TATARIA AND CHECHNYA -- A COMPARATIVE STUDY

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Background to the text

In the late 1990s, when I was at Brown University's Watson Institute for International Studies, I participated in a collaborative research project entitled "Preventing Ethnic Violence." Like many others, my colleagues and I focused on conflicts that arose in the course of the post-Soviet transition. Our approach, however, was somewhat unusual. We sought to understand the determinants of violent outcomes by focusing primarily on conflicts that easily might (in our judgment) have turned violent but did not and by asking why they did not, despite the fact that other somewhat similar conflicts did. To paraphrase a famous question once posed by Sherlock Holmes, why did these particular dogs *not* bark in the night?

We used the method of comparative analysis of paired case studies. Case studies were selected in such a way that the two cases in each pair would be similar in a number of important respects, though not in all important respects, while also giving contrasting outcomes, violent in one case and nonviolent in the other. Moreover, we concentrated our efforts on the nonviolent case in each pair. For each case study with a nonviolent outcome, we made an extended visit to the region concerned in order to collect information and interview social scientists politicians, officials, and other public figures. For the case studies with violent outcomes we relied mainly on literary sources, although here too we were able to interview a few individuals with relevant knowledge and experience.

Although my colleagues** and I planned to present the results of the project in a published volume, for reasons that I do not altogether understand such a volume has never appeared. No doubt the same is true of quite a few other collaborative projects. Therefore I decided at least to make publicly available as a separate study the text that I

wrote on the paired cases of Tataria (Tatarstan) and Chechnya. Even after all this time, it perhaps remains of more than purely historical interest.

Introduction

In several basic respects, the Volga Tatars and the Chechens have much in common. Both Tatars and Chechens have religious traditions typical of "northern Islam" – that is, they belong to the Khanafi school of Sunni Islam, embrace a form of "popular" Islam combining Moslem law (*Sharia*) with local customary law (*adat*), and are strongly influenced by Sufi brotherhoods (*Islam* 1998). Both Chechens and the majority of Volga Tatars were incorporated into the expanding empire of the tsars against their will as a result of military conquest. The suffering and humiliation of both peoples under the tsarist regime led many of their secular intellectuals to support the Bolsheviks, and it was these individuals who constituted new indigenous political elites in the early Soviet years. For both peoples, the Stalin period brought the repression of their new elites and the horrors of forcible collectivization, but also a certain measure of modernization, urbanization, and industrialization, with oil extraction playing an important role in both cases. Finally, the Volga Tatars and the Chechens occupied similar positions on the second rung of the formal hierarchy of Soviet peoples. That is, each was the titular people of an autonomous republic – the Volga Tatars of the Tatar Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (TASSR), less formally referred to as Tataria, and the Chechens of the Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (CIASSR), also known as Checheno-Ingushetia.[1]

Despite these important similarities, the outcome of the post-Soviet transition has been very different for the two peoples. In Chechnya, the transition brought to power the radical separatist regime of General Jokhar Dudayev, whose confrontation with Moscow culminated in the massive assault that the federal military forces launched at the end of 1994. In Tataria, by contrast, the late-Soviet political establishment succeeded, under the leadership of Mintimer Shaimiev, in retaining power in its hands throughout, and

eventually secured, in the form of the bilateral treaty of February 15, 1994, Moscow's recognition of the region's right to broad autonomy.

How are such sharply divergent outcomes to be explained? There are various ways in which one might attempt to answer a question of this kind. On the one hand, a historical determinist might compare the long-term historical experience of the Volga Tatars and the Chechens, starting with their pre-conquest societies and the impact that the tsarist conquest had upon them and ending with the effects of developments in the Soviet period. On the other hand, a scholar inclined to place more stress on the roles played by contingency and by human agency might undertake a comparative examination of the temporal sequence of political events during the period of the post-Soviet transition, paying special attention to the key decisions made by the principal actors.

In this study I use both methods. Section 1 approaches the question from a long-term historical viewpoint, focusing on the impact upon the Volga Tatars and the Chechens of tsarist conquest and then of the Soviet experience taken as a whole. Section 2 outlines the most important political developments that occurred in Tataria and Chechnya between 1985 and 1991, when Mikhail Gorbachev was in power. Section 3 examines what happened in the crucial half-year from August 1991 to January 1992, the period that saw the final collapse of the Soviet Union. Section 4 analyzes developments during the post-Soviet transition up to 1994. In the concluding section, I review the key factors that affected the respective outcomes.

Section 1. Tataria and Chechnya: Historical Background

1.1 The Impact of Conquest

The pre-conquest statehood of the Volga Tatars (originally known as Bulgars) was embodied in the Kazan Khanate, one of the regional successor states to the Golden Horde. On the eve of its defeat by the armies of Tsar Ivan IV (The Terrible) in 1552, the Kazan Khanate was a complex city-based civilization with developed trade and

handicrafts and a high literary culture. Its social structure consisted of a powerful landed nobility, a hierarchy of state officials, a military and an ecclesiastical establishment, free urban merchants and artisans, peasants, serfs, and slaves (Rorlich 1986, pp. 28-31).

The Chechen society that was subdued with such difficulty by Russia in the middle of the nineteenth century could hardly have stood in sharper contrast to that of the pre-conquest Volga Tatars. The Chechens had no towns and no written language, and it was only in about 1815 that they acquired their first rudimentary state structure.[2] They lived in mountain villages [*auls*] by means of subsistence agriculture and occasional raids on their neighbors. The only distinction of social status that they knew, besides those of age and sex, was that between free independent Chechens [*uzdens*] and the non-Chechen prisoners whom they held as slaves (Derlug'ian 1999, p. 201; Shakhbiev 1996, pp. 65-6). The traditional Chechen society is commonly characterized as a "mountain democracy"; one author describes it as a "military democracy" similar to that of ancient Sparta (Derlug'ian 1999, p. 200).[3]

How did tsarist conquest affect these two very different societies?

A great deal of death and destruction fell to the lot of both peoples. The old Kazan was razed to the ground. Many Chechen villages were likewise put to the torch; a large proportion of the Chechen population – some Chechen historians put it at 35 per cent, others as high as 70 per cent (Gall and de Waal 1998, pp. 50-51; Gakaev 1999b, p. 12) – perished or were deported to the plains of European Russia, to Siberia, or to Turkey. It is indeed very likely that the physical devastation accompanying the tsarist conquest of Chechnya was greater, in absolute and proportional terms, than that accompanying the tsarist conquest of Kazan, by virtue of the much more prolonged armed resistance put up by the Chechens. Chechnya was never fully pacified, and remained under martial law right up to the collapse of tsarist rule in early 1917.

Nevertheless, the social and cultural impact of conquest was far more devastating for the Volga Tatars than it was for the Chechens. The identity and mode of life of the Volga

Tatars had been inextricably bound up with the Kazan Khanate, and could not but be severely undermined by its fall. Moreover, the Russian government pursued policies aimed at changing the society of the Volga Tatars in such a way that future rebellions would be prevented. Tatar urban life was practically destroyed: Kazan was rebuilt as a Russian city, and by 1565 no more than a thousand Tatars remained there. For the next three hundred years Tatars were to be an overwhelmingly rural population. The Tatars' mosques were destroyed, and they were forbidden to restore them or to build new ones (*Sotsial'naia* 1998, pp. 112-113). Only in the late eighteenth century, thanks to the more tolerant policy of Catherine II, were they allowed to return to their previous places of residence, reconstruct old and build new mosques, and openly practice Islam (*Islam* 1998, p. 69). The landed nobility, to which ordinary Tatars were accustomed to look for leadership, was at first co-opted in part into the all-Russian nobility; later on, measures were taken to merge the remaining nobles into the peasantry (Giliazov 1997).

As a result, Tatar society "fell apart into local communities, weakly linked to one another"; the sense of ethnic identity faded, leaving only various local identities and the broader trans-ethnic identity provided by Islam (Iskhakov 1997a, pp. 32-3). True, at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries the Tatar Moslem reformers or "enlighteners" known as *jadids* urged their fellow Tatars to reclaim and take pride in their Tatar identity. But the Tatar identity that the *jadids* inculcated was a *new* Tatar identity. It was the identity of a group that no longer vividly recalled the trauma of conquest or the experience of armed resistance and had come to take for granted its situation in the middle of a vast multi-ethnic Russia and everyday interaction with Russians and other peoples of the empire. The Tatar politicians who emerged in the late tsarist period, with the exception of a few marginal figures, sought at most some kind of Tatar autonomy within the framework of the struggle for civil freedom in Russia as a whole. Many of the *jadids* attributed positive significance to the Tatars' inclusion in Russia, which had brought them into contact with European culture and science, and evinced a lively interest in ideas about the autonomy of ethnic groups within Russia (Khabutdinov 1997; *Islam* 1998, p. 73).[4] The thread of continuity with past Tatar statehood had been irretrievably broken.

The cultural loss suffered by the Chechens was much smaller, for the simple reason that they had much less to lose. They had no city for the Russians to raze, nor could they be deprived of self-confidence and leadership by crushing a statehood that they never possessed or by co-opting or abolishing a nobility that did not exist. Few of the Chechens' villages may have remained standing after their long war of resistance, but life in those villages went on more or less as it always had. The structure of Chechen society was unchanged by conquest, and nothing crucial to Chechen ethnic identity was lost. A continuity of awareness with pre-conquest times was therefore preserved. The memory of armed resistance was kept alive, inspiring the popular uprising of 1877 and the bold exploits, duly celebrated in epic verse and song, of Chechen Robin Hoods [*abreks*]. It is true that at the same time there spread among the Chechens a new outlook, espoused by the head of the Kadyria Sufi order Sheikh Kunta-Khaji, who justified submission to Russia as a necessity of ethnic survival. The defeatism of the Kadyria, however, was a purely pragmatic adjustment to a painful reality, bearing little resemblance to the deep engagement in Russian life of the Tatar *jadids*.[5]

It should finally be noted that one group of Volga Tatars, the Kasimov Tatars, were absorbed into Russia in a much less traumatic fashion. Khan Kasim, a son of the founder of the Kazan Khanate Khan Sarai, entered the service of the Muscovite prince Vassily II with 500 followers in 1446. He was rewarded with Russian lands on the River Oka that became the Kasimov Kingdom, a Russo-Tatar vassal state of Muscovy that survived as an autonomous entity until 1681 (Rorlich 1986, p. 25; *Islam* 1998, pp. 111-13). Even today the Kasimov Tatars have the reputation of being especially loyal to Moscow. One can hardly find any counterpart to this phenomenon in the history of the Chechens.

1.2 Industrialization, Urbanization, and Russification

Industry came to the Kazan Province [*guberniia*] – the name by which Tataria was known under the tsarist regime – in the late eighteenth century.[6] There appeared in Kazan textile mills, a large soap factory, and one of Russia's biggest plants for the manufacture

of gunpowder. Among the workers at these factories, as among the capitalists who owned them, were both Russians and Tatars. Supported by the patronage of Tatar capitalists and merchants, Tatar secular and religious intellectuals created a modern Tatar culture, including *jadid* schools, numerous books and periodicals in Tatar, and the first professional Tatar theater. Tatar merchants traveled throughout the empire, strengthening the links between European Russia and Central Asia and funding the building of mosques in Moscow, St. Petersburg, and even Chechnya. Young unmarried Tatar men from the villages likewise ventured far afield – to the Donbass mines in Ukraine, for instance – in search of temporary paid employment. Of all the other Moslem peoples of pre-revolutionary Russia, only the Azeris underwent socio-economic development that was at all comparable with that of the Volga Tatars.

Industrialization in Chechnya began at about the same time as in Tataria – during the 1880s, following the discovery of oil in the Grozny area (Dunlop 1998, p. 34). However, industrial development in Chechnya differed from that in Tataria in two crucial respects. First, industry in Chechnya was never significantly diversified. Oil extraction itself sharply declined toward the end of the Soviet period, but the industrial economy remained dominated by oil-related activities, such as oil transportation (the pipeline from Baku to Russia passed through Chechnya), oil refining, the production of aircraft fuel, and the manufacture of equipment for oil extraction. Second, again in contrast with Tataria, industry in Chechnya was owned and staffed mainly by people from other parts of the empire. Under the Soviet as well as the tsarist regime, it remained a colonial enclave separate from the native rural economy. A Chechen bourgeoisie oriented toward Russia did begin to form toward the end of the nineteenth century, but this was a very weak stratum without much influence over the great mass of Chechens.

By the 1980s Tataria had built up a considerable industrial capacity, concentrated in three geographical zones. Kazan and its environs underwent further industrialization from the 1930s onward, acquiring a heavy industrial base, mainly in engineering and chemicals (including such advanced branches as the production of airplanes and synthetic rubber). In the immediate postwar years, a second zone arose in the eastern part of the republic in

connection with the newly exploited oilfields around Almetevsk and Bugulma. The third zone developed from the late 1960s onward in the northeast, its main centers being the cities of Naberezhnye Chelny, Nizhnekamsk, and Yelabuga. The most important of the new enterprises erected in this zone was the gigantic KAMAZ truck plant in Naberezhnye Chelny (Kondrashov 2000, pp. 2-3).

Soviet-era urbanization and industrialization had mixed implications for the Tatars, as they had for many other non-Russian peoples of the USSR. On the one hand, many formerly rural Tatars gained the opportunity to move up the Soviet educational and occupational ladder, thereby considerably narrowing the initially wide gap in occupational status between Russians and Tatars. By the end of the Soviet period, the correlation between occupational status and ethnicity (with the important exception of the industrial zone in the northeast) was fairly weak, although still strong enough to cause a certain amount of resentment (Musina 1996). On the other hand, Tatars purchased upward mobility at the price of linguistic and cultural Russification. Stereotypes equating "Russian" with "modern" and "Tatar" with "primitive" persisted among almost all Russians, and were internalized by many Tatars (Kondrashov 2000, chapters 1 and 2).

In the northeastern industrial zone, industrialization began relatively recently, and the process of urbanization and cultural Russification of formerly rural Tatars remains incomplete. As recent empirical research in Russia's ethnic republics has confirmed, minority nationalism is strongest among those who migrated to the cities after growing up in the countryside (Gorenburg 2001). Not by coincidence, inter-ethnic tension has been much higher in the northeast, and especially in Naberezhnye Chelny, than in other parts of Tataria ("KAMAZ" 1998). It is for this reason that Naberezhnye Chelny became the stronghold of the radical wing of the Tatar national movement (Kondrashov 2000, pp. 13-14).

Industrialization offered Chechens fewer opportunities for advancement, not only because there was less industry in Chechnya, but also because Chechens encountered much more discrimination on ethnic grounds in gaining access to technical education and

industrial employment. The oil industry continued, as in tsarist times, to be manned mainly by workers and engineers brought in from outside Chechnya.[7] Meanwhile, the unemployment rate among Chechens grew by the mid-1970s to 40 per cent; each year up to 100,000 young Chechens went to look for work in other parts of the USSR. In Tataria, industry continued to draw its workforce primarily from local people, Russian and Tatar. However, Russian workers were recruited from outside Tataria to build new enterprises in Naberezhnye Chelny and Yelabuga (*Sovremennye* 1992, p. 32). In this respect also, the northeast was atypical of Tataria as a whole.

Thus Chechens had much greater reason than did Tatars to resent unfair treatment by "the Russians" in the occupational sphere. At the same time, Chechens underwent Russification to a much lesser extent than did Tatars. For example, many urban Tatars came to use Russian almost exclusively in everyday life and lost their fluency in Tatar. While Chechens likewise found it advantageous to learn Russian, they continued to speak Chechen among themselves, so that the vast majority became fully bilingual. Some Tatars went so far in their quest to be accepted as "civilized" as to forbid their children to speak Tatar. There are no reports of Chechens behaving in like fashion: Chechens were the object of similar stereotypes, indeed in a much more intense form, but they did not internalize them. Another typical concomitant of Russification, intermarriage, very common in Tataria, has been quite rare in Chechnya.[8] While traditional conceptions of "what it means to be a Chechen" did undergo some degree of erosion, especially among urban youth, a thread of continuity in ethnic identity could still readily be traced back to the pre-Soviet and pre-conquest eras (Bersanova 1999).

1.3 Soviet Nationalities Policy

Soviet state policy regarding "nationalities" (ethnic groups) passed through three phases. In the early post-revolutionary years, many ethnic minorities were granted a substantial measure of cultural and administrative autonomy within territorial units designated as their homelands. These homelands were arranged in a hierarchy, the top level of which comprised the union republics and the next level the autonomous republics. Under the

policy of "indigenization" [*korenizatsiia*], members of the ethnic group considered indigenous to the territory concerned were preferentially promoted to responsible posts in its economy and government. Under Stalin, the autonomy of the ethnic minorities was sharply curtailed, though never formally abolished; their elites – and in some cases their whole populations – suffered repression; and official ideology underwent a shift away from communist internationalism and toward Russian imperial nationalism. The post-Stalin period witnessed a partial return to the policy of the early Soviet period: official ideology became an amalgam of internationalism and Russian nationalism, and there was a limited and gradual restoration of ethnic minority autonomy.

