

Aid Efficiency in an Armed Conflict. The Role of Civil Society in the Escalation of Violence in the North Caucasus

Huseyn Aliyev

IFHV Working Paper, Vol. 1, No. 1

Bibliographic information:

Title: Aid Efficiency in an Armed Conflict. The Role of Civil Society in the Escalation of Violence in the North Caucasus

Author(s): Huseyn Aliyev

Source: IFHV Working Papers, Vol. 1, No. 1

Date: March 2011

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.17176/20220622-124610-0>

ISSN: 2199-1367

Suggested citation:

Aliyev, H. (2011). Aid Efficiency in an Armed Conflict. The Role of Civil Society in the Escalation of Violence in the North Caucasus. IFHV Working Paper, 1(1).



RUHR-UNIVERSITÄT BOCHUM

IFHV Working Paper Vol. 1, No. 1, March 2011

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The role of civil society in the escalation of violence
in the North Caucasus

Huseyn Aliyev*

Institute for International Law of Peace and Armed Conflict
(IFHV), Ruhr-Universität Bochum, Germany. Email:
po4alho1@yahoo.com

Abstract

This thesis is an analysis of civil society's participation in conflict resolution and implementation of aid efforts in the North Caucasus. Its main goal is to explore the role of civil society in conflict de-escalation in three autonomous republics in the Russian North Caucasus - Dagestan, Ingushetia and Kabardino-Balkaria, which are the scene of a recently emerged armed conflict. It is suggested here that escalation of violence as well as failing humanitarian, development and democratization efforts are linked to the weakness of civil society in the region. In contrast to mainstream theories of conflict escalation in the North Caucasus, which seek answers for the current growth of violence in economic and ethnic grievances, the main argument of this thesis connects the escalation of violence with the inability of local and international civil groups operating in the region to serve as a balance between state and population in safeguarding human rights and implementing peace-building efforts. As a result, the lack of civil rights and freedoms in conjunction with grave human rights violations are serving as obstacles to aid efforts and are fueling the conflict. Furthermore, this study explores peace-building opportunities in the North Caucasus and prospects for implementing peace from the bottom-up by local and international NGOs.

* This paper is a revised version of the master thesis originally submitted at the Joint European Master's Programme in International Humanitarian Action (NOHA) at the IFHV.

URL:

Aid efficiency in an armed conflict

The role of civil society in the escalation of violence in the North
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List of Acronyms

BBC - British Broadcasting Corporation
CACI - Central Asia-Caucasus Institute
CIS - Common Wealth of Independent States
COE - Council of Europe
CSIS - Center for Strategic & International Studies
CSMR - Committee of Soldiers' Mothers of Russia
FD - Federal District
FEWER - Forum on Early Warning and Early Response
HRC - Human Rights Council at the United Nations
ICG - International Crisis Group
ICRC - International Committee of the Red Cross
IDMC - Internal Displacement Monitoring Center
IDP - Internally Displaced Person
IGO - Intergovernmental Organization
IHF - International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights
IHPS - Institute for Humanities and Political Studies
ISS - International Institute for Strategic Studies
MHG - Moscow Helsinki Group
MSF - Médecins Sans Frontières
NGO - Non-governmental organization
NI - Non Violence International
NIS - Non-Violence International in CIS
OCHA - Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OSI - Open Society Institute
PMGL - Peace Mission of General Lebed
RAD - Russian Analytical Digest
RFE - Radio Free Europe
UCDP - Uppsala Conflict Data Program
UNDP - United Nations Development Program
UNHCR - United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF - United Nations Children's Fund
USSR - Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

I. Introduction

The collapse of the USSR has plunged the North Caucasus, a region in the south of the Russian Federation, into a quagmire of disputes among its multiple freedom-aspiring ethnicities and the newly born Russian State. In spite of almost two decades of violence, the region continues to remain a “forgotten crisis.” Identified as an on-going armed conflict¹ by some and as a struggle with organized crime and terrorism by others, violence in the North Caucasus continues to escalate (CSIS 2008).

The end of the active combat stage in 2002-03 of the Second Chechen campaign, waged by Russia to bring the breakaway Chechen republic under its control, has been marked by an increase of violence in the neighbouring North Caucasian republics. Nevertheless, in spite of the conflict spillover, violence in other autonomous republics has been of low intensity. However, the conflict began to change its dynamics in 2006-07 towards a rapid escalation. In spite of the growth of hostilities, there have been no attempts to initiate peace talks (as of autumn of 2010) between the state and militants. Moreover, the federal government actively denies the very existence of an on-going armed conflict in the North Caucasus and rejects any necessity for conflict resolution and peace-building.² There have been only a few attempts by NGOs to work on peace-building in the conflict area. However, the state’s crackdown on civil society in Russia, which began with the start of Putin’s presidency and reached its peak with the adoption of the NGO Law in 2006 (Richter 2008), requiring additional registration of foreign NGOs aimed at investigating their revenues and sources of funding, was a setback to the possible development of a peace-building process. By reducing numbers, opportunities and competences of NGOs in the region, the state, in fact, reduced the chances of peace-building, which resulted in the outburst of violence seen in the following years.

The North Caucasus has been in the focus of aid agencies ever since the start of conflict in Chechnya in the mid-1990s. However, aid has been largely focused on Chechnya and, with the end of large scale hostilities in that republic, aid efforts³ began to refocus on post-conflict transformation. In the meantime, other parts of the North Caucasus began to plunge into uncontrolled violence. Aid efforts outside of Chechnya appeared incapable of reducing violence. The North Caucasian republics, in particular, Dagestan, Ingushetia

1 The definition of an armed conflict here is that of “...a contested incompatibility which concerns government and/or territory where the use of armed force between two parties, of which at least one is the government of a state, results in at least 25 battle-related deaths (per year).” (UCDP - Wallensteen - Sollenberg, 2001)

2 This thesis adopts the definition of peace-building as: “...all activities related to preventing outbreaks of violence, transforming armed conflicts, finding peaceful ways to manage conflict, and creating the socio-economic and political pre-conditions for sustainable development and peace”(Civil Society and Peace-building, World Bank:7). The given definition is a general concept which will be deconstructed in the further parts of this thesis. However, generally, peace-building is understood here as a process including, but not limited to, good governance, capacity building, and civil society development.

3 Aid efforts mentioned in this thesis are:

- Humanitarian aid- food, health and shelter;
- Development aid – governance, education, capacity and infrastructure building, employment, etc.;
- Human rights - human rights and civil freedoms, as quarantined by international norms and national constitution;
- Democratization- transparency of state institutions, freedom of choice, freedom from persecution.

and Kabardino-Balkaria, have experienced an almost endless growth of conflict related violence since the year 2006 (CSIS Spring 2010:4), i.e., the start of state's crackdown on civil society.

1.1 Argument and research questions

The main research question that this thesis addresses is why the aid efforts, i.e., humanitarian, development and human rights aid, have had only limited success in the North Caucasus. Consequently, as an answer to that question, this research suggests a hypothesis proposing that the recent escalation of violence in the North Caucasus is one of the main factors reducing the efficiency of aid efforts. Furthermore, the growth of violence and ineffective aid are both the results of the weakness of civil society⁴ in the region and its inability to implement conflict resolution.

The hypothesis also suggests that the state's attempts to control Russian civil society and "domesticate" international civil groups are decreasing the ability of civil groups to function as facilitators between the state and people and result in inefficiency of aid efforts. The above mentioned takeover of civil society by the state is taking place on the whole territory of the Russian Federation: however, it is particularly dangerous in the volatile region of the North Caucasus.

In addition, by failing to implement peace-building, civil groups operating in the region limit their efficiency in providing aid. Therefore, lack of peace-building efforts can be one of the most important points in understanding the inefficiency of aid efforts in the North Caucasus. The argument is proposed here that the roots of the conflict are at the community level, and therefore, peace-building needs to be implemented from the bottom-up.

Consequently, this thesis aims to answer a number of inter-related questions. **First**, what is the role of civil society in the North Caucasus? To what extent is it involved in conflict resolution efforts and how successful is it in facilitating between the state and citizens? **Second**, what is the current/past/future role of civil groups operating in the region in implementing peace-building from the bottom up? What is the potential for civil groups in implementing peace-building in the North Caucasus and do the bottom-up peace efforts reduce violence and promote aid efforts? **Third**, is it possible to link the increase of violence in the region with the decline of civil society? And if the increase of violence is indeed an outcome of the weakness of civil society, which can be emphasized by inefficiency of aid efforts, can the empowerment of civil groups deescalate the conflict?

The North Caucasus conflict, studied in this thesis, is often called a separatist insurgency struggling to establish a sovereign Islamic state on the territory of the Russian North Caucasus, i.e., in Chechnya, Dagestan, Ingushetia, Kabardino-Balkaria, North Ossetia and Karachay-Cherkessia. However, this study makes an assumption that the current conflict, if not nationalist, ethnic, or religious, is an outcome of poor governance and abuses of basic civil rights and freedoms.

⁴ This study divides civil society operating in the North Caucasus into two major groups: 1) local NGOs, civil groups and grass-root movements, and 2) international aid organizations (NGOs, IGOs).

1.2 Case studies

The three case studies presented in this thesis are autonomous North Caucasian republics of Dagestan, Ingushetia and Kabardino-Balkaria, which are part of the Russian Federation (Figure 1). The intention to focus on these three republics derives from the fact that all three of them have only recently become affected by the wave of violence and were relatively stable until 2004-06. Similarly, in contrast to Chechnya, the three republics did not experience a protracted armed conflict, despite neighbouring the war-affected Chechnya. It is assumed here that these republics are ravaged by the violence as result of the decline of civil society, coupled by inefficient aid efforts.

Figure 1: North Caucasus



Source: BBC, News: North Caucasus.

1.3 Limitations

The time frame of this research covers a period from 2003-04 (i.e., conflict spillover) to 2010. However, a particular emphasis will be put on the period from 2007 to 2009.

This thesis considers the current conflict in the North Caucasus as an offshoot of the Chechen war, and accordingly as a conflict distinct from the two Chechen wars (1994-97 and 1999-2009). Therefore, it is argued here, that in spite of the fact that the current conflict may partially take its origins from the Chechen war, it is no longer limited to Chechnya. Accordingly, this study will have no specific emphasis on Chechnya for a number of reasons. First, in comparison to the three republics (Dagestan, Ingushetia and Kabardino-Balkaria) which are to stay in the main focus of this research, Chechnya has been the scene of a full scale war, and, therefore, peace-building efforts should be conducted there at a different (post-war) level. Second, Chechnya remains in the spotlight of the international community as the 'only' armed conflict area in the North Caucasus, and, therefore, receives a great deal of NGO aid and attention in comparison to its neighbours, which remain in its shadow in spite of having increasingly high rates of conflict related violence. And lastly, the strong clan based structure of Chechen society and governance dividing it into pro-Kadyrov's and pro-separatist clans/groups distinguishes Chechnya from other autonomous republics in the region, which ranges from less clan-based (Ingushetia) to non-clan based (Kabardino-Balkaria) or ethnicity based (Dagestan) societal structures.

Also in contrast with Chechnya, this study will have no special focus on North Ossetia. In spite of being part of an on-going conflict, it only plays a marginal role in terms of both the levels of violence and the strength of the separatist movement in the republic. Largely Orthodox Christian, it also has a distinct societal structure⁵ from other autonomous republics in the region as well as closer social ties with the 'mainland' Russia. Another autonomous republic in the North Caucasus - Karachay-Cherkessia features a different conflict (the Circassian independence movement)⁶ from the one studied in this thesis and is not covered in this work.

The issue of IDPs, briefly covered in Chapter 5, is not central to the arguments of this thesis. In spite of being one of the factors defining the weakness of civil groups and inefficiency of aid efforts, the IDP problem in the North Caucasus is largely an outcome of previous conflicts in the region and a by-product of the government's unwillingness to handle the problem and lack of economic and social conditions necessary for IDPs to resettle in the their home republics.

Although civil society in the region in general is of interest for this study, the main focus lies on peace-building civil groups, which are discussed in detail. Due to the emphasis of this research on civil rights, transparency and democratization of governance, advocacy and rights groups are also discussed. However, peace-building organizations are of primary interest for this study.

1.4 Relevance and previous research

A number of explanations have been suggested for the recent surge of violence in the North Caucasus. The dire economic situation in the region, the spread of separatist ideology and radical Islam, as well as corrupt pro-Moscow leaders have been cited among the main reasons behind the escalation of violence in the North Caucasus (Falkowski 2010, Shlapentokh 2010, Mendelson 2009). This thesis does not altogether reject the above mentioned factors: instead its purpose is to suggest a yet another reason for the increase of conflict related violence in recent years.

The aforementioned hypothesis linking the decline of civil society with the growth of violence in the North Caucasus can be a contribution to the research of the North Caucasus conflict. Civil society in the North Caucasus is a poorly researched topic. Only a handful of research works have ever been published on the issue (Hansen 1998, Mendelson 2009) with a few reports by international organizations (Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Non Violence International). Primarily due to state censorship of information and strict control over civil society organizations operating in the region (launched by Putin's administration and continued during Medvedev's presidency) there has been little to no comprehensive research done to analyse the structure and *modus operandi* of NGOs working in the region, and in particular their involvement in the conflict. The above mentioned research gap is addressed in the course of this thesis, which provides a general analysis of civil society in the region with the particular focus on peace-building groups.

⁵ North Ossetia predominantly features a single ethnicity (Ossetian) based social structure with less visible clan cleavages than in Chechnya and Ingushetia.

⁶ The Circassian independence movement is a non-violent ethnic identification struggle.

The role of civil society in conflict resolution and peace-building is not a new topic for research.⁷ However, no studies have been done so far to analyse the role of civil society in conflict resolution in the North Caucasus. The spillover of the conflict from Chechen republic to the rest of the region is a recent phenomenon and the escalation of violence which engulfed the region in the last two years has hardly ever been noticed by the international community. The most comprehensive analysis of recent violence in the North Caucasus to date has been conducted by the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), which has compiled a series of comprehensive reports on the situation in the North Caucasus in its Human Rights & Security Initiative project. Significant analytical work on the issue can also be found in reports of Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and other NGOs and INGOs. An expert report by the FEWER group on Early Warning and Early Response in the Caucasus (2005) also considers peace-building issues in the North Caucasus. The possibility of community dialogue via alternative dispute resolution is mentioned by Gendron (2009) and advanced onto reconciliation level by Bakke et al (2009). However, no studies have been done so far on the possibility of applying a bottom-up peace-building approach in the North Caucasus. Therefore, the research conducted in this thesis can serve as an empirical and analytical contribution to this field of study.

1.5 Theoretical background

This thesis pursues the goal of analysing how the strength of civil society can affect conflict (de)escalation and peace-building. It suggests that lack of bottom-up peace efforts emanating at the community and civil society levels (rather than state initiatives from top-down) is one of the main causes for the failure of conflict resolution, which, in conjunction with increased state interventionism, leads to the dramatic escalation of violence in the case under study. The main argument of this study suggests that the key to the growth/reduction of violence in the context of the North Caucasus lies at the community level. In Curle's (1994:96) opinion:

“Since conflict resolution by outside bodies and individuals has so far proved ineffective [in the chaotic conditions of contemporary ethnic conflict –particularly, but not exclusively, in Somalia, Eastern Europe and the former USSR], it is necessary to consider the peacemaking potential within the conflicting communities themselves.”

For that purpose the concept of ‘indigenous empowerment’ (Lederach 1997) is adopted here as part of bottom-up peace-building, i.e., peace processes starting at the community level. The theory of bottom-up peace-building suggested by Curle (1994) and Lederach (1995, 1997) assumes that peace processes should originate at the grass-roots and, consequently, develop into higher levels of political dialog. As stated by Lederach (1995:212),

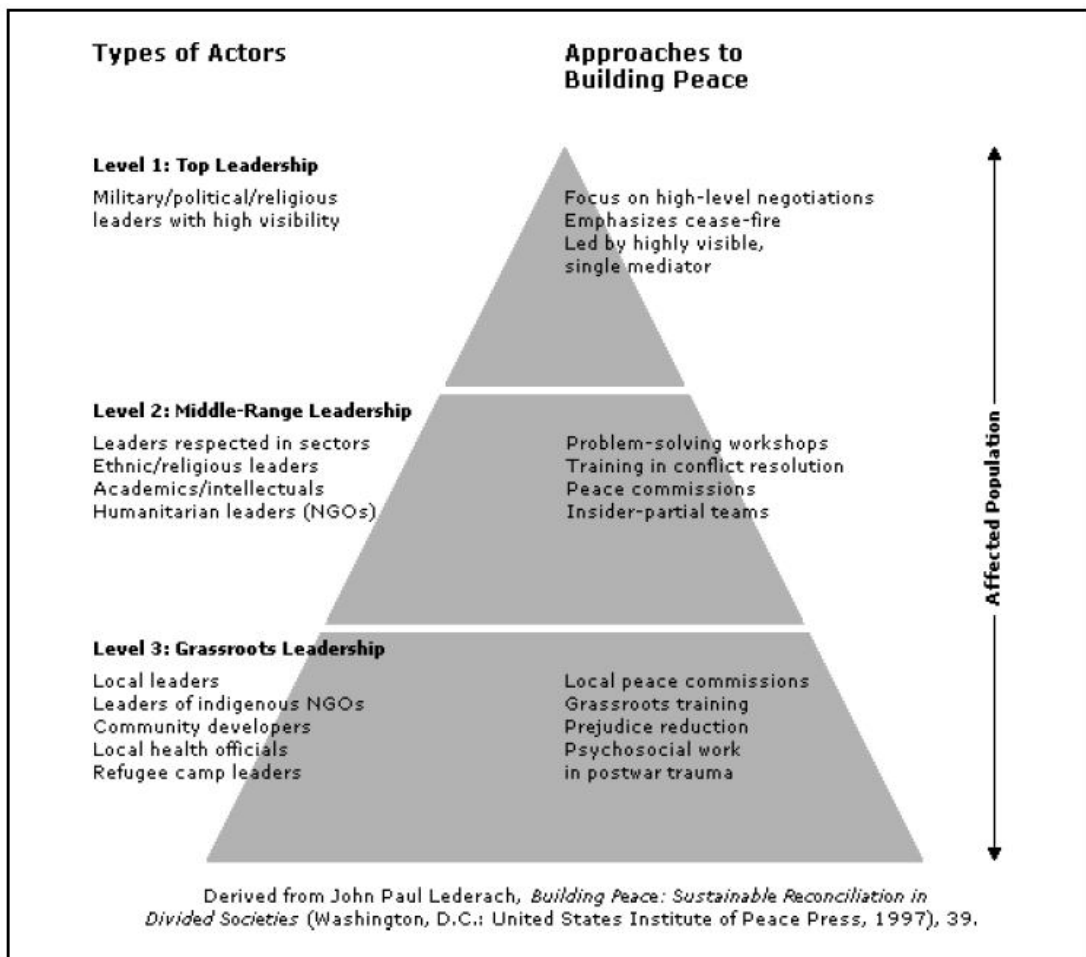
“The principle of indigenous empowerment suggests that conflict transformation must actively envision, include, respect, and promote the human and cultural resources from within a given setting.”

⁷ See Lederach (1997), Parver & Wolf (2008), Paffenholz & Spurk (2006), Curle (1992).

This study focuses on the assumption that the conflict's origins are at the community level and, therefore, peace-building efforts of civil groups should start precisely at the local level. It is assumed here that 'empowering' local communities, i.e., allowing them to participate in peace processes and aid efforts can significantly decrease the level of violence. Accordingly, this study conducts an analysis of how the empowerment of local communities by NGOs and other elements of civil society in the North Caucasus can strengthen and promote the peace-making process. Examples of bottom-up peace-building efforts during the first Chechen war (1994-96) are shown here as a case of community empowerment's contribution to peace-building.

Consequently, Lederach's (1997) theory of triple track peace-building is used as the main theoretical framework here. The particular focus, however, is on track (level) 3 and track (level) 2 of the model (Figure 2) dealing with grass-root and middle-range community leadership.

Figure 2: John Paul Lederach's peace-building model



Source: Lederach (1997:39)

Bottom-up peace-building is aimed at conflict resolution from grass-roots rather than top-down and its goal is to create human security and strengthen the rule of law by enhancing local structures. As mentioned in this thesis, there is no opportunity for a "formal higher political level" conflict resolution due to the dispersed nature of the insurgency and a lack of credible leadership, coupled with the unwillingness of the federal government to accept the very existence of the conflict.

This thesis provides an analysis of how several aid groups, both international (Non-violence International (NI), Peacebuilding UK) and local (Peace Mission of General Lebed (PMGL) and Committee of Soldiers' Mothers of Russia(CSMR)) approach the peace-building process in the region and implemented bottom-up peace efforts. However, it is suggested in this study that current efforts are insufficient in their scale and approach. Instead of peace education and reconciliation efforts conducted via authorities and state structures, which are the peace-building efforts which exist at the moment, the bottom-up approach, analysed here, suggests peace cooperation with local communities and via local social structures, i.e., something that has not been done so far.

1.6 Methodology and data sources

This research intends to apply a twofold methodological approach:

- Comprehensive analysis aimed at scrutinizing qualitative sets of data derived from NGO reports and media sources, as well as scholarly publications and academic research in the field;
- Process tracing as a summary of historical developments leading to the current situation. By tracing the events which have played a significant role in the development of civil society in the North Caucasus, and in Russia in general, this study attempts to explain its patterns and the process which led to its current stage.

This thesis utilizes secondary data sources as the main data component, and primary data as a supplementary resource. Research articles and publications are used for theoretical and methodological parts of the thesis. Articles and publications are extracted from reputable scholarly data bases (JSTORE, EBSCO, academic databases of institutions and universities, etc.). Secondary data sources are also composed of NGO and IGO reports, such as *Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs* (OCHA), Council of Europe, UNDP, Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International reports on North Caucasus. Media articles and news reports from independent mass media sources, such as Radio Free Europe, Caucasus Knot, Caucasus Analytical Digest, North Caucasus Weekly, etc., are an important component of secondary data for this research. Interviews with experts on the North Caucasus and civil society in Russia complement this research with opinions and personal observations. A total of five interviews with experts on conflict, civil society, ethnicity and humanitarian assistance in the North Caucasus region are used as a primary data source in this research.

1.7 Chapter Overview

The introductory Chapter 1 presents a review of the argument, theoretical background and methodology to be applied in this thesis. This chapter also introduces previous research done on the topic and identifies the main data sources.

Chapter 2 provides a brief historical overview of the conflict in the North Caucasus. It presents the background of the current conflict, its development and spill-over. Additionally, it describes the three case studies with a brief analysis of their political, economic and social structures and a detailed insight of the conflicts in each of the cases.

Chapter 3 addresses the role of civil society in the North Caucasus and its participation in facilitation between the citizens and the state. It begins with an analysis of civil society in the Russian Federation in general, by highlighting the main milestones in the development and decline of the third sector in Russia. It further develops with an analysis of civil society's activities in the North Caucasus, which is supported by a scrutiny of the state's attempts to control civil groups. This chapter also deals with the issue of the deficiency of aid efforts in the region and attempts to gauge the weaknesses of civil groups operating in the area and co-relate them with the growth of violence.

Chapter 4 deals with the role of civil society in peace-building. It is a review of bottom-up peace-building, its practice worldwide and in the North Caucasus. It examines opportunities and obstacles to implementing a bottom-up peace-building model in the region and analyses possibilities for civil groups' participation in such processes.

The final links are drawn in Chapter 5 to connect escalation of violence with the weaknesses of civil society and lack of bottom-up efforts to resolve the conflict. A comprehensive analysis is offered here to support the claim that the escalation of violence is interlinked with the decline of civil society. This chapter also provides answers to a number of fundamental questions raised in this thesis.

Chapter 6, as a conclusion of this study, revisits hypotheses and arguments of this thesis and provides a summary of the main findings and conclusions.

