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WINNING HEARTS AND MINDS: POPULATION-CENTRIC COUNTERINSURGENCY IN
THE NORTH CAUCASUS FEDERAL DISTRICT

University of Tampere
School of Management/Politics
International Relations
Master's Thesis
Cross-Border University – MDP in International Relations
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In International Relations, war and security comprise a large role because it generally affects multiple countries. The insurgency in the North Caucasus Federal District is not only a threat to stability in the region or the Russian Federation, but to international peace and security as a whole. The Caucasus Emirate terrorist organization has declared jihad against the Russian government and any country or individual which they consider wages war against “Muslims”.

Since the fall of the Soviet Union, the Russian government has implemented an enemy-centric strategy to neutralize insurgent numbers without addressing the root causes of instability in the region such as weak governance, corruption, lack of identity, economic stagnation, and military abuses. In 2010, the Russian government created the North Caucasus Federal District and unveiled a new strategy to counteract the root causes of instability in the region. This thesis analyzes to what extent the Russian government is implementing a population-centric counterinsurgency strategy to bring stability to the North Caucasus Federal District since the new strategy took effect to the end of the year 2012.

Population-centric counterinsurgency is a strategy implemented by a government to win the “hearts and minds”, meaning the support of the target population to create an environment of support for the counterinsurgent, whereby support for an insurgency decreases and long-term stability is achieved through nation-building, encompassing the strengthening and maintenance of all forms of national power: the political, informational, military, and economic elements. In this thesis it is framed into three Logical Lines of Operation (LLOs): governance, economic development/essential services, and combat/civil security operations based upon the United States Army Counterinsurgency Field Manual No. 3-24. I also address the Russian government’s information campaign to enable stability since psychological warfare comprises a large part of population-centric counterinsurgency.

Using ethnography as my method, I travelled to the North Caucasus Federal District for three weeks in the North Caucasus Federal District to observe the implementation of the government’s strategy under the framework of the three LLOs plus information campaign as well as conduct interviews with six Russian citizens: five in the North Caucasus Federal District and one from outside the region, regarding their thoughts on what the government’s strategy in the region. I have also read over 350 articles, news and government reports on the conflict and government’s strategy, some of which I use in this thesis to support or question my findings.

One can conclude from this thesis that the Russian government, although still suffering to reform, is making considerable effort to solve the instability in the North Caucasus Federal District through economic development and a country-wide information campaign while still largely failing to gain the trust of the regional population due to gross levels of corruption, a closed political process for the people to decide their future, and continual abuses by military and security personnel who are still determined to solve the instability through violence. I have concluded that the Russian government implements a population-centric counterinsurgency strategy in terms of its information campaign and economic development, fails in terms of governance and drastically fails in combat/civil security operations.

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Glossary of Terms and Persons

Bortnikov, Alexander: Director of the Federal Security Service (FSB) of the Russian Federation since 2008. He is also head of the National Counterterrorism Committee (NAK), the federal body tasked with overseeing counterterrorism operations in the Russian Federation, including the North Caucasus Federal District.

Caucasus Emirate: Terrorist organization created on October 31, 2007, led by Chechen Doku Umarov that seeks to establish an Islamic Caliphate within the borders of the North Caucasus with its eventual expansion from West Africa to India.

Chechen Republic of Ichkeria (ChRI): Secessionist ‘government’ of Chechnya created in 1991 which led to two separatist wars against the Russian government in the First Chechen War (1994-1996) and the Second Chechen War (1999-2000). The ChRI President Doku Umarov disbanded the ‘government’ in October 2007 and created the Caucasus Emirate terrorist organization.

Counterinsurgent: A political or military actor that acts to neutralize an insurgency.

Counter-terrorism: A narrow strategy to identify and neutralize terrorist organizations and prevent acts of terrorism.

Counter-insurgency: A wider strategy than counter-terrorism employed by a counterinsurgent which addresses grievances and winning “hearts and minds” of a target population to bring stability to an area of operation.

Gazavat: Term for “jihad” used in the North Caucasus.

Insurgent: A non-state combatant, not necessarily a terrorist, as in the case of a secessionist fighter whose objective is to fight counterinsurgent forces, not spread fear among the civilian populace or seeks political revolution. They could be considered by some to be “freedom fighters”.

Jamaat: Arabic word meaning “Assembly”. Used in this thesis to describe a group of Islamic militants.

Jihad: Used in this text to describe Islamic extremist ‘holy war’ against non-believers to create a ‘pure’ world, free of injustice and non-believers. Also, it is usually referred by moderate and traditional Muslims as an internal spiritual “struggle” against evil.

Kadyrov, Ramzan: President of the Republic of Chechnya since 2007. He is a former Chechen militant who fought for Chechen independence in the First Chechen War.

Khloponin, Alexander: Former businessman and governor of Krasnoyarsky Krai who in 2010 was appointed presidential envoy to the North Caucasus Federal District, giving him powers to create an economic strategy to address regional economic grievances and oversee its economic development.

Magomedov, Magomedislam: Kremlin-appointed President of the Republic of Dagestan from 2010 to January 2013.

Non-state actor: an individual or organization that has no formal or legal ties to a government which aims to influence international relations, i.e. non-government organization (NGO), insurgent group, or terrorist organization.

Salafism: A sect of Sunni Islam which originated in Egypt in the late 19th century which seeks to establish a “Golden Age” of Islam using modern advancements for implementing ‘pure’ Islam in strict accordance with the Quran and Hadith. A follower is known as a Salafist. A minority of Muslim’s in the North Caucasus are Salafist.

Siloviki: Russian term for a member of Russia’s security services or military.

Spetsnaz: A general Russian term for its Special Forces from its military and security services.

Sufism: A controversial sect of Islam, not regarded by a majority of Sunni or Shi’a Muslims as followers of Islam. They incorporate mystical and traditional cultural aspects into their religion which angers Salafists and Wahhabists. A follower is called Sufi. The vast majority of Muslims in the North Caucasus are Sufi.

Target Population: A specific group of people based upon operational requirements that a counterinsurgent’s words or actions are targeted towards to implement its strategy.

Theater of Jihad: An environment where jihad is being waged.

Terrorist: A non-state combatant whose objective is to create instability and fear through acts of violence, subversion, or propaganda in the effort to create political revolution or destabilize society. They cannot be considered a “freedom fighter” because the tactics they often attack “soft targets” such as civilians and private infrastructure which do not belong to a state, instead of solely combatting or negotiating with a state by direct means.

Wahhabism: A sect of Sunni Islam which originated in Saudi Arabia in the 18th century which, opposite to Salafism, blamed the decline of Islam to the modernization of Europe and traditional Islam. Similarly to Salafism, they impose a strict adherence to the teachings of the Quran and Hadith, including the use of armed violence against unbelievers. A follower is known as a Wahhabi.

Yevkurov, Yunus-bek: A member of the *siloviki* who in 2008 was appointed President of the Republic of Ingushetia by the Kremlin.

Abbreviations

AO - Area of Operation

COIN - Counterinsurgency

FSB - Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation

LLO - Logical Line of Operation

NCFD - North Caucasus Federal District

Russia's new federal district

Russian President Dmitry Medvedev decided to establish the North Caucasus Federal District



Graphic used with permission from RIA Novosti, 2013  РИАНОВОСТИ

1 INTRODUCTION

The objective of this thesis is to determine to what extent the Russian government is implementing a population-centric counterinsurgency strategy in the North Caucasus Federal District (NCFD). This will be achieved by analyzing information I have found during my three week trip to the North Caucasus District where I observed Russia's strategy to bring stability to the region. This comprises economic development, daily living, security, governance, and the government's information campaign. The framework I have used for this analysis comprises the four applicable Logical Lines of Operation (LLOs) outlined in the United States Army Manual No. 3-24. They include governance, economic development, essential services and combat/civil security operations. In this thesis I have combined the economic development and essential services LLOs and added a chapter on the Russian government's information campaign. This better represents all the elements of national power which are needed to work in coordination with one another to implement a coherent policy in the form of a population-centric counterinsurgency strategy. I have also read many articles on the situation in the North Caucasus to give me more information on the region on subjects that I was unable to observe, to provide further evidence and question some of my findings. I argue that the Russian government has implemented some aspects of population-centric counterinsurgency strategy in the NCFD such as through its 15-year economic development strategy and information campaign to integrate non-ethnic Russians into Russian society. Furthermore, I argue that in terms of federal and regional governance; corruption, weak regional governance in regards to credibility and capability, and lack of popular political participation has resulted in a failed attempt by the governments to win "hearts and minds". Additionally, it has failed to match its rhetoric with physical changes in how it conducts combat/civil security operations, instead continuing to pursue an enemy-centric strategy that cannot promote or enable long-term stability and win "hearts and minds" of the regional population.

COIN is considered a part of International Relations because counterinsurgencies have taken place across the globe and have often involved militaries or peacekeeping organizations being deployed into a foreign country. The most well-known cases are the counterinsurgencies in Vietnam, Afghanistan and Iraq. However, counterinsurgencies can also be declared and used in an entirely domestic environment such as what is being witnessed in the NCFD. The Russian government has continually fought insurgents in the region since the First Chechen War. There has never been the deployment of foreign military forces to the NCFD. The government relies on its own power and internal military and security forces. What was once mainly an international phenomenon is becoming more domesticated. The current Malay-insurgency in the Pattani province of southern

Thailand is another example of a domesticated counterinsurgency effort. Terrorist organizations and insurgent groups such as the Caucasus Emirate and al Qaeda operate on an international scale, are not limited to one geographical area and do not adhere to the Westphalian definition of sovereign states. Additionally, COIN is not a conventional type of warfare, meaning that the military and security elements are not the primary actor in a population-centric counterinsurgency since it includes nation building and all elements of national power. This causes insurgency and counterinsurgency to be an issue for international governments to study and be prepared to experience.

Secondly, security is a relative concept. It can mean different things to different countries. Personal, societal, and state security are broad sectors of security but what exactly is defined as security in these sectors is up for discussion. The Russian government has defined the instability in the NCFD to be a threat to its state security and has taken a course of action to address it. COIN is about changing the perception of the threat using hard and soft power. Hard power comes in the form of combat and civil security operations to “clear” the area of insurgents and “hold” the area through sustained presence. Soft power comes in the form of winning “hearts and minds”, which is a form of “building” the support of the target population towards the counterinsurgent.

Population-centric COIN should be accepted as the solution to instability in the NCFD because the government’s previous enemy-centric has failed to bring any progress to the region. Enemy-centric COIN is very narrow and does not address sources of instability that insurgents can and do exploit, such as economic depravity, corruption, ethnic-conflict, and weak governance. Only population-centric counterinsurgency advocates a broader strategy that aims to address sources of instability alongside a military strategy that seeks to neutralize insurgents who are unwilling to surrender. To use a famous analogy, population-centric COIN strategy uses the “carrot” and the “stick” while an enemy-centric strategy uses just the “stick”. Merely aiming to suppress an insurgency is a continual battle that will re-appear as soon as the counterinsurgent becomes complacent. Implementing a COIN strategy helps solidify support for counterinsurgent efforts, creates a strong bond between the government and target population and empowers them to work together which increases the prospect for establishing long-term stability and decreases the opportunity and ability for an insurgency to reappear.

Since the fall of the Soviet Union until 2010, the Russian government solely relied on an enemy-centric conventional/counterinsurgency strategy. This has only enabled the insurgency to spread from Chechnya to the six other republics of the NCFD while societal grievances held by the

regional population were not acknowledged as causes of instability, nor were they addressed. An enemy-centric strategy means the focus of the strategy is primarily kinetic in nature, where the capturing or killing of insurgents is the main objective. A historical example of this strategy is in Vietnam where American forces primarily sought to bring victory and stability primarily by the neutralization of enemy insurgents and the North Vietnamese Army (NVA).

A population-centric counterinsurgency, as stated above, applies a much broader strategy encompassing all elements of national power. The neutralization of insurgents plays only one role in the strategy. Nor is the neutralization of insurgents the most important in bringing stability. What is most important in a population-centric counterinsurgency is the addressing of the target population's grievances and setting up a framework of governance that that can control and maintain all the aspects of national power and win "hearts and minds", meaning the support of the target population. Without trusted links created between the government and the target population, "hearts and minds" cannot be won, meaning the continuation of instability.

During my ethnographic trip to the NCFD, I traveled through six of the seven republics of the NCFD, avoiding Karachaevo-Cherkessia due to time constraints. I carried out six interviews, one with an ethnic-Russian in St. Petersburg prior to my trip. The other five were done with native residents inside the NCFD. Interviews were semi-structured in nature and aimed to find out more about daily life in the region, what the government was doing in the region to stabilize it, and reaffirm or question my observations in the region. I would have liked to have questioned more individuals and asked more questions to some of the individuals but my Russian language skills were not advanced enough to ask everything I desired. The names and genders of my interviewees have been concealed. For example, I use pseudonyms in this thesis for all my interviewees and their real gender is not necessarily the one I give them in the paper. This is to protect their identities and prevent any possible retribution they could encounter. However, I do not conceal their careers or republic of residence so readers can see that I was able to attain a broad range of views from a variety of republics, from young and old, well-established and working-class. All of the interviewees belonged to a native ethnic group in their respective republic. Only my interviewee in St. Petersburg was an ethnic-Russian. In St. Petersburg, Boris my interviewee talked about his father who had recently returned from a six-month police deployment to Grozny, Chechnya. My main interviewee was Alexei in Kabardino-Balkaria. He was a journalist, younger in age, and had hope in the future of the republic. In Ingushetia, I interviewed Sergei, a taxi driver who was quite young and had unfavorable views of Ingushetia and Russia. In Chechnya, I interviewed two individuals. Ilya, a middle-aged economist was quite well-established and had desires to move out

of the region because of lack of work. Vyacheslav, a retired security services officer was also well-established and had hope in the future of the Chechnya. In Dagestan, I interviewed Mikhail, a young man around who worked in quite a low position and desired to leave Russia for work in North America. However, my main method was to observe daily living in the NCFD, the extent of economic development, and the security infrastructure in place to secure the regional population. I travelled with a note-book and pen and recorded observations. I have not only relied on my fieldwork: my observations and interviews. I have read many articles from various analysts who have studied the region. However, only Anna Matveeva has travelled to the region to perform research as far as I am aware. These texts will support or question my findings. I have read as many as I could (over 350) and have not included them all in my bibliography because I could not source them all. Many of the articles were quite narrow in nature, solely focusing on Russian military efforts to suppress the insurgency, weak and corrupt regional governance and alleged human rights abuses. Only when reading articles from the Russian Presidential Executive Office was I able to find statistics and facts about the other areas of government investment in the region such as economic development and its information campaign. I have taken points from analysts and the Russian government alike which matched and challenged my observations and interviews to give a more balanced view of the complex conflict in the NCFD.

My hypothesis for this thesis is that the Russian government has not implemented a coherent population-centric counterinsurgency, primarily because it has failed to successfully address the issue of corruption in government, military/security services and society as a whole. However, my aim is to bring attention to the change in Russian government policy since 2010 to bring long-term stability to the NCFD. Much of the analyses of the region since the First Chechen War in the early 1990s pertain only to Russian government failures and rely on reports and statistics from human rights groups. Since 2010, these have failed to take into account the Russian government's change of strategy, encompassing some elements of a population-centric counterinsurgency. These include its information campaign targeting the ethnic-Russian and non-ethnic Russian populations in the Russian Federation and its economic development strategy.