Within this general pattern of the evolution of Soviet nationalities policy, there were significant variations in the treatment of different ethnic groups. Stalin's repression affected some groups more severely than others, and the post-Stalin tendency toward the restoration of autonomy benefited some groups more than others. The Volga Tatars and the Chechens are in this regard contrasting cases, notwithstanding their identical formal status as recognized indigenous peoples of autonomous republics within the RSFSR.[9]

Stalin's repression of the Chechens culminated in the national trauma of deportation. In 1944, all Chechens were deported to Kazakhstan and Central Asia with the sole exception of a few chance fugitives and the inhabitants of villages too inaccessible to be transported to the railroad, who were massacred on the spot (the best-known instance being at Khaibakh). About a third of the deportees perished en route or soon after arrival. The ordeal of deportation was the most important single source of the feelings of bitter grievance and of the paranoia that were later to find expression in radical Chechen nationalism. At the same time, deportation brought the survivors into closer contact with other Soviet peoples and broadened their horizons. It was in exile that most Chechens first learned to speak Russian fluently and to adapt their conduct to Soviet reality. Their inner selves, however, remained deeply alienated. The result was a bifurcated personality: in one part of their consciousness they were ordinary Soviet citizens, while in the other "Chechen" part they maintained an independence of the society around them. This

phenomenon was less characteristic of more deeply Sovietized peoples such as the Volga Tatars.[10]

For the Volga Tatars too the Soviet period brought great suffering, but they were not exposed to the degree of trauma inflicted upon the Chechens. The cultural institutions that had been created in the early post-revolutionary years, when special attention was devoted to the culture of the Tatars as "the avant-garde of the peoples of the Red East," continued to operate. Purges mainly affected the pre-Stalin political, managerial, cultural, and educational establishment, many members of which were repressed in 1929-32 in the course of the campaign against Sultangaliev's "nationalist deviation" and in the great purge of 1937-38 (Rorlich 1986, pp. 155-6; Mukhametshin 2000, pp. 21-23). Some 6,000 Volga Tatars were also deported, to Uzbekistan (Tagirov 1999), but this was the fate of a relatively small minority. All in all, the way in which the Tatars experienced the Stalin years was not such as to prevent their increasing integration into the Soviet system in the post-Stalin period.

Given the role played by memories of the deportation in enabling Dudayev to capture and consolidate power, it is worth considering briefly why it occurred. One should not view the hostility that arose between the Chechens and the USSR as a natural and direct continuation of the hostility that had existed between them and tsarist Russia. The Chechens were not at first perceived as enemies by the Soviet regime. On the contrary, the majority of Chechens, like the majority of the other mountain peoples of the Northern Caucasus, backed the Reds during the civil war. This was mainly because they were at the time engaged in a fierce struggle over land with the local Cossacks, in which the Reds took the side of the mountaineers and the Whites that of the Cossacks. Soviet repression of the Cossacks enabled the Chechens to regain land that they had lost under tsarist rule. As already noted, there was a stratum of secular Chechen intellectuals out of which the indigenous Bolshevik elite of the early Soviet period was constituted. Throughout most of the 1920s, Soviet policy in Chechnya was shaped by local Chechen communists who took care to avoid steps that would alienate their fellow Chechens (Avtorkhanov 1992, p. 155; Gakaev 1999b, pp. 19-22).

The popularity that the Soviet regime initially enjoyed in Chechnya abruptly ended with Stalin's "great turn" in 1929. The customary way of life of the Chechens now came under attack, and collectivization was forcibly imposed upon them. The Chechens, however, were not cowed, and responded with an armed uprising. More uprisings followed in 1932-33 and in 1940. It was this defiant reaction that led Stalin so to distrust the Chechens that he ordered their deportation as a "security measure" necessitated by the advance of the German army toward the Caucasus. The underlying cause of the deportation was therefore the preservation of the Chechen tradition of armed resistance to oppression, and not an unchanging rejection by the Chechens of the very idea of inclusion in any kind of "Russian" state.[11]

The contrast between the position of the Chechens and that of the Volga Tatars continues to be evident in the post-Stalin period. In the late 1950s, Khrushchev allowed the surviving deportees to return to Chechnya, and formally restored the CIASSR, which had been wiped off the map after the deportation. But no real ethnic autonomy was restored. Checheno-Ingushetia was, in effect, governed by Moscow in the fashion of a colonial possession, with a succession of ethnic Russian party first secretaries serving in the role of colonial governor. Chechens were held in distrust and systematically denied appointment to all leading positions in the Party and government apparatus, in industry, and in education. It was even forbidden to promote a Chechen teacher to the position of school head.[12] Official business was conducted only in Russian, as (for most of the period) was teaching in the schools, limiting the use of Chechen mainly to family life. This quasi-colonial mode of government was facilitated by the enclave character of industrialization in Chechnya.

In Tataria, by way of contrast, the post-Stalin period saw very substantial progress made toward the restoration of genuine Volga Tatar autonomy. While only one of the three men who had occupied the post of party first secretary in Tataria under Stalin had been an ethnic Tatar,[13] from the 1960s onward the post was occupied by a succession of ethnic Tatars – first by Fikryat Tabeyev, then from 1979 (when Tabeyev was sent to Kabul as

Soviet ambassador following the invasion of Afghanistan) by Usmanov, and finally from 1989 by Mintimer Shaimiev, who is now President of the Republic of Tatarstan.[14] Under the patronage of Tabeyev and Usmanov there took shape a predominantly Tatar political, managerial, and academic elite, so that by the end of the 1980s 57 per cent of party officials in Tataria and 64 per cent of directors of enterprises and organizations were ethnic Tatars (Iskhakov 1998a). Tabeyev and Usmanov encouraged and facilitated a quiet renaissance of Tatar language, culture, and historical scholarship.[15] There is some indication that they also attempted to enhance the status of Tataria within the Soviet Union. Thus in the course of the discussions that preceded the adoption of a new Soviet constitution in 1977, the demand was raised that Tataria be elevated from an autonomous to a union republic. It is even said that a constitution for the putative Tatar Soviet Socialist Republic was drafted and circulated at this time.[16]

1.4 Summing Up

The contrasting character of the Tatar and the Chechen leaderships that emerged from the post-Soviet transition and conditioned the peaceful or violent outcome in each case can be explained by reference to the differences between the experience of the two peoples in both the tsarist and the Soviet era. The reasons for these differences may in turn be traced back to the dissimilar nature of the pre-conquest Volga Tatar and Chechen societies.

As a result of conquest by tsarist Russia, the Volga Tatars lost their previous ethnic identity along with the statehood that had nourished it, while the stateless Chechens were able to preserve their ethnic identity in its pre-existing form. The Volga Tatars became an integral part of Russia's multi-ethnic mosaic, on the whole aspiring to no more than autonomy within Russia, while the Chechens remained deeply alienated and stubbornly rebellious. In the early Soviet period, there were some grounds for hope that the Chechens might accept their position within Russia in its new incarnation, but the advent of the Stalinist order put paid to any such hope and brought about the resumption of Russo-Chechen hostility. The trauma of deportation deepened the Chechen's sense of bitter grievance.

The marginality of the Chechens to Soviet society was only increased by the colonial style in which Chechnya was governed in the post-Stalin period and by the continued underdevelopment of its economy. Chechen society underwent modernization only in a distorted, incomplete, and superficial form. For the Volga Tatars, by contrast, the post-Stalin period brought further all-round modernization and economic diversification, the occupational advancement and simultaneous Russification of many formerly rural people, the beginnings of a cultural renaissance, and the formation of a strong indigenous political establishment. Under the changing conditions of the post-Soviet transition, therefore, the Volga Tatars found themselves well equipped to realize their relatively modest political aspirations by peaceful means, while the Chechens proved unable to avoid a precipitous descent into the bloody maelstrom of revolution and war.

Section 2. Tataria and Chechnya: 1985-91

2.1 The Ethnic Republics: Typical Patterns of Interaction

Central to Gorbachev's strategy was the campaign that he called *perestroika* [rebuilding]. Seeking the reform, renewal, and modernization of Soviet society, he embarked upon a liberalization and democratization of the political system that he intended to remain limited in scope and under his control, but that in fact unleashed powerful anti-systemic forces, culminating by late 1991 in the collapse of the Soviet system and the disintegration of the USSR. Among these forces, a key role was played by the national movements of the non-Russian ethnic minorities. The outcome of the Soviet collapse in a given region of the USSR depended, inter alia, on the nature, goals, and strategy both of the national and other anti-systemic forces in that region and of the regional authorities that directly faced the challenge posed by those forces. Before considering the specific ways in which events developed in Tataria and Checheno-Ingushetia between 1985 and 1991, it will be useful to describe the typical patterns of interaction in the USSR's ethnic republics during that period.

2.1.1 The Rise of Anti-Systemic Forces

The rise of anti-systemic forces followed a similar pattern in most parts of the USSR inhabited by substantial non-Russian populations. The "ideal type" of this pattern consisted of three distinct phases.

In the first phase, roughly corresponding to the period from 1986 to mid-1988, there arose outside the official party-state structure public action groups known as "informals" [*neformaly*]. The informals took care not to challenge the monopoly of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, which was still the sole legal political party, and limited themselves to exerting pressure on "safe" issues, pertaining mainly to the environment[17] and to ethno-cultural revival.

In the second phase, lasting from mid-1988 until about the spring of 1990, the informals gave birth to organizations that adopted broader agendas of a more explicitly political and anti-systemic character. At the same time, they split into two rival streams: multi-ethnic groups, usually organized under the umbrella of "popular fronts," that espoused general democratic values, and mono-ethnic groups of the non-Russian minority that gave priority to ethnopolitical goals. Under these conditions, the general democratic groups took on the additional function of defending the rights of the Russian and russophone population against the perceived threat of minority nationalism. In this phase, however, ethno-national movements sought only enhanced autonomy or "sovereignty" within the framework of the USSR.[18]

Only in the third phase, from about mid-1990 on and especially after August 1991, as it became ever more obvious to people that the collapse of the USSR was approaching, did full independence begin to seem a real possibility. It was at this point that a division became more apparent within national movements between radicals, who were determined to grasp – by force of arms if necessary – what they took to be a unique historic opportunity, and moderates, who advocated a cautious, gradual, and non-violent strategy.

It is important to note that this pattern applies, mutatis mutandis, both to the non-Russian union republics and to the autonomous republics. At the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s it was not yet clear, as it was to become clear in retrospect, that only the union republics would be recognized by the international community as independent states. There was widespread speculation that the number of post-Soviet successor states might be closer to fifty than to fifteen. Thus not only Ukrainians, Georgians, and Uzbeks, but also many Chechens, Tatars, and Abkhaz thought that they too would be able to establish a state of their own on the ruins of the USSR, despite the lower status of their territories as autonomous republics within the Russian Federation or Georgia.

Zelimkhan Yandarbiev, a poet who was to play a central role in creating the first and most important of the Chechen nationalist parties and who later became Dudayev's vice-president, recounts in his autobiography a conversation that he says decisively changed his thinking. Sitting in a train and discussing the question of language rights with four fellow students of different ethnic affiliation – a Ukrainian, a German, a Pole, and a Georgian – he is suddenly struck by the thought: Why should Chechens have fewer rights than other peoples of the USSR? Action was soon to follow thought: "The collapse of the USSR was already on the horizon… A people that found itself at that crucial moment without a strong political avant-garde would be lost. It would be a new catastrophe for our people… It was necessary to prepare for the disintegration of the USSR. And then that people who possess a sufficiently strong political organization, capable of correctly identifying and making use of the direction of all-Union political processes, will be able to acquire real independence. I recall talking about this with Said-Khasan Abumuslimov already in the spring of 1988 in room 724 of the hostel of the Literary Institute on Moscow's Dobrolyubov Street, 9/11. Said-Khasan was finishing graduate work at Moscow State University and I was studying literature. Upon our arrival in Chechnya a bit less than a year later, we got to work organizing such a political force… The lads suggested that I take part, and then that I head the work" (Yandarbiev 1996, pp. 18-19).

A similar logic inspired the self-styled political avant-garde of the Tatars, the Tatar Party of National Independence *Ittifaq*.

2.1.2 Interaction with Regional Authorities

While one can identify a single typical pattern in the rise of anti-systemic forces, various regional authorities reacted to the challenge posed by these forces in two very different ways.

In some regions, the authorities perceived the new movements solely as threats, and sought to suppress them using all the means at their disposal. This tended to be the case where the political elite was socially or ethnically alien to the society it controlled, politically clumsy and inflexible, insecure, and highly dependent on the central authorities in Moscow. There were only two ways in which the confrontation between such a regional regime and the forces opposing it could end: either the opposition forces would be crushed, as occurred in Tajikistan, or the regime would be replaced or overthrown, as occurred in Checheno-Ingushetia.

In other regions, the authorities saw in the new movements not only potential threats, but also opportunities to further their own goals. This was the case when there were close ties between the political elite and the social strata within which the new movements arose, and when the elite was politically flexible and adroit, self-confident, and desirous of enhancing its autonomy from Moscow. Such a regional regime would pursue a strategy of splitting the new movements: it would aim to cooperate with and co-opt the moderates, with whom it shared values and goals, while the extremists would be marginalized, and if necessary suppressed. Examples of regions in which a co-optation strategy was successfully implemented were Ukraine and Tataria. However, where conditions were insufficiently favorable, as in Georgia, Armenia, and the Baltic republics, a co-optation strategy might fail to save a weak regional regime.[19]

2.2 Tataria 1985-91

In Tataria as elsewhere, the advent to power of Mikhail Gorbachev had no dramatic immediate repercussions.[20] In 1986 there began to appear in the regional press articles raising certain ethno-cultural issues, such as that of place names, but it was not until 1987 that there arose civic movements.

By far the largest of the "informal" movements, in this early phase, was the environmental movement, which originated among the students and faculty of Kazan State University and the Kazan Aviation Institute. The apogee of ecological protest came in the summer of 1988 with a mass campaign that succeeded in halting the construction of a nuclear power station in Tataria. Thereafter the movement went into sharp decline.
As the environmental movement lost its impetus, the Tatar national movement rose to replace it as the most salient of the civic movements. The Tatar Public Center (TPC), the main umbrella organization of the Tatar nationalists, was organized in the second half of 1988 and held its founding congress in January 1989. Later on radical Tatar nationalist parties split off from the mainstream of the TPC, the most important being the Tatar Party of National Independence *Ittifaq* (in April 1990) and the Islamic Democratic Party of Tatarstan (in March 1991).[21]

Simultaneously with the Tatar national movement there took shape a multi-ethnic civic movement of a general democratic character. The Popular Front of Tataria in Support of Perestroika was created in June 1988, and played a significant role in the public life of the region in late 1988 and in 1989. As the Tatar national movement gathered strength, the Popular Front increasingly came to express the interests of the Russian population (and to some extent of russophone Tatars). Later new "federalist" organizations were created as counterweights to the Tatar national movement: the Multi-Ethnic Movement for the Equal Rights and Unity of the Peoples of Tataria *Soglasie* [*Concord*] (in September 1990), the Public Movement "Citizens of the Russian Federation" (in October 1991), and the Movement for Democratic Reforms of Tatarstan (in November 1991).[22] The local branches of some all-Russian parties – notably the Tataria branch of Nikolai

Travkin's Democratic Party of Russia, founded in May 1990 – were also active in mobilizing opposition to the Tatar nationalists.

The nature of the relationship that existed between the Tatar national movement and the Tatar political establishment is a matter of controversy. Some opponents of the movement viewed it as a mere creature of the Tatar establishment, which used it as and when needed to bring pressure to bear on the federal government (Mikhailov). The links between the establishment and the moderate leaders of the TPC were certainly very close. In particular, the man on whose initiative the TPC was created, the late Marat Mulyukov, a lecturer in the history of the CPSU at Kazan State University, was known for his loyalty to the party leadership, and it may be assumed that he did not act without consulting them (Moukhariamov). Another person who provided an important link between the two forces was Rafael Khakimov, an ideologist of the Tatar national movement who was co-opted into the party apparatus and became Shaimiev's negotiator and perhaps his closest political adviser.

However, the close links that the Tatar establishment had with the national movement did not suffice to give it full control over the latter. Indeed, the TPC leaders were themselves far from fully controlling the movement over which they formally presided. Their authority was not recognized by parties like *Ittifaq*, which regarded itself in quasi-Bolshevik fashion as the authentic vanguard of the Tatar people. Any influence that the regional authorities were able to exert on the national radicals must have been very tenuous, although they were in a position to constrain the radicals' activity by means of administrative and police measures -- for example, by stopping the buses on which demonstrators were brought to Kazan from the radical strongholds of Naberezhnye Chelny and Almetevsk. Moreover, the regional authorities assisted the moderate nationalists at least partly with a view to forestalling the emergence of a strong radical nationalist movement by "immunizing the Tatars with a prophylactic dose of nationalism" (Tishkov), which implies that they did perceive radical nationalism as a potential threat.

A de facto alliance did take shape between the Tatar leadership and the national movement, but it was a fragile and ambivalent alliance that waxed and waned depending on the ever-changing political situation. The goals of the partners converged, but only partly: while Tatar independence was an end in itself for the nationalists, the establishment was concerned above all to safeguard social stability and thereby to preserve and consolidate its own power (Kondrashov 2000, chapters 5 and 6). Nevertheless, so long as the overarching framework of the Soviet Union remained firmly in place, regional party and state officials and moderate nationalists could agree on strategic goals for the medium term. In the sphere of language policy, the full equality of Tatar and Russian as official languages was to be assured. Tatarstan's autonomy in the area of economic policy was to be enhanced – a goal already embodied in the formula regional *khozraschet* introduced under Usmanov's leadership. In the constitutional sphere, the Declaration of State Sovereignty of the Tatar Soviet Socialist Republic, adopted by Tatarstan's Supreme Soviet on August 30, 1990, claimed for Tatarstan the long-sought status of union republic alongside – and not within – the Russian Federation. It remained to secure the recognition of the claim by the rest of the world.