2. North Caucasus Conflict

"Now we are facing a new wave of violence in Daghestan, Ingushetia and Chechnya in which a local mixture of blood feuds and regional separatism cloaked in Jihadism plays an increasingly significant role." (Tatum 2010)

This chapter is an overview of the North Caucasus conflict, its historical development, protagonists, its transformation and escalation. It analyses the causes and dynamics of the conflict and provides indications of the role of civil society in the conflict, which is to be further developed in the latter parts of this thesis. Furthermore, it introduces the three case studies: Dagestan, Ingushetia and Kabardino-Balkaria, with an analysis of the current situation in each of them.

2.1 Background of the conflict

The end of large-scale fighting in Chechnya (in 2002-03) was, in fact, the beginning of the conflict's spillover into the North Caucasus. Adoption of the Chechen constitution by the Russian-backed government of Ahmad Kadyrov in 2003 and Kadyrov's election as a president of Chechen republic officially put an end to Chechnya's independence and outlawed separatist government of Aslan Maskhadov. By the end of 2003, the Chechen insurgent movement was in a gridlock, with its actual power being concentrated in the hands of the most influential warlord in the country, Shamil Basayev.⁸ A handful of

⁸ Shamil Basayev, a failed law school student and computer salesman in Soviet times, joined the Chechen independence movement in 1991. The same year Basayev participated in a hijacking of a Russian airplane. In 1992, he joined a battalion of Chechen volunteers participating in the Abkhaz-Georgian war to support the Abkhazian separatists. With the defeat of the Georgian army in 1993, Basayev, already commander of a

other warlords were in charge of militant groups in different parts of the country. However, the official leader of the insurgent government, Maskhadov had little real power and even less ability to control the situation on the ground.

The outflow of non-Chechen fighters from Chechnya, which began by the end of large-scale military operations in 2002-03, gave a powerful boost to the development of military jamaats⁹ in different parts of the region. There is no question that most of the jamaats have been founded by veterans of the Chechen resistance and largely adopted similar ideology and *modus operandi*. The first indicator of conflict spillover was a rapid increase of attacks on government officials, security forces, and military installations throughout Dagestan, Ingushetia, North Ossetia, Kabardino-Balkaria, and Karachay-Cherkessia. An increased rate of violent incidents followed an almost similar level of intensity in most of the republics in the North Caucasus, including Chechnya (Figure 3). The data compiled by the Center for Strategic & International Studies (CSIS) indicates that as early as of January 2004, Chechnya ceased to be the only hotspot in the North Caucasus, and it was no longer the most violent place in the region. The conflict had steadily progressed and militant cells not only actively operated in their home republics but also united for large-scale attacks:

June 21-22, 2004, up to 500 Ingush and Chechen militants attacked government and security installations in the capital of Ingushetia, Nazran, leaving around 100 policemen, officials and soldiers dead and hundreds wounded (CACI 2004).

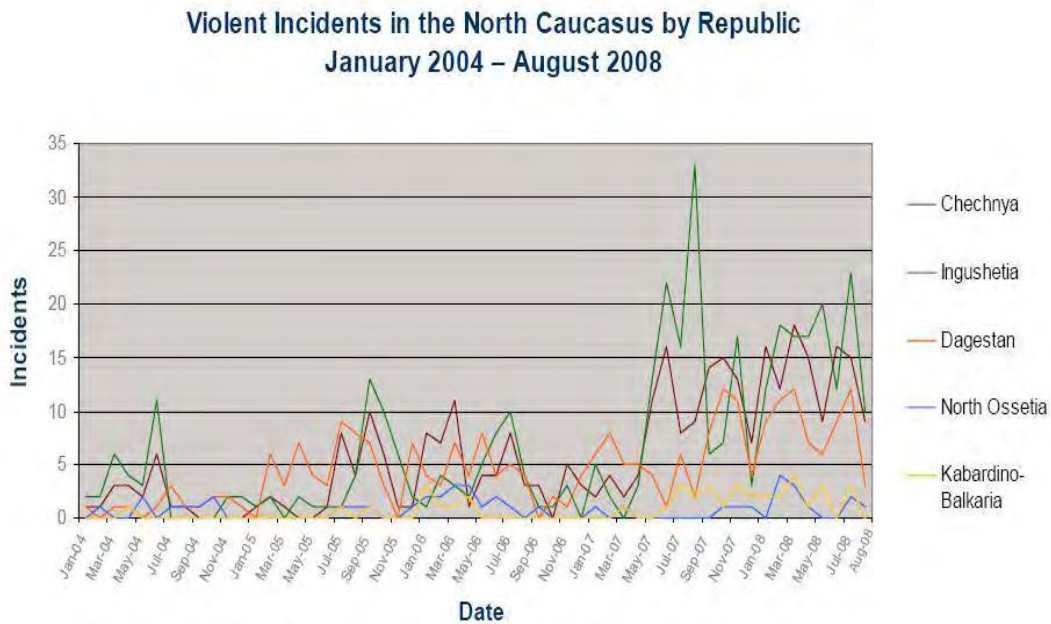
September 1, 2004, a multi-ethnic band of militants (with a majority of Ingush nationals) took 1,100 people hostage in a school in the North Ossetian town of Beslan (UNICEF August 2006). The following siege of the school ended with a botched rescue operation and subsequent death of 334 hostages, including 186 children (BBC September 2005).

October 13-14, 2005 large-scale militant attack on government and military installations in the capital of Kabardino-Balkaria, Nalchik, left 140 people dead. Most of attackers were of Balkar nationality (RFE October 2006).

Caucasian volunteer brigade (unit of nationalists from different parts of the Caucasus), led a group of Chechen volunteers in Nagorno-Karabakh war between Armenia and Azerbaijan. With the start of the Chechen war in 1994, Basayev was one of the leading figures in the resistance movement. In 1995, he raided a town in the south of Russia, taking 1,600 people hostage in a local hospital. After the end of the first Chechen war, Basayev occupied the post of the vice-prime Minister in Maskhadov's government. In 1999, he led an army of Islamic militants on an incursion into Dagestan, which provoked the second Chechen war. In the following years, Basayev was the most influential and powerful warlord in Chechnya and the mastermind of the Caucasus Front, a region-wide separatist movement. Basayev, is also known as a mastermind of the 2003 Moscow Theater hostage crisis and 2004 Beslan school hostage taking (Russia Profile.Org).

⁹ "The organizational structure of separatist societies [in the North Caucasus], jamaats, does not coincide with the structure of traditional Muslim societies in the region, which are also called jamaats. The traditional jamaats are organized along territorial principles, incorporating the population of a village or city district, grouped around the mosque. The separatist jamaats are extra-territorial and dispersed. One jamaat can encompass many small groups, united in one or several networks" (Yarlykapov 2007:7).

Figure 3: Violence in the North Caucasus, Trends since 2004



Source: Center for Strategic & International Studies (CSIS), 2009

The 2004 Beslan hostage crisis and 2005 Nalchik raid, as well as many other attacks conducted by separatist militants in several North Caucasian republics provide clear evidence of the conflict's spillover. Essentially, all of the large-scale joint operations conducted by separatists in the North Caucasus from 2003 to 2006 have been directly masterminded, financed, and commanded by Basayev. As the most powerful and renowned Chechen warlord, Basayev envisioned himself as a figure capable to unite anti-Russian resistance in the North Caucasus and considered all means to fight Russia as legitimate, including terrorism.

In May 2005, Basayev announced creation of a joint *Caucasian Front*, aimed at unifying insurgent groups throughout the North Caucasus. He purposefully denied the post of President of Ichkeria's¹⁰, consequently offered to him following the death of Maskhadov and Sadulayev, expecting to play the role of a regional leader, rather than focusing on the Chechen insurgency only.

It was anticipated that Basayev's death on July 2006, which happened as a result of an accidental explosion in Ingushetia, would strike a serious blow to the cohesiveness of the insurgency. In spite of losing a leader capable of uniting militant cells for large-scale operations, the separatist underground did not weaken its strength with the death of

¹⁰ The Republic of Ichkeria is the official name of the unrecognized separatist government of Chechnya. The first elected president of Ichkeria was Djohar Dudayev. After his death in the Russian air strike at the end of the First Chechen war in 1996, he was temporarily succeeded by Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev (German 2003). In the aftermath of peace accords between Ichkeria and Russia and subsequent presidential elections in Chechnya, Aslan Maskhadov was elected as President of Ichkeria and occupied that post until he was killed by Russian special forces in 2005 in the course of a 'counter-terrorism' operation (1999-present), officially known as the Second Chechen war. Upon Maskhadov's death, insurgent cleric Abdul Halim Sadulayev was appointed to the post of Ichkeria's president by the rebel Council. Sadulayev was killed in action in 2006 (Gilligan 2010).

Basayev. The rate and intensity of rebel attacks in 2006 remained similar to the previous year (Figure 3). However, the situation in the North Caucasus was about to change.

The only warlord capable of replacing Basayev as leader of the Caucasian Front was a veteran of two Chechen campaigns and Basayev's right hand, Doku Umarov. Umarov has taken over the post of president of Ichkeria's and immediately abolished the Republic of Ichkeria by creating a *Caucasus Emirate (Imarat Kavkaz)* in October 2007 (Davydov 2009). The *Caucasus Emirate* eliminated the concept of an independent Chechnya, instead replacing it with that of a united pan-Caucasian state, including all of the Russian North Caucasus (Figure 4). Umarov proclaimed himself as its *Emir* (supreme leader). The Caucasian Front has become a military branch of the Caucasus Emirate, now incorporating military jamaats of Dagestan, Chechnya, Ingushetia, Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachay-Cherkessia, and North Ossetia (Kavkazcenter October 2009).

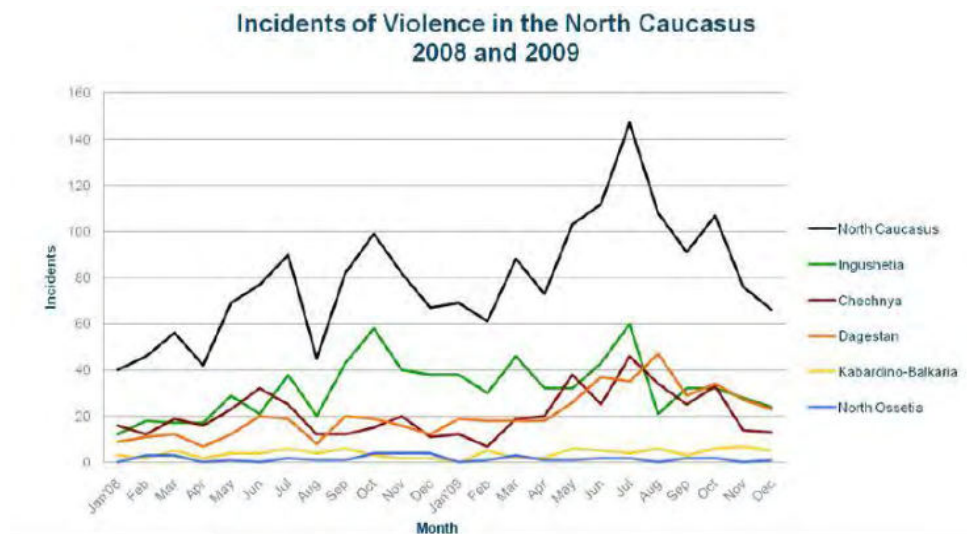
Figure 4: Caucasus Emirate



Source: Caucasus Emirate at WikiCommons, 2009

Although opposed by some of Ichkeria's leaders in exile (Chechenpress October 2007), the Caucasus Emirate has opened a region-wide front of anti-Russian insurgency. The creation of a new insurgent entity in the North Caucasus has been marked by an increased level of militant attacks in all parts of the region (Figure 5). This wave of violence includes armed confrontations between rebels and security forces, rebel attacks on government and military installations, abductions, assassinations of police, military, and civilians, bombings, including suicide bombings, etc. The rates of violence almost doubled in 2008 and tripled in 2009. In fact, the surge of violence reached an unprecedented level in 2009, with 1100 incidents in comparison to 795 in 2008. The number of people killed in the conflict almost doubled in 2009 with 900 fatalities in comparison to 586 deadly incidents in 2008 (Figure 5) (CSIS 2009).

Figure 5: Violent Incidents in the North Caucasus by Republic, 2008-2009



Source: Center for Strategic & International Studies (CSIS), 2009

Ironically, Medvedev's administration announced an end to the 'counter-terrorism' operation in Chechnya on April 2009 (BBC April 2009). The announcement was more symbolic (needed to boost Kadyrov's government) than real. According to the latest data (CSIS Summer 2010), the first four months of 2010 already caused more than 200 conflict-related deaths, with the majority of violent incidents occurring in Ingushetia and Dagestan (109 in Ingushetia and over 90 in Dagestan) (Ibid).

2.2 Conflict dynamics

The current conflict in the North Caucasus is distinctly different from both Chechen wars not only due to the fact that most conflict-related violence is now taking place outside of Chechnya, but also in terms of the goals and objectives of its participants, as well as the political environment. In comparison to the Chechen issue, the current conflict is no longer ethnic and is no longer a nationalist one. A process of "regionalization" of the insurgent movement, launched by Basayev, was further developed by Umarov, who prioritized the idea of a common establishment for all Caucasian nations, an *Emirate*, over nationalist aspirations of Chechen warlords of earlier periods.

A simple glance at Dagestan, Ingushetia and Kabardino-Balkaria suggests that they do not even share common geographical borders, and their population is different linguistically, culturally, and with distinct structures of societal organization. Yet, nationals of these seemingly different republics are parts of the same conflict and pursue the same common goal, that of independence from Russia. In spite of assumptions suggested by a number of scholars (Dannreuther 2010, Shlapentokh 2010, Ferris-Rotman 2010, McGregor 2006), the conflict in the North Caucasus is far from being a case of religious fundamentalism, fuelled by 'global *jihadism*'. Although religion plays the role of an ideological driving force for insurgency, it cannot be considered as the main cause of the conflict. Nations inhabiting the North Caucasus, in spite of their strict religious adherence, have never been known to follow the radical tenets of Islam and were not known for religious fundamentalism. In particular Balkars, Kabardins and

Cherkessians of Kabardino-Balkaria, are known for their moderate religious beliefs (McGregor 2006:11). As noted by Shlapentokh (2010), the current trend of insurgency in the North Caucasus is that of “de-Islamization”¹¹ or moving toward a goal rather than ideology oriented nature, following something similar to the Marxist-Leninist motto of “Proletarians of all countries unite” (Shlapentokh 2010) in terms of willingly accepting recruits from diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds. Although often accused of being Islamic fundamentalists, militants are likely to have both moderate and radical members, practicing both the radical *Salafi* trend of Islam and more moderate *Sunni* branches traditionally practiced in the region (Kroupenev 2009).

Insurgent jamaats normally consist of several dozen to several hundred active members, operating both in urban and rural settings. Most of jamaats’ senior members and leadership are usually veterans of Chechen campaigns, although the majority of rank and file members are recruited among unemployed youth. The insurgency is known to have no clan, class, age, or nationality bias. Militant groups usually have fighters from all over the region and other parts of Russia, as well as a number of foreign volunteers (McGregor 2006). In terms of the social status of its members, insurgent groups include people from all walks of life.¹² Although officially all insurgent jamaats are under the central command of the head of the Caucasus Emirate, Doku Umarov, in fact, most of the groups have a rather autonomous chain of command with little dependence on Umarov in terms of tactics and activities (Falkowski 2010). Besides, as noted by some analysts (Shlapentokh 2010, Vatchagayev 2010), the recent trend of the insurgency is to allow as much operational space for individual groups as possible with less communication between groups.

The government of the Russian Federation does not officially recognize the conflict in the region as distinct or separate from the Chechen problem (which is normally considered as an issue of terrorism) and generally classifies most of the violent incidents as connected to organized crime and terrorism (Mendelson & Gerber 2006). The federal government has boosted its military contingents in the North Caucasus in recent years and retained Interior troops and Special Forces units in Chechnya, in spite of the official announcement of the termination of ‘counter-terrorism’ operation in Chechnya in April 2009 (Vatchagayev April 24, 2009). As mentioned above, the Kremlin repeatedly denied the existence of a separatist insurgency, classifying jamaats as ‘illegal armed gang formations’ (Bishevsky 2009), a definition officially accepted by all local autonomous governments in the North Caucasus. In reality, the Caucasus Emirate is a loose network of insurgent groups and cells, numbering perhaps less than 10,000 men at arms in the North Caucasus and relying on a base of sympathizers and supporters composing in all likelihood only a minority of the North Caucasus’ population (Falkowski 2010:62). In

¹¹ The role of Islam in the North Caucasus’s insurgency is highly debatable. The proponents of the “global jihad” theory (who also include the Russian government) are prone to argue that the radical Islam is one of the main reasons for the ongoing violence. However, I tend to follow the view that Islam has a marginal role in the conflict and its radical tenets have failed to settle roots among the nations of the NC. A good example of that is the failure of Wahabbi preachers/militants from the Middle East in Chechnya and Dagestan.

¹² “For instance, among those killed during the operation to dislodge militants holed up in a residential apartment building in Dagestan on August 26, 2006, there was Zubail Khiyasov, a former Dagestani culture minister and director of the Kumyck National Theater of Dagestan, who was close to 70 years old.” (Vatchagayev January 15, 2009).

the short term, as suggested by experts,¹³ it is highly unlikely that the insurgency will be capable of affecting political life in the region or spearheading a change of regime and movement towards independence. Nonetheless, it is crippling peace and development efforts in the region. On-going conflict also prevents refugees from previous conflicts to resettle and return to peaceful life. The vicious cycle of economic stagnation and underdevelopment in the region is both a trigger and an outcome of the conflict.

2.3 Case studies' profiles

In spite of belonging to the same insurgent movement, rebel groups operating in different autonomous republics have differences, represented not only by geographical location and ethnicity but also by the paths they followed to join Umarov's Caucasus Emirate, which spread the conflict well beyond the borders of Chechnya. The three countries analysed in this thesis: Dagestan, Ingushetia and Kabardino-Balkaria, have all followed different paths to joining the insurgency with differing degrees of involvement.

2.3.1 Dagestan

Brief Country profile:

The Republic of Dagestan is an autonomous republic within the Russian Federation. The President of the republic is selected by the Parliament (People's Assembly) and appointed by the Kremlin. Population is 2,2 million. Territory 50,300 sq km (BBC August 2010). Agriculture accounts for 28,1% of economic output, 16.4% is trade and 15.7% industry.¹⁴ 75% of the population is Northeast Caucasians, 20% Turkic nationalities and 5% Russians (Rosstat 2002). Societal structure is based on ethnic linkages.



Source: FEWER, SRDA, 2005

The largest autonomous republic in the Russian North Caucasus, Dagestan, is inhabited by several dozen ethnic groups, with *Avars*, *Dargins*, and *Lezgins* being the most numerous. The republic is also known for its religious heterogeneity, displaying a mix of *Sunni* and *Shia* Islam and Orthodox Christianity. The conflict in Dagestan cannot be easily separated from the wars in Chechnya. However, in spite of being influenced by Chechen rebels, Dagestan's insurgency has been developing independently.

In contrast to the Chechen case, where separatist insurgency was initially nationalist and liberationist and only had a weak religious sentiment involved, the beginning of the conflict in Dagestan was closely connected with the spread of radical *Salafi* Islam in the Caucasus. A brief military conflict between *Salafi* militants occupying several villages in the Kadar zone of central Dagestan and the Federal troops in 1999, which resulted in the destruction of the former and ensuing invasion of Chechen and Arab militants into

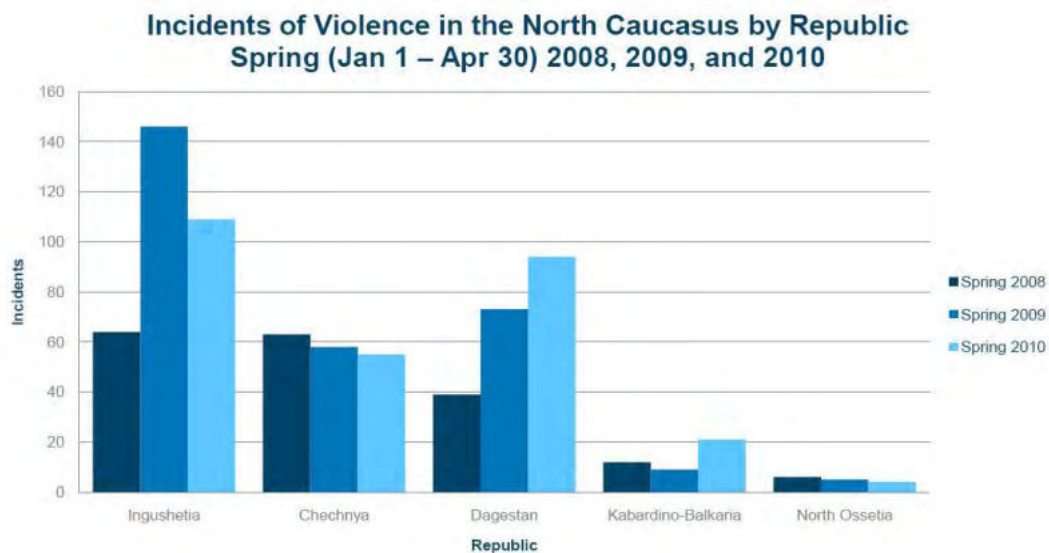
¹³ See Memorial Human Rights Center Report 2009, Falkowski 2010, Vatchagayev 2010.

¹⁴ Republic of Dagestan, at <http://www.dagestanrsp.ru/economy/>, (retrieved on 30.08.2010).

Dagestan fuelling the Second Chechen war, was in fact, the start of conflict in Dagestan (Blandy 2000). Following the start of Second campaign, the so-called 'hunt for the Wahabbis' took place (CrisisGroup 2008:8), in which hundreds of *Salafi* adherents were apprehended. The conflict spillover in the North Caucasus coincided with the establishment of the home-grown insurgent group in Dagestan-Jamaat Shariat (McGregor 2006). Created by the Dagestani veterans of Chechen wars, it began recruiting young people from the *Avar*, *Lakh*, and *Dargin* ethnic groups (Vatchagayev March 13, 2009). The levels of violence in Dagestan began to increase at an alarming rate (Figure 3).

In the following years, the jamaat continued to grow by broadening its recruitment base to include other ethnicities of Dagestan and often by offering financial rewards to the impoverished population and unemployed youth (Latynina 2005). The group proved itself to be very resistant to law enforcement tactics. In spite of losing its leaders regularly and suffering serious casualties (Vatchagaev March 13, 2009) in confrontations with the police and army, the group manages to regroup and evolve, simultaneously increasing the level of violence directed against the local and federal governments. Currently, the Dagestani jamaat maintains high levels of violence (Figure 6), keeping the republic in the headlines of Russian news as the legitimate 'hot spot'. Members of Dagestani insurgent groups allegedly masterminded and provided manpower for the March 29 Moscow metro bombings, advancing the insurgency well outside of the Caucasus' borders.

Figure 6: Violence in the North Caucasus, 2008, 2009, 2010



Source: Center for Strategic & International Studies, Spring (CSIS:8), 2010

Unlike to other conflicts in North Caucasus, violence in Dagestan is not ethnic or nationalistic. Due to the multi-ethnic composition of Dagestani society, the republic managed to avoid the nationalist-separatism which overtook Chechnya in the 1990s. However, the ensuing wave of religious fundamentalism, appearing as an aftershock of Chechen conflict threw the republic onto the frontlines of the insurgency. In spite of constituting one of the reasons for the start of the insurgency, radical Islam did not take root in Dagestan, similarly to other Caucasian republics (Ware et al. 2003). As argued by a number of experts (Falkowski 2010, Magomedov 2006), the radical *Salafi* branch of

Islam serves as an alternative to state-supported *Sufi* Islam attracting young people with its clear and straight interpretation of the religion and provided an opportunity to oppose state authorities. However, the recent history of insurgency in Dagestan suggests the opposite: adherents of radical *Salafism* failed to take a lead in the anti-government movement as can be seen in the defeat of fundamentalists in Kadar in 1999. Instead, in spite of preserving *Salafi* Islam as the main ideology of insurgency, the movement gained momentum and rapidly grew in numbers and scale mostly due to its de-radicalization and focus on anti-governmental agenda rather than on religious tenets of jihad.