Due to population-centric counterinsurgency strategy encompassing psychological warfare to win the "hearts and minds" of the population, it is important to analyze how the Russian government identifies the population residing in the NCFD. Do they include them as Russians even though most of them are not ethnically Russian? Or do they consider them to inhabit a pseudo-colony inside the physical borders of the Russian Federation? It is worth noting that Russia is home to an estimated

25 million Muslims, approximate to the entire Muslim population in the rest of Europe.¹ The Russian government is actively working with moderate religious leaders in the region to bring stability and propagate its message, especially to young people who are especially disenfranchised. The identity “vacuum” in the region since the fall of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s has caused many in the region to look for a new identity. Nationalism in Chechnya was important in uniting Chechens which led to two wars against the Russian government. However, since the mid-2000s, extremist Islam has become the dominant identity propagated by Salafist Muslims, both foreign and domestic in the North Caucasus to unite frustration against the Russian government. Young people are increasingly adopting Salafist ideals which may lead to them joining the ranks of the Caucasus Emirate. Others have lost hope in their future because they believe they have been forgotten by the Russian government and attribute excessive military and law enforcement actions as Russian policy to harm non-Russian ethnicities. Yet Medvedev and Putin have in recent years have initiated the use of the term “multi-people Russian nation” instead of “Russian nation” to send a strong signal that the Russian government officially interprets non-ethnic Russians to be citizens of the Russian Federation.

The second branch of this information effort is to convince the ethnic-Russian population that non-ethnic Russians, including those in the NCFD are Russian citizens equal under the law. Russian leaders, including presidents Putin and Medvedev have called for the uniting of the Russian population, both ethnic and non-ethnic Russians as equal citizens. They plan to use the education system to educate Russian students regarding inter-faith and inter-ethnic harmony to create a paradigm shift in Russian thinking. This is in order to unite the Russian Federation and strengthen Russia’s identity as a strong nation on the international stage to prevent foreign intervention and a united opposition force to weaken the Russian political system.

The main element of the Russian government’s strategy to bring stability to the region is to develop its economy and essential services. The Russian government is determined by word and action to improve the living conditions and economic production. Since the fall of the Soviet Union, the region has suffered from a lack of government acknowledgement and investment. In early 2010, Alexander Khloponin, the appointed presidential envoy to the NCFD presented the government’s strategy to drastically reduce unemployment, create hundreds of thousands of jobs for the regional population, invest trillions of roubles into regional development, and create a “tourism cluster” that

¹ Vatchagaev 2012, quoted in ‘К 2015 году мусульмане составят большинство в российской армии, утверждает британский журнал’, [translated: By 2015, Muslims will be the majority in the Russian army, says British magazine] *Newsru.com*, 29 July 2008, <www.newsru.com/religy/29jul2008/moslems.html>

would showcase the beauty of the mountainous region to attract private and foreign investment as well as tourists. Jobs in the region are being given primarily to locals and training schools have been built in the region to teach them the skills needed for jobs that are desperately needed in the region to implement its development strategy and will be needed in the foreseeable future. Federal investment into the regional economy has decreased the regional governments' dependence on federal subsidies but there is still a lot of work to be done to enable regional governments the ability to control their own economies and present themselves as legitimate, credible, and capable to their respective citizens. Cities in the region are also being heavily developed. The best examples include Grozny, and Magas, Ingushetia. Constructing businesses and residential complexes are the main priority for the Russian government. Essential services such as an energy and transportation network have been rapidly developed. However, there are still shortcomings in the education sector. Additionally, with trillions of roubles coming into the region, corruption is still entrenched in the regional governments, military, law enforcement, and society. While Putin and Medvedev have voiced their desire to battle corruption, little has been done to prevent it, leaving only the threat of imprisonment to deter those willing to rebel. The "shadow economy" in the region continues to be strong and in direct competition with the legitimate Russian economy. Regional governments have overestimated unemployment numbers by not taking into account the tens of thousands of civilians that work in the "shadow economy". This has resulted in little action being taken to directly combat it. Instead, the Russian government is hoping that by creating hundreds of thousands of jobs in the region, civilians will no longer have to rely on the "shadow economy" to acquire a job or goods and services. Positively, unemployment figures are decreasing while wages for workers are increasing which has allowed locals to have more money to spend and save for the future. This is vital to ushering in long-term stability because once people have the ability to care for themselves and save money, they can plan and have hope for their future. The government has adopted various business incentives attracting private and foreign investors to invest in the NCFD such as tax breaks, and guaranteed investment returns of 70%. Various companies from North America, Europe, and Asia have seen potential in the region. The results have been exceptional resulting in billions of dollars of investments, mainly into the tourism cluster and agriculture industry with further agreements signed that promise investment in the near future. These investments have helped increase international awareness to the region as will the Sochi Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games in February-March 2014. Therefore, in addition to more international publicity, government efforts will need to improve to attract further investments and tourists while developing and stabilizing the regional economy.

The Kremlin's call for change in Russian military and security operations have yet to be implemented successfully. Residents of the district still fear them which prevent the building of trusted networks between the military, meaning the Internal Troops of the Ministry of Interior (MVD), and security services with the target population. At present, the disproportionate and sometimes brutal methods employed during operations eradicate any government support held by the population because they do not see positive change in their actions towards the civilian populace. Russian military and law enforcement agencies are a main actor in the region and have been present in large numbers since the First Chechen War in the early 1990s. They are viewed as legitimate by the Caucasian population yet there is a large divide between the two. They lack credibility because of the corruption that exists within their ranks. The government has called it a source of instability in the region. The FSB has been called "the biggest bandit of them all" by one of my interviewees. Abuses that were reminiscent in the 1990s and early 2000s are still occurring today. The federal and regional governments have openly admitted to this. This is largely because Russian military and security forces are not trained in counterinsurgency and winning "hearts and minds" but in enemy-centric, conventional tactics which are used to destroy an enemy, including their will. Their actions create fear and distrust with the target population and trusted links have not been established. However, the military's ineffectiveness is not only a problem in the military and security apparatus in the North Caucasus, but the country as a whole. The Russian military still relies on conscripts who lack a variety of skills, especially in advanced topics such as counterinsurgency, while troop numbers have been cut. Law enforcement personnel from regions outside the NCFD are deployed to the North Caucasus for six months with little time to change their thought pattern that the two Chechen wars are over and that Muslims are not the enemy of Russia. In 2011, Medvedev declared an end to the enemy-centric strategy in the North Caucasus but the military has been too slow to change. The Russian military and security services have a variety of *spetsnaz* forces that are capable of proportionality and have high skills yet they have not taken advantage of them in the North Caucasus. Russian forces are very effective in killing and capturing insurgents, their supplies, and weapons. However, they are not using proportionality, instead actively creating fear in the population by pillaging villages that are subject to *zachistki*, otherwise known as sweep operations where towns are surrounded by military and law enforcement units to search for insurgents and caches of weapons. There is also fear among the populace of those who openly display their Islamic identity that they will be targeted by security forces.

One positive step is the Russian government having taken steps to reintegrate insurgents who have joined for reasons other than ideology and have not committed crimes against the Russian state.

This is promising in winning “hearts and minds” because many locals perceive that when Russian forces appear, justice will be served immediately without the use of the court system. Cooperation and coordination between government, military, and law enforcement agencies are improving the effectiveness and their intelligence gathering capability which is leading to more insurgents being captured or killed. This is important to implement proportionality and establish trusted networks with the regional population. The Russian government has also invested billions of roubles into fortifying its southern border between the Black and Caspian Seas which has and is still being used by insurgents to flee or enter Russia, enjoy safe haven in foreign countries such as Georgia, Azerbaijan or Turkey, and receive foreign finances from Caucasian diaspora or jihadist organizations and supporters. Insurgents also raise funds locally by collecting *zakat*, which is charity from the people for those in need and one of the five pillars of Islam which they exploit.

Russia has never been a liberal democracy in the words of Yuri Zhukov.² Yet this history has not prevented the Russian government from implementing a population-centric counterinsurgency strategy twice in the 19th and 20th centuries. Governance in a counterinsurgency is of the utmost importance due to its control of the implementation of its strategy. Any weakness in government reflects its inability to implement a successful strategy and vice versa. Deputy Chairman of the Russian State Duma’s committee on security and a retired colonel in the FSB, Gennadii Gudkov, argued that “Russia could lose the North Caucasus, not due to radical Islam but because of the central government’s inability to forge a coherent policy.”³ I will assess how the federal government defines the conflict in the North Caucasus to determine if they do regard it as a war against terrorism. In order to wage a successful strategy, government leaders must correctly identify who their enemy is, and what type of warfare they will use to wage war against them. I will also be assessing the legitimacy, credibility, and capability of the federal and regional governments as these are essential in having the ability to win the “hearts and minds” of the population. The three abilities are inextricably linked with one another. If a government is not viewed as legitimate by the population, it will not have credibility either. If it has legitimacy and credibility but not capability, it remains unable to implement its strategy, effectively weakening its credibility over time. Furthermore, I will address if the federal and regional governments are establishing links with the regional population to understand their grievances and working with them to implement solutions. This is very important in winning the target population’s “hearts and minds” because if the government does not identify or understand the population and their grievances, it will be very

² Zhukov 2011, p. 4

³ Dunlop & Menon 2006, p. 107, quoted in ‘Osobie mnenie’ [translated: ‘One’s Own Opinion’] *Moskovskie novosti* [translated: Moscow News], 21 October 2005

difficult to gain or maintain their support. Working with the target population allows the government to understand the people, its grievances, and the ability to implement solutions with regional and local leaders that have the ability for long-term success because solutions have not been forced upon them, but implemented with the acceptance of regional and local leaders. Lastly, the judicial system in the region will be assessed to see how it is viewed by the people and how it is being used in the conflict to impose the law of the Russian Federation. Ultimately, there are positives and negatives in each sector and this further illustrates the complexity of counterinsurgency warfare, especially the need for unity of effort, as a disconnection of effort between government actors and the population provides opportunities for insurgents to exploit. The regional governance in the NCFD is still quite weak. All seven presidents of the NCFD republics have been directly appointed by the Kremlin. Many residents in the NCFD do not believe in fair elections in Russia and fail to see hope of change towards individual empowerment to choose their leaders. The regional governments are still quite corrupt and are more concerned about matters of self-advancement than advancing society or bringing stability to the NCFD. Many of the regional governments speak as if they are taking their respective population's grievances into account, yet their words do not match their actions. However, the governments themselves are almost powerless to change because they are overly dependent on subsidies from the federal government. Overall, they could be labeled "yes men" because they lack the autonomy and capability to carry out such a complex and time-consuming population-centric COIN strategy.

At the present time, the NCFD comprises only 0.66% of Russian territory and around 5% of its population yet news of the problems there have reached a world audience for the past two decades.⁴ Two wars in Chechnya have occurred while an Islamic fundamentalist insurgency continues throughout the region to establish an Islamic caliphate. The district is home to the majority of non-ethnic Russian ethnicities inside the Russian Federation. Caucasian, Turkic, and Persian ethnicities find home inside the Russian Federation that was conquered in the 19th century as part of the expansion of the Russian Empire.⁵ The region has been plagued with many uprisings since its annexation.⁶ Dagestan, the most diversified republic in all of Russia hosts 34 different nationalities.⁷ Others such as Kabardino-Balkaria and Karachaevo-Cherkessia host two main ethnicities, the Kabardins and the Karachay, respectively along with sizeable Russian minorities. Chechnya, North

⁴ Dunlop & Menon 2006, p. 97

⁵ Dobaev

⁶ History of rebellion in the North Caucasus from the 19th century onwards: The national-liberation movement of Imam Shamil (1834-1959), the Abrechestvo (1866-1916), revolution and civil war in Russia (1917-1920), deportation of some North-Caucasian nations for alleged collaboration with the Nazis (1944-1957), "restoration of constitutional order" (1994-1996); insurgency (October 1999 – present), cited in Dobaev

⁷ Dunlop & Menon 2006, p.105

Ossetia-Alania, Ingushetia and Stavropol Krai are mono-ethnic republics of Chechen, Ossetian, Ingush, and Russian populations, respectively. Since the declaration of the Global War on Terrorism in 2001, the global importance of this region has intensified. Many would wrongly assume that the “Global War on Terrorism” began with America’s “Operation Enduring Freedom” in Afghanistan in October 2001. In fact, the first action taken was the Georgian Train and Equip Mission to eliminate Chechen and al Qaeda extremists who enjoyed safe haven in the Pankisi Gorge in Georgia.⁸

The timeframe of my thesis is from the year 2010 through to the end of 2012. I chose this timeframe for two main reasons. Firstly, the Caucasus Emirate was only defined as a terrorist group by the Russian government and judicial system in February 2010, despite its existence since October 2007. Prior to this, the Russian government was attempting to identify what the Caucasus Emirate was and recognize the insurgents’ ideological shift from secular secessionism to global jihad. Secondly, in January 2010, President Dmitri Medvedev created the NCFD while Alexander Khloponin, the presidential envoy to the North Caucasus released his district-wide strategy until 2025, the first serious strategy of the Russian government to end instability in the region by addressing sources of instability that have been exploited by insurgents.

Population-centric counterinsurgency theory is not a new concept, however, as a written doctrine it has only been truly defined in the last six decades. Whereas in conventional warfare the primary objective is to destroy an enemy’s support structure, infrastructure and its will to win, the primary objective in a population-centric COIN conflict is the control of the “hearts and minds” of the target population. To win the “hearts and minds” of the target population, the counterinsurgent competes against efforts by insurgent forces who are seeking the same support. Without popular support, lawlessness can arise leading to the loss of government control over an area as well as create or worsen a number of grievances among the target population which insurgents can exploit to their benefit. However, even with a strong, stable government in power, there may already exist grievances which can be exploited by insurgents. When an insurgent rebellion occurs, a counterinsurgency must be declared by the government. It must actively seek to eliminate insurgent safe havens, financial networks, and grievances among the target population that the insurgent exploits or could exploit, while capturing or killing unrepentant insurgents. It must do so with proportionality to protect the target population, to display to them that they are their protector and that the insurgent is trying to destabilize a force that will not lose. Collateral damage by

⁸ Schaefer 2010, p.2

counterinsurgent forces among the population will only seek to reinforce insurgent propaganda that the government does not care about the rights of the people but only about sustaining power and control over that area.

Population-centric COIN is largely about perceptions. If the target population does not believe the counterinsurgent will protect them or provide them a stable future, they will support someone else who they believe will do so. The insurgent attempts to fulfill that grievance gap by seeking out the alienated in a population and blame their lack of progress or stability on the lack of care and/or capability of the current government. Hence, the insurgent can build a base of support and enable them to win the “hearts and minds” of the population against the counterinsurgent government. History has shown that merely focusing on destroying the ranks of insurgent fighters will not end in victory or long-term stability. During the 1968 Tet Offensive in the Vietnam War, American forces killed 32,000 Viet Cong and captured an additional 6,000 while thousands more deserted their ranks. American and South Vietnamese forces suffered 1,000 and 2,800 killed respectively.⁹ This battle was a clear, decisive military victory for the Americans and South Vietnamese who decimated the ranks of the North Vietnamese in a very short time period. However, in the continental United States, the battle was perceived as a major loss for the Americans with footage shown on American televisions of the large swath of destruction that had occurred during the fighting and the number of American dead and wounded. This offensive was the catalyst for civilian calls to withdraw from Vietnam. In population-centric COIN, it really is a battle using propaganda to win the “hearts and minds” of the target population. It is a battle for the leadership of an AO, and usually an entire country. Insurgents will demonize and attempt to thwart counterinsurgent efforts, yet create huge propaganda victories for themselves even in the event of minute successes.