A few words on relations between the Tatar national movement and the predominantly russophone "federalist" movement. The two movements had opposed goals. However, the tone of the confrontation between them, by comparison with ethnopolitical confrontations in many other places both in the (ex-)USSR and elsewhere, was remarkably mild and civilized. There was no violence even when Tatar nationalist and federalist demonstrations took place side by side on the same square with no police cordon to separate them. (There were a few violent clashes, entailing injuries but no deaths, between radical Tatar nationalist demonstrators and the police, as on May 27 and again on October 15-16 in Kazan.) On the ideological level, there was in fact a great deal of common ground between the two sides. While they could not agree on the correct interrelations between national rights and general human rights, democratic values were not denied by the nationalists, nor did the federalists deny the need for some kind of regional autonomy (Kondrashov 2000, chapter 4). Even most "radical" Tatar nationalists could be considered radical only by Tatarstani standards. Unlike (say) Estonian and

Latvian nationalists, they never sought to deprive local Russians of citizenship, let alone to expel them, and they too wanted to avoid large-scale violence in order not to give Moscow a pretext for military intervention (Malik). The overwhelmingly non-violent nature of ethnic politics in Tataria is clearly rooted in a long-established regional tradition of inter-ethnic cohabitation, religious tolerance, and mutual adaptation (Kolesnik, Moukhametshin). Whether the tradition might have been shattered by a sufficiently prolonged period of high political tension is a question over which our interlocutors differed.[23]

2.3 Checheno-Ingushetia 1985-91

As in Tataria, "informal" activism in Chechnya began with environmental protest – specifically, a big public campaign in the spring and summer of 1988 against the construction of a hazardous biochemical factory in Gudermes.[24] In the next phase, lasting from the summer of 1988 until the fall of 1990, the most prominent group was the Popular Front of the Chechen-Ingush ASSR, which combined general calls for democratization and action against corruption with demands for justice for the Chechen people – revival of Chechen culture, an end to anti-Chechen discrimination, and restoration of historical truth. [25] (The target of the latter demand was official propaganda claims that the Chechens had joined the Russian empire voluntarily. It is pertinent to note that official propagandists never claimed the same of the Tatars.) Nevertheless, the Popular Front was in principle a multi-ethnic civic organization, although in practice its efforts to draw in Russians were unsuccessful. A Chechen national movement emerged in the summer of 1989, when Zelimkhan Yandarbiev and a number of other cultural figures formed the *Bart* [*Concord*] Society. In May 1990 *Bart* was reconstituted as the Vainakh Democratic Party (VDP).[26] Like *Ittifaq* in Tataria, the VDP conceived of itself as a vanguard destined to lead the struggle for independent statehood. Again as in Tataria, the secular nationalists were joined by nationalists of Islamic orientation (*Islamic Path* in spring 1990, the Party of Islamic Revival in December 1990).

While the sequence of events was not quite the same in Chechnya as it was in Tataria, the movements that emerged clearly belonged to the same basic types. The crucial difference between the two cases lay in the reaction of the regional authorities. In contrast to the party leadership in Tataria, which was not alarmed by the new movements and saw advantage in cooperating with them, the quasi-colonial leadership of the ethnic Russian V. K. Fateyev in Chechnya could see in them only a threat to its position. It is germane that the social status of the leading activists was very different in the two cases: the leading Tatar activists belonged to the official intelligentsia, which had close ties to the political elite, while the leading Chechen activists were separated from the political elite by an ethnic as well as a social divide.

At first Fateyev simply ignored the informals. Then from the beginning of 1989 he took started to take police measures against them. However, his hand was weakened by the changes then taking place in Moscow. Rivals within the republic's party organization accused him of sabotaging perestroika. Under the impact of pressure from within and without, some concessions were made to Chechen grievances. A Chechen-Ingush State Pedagogical Institute was set up to train more Chechen and Ingush teachers. A few Chechens were at last placed in leading positions: for example, a Chechen was appointed rector of the Chechen-Ingush State University. The turning point came in June 1989, when a plenum of the party provincial committee elected Doku Zavgayev first secretary – the first Chechen ever to occupy the post.

Zavgayev introduced a more liberal regime in Checheno-Ingushetia. Although he did not have time fully to renew the composition of the regional political elite, he did replace many local bosses with his own men in February and March 1990, exploiting for the purpose popular protests organized by the Popular Front – an episode that came to be known as "the spring leaf-fall of first secretaries." Some attempt was made to tackle pressing social problems. A Chechen intellectual elite began to form. Like Shaimiev in Tataria, Zavgayev co-opted the slogans of the opposition concerning Chechen self-determination and sovereignty. In the wake of a Congress of the Chechen People convened in Grozny with Zavgayev's consent on November 23-25, 1990, the Supreme

Soviet of the Chechen-Ingush ASSR (SSCIR), chaired by Zavgayev, adopted on November 27 a Declaration of the State Sovereignty of the Chechen-Ingush Republic, which as a sovereign state was ready to enter into union and federal treaties with other Soviet republics on the basis of equal rights. In appearance, this stance was broadly similar to that embodied in the analogous declaration that Tatarstan's Supreme Soviet had adopted just three months earlier. There was, however, an important difference that made the stance of Checheno-Ingushetia much the more intransigent: under Ingush pressure, readiness to establish treaty relations was made conditional upon recognition of the CIR's territorial claim on the Prigorodnyi County (transferred to North Ossetia following the deportation of the Ingush in 1944). As neither Gorbachev nor Yeltsin was at all likely to meet this condition, the declaration amounted in effect to a bid for full independence.

Despite his best efforts, Zavgayev's attempt to co-opt the national movement failed. Anti-regime demonstrations continued through the winter of 1990-91. At the end of 1990, the various nationalist parties came together in a bloc that was called initially the Pan-National Movement of the Chechen People and later the Pan-National Congress of the Chechen People. The organizers decided to invite one of the most eminent Soviet Chechens, Air Force General Jokhar Dudayev, who had delivered a fiery speech at the recent Congress of the Chechen People, to chair the Executive Committee of the Congress (EC PNCCP). It was the PNCCP that, under Dudayev's leadership, was to seize power in the fall of 1991.

As we have seen, Zavgayev and Shaimiev were trying to play the same role. Why did the one fail where the other succeeded?

Several reasons suggest themselves. The continuity of the institutional structure of the CIASSR had already been broken by the decision of the Ingush, adopted at the Second Congress of the Ingush People in Grozny on September 9-10, 1989, to break away and establish an Ingush Autonomous Republic within the Russian Federation.[27] A second reason concerned the deep clan [*teip*] divisions within Chechen society, divisions of a kind that do not exist among the Tatars. Zavgayev came to be widely perceived as

serving the interests of his clan rather than those of all Chechens. But surely what most badly damaged the credibility of Zavgayev in the role that he tried to play was his earlier career as a loyal servant of the "colonial" administration. In general, a considerable period of time would have been needed to form a coherent and competent Chechen-Soviet elite that might have stood a chance of withstanding the turbulence of the Soviet collapse. The two years that Zavgayev were given were simply too short a time for accomplishing a task of such magnitude. The Chechen Revolution was already gathering pace, and Zavgayev lacked the political resources either to suppress or to co-opt it.

It should not, however, be assumed that the accession to power of the PNCCP put Chechnya irrevocably on the road to disaster. Among the leading figures of the nationalist bloc there were not only extremists, but also moderates who advocated a non-violent and constitutional transition and the preservation of good relations with Russia. Moreover, the discontinuity between the Zavgayev and the Dudayev regimes was not a total one: some of Zavgayev's people, such as the economics minister Taimaz Abubakarov, remained in office under Dudayev. The personal contribution that Jokhar Dudayev made to the tragic outcome should not be underestimated. Some of those who invited Dudayev to take the chairmanship of the PNCCP did so on the supposition that he would be a passive figurehead and adopt a neutral position in internal conflicts. They were to realize their mistake soon enough. Against expectations, Dudayev threw his backing wholeheartedly behind the radical wing within the bloc. He had no intention of being a "wedding general."[28]

Section 3. Tatarstan and Chechnya: August 1991 – January 1992

3.1 The General Political Context of Soviet Disintegration

In the last two years of the Soviet Union, there was a steady decline in the effective power of the central Soviet party and government structures (the "union center"), as union and autonomous republics alike increasingly laid claim to "sovereign" prerogatives on their territory. At the same time, Gorbachev made persistent efforts to negotiate with

the republican leaders the terms of a "renewed union" in what was called the Novo-Ogaryovo process (after the place where the negotiations were held). There developed a complex triangular interaction between the union center, the union republics, and the autonomous republics. The union republics sought to exclude the autonomous republics from the re-division of power, while the autonomous republics offered the union center their support in exchange for inclusion in the process. By way of compromise, representatives of the autonomous republics were allowed to attend the Novo-Ogaryovo negotiations, but only as observers.

Among the republics, the Russian Federation occupied a special position as a potential new center of power (the "Russian center"). This lent its relations with the other republics at this time a certain ambiguity. On the one hand, it was allied with the other republics against the old union center. On the other hand, the alliance was overshadowed by the prospect of future conflict once the new Russian center had displaced the old union center. The autonomous republics within the Russian Federation, especially Tataria and Checheno-Ingushetia, had the greatest cause for anxiety on this score. They were accordingly committed to preserving the Soviet Union as a framework within which their autonomy could be safeguarded. Thus in the referendum of March 17, 1991, the proportion of those in favor of "the preservation of the USSR as a renewed federation of equal sovereign republics" was 87.5 per cent in Tataria and 76 per cent in Checheno-Ingushetia, as compared to 71 per cent in the Russian Federation as a whole.[29]

The disintegration of the Soviet Union was accelerated in the late summer of 1991 when leading hard-liners formed a State Committee for the State of Emergency (SCSE) and attempted but failed to seize power (August 19-21). Several non-Russian union republics immediately declared independence, while in Russia Yeltsin banned the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, which was the main structure holding the USSR together. Union power structures, the heads of which had been members of the SCSE, were disoriented and demoralized. In Russia, the control exercised by the institutions of the old union center was greatly weakened, while the institutions of the new Russian center were not yet strong enough fully to take their place. The interregnum came to an end in late

December 1991, when the dissolution of the Soviet Union was formally completed by the resignation of Gorbachev, the first and last Soviet president.

The situation of "dual power" in those final months of 1991 has been graphically portrayed by Yeltsin's security chief Alexander Korzhakov: "Dual power is always fraught with the danger that in such a period people will recognize no authority. Gorbachev was no longer taken seriously, … but Yeltsin did not yet possess sufficient levers of power. Such a situation is even worse than anarchy… Prolonged dual power made possible the disintegration of the Union. Each [Union Republic president] thought that it would be easier to restore order in his own domain than in the common home" (Korzhakov 1997, pp. 128-9).

As has already have noted, relations between Yeltsin's new Russian center and Russia's autonomous republics were rather strained in the year or two preceding August 1991. Their relations were further exacerbated by the way the leaders of the autonomous republics behaved during the attempted coup. Anxious to preserve the union at any price, they either kept silent, waiting to see who would win, or openly backed the putschists. Consequently Yeltsin and his colleagues condemned them as communist reactionaries and sought to have them ousted, with little if any regard to who their successors were likely to be. This short-sighted policy actually worked to the advantage of the radical nationalists in the autonomous republics. This, it seemed, was the historic opportunity for which they had been preparing.

3.2 Tatarstan: August 1991 to January 1992

Despite the tensions arising from the triangular politics of the Novo-Ogaryovo process, an initial round of political negotiations between Tatarstan and the Russian center took place in Moscow between August 12 and 15, 1991. The delegations were headed by Tatarstan vice-president Vassily Likhachev (himself an ethnic Russian) and state secretary Gennady Burbulis respectively. Although the proceedings seem to have consisted mainly of fruitless wrangling over historical and theoretical issues, the sides

agreed to sign a protocol recognizing the need for treaty-based relations between the Republic of Tatarstan and the Russian Federation. [30]

A few days later came the attempted coup. Shaimiev flew to Moscow to meet with the coup leader Soviet vice-president Gennady Yanayev, and on his return home expressed support for the coup in a radio broadcast and ordered the police to disperse 600 opponents of the coup who demonstrated on Kazan's central square on August 20. One result of the consequent exacerbation of his relations with Yeltsin was a hiatus in the political negotiations. Relations never, however, became so strained as to seriously affect economic ties, the necessity of whose preservation was generally acknowledged. At the end of November 1991, delegations led by the prime ministers of the two sides, Mukhammat Sabirov and Yegor Gaidar, began economic negotiations, leading to the conclusion in January 1992 of an agreement on economic cooperation.

In the immediate aftermath of the coup, Yeltsin and his colleagues in Moscow and both the federalist and the Tatar nationalist opposition in Kazan were all united in demanding Shaimiev's resignation. It took only a few days for this strange alliance to fall apart. As soon as the nationalists realized that not only Shaimiev but also Tatarstan's sovereignty were in jeopardy, they reluctantly rallied to Shaimiev's support. At the same time, at a meeting organized on August 27 by the TPC and the *Sovereignty* Committee, they demanded that full independence be declared. On August 29, the Tatarstan parliament convened in the presence of Russian presidential adviser Sergei Shakhrai, who had been sent by Yeltsin to engineer Shaimiev's ouster. Shakhrai's mission failed: the question of removing Shaimiev was not even placed on the agenda.

The aspect of the campaign for independence waged by the Tatar nationalists in the fall of 1991 that held the greatest potential for violence was their attempt to acquire a paramilitary capability. On September 9, the presidium of the TPC adopted a resolution to create a "national guard," and appointed as its commander-in-chief a vice-president of the TPC who was a retired army colonel. Although the national guard was reported in early October to number 3,000 people, it never became an effective armed force, above

all because its commanders were unable to procure a significant quantity of arms, all the main possible sources of arms being closed to them. Firstly, there was virtually no leakage of arms out of local military bases and enterprises, which were under tight security. Secondly, there was no black market for arms in Tatarstan, while the nationalists lacked the funds and criminal connections needed to buy arms in those regions of Russia (such as neighboring Udmurtia) that did have such a market. Nor was a way found to smuggle in arms from outside Russia: there was one attempt by radical nationalists in Naberezhnye Chelny to obtain arms from the Baltic, but the plan was detected and the shipment intercepted (Moukhariamov, Tishkov).[31]

Ethnopolitical tension reached its height in Tatarstan in the fall of 1991. Activists exchanged vitriolic anti-Russian and anti-Tatar invective in the pages of the local press. Some Moscow politicians, including Supreme Soviet chairman Ruslan Khasbulatov, made inflammatory speeches attacking not only the radical Tatar nationalists but also Shaimiev himself. In a survey conducted in October 1991, only 8 per cent of respondents in Kazan and 5 per cent of respondents in other Tatarstan cities rated inter-ethnic relations as "stable", while 26 per cent of respondents in Kazan and 32 per cent in other cities considered them "very tense" (Mukhametshin and Isaev 1998, p. 60). Admittedly, these figures are not suggestive of an extremely high level of tension, but there was some cause for anxiety. [32]

A turning point was reached on October 15, when nationalist demonstrators trying to storm the building of the Tatarstan Supreme Soviet clashed with police, leaving eleven injured. This incident triggered a decision on the part of Shaimiev to take a tougher stand against the radical nationalists. On October 17 he issued a decree banning paramilitary groups, leading to the prosecution by the end of November of 673 activists associated with the national guard. Some officials of the federal government also tried to reassert control of the situation: on October 24, the federal procuracy (prosecutor's office) issued a declaration holding certain individuals and public associations in Tatarstan responsible for criminal acts. The declaration, however, led to no arrests – in part because the federal procuracy was not supported by the Gaidar government, which was very reluctant to

sanction the use of force against the national movements of ethnic minorities, and in part because the Tatarstan procuracy and police, in the absence of clear signals from their formal superiors in Moscow, took their instructions from the regional authorities (Tishkov). The paralysis of the central authorities may well in this instance have played a stabilizing role, inasmuch as action against the radical nationalists had greater legitimacy, and was accordingly less likely to provoke violent counteraction, coming from a local politician who was a fellow Tatar rather than from Russian officials in the capital.

It was also in the aftermath of the October disorders that Shaimiev began to develop a political strategy to meet the challenge of the post-Soviet transition (Moukhariamov). The strategy was designed to satisfy moderate nationalist aspirations while marginalizing the radical nationalists, and to consolidate Tatarstan's autonomy while reassuring Moscow. It was decreed that October 15, the anniversary of the storming of Kazan by Ivan the Terrible, would no longer be celebrated as a holiday. On October 24, the Tatarstan Supreme Soviet adopted a resolution on "the state independence of the Republic of Tatarstan," authorizing the republican government to carry out an analysis of the consequences of a possible declaration of independence, to be followed by a referendum on the status of Tatarstan. The Likhachev-Burbulis negotiations were resumed on the same day. In late November a new constitution for Tatarstan was promised.

