jamaat one of the most important military units of the entire resistance movement. The constant replacement of the republic's security chiefs has not helped Zyazikov, making it seem that the current situation in Ingushetia may become irreversible.

The recent events in the republic speak for themselves. On July 21, 2007, Vakha Vidzizheva, Zyazikov's advisor for religion and social issues, was killed. Shortly afterwards, the motorcade of the president himself was attacked[7]. Given the fact that Zyazikov's travel is minimal and that Ingushetia has a territory of only 4,000 square kilometers, it seems clear just how hazardous it is for Zyazikov to simply be present in the republic [8]. Moscow cannot afford to replace Murad Zyazikov today, since that would be an open admission of the fact that the removal of Ruslan Aushev was a mistake. That said, a replacement is still necessary and the question of who will be the next leader of Ingushetia is already a serious one. Whoever inherits the post, it is clear that he will also be a member of the security services.

Nazran 2004

While the Ingush jamaat has existed since 1999, its most important and influential operation was the attack on Nazran in 2004. The Nazran raid was led by the Ingush emirs, though it benefited from the full participation of Shamil Basaev and can be seen as an exam of sorts for the jamaat fighters. The operation was directed at showing those in power that not only could a jamaat exist outside of Chechnya, but that this jamaat was capable of striking painful blows on the Russian security forces. To underscore this, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the FSB divisions in Ingushetia, along with units of the Ministry of Defense, the courts and the attorney general were targeted. All of these elements had participated in arresting and punishing the non-combatants who sympathized with the resistance on an everyday occurrence[9].

The real issue of the attack was to move the war to territories outside of Chechnya, something that Aslan Maskhadov had warned the Russian authorities would happen if Moscow could not settle with the Chechen resistance. During the Nazran attack, a school and a mental health clinic were destroyed, while the buildings of the local branch of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Nazran and Karabulak police agencies and several banks were also damaged. The overall costs of the raid, including damage to the governmental buildings, are estimated at 600 million.

The attack was directed at the eight most important sites within the republic. They were all located along the main highway, with guerrilla checkpoints being set up in order to stall incoming help. In the course of a few hours, several hundred men were able to disarm the republic's branch of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, destroy the local FSB branch, and blockade military units in such a way as to prevent them from moving into the center of Nazran to help.

The number of those killed changed from day to day, and in the end it was difficult to say who was killed and by whom, though even the earliest casualty counts were close to a hundred men. Not a single innocent bystander was killed by the guerrillas and even the traffic police were spared, the officers simply being disarmed and sent home. During those short hours, over a hundred officers (the official statistics

claim several dozen) from the Ministry of Internal Affairs, FSB, the Ministry of Defense, as well as court and prosecutor's office staffers were killed. As a result of this operation, Viacheslav Tikhomirov, the head commander of the internal forces, lost his job and the episode served as a last straw for the resignation of Anatoly Kvashnin from his post as the head of the Army's headquarters. Along with them, Mikhail Labunets, the commander of the internal forces in the Northern Caucasus, and Anatoly Ezhkov, the FSB commander for the region, were also fired. Valerii Lukov, the commander of the 503rd regiment, lost his rank and was transferred. The head of the North Caucasus military district was replaced by Army general Aleksandr Baranov, a man who had acquired a great deal of experience in the battles of 1999-2001 [10].

Beslan 2005

Even today, the Beslan story still has more questions than answers and everything concerning it seems to be a mystery. The role of the Ingush jamaat remains completely unclear. If the operation was conducted under its aegis, why were the most notable Ingush leaders absent? The affair brought together a variety of men from different jamaats who belonged to different ethnic groups. What was the need to assemble such a strange group to take children hostage?

It is probable that this group was supposed to take the responsibility for the events at the school, while drawing attention away from the major blow that was supposed to fall elsewhere in the Caucasus. This begs the question of why nothing happened anywhere else in the region. It almost seems like everyone was so busy watching the news and trying to get the most out of this tragedy.