2.3.2 Ingushetia

Brief Country profile:

The Republic of Ingushetia is a federal subject of the Russian Federation. The head of government is a president, appointed by the president of the Russian Federation. Population is 492,000. Societal structure is clan based. Ethnic Ingush are 83%, Chechens 11.2%, Russians 4,0% (Rosstat 2007). Economy is agriculture dominated. 90% of the country's revenue is subsidies from Moscow. Unemployment rate is at 50% (Evans & Liffey 2009).



Source: FEWER, SRDA, 2005

Overshadowed by Chechnya from the east, Ingushetia has been directly and indirectly involved in Chechen conflicts since the early 1990s. However, by both virtue and skilful leadership, the republic managed to make sure not to have an insurgency of its own. The home grown insurgent groups began to appear in Ingushetia from 2000-01, mostly made up of Ingush fighters participating in the Chechen conflict. McGregor (2006) mentions the year 2000 as the starting point for the appearance of Ingush jamaat. The spread of insurgency to Ingushetia is often connected with the replacement of Ingushetia's populist and liberal president, Ruslan Aushev with pro-Moscow, Gen. Zyazikov (ISS 2008:2). It is, however, highly debatable whether the republic could have avoided being dragged into conflict if Aushev was still in power. In any case, with the spread of insurgency to other North Caucasian republics, by 2004 Ingushetia became one of the strongholds of anti-Russian rebellion with large numbers of Ingush fighters taking part in rebel operations in different parts of the North Caucasus.

Closely associated with the Chechen insurgency, insurgent groups in Ingushetia started to increase their scale and reduce dependency on Chechen warlords, particularly after the death of Basayev in 2006. Ingush rebels readily joined the Caucasus Emirate in 2007. Led by Emir Magas (Magomet Yevloyev), Ingush jamaat turned Ingushetia into the 'hottest spot' in the North Caucasus with the escalation of violence in 2008 (Figure 4). With the rate of violence getting out of hand, the Kremlin replaced Zyazikov with a former intelligence official, Yunus-bek Yevkurov. The change of leadership, however, did not change the fate of Ingushetia, which has de-facto lost its status as an autonomous

republic within the Russian Federation, being directly ruled from Moscow or by Moscow appointed officials, instead of popularly elected representatives.

Although emphasizing corruption and blood feuds among clans as the major ills plaguing the republic, Yevkurov, nevertheless, failed to deal with the insurgency by accepting it as a reality. The federal and republican authorities' failure to deal with insurgents in the ways other than military has led to a continuous growth of violence.

The Ingush jamaat, similarly to Dagestani insurgents managed to evolve through several stages and transform itself from a radical *Salafi* movement, which it used to be in the first years of its existence in early 2000s, to a more moderate anti-Moscow movement (Vatchagayev September 25, 2009). Transforming itself from religious fundamentalism to more of a pro-independence group and extending its ranks to *Sufi* Muslims (comprising 80% of the population in the North Caucasus) was a tactical move allowing the insurgency to expand radically both in numbers and in operational capacities. Also like Dagestan, the Ingush insurgency never experienced a nationalistic stage, as in Chechnya. In fact, under Aushev's administration, Ingushetia displayed a degree of loyalty toward the Russian Federation and carefully avoided following the Chechen path of a national-liberation struggle.

2.3.3 Kabardino-Balkaria

Brief Country profile:

The Republic of Kabardino-Balkaria is a semi-autonomous subject of the Russian Federation. The head of government, president, is appointed by the Kremlin with the approval of republic's MPs. Population is 900, 500 (BBC April 2010). Ethnically 55 % Kabardins, 25% Russians and 12% Balkars (Rosstat 2002). Unemployment rates are high with the decline of republic's tourism industry and increasing reliance on federal subsidies (Ibid).



Source: FEWER, SRDA, 2005

A popular mountainous resort in Soviet times and a quiet autonomous republic in the Russian North Caucasus, Kabardino-Balkaria remained an enclave of peace and stability in the volatile environment of North Caucasus throughout the 1990s. The republic's multi-ethnic population, stayed seemingly immune to the nationalism tearing apart others regions of the Caucasus, the anti-Moscow liberation struggle ravaging Chechnya, and the religious fundamentalism overtaking Dagestan. However, the conflict spillover in the North Caucasus did reach Kabardino-Balkaria.

The Kabardino-Balkaria's "Yarmuk" jamaat was founded in 2002-04 (McGregor 2006) by a group of Kabardino-Balkaria's volunteers participating in the Second Chechen war. Apparently not without assistance from Basayev's camp, insurgent groups proliferated in the republic. In the spring of 2005, after hundreds of jamaats' members attacked police stations and government's facilities in the capital, Nalchik, the republic first entered the headlines as a new 'hot spot' in the Caucasus.

Initially operating mostly in the Balkar areas (McGregor 2006:16), the insurgents later began to recruit Kabardin and Cherkessian volunteers, claiming a necessity for unity in an “anti-colonial” struggle and denouncing national and ethnic divisions (Vatchagayev July 10, 2009). Under the leadership of a former theology professor, Anzor Astemirov, the “Yarmuk” jamaat joined the Caucasus Emirate. Officially a *Salafi* group, the Kabardino-Balkaria’s insurgents are presumably more moderate in their religious views (Tlisova 2009) than other insurgent groups in the North Caucasus, which can be explained by a long tradition of religious tolerance in the republic. According to recent estimates, released by the Interior Ministry of Kabardino-Balkaria¹⁵, there are approximately 700 insurgents operating in this small mountainous republic.

2.4 Causes

In order to understand the role that humanitarians, as well as civil society in general, can take in resolving the North Caucasus conflict, it is necessary to scrutinize its causes. The on-going armed conflict cannot be easily qualified as the ‘old war’, as defined by Kaldor (1999), nor as a ‘new war’. It displays both gratuitous and controlled violence; it lacks popular support in some geographical areas whereas it enjoys support of particular layers/groups/individuals in other areas. Simultaneously, it is no longer a classical post-Cold War former Soviet Union conflict. In spite of being an offshoot of Chechen wars, the current conflict seems to have inherited neither nationalism nor ethnic self-determination. Tishkov (2001) in his discussion on the causes of Chechen conflicts describes the Chechen motivations as separatism that:

“...is born and its protagonists (both the leaders and the rank-and-file participants) are mobilized on the basis of the doctrine and political practice of ethnic nationalism. This holds that each people – understood not as a territorial association (demos) but as an ethnic community (ethnos) or ethno-nation – has the right to self-determination, to ‘its own’ state (Tishkov 2009:9).”

None of that doctrine has persisted in the current conflict. Both “founding fathers” of the North Caucasian insurgency, Basayev and Umarov, grew to prominence as leaders of the Chechen independence struggle and both have been in Maskhadov’s government of independent Ichkeria. However, both have abandoned the nationalist independence camp in favor of a larger but more ambiguous notion of the Caucasus Emirate. The idea of a pan-Caucasian state unifying all ethnic groups of the North Caucasus is not a new one. In its essence it follows the idea of *Imamate* of Dagestani Sheikh Shamil, who unified the mountainous nations in their struggle with the Russian Empire in the 19th century. However, the modern Caucasus Emirate is more of a utopia than a real state project. In reality, none of its founders and creators has had any clear idea for political structure of the ‘future’ state (Falkowski 2010:63), except that it is envisioned as an Islamic state ruled by *Sharia* law.

In addition, the North Caucasian insurgency is not similar to Islamic fundamentalist groups, such as Al-Qaeda or Indonesian Jamaa Islamiyah, nor it can be an Islamist movement of a Taliban type. As mentioned earlier, in spite of being staunchly Muslim,

¹⁵ The head of the Kabardino-Balkaria section of the Russian Prosecutor-General’s Investigative Committee, Valery Ustov, in interview to www.yuga.ru, May 28.

the population of the Caucasus has never welcomed radical Islam. Radical *Salafi* militants, both home-grown and of foreign origin, have found it extremely difficult to hold their ground being surrounded by a moderate *Sufi* population: a population worshipping and respecting their elders, customs and traditions rather than tenets of traditional Islam (Leahy 2008). The incumbent and former leaders of the insurgency were well aware of that fact. Basayev and Umarov, as well as Ingush leader Yevloyev and Kabardino-Balkaria's Astemirov, have all been moderate Muslims, rather than radical fundamentalists. The "founding fathers" have repeatedly welcomed radicals and continue doing so in an attempt to win their favour and vouchsafe financial support from wealthy Arab donors in the Middle East.¹⁶ However, the use of *jihād* slogans has more of a symbolic rather than real purpose for the insurgency. There is no doubt that religious motives attract misguided and unemployed youth into the ranks of 'mujahideen' (Vatchagayev January 15, 2009). However, the core of the insurgency, as well as its recent conscripts, is clearly drawn to the cause not from a sheer religious zeal. What then drives recruits to the jamaats?

A number of experts (Vatchagayev, O'Loughlin, Falkowski, Tishkov) advocate a theory of economic "grievances" as the main cause of the conflict in North Caucasus. It is hard to argue with the theory of economic plight in the region as being one of the main causes of the conflict. Chechnya, Ingushetia, and Dagestan are on the bottom of employment, income, and development scales in the Russian Federation (Figures 7-8). "On average, around 70% of the budgets are formed around federal subsidies" (Stanovaya 2005). A few existing and operational industries in Ingushetia and Dagestan are almost stagnant, with unemployment being rampant and corruption crippling all stages of governance. Undoubtedly, the scores of unemployed young people, with little to no prospects for a future in the impoverished Caucasian republics, chose joining rebels as a reasonable alternative.

Nevertheless, although this thesis does not dismiss economic "grievances" as a serious cause for the conflict, it cannot be considered as the main reason behind the escalation of violence. As suggested by Gerber & Mendelson (2006), the majority of the population in Dagestan and Kabardino-Balkaria do not consider themselves to be on the brink of poverty and, although that cannot be classified as wealthy by the standards of Russian Federation, not in a poor category either. In spite of fearing for their employment prospects and low-paying jobs, the majority interviewed were not scared of being left hopelessly unemployed and having no opportunities for survival. A study on Ingushetia by Sokirianskaia (2009) also describes close family and clan connections as a means of material support and alleviation of poverty. In other words, coping mechanisms within North Caucasian societies, such as clan structures in Ingushetia, ethnic linkages in Dagestan and family connections in Kabardino-Balkaria, which have developed over centuries of economic plight under the Russian Empire, Soviet Union, and Russian Federation, are still in place.

¹⁶ Foreign funding might be adding a few coins into Umarov's budget, but it almost never reaches insurgent groups outside of Chechnya, who have developed their own local networks of financing. (Tlisova, Fatima, Exclusive interview with Anzor Astemirov, March 2009, North Caucasus Analysis, Vol. 10, Issue 11, 2009).

Figure 7: Employment and Unemployment rates, North Caucasus, 2008

| Region | Employment % | Unemployment % | Position of the region in Russia (out of 86) | |
|-------------------------------|--------------|----------------|--|--------------|
| | | | Employment | Unemployment |
| Adygeya | 55.8 | 7.7 | 77 | 51 |
| Daghestan | 58.2 | 13.4 | 71 | 76 |
| Ingushetia | 24.0 | 55.0 | 83 | 83 |
| Kabardino-Balkaria | 48.0 | 18.3 | 80 | 80 |
| Karachay-Cherkessia | 51.3 | 16.0 | 79 | 78 |
| North Ossetia | 59.5 | 10.1 | 63 | 72 |
| Chechnya | 38.3 | 35.5 | 82 | 82 |
| Krasnodar krai | 62.4 | 4.8 | 43 | 11 |
| Stavropol krai | 59.8 | 7.8 | 62 | 53 |
| Rostov oblast | 61.5 | 6.6 | 53 | 34 |
| South Federal District | 58.2 | 10.2 | | |

Source: Federal Service of State Statistics of the Russian Federation

Figure 8: Federal subsidies, 2004

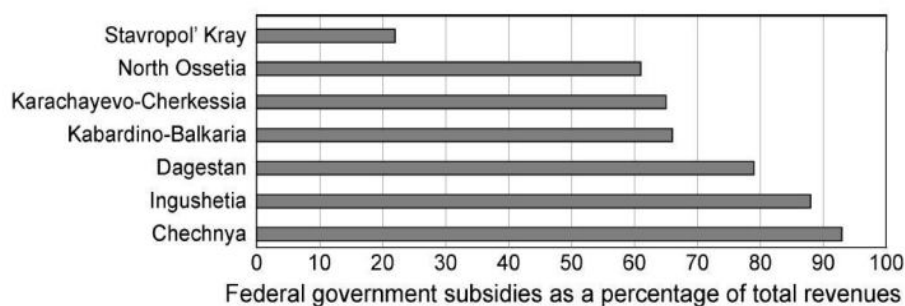


Fig. 1. Percentage of republic/krai revenues provided by central government (*O sostoyanii*, 2004).

Source: Vendina et al, 2007

Thus, it remains an open question as to what drives recruits into the forest camps of Chechen war veterans, years after the ground causes of Chechen conflicts have lost their validity. It might be clear that Umarov, as the 'last of the Mohicans' of Chechen warlords, hunted by the Kadyrov's clan for blood revenge, has no other options except war. The utopian Caucasus Emirate is seen by the survivors of the Chechen resistance as a last hope to avoid being squeezed between a rock and a hard place: the Kremlin and Kadyrov. However, what pushes thousands of people from other parts of North Caucasus to pursue the idea of an ambiguous pan-Caucasian state by openly challenging federal and local governments and bringing a bloody havoc to the region? Why, instead of losing popularity, as the Kremlin's leaders predicted, does the insurgency gain more strength and escalate violence at an alarming rate?

2.5 The role of civil society in conflict escalation

In comparison to the issue of aid efficiency, which is a topic hardly ever mentioned in scholarly literature, the reasons for conflict escalation in the North Caucasus is an area contested by experts. A number of analysts,¹⁷ who do not deny the significance of the role civil society, on the other hand, yet on the other do not consider it as an important issue in the current conflict escalation. Such an opinion can be summed up in the words of Souleimanov (2010):

“I do think that the weakness of civil society in the North Caucasus has played a role in this regard, but at the same time I argue that some other factors have been much more influential in shaping the form and scope of the ongoing violence (such as patterns of traditional society/values - tribalism, blood feud, anti-Russian sentiment, etc.).” (Interview, Souleimanov, 27.08.2010)

Another opinion existing in scholarly circles, considers the weakness of civil society as a direct result of the conflict rather as its cause:

“... The weakness of civil society is probably an outcome of the current war (and the preceding one) rather than a cause of it. In some areas (i.e. Ingushetia, Dagestan) it is the strength of civil society, in the form of jamaats that may actually be the problem. This process is aided by the weakness of the state (itself a function of the wars), which allows these groups to offer services and some measure of protection to new recruits. Strengthening civil society might lead to a curbing of state abuses (especially in Chechnya) but it is unlikely to stop the conflict(s) entirely...” (Interview, Lyall, 28.08.2010)

However, the most wide spread opinion is that the conflict is an outcome of economic and political grievances, in particular, unemployment and poverty and the oppressive Russian policies in the region. Briefly summarized by O’Loughlin (2010):

“... the main reason for the spread of violence is the endemic poverty and unemployment especially among young men ...and also the heavy-handed and repressive nature of the Russian response in alliance with local militias (Kadyrov etc.).” (Interview, O’Loughlin, 27.08.2010)

The theory of economic and political grievances is also reinforced, in some experts’ opinion, by the centuries of Russian domination in a region religiously and culturally different from the rest of Russia.¹⁸

This thesis does not reject the above mentioned reasons for the conflict escalation in the North Caucasus. Instead, its aim is to suggest a yet another, previously overlooked issue the role of civil society in the conflict. This study supports the assertion that civil society’s role in the current conflict is much greater than initially assumed. In order to validate this hypothesis, the thesis examines the current condition of civil society in the region, in general, and in the three republics under study, in particular. A number of indicators, mentioned in Chapter 5, suggest that the decline of civil society and the development of the current conflict in the North Caucasus roughly coincide. In addition, such a decline has been marked by an increase of unemployment, which came as no surprise amidst failed development efforts, and as a result of the incompetence and

¹⁷ See Souleimanov 2010, Vatchagaev 2009, 2010.

¹⁸ See Vatchagaev 2010, Falkowski 2010.

inefficiency of local authorities. These factors have been emphasized by other experts. However, the possibility that the presence of a functional and independent civil society may have, at the very least, reduced the scale and gravity of negative factors, has been largely neglected and overlooked. Although the assumption that there exists a direct linkage between the decline of civil society's performance and growth of violence might be disputed, the fact that empowerment and strengthening of civil society is crucial for peace processes is undisputed.

Nevertheless, the majority of experts are likely to agree that the main reason for aid efforts to fail is an on-going conflict, in conjunction with neglect of the state and a lack of international attention. In addition, it is the weakness of civil society that attributes to the failure of aid efforts. Thus, a well-functioning civil society is needed both to contain the conflict and to assist in effective aid provision. However, as shown in this thesis, civil society in all three North Caucasian republics discussed here, is at its beginning. If given similar international focus as that which development and humanitarian groups have received in the neighbouring Chechnya, both local and foreign NGOs could have brought serious changes to Dagestan, Ingushetia, and Kabardino-Balkaria. Notably, that Chechnya is still far from success: ruled by an authoritarian regime, which brutally suppresses any opposition and rejects human and civil rights of its citizens, Chechnya is suffering from insurgency and serious unemployment. However, for good or for bad, a decade long conflict has attracted a great deal of international attention, which is leading the republic slowly out of its crisis. In contrast, Ingushetia, Dagestan, and Kabardino-Balkaria are still in the shadow of Chechnya. The names of these three republics are mostly unheard of outside of the Russian Federation, whereas the levels of violence in these small North Caucasian republics are significantly higher than those in Chechnya.

2.6 Conclusion

The hypothesis, proposed in this thesis, suggests that the recent escalation of violence is related to an absence of independent civil society, a mediating factor between the state and the citizens. Hence, violations of human rights, failure of democracy, uncontrolled corruption, unprecedented centralization, and general distrust of governance are all fuelling the conflict. Ruling the Caucasus with an iron fist, the Kremlin turns a blind eye to the lawless behaviour of local and federal authorities at the same time outlawing civil and social activities which are not initiated by the state. The lack of an independent civil society capable of serving as a check to the government and to ensure the rights and freedoms of vulnerable minorities¹⁹ continues the vicious cycle of violence in the North Caucasus. As a result, both humanitarian efforts aimed at alleviating the immediate physical needs of the population and long-term rehabilitation and development projects often become hostages to the protracted conflict.²⁰

In order to validate the role of civil society in conflict (de)escalation, it is necessary to scrutinize the role that civil society plays in the North Caucasus. Participation of civil society is needed to promote peace efforts in the region that should remain a priority for

¹⁹ In this particular case, North Caucasian ethnicities in the Russian Federation are the minorities

²⁰ This assumption is further developed in Chapter 5, part 5.2.

long term stability and development. Often neglected by the analysts of the North Caucasus conflict, civil society is one of the main protagonists in the conflict area.

3. Civil society in the North Caucasus

“Armed conflict is a fundamental obstacle to development. During and in the aftermath of conflict, high hopes are placed on the de-escalating or conflict-transforming power of civil society and its contribution to sustainable peace. From this perspective, citizens, communities and civil society organizations are perceived as key actors in overcoming existing conflict lines, factionalism and organized violence (Paffenholz & Spurk 2006:1).”

It is easy to overestimate the role of civil society in conflict resolution and peace-building, as well as in development and humanitarian action. Civil actors are ideally expected to build a link between belligerents, and, in particular in intra-state conflicts, to serve as a nexus between the government and the people. The role of civil society in the current conflict in the North Caucasus is ambiguous and elusive. The physical presence of civil society on the scene and its actual absence as an actor and a participant capable of affecting the situation leads to hypothesis that it is the role of civil groups in the region that needs to be studied in order to comprehend the reasons and causes for the escalation of violence. This chapter reviews the role of civil society in the North Caucasus by scrutinizing its history, development, and transitions. Analysis of the local and international NGO sectors presented in this chapter provides clues to what the current role of civil society is in the conflict in the North Caucasus, what potential it has for conflict resolution, and how effective it is in mediating between the state and the citizens.

3.1 Conceptual definition of civil society

The concept of civil society used in this thesis defines civil groups as independent from state, political parties and market entities which operate in a public sphere. Among the multitude of existing definitions of civil society, this study adopts the concept of civil society suggested by Habermas (1996:367), which describes civil society as:

“...composed of those more or less spontaneously emergent associations, organizations, and movements that, attuned to how societal problems resonate in the private life spheres, distil and transmit such reactions in amplified form to the public sphere. The core of civil society comprises a network of associations that institutionalizes problem-solving discourses on questions of general interest inside the framework of organized public spheres.”

Generally, the civil society described in this thesis is not limited to conventional NGOs and other non-profit interest groups. It also includes religious and, to some extent, clan associations and grass-roots movements. However, this study insists that only groups pursuing democratic and egalitarian values, based on internationally accepted norms of civil liberties and human rights, are likely to succeed in conflict resolution in the North Caucasus. Although civil society alone cannot ensure the respect of human rights in an area of armed conflict and hold an authoritarian state responsible for the lack of transparency and the inefficiency of governance, it can, nevertheless, serve as a system of checks and balances as well as a “whistle blower” capable raising international and domestic awareness of the conflict.

Civil society in the North Caucasus, in spite of its weaknesses, is already known for serving in such a capacity. A good example of that is the First Chechen war (1994-96), during which international and local civil groups managed to hold the state accountable for the atrocities of war and to ensure that human rights violations were not concealed by the state and the military. The weakness of civil society in the on-going conflict is not simply in its inability to implement peace-building which, it might be argued, is not in the mandates of many humanitarian and development groups, but in its inefficiency as a balance between the state and the people.

3.2 Historical background

The development of civil society in Ingushetia, Dagestan, and Kabardino-Balkaria began with the end of Soviet rule in the first turbulent years of the early 1990s. Khalidov (2010), notes that by the frequency of civil activities, meetings, referendums, and social events these three republics could easily challenge any other region of the Russian Federation. Due to societal reliance on clan, family, and community in the North Caucasus, most civil associations operated at a municipal or district level and were often of a political nature (Ibid).

Local civil society took different forms in the three republics under study. In Kabardino-Balkaria, civil groups formed along ethnic lines, i.e., predominantly Kabardin and Balkar. In comparison to other parts of the Caucasus, the North-West has experienced only a low level of national revival spirit, which can be seen in civil society development in Kabardino-Balkaria. In their nature, civil associations often followed the all-Russian NGO standard and were closer to the “international” standard for non-governmental organizations. In Ingushetia, grass-roots civil society took the form of *teip* (clan) revival (Sokirianskaia 2009:270). However, in comparison to Chechen *teip* culture, which survived the Soviet era and served as a powerful national mobilization tool in the years of struggle for independence, the *teip* culture in Ingushetia began to revive almost from scratch in the 1990s (Ibid:272). In spite of failed efforts of several large *teips* to take part in the political life of the republic, the *teip* culture remained in the realm of heritage preservation and cultural rituals (Ibid: 274). In Dagestan, civil mobilization developed in the form of *jamaats* (not to be confused with insurgent *jamaats*), or religious communities, which are often based along ethnic lines. In spite of being structured upon religious tenets (mostly of *Sufi* trend), *jamaats* are communities, mostly in rural areas, preserving ethnic culture and traditions (Gammer 2005 & McGregor 2006).