3.3 Chechnya: August 1991 to January 1992

According to some observers, the influence of the radical nationalists was declining in Chechnya in the summer of 1991 as Zavgayev continued gradually to consolidate his position and new organizations of a liberal centrist orientation established themselves among the intelligentsia and students (Gakaev 1999, pp. 162-3).[33] Any shift of this kind was cut short by the attempted coup of August 19-21. Zavgayev (who was in Moscow at the time) and most of his colleagues in the republican leadership kept their silence, as they waited to see who would come out on top. Meanwhile, a non-stop mass meeting in Grozny's Lenin Square, in which all the main opposition organizations took part, demanded that Zavgayev resign and the SSCIR dissolve itself.

In sharp contrast to their Tatar counterparts, the Chechen nationalists had access to an abundant supply of arms. There was a thriving black market in arms in the Caucasus, and the nationalist organizations were generously funded by criminal mafias among the Chechen diaspora. There was also a considerable leakage of arms from local army bases (Tishkov). Moreover, on account of ethno-cultural differences the proportion of Chechens with combat skills and experience was higher than the corresponding proportion of Tatars. The nationalists therefore found it much easier to organize effective paramilitary forces in Chechnya.

On August 22, the radical nationalists seized the initiative. Armed supporters of the PNCCP belonging to the "national guard" seized control of the television station and put Dudayev on the air. The police were ordered to disperse the demonstrators by force, but many refused. The "Chechen revolution" had begun.

Zavgayev might nonetheless have managed to regain control had he enjoyed the backing of Moscow. The Russian leadership, however, refused him their support, regarding him as an enemy of the "democrats." A succession of emissaries from Moscow arrived in Grozny – the first three[34] on August 26, then Burbulis and minister of press and information Poltoranin on September 11, and then Khasbulatov on September 14. They all warned Zavgayev not to use force, and attempted to mediate a compromise solution to the political crisis. Under these circumstances, the police refused to enforce a state of emergency in Grozny that the presidium of the SSCIR declared on September 3. On September 6, an armed crowd forced its way into the building where the SSCIR was sitting, beat up many of the deputies, and threw the first secretary of the city party committee, Kutsenko, out of the window to his death.[35] Zavgayev was taken prisoner by the national guard and forced to resign.

From this point on, power was effectively in the hands of Dudayev and the EC PNCCP. On Khasbulatov's initiative, a "Temporary Supreme Council of the Chechen-Ingush Republic" of 32 members, half of them drawn from the defunct SSCIR and the other half

nominated by the EC PNCCP, was set up in mid-September, supposedly to govern the republic pending new parliamentary elections on November 17. Unsurprisingly, this body proved unable to function as intended. Within a few days it broke apart into two rival "temporary councils."

On October 6, the next emissary from Moscow, vice-president Alexander Rutskoi, came to Grozny. After meeting with all significant political actors, he flew back on October 7, believing that he had finally resolved the crisis. His delusion was dispelled the very next day, when the EC PNCCP declared itself the sole legitimate authority in the Chechen Republic and announced that presidential and parliamentary elections would be held on October 27.

Now the Russian leadership finally understood what had happened in Chechnya. On October 9, the presidium of the RF Supreme Soviet demanded that the EC PNCCP disarm its "illegal armed formations," vacate occupied government buildings, and recognize the authority of the Temporary Supreme Council. The EC PNCCP responded by calling the demands "crude interference in the internal affairs of the Chechen Republic and a declaration of armed confrontation," bringing the national guard into combat readiness, and announcing a general mobilization of the male population. On October 19, President Yeltsin repeated the same demands, warning that if they were not met "all measures envisaged by the laws of the RF would be taken to normalize the situation."
It may be presumed that by mid-October Yeltsin and his colleagues were actively considering the option of military intervention to reverse the Chechen nationalist takeover. The decision to go ahead was probably taken after Dudayev, having duly won the PNCCP-controlled presidential election, issued on November 1 a decree declaring the sovereignty of the Chechen Republic.

On November 7, Yeltsin issued a decree introducing a state of emergency in Checheno-Ingushetia. No attempt was made to secure the advantage of surprise: the decree was announced on television, facilitating the rapid mobilization of Chechens in defense of the new republic. The intervention was a fiasco. Russian soldiers landed – without their

equipment, which was on another plane – at the Khankala airfield, where they were promptly surrounded by Chechen fighters. Trucks loaded with stone were parked on the airstrip to prevent other planes landing. Meanwhile, another group of Chechen fighters led by Yandarbiev entered the building of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in Grozny, which was "full of Russian special forces [*spetsnaz*] in heavy bullet-proof jackets and armed to the teeth, awaiting orders," found their way to the commanders' office, and talked them into surrendering (Yandarbiev 1996, p. 91). On November 10 the RF Supreme Soviet retracted the state of emergency. With the consent of the Chechen leadership, the intervention force was evacuated by bus.

A crucial factor in the immediate collapse of the intervention was the weakness and inexperience of the emergent Russian center during the interregnum of late 1991. The main force structures were still subordinate to the Soviet president. Yeltsin appealed to Gorbachev for help, but in a fit of pique Gorbachev refused, reminding Yeltsin how he had refused to let Gorbachev introduce a state of emergency in Lithuania. Gorbachev's stance also provided the commanders of Russian forces based in Grozny with a welcome excuse to surrender (Yandarbiev 1996, p. 95). Had Gorbachev taken a more cooperative attitude, the Chechen war would have begun at the end of 1991 instead of three years later. It would have presumably been somewhat less bloody and prolonged, inasmuch as Dudayev had not yet had the time to build up and properly organize his forces.

At this early stage, when the radical nationalist regime had yet to consolidate its position, there may have been a possibility of removing it with minimal violence by helping – or at least not hindering – its domestic opponents. In mid-October a new opposition to the PNCCP arose among the Chechen intelligentsia, united in the "Movement for the Preservation of Checheno-Ingushetia." This movement was not tainted by association with Zavgayev and the old party-state elite, and it had the support of the influential religious leader, Sheikh Deni Arsanov. However, any prospects that the movement may have had were destroyed by Moscow's attempt at military intervention, which enabled Dudayev to assume the mantle of a national hero. Yandarbiev himself was later to acknowledge that it was the state of emergency that made "the national revival …

unstoppable" and "gave Dudayev for the first time the support of the overwhelming majority of the Chechen people" (Yandarbiev 1996, pp. 93-4).

Section 4. Tatarstan and Chechnya: 1992–1994

In the period from 1992 to 1994, the paths taken by Tatarstan and Chechnya increasingly diverged. In the first half of 1992, the Shaimiev leadership consolidated its position, defeating the challenge to its authority posed by the radical nationalists. At the same time, relations were normalized with the federal center, which having failed to stop an "anti-constitutional" referendum on the status of Tatarstan reluctantly accepted the result and opened negotiations that ultimately led to the bilateral treaty of February 15, 1994. By contrast, attempts to normalize relations between the federal center and Chechnya, whether by negotiating with the Dudayev regime or by removing it through means short of war, failed over and over again, until resort was finally had to direct military intervention in December 1994.

4.1 Tatarstan: The Path to Resolution

There were in the first half of 1992 two parallel and related developments in Tatarstan that may have entailed some risk of violent conflict. Firstly, an attempt was undertaken by radical Tatar nationalists to push forward the drive to independence by creating new institutions of Tatar political representation, the Kurultai [Congress] and the Milli Mejlis [Small Council], that laid claim to broad prerogatives. The other dangerous development was the "referendum crisis" set off by the decision made on February 21 by the Tatarstan Supreme Soviet to conduct on March 21, over the strenuous objections of the federal center, a referendum to legitimize Tatarstan's claim to be "a sovereign state, subject of international law, that builds its relations with the Russian Federation and other republics and states on the basis of equal treaties." After examining each of these developments in turn, I show how the political situation in and around Tatarstan was stabilized following resolution of the referendum crisis, and trace the post-crisis negotiating process between Moscow and Kazan.

4.1.1 January—June 1992: From the Kurultai to the World Congress of Tatars

On January 14, an organizational committee was formed around the president of the Marjani Society, retired army colonel Zaki Zainullin and *Ittifaq* leader Fauzia Bairamova with a view to making preparations for a Pan-Tatar Kurultai. The Kurultai, held in Kazan with 877 delegates present on February 1-2, proclaimed the full independence of Tatarstan, and adopted a declaration to the effect that "the Kurultai alone expresses the will of the Tatar people and resolves in the name of the whole Tatar people (nation) questions related to realization of the right to self-determination." It also elected the Milli Mejlis, a smaller body that was to function in its place in the intervals between successive Kurultais and to create a network of elective local councils in areas of compact Tatar habitation. Together the Kurultai and the Milli Mejlis constituted an alternative Tatar parliament that – in contrast to the Tatarstan Supreme Soviet, which represented Tatar and non-Tatar citizens of the Republic of Tatarstan – was intended to represent all Tatars as an ethnic community, including the Tatar diaspora scattered throughout Russia, the post-Soviet region, and the world.[36] While the Milli Mejlis did not aspire completely to replace the Tatarstan Supreme Soviet, it conceived of itself as a law-making body within the state structure of Tatarstan, and laid claim to a juridical status higher than that of the Tatarstan Supreme Soviet (with the right, for instance, to repeal laws passed by the latter).[37]

The organizers of the Kurultai were clearly throwing down an open challenge to the authority not only of the Shaimiev leadership but also of the federal bodies of power in Moscow. They were indeed afraid that Moscow would intervene militarily to prevent the Kurultai from being held, intending in that event to go underground in Naberezhnye Chelny, where they were strongest. While they evidently exaggerated the immediate danger of a violent response, the Kurultai undoubtedly did contribute to the perception by federal politicians of the threat to Russia's territorial integrity inherent in Tatar nationalism.

The attitude taken toward the Kurultai by the official Tatarstan leadership was marked by a certain ambiguity. On the one hand, Shaimiev stated in advance that any decisions adopted by the Kurultai would be devoid of juridical force, and immediately after the event the Tatarstan Supreme Soviet passed a resolution re-affirming this position and characterizing the Kurultai as an attempted coup d'etat (Kondrashov 2000, p. 181). On the other hand, Shaimiev could easily have thwarted the convening of the Kurultai had he chosen, but he allowed it to take place. Indeed, according to one well-informed observer, his emissaries actually encouraged the organizers to go ahead with their plans (Malik 1999). A number of informants take the view that Shaimiev at this time regarded the radical nationalists as serving a useful purpose as bogeymen in his dealings with Moscow. By playing up the threat supposedly posed by the radicals, he could present himself as the moderate and responsible politician who would save Russia from this threat – provided only that the federal authorities made the concessions that would enable him to do so. This interpretation of Shaimiev's motives is plausible enough, especially in light of the fact that he had already taken decisive action to curtail any *real* threat that the radicals might have posed.[38]

Nevertheless, Shaimiev did not want the Kurultai and Milli Mejlis to develop into an effective rival center of power in the republic. He accordingly set about undermining the legitimacy of the alternative parliament by creating a semi-official institution that would fulfill the function claimed for itself by the Kurultai – namely, the representation of Tatars as an ethnic community. This was the World Congress of Tatars, planned to take place in June 1992. The Milli Mejlis felt unable to oppose such a congress, but demanded for itself (in a decree dated March 29) the right to organize it. Such was not to be: the organizing committee was chaired by prime minister Sabirov, while the historian Indus Tagirov became president of the new organization. It appears that the World Congress of Tatars did take the wind out of the sails of its radical counterparts. Although local Tatar councils were set up in Kazan, Nizhnekamsk, and Naberezhnye Chelny, the activity of the Milli Mejlis steadily declined. A second Kurultai has never convened.

4.1.2 February—March 1992: The Referendum Crisis

On February 21, 1992, the Tatarstan Supreme Soviet adopted a decree providing for the holding of a referendum on the state status of the republic. The people of Tatarstan were to be asked the question: "Do you agree that the Republic of Tatarstan is a sovereign state, a subject of international law, that builds its relations with the Russian Federation and other republics and states on the basis of equal treaties?" This decree set off a confrontation between Tatarstan and the federal authorities, who denounced the planned referendum as unconstitutional and attempted to prevent it from being held. For this purpose they resorted to means that included a propaganda campaign aimed at the population of Tatarstan, threats to prosecute officials assisting in the conduct of the referendum, and – according to some informants – troop movements in provinces neighboring Tatarstan. Despite the tension generated by the confrontation, the referendum took place without incident on March 21. The result was officially confirmed on March 26: of those participating, 61.4 per cent – corresponding to just over 50 per cent of the total electorate – had answered yes. However, the "referendum crisis" was over by March 25, following conciliatory public statements in which Yeltsin in effect ceded the legitimacy of the referendum and acknowledged the need to negotiate a special bilateral treaty between Kazan and Moscow. On March 31 negotiations resumed in Moscow with a view to preparing the draft of such a treaty.

According to two of the Tatar negotiators, the idea of holding a referendum had first been suggested the previous year, during the initial negotiations between the Tatarstan and Russian federal leaderships, by the head of the federal delegation, Gennady Burbulis. They believe that Burbulis was issuing a rhetorical challenge that he did not expect to be taken up; when the Tatarstan side responded favorably, Burbulis distanced himself from his own suggestion (Khakimov 1999, Tagirov 1999).[39] Shaimiev and his colleagues were apparently confident that they could win a suitably worded referendum, and the holding of a referendum was consistent with their emerging strategy of co-opting Tatar nationalism to consolidate Tatarstan's autonomy.

The most controversial question pertaining to the referendum crisis is whether there was ever any danger of federal military intervention. Several of our Tatar interlocutors claim that army divisions, including many tanks, were deployed in a partial or complete encirclement of Tatarstan, in the first instance as a demonstration of force but not excluding the possibility of direct intervention should the attempt to intimidate Tatarstan fail.[40] Our Muscovite informants dismiss these claims as preposterous. They acknowledge that the federal authorities had sufficient motive to intervene: the de facto secession of Chechnya had heightened anxiety among the political elite that the Russian Federation was heading the same way as the Soviet Union, and it was feared that if Tatarstan were also to secede other ethnic republics (say, Baskhiria and Tyva) would soon follow suit. The still weak federal structures would be unable to cope with such a situation (Tishkov). This anxiety, however, was not shared by the public at large, which was quite unprepared for military action – as indeed were the force structures themselves (Payin, Tishkov). No documentary proof of plans to intervene has ever been presented – although "our Tatar colleagues would pay handsomely for such documents" – and rumor is not a reliable source of information. As for troop movements, these are always taking place for one reason or another, and should not automatically be viewed as serving a political purpose (Tishkov).

Another hypothetical scenario is less implausible. Rising tension might have led to violent inter-ethnic clashes inside Tatarstan that would have aroused Russian public opinion, thereby creating political conditions more conducive to military intervention. According to our Tatarstan informants, the traditionally good relations between Tatars and local Russians made such clashes highly improbable, although a Moscow-based Tatar ethnologist thinks that a more prolonged confrontation could nonetheless have resulted in inter-ethnic violence (Aklaev). In the eyes of policymakers in Moscow, at any rate, the danger was a very significant one. Indeed, a Tatar informant suspects that anti-sovereignty leaflets and posters of a highly alarming kind were distributed in Tatarstan by the federal authorities precisely with the intention of provoking clashes that would provide the needed pretext for intervention (Valeeva 1999).[41] This is perhaps, as Muscovite informants argue, too cynical an interpretation: such provocation would have

been excessively risky. True, Khasbulatov made some provocative speeches, but Yeltsin's statements were quite mild in tone (Tishkov).

How would Tatar nationalists have reacted to a military intervention, had it taken place? On the one hand, there is reason to think that the reaction would have been overwhelmingly one of non-violent protest, like that in Prague in 1968 (Valeeva). On the other hand, a substantial minority of radical nationalists would have wanted to resort to armed resistance, and had tried – though, as we have seen, without success – to make preparations for such a contingency (Malik 1999). It is possible that they would eventually have managed to acquire enough recruits and weapons to launch at least a low-intensity guerrilla campaign.

While there is insufficient evidence to indicate that military intervention was seriously planned by Moscow, it is clear that plans were made for police action. Every official involved in the conduct of the referendum received a personal letter from the federal procuracy warning that he or she was acting in contravention of the Constitution of the Russian Federation, and was accordingly liable to criminal prosecution (Khakimov 1999). A team of investigators was sent to Tatarstan to collect evidence. In the event, nobody was arrested or tried in connection with the referendum. According to one source, representatives of the procuracy were even given instructions to go to the polling stations on the morning of the referendum and close them (Tagirov 2000, p. 296). The instructions were not carried out. Violent incidents were avoided thanks to the inability of the procuracy to enforce its writ in Tatarstan.

The referendum result has generally been perceived as proving that sovereignty, in the form advocated by the Shaimiev leadership, enjoyed widespread popular support among Russians as well as Tatars in Tatarstan (Valeeva). Such cross-ethnic support would lend credence to the official doctrine according to which the Republic of Tatarstan was not only the vehicle of Tatar self-determination, but also the homeland of all its inhabitants irrespective of ethnic affiliation. The perception that many or most local Russians also backed the sovereignty project did much to legitimize the latter, even in the eyes of a

reluctant federal political elite, thereby helping to stabilize relations both between Kazan and Moscow and between Tatars and Russians in Tatarstan. It may well therefore have played a crucial role in ensuring a non-violent outcome. The validity of the perception is another matter. While a certain proportion of the Russian population did vote in favor of sovereignty, just as a certain proportion of the Tatar population voted against it, the regression analysis conducted by Mikhailov, Novikov, and Sultanov (1992) suggests that the proportion in both cases was only about 10 per cent, with a very strong correlation between the referendum results in different districts and their ethnic composition.[42] Perceptions of the significance of the referendum result were effectively manipulated by Tatarstan's political and academic establishment to exaggerate the real extent of inter-ethnic concord in the republic. To the extent that inter-ethnic tensions did indeed abate in the wake of the referendum, the whole exercise may perhaps be regarded as a self-fulfilling prophecy of a benign kind.