First and foremost, this concerned the leaders of the Chechen resistance. Aslan Maskhadov was unable to make his views public and was surprised to hear that Ahmed Zakaev was speaking in his name. Those close to the Chechen president note that he was truly ready to negotiate with the hostage-takers and tell them that these were not the goals or the means of the Chechens, and that fighting with women and children was not fitting for anyone. For a man proud of his officer's uniform, the assault on the Beslan school was an assault upon his prestige.

The fact that the Russian authorities accused Maskhadov of being an organizer of the attack was a deliberate lie, since Aslan Maskhadov would have never permitted such a thing to occur. Since his attitudes are well known, one of the video tapes distributed among the Chechen diaspora contains a segment in which all of the participants criticize Shamil Basaev and his chosen methods, while emphasizing that it is unacceptable to fight against the civilian population of any part of the Russian population. Basaev was unmoved, however, and responded by claiming that he fought in the same way as the Russian military. These circumstances led Maskhadov to order a full investigation of the Beslan attack and to temporarily remove Basaev from all official duties in the resistance government. These disagreements raised questions about the unity within the resistance movement, since there could be no talk of unity when one commander was able to organize such a massive undertaking without the knowledge of his superiors. Nevertheless, Shamil Basaev had to be treated carefully by both his friends and his enemies, since he always chose the rules by which he played the game.

The answer seems to be in Basaev's statement that he undertook the Beslan affair knowingly, but never suspected that the Russian government would risk killing children. That does not, however, excuse the use of children as a form of leverage against the Kremlin. In all probability,

the men who attacked Beslan were the “Riyadus-Salikhin” (“Gardens of the Righteous”), the personal retinue of Basaev, generally known as a group of kamikaze fighters. Since no one spoke on behalf of this group following Basaev’s death, it seems that the group was not a permanent one, but grew and shrank according to Basaev’s plans, with members being pulled from those units that respected him and were willing to provide the necessary manpower for their leader.

Hostage Taking

One form of pressure that the Ingush jamaat has used against the government and local officials has been the taking of high-ranking hostages. This technique first appeared six years after the conflict began and was a tactic that the jamaat used to test the officials. This recent development, however, may suffer the same fate as that of suicide bombings in Chechnya. Given that it is fairly foreign to Ingush culture, much like suicide bombing is to Chechen culture, it may simply fade away with time. During the second military campaign, a number of novel tactics appeared in Chechnya – many of them eliciting a sharp reaction from the Russian public – but completely disappeared within just a few years. Suicide bombers appeared in Chechnya between 2000-2002, but soon vanished as a phenomenon incompatible with Chechen traditions and customs. This tactic had been borrowed from Palestine, where the custom has been practiced for decades and has become a symbol of the Palestinian struggle.

In the 1990s, any abduction could lead to massive inter-clan conflicts in Ingushetia, but by 2004, the population had grown accustomed to the phenomenon. When compared to the numerous abductions of young men by the security services (in an attempt to reduce tensions by removing sympathizers of the resistance) and the daily attacks of the guerrillas on governmental and security personnel, abductions are no longer an extraordinary event and instead have become another hazard of Ingush life.

Attacks on the Government in Ingushetia in 2006

Following the events in Beslan and the resulting death of thirty guerrillas, it would have been reasonable to expect a reduction in the effectiveness of the Ingush jamaat. Nonetheless, there was no reduction of pressure at this time, indirectly confirming the theory that Beslan was the work of a separate group assembled specifically for that task, rather than an operation of the Ingush jamaat. A chain of well thought out attacks was carried out under the command of emir Magas. These were targeted at the enemies of the republic, which the jamaat considered to be not only members of the local government and the security services, but also the pro-Kremlin clergy.

One of these attacks was the assassination of the temporary minister of internal affairs of the republic, Dzhabrail Kostoev, on May 17, 2006. Explosions rocked the motorcade of the minister, killing him, the driver and two bodyguards. Three weeks later, on June 9, 2006, in Karabulak, Ruslan Nalgiev, a police colonel and head of the OMON team of Ingushetia, was killed by automatic fire in a drive-by attack perpetrated by several unknown assailants. At roughly the same time, the head of the Sunzhen district, Galina Gubina, was also subjected to a drive-by attack in the village of Ordzhonikidzevskaya, and died of her wounds in the Sunzhen district hospital.