Both Russian and international civil groups entered the North Caucasus at the start of the first Chechen war in 1994. Mainly operating from Ingushetia, Dagestan, and Stavropol (only a few NGOs and IGOs dared to work in Chechnya due to high security risks) a plethora of civil groups was dealing with issues ranging from IDP relief to human rights and sustainable development. It is noteworthy that, before the start of the first Chechen campaign in 1994, the civil sector in Russia met few obstacles from the state and many international as well as the majority of local groups did not even have to register with the state (Jung 2005). However, loud criticism of state’s heavy handed policies in Chechnya, unleashed by the NGO sector and, in particular, by human rights groups, pushed Yeltsin’s administration into tightening its grip on civil society. International outrage over Moscow’s ‘dirty’ war in Chechnya might as well be considered

as one of the main reasons for the Russian withdrawal from the conflict in 1996. However, the state has learned its lesson and has promulgated a series of regulations and laws “On Public Associations”, “On Non-Profit Organizations”, and “On Charity Organizations” with a goal of establishing state control over the civil society (Richter 2008).

Putin’s presidency marked a new stage of state interventionism in the civil sector regarding the Russian civil society, and NGO sector, in particular, as a western oriented and therefore, “serving interests of foreign governments” (Weigle 2002), Putin’s administration unleashed a domestication program for the Russian civil society. Starting with the Civic Forum in 2001, created to promote “a corporatist umbrella organization to facilitate communication between civil society representatives and the federal authorities” (Squier 2002; Nikitin & Buchanan 2002) and finally establishing a Public Chamber.²¹ The infamous 2006 NGO Law was the final step in Putin’s policy to gain control over the civil sector in the country. In brief, the new legislation required all foreign civil groups operating on the territory of the Russian Federation to submit a new registration and all foreign-funded civil groups to submit detailed financial statements as well as detailed materials on all activities the group had carried out so far. If any one of groups’ activities did not conform to the group’s official statement of its activities, the group could be shut down. Thus, in 2007, the Federal State Registration Service, created by the new law, rejected the applications of 12,000 NGOs, most of which had to suspend their activities (Kanevskaya 2008). The same year only 216,000 from approximately 500,000 Russian NGOs managed to attain registrations (Gee 2007). In 2008, 280,000 NGOs succeeded in satisfying the state’s requirements for non-profit organizations (Kanevskaya 2008).

The majority of ‘unwanted’ NGOs were working in the North Caucasus. Thus, in the immediate aftermath of the adoption of the NGO law, organizations actively criticizing the Russian government’s policies in the North Caucasus were banned from working in Russia (Dzutsev July 29, 2009). The ban was later removed on the condition that the groups change their negative standing. A few international NGOs working in humanitarian field were also forbidden to work in the country.²² There are a number of reasons why the Russian government is openly hostile to the independent civil sector and why it considers humanitarian efforts in the conflict area of the North Caucasus as detrimental to the state.

First, a number of ‘color’ revolutions in post-Soviet states, in particular those in Georgia and Ukraine, toppling pro-Russian authoritarian leaders and replacing them with more democracy-friendly regimes, has taught the Russian administration a lesson on how dangerous it is to have a liberal and outspoken civil society in the country. Creation of

²¹ According to the legal statute of the Russian Federation, the major purpose of the Public Chamber is to: facilitate coordination between the socially significant interests of citizens of Russia, NGOs, and national and local authorities, in order to resolve the most important problems of economic and social development, to ensure national security, and to defend the rights and freedoms of citizens of Russia, the Russian constitutional system, and the democratic principles of the development of civil society in Russia, <http://www.oprf.ru/eng/about/>.

²² Czech NGO People in Need is still banned from Russia (as of summer 2009), according to the Eurasia Daily monitor, Jamestown Foundation.

the Public Chamber and the so-called ‘domestication’ process, which encouraged civil groups to accept the state’s patronage in return for financial and moral support, have both been aimed at replacing a ‘pro-western’ and, therefore, dangerous civil society with ‘all-Russian’ civil groups working in agreement with the government and being a part of it. In essence, Putin’s administration (as well as the current Medvedev’s administration) considered that civil society should exist and operate for the purpose and welfare of the state apparatus (Richter 2008). Accordingly, Russian civil society has to function as one of the mechanisms of the state; it should be financed by the state and it should be accountable to the government. The inflow of foreign funds to Russian civil society has been perceived by the state as a direct intervention by foreign governments in Russian political life and as an attempt to dictate their own political agenda using Russian civil society as their tool. The fact that more than half of Russian civil groups relied entirely on foreign assistance was clearly humiliating for the state. In Putin’s words, most of the new legislation (2006 NGO Law) targets those: “who wander like jackals near foreign embassies (...) in order to get support from foreign funds and states, and not from their own people.”²³ Simultaneously, foreign NGOs and IGOs are normally perceived as working for foreign governments and, therefore, they have to be controlled and restricted.

Second, Putin’s administration obviously learned from the previous mistakes of allowing local and international civil society to operate unrestricted in the North Caucasus. Often the defeat in the first Chechen campaign (1994-96) has been blamed on intensive international pressure which became possible as a result of an active NGO campaign aimed at raising the awareness and concern of the international community. With the start of the second Chechen campaign in 1999, and the subsequent spillover of the conflict in 2003-04 to the rest of the region, Putin and Medvedev’s governments had no desire to repeat Yeltsin’s decision to allow the international community, represented by IGOs and NGOs, to act freely in the North Caucasus. Although the idea to restrict civil society’s freedom in the North Caucasus was not the main reason behind the adoption of the 2006 NGO Law,²⁴ it was undoubtedly one of its main imperatives (Richter 2008). In May 2010, president Medvedev held talks with local NGOs in the North Caucasus. In the course of discussions, he promised to create a Public Chamber in the North Caucasus Federal District, similar to the one in Moscow (Dzutsev August 27, 2010).

A third reason why civil society has become one of the enemies of the Russian state in the North Caucasus also lies in the official definition of the conflict taking place in that region. The situation in the North Caucasus is officially defined by the president of the Russian Federation, Dmitry Medvedev, as a “struggle against terrorism.”²⁵ After the cancellation of the “counter-terrorism” operation in Chechnya in April 2009 (which began in August 1999), the president emphasized “the clear improvement of the situation in the North Caucasus” republics and concluded that “Russia’s fight with terrorism is successful.”²⁶ As previously mentioned, the Russian government does not accept the existence of insurgent groups in the region, instead identifying them as

²³ Vladimir Putin, in press interview, November 2006, quoted by Kanevskaya (2008).

²⁴ The 2006 NGO Law targeted, first of all, the foreign funding of Russian civil groups.

²⁵ Dmitry Medvedev, in a live broadcast on three national TV channels on December 24, 2009.

²⁶ Ibid.

“illegal gang formations.” Accordingly, the main goal of the federal government is restoration of ‘law and order’ in the North Caucasus, which are to remain a part of the Russian Federation.

Lastly, considering the Russian government’s position with the regard to NGOs, it is not difficult to imagine that the state does not see any necessity for humanitarian intervention in the region, in particular by advocacy groups. For instance, in April 2008, the head of the Federal Security Service (FSB) openly accused foreign NGOs of recruiting fighters for insurgents in the North Caucasus and the Vice-speaker of the Russian Federation Council came up with a list of several dozen international civil groups allegedly assisting the militants (Dzutsev July 29, 2009). In spite of a number of amendments to the 2006 NGO Law, attempted to simplify registration procedures for foreign and local NGOs, any foreign funding for local NGOs working in the North Caucasus is effectively blocked by the state (Ibid). For the moment there is, however, no evidence of either foreign or local NGOs supporting the militants, which might be virtually impossible considering the threats of imprisonment and further persecutions for collaborating with insurgents.

The state’s policy of outlawing all communications with militants is aimed at supporting its statements on the absence of any armed conflict in the North Caucasus and prevents insurgents from gaining the status of a credible actor in the conflict. Seemingly, the state has drawn a lesson from the first Chechen war (1994-96) when a number of NGOs, both local and international, actively collaborated with militants on prisoner exchange and served as mediators on cease fire agreements between rebels and federal troops (German 2003). Putin’s stance of ‘no talks with terrorists’ put an end to any possibility of mediation by civil groups. However, recent data on the escalation of the conflict in the last five years suggests that Putin’s & Medvedev’s strategy of ‘no talks’ has led to a dramatic increase in violence (CSIS 2008), often compared in scale to a civil war (Baev 2010), which now engulfs the whole region of the North Caucasus.

3.3 NGO presence in the North Caucasus 2009-10

In spite of a range of obstacles created by the state, there are still plenty of international and local NGOs and IGOs operating in the North Caucasus as of 2010. The United Nations in the North Caucasus are represented by UNDP, UNDSS, UNESCO, UNICEF, and UNHCR. Altogether, there are about 10 to 12 UN agencies operating in the region. The main aid providers in the region are the Danish Refugee Council, Islamic Relief, ICRC, The International Rescue Committee (IRC), The International Medical Corps (IMC), The World Food Program (WFP), The World Health Organization (WHO), Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), Amnesty International, Non-Violence International (NI), and others.²⁷ There also a number of NGOs from the Russian Federation working in the region: Caucasian Refugee Council (CRC), Peace Mission of General Lebed, Voice of the Mountains, etc. (OCHA 2007). The main target groups are IDPs and civilians, in particular children and women. According to UNHCR 2009, the largest concentrations

²⁷ Additional organizations: Association of Media Managers (ARS-Press), Children's Fund of North Ossetia-Alania, Civic Assistance, Centre for Inter-Cultural Education Ethnosfera, EquiLibre Solidarity, Guild of Russian Filmmakers, Magee WomenCare International, Memorial Human Rights Centre, Nizam, Stichting Russian Justice Initiative, Vesta, and many others.

of IDPs are in Ingushetia, Dagestan and Chechnya. The NGO and IGO community in the North Caucasus work in development, education, health care, relief and rehabilitation.

At first glance, it seems that humanitarian action in the North Caucasus is progressively underway and is, according to the Russian mass media, successful in bringing stability and peace to the region. However, a brief investigation of civil groups' areas of priority reveals that there are no conflict resolution efforts taking place in the North Caucasus. It becomes obvious that most, if not all, of the humanitarian efforts in the region are of a post-conflict nature. Upon closer examination, one may find peace-building programs conducted by Non-Violence International (NI) in several North Caucasian republics, Peacebuilding UK projects, and a UNICEF program on peace education in Ingushetia and Chechnya seems to complete the picture.²⁸ However, the NI programs are mostly in sport and extra-curricular activities for youngsters (NI 2010) and the UNICEF program offers peace classes for kids (UNICEF 2010). Both are undoubtedly of great importance. However, neither of the two can be considered as a viable peace-building effort in a region torn apart by an armed conflict claiming hundreds of lives every year. A number of local and Russian NGOs engage on similar projects, namely Voice of the Mountains, Serlo, and Memorial. There are no attempts to mediate the conflict and similarly no attempts at bringing the warring sides to the negotiating table.

Paffenholz & Spurk (2006:13) define seven basic functions of civil society: protection of citizens, monitoring for accountability, advocacy and public communication, socialization, building community, facilitation between citizens and state, and service delivery.²⁹ Seemingly, the civil groups operating in the North Caucasus are only engaged in the last function, i.e., service delivery. Significant as it is, service delivery does not provide long-term solutions to the conflict. Remarkably, most IGOs and NGOs working

²⁸ These programs are discussed in more detail in Chapter 4 of this thesis.

²⁹ "Protection of citizens: This basic function of civil society consists of protecting lives, freedom and property against attacks and despotism by the state or other authorities.

- Monitoring for accountability: consists mainly in monitoring the activities of the central powers, state apparatus and government. This is also a way of controlling central authorities and holding them to account. Monitoring can refer to various issues, such as human rights, public spending, corruption, and primary school enrolments.
- Advocacy and public communication: Civil society has an important task to articulate interests—especially of marginalized groups—and to create channels of communication to bring them to the public agenda, thus raising public awareness and debating them.
- Socialization: With its rich associational life civil society contributes to the formation and practice of democratic attitudes among citizens. Thus people learn to develop tolerance, mutual trust and the ability to find compromise by democratic procedures.
- Building community: Engagement and participation in voluntary associations also has the potential to strengthen bonds among citizens, i.e., building social capital.
- Intermediation and facilitation between citizens and state: Civil society and its organizations fulfill the role of balancing the power of and negotiating with the state by establishing diverse relations (communication, negotiation, control) of various interest groups or independent institutions to the state.
- Service delivery: The direct provision of services to the citizens forms an important part of the activities of civil society associations, e.g. self-help groups. Especially, in cases where the state is weak it becomes a basic activity to provide shelter, health or education."(Paffenholz & Spurk 2006:13)

in the North Caucasus admit the gravity of the situation and rapidly deteriorating security (ICRC 2010). Consequently, one may ask why there are no efforts at conflict resolution and peace-building in the North Caucasus. The answer may be simply that civil groups have already had a bitter lesson in confronting the state and, apparently, instead of leaving the region, prefer to engage on areas where they can work unobstructed by the state. Thus, for instance, the UN agencies in the region work on development projects and employment, targeting the root causes of violence. However, only a handful of civil groups have actual presence on the ground in the areas where the rates of violence are the highest. In its 2009 report, UNHCR emphasized the tense security situation in Ingushetia, Dagestan, southern Chechnya, and Kabardino-Balkaria, forcing the organization to close its office in Nazran, the capital of Kabardino-Balkaria and postpone opening its field office in Grozny, capital of Chechnya. Similarly, many other IGOs and NGOs keep their offices in the relative safety of Stavropol region or in the western part of the North Caucasus, which has the lowest rates of violence.

In spite of the fact that the majority of civil groups in region remain silent on the on-going situation, there are a handful of rights groups who are vocal enough to criticize federal and local authorities. Namely, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Moscow Helsinki Group, Russian Movement for Human Rights, and Mothers of Dagestan for Human Rights are keeping a close eye on abductions of people by law enforcement bodies, torture, ill-treatment, and other violations of human rights. These groups, however, have only limited success, since they represent a marginal part of civil society in the region. They are also far from being able to build a link between the state and the people needed to bridge the mutual distrust. In the meantime, such prominent and powerful organizations as ICRC and UN agencies tend to be wary of criticizing the authorities publicly.

The Russian government's position towards the third sector operating in the North Caucasus can be summed up as:

"The Kremlin did tolerate foreign-funded organizations whose activities might further the state's own agenda: organizations that helped educate enforcement agencies on domestic violence or the trafficking of women, helped preserve existing natural areas or helped monitor conditions in Russian prisons, had relatively few problems working with the authorities, even if they received foreign grants. Those organizations that criticized the construction of oil pipelines, the dumping of chemical or radioactive waste by defence industries, or human rights violations in Chechnya were portrayed as alien and even harmful to the interests of society (Richter 2008:14)."

In a sense, the Kremlin's approach to non-profit organizations in the North Caucasus is very controversial. On the one hand, groups working on development and rehabilitation are not limited in their work and often seem to be welcomed to work in the region. On the other hand, NGOs are expected to limit their range of activities to that of service-providers only. This role limits them to supplying material aid without any possibility of affecting the situation with any form of advocacy undesirable to the state. Although of great importance, the work of many humanitarian organizations in the North Caucasus seems futile, given high levels of corruption among local officials and Moscow's reluctance to pressure its loyal local elites, which provide no prospects for development and humanitarian assistance to actually improve the desperate social and economic

situation in the region. In the meantime, unemployment rates in the North Caucasus are among the highest in the Russian Federation (Vatchagayev January 15, 2009). An operational environment of this kind might seem endurable for organizations focusing entirely on humanitarian service delivery. However, most of the groups working on human rights, peace-building, and other forms of advocacy either have to follow the path taken by the Non-violence International and limit themselves to low scale projects in cooperation with the federal authorities or criticize the situation from a safe distance, similar to Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, without being able to implement programs on the ground.

Slim (1997) compared humanitarians with sinners from Dante's *Inferno*, condemned to remain on the outer part of hell for being neutral throughout their lives. Nevertheless, Slim admitted that modern humanitarian workers are far from being silent neutrals (Slim 1997:4). They have 'moral standing' and professional responsibility. However, the conflict in the North Caucasus is one of the places where civil workers, whether they are engaged in humanitarian aid delivery or development and human rights, are bound to remain neutral observers, rather than guarantors of civil rights and freedoms.

It is important to note that the current conflict in the North Caucasus, due to the dispersed and selective nature of the violence, does not create IDPs of its own. However, it continues to prevent Chechen IDPs in Ingushetia from returning to their homes. Large numbers of Ingush IDPs, according to Ingush authorities 21,000 (Norwegian Refugee Council 2006), are also settled in North Ossetia, unable to return home. In Ingushetia and Dagestan, high levels of insecurity prevent transportation of food and medicaments to the rural population, often creating humanitarian emergencies in the winter months. Development projects, such as construction of roads and irrigation systems, infrastructure renovation and creation of new jobs, are continuously thwarted by violence and lack of human security. There are no actual humanitarian needs in Kabardino-Balkaria at the moment. However, with the continued escalation of violence, the republic is at risk of plunging into a deeper economic crisis. Formerly thriving Kabardino-Balkaria's tourist industry is in gridlock now while insurgent bands are roaming the vicinities of previously popular ski resorts (Vatchagaev April 7, 2010). Nevertheless, it is human rights and civil liberties that are the main problems in need of civil society's attention.

3.4 Civil society and the roots of the conflict

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the current conflict in the North Caucasus is not a nationalist-liberation struggle, nor a religious fundamentalist, and even less so an economic 'grievances' issue. Amazingly enough, for more than a decade after the fall of the USSR, Dagestan, Ingushetia and Kabardino-Balkaria, underdeveloped and impoverished, remained peaceful and successfully fended off nationalists and Islamists only to explode in the mid-2000s like a time-bomb. In spite of economic deficiencies and large-scale warfare in next-door Chechnya, the three republics managed to maintain a standard of civil liberty, ensuring freedoms and respect of basic rights for their citizens throughout 1990s. Yeltsin's famous notion of 'take as much autonomy as you can swallow' served well in the sense of allowing the North Caucasian republics to maintain dignity and self-consciousness while preserving loyalty to the Russian Federation. On

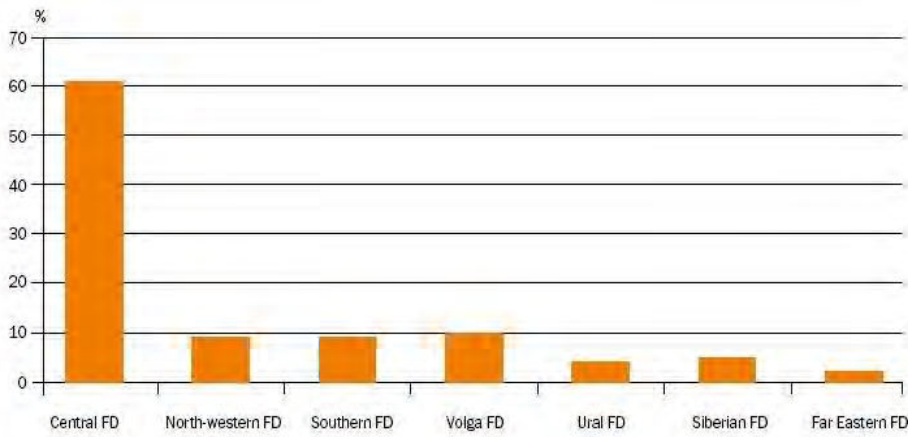
the other hand, Putin's 'witch hunt' for nationalists and Islamists, led to a tremendous loss of autonomy for the republics, accompanied by extra-judicial executions, kidnappings, police brutality, and, most of all, restrictions on civil liberties. As suggested by Souleimanov (2010):

"...the blood feud; and the archaic concept of honor is still intact ...which explains why the level of violence is so high in Chechnya, Ingushetia and Dagestan. To put it in other words: if you offend me or offend, kill or lethally injure a relative of mine, I shall do my best to retaliate – regardless of what my political persuasion actually is Because I am alone and the state authorities are strong and corrupt, I need some backing, whether organizational or financial – to achieve my goal – and that is why I am very likely to join resistance fighters up in the mountains." (Souleimanov in Tatum 2010)

The state's assault on civil freedom, a part of which was an earlier described crackdown on NGOs, is continuously forcing the escalation of violence. Besides, the state's oppression, apart from inciting the violence, makes immediate humanitarian relief inefficient and long-term development and rehabilitation unsuccessful.

The indigenous civil society in Ingushetia, Dagestan, and Kabardino-Balkaria, the creation of which is mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, for the most part did not manage to evolve into a functional local civil society. In fact, most of the early civil groups have either developed into political parties or, on acquiring the official status of NGO, became dependent on the Public Chamber and the state (Khalidov 2010). Discussed earlier Medvedev's project of creating a 'branch' of the Public Chamber for the North Caucasus is expected to start in the summer of 2010. However, even the state-controlled Public Chamber, realizes the gravity of the situation in the North Caucasus and most of its members have few hopes for a positive resolution any time soon. In the words of one of the members of the Public Chamber: "In terms of development of civil society in the North Caucasus there are no reasons for optimism. The situation is serious and it is beyond our strengths to solve it."³⁰ As a matter of fact, created by Putin's administration as a tool of the state to control over civil society in Russia, the Public Chamber has almost no power at the grass-root level. According to the existing data (Figure 9), local and Russian NGOs working in the region do not receive any preferential treatment in terms of funding. As depicted in the graph below NGOs of the Southern Federal District, which includes all of the North Caucasus, each receive five times less funding than the Central FD. In addition, NGOs working in the North Caucasus, in particular rights and advocacy groups, have fewer opportunities of receiving funds from foreign donors than civil groups working in other regions of the Russian Federation. Whether the North Caucasian NGOs are under-funded on purpose or not, limited funding combined with rigid state control makes them weaker and less vocal.

³⁰ Nikolai Swanidze in an interview to the "Caucasus Knot" on February 18, 2010.

Figure 9: Distribution of state-allocated grants to NGOs

Source: Public Chamber of RF

In sum, the North Caucasus is a region with no independent local civil society and with a considerable presence of international IGOs and NGOs mostly engaged in service delivery with a limited advocacy function. This study raises several questions: why do the humanitarian and development efforts of local and international NGOs not actually lead to positive outcomes in the North Caucasus? Why do most NGOs and IGOs engage in post-conflict projects in an area of an on-going armed conflict? Is the international community ignorant to the fact that billions in aid money is poured into a region which is ravaged by an intra-state conflict? At the moment, the available literature does not provide answers to the above questions. However, at least two factors appear to have contributed to this current state of affairs.

First, the escalation of large-scale violence in the North Caucasus is a phenomenon of the last two or three years. The rates of violence prior to 2007 were virtually within the norm of daily life in the region. Besides, after the death of Basayev in 2006 it was expected that the insurgent underground would lose its capacity of coordinating large scale operations, such as the Beslan and Nazran raids. In fact, there were no indicators of the possibility of violence spreading in scale and frequency. In conjunction with a continuous denial of the conflict by the state authorities, the sudden outburst of violence was initially regarded as a phase which would fade away within a year or so.

Second, the end of full-scale hostilities in Chechnya was widely perceived as the anticipated end of the Chechen conflict and served as a signal for aid agencies to start post-conflict development and humanitarian assistance projects. Some of these projects started as late as 2007³¹ and were designed to work for a multi-sector approach to development, reconstruction, reconciliation, and rehabilitation in the region, in particularly Chechnya. Often Chechnya was considered as a source and epicentre of the conflict in the North Caucasus (Vendina et al 2007) and, it was assumed, by appeasing and developing Chechnya the issue would be solved. The violence in the rest of the region was seen as an after-shock of the Chechen war (Smirnov 2007), and the eradication of local Chechen war veterans in other republics put an end to hostilities.

³¹ 2007 Inter-Agency Transitional Workplan for the North Caucasus- a multi-agency development and reconstruction plan, involving 9 UN agencies and 12 NGOs with initial budget of US \$ 79.6, at <http://www.unrussia.ru/en/groups/kavkaz.html> (retrieved on 17.07.2010).

However, the events of last three years have proven the opposite. Ruled by the iron fist of Kadyrov and lavishly financed by the Kremlin, Chechnya, as might be expected, is relatively quiet. At the moment, it is Ingushetia and Dagestan who are competing for the title of the most violent place in the Caucasus. The Kremlin's attempts to replicate the 'Chechen success' in other republics by promoting a 'strong leader' have led to even further intensification of violence, as can be seen in Ingushetia and Dagestan.