Population-centric COIN can also be described as a concept of nation-building. A counterinsurgent force must use the strategy of “clear, hold, build” which involves clearing insurgents out of an area, establishing rapport with the target population, securing the area from insurgent re-infiltration, and finally building stability and hope by securing and successfully addressing grievances the target population may have in order to prevent an insurgent group from taking control over the area in the future. According to the U.S. Army and Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual, there are five Logical Lines of Operation (LLOs) that need to be addressed to bring long-term stability to an AO. They are combat/civil military operations, host nation security forces (not applicable in all COIN environments), essential services, economic development, and governance. Therefore, in this

⁹ Joes 1989, pp.91-92

thesis I am addressing the Russian government's efforts to establish stability in the NCFD by addressing the four LLOs of governance, economic development, essential services, and military and law enforcement operations plus its information campaign.

2 THE CAUCASUS EMIRATE

2.1 Introduction

When preparing to write this thesis, many peers stated that they were unaware of the existence of the Caucasus Emirate terrorist organization and their objectives for the North Caucasus region and beyond. It is important to understand who the Russian federal and regional governments as well as its military and law enforcement organs are combatting. There is contradiction between Western and Russian scholars as to the importance of the insurgency in the NCFD. The Caucasus Emirate is not a familiar or widely studied exporter of terror in the counter-terrorism field which is best explained by the two major wars in Afghanistan and Iraq since the declaration of the Global War on Terror in 2001. Therefore, resources were transferred and the importance of the study of the conflict in North Caucasus was overshadowed, and not ignoring the fact that many counter-terrorism and counterinsurgency experts reside in the United States. However, as I will disclose in this chapter, the Caucasus Emirate in the North Caucasus is closely linked with global jihadist terrorist organizations, such as al Qaeda, and adhere to Salafist-Takfiri ideology whose final goal is the creation of a pan-Islamic Caliphate in all “Muslim lands” to wage war against the non-Muslim world.

The Caucasus Emirate was not formally created until October 2007 yet it existed earlier as the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria (ChRI) in the 1990s. The ChRI was largely concerned with jihad inside Chechnya but the creation of the Caucasus Emirate expanded its scope to the other North Caucasus republics, all the “Muslim lands” of Russia, as well as the global jihad theater where their Islamic “brothers” fight “infidels” and “apostate” Muslims. Doku Umarov¹⁰, the Emir of the Caucasus Emirate declared on its founding that it endeavored to target Russians, Americans, British, Israelis, and anyone who attacks Muslims. He has also declared that “apostate” Muslims, those who do not adhere to ‘pure’ Islam, Salafist ideology are legitimate targets for attack. In 2009, Umarov declared that civilians who were thought to be aiding the Russians were to be considered Russian combatants and justified for targeting, although in February 2012 he reneged on this, stating that there was no longer a need to target civilians because they no longer supported the Russian government. Its *modus operandi* consists of orthodox and unorthodox methods ranging primarily from full-scale military assaults, kidnapping (although becoming much rarer) to assassinations, suicide bombings, and improvised-explosive device (IED) attacks.

¹⁰ Also known as Dokka Abu Usman

The Caucasus Emirate maintains contacts and cooperates with global jihadist terrorist organizations. Its terror cells and lone operatives have been arrested or killed in numerous jihadist battle grounds, including in Afghanistan and Iraq as well as in a variety of European countries. An abundant number of foreign jihadists have come to the North Caucasus to train, lead, and fight alongside Caucasus Emirate forces thereby exhibiting that it is a legitimate and credible actor in the global jihad movement. Additionally, global jihadist leaders, ideologists, and propagandists call for Muslim support to the Caucasus Emirate while the Caucasus Emirate propagates its messages to a global audience through a number of websites, a blog, and a Twitter account.

The Caucasus Emirate has declared its identity as a global jihadist organization, uses terrorist tactics including the targeting of civilians, exports its fighters to global jihad theaters and has received fighters as well as moral and material support from foreign jihadist terror groups, thereby composing a threat not only to the Russian Federation but to international peace and security.

2.2 Salafism – the Ideology of the Caucasus Emirate

Ideology is important in defining the identity of a terrorist organization and understanding its objectives. My definition of “ideology” is the system of beliefs that a collective body bases their value system upon. “Identity” is a title defining who a person is according to their system of beliefs and personal characteristics. Salafism is an offshoot of Sunni Islam that originated in Egypt in the late 19th century.¹¹ According to Travis Stanley, Salafists desired to rationally reinterpret early Islam to rediscover a more “modern” religion.¹² They commended the technological and social advances of Europe’s Enlightenment period in the 17th and 18th centuries and aspired to incorporate these advancements into their own society to produce a Golden Age of Islam, following the Prophet Muhammad’s revelations.¹³ Salafists believe that the early Muslims had understood and practiced Islam correctly; however, its true understanding and practices had declined over the centuries, resulting in the tainting of Islamic doctrine.¹⁴ The question today among Salafists is no longer how to interpret Islam but how to generate this spiritual re-awakening in the Islamic *Ummah* (community). There has always existed a dichotomy among Salafists as to how to bring about the reformation of ‘pure’ Islam. Some desire to transform society through *da’wa*, meaning through preaching and evangelism while others are inclined to use armed violence.¹⁵ According to Gordon Hahn, Senior Associate of the Russia and Eurasia program at the Center for Strategic and

¹¹ Stanley 2005

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

International Studies, argues there is thorough evidence to believe that Salafist-Takfiri ideology is the force behind the renewed violence in the North Caucasus and the Caucasus Emirate organization.¹⁶ However, Doku Umarov denies that he is a Salafist and that the Caucasus Emirate has been overwhelmingly infiltrated by them, yet they adhere to Sharia Law which is a central principle of Salafist ideology,¹⁷ one not adhered to by the majority moderate Sufi Muslim population of the North Caucasus. The Caucasus Emirate's history also illustrates how it conforms to an ideology foreign to its region and how foreign Salafists influenced Russian jihadists.

2.3 History of the Caucasus Emirate

Understanding the history of the Caucasus Emirate is essential in observing how they are positioning themselves around Salafist-Takfiri ideology, distancing themselves from their previous objective of secular secession from the Russian Federation. In the mid-1990s, foreign Salafists introduced the concept of “Pure Islam” into the North Caucasus which did not revolve around ethnic nationalism, instead invoking this foreign concept, signifying the abandonment of the inclusion of local traditions in Islam which are common practice in Sufi Islam.¹⁸ The Salafists promoted universal values, such as the fight against corruption and social injustice, which subordinated the traditional local concepts of *tarikats* (ethnic clans) and *Wirds* (the Sufi order).¹⁹ Salafism slowly increased in popularity in the North Caucasus and the conflict in the North Caucasus increasingly became identified as a fight against “infidels” than one exclusively against “Russian occupiers”. The first tangible step towards the formation of the Caucasus Emirate occurred in May 2005 when President Abdul-Khalim Saydullayev of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria (ChRI) declared the creation of a “Caucasus Front” against Russia among the Islamic community in the North Caucasus.²⁰ The front's objective was to advance Chechen ideological, logistical, and financial support for wider hostilities outside of Chechnya's borders.²¹ However, this declaration by Saydullayev was only made public after years of a quiet dispersion of “combat jamaats” across the North Caucasus republics since the summer of 2002.²² In spring 2006, the ChRI expanded to include the Volga and Urals fronts, claiming their proliferation to all the “Muslim lands” in Russia.²³ On October 31, 2007, Saydullayev's successor, Doku Umarov resigned as the president of the ChRI, and declared the formation of the Caucasus Emirate while appointing himself

¹⁶ Hahn 2011, p.18

¹⁷ Leahy 2010a, p.264

¹⁸ Markedonov 2010, p.4

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Nichol 2010, p.1

²¹ Ibid.

²² Hahn 2009a, p.10

²³ Ibid.

as Emir of the *mujahideen* of the Caucasus Emirate and “leader of the jihad and ghazavat” in the North Caucasus.²⁴ The formation of the Caucasus Emirate was the final step to solidify the rebel movement in the North Caucasus as one that was no longer primarily interested in secular secession from Russia, but one that had accepted and adopted their struggle to be one of jihad against Russian “infidels” in their lands. David Kicullen notes that historically, insurgencies where religion functions as a marker for ethnic identity, both religious motivations and religious justifications tend to increase over time.²⁵ This is what has been witnessed in the North Caucasus insurgency.

Umarov, during his opening revelation of the formation of the Caucasus Emirate used Islamic militant language extensively, proclaiming,

The Caucasus is occupied by infidels and apostates and is *dar al-harb*, a land of war, and our immediate task is to turn it into *dar as-salam* [land of peace], to institute Sharia on its territory and to drive out the infidels.... After driving out the infidels, we shall have to get back all of the historical territory of Muslims, and that territory is located beyond the borders of the Caucasus.²⁶

In this statement Umarov openly declared upon the founding of the Caucasus Emirate that secession is not the primary objective of this militia, but one of forging an Islamic caliphate inside the North Caucasus and beyond its borders. I will delve further into the scope of the Caucasus Emirate and what they define as “beyond the borders” later in this chapter. Additionally, Umarov declared the legitimate Russian republic borders in the North Caucasus to be “ethnic, territorial colonial zones, created by non-believers for the purpose of dividing up Muslims,” and rebordered them in into “vilayats”, Islamic governorates constituting Dagestan, Nogay Steppe (the southeast part of Stavropol Krai), Noxçıyçö (Chechnya), Ğalgayçö (Ingushetia), Iriston (North Ossetia), and Kabardino-Balkaria-Karachay.²⁷ In May 2009, the Iriston vilayat (North Ossetia) was incorporated into the Ğalgayçö vilayat (Ingushetia).²⁸ Furthermore, in 2007, Doku Umarov ousted Akhmed Zakayev as Foreign Minister of the ChRI who was later sentenced to death by a Shariah Court of the Caucasus Emirate in August 2009 for abandoning Islam for “democratic religion”, meaning that he favored a secular state (i.e. secessionist) and the law of man rather than the law of Allah.²⁹ These acts are further evidence that the conflict in the North Caucasus today is jihad and not a war of secular secession.

²⁴ Souleimanov 2011, p. 161, quoted in *Newsru.com*, <<http://www.newsru.com/russia/31oct2007/umarov.html>>

²⁵ Kilcullen 2009, p.213

²⁶ Souleimanov 2011, p. 163

²⁷ *Ibid.* p. 161

²⁸ *Ibid.* p. 161

²⁹ Nichol 2010, p.9, quoted in ‘Supreme Sharia Court of Caucasus Emirate Sentenced Akhmed Zakayev to Capital Punishment’ *Kavkaz Center*, 25 August 2009

From the formation of the Caucasus Emirate in October 2007 to May 2011, the militia has conducted over 1,800 attacks, resulting in over 4,000 casualties, many of them civilian.³⁰ In February 2010, as a result of these attacks on civilians, the Russian Supreme Court came to a verdict that the Caucasus Emirate was a terrorist organization, banning it from the Russian Federation.³¹ On May 26, 2010 the United States followed suit, designating the Caucasus Emirate (Chechen name: Imarat Kavkaz) under Presidential Executive Order 13224 as a terrorist organization with its leader Doku Umarov being defined as a terrorist on June 23, 2010, conveying that the United States government will target their organization and those providing it support.³² Furthermore, on March 11, 2011, the United Nations declared Umarov to be an international terrorist resulting in additional international sanctions against him and Caucasus Emirate supporters.³³ The Caucasus Emirate is a terrorist organization, not a political entity since it has never expressed interest in joining the political sphere of Russia or any other country. It seeks change solely through the use of armed violence. The international community is coming to the realization that the Caucasus Emirate is a fundamental group in the exportation of terror in the North Caucasus and in many theaters around the world.

2.4 Relations with the Global Jihad Movement

The North Caucasus has been viewed by foreign extremists and their supporters to be a theater of jihad since the First Chechen War. During this war, the ChRI had delegations in Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, and Afghanistan; the only countries to have such a representation.³⁴ These three countries are notorious for being home to many jihad supporters while during the First and Second Chechen Wars the latter was controlled by the Taliban. The region was deemed so important that Ayman al-Zawahiri, the current leader of al Qaeda visited the North Caucasus in the mid-1990s and was temporarily in Russian custody in 1996 for attempting to establish links with militants.³⁵ As recent as April 2008, al-Zawahiri referred to the Caucasus region as one of the three primary fronts in the war against the West; the first two being Iraq and Afghanistan, respectively.³⁶ In 1996, al-Zawahiri urged jihadists to seize all “Muslim lands” in Russia and the former Soviet Union in order to fragment the Russian Federation to “topple a basic ally of the United States in its battle against

³⁰ Hahn 2011, p.25

³¹ Philipot 2010, p. 96

³² Office of the Spokesman 2011; and in Nichol 2010, p.23

³³ RT, 11 March 2011

³⁴ Markedonov 2010, pp. 3-4

³⁵ Cohen 2010; and in Mahapatra 2013

³⁶ Ibid.

the Islamic jihadist awakening.”³⁷ On jihadist website Alqimmah.net, Ayman al Zawahiri was asked directly if there is coordination between al Qaeda and the Caucasus Emirate in which he replied, “[W]e bless and support the Islamic Emirate of the Caucasus.”³⁸ In September 2010, Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, widely regarded in jihadist and counter-terrorism circles to be the leading philosopher of the global jihad movement, proclaimed that Muslims should aid the Caucasus Emirate so it becomes the “back door to Eastern Europe”.³⁹ A now declassified Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) report from 1998 outlines al Qaeda’s plans to fund and organize training camps in Chechnya and other North Caucasus republics and to send hundreds of its fighters, ideologists, and trainers to the region.⁴⁰ The same report disclosed that Usama bin Ladin met personally several times with Wahhabite representatives from the Chechen and Dagestani cities of Gudermes (Chechnya), Grozny, and Karamakhi (Dagestan).⁴¹ At these meetings, an agreement on financial cooperation was reached and bin Laden stressed the importance of training converted Ukrainians, Europeans, Russians, Cossacks, and Ossetians in these training camps for the carrying out of acts of terror and kidnapping against French, Israeli, American, and British citizens. The document further claimed that the kidnapping of UNHCR official Vincent Cochetel in Vladikavkaz in February 1998 was conducted by trainees from one of the training camps in Veteno, Chechnya⁴² which is still a militant stronghold to this day. Al Qaeda’s mission, according to the report was the creation of an Islamic state in the North Caucasus and to form a united uprising against Russia.⁴³ Al Qaeda desired the need to establish a terror base in the North Caucasus and Chechnya as these areas were thought to be unreachable by Western forces.⁴⁴