4.1.3 Post-Crisis Stabilization

The implementation of the referendum without the feared clashes or disruptions, the conciliatory statements that followed from Yeltsin and Shaimiev, and the resumption of negotiations between Moscow and Kazan had a calming effect on the political atmosphere in Tatarstan. The proportions of opinion poll respondents expressing a positive assessment of inter-ethnic relations in the republic, which had fallen from 68 to 40 per cent (and only 22 per cent for Russian respondents) between August and October 1991, returned to their previous high levels during the summer and fall of 1992 (Mukhametshin and Isaev 1998, pp. 56, 60; Kondrashov 2000, p. 189).

A parallel change occurred in the tenor of relations between the federal center and the Tatarstan leadership in the period following the referendum. If one traces the evolution in the way the Tatarstan issue is analyzed by Russian specialists, one notices a paradigm shift taking hold from mid-1992 onward. In late 1991 and early 1992, Shaimiev is typically perceived first of all as a Tatar nationalist, more cautious in his tactics than the radical nationalists but sharing the same ultimate goal of a fully independent Tatarstan.

By late 1992 Russian specialists have begun to see Shaimiev in a much more positive light, as an ally of the federal center in overcoming the threat posed by the radical nationalists.[43] Although the negotiations between Moscow and Kazan were to encounter difficulties and take much longer than initially expected, both sides were to remain firmly committed to the process and to its successful outcome. From April 1992 onward, there was no significant likelihood of a return to open confrontation, let alone of a violent showdown.

4.1.4 March 31, 1992—February 15, 1994: The Negotiating Process

A large Tatarstan delegation, headed by vice-president Vassily Likhachev, arrived at Moscow's Kazan Station on March 31. They were overjoyed to be welcomed by Valery Tishkov with flowers and elaborate protocol, "just like a foreign delegation," and were accommodated in a dacha formerly belonging to Stalin at Fili near Moscow. The next day Likhachev and Tagirov were invited to Burbulis' office in the Kremlin. Tagirov recounts the exchange that followed between the two heads of delegation:

Burbulis said that following the referendum the view of the Russians had changed radically and they now accepted asymmetrical federalism with elements of confederalism. And Likhachev replied: "Let us remember this historical day!" and they congratulated one another and shook hands.

The shift in the outlook of the federal representatives was perhaps not quite as radical as it appeared to the Tatarstan negotiators at that moment. The ceremonial reception at the train station had been arranged on the personal initiative of Tishkov, who recalls the event with a certain irony. In general, the federal side did not approach the negotiations in a very serious spirit: the composition of its negotiating team frequently changed, depending on who was available at any particular time; and the federal negotiators were poorly organized, to the extent that they often did not even have the most recent drafts to hand. This casual attitude upset the Tatarstan representatives, who did keep careful records: they understandably felt that they were not being treated as equals.[44] Much of the

time deliberations were rather pedantic and unproductive, with considerable attention devoted to such matters as the placing of brackets and quotation marks. However, the two deputy heads of delegation, Tishkov and Likhachev, did develop a good working relationship, which to a large extent accounts for the progress that was nonetheless made (Tishkov).

During this first phase of the negotiations, the initiative on matters of substance appears to have come mainly from the Tatarstan delegation, who had a much clearer idea of what they wanted and were able to rely on the expertise of juridical experts from Kazan University (Valeeva). The federal representatives operated in a reactive mode, objecting to those proposed formulations that seemed to them logically inconsistent with Russia's territorial integrity, such as the characterization of Tatarstan as a subject of international law. Many disagreements were papered over through the ingenious use of ambiguous language. A constructive role was also played by an American specialist who provided information about the associated status of Puerto Rico with respect to the United States – an analogy that evoked a positive response on both sides (Khakimov).

At some point in the summer of 1992, Tishkov suggested to Burbulis that the federal delegation take up residence with their Tatarstan colleagues at the dacha in order to complete the negotiations in a final spurt.[45] The task was duly accomplished. On August 15, the draft of a treaty was initialed by the heads of delegation, ready for submission to Presidents Yeltsin and Shaimiev. The signing of the treaty was tentatively scheduled for September 15 (Khakimov, Malik). The event, however, never took place.

On August 30, Tishkov presented the draft for discussion at a session of the Russian government collegium (that is, inner cabinet).[46] Accompanying the draft was a memorandum proposing that the political treaty be concluded and then followed up with separate agreements specifying arrangements in various sectors of government and the economy. The reaction of those present was one of suspicion and incomprehension: all who spoke attacked the draft, some in harsher and others in milder terms. Vice-President Alexander Rutskoi, with whom Tishkov had very poor relations, asserted that the

document meant secession and the end of Russia, while interior minister Viktor Yerin expressed the fear that loss of central control over Tatarstan's police, courts, and procuracy would result in chaos. Tishkov responded to the outburst by saying that the critics had misunderstood and misquoted the text. He also mentioned that the states had control over the police in America.

Finally Yeltsin delivered his verdict: "Yes, really perhaps we have taken fright too much. We have not talked with Shaimiev yet. The idea of separate agreements is a very good one. If there is nothing in the text that violates our constitution, then perhaps it can be approved. Or perhaps we can wait for the other agreements and approve them all together" [as reported by Tishkov].

Thus it was decided to leave the question of a political treaty in abeyance while proceeding to the negotiation of sectoral agreements. The decision arose also out of a broader conflict occurring at that time among Yeltsin's top advisers. Burbulis, who was in charge of negotiations with Japan as well as with Tatarstan, stood accused – the main accuser appears to have been Sergei Stankevich – not only of selling out to the Tatar nationalists but also of contriving to return the Kurile Islands to Japan. (A visit by Yeltsin to Japan was planned for early September, but was canceled at the last moment.) Under pressure both from within his government and circle of advisers and from the nationalist and communist opposition in the Supreme Soviet, who were threatening to impeach him, Yeltsin sacrificed Burbulis, replacing him with Sergei Shakhrai.[47] Nevertheless, as Emil Payin points out, the shift in Moscow's policy on the Tatarstan question that took place in August—September 1992 was not merely the product of a clash of personalities and political maneuvering. There was a real rethinking of the principles of state-building: according to the now dominant view, the federal negotiators had been too willing to yield to the Tatarstani side, whose confederalist approach threatened to undermine Russia's federal structure. Radical democratic politicians who sympathized with the aspirations of ethnic minorities to self-determination, such as Yeltsin's former adviser Galina Starovoitova, were finding themselves increasingly marginalized.

How serious a setback was the decision not to conclude a political treaty in September 1992? After all, there was no obvious destabilizing effect, and such a treaty was eventually signed, albeit not until February 15, 1994, after a seventeen months' delay. Tishkov argues that the long delay did have serious negative consequences: the tension in Tatarstan was not dissipated as quickly as it might have been, and the needless prolongation of political negotiations with Kazan distracted the federal authorities from concentrating on Chechnya, for "only after February 1994 did they feel that war on two fronts had ended." As a result, the deterioration of the situation in Chechnya was allowed to continue until it became irreversible.

The replacement of Burbulis by Shakhrai as head of the federal team broke the continuity of the negotiating process. Shakhrai was not content to take over from the point where Burbulis left off: he wanted to develop his own strategy and impose his own stamp on the process (Tishkov). Moreover, the Tatarstan side found Shakhrai much more difficult to deal with: he "was not only a hard-liner, but deliberately offensive to the Tatars" (Malik). In this second phase of the process, progress was made mainly by the specialized working groups responsible for the sectoral negotiations, while the political negotiations dragged on and were continually stopping and starting (Khakimov).

Curiously enough, this state of affairs seems to have suited both sides. On the one hand, repeated interruptions in the political negotiations helped Shakhrai change the now unacceptable conceptual framework inherited from the previous phase. On the other hand, the Tatarstan side saw the sectoral negotiations as a useful "diplomatic" mechanism: they drew a large number of federal officials from different agencies into the process, familiarized them with Tatarstan's point of view, and won them over to a new approach to relations between Moscow and Kazan (Khakimov, Valeeva). Eleven sectoral agreements in all were negotiated, regulating various aspects of governmental and economic relations between Tatarstan and the Russian Federation: six agreements were signed by the respective prime ministers, Chernomyrdin and Sabirov, in June 1993, with the remaining five being signed at the same time as the political treaty in February 1994.[48] To a large extent, the sectoral negotiations came to shape the agenda of the

political negotiations. The central issue became that of the division of competencies between the federal and the republican authorities, with competencies divided into three categories: federal, republican, and joint.[49]

The third and final phase of the negotiating process follows the violent resolution in October 1993 of the conflict between Yeltsin and the Supreme Soviet of the Russian Federation. On both sides there was a widespread feeling of tiredness with the whole business: it had already dragged on for long enough, and it was time to get it over and done with. The sense of urgency was greatly heightened by the outcome of the December 1993 elections to the new State Duma. The dramatic gains made by Vladimir Zhirinovsky's Liberal-Democratic Party of Russia drove home the point that the political climate was shifting in favor of a Russian nationalism hostile to the ethnic republics and their claims to enhanced autonomy. Tatarstan's political elite realized that if they did not get a treaty soon they might well end up with nothing (Tishkov). They had also been badly frightened by the armed suppression of the Supreme Soviet. If Yeltsin was prepared to use force against his opponents in Moscow, might he not resort to force in Kazan too if agreement could not be reached? Federal policymakers, for their part, felt that with the Supreme Soviet out of the way and a new Constitution for the Russian Federation adopted (simultaneously with the Duma elections) the next item on the agenda was resolution of the Tatar and Chechen problems.[50]

The negotiators on both sides accordingly found themselves under strong pressure from above to accelerate their work. The circle of those involved in the negotiations was narrowed, especially on the Tatarstan side: those resistant to making the necessary concessions, notably president of the World Congress of Tatars Indus Tagirov, were excluded.[51] Immediately after the Duma elections, Shaimiev sent Yeltsin a letter arguing that the low turnout in the elections in Tatarstan showed how isolated Tatarstan was becoming from Russia and urging rapid conclusion of a treaty to reverse this unfortunate trend.[52] The letter led to the first of a number of personal meetings between Yeltsin and Shaimiev that took place in January and early February of 1994. During the final weeks

preceding the signing of the treaty, negotiations were carried on directly between Yeltsin and Shaimiev, assisted by Shakhrai and Khakimov respectively (Tishkov).[53]

From October 1993 onward, Moscow clearly held the upper hand. Shaimiev adjusted his expectations accordingly, and was prepared to make far-reaching concessions of both language and substance in order to get at least some kind of a treaty. In the final draft as signed, all reference to the "sovereignty" of the Republic of Tatarstan has disappeared, although the characterization of Tatarstan as "a state united with the Russian Federation" still grants it a vague statehood of its own.[54]

Various factors help to explain the weakness of Kazan's position at this time. For example, the Tatar national movement had sharply declined since 1992, and was no longer effective as a bogey with which to frighten the federal authorities (Iskhakov 1998a). Nevertheless, the crucial factor was the perceived change in the political climate in Russia as a whole signaled by the events of October and December 1993.

According to some Tatar informants, economic pressure was used in the winter of 1993-94 to force Kazan into making the required concessions. In particular, they claim that for this purpose Tatarstan was denied access to the Russian oil pipeline passing through its territory (Galeev, Tagirov).[55] However, there is no reason to impute political motives to restrictions on Tatarstan's access: Siberian oil producers have always had first priority in this respect, with Tatarstan taking up the slack, and Tatarstan continued to be cut off periodically even after the signing of the treaty (Payin).[56]

A very significant contribution to the successful outcome of the negotiations was also made by personal factors. In dramatic contrast to the Chechen case, negotiators on opposite sides achieved a certain level of trust and mutual understanding, and some of them became friends (Tishkov). Most important of all, while Yeltsin and Shaimiev were not closely acquainted at the outset, there developed between them a relationship of special trust that evidently played a key role at the closing stage (Payin, Tagirov, Tishkov).[57] This in turn implies that success owed much to Shaimiev's personality: some

other Tatar leader in his place might not have been able to win the trust of a man as difficult and moody as Yeltsin. Emil Payin is on record as making the unequivocal statement that "without Shaimiev there would have been no treaty" (*Mezhdunarodnyi* 1996, p. 15).

Thus on February 15, 1994, the Treaty "On the Division of Competencies and Mutual Delegation of Prerogatives Between the Bodies of State Power of the Russian Federation and the Bodies of State Power of the Republic of Tatarstan" was signed in Moscow by Presidents Yeltsin and Shaimiev and Prime Ministers Chernomyrdin and Sabirov. The treaty, together with the informal understandings that accompanied it, provided a framework for the new consultative relationship between Kazan and Moscow. However, the treaty was never ratified by the parliaments of the sides, and its juridical status remained indeterminate. The crucial role played by the personal relationship between Yeltsin and Shaimiev made the whole arrangement vulnerable to changes at the top. Under President Vladimir Putin, who strives to standardize and tighten center-regional relations and with whom Shaimiev has no special relationship, the system of joint decision-making established by the treaty no longer functions (Moukhariamov). While Tatarstan's political elite has reluctantly adapted itself to the new regime, the potential for renewed tension clearly exists.

4.2 Chechnya: The Path to Disaster

4.2.1 Russia and Chechnya: An Ambiguous Relationship

The failure of the attempt at military intervention in November 1991 seems to have demoralized the Russian leadership. In the months that followed, they avoided any risk of armed confrontation with the Chechen nationalists. Under unremitting physical and moral pressure, all federal troops based in Chechnya were withdrawn by June 8, 1992, leaving an immense quantity of arms and ammunition behind to fill the arsenal of independent Chechnya.[58]

The relationship that consequently took shape between Chechnya and the Russian Federation was marked by a deep ambiguity. On the one hand, the Dudayev regime was officially considered illegitimate, and no steps were taken to extend formal recognition to Chechnya as an independent state. Indeed, the option of military intervention was never abandoned. Thus when federal forces were deployed to the zone of the Osset-Ingush conflict in early November 1992, there was a plan to continue across the Ingush-Chechen border and depose Dudayev, although in the face of Chechen determination to resist it was decided not to carry through the plan (Tishkov). On the other hand, there was extensive practical cooperation between the Russian and the Chechen governments – for example, with regard to the transportation, refining, and allocation of oil – that could be interpreted as a kind of de facto recognition. Any consistent policy, whether one of open recognition or one of total non-recognition, would have entailed substantial political or economic costs: the path of least resistance was to muddle along and leave the nature of relations undefined (Pain and Popov 1995a). As there appeared no way clear to solving the problem in an acceptable fashion, it was evaded.[59]

The war that finally broke the impasse in December 1994 might have been avoided in either of two ways. A solution to the conflict might have been negotiated with Dudayev, or else rival Chechen politicians willing to keep Chechnya within the Russian Federation might have been effectively helped to oust Dudayev. Both approaches were tried, but neither succeeded in time to prevent war. Indeed, a large part of the problem was that no clear choice was ever made *between* the two approaches, which were inherently incompatible with one another: negotiating with Dudayev enhanced his legitimacy and weakened the position of his rivals, while attempts to get rid of Dudayev undermined negotiations with him.

Let us examine in turn the failure of negotiations, the failure of attempts to remove Dudayev from power short of war, and finally Yeltsin's decision to intervene militarily.[60]

4.2.2 The Failure of Negotiations

The first meeting between parliamentary delegations of the Russian Federation and of the Chechen Republic opened on March 12, 1992, in a tourist complex at the Black Sea resort of Sochi. The federal delegation was headed by Viktor Zhigulin, a deputy chairman of the Supreme Soviet, the Chechen delegation by Zelimkhan Yandarbiev. On March 14, the heads of delegation signed a protocol proposing an agenda for future negotiations. The first point on the agenda was "the question of recognition of the political independence and state sovereignty of the Chechen Republic"; other points dealt with various issues of economic and security cooperation (Yandarbiev 1996, pp. 127-8). Had this agenda proven acceptable to other members of the federal leadership, Chechnya might well by now be a post-Soviet state similar to Belarus – that is, formally independent but closely dependent on Russia. Such, alas, was not to be: the protocol was repudiated by the Supreme Soviet, and a second round of negotiations in Moscow between May 25 and 28 ended inconclusively in the midst of recriminations.

New talks were held in Moscow in September 1992. Participants on the Russian side included first deputy chairman of the Supreme Soviet Yuri Yarov, Vice-President Alexander Rutskoi, and other officials, while the Chechen parliament was represented by first deputy chairman Bek Mezhidov, chairman of the foreign affairs committee Yusup Soslambekov, and Aslambek Akbulatov. Some progress was made: it was decided that the economic and air blockade of Chechnya would be lifted, and that representative offices would be opened in Grozny and Moscow.

