

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

THE CAUCASUS EMIRATE IN THE AGE OF ISIS:
A SHORT HISTORY OF ISLAMIC “STATES” IN THE
NORTH CAUCASUS

by
SUSANNAH JANE STEPHENS

A Project
submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts
to the Center for Arab and Middle East Studies
of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences
at the American University of Beirut

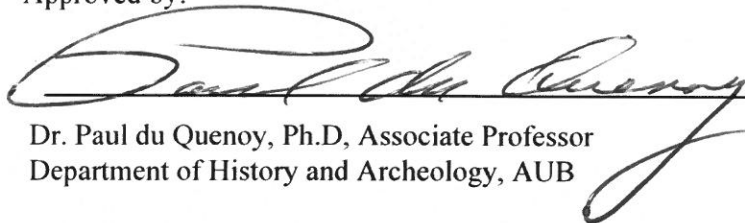
Beirut, Lebanon
April 2016

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

THE CAUCASUS EMIRATE IN THE AGE OF ISIS:
A SHORT HISTORY OF ISLAMIC "STATES" IN THE NORTH
CAUCASUS

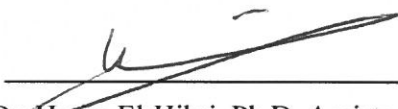
by
SUSANNAH JANE STEPHENS

Approved by:



Dr. Paul du Quenoy, Ph.D, Associate Professor
Department of History and Archeology, AUB

First Reader



Dr. Hatim El-Hibri, Ph.D, Assistant Professor
Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Media Studies, AUB

Second Reader

Date of project presentation: April 25, 2016

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

Project Release Form

Student Name: Stephens Susannah Jane
Last First Middle

Master's Thesis
Dissertation

Master's Project

Doctoral

I authorize the American University of Beirut to: (a) reproduce hard or electronic copies of my thesis, dissertation, or project; (b) include such copies in the archives and digital repositories of the University; and (c) make freely available such copies to third parties for research or educational purposes.

I authorize the American University of Beirut, **three years after the date of submitting my thesis, dissertation, or project** to: reproduce hard or electronic copies it; (b) include such copies in the archives and digital repositories of the University; and (c) make freely available such copies to third parties for research or educational purposes.

Susannah Stephens
Signature

6/5/2016
Date

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would first like to acknowledge the extraordinary teachers who have inspired and encouraged me during the course of my education. I have been profoundly lucky to study under such sagacious and passionate individuals. Specifically, I want to thank Michael Schaffer for believing in me at a crucial moment and giving me my first transformative abroad experience, Dr. Jay Holstein for making learning fantastically exciting and for awakening a lifelong passion for religious studies, David Gould, for talking me through my last year of undergraduate and for patiently and softly guiding me towards the my most correct path, and Dr. Paul du Quenoy for his invaluable advice and attention during the process of producing this project. Thank you all, you have changed my life.

I would next like to thank the great friends who have enriched my life and taught me so much. I would especially like to thank Kelsey Williamson, the most selfless and trustworthy friend a person could hope to have. Thank you for taking care of me, for helping me, and for always going above and beyond.

Thank you Max Gardiner for being patient with me and for loving me so well.

Finally I would like to express my profound and lifelong gratitude to my parents, Thomas Stephens and Sarah Renner. Thank you Mom for showing me the value of both hard work and hard laughter and for doing everything in your power to ensure that I had an enriching life, full of opportunity. And Dad, thank you for sharing your stories, for encouraging me to be adventurous, for never judging me, and for giving my life so much purpose and joy.

AN ABSTRACT OF THE PROJECT OF

Susannah Stephens for Master of Arts and Science
Major: Middle Eastern Studies

Title: The Caucasus Emirate in the Age of ISIS: A Short History of Islamic “States” in the North Caucasus

North Caucasian resistance movements against Russian colonial incursion and political dominance have consistently framed their struggles in terms of “Gazawat,” “Holy War,” and “Jihad.” Despite the religiosity of their rhetoric, only four such resistances have been led by ideologists who actively campaigned for and declared the establishment of an Islamic State in the region. This project identifies these ideological leaders and their “states,” providing comprehensive contexts from which they emerged. These states were more virtual than tangible and relied on ideological constructions and propaganda formed by key religious and military leaders to make them “real” in the minds of their supporters. This project extensively examines the most recent incarnation of this trend: The Caucasus Emirate, established in 2007. The Caucasus Emirate claimed to be following the model set by the previous “states,” yet it is remarkably novel in the region and distinct from its predecessors in its geographical scope, its adherence to imported Salafism over traditional Sufism, its connections with the Global Jihad movement, and its ability to use modern technologies to disseminate information and propaganda. The final part of this project explores how the Caucasus Emirate’s involvement in the Syrian Civil War weakened it to the point that the Islamic State in Syria and the Levant (ISIS) was able to wage and win an ideological war for the allegiance of radical Salafist North Caucasians, resulting in the creation of the “Wilayat Qawqaz” in 2015.

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	v
ABSTRACT.....	vi

Chapter

I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
A. Introduction	1
1. Demographics	2
2. Religion.....	4
B. Russia’s Initial Incursions Into The Region	5
II. THE FIRST NORTH CAUCASUS ISLAMIC STATES	8
A. Sheikh Mansur.....	8
B. Caucasus Imamate	10
C. North Caucasian Emirate.....	15
III. LEADUP TO THE CAUCASUS EMIRATE.....	19
A. The Soviet North Caucasus and the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria.....	19
1. General Dudayev and The Declaration.....	21
2. Movladi Udugov and Akhmed Zakayev.....	23
B. “Wahhabism” in Chechnya and Dagestan in the 1990s	24
1. Arabs in the North Caucasus in the 1990s.....	25
2. Shamil Basayev and Emir Khattab	26
C. The Interwar Period	28
1. The Invasion of Dagestan	33
D. The Second War and the ChRI-in-Exile.....	34
1. Insurgency Period of the ChRI	36
2. Basayev’s Terrorism.....	37

3. New Leadership	39
4. The Kavkaz Center	40
IV. THE CAUCASUS EMIRATE	42
A. Dokka Umarov	42
1. Dokka Umarov’s Life Before Leadership	43
B. Anzor Astemirov	45
C. The Declaration of The Caucasus Emirate	47
1. Opposition and Endorsement.....	49
D. Ideology and Organization of the CE.....	53
1. Implementation of Sharia Law and Administrative Organization.....	55
2. Propaganda	57
3. Said Buryatsky and CE Terrorism.....	58
E. Coup Attempt and Leadership Changes	62
1. Key Deaths.....	64
2. New Leadership, New Terrorist Attacks	65
3. Umarov’s Death.....	66
V. NORTH CAUCASIANS IN THE SYRIAN CONFLICT	67
A. First North Caucasians Go to Syria	67
1. North Caucasian Communities in Diaspora	69
2. Umarov Tries to Retain Control	69
3. Omar al-Shishani and Jaish al-Muhajireen wal-Ansar	70
4. “al-Shishani”	71
5. Crackdown by Security Forces in the North Caucasus	72
B. The CE Between Al Qaeda and ISIS	73
1. The Islamic State	74
2. Omar al-Shishani’s Defection.....	74
C. Aliaskhab Kebekov and The Decline of the CE.....	75
1. Rustam Asilderov’s Defection.....	77
2. Death Blows to the CE	79
3. Abu Usman al-Gimrinsky.....	80

D. “Wilayet Qawqaz” 81

 1. Omar al-Shishani in ISIS 81

 2. ISIS in the North Caucasus: The Wilayet Qawqaz in Action..... 85

E. Salahuddin al-Shishani and The Last Remnants of the CE in Syria..... 86

F. Conclusion..... 88

REFERENCES90

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Introduction

The peoples of the North Caucasus region have vigorously resisted Russian conquest since the first incursions over 400 years ago. One of the most diverse regions in the world, the North Caucasus (NC) contains up to 50 languages and 60 distinct indigenous peoples.¹

The people of these disparate ethnic groups, still living in relative isolation from the outside world as recently as the late 18th century, responded to the initial efforts of Imperial Russia to take control of the area by realizing that they could not hope to defeat the great military power while disorganized and disunified. By this point, the majority of peoples in this region were Muslim. Islam served as the unifying characteristic for the otherwise diverse North Caucasus peoples against the Orthodox Christian Russians. For this reason the resistance movements in the North Caucasus have always framed their actions with the religious terminology of *Gazawat*, or “Holy War,” and later, *jihad*.

Despite the religiosity of these movements’ rhetoric, only four such resistances have been lead by leaders who actively campaigned for and declared the establishment of an Islamic State in the region. This project first examines these leaders and their “states,” borrowing the definition of a state from the Caucasus Emirate’s main propagandist, Movladi Udugov, who said: “The state is not just a socio-political entity

¹ John Colarusso, "People of the Caucasus," in *Encyclopedia of Cultures and Daily Life*, (Pepper Pike, Ohio: Eastword Publications, 1997), 1.

on a certain territory, it is above all, an ideological construction.”² Sheikh Mansur’s state, the Caucasian Imamate, and the North Caucasus Emirate controlled small territories for relatively short periods of time and were constantly under attack from Russian forces. In this way these “states” were more virtual than tangible and relied on ideological constructions and propaganda formed by key religious and military leaders to make them “real” in the minds of their supporters. The second part focuses on the most recent incarnation of this trend: The Caucasus Emirate, established in 2007. The Caucasus Emirate claimed to be following the model set by the previous “states,” and relied on ideology to unify disparate insurgent groups operating in the Caucasus in the mid-2000s, yet it is remarkably novel in the region and distinct from its predecessors in its adherence to Salafism over traditional Sufism. The final part of this paper explores how the Caucasus Emirate’s involvement in the Syrian Civil War weakened it to the point that the Islamic State in Syria and the Levant, (ISIS), was able to wage and win an ideological war for the allegiance of radical Salafist North Caucasian insurgents, resulting in the creation of the “Wilayat Qawqaz” in 2015.

1. Demographics

Situated between the Caspian and Black Seas, divided from the Southern Caucasus countries of Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan by the Greater Caucasus mountain range, the modern North Caucasus Federal District is the smallest of Russia’s eight federal districts and the only one in which Russian Slavs do not constitute the

² "The War Goes For Life...:An Interview with Movladi Udugov," Interview by Kavkaz Center. *Kavkaz Center*. November 28, 2007. <http://www.kavkazcenter.com/russ/content/2007/11/28/54654/movladi-udugov-vojna-idyot-za-obraz-zhizni.shtml>.

ethnic majority. A census conducted by the Russian Federal government in 2010 determined that the total population of the district was 9.86 million.³

It is currently divided into six nominally autonomous republics: Dagestan, Chechnya, Ingushetia, North Ossetia, Kabardino-Balkaria and Karachay-Cherkessia, and the frontier territories of Stavropol Krai and Krasnodar Krai. The borders of these Russian regions are largely the same as those arbitrarily imposed by Stalin in an attempt to isolate and divide allied communities. They generally take their names from large ethnic groups extant in the area, although Dagestan means “mountain area.” Natural topographical borders and a lack of interference from outsiders until the 17th century provided the conditions for a high level of isolation between ethnic groups who have their own cultures, histories, traditions and languages. Ethnic groups are further divided into tribes and clans and show wide variation in social organization from those based on strict social hierarchies to more egalitarian systems.⁴ Greater interaction between the ethnic groups occurred simultaneously with the first Russian colonial incursions. Within the republics currently, multilingualism is nearly universal and Russian is the lingua-franca between the various groups.

Currently, Dagestan has the largest population of the republics with about 3 million people, it is also the least homogenous, with up to 32 indigenous ethnic groups, the largest being the mountain dwelling Avars.⁵ Chechnya is the least homogenous republic with ethnic Chechens comprising near all of its 1.3 million people.⁶

³“National Population Census 2010. Volume 1,” (in Russian), Federal State Statistics Service, 2011, accessed April 19, 2014.

⁴Colarusso, “People of the Caucasus,” 4.

⁵Ibid.

⁶“National Population Census 2010.”

2. Religion

The North Caucasus Federal District is unique among Russia's districts in that it is the only one with a Muslim majority. By the 18th century, the majority of the population of the Caucasus was Sunni Muslim, especially in the regions of modern day Dagestan, Chechnya, and Ingushetia. The Qadiri *tariqat* (school or order), of Sufism first appeared in the region in 12th century. The Naqshbandi *tariqat* reached the Caucasus in the 15th century.⁷ By the 17th century a majority of Muslims in the North Caucasus, especially in the modern day regions of Dagestan and Chechnya, were Sufis belonging to one of these two orders.⁸

The practice of Sufism in the North Caucasus is unique to much of the Muslim world. Indigenous pagan religious practices, present in the country before the spread of Islam, by and large persisted and merged with the new monotheistic religion to form a regional form of Sufism known as Tariqatism, which is unique to the North Caucasus. Tariqatists are characterized by their religious exclusivity, fanaticism, rigidity in organization, strict discipline in study and practice of ritual, and complete submission to religious teachers and leaders.⁹

Reflective of the synthesis between mainstream Sufism and indigenous religious practice, Tariqatists recognize supernatural characteristics of shrines and practice ancestor reverence and pilgrimage to shrines, chant praise to saints or sheikhs, and use amulets and talismans. They prioritize the times and forms of *zikr* (chanting the name

⁷Galina Yemelianova, *Russia and Islam: A Historical Survey*, (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2002), 48.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Idem, "Divergent Trends of Islamic Radicalism," In *Russia and Islam: State, Society and Radicalism*, ed. Roland Dannreuther and Luke March. (London: Routledge, 2011) 128.

of Allah) and participate in methods of devotion and fulfillment of material obligations of the Tariqat instead of focusing on mysticism and self perfection.¹⁰

Naqshbandi Sufi Tariqatists are characterized by strict adherence to Sharia law and a strong respect for the relationship between *murshid* (teacher) and *murid* (disciple). In the context of the defensive war against Imperial Russia from 1834 to 1859, this dogma supported the foundation of the idea of *gazawat*, or Holy War, against the Russians. Religious duty and obedience to one's master became the basis for the "military-theocratic" state of the Caucasian Imamate under Imam Shamil.¹¹ The word "*murid*" became synonymous with the 19th century North Caucasian resistance to the point that the war from 1830-1859 became known as the "Murid War" and "Muridism" became known as the specifically militarized Tariqatism, unique to the North Caucasus.¹²

B. Russia's Initial Incursions Into The Region

Russia's interest in the Caucasus dates to the reign of Tsar Ivan the Terrible in the 16th century when Ivan married a Kabardinian princess in his second marriage. Territorial expansions under Ivan and under subsequent Tsars brought the Empire to the edge of the Caucasus region, where it became embroiled in a rivalry for influence with the Ottoman and Safavid Empires.

The first Russian incursion into Caucasian territory occurred in 1594 under Fedor I when a Russian military regiment established a fortress on the Sulak river in

¹⁰Galina Yemilianova, "Divergent Trends of Islamic Radicalism," 128.

¹¹Galina Yemelianova, "Sufism and Politics in the North Caucasus." *Nationalities Papers: The Journal of Nationalism and Ethnicity* 29 (2001): 664, accessed March 20, 2016, doi:10.1080/00905990120102138.

¹²Ibid.

Dagestan¹³. Although a contingent of the locals supported the idea of a Russian presence as a counterbalance to the Safavids and Ottomans, the majority immediately met the military advance with distrust and aggression.

In 1605 a group of Dagestani warriors surrounded the Sulak fortress and executed the Russian troops there.¹⁴ Territory gained was quickly lost, only to be regained again. Robert Seely describes Russia's initial push into the Caucasus as a "diaphragm, contracting and expanding from its Slavic heartland from the 16th to 19th centuries."¹⁵

Galina Yemelianova identifies the primary reasons for Russia's drive to conquer the Caucasus region the Russian political elites believed 1) subduing the area would protect southern Russia from devastating raids perpetrated by border tribes coming from the region; 2) the Caucasus mountains would provide a strong, difficult to bypass border against Russia's Muslim neighbors, the Persians and the Ottomans, whose Imperial territory came up to the southern edge of the Caucasus; and 3) that Russian control over the region would give it strong leverage against Great Britain's growing influence in the region.¹⁶

Michael Khodarkovsky identifies the aim of Russian conquest as assimilation rather than colonization. The ultimate goal was to Russify, "civilize," and convert the peoples they conquered. In trying to achieve this goal, the Russians initially offered material and political incentives to those who were willing to convert to Orthodoxy.

¹³Yemelianova, *Russia and Islam*, 45.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Robert Seely, *Russo-Chechen Conflict, 1800-2000: A Deadly Embrace*. (Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 2001), 22.

¹⁶Yemelianova, *Russia and Islam*. 48.

This alienated the more steadfastly Muslim peoples, like the Chechens and Dagestani tribes.¹⁷

In 1783 Tsarina Catherine the Great launched a full-scale military campaign, the goal of which was the complete annexation of the North Caucasus region, in part to extend protection to the Christian kingdom of Georgia.¹⁸ Until this point, the peoples of the North Caucasus had no state structures or institutions to counter this attack but the threat of Russian conquest provided a powerful catalyst for the unification of disparate peoples toward a common resistance, particularly among the mountainous regions inhabited by Chechens and Dagestanis.

¹⁷Michael Khodarkovsky, *The North Caucasus During The Russian Conquest: 1600-1850s*. Report. (Seattle: National Council for Eurasian and Eastern European Research, 2008), accessed March 30, 2016, https://www.ucis.pitt.edu/nceeer/2008_821-08g_Khodarkovsky.pdf, 6-8.

¹⁸Yemelianova, *Russia and Islam*. 48.

CHAPTER II

THE FIRST NORTH CAUCASUS ISLAMIC STATES

A. Sheikh Mansur

In 1784, a Chechen named Ushurma from the village of Aldy, near present day Grozny, had a vision of the Prophet Muhammad in which he was instructed to declare holy war against the Russians.¹⁹ A follower of the Naqshbandi Tariqat, Ushurma was educated in a Dagestani Sufi order.²⁰ After the vision he took the title of Sheikh and changed his name to Mansur.

Sheikh Mansur returned to Aldy and began preaching in the area. His popularity grew and he garnered a reputation for modesty, faithfulness, and austerity. The Russian forces stationed in the lowlands of the North Caucasus, along the Caucasian Line, heard of Sheikh Mansur's growing popularity and sent a regiment to Aldy to detain him in 1785. They found the village deserted because the people had heard of the Russian's plans and retreated into the forest. The Russians razed the village and retreated, causing Mansur, for the first time in the history of the North Caucasian peoples, to declare a *gazawat* against the Russians.²¹

The angry Chechens surrounded and slaughtered the Russian regiment in what became known as the Battle of the Sunzha River. Between 300 and 600 Russians were killed, hundreds more were taken prisoner or fled into the forest. The story of this

¹⁹Sebastian Smith, *Allah's Mountains: Politics and War in the Russian Caucasus* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1998), 48.

²⁰Robert W. Schaefer, *The Insurgency in Chechnya and the North Caucasus: From Gazavat to Jihad* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger Security International, 2011), 56.

²¹*Ibid.*, 4.

victory would carry across the region, and Sheikh Mansur took on a legendary quality that drew people to his quasi-mystical quest.

His followers launched a six-year guerrilla campaign against the Russian Imperial forces, led by Sheikh Mansur who traveled around preaching and advocating for the unification of the highlanders into a political-military union under the green banner of Islam. He used the existing Sufi network for popular mobilization, using religious rhetoric to appeal to the disparate ethnic groups to cooperate in the common purpose of expelling the Russians and creating a Shariat state. His message of religious unity against the Christian invaders had real resonance among the people and members of different ethnic groups joined the *gazawat*.

Mansur preached that independence could only be achieved if the North Caucasians adhered to a strict observance of Sharia Law, echoing the Naqshbandi notion that Muslims can only defeat their enemies and achieve glory if they follow the “righteous path.”²² From 1785 to 1791, he was able to unite Chechens and various peoples of Dagestan in this purpose, which at its height had 12,000 fighters.²³

Mansur’s forces avoided open conflict and instead conducted raids on the Caucasian Line forts, though he was never as successful in fighting the Russians as his first battle at Sunzha. Mansur hoped to raise enough men to defeat and push out the Russians in Chechnya and Dagestan and from that point, export the holy war to the rest of the North Caucasus.²⁴

The resistance movement lasted until Mansur was captured in 1791 at the Turkish fort of Anapa. He was convicted of inciting the mountain peoples against

²²Smith, *Allah's Mountains*, 38.

²³Emil Souleimanov, "North Caucasus Resistance Leader Sheikh Mansour." *Prague Watchdog*, April 13, 2006, accessed April 1, 2016, <http://www.watchdog.cz/?show=000000-000015-000006-000015&lang=1>.

²⁴Smith, *Allah's Mountains*, 48.

Russia and was imprisoned until his death at Shlissel'burg fortress near St. Petersburg in 1794. Though the Russians had defeated Sheikh Mansur, the mountains of Chechnya and Dagestan remained inaccessible to the Russians as they continued to colonize the lowlands.

The importance of Sheikh Mansur and his *gazawat* to later efforts to expel the Russians in the North Caucasus cannot be understated. Mansur's movement strengthened the power and military capability of Sufi orders. Similarly, the tenets of Tariqatism in social construction demonstrated that Islam could be effectively used as an ideology, for the purpose of uniting the various ethnic groups and clans into one cooperative, and contributed to deepening Islamization in the population.²⁵ Sheikh Mansur is held up as a paragon among all North Caucasians who have fought anti-colonial armed battles against Russia and this first *gazawat* set the pattern for every Russian-Chechen conflict for the next 300 years.

B. Caucasus Imamate

In 1816, Tsar Alexander I sent General Alexsey Petrovich Yermolov, a hero of the Napoleonic wars, to the Caucasus in order to finally take full control of the area and crush local Muslim hostile "rebels."²⁶ This marked a change in Russian military policy from short term military campaigns to continuous warfare. Yermolov's reputation for atrocity and brutality soon became well known among the Caucasian peoples. He is quoted as saying, "I desire that the terror of my name should guard our frontiers more

²⁵Schaefer, *The Insurgency in Chechnya and the North Caucasus*, 49.