One may argue that the Caucasus Emirate did not exist in the 1990s and therefore the links above are irrelevant. However, the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria (ChRI), the predecessor of the Caucasus Emirate did maintain a strong relationship with al Qaeda and international jihadist groups as stated above. The Caucasus Emirate continues to preserve these relationships and foreign jihadist organizations maintain the importance of the North Caucasus and Caucasus Emirate in the global jihad movement. When the U.N. Security Council delegated Doku Umarov as a terrorist in 2011, they said that he was associated with “Al-Qaeda, Usama bin Laden or the Taliban” through his ties

³⁷ Hahn 2009a, p.9

³⁸ Hahn 2011, p.8

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid. p.3, quoted in Defense Intelligence Agency 1998, pp.3-4

⁴¹ Hahn 2011, p.3, 5-6, quoted in Defense Intelligence Agency 1998, p.3

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Defense Intelligence Agency 1998, p.6

⁴⁴ Ibid. p.5

to the Islamic Jihad Group, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, and the Riyadus-Salikhin Reconnaissance and Sabotage Battalion of Chechen Martyrs.⁴⁵

Fighters from the North Caucasus are gaining experience with foreign fighters in many theaters of jihad around the world. For example, two Kabardins were among eight ethnic Muslims from the North Caucasus and Volga region who were captured fighting amongst al Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan in 2001 and sent to Guantanamo Bay in 2002.⁴⁶ During “Operation Iraqi Freedom”, Iraqi Interior Minister Falah al-Naqib reported that terrorists from Chechnya had been killed by Iraqi forces.⁴⁷ In October 2007, four ethnic North Caucasians were arrested in Lebanon, charged with belonging to Fatah-el-Islam and carrying out attacks on Lebanese forces.⁴⁸ The Caucasus Emirate also boasts that their operatives are fighting alongside the Syrian rebels against the Syrian Assad-regime and have released a video of their presence.⁴⁹ Two Pakistan-trained Chechens were arrested in Spain in 2012 after nearly carrying out a terrorist attack in the region, with Caucasus Emirate terrorists also being arrested in France, Denmark and other countries, while three additional plots were disrupted in Belgium in 2010, and Azerbaijan and the Czech Republic in 2011.⁵⁰

2.5 Scope

The Caucasus Emirate as already noted in its relations with the global jihad movement, is not confined to a belief that Russia and “infidels” on “Muslim lands” within Russian borders are their sole enemies. In his opening declaration of the Caucasus Emirate Umarov boldly proclaimed,

Today our brothers are at war in Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia and Palestine. Anyone who attacks Muslims, wherever they may be, is also our enemy. Our enemy is not only Russia, but also America, England, Israel and anyone who is waging war against Islam and Muslims.⁵¹

Therefore the scope of the Caucasus Emirate is not solely a threat to Russia but to international peace and security. Considering this, the Caucasus Emirate has taken a jihadist populist position at times declaring “The USA is the main and most dangerous enemy” on Kavkazcenter.com, their

⁴⁵ Cohen 2012, quoted in U.N. Security Council Committee, ‘QI.U.290.11. Doku Khamatovich Umarov’, 10 March 2011 <<http://www.un.org/sc/committees/1267/NSQI29011E.shtml>>

⁴⁶ Hahn 2011, p.3

⁴⁷ Ibid. p.4, quoted in ‘Iraq’s al-Naqib – ‘Terrorists’ from Chechnya, Sudan, and Syria Killed Arrested’ *Beirut LBC SAT Television*, 1300 GMT, 30 January 2005

⁴⁸ Ibid. p.12-13

⁴⁹ Mahapatra 2013; and in Kavkaz Center, 7 February 2013

⁵⁰ Hahn 2012, p.17

⁵¹ Souleimanov 2011, p. 163

main website on the commemoration of its first anniversary.⁵² The Caucasus Emirate has openly outlined their objectives that include proliferating jihad throughout Russia and around the world. In an April 24, 2010 posting on one of the Caucasus Emirate websites, Hunafa.com, they divulged,

In the near future we can assume that after the liberation of the Caucasus, Jihad will begin in Idel-Ural and Western Siberia. And, of course we will be obligated to assist with all our strength in the liberation of our brothers' lands from the centuries-long infidel yoke and in the establishment there of the laws of the Ruler of the Worlds. It is also possible that in our help will be very much needed in Kazakhstan and Central Asia, and Allah as ordered us to render it. And we, Allah willing, will destroy the laws of the infidel on the Central Asian lands in league with the mujahedin of Afghanistan.⁵³

They also make reference in the same post their desire to help their "brothers" in the Crimea and Muslims from West Africa to India in the effort to create an Islamic caliphate.⁵⁴ One may argue that these statements are an exaggeration yet the Caucasus Emirate's history of involvement in jihad in international theaters of jihad across Europe and the Middle East as well as its strong relations with international jihadist organizations illustrate why this threat is real. The Caucasus Emirate has also distributed leaflets declaring: "Showing off, flaunting—that's a Judaic method. Jews have succeeded in their skill of destroying peoples with the help of feminine temptation and charm."⁵⁵ These statements by the Caucasus Emirate have shown that the movement in the North Caucasus has grown from one of secession to one of jihad in the destruction of the West and Israel ending with the creation of an Islamic Caliphate.

From 2007-2009 the scope of the Caucasus Emirate in practice was largely limited to the North Caucasus until Umarov announced in August 2009 that they would focus on attacking Russian industry and infrastructure.⁵⁶ It was after this point that the Caucasus Emirate began to carry out attacks against targets outside of the North Caucasus.

However, at present, the scope of the Caucasus Emirate's attacks has primarily been focused against Russian *siloviki* in the North Caucasus, members of the government and security establishment, including the security services and military.⁵⁷ Some estimates report that 90% of terrorist attacks in

⁵² Hahn 2009a, p.10, quoted in Ali Bekhan, "Vragi Islama—Neskol'ko strikhov" *The Chechen Times*, 11 November 2008 <www.chechentimes.net/content/view/2531/37/>

⁵³ Hahn 2011, p.7

⁵⁴ Ibid. p.7

⁵⁵ Markedonov 2010, p.8, quoted in Markedonov interview in Cherkessk (Karachaevo-Cherkessia, Russia), 17 April 2007

⁵⁶ Phlipot 2010, p. 93

⁵⁶ Souleimanov 2011, p. 165

⁵⁷ Ibid. p.165

the North Caucasus in 2009 targeted military, police, and law enforcement officials.⁵⁸ However, 2010 saw an increase in attacks against civilians because of the reinstatement of its suicide squad.⁵⁹ Wojciech Górecki also notes the increase of attacks against moderate Sufi Muslim clergy who maintain relations with the Kremlin and condemn Salafism.⁶⁰ Emil Souleimanov, an Armenian expert in security affairs in the Caucasus region, mentions frequent attacks against prostitutes, proponents of traditional medicine, businesses that sell alcohol, and followers of local and customary laws that contradict Sharia Law.⁶¹

The Caucasus Emirate has stated that attacks on certain civilians are justified because they support the Russian government. In May 2009 Doku Umarov declared:

... if we are forbidden to kill those citizens, who are so called peaceful citizens, who provide for the army, for the FSB by their taxes, by their silence, who support that army by their approving silence, if those people are considered civilians, then I don't know, by what criteria it is judged. Therefore, insha'Allah, it is our great success that we have restored this Jamaat, and that this Jamaat will carry out operations in the territory of Russia, and it will be our retaliatory attacks for those deeds which are committed in Caucasus.⁶²

The “Jamaat” he refers to is the Riyadus Salikhin Martyrs’ Brigade, its suicide-bombing unit. On September 9, 2010 a car bomb was detonated in the main market in Vladikavkaz, killing nineteen and injuring nearly two-hundred people with the Ingush Vilayet claiming the attack was against “Ossetian infidels” on “occupied Ingush lands”.⁶³ When I visited the market in November 2012, the market area had been rebuilt and there were men at the entrances with hand-held metal detectors, who checked only suspect individuals, especially those with bags.⁶⁴ However in February 2012, Umarov called for the cessation of attacks on civilians. In a video posted on February 3, 2012, he communicated,

The population in Russia today definitely does not support Putin...They've been exploited by these sinners and they are hostages to this Chekist regime. So I order all fighters that are carrying out or are planning to carry out security operations on the territory of Russia to put a halt to these operations that could hurt the peaceful population of Russia.⁶⁵

⁵⁸ Baev 2011, p.9, quoted in Musa Muradov, ‘Terror-Advertising Action’ *Kommersant*, 31 August 2010

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Górecki, 2011

⁶¹ Souleimanov 2011, p. 165

⁶² Kavkaz Center, 17 May 2009

⁶³ Nichol 2010, p.6, quoted in The Kremlin, ‘Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation’, 12 November 2009

⁶⁴ Author’s trip to the North Caucasus Federal District, November-December 2012

⁶⁵ Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 3 February 2012

Caucasus Emirate militants have also targeted Moscow and areas outside of the North Caucasus. In November 2009, militants detonated an improvised explosive device (IED) comprised of nearly six kilograms of TNT, plastic explosive, and ammonium nitrate under the Nevsky Express train between Moscow and St. Petersburg killing twenty-eight people and leaving nearly one-hundred injured and ‘attacked’ a hydro-electric dam in Siberia on the same day.⁶⁶ The ‘attack’ on the hydro-electric dam is a matter of controversy as the Russian government officially called the explosion at the complex an industrial accident.⁶⁷ In March 2010, they carried out two suicide bombings on the Moscow metro, while in January 2011, they carried out a suicide bombing attack in the arrivals hall of Domodedovo Airport in Moscow resulting in dozens of dead and nearly two-hundred injured.⁶⁸ The Caucasus Emirate has also been active in northern Azerbaijan. The porous border between Dagestan and Azerbaijan has been exploited by terrorists that have resulted in them coming into conflict with Azerbaijan’s army and police.⁶⁹ They have also carried out an attack on a Shiite-led mosque in Baku while a Caucasus Emirate cell was discovered and disbanded in 2008 that were previously active in Chechnya and Dagestan.⁷⁰ Caucasus Emirate militants have not carried out an attack in Sochi since 2008, nor have St. Petersburg or major regional cities such as Volgograd, Krasnodar, or Rostov-on-Don in the North Caucasus fallen victim to terrorism.⁷¹ However, it seems that it is only a matter of opportunity and capability for terrorist attacks to occur against targets outside the North Caucasus.

2.6 Modus Operandi

Understanding the *modus operandi* of the Caucasus Emirate allows readers to understand that the tactics they use are not used by secular rebels to achieve an independent state, but that the tactics involved are identical to ones used in global jihadist theaters of war. The most notable differences are the direct targeting of innocent civilians, and “black widow” suicide attacks using the wives of killed militants, likely to fulfill their husbands’ desire to kill Russian “infidels”.

The Caucasus Emirate uses a variety of methods in carrying out terrorist attacks. These range from drive-by shootings to assassinations, ambushes, car and suicide bombings, IED attacks as well as full tactical assaults on significant targets. Pavel Baev, an expert in North Caucasus affairs determined that there is no consistent pattern in Caucasus Emirate suicide attacks. Some are acts of

⁶⁶ Hahn 2009b; and in Phlipot 2010, p. 93; and in Souleimanov 2011, p. 165

⁶⁷ Green 2009

⁶⁸ Baev 2011, p.6

⁶⁹ Hahn 2009a, p.28

⁷⁰ Ibid. p.28

⁷¹ Baev 2011, p.9, quoted in Simon Shuster, ‘Is Sochi Safe Enough for the Olympics?’ *Time*, 30 May 2010

desperation while others are very well planned to cause maximum damage.⁷² Baev notes that the Caucasus Emirate has not been fearful of using women as suicide bombers, especially if their husbands have been killed in combat, earning them the title of “black widow” attacks.⁷³ Using a variety of orthodox and unorthodox methods works to the benefit of the Caucasus Emirate as it allows them maximum flexibility to decide what and how targets are to be attacked. Consequently, to the detriment of Russian security forces, it causes them to defend more targets, stretch their resources, and be on alert for a number of types of terrorist attacks, some of which are very difficult to prevent.

From 2007-2008 the Caucasus Emirate did not carry out suicide attacks. However, in 2009, Umarov re-initiated suicide bombings as a suitable tactic to target civilians by reviving the Riyadus Salikhin Martyrs’ Brigade that had operated during the Second Chechen War.⁷⁴ Kuchins, Malarkey, and Markedonov suggest suicide attacks are used to show the North Caucasian and Russian public the weaknesses and limitations of Russian security forces.⁷⁵ Pavel Baev has also formulated a plausible allegation. According to him, Caucasus Emirate terrorists realize that Russian security forces will not aggressively target them unless they target high value targets.⁷⁶ He notes that these high value targets are the Sochi Olympic sites, the oil and gas sector, and Moscow.⁷⁷ Meaning that Baev assumes that the Kremlin desires to ignore the conflict in the North Caucasus except when the militants attack high value targets that would be displayed as top news items in Russian and international media. I disagree with this statement as I will analyze the strategy of the Russian government to bring stability to the NCFD later in this thesis.

A modus operandi that targets civilians along with adhering to Salafist-Takfiri ideology to create a pan-Islamic Caliphate demonstrates that the Caucasus Emirate is a terrorist organization with religious aims, and is focused on more than secessionist goals.

2.7 Dissemination of Propaganda

It is important to distinguish how the Caucasus Emirate disseminates its propaganda to their audience. To propagate its message to its domestic and international audience, the Caucasus Emirate relies primarily on the internet. It uses multiple websites such as Kavkazcenter.com, Hunafa.com, Jamaatshariat.com (not online in 2013), Islamdin.com which other than hosting

⁷² Ibid. p.9

⁷³ Ibid. p.20

⁷⁴ Hahn 2011, p.15; and in Pan 2009

⁷⁵ Kuchins et al. 2011, p.12

⁷⁶ Baev 2011, p.20

⁷⁷ Ibid.

Caucasus Emirate propaganda, hosts translated literature from Osama bin Laden, Anwar al-Awlaki, al Qaeda's English language magazine 'Inspire', and Sayyid Qutb, one of the founding ideologists of the Muslim Brotherhood.⁷⁸ Kavkazcenter.com is the main host of Caucasus Emirate videos and the primary venue of North Caucasian news from the Caucasus Emirate's viewpoint.

The Caucasus Emirate also has a Twitter account @kavkazcenter which is very frequently updated. It was created in July 2011 which also retweets "Tweets" from the al-Qaeda affiliated Al-Shabaab terror group of Somalia, the Taliban and other *mujahideen* groups.⁷⁹ A report from MEMRI, the Middle East Media Research Institute revealed that on January 12, 2012 @kavkazcenter had only 150 followers and 542 tweets.⁸⁰ As of January 30, 2013 it had 5,500 followers, over 16,300 tweets and links at the top of their page to Kavkazcenter.com and its blog kcblog.info.⁸¹ A year later its following has increased over 3600%. This development shows that the Caucasus Emirate Twitter account is becoming more popular with followers and its propaganda is reaching a wider audience.

The Caucasus Emirate did have a "Youtube" account but its official page was disabled in April 2010 after pressure from the Russian government.⁸² The conclusion that can be drawn from its propaganda sources and dissemination methods is that it is allied with the global jihad movement with aims that reach beyond the North Caucasus.