3.5 Conclusion

As this study suggests, in the absence of peace and human security, development and reconstruction projects are unlikely to succeed. The source of the escalation of violence must be the decline of civil society and the weakening of civil society as a force capable of countering the state. By making the state accountable and its citizens protected from the state and also empowered, civil society represented by both local and international groups would ensure stability and peace. In the environment that exists in the North Caucasus, creating new jobs and reconstructing the infrastructure would provide little incentive for the members of the armed underground to return to peaceful life as long as state orchestrated violations of human rights continue. Therefore, it is suggested here that the primary activity to be conducted by civil groups in the region should be peace-building. Cessation of continuous violence, in its turn, will ensure that humanitarian and development projects of a post-conflict nature can achieve their goals.

Civil society's role might prove crucial in conflict resolution in the North Caucasus. As a matter of fact, civil society is an inseparable part of the conflict. It is needed to deliver humanitarian and development assistance, implement human rights, and make state institutions transparent. It is also needed to bring peace to the region and, in particular, the peace implemented from below rather than from top-down. The following chapter is an analysis of what role civil society can play in conflict resolution in the region and how it might contribute to the de-escalation of violence.

4. Peace-building from the bottom

"The grassroots represents the masses, the base of the society. Life at this level is characterized, particularly in settings of protracted conflict and war, by a survival mentality (Lederach 1997:42)."

This chapter provides a brief overview of bottom-up peace-building, its practice worldwide and in the North Caucasus. Two main sub-questions of the present thesis are addressed in this chapter. First, what used to be the role of civil society in bottom-up peace-building in the region in the past, what is it now and what role can civil groups play in implementing peace-building in the future? Second, what potential civil groups have in implementing peace-building in the North Caucasus and do bottom-up peace efforts reduce violence and promote aid efforts?

This chapter argues that conflict in the North Caucasus starts at the community or grass-root level. Therefore, paths to its peaceful resolution should be sought in implementing a local, bottom-up type peace-building. Such peace-building, in turn, requires the active participation of civil society and, in particular, independent and functional local and international NGOs.

In essence, the North Caucasus requires more than a mere cessation of direct violence. The term peace-building, as used in this thesis, implies a necessity to build good governance, civil society, and capacity building. However, the primary task of peace-builders in the region should be empowerment and mobilization of grass-roots aimed at reconciling the root causes of the current conflict - the mistrust towards authorities and law enforcement agencies, resulting in radicalization of the population and centralization of the state apparatus. Cessation of hostilities, nevertheless, remains a primary task for peace-builders in Dagestan, Ingushetia, and Kabardino-Balkaria at the moment. Ironically, building civil society and good governance, in turn, requires civil society to be functional and capable enough to implement the peace-building.

4.1 Theory of bottom-up peace-building revisited

A bottom-up peace-building approach, also known as ‘indigenous empowerment’, briefly described in the introductory chapter of this thesis, is a comprehensive tool in the conflict resolution field (Lederach 1997). A core idea of bottom-up peace-building is to empower local populations at the bottom and mid-levels of society by allowing them to consolidate and develop necessary resources for the implementation of a peace process, which could later be advanced to higher levels (Lederach 1997). Lederach’s pyramid of peace-building³² reasonably places NGOs and other civil groups into the mid-level, as to represent a link between elite/state and people/grass-roots. According to Lederach (1997), the reason why bottom-up peace-building efforts can be more efficient than those originating from the top is that:

“ ..by virtue of their high public profile, ...leaders are generally locked into positions taken with a regard to the perspectives and issues in conflict. They are under a tremendous pressure to maintain a position of strength vis-à-vis their adversaries and their own constituencies (p.40). ”

On the other hand, middle range actors are usually not involved in the governing process. They are educators, intellectuals, businessmen, and representatives of civil society. As such, they can have a certain degree of influence on the elites while simultaneously serving as a link between state and citizens. Most importantly, middle range actors should have no political or military affiliations. Although they do not necessarily have to be neutral, they are not expected to openly support either side. Accordingly, middle-range leaders do not usually “depend on visibility and publicity” (Ibid: 42). In the case of the North Caucasus, middle range actors are local and international civil groups, community leaders, village elders, intellectuals and scholars, and in some cases clan leaders. However, the exact definition of middle range leaders varies from place to place. For instance, in Dagestan, where the Avar ethnicity traditionally occupies governmental posts, many of the Avar clan leaders might be expected to have links with authorities or to occupy certain positions in government. However, many of Dagestan’s insurgents are also of the Avar ethnicity. In such a case, it might be reasonable to rely on middle range leaders from civil society rather than on community or clan leaders. The same might be said of Kabardino-Balkaria, where the Kabardin ethnicity is a ruling group and also a major recruitment pool for rebels. In

³² See Chapter 1, 1.6 Theoretical background (Figure 2).

Ingushetia, clan leaders are in charge of municipal or district administrations and are less trusted than grass-root leaders without clan affiliation.

Lederach (1997) also places religious leaders in the middle range category. That might have a dubious role in the case of the North Caucasus. Most of the religious establishment in the region is closely associated with the government, supporting authorities and receiving backing from elites, both local and federal. *Sufi* religious leaders are seen by the government as a bulwark of moderate Islam and counter-balance to radical *Salafi* separatists (Dannreuther 2010:113). However, *Sufi* clerics are popularly regarded as corrupt and using religion to justify the actions of local authorities with no respect for traditional notions of Islam. Thus, by adhering to the *Salafi* branch of Islam, rebels and critics of the state deny the clerics' power of religious authority (Markedonov 2008). The so-called 'hunt for Wahabbis', unleashed by Putin's administration in the North Caucasus with the start of the Second Chechen campaign, in fact, allowed *Sufi* clerics to strengthen their position and eradicate their opponents from other branches of Islam (Dannreuther 2010). Yet considering that many rank-and-file members of the insurgency, as well as some of its commanders are still followers of the *Sufi* branch rather than the radical Wahabbis, it might be expected that the emergence of neutral *Sufi* clerics can be favourable for the peace process.

As a matter of fact, the category of middle range actors also includes members of the insurgent leadership. In comparison to other rebel movements around the world, which have the whole decision making and leadership process concentrated in the hands of a "supreme leader", the North Caucasus's insurgency has a rather dispersed power-centre. The rebel movement's leadership is constantly undergoing a circulation of staff, with newly emerged leaders replacing deceased ones. Also, in contrast to former and current Chechen warlords, insurgency leaders in other parts of the North Caucasus prefer to stay in the shadows and rarely appear in the headlines. It has been speculated that as a head of the Caucasus Emirate, Umarov has only nominal power over the insurgent jamaats outside of Chechnya (Falkowski 2010:63). For instance, it has been noted, that Umarov has never had a single joint meeting with the head of the Ingush jamaat, Yevloyev, in spite of the fact that both are operating within a short reach from each other (Vatchagaev September 25, 2010). In addition, most insurgent leaders in Ingushetia, Dagestan and Kabardino-Balkaria are from middle class rather than from the republics' elites.

However, in spite of middle-range level's importance, Lederach (1997) allocates a leading role in peace-building to grass-root leadership, i.e., members of NGOs working with local communities, healthcare personnel and grass-root volunteers at the community level. As Lederach (1997) observes:

"...the local level is a microcosm of the bigger picture. The lines of identity often are drawn right through local communities, splitting them into hostile groups. Unlike many actors at the higher level of the pyramid, however, grassroot leaders witness first-hand the deep-rooted hatred and animosity on a daily basis" (p.43).

Lederach (1997) also infers that most social issues, such as human rights abuses and inter-ethnic divisions often start at the grass-root level. Accordingly, actions taken by leaders of the state are slow to reach their actual beneficiaries at the bottom of the pyramid, i.e., the grass-root community levels. Conversely, activities conducted from the bottom-up are more likely to target the actual needs and grievances of affected

population. In the case of the on-going conflict in the North Caucasus, social insecurity and the inability of civil society to fulfil its role adds to this issue. A sheer glance at the belligerents might suffice to spot the roots of incompatibility, which are at the bottom. The conflict's distinctive feature is that it has clan members and representatives of multiple ethnicities rebelling against their leaders and the establishment that they support rather than rallying along ethnic and national divisions, similar to past conflicts in the Caucasus. The incompatibility that begins at a grass-root level sometimes overtakes middle levels of society but never the upper ones. Thus, the classical models of peace-building (Galtung 1996) aiming at identifying top leaders and bringing them to a negotiating table for peace talks, is less plausible in the North Caucasus. As mentioned earlier, insurgency in the region does not have a clearly defined leadership capable of ordering all the groups to cease fighting. Instead the leadership is dispersed, symbolical in its nature and constantly changing. Besides, in contrast to societies in "old wars", where rebel leaders often attempted to represent the whole population and pursued higher goals, such as independence from colonialism, struggle against capitalism, dictatorship or ethnic liberation, insurgent leaders in the North Caucasus hardly even have clear and feasible objectives for their struggle. Apart from that, top level peace-making has previously failed in earlier conflicts in the North Caucasus, and in the first Chechen war in particular. It must also be noted, that in comparison to "old wars", where the top level peace-building has mostly been used before, the conflicting sides in North Caucasus have reached the stage when mutual vilification makes it extremely difficult even to start peace talks.

Furthermore, Lederach (1997) identifies a number of major activities as a part of middle-range conflict resolution: problem-solving workshops, conflict resolution training and peace commissions. The main goal of these activities is to initiate contact and a dialog between middle-range leaders representing civil society and the conflicting sides. Such workshops and meetings are normally conducted off the record and are designed to lead to a further dialog at higher levels. PLO-Israeli accords in 1993 and the Guatemala accords of 1996 are usually cited as outcomes of such informal problem-solving meetings. Conflict resolution trainings are known as an element of middle-range peace-building. The trainings are expected to be conducted by leaders of civil society and community representatives in order to raise awareness of peace and reconciliation. In general, middle-range peace-building activities may take many different forms directed at changing perceptions, stereotypes and incompatibilities of the warring sides.

In spite of the importance of middle-range peace-building, it is bottom-up, grass-root action that is expected to serve as a decisive force in enforcing a peace process. Grass-root actors are both in need for peace and also face the difficulty of coping with on-going violence and daily survival (Lederach 1997:52). Lederach (1997, 2001) concludes that it is desperation and frustration with the conflict that usually forces grass-root actors onto the pass of promoting peace. However, in order for the bottom-up peace-building process to start it is necessary to 'empower' local actors by ensuring them in a feasibility of peace efforts and plausibility of conflict resolution. Such an empowerment, in general, is considered to be the job of NGOs and civil society. It is non-governmental actors, from both middle range and grass-roots, who should be responsible for initiating a dialog and 'empowering' local communities and themselves at the same time. Active and vocal civil society is a necessary prerequisite for the implementation of bottom-up peace-building.

Many advocates (Lederach, Curle) of bottom-up approach claim that most of modern civil wars of the “new type” have ended as a result of bottom-up peace-building.

Peace-building is also often associated with society-building (Conteh-Morgan 2005), which is usually the case in post-colonial societies and societies in transition. Needless to say, society-building has become a necessity in many post-Soviet states in the early 1990s in the aftermath of the collapse of the USSR. This process has also engulfed the North Caucasus. However, society-building in Dagestan, Ingushetia and Kabardino-Balkaria was not so clearly shaped as in the independent states of the Caucasus. In comparison to Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan, where society-building evolved around rising nationalism and ethnic-identity, a similar process in the Russian North Caucasus (with the exception of Chechnya) has been largely focused on economic transition from industrial and agricultural industries to service-oriented industry and tourism.

4.2 Civil society in bottom-up peace-building

At first sight it might be rather difficult to assess the effectiveness of NGOs' role in peace-building. While some proponents of peace-building from the bottom (Lederach, Curle, Toohey) strongly advocate the idea of empowering local groups and communities, others are either wary about the role of NGOs in an armed conflict (Anderson 1999) or cautious about the level of NGOs' engagement (Paffenholz & Spurk 2006). Yet another debate focuses on whether global civil society is more efficient in peace-building rather than local. Proponents of the former claim that on average national NGOs tend to work on peace-building at macro levels, targeting elites and state (Orjuela 2004), whereas supporters of the local peace-building (Paffenholz & Spurk 2006) state that international NGOs often attempt to bring Western ideas of peace-building and disregard local needs and traditions. Anderson and Olson (2003) also add that:

“Agencies with experience in many conflicts can create the impression that they are the experts in peace. This can disempower people who have experience in only their own conflict. It can undermine local people’s energy and initiative to act. In some cases, peace agencies inadvertently communicate the implicit message that local people cannot make peace without their outside help (p.25).”

Generally speaking, it is very difficult to present NGOs as either a positive or a negative actor in bottom-up peace-building. Examples from different parts of the world offer diverse techniques used by civil actors. Varshney (2001) in his study on civil networking at grass-root level and their influence on inter-ethnic conflicts in India concludes that civil society does matter in reducing inter-ethnic tensions via grass-root networks incorporating members of different ethnic groups. He argues that associational and everyday forms of civic engagement have served as a balance in inter-ethnic and inter-confessional conflicts in different parts of India. Civil society's involvement in peace processes in Philippines has been considered as success (Toohey 2005), leading to peace agreements between government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). Due to the active participation of grass-root groups, religious leaders and local and international NGOs, it has become possible for civil society to influence conflict participants by elevating the ground causes of conflict from grass-roots to elites. However, Toohey (2005) emphasizes that if NGO interventions: “... are not accompanied by meaningful government redistributive policies and political reform, then it is likely that their

constituencies will become increasingly disillusioned with the promises inherent in the struggle for peace (p.17).”

Successful examples of bottom-up peace-building can be found in 1998 Angola peace process and 1994 Guatemala peace talks. Palestinian civil society also has a long history of involvement in peace-building and is known to score a number of achievements in peace talks with Israel. The above mentioned 1998 Angola peace agreements, as well as, the Nuba Mountains Ceasefire in Sudan, are examples of a successful third party initiated bottom-up peace-building (Harpviken & Kjellman 2004:10). In both cases peace processes have been monitored by the international community with a strong focus on local participation.

On the other hand, Ramirez (2008) suggests that civil society’s involvement in the Colombian civil war so far has had a limited success. She argues that even in times of active NGO participation in peace processes between leftist guerrillas and the government, levels of violence had little correlation with the levels of civil engagement.

Such claims support Kalyvas’s (2006) theory stating that levels of violence “persisting across time and space” are mere reflections of armed groups’ struggles over territorial control. Accordingly, in areas where such control is contested, levels of violence are high. On the contrast, areas where an armed group (or government) has established firm control over territory, levels of violence are the lowest. However, this theory can hardly serve as an explanation for the escalation of violence in the North Caucasus. Being a territory under the firm governmental control, the North Caucasus keeps on plunging deeper into violence. Contrary to the hypothesis of Kalyvas, the Russian government is in physical control of the territory in the North Caucasus (with no areas under the rebel control existent), which to some degree is a cause for the conflict.

Bottom-up peace-building has been widely used in Somalia, although with differing outcomes. Active grass-root involvement in the 1991 peace agreements in Somalia, described by Lederach (1997) as a successful case of bottom-up approach, included participation of clan leaders and elders and contribution from many communities and ethnic groups. Another successful application of bottom-up peace-building in Somalia is a peace-process and governance building in Puntland from 1991 to 2007 (Johnson 2008), which lead to the creation of Puntland administration with a support from clan leaders and local communities. However, bottom-up peace attempts have been of little success in the Mogadishu area, as well as in other parts of the country after the end of UN intervention in 1992.

Apart from Colombia and Somalia, Sri Lanka can be cited as one of the failed examples of bottom-up peace-building. Harpviken and Kjellman (2004) mention Sri Lankan civil society’s lack of impartiality as one of the main reasons of its failure to serve as a bridge between the government and the Tamil Tigers. International organizations similarly failed to achieve considerable results in Sri Lankan peace-building, mostly due to distrust of Tamils and unwillingness of the government to cooperate. Afghanistan is often mentioned (Harpviken and Kjellman 2004, Pouligny 2004) as an example of a successful empowerment of local civil society in the early stages of post 9/11 reconstruction. Bottom-up peace-building exercised in a form of empowering tribal *shuras*, or village councils, is presented as a success resulted in driving the Taliban out of many tribal areas in the North of the country (Harpviken & Kjellman 2004:12).

However, recent developments in Afghanistan seem to prove that bottom-up empowerment can be a short lived success in the absence of human security in the long term.

Retrospectively, it is difficult to single out bottom-up peace-building as the most successful type of peace-building, or brand it as a failure. It has seen both successes and failures in a variety of conflicts around the world. However, in a modern political arena dominated by conflicts of the “new type”, i.e., intrastate civil wars, the bottom-up approach addresses the very core of the conflict – the grass-roots level. Some of the above mentioned cases of bottom-up theory application in practice are similar to the North Caucasus, whereas others are very different. For instance, similarly to Sri Lanka, civil society in the North Caucasus lacks impartiality and keeps a distance from insurgents, who often portray it as state-controlled, in particular such elements of civil society as religious establishments and charity groups. The North Caucasus conflict also resembles the conflict in Mindanao, Philippines, where peace-building efforts required not only inter-ethnic but also inter-confessional dedication. Similar to Afghan civil society, civil grass-roots in the North Caucasus are weak and need to be fostered and assisted.

In spite of existing similarities and discrepancies of peace-building approaches around the world, it is necessary to consider the uniqueness of each case difficulty to replicate successes and avoid failures. The most significant lesson to be drawn at this point is that bottom-up peace-building can solve conflicts, that it deals with local communities, that it mobilizes local peace-building potentials, that it requires participation of civil society, and that it generally welcomes collaboration of national and international civil groups. A set of examples presented in this section also aims to illustrate that the bottom-up approach does not require NGOs, grass-root movements and other elements of civil society to be highly developed and sophisticated. However, it does require civil society to be independent from the state and capable of acting as a “third” sector balancing the state and people, or in other words capable of fulfilling its function as a civil society. Therefore, it might be useful to throw a glance at how successful the practice of empowering local actors has been in the North Caucasus so far.

4.3 Bottom-up peace-building practice in the North Caucasus

After a brief overview of bottom-up peace-building practice around the world it is necessary to scrutinize the history of peace-building efforts in the North Caucasus. Peace-building as such is not new for the region and the bottom-up approach has been previously used in the North Caucasus. In spite of being applied in different contexts and settings, previously used approaches can be of some help to future peace-builders.

Bottom-up peace-building began with the start of the first Chechen war as early as in 1995. Grass-roots peace efforts were mostly focused on ceasefire negotiations and prisoner exchange; they were implemented mainly by national NGOs. The most prominent group initiating informal talks with Chechen field commanders and working on community level peace-building was the Committee of Soldiers’ Mothers of Russia (CSMR).³³

³³ Organization’s Profile: Committee of Soldiers’ Mothers of Russia (CSMR) founded in 1989, as a grass-root movement, works on peace and non-violence, implementation of civil accountability and transparency

CSMR volunteers managed to organize massive prisoner exchanges and secure releases of captured Federal soldiers and officers (CSMR 2010). Successes of CSMR can be attributed to their 'straightforward' approach in directly contacting Chechen warlords and village elders rather than hauling prisoner exchange talks via the top command of both federal and Chechen sides. Mostly elderly female CSMR volunteers managed to vouchsafe free entry into rebel controlled areas and establish trustworthy contacts with rebel commanders on the ground. After the end of hostilities in 1996, CSMR's work has been continued by another Russian grass-roots group - "Peacemaking Mission of General Lebed" (PMGL).³⁴

Although both CSMR and PMGL are still active in the region, it is obvious that their previous peace-building successes occurred in an environment different from the current one. Precisely speaking, both grass-root groups have worked in an environment of large-scale military activities, almost unobstructed by the state, capable and willing to engage the rebel side in Chechnya, which remained their main partner. Both groups have also deployed typical bottom-up approaches of reaching out to minor Chechen warlords or clan and village elders in an informal way. Generally, throughout the whole Chechen conflict, Chechen warlords operated in a locality of their origin, i.e., villages, towns, settlements. Accordingly, they drew their recruits, food and supplies from such a locality and closely depended on it (German 2003). Therefore, community peace-building could potentially succeed in such an environment.

on the other hand, the current conflict, is more of a guerrilla warfare without clear-cut frontlines, where insurgents do not control any areas and do not closely depend on the local population in rural and urban areas. The composition of insurgent groups has itself changed significantly from locally recruited Chechen warlords' bands. Now a typical profile of an insurgent recruit can be presented as:

"He or she is young—in the 18-20 age range—and almost always a college student, often away from home. They might be a student in Moscow or in one of the Western countries or, on rare occasions, a student at an Islamic institute in the Middle East. Whatever the case, he or she is a young person who is only about to begin an independent life; a person who is easily attracted to idea of comprehending the truth and distinguishing it from untruth." (Vatchagayev January 15, 2009)

It is known that insurgents are receiving continuing support from the local population.³⁵ However, most insurgent jamaats are fairly autonomous from the local population. They

of federal and municipal administrations and development of civil society and civil consciousness in Russian Federation. With the start of war in Chechnya in 1994, CSMR actively worked on protection of conscript's rights, exchange and release of prisoners of war and hostages. In 1996, CSMR received "Right Livelihood Award" for its contribution to peace and civil development (<http://www.ucsmr.ru/english/>, (retrieved on 20.08.2010)).

³⁴ Organization's Profile: Peacemaking Mission of General Lebed (PMGL), founded in 1998 by Gen. Alexander Lebed as "Peace Mission in the North Caucasus". The group works on prisoner release and exchange as well as release of hostages and illegally detained persons.³⁴ It claims to have released over 200 prisoners and hostages in Chechnya since the start of its work in 1998.³⁴ According to the group's mission, one of its main priorities is a conflict prevention and de-escalation of violence in the North Caucasus (http://www.rozysk.org/i/about_pmg1, (retrieved on 20.08.2010)).

³⁵ According to the Chief Commander of North Caucasus Military District, Gen. Nikolai Sivak: "local population either supports armed groups or treats them neutrally, does not resist them and does not report

receive recruits (predominantly so from urban populations) handpicked by jamaats' operatives, who are normally not connected to local communities and are not subjects to elders or community leaders. In terms of their supply links, insurgents seem to be more prone on relying on 'institutionalized' methods of food and supply collection rather than on donations from local communities.³⁶ Another source of insurgent logistics is mentioned by Vatchagaev (2009):

"Whether or not there are shared ideological views, any interaction with relatives who happen to be militants is governed by the mechanism of highland ethics that is inherent in all Caucasian peoples. It implies that if a person invokes a name of a relative, then to assist him or her is not simply an obligation but also a matter of personal honor." (Vatchagayev January 15, 2009)

On a number of occasions local population involved in rebel "food supply chain" has been either financially or forcibly convinced by federal forces to poison rebels (Jamestown July 30, 2010). Thus, trust between local population in rural areas and insurgent groups operating there is not of the same level as in previous Chechen conflicts. Therefore, such groups as PMGL, who based their work on first establishing links with local communities and via them extending their reach to rebel commanders, might experience difficulties in achieving their goals.