During the night of August 19-20, members of the jamaat attacked the households of Shakhhan-Girei Tsechoev and Rustam Belkhoroev, both detectives of the Ingush ministry of

internal affairs, in the village of Alkhasty. Both men were executed and their homes burnt to the ground. In a comparable attack, Aslan Khamkhoev, another government official, was attacked during the night of August 24-25, but survived despite numerous gunshot wounds.

On August 29, Abu Yandiev, a police official, was executed in one of the saunas of Nazran by an unknown attacker. The murdered man was the nephew of Ali Yandiev, the deputy chief of the city police and the target of several previous assassination attempts.

During the nights of October 12 and 13, groups of jamaat members simultaneously fired upon all nine of the cell phone transmission towers of the “Mobikom-Kavkaz” (local “Megafon” subsidiary) telephone company. Two towers were located in Nazran and Ordzhonikidzevskaia, and one tower was in each of the villages of Yandurka, Plievo and Surkhakhi. All of the units were heavily damaged, especially the one near the airport.

On December 7, operations groups from the jamaat attacked several pro-Russian policemen across the republic. Akhmed Torshkhoev, a detective, and his brother, a driver, were killed in Nazran by automatic fire. In Ordzhonikidzevskaia, Abdul Tutaev, a village policeman from Troitskaia was attacked.

Chaos in the Republic’s Government

In 2007, the news from Ingushetia has been an endless chronicle of events in which every other episode is an attack on government officials, security officers, men from the ministry of internal affairs, the courts, the office of the district attorney and the official clergy. Under pressure from the jamaat Magomed-khadzhi Albagachiev, the head mufti of Ingushetia who also serves as the head of the Coordination Center of the Muftis of the Northern Caucasus resigned from both of his positions[11]. An assassination attempt and a warning that destruction would soon follow made him go against the wishes of the pro-Kremlin leadership that offered him protection.

The murders of Vakha Vedzizheva and a Russian family, the firing upon the home of Murat Zyazikov and the head of his guards, Rostambek Zyazikov (the son of Urus Khan Zyazikov, who was abducted in the middle of the day on March 23, while on his way to the Nazran mosque) were just some of the incidents. There were also the attacks on the motorcade of the republic’s president and the attacks upon the 126th regiment of the internal forces located in Nazran (that occurred on the night of July 25-26, 2007). All of these incidents suggest that the situation in the republic is far less stable than in the neighboring regions, implying that the Ingush jamaat has become active and capable, and thus able to control the situation in Ingushetia without the assistance of the Ossetian or Chechen units.

The increase in the strength of the jamaat has led to Emir Magas’ appointment to the post of overall military commander of all Chechen units, a title generally understood to include command over all of the military units of the resistance movement. He inherited this post from Shamil Basaev, but was long considered a temporary appointee (with Magas being both the Ingush leader and the overall military commander since the autumn of 2006), but recent events in Ingushetia have secured his confirmation. (The other candidate was Rappani Khalilov, the leader of the Dagestan jamaat.)

In 2007, Ingushetia continues to live in anticipation of the next assault launched by the jamaat[12]. The authorities have attempted to ensure that the necessary information – that which is unable to be concealed – reaches the media. For example, the attack on the

presidential motorcade has been steadfastly denied by the Ingush authorities, even though the simple possibility of such an attack provides Moscow with reasons for serious thought [13].

Unknown individuals have fired upon humanitarian organizations located in Ingushetia, forcing them to remove their operations from the republic. The same approach was undertaken in the past in order to drive organizations thought to be connected with Western intelligence services out of Chechnya. The similarities in attempting to remove any witnesses to the misery in Chechnya and Ingushetia are clear, with Moscow unwilling to find new methods for controlling the Northern Caucasus.