²⁶Yemelianova, *Russia and Islam*, 48.

potently than chains or fortresses, that my word should be for the natives a law more inevitable than death.”²⁷

Yermelov’s rapid construction projects, including the Grozny fortress in Chechnya built in 1818, drew Chechen ire and rebels began initiating raids and attacks along the Caucasian Line. Yermolov responded mercilessly. He enacted a program of deforestation to eliminate the mountain peoples’ military strongholds, razed entire villages thought to be in collusion with the resistance, took slaves from among the Caucasus women, and imposed mass resettlements.²⁸

Schaefer asserts that Yermolov’s application of ruthless military pacification caused the rise in fundamentalist Islam in Chechnya because the shared experience of Russian aggression and the need for vengeance facilitated cooperation between the ethnic groups, whose shared culture was Islam. Among the clans of the North Caucasus, the concept of “blood feuds” and “vendettas” was a shared cultural norm. The Russians had violated the North Caucasus peoples, and this violation demanded retribution. By the end of the 1830s, *gazawat* was embraced by most of the peoples of Chechnya and Dagestan.²⁹

The figure of Sheikh Mansur remained vivid in the memories of the highland people. The leaders of the mid-19th century resistance movement modeled and expanded on Mansur’s precedent. In the early 1800s, Dagastani Sufi scholar Sheikh Muhammad Yaragskii preached a radical interpretation of Tariqatism that would provide the basis for Muridism. He advocated the spiritual and political independence of the North Caucasus and railed against *adat* (local customary practices) that he

²⁷Jeffrey S. Murer, “Caucasus,” in *Flashpoints in the War on Terrorism*, ed. Derek S. Reveron and Jeffery S. Murer, (New York: Routledge, 2006), 90.

²⁸Schaefer, *The Insurgency in Chechnya and the North Caucasus*, 54.

²⁹Yemelianova, *Russia and Islam*, 50.

asserted claimed to be a deviation from Sharia Law. As Khodarovsky relates, as the Russians realized they would not be able to assimilate the North Caucasus peoples, Russian authorities embarked on a program of coopting local elites to act as intermediaries between them and the populace. Given the choice between supporting the religious *ulema* leaders who controlled Sharia law systems and the more secular clan princes who controlled *adat* legal systems, the Russians chose the secular princes. For this reason *adat* became linked in the public rhetoric of *ulema* and Sufi *murshids* with the Russian colonizers and the treacherous local elites.³⁰ For this reason, religious leadership was naturally allied with resistance movements.

Sheikh Yaragskii called for the creation of an Islamic State, an Imamate, based on Sharia Law, which would provide the necessary conditions for a successful renewed *gazawat* against the Russians.³¹ Gazi Muhammad, born in the 1790s in Gimry, studied under the distinguished scholar, Dagestani Muslim and Naqshbandi sheikh Jamaluddin, who was himself a *murid* of Sheikh Yaragskii. He completed his training under Yaragskii, who transmitted to Gazi Muhammad “all his knowledge of the Tariqat.”³²

Yaragskii helped develop Imam Gazi Mohammad’s plans for *gazawat* against the Russians. With Yaragskii, Gazi Mohammed gathered followers and traveled around preaching and implementing Sharia law. Yaragskii openly proclaimed *gazawat* in 1830 against the Russians and announced the creation of the “Caucasian Imamate.”

³⁰Michael Khodarkovsky, “The North Caucasus During The Russian Conquest: 1600-1850s,” 10.

³¹Yemelianova, *Russia and Islam*, 50.

³²Moshe Gammer, *Muslim Resistance to the Tsar: Shamil and the Conquest of Chechnya and Daghestan*, (London: C Hurst & Co Publishers, 2005), ch.6.

Meanwhile, Sheikh Jamuluddin composed the first treatise of Naqshbandi doctrine and practices.³³

Gazi Mohammad appointed himself Imam of the Caucasian Imamate and launched a guerilla campaign against Russian installations, striking forts in Dagestan, Ingushetia, Kizlyar, and Derbent. The Russians sent 20,000 men to hunt down Gazi Mohammad in 1831 and a year later they cornered his forces near his hometown of Gimry where all but two Caucasian fighters were slaughtered.³⁴ Despite the loss of its leader, the *gazawat* was not crushed. One of the men who escaped the Gimry slaughter, Shamil, would become the third Imam of the Caucasian Imamate two years later. Under his rule, the Caucasus Imamate would reach its peak.

Shamil was also murid of Jamaluddin. He was member of the Avar ethnic group born in Gimry in 1796. He was educated in the Sufi brotherhood and in 1828 traveled on Hajj to Mecca where he met Abdel Kader, a North African from whom Shamil learned new guerrilla tactics.³⁵ Upon his return, he joined his childhood friend, Gazi Mohammad, in his fight against the Russians. He became known as the “Lion of Dagestan.” Shamil was proclaimed Imam of the Caucasian Imamate in 1834. Shamil’s long and durable leadership can be attributed to the talents of the man himself. He was a military genius, effective religious leader, and an excellent politician.

Seely notes that Shamil knew how to play a role. His notoriety had grown since his dramatic escape from death at Gimry in 1832, and he purposely cultivated a reputation for religious piety due to his meditation, fasting, and material modesty.³⁶ He

³³Thomas Sanders, Ernest Tucker, and Gary M. Hamburg. *Russian-Muslim Confrontation in the Caucasus: Alternative Visions of the Conflict between Imam Shamil and the Russians, 1830-1859*. (London: Routledge, 2010), 161.

³⁴Smith, *Allah's Mountains*, 43.

³⁵Reveron, “Caucasus,” 90.

³⁶Seely, *Russo-Chechen Conflict*, 41.

used Islam and his own force of personality to reach across ethnic cleavages to create a strong alliance of highlanders, united in Islam and in purpose: to expel the Russians.³⁷

Imam Shamil created an administrative system with village governors who comprised the secular administration and ruled in tandem with Sufi Muftis, who interpreted Koranic law.³⁸ He ruthlessly upheld Sharia Law in his territories, often carrying out punishments himself.³⁹

Although Shamil led the Caucasus Imamate, it was not by any means his personal kingdom. As a man of God, Shamil was beholden to the Mufis. To guarantee their support, he had to follow the Koran. Moreover, although he appointed Naibs, they could effectively govern only with the consent of the villagers.⁴⁰

In the highly militaristic society, he created the first regular fighting force, dependent and loyal to the state.⁴¹ His army did very well against the Russian forces and was able to continue the fighting for 25 years under Shamil. In that time Shamil's state was the closest the Caucasus would come to experiencing a "real" Islamic state for he was able to create tangible institutions and maintain control for a significant amount of time. However, the Imamate could not survive the loss of its charismatic leader.

In 1859, 40,000 Russian soldiers were sent to finish off the Caucasian Imamate to kill or capture Shamil. Shamil was cornered at the Dagestani mountain village of Gunib.⁴² With only 400 men left, Shamil chose to surrender to the authorities. The Imamate was dissolved and the Naqshbandi murids of the *gazawat* were mercilessly

³⁷Smith, *Allah's Mountains*, 45.

³⁸Seely, *Russo-Chechen Conflict*, 45.

³⁹Smith, *Allah's Mountains*, 46.

⁴⁰Seely, *Russo-Chechen Conflict*, 46.

⁴¹Ibid, 45.

⁴²Smith, *Allah's Mountains*, 49.

punished. Many were forced to join other Tariqas, while others emigrated to Turkey to escape the persecution.⁴³ The Qadiri order absorbed many of the former Naqshbandis.

In contrast to the Naqshbandi order, the Qadiri were more accepting of Russian rule, which allowed them positions of relative power in the Tsarist regime's administration of the Caucasus.⁴⁴ A low level of anti-Russian insurgency among the mountain peoples against the Empire authorities occurred for the next 50 years.

C. North Caucasian Emirate

The chaos of the 1917 Russian Revolution allowed the North Caucasians to again push their claims for self-determination and independence from Russia. Nationalists formed the First North Caucasian Congress, which set up the Central Committee of the Union of the North Caucasus and Dagestan to act as a provisional government for a new independent state in May of that year.⁴⁵ A year later in May 1918 the new state declared unilateral independence from Russia.

The Russian White movement's Volunteer Army, then locked in battle on many fronts with the Bolsheviks for control of the Russian Empire, invaded the Caucasus to subdue the upstart independence movement. They were concerned with maintaining the unity of the current Russian Empire and they wanted to prevent the Bolsheviks from taking the area over.⁴⁶ Led by General Anton Denikin, the White Russians moved through the North Caucasus and engaged in clashes with local militias. Finally reaching Chechnya and Ingushetia in February 1919, they burned dozens of towns and conducted

⁴³Yemeljanova, "Sufism and Politics in the North Caucasus," 664.

⁴⁴Idem, *Russia and Islam*, p. 51

⁴⁵Abdurakhman Avtorkhanov and Marie Broxup. *The North Caucasus Barrier: The Russian Advance towards the Muslim World* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), 152.

⁴⁶John B. Dunlop, *Russia Confronts Chechnya: Roots of a Separatist Conflict* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 38.

a pogrom against the people of Grozny. The nationalist movement was crushed and the new state fell.⁴⁷

In August 1917, at the same time that the Nationalists were forming their nascent state, a congress of Muslim leaders in Andij elected the revered 87-year old Chechen Naqshbandi Sheikh Uzun Haji the Imam of Chechnya and Shiekh Najmuddin Hotso the Imam of Dagestan.⁴⁸ These two sheikhs would lead an Islamist rebellion against the invading White army. Sheikh Uzun Haji, from Salty in Dagestan, was a “gifted military leader, learned Arabist, and a strict adherent to the Sharia.”⁴⁹ By 1918, they had raised an army of over 10,000 men.⁵⁰ Uzun Haji took over the village of Vedeno and declared war on Denikin soon after.

In September 1919 Uzun Haji announced the creation of the North Caucasus Emirate as an independent monarchy under the protection of Ottoman Sultan Mehmed VI. He relied on the support of the mountain people in Chechnya and Dagestan but Haji believed that the boundaries of his state should extend to all Muslim regions of the Caucasus.⁵¹

Uzun Haji’s forces were not strong enough to counter Denikin on their own so he accepted the aid of the Red army in repelling the Whites and was given the Fifth Army of the Bolshevik forces to assist.⁵² The Bolsheviks promised the North Caucasus Emirate recognition and autonomy when the war was over and the freedom to institute

⁴⁷Amjad M. Jaimoukha, *The Chechens: A Handbook* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2005), 53.

⁴⁸Jaimoukha, *The Chechens: A Handbook*, 53.

⁴⁹Dunlop, *Russia Confronts Chechnya: Roots of a Separatist Conflict*, 38.

⁵⁰Dunlop, *Russia Confronts Chechnya: Roots of a Separatist Conflict*, 38.

⁵¹Mairbek Vatchagaev, "Uzun Haji's and Dokka Umarov's Emirates: A Retrospective." *North Caucasian Analysis* 9, no. 10 (March 13, 2008): 1, [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=4785&no_cache=1#.VwCRTDZ94b3](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?tx_ttnews[tt_news]=4785&no_cache=1#.VwCRTDZ94b3).

⁵²Jaimoukha, *The Chechens: A Handbook*, 53.

Sharia.⁵³ Despite the Bolshevik aid, Uzun Haji's forces were defeated in battle with Denikin's forces in fall of 1919.

Although he won the battle, Denikin's resources were so depleted by his overall military endeavour he was forced to retreat his White army to the Black Sea Coast and evacuate his forces from the North Caucasus by May 1920. The struggling Emirate limped on until the summer of 1920, when Uzun Haji was forced to allow the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic to fully occupy the area to deal with the abysmal economic situation. Haji died in May 1920 and the Bolsheviks quickly reneged on their promise to allow the Emirate autonomy and recognition and formally abolished the Emirate in September 1921.⁵⁴ Hopes were high that the end of the Russian Empire would allow the North Caucasus freedom from the colonial yoke, and that Sheikh Haji's Emirate would successfully finish the work started by Sheikh Mansur and Imam Shamil, making the Bolshevik betrayal all the more bitter for the Sufi Islamists.

Najmuddin Hotso and Imam Shamil's grandson, Said Beg, led the Naqshbandi Sufis in a revolt against the new Communist rulers. The revolt was mostly put down by the following year but Hotso continued operations against the Bolsheviks until he was captured and executed in September 1925.⁵⁵ The Soviet crackdown on Islamic institutions in the North Caucasus began in earnest around this time and the Naqshbandi order was again the most severely persecuted. The Soviets elevated the Qadiri order in order to create an "official" Soviet Islamic institution that would be heavily controlled by Soviet authorities.⁵⁶

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴Jaimoukha, *The Chechens: A Handbook*, 54.

⁵⁵N. Hanif, *Biographical Encyclopaedia of Sufis: Africa and Europe*, (New Delhi: Sarup & Sons, 2002), 117.

⁵⁶Hanif, *Biographical Encyclopaedia of Sufis: Africa and Europe*, 121.

Like in the rest of the Soviet Union, the period that followed was characterized by rapid industrialization and collectivization starting in 1928, as well as harsh suppression of religion and political dissent. In the Caucasus Soviet authorities destroyed most of the mosques and religious institutions and established regionally-based spiritual boards of Muslims called Spiritual Boards of Muslims, or DUMs, to monitor and control “official” state Islam.⁵⁷ All other forms of Islam were harshly persecuted and Naqshbandi clerics were harassed, imprisoned, and killed.

In 1936 the Soviets redrew the administrative borderlines to create artificial states, lumping together unrelated competing ethnic groups in an attempt to ensure that the Soviet government and party administration was the only unifying force. These borderlines have largely remained in place ever since.⁵⁸

Mass arrests and purges were common in the Soviet period under Stalin, culminating in Operation Lentil in 1944. Accused of collaborating with the Nazis, who had briefly occupied the North Caucasus during World War II, hundreds of thousands of Chechens, Ingush, and members of other ethnic groups were deported to Central Asia in Stalin’s genocidal attempt to deal with the Caucasian “problem” once and for all.⁵⁹ They were allowed to return under Khrushchev in the 1950s, but they continued to be harshly repressed for several decades thereafter.

⁵⁷Gordon M. Hahn, *Russia's Islamic Threat*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 26.

⁵⁸Smith, *Allah's Mountains*, 57.

⁵⁹Ibid, 58.

CHAPTER III

LEADUP TO THE CAUCASUS EMIRATE

A. The Soviet North Caucasus and the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria

Because of the repressive policies against religion and the promotion of Soviet identity above ethnic and religious identity, many North Caucasians lost touch with their Muslim heritage during the six decades of Soviet rule. The majority of urban people had grown up in an atheist state and were not practicing Muslims; many were ignorant of basic tenets of faith.⁶⁰ Traditional Sufism was stronger in rural areas where Islam remained “the essential regulator of social and family life,” especially in Chechnya, Ingushetia, and Dagestan, where the Sufi brotherhoods were the most intact.⁶¹

By the end of the 1980s, the situation in the North Caucasus was characterized by a bad economy, high unemployment and increasing unrest and crime. It was also the start of a re-Islamization period as previous restrictions on religious activity were lifted North Caucasus peoples were able to practice their faith with more freedom from repression. The U.S.S.R. allowed mosques to reopen in 1978.

Taking advantage of this “opening,” Arab Gulf sponsors sought to establish Islamic charities and civil societies within Russia. As Gulf money poured in, new mosques and madrasas were built; Islamic publishing increased, including a huge distribution of Korans, and many Muslims were able to take advantage of subsidized Hajj trips, paid for by King Fahd of Saudi Arabia. These charities and societies were

⁶⁰Smith, *Allah's Mountains*, 75.

⁶¹Yemelianova, *Russia and Islam*, 131.

also able to conduct informal, non-sanctioned activities, such as proselytizing and organizing Islamic courses and training camps.⁶²

Dagestan and Chechnya received the bulk of the foreign attention and therefore quickly became the most Islamicized and most acquainted with the Islamic ideology of Saudi Arabia, Wahhabism. By the end of 1990, Wahhabis made up 7-9% of Dagestani Muslims and about 10% of Chechens.⁶³ This Islamization manifested itself in the rapidly increasing appearance of Islamic social groups and political parties in the North Caucasus. The first of these, the Jamaat-ul-Muslimi group, advocated radical reform of Dagestani society and the creation of an Islamic State as early as 1989.⁶⁴

At this time, however, the bulk of domestic attention was turned more to nationalist political movements over these more obscure fundamentalist Islamic parties. In Gorbachev's Soviet Union, ethnic groups, whose expression of distinct identity had been repressed and discouraged for decades, were allowed a degree of freedom to reassert their distinctiveness.

While all Soviet republics would begin to assert collective identities based on ethnicity, this route would prove prohibitively difficult in a region as ethnically diverse as the North Caucasus. In Chechnya, Sufism, or Tariqatism, re-emerged as a differentiating, unifying factor for an independent secular nation. It became the dominant ideology of the emerging Nationalist secessionist movement.

⁶²Yemeljanova, *Russia and Islam*, 139.

⁶³Ibid, 152.

⁶⁴Ibid, 174.

1. General Dudayev and The Declaration

In November 1990, while the rest of the Soviet Union was debating a new union treaty, the autonomous republic of Chechnya and Ingushetia convoked a national congress, called the National Congress of the Chechen People, and elected General Dzokhar Dudayev, the first Chechen Soviet Air Force general, as president of that congress. Dudayev had retired from the Soviet Air Force his brave refusal to comply with Soviet orders to crush the 1990 Estonian independence drive by shutting down Estonian television and the Parliament.

On September 6th, 1991, militant members of the National Congress of the Chechen People stormed a session of the Chechen-Ingush ASSR Supreme Soviet with the aim of declaring independence. The Soviet Communist Party chief of Grozny was killed and the Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Republic of the Soviet Union was effectively dissolved.

Ingushetia voted to leave the union with Chechnya and it became the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria as the USSR was divided and the Russian Federation emerged. Dudayev won a presidential election the next month and soon after publically declared the creation of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria (ChRI) in a televised address. The chairman of the Information Committee of the National Congress of the Chechen People, Movladi Udugov, who incidentally was also an employee of a local Grozny television station, broadcast this declaration, initiating his own durable and enigmatic career in the ongoing North Caucasian political and military struggle against Russia.⁶⁵

Dudayev was not following Shamil's example when he declared Chechen independence. Dudayev was following the earlier examples of independence

⁶⁵Yemelianova, *Russia and Islam*, 131.

movements in Estonia, Lithuania, and Georgia and was committed to a secular state.

Dudayev encountered some opposition to his leadership among Chechen political elites, but most Chechens believed that independence was necessary and imminent.

Following Dudayev's announcement, the new republic suffered three years of political turmoil and a dismal economy. The Russian Federation, under President Boris Yeltsin, invaded Chechnya in 1994, attempting to bring the separatist government back under the yoke of Moscow.⁶⁶ In the ensuing war, Russians conducted heavy aerial bombardments but were unable to seize control of the mountainous areas of Chechnya where armed guerrillas were able to consistently repel and overwhelm the technologically superior Russian troops.⁶⁷ Akhmed Kadyrov, a prominent Qadiri Sufi Mufti, declared a jihad against the Russians.⁶⁸

Boris Yeltsin's vision of a quick operation that would quickly bring the Chechens to heel did not manifest and the Russians languished in complicated and costly conflict. Dudayev was killed in a targeted air strike on April 21, 1996, and his vice president Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev took over in the interim. Russian troop demoralization and public disapproval forced Yeltsin's government to negotiate peace terms in August 1996 and leave the country. This treaty was negotiated by General Aslan Maskhadov, the hero of the war, in the Khasa-Yurt Accords. The treaty was finalized in 1997 and left Chechnya independent, though the Russian Federation never formally recognized the ChRI.⁶⁹ It was during this time that many of the dominant

⁶⁶Emil Souleimanov, "The Caucasus Emirate: Genealogy of an Islamist Insurgency." *Middle East Policy* 18, no. 4 (2011): 155-68, accessed April 1, 2016, doi:10.1111/j.1475-4967.2011.00517.x.

⁶⁷Zachary Laub, "Instability in Russia's North Caucasus Region." *Council on Foreign Relations*, February 6, 2014. Accessed April 1, 2016, <http://www.cfr.org/russian-federation/instability-russias-north-caucasus-region/p9021>.

⁶⁸ Ian Traynor, "Obituary: Akhmad Kadyrov." *The Guardian*, May 09, 2004. Accessed April 12, 2016. <http://www.theguardian.com/news/2004/may/10/guardianobituaries.russia>.

⁶⁹ Laub, "Instability in Russia's North Caucasus Region."

figures in Chechen politics of the 1990s and 2000s cut their teeth in politics, war, and international affairs.

2. Movladi Udugov and Akhmed Zakayev

Movladi Udugov, the upstart television employee, joined the ruling structures of the separatist government as press secretary. He was born in the Shirdi teip in Germenchuk and grew up and studied in Chechnya.⁷⁰ He distinguished himself during the war by effectively disseminating information about wartime events to fighters around the countryside. Sebastian Smith describes the important role Udugov played during the first war: “in some ways the most dangerous man the Russians faced was Dudayev’s minister of information, Movladi Udugov. He proved a mastermind in the behind-the-scenes war. Not only did he use propaganda with great persistence and skill, he was also a key ideological advisor to the other separatist leaders.”⁷¹ Udugov waged an information battle against the Russian propaganda machine, constantly updating foreign and domestic outlets personally about the resistance’s activities and the brutal tactics of the Russian forces.

The resistance was also unique in that it allowed full access to foreign media to the separatists, unlike the Russians who were attempting to keep the war away from international scrutiny.⁷² Udugov was by Maskhadov’s side for the peace negotiations in 1996, directly engaging with Boris Yeltsin. For his role in the Chechen victory of information, Udugov was appointed the First Deputy Prime Minister of the ChRI. After

⁷⁰Ali Askerov, *Historical Dictionary of the Chechen Conflict*, (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2015), 229.

⁷¹Smith, *Allah's Mountains*, 180.

⁷²Ibid.

the war, he was awarded Ichkeria's highest medal, the Honor of the Nation.⁷³ Salafist Udugov and Nationalist Zakayev, the right hand men of Dudayev's successor Yandarbiyev and later Maskhadov, would come to exemplify and define the ideological cleavage that would tear the ChRI in two. Both would later create media outlets to disseminate information to Chechen people with bias toward their respective ideological slants.

B. "Wahhabism" in Chechnya and Dagestan in the 1990s

The phenomenon of "Wahhabism" appeared in Chechnya during the liberal period of Gorbachev. In addition to missionary efforts by Arab charities and associations operating in the North Caucasus, following an ease in travel restrictions for citizens of the former U.S.S.R., some Chechens left to study in Saudi Arabia and other Arab states and were exposed to Salafi and Wahhabi doctrine. Nearly 1,500 Dagestanis studied abroad and 12,700 Dagestani pilgrims went on Hajj before 1990. Many of these men became involved in Islamic movements when they returned.⁷⁴

The first significant influx of Arab Salafis into Chechnya occurred during the First Chechen War.⁷⁵ "Wahhabism," it should be noted, in the North Caucasian context, does not necessarily refer to the dominant ideology of the Saudi Arabia state. Russian media calls all Arab Salafists and their North Caucasian cohorts "Wahhabis" as a kind of generalizing term for anyone operating outside of "official Islam." Murad Batal al-

⁷³"Udugov, Movladi Saidarbievich," *Caucasian Knot*, May 18, 2003, accessed April 18, 2016. <http://eng.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/398/>.