⁷⁸ Hahn 2011, pp.7-8

⁷⁹ Green R. et al. 2012

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Author's observation on 30 January 2013

⁸² Green R. et al. 2012

3 POPULATION-CENTRIC COUNTERINSURGENCY THEORY

3.1 Population-centric Counterinsurgency Theory

Counterinsurgency warfare (COIN) is not a new concept. However, the term is unfamiliar to many outside of military circles. Unlike a conventional war, such as the Second World War or the Russian-Georgian War in 2008 which consisted of two state actors fighting each other, counterinsurgency warfare is a conflict fought between a state actor and at least one non-state actor. Additionally, COIN conflicts generally prolong much longer than conventional wars. From 1945-2008, the average victorious COIN operation lasted fourteen years, unsuccessful ones for eleven years, with 36% enduring more than twenty years.⁸³ In recent history there have been many high profile counterinsurgency wars occurring from the lush jungles of Central America and south-east Asia, to European countries including Cyprus, Bosnia and Kosovo, to the deserts of Angola, Afghanistan and Iraq. They often involved direct or indirect intervention of a world superpower or a clash of superpowers involved in a proxy-war. The United Kingdom's decades-long conflict in Northern Ireland against the Irish Republican Army (IRA), the United States war in Vietnam against the Viet Cong, and France's conflict against the National Liberation Front (FLN) and the National Liberation Army (ALN) in Algeria are well known to many around the world. A non-state actor is an organization, group, or militia that has few if any ties to a national government. In counterinsurgencies, most non-state actors are insurgents, otherwise regarded as guerrillas. As in the cases of the United States in Vietnam and the Soviet Union in Afghanistan, a COIN strategy is not always population-centric in nature. Enemy-centric counterinsurgencies can be referred to as "dirty wars"⁸⁴, as could some phases of a population-centric counterinsurgency such as the "clear" and "hold" stages where the neutralization of insurgents and their support infrastructure and the gathering of intelligence by any means possible, including enhanced interrogation are sometimes deemed to be more important than proportionality and "hearts and minds". However, each conflict is unique and one cannot blankly call counterinsurgency a "dirty war".

The objective of a population-centric COIN strategy is defined in its title. Its purpose is to create an environment where long-term stability can exist and be maintained. The population is the target of this strategy. Its trust and support must be obtained or maintained by the counterinsurgent for them to effectively and efficiently work with the population to create a stable and sustainable environment where the insurgent will be unable to acquire adequate support, supplies or safe haven. A population-centric COIN strategy is concerned with additional factors to achieve success in an

⁸³ Jones 2008, p.10

⁸⁴ Maass 2005

operation. This strategy is not enemy-centric as in conventional war, where the destruction of the enemy's forces, infrastructure and will to fight is the primary target. However, in a counterinsurgency, the enemy's forces, its infrastructure and will to continue to fight still comprises an element of COIN. Major Robert Cassidy of the U.S. Army argued that "Guerrilla war is more a test of national will and endurance than it is a military contest."⁸⁵ Dominance over the population must be established through the sustained presence of counterinsurgent military and non-military elements; local networks must be established with the population, and then efforts can be made to marginalize the insurgent.⁸⁶ Military elements initially eliminate insurgent networks in the AO. Of course, when I mention "must" in this thesis, I am talking about the ideal way to implement a population-centric COIN strategy. In reality, a counterinsurgent may be unwilling or unable to fulfill all their objectives all the time. Then military and law enforcement must sustain their presence to protect the population from insurgent re-infiltration and influence. Additionally, the creation of local networks conducted primarily by non-military actors with the target population offers the counterinsurgent the opportunity to present themselves to the population as the only and most qualified actor that can protect them and give them hope for a stable future. If and when local networks are built, the effects of influence and propaganda from the insurgent will have less significance and their popular support will become marginalized. Therefore, sustained normalcy in the AO can be achieved. The environment must be controlled by the counterinsurgent. In controlling the environment, the counterinsurgent is better enabled to control the psychological state of mind of the target population. As David Kilcullen, a leading counterinsurgency theorist from Australia who has worked in many COIN environments conveys that, "If you are reacting to the enemy - even if you are killing or capturing him in large numbers - then he is controlling the environment and you will eventually lose."⁸⁷ As mentioned earlier, dominance of the environment is a three step process. The counterinsurgent can easily lose gains by reacting to insurgent provocation and population unrest in a disproportionate and culturally insensitive manner.

COIN in its broad form is identical to counter-guerrilla warfare. The aim of each is to create stability through the neutralization of support and existence of insurgent/guerrilla forces. However, a population-centric COIN strategy is not a counter-guerrilla strategy. An enemy-centric COIN strategy is better fitted to be defined as counter-guerrilla. In a counter-guerrilla campaign the aim is quite narrow and does not necessarily aim to address societal grievances, "build" trusted networks with the target population or win "hearts and minds". In the counterinsurgency in El Salvador in the

⁸⁵ Cassidy 2002, p.47

⁸⁶ Kilcullen 2006, p. 4

⁸⁷ Ibid. p. 5

1980s, the use of alleged “death squads”⁸⁸ to neutralize the guerrillas was not an example of population-centric COIN strategy, but enemy-centric in nature. During “Operation Iraqi Freedom”, the early years up to the time of the 2007 “Surge”, American forces along with their Iraqi counterparts fought “terror with terror”.⁸⁹ It was not until the “Surge” that American forces changed to a “clear, hold, build” strategy that incorporated population-centric COIN principles.

Guerrilla warfare can be used by the government as well, not just by insurgents. For example, after the Second World War, many European countries had covert guerrilla units based in their own countries who could wage guerrilla warfare during the possible event of Communist takeover. However, the rebels are those who fight against a legitimate government while the counterinsurgent is those who fight against the insurgent. However, these terms are constructive in that rebels and the people consider a certain government to be legitimate. It is the counterinsurgent and rebels that define who is who and the population chooses for themselves who to support. This ambiguity can lead to some calling insurgents “freedom fighters” while others consider them “terrorists”.

COIN is similar to peacekeeping but holds some major differences. Peacekeeping forces rarely take on offensive military operations. These are deemed important even in population-centric COIN where there is a need to “clear” the AO of insurgents before subsequent steps can be taken to secure the AO. Similarly, both counterinsurgent and peacekeeping forces “hold” AOs through their sustained presence. Additionally, they both “build” relations with the target population but the extent of these actions are different. Peacekeeping forces are more concerned with providing aid and support in the AO during the time of war or conflict, not necessarily “building” their AO for the long-term. The counterinsurgent, in a population-centric counterinsurgency is not only concerned with the present and the future up until their departure, but of the long-term survivability and stability of the AO when they withdraw. Therefore, a counterinsurgency provides more thorough aid and considers a longer time frame compared to peacekeeping forces.

3.1.1 “Clear, Hold, Build” Concept

French counterinsurgency theorist David Galula’s book, “Counterinsurgency warfare: Theory and practice”⁹⁰ published in 1964 was one of the first books that defined a population-centric COIN strategy. Galula’s works on COIN warfare has been heavily influential and referenced by present counterinsurgency theorists and military generals, including in the formation of the U.S. Army and

⁸⁸ The Guardian, 8 March 2013

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Galula, David, *Counterinsurgency warfare: Theory and practice* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger 1964). It has been republished in 2006 under the same title.

Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual, no. 3-24.⁹¹ Galula's theme throughout this book is the concept of "clear, hold, and build". The concept was first fully implemented by the British in Malaya (now Malaysia) prior to Galula's publishing, namely by High Commissioner Gerald Templer and Lieutenant General Sir Harold Briggs whose strategy effectively won over the "hearts and minds" of the Malay population and brought the ethnic conflict there to an end.⁹² However, the importance of establishing positive networks with a population is not new in counterinsurgency strategy, having been recognized by Union forces in the American Civil War and also by the French during their many colonial wars. Galula's eight-step strategy involves attacking an insurgent-controlled area to "clear" insurgents from the area of population. A force large enough to defend the populated area is to be left behind to establish control and "build" positive links with the population, and control its movement to prevent insurgent re-infiltration or re-supply. If any political organizations exist that were under the control of the insurgent, they must be disbanded and a new provisional local authority is to be established through the means of an election. Incompetent leaders are to be replaced and full support is to be given to competent leaders. The new leaders are to be educated in a "new political movement" from which to rule, ending with the neutralization of the last insurgents who refuse to surrender.⁹³ French General Allard also spoke about the importance of the concept of "clear, hold, build" during his time in Algeria. He said, "To destroy without building up would mean useless labor; to build without first destroying would be a delusion."⁹⁴ Using this strategy, the French were able to attain a military victory in Algeria yet experienced political 'defeat' in giving Algeria its independence. Therefore, the application of hard and soft power, kinetic and psychological operations, and military and political unity are essential in implementing a population-centric counterinsurgency strategy.

Reviewing history, the Russian Tsarist government applied a population-centric counterinsurgency strategy in the North Caucasus in the mid-19th century. From 1832-1859, Imam Shamil established an illegitimate theocratic government in the region, collecting taxes and controlling some Russian military assets.⁹⁵ He and his bandits defeated Viceroy Vorontsov and his Russian forces in a battle

⁹¹ The U.S. Army * Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual, U.S. Army Field Manual No. 3-24, Marine Corps Warfighting Publication No. 3-33.5 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press 2007)

⁹² The population-centric strategy initiated by H.C. Templer and Sir Harold Briggs, called the "Briggs Plan" involved clearing Malaya from the south to the north, dominating the population through sustained presence to establish relationships with the locals, thereby isolating the insurgents from the population. This forced the insurgents to attack the British to attempt to re-establish control over the population. This is what the British hoped for where their better trained and equipped forces could kill or capture the remaining insurgents. For further details on the Briggs Plan, read Nagl (2002), pp.50-78; and Stubbs (1997), pp.51-61

⁹³ Galula 1964, p. 55

⁹⁴ Paret 1964, p. 30, quoted in Michel Déon, *L'Armée d'Algérie et la Pacification* (Paris 1959), pp.77-79

⁹⁵ Marshall 2009

in 1842, exhibiting them to the loss of 984 dead, nearly three thousand wounded and the loss of some weapons and supplies.⁹⁶ Taking the defeat into account, the Russians shifted their strategy from a conventional military campaign to one of an attrition strategy, called the “Strategy of the Axe”.⁹⁷ Territory that the Russians regained from Imam Shamil’s control would be permanently held and policed, with the focus on demoralizing Shamil’s forces, rather than focusing on armed battle.⁹⁸ Russian forces continually constrained Shamil’s forces by cutting down forests where he and his men found refuge, and built roads and fortifications restricting their freedom of movement, preventing them from re-supplying through the regional population.⁹⁹ Shamil and his forces surrendered in 1859 after the Crimean War when Shamil hoped unsuccessfully that Ottoman forces would come to his aid.¹⁰⁰ History presents that Russian forces are capable of a population-centric strategy and the use of proportionality.

3.1.2 Proportionality of Force

Proportionality is an essential concept in counterinsurgency theory. Since the battle is a matter of perception and is for the target populations “hearts and minds”, the counterinsurgent must use proportionate force. That requires force that is effective in achieving the objective yet minimizes the chance of collateral damage and the alienation of the target population. In a conventional war, strategic targets may be regularly bombed with little thought to collateral damage caused to nearby infrastructure and innocent persons around the structure because of its primary objective to destroy enemy infrastructure, its forces, and will to continue fighting. In a counterinsurgency, strikes against the insurgent must be conducted with precision to avoid collateral damage, which may otherwise result in damaged relations with the locals whose support they are attempting to win or maintain. Attacks by the insurgent and collateral damage cause instability in an AO. Therefore, exhaustive efforts must be made by the counterinsurgent to minimize opportunities for instability to arise and to learn how to successfully handle and contain situations of instability to minimize casualties and indifference among the target population.

3.1.3 Political-Military Nexus

Population-centric counterinsurgency is a complex form of warfare because of the need for a strong political-military nexus to enable victory and long-term stability. It requires the incorporation of all

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

the elements of national power: political, informational (i.e. intelligence and propaganda), military, and economic.¹⁰¹ In a conventional war, the military is the primary actor fulfilling the objectives that are required to achieve victory. In contrast, in a COIN environment, the military is only one actor and subordinate to the political actor in achieving victory. Additionally, there disappears a divide between the international and domestic spheres, and between hard and soft power employed by the military. Evidence of this can be seen in Afghanistan and Iraq at present where internal military forces clear populated areas of insurgent presence through the use of hard power, then dominate the environment through its sustained presence, securing the population, and aiding non-military elements to re-establish stability in the AO primarily using an admixture soft and hard power. The military can secure the environment and population from the insurgent but non-military actors are required to address local grievances that sustain the roots of an insurgency. This could be in the form of economic depravity, weak governance, corruption, military deficiency (meaning the population does not feel secure), or a multitude of other grievances that an insurgent group can exploit for their own gain. In a counterinsurgency AO there likely exist multiple grievances, some of which will intertwine with one another such as corruption and weak governance. Each COIN AO is unique, with its own specific grievances and environment, whether physical, cultural, religious, or ethnic making each COIN operation different in many respects.

The major factor which illustrates that counterinsurgency is more complex than conventional warfare is that the ‘stronger’ military, the one with more soldiers and better training and technology, which generally have the advantage in a conventional environment, is viewed as equals with the insurgents. This is because the battle is not to destroy something physical but to battle for popular support, an abstract that cannot be destroyed solely through killing, violence, or technology. David Kilcullen states that, “In this battlefield popular perceptions and rumor are more influential than the facts and more powerful than a hundred tanks.”¹⁰² One hundred tanks will do well in fighting an enemy force in open terrain, but it is not the best tool to win the support of the population. The insurgent and counterinsurgent are on equal grounds, having to work to win and maintain what is called in Western military circles as the “hearts and minds” of the population. The term “hearts and minds” was first used by the British in their successful counterinsurgency in Malaya in the 1950s.¹⁰³ This approach was formally adopted by the American military in the mid-2000s, having been applied in Iraq from 2007 “Surge” onwards and is currently being implemented in Afghanistan.

¹⁰¹ Schaefer 2010, p.12

¹⁰² Kilcullen 2006, p. 1

¹⁰³ Mockaitis 1990, p. 63

3.1.4 Hearts and Minds

“Hearts and minds”, or support of the population is won essentially through psychological warfare. The counterinsurgent must be able to convince the target population that the government and the military can and will serve the best interests of the people. According to David Kilcullen, winning the “hearts” of the population is accomplished by persuading the target population that their best interests are served by counterinsurgent successes, while winning the “minds” is convincing them that the counterinsurgent can protect them, and that resisting is futile.¹⁰⁴ In Afghanistan, allied forces along with their Afghan counterparts form Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) that travel from district to district, meeting with local people and their leaders to address local and regional issues. This is implemented to aid in solving grievances and presents themselves to the locals as the legitimate, credible, and capable actor with whom to cooperate, leading to the insurgents losing their control over that local village or group. However, civilian-led elements, such as PRTs must cooperate with military forces to strengthen the political-military nexus which is essential in the establishment of coordinated effort, efficiency, effectiveness and long-term stability. These are successful in winning “hearts and minds” and enabling long-term stability because local forces are used in conjunction with federal and/or foreign forces. This enables local forces to gain experience in establishing trusted networks, shows themselves to the target population as one that is capable of addressing grievances, and will aid them in becoming legitimate and credible forces. Additionally, it allows foreign and/or federal forces, which are likely more highly trained and equipped, to use their skills with the input of local forces who understand the AO much better, allowing for a higher chance of success in establishing trusted links that will eventually lead to winning popular support. If the “hearts and minds” of the target population are not won by the counterinsurgent, they will never achieve long-term stability because of the continued existence of an unsupportive population that is able to be exploited by another insurgent group.