Given the small size of Ingushetia, nearly all Ingush are acquainted or are related to one another. Because of this, the jamaat and emir Magas are able to maintain such high levels of secrecy only because of the sympathy that they obtain from individuals working in the security services. During one gun battle, for example, officer Khamkhoev secretly contacted the guerrillas and informed them of the actions of the security personnel. Although he was discovered and arrested, the episode is crucial, since it shows that Ingush relate to each other as ethnic brothers, rather than as members of the jamaat or the security services. Similar episodes have occurred in Chechnya, where hundreds of policemen have been arrested for aiding members of the resistance. This aspect of the social structure is still effective, if not particularly powerful.

Conclusion

The current situation in Ingushetia is similar to that in Chechnya on the eve of the second military campaign of 1999. The local authorities are unable to control the situation within the republic, the resistance is unable to overthrow the government, and numerous internal problems (of refugees, inter-clan and inter-party conflicts) remain unresolved, with the Ingush government only too happy to write them off as a consequence of the situation in the Prigorodnyi district.

Slowly, and largely due to the policies of the Russian government, the Ingush are getting used to the idea that they are living in a war zone. This invariably leads to a growth in the idolization of the armed resistance among the youth, with many willing to participate in the activities of such groups. The psychological outlook of those living through war is always different from those living in peacetime. Such individuals inherently start to see everything in terms of casualties and military victories. In tragedy, they no longer pay attention to the victims, but view what goes on as a simple consequence of the environment. This grim worldview makes people less willing to sacrifice themselves for the abstract ideas offered by “Yedinaia Rossia” and the unified state. The intelligentsia begins emphasizing the positive aspects of the military conflict, making the youth more nationalistically inclined and aggressive toward other ethnic groups. This comes in addition to the normally higher level of nationalistic and patriotic attitudes found among those living in a wartime situation.

The population of Ingushetia has been pulled into the conflict that arose in Chechnya, with the hostilities becoming ever more varied and widespread. This has already affected Dagestan and is sure to reach other republics in time. The only thing that can prevent these developments is a radical change in the socio-political dynamics of the region. Given what is happening today, it is unlikely that the Russian government will undertake something unexpected to alter the current situation.

The conflict is, in fact, deepening further, with the apparent pacification and the variety of declarations made by politicians who are doing nothing to alter the underpinnings of the crisis. Placing an issue into stasis is not the same as resolving it and delaying a resolution does not result in winning extra time. The opponents of the federal policies are pursuing their own ends and trying to reinforce their movement. It is hard not to agree with one Russian observer, who states that “albeit slowly, but the favorable view of the mujahideen grows, while respect for the authorities and Russia in general declines, since Russia’s government is unable to offer any positive programs for the future, while being directly associated with terrorism”[14]. The government’s indiscriminate approach to searching out jamaat members has led to the victimization of countless innocent people. Their tragic fate only robs the populace of the remaining respect for Russian law, and instead turns the sympathies of young men toward the rebels in a manner reminiscent of Robin Hood.

Ingushetia is an example of how Russian policy has created vast tensions, comparable to those of Chechnya, in a peaceful region. This has been a great success for the Chechen leadership, since a Russo-Chechen conflict has been transformed into one between the entirety of the Northern Caucasus and Russia. The attempts to pacify Ingushetia using Federal involvement in the way certain commentators from Moscow have suggested will not bring genuine peace, but only freeze the situation in its current state[15]. In order to truly resolve the conflict, it is necessary to understand its foundations and move beyond the notion that the Ingush are “almost Chechens.” The Ingush supported the Russian government in the toughest days of 1992 and have a reason to believe that they deserve to be supported during their time of difficulty. The Russian government needs to remove the label of “Salafite” from those whose opinions differ from the ones of the authorities, halt the attempt to create an artificial clergy organization from men that have no authority among the people, and most importantly, and resolve the situation in neighboring Chechnya. Only then can real peace be brought to Ingushetia.