⁷⁴Murad Batal al-Shishani, "The Rise and Fall of Foreign Fighters in Chechnya," *The Jamestown Foundation*, (2006): 7, accessed April 12, 2016, http://www.jamestown.org/fileadmin/Recent_Reports/Trans_and_Speaker_NCC09142006/Al-Shishani-14Sep06.pdf.

⁷⁵William J. Burns, "US Embassy Cables: Chechnya, the Once and Future War," *The Guardian*, December 01, 2010. Accessed March 21, 2016. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/us-embassy-cables-documents/65802>.

Shishani asserts that Wahhabism is a new perjorative used by Russians to describe Chechens and can be thought of as a synonym for “barbarian” or “fanatic.”⁷⁶

1. Arabs in the North Caucasus in the 1990s

The Arab Mujahideen that came to Chechnya in the early 1990s were mostly veterans of the Afghanistan Jihad against the Soviets and comprised many nationalities. They fought alongside the Chechens to expel the Russian forces. The Chechens were wary of them because they were foreigners who practiced an extreme form of Islam, but they were generally happy to accept the considerable financial resources the Mujahideen could funnel to the resistance.⁷⁷

Sheikh Muhammad Fathi ‘Ali al-Shishani was an elderly Jordanian national of Chechen ethnic descent who fought in Afghanistan. In 1995 al-Shishani came to Chechnya as a “missionary for Salafism.”⁷⁸ He attracted unemployed and very poor Chechens to Wahhabism using his enormous personal wealth to build Salafi mosques, boarding schools for war orphans, and training camps. He paid young men to join these training camps, providing a generous salary at a time when most Chechens had little or no income.⁷⁹ He recruited a Saudi Arabian national and fellow Afghan veteran, Ibn al-Khattab, to lead a paramilitary group of Arab fighters that run training camps for Chechen jihadists.

According to his brother, Al-Khattab first heard about the Chechen conflict on an Afghan television channel in 1995. That same year he entered Chechnya posing as a

⁷⁶Al-Shishani, "The Rise and Fall of Foreign Fighters in Chechnya." 2.

⁷⁷Smith, *Allah's Mountains*, 78.

⁷⁸Burns, "US Embassy Cables."

⁷⁹Moshe Gammer, *Ethno-Nationalism, Islam and the State in the Caucasus*. (London: Routledge, 2010), 45.

television reporter with a small group of muhajideen.⁸⁰ This small band of Arab fighters, provided the basis for the “Arab Mujahideen in Chechnya” group, an international unit of Salafi militants that fought in Chechnya and other parts of the North Caucasus through the 1990s and 2000s. This group was funded by al-Shishani and through the Makhachkala office of the Benevolence International Foundation (BIF), which received donations from Saudi Arabian supporters, including Osama bin Laden.⁸¹

The declassified U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency “Swift Knight Report” details and proves Khattab and Udugov’s involvement with Al Qaeda, including funding and support.⁸² This funding was used by Khattab to make jihad training camps for militants from Dagestan, Chechnya, and other areas of the North Caucasus, as well as those coming in from the Arab Middle East and other Muslims areas. Courses trained them in explosives, light weapons, ambush tactics and Wahhabi Islamic practices.⁸³

2. Shamil Basayev and Emir Khattab

After the war, the Wahhabis did not leave Chechnya and most Sufis grew resentful towards them and the imported, ultra pure brand of Islam they practiced which set itself at odds with the proud and highly idiosyncratic forms of worship in the North Caucasus. This resentment would build to open clashes in the interwar period.⁸⁴

Khattab had a known correspondence with Al Qaeda members as a holdover from his days in Afghanistan in the 1980s. Osama bin Laden’s networks supplied fighters and

⁸⁰“Khattab, the Man Who Died for the Cause of Chechnya: Interview with Mansour al-Suwailem” by Mowaffaq Al-Nowaiser, *Arab News*, May 4, 2002, <http://www.arabnews.com/node/220601>.

⁸¹Gordon M. Hahn, *Getting the Caucasus Emirate Right: A Report of the CSIS Russia and Eurasia Program*. (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2011), 4.

⁸²Ibid.

⁸³Bryan Glyn Williams, *Inferno in Chechnya: The Russian-Chechen Wars, the Al Qaeda Myth, and the Boston Marathon Bombings*, (Lebanon, N.H.: ForeEdge, 2015), 164.

⁸⁴Smith, *Allah's Mountains*, 78.

funds to Khattab in the late 1990s but Khattab's group was not taking direct orders from Al-Qaeda and Al Qaeda did not officially claim the Caucasus as part of its umbrella organization.⁸⁵ Upon arriving in Chechnya, Khattab quickly formed a relationship with the most famous field commander of the first Chechen War, Shamil Basayev.

Shamil Basayev was born near Vedeno in south-eastern Chechnya in 1965. He was named after Imam Shamil. His family is said to have had a long history of involvement in Chechen resistance to Russian rule. His grandfather fought in the failed attempt to defend the North Caucasian Emirate after the Russian Revolution.⁸⁶ With the outbreak of war, Dudayev made Basayev one of the front-line commanders leading the "Abkhaz Battalion." The unit inflicted major losses on Russian forces in the Battle of Grozny, Chechnya's capital, which lasted from December 1994 to February 1995. Basayev's men were among the last fighters to abandon the city. On 3 June 1995, during a Russian air raid on Basayev's hometown of Dyshne-Vedeno, two bombs landed on Basayev's uncle's house. Six children, and four women, and his uncle were killed. Basayev's wife and child died, as was his sister Zinaida. One of his brothers was also killed in fighting near Vedeno.⁸⁷

Basayev did not identify as Salafi or Wahhabi, but was attracted to Khattab's access to donor money from the Gulf.⁸⁸ Khattab's fighting force was not a major military factor during the 1994-1996 war, but after the conflict ended, Khattab set up military and religious training camps in Serzhen-Yurt and other areas. He was able to do this with

⁸⁵Burns, "US Embassy Cables."

⁸⁶Paul J. Murphy, *The Wolves of Islam: Russia and the Faces of Chechen Terror*, (Washington, D.C.: Brassey's, 2004), 7-10.

⁸⁷Liz Fuller, "Chechnya: Shamil Basayev's Life Of War And Terror," *RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty*, July 10, 2006, accessed April 12, 2016, <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1069740.html>.

⁸⁸Fuller, "Chechnya: Shamil Basayev's Life Of War And Terror."

agreement by the government, in gratitude for his support during the war. Khattab married and set down roots in Chechnya.

According to William J. Burns, these camps provided employment opportunities for Chechen fighters demobilized following the Khasavyurt Accord.⁸⁹ The economy and infrastructure of the country following the war were in shambles and work opportunities were few. Two of the main reasons for the growth of Wahhabism in Dagestan and Chechnya, during this time, were the difficult social and economic situation, which were perceived as Russia's fault and the generous financing coming from the Gulf to Wahhabi groups, which were intended to remedy the situation.

Though Basayev's interest in Khattab had started as purely financial, their relationship continued and deepened through the 1990s, Basayev's rhetoric became increasingly Islamist.⁹⁰ Basayev and al-Khattab attracted hundreds of fighters to their movement between 1996-1999. In the war Udugov had forged a strong relationship with Basayev and al-Khattab. At some point before the first war Udugov had become a practicing Salafist, and this made him a natural ally of Khattab. As Minister of Information in the Dudayev administration, Udugov had also organized regular broadcasts of sermons by Wahhabi preachers on Chechen television.⁹¹

C. The Interwar Period

Following his efforts at Khasavyurt, Udugov ran for president against Aslan Maskhadov, Zemlikhan Yandarbiyev and Shamil Basayev in the January 1997 presidential and parliamentary elections on a radical Islamist platform. He received less

⁸⁹Burns, "US Embassy Cables."

⁹⁰Ibid.

⁹¹Yavus Akhmadov, Stephen R. Bowers, and Marion T. Doss, Jr., "Islam in the North Caucasus." Faculty Publication, *Liberty University*, 2009.

than 1% of the votes, but was retained as Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Information in Maskhadov's government.⁹² Maskhadov was elected president.

Maskhadov had been born in Kazakhstan in exile in 1951 and returned to Chechnya, where he joined the Soviet army. He retired from the Soviet Army in 1992 with the rank of colonel and joined the ChRI civil defence from late 1992 to November 1993. He was the senior military figure on the Chechen side during the war and was widely seen as instrumental in the Chechen victory over the Russian forces, organizing the defense in the Battle of Grozny.

Basayev came in second place to Aslan Maskhadov, obtaining 23.5% of the votes.⁹³ Maskhadov's victory showed clearly that the majority of Chechens wanted moderate, non-Salafist government. Maskhadov's government included Nationalists and Islamists, including Zakayev, Kadyrov, Basayev, and Udugov, who publically differed on many aspects of policy and ideology.

In August 1997, following his loss in the elections, Udugov had founded the Islamic Umma party, uniting a number of political movements in Chechnya and neighbouring Dagestan. The goal of the movement, according to Udugov, was "to prevent anti-Islamic expansion in the Caucasus, promote the consolidation of the Islamic public and political forces and ensure real unification of peoples of the Caucasus."

The goals of this movement also went beyond the scope of the Caucasus region. Udugov said, that "the movement will work for the unification of Islamic ideas in the world"⁹⁴ Several times in 1997 in Afghanistan Osama bin Laden and Al Qaeda leaders

⁹²Oleg Lukin, "The 1997 Presidential and Parliamentary Elections in Chechnya." *Prague Watchdog*, January 27, 2007, accessed April 12, 2016, <http://www.watchdog.cz/?show=000000-000004-000001-000194&lang=1>.

⁹³Ibid.

⁹⁴"Chechnya Power Struggle." *BBC News*, February 09, 1999, accessed April 12, 2016, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/276075.stm>.

met with representatives of this party.⁹⁵ As one of the heroes of the war, Shamil Basayev was appointed Vice Prime Minister in early 1997 by Maskhadov, in part because of the public support he enjoyed. His tenure in formal politics did not last long, though, as his association with Khattab and accusations of corruption negatively harmed his reputation among moderates. He was also not comfortable with many policy decisions in the new government and resigned in March of 1998 because he felt Maskhadov was moving the Republic back towards the Russian Federation.⁹⁶

Udugov, now firmly aligned with Baseyev and Khattab, began plotting against the President with the aim of moving the state towards Sharia law. Maskhadov had brokered peace and won the presidency but was unable to control the antagonistic forces within his country. Along with Udugov, Akhmed Zakayev, who had given up a career as an actor to take up arms when the Russians invaded, participated in the peace negotiations between the ChRI and Russian governments that culminated in its signing of the Khasavyurt Accord by Presidents Yeltsin and Maskhadov in 1997. While Udugov was consolidating his support among Islamists following the elections, Zakayev wrote a book: *Wahhabism-The Kremlin's Remedy Against National Liberation Movements*. This work alleges that certain Islamic extremist figures and groups were associating with Russian "pro-terrorist" policy, to legitimize use of force against nationalist movements around the Muslim world and to prop up Muslim dictatorships.⁹⁷ This was a direct challenge to the activities of Udugov and the other Wahhabis during this time. Zakayev had made an enemy for life out of his former comrade-in-arms.

⁹⁵Gordon M. Hahn, "The Caucasus Emirate Jihadists: The Security and Strategic Implications." in *Russia's Homegrown Insurgency: Jihad in the North Caucasus*, edited by Stephen J. Blank, 1-99, (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2012), 16.

⁹⁶Fuller, "Chechnya: Shamil Basayev's Life Of War And Terror."

⁹⁷Smith, *Allah's Mountains*, 258.

By the time Maskhadov assumed the presidency, Chechnya was in economic and social chaos. The country had been destroyed by Russian artillery, whole towns were uninhabitable, tens of thousands of Chechens were dead, and hundreds of thousands were displaced. The economy had collapsed and was dependent on Russian aid. Warlords ruling violent armed militias controlled vast swathes of the countryside and engaged in organized crime, kidnapping, and racketeering.⁹⁸

As Maskhadov attempted to deal with Chechnya's myriad problems, his inability to control criminal activity and improve the economic situation increasingly disenchanted the population. Religious observance among Sufis deepened during the war, but there had also been an increase in Muslims adhering to Salafism.⁹⁹ This increase was minimal in terms population; most Chechens were Sufi Muslims by the end of the 1990s, but the impact of the Wahhabis that existed on the social order was drastic.¹⁰⁰

Gangs of Wahhabi converts with no allegiance to Khattab roamed the countryside, clashing with Sufis.¹⁰¹ In the areas these gangs controlled, members violently attempted to institute a rough version of Sharia law against the moderate Sufis. Armed conflicts between groups of Wahhabis and Sufi militias became common. Maskhadov was unable to deal with this problem and was facing increasing pressure from Wahhabis in his own government. The Chechen separatist government was becoming more and more divided. Through 1998 however, Maskhadov remained committed to moderate nationalism.

⁹⁸Ibid, 259-262.

⁹⁹Smith, *Allah's Mountains*, 154.

¹⁰⁰Emil Souleimanov, "Chechnya, Wahhabism and the Invasion of Dagestan." *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 9, no. 4 (2005), accessed April 1, 2016, <http://www.webcitation.org/5x3qOuZzo>.

¹⁰¹Williams, *Inferno in Chechnya*, 128.

Basayev, Khattab, and Udugov began to form plans to overthrow Maskhadov's government in 1998. In October 1998, Chechen Qadiri Sufi Muslim leader Mufti Akhmad Kadyrov, the most vocal opponent of Wahhabism and Udugov at the time, urged the Chechen Parliament to pass a law banning public movements and political parties. He noted that the hundreds of parties registered in Chechnya pursued purely mercenary objectives that were far from public interests. The Mufti said that advocates of Wahhabism were enemies of Islam and the Chechen people and were "fanning domestic conflicts and pushing Chechens to interfere in Dagestan." He also urged the president and parliament to immediately expel the Arab Muhajideen from Chechnya.¹⁰²

With the support of the majority of Chechens, Maskhadov took a harder line against the Wahhabis. In July 1998 he banned all Wahhabi military units, political parties, newspapers, and television stations. He ordered Khattab and his Arab Mujahideen to leave Chechnya, but security forces were not strong enough to ensure these demands were heeded.¹⁰³

Despite the protestations of Zakayev and other Nationalists within Maskhadov's government, in February 1999 Maskhadov caved in to pressure by an "armed and vocal" movement within his government, led by Udugov, to declare the "Islamic Republic of Ichkeria" and to introduce a Sharia system of law in Chechnya. Maskhadov hoped this strategic move would weaken the Wahhabis by co-opting their movement and making it part of state policy, ending the need for insurrection. Ultimately, it had the opposite effect.

¹⁰²Minorities at Risk Project, "Chronology for Chechens in Russia," *Refworld*, 2004, accessed April 12, 2016, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/469f38d12.html>.

¹⁰³Williams, *Inferno in Chechnya*, 131.

1. The Invasion of Dagestan

Emboldened by this “victory,” the Wahhabis were ready for the next step. In February 1999, as a concession to radical Islamists, Sharia courts began hearing cases with Maskhadov’s tacit approval. The courts that were established sentenced people to mutilations, flogging, and executed people for crimes such as adultery.¹⁰⁴ The Parliament of the ChRI, at the time dominated by Maskhadov’s Independence Party, issued a public statement which asserted that the President did not have the constitutional authority to proclaim Sharia law. The statement also condemned the opposition for “undermining the foundations of the state.”¹⁰⁵

Wahhabism was gaining in popularity in Dagestan in the mid-1990s, which worried the Sufi establishment there. In December 1997, the Muftiyat of Dagestani Parliament issued a ban on Wahhabi activities. This persecution radicalized the Dagestani Wahhabis and pushed them into an alliance with the Chechen Wahhabis. A large group fled from Dagestan to Chechnya to escape the persecution and these fighters joined the Congress of Peoples of Chechnya and Dagestan, a military-political party created by Udugov and Basayev.¹⁰⁶ Shamil was declared “Emir” of the group.

At the beginning of 1998, the leaders of Dagestans’s Wahhabi Jamaat announced a jihad against the Dagestani government and welcomed Basayev’s plans for invasion.¹⁰⁷ On the eve of the invasion there were as many as 500 foreign fighters in the North Caucasus, mostly under the direction of Khattab.¹⁰⁸ In August of 1999, al-Khattab and Basayev, with a few thousand members their Islamic International Brigade (IIB),

¹⁰⁴Richard Sakwa, *Chechnya: From past to Future*. (London: Anthem Press, 2005), 45.

¹⁰⁵Laub, "Instability in Russia's North Caucasus Region."

¹⁰⁶Williams, *Inferno in Chechnya*, 119.

¹⁰⁷Yemelianova, *Russia and Islam*, 152.

¹⁰⁸Hahn, "The Caucasus Emirate Jihadists: The Security and Strategic Implications," 122.

comprised of the Arab Mujahideen and the Congress of the Peoples of Chechnya and Dagestan in “Operation Gazi Mohammad,” invaded the neighboring state of Dagestan from Chechnya, hoping to rally Wahhabi supporters there and create a new Chechen-Dagestan Islamic Republic.¹⁰⁹

D. The Second War and the ChRI-in-Exile

Just after the Dagestan invasion, Russia was hit with a series of terrorist attacks targeting apartment buildings in the cities of Buynaksk, Moscow, and Volgodonsk. Bombs ripped through these buildings at night, ensuring high casualty rates. Altogether 293 people died and more than 1000 were injured. There has been debate over the true perpetrator of the attacks, but the high level of fear and the current upheaval in the Caucasus drew Russian popular attention to the situation in Chechnya and Dagestan. The Russian Security and Prime Minister Vladimir Putin blamed the bombings on Chechen extremists and popular opinion in Russia supported a new war on the Chechen Republic.¹¹⁰ The Russian authorities also framed the war as a defense against the lawlessness and chaos indicted by the recent invasion by Wahhabis into Russian administered Dagestan. Putin pledged to “waste Chechen rebels in the outhouse” and invaded Chechnya.¹¹¹ Ironically the IIB, which had hoped to provoke a popular revolution in Dagestan was quickly driven out of Dagestan by Sufi militias.¹¹²

Maskhadov denounced the invasion of Dagestan and made desperate overtures to Putin to assert that Wahhabism was a shared threat and did not reflect ideology the

¹⁰⁹Laub, "Instability in Russia's North Caucasus Region."

¹¹⁰Williams, *Inferno in Chechnya*, 138.

¹¹¹"Putin on “Wasting Terrorists in the Outhouse”: Wrong Rhetoric, Right Idea." *RT International*. July 15, 2011, accessed April 12, 2016, <https://www.rt.com/politics/putin-honesty-president-magnitogorsk/>.

¹¹²Williams, *Inferno in Chechnya*, 135.

majority of Chechens. Putin responded by labelling Maskhadov a terrorist, declaring his government illegitimate, and sending Russian forces into Chechnya in late September 1999. Putin described it as a counterterrorism operation. The Russians began a devastating aerial campaign September 28th.

Putin's popular war caused the Chechen warlords and government officials who had been on the brink of civil war to rally together again as they had in the first war. Basayev and the other militants acknowledged Maskhadov as their leader and Maskhadov declared a gazawat against the Russians in October 1999. This war would end very differently than the previous one.

The result of Russia's military invasion in 1999 was the end of the ChRI's period of independence and the resumption of Russian control. In November, the Grand Mufti Akhmed Kadyrov, who had railed so passionately against the Wahhabist threat the ChRI faced just a year before, switched allegiances and agreed to work with the Russians. He gave up Gudermes, the second largest city in Chechnya, which was under the control of his faction, to the invading forces. This gave the Russian army the strategic launch point it needed to quickly take control of the rest of the country. They finally seized the Chechen capital Grozny after a winter siege that lasted from late 1999 until February 2000. A total of 2,700 separatist fighters were killed trying to leave Grozny, with many more injured in the mine field at Alkhan-Kala.¹¹³

¹¹³Lyoma Turpalov, "Chechens' Corpses Paved Path Across Minefield." *SFGate*, February 5, 2000, accessed April 12, 2016, <http://www.sfgate.com/news/article/Chechens-Corpses-Paved-Path-Across-Minefield-2805746.php>.

1. Insurgency Period of the ChRI

The ChRI leaders and militias were forced to flee Grozny to the mountains. Overnight, Maskhadov was a president without a country, now the leader of an insurgency against the new Chechen regime and the Russians.

Putin established direct rule and Russian forces set up filtration camps in the countryside to root out potential “terrorists” from among the population. These filtration camps were the site of terrible war crimes against the Chechen population.¹¹⁴ Akhmad Kadyrov was installed as Putin’s puppet president in Grozny in the newly styled “Chechen Republic” and he was given free reign to “stamp out” the Islamist insurgency.¹¹⁵ Kadyrov, a Qadiri Sufi, did enjoy a certain degree of popularity, especially among Sufi Chechens that had feared a Wahhabist regime under the ChRI.¹¹⁶

Despite reservations, Zakayev stayed in the government of the ChRI after it was rebranded as an Islamic Republic, commanding Maskhadov’s presidential guard until 2000. He left Chechnya for treatment after being wounded in a car accident during the siege of Grozny and opted to stay abroad as Maskhadov’s chief representative in Western Europe until Maskhadov’s assassination in 2005. He retained his post as Chechen Deputy Prime Minister in Charge of Education and Culture until 2007. In 2003 he received political exile in London, supported by his close friend, actress Vanessa Redgrave. He and his family reside there still. While in exile, Zakayev helped set up a news outlet in the ChechenPress and remained a careful observer and advocate of the insurgent ChRI government.

¹¹⁴Williams, *Inferno in Chechnya*, 174.

¹¹⁵Laub, "Instability in Russia’s North Caucasus Region."

¹¹⁶Al-Shishani, "The Rise and Fall of Arab Fighters in Chechnya." 16.

Udugov left Chechnya in September 1999 and has remained in hiding ever since. Though his whereabouts are unknown, he has retained an influential role in the Chechen insurgency.

After 2000 Maskhadov condoned armed resistance against the occupying Russian military targets, but denounced attacks on civilians. He allegedly supported the assassination of pro-Russian Chechen President Akhmad Kadyrov in Chechnya in 2004, but often denied responsibility for the increasingly brutal terrorist acts against Russian civilians by Basayev's followers, continually issuing denunciations of such incidents through spokesmen abroad, including Akhmed Zakayev in London.

2. Basayev's Terrorism

As of 1999, Basayev was still connecting the methods of jihad with the goals of Nationalism, saying that “we are fighting for the proclamation of an Islamic republic and creation of a great Chechen empire.” In 2005 he acknowledged that “for me, it's first and foremost a struggle for freedom, Sharia comes second.”¹¹⁷ Though his political and terrorist careers were made possible by his support from Wahhabi leaders, and his rhetoric and terminology were influenced by the language of International Jihad, Basayev never seems to have become a “true believer.”