In sum, in comparison to Chechen wars of the 1990s, the current conflict requires slightly different peace-building priorities and goals. There is no longer a need for prisoner and hostage release from the rebel side; most of the missing persons are now allegedly held by security forces (Amnesty Int. 2009). In comparison to the aftermath of the first Chechen war, between 1996 and 1999, during which time hundreds of civilians were kidnapped in Chechnya and outside of it by armed Chechen gangs mostly made up of former rebels (Moore & Tumelty 2008:426), most of the kidnappings are now conducted by police, Special Forces and other law enforcement agencies. Moreover, grass-root peace-builders of the 1990s seem to have prioritized short-term activities, i.e., prisoner release and exchange over long term goals, such as community peace-building, conflict cessation, and eradication of war culture. The dynamics of current hostilities, on the other hand, dictate prioritizing long-term goals in the first place. Cessation of hostilities seems to depend now on the government's policies and shift in both republican and federal policy-making rather than on the dissolution of rebel forces. In terms of community peace-building, there is a lot more to do now than in the Chechnya of the 1990s; it is necessary for peace-builders to establish contacts with rebel commanders. And that might be as important as peace-oriented community work in areas of rebel activity. However, the personal approach, actively used in 1990s, also

them to federal authorities. If not for the support of locals, armed groups would have long been eliminated." (In interview to НЕЗАВИСИМАЯ newspaper on April 27, 2009)

³⁶ "We created and systematized internal support techniques, and Sharia gives us clear rules for collecting military zakat (taxes). We prepared regulations and orders, which were distributed on our territories by our naibs (deputy commanders). In today's situation, financial or any other types of support are no longer voluntary actions but fard 'ain (compulsory) for every true Muslim because we are in war. We do not take anything that is above a fixed percentage rate, we do not rob poor families or those who suffered from the regime; instead, we support them as much as we can afford.", Leader of the Yarmuk jamaat, operating in Kabardino-Balkaria, in exclusive interview to North Caucasus Analysis, Volume: 10 Issue: 11, March 20, 2009.

remains a must. Similarly to the conflicts in 1990s, insurgent forces do not have a 'supreme' leader to be negotiated with, and therefore approaching individual field commanders remains necessary to achieve peace. Evidently, a new peace-building approach needs to incorporate some activities of earlier peace-building efforts in cohesion with new strategies.

In general, with regard to the previous grass-root peace-building experience, it is possible to identify a number of priority areas for peace-builders. First, peace-building has to target wide circles of the population possibly, starting with grass-roots, such as current and potential rebel recruits, supporters, sympathizers, as well as the local population in areas of insurgent activity. It is necessary to ensure that peace-building efforts are targeting the most affected by the conflict segments of population. Second, peace-building has to include not only rebel force but most importantly security and military of North Caucasian republics, as well as similar structures at the federal level. As mentioned earlier in this thesis, the growth of authoritarianism and its onslaught on civil society, accompanied by centralization and militarism, are presented here as one of the main reasons for the current escalation of violence. Decentralization and demilitarization of local and federal governments might be considered as one of the main long-term objectives to de-escalate the conflict. Working with police and law enforcement agencies is necessary to prevent rampant human rights violations, which are known to fuel conflict and increase distrust of the government by the population. Improvement of human rights situation should be given a priority in eradicating ground causes of the conflict: insecurity of population and heavy-handed treatment by police and other law enforcement services. Yet it is noteworthy to mention, however, that although current peace-building efforts in the region are limited in their scope and nature, some bottom-up activities are taking place.

4.4 Current efforts of bottom-up peace-building in the North Caucasus

As mentioned in Chapter 2, there are a handful of peace-building programs operating in the region. A brief analysis of their activities presented below may help to understand pitfalls of the current peace efforts.

4.4.1 Non-violence International (NI) peace-building

A multi-sector peace-building program launched by the international NGO Non-Violence International (NI)³⁷ on the territory of Commonwealth of Independent states (CIS) in 1993 was expanded to the North Caucasus in 2001. Non-Violence International in CIS (NIS) began its peace-building efforts in the republic of Karachay-Cherkessia and the border regions between Chechnya and Dagestan. Its main goal is conflict prevention and de-escalation as well as reconciliation and rehabilitation in conflict-affected societies. NIS

³⁷ Organization's Profile: "Nonviolence International promotes nonviolent action and seeks to reduce the use of violence worldwide. Nonviolence International is a decentralized network of resource centers that promote the use of nonviolent action. NI is also a non-governmental organization in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations." It is founded in 1989, by a Palestinian activist and it's registered in Washington DC, USA. It runs projects in Indonesia, Palestine, South America, former Soviet Union and South East Asia (<http://www.policy.hu/kamenshikov/ninis/russian.html>, (retrieved on 20.08.2010)).

peace-building program focused on conducting peace trainings to youth in remote regions of Dagestan and Ingushetia. In 2001 and 2002, NIS launched a number of programs designed to increase inter-ethnic reconciliation and peace-building in border regions of Chechnya and Dagestan. Programs aimed to reduce tensions between Dagestani and Chechen villagers in border regions after the invasion of border districts of Dagestan by the Chechen-led Islamist brigade in 1999 (which was the start of the second Chechen campaign). Two separate programs have been also implemented in Karachay-Cherkessia and Kabardino-Balkaria. Both had goals of increasing inter-ethnic tolerance and conflict prevention in multi-ethnic settings (Non-Violence International, Projects 2009). NIS defines its peace-building priorities as:

Any humanitarian, human rights, cultural, sports, analytical, educational and/or other activity implemented then and there, when and where it can practically influence a situation in the direction of preventing violence, mitigating tensions and managing conflicts between self-identified groups of population (IHPS 2005).

According to the data provided by the Non-Violence International group, most of its funding, used to implement peace-building programs in the North Caucasus, is from private sources (NIS 2010). In 2005 NIS launched the North Caucasus Regional Peace-building program (IHPS 2005). The program intends to cover almost all of the Russian North Caucasus (except Stavropol) and its primary goals are peace-building, regional development, inter-ethnic and inter-confessional tolerance.

It also defines republic-specific goals. In Kabardino-Balkaria, it identifies as a priority the participation of young people in social and political life of the republic. It also includes trainings and seminars on non-violence and tolerance as well as promoting education and employment. In Dagestan it prioritizes inter-ethnic cooperation and tolerance to Chechen IDPs, as well as inter-confessional reconciliation between *Sufi* and *Salafi* adherents of Islam. The program pursues similar goals in Ingushetia. Most peace-building activities implemented as a part of the program are sport competitions, culture and socializing clubs, peace education programs, trainings and discussion clubs. Notably, almost all of NIS activities took place in rural areas (IHPS 2005). Generally, the NIS work can be described as local capacity building. However, its scale and degree of penetration into the society are insufficient to bring long-term results in peace-building.

4.4.2 Other peace-building efforts

Peacebuilding UK³⁸ began operating in the North Caucasus in 2006. Currently it runs two programs in six republics, including Dagestan, Ingushetia and Kabardino-Balkaria. Peacebuilding UK mostly focuses on cultural and social programs, psychological rehabilitation and peace-building networking (Peacebuilding UK 2010). Funded and supported by the Russian Charitable Fund, the group also conducts conflict resolution and transformation trainings in North Caucasus and Russia. Peacebuilding UK also

³⁸ Organization's Profile: "Peacebuilding UK's mission is to support and build local capacities for peace in the Russian Federation, predominantly in the North Caucasus region. This involves supporting and jointly implementing projects with staff, local groups and individuals in the region to promote sustainable peace, well-being and the enjoyment of human rights, with a particular focus on children, youth and other vulnerable people." (<http://peacebuildinguk.org/home>, (retrieved on 20.08.2010)).

actively works at the grass-root level, by engaging in the daily lives of local communities and promoting their focus on culture and self-identity. Apart from peace activities, the group also works on reconstruction, mainly of educational and cultural facilities, in particular in Chechnya (Ibid).

“Humanitarian Dialog for Human Security in Chechnya” is a peace-building project implemented in Chechnya in 2005 by FEWER International in coordination with Swisspeace. The project focused on bringing the conflicting sides together for negotiations on non-political subjects, including issues such as psychological rehabilitation, reconciliation, the release of illegally detained persons, and the enhancement of human security aimed at increasing the efficiency of humanitarian operations (FEWER 2006). Unfortunately, the project was meant to bring together only local/federal officials and representatives of the Chechen civil society without directly reaching out to rebels. The project also promoted strengthening the rule of law and state institutions, which in practice meant delegation of more power to Kadyrov’s clan.

The other program worth mentioning is a UNICEF-run peace education program. Focused on children and youth, the program conducts regular summer camps for peace education, distributes materials and disseminates knowledge on conflict awareness.

A couple of other NGO initiatives have been implemented in the region with a goal of boosting peace-building initiatives. They are the NGO ‘Friendship-North Caucasus’ and the Russian NGO Intercenter. The NGO ‘Friendship-North Caucasus’ created in 1997 works on multi-ethnic tolerance and reconciliation. It is also one of the few local civil groups engaged in peace activities. In 2007, the NGO started the program ‘Cooperation in ethnological monitoring implementation and early conflict prevention’. Based in Stavropol, it is mostly active in the North-West Caucasus. A two-year project “Cross-Cultural Understanding and Peace in North Caucasus (OSI 2008),” has been launched by the Russian NGO Intercenter, founded by Open Society Institute (OSI) and aimed at promoting peace education and non-violence at elementary and high school levels in all republics in the North Caucasus.

4.4.3 Top-down efforts

Amid the on-going human insecurity crisis, the government of the Russian Federation was not the last one to notice a need for peace. In spite of stubbornly adhering to Putin’s ideology of ‘no-talks’ with the rebel underground, denying the very existence of a conflict in the North Caucasus and branding all anti-Russian resistance as international terrorism, Medvedev’s administration has nevertheless, made a few short-lived attempts at peace-building.

Worth mentioning is the “Peace to the Caucasus” project, which was brought to life by a pro-Kremlin journalist, Maxim Shevchenko and has been described by state officials as “one of the last hopes for the North Caucasus for improvement” (Dzutsev September 10, 2010). Launched on October 2009, the project attempts to initiate a dialog between state officials and representatives of civil society in the region. To distinguish it from a purely top-down initiative, the project also considers talks with community leaders and grass-roots. Although it is difficult to brand the “Peace to the Caucasus” as a complete failure at the moment, it has already been pointed out that the project has not yet progressed

beyond the “talking” stage (spring 2010). According to a well-known Dagestani sociologist, Enver Kisriev “There were hearings no decisions were made, various suggestions were moved and everybody was offered to take further part in drafting the report in Northern Caucasus (Florin & Kisriev 2010).” It seems obvious, however, that the project is not aimed at bringing any concrete results apart from emphasizing its own existence as a ‘peace effort’ brought over by the state and civil society (represented by Shevchenko). “Peace to the Caucasus” remains the first top-down peace-effort which aimed to cover the whole Caucasus and not only Chechnya. It is necessary to mention that since the start of conflict spillover in the region, both local and federal authorities have hardly ever tried to implement any peaceful conflict resolution measures.

Amnesty to rebel fighters in Dagestan announced in February 2010 by the newly appointed president of Dagestan, Magomedov, was one of the few attempts at reducing violence by non-violent means (Solovyov 2010). The outcome of that amnesty never reached the press and its results remain unknown for the moment (August 2010). However, considering the Chechen experience of amnesty, during which many former insurgents who chose to hand over their weapons were later abducted or subjected to continuous harassment from law enforcement (IHF 2007), it is unlikely that amnesty can work in the absence of human security and law and order.

4.5 Conclusion

To conclude, bottom-up peace-building has been used already in the Caucasus, it has a potential to be used again and it can contribute to a resolution in the on-going conflict. However, a review of current peace efforts in the region shows that both top-down and bottom-up peace activities are far from reaching their goals and equally far from reaching positive outcomes. In the meantime, both the international community and the local and federal authorities realize the gravity of the situation in the region and slowly, and to some extent reluctantly, start to conceive peace efforts. It is obvious that top-down peace-building can have little success in the current conflict; the Russian government simply will not find credible counterparts on the rebel side to start talks and guarantee the end of violence. Moreover, the state under the current government has no desire to acknowledge the very existence of an armed conflict in the North Caucasus, which makes any possibility for top-down peace-building impossible.

In contrast, a bottom-up approach might have a brighter future. As we have seen from the past experience of NGO engagement in local empowerment and bottom-up peace activities in earlier conflicts in Chechnya, civil society can have a potential to tackle the problem. However, the lack of a civil society at the present moment poses a different problem. The current peace-builders in the North Caucasus, be it NIS or Peacebuilding UK, are obviously not enough to change the situation on the ground. A brief analysis of the conflict might suffice to demonstrate that post-conflict transformation and reconciliation efforts are too premature and that inter-ethnic tolerance and empowerment of state institutions are not targeting the root causes of violence, i.e., infringement of civil liberties and freedoms as well as lack of civil space. The current peace activities, undertaken by the earlier mentioned NGOs, resemble only a small effort in a chaotic conflict. Although, both NIS’s and Peacebuilding UK’s programs are aimed at grass-root conflict resolution, they do not target the actual participants of the conflict –

insurgents, law enforcement, and state officials. Considering the dynamics of the ongoing conflict, particularly the fact that it is neither a rural or urban conflict nor is it ethnic or nationalist one, bottom-up peace-building has to target wider masses of population.

To sum up the analysis presented in this chapter, it is necessary to emphasize that bottom-up peace-building can bring positive changes to the region only if its proponents will consider a number of important factors necessary for the success of peace efforts in the North Caucasus.

First, activities targeting rural and IDP communities alone are not sufficient in ensuring that all potential conflict participants are included into a peace process. Considering the heterogeneity of the conflict, the diversity of its participants and its geographical scope, peace-building programs may need to target those segments of population which are most likely to get involved in conflict. Programs working with young people need to ensure that their target groups are not only well aware of the importance of non-violence, but most importantly that young people are free in expressing their beliefs, points of view and are safe from persecution. The numbers of young people joining rebel forces can be reduced by increasing the social security of the new generation and ensuring preservation of their identity as ethnic and religious minorities within the Russian Federation. It implies that community grass-root level peace-building remains a priority, but its scope and target groups need to be expanded to include youth in urban and rural areas, working and middle classes alike.

Second, peace-building should be multilateral, i.e., peace-builders have to work with both local and federal authorities as well as with the rebels. Obviously, it would be impossible to convince rebels to lay down their weapons as long as there are no guarantees for their security in the short term and no improvements in the area of social and economic security in the long term. On the other hand, it is unlikely that law enforcement will change its strategies as long as the threat from the insurgency persists. Therefore, the job of peace-builders in that area might be that of mediators having an ability to reach out to rebel field commanders and law enforcement officials at the local and federal level and ensuring that both sides are respect of peace terms. This task requires civil groups to be influential enough in order to decentralize state institutions and ensure transparency of their service.

The peace process, necessary to ensure the efficacy of humanitarian and development efforts in the region, has to originate from below in order to succeed in the North Caucasus. It should then advance onto further levels, i.e., cooperation with law enforcement officials and top rebel command, and eventually be solidified by the elites. However, the suggested above bottom-up peace-building approach is a means of conflict resolution, which can only succeed if implemented by non-state actors, that is civil groups, represented by both local and international NGOs.

5. Linking civil society and violence

“Why isn’t the end of the Caucasian war [in the nineteenth century] celebrated in Russia? Because it is still going on.”³⁹

The failure of civil society in the North Caucasus’s conflict is twofold. First, it is civil society’s inability to countervail the state and serve as a link between state institutions and the population, and accordingly to vouchsafe civil freedoms and liberties by ensuring transparency and credibility of state institutions. Second, it is its failure to implement conflict resolution efforts, originating from the grass-roots, which as it is argued here, are necessary to bring peace to the region. As a result, humanitarian, development and democratization efforts, conducted in the region by a diversity of local and international NGOs bring no positive results in the long term. Therefore, it is suggested here that strengthening civil society, and in particular, the functional and independent NGO sector, will promote and secure civil rights and freedoms of the indigenous populations of the North Caucasus, create foundations for a peace process and potentially eradicate the ground causes of the on-going conflict. Decentralizing the federal state apparatus, and reducing its interference into social and cultural life of the North Caucasian ethnicities, may be one of the most important tasks requiring active involvement of civil society.

5.1 Are the aid efforts failing?

The main research question of this study is why the aid efforts, i.e., humanitarian, development and human rights aid are failing to succeed in the long term. One might wonder, however, if the aid efforts are really failing? It is difficult to provide a definitive answer to that question. Nonetheless, it is obvious that humanitarian emergency and urgent development needs still exist in the North Caucasus and aid providers are far from achieving their goals.

5.1.1 Humanitarian aid

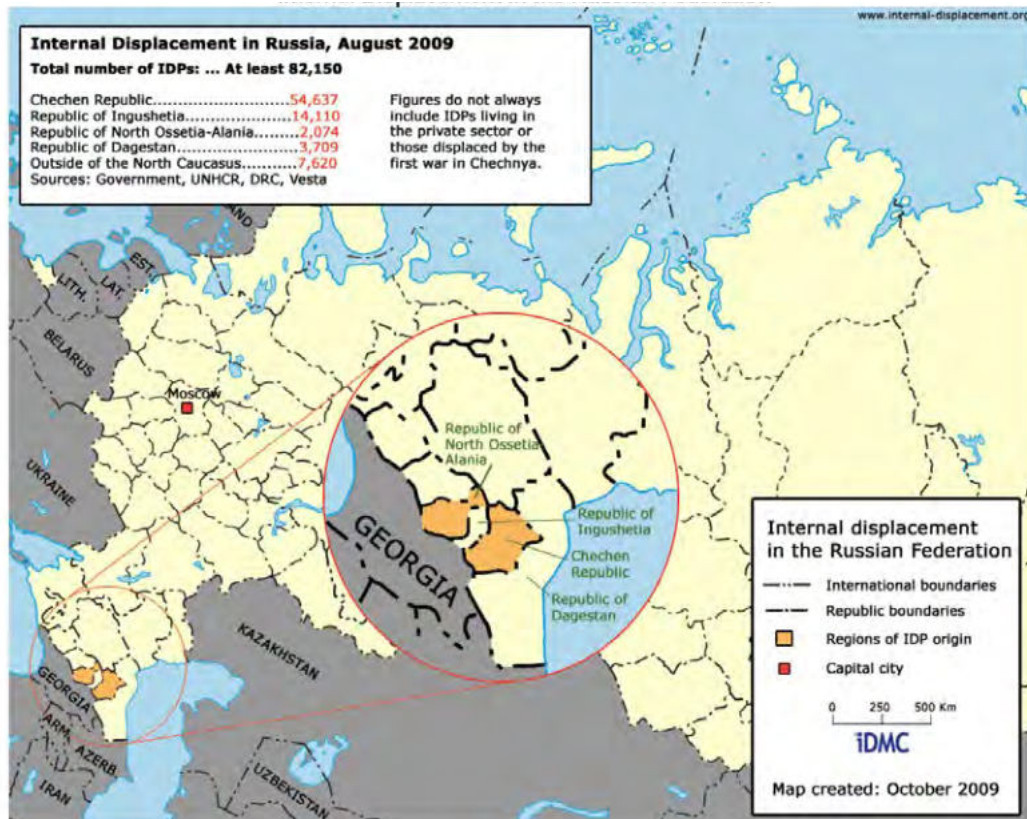
Humanitarian aid delivery aimed at relieving the immediate physical needs of the affected population, in the form of food, shelter, health, and sanitation, still remains a priority in the region. Apart from Chechnya with its 54,637 IDPs, according to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Center (IDMC) there are 14,110⁴⁰ and 3,709 IDPs in Ingushetia and Dagestan respectively (Figure 10). In 2009 the government of the Chechen republic reported the return of 60% of Chechen IDPs from Ingushetia and Dagestan to their homes in Chechnya (IDMC 2009). In spite of that, according to UNHCR (UN, 1 July 2009) most of the returnees have no adequate housing and means to sustain their living, and therefore, are still in need of humanitarian assistance. In IDMC’s estimates more than 275,000 IDPs have returned to their homes in Chechnya and North Ossetia (mostly from Ingushetia and Dagestan). However, most of the

³⁹ Ramazan Abdulatipov, one of the former high-ranking Dagestan’s officials in Moscow, in interview to www.kavkaz-uzel.ru, July 5, 2009 (cited in Dzutsev September 10, 2010).

⁴⁰ Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) reports more than 18,000 IDPs in Ingushetia in 2009, MSF Article, Hope for Peace in Ingushetia has given way to despair, 29 September, 2009.

returned IDPs are still in desperate need of humanitarian assistance.⁴¹ The government of the Russian Federation admits the need for humanitarian assistance in the region, and according to the official statistics, humanitarian relief remains a priority in the Southern Federal District (including all of the North Caucasus) (Figure 11). However, most of humanitarian aid provided by the state is channelled via local governments notorious for corruption and embezzlement.

Figure 10: Internal Displacement in the North Caucasus

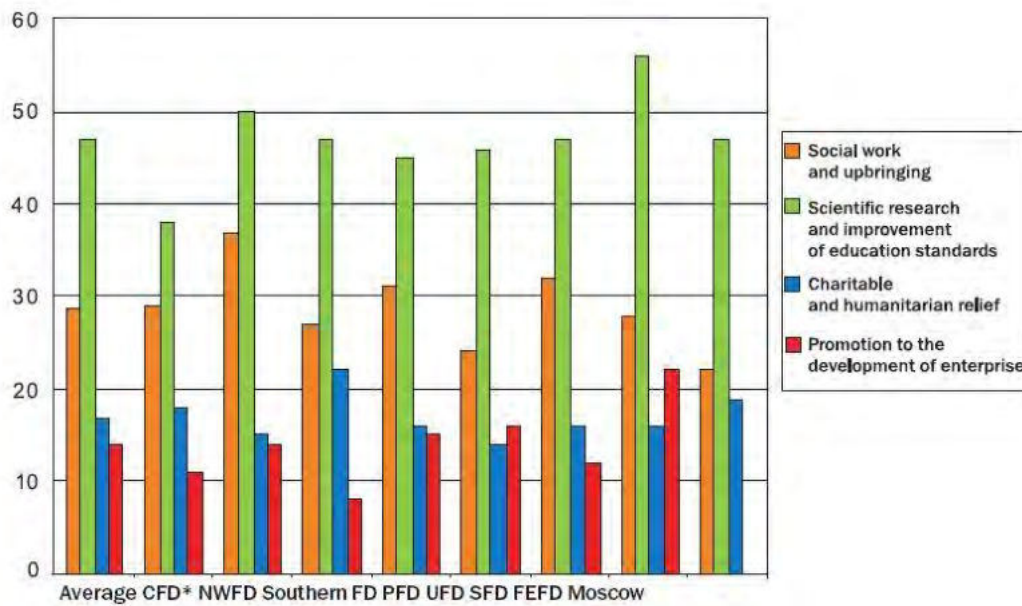


Source: Internal Displacement Monitoring Center (IDMC)

According to the existing reports (Danish Refugee Council 2010 Report, UNHCR 2009 Report), aid agencies currently manage to provide assistance to roughly 60% of registered IDPs in the North Caucasus. However, the majority of voluntarily or forcibly returned IDPs are no longer registered as internally displaced persons. Besides, it has been estimated that the aid amounts, as well as the funding and commitment of international actors are diminishing (FEWER, 26 June 2009). According to Relief Web (7 September 2009), international donors have allocated only \$8 million in 2009 for all the humanitarian needs in the North Caucasus, in comparison to \$25 million in 2008 (IDMC 2009).

⁴¹ According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Center (IDMC), majority of the returned to Chechnya IDPs were forced by the government to sign return application forms and abandon refugee camps in Ingushetia and Dagestan in 2009.

Figure 11: Activities of NGOs in the Russian Federation, 2007-2008



Source: Public Chamber of the Russian Federation

Thus, humanitarian aid in the region is needed, and appropriately funded aid organizations working in the region some of which maintain presence on the ground for more than one and a half decade are capable of delivering aid to those in need. The service delivery is, however, failing to achieve long term results. In other words, the numbers of those in need of humanitarian aid are still high. As a matter of fact, the needs and numbers of beneficiaries have hardly changed in the last decade, which can be seen from the government's move to forcibly return IDPs to their former home-republics in order to reduce official numbers of displaced persons, allowing them to downgrade humanitarian efforts and re-allocate funding into post-conflict rehabilitation. For instance, most UN programs in the North Caucasus are currently of post-conflict nature, mostly in rehabilitation and reconstruction (UNDP 2007).

Thus, the on-going armed conflict, absence of law and order, and human security are continuously preventing IDPs from returning to their home republics making them permanently dependent on humanitarian aid. Lack of employment prospects and chances to settle down in host republics (Dagestan and Ingushetia) in conjunction with continuing violence keep IDPs in constant need of assistance.