Key Figures in the Ingush Jamaat

Ahmed Evloev – One of the most famous leaders of the Ingush jamaat. On July 21, 2007, Dokka Umarov appointed Evloev as the military emir (chief commander) of all the forces of the North Caucasus resistance movement. During the second military campaign of 1999-2000, the Russian authorities declared him slain many times; the same was announced in Beslan. Evloev commanded the Nazran attack alongside Shamil Basaev, during which a daring and large-scale operation was carried out with no insurgent casualties.

Adam Nalgiev – Killed during an operation conducted by the military and the Ingush security services. Known to have participated in numerous attacks on members of the security apparatus, Nalgiev became famous in Ingushetia following the murder of deputy interior minister M. Kostoev.

Ruslan Geliskhanov – One of the leaders of the Ingush jamaat, who was killed alongside his emir, Ruslan Sampiev, in 2004 after being surrounded in a house by OMON, police and commandos.

Abdul-Karim Sampiev (Seifislam) – Along with his three brothers, Sampiev was an active participant in the jamaat. All of the brothers were killed after being attacked by military personnel and OMON troopers. Sampiev rejected offers of reinforcements and the brothers managed to hold off two hundred soldiers and policemen for several hours.

Alikhan Merkhoev – Leader of the “Khalifat” regional jamaat and one of the most active members of the Ingush resistance organization. Merkhoev was killed on September 2, 2005, in Karabulak.

Isa Kushtov – Killed alongside Shamil Basaev during Basaev’s assassination.

Bashir Evloev – An Ingush from Grozny. Evloev has participated in the hostilities since 1999 and has been a part of the jamaat during many of the operations conducted in Ingushetia.

Khazbulat Amirkhanov (Abdul-Karim) – Better known as “Khoza.” Amirkhanov is another Ingush from Grozny who looks like an Arab and is often mistaken for a foreign fighter.

Khamza Chigiev (“Kharun”) – An Ingush from Grozny, Chigiev returned from Russia proper in order to participate in the hostilities and became an active member of the jamaat.

Emir Khabibula – One of the leaders of the Ingush jamaat.

Notes

1. The Chechens and the Ingush are closely related peoples united by similar languages, mores and traditions that make them essentially one ethnic group that refers to itself as the “Vainakhs,” a word that means “our people.”
2. Many well-known politicians and businessmen, including Ruslan Aushev and Mikhail Gutseriev, have indicated that they feel the same way, along with members of other ethnic groups that were forced to leave Grozny in the mid-1990s.
3. Maskhadov had a strong preference for military terminology and tended to avoid overtly Islamic names.
4. Milkin, Andrei, “Nevskoie vremia,” September 2, 2004.
5. “Daimokh,” interview with emir Magas, November 3, 2006.
6. For example, during the August 9, 2006 attack on the house of Nazran district prosecutor, the prosecutor’s brother was killed and a total of 13 people were wounded. The Ingush jamaat specifically declared that it played no part in the attack.
7. www.ingushetiya.ru, July 22, 2007.
8. A more serious incident, in which Zyazikov and those near him were wounded, occurred on April 6, 2007.
9. Many ways of determining a person’s “sympathies” were used. These included the wearing of a beard, disagreement with an official mufti, avoidance of Sufi rituals, etc. Frequently, people were not even aware of the fact that they had been placed on the “suspected” lists.
10. Galperin, I. “Sovershenno sekretno,” #8, 2004.
11. <http://www.newsru.com/religy/08jul2004/albogachiev.html>.
12. M. Vatchagaev.
13. www.newsru.com, July 22, 2007.
14. Sukhov, Ivan, “Ingushskii platsdarm,” www.apn.ru, August 19, 2006.
15. Markedonov, S, “Ingushetia: the keys to stability are in Moscow,” www.politcom.ru, July 25, 2007.

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Mairbek Vachagaev is currently a Ph.D. candidate in Social Sciences at the University of Paris. He also holds a doctorate of science from the History Institute at the Russian Academy of Science. As an analyst for The Jamestown Foundation he most frequently appears in the publication *Chechnya Weekly*. Dr. Vachagaev is the author of the book, *Chechnya v Kavkazskoi Voine XIX Veka* (*Chechnya in the 19th Century Caucasian Wars*).