Soon after the war ended Basayev formed the Riyadus Salihin Martyrs Brigade, a terrorist group whose operations would target Russian military and civilian targets alike. This group would be responsible for some of the most horrific terrorist attacks of the 2000s. These attacks included the October 2002 Nord-Ost siege. Dozens of

¹¹⁷Geraldine Fagan, "A Word of Justice: Islam and State Repression in the North-West Caucasus." *Central Asian Survey* 33, no. 1 (2013): 36, doi:10.1080/02634937.2013.826441.

militants stormed and took hostage the Dubrovka theater in Moscow. A total of 133 hostages were killed.

Basayev claimed responsibility for the attack in a statement made on his website. In this address he resigned from his position in Maskhadov's government-in-exile and apologized to Maskhadov directly for not informing him of the plans for the attack.¹¹⁸ Maskhadov condemned the attack and Basayev officially began operating as independent from ChRI leadership. Khattab was poisoned to death by the FSB in March 2002 in the mountains after receiving a letter laced with anthrax.¹¹⁹

In 2003 Basayev was responsible for a car bomb attack on the FSB headquarters in Grozny that killed 54 people. He also claimed responsibility for the assassination of Akhmed Kadyrov in May 2004.¹²⁰ Basayev also claimed to have masterminded the multiple raids on police and security facilities in Ingushetia in June 2004 and in Kabardino-Balkaria in October 2005. His bloody campaign reached its peak with the Beslan school hostage crisis in September 2004 in which more than 320 people, including many children, were killed.¹²¹ By this point he was the most wanted man in Russia.

In 2003 Maskhadov called on separatists to stop making attacks beyond the borders of the Chechen republic but by mid-2004, his plans had changed. He acknowledged the need to expand the resistance and established military sectors in

¹¹⁸"Chechen Warlord Claims Theatre Attack." *BBC News*, November 01, 2002, accessed April 12, 2016, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/2388857.stm>.

¹¹⁹ "Obituary: Chechen Rebel Khattab." *BBC News*, April 26, 2002, accessed April 12, 2016, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/1952053.stm>.

¹²⁰"Chechen Rebel Claims Grozny Blast." *BBC News*, May 17, 2004, accessed April 12, 2016, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/3720375.stm>.

¹²¹ "Beslan Leader 'Planning Repeat'" *BBC News*, February 03, 2005, accessed April 12, 2016, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/4234565.stm>.

Kabardino-Balkaria and Dagestan.¹²² Despite this Maskhadov harshly condemned the Beslan attack as an atrocity.¹²³

Russia's FSB launched successive counter-terrorist attacks on the highlands of Chechnya and Dagestan and by 2005, much of the key leadership had been assassinated. On March 8, 2005 Maskhadov was killed in a raid. Basayev was killed by an explosion on July 10, 2006.¹²⁴ The insurgency membership remained at a low but durable level through the mid 2000s.

3. New Leadership

Wahhabist propaganda was prohibited on official media outlets. Kadyrov's government attempted to repress these groups but was unable to fulfill his agenda to "stamp them out," before he was assassinated. In 2007 Akhmed Kadyrov's son, Ramzan, became the new president of the Chechen Republic. He was deemed another "puppet" of Putin, a charge that has proven accurate in the intervening years.

Maskhadov was succeeded by his vice president Abdul-Halim Sadulayev, who was quickly endorsed by Basayev and Zakayev. Sadulayev's short tenure was distinguished by his attempt to unify his separatists with Islamist rebels outside the borders of Chechnya. The networks he created within the region would provide the building blocks of the "vilayats" of the Caucasian Emirate. The expansion of the Chechen jihad to all of the North Caucasus was his main goal.¹²⁵ By the summer of 2005, he had issued a special decree announcing the creation of a united Caucasian Front consisting of

¹²²Souleimanov, "The Caucasus Emirate," 162.

¹²³"Obituary: Aslan Maskhadov." *BBC News*, March 08, 2005, accessed April 12, 2016. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/459302.stm>.

¹²⁴Bill Roggio, "Chechen Terrorist Shamil Basayev Killed by Russian FSB," *The Long War Journal*, July 10, 2006, accessed April 1, 2016, http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2006/07/chechen_terrorist_sh.php.

¹²⁵Souleimanov, "The Caucasus Emirate," 162.

sectors in Ingushetia, North Ossetia, Kabardino-Balkaria, the Stavropol and Krasnodar provinces, Karachay-Cherkessia and Adygea, subject to the Chechen command. At the time Dagestan was independent but had similarly constituted a new Wahhabi Jamaat. He strongly condemned hostage taking and is credited with convincing Basayev to rein in his activities following Beslan.¹²⁶ Sadulayev was only in power for a year before he was killed in a gun battle with the FSB and Chechen government forces on June 17, 2006, just three weeks before Basayev.¹²⁷

4. The Kavkaz Center

In March 1999, a five months before the IIB's invasion of Dagestan, and six months before Udugov's departure from Chechnya, Udugov and the ChRI National Center for Strategic Research and Political Technology created the Kavkaz Center (KC), an online news agency which reports on events in the Islamic World, the Caucasus, and Russia.

According to its website, Kavkaz Center is "a privately run, independent agency and does not represent the viewpoint of any state structures or the ChRI government. The Kavkaz Center agency makes it its mission to report real events in Ichkeria under conditions of a total information embargo and to disseminate to the world community the truth about the war, the war crimes, the evidence of genocide on the part of the state aggressor against the entire population, and the positions of the side defending against aggression -- the Chechen mujahedeen."¹²⁸ The Kavkaz Center under Udugov supplies

¹²⁶Liz Fuller, "Russia: New Chechen Resistance Leader Vows No More Hostage Takings." *RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty*, June 3, 2005, accessed April 12, 2016, <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1059114.html>.

¹²⁷"Chechen Rebel Leader Sadulayev Reported Killed." *RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty*, June 17, 2006, accessed April 12, 2016. <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1069240.html>.

¹²⁸"About Us," Kavkaz Center, accessed March 2, 2014, <http://www.kavkazcenter.com/eng/about/>.

propaganda supporting the Islamists in Chechnya and abroad while publishing material critical of Zakayev and other “enemies” of the Wahhabis.

The homepage has video clips featuring interviews with Emirs of the mujahideen, a portrait gallery of “martyrs”, and up to date news about Russian injustices in the Caucasus, as well as news of Islamic Jihads around the world.

The website also serves as a transmit point for Caucasian Islamist leaders to communicate with each other, swear loyalties and claim responsibility for attacks. It is harshly critical of Kadyrov’s regime and Putin. There are also translations of the writings and interviews of major ideologists of Global Jihad.

The underlying theme of the website is not the North Caucasian struggle for independence, but the worldwide Jihad against infidels. Attention is given to all Jihad operations around the world.¹²⁹ The writers provide content in Russian, Arabic, and other languages, but retain Arabic terminology when describing certain religious and theo-political concepts. It often shows videos depicting “triumphant” operations and gruesome martyrdoms. They show the jihadis’ exploits for purpose of glorifying the jihad of the mountain fighters. The men in the videos wear beards and often cover their faces to avoid identification.¹³⁰ The insurgent North Caucasian groups use these visual narratives to bolster their collective identity and solidarity, to appear effective, and to gather recruits.

¹²⁹Alexander Knysh, "The Caucasian Emirate: Between Reality and Virtuality." (working paper, Keyman Program in Turkish Studies, 2009), 15.

¹³⁰Ibid, 5.

CHAPTER IV

THE CAUCASUS EMIRATE

A. Dokka Umarov

When President Abdul-Halim Sadulayev of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria was killed in battle with Russian special forces in June 2006, there was nothing to suggest that his vice president, Dokka Umarov, who immediately assumed control, had any intention of pursuing a particularly Islamist agenda. Unlike Sadulayev, Umarov was not an Islamic scholar, but a field commander who had participated in both Chechen Wars of the 1990s.

In 2005, shortly after being appointed Sadulayev's vice president, Umarov was interviewed by Andrei Babitsky of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. He affirmed the need to continue performing the Jihad against the Russian "barbarians," yet when asked if he was a "Wahhabi" and if the Chechen resistance was trying to create a state based on Sharia, he called it a "FSB fantasy" and said the idea that he was a Wahhabi or a follower of radical Islam was "laughable."¹³¹ He also rejected the use of terrorism, saying that he was "horrified" by the events at Beslan, which were planned by his comrade-in-arms, Shamil Basayev, and noting that "such operations have no legitimacy."¹³² Upon assuming control, Umarov appointed Shamil Basayev to the post of vice president on June 27th, 2006.

At this point, Basayev was the most wanted man in Russia. This appointment was not necessarily an indication that Umarov was ideologically aligned with Basayev's

¹³¹ Andrei Babitsky, "RFE/RL Interviews Chechen Field Commander Umarov." *RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty*, July 28, 2005, accessed April 01, 2016, <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1060266.html>.

¹³² *Ibid.*

extremism. Rather, as Umarov's foreign minister, Usman Fizauli suggested it would force Russian authorities to negotiate with Umarov, for if he were killed, the violent Basayev would assume the presidency.¹³³

1. Dokka Umarov's Life Before Leadership

Dokka Umarov led a checkered life before the First Chechen War and before he entered the political realm of the separatist ChRI. He left his small town in the south of the Chechen–Ingush Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic in the mid 1980s to go to the Tyumen Oblast in Siberia where he tried his hand at business for several years. A violent incident in Tyumen in 1992, where he and a cousin were charged with murdering several people, necessitated a quick escape. So, to avoid prosecution, they returned home to the newly independent Chechen Republic of Ichkeria.

When Umarov arrived in the summer of 1992, he connected with family members who introduced him to Daud Akhmadov, a member of President Dudayev's inner circle who would soon be commanding military units in the First Chechen War. He became a member of Akhmadov's network and distinguished himself as an able fighter during the war, emerging as a Brigadier-General, a position of fairly high political influence. Umarov's relative, Ruslan Gelayev, a military commander in Dudayev's administration, noted that at this time, he did not know how to perform basic religious rites.¹³⁴ In 1996, he was allied with Akhmed Zakayev and served in his

¹³³Kevin Daniel Leahy, "From Racketeer to Emir: A Political Portrait of Doku Umarov, Russia's Most Wanted Man." *Caucasian Review of International Affairs* 4, no. 3 (Summer 2010): 248-70, http://www.cria-online.org/12_4.html.

¹³⁴Leahy, "From Racketeer to Emir".

paramilitary unit before being appointed chairman of President Maskhadov's new Security Council in June 1997.¹³⁵

Umarov was a field commander from September 1999 until January 2000 in the Second Chechen War when he was injured in the jaw by a landmine while escaping the siege of Grozny. He spent time in Georgia recuperating with Zakayev and then returned to Chechnya in 2002 to rejoin the ChRI, now in exile. Umarov commanded the Southwestern front and was politically allied with Basayev, but at the time, was thought to be a practicing Sufi.¹³⁶ He received many Ichkerian awards and medals during the wars, but was constantly battling rumors about his collusion with known organized criminals, racketeers, and hostage-takers, including Arbi Barayev, during the interwar period.¹³⁷

As a military commander, he was described as cunning and slightly paranoid, rarely leaving the forest unless absolutely necessary, which may help explain his longevity in an era when ChRI leaders were being killed, left and right.¹³⁸ He was one of the only veteran military commanders from the Chechen wars to live into the 2010s. Rising in political position in the ChRI government-in-exile, Umarov was eventually appointed vice president in the new administration of Sadulayev upon the latter's ascension to the position of president.

At some point, between the interview given to RFE/RL in summer 2005 and the proclamation of the new Emirate in October 2007, Umarov seems to have completely reversed his opinion on Salafism. This can be attributed to the growing influence of

¹³⁵Leahy, "From Racketeer to Emir".

¹³⁶Ibid.

¹³⁷Ruslan Isayev, "Dokka Umarov: A Hawk Flies to the Ichkerian Throne." *Prague Watchdog*, June 20, 200, accessed April 1, 2016, <http://www.watchdog.cz/?show=000000-000004-000001-000188&lang=1>.

¹³⁸Isayev, "Dokka Umarov."

Movladi Udugov, Isa Umarov, and Anzor Astemirov over the ChRI in general and Umarov in particular.

B. Anzor Astemirov

Anzor Astemirov, also known as Emir Sayfullah, an ethnic Kabardinian born in the Ukraine SSR, first gained attention as a jihadi fighting for the Yarmuk Jamaat in Dagestan in 2002. He had studied Islamic theology in Saudi Arabia at the King Saud University in the early 1990s, where he became fluent in Arabic. He became the leader of Yarmuk Jamaat in 2004 where his reputation as a religious scholar grew among North Caucasian Jihadists. The jamaat would embrace violent Jihad when they joined the Caucasian Front in 2005, at Basayev's invitation.¹³⁹ He gave *bayat* (an oath of allegiance) to President Sadullayev in May of 2005 and Basayev nominated him to the position of commander of the Kabardino-Balkarian sector of the Caucasian Front.¹⁴⁰

Astemirov and Basayev masterminded the disastrous, unsuccessful raid in Nalchik on October 13, 2005. Astemirov and President Umarov met in 2006 and began a correspondence. Astemirov helped to convince Umarov that the establishment of a Sharia-based Islamic state should be the main goal of Umarov's government.¹⁴¹ Astemirov would later claim in November 2007, on the Kavkaz Center website, that he had discussed and advocated for the idea of an Islamic state to Basayev in 2005, but that Basayev had rejected the idea.¹⁴²

¹³⁹Fagan, "A Word of Justice" 35.

¹⁴⁰ Kevin Daniel Leahy, "Anzor Astemirov: From Military Dilletante to Leading Political Strategist." *Central Asia Caucasus Institute*, February 11, 2009, accessed April 1, 2016, <http://old.cacianalyst.org/?q=node/5033>.

¹⁴¹Leahy, "From Racketeer to Emir."

¹⁴²Leahy, "Anzor Astemirov."

Unlike Basayev, who maintained a kind of mix of Islamist and Nationalist agendas, Astemirov became a part of the 1990s jihadi movement for his Islamic convictions alone. In late 2006, Astemirov published a video address to the Muslims of Kabardino-Balkaria saying that anyone not strictly following the law of Allah was an infidel, that jihad was mandatory, and that anyone aiding “Allah’s enemies” was an apostate.¹⁴³

His ideology was devoted to Salafist notions of *tawhid* (the oneness of God) and *takfir* (accusation of apostasy), tenets that would provide the foundation of the Caucasus Emirate’s ruling ideology.¹⁴⁴ While Udugov continued to reside abroad, his cousin, Isa Umarov, maintained a tight presence next to Doka’s side. Together, Udugov and Isa Umarov waged an online propaganda campaign in 2007, promoting the idea of an Islamic State as envisioned by the Udugov’s Wahhabi allies in the 1990s and now, by Astemirov.¹⁴⁵

In anticipation of the new ambitious political project, Umarov gave an interview where he stated: “I will remind you that the peoples of the North Caucasus have experience of joint statehood during the time of Sheikh Mansur, Imam Shamil, and the Mountain Republic, as well as the North Caucasian Emirate of Sheikh Uzun Haji. The basis of this association was always Islam, and in the case of the Mountain Republic, the idea of all Caucasus unity and decolonization.”¹⁴⁶ Umarov was rhetorically drawing a line from the three previous Islamic “states” to his own movement to emphasize its legitimacy.

¹⁴³Fagan, “A Word of Justice.” 36.

¹⁴⁴Hahn, “The Caucasus Emirate Jihadists.” 4.

¹⁴⁵Leahy, “From Racketeer to Emir.”

¹⁴⁶“Interview with Dokka Umarov.” Interview by Kavkaz Center, *Kavkaz Center*, March 8, 2007, accessed April 13, 2016, <http://www.kavkazcenter.com/eng/content/2007/03/08/7655.shtml>.

C. The Declaration of The Caucasus Emirate

The Caucasian Emirate came into being October 7, 2007. Umarov changed his title to “Emir” and created an Islamic “state.” This move, by Umarov, came as a distinct surprise to the more nationalistic elements within the ChRI, many of whom were now living abroad. It was actually the culmination of a long ideological campaign for an Islamic state, waged since 1991 by Salafist ideologists like Isa Umarov and Movladi Udugov.

Until this move, even as the Chechen resistance had adopted a more Salafist rhetoric and practice and become more violent in its methods, it refrained from allying their movement with the phenomenon of Global Jihad. Key Arab Jihadist thinkers had identified the North Caucasus as a frontier for Jihad, but the the North Caucasians had, until this point, chosen to identify their movement with the resistance movements of their ancestors, placing their struggle as the latest episode in a 300-year history of *gazawat* against Russian Imperial infringement.

The Caucasian Emirate connected its struggle only with *gazawats* of Sheikh Mansur, Imam Shamil, and Uzun Haji because the primary aim of these movements had been the creation of an Islamic state, based on Sharia Law in the North Caucasus region and not simply just the expulsion of the Russians. It was necessary to create a new entity and to dissolve the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria in order to explicitly proclaim to the world that this was not a nationalist secessionist insurgent movement; rather it was a militant jihad with the express goal of creating an Islamic state, based on Sharia--not on nationality, Tariqatism, or any secular ideology of cohesion.

In this way, Dokka Umarov, with his Caucasian Emirate, is the heir of Mansur, Shamil, and Uzun Haji. Umarov emphasized this connection in the announcement when

he said, “Our glorious ancestors waged Jihad against these enemies and today, Allah is testing our generation, as he did our fathers. Everything repeats. Jihad reveals faith and disbelief. Today, as in the old days, people are divided into Muhajideen, hypocrites, and apostates.”¹⁴⁷

What makes Umarov’s state different from his historical precedents is that for the first time in the North Caucasus, the leaders of a “state” internationalized its struggle, placing itself not only within the context of Caucasian *gazawat*, but also among the jihadist struggles of Muslims everywhere. In his proclamation, he stated:

All lands in Caucasus, where Muhajideen who gave bay’ah to me wage Jihad, I declare wilayahs of the Caucasus Emirate: wilayah Dagestan, wilayah Nokhchiycho, wilayah Ghalghaycho, wilayah Iriston, wilayah of the Nogay Steppe, the combined wilayah of Kabarda, Balkar and Karachay...I don’t think that it is necessary to draw the borders of the Caucasus Emirate. Firstly because Caucasus is occupied by kuffar and apostates and is Dar al-Harb and our nearest task is to make Caucasus Dar as-Salam, establishing the Sharia in its land and expelling the kuffar. Secondly, after expelling the kuffar we must reconquer all historical lands of Muslims, and these borders are beyond the boundaries of the Caucasus.¹⁴⁸

He further asserted that, “our enemy is not only Russia, but all who are waging a war against Islam and Muslims.”¹⁴⁹ He appealed to all Caucasian Muhajideen to swear allegiance to him and claimed that he was the only legitimate power in the area.

The declaration of the CE is peppered with Arabic terms like *kuffar* (unbelievers) and *Dar al-Harb* (territory of war) and extends its enemies’ list far beyond Russia to include all enemies of Islam, including America and “the West,” a clear departure from all earlier movements. Although it was reported later that there had been

¹⁴⁷“Interview with Dokka Umarov.” *Kavkaz Center*.

¹⁴⁸“Statement of Amir Dokka Umarov on the Proclamation of the Caucasus Emirate.” News release, *Kavkaz Center*, November 21, 2007, accessed April 1, 2016.
<http://www.kavkazcenter.com/russ/content/2007/11/21/54480/%3Cb%3Eofitsialnyj-reeliz-zayavleniya-amira-dokki-umarova-o-provozglashenii-kavkazskogo-emirata%3C-b%3E.shtml>.

¹⁴⁹“Statement of Amir Dokka Umarov.” *Kavkaz Center*.

heated opposition to the idea of the CE among various jamaat leaders, by the time of the proclamation, the majority of the Salafist commanders quickly released audio statements pledging *bayat* to Umarov becoming the new Emirs of the Caucasian Emirate's vilayats.

1. Opposition and Endorsement

The most vocal opposition to the CE project came from the ChRI's minister of foreign affairs, Akhmed Zakayev, Umarov's old friend, now living in exile in London. Zakayev had apparently known of the plan some two months before Umarov's proclamation and had been desperately trying to persuade Umarov against the Emirate idea. By this time, Zakayev was unable to speak to his old comrade directly, as all communication to Umarov was being channeled through Udugov and Isa Umarov.

Zakayev released two audio tapes publically, that were subsequently posted by the Kavkaz Center, in which he appealed to his friend, Umarov, to abandon the idea of the Caucasus Emirate. Zakayev claimed that Umarov had been duped by "provocateurs" in league with the FSB, who were attempting to invalidate the Chechen separatist movement. He spoke with some degree of respect for Umarov, calling him "a talented and adamant fighter," but noted that he had committed a "crime" against the ChRI by going against the wishes of most of its supporters to establish the Emirate.¹⁵⁰ Zakayev resigned from his position in Umarov's government and called upon separatists to re-pledge their loyalty to the ChRI.¹⁵¹ He was subsequently elected Prime Minister of the remaining members of the ChRI parliament-in-exile in November 2007.

¹⁵⁰Liz Fuller, "Russia: Is North Caucasus Resistance Still A Serious Threat?" *RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty*, November 1, 2007, accessed April 13, 2016, <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1079059.html>.

¹⁵¹Liz Fuller, "Separatist Leader Declares 'Jihad' On West," *RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty*, November 1, 2007, accessed April 13, 2016, <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1079060.html>.

The Chechen Republic of Ichkeria is now all but defunct, although Zakayev still claims to be the Prime Minister in exile from London.¹⁵² He was dismissed from this position in 2009 by the Chairman of the ChRI in exile due to the apparent warming of relations with Ramzan Kadyrov, who invited him to return to Chechnya. Though Zakayev refused, his correspondence with the Russian-backed Kadyrov was seen as a betrayal by nationalist and Islamist contingencies within the Chechen separatist movement. This impression was seemingly confirmed when Kadyrov invited Zakayev to return to Chechnya. In a 2013 interview he stated, “I am confident that even now there are no irresolvable issues in relations between Russia and Chechnya.”¹⁵³

The Supreme Sharia Court of the Caucasus sentenced Zakayev in absentia to death in August 2009 for being a *zindiq* (heretic). The statement that was released on the Kavkaz Center noted that Zakayev “professes the democratic religion, calls to secularism, and prefers laws made by humans to Sharia of Allah, the Almighty, the Great.”¹⁵⁴

Zakayev’s supporters quickly decried the ruling and stated that the Supreme Sharia Court was following orders from Udugov to discredit Zakayev, based on his own personal enmity for the man. Though the support the Caucasus Emirate enjoyed from jamaats around the North Caucasus was extremely tenable, members of its organization maintained a strong level of credibility with the population. Zakayev’s long absence and perceived connection to Kadyrov embittered most of the population to him.