5.1.2 Development

As mentioned earlier in this thesis, the current aid efforts (for the last decade) in the North Caucasus are focused on post-conflict reconstruction. The end of large scale military activities in Chechnya marked the beginning of full scale reconstruction projects run by a diversity of local and international organizations, with UN agencies, supported and endorsed by the government often taking the lead. This study will not describe the development projects currently and previously implemented in the region. Noteworthy, the majority of projects are focused on Chechnya, which as a matter of fact has different needs from the rest of the region. Ravaged by more than a decade of large scale conventional war, the republic was in need of rebuilding its cities, infrastructure, and society. Reconstruction projects in Chechnya, for the most part, have reached their

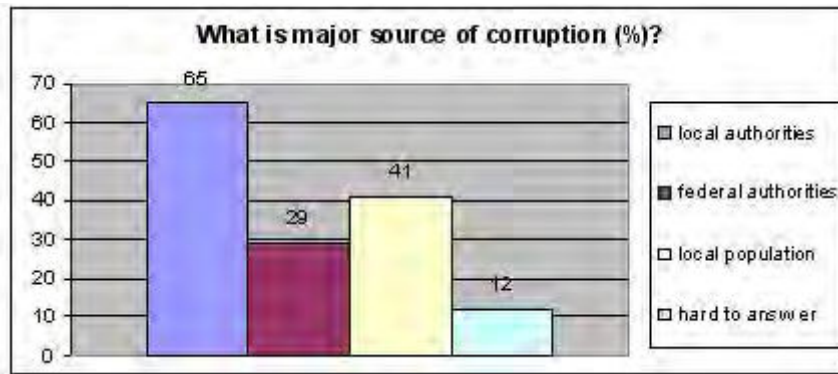
objectives (UNDP 2007), although there is still a great deal of rebuilding needs to be done. On the other hand, development needs in Dagestan, Ingushetia and Kabardino-Balkaria are of a completely different nature. The three republics are crippled by unemployment, corruption, poor governance and inefficiency of state institutions. Development projects have been aiming to tackle the above problems for the last decade and a half with little progress. Against all odds, unemployment and poverty levels in these three republics are unbeatable and are known to overcome many development initiatives. For instance, MSF reports unemployment levels in Ingushetia at more than 70% in 2009 (MSF 2009). It is in spite of all counter-unemployment and job development initiatives included into the Inter-agency Workplan, implemented in the republic since 2007 (OCHA 2007), not to mention previous efforts of UNDP and other development organizations. Gerber & Mendelson (2006) indicate that in Kabardino-Balkaria and Dagestan:

“...fewer than half of the respondents earn enough money to sustain themselves and more than half live in households with total incomes below the most recent official subsistence minimums.”
(p.5)

Little has changed since 2006. Even the official statistics, notorious for their inaccuracy and fabricated data, mention that only 12.9% of the total population is employed in Ingushetia and around 30-34% in Dagestan and Kabardino-Balkaria in 2009 (Rosstat 2009). Official unemployment figures are, however, far from reality; the majority of the unemployed do not report their status to state authorities. Whereas even larger numbers⁴² are employed for hire on a non-permanent basis (Gerber & Mendelson 2007).

Corruption, lack of accountability, and credibility on part of local authorities are considered to be the main reasons behind the inefficiency of development efforts in these three North Caucasian republics. The main sources of corruption are usually Moscow-appointed local authorities (Figure 12) of all levels, including high-ranking officials. The transition to direct administration in Dagestan and Ingushetia, i.e., replacement of elected officials and heads of republics by federally appointed ones, has decreased levels of officials' responsibility toward the population and abolished any need for them to achieve popularity in order to be re-elected (FEWER 2005:64). As a result, the majority of funds allocated for development by the federal government, IGOs and NGOs often end up in the pockets of corrupt officials at all levels of governance (Sagramoso 2007:687-89).

⁴² Gerber & Mendelson (2006:30) report that in 2005-06, up to 30% of working force in Dagestan and up to 40% in Kabardino-Balkaria has been employed for hire on temporary basis.

Figure 12: Poll results on corruption in Kabardino-Balkaria

Source: Caucasus Times⁴³

The problem of “disappearing” funds in the North Caucasus is a well-known issue in the Kremlin and President Medvedev has stressed on a number of occasions that, “unemployment, poverty, corrupt clans indifferent to peoples’ needs that divert subsidies from the federal budget for their own private purposes play a far greater role in engendering armed opposition to the authorities (RFE 20 August 2009).” However, the Kremlin is in no hurry to allow the North Caucasian republics more self-governance, which could further distance them from the federal government or make them overly independent. This is the case with the government of Ramzan Kadyrov in Chechnya, who enjoys a special status of self-governance with little interference from Moscow.

Therefore, development efforts will not bring positive results as long as corruption and a lack of accountability and transparency of local officials exist. In conjunction with the continuing violence, which scares off private investment to the region (Pakhomenko 2009), there are in fact very few positive opportunities for development in the region, with or without development aid.

5.1.3 Human rights

If efficacy or failure of both humanitarian and development assistance can still be disputed, human rights and democratization have clearly failed in the North Caucasus for the moment. As described by the Council of Europe on May 2010:

The situation in the North Caucasus region, particularly the Chechen Republic, Ingushetia and Dagestan, is currently “the most serious and difficult situation” from the angle of protecting human rights and affirming the rule of law in the whole geographic area covered by the Council of Europe (COE May 2010:1).

As of 2009, Human Rights Watch reports no improvement on human rights issues in the North Caucasus and the 2009 Amnesty International report confirms rampant human rights violations by federal authorities in the North Caucasus. In February 2009, Russia failed to pass the Universal Periodic Review conducted by the UN Human Rights Council (HRC). Human rights abuses were mentioned by the HRC as one of the main causes of that failure (Human Rights Watch 2010:434). A recent report by Amnesty

⁴³ Caucasus Times, PRAGUE, 26 January, Caucasus Times – Opinion Poll in Nalchik, Kabardino-Balkaria, December 2008: 77% had personal experience with corruption; 75% are sure that level of corruption in Kabardino-Balkaria will either remain stable or increase.

International “*Russian Federation: Rule without Law: Human Rights Violations in the North Caucasus*” mentions at least 17 types of human rights violations in the region, ranging from torture to extra-judicial executions.

The European Court of Human Rights reported over 235 pending cases of human rights violations in the North Caucasus. The majority of cases are from Chechnya, although Ingushetia and Dagestan are also included (COE May 2010:12). A number of reports by prominent human rights groups are voicing concerns over exacerbating human rights situation in Dagestan, Ingushetia and Kabardino-Balkaria.⁴⁴ The absence of basic civil rights and freedoms, such as the freedom of speech, press and association, unfortunately, are not the major human rights violations in these three republics. The most frequent violations of human rights are abductions and enforced disappearances, arbitrary detentions, death in custody, and excessive use of force, threats, and torture. All of the above mentioned types of human rights abuses are regularly committed by law enforcement agencies on direct orders from local and federal authorities. The scale of such abuses is enormous, there are several thousand people reported missing in the North Caucasus (PMGL 2010).

According to Ulla Pape, an analyst on humanitarian assistance in the North Caucasus, human rights groups and activists succeed in delivering the message on human rights issues in the North Caucasus to the international community and make authorities wary of international criticism.⁴⁵ That often serves as a deterring factor for local and federal authorities from openly engaging in unlawful persecution of local residents in the region. However, it must be noted that generally, human rights groups fail at advocacy and public communication at the local level, as well as in facilitation between citizens and the state, which can be seen in continuing violation of human rights and civil liberties.

As mentioned in Chapter 3 of this thesis, a number of groups working on protecting human rights are operating in the region, with some having permanent staff in the North Caucasus (ICRC, Stichting Russian Justice Initiative) and some maintaining a temporary presence (Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch). However, in spite of the efforts of human rights agencies, the reports indicate an increase in the number of grave human rights violations (COE May 2010:12). On a number of occasions, human rights defenders have become victims themselves (MHG 2009). It might be concluded that the lack of law and order, as well as on-going hostilities are severely crippling the work of human rights and advocacy groups operating in an increasingly hostile environment.

5.2 Is civil society weak?

The fact that civil society in the Russian Federation is far from being capable of fulfilling its task has been noted by many analysts within and outside of Russia.⁴⁶ Civil society in

⁴⁴ See Amnesty International 2009, Human Rights Watch 2009.

⁴⁵ Interview with Ulla Pape, at the Research Center for East European Studies, Bremen, Germany, October 25, 2010.

⁴⁶ See Richter 2008, Semenova 2006, Falkovskaya 2004, Hemment 2004, Henderson 2002.

the North Caucasus, as might be expected of a civil society in a conflict area,⁴⁷ is further weakened by excessive state interventionism, under-funding, and a number of other malaises mentioned in the Chapter 3 of this thesis. As argued by a prominent expert on civil society in Russia, Mitrokhin (2010):

As a matter of fact, there are no real institutions of civil society in the region. There are attempts to copy Western or Oriental (Arabic or Turkish) practices of social work and institutions of civil society, but they are all of little significance. International groups are capable to assist certain individuals or groups of people, but they are unable to solve conflicts even at the village level. First of all, because they are regarded as “outsiders” by the both sides, although those against whose interests they tend to act are eager to regard them as enemies. In other words, Chechens, Dagestanis, Balkars and Islamists consider them as “useful idiots” who need to be abused, and Ossetians, Kabardins and Federals consider them as foreign agents who need to be tolerated due to international pressure (Interview, Mitrokhin, 26.10.2010).

5.2.1 Local NGOs

The strength of local NGOs in the North Caucasus has been considered as particularly weak (by the all-Russian NGO standards) even in official statistics (Figure 13).

NGOs in the heartland of Russia are still under the state’s firm control and mostly function in service delivery, while NGOs in the North Caucasus are expectedly much weaker than civil groups in other developing countries. Civil groups in Kabardino-Balkaria and partially in Ingushetia, for the most part typical Russian NGOs,⁴⁸ are seriously under-funded, and in the majority of cases cut off from any foreign funding.⁴⁹

Civil groups in Dagestan, in contrast to NGOs in other North Caucasian republics, are made up of both all-Russian types of civil groups, mentioned above, and local civil associations, known as *jamaats*. In contrast to Ingush *teips*,⁵⁰ Dagestani *jamaats* have managed to organize themselves into more or less civil group-shaped formations.⁵¹ As suggested by O’Loughlin (2010):

“...there is civil society in a traditional sense - strong jamaats, mosque based groups and so on - not a civil society in the sense of lots of NGOs. These traditional groups are trying to counter the more radical groups (called Wahabbis by the Russians) and are quite successful in many regions (most of Dagestan, for example).” (Interview, O’Loughlin, 27.08.2010)

However, the Dagestan’s *jamaats*, in spite of being an authentic form of grass-roots, cannot be expected to fill the gap left by an ineffective civil society in terms of promoting civil rights and liberties, vouchsafing democratic conduct, and ensuring transparency of

47 “Civil society...tends to shrink in a war situation, as the space for popular, voluntary and independent organizing diminishes” (Orjuela 2004: 59).

48 Typical Russian NGOs can be roughly divided into three general types:

- State funded, monitored and in some cases fully controlled groups, which include grass-root movements, charities, civil associations, and typical NGOs;
- Independent foreign-funded NGOs: both genuine and grant-hunters;
- Independent grass-root movements.

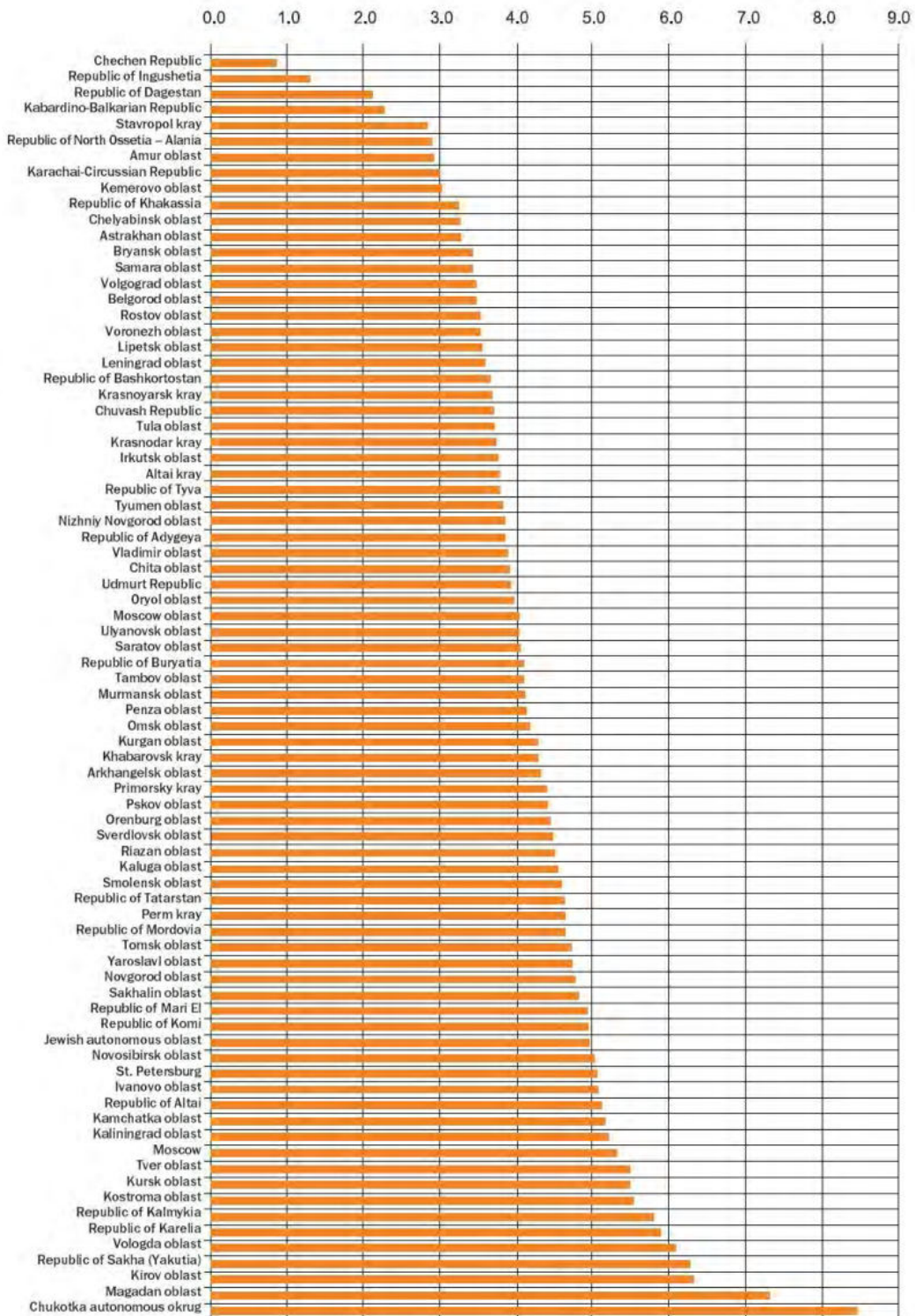
49 See Chapter 3, Section: “3.3.Civil society and the roots of the conflict.”

50 See Chapter 3, Section: “3.1.Historical background.”

51 Dagestan’s *jamaats* are organized on regional and community basis, rather than being structured on clan and kinship affiliations as is the case with Ingush *teips*.

state institutions. Nevertheless, being a form of communal-religious associations, *jamaats* are likely to act as NGOs in such areas as community welfare, health, education, local administration, and possibly local dispute resolution, as well as bottom-up peace-building.

Figure 13: Strength of civil society organizations in the Russian Federation



Source: Public Chamber of the Russian Federation, 2007

Summarily, judging the local civil society in Dagestan, Ingushetia and Kabardino-Balkaria, according to Paffenholz & Spurr's (2006:13) seven basic functions of civil society,⁵² leads to the following conclusions:

The local civil groups mostly fail at protecting citizens; hence human rights abuses are rampant. They have no capacities to monitor local and federal authorities and to make them accountable. Service delivery is mostly implemented by state controlled groups and community building by grass-roots, i.e., *jamaats* in Dagestan and *teips* in Ingushetia, although the latter cannot be considered as civil society.

5.2.2 International NGOs and IGOs

International civil groups, as well as international governmental organizations have both numerical and financial advantage over the local civil society in the North Caucasus (OCHA 2007). However, as described in Chapter 3 of this thesis, they are severely limited by the state. Restricted by the federal legislature, local authorities, insecurity, and a lack of donor interest, the aid organizations are mostly involved in service delivery with limited advocacy functions. Although having strong potential, foreign groups are limited in their mandates and therefore, for the most part, unable to bring significant changes to the region. While donor commitment to projects in Ingushetia remains high, in particular in the IDP sector (UNHCR 2009), Dagestan, and especially Kabardino-Balkaria are not the focus of international NGOs.

Due to its skilful media manipulation and blockage of information, the government of the Russian Federation manages to reduce international interest in the events in the North Caucasus. Thus, a few voices of protest from several rights' groups remain largely unnoticed and unattended. It is disputable whether the international civil society is losing its interest in the North Caucasus with the end of Chechen wars, for instance, indicated by cut offs in funding of humanitarian projects (IDMC 2009:10). It is evident, however, from the failure of development and human rights issues, that Ingushetia, Dagestan and Kabardino-Balkaria are not the places where any of international NGOs and IGOs can boast of long term success.

5.3 Linking civil society and violence

Since one of the main goals of this study is to link the escalation of violence in the North Caucasus with the weakness of civil society, it is necessary to scrutinize indicators in favour and against of such an assumption.

5.3.1 Indicators linking civil society and violence

One of the main indicators supporting the hypothesis of linkages between the increase of violence and decline of civil society in the North Caucasian republics is a fact evident from the recent history; Dagestan, Ingushetia and Kabardino-Balkaria have remained immune to conflict spillover and had no home-grown insurgencies prior to the start of Putin's onslaught on independent civil society. It is true that Chechen militants have

⁵² Mentioned in Chapter 3, these functions are: protection of citizens, monitoring for accountability, advocacy and public communication, socialization, building community, facilitation between citizens and state, service delivery.

worked assiduously on spreading anti-Moscow sentiments to their neighbours in the Caucasus. However, they did so with even a higher vigor in the 1990s. With the increase of Putin's administration's efforts to curb autonomy and limit freedoms in the North Caucasus, insurgent jamaats established themselves in the three republics under study. However, levels of violence remained moderate until 2006, the year when a notorious NGO Law significantly decreased not only the number and capacity of civil groups but also reduced civil rights and freedoms, by outlawing civil associations unapproved by the state. Thus, the year 2006 served both as a significant milestone in the decline of civil society and as a point from which levels of violence began to accelerate rapidly.⁵³ The direct correlation between the decline of civil society and conflict escalation in 2006 is more of an assumption suggested in this thesis rather than an established fact. However, the below mentioned variables can offer a few clues to support that assumption.

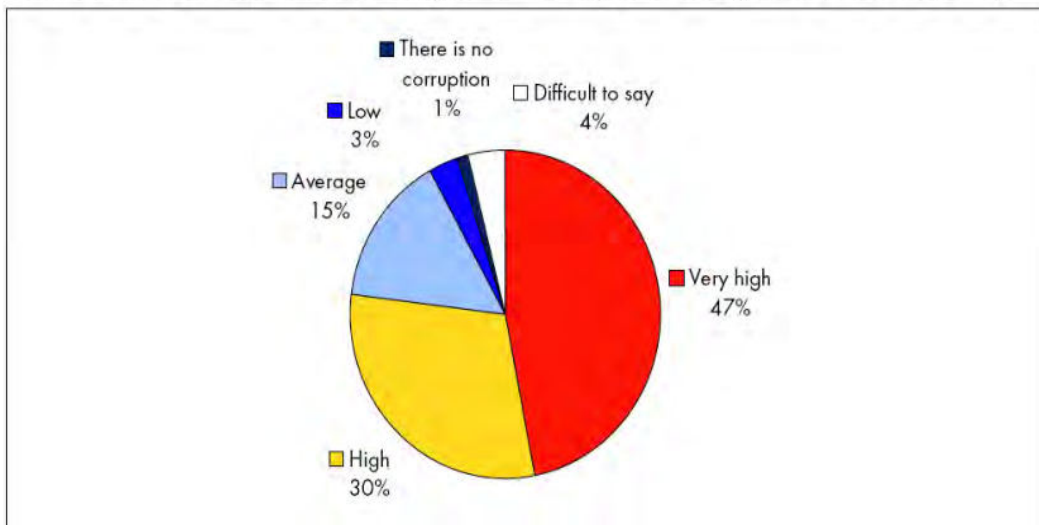
Decline of civil rights and freedoms as well as civil society as a guarantor of such rights, has allowed local and federal authorities to act with impunity. As a matter of fact, there were almost no abductions, extra-judicial executions and other grave violations of human rights in Dagestan, Ingushetia and Kabardino-Balkaria prior to 2004-06. Human rights issues have become a concern in these three republics right after the local and Russian NGOs have been "domesticated" by the state and international civil groups have received a serious warning in the form of 2006 NGO Law and were further restricted. As stated earlier, the actual numbers of beneficiaries in need of humanitarian aid have remained almost similar to the early 2000s, although the amount of aid and the commitment of aid providers are decreasing. As a result, discontent and weariness of the population with the government is growing, allowing rebels to recruit more actively. Furthermore, an absence of a force capable of monitoring the work of state institutions, in particular preventing corruption, nepotism and neglect on the part of state officials, increases impunity and reduces the accountability of state officials. As a consequence, corrupt officials continuously thwart development efforts which lead to the exacerbation of unemployment and an increase in poverty. For instance, opinion polls conducted by scholars from the Center for Strategic International Studies (CSIS) in 2005 in Dagestan report only 4-6% of respondents who ever encountered corruption in dealing with authorities (Gerber & Mendelson 2006:40). In contrast, an opinion poll of an independent Public Opinion Research Center in Dagestan found more than 80% of respondents had encounters with corrupt officials in 2008 (Figure 14).

Finally, the conflict in the North Caucasus is not a war of elites. It starts at the community level and it requires conflict resolution efforts from the bottom up. Accordingly, the presence of a functional civil society with a the credibility and strength of convincing belligerents to start peace talks is crucial in implementing peace-building. Civil participation in the North Caucasus is most needed in conflict resolution efforts from the bottom-up. However, an absence of actors capable of starting the peace process at the grass-root level contributes to continuing violence.

⁵³ Refer to "Figure 1. Violence in the North Caucasus, Trends since 2004," Chapter 2.

Figure 14: Corruption experiences in Dagestan

How Do You Assess the Level of Corruption in the Republic of Dagestan? (VTsIOM, 2008)



Source: http://wciom.ru/arkhiv/tematicheski-arkhiv/item/single/10703.html?no_cache=1&cHash=1d152c4320, September 2008

Source: The Russian Public Opinion Research Center, September 2008 (RAD 2008).

5.3.2 Indicators against the links between civil society and violence

The conflict in the North Caucasus is a secessionist war. The main goal of insurgents is a creation of an independent state from Russia and they are unlikely to give up their goals whether there is or isn't a functional civil society in the region. The following might be one of the main arguments against linking civil society and violence in the North Caucasus conflict. However, a number of variables need to be considered.

First, insurgents and their supporters and sympathizers constitute only a minor per cent of the North Caucasus population (Falkowski 2010:63). It is highly unlikely that by using radical Islam, suicide bombers, and uncontrolled violence that they will ever be able to convince the majority of the population to join them.

Second, it is the improvement of governance, reduction of corruption, promotion of human rights and freedoms and respect for minority cultures that can reduce the grievances and undermine the causes for the rebellion. The participation of civil society, in the above mentioned processes, is of foremost importance.