3.1.5 Legitimacy, Credibility, and Capability

It is generally understood that the only way legitimate, stable and sustainable support can be gained from the population is if the counterinsurgent establishes a framework that protects the population, its culture and resolves its grievances through the creation or reformation of the national/district/local leadership or government and military forces, while restoring a renewed hope to the populace that normalcy will be achieved under counterinsurgent guidance and cooperation. The government structure created or reformed by the counterinsurgent must be viewed as

¹⁰⁴ Kilcullen 2006, p.5

legitimate, credible, and capable by the target population in order that cooperation with civilian leaders and the populace in general is successful in addressing its needs. Insurgent groups are renowned for operating a “shadow government” competing against the counterinsurgent government. In the current conflict in Afghanistan, the Taliban operate a Sharia government with its own Sharia judicial system that gives support to the populace in solving local disputes, and carries out punishment in accordance with Sharia law. This is in direct competition with the democratically-elected, United Nations-recognized Karzai government in Afghanistan. Some locals who support the “shadow government” of the Taliban do so because they view the Karzai leadership as corrupt or a puppet regime of the West.

In the same way, the military and law enforcement of the counterinsurgent and its supporting local elements must be viewed by the target populace as the legitimate, credible, and capable force that can provide security according to the target population’s needs. Local elements consist of military or law enforcement groups wholly or partially made up of locals from the town, ethnic group or region. If counterinsurgent forces are unable to provide security for the populace, they will seek protection from a group that is willing to provide it, usually for a price that is not in the interests of the counterinsurgent. In Afghanistan, if a village is not protected by counterinsurgent forces, the “security vacuum” is usually provided for by the Taliban, Al Qaeda, the Haqqani network or others. The populace gains ‘security’ but becomes subject to Sharia law or other forms of governance that are alien to them, some of which they support and some of which they do not. In any case, the target population becomes subject to the insurgent, thereby destabilizing efforts of the counterinsurgent.

3.1.6 Eliminating External Support of the Insurgent

In many counterinsurgencies, insurgents receive support from external sources, usually foreign governments whose aim is to destabilize the area of conflict and undermine counterinsurgent gains and ultimately, their prospect for victory. During the Vietnam War, the Viet Cong received supplies, weapons, and finances from China and the Soviet Union.¹⁰⁵ The Afghan *mujahideen* received finances, medical assistance, training, and weapons from the United States and United Kingdom in their insurgency against Soviet forces in the 1980s.¹⁰⁶ Safe haven can also be provided by external supporters of insurgents. In order to secure the target population, the counterinsurgent must secure the external borders of the AO to prevent the free flow of insurgents across the borders, to cut off their external supply routes, and to prevent additional foreign fighters and aid coming

¹⁰⁵ Record 2002, p. 128

¹⁰⁶ Maley 2002, p. 81

from external supporters. In a report by the RAND Corporation in the United States, an organization focusing on conducting reports for the United States Department of National Defense, reported that all insurgencies from 1945-2008 that received support from external states achieved victory in more than 50% of the conflicts. Insurgents were able to achieve victory in 43% of those conflicts because they enjoyed an external sanctuary, and won over 30% of those insurgencies because they received support from external non-state actors and diaspora groups. To magnify the importance of securing external borders, the same report stated that insurgents with no external support or sanctuary were only able to achieve victory in a mere 17% of their conflicts.¹⁰⁷ However, even if the counterinsurgent is able to prevent external aid or sanctuary from being obtained by insurgents, there must be successful interior development, some of which has already been mentioned in terms of a legitimate, credible, and capable government and military. Additionally, in many regions where counterinsurgency warfare has and is being fought, economic depravity, poor living conditions and high levels of unemployment exist, creating many societal grievances which insurgents exploit.

During the early years of the Soviet Union, the Soviets fought against many insurgent groups. Beginning in 1921, Ibrahim Bek, an insurgent leader from the Tajikistan S.S.R. with his 5,000 fighters enjoyed freedom of movement between the porous border with Afghanistan, enabling them to escape, rest, regroup, and train for future raids into Soviet territory as well as receive financial support from the dethroned Emir of Bukhara, and at times from the British administration in India and the Afghan government.¹⁰⁸ To eliminate the threat, Soviet forces enforced strict border control while simultaneously implementing a population-centric counterinsurgency strategy in 1923.¹⁰⁹ Marshall notes that the Soviet authorities realized early into the campaign that the insurgents used local citizenry to their advantage and therefore political measures had to be implemented alongside military operations to quell the insurgents' popular support.¹¹⁰ Therefore, new schools and health clinics were built, mosques were re-opened, reformist Islamic clergy were co-opted, amnesty was offered to the insurgents if they surrendered, and much needed agricultural assistance such as free seeds were given to the people through the accompaniment of Soviet propaganda tours throughout Central Asia.¹¹¹ Not only was education and literacy pursued in Central Asia as a result of this insurgency, but it was applied throughout the Soviet Union through a nation-wide campaign.¹¹²

¹⁰⁷ Jones 2008, pp. 21-22

¹⁰⁸ Marshall 2009

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid.

Again, a political-military nexus was established, combining political efforts to win the “hearts and minds” of the Central Asian population while securing the border and carrying out military operations. The Soviets built a web-work of fortresses which communicated by heliograph, enabling Soviet forces to communicate with each other quickly over vast distances, thereby effectively cutting off Bek’s freedom of movement and supply lines.¹¹³ It was the capture of his large herd of livestock in 1926 that forced him to surrender and be exiled to Afghanistan.¹¹⁴ This Russian history illustrates that enforcing a population-centric counterinsurgency strategy including strict border control can enable victory.

3.1.7 Economic Development

Developing the economy of the target population will aid in winning their “hearts and minds”. A well-functioning economy will provide jobs and income to the populace, address economic grievances if they have any, and show them that the counterinsurgent cares about their economic wellbeing, thereby restoring hope and the opportunity for long-term stability. The provision of essential services such as clean water, electricity, sanitation, education centers, hospitals, and a viable transport network by the counterinsurgent also aids in developing a strong economy and shows the population that they can do better than the insurgent in providing essential services to a wide population. Investment from the counterinsurgent government is also an essential part of developing the economy of the target population. However, investment without a purpose and the advice of the target population will not aid in winning “hearts and minds”. If the populace already has an abundance of clean water, schools, and electricity, the counterinsurgent would do well to avoid investing too much in these areas while neglecting other sectors that the population desires which could aid in winning their support. That is why local input in all sectors of a counterinsurgent’s actions, whether military or non-military, will achieve greater benefit because the locals know what they need and want and by responding appropriately to their needs the population’s support can be won over and the control of the insurgency over them will diminish accordingly.

3.1.8 Victory

A military strategy is useless if it cannot be used to achieve victory. David Kilcullen defines victory in a population-centric counterinsurgency environment as “...the permanent isolation of the insurgent from the population, isolation not enforced upon the population but maintained by and

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

with the population.”¹¹⁵ There is no mention by any counterinsurgency theorist that the destruction of the insurgent force alone will bring about victory. If an insurgent force is depleted, but the grievances of the population that the insurgent exploited are not successfully addressed and solved, stable and sustainable victory is not achieved because the population is still open to be exploited by another group who claims they can solve those issues. Additionally, if the insurgent group is eliminated, there is no guarantee or evidence that the target population will automatically support the counterinsurgent. If the counterinsurgent is not viewed as a legitimate, credible, or capable actor that can provide the target population a stable future, there is no rational reason why they would automatically attract popular support. That is why attacking the insurgents’ strategy and solving the grievances of the population are of primary importance in establishing support for the counterinsurgent, and long term stability. However, even if all the rules of counterinsurgency are followed, there is no guarantee of victory because of the complexity of the environment and the need to adapt to local and regional changes which is of the utmost importance. In the words of war theorist Carl von Clausewitz, “Everything is very simple in War, but the simplest thing is difficult.”¹¹⁶

3.2 How Population-centric Counterinsurgency is Applied

As already mentioned, every counterinsurgency environment is different. Each AO will have its own grievances that must be addressed. They may be local, regional, or global in nature. The first task in applying a successful population-centric counterinsurgency strategy is learning and understanding as much as possible about the population, their culture, grievances, and everyday way of life. Only by understanding the behavior and needs of the population will the counterinsurgent be able to formulate an effective, efficient, and likely successful population-centric strategy. Secondly, the counterinsurgent must learn as much as they can about the insurgent enemy. Intelligence must be obtained stating what their main tactics are, where they are getting supplies and finding safe havens, where their finances are coming from and how they are controlling the population. Ascertaining the capabilities of the enemy is not a new concept. Sun Tzu stated that,

So it is said that if you know others and know yourself, you will not be imperiled in a hundred battles; if you do not know others but know yourself, you win one and

¹¹⁵ Kilcullen 2004, p. 54

¹¹⁶ Von Clausewitz 1968, p. 164

lose one; if you do not know others and do not know yourself, you will be imperiled in every single battle.¹¹⁷

In a counterinsurgency environment, while knowing the enemy is essential, the understanding of the population bears more importance because without their support and cooperation, the enemy will never fail to have control over the environment and therefore the counterinsurgent's chance of victory becomes severely limited.

3.2.1 Logical Lines of Operation

According to the U.S. Army and Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual, there exist five "logical lines of operation" (LLO's) which need to be addressed together to establish dominance over a population, address grievances, and secure long-term stability. They are combat operations/civil security operations, host nation security forces, essential services, governance, and economic development.¹¹⁸ The LLO of "host nation security forces" will only apply to areas of operation where a foreign counterinsurgent force invades an insurgent's AO to aid the host government. In the case of the current war in the NCFD of Russia, the LLO of "host nation security forces" does not apply because of the absence of foreign counterinsurgent intervention in the AO, while during "Operation Enduring Freedom" in Afghanistan it is applicable because the COIN operation was initiated and is largely controlled by the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) comprising of NATO and other countries working alongside the Afghan government and its military and non-military elements.

3.2.2 Combat/Civil Security Operations

To fulfill the population-centric requirements of the "combat operations/civil security operations" LLO, COIN forces must use proportionality in implementing the time, place, duration, and intensity of combat with insurgent forces to avoid collateral damage that could physically endanger civilians or damage relations with the target population. A scenario could involve insurgents embedded in a building in the middle of a residential area. A fixed-wing aircraft could be used to bomb the building with a precision-guided missile. However, the probability of collateral damage is considerably higher compared to using Special Forces on the ground to raid the building, even though the precision-guided missile would almost certainly guarantee the destruction of the insurgent forces and avoid potential Special Forces casualties.¹¹⁹ Therefore, to avoid the likelihood of collateral damage in this scenario, using Special Forces to carry out a raid would be more

¹¹⁷ Tzu 2003, p. 85

¹¹⁸ The U.S. Army * Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual 2007, p. 155

¹¹⁹ Ibid. pp. 247-248

efficient in that there is a smaller footprint left by a raid, less opportunity for collateral damage and a higher probability of relations with the locals being maintained. However, each situation must be viewed separately, as each will have their own unique specifications. A booby-trapped house, human hostages/shields, insurgents wearing suicide vests, and other factors will determine the proportionality of force so as to avoid civilian casualties. If civilians are killed or civilian property is destroyed, local networks with the population that took time to establish could be damaged and may be considered irreparable just in the effort to kill a few insurgents. Therefore, it is essential to prioritize the interests of the civilian population and counterinsurgent forces relationships with them before determining whether force is required and how it can be most efficiently applied while maintaining effectiveness. Additionally, throughout history, population-centric COIN forces have relied on small military units to carry out operations to reduce its footprint, have high mobility, and reduce the chances of error and the death of civilians. In Malaya for example, the British primarily relied on “Ferret Forces” made up of twelve members from a variety of regiments, including local trackers and linguists to attack insurgents and establish contact with the target population.¹²⁰ Additionally, British operations in Cyprus, Oman, and U.S. COIN operations in El Salvador, Afghanistan, and Iraq have relied or still rely mainly on small-unit operations. The destruction of the insurgent’s forces is not the primary aim of a population-centric COIN operation so combat operations must only be conducted if the likelihood of civilian casualties, property damage, and damaged relations will be non-existent or negligible and that if damage does occur that relations can be restored quickly with the target population to avoid losing their support.

3.2.3 Essential Services

The second LLO is the creation/maintenance of essential services. These consist of effective and efficient police and fire departments, water supply, electricity, schools, transportation networks, medical services, sanitation, and the employment of qualified staff to operate these services.¹²¹ In a COIN operation, the “clear” stage of “clear, hold, build” involves attacking an insurgent stronghold within the target population. During this event, essential services may have been damaged or disrupted, the insurgents may have purposely destroyed them on withdrawing from the AO, or some essential services may be inefficient or non-existent. To win the “hearts and minds” of the target population, non-military and military COIN forces should establish or re-establish relationships with the population and ask them what grievances they have in the sector of essential services. Building and maintaining essential services that the target population deem important to their daily

¹²⁰ Nagl 2002, pp. 68-69

¹²¹ Ibid. p. 170

lives must be addressed by COIN forces to establish a stable environment. Building and maintaining essential services without local input, support, training and employment will do little to win the target population's support. In fact, it may backfire, and cause further instability because of its inability or lack of desire to maintain the essential services that it did not want or that it is incapable of maintaining. In the American war in Vietnam, not only did the Americans not build efficient essential services for the people but created a South Vietnamese military that was incapable without American assistance. When American military forces completed its withdrawal from Vietnam in 1973, the South Vietnamese were incapable of sustaining the American-made, highly-technological defense systems which created an environment of poor administration and corruption which helped lead to its overthrow by Northern forces.¹²² During "Operation Enduring Freedom" in Afghanistan, British ISAF forces in Afghanistan have readily admitted to this mistake in their operations in Helmand province. It was reported that dozens of UK-built schools and medical clinics would be forced to close down because of the Afghanistan government's inability to financially afford to maintain these essential services. The report stated that there exists a "mismatch between the value of the assets and the Afghan government's ability to maintain them," further claiming that these schools and clinics were built without consulting with the local population and government and without a long-term vision.¹²³ This occurred because the British COIN forces were overly-enthusiastic about winning "hearts and minds" and forgot or ignored the importance of consulting the local population and viewing each action in regards to long-term stability which is essential in creating a viable and stable AO. The UK ambassador to Afghanistan Sir Richard Stagg declared in an interview with the Guardian newspaper: "We focused on the physical and visible rather than the human capital which would manage the country in the longer term."¹²⁴ Also, "The challenge for Afghanistan now is not a lack of roads and school buildings. It is a lack of capacity in its governmental structures in particular to run the country."¹²⁵