¹⁵²Knysh, "The Caucasian Emirate," 8.

¹⁵³Interview: Zakayev Says 'No Irresolvable Issues' Between Russia, Chechnya." *RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty*, September 23, 2010, accessed April 1, 2016, http://www.rferl.org/content/Interview_Zakayev_Says_No_Irresolvable_Issues_Between_Russia_Chechnya/2166048.html.

¹⁵⁴"Supreme Sharia Court of Caucasus Emirate Sentenced Akhmed Zakayev to Capital Punishment" *Kavkaz Center*, September, 25, 2009, accessed April 1, 2016. <http://www.kavkazcenter.com/russ/content/2009/08/25/67586.shtml>.

Once again, Udugov stepped into the role of chief propagandist. A few weeks after Umarov's declaration, an interview was posted by Kavkaz Center in which Udugov justified the creation of the Emirate. He asserted: "The Chechen government is not only not eliminated as opponents of the Sharia have falsely said, exactly the opposite -- it has regained the high status, as it has always been in the past, of Sheikh Mansur, Imam Shamil, and Sheikh Uzun-Haji."¹⁵⁵

Speaking against Zakayev and others he noted, "the Prophet was not a democrat. There cannot be compromises because either you are or you are not following the correct path--diplomacy with Western powers got us nowhere. It is lies to think we can institute Sharia after getting an independent state supported by other countries, Muslims have been betrayed by this thinking everytime...Sharia must be the foundation of a state. It's not about Putin or the strength of Russia, Muslims will inevitably lose if we deviate from the Sharia."¹⁵⁶

In an interview with Prague Watchdog following the creation of the Caucasian Emirate, Udugov stated:

It goes without saying that freedom, independence, political independence and sovereignty are a very important moral boost for a nation, a people, and those who feel themselves to be part of it. The self-esteem of an ethnic group is based on this. But the situation has begun to change rapidly, both in Chechnya and in the world at large. In the place of those who with absolute sincerity went to fight under the slogan of national liberation, there has come a new generation of young people who believe in the promise of Allah and the saving force of jihad. In other words, independence has ceased to be something abstract. Previously, it was seen as the sole and ultimate goal. But independence is only one of the conditions for the victory of truth. The new generation of mojahedin has gone to war not for the sake of independence and freedom alone, but first and foremost, in order to restore Sharia law to the liberated lands.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁵Udugov, "The War Goes For Life..."

¹⁵⁶Udugov, "The War Goes For Life..."

¹⁵⁷Ibid.

Udugov echoes the sentiment that nationalism has failed in Chechnya and chides those who believe that some form of national independence is possible under Kadyrov. For Udugov, only the absolute expulsion of Russia from any and all influence over an Islamic State in Chechnya is acceptable.

Udugov saw the cleavage in Chechen separatist leadership as a healthy purging of ‘the alien elements’ of the Chechen resistance who “harbor hatred toward Islam and the Sharia under the guise of supporting the Chechen Jihad.”¹⁵⁸ He believed that the Caucasian Emirate was the restoration of the Sharia states of Chechnya and the Caucasus that were periodically created throughout their history by Sheikh Mansur, Imam Shamil, and Uzun Hajj.

Since its inception, the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria had attempted to negotiate the widening gap between traditional Sufis and Salafists, within its own ranks. The radical Wahhabism of Emir Khattab and the extremism of Shamil Basayev, complete with its fantastic terrorist operations, had polarized most of the Sufis from the Salafist point of view; however in 1999, Maskhadov had succumbed to the pressure of Movladi Udugov and others to institute Sharia Law and reorganize into an “Islamic Republic.” This was not an Islamic State in the true sense of the word, but a brief attempt by the nationalist government to co-opt Salafist rhetoric and law administration to prevent a devastating civil war. It was not until the CE that the Salafi ideologists surrounding Umarov could fully articulate and implement their vision.

¹⁵⁸Ibid.

D. Ideology and Organization of the CE

There is a tendency in academic and media coverage about the CE simply as an “Islamic radical group,” however the group’s actual ideological tenets are useful in understanding why this group is both similar to, and radically different from, previous incarnations of Islamic states in the Caucasus. Sheikh Mansur, Imam Shamil, and Uzun Haji were Naqshbandi Sufis who preached a conservative form of Sufi Islam that placed emphasis on adherence to Sharia Law, the “righteous path,” with *gazawat* as the method for assuring the necessary freedom from Russia to establish that societal organization.

The Chechen Republic of Ichkeria was a Secular Republic from 1991 to 1996 and an “Islamic” Republic from 1999 to 2007, most of the later period spent in exile. The Caucasian Emirate is a Salafist-Takfiri-Jihadist group that rules a virtual Islamic State, based wholly on the Sharia devoid of secularisms. Gordon M. Hahn, Alexander Knysh, Bryan Glyn Williams, and Emil Souleimanov have described it as such.¹⁵⁹

The characteristics of this ideology include a strict literal interpretation of the Quran and the Sunnah, in line with the Hanbali school of thought, emphasizing *tawhid* (the oneness of God). Further, it includes designation of all non-Muslims as *kuffar* (infidels) and Muslims who do not prescribe to this narrow definition of “correct” Islam, such as Tariqatists, as *takfir* (apostates).

In contrast to other Muslim ideologies, Salafist-Takfiri-Jihadists believe Islam and Sharia law can only be established on earth through armed jihad and that suicide martyrdom and killing of Muslim takfirs are acceptable practices. In line with this, the

¹⁵⁹Darion Rhoades, “Salafist-Takfiri Jihadism: the Ideology of the Caucasus Emirate,” (working paper 27, International Monetary Fund International Institute for Counter-Terrorism, 2014). <http://www.ict.org.il/Article/132/Salafist-Takfiri%20Jihadism%20the%20Ideology%20of%20the%20Caucasus>.

CE changed from the green flag of the ChRI to the black flag of jihad when it was established.¹⁶⁰

Unlike the ChRI, which incorporated Sufis and secular nationalists into the highest rungs of government, the CE actively condemns the Tariqatist Sufism of the North Caucasus, arguing against practices like *zikr* dancing, celebrations of Muhammed's birthday, and shrine worship. Umarov advocates the concept of *al-wala' wa'l baraa* (enmity against unbelievers) and in 2010, said that there cannot be peaceful coexistence with them.¹⁶¹

In a 2007 interview, Umarov said he is "saddened by the position of these Muslims who declare as their enemies only those kuffar who attacked them directly."¹⁶² The doctrines of tawhid and takfir, as well as the exaltation of armed Jihad and martyrdom, is in line with the mainstream of current Global Jihadist ideology, including prominent Al Qaeda ideologists. These principles have been elaborated upon, encoded into the CE's organization and actions, and promoted on CE websites by CE Sharia court ideologues, starting with Astemirov, the CE's first head Qadi.¹⁶³

Though Umarov was not an Islamic scholar and often flubbed his Arabic and Quranic verses, as leader of the CE he formulated his political purpose as part and parcel with other Jihad movements around the world. In his rhetoric, he has made anti-Western statements and repeatedly connects the North Caucasian struggles to other Jihads including those of Iraq and Afghanistan. The expansion of the area of Jihad to the whole of the North Caucasus also allows for far flung militants to participate in a

¹⁶⁰ Rhoades, "Salafist-Takfiri Jihadism." 6-7.

¹⁶¹ Ibid, 13.

¹⁶² "Interview with Dokka Umarov." *Kavkaz Center*.

¹⁶³ Hahn, "The Caucasus Emirate Jihadists," 4.

large scale “cause” that is appealing to those outside of Chechnya and Dagestan who have adhered to Salafism.

Though the links between Al Qaeda and the CE were initially very thin, by posting AQ articles on the sites and following the AQ ideological precedents, the imagined association raised the prestige of the CE and gave many members the feeling that they were no longer “alone” but part of a global umma led by the high profile, admired AQ.¹⁶⁴ It is conceived as a “cosmic battle for a lofty, divinely-sanctioned cause, as opposed to a suicidal local insurgency, versus an invincible Goliath.¹⁶⁵ This trope lent confidence to CE fighters while further alienating secularists and Sufis, whose self-identity is linked to the uniqueness of Tariqatism. Further alienating Sufis from the CE, was the CE’s campaign of rhetoric against Sufi practices and teachings, up to and including violent actions against Sufi leaders and holy sites.¹⁶⁶

1. Implementation of Sharia Law and Administrative Organization

The leadership of the CE believes that it has the most legitimate claim to the political control of the Caucasus territory. To this end, they, like Mansur, Shamil, and Uzun Hajj before them have attempted not only to take military action against the Russians, but to establish tangible state institutions based on Sharia Law. Umarov and the CE leadership established Sharia courts, administered by qadis; policed and punished gambling, prostitution and alcohol consumption; collected taxes in the areas it controlled; and expanded its propaganda strategy by increasing proselytization and dissemination of religious literature on its many websites.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁴Ibid, 10.

¹⁶⁵Knysh, "The Caucasian Emirate," 26.

¹⁶⁶Ibid, 18.

¹⁶⁷Hahn, "The Caucasus Emirate Jihadists," 12.

This initial military strategy continued as before by targeting all enemies, including Russian state institutions and officials as well as pro-Russian Sufi officials and clerics. The CE's organizers borrowed from the Ottoman Empire's system of administrative units, or vilayats.¹⁶⁸ This organization is decentralized but unified, where individual vilayats enjoy a degree of autonomy from Umarov's Chechen base, but the leaders of these vilayats are chosen by Umarov and swear *bayat* (an oath of loyalty) to him.¹⁶⁹

The six vilayets more or less correspond with the current republics of the North Caucasus Federal District: Dagestan, Chechnya, Ingushetia, Karachay-Cherkessia, Kabardino-Balkaria, North Ossetia-Alania, and Adygeia -- even though Umarov rejected "the ethnic, territorial, and colonial zones" that were imposed by Russian authorities. Part of this might have been pure pragmatism, as it is not so easy to simply cross borders controlled by Russians. Each vilayat consists of several sectors and dozens of jamaats which often correspond to villages and village groups. Each vilayat has a Sharia court to decide cases and Umarov appoints the Qadis.¹⁷⁰ Umarov's actual control over the territory was severely limited from the beginning. Though the emirs of the vilayats swore oaths of allegiance to him and there was coordination between vilayats on some operations of moderate impact, the majority of small attacks were carried out by individual jamaats. Only large attacks required Umarov's approval.

The jamaats are financially self-sufficient, collecting from racketeering, zakat, and raids. This system makes them safer from Russia's ability to track and attack them, but leads to a situation where each jamaat is largely autonomous, meaning that there is

¹⁶⁸Ibid.

¹⁶⁹Gordan M. Hahn, *Getting the Caucasus Emirate Right: A Report of the CSIS Russia and Eurasia Program*. (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2011), 14.

¹⁷⁰Ibid.

no real standardization of message or method, and it is difficult for Umarov to actually control them.¹⁷¹ This would become more evident later when certain jamaats were committed to violent terrorism while others condemned terrorism or abstained from it.

2. Propaganda

Under the direction of Movladi Udugov, Isa Umarov, and Anzor Astemirov; the propaganda arm of the CE, which exists mainly in the form of websites set up by individual leaders and the Kavkaz Center, documented and promoted the group's doctrine and activities. The small number of insurgents is somewhat balanced by the larger-than-life quality of their internet presence. Alexander Knysh notes, "The virtual presence gives the CE an aura of invincibility and permanence—while on the ground, the muhajideen are overwhelmed by Russian forces and do not enjoy popular support. The site continues to be updated regularly and provides its own self-righteous and self-confident spin on regional news as well as highlighting international jihad."¹⁷² The site was a repository for messages from CE commanders and pledges of loyalty by fighters as well as the source of documentaries about martyrs and the history of jihad.

After the proclamation, Astemirov was appointed Chief Sharia Qadi as well as continuing to act as the CE's ideologist and Umarov's advisor on Islamic matters.¹⁷³ Astemirov started a website called Islamdin.com which disseminated jihadi literature, including translations of the writings of jihadist theologians, ideologists, and propagandists from around the Muslim world including Al Qaeda leaders Osama bin Laden, Ayman al Zawahiri, and Anwar al Awlaki. The website also provided

¹⁷¹Andrew Kuchins, Matthew Malarkey, and S. M. Markedonov, *The North Caucasus: Russias Volatile Frontier*, (Washington: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2011), 11.

¹⁷²Knysh, "The Caucasian Emirate," 25.

¹⁷³Fagan, "A Word of Justice" 36.

translations of Al Qaeda's English language online journal *Inspire*.¹⁷⁴ Astemirov's posts rejected democratic systems of government, saying that they are incompatible with Islam.¹⁷⁵ One of the most prominent jihadist ideologists featured on Islamdin.com was Jordanian Sheikh Abu Muhammad Asem al-Maqdisi. Maqdisi is known as one of the most influential living Jihad ideologist. Astemirov and Maqdisi began a student-mentor relationship, via the internet, at some point in 2008, and Maqdisi publically praised Astemirov for his Islamic knowledge. Maqdisi's website began publishing supportive articles about the CE and the jihadists of the Caucasus. He endorsed the CE in September 2009 and called for Muslims to support the Caucasus insurgency.¹⁷⁶

3. Said Buryatsky and CE Terrorism

In addition to fighting Russian security forces in a guerilla war and conducting small scale shootings, explosions, and assassinations; the CE was responsible for several large scale terrorist attacks outside of the North Caucasus in the late 2010s. From October 2007 to June 2011, the CE claimed responsibility for, or was implicated in approximately 1,800 attacks and violent incidents. These 1,800 attacks have killed 1,300 and wounded 2,100 state agents and killed 300 and wounded 800 civilians for a total of some 4500 casualties.¹⁷⁷

From 2005, following the Beslan school attack, to 2008, there had been a lull in terrorist operations carried out in Russia, due in part to the death of Basayev. The CE's campaign of attacks ended the Russian government's illusion that the terrorist threat from the Caucasus had been quelled. Between 2008-2001, Russia ranked fourth in

¹⁷⁴Hahn, "The Caucasus Emirate Jihadists," 4.

¹⁷⁵Knysh, "The Caucasian Emirate," 14.

¹⁷⁶Hahn, "The Caucasus Emirate Jihadists," 5.

¹⁷⁷Ibid, 14.

suicide bombings in the world with 95% of those attacks happening in Dagestan, Chechnya and Kabardia-Balkaria.¹⁷⁸ In April 2009, thinking that the insurgency had largely been quelled, the Russian anti-terrorism Committee announced the end of operations in Chechnya. According to official data provided by the National Anti-Terrorism Committee, the number of terrorist attacks in the national increased by nearly 60% in 2009.¹⁷⁹ The security situation became so dire that in 2010, Medvedev called the NC the most serious threat to Russia's security. The increase in activity can partially be attributed to the appearance of Said Buryatsky also known as Buryatyali in 2008.

Born in 1982 in Buryatia in the south central region of Siberia, raised as a Buddhist Buryatsky, and converted to Islam at 15, Buryatsky studied at the Muslim theological institute in Orenburg. Then, from 2002-2005, he studied in Cairo and Kuwait. In 2008, by then a celebrated Islamic scholar, Buryatsky was attracted by the prospect of the new Emirate and traveled to Chechnya. He quickly became an important ideologue of the movement.¹⁸⁰ Described as "charismatic and ruthless," Buryatsky was assigned by Umarov to the CE's GV in Ingushetia. The fervent Buryatsky became a recruiting draw, prolific propagandist, and the planner of many high profile attacks on Russian targets.¹⁸¹

Buryatsky started the "Hunafa" website which disseminated jihadist literature including works by Sheikh Maqdisi. His propaganda activities included a video series on the Kavkaz Center website showing muhijideen daily life and insurgent activities in the mountains, called "An Inside View of Jihad."¹⁸² While Astemirov had believed in

¹⁷⁸Gordan M. Hahn, *The Caucasus Emirate Mujahedin: Global Jihadism in Russia's North Caucasus and Beyond*, (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2014), 14.

¹⁷⁹Kuchins, Malarkey, and Markedonov, *Russias Volatile Frontier*, 1.

¹⁸⁰Leahy, "From Racketeer to Emir."

¹⁸¹Hahn, "The Caucasus Emirate Jihadists," 28.

¹⁸²Leahy, "From Racketeer to Emir."

maintaining a latent insurgency to prevent heavy Russian intervention, Buryatsky took a much more violent approach: He was responsible for Umarov's reactivation of the Riyadus-Salikhin Martyrs Brigade (RSMB) of suicide bombers in 2008, originally formed by Basayev in the Chechen vilayat.

Within weeks of Umarov announcing the reconstitution of the RSMB, a wave of suicide bombings hit the North Caucasus. On November 6, 2008 a female suicide bomber blew herself up on a minibus in Vladikavkaz killing 11 people and injuring as many as 40.¹⁸³ On August 17, 2009, a car bomb detonated at the police headquarters in Nazran that killed 25 and injured 138 people and destroyed the main police station in Ingushetia's largest city.¹⁸⁴ The flashy attacks brought significant media attention to the new Islamic "state" in the Caucasus.

The Dagestani vilayat created their own Riyadus Salikin Martyr's Jamaat in fall of 2010 and following this, the Dagestanis soon overtook all other vilayats in volume of attacks.¹⁸⁵ The equally notorious Seifullah Gubdenskii Magomedali Vagabov, the Emir of CE's Dagestani Vilayat and Qadi of the CE, and his successor, Aslan Byutukaev, organized the double suicide bombing of the Moscow subway in March 2010, which killed 40 and wounded 101 civilians, including 10 foreigners. Umarov took responsibility, but it was the Dagestani leaders who planned the attack.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸³ "Militant's Wife behind Volgograd Suicide Blast." *RT International*, October 21, 2013, accessed April 13, 2016. <https://www.rt.com/news/volgograd-blast-militant-wife-518/>.

¹⁸⁴ Mairbek Vatchagaev, "Suicide Attacks in Moscow Are Part of an Upsurge in Attacks by North Caucasus Militant," *The Jamestown Foundation*, September 14, 2010, accessed April 1, 2016. http://www.jamestown.org/programs/nc/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=36838&cHash=26d68db774.

¹⁸⁵ Hahn, *Getting the Caucasus Emirate Right*, 15.

¹⁸⁶ "Chechen Rebel Says He Ordered Moscow Metro Attacks." *BBC News*, March 31, 2010, accessed April 13, 2016. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/8597792.stm>.

On September 9, 2010, an Emirate suicide bomber exploded a car in Vladikavkaz's Central market, killing 17 and wounding 160.¹⁸⁷ On Emir Umarov's orders, the CE's RSMB prepared and dispatched 20-year old Ingush Magomed Yevloev to carry out the January 24, 2011 suicide bombing attack in the International terminal of Moscow's Domodedovo Airport. A total of 37 were killed and 180 were wounded.¹⁸⁸ These spectacular attacks made international news but the North Caucasians and Russians were experiencing an almost constant barrage of small scale attacks occurring between 2008 and 2010 -- to the point where Dmitri Medvedev called the North Caucasus Russia's most serious domestic problem in 2009.¹⁸⁹

4. Federal Security Response

The Chechenisation policy, in place since 2002, called for replacing the previous arrangement implemented by Russian security and law enforcement agencies after 2000. The new policy called for relinquishing power to the Kadyrov clan, offering the republic genuine internal autonomy, guaranteeing stable and generous financing from the federal budget, and trusting the government in Grozny to administer its own security forces in exchange for stabilization at any cost.¹⁹⁰ This unwritten agreement policy has been effective and Chechnya is fairly stable. Kadyrov has used a successful combination of bloody force on militants with Russian aid, successful political maneuvering to

¹⁸⁷Luke Harding, "Islamist Militants Blamed after Suicide Bomb Kills 16 in Christian Caucasus City," *The Guardian*, September 09, 2010, accessed April 13, 2016, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/sep/09/russian-market-deadly-car-bomb>.

¹⁸⁸"Russia 'Identifies' Domodedovo Airport Bomber Suspect," *BBC News*, January 29, 2011, accessed April 13, 2016. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-12315608>.

¹⁸⁹Hahn, "The Caucasus Emirate Jihadists," 45.

¹⁹⁰Maciej Falkowski, *On the Periphery of Global Jihad*, (Warsaw: Centre for Eastern Studies, 2014), 24.

neutralize political adversaries, and promotion of Chechen nationalism based on Sufi Islamic culture.¹⁹¹

Following the Beslan attacks, Russian and Chechen federal forces had systematically hunted down the radical terrorist leaders, but after the 2005 and 2006 deaths of Aslan Maskhadov and Shamil Basayev, the Russians left the security operations to the Chechen domestic forces. The terror attacks of 2008-2010 elicited a renewed effort to root out the leaders of the insurgency. Kadyrov stepped up anti-terror operations which were carried out ruthlessly to the point that by 2010, Chechnya was the least active of the CE's four main vilayats.¹⁹² In tandem with this, the Russian authorities attempted to counter the popular support for the insurgency by creating the North Caucasus Federal District in 2010 to build economy; promote investment; construct more public works; and increase infrastructure, tourism, and access to higher education. The total sum of these investments will be 3.4 trillion rubles, according to Putin.¹⁹³

E. Coup Attempt and Leadership Changes

The CE was rocked by a coup attempt in August 2010. Umarov released a video in which he stated he was stepping down from the role of Emir in favor of his second-in-command, Aslambek Vadalov. A few days later, he retracted his abdication, claiming that the original statement had been fabricated. Chechen Emir Khusein Gakayev and two other Chechen rebel field commanders, Aslambek Vadalov and Tarkhan Gaziyeu, along with Emir Mukhannad, rescinded their oaths of allegiance to

¹⁹¹Ibid.

¹⁹²Hahn, "The Caucasus Emirate Jihadists," 48.

¹⁹³Ibid.