The next negotiations took place in November and December 1992 in the wake of the confrontation between federal and Chechen forces at the Ingush-Chechen border that followed the deployment of federal troops to the zone of the Osset-Ingush conflict. These negotiations were conducted at a higher level than those that preceded them: the delegations consisted not only of parliamentarians, but also of government officials, and were headed by Russian prime minister Yegor Gaidar and Chechen deputy prime minister Yaragi Mamodayev (Dunlop 1998, pp. 175-8). Agreement was reached on the separation of forces, and on November 18 a memorandum was signed envisaging a treaty on the division of powers between the state bodies of the Russian Federation and of the Chechen Republic, similar to the treaty being negotiated with Tatarstan.[61] Over the

following weeks the negotiators proceeded to prepare a draft of such a treaty. However, Dudayev repudiated the draft, dismissing the negotiations leading to it as "a private initiative" – even though senior members of his own government had taken part!
The negotiators pressed on regardless. On January 14, 1993, Russian deputy prime minister Sergei Shakhrai and chairman of the Council of Nationalities of the Supreme Soviet Ramazan Abdulatipov arrived in Grozny for further talks with Chechen parliamentarians. A protocol was signed, and working groups were formed to prepare a new draft of a treaty. On January 15, and again on January 18, Dudayev sharply criticized the protocol, asserting that its language impinged upon the sovereignty of the Chechen Republic. He also gave vent to his hostility toward Shakhrai.[62] On January 19, the new draft was published in the Chechen press – evidently without Dudayev's consent, as those responsible for its publication were subsequently dismissed from their positions.

At the end of January, Dudayev intervened in the negotiation process and took it under his control. Sidelining the Chechen parliament, with which he was increasingly at loggerheads, he sent to Moscow a large government delegation led by Yandarbiev (now Vice-President). The Russian delegation was headed by deputy chairman of the Supreme Soviet Nikolai Ryabov. For the first two days the focus of discussion was economic relations and cooperation in the struggle against crime, and progress was made in these areas. However, under pressure from Supreme Soviet chairman Ruslan Khasbulatov, Ryabov broke off the negotiations on the grounds that the Chechen side had repudiated the draft treaty prepared earlier. Matters had not been helped by a telegram that the hard-line Chechen foreign minister Shamsudin Yusef sent the Russian leadership from Grozny withdrawing the credentials of the Chechen delegation (Abubakarov 1998, p. 162).[63]

In mid-1993, political developments within Chechnya removed Moscow's preferred negotiating partner, the Chechen parliament, from the picture. In April, following a period of growing confrontation, Dudayev announced the disbanding of parliament and the introduction of presidential rule. The parliament ignored the announcement and remained in session until Dudayev's armed supporters stormed parliament and crushed all legal opposition on June 3 and 4. Henceforth opposition to Dudayev was forced to

take an at least partly military form, with the main figures of the armed opposition establishing their bases in the northern (plains) part of Chechnya.

The initiative for the next round of negotiations was taken in the fall of 1993 by Chechen deputy prime minister M. Mugadayev, who – first of all obtaining, with some difficulty, Dudayev's consent – made use of his influential contacts in Moscow to set up negotiations with Russian prime minister Viktor Chernomyrdin.[64] Assisted by other government ministers responsible for economic affairs, especially by minister of economics and finance Taimaz Abubakarov, Mugadayev began work in December 1993 on the draft of an agreement with Russia. Foreign minister Yusef refused to be involved. As one might expect in light of the "technocratic" orientation of the authors, the draft concentrated on practical cooperation between Chechnya and Russia rather than on constitutional niceties: provision was made for joint defense and policing, a joint system of strategic communications (including the oil pipeline), a single information field, and a single economic and legal space. Dudayev deleted the last point, as he planned to introduce a separate currency and Shariat [Islamic] law. He did, however, approve the proposed composition of the Chechen delegation: Mugadayev, Abubakarov, and minister of grain production V. Dakalov. The delegation met with Chernomyrdin in Moscow in mid-January 1994 and found him receptive to their proposals. Chernomyrdin and the Chechen ministers agreed that a summit meeting between Yeltsin and Dudayev was an essential next step – as it clearly was, for Dudayev had shown himself unwilling to accept agreements negotiated without his participation and the only person he was willing to negotiate with on the Russian side was Yeltsin himself.

Of all the negotiations that took place between Russia and Chechnya in the prewar period, the Chernomyrdin-Mugadayev talks undoubtedly held the greatest promise. They were the first purely intergovernmental negotiations, free of the complications of parliamentary involvement. The principals were moderate and pragmatic figures with a good mutual understanding; at the same time, they acted in close consultation with their respective presidents. The initiative also came at the right time from the point of view of

the Russian leadership – just after the suppression of the Supreme Soviet, when the issues of Chechnya and Tatarstan were moving to the top of Moscow's agenda.

Unfortunately, Mugadayev and his colleagues did not enjoy Dudayev's full trust.[65] On his return from Moscow, Abubakarov was summoned by Dudayev. He was in for a rude shock: "[Dudayev] asked not about substance, but about formal details: Where did you stay? With whom did you talk and where? Eventually I asked Dudayev to address substance and not minor details. In response, he pulled from his inside pocket a sheet of paper, and began to read out names of ministers, including Mugadayev and myself, who allegedly sympathized with Russia and were ready to make a deal behind his back… Later I learned that a spy had been following our delegation and reporting back fables to Dudayev" (Abubakarov 1998, pp. 165-6). Abubakarov managed to convince Dudayev that he was not a traitor, but he refused to be included in any future negotiations.

Dudayev did nonetheless display interest in the prospect of a summit meeting with Yeltsin. Indeed, as early as August 1993 he had sent Yusef to Moscow to convey confidentially that he would like to meet with Yeltsin, but there had been no response. In February 1994, Dudayev sent his State Secretary A. Akbulatov to the Russian presidential administration to make preparations for the summit envisaged by Chernomyrdin and Mugadayev. For the next three months or so, it was periodically announced by spokesmen for both sides that the summit would soon take place – but it never did. Admittedly, these spokesmen never made it very clear whether the holding of the summit was subject to any preconditions, and if so what exactly these preconditions were. Thus in his annual address to the Federal Assembly (parliament) on February 24, Yeltsin demanded that negotiations be preceded by new elections in Chechnya.[66] New elections did not, however, figure among the three conditions announced by head of presidential administration Sergei Filatov on March 25, namely: (1) that representatives of Chechnya "stop slandering Russia"; (2) that negotiations be based on the acknowledgement that Chechnya was a subject of the Russian Federation; and (3) that the Chechen side study the treaty with Tatarstan as a basis for negotiation. Chechen first deputy prime minister Sultan Geliskhanov replied that Chechnya accepted the treaty with

Tatarstan as a basis for negotiation, but only provided that Chechnya be recognized as an independent state. One might argue that neither side was really willing to take the treaty with Tatarstan as a model, for one of the great virtues of that treaty is that it successfully fudges the issue of whether Tatarstan is a subject of the federation or an independent state.[67]

The most serious problem was probably the "slander" to which Filatov alluded in his first condition. Dudayev continued to speak in public about Russia – and, more crucially, about Yeltsin personally – in highly undiplomatic terms.[68] As Yeltsin was a man highly sensitive to personal insult, Dudayev thereby made it easy for those in Yeltsin's entourage who opposed a summit to dissuade him from meeting Dudayev. Tishkov reconstructs the tone in which these advisers were rumored to have spoken to Yeltsin: "He is crazy, he can't be trusted, and he speaks badly about you, Boris Nikolayevich. It isn't fitting that you, the president of Russia, should meet with a rebel."[69] More rational arguments were also put forward: a meeting with Yeltsin would serve to bolster Dudayev's failing authority in Chechnya.

Yeltsin may not have been persuaded completely to give up the idea of a summit. As late as May 1994, while on a visit to Kazan, he told Shaimiev that he was still determined to meet with Dudayev (Payin). And even if Yeltsin was not too sure whether he really wanted to go ahead, neither was Dudayev, who began to tell his colleagues that "in view of the growing anti-Chechen mood in Russia, Chechen public and religious organizations were advising him to delay the meeting until better times" (Abubakarov 1998, p. 167). Whichever side was more to blame, the meeting was put off again and again, until the further deterioration of relations made it too late.[70] What – in Emil Payin's very plausible view – finally scotched any chance of a meeting between Yeltsin and Dudayev was an attempt on May 27, 1994 to assassinate Dudayev by means of a remote-control explosive device. Dudayev reacted with an angry speech in which he held the Russian secret services, and Yeltsin personally, responsible for the incident.

How big a difference would it have made had Dudayev and Yeltsin actually met face to face? Some believe that it could have made all the difference, at least provided that they had met at an early enough date.[71] According to this point of view, Dudayev yearned above all to be received respectfully by Yeltsin as an equal; had Yeltsin only deigned to grant him this satisfaction, Dudayev would suddenly have become accommodating on all the issues under dispute. Others do not believe that there would have been any breakthrough: a summit can make a big difference only when both leaders are strongly committed to compromise and have supervised the requisite preparatory work, and Dudayev met neither of these two conditions (Payin). One may also well doubt whether Yeltsin and Dudayev possessed the diplomatic skills needed to handle such a difficult encounter. As Tishkov argues: "Both Yeltsin and Dudayev were egocentric personalities (to put it mildly), psychologically unstable, and disinclined to make concessions. It was a tragic circumstance that *both* sides should have as leaders men so ill-equipped to negotiate and compromise. In the case of Tatarstan, at least one of the sides had a leader capable of compromise – namely, Shaimiev. Dudayev was never such a person."

And yet it is very likely that Dudayev would have been accommodating on matters of *substance*, as the Chechen side in the negotiations generally was. One Russian negotiator attests: "I recall our discussions with many Chechen leaders over several months of negotiations. There arose the question: OK, independence. Is Chechnya to have its own army, to defend its own airspace? No, they reply, that we must have in common. Does Chechnya need its own special system of supply? No, we must have our economic system in common. And the railroad – shall we divide it? No, the railroad must be held in common" (Zorin 1997).[72]

The sticking point would in all likelihood have been language and symbolism. The political elite of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria never minded being part of Russia in real terms, just so long as they were allowed to *say* that they were independent.[73] But this was something that Russian leaders found hard to stomach.

A last-ditch attempt to avert war by means of negotiation was made on the initiative of Russian prime minister Viktor Chernomyrdin. However, while the new negotiations were still in the process of being arranged the fateful decision to introduce troops was taken. The Russian delegation, led by minister of nationalities Mikhailov, set off on December 11, 1994, by air to Vladikavkaz, where they were to meet a Chechen delegation headed by Abubakarov.[74] The troops started moving the same night, though fighting was not to begin for another couple of days.

Tishkov, who was a member of the Russian delegation, recalls the flight: "Besides Mikhailov, there was another government minister on our plane, the recently appointed minister of information Mironov, who was going to the military headquarters at Mozdok. So on one and the same plane you had the minister of nationalities going to negotiate peace and the minister of information, dressed up in camouflage field uniform, clearly going to war. Mironov insisted that the plane land at Mozdok first, as unlike us he was on 'real business,' which delayed our arrival in Vladikavkaz by an hour."

The two delegations reached a provisional agreement providing for the simultaneous withdrawal of federal forces from Chechnya and disarming of the Chechen National Guard. The question of a political resolution to the conflict was deferred. Abubakarov then returned to Grozny to discuss the agreement with Dudayev. Unfortunately he found Dudayev in a state of euphoria over the first military exploits of the Chechen fighters – a few dozen of the Russian tanks that had entered the city had been blown up – and in no mood to sue for peace. Even if Dudayev had accepted the agreement, it is doubtful whether the Russian leadership could have been persuaded to halt military operations at that late stage, except in the hypothetical event of unconditional Chechen surrender.[75]

4.2.3 The Failure to Remove Dudayev Without War: The Half-Force Variant

On November 6, 1993, Yeltsin approved proposals submitted to him by Shakhrai envisaging the conduct of Russia's relations with Chechnya along two parallel tracks. Negotiations with Dudayev would be pursued, but at the same time forceful pressure

would be applied with the aim of replacing Dudayev by Chechen politicians loyal to Moscow. This so-called "half-force variant," as it gradually took shape over the next few months, entailed growing political, financial, and military support of the armed Chechen opposition based in northern Chechnya, which on December 16, 1993 united in a "Provisional Council of the Chechen Republic" (PCCR), chaired by Umar Avturkhanov.[76] The military support rendered to the PCCR was initially limited to the provision of money and light arms, but Moscow's Chechen allies proved rather poor fighters and by the fall of 1994 its support had come to include combat training, air support, the provision of tanks and helicopters,[77] and the clandestine recruitment of Russian mercenaries to man the latter. The balance between the two tracks of the strategy shifted decisively in favor of the military track in the late spring and early summer of 1994, as the prospect of a Yeltsin-Dudayev summit receded.[78] From June onward, armed clashes between Dudayev's forces and the PCCR became a frequent occurrence. It was about this time also that some Russian officials began to refer to the PCCR as the sole legitimate authority in Chechnya, although it was not until August 25 that the Russian government, in a secret resolution, made this its official position.

Tishkov is on record as saying that he "saw nothing criminal in [the half-force variant], inasmuch as it was not war."[79] It may not have been war in the direct sense, but – like American military support of the Saigon regime in Vietnam – its continuing failure led inexorably in the direction of war. On August 25, agents of the Dudayev regime captured Colonel Stanislav Krylov, an officer of the Federal Counterintelligence Service who was in Chechnya on some kind of mission. The crunch came on November 26, when an attempt by PCCR fighters, accompanied by Russian-manned tanks, to take Grozny was beaten off by Dudayev's forces. The Russian mercenaries were taken prisoner. Worst of all, they were paraded the next day in front of the television cameras. This time Yeltsin evidently found the humiliation beyond endurance. It appears to have been this incident that served as the immediate trigger of the Russian decision, confirmed by the Security Council on November 29, to intervene directly in Chechnya.

4.2.4 The Khasbulatov Option

The PCCR, however, was not the only Chechen opposition force that might have removed Dudayev short of outright war. There was another opposition that may have come closer to success in this endeavor – namely, the predominantly non-violent movement of agitation and civil disobedience initiated in the spring of 1994 by the former chairman of the Supreme Soviet Ruslan Khasbulatov.[80] Imprisoned in Lefortovo following Yeltsin's suppression of the Supreme Soviet in October 1993, Khasbulatov (together with those imprisoned with him) was amnestied by the newly elected Duma in February 1994. On March 1, Russia's most prominent Chechen, his prestige enhanced by the aura of martyrdom that his spell as a political prisoner had given him, [81] arrived in Chechnya and took up residence in his native village of Tolstoi-Yurt. Tolstoi-Yurt became the headquarters of Khasbulatov's political operations and a place of pilgrimage for his numerous admirers.

Khasbulatov toured those parts of Chechnya that were no longer under Dudayev's effective control and addressed large crowds, lambasting the tyranny, corruption, and criminality of the Dudayev regime, and urging his listeners to refuse it their cooperation: in particular, they should forbid their sons and grandsons to serve in Dudayev's armed forces. Khasbulatov claims that 100—150,000 people in all heard him speak; Tishkov suspects that this figure may contain an element of exaggeration, but acknowledges that Khasbulatov was the most popular political figure in Chechnya in 1994. On August 10, Khasbulatov brought together respected Chechen religious and public figures to form a "peacemaking group." By this time, Dudayev's administration was starting to collapse: his writ hardly extended beyond Grozny itself, and he held on to power thanks only to special units of armed police.

Khasbulatov's strategy from this point on was twofold. On the one hand, he tried to organize new popular elections that would legitimize the seizure of power by his "peacemaking group." In the middle of November, he was able to convene an "extraordinary congress" attended by more than 1,300 delegates from many parts of

Chechnya. On the other hand, he entered into secret talks with each of Dudayev's field commanders (except for one whom he was unable to reach) in the hope of persuading them to mount a coup against Dudayev on his behalf. That such a hope was not wholly delusive is indicated by the fact that one of Dudayev's leading commanders sent a relative to live in Tolstoy-Yurt as a voluntary hostage, thereby assuring Khasbulatov that the force under his command would never attack Tolstoy-Yurt.

There were nevertheless a number of factors that impeded Khasbulatov's accession to power. First, the clan [*teip*] divisions within Chechen society made it very difficult for him, as they did for any other Chechen politician, to consolidate his support in all parts of Chechnya. Second, as Tishkov suggests, Khasbulatov's caution in not openly staking a claim to power may have worked against him. But the crucial obstacle was Moscow's sponsorship of the PCCR and its military operations against Dudayev, which divided the potential constituency of the opposition and created very unfavorable conditions for a non-violent opposition movement to make headway. It seems reasonable to suppose that in the absence of this obstacle and given some more time Khasbulatov would have succeeded in toppling the crumbling Dudayev regime.

Had Khasbulatov come to power, war with Russia would certainly have been averted, for Khasbulatov was firmly committed to Chechnya remaining within the Russian Federation.[82] The fact that he alone, of all the Chechen opposition politicians who shared that commitment, was not perceived as a stooge of Moscow uniquely qualified him to resolve the conflict. The question therefore arises as to why the Yeltsin administration should have sabotaged such a golden opportunity to restore the territorial integrity of the Russian Federation without resort to war.