3.2.4 Governance

This last quote highlights the third LLO in carrying out a population-centric COIN operation. This is the creation or building of a stable government structure in the AO which the population supports, including federal, regional, and local jurisdictions. The U.S. Army and Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual states that an effective government must be capable and willing to regulate public activity, maintain security and control over its areas of jurisdiction, maintain

¹²²The U.S. Army * Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual 2007, pp.270-271

¹²³ RT, 28 September 2012

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

essential services, enforce the rule of law, hold public records and be accountable to the people through transparency, hold an electoral process for representational government, and have a structure in place for disaster preparedness and response.¹²⁶ In order for the government to be supported by the target population, it must be viewed as legitimate, credible, and capable. Legitimacy is obtained if the government is elected by means of free elections, chosen by a group of elders that represent the people, or by some other culturally acceptable way of choosing leadership. Additionally, according to David Kilcullen, legitimacy is also achieved if there is a high level of popular participation in the political process, a low level of corruption, a level of support of the government from major institutions, and a “culturally” acceptable level of political, economic, and social development.¹²⁷ In the British COIN campaign in Aden, which now is part of Yemen, the British government created the Federation of South Arabia in 1959. Some states joined this federation but Aden refused because they did not view the British government as legitimate and British forces fought for ten unsuccessful years to bring stability to the AO.¹²⁸ Credibility is established when the government’s words match their actions. If a new government/leadership is established in an AO, the people will hold them accountable. If the government’s words do not match their actions they will not win the population’s “hearts and minds” because there will be no element of trust between them. Therefore, instability will ensue and stability will never exist alongside a cooperating public which will never result in long-term stability. David Kilcullen states that when trust is established between the rulers and the locals, that trust-networks will “grow like roots into the population”, which will displace insurgent networks.¹²⁹ Lastly, a government that wants to maintain the support of the populace must be capable of carrying out their tasks of control and security, providing essential services, and enforcing the rule of law. If its structure is weak, it will fall apart due to internal conflict, rioting by the population, or a sustained attack by insurgents. At the present time, there is a debate among world leaders revolving around “Operation Enduring Freedom” whether the Afghan government will survive after the proposed withdrawal of ISAF forces from Afghanistan in the year 2014. This presents the criticality of establishing government capability, as efforts to win the population’s support could be quickly lost if the government, who controls all the other LLOs, loses its capability to control and secure the COIN environment. Therefore, a government must be established that is legitimate, credible, and capable in order to obtain the support of the people, disable insurgent networks, and have an opportunity to enable long-term stability in the environment.

¹²⁶ The U.S. Army * Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual 2007, pp. 170-171

¹²⁷ Kilcullen 2009, p.49

¹²⁸ Newsinger 2002, p. 110

¹²⁹ Kilcullen 2006, p. 5

3.2.5 Economic Development

The last LLO is in the area of economic development.¹³⁰ Without the creation of a strong economy, the government will be unable to finance growth, fund its essential services and defense forces, be viewed as a capable government, and grievances will still exist or reappear that could be exploited by insurgents. Factors such as high unemployment, low salaries, poor living conditions, weak currency, etc. are grievances that insurgents have exploited in counterinsurgencies such as the *Mau Mau* in Kenya against British colonial rule.¹³¹ This LLO becomes especially important during a time of war, where civilian work will likely be disrupted, and their agricultural fields and places of business may be damaged or destroyed. If efforts by the counterinsurgent to “clear” the area of insurgents are successful, then they can start to rebuild the economy and bring people back to work and ‘normalcy’ of living can be achieved, which will win the “hearts and minds” of some locals, and be a positive action that will lay groundwork to win the support of still neutral or disapproving locals. It can be argued that long-term stability is impossible to achieve without a strong economy. If a government fails to achieve growth on its own it will eventually fall. If it is bolstered by a foreign government or another actor it may not be viewed as a legitimate, credible, or capable government. This increases the possibility of locals looking for hope or leadership provided by other actors that could be insurgent-led and earlier successes could be lost in a short time. A counterinsurgency requires a lot of effort, time, and money to win “hearts and minds” but it could be lost much faster due only to a small number of mistakes or negligence on the part of the COIN government, its military and law enforcement. This is the complexity of counterinsurgency warfare.

¹³⁰ The U.S. Army * Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual 2007, p. 173

¹³¹ Leakey 1954, p. 21

4 ETHNOGRAPHY: OBSERVATIONS, INTERVIEWS AND TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

4.1 History of Ethnography as a Method

Giampietro Gobo, an Italian ethnographer, states that ethnography as a methodology was born in Western Europe in late 19th-early 20th centuries which morphed from ethnology in the early 1800s which it itself split from traditional anthropology before that.¹³² It involves the study of culture using different forms of observation. It seeks to use distant observation and the use of local knowledge in forming an argument. Gobo further divides this methodology into two research strategies: non-participant observation and participant observation.¹³³ Non-participant observation is the observing of an environment without becoming directly involved, such as talking with locals. Participant observation makes use of local knowledge such as interviews to aid in formulating an argument.¹³⁴ Early ethnologists deemed non-participant observation as the only option to study “savage” cultures because they deemed “primitive” cultures not intelligent enough to be objective and receive reliable information from.¹³⁵ However, in this thesis I make use of both non-participant and participant research strategies. For the majority of my travels in the NCFD I relied on observation from a distance, viewing economic development, security, and daily life. I used participant observation when I conducted interviews with six individuals, five being in the NCFD. One of the goals of my thesis is not just to record what is “out there”¹³⁶ but to interpret my material: my observations, interviews, and texts into a thesis that can answer my research question.

4.2 Purpose and Perspective

The purpose of this study is to highlight the complexity of counterinsurgency warfare, the importance of the counterinsurgency in the NCFD in the framework of the “Global War on Terrorism”, the insurgency in the NCFD being a threat to global peace and security as well as the current capabilities of the Russian government to wage a population-centric counterinsurgency strategy. The aim of my research is to find information pertaining to the Russian government’s COIN strategy based on four LLOs and its information campaign to determine the extent of the existence of population-centric COIN principles being implemented in the NCFD. This came in the form of interviewing locals, observing daily life, and reading a variety of texts analyzing the conflict or disseminating news about the region or government’s strategy.

¹³² Gobo 2008. pp.7-8

¹³³ Ibid. p.5

¹³⁴ Ibid. p.5

¹³⁵ Ibid. p.8

¹³⁶ Müller 2011, p.3

As an ethnographer, I should reveal something of my identity so readers can understand my point of view further and my potential bias. Donna Haraway calls it a “map of consciousness” where knowledge is attributed to a person’s gender, class, nationality, education, etc.¹³⁷ I am Canadian from the middle-class who has studied in Canada and throughout Western and Northern Europe as well as four months in Russia. These studies have allowed me to gain a wide and deep understanding of different cultures and points of view. Additionally, this experience has caused me to question more, which is crucial when writing an academic paper that deals with any topic, especially one that exists in a foreign country.

This thesis is written from a counterinsurgent’s perspective. Since the occurrence of the terrorist attacks in the United States on September 11, 2001 I have been studying terrorism and terrorist organizations. Specifically I have been studying their strategies, tactics, propaganda, recruitment methods, and financial procurement. It has further led me to study and understand how a variety of terrorist groups with various aims attempt to achieve their objectives. Understanding the “enemy”, terrorist groups, is essential in identifying, planning, and implementing an effective, efficient, and likely successful strategy. This is only one half of my studies. My educational experience is in counter-terrorism, counter-insurgency, and war studies so it is fitting for me to take this approach when writing this thesis. I have studied British, American and French approaches to counterinsurgency. Furthermore, researching for this thesis has allowed me to gain extensive knowledge on the Russian approach to counterinsurgency. I have studied historical cases of counterinsurgency strategy in the conflicts in Malaya, Northern Ireland, Algeria, Vietnam, Afghanistan, Iraq, and others in a variety of geographical regions. This research has enabled me to write this thesis from a counterinsurgent’s view, not from the viewpoint of a regional analyst, journalist, human rights activist, or politician of whom I am not. I have used some American military terms such as Logical Line of Operation (LLO), and Area of Operation (AO) to mold my vocabulary with those used in counterinsurgency operations and will be recognizable and understood by those involved or interested in this field, who are familiar with American military jargon.

I chose ethnography as my method because I believe it is imperative to obtain first-hand knowledge when it comes to issues pertaining to war and terrorism. It is a subject rife with misinformation, disinformation, media “spin”, and complexity. Many analysts, often the most out-spoken on the conflict in the NCFD, have never travelled to the district and rely solely on government statistics

¹³⁷ Ibid. p.4

and reports from human rights organizations which often present a one-sided distorted view of the conflict. Travelling through the region over three weeks presented an extraordinary opportunity to talk with locals, observe daily living, the economic development and security infrastructure, and obtain a general ‘feel’ of the area, something that can only be experienced by physically being in the district, not from offices in Washington D.C. or London. This has allowed me to formulate a comprehensive view of the strategy of the Russian government to bring stability to the NCFD.

4.3 Observations, Interviews, and Texts

During November and December 2012, I travelled throughout the North Caucasus Federal District for three weeks to obtain primary information on the current state of affairs in the district. I travelled throughout six of the seven republics, avoiding Karachaevo-Cherkessia due to time constraints. However, I travelled thoroughly through the republics of Kabardino-Balkaria, Stavropol Krai, North Ossetia-Alania, Ingushetia, Chechnya, and Dagestan. I travelled with a notebook and pen which I filled with quotes from locals and observations immediately after receiving them to decrease the likelihood of my own distortion of facts at a later period. Obviously, each ethnographer and every person has their own bias, however I attempted to find arguments on both sides of the conflict and have presented them in this thesis.

Aside from observation, I conducted semi-structured interviews with five residents of the North Caucasus as well as one who was from a nearby region who had connections to the district. The residents were from Kabardino-Balkaria, Ingushetia, Dagestan, with two residing in Chechnya. Interviews were semi-structured in nature and aimed to find out more about daily life in the region, what the government was doing in the region to stabilize it, regional grievances and reaffirm or question my observations in the region. Questions were based around the framework of the four LLOs: governance, economic development, essential services, and combat/civil security operations. Questions also pertained to the government’s information campaign to win “hearts and minds”. The longest interview lasted around two hours while the others took between ten minutes to one hour. All of my interviews were conducted with individuals I met on the street or was directed to by an interviewee. All the interviewees were cooperative and eager to give their opinions. Three of the five interviewees in the NCFD had extensive and broad knowledge of events in the region. The other two, being the younger individuals were less knowledgeable when it came to knowledge of events outside their republics but their information was useful because they gave me a representative perspective of life of a young person in their republic. I would have liked to have questioned more individuals and asked more questions to some of the individuals but my Russian

language skills were not advanced enough to ask everything I desired. I understand that interview pool of six people is not a large representation. However, in such an environment, like the NCFD, it is difficult to find people who are willing to talk for such a long time and on issues that are not necessarily talked about openly and publicly on a daily basis. The republics of Ingushetia, Chechnya, and Dagestan are still considered “war zones”, so I applaud those who were willing to speak with a foreigner about such issues. The names and genders of my interviewees have been concealed. For example, I use pseudonyms in this thesis for all my interviewees and their real gender is not necessarily the one I give them in the paper. This is to protect their identities and prevent any possible retribution they could encounter. However, I do not conceal their careers or republic of residence so readers can see that I was able to attain a broad range of views from a variety of republics, from young and old, well-established and working-class. All of the interviewees belonged to a native ethnic group in their respective republic. Only my interviewee in St. Petersburg was an ethnic-Russian. In St. Petersburg, Boris my interviewee talked about his father who had recently returned from a six-month police deployment to Grozny, Chechnya. My main interviewee was Alexei in Kabardino-Balkaria. He was a journalist, younger, and had hope in the future of the republic. In Ingushetia, I interviewed Sergei, a taxi driver who was quite young and had unfavorable views of Ingushetia and Russia. In Chechnya, I interviewed two individuals. Ilya, a middle-aged economist was quite well-established and had desires to move out of the region because of lack of work. Vyacheslav, a retired security services officer was also well-established and had hope in the future of the Chechnya. In Dagestan, I interviewed Mikhail, a young man around my age who works in quite a menial position and desires to leave Russia for work in North America. I have not only relied on my fieldwork: my observations and interviews. I have read many articles from various analysts who have studied the region. However, only Anna Matveeva has travelled to the region to do research as far as I am aware. These texts will support or question my findings. I have read as many sources as I could (over 350) and have not included them all in my bibliography because I could not source them all in the thesis. Many of the articles were quite narrow in nature, solely focusing on Russian military efforts to suppress the insurgency, weak and corrupt regional governance and alleged human rights abuses. Only when reading articles from the Russian Presidential Executive Office was I able to find statistics and facts about the other areas of the government’s strategy in the region such as economic development and its information campaign. I have taken points from analysts and the Russian government alike which matched and challenged my observations and interviews to give a more balanced view of the complex conflict in the NCFD.

The chosen design of my method using observation and interviews is appropriate because it has allowed me to gather first-hand and current information on the Russian government's strategy to develop the NCFD and how some citizens view the government and their actions. Much of past analyses by a variety of writers on Russia's strategy in the NCFD have been focused on the military and security aspect, largely ignoring developments in other sectors of the strategy such as economic development, governance, and information campaign. Anna Matveeva's ethnographic research¹³⁸ is the only other thorough and current report taking into account a variety of aspects of life in the North Caucasus and government efforts to bring stability to the region. However, she does not frame her research around defining or analyzing the Russian government's strategy in the region.

For information that was difficult to obtain in the district such as information on military operations and the government's information campaign, I have found significant use from a variety of government and Russian news websites such as the Russian Presidential Executive Office¹³⁹ which publishes transcripts and summaries of governmental meetings and speeches as well as articles from RIA Novosti, RIA Dagestan, and Russia Today (RT) which has enabled me to acquire countless valuable quotes from Russian leaders regarding the conflict in the North Caucasus. Additionally, Anna Matveeva's ethnographic project using focus groups in the North Caucasus published in March 2012 was also an excellent asset in obtaining current opinions from the regional population.

In terms of what I expect to observe and discover in the NCFD if the Russian government has implemented a population-centric strategy is idealistic. In terms of governance, I would expect regional governmental leaders to be elected in free elections, actions taken to combat corruption, inefficiency and ineffectiveness, as well as steps taken to work with their respective population's to develop their societies through institutions being set up which allow dialogue for grievances to be voiced freely without threat of retribution. For federal governance, I expect them to create conditions that favor economic development in the region and aggressively advocate that non-ethnic Russians are equal Russian citizens under the law. In terms of economic development, I expect to see that the federal and regional governments are developing essential services and addressing unemployment in the region by creating jobs and constructing large projects that will have long-term benefit for the region. In terms of its military strategy, I expect to see that Russian internal military and security forces use proportionality when carrying out sweep operations and rely on intelligence-led operations to neutralize insurgents to prevent collateral damage against innocent civilians and infrastructure, which if harmed, could damage relations between the government and

¹³⁸ Matveeva 2012

¹³⁹ Russian Presidential Executive Office website: <http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/articles/administration_about.shtml>

the people and restrict its ability to win “hearts and minds”. I expect them to secure the population through sustained presence in civilian areas of hostility or neutrality to secure them from insurgent re-infiltration and further allow the government and non-military elements to “build” relations with the target population.