Umarov. In a video posted to Chechen rebel website Daymohk.org, they stated they had lost faith in Umarov because he refused to seek the advice of other "emirs." They also said that Umarov announced the CE without consulting other rebel leaders, although they acknowledged it was the right action.¹⁹⁴

In a video posted to the Hunafa.com website on September 25, 2010, Umarov charged that Mukhannad, the 4th Emir of the largely defunct Arab Muhajideen group, was trying create *fitna* (dissention) in the ranks of supporters of the jihad in the North Caucasus. Umarov claimed that Mukhannad had been an opponent of the Caucasus Emirate from the moment of its creation and had tried to convince other militants that the CE had no future.¹⁹⁵

In July 2011 a Sharia court ruled in favor of Umarov and he was able to reassert control. Emirs of the vilayats issued statements renewing their oaths of allegiance to Umarov, including Aslan Byutukaev and Rustam Asilderov.¹⁹⁶ Mukhannad was killed in April 2011 which supposedly paved the way for a reconciliation with Umarov and Vadalov, but not Gaziyeu.¹⁹⁷ Gaziyeu would later, in the summer of 2013, bring a case against Dokka Umarov to a Chechen Republic Ichkeria Sharia court-in-exile to rule on whether Umarov's proclamation of the Caucasus Emirate in late 2007 was justified under Sharia law; he would later appear in Syria after 2011.¹⁹⁸ Although Umarov was

¹⁹⁴"Chechen Rebel Field Commanders Renounced Loyalty Oath to Doku Umarov," *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 7, no. 82 (October 8, 2010), [http://www.jamestown.org/programs/edm/single/?tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=37012&tx_ttnews\[backPid\]=484&no_cache=1#.Vw8CFCN968o](http://www.jamestown.org/programs/edm/single/?tx_ttnews[tt_news]=37012&tx_ttnews[backPid]=484&no_cache=1#.Vw8CFCN968o).

¹⁹⁵"Chechen Rebel Field Commanders Renounced Loyalty Oath to Doku Umarov."

¹⁹⁶ Liz Fuller, "Some Chechen Commanders Reaffirm Loyalty To Umarov." *RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty*, July 26, 2011, accessed April 13, 2016, http://www.rferl.org/content/chechen_commanders_reaffirm_loyalty_to_umarov/24277716.html?s=1.

¹⁹⁷ Bill Roggio, "Internal Divisions Resolved, Claims Caucasus Emirate." *The Long War Journal*, July 25, 2011, accessed April 1, 2016.

http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2011/07/caucasus_emirate_cla_1.php#ixzz1TKEnDQLI.

¹⁹⁸ Liz Fuller, "Insurgency Commanders Divulge Details Of Umarov's Death." *RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty*, July 23, 2014, accessed April 13, 2016, <http://www.rferl.org/content/insurgency-commanders-divulge-of-umarovs-death/25467747.html>.

able to reassert the legitimacy of his position, this situation showed the weakening position of the CE leader.

1. Key Deaths

In 2010 and 2011, the CE lost many key leaders. Umalat Majomedov and Ibragimkhalil Daudov, successive emirs of Dagestan, as well as Buryatsky and Astemirov, were all killed by security forces. Umarov's second in command, Ali Taziev, was captured by the Russians in June 2010. These deaths and Taziev's capture landed a serious blow on the ideological leadership of the of CE. Buryatsky was an effective religious and military leader committed to keeping the CE on the wavelength of Global Jihad and had a large online following.¹⁹⁹ Astemirov had continued to advise Umarov throughout the first years of the CE. Umarov had no choice but to continue to operate. He replaced the dead leaders with a new crop of jihadis.

Following the death of Daudov, in August 2010, Umarov announced his first deputy Rustam Asildarov, also known as Emir Abu Muhammad Kadarsky, was the new Emir of Dagestan.²⁰⁰ Asildarov is a native of the Kadar region of the Buynaksky District in Dagestan. In the 1990s, the area became a regional center of Salafism. Umarov appointed Aslan Byutukayev, also known as Emir Khamzat, to replace Said Buryatsky as leader of the RSBM in August of 2010. In July 2011, he appointed Byutukayev to become his deputy in the newly created Western Sector of Vilayat Nokhchicho. In February 2011, Umarov appeared on a videotape, flanked by Khamzat,

¹⁹⁹Kuchins, Malarkey, and Markedonov, *Russias Volatile Frontier*, 11.

²⁰⁰Liz Fuller, "Umarov Names New Commander Of Insurgency In Daghestan," *RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty*, August 26, 2012, accessed April 07, 2016, <http://www.rferl.org/content/umarov-names-new-commander-daghestan/24688709.html>.

the commander of the Riyad-us-Saliheen Martyr Brigade, threatening Russia with a year of “blood and tears.”²⁰¹

2. New Leadership, New Terrorist Attacks

The next two years would demonstrate that despite the loss of important leaders and significant challenges to its very existence, the CE was capable of performing large terrorist attacks against Russian and Caucasian targets. On July 2, 2013, Russia was put on high alert when Dokka Umarov issued a video statement threatening to hit targets at the 2014 Winter Sochi Olympics. On October 21, 2013, a lone suicide bomber from Dagestan, detonated an explosive device on a bus in Volgograd and killed six people.²⁰² On December 29, 2013 a suicide bomber blew himself up at Volgograd’s principal railway terminal. The next day, another suicide bomber in Volgograd detonated explosives on a trolleybus. These consecutive bombings killed 34 people. Vilayet Dagestan claimed responsibility in a video address, released on January 18, 2014, where they enumerated their grievances against the enemies of Islam.

The most recent major attack carried out by the CE occurred on December 6, 2014. Between 100 and 300 militants, commanded by Amir Khamzat, engaged in surprise “battle” with Chechen security personnel in Grozny. A total of 14 police were killed and 36 were wounded. The loss of life was not large considering how many fighters participated. It was, however, surprising given the lack of attacks in Chechnya in 2014. The attack demonstrated that insurgency was still a force, even after an

²⁰¹Bill Roggio, “Caucasus Emirate Leader Threatens Russia with “A Year of Blood and Tears,” *The Long War Journal*, February 6, 2011, accessed April 13, 2016, http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2011/02/caucasus_emirate_lea.php.

²⁰²Lisa Lundquist, "Suspected 'Black Widow' Suicide Bomber Kills 6 in Southern Russia." *The Long War Journal*, October 21, 2013, accessed April 1, 2016, http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2013/10/a_suspected_black_wi.php.

embarrassing failure to perpetuate Sochi attacks. In Dagestan, small attacks, usually in the form of ambushing and gunning down police officers, judges and Sufi clerics loyal to Moscow still occurred with regularity in 2014. In that year, there were a total of 103 attacks on personnel.²⁰³

Although the CE was able to perpetrate many attacks in 2013 and 2014, this should not suggest that the Umarov was in full control. The Dagestani Vilayat, under Emir Khamzat, was responsible for organizing and carrying out most of these attacks. The threat against Sochi also caused another wave of security crackdown by Chechen and Russian military forces that eliminated many of insurgents.

3. Umarov's Death

Umarov died on September 7, 2013, by food poisoning, as result of FSB food contamination. The details of his death were not divulged until July 2014, when an 11-minute video was posted to YouTube and then to the Kavkaz Center that showed Emir Khamzat and another senior Chechen insurgency leader, Emir Saidov, burying Umarov and describing the circumstances of Umarov's demise.²⁰⁴ Umarov and four other fighters had died of food poisoning a month after consuming contaminated food in southern Ingushetia. President Kadyrov promptly posted a screen grab from the footage on his Instagram account as definitive proof that Umarov was dead.²⁰⁵ The death dealt a mighty blow to the already struggling CE.

²⁰³ Liz Fuller, "Was The Insurgent Attack On Grozny A Trial Run?" *RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty*, December 6, 2014, accessed April 1, 2016, <http://www.rferl.mobi/a/grozny-attakc-chechnya/26728961.html>.

²⁰⁴ Mairbek Vatchagaev, "Post-Mortem Photograph and Video of Doku Umarov Emerge." *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 11, no. 135 (July 24, 2014), accessed April 1, 2016. [http://www.jamestown.org/regions/thecaucasus/single/?tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=42665&tx_ttnews\[backPid\]=54&cHash=ab297c05f04f9bbc8c3215a0a25385d9#.VxqH0yN96fQ](http://www.jamestown.org/regions/thecaucasus/single/?tx_ttnews[tt_news]=42665&tx_ttnews[backPid]=54&cHash=ab297c05f04f9bbc8c3215a0a25385d9#.VxqH0yN96fQ).

²⁰⁵ Liz Fuller, "Insurgency Commanders Divulge Details Of Umarov's Death." *RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty*, July 23, 2014, accessed April 13, 2016, <http://www.rferl.org/content/insurgency-commanders-divulge-of-umarovs-death/25467747.html>.

CHAPTER V

NORTH CAUCASIANS IN THE SYRIAN CONFLICT

A. First North Caucasians Go to Syria

The outbreak of civil war in Syria in 2011 provided a new theater for Global Jihadism. The radical fighters who flocked to the area formed brigades that supported the opposition to Bashar Assad's regime. As the war dragged on, these groups became more fragmented in ideology and practice. This resulted in a situation where hundreds of different groups currently operate against the regime and against each other.

This conflict proved irresistible for certain Caucasian jihadists who began leaving the Caucasus in late 2011. Emir Umarov's initial reaction was ambivalence.²⁰⁶ Three Kist Chechen fighters, Murad Margoshvili also known as Muslim "Abu Walid" al-Shishani, Ruslan Machaliashvili also known as Seifullah al-Shishani, and Tarkhan Tayumurazovich Batirashvili also known as Omar al-Shishani, arrived in Syria between 2011 and late 2012. Umarov also sponsored a group of CE fighters to Syria. Umarov hoped the jihadis might learn useful skills there that they could import back to the CE and that they might possibly garner support for the fledgling Emirate among possible financiers and fighters. However, he was wary of militants who would otherwise be fighting for him, leaving to fight in the international conflict.²⁰⁷ Tarkhan Gaziyeu, one of the conspirators against Dokka Umarov's leadership in 2010, showed up in Syria a

²⁰⁶ *Assessing Terrorism in the Caucasus and the Threat to the Homeland*, 113th Cong. (2014) (testimony of Gordon M. Hahn).

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

few years later and formed a militant group of Chechens known as “Tarkhan’s Jamaat,” based in Latakia.²⁰⁸

Muslim “Abu Walid” al-Shishani, a well-connected Pankisi-born Kist Chechen, formed Junud as-Sham (soldiers of the Levant) in 2012. This group is mostly composed of veteran fighters from the North Caucasus. Junud as-Sham is not under allegiance to the Caucasian Emirate and retains independence from other groups in Syria, though it has participated in many battles alongside other near Aleppo.²⁰⁹

Omar al-Shishani, an ethnic Kist Chechen Georgian national, and Seifullah al-Shishani, from the Pankisi Gorge, formed the Muhajireen Brigade in summer 2012 and aligned with Jabhat al Nusra. Jabhat al Nusra is the Syrian branch of Al Qaeda. This brigade was populated by jihadists loyal the Caucasian Emirate, but also by Muslims from other Russian areas and other nations. In an interview in 2013, Omar al Shishani said that he and his group had come to Syria on Umarov’s orders and that Umarov had financed them “for a time.”²¹⁰ In another video, released in 2015, Omar al-Shishani said that he had not sworn allegiance to Umarov when he arrived in Syria, although he supported the Caucasian insurgency while he was living in the Pankisi Gorge and later in Syria he had helped support and train CE transplants.²¹¹

²⁰⁸Joanna Paraszczuk, "Tarkhan's Jamaat": Chechen Fighters Burn Flags in Kassab, Latakia," *From Chechnya to Syria*, May 5, 2014, accessed April 1, 2016, <http://www.chechensinsyria.com/?p=21901>.

²⁰⁹Cerwyn Moore, "Foreign Bodies: Transnational Activism, the Insurgency in the North Caucasus and “Beyond”," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 27, no. 3 (2015): 409, accessed April 1, 2016, doi:10.1080/09546553.2015.1032035.

²¹⁰Joanna Paraszczuk, "Umar Shishani Claims: Dokka Umarov Financed Us," *From Chechnya to Syria*, December 10, 2013 accessed April 1, 2016, <http://www.chechensinsyria.com/?tag=dokka-umarov>.

²¹¹Idem, "Umar Shishani to Kebekov: I Didn’t Have Bayah to Umarov When I Came to Syria," *From Chechnya to Syria*, June 7, 2015, accessed April 1, 2016, <http://www.chechensinsyria.com/?p=23819>.

1. North Caucasian Communities in Diaspora

Syria also saw the appearance of members of the Chechen diaspora to Europe and Turkey. This community is estimated to be 200,000 people who still maintain ties to their homeland. Like in the Caucasus, a fraction of the members of these communities were radicalized by the events of 1990s but were largely unable to return to Chechnya to participate in fighting there due to travel restrictions imposed by Russian authorities. Syria provided an excellent and easily accessible venue for these fighters to participate in battle against the “enemies of Islam.”²¹² Several high profile Caucasian Emirate members, including Movladi Udugov, are said to be living in Turkey. These members initially helped facilitate the transit of North Caucasian Jihadists to Syria.²¹³

2. Umarov Tries to Retain Control

In early 2012 Umarov slightly shifted his message on terrorism. He stated that militants should only seek “official” targets and refrain from harming Russians who do not belong to or support the Russian armed forces.²¹⁴ This thinking put Umarov in line with dominant Al Qaeda dogma at the time, but alienated him to the more radical elements within the CE, especially in Dagestan.²¹⁵ This moratorium on civilian targets

²¹²“The Chechen Foreign Fighter Threat.” *The Soufan Group*, November 21, 2014, accessed April 13, 2016. <http://soufangroup.com/tsg-intelbrief-the-chechen-foreign-fighter-threat/>.

²¹³“The North Caucasus: An Exported Jihad,” *International Crisis Group*, March 16, 2016, accessed April 1, 2016. [http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/europe/caucasus/238-the-north-caucasus-insurgency-and-syria-an-exported-jihad.pdf](http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/europe/caucasus/238-the-north-caucasus-insurgency-and-syria-an-exported-jihad.pdf).

²¹⁴Bill Roggio, “Caucasus Emirate Leader Orders Halt on Attacks against Russian Civilians.” *The Long War Journal*, February 3, 2012, accessed April 13, 2016, http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2012/02/caucasus_emirate_lea_4.php.

²¹⁵“Imarat Kavkaz” Leader Calls on Militants to Abandon Suicide Bombings and Terror Acts against Civilian,,” *Caucasian Knot*, July 1, 2014, accessed April 14, 2016, <http://eng.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/28582/>.

was lifted in July 2013 when Umarov called for jihadists to attack the Sochi Winter Olympics.²¹⁶

At the same time, Kavkaz Center was publishing numerous articles about the activities of the North Caucasians in Syria praising the fighters, but also posted op-eds stating that the fighters should stay to wage jihad in the North Caucasus instead of leaving. Kavkaz Center published a speech from Umarov praising the Muhajireen brigade in Syria in November 2012.²¹⁷ Umarov knew that he needed to maintain ties to the Caucasian forces in the Syria in order to maintain the image of being in control. In reality, the Syrian fighters on the ground were being absorbed into the chaotic politics of the Syrian conflict.

3. Omar al-Shishani and Jaish al-Muhajireen wal-Ansar

In March 26, 2013, the Kavkaz Center announced the formation of Jaish al-Muhajireen wal-Ansar (JMA) under the leadership of Omar al-Shishani which subsumed the Muhajireen brigade and two other Syrian fighting groups who swore bayat to Shishani.²¹⁸ A video was posted to YouTube showing a group of Syrian jihadists with Al Qaeda flags swearing an oath of loyalty to Omar al-Shishani. In another video, Omar's deputy, Seifullah al-Shishani states "We came here to establish God's law...We have a purpose: to establish Sharia." He also notes, "to us, there is not a

²¹⁶Miriam Elder, "Russian Islamist Doku Umarov Calls for Attacks on 2014 Winter Olympics," *The Guardian*, July 03, 2013, accessed April 14, 2016, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jul/03/russia-islamist-attack-olympics-sochi>.

²¹⁷Bill Roggio, "Chechen Commander Forms 'Army of Emigrants,' Integrates Syrian Groups," *The Long War Journal*, March 28, 2013, accessed April 1, 2016, http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2013/03/chechen_jihadist_for.php.

²¹⁸*Ibid.*

difference between Syria, Egypt, Iraq, Afghanistan, Chechnya, the Caucasus, any place.”²¹⁹

Between 2012 and 2013, under the leadership of Omar al Shishani, the JMA participated in various operations in cooperation with Nusra front. The Kavkaz Center reported on these operations with a degree of pride, but the nominal control that Umarov and the CE leadership had over the Caucasian fighters on the ground on the Syria was illusory and about to fade completely. In 2013, Salahuddin al-Shishani, another Kist Chechen from Pankisi who had sworn allegiance to Umarov, traveled to Syria and joined the JMA.

4. “*al-Shishani*”

Many of the North Caucasians who came to Syria adopted nom de guerres that ended in the Arabic term for Chechen: “al-Shishani”. Chechens have a strong reputation in the jihadi world as top notch fighters, so marking this association raised these fighters’ profiles.²²⁰ Though most of the Caucasian fighters in reality lack battle experience, they tended to enjoy a higher reputation among the fighters because of their association with the jihads of the 1990s. Although these numbers are extremely difficult to substantiate and remain hotly contested, Vladimir Makarov, the deputy head of the Chief Department to Combat Extremism of the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs in March 2016 said that almost 3,500 Russian citizens are now fighting for militants.²²¹ It is crucial to note that many of the fighters who have taken the nom de guerre “al-

²¹⁹Bill Roggio, "Chechen Commander Forms 'Army of Emigrants,' Integrates Syrian Groups," *The Long War Journal*, March 28, 2013, accessed April 1, 2016, http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2013/03/chechen_jihadist_for.php.

²²⁰Moore, "Foreign Bodies," 408.

²²¹"Up to 3500 Russian Citizens Are Fighting for Militants in Syria and Iraq, MIA Reports." *Caucasian Knot*, March 17, 2016, accessed April 14, 2016, <http://eng.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/34946/>.

Shishani” are not from the North Caucasus, but rather Russophone Central Asians or from diaspora communities in Europe. They have purposely associated themselves with the Chechens in order to raise their own statuses.

5. Crackdown by Security Forces in the North Caucasus

Before 2014 Russian security forces had essentially opened the borders to North Caucasian Salafists leaving for Syria. The thinking was, that if they were in Syria, they would not cause trouble in Russia. Russia criminalized participation of armed groups abroad and prosecuted those who returned.²²² Following Umarov’s threat to the 2013 Olympics, Kadyrov’s government forces and Russian and local security forces in other North Caucasus republics initiated an enormous crackdown on non-violent Salafis and suspected Salafi jihadist sympathizers, especially in Dagestan. They harassed and detained Salafis and shut down mosques and organizations. They also attempted to clamp down on fighters leaving Russia. Police created special lists of Salafis, called “Wabbabi registration” lists, which they use to detain and harass people extra-judicially. Those detained were often beaten, tortured, or disappeared.²²³ This caused an exodus from these areas with many North Caucasian families resettling in Turkey, some of whom would then go on to Syria. It also thinned the numbers of radical militants within the Caucasus who chose what they perceived as real opportunity to wage jihad in Syria as opposed to the difficult and suicidal enterprise at home.

²²²“The North Caucasus: An Exported Jihad,” 4.

²²³“Human Rights Violations in Russia's North Caucasus,” *Human Rights Watch*, January 28, 2016, accessed April 22, 2016. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/01/28/human-rights-violations-russias-north-caucasus>.

B. The CE Between Al Qaeda and ISIS

On June 29, 2014, the commander of the Islamic State in the Sham (ISIS), Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi proclaimed in an audio message posted online the formation of the “Islamic State,” a caliphate that claimed the territories of Iraq and Syria under its direct control as well as all Muslim areas outside of its direct control.²²⁴ The group invaded Syria from Iraq soon after the onset of the Syrian Civil War and established a presence in the al-Raqqah, Idlib, Deir ez-Zor, and Aleppo provinces.

A potential merger with Jabhat al-Nusra was rejected by both sides in 2014 and the two groups quickly went to war with each other as well as continuing their struggle against Syrian regime forces. ISIS’s brutal tactics are notorious and have garnered a lot of international attention. ISIS is a Salafi-Jihadist-Takfiri group that follows the fundamentalist Wahhabi doctrine of Sunni Islam. Al-Baghdadi codified the ideology of the prospective state while still in Iraq in 2006. Fouad al-Ibrahim identifies the purposed ideological construction of this group as an attempt to create a state based directly on the prescription of Mohammed Ibn Abd al-Wahhab, characterized by ultraconservative and puritanical adherence to the Sharia. Al Ibrahim describes ISIS as “the most indulgent of takfiri groups in issuing declarations of disbelief.”²²⁵ Unlike Jabhat al-Nusra, ISIS immediately clarified its primary goal as not fighting Assad, but to impose Sharia law on territory it physically holds to create a real Islamic state.²²⁶

²²⁴Matthew Weaver and Mark Tran, "Isis Announces Islamic Caliphate in Area Straddling Iraq and Syria," *The Guardian*, June 30, 2014, accessed April 14, 2016. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jun/30/isis-announces-islamic-caliphate-iraq-syria>.

²²⁵Fouad al-Ibrahim, "Why ISIS Is a Threat to Saudi Arabia: Wahhabism's Deferred Promise," *Al Akhbar English*, August 22, 2014, accessed April 07, 2016, <https://web.archive.org/web/20140824121659/http://english.al-akhbar.com/node/21234>.

²²⁶Birke, Sarah. "How ISIS Rules," *The New York Review of Books*, January 7, 2015, accessed April 07, 2016. <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/2015/02/05/how-isis-rules/>.

1. The Islamic State

In his declaration of the “Islamic State” al-Baghdadi extended his scope, claiming a worldwide caliphate and demanding that all Muslims pledge allegiance to him.²²⁷ As of December 2015, the group held a vast, landlocked territory covering large areas of Iraq and Syria, with a population of millions.²²⁸

The fact that al-Baghdadi created a “caliphate” versus an “Emirate” is important. A caliphate is the only type of Islamic state that claims authority of the entire ummah. A caliphate, if legitimate, requires all Muslims to recognize it and swear loyalty; its Sharia rulings are relevant to all.²²⁹ This group has enjoyed popularity among radical Muslims all over the world who have pledged their support online and carried out numerous terrorist attacks in the name of ISIS.

2. Omar al-Shishani's Defection

In mid 2013 Omar al-Shishani switched allegiances from Jabhat al-Nusra to ISIS, swearing *bayat* to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. The JMA was split, but hundreds of members went with Omar al-Shishani. Seifullah defected from the JMA in September 2013 and formed “Seifullah’s Jamaat” of predominantly Russian-speaking fighters. They announced they would join Jabhat al Nusra in December 2013.²³⁰ Seifullah’s death

²²⁷“Iraq Conflict: ISIS Declares a 'Caliphate', Calls for Muslims to Pledge Allegiance.” *ABC News*, July 2, 2014, accessed April 14, 2016, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-06-30/isis-declares-islamic-caliphate/5558508>.

²²⁸“Interactive Map: Isis' Advance Through Iraq and Syria,” *Financial Times*, March 18, 2016, accessed April 14, 2016, <http://www.ft.com/ig/sites/2014/isis-map/>.