Third, in spite of being ethnically, culturally, linguistically and religiously different from the majority of the population in the Russian Federation, the nations of the North Caucasus (here of Dagestan, Ingushetia and Kabardino-Balkaria) maintain a considerable degree of loyalty to the Russian Federation. Interestingly enough, in most of the cases, the blame for corruption and bad governance is placed on local rather than the federal government. For instance, an opinion poll conducted by CSIS in Dagestan and Kabardino-Balkaria in 2005 (Gerber & Mendelson 2006:38) included the following question: "How much confidence do you have in President Putin?" 34% respondents in Dagestan and 30% in Kabardino-Balkaria indicated complete confidence in the president and 43% in Dagestan and 53% in Kabardino-Balkaria confirmed to have "some confidence," whereas only 5% in both republics responded to have no confidence at all. Remarkably, in spite of occasionally displaying discontent with Moscow, residents of the North Caucasian republics maintain a considerable degree of loyalty to the Federation.

Such loyalty could also be observed in crisis situations prior to the start of the current conflict. Examples can be found in the perseverance of the Ingush people in preventing Ingushetia to be dragged into Chechen wars of 1994-96 and 1999. A similar mood prevailed in Dagestan when several villages of Kadar area, in the mountains of central Dagestan, have declared creation of an independent from Russia Islamic state in 1999. However, they have received no support or sympathy from other regions of the country. Moreover, Dagestan's military units have actively assisted federal troops in suppressing the Kadar rebellion (Blandy 2000:40).

Edward Azar's (1991:93) theory of a 'protracted social conflict'⁵⁴ can serve as another indicator against the hypothesis linking the decline of civil society and an increase of violence. It is assumed that many conflicts are prone to develop as latent or protracted ones, developing over a long period of time, at times erupting into violence (Miall et al 2000:84). The three republics studied in this thesis have all the requisites of a protracted conflict, i.e., long-lasting economic grievances, cultural and religious differences with the "mainland" Russia, in conjunction with decades of poor governance. As a matter of fact, this thesis does not deny that the conflict environment in the North Caucasus has long been waiting for an impetus to explode. Such an impetus could as well be the decline of a civil society, expressed not as much in the decline in NGO numbers and competences, but in the fall of civil freedoms and liberties and civil society's role as the link between the people and state.

An interesting hypothesis questioning the link between the increase of violence and the weakness of civil society has been offered by Dr. Mitrokhin (2010). As an expert on civil institutions in Russia, he argues that civil society in the region is so primitive that it is almost invisible on the surface, and therefore, it might be increasingly difficult to assess its impacts on the conflict:

"What kind of civil society can we talk about in a traditional, pre-industrial, living by social norms of the "real time" and almost medieval society [of the North Caucasus]? It is more likely a conflict between a "nation-state" [Russia]... and a traditional society [the North Caucasus] being in transition towards creating a nation-state." (Interview, Mitrokhin, 26.10.2010)

As matter of fact, this assumption implies that the current conflict is more of a conflict over societal differences rather than a conflict that is taking place because of the absence of a functional civil society. However, Dr. Mitrokhin does not deny the fact that civil rights and liberties, which are safeguarded by a civil society, are a part of conflict escalation:

Human rights violations, perpetrated by the state, are of course, igniting the conflict and serve as examples of state's mistreatment by local radicals (both nationalist and religious). The lack of compromise on the part of radicals and their followers also serve as a source of conflict escalation [in the North Caucasus]." (II, Mitrokhin, 2010)

⁵⁴ The term "protracted social conflict," coined by Edward Azar, refers to a prolonged confrontation between two or more communal groups over basic needs and resources, such as recognition, political and economic rights, access to natural resources, etc. The confrontation is often deemed to erupt into open hostilities, although the course of the conflict is usually an interchangeable chain of physical violence and periods of calm. Protracted social conflicts are expected to occur over religious, racial, cultural or ethnic cleavages and usually develop over an extended period of time (Miall et al, 2008:84).

Yet another indicator worth mentioning is a theory, proposed not only by the ruling circles in Russia but also outside of it, assumes that the “whole issue” begins and ends in Chechnya.⁵⁵ Chechen separatists were the ones to spread the conflict, brainwash residents of other republics, export weapons and expertise, and provide leadership and guidance. Similarly, by pacifying and developing Chechnya, the North Caucasus can be brought to peace and stability. Undoubtedly, the Chechen factor used to be significant for the development of the conflict. However, the dynamics of the current conflict have shown that the on-going insurgency has a life of its own and became almost entirely independent from Chechnya. Although at the initial stages of the conflict, insurgent jamaats outside of Chechnya have borrowed ideology, expertise and often assumed the leadership of their Chechen comrades, they are known to attain almost complete independence of action and command in recent years (Vatchagaev October 8 2010).

5.4 Civil society's contribution

Assuming that civil society could play a greater role in conflict prevention and conflict de-escalation, it is necessary to examine how civil society organizations can contribute to peace efforts in each of the three republics under study.

5.4.1 Dagestan

The civil space of Dagestan is dominated by religious communities, *jamaats*, which in many areas are serving as a surrogate of NGOs, providing aid in welfare, education and communal activities (Matsuzato & Ibragimov 2005). *Jamaats*, however, are incapable of bridging religious problems, in particular tensions between adherents of traditional *Sufi* and more radical *Salafi* trends of Islam. Besides being highly localized grass-roots associations, *jamaats* have no means to influence inter-ethnic conflicts, as well as tensions between local officials and the population, nor can they promote the democratization processes or vouchsafe human rights and liberties.

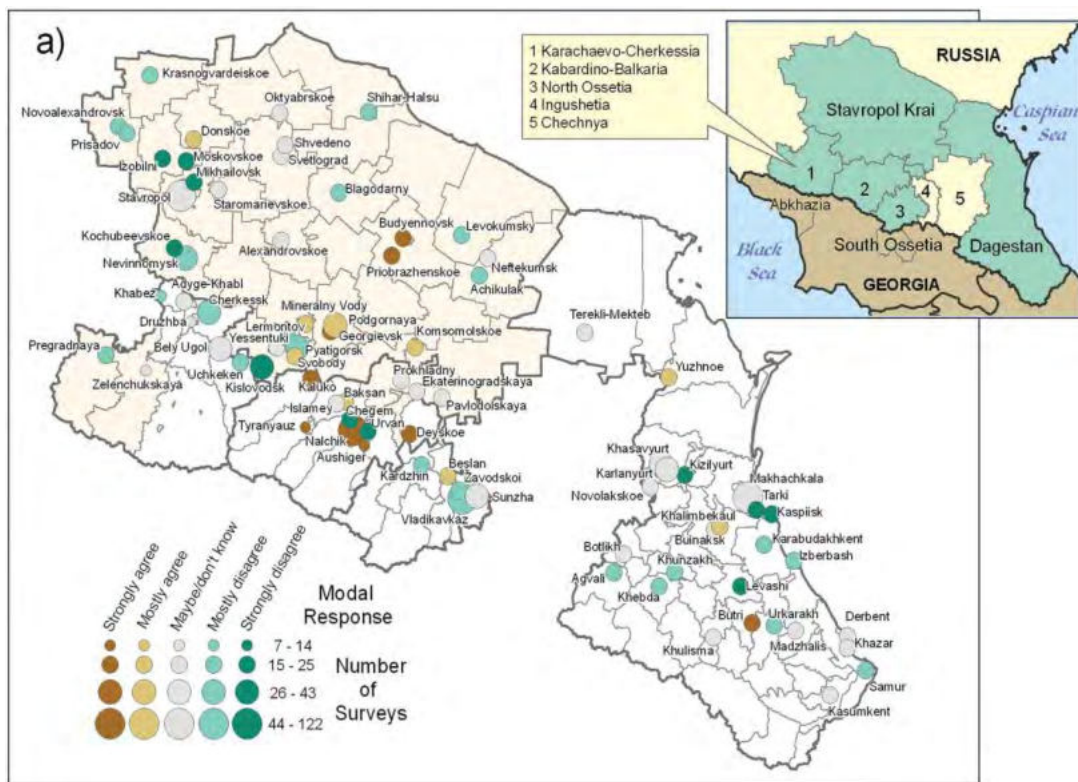
The revival of civil society, in the form of local NGOs, as well as the strengthening and empowering of international NGOs may prove vital for the current political and economic situation in Dagestan. By abolishing direct elections of the republic's administration in 2004 (FEWER 2005:64), the federal government destroyed the popular support system, allowing the republic's leadership to be in touch with their electorate and keep the local officials interested in the fate of Dagestan's population. Following a general onslaught on civil society, in the form of the 2006 NGO legislation, a link connecting the population to the republics' leadership has been severed (Blandy 2005:12). Thus, the need for a force, capable of initiating communication between officials and the population, and most importantly ensuring transparency of state institutions, is significant.

The role of NGOs can also be envisioned in mediation among the diversity of ethnic groups inhabiting the territory of Dagestan and most importantly in mediation between the two conflicting trends of Islam: *Sufi* and *Salafi*. That function cannot be performed

⁵⁵ See Tishkov 2001, Tumelty 2005, Vendina 2007, Nichol 2009.

by *jamaats* due to their ethnic composition.⁵⁶ As a third party, the role of independent civil groups cannot be underestimated in conflict resolution and the de-escalation of violence. As shown by the data collected by Bakke & O’Loughlin (2009:1014) on sentiments of forgiveness and reconciliation with the regard to authorities and other ethnic/religious/communal groups in the North Caucasus, the majority of Dagestan’s population very much disagrees on reconciliation prospects (Figure 15). That leads to an assumption that conflict resolution and peace-building cannot be exclusively implemented by local actors, i.e., third party involvement seems necessary for the success. Such a third party, however, should both be neutral and linked to the grass-roots and communities. Clearly, Dagestan’s *jamaats*, which are often a part of religious and ethnic tensions, cannot be such a party.

Figure 15: Local responses to the forgiveness question in the North Caucasus



Source: Bakke & O’Loughlin et al (2009:1014)

Thus, in Dagestan, civil society can be expected to play an important role in administrative and social areas, and in conflict and dispute resolution. Reduction of corruption and a decrease in violence can increase the efficiency of humanitarian, development, and human rights aid in the country. As noted earlier, the main reasons behind the inefficiency of humanitarian aid in the North Caucasus is continuing insecurity and economic deprivations. Both of these reasons, in Dagestan, can be addressed by strengthening and empowering civil society, i.e., creating a force independent from the state and neutral from ethnic and religious divisions. Similarly,

56 Each religious jamaat is made up of representatives of a particular ethnicity, and of a particular trend of Islam. The majority of jamaats are in fact Sufi Brotherhoods, i.e., sworn enemies of Salafi (insurgent) Brotherhoods, which makes it difficult for them to serve as mediators in an inter-confessional dialog (Matsuzato & Ibragimov 2005 and McGregor 2005).

one of the main reasons is inefficient development aid in Dagestan is systemic corruption, which can also be tackled by civil society.

5.4.2 Ingushetia

Ingushetia's *teips*, or kinship clans, often serve as Dagestan's *jamaats* in providing local communities with basic social services in education, welfare, and communal aid (Sokrianskaia 2009). However, in comparison to Dagestan's *jamaats*, Ingush *teips* are not even regional based associations: their basis is in family and kinship relations. Therefore, *teips* cannot be considered as surrogates of civil society. Instead while penetrating state institutions, *teips* represented by their members in government and administrative structures, compete among each other impeding the governing process. Ingush government, bogged down in systemic corruption and distrust by population, more than any other North Caucasian republic needs transparency and accountability of government officials. It is the lack of social structures capable to ensure facilitation between authorities and population that fuels insurgency leaves aid efforts fruitless and impedes economic development. Strengthening local civil society, as well as allowing more freedoms to international NGOs, which are already present in the republic, can provide a necessary structure for monitoring and serve as checks-and-balances on state authorities. Civil actions are also needed to eradicate impunity of law enforcement agencies accountable for abductions, torture and other violations of human rights.

Lastly, civil society's role in peace-building in Ingushetia can be one of a great significance. Similarly to Dagestan, a third party is needed in Ingushetia to reach out to grass-roots and build a link among competing for power and influence *teips*, many of which are the main suppliers of manpower and funds to insurgents, who are often used as a political weapon by rivaling *teips* (ISS 2008:2). Besides, numbers of young people joining insurgent *jamaats* could be reduced by fostering educational efforts and developing employment market in private sector, which in its turn needs heavy investments and security. The recent federal efforts to create more jobs in industry and agriculture seemed to have little success (Vatchagaev, March 2010), since the state salaries remain low and equally low are incentives for young people to be employed in unpromising state sector. On the other hand, the previous experience of private run business initiatives has showed success in reducing unemployment and boosting the republic's economic development.⁵⁷ Accordingly, the development of private sector, unobstructed by corrupt state officials, requires civil initiatives and participation of non-governmental actors, such as NGOs and INGOs working in development area. Thus, decentralization and reduction of clan politics in Ingushetia can only be achieved with the participation of civil actors and preferably from the bottom-up. As significant as they may prove for economic development, these efforts can also be crucial in the field of conflict resolution.

⁵⁷ The free economic zone has been created in Ingushetia by the president, Ruslan Aushev, in the 1990. It has led to a brief expansion of private farms and businesses, strengthening the Ingush economy and creating a number of wealthy households. The free economic zone has been abolished with the removal of Aushev from his position by Putin (FEWER 2005).

5.4.3 Kabardino-Balkaria

Among the three researched here North Caucasian republics, Kabardino-Balkaria has perhaps the most conventional, in the Western sense, civil society. However, in spite of having no necessity to compete with clan or religious communities for civic space, civil groups in Kabardino-Balkaria remain weak and dependent on the state (Figure 4). Due to the lack of pressing humanitarian issues in the republic and no war-related destruction, numbers of international aid groups operating in the country are lower than in neighbouring Ingushetia and Chechnya (OCHA 2007).

Similarly to Ingushetia and Dagestan, Kabardino-Balkaria is plagued by systemic corruption, lame administration, resulting in high unemployment and economic stagnation. Heavy handed practices of law enforcement agencies in their hunt for Islamic fundamentalists have created serious human rights problems which place the republic on the same level with Ingushetia and Dagestan, in terms of human rights and freedoms (FEWER 2005). Top-down efforts to tackle the governance problems have been fruitless similarly to other North Caucasian republics. Evidently, if given enough operational freedom, the Kabardino-Balkaria's civil society could effectively counter-balance the state in areas of governance (FEWER 2005:89).

Religious tensions, in this largely moderate secular republic are not a pressing issue. In comparison to Dagestan and Ingushetia, where scores of young people are joining *Salafi*-preaching insurgents as a sign of protests against the traditional Moscow-backed *Sufi* religious establishment, in Kabardino-Balkaria, insurgents are using as a motto the oppression of Islam in general (McGregor 2006). Radical Islam is seen in the republic as a means of resistance to corrupt and heavy handed largely secular Moscow-appointed officials. Thus, similar to other republics in the region, civil society in Kabardino-Balkaria is needed as the third party. In contrast to ethnically divided power structures of the republic (predominantly dominated by the Kabardin ethnicity), insurgency is multi-ethnic, and therefore, appealing to low income and middle classes of all ethnic groups in the republic. The grass-root nature of insurgency recruitment strategies makes it necessary to focus on bottom-up peace-building, which can become one of the priorities for civil groups in reducing levels of violence, which in its turn can attract investments back to the republic.

5.5 Conclusion

The goal of this chapter was to address the four main questions, necessary to support the hypothesis of this thesis, i.e., an assumption that the on-going escalation of violence in the North Caucasus, and in particular in Dagestan, Ingushetia and Kabardino-Balkaria, can be linked to the decline of independent civil society in the region. The four questions, analysed in this chapter are also expected to provide an answer to the main research question of this study: why aid efforts in the region are failing to bring long term outcomes?

Consequently, the first question addressed in this chapter is a scrutiny of aid efforts in the region. It proves existence of a solid body of evidence, confirming that humanitarian and development aid as well as efforts in promoting rights and freedoms are falling short of their objectives. It is also obvious that all three types of assistance are closely

interlinked: failures of development and human rights make humanitarian efforts endless and fruitless. In the meantime, donors of humanitarian aid, weary of almost a one and a half decade long need for aid, are keen to re-focus on reconstruction and post-conflict transformation, actively endorsed by the government. Thus, reduced amounts of humanitarian aid to unreduced numbers of beneficiaries, development in the midst of rampant corruption and on-going warfare, and human rights protection in a security vacuum - all turn aid efforts into a vicious cycle of decreasing effectiveness.

The second question, raised in this chapter is aimed to examine the weakness of civil society in the region. The civil society's malfunction in the North Caucasus, widely discussed throughout this thesis, can be evidenced in the performance of NGOs (rated as weak even in official statistics), their goals and objectives, their methods and strategies. Limited by the state in their mandates and operational freedom, working in a hostile environment marked by the continuous violence, and surrounded by an information vacuum, international aid agencies are in a weak position in the North Caucasus. Their local partners are largely state controlled, have even narrower mandates, restricted in funds and freedoms to act and are hardly capable to protect their own stuff let alone the beneficiaries.

The next dilemma addressed in this chapter is a possibility to link the recent outbreak of violence in the North Caucasus with the decline of civil society. The fact that the above mentioned escalation of hostilities took place in the immediate aftermath, i.e., in the same year, of the restrictions on NGOs, is an unlikely coincidence. The 2006 NGO legislature has been followed by an increase in human rights abuses, accompanied by an unprecedented growth of corruption, inefficiency and unaccountability of state institutions in the North Caucasus. All of the above has been emphasized by almost a decade of fruitless and ineffective development efforts, which have witnessed the slow downfall of local economies, resulting in the continuous growth of unemployment for the republics' residents and further dependence on humanitarian aid for IDPs. These all took place in the background of ever increasing rebel attacks on army, law enforcement, state officials and facilities, who in their turn responded by persecutions of local population, further reduction of civil rights and freedoms and continuing "counter-terrorism" operations.

Lastly, as suggested in this chapter, strengthening of civil society can critically, although not overnight, alleviate situations in the three North Caucasian republics. Stronger and more independent NGOs, both local and international, can fill an empty niche of an intermediary between the state and people. NGOs are needed in the region as a third party to serve as mediators and monitors, a role that cannot be fulfilled by local surrogates of NGOs, i.e., Dagestan's *jamaats* and Ingushetia's *teips*. Apart from serving as guarantors of human rights and freedoms and monitors of state officials, civil groups are also needed to establish peace efforts in the region, and most importantly, implement peace-building.

6. Conclusion

This thesis aimed to answer the question of why aid efforts have been unable to achieve long terms results in three North Caucasian republics: Dagestan, Ingushetia and Kabardino-Balkaria. The hypothesis suggested as an answer to that question emphasized

weakness of civil society and associated with it growth of violence, which continues to cripple aid efforts. It has been suggested here that the inability of civil society to implement peace efforts and serve as a guarantor of civil freedoms and liberties is particularly detrimental to aid efforts. The aid efforts implemented, in the midst of violence and human insecurity and in an environment infested by corruption and nepotism, are bringing very little change to the region. Thus, as argued in this study, the rapid escalation of violence in recent years is a result of a declining civil society. The latter in its turn, is both a cause for the inefficiency of aid efforts and a factor preventing the de-escalation of the conflict. Therefore, the variables of this research are closely interlinked.

6.1 Findings summarized

To draw out conclusions from this research it is necessary to provide an answer to the question of why aid efforts are failing in the North Caucasian republics.

First, and most importantly, aid organizations never considered Dagestan, Ingushetia and Kabardino-Balkaria to be areas of an on-going armed conflict, nor have they considered countries undergoing a post-conflict transformation, such as Chechnya. One particular aid effort, the Inter-agency Workplan 2007, often mentioned in this study (also the largest aid initiative aimed at covering entire region) is an example of how limited development and human rights aid outside of Chechnya was (OCHA 2007). Most of the aid provided to these three republics has been of humanitarian nature, and although urgently needed, such aid had little impact on long term development and conflict prevention in the republics.

Second, good governance, capacity, and civil society building efforts conducted by both local and international aid groups are continuously encountering corrupt and uncooperative authorities. In most cases these authorities are not interested in changing the existing situation and due to their loyalty to the federal government, are considerably immune to criticism. As a result, development, human rights and democratization efforts are bogged down in bureaucracy and corruption.

Third, the aid organizations do not prioritize the conflict resolution: only a handful of peace-building efforts have been ever implemented in the region and mostly of a low scale and capacity. Therefore, growing violence is continuing to serve as a major factor affecting the efficacy of development and human rights efforts.

6.2 Conclusion

In order to validate the hypotheses of this study it is necessary to assess the evidence pointing of the weakness of civil society, the increase of violence and the ineffectiveness of aid efforts. This thesis does not pursue a goal of providing complete evidence to support its assumptions. Instead, its aim is to emphasize the existing clues and links which lead to the conclusions summed up below.

First, the escalation of violence and decline of civil society took place at approximately the same time. However, the factors that are likely to accelerate those two processes can be divided into political and social. Politically, the direct election of state officials in the North Caucasian republics were abolished by the Kremlin in 2004, civil groups were

then restricted by rigid legislature in 2006, and the republics of Dagestan, Ingushetia and Kabardino-Balkaria have become further dependent on federal subsidies. Socially, human rights abuses are becoming a part of the counter-insurgency agenda, and therefore becoming legitimized. Civil rights and freedoms, such as freedom of speech, press and expression have been curbed, while their guarantors, i.e., NGOs and civil society in general are pressured by the state.

Second, while civil society's function of ensuring transparency within state institutions is decreasing, large circles of the population become disaffected with the state and opt to support the insurgency. In conjunction, pressed by the state and driven by donor priorities, the majority of NGOs operating in the region do not heavily involve in development and human rights issues in Dagestan, Ingushetia and Kabardino-Balkaria, instead focusing on humanitarian aid and other service delivery functions.

Third, in the absence of a functional civil society, local surrogates of NGOs are prone to act as their substitutes. Although the latter are failing to ensure democracy and civil freedoms, instead further exacerbating inter-confessional and clan cleavages. Often presented as grass-root civil society, *jamaats* of Dagestan and *teips* of Ingushetia, due to their limited capabilities, cannot implement conflict resolution without a third party intervention. Regardless of whether the escalation of violence can be linked to the decline of civil society, conflict resolution still requires civil participation and is unlikely to be successful if only implemented from the top-down. Thus, in spite of the actual causes of the current escalation of violence third party involvement is needed from the bottom-up. This can only be done by non-governmental organizations, needed to reach out to the masses and connect them to those on the top.

Appendix I

List of Interviewees

Lyall, Jason (Dr.) is an assistant professor in the Department of Political Science at the Yale University and an expert on the North Caucasus. Dr. Lyall wrote a number of books and articles on the conflict in the North Caucasus.

Mitrokhin, Nikolay (Dr.) is a senior researcher at the Research Center for East European Studies, Bremen, Germany. Dr. Mitrokhin is an expert on civil society in the Russian Federation and an author of several publications on civil organizations in Russia.

O'Loughlin, John (Dr.) is a professor at the University of Colorado. He is a well-known expert on the North Caucasus and Russia and the author of a number of books and research works dealing with conflict and society in the North Caucasus.

Pape, Ulla (PhD) is a researcher at the Research Center for East European Studies, Bremen, Germany. She is specializing in Russian civil society, as well as humanitarian issues in the North Caucasus.

Souleimanov, Emil (Dr.) is an assistant professor at the Institute of Political Studies, Charles University, Prague. He is an author of "An Endless War: The Russian Chechen conflict in Perspective" (2007) and other works covering the conflict in the North Caucasus.

Appendix II

Interview Questions

Do you think that escalation of violence, as well as conflict spillover, in the North Caucasus (NC) in recent years can be connected to the weakness of civil society in the region and its inability to countervail the state?

2. Do you think that aid efforts in the NC are bringing positive results?
3. Is civil society in the NC capable to implement peace-building?
4. If peace efforts are to be conducted in the NC what type of peace is likely to succeed?
5. What are the strengths and weaknesses of civil groups in the NC?

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Contact:

Institute for International Law of Peace and Armed Conflict (IFHV)

NA 02/33

Ruhr University Bochum

Universitätsstraße 150

44780 Bochum

Germany

Telephone: +49(0)234 32 27366

Fax: +49(0)234 32 14208

Email: ifhv@rub.de

Web: www.ifhv.de

Facebook: www.facebook.com/rub.ifhv