4.4 Validity and Reliability of Ethnography

One must question the validity of my source material and method. I was able to observe much of the Russian government’s strategy in practice in the NCFD through interviews with locals and thorough travels throughout six of the seven republics. Other analysts of the region have relied on using government and human rights statistics to formulate their arguments which do not give full credence to the advancements and failures of the government’s strategy. I was able to observe and question interviewees on life in the region so I was able to match statements with what I was physically visualizing and experiencing. I believe it would not be possible to accurately determine whether the Russian government is implementing a population-centric counterinsurgency strategy unless one was to visit the region because of the aspects of misinformation, disinformation, media “spin”, and complexity that surround the issue, especially in a somewhat closed country such as Russia.

Additionally, one must question the reliability of my source material and method. My thorough travel throughout the region has allowed me to gain an overview of the government’s strategy in each republic. My interviewees came from various republics in the North Caucasus Federal District which allowed for me to gain an understanding of what each republic is facing in terms of development, security, hope in the future, and other aspects that can only be gathered when speaking with people from the region. One could argue that I did not interview many residents, which is somewhat true, yet I was able to incorporate their statements with what I observed in the region which leaves little doubt in terms of reliability. One may argue that they could obtain another six interviewees and come up with six other opinions that are different from the ones presented in my thesis. They could be correct, but I have made the effort to match their beliefs with my observations or call them into question. I have not naively incorporated ideas from my interviewees without other evidence to agree or disagree with. I visited the capital cities of each republic and at least one other city in each republic. In most of them I visited multiple cities. In major cities I stayed for 2-3 days to observe and possibly carry out an interview. This is a qualitative method, which relies more on the quality of information that I attained, and I believe I was able to find enough quality information to formulate this thesis. Regarding how systematic this research is,

ethnographers can visit the regions I visited as they are open to visitors. No information was collected covertly or by illegal means. Conversely, interviews were not set up prior to my travels so my selection of interviewees was not systematic in the effect that my sources were willing individuals on the street whom I met randomly. However, I did have a set of questions I would like to ask interviewees regarding governance, economic development, etc. The ethnographic method has enabled me to conduct original research which is rarely conducted in the North Caucasus Federal District, especially when it pertains to defining the encompassing strategy of the Russian government to bring stability to the North Caucasus Federal District.

5 GOVERNANCE

Vladimir Putin in 1999: “*My mission, my historic mission—it sounds pompous, but it is true—is to resolve the situation in the North Caucasus.*”¹⁴⁰

5.1 How the Federal Government defines the Conflict in the North Caucasus Federal District

It is imperative that in order to wage a successful strategy, the government must correctly identify what kind of enemy they are opposing and the type of war they will fight. Carl von Clausewitz, a leading war theorist declared,

The first, the supreme, the most far-reaching act of judgement that the statesman and commander have to make is to establish...the kind of war on which they are embarking; neither mistaking it for, not trying to turn it into, something that is alien to its nature. This is the first of all strategic questions and the most comprehensive.¹⁴¹

Therefore, I will deduct how the Russian federal government defines the conflict in the NCFD. In October 2010, President Dmitri Medvedev ratified a new law defining terrorism that had been agreed upon by the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in June 2009. It defines terrorism as an,

...ideology of violence and practice of attempting to influence the decisions of state authorities or international organisations by committing or threatening to commit violent or criminal acts intended to intimidate the population and cause damage to individuals, society and the state.¹⁴²

The Caucasus Emirate terrorist group fits these parameters. The Russian government acknowledges this and has defined the conflict in the North Caucasus as a “struggle against terrorism.”¹⁴³ It also refers to the militants of the Caucasus Emirate by a variety of terms, including: “criminals”, “extremists”, “bandits”, and “terrorists”.¹⁴⁴ President Putin, when foreign actors were pressuring Russia to negotiate with the terrorists in the North Caucasus, boldly stated, “Russia does not negotiate with terrorists, it destroys them.”¹⁴⁵ Regional presidents from the NCFD also define the conflict as a battle against terrorism.¹⁴⁶

However, to define the conflict as a war against terrorism does not mean that the Russia government will implement a population-centric counterinsurgency strategy. An enemy-centric

¹⁴⁰ Kuchins et al. 2011, p.2, quoted in Natalia Gevorkian, A.V. Kolesnikov & Natalia Timakova, ‘От Первого Лица’ [translated: First Person] (Moscow: Vagrius, 2000), p. 133

¹⁴¹ Kilcullen 2004, p.1, quoted in Carl von Clausewitz, ‘On War’, Michael Howard and Peter Paret, trans., (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press 1989), p.8

¹⁴² Russian Presidential Executive Office, 4 October 2010

¹⁴³ Aliyev 2010, p.326

¹⁴⁴ Russian Presidential Executive Office, 25 January 2011

¹⁴⁵ Melvin 2007, pp.31-32, quoted in Dmitri Litvinovich, ‘Russia: the dead and the missing’ *Transitions Online*, Week in Review, 3-9 February 2004, <http://www.ciaonet.org/pbei/tol/tol_2004/feb3-9/>

¹⁴⁶ Ragimkhanova, 11 April 2012

strategy could be implemented as well. However, Russian leaders have come to the realization that the roots that prolong this conflict are “systematic,”¹⁴⁷ in regards to “low living standards, high unemployment, and massive, horrifying widespread corruption”¹⁴⁸ which pose “long-term threats to our country.”¹⁴⁹

The Russian government has defined the conflict in the North Caucasus as a struggle against terrorism which must be fought by solving systematic social problems in the NCFD. This is very promising, yet words are not enough; a strategy must be implemented.

5.2 Kremlin’s “Development First” Strategy

Dmitri Medvedev considers terrorism and instability in the North Caucasus to be the “single biggest threat to Russia.”¹⁵⁰ His words became action in 2010. Firstly, to consolidate the scope of its regional strategy to the North Caucasus republics that were the most unstable, Medvedev created the NCFD which comprises the republics of Karachaevo Cherkessia, Stavropol Krai, Kabardino-Balkaria, North Ossetia-Alania, Ingushetia, Chechnya, and Dagestan.¹⁵¹ Furthermore, Medvedev implemented the “Development First” strategy to develop the region and eliminate support for the Caucasus Emirate. On September 6, 2010, Prime Minister Vladimir Putin endorsed this strategy.¹⁵² Its primary objective is to create an environment in the NCFD which can solve the social instability in the region and provide its citizens a stable future.

In a widely-viewed unorthodox move, Dmitri Medvedev appointed Alexander Khloponin, a former businessman and governor of Krasnoyarsky Krai in Siberia, as presidential envoy to the NCFD,¹⁵³ openly ignoring qualified *siloviki* who normally obtain positions of power in Russia. This illustrates that the Russian government acknowledges that a leader with an economic is essential to implement a successful strategy in the North Caucasus. Assigning a member of the *siloviki* would have sent a wrong message to the people of the North Caucasus, that the government would still be primarily focused on solving the instability in the NCFD through military force, regardless of the title of the strategy.

¹⁴⁷ Nichol 2010, pp.14-15

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Russian Presidential Executive Office, 25 January 2011

¹⁵⁰ Snetkov 2011a, p.2

¹⁵¹ Cohen 2012

¹⁵² Górecki 2011

¹⁵³ Hahn 2010

In October 2010, Khloponin released his strategy for the NCFD until the year 2025.¹⁵⁴ I will delve into more detail about his strategy in further chapters. Anna Matveeva, who has also carried out research in the North Caucasus, has concluded that Russian federal authorities are concerned with four main issues in the region: security, its response to growing Islamism, economic development, and how to manage multi-ethnicity in the region and throughout the Russian Federation.¹⁵⁵ Unity of effort involving all the elements of national power is essential in any population-centric counterinsurgency strategy to ensure effective communication, coordination of effort, and the implementation of a potentially successful strategy. In the NCFD, the Russian government divides the leadership of the security and non-security elements of its strategy. Alexander Khloponin controls the finances and investment projects in the region while security forces are under the control of the regional governments.¹⁵⁶ Malashenko, an analyst of the region, argues that Khloponin lacks leverage to improve the situation in the district because his role as presidential envoy has really only given him a managerial role without political authority.¹⁵⁷ What can be assured is that the Russian government's strategy in the NCFD has morphed from an enemy-centric strategy in to one that comprises the additional aspects of national power: the political, informational, military, and economic spheres which mirror a long-term, environment-encompassing strategy.

5.3 Regional Population Support for the Federal and Regional Governments

5.3.1 Legitimacy of Federal and Regional Governments

Legitimacy is of the utmost importance in a counterinsurgency. A government must be viewed as legitimate by the target population in order for a successful strategy to be implemented. Illegitimacy means that government efforts will mean little if anything to the target population because they do not view it as a legitimate actor in their environment. Counterinsurgent forces must endeavor in illegitimizing the insurgents to eliminate their support among the populace while increasing their own legitimacy.

The federal government in Moscow is generally viewed as legitimate in the minds of the North Caucasus population. However, when Putin was first elected to power, he eliminated the governors' and regional presidents' seats from the Federation Council, strengthening the federal government's

¹⁵⁴ Matveeva 2012, p.33, quoted in Kira Latukhina, 'Kavkazskii Marshrut' [translated: Caucasian Route] *Rossiiskaya Gazeta* [translated: Russian Newspaper], no. 287, 21 December 2011

¹⁵⁵ Ibid. p.8

¹⁵⁶ Agentura.Ru 2010; and in Baev 2011, p.18

¹⁵⁷ Malashenko 2011, p.5

control of Russia, simultaneously weakening regional governments' power.¹⁵⁸ Most Russians uphold the view that a strong centralized government is needed to make living conditions more predictable and to maintain stability.¹⁵⁹ Yet, there is also a minority that views presidential elections in Russia as fraudulent, yet they have been unable to provide convicting evidence that can be upheld in a Russian court of justice. Corruption in the federal government has also posed problems in the maintenance of its legitimacy. The Federal government maintains support from major institutions but this is because many of the major institutions are owned by the federal government or are considerably tied to the Kremlin, such as Gazprom, Sberbank, and the Rosatom which supply the majority of Russia's energy and financial transactions. Therefore, that is not a viable measurement of the legitimacy of the Russian government.

The legitimacy of the governments in the individual republics is a subject of controversy in the NCFD. In 2004, in response to the terrorist attack on School No.1 in Beslan, North Ossetia, President Putin abolished elections for regional leaders and gave the president the power to directly appoint regional presidents with the approval of the respective regional parliaments.¹⁶⁰ In April 2012, after months of mass protests throughout Russia for fair elections, then-President Medvedev called for the "speedy" adoption of a bill to re-implement direct gubernatorial elections throughout Russia, which was passed and ratified that same month.¹⁶¹ Medvedev stated that this law "...takes into account the interests of the people and also raises the political responsibility of candidates."¹⁶² However, on January 30, 2013 the Russian Duma voted 90% in favor of allowing regional legislatures to ban gubernatorial elections.¹⁶³ It could be signed into law in time for the September 2013 elections.¹⁶⁴ The Duma has voted for the ban because many of them believe that voters in the North Caucasus vote for leaders based on ethnicity since "clan culture" is dominant in the region, which they believe enflames ethnic-based violence in the region.¹⁶⁵

However, the people of the North Caucasus must feel they have power in their region to direct their republic in the way they desire. In a focus group in Chechnya, a participant professed,

We are not that content with the political order of our life....People elect those who are already chosen. Everything happens here because those at the top, for instance,

¹⁵⁸ Melvin 2007, p.25

¹⁵⁹ Canadian Security Intelligence Service 2010, p.7

¹⁶⁰ Melvin 2007, pp.26-27

¹⁶¹ RT, 11 April 2012

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Ponomareva 2013

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

Medvedev and Putin, decide everything between themselves. We do not have competitiveness, as in the West.¹⁶⁶

In an interview I carried out with Alexei, he said it was impossible to have a fair election in Russia and that the people of Kabardino-Balkaria do not believe that the election of their current regional president was fair.¹⁶⁷ Therefore, the regional governments are viewed as illegitimate by many in the NCFD because they lack a high level of participation in the political process, which is a grievance for them, and restricts the Kremlin's ability to win "hearts and minds".

Melvin argues correctly that when regional presidents were directly appointed by the Kremlin, they had little legitimacy or accountability and overly relied on Kremlin-backed force rather than their own means to impose policy.¹⁶⁸ Long-term stability cannot be a foreseeable goal in the NCFD unless the regional population has the power to choose their leaders through fair elections. Some argue that this could create bitter conflict in Dagestan where many ethnic groups live amongst each other. In the mind of a counterinsurgent, it is better to have the people present their concerns at the regional and local level in order to solve grievances and contain instability, rather than have concerns and anger directed at the federal government. The more locally-contained the problem, the easier it is to focus upon and solve. Re-implementing federally-appointed presidents would cause the people of the North Caucasus to refocus their anger towards the Kremlin, decreasing the legitimacy of republican presidents and prolonging instability.

The Kremlin also had a reactive policy towards directly appointing presidents. After the increase of instability in Ingushetia following the Russia-Georgia War in 2008, the Kremlin appointed a new president, with similar results seen in Dagestan with the dismissal of President Aliyev and the appointment of Magomedov after dismal development results.¹⁶⁹ What makes matters worse is the Russian government has usually appointed members of the *siloviki* as presidents in the North Caucasus.¹⁷⁰ If the Russian government resorts to appointing regional presidents, it would be seen as a step backward towards further instability. If the people do not feel empowered, they have no hope in their future because they know that the federal government controls their lives, therefore preventing regional participation in the political process to decide the direction of their future.

¹⁶⁶ Matveeva 2012, p.30

¹⁶⁷ "Alexei", journalist in Kabardino-Balkaria, interview with author, November 2012

¹⁶⁸ Melvin 2007, p.27

¹⁶⁹ Kuchins et al. 2011, p.3-4

¹⁷⁰ Matveeva 2012, p.7

5.3.2 Credibility of Federal and Regional Governments

Credibility is important to win the “hearts and minds” of the target population because without credibility it is impossible to establish relations with the regional and local leadership and its population, resulting in the impossibility to implement a population-centric counterinsurgency strategy. In a 2010 nationwide poll, participants were asked if “Russian state organs” could protect them from new terrorist attacks. Most of the respondents answered “Probably Not”, “Definitely Not”, or “No Answer”.¹⁷¹ When asked if federal authorities had begun to “seriously combat terrorism”, 47% of respondents answered that they “Are only imitating a new stage in the fight against terrorism in front of the public”.¹⁷² These results present the federal government as inept in their war against terrorism. It further illustrates that the Kremlin’s war against terrorism is viewed by a sizeable minority of the general population as an artificial war. This poll was taken in the first year of the implementation of the Kremlin’s “Development First” strategy and when successes were limited, so these figures do not necessarily represent the views of the Russian population at this current stage of Russia’s war against terrorism.

However, the Kremlin is willing to admit they are having problems fighting terrorism in the North Caucasus, and this is promising since it shows that the government is being honest and accountable to the people. In November 2010, ten months after the implementation of the “Development First” strategy, Medvedev said that the situation in the district remains “problematic” and “has seen little improvement overall, although progress has been made in some specific areas.”¹⁷³ President Putin blames