²²⁹“The North Caucasus: An Exported Jihad” 24.

²³⁰Murad Batal al-Shishani, “Islamist North Caucasus Rebels Training a New Generation of Fighters in Syria.” *Terrorism Monitor* 12, no. 3 (2014), accessed April 15, 2016, [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=41927&#:;VxB0wSN96fQ](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?tx_ttnews[tt_news]=41927&#:;VxB0wSN96fQ).

during a failed raid on Aleppo Central Prison was captured on camera and published on YouTube in February 2014.²³¹

The CE fighters who did not follow Omar al-Shishani remained allegiant to Umarov, and the group appointed Salakhuddin al-Shishani their new commander in late 2013.²³² Omar al-Shishani was appointed northern commander of ISIS with authority over militants in Aleppo, Raqqa, Latakia, and northern Idlib. He was soon promoted to Emir of Northern Syria and became very influential in the high leadership of ISIS.²³³ He is said to have led ISIS' conquest of Anbar province and belonged to ISIS's Shura council. His brother, Tamaz, holds a high position in ISIS's financial operations.²³⁴ Omar's defection was the beginning of a series of Caucasian defections to ISIS that would significantly damage the CE.

C. Aliaskhab Kebekov and The Decline of the CE

In September 2013 Umarov died and leadership of the CE shifted from Chechen to Dagestani hands. The CE and the Kavkaz Center chose not to announce Umarov's death until March 2014. This was due to the difficulty of gathering fighters together to elect a leader as well as dispute over who should replace Umarov. The final choice was Aliaskhab Alibulatovich Kebekov, also known as Ali Abu Muhammad. He served in the position of Qadi of the Vilayat Dagestan and later the whole CE before succeeding

²³¹Bill Roggio, "Al Nusrah Front Praises Chechen Commander Killed in Aleppo," *The Long War Journal*, February 10, 2014, accessed April 1, 2016, http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/02/al_nusrah_front_prai.php.

²³²Murad Batal al-Shishani, "Syria Crisis: Omar Shishani, Chechen Jihadist Leader," *BBC News*, December 3, 2013, accessed April 15, 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-25151104>.

²³³Tarkhan Tayumurazovich Batirashvili. " *Rewards for Justice*, May 5, 2015, accessed April 1, 2015, https://www.rewardsforjustice.net/english/tarkhan_batirashvili.html.

²³⁴Gordon M. Hahn, "REPORT: An Anatomy of North Caucasus-Tied Jihadi Groups in Syria and Iran," *Russian and Eurasian Politics*, October 20, 2015, accessed April 1, 2016, <http://gordonhahn.com/2015/10/20/report-an-anatomy-of-north-caucasus-tied-jihad-groups-in-syria-and-iraq/>.

Umarov.²³⁵ Unlike Umarov, Kebekov had an Islamic education, which he received in Tunisia and Syria.²³⁶

Jamaats and Emirs from CE vilayats as well as members of the Jaish al-Muhajireen wal-Ansar pledged allegiance to the new emir. In March 2014, he received *bayat* from Rustam Asilderov, the leader of Vilayat Dagestan. In May 2014, Aslan Byutukayev, also known as Emir Khamzat, appeared in a video with a large number of field commanders of the Vilayat Nokhchicho, giving an oath of allegiance Kebekov.²³⁷ Kebekov is a native of Dagestan with little combat experience. Already in a weak position among militants and Chechens in Syria, his credibility had been eroded by his more moderate views on jihad. He came out in opposition to civilian targets and prohibited female participation in suicide attacks. In a video recording posted on the internet in June 2014, Kebekov apologised to civilians who had been harmed by Caucasus Emirate attacks and stated that civilians should not be targeted by the group. He also called on militants not to use “black widows” in armed attacks or suicide bombings.²³⁸

Kebekov and his emirs contacted each other very rarely and engaged in uncoordinated attacks. A very small portion of the CE militants at this point included active fighters, operating out of bases in the mountains. The dwindling forces mostly lived in the cities or villages and from time to time, would join military actions or

²³⁵"Kebekov Aliaskhab Alibulatovich." *Caucasian Knot*, April 21, 2015, accessed April 14, 2016, <http://www.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/239677/>.

²³⁶Mairbek Vatchagaev, "The North Caucasus in 2014: The Year in Review," *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 12, no. 5 (2015), accessed April 1, 2016, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/54b788854.html>.

²³⁷Mairbek Vatchagaev, "Rebels in Chechnya Regroup in Rare Meeting of Field Commanders." *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 11, no. 146 (2014), accessed April 07, 2016, [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=42731&tx_ttnews\[backPid\]=7&cHash=70da6cc571d3dc6585f94aa4b546507f#.VwaFXDZ97-b](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?tx_ttnews[tt_news]=42731&tx_ttnews[backPid]=7&cHash=70da6cc571d3dc6585f94aa4b546507f#.VwaFXDZ97-b).

²³⁸"Imarat Kavkaz" Leader Calls on Militants to Abandon Suicide Bombings and Terror Acts Against Civilians." *Caucasian Knot*, July 1, 2014, accessed April 14, 2016, <http://eng.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/28582>.

participate in attacks. Currently, in total, fewer than 1,000 militants are thought to be active in the Caucasus as a whole, most of them in Dagestan.²³⁹

Upon his promotion to Emir of the CE, Kebekov called on fighters in Syria to back Jabhat al Nusra.²⁴⁰ In September 2014, Kebekov, along with Sheikh Maqdisi and several other prominent jihadist scholars, issued a statement calling on the ISIS to be more moderate and patch up its split with AQ. This exacerbated an already tense situation between the CE and ISIS.²⁴¹ In early August 2014 Maqdisi thanked Kebekov for his assistance with jihad in Syria and called upon Caucasian fighters to show Kebekov obedience.²⁴² Kebekov's power was waning as he increasingly alienated himself to many Caucasian jihadists through his inept interference in Syria, "non-violent" jihadism, and commitment to Al Qaeda.²⁴³

1. Rustam Asilderov's Defection

Highlighting the CE's loss of control over its members, on December 19, 2014 the commander of the Dagestan vilayat, Rustam Asilderov, also known as Abu Muhammed al-Qadarsky, recanted his *bayat* to Kebekov and pledged allegiance to al-Baghdadi.²⁴⁴ In his video address he claimed that he would have pledged to al-Baghdadi sooner but he was trying to convince Kebekov to come with him.²⁴⁵ Abu

²³⁹Falkowski, *On the Periphery of Global Jihad*, 15.

²⁴⁰Mairbek Vatchagaev, "Statement by New Leader of Caucasus Emirate Creates Rift Among Chechen Groups Operating in Syria." *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 11, no. 121 (2014), accessed April 1, 2016, [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=42587#.VwgkzTZ97-Y](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?tx_ttnews[tt_news]=42587#.VwgkzTZ97-Y).

²⁴¹Gordon M. Hahn, "The Islamic State Splits the Caucasus Emirate." *Fair Observer*, January 23, 2015, accessed April 1, 2016, <http://www.fairobserver.com/region/europe/the-islamic-state-splits-the-caucasus-emirate-18941/>.

²⁴²Falkowski, *On the Periphery of Global Jihad*, 23.

²⁴³*Ibid.*, 22.

²⁴⁴Liz Fuller, "Commanders Transfer Allegiance to Islamic State," *RadioFreeEurope/Radio Liberty*, January 02, 2015, accessed April 1, 2016, <http://www.rferl.mobi/a/islamic-state-north-caucasus-insurgency-commanders-allegiance/26773615.html>.

²⁴⁵Thomas Joscelyn, "Dagestani Jihadist Swears Allegiance to Islamic State, Invoking Backlash." *The Long War Journal*, December 31, 2014, accessed April 1, 2016, http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/12/jihadists_in_dagesta.php.

Muhammed al-Adnani, the official spokesman for ISIS, accepted this pledge on behalf of Baghdadi²⁴⁶ Days later, Kebekov released a video to Kavkaz Center in which he describes Asilderov's defection as "treachery" and accused him of trying to split the muhajideen and of lacking basic knowledge of the Sharia. He challenged Asilderov to debate him over whether Baghdadi or Zawahiri and Mullah Omar are the correct arbiters of Sharia.²⁴⁷

Magomed Aliyevich Suleimanov, also known as Abu Usman Gimrinsky, Qadi of the Caucasus Emirate's Vilayat Dagestan branch, and the military commander of Vilayat Dagestan's Mountain Sector, released a video criticizing Asilderov's decision, stating that Kebekov had not allowed any CE jihadis to swear allegiance to ISIS, because "they (ISIS) accuse Muslims of disbelief, accept killing of Muslims, and do not listen to scholars." These videos were promoted on Twitter by Nusra leaders.²⁴⁸ Kebekov called for unity, but more defections within the CE were about to follow. In November 2014, a small Dagestani Vilayat cell in Aukhovsky village posted a video swearing allegiance to Baghdadi. In December 2014 and January 2015, the Emirs of Khasav-Yurt, Baba-Yurt, Tsumadin Jamaats, the Emir Nokhchicho Vilayat's Eastern Front, and the Nokhchicho Vilayat Emirs of Vedenov and Itumkala sectors defected as well.²⁴⁹

On January 30, 2015, ten ideologues, including Kebekov and prominent Al Qaeda jihadists, addressed the rogue groups in a joint statement denouncing the

²⁴⁶Idem, "Amid Defections, Islamic Caucasus Emirate Publicly Recognizes New Leader." *The Long War Journal*, July 6, 2015, accessed April 1, 2016, <http://whhttp://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2015/07/amid-defections-islamic-caucasus-emirate-publicly-recognizes-new-leader.php> www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2015/07/amid-defections-islamic-caucasus-emirate-publicly-recognizes-new-leader.php.

²⁴⁷Idem, "Dagestani Jihadist Swears Allegiance to Islamic State, Invoking Backlash."

²⁴⁸Thomas Joscelyn, "Dagestani Jihadist Swears Allegiance to Islamic State, Invoking Backlash."

²⁴⁹Liz Fuller, "Six North Caucasus Insurgency Commanders Transfer Allegiance To Islamic State." *RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty*, January 2, 2015, accessed April 14, 2016, <http://www.rferl.org/content/islamic-state-north-caucasus-insurgency-commanders-allegiance/26773615.html>.

defections and arguing that ISIS's caliphate was illegitimate and that they should return therefore to the fold.²⁵⁰ In May 2015, Sheikh Maqdisi issued a fatwa in response to an inquiry as to whether *bayat* to the emir of CE is null if the emir is dead. Maqdisi said no.²⁵¹

2. *Death Blows to the CE*

Since the invasion of Chechnya in 1999, militants have committed over 75 major terror attacks on civilian targets in Russian cities and hundreds of attacks against security forces and religious and political leaders within the North Caucasus. Between 2010 and 2012, Dagestan saw attacks occurring almost constantly. Since 2014, there has been an enormous reduction in such attacks, a trend that continued in 2015.²⁵² This is not due to Kebekov's insistence on more discretion in terrorist attacks, but primarily to the success of security forces in thinning the ranks of the militants and the exodus of fighters to Syria. The most recent major terrorist action claimed by CE leadership was the December 2014 Grozny suicide bombing a town hall during Grozny City day celebrations in which 14 police officers were killed and 35 were wounded.²⁵³

On April 19, 2015 Kebekov was killed by Russian security forces during a raid on a house in Buynaksk.²⁵⁴ The earlier defections and Kebekov's death weakened the CE greatly, but an even bigger blow was coming. On June 13, 2015, Aslan Byutukayev,

²⁵⁰Thomas Joscelyn, "Al Qaeda Sharia Officials Address Caucasus Defectors in Joint Statement," *The Long War Journal*, January 30, 2015, accessed April 1, 2016, http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2015/01/al_qaeda_sharia_offi.php.

²⁵¹Gordon M. Hahn, "The Islamic State – Al Qa`ida Tussle over the Caucasus Emirate Continues," *Russian and Eurasian Politics*, March 10, 2015, accessed April 1, 2016, <http://gordonhahn.com/2015/03/10the-islamic-state-al-qaida-tussle-over-the-caucasus-emirate-continues/>.

²⁵²"The North Caucasus: An Exported Jihad," 7.

²⁵³"Five Killed in Suicide Bombing in Chechen Capital," *BBC News*, October 5, 2014, accessed April 14, 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-29498909>.

²⁵⁴Bill Roggio, "Ali Abu Muhammad Al Dagestani, the New Emir of the Islamic Caucasus Emirate," *The Long War Journal*, March 18, 2014, accessed April 1, 2016, http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/03/ali_abu_muhammad_al_dagestani.php.

also known as Emir Khamzat, the Emir of CE's Vilayat Nokhchico (Chechnya) and a strong contender to succeed Kebekov, swore an oath of allegiance to Baghdadi on behalf of the entire Vilayat via video address. Khamzat was partially responsible for planning the 2010 Moscow bombings, the 2011 Domodedovo Airport attacks, and the Grozny attacks of 2014. He is one of the few veterans of the wars of the 1990s still alive and continues to command a great deal of respect among NC jihadis.

Particularly enigmatic in his address, Emir Khamzat accuses Udugov and Isa Umarov of trying to destroy jihad in the Caucasus and now in the Sham, but he does not explain what he means.²⁵⁵ This defection prompted many observers to question whether the CE could continue to survive. Joanna Paraszczuk, who runs a blog that tracks Chechens operating in Syria, asked the question, "Is the Caucasus Emirate dead?"²⁵⁶ Mairbek Vatchagaev, Chechen historian and former official in Maskhadov's government, tweeted that Khamzat "had buried the CE once and for all."

3. *Abu Usman al-Gimrinsky*

Abu Usman Gimrinsky succeeded Kebekov in July 2015. Salakhuddin Shishani had recently been forced out from leadership of the JMA and had formed, with his supporters, the "Caucasus Emirate in Syria" (IKvS) group. Immediately after the announcement of the new emir, Salakhuddin and his group released a short video, posted to Kavkaz Center, pledging *bayat* to Emir Abu Usman Gimrinsky.²⁵⁷ In a video

²⁵⁵Joanna Paraszczuk, "Is the Caucasus Emirate Dead?" *From Chechnya to Syria*, June 13, 2015, accessed April 1, 2016, <http://www.chechensinsyria.com/?p=23847>.

²⁵⁶Joanna Paraszczuk, "Is the Caucasus Emirate Dead?"

²⁵⁷Bill Roggio, "Chechen Commander in Syria Pledges to Islamic Caucasus Emirate," *The Long War Journal*, July 10, 2015, accessed April 1, 2016, <http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2015/07/chechen-commander-in-syria-pledges-to-islamic-caucasus-emirates.php>.

released after his promotion, Gimrinsky bragged that the new emir of the Vilayat Dagestan, the respected fighter, Said Arakansky, had sworn allegiance to him.

D. “Wilayet Qawqaz”

Soon after Khamzat’s defection, on June 23, 2015, ISIS announced the creation of a new governorate called the “Wilayet Qawqaz,” or “Caucasus Province,” and named Abu Muhammad al-Qadiri, also known as Rustam Asilderov, leader of the group. This announcement, in theory, subsumed the entire Muslim Caucasus into a district, or vilayat, of the Islamic State. Though this designation is more virtual than tangible, there are groups who have sworn allegiance to ISIS operational in the North Caucasus who consider themselves a part of this “Wilayet Qawqaz.” Audio statements pledging allegiance from supporters in Dagestan, Chechnya, Ingushetia, and the United Vilayat of Kabarda, Balkaria, and Karachay to al-Baghdadi and this new “province” were posted online. No supporters from Cherkessia or the Nogai Steppe pledged.²⁵⁸ On September 3, 2015, the Islamic state announced jihad against Putin, saying in a video posted to AlArabiya filmed in Raqqa, that they were going to free the Caucasus.²⁵⁹

1. Omar al-Shishani in ISIS

An interview with Omar al-Shishani’s family from October 2014 published on the Daily Beast shed more light on the notorious commander. While still Tarkhan Batirashvili, he joined the US-backed Georgian Army in 2006, where he was recruited for intelligence training. He fought in the 2008 Russo-Georgian War. After leaving the

²⁵⁸Harleen Gambhir, "ISIS Declares Governorate in Russia's North Caucasus Region," *Institute for the Study of War*, June 23, 2015, accessed April 1, 2016, <http://understandingwar.org/backgrounders/isis-declares-governorate-russia%E2%80%99s-north-caucasus-r...>

²⁵⁹Allison Quinn, "Islamic State to Putin: We Are On Our Way to Russia," *The Moscow Times*, September 13, 2014, accessed April 1, 2016, <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/article/506366.html>.

army due to illness he spent time in prison for arms possession. His father describes Batirashvili's older brother Tamaz as the "brains" of the duo and insinuates that Tamaz may be the real power in ISIS leadership behind the "face" of Tarkhan.²⁶⁰ In 2013, he claimed that his defection did not put him at cross purposes with Umarov. He claimed (falsely) that Umarov wanted him to join ISIS's saying: "we swore an oath to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and we are fighting under his authority. This is what he (Umarov) wanted, that we swear an oath to al-Baghdadi. Dokka is also fighting to establish an Islamic State and we are fighting for the same thing." He also claimed that when the fight was over in Syria he would return to bring the jihad back to Kadyrov²⁶¹

By this time, international news outlets had picked up on Omar al-Shishani's prominent role in ISIS. Much was made of the fact that he was "Chechen," building on previous narratives of bellicose Chechens within the ranks of Arab jihad struggles. These narratives were especially seen during Russia's invasion of Afghanistan in the 1980s. The "Red-Bearded" ISIS commander's "death" was reported by media outlets several times in 2014 and 2015. In September 2014 he offered a five million dollar reward for the assassination of President Kadyrov.²⁶² The primary source of information regarding his activities was his website, FiSyria, run by someone called Abu Jihad until July 2015 when Russian language "Furat Media" was established under Abu Jihad's leadership. Abu Jihad was identified by the anti-ISIS news website, "Kavkazpress," as Islam Seit-Umarovich Atabiyev, a native Karachi from Karachay-Cherkessia. They reported that he had theological training in Egypt and had come to

²⁶⁰Will Cathcart, Vazha Tavberidze, and Nino Burchuladze, "The Secret Life of an ISIS Warlord," *The Daily Beast*, October 27, 2014, accessed April 22, 2016, <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2014/10/27/the-secret-life-of-an-isis-warlord.html>.

²⁶¹Joanna Paraszczuk, "Umar Shishani Claims: Dokka Umarov Financed Us," *From Chechnya to Syria*, December 10, 2013, accessed April 1, 2016, <http://www.chechensinsyria.com/?tag=dokka-umarov>.

²⁶²"Umar Al-Shishani (Tarhan Abu Omar Al-Shishani)," *Caucasian Knot*, March 22, 2016, accessed April 14, 2016, <http://www.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/249731/>.

Syria in 2011, where his Islamic education allowed him to claim high status among the Caucasian Fighters. He has been on the FSB wanted list since March 2014.²⁶³ Omar al-Shishani entrusted him to publish propaganda on his behalf, and he was able to rise quickly in ISIS. Furat Media currently publishes messages from the ISIS leadership, news, articles, and sermons as well as the magazine “Istok,” meant to further indoctrinate current ISIS adherents and promote ISIS to Russian-speaking Muslims around the world. It is especially active on Twitter, the smartphone messenger program, Telegram, and V Kontakte, the Russian Facebook alternative.²⁶⁴

In 2014 Abu Jihad set out to co-opt the North Caucasus Salafi insurgency. ISIS engaged in a strategy of “headhunting” for North Caucasian, especially Dagestani, Salafi leadership in Turkey, and the North Caucasus who could be convinced not only to pledge allegiance to ISIS but to missionize on their behalf among their followers.²⁶⁵ This effort was highly successful. The CE was increasingly being seen as a suicidal venture by NC would be jihadists. Most of the leaders were dead, and Russian security services were relentless in their drive to eliminate the CE militants. The CE’s inability to attack the Sochi Olympics and Kebekov’s restrictions on attacks all served to alienate the more radical elements of the North Caucasus insurgency from the CE. ISIS propaganda even mocked the CE insurgents, calling them “leaf eaters sleeping in the dirt.”²⁶⁶ Abu Jihad also released an hour long video address in December 2014 in which he condemned the “lies against IS” included in Emir Gimrinsky’s recent video criticizing Asilderov’s defection. In the same video he criticized Salahuddin al-Shishani

²⁶³ "Abu Jihad: The Brand of the Bastard's Club." *KavkazPress*, November 28, 2014, accessed April 1, 2016, <http://kavkazpress.ru/archives/67349>.

²⁶⁴"The North Caucasus: An Exported Jihad," 29.

²⁶⁵*Ibid*, 7.

²⁶⁶*Ibid*, 29.

the leader of the non-ISIS affiliated JMA and called the JMA “the enemies of Allah.”²⁶⁷ Abdulla Kostekskiy, a Sharia judge of the CE, immediately made a video accusing Abu Jihad of dividing the mujahideen of the Caucasus by getting them to join ISIS and of destroying the CE.²⁶⁸

Syria provided an opportunity to join an organization that projected strength and legitimacy. ISIS has material resources and territory and claims to have a perfect implementation of Sharia in its territory. There is a manual in Russian Cyrillic, with instructions detailing how to get to Syria through Turkey, what to bring, etc., called “How to Make a Hijra to the Islamic State,” written by a militant named Mukhammad Abu Barud al-Dagestani, it appeared on Russian social media websites in March 2015.²⁶⁹ Russian and Chechen security forces had been so thoroughly effective in crushing the CE and the propaganda the ISIS projected was so appealing, it is no surprise that thousands flocked to ISIS controlled territory after 2013. These Russian speaking jihadists, from former Soviet republics in Central Asia as well as from the North Caucasus, have developed communities near Raqqa where residents have Friday prayers in Russian and children can study at a Russian language school run by a group of Dagestanis.²⁷⁰ ISIS formally declared holy war on Russia when Russia initiated military operations in Sept 2015.²⁷¹

²⁶⁷Joanna Paraszczuk, "IS's Abu Jihad Slams Caucasus Emirate and Gives More Details of "Truce Request" Meeting In Raqqa," *From Chechnya To Syria*, December 14, 2014, accessed April 22, 2016, <http://www.chechensinsyria.com/?p=23208>.

²⁶⁸Joanna Paraszczuk, "IS's Abu Jihad Slams Caucasus Emirate"

²⁶⁹Felicity Capon, "New Islamic State Propaganda Targets Russian Recruits," *Newsweek*, March 27, 2015, accessed April 15, 2016, <http://europe.newsweek.com/new-islamic-state-propaganda-targets-russian-recruits-317282?rm=eu>.