Khasbulatov himself believes that the Russian leadership understood perfectly well that Dudayev's days were numbered, and that keeping Khasbulatov out of power was in fact their overriding motive: "Let the whole Caucasus explode, just so long as Khasbulatov does not come to power there" (*Komissiia* 1995, p. 92). There is indeed evidence in support of the conjecture that preventing Khasbulatov's ascent to power was an important

policy consideration: at the end of the summer of 1994, deputy minister of nationalities Vadim Pechenev (without even informing his minister, Mikhailov) sent a memorandum to Yeltsin and the Presidential Administration, urging that every effort be made to this end (Tishkov). Payin, however, argues that this interpretation unnecessarily complicates the matter: whatever may have been the actual situation, there was no clear perception among decision-makers in Moscow that the Dudayev regime was close to collapse. The truth may lie somewhere between the two explanations. There was indeed a failure of perception, as reflected in the distorted reporting of Chechen affairs in the central press.

At the same time, the inability of Yeltsin and his entourage to make an objective assessment from the point of view of state interests owed much to their irrational loathing of Khasbulatov, who they feared would use Chechnya as a springboard to re-enter politics at the federal level and once again challenge Yeltsin from the parliamentary rostrum. [83] Hating both Dudayev and Khasbulatov, they were loathe to entertain the idea of welcoming the latter as the lesser of two evils.

4.2.5 The Decision to Intervene

The Security Council was convened on November 29 not for an open discussion of the situation in Chechnya but in order to ratify a decision to intervene that Yeltsin had already made and presented to his colleagues as a fait accompli. Of those present, only the minister of justice, Yuri Kalmykov, expressed a contrary view. Kalmykov, who was a highly respected figure and himself from the Caucasus (a Kabard by origin), was forced to resign the next day (Tishkov).

Yeltsin must therefore have made the fatal decision on November 27 or 28, under the immediate influence of the humiliating debacle that had just occurred in Grozny. While this incident was clearly the trigger, other factors were also at play. The crucial factor, as Payin plausibly argues, was the long-term decline in Yeltsin's electoral rating. Duma deputy Sergei Yushenkov later revealed that Secretary of the Security Council Oleg Lobov had told him on the telephone that "we need a small victorious war" – and Lobov

was never to deny saying this. Yeltsin would presumably not have embarked on the venture had it not been for the delusion, encouraged by unfounded assurances from defense minister Pavel Grachev, that only a "small war" would be needed to achieve the quick victory that he sought. Indeed, it was initially thought that a mere show of force might suffice to overpower the adversary, as it had in Prague in 1968. The federal troops who entered Chechnya in December 1994 were accordingly under strict instructions not to open fire first. This expectation may not have been totally absurd. After all, the famous Chechen commander Shamil Basayev was later to remark that during the first two days of the intervention even he was not sure whether the Chechens would be willing to start fighting such a great power as Russia (Tishkov). But as it turned out they were.

Conclusion: Review of Key Factors

Tatarstan and Chechnya are in many ways sharply contrasting cases. Nevertheless, the contrast is far from an absolute one. On the one hand, there was some potential for a violent outcome in Tatarstan. If violence was avoided, that was in part thanks to some purely fortuitous circumstances, such as the geographical separation between the capital (Kazan) and the stronghold of radical Tatar nationalism (Naberezhnye Chelny). On the other hand, there was clearly a real potential for the peaceful resolution of the Russo-Chechen conflict, whether pursuant to the understanding reached between Chernomyrdin and Mugadayev or as a result of the success of Khasbulatov's movement. If this potential was not realized, that was likewise in part due to circumstances quite extraneous to the conflict itself – for example, Yeltsin's need for a "small victorious war" to raise his electoral ratings.

Several of our interlocutors place special stress on the key role played by *personal factors* in both the Tatar and the Chechen cases (Khakimov, Payin, Tagirov, Tishkov). It is hard not to agree. The personal equation between Yeltsin and Shaimiev was capable of yielding constructive results, while the personal equation between Yeltsin and Dudayev – not to mention that between Yeltsin and Khasbulatov – was clearly quite incapable of doing so. And yet personal factors are rarely purely personal; they are usually closely

linked to impersonal and structural factors. Thus it is not unreasonable to suspect that the hostile feelings of most Russian officials toward Dudayev and Khasbulatov were not aroused solely by the rather acerbic personalities of these two Chechens, but also had something to do with historically rooted anti-Chechen prejudice.

To take another example, both the Tatar and the Chechen case provide ample evidence in support of the generalization that officials on opposite sides responsible for economic matters are able to come to an understanding without difficulty and do not get unduly upset about juridical formulas, which they regard as having little or no practical significance. In the opinion of one Tatar political scientist, Shaimiev's background in economic management – he had been minister of agricultural amelioration for many years and then prime minister before becoming party first secretary in September 1989 – helped to make his outlook moderate and flexible (Moukhariamov). Dudayev's outlook was not molded in a similar fashion by his military background. But in all likelihood it is not by pure chance that in the one case it is an economic administrator, and in the other case an air force general, who lands up in the leading role. This is a contrast that begs explanation in terms of socio-economic structures and cultural traditions.

The most important structural contrast between the Tatar and the Chechen cases is that between the long-established *integration* – cultural and psychological as well as socio-economic and political – of the Tatars in Soviet and Russian society and the continued, and similarly multidimensional, *marginality* of the Chechens. Many specific differences that have had a clear impact upon the development of events can be traced back to this basic contrast: the uninterrupted tradition of armed resistance among the Chechens *versus* the lack of such a tradition among the Tatars; the surviving archaic elements in Chechen society *versus* the modernity of Tatar society; the strength of anti-Chechen prejudice among Russians *versus* the relative tolerance that they display toward Tatars; the specialized enclave character of industry in Chechnya *versus* the balanced profile of industry in Tatarstan; the severity of the problem of rural youth underemployment in (highland) Chechnya, providing a readily mobilized social base for radical nationalist parties, *versus* the absence of a corresponding problem in Tatarstan; and – most crucial of

all – the emergence from the 1960s onward of a confident, cohesive, and diplomatically adroit native Tatar political and intellectual elite *versus* the absence of any comparable Chechen elite as a coherent collective entity.

Although integration / marginality does appear to be the key dimension, I am inclined to reject the hypothesis of a direct correlation between the degree of marginality of a given ethnic community in Russian society and the likelihood of a violent outcome to its interaction with the Russian state. Since 1944, the Chechens have not occupied a *completely* marginal position in Soviet (post-Soviet) space. In fact, as noted earlier, the deportation, and later on labor migration, increased Chechens' interaction with other Soviet (post-Soviet) peoples, thereby eventually giving them access to resources that made possible their separatist adventure. These resources included both such intellectual resources as the example of other anti-Russian nationalist movements, especially the Baltic nationalist movements[84] and economic resources – in particular, a wealthy union-wide class of largely criminal businessmen able and willing to finance the radical nationalist cause, including the purchase of arms. Thus it was the Tatars, rather than the Chechens, who found themselves marginally placed with regard to at least one institution of the post-Soviet transition – namely, the black market in arms.

A comparison with the case of Tuva is instructive. Tuva – a mountainous area in southern Siberia on the Mongolian border that was incorporated into the Soviet Union only in 1944, the same year in which the Chechens were deported – suffers from essentially the same socio-economic ills as Chechnya: undeveloped industry, lack of modernization, rural underemployment, and so on. [85] The Tuvins are, to all appearances, no less alienated from Russia than the Chechens; inter-ethnic tension in Tuva is high, and is reflected in widespread low-level violence. However, while there is a Tuvin radical nationalist organization, namely the Popular Front *Khostug Tyva*, it is quite weak, and lacks the intellectual and economic resources required to mount an effective separatist challenge to the Russian state. The weakness arises not so much from any lack of political appeal as from the unrelieved poverty, and spatial as well as cultural isolation, of the Tuvin population. Violent separatist conflict may therefore be associated not with maximal

marginality, but with a particular level of marginality falling somewhat short of the extreme end of the integration / marginality continuum.

NOTES

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** P. Terrence Hopmann, Dominique Arel (then at the Watson Institute, now chair of Ukrainian Studies at the University of Ottawa), and Judith Hin (then at the University of Amsterdam). The project was funded mainly by the Carnegie Corporation of New York. Arel investigated the evolution of the conflict situations in Crimea and Transdniestria. Hin focusd mainly on the evolution of the conflict over Ajaria in Georgia.

1. The titular peoples of the union republics occupied the first rung of the hierarchy. With the rise of the Tatar national movement, the Slavic form *Tataria* gave way to the Turkic *Tatarstan*. The Chechens were, to be more precise, one of the two titular peoples of the CIASSR, the other being the Ingush. However, the Chechens and the Ingush are very closely related, and are often regarded as constituting a single ethnic group, for which the term *Vainakh* is used.

2. It was in about 1815 that Beibulat Taimiev was elected chairman of the Chechen *mekhk-kkhel* (supreme council) and created a system of executive power comprising the majority of Chechen communities (Gakaev 1999b, p. 11). Taimiev's proto-state was followed by the imamate that Shamil established in Chechnya and Daghestan in mid-century. However, Shamil was not a Chechen but an Avar from Daghestan, and there was nothing specifically Chechen about his theocracy. For further discussion of this point, see Lieven (1998, ch.10). Lieven uses for the title of this chapter a pertinent Chechen saying: "We are free and equal like wolves." The wolf is a national Chechen symbol.

3. According to Chechen oral tradition, the Chechens had in an earlier age lived under feudal lords of Kabardinian origin, whose yoke they had thrown off in a popular uprising. In the absence of written records, there is no way of telling whether this is so.

4. The most radical of the Tatar politicians dreamed of the restoration of Tatar statehood in the form of an Idel-Ural Republic (Idel being the old Tatar name for the Volga). Ideas about ethnic autonomy enjoyed

great popularity in the late tsarist period not only among the Tatars but also among other ethnic minorities -- among Russia's Jews, for example. The most accessible English-language account of the *jadid* movement remains that of Rorlich (1986, ch. 6-9). A fascinating Russian-language survey of *jadid* thought is provided by Abdullin (1976).

5. In 1864, Sheikh Kunta-Khaji appealed to his fellow Chechens: "Brothers, stop fighting. They provoke us to war in order to destroy us. … If they force you to go to church, go. It's only walls. It suffices that your souls be Moslem. I'll never believe that any Turks will help us. … So learn to live with the Russians" (Gakaev 1999b, p. 129).

Useful accounts of the post-conquest history of the Chechens are given by Avtorkhanov (1992) and by Muzaev and Todua (1992, pp. 31-43).

6. In 1800 there were already 84 factories in Kazan, mainly leather, soap, and candle works and a fulling mill (Amirov et al. 1998, p. 3). I am indebted to Nail Moukhariamov for information on the socio-economic development of Tataria in the late tsarist period. The statement by Kondrashov (2000) to the effect that Tataria had no significant industry before the late 1920s is incorrect.

7. The higher educational institution that trained personnel for the oil industry in Chechnya, the Grozny Oil Institute, was considered a "Russian" institute. There were never any Chechens or Ingush among its rectors and lecturers, who were mainly Russians, Armenians, and Jews (Mezhidov and Aliroev 1992, p. 28). Jabrail Gakayev notes that the proportion of the population with higher education among Chechens was not only much lower than among non-indigenous groups, but also much lower than among other native peoples of the North Caucasus (by a ratio of about 6 in 1989)(Gakaev 1999b, p. 26).

8. Moreover, ethnically mixed families in Tataria invariably became culturally and linguistically Russian, while intermarriage among Chechens often entailed the Chechenization of the non-Chechen partner.

9. Strictly speaking, the Chechens and the Ingush shared the status of indigenous peoples of the CIASSR. However, the Ingush constituted a small minority of the population (about 10 per cent), and never played a significant role in the government of Checheno-Ingushetia. The RSFSR was the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic, or the Russian Federation for short – the largest of the Union Republics making up the USSR.

10. Zdravomyslov (1998) provides an interesting discussion of the psychological differences between deeply and superficially Sovietized peoples, contrasting the Chechens and Ingush with the Ossets. A similar contrast can be drawn between the Chechens and the Volga Tatars, even though the latter were not as deeply Sovietized as the Ossets.

11. This interpretation is argued at greater length in a monograph prepared by a group of scholars at the Institute of Russian History of the Russian Academy of Sciences, entitled Russia and the Northern Caucasus: 400 Years of War? (*Rossiia* 1998). These scholars cite the positive experience of the early Soviet period, as well as that of the earliest peaceful contacts between Russians and Chechens in the sixteenth century, to disprove the stereotyped thesis to the effect that the Russo-Chechen conflict is permanent, basically unchanging in character, and inevitable.

12. There were apparently secret instructions to this effect, listing all the positions to which a Chechen could not be appointed. These instructions also provided for a strict limit on the number of Chechens allowed to become party members, so that qualified Chechen candidates for leading positions could not be put forward (Mezhidov and Aliroev 1992, pp. 27-28, 120-23). In the USSR, party membership was an indispensable condition for appointment to a leading position in any sphere of life. Ingush were subjected to the same discrimination as Chechens.

13. In the 1930s, the first secretary was a Latvian by the name of Lieba. In the war years the post was held by the Tatar Muratov. In the 1950s an ethnic Russian named Ignatiev was first secretary.

14. An additional nuance is added by Iskhakov (1998, p. 35): "Starting with Tabeyev, the leadership … passed into Tatar hands. Tabeyev came from outside the republic but studied at Kazan University, but the leaders who succeeded him were of local origin, reflecting the ongoing process of nativization of the nomenklatura."

15. Moukhariamov remarks that "although Usmanov was a very strict leader of the traditional type, trained in the old system, he did a great deal for Tatar culture… He provided buildings for the unions of Tatar writers and composers, established a new Tatar magazine, and so on." A central role in the process of cultural revival was played by the scholarly work carried out at the Ibragimov Institute of Language, Literature, and History of the Kazan Branch of the Soviet Academy of Sciences. One product of the institute's historical scholarship was Abdullin's study of *jadid* thought (see note [4] above). In the early 1980s, Usmanov assigned scholars at the Ibragimov Institute the task of revising the official history of the Tatars.

Even in the late 1950s, before the appointment of Tabeyev, the official status of the Tatar language in Tataria had been much higher than the official status of Chechen or Ingush in Checheno-Ingushetia. In 1958, Chechen or Ingush was used as the medium of instruction in some rural schools up to the fourth grade, while Tatar was in use right through to the tenth grade. In 1972, Chechen and Ingush were not used in the schools at all (Silver 1974)

16. The demand was put forward by members of the Tatar intelligentsia, who argued that it was anomalous for Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia to be Union Republics while Tataria, which possessed a larger population and a greater industrial potential than the three Baltic republics taken together, was denied equivalent status. The extent to which Tabeyev supported the campaign is unclear, but he did at least abstain from acting to suppress it.

17. Dawson (1996) argues that the early environmental movements served as functional surrogates for nationalism ("eco-nationalism"). No doubt there is some truth in this, but activists were also motivated by genuine environmental concerns. The multi-ethnic composition of the environmental movements, in contrast to the mono-ethnic composition of the nationalist movements that followed them, is consistent with such a supposition.

18. In Soviet terminology, "sovereignty" implied autonomy and the legal right to secede, but not necessarily full independence.

19. The way in which events developed in some regions of the USSR was more complicated. For instance, different trends might prevail at different periods of time, as in Belarus.

20. For accounts of the evolution of the "informal," democratic, and national movements in Tatarstan, see Dawson (1996, pp. 129-141), Iskhakov (1998a), and Kondrashov (2000, chapters 4-9).

21. The Union of Tatar Youth *Azatlyk*, founded in October 1990, also took up quite radical positions, although it arose as the youth wing of the TPC.

22. The Movement for Democratic Reforms of Tatarstan was affiliated with the all-Russian (originally all-Soviet) Movement for Democratic Reforms founded by Eduard Shevardnadze.

23. The skeptics pointed out that a tradition of inter-ethnic cohabitation in Bosnia had not prevented civil war there (Akayev, Tishkov).

24. Detailed accounts of political developments in Chechnya in the period 1985-91 are given by Muzaev and Todua (1992, pp. 34-39) and by Gakaev (1999).

25. I refer to the Popular Front led by the expeditor Khozh-Akhmed Bisultanov. There was a rival organization, established by the journalist L. Saligov, called the Popular Front for Assisting Perestroika.

26. Although the term *Vainakh* includes Ingush as well as Chechens, Ingush did not play a significant role

in the Chechen nationalist parties.

27. Gakayev (1999) places great emphasis on the harm caused by this decision. By abandoning the joint republic, he argues, the Ingush cleared the way for the Chechen radical nationalists likewise to set up "their own" republic. It may also be argued that the departure of the Ingush removed from the political life of Chechnya a native group more inclined than the Chechens themselves to remain in the Russian Federation, albeit partly in the illusory hope that Moscow would take their side in the conflict with Ossetia over the Prigorodny District. The migration of Russians and other non-Vainakhs out of Chechnya in the late 1980s had a similar effect.

28. A "wedding general" [*svadebnyi general*] is a general who is invited, in accordance with Russian custom, to a wedding for the purpose of decoration. Why Dudayev should have behaved in a fashion so contrary to his previous career as a Russified Soviet military professional – after all, he had had no qualms about fighting fellow Moslems in Afghanistan – is a matter of speculation. Some Russian analysts believe that the whole course of events would have been quite different had Dudayev been offered in good time a sufficiently high position in the Russian government, perhaps as minister of defense. In my opinion, this is to take an excessively cynical view of Dudayev's motives.

29. The referendum was held by decree of the USSR Supreme Soviet and in accordance with the decision of the fourth USSR Congress of People's Deputies. The proportion of citizens who participated in the referendum was 77 per cent in Tataria, 59 per cent in Checheno-Ingushetia, and 75 per cent in the Russian Federation as a whole (*Soiuz* 1995, pp. 145-50).