²⁷⁰Mehdi Jedinia, "IS 'Cyrillic Jihadists' Create Their Own Community in Syria," *Voice of America*, March 30, 2016, accessed April 14, 2016, <http://www.voanews.com/content/is-cyrillic-jihadists-create-their-own-community-in-syria/3261535.html>.

²⁷¹"Islamic State Declares Holy War Against Russia." *Sputnik News*, October 13, 2015, accessed April 01, 2016, <http://sputniknews.com/world/20151013/1028478312/isil-jihad-russia-us.html>.

2. ISIS in the North Caucasus: The Wilayat Qawqaz in Action

In October 2015, Rustam Asilderov aka Abu Muhommed Al-Qadarsky appeared in a video message on ISIS's Furat Media issuing a call for would-be IS militants within Russia to fight against Russian forces there, instead of traveling to Syria to join. Asilderov claimed this was the direct wish of Baghdadi.²⁷² This was echoed on March 8, 2016 when a group of jihadis representing the Wilayat Qawqaz posted a video where the speaker called on Russian Muslims to emigrate to the Wilayat and if they cannot, to target the apostates "wherever they are, using a rope or a knife." The video ended with the execution of a Russian intelligence officer.²⁷³

The majority of former CE fighters have now pledged allegiance to ISIS. In August 2015 Emir Gimrinsky and the Dagestani Emir Said Arakansky were killed in a counterterrorism operation in Dagestan. A new leader had not been announced as of April 2016. Khamzat and Asilderov's defections brought many of the CE's militants into the ISIS fold.

Russian security forces have claimed to have arrested many IS fighters and recruiters in the North Caucasus. At the same time ISIS has claimed responsibility for several small attacks done by Caucasian jihadis who have sworn loyalty to ISIS in the North Caucasus region from 2014 on. On December 29, 2015 IS claimed responsibility for a shooting attack on tourists by gunmen in Derbent castle which killed a Russian guard and injured 11 people, including international tourists.²⁷⁴ A car bombing by an

²⁷²James Miller, "IS's North Caucasus Affiliate Calls For Recruits To Join It In Daghestan," *RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty*, October 3, 2015, accessed April 15, 2016, <http://www.rferl.org/content/islamic-state-north-caucasus-affiliate-call-for-recruits-daghestan/27285024.html>.

²⁷³John Hayward, "Islamic State Threatens Putin with Attacks on Russian Soil." *Breitbart News*, March 08, 2016, accessed March 31, 2016, <http://www.breitbart.com/national-security/2016/03/08/islamic-state-threatens-putin-the-apostate-with-attacks-on-russian-soil/>.

²⁷⁴Valery Dzutsati, "Attack in Dagestan Undermines Claims That Republic Is Stable," *The Jamestown Foundation*, January 4, 2016, accessed April 1, 2016,

ISIS jihadi on February 15, 2016 killed two police officers and injured 17. In the last week of March 2016, ISIS claimed responsibility for two attacks in the area of Kaspiysk in eastern Dagestan.²⁷⁵

The elusive Chechen leader Omar al-Shishani was killed by a U.S. airstrike in March 2016.²⁷⁶ Media outlets widely reported his demise as a great blow to the ISIS leadership. Al Baghdadi was reported to be dead or severely injured in late January 2015, but ISIS has continued to function with very little apparent interruption of activity. Though Omar al-Shishani's death eliminates a great recruiting lightning rod for ISIS, it is doubtful that his death will have a great impact on the day to day functions of ISIS leadership, especially as Abu Jihad and Tamaz seemingly persist in the leadership and arguably have more tangible power within the organization.

E. Salahuddin al-Shishani and The Last Remnants of the CE in Syria

In July 2015 Salahuddin al-Shishani, the leader of the Caucasian Emirate in Syria (IKvS) militant group, accused IS of creating fitna (sedition) in an interview with Al Jazeera Turk. He reported that he had traveled to Raqqa to negotiate a ceasefire on behalf of Jabhat al-Nusra, so that they could complete an operation in Handarat against Assad's forces. According to him, the negotiations fell apart quickly and Omar al-

http://www.jamestown.org/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=44938&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=7&cHash=2de1058...

²⁷⁵Thomas Joscelyn, "Islamic State Claims 2 Attacks on Russian Forces in Dagestan," *The Long War Journal*, March 31, 2016, accessed April 1, 2016, <http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2016/03/islamic-state-claims-2-attacks-on-russian-forces-in-dagestan.php>.

²⁷⁶"Islamic State's 'War Minister' Omar Al-Shishani 'Clinically Dead'" *The Guardian*, March 14, 2016, accessed April 07, 2016, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/mar/14/islamic-states-war-minister-omar-al-shishani-clinically-dead>.

Shishani and the IS leadership had treated him with derision and attempted to assassinate him shortly after.²⁷⁷

Salahuddin commanded IKvS until late December 2015, when that group ousted him as well. He then formed Jaish al-Usrah of mostly Syrian fighters who fought in Skeikh Maqsood in February 2016.²⁷⁸ As of early 2016, Salahuddin still considers himself to be the Caucasus Emirate's representative in Syria.²⁷⁹ On March 10, 2016, a group of about 16 fighters holding the IKvS flag posted a video on YouTube announcing in Arabic that they were preparing to fight alongside Jabhat al-Nusra near Aleppo. It is unclear, at this point, what relationship this group has to the remnants of the CE in the NC or if these fighters are even Russophones.²⁸⁰

The Caucasus Emirate is now all but defunct. A new Emir has not been announced and there has been little mention of the issue on the Kavkaz Center website for over a year. Despite this, the Kavkaz Center has continued to produce new material without interruption, although its English page has been shut down for many months for "maintenance." On November 1, 2015 Abdulvakhid Edilgeriev, an administrator of the website Kavkaz Center and a relative of Movladi Udugov and Isa Umarov's son-in-law, was shot and killed by Turkish security forces in Istanbul.²⁸¹ Udugov is believed to be alive and residing in Turkey. As of 2011, he was still regularly posting commentary on

²⁷⁷Bill Roggio, "Jaish Al Muhajireen Wal Ansar Leader Accuses Islamic State of Creating 'fitna' Between Jihadist Group," *The Long War Journal*, May 28, 2015, accessed April 1, 2016, <http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2015/05/jaish-al-muhajireen-wal-ansar-leader-accuses-islamic-state-of-creating-fitna-between-jihadist-groups.php>.

²⁷⁸Joanna Paraszczuk, "Chechen Led Jaish Al Usrah Fighting Kurds in Sheikh Maqsood," *From Chechnya to Syria*, February 19, 2016, accessed April 1, 2016, <http://www.chechensyria.com/?p=24692>.

²⁷⁹Mairbek Vatchagaev, "Chechens Fighting in Syria Increasingly Joining Forces With Islamic State," *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 13, no. 43 (2016), accessed April 15, 2016, [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=45167&tx_ttnews\[backPid\]=7&cHash=7a6812fef4c4d3c755b6356265cb38c3#.Vw6jxSN968q](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?tx_ttnews[tt_news]=45167&tx_ttnews[backPid]=7&cHash=7a6812fef4c4d3c755b6356265cb38c3#.Vw6jxSN968q).

²⁸⁰Joanna Paraszczuk, "Arabic-speaking Katiba Guraba Fighting Under Auspices of IK v Sham in South Aleppo," *From Chechnya To Syria*, March 10, 2016, accessed April 15, 2016, <http://www.chechensyria.com/?p=25028>.

²⁸¹"Administrator of Website "Kavkaz-Centre" Killed in Turkey," *Caucasian Knot*, November 2, 2015, accessed April 15, 2016, <http://eng.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/33524/>.

the Kavkaz Center website but this activity has now ceased. There has no comment from Udugov about ISIS, the Wilayat Qawqaz or the current situation in the Caucasus or Syria.

F. Conclusion

The Russian Empire, the Soviet Union and the Russian Federation each have steadfastly adhered to a policy of complete domination in the North Caucasus. The North Caucasus peoples have never assimilated into the Russian culture and remain “the other” within the Federation, even as the majority has, for now, submitted begrudgingly to political rule. The history of unremitting resistance to Russian rule is intimately tied with the North Caucasus’s unifying identity of Islam. Islam provided the medium through which each successive resistance framed its struggle and asserted its cultural and political independence. The goal of creating an Islamic state based on Sharia law was not a factor shared by every movement. Only Sheikh Mansur, Imam Shamil, and Uzun Hajj proclaimed the establishment of an Islamic State in the territory before the 21st century. These “states” were held together not by military strength and institution building, but by the ideological construction performed by their leaders. In this way the Caucasus Emirate, established in 2007, was the heir of these three movements. In contrast to the previous states, a series of events and new dynamics that immediately preceded the CE’s creation ensured that this latest incarnation would be unique in character and novel in the region. The appearance of Arab Wahhabism in the region, the international attention placed on the Chechen wars of the 1990s, the presence of new technology that made spreading propaganda easier and the increasing interaction between the Caucasus and international jihad movements were all factors that made the

CE unique to the Caucasus' history of *gazawat* and jihad. The CE struggled under the weight of Russian repression and military might, but its real decline occurred as a result of its interaction in the Syrian Civil War. Fighters loyal to the CE both in Syria and the Caucasus drifted to the flashy, violent Islamic State, which in turn rhetorically claimed territory in the Caucasus, the "Wilayat Qawqaz." Like the four previous movements, the Wilayat Qawqaz is more of a virtual ideological construction that exists only because there are fighters who believe it exists and are willing to die to achieve its goals.

REFERENCES

- Akhmadov, Yavus, Stephen R. Bowers, and Marion T. Doss, Jr. "Islam in the North Caucasus." *Faculty Publications and Presentations, Liberty University*, 2009.
- Alaolmolki, Nozar. *Militant Islamists: Terrorists without Frontiers*. Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2009.
- Al-Shishani, Murad Batal. "Islamist North Caucasus Rebels Training a New Generation of Fighters in Syria." *Terrorism Monitor* 12, no. 3 (February 7, 2014). Accessed April 15, 2016.
[http://www.jamestown.org/single/?tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=41927&#.VxB0wSN96fQ](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?tx_ttnews[tt_news]=41927&#.VxB0wSN96fQ)
- Al-Shishani, Murad Batal. "The Rise and Fall of Arab Fighters in Chechnya." The Jamestown Foundation. Accessed April 12, 2016.
http://www.jamestown.org/programs/tm/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=658&no_cache=1.
- Anand, Vinod. "Export of Holy Terror to Chechnya from Pakistan and Afghanistan." *Strategic Analysis* 24, no. 3 (April 25, 2008): 539-51.
doi:10.1080/09700160008455231.
- Askerov, Ali. *Historical Dictionary of the Chechen Conflict*. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2015.
- Assessing Terrorism in the Caucasus and the Threat to the Homeland*, 113th Cong. (2014) (testimony of Gordon M. Hahn).
- Avtorkhanov, Abdurakhman, and Marie Broxup. *The North Caucasus Barrier: The Russian Advance towards the Muslim World*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992.
- Bhattacharji, Preeti. "Chechen Terrorism (Russia, Chechnya, Separatist)." Council on Foreign Relations. April 08, 2010. <http://www.cfr.org/separatist-terrorism/chechen-terrorism-russia-chechnya-separatist/p9181>.
- Bodansky, Yossef. *Chechen Jihad: Al Qaeda's Training Ground and The Next Wave of Terror*. New York, NY: Harper, 2007.
- Colarusso, John. "People of the Caucasus." In *Encyclopedia of Cultures and Daily Life*. Pepper Pike, Ohio: Eastword Publications, 1997.
- Dowling, Timothy C., and Bruce Menning. *Russia at War: From the Mongol Conquest to Afghanistan, Chechnya, and beyond*. 728-30.
- Dunlop, John B. *Russia Confronts Chechnya: Roots of a Separatist Conflict*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

- Fagan, Geraldine. "A Word of Justice: Islam and State Repression in the North-West Caucasus." *Central Asian Survey* 33, no. 1 (October 29, 2013): 29-46. doi:10.1080/02634937.2013.826441.
- Falkowski, Maciej. *On the Periphery of Global Jihad*. Warsaw: Centre for Eastern Studies, 2014.
- Gammer, Moshe. *The Lone Wolf and the Bear: Three Centuries of Chechen Defiance of Russian Rule*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2006.
- Gammer, Moshe. *Ethno-Nationalism, Islam and the State in the Caucasus*. London: Routledge, 2010.
- Gammer, Moshe. *Muslim Resistance to the Tsar: Shamil and the Conquest of Chechnya and Dagestan*. London: C Hurst & Co Publishers, 2005.
- Gammer, Moshe. "Separatism in the Northern Caucasus." *Caucasus Survey* 1, no. 2 (2014): 37-47. doi:10.1080/23761199.2014.11417292.
- Giuliano, Elise. "Islamic Identity And Political Mobilization In Russia: Chechnya And Dagestan Compared." *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 11, no. 2 (2005): 195-220. doi:10.1080/13537110591005711.
- Hahn, Gordon M. "The Caucasus Emirate Jihadists: The Security and Strategic Implications." In *Russia's Homegrown Insurgency: Jihad in the North Caucasus*, edited by Stephen J. Blank, 1-99. Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2012.
- Hahn, Gordon M. *The Caucasus Emirate Mujahedin: Global Jihadism in Russia's North Caucasus and Beyond*. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2014.
- Hahn, Gordon M. *Getting the Caucasus Emirate Right: A Report of the CSIS Russia and Eurasia Program*. Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2011.
- Hahn, Gordon M. "The *Jihadi* Insurgency and the Russian Counterinsurgency in the North Caucasus." *Post-Soviet Affairs* 24, no. 1 (2008): 1-39. doi:10.2747/1060-586x.24.1.1.
- Hahn, Gordon M. "The Rise of Islamist Extremism in Kabardino-Balkariya." *Demokratizatsiya: The Journal of Post-Soviet Democratization* 13, no. 4 (2005): 543-94. doi:10.3200/demo.13.4.543-594.
- Hahn, Gordon M. *Russia's Islamic Threat*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007.
- Halbach, Uwe, and Manarsha Isaeva. "Dagestan: Russia's Most Troublesome Republic." The International Relations and Security Network. September 11, 2015. <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/Digital-Library/Articles/Detail/?lng=en&id=193438>.

- Hanif, N. *Biographical Encyclopaedia of Sufis: Africa and Europe*. New Delhi: Sarup & Sons, 2002.
- Hunter, Shireen, Jeffrey L. Thomas, and Alexander Melikishvili. *Islam in Russia: The Politics of Identity and Security*. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2004.
- International Crisis Group. "The North Caucasus: An Exported Jihad." March 16, 2016. <http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/europe/caucasus/238-the-north-caucasus-insurgency-and-syria-an-exported-jihad.pdf>.
- Jaimoukha, Amjad M. *The Chechens: A Handbook*. London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2005.
- Kemper, Michael. "An Island of Classical Arabic in the Caucasus: Dagestan." In *Exploring the Caucasus in the 21st Century: Essays on Culture, History and Politics in a Dynamic Context*, edited by Françoise Companjen, László Károly. Marác, and Lia Versteegh, 63-90. Amsterdam: Pallas Publications, 2010.
- Khodarkovsky, Michael. *The North Caucasus During The Russian Conquest: 1600-1850s*. Report. Seattle: National Council for Eurasian and Eastern European Research, 2008. https://www.ucis.pitt.edu/nceer/2008_821-08g_Khodarkovsky.pdf.
- Knezys, Stasys, and Romanas Sedlickas. *The War in Chechnya*. College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 1999.
- Knysh, Alexander. "The Caucasian Emirate: Between Reality and Virtuality." Keyman Program in Turkish Studies. Working Paper, June 2009.
- Kuchins, Andrew, Matthew Malarkey, and S. M. Markedonov. *The North Caucasus: Russias Volatile Frontier*. Washington: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2011.
- Kulikov, Sergey, and Robert R. Love. "Insurgent Groups in Chechnya." *Military Review* 83, no. 6 (November/December 2003): 21. <https://www.questia.com/library/journal/1P3-538748461/insurgent-groups-in-chechnya>.
- Leahy, Kevin Daniel. "Anzor Astemirov: From Military Dilletante to Leading Political Strategist." *Central Asia Caucasus Institute*, February 11, 2009. <http://old.cacianalyst.org/?q=node/5033>.
- Leahy, Kevin Daniel. "From Racketeer to Emir: A Political Portrait of Doku Umarov, Russia's Most Wanted Man." *Caucasian Review of International Affairs* 4, no. 3 (Summer 2010): 248-70. http://www.cria-online.org/12_4.html.
- Laub, Zachary. *Instability in the North Caucasus*. New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 2014. <http://www.cfr.org/russian-federation/instability-russias-north-caucasus-region/p9021>.

- Mccartan, Lisa M., Andrea Masselli, Michael Rey, and Danielle Rusnak. "The Logic of Terrorist Target Choice: An Examination of Chechen Rebel Bombings from 1997–2003." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 31, no. 1 (2008): 60-79. doi:10.1080/10576100701767122.
- Minorities at Risk Project. "Chronology for Chechens in Russia." Refworld. 2004. Accessed April 12, 2016. <http://www.refworld.org/docid/469f38d12.html>.
- Moore, Cerwyn, and Paul Tumelty. "Foreign Fighters and the Case of Chechnya: A Critical Assessment." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 31, no. 5 (April 11, 2008): 412-33. doi:10.1080/10576100801993347.
- Moore, Cerwyn. "Foreign Bodies: Transnational Activism, the Insurgency in the North Caucasus and "Beyond"." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 27, no. 3 (May 06, 2015): 395-415. doi:10.1080/09546553.2015.1032035.
- Murphy, Paul J. *The Wolves of Islam: Russia and the Faces of Chechen Terror*. Washington, D.C.: Brassey's, 2004.
- Pilkington, Hilary, and Galina M. Yemelianova. *Islam in Post-Soviet Russia Public and Private Faces*. New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003.
- Pokalova, Elena. *Chechnya's Terrorist Network: The Evolution of Terrorism in Russia's North Caucasus*. Praeger, 2015.
- Reveron, Derek S., and Jeffrey Stevenson. *Murer. Flashpoints in the War on Terrorism*. New York: Routledge, 2006.
- Russia's Homegrown Insurgency: Jihad in the North Caucasus*. Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2012.
- Sakwa, Richard. *Chechnya: From Past to Future*. London: Anthem Press, 2005.
- Sanders, Thomas, Ernest Tucker, and Gary M. Hamburg. *Russian-Muslim Confrontation in the Caucasus: Alternative Visions of the Conflict between Imam Shamil and the Russians, 1830-1859*. London: Routledge, 2010.
- Sanders, Thomas, Ernest Tucker, Gary M. Hamburg, Leo Tolstoy, and Muḥammad Ṭāhir Qarāhī. *Russian-Muslim Confrontation in the Caucasus: Alternative Visions of the Conflict between Imam Shamil and the Russians, 1830-1859*. London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004.
- Schaefer, Robert W. *The Insurgency in Chechnya and the North Caucasus: From Gazavat to Jihad*. Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger Security International, 2011.
- Seely, Robert. *Russo-Chechen Conflict, 1800-2000: A Deadly Embrace*. Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 2001.

- Smirnov, Andrei. "The Caucasian Emirate: A Not So New Idea." *North Caucasian Analysis* 8, No. 43 (November 8, 2007).
[Http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews\[swords\]=8fd5893941d69d0be3f378576261ae3e&tx_tt...](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[swords]=8fd5893941d69d0be3f378576261ae3e&tx_tt...)
- Smith, Sebastian. *Allah's Mountains: Politics and War in the Russian Caucasus*. London: I.B. Tauris, 1998.
- Souleimanov, Emil. "The Caucasus Emirate: Genealogy of an Islamist Insurgency." *Middle East Policy* 18, no. 4 (2011): 155-68. doi:10.1111/j.1475-4967.2011.00517.x.
- Souleimanov, Emil. "Chechnya, Wahhabism and the Invasion of Dagestan." *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 9, no. 4 (December 2005).
<http://www.webcitation.org/5x3qOuZzo>.
- Vatchagaev, Mairbek. "The Role of Sufism in the Chechen Resistance." *North Caucasian Analysis* 6, no. 16. Accessed April 4, 2016.
[http://www.jamestown.org/single/?tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=2875#.VwJ4jTZ94b0](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?tx_ttnews[tt_news]=2875#.VwJ4jTZ94b0).
- Vatchagaev, Mairbek. "Uzun Haji's and Dokka Umarov's Emirates: A Retrospective." *North Caucasian Analysis* 9, No. 10 (March 13, 2008).
[Http://www.jamestown.org/single/?tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=4785&no_cache=1#.VwC RTDZ94b3](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?tx_ttnews[tt_news]=4785&no_cache=1#.VwC RTDZ94b3).
- Vergani, Matteo, and Dennis Zuev. "Neojihadist Visual Politics: Comparing YouTube Videos of North Caucasus and Uyghur Militants." *Asian Studies Review* 39, no. 1 (2014): 1-22. doi:10.1080/10357823.2014.976171.
- Vidino, Lorenzo. "How Chechnya Became a Breeding Ground for Terror." *Middle East Quarterly* 12, No. 3 (Summer 2005): 57-66. [Http://www.meforum.org/744/how-chechnya-became-a-breeding-ground-for-terror](http://www.meforum.org/744/how-chechnya-became-a-breeding-ground-for-terror).
- Williams, Brian Glyn. *Inferno in Chechnya: The Russian-Chechen Wars, the Al Qaeda Myth, and the Boston Marathon Bombings*. Lebanon, N.H.: ForeEdge, 2015.
- Williams, Bryan Glyn. "Unravelling the Links between the Middle East and the Islamic Militants in Chechnya." *Central Asia Caucasus Institute*, February 12, 2003.
<http://old.cacianalyst.org/?q=node/901>.
- Wittig, Timothy S. "Financing Terrorism along the Chechnya–Georgia Border, 1999–2002." *Global Crime* 10, no. 3 (August 07, 2009): 248-60.
doi:10.1080/17440570903079949.
- Yemelianova, Galina. "Divergent Trends of Islamic Radicalism." In *Russia and Islam: State, Society and Radicalism*, by Roland Dannreuther and Luke March. London: Routledge, 2011.

Yemelianova, Galina. "Islam, Nationalism and State in the Muslim Caucasus."
Caucasus Survey 1, no. 2 (2014): 3-23. doi:10.1080/23761199.2014.11417291.

Yemelianova, Galina M. *Russia and Islam: A Historical Survey*. Houndmills: Palgrave, 2002.

Yemelianova, Galina M. "Sufism and Politics in the North Caucasus." *Nationalities Papers: The Journal of Nationalism and Ethnicity* 29, No. 4 (2001): 661-68.
Doi:10.1080/00905990120102138.

Zhemukhov, Sufian, and Jean Francois Ratelle. "Russia and the North Caucasus."
Russian Analytical Digest 131, no. 8 (July 2013).