30. This assessment is based on the account given in the interview with Indus Tagirov, who took part in the negotiations. For his published account and the text of the protocol, see Tagirov (2000, pp. 266-70). Other accounts of developments in Tatarstan in this period are those of Kondrashov (2000, ch. 9) and Walker (1996, 1998).

31. Moukhariamov pointed out that – unlike the Chechens – the Tatars had no ethnic criminal groups who supported the nationalist cause, knew how to get arms, and could pay for them. The Kazan mafia, which was active mainly in St. Petersburg, Moscow, and Sochi, was a non-political group consisting of both Russians and Tatars. Only the few Tatars who were retired army officers could get hold of some weapons. He also argued that Shaimiev exaggerated the significance of the national guard as a pretext for clamping down on the radical nationalists.

32. Moreover, tension was much lower in the countryside, where 20 per cent of respondents rated inter-ethnic tension as "stable" and only 17.5 per cent as "very tense."

33. Gakayev places particular stress on the role of the Movement for Democratic Reforms of the Chechen-Ingush Republic, of which he was a co-founder. Political developments in Chechnya in the fall of 1991 were very complicated. Here I give a very condensed account, focusing only on crucial turning points. For fuller accounts by participants in the events, see the first book of Yandarbiev (1996) and Gakaev (1999a, 1999b).

34. The first group of emissaries consisted of two parliamentarians of Chechen origin – the RF Supreme Soviet deputy for Checheno-Ingushetia I. Aleroyev and the chairman of the RF Supreme Soviet committee on law and order, Major-General of Police A. Aslakhanov – and deputy chairman of the RF Council of Ministers I. Grebeshev.

35. According to some accounts, Kutsenko was not thrown, but jumped out of the window. Even if he did jump in order to escape, it was still murder.

36. The largest concentrations of Tatars outside Tatarstan live in Bashkortostan, in Moscow, and in Kazakhstan and Central Asia. There are significant Tatar communities in Lithuania, Poland, Finland, and the United States.

37. The texts of the most important declarations, appeals, resolutions, decrees, and laws adopted by the Kurultai and the Milli Mejlis are collected in *Suverennyi Tatarstan* (1998), Vol. 3, pp. 160-88.

The Tatar Public Center declined to take part in the Kurultai, but its representatives did attend the sessions of the Milli Mejlis from April onward.

38. This interpretation is consistent with a statement made by Mukhammat Sabirov, prime minister of Tatarstan at the time, in an interview with *Vremia i den'gi* (2/12/1999): "It would have been a sin not to take the opportunity [during meetings with representatives of the federal authorities] of referring to the gatherings of the nationalists and their endless protests, although I always understood that there were not really many people of that inclination."

39. Burbulis' deputy in the negotiations, Valery Tishkov, took the position that in view of the importance of the issues at stake in a referendum a qualified (say, two-thirds) majority should be required, not just 50 per cent plus one. He also thought that a positive outcome should be subject to confirmation in a second referendum ten years later (Tishkov).

40. It is also claimed that preparations for military intervention began with the withdrawal out of Tatarstan of army weaponry, presumably to prevent it from falling into rebel hands (Tagirov).

41. She remarks that the reports of foreign journalists, and simply their presence, helped to calm the atmosphere.

42. This source gives a shortened version of the research report. I would like to thank Valentin Mikhailov for providing me with the full report. The voting behavior of Chuvash and other non-Tatar minorities was similar to that of Russians. The authors' conclusions are also supported by data from opinion surveys conducted at about the same time as the referendum.
Besides the issue of the ethnic distribution of the yes vote, there is cause to question the accuracy of referendum results in predominantly Tatar rural areas (correspondence between Valentin Mikhailov and myself, March 2000).

43. The evolution can be traced by following the way in which the issue is dealt with in the monthly bulletin *The Ethnopolitical Situation in the Former Soviet Union*, issued by the influential expert on ethnic politics Emil Payin. For a revealing example of an alarmist analysis by another Russian specialist, see Smolianskii (1996, pp. 160-61), which despite the late publication date was written in early 1992. A particularly interesting document, also written in early 1992, is the "analytical memorandum" on Tatarstan produced by the Center for Socio-Strategic Research in Moscow. Although the analysis is fairly alarmist, the authors do urge federal policymakers to take a stance more supportive of Shaimiev (*Prognoz* 1992).

44. Tishkov remarks that he "[does] not remember any insults being exchanged, or any personal dislike or alienation, but there was a lack of consistency, responsibility, and respect on the part of federal officials who regarded Tatarstan as a secondary issue unworthy of careful attention by such important people as themselves."

45. It was common practice in Soviet times to make the officials responsible for drafting an important document live together at an official dacha until they had the job done.

46. The collegium consisted of the president, the vice-president, the prime minister, all deputy prime ministers, ministers of power structures (Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Internal Affairs, etc.), and the minister of foreign affairs. Tishkov was not a member of the collegium, and sat to one side. As minister of nationalities, he was subordinate to deputy prime minister Valery Mukharadze, who was on the collegium.

47. Tishkov suggests two additional reasons for Burbulis' unpopularity. First, he had been one of the main people behind the agreement made at Belovezhskaya Pushcha in Belarus in December 1991 to abolish the Soviet Union. Second, people disliked Burbulis' political style as a "gray cardinal" who never made public statements or appearances. They wanted officials to be more explicit and transparent.

48. The agreements on higher education, the sale and transportation of oil and oil products, and environmental cooperation were signed on June 5, 1993, the agreements on property, defense industry, and customs on June 22, 1993, and the agreements on external economic ties, banking, monetary, and credit policy, budgetary relations, the struggle against crime, and military matters on February 15, 1994. The texts of the agreements are reproduced in *Belaia* (1990).

49. Khakimov initially opposed inclusion in the treaty of a list of federal competencies on the grounds that these were already specified in the Constitution of the Russian Federation. The question of how the numerous and important joint competencies (of which there were eventually 23, as compared to 17 federal and 15 republican competencies) were to be exercised in practice was not addressed in much detail, beyond stating that the two sides would consult and cooperate, form joint commissions, and so forth.

50. Emil Payin thought that it would have been inappropriate to conclude a treaty with Tatarstan prior to the adoption of the new constitution.

51. Lower-level negotiators on the Tatarstan side had in general been unwilling to entertain any proposal that seemed to them inconsistent with Tatarstan's Declaration of Sovereignty or Constitution, which they did not have the prerogative to override. Only Shaimiev's direct intervention could surmount this obstacle (Tishkov).

52. The letter was drafted for Shaimiev by Khakimov. The argument about low turnout was rather disingenuous, inasmuch as the low turnout was largely the intended consequence of a decision by the Tatarstan authorities to distance themselves from the Duma elections in order to demonstrate that Tatarstan was not fully part of the Russian Federation (Khakimov).

53. At exactly what point in time the negotiations became restricted to these four individuals is unclear. So is the number of personal meetings between Yeltsin and Shaimiev. There were at least two, perhaps three.

54. Substantial concessions were made even in the last two weeks before the signing. This is revealed by a close comparative analysis, not presented here, of the texts of the penultimate treaty draft of February 1, 1994 and of the finalized draft as signed. Both these drafts, as well as the earlier draft initialed on August 15, 1992, are reproduced in *Belaia* (1990). Indus Tagirov, who took part in the negotiations except during the final phase, states that analysis of the texts of the sectoral agreements likewise "shows that concessions were made by Tatarstan on all issues without exception" (Tagirov 2000, p. 302).

55. “The winter was cold. There was not enough heat in homes and offices. Russian oil pipelines stopped taking Tatar oil. As a result, many oil installations came to a halt. The dismissal of workers began. It was pressure on the republic. Under these conditions, concessions had to be made to the Russian side” (Tagirov 2000, p. 302).

56. In May 1996, over two years after the signing of the treaty, Shaimiev complained that Tatarstan's access to the pipeline was being curtailed more severely than at any time in the past.

57. Payin observes that “Yeltsin treated Shaimiev as an honored guest.” Tishkov speculates that “Yeltsin and Shaimiev may have had a private conversation with nobody else present at which they reached certain agreements. Shaimiev was not the sort of person who would insist over Yeltsin’s strong objection to some point. He would not say a straight NO to Yeltsin.”

58. How and why this happened was one of the main issues to be later investigated by the Duma commission chaired by Stanislav Govorukhin (*Kommissiia* 1995, pp. 33-51). The federal government agreed to hand weapons over, but in many cases they had already been taken by force or bribery. True, even if Dudayev would not allow arms to be evacuated, they could have been disabled or destroyed. Some officers did in fact propose such action, but to no avail.

59. Many Russian observers – see, for instance, Tishkov (1997, p. 183) – argue that this ambiguous state of affairs became enormously profitable to criminals and corrupt officials, whose interests help to account for why it went on for so long. While some of the conspiracy theories erected upon this supposition strain credulity, the point itself is plausible.

60. I do not aim here to give a detailed account of events in Chechnya in 1992-94, or to analyze the interactions between Chechnya and the Russian Federation apart from the negotiations and the attempts to remove Dudayev.

61. In Tishkov’s view, the draft treaty with Chechnya in fact gave clearer recognition of sovereignty than did the final draft of the treaty with Tatarstan. It also gave Chechnya the right to retain its own armed forces as well as special rights as a Moslem country: it would, for instance, be allowed to join international organizations of the Moslem world.

There were parallel negotiations between a Chechen delegation headed by Soslambekov and Russian deputy prime minister Sergei Shakhrai and minister of emergency situations Sergei Shoigu, leading to agreement on the allocation of funds for the payment of pensions and benefits in Chechnya and on the resumption of flights between Moscow and Grozny.

62. Dunlop (1998, p. 181) suggests that Dudayev's hostility toward Shakhrai may have been aroused by the latter's strong Cossack connections.

63. It is not clear whether or not Dudayev was behind Yusef's action. The previous Chechen foreign minister, Shamil Beno, was not allowed to take part in negotiations and was forced to resign after five months in office, being regarded by Dudayev and Yandarbiev as suspiciously pro-Russian. Yusef was a descendant of Chechen exiles from Jordan, who – in the words of a member of the Chechen delegation, minister of economics and finance Taimaz Abubakarov – "knew nothing about Russia and didn't want to know, but was very good at petty provocations."

64. My account of these negotiations, and of the last round of negotiations in Vladikavkaz, relies heavily on the memoirs of Abubakarov (1998, pp. 163-78), and also on the interview with Valery Tishkov, who was a member of the federal delegation at the Vladikavkaz talks.

65. Vice-President Yandarbiev was very hostile toward the "technocrats" in the Chechen government, whom he suspected of links with the Russian secret services, and may well have influenced Dudayev against them. "Alongside a circle of tried and tested leaders and activists of the national liberation movement, [there was] a circle of senior administrators in the executive branch, the majority of whom were ready to cooperate even with the devil so long as they themselves remained at the feeding-trough of power… We demanded of them only that they honestly fulfil their managerial functions" (Yandarbiev 1996, p. 107).

66. On May 19, presidential spokesman Vyacheslav Kostikov stated that Yeltsin did recognize Dudayev as the legal president of Chechnya. Shakhrai seems to have been the main figure who opposed recognizing him as such.

67. The ambivalence of Dudayev's attitude toward "the Tatarstan model" was expressed in a telephone interview with Harvard University's Russian Research Center on February 14, 1995. Asked whether he would be ready to accept the Tatarstan model, Dudayev replies in the negative. Asked, however, whether "in a concrete sense" it has any attraction for him, he replies: "Of course there is a lot there that is healthy. But we have our own special character. One cannot transpose a stereotype, be it Tatar or Mongol, on Chechnya. It just can't work." The problem lay not in the specific substance of the treaty with Tatarstan, but in the tactless and condescending way in which most Russian politicians talked to the Chechens about it. It was humiliating for a Chechen to be placed in the position of an errant pupil upbraided by his Russian school principal for not studying with sufficient diligence the lesson set by his Tatar teacher. One Russian parliamentarian, Vladimir Zorin, did come to appreciate the point: "I understand that a Tatar robe does not suit a Chechen. He needs a *burka* [the traditional Chechen cloak]" (Zorin 1997, p. 154). The Chechens

might have proven more receptive to the Tatarstan model had Shaimiev, who had the necessary tact, played an active role as an intermediary. Shaimiev did indeed make clear his willingness to play such a role, but the offer was taken up by neither side. He sent Khakimov to Grozny to explore the possibility, but Dudayev refused to receive him.

68. Shaimiev has more than once given it as his view that Dudayev's insulting speeches were the crucial factor. One example was his address to an international conference held in Grozny in April 1994 on "Genocide: Theory and Practice" (Abubakarov 1998, p. 167).

69. Different individuals had their own motives for opposing a summit. Tishkov explains the opposition of Shakhrai and Abdulatipov to a summit as a reaction to the failure of their own peacemaking attempt in January 1993, from which they had drawn the conclusion that it was impossible to deal with Dudayev. "They were disappointed, and didn't want to see it as their own failure, so they argued that nobody could succeed."

70. Tishkov suggests that Yeltsin may have deferred the meeting with Dudayev because of his poor state of health. However, poor health did not prevent him from meeting with many other people during this period. This was perhaps more of an excuse than a real reason.

71. Tishkov takes the view that if the treaty with Tatarstan had been signed in September 1992, as originally planned, and a meeting between Yeltsin and Dudayev had taken place soon thereafter, then a treaty with Chechnya could have been concluded. Galina Starovoitova did in fact try to arrange a meeting between Yeltsin and Dudayev in early 1992.

72. Vladimir Zorin, chairman of the Duma committee on nationality affairs, was a participant in negotiations with Chechnya that took place after the outbreak of war.

73. In this regard it is worth pondering what Musa Temishev, editor of the leading Chechen newspaper *Ichkeriya*, wrote on October 22, 1992: "We must be together with Russia. With Russia, but not *in* Russia. This is an essential difference. I am for a single economic, cultural, ruble, and military space with Russia. I am for Chechnya being an organic part of a Russian commonwealth of equals." Chechnya cannot be part of Russia, but it can be part of a "Russian commonwealth of equals." It is not the dimension of inside / outside that matters, but the dimension equal / unequal.

74. It may be recalled that Abubakarov, having been accused by Dudayev of treason, refused to take part in any more negotiations. At first he did refuse to go to Vladikavkaz, but gave in when Dudayev insisted (Abubakarov 1998, p. 168). Dudayev's choice of Abubakarov as head of the delegation, despite the latter's

conciliatory stance toward Russia, suggests that Dudayev may at this point have seriously wanted to avoid war.

75. In support of this supposition, mention may be made of a telephone conversation that took place between Mikhailov and General Yegorov, recently appointed presidential representative for Chechen-Ingushetia, while the Russian delegation was waiting in Vladikavkaz for Abubakarov to report back from Grozny. Yegorov asked only one question about the provisional agreement that had been reached: Did it specify that Chechnya was a subject of the Russian Federation?

76. This was the main means of pressure applied in the half-force strategy, but there were others, such as undercover operations by the security services and intermittent border closures.

77. Thus on September 5 the PCCR received ten armored personnel carriers and six helicopters with Russian crews; on November 1 they received forty tanks. On September 30 "unidentified" helicopters destroyed seven planes at the Chechen airport *Severnyi*. In October 1994 a group of 120 PCCR fighters underwent a four-week course of training by Russian officers near Volgograd.

78. Anatol Lieven argues that an important factor in bringing about this shift was a series of four bus hijackings by Chechen criminals in the Russian part of the northern Caucasus. The hijackers demanded millions of dollars in exchange for releasing their hostages. The last three of these incidents occurred in May, June, and July 1994 in Mineralnye Vody (Lieven 1998, p. 86).

79. *Novoe vremya* 1995, 15, 22-23.

80. Khasbulatov's movement, though non-violent, did have some potential for violence. He did hire armed protection: it would have been foolhardy not to do so under the conditions prevailing. And the coup that he tried to persuade Dudayev's commanders to carry out would probably have entailed a certain amount of violence. Nevertheless, Khasbulatov was much less violent in his methods than either Dudayev or the PCCP.

This subsection draws mainly on the interview with Tishkov and on Khasbulatov's own account as given in Khasbulatov (1995) and *Komissiia* (1995, pp. 91-2).

81. Another source of Khasbulatov's prestige among traditionally minded Chechens was the fact that he was the scion of a line of eminent religious scholars. The circumstance that he had spent most of his adult life not in Chechnya but in Moscow – as a student, an economics professor, and then as a politician – does not seem to have counted against him (just as Dudayev's career outside Chechnya did not count against

him). In fact, as Tishkov points out, Khasbulatov was to spend more time in Chechnya in 1994 than he ever had since he was deported as a child.

82. Presumably with a view to making this position more palatable to Chechen nationalists, Khasbulatov said that he was not opposed in principle to independence, but that it was beyond the strength of the Chechen people.

83. As elected president of a Chechen Republic within the Russian Federation, Khasbulatov would have been entitled to a seat in the Council of the Federation (i.e., the upper house) of the Federal Assembly.

84. And especially the Estonian nationalist movement, which greatly influenced Dudayev's formation as a nationalist at the time when he was commander of a Soviet air force base in Estonia.

85. For an analysis of socio-economic and ethnopolitical conditions in Tuva, see Balakina and Anaiban (1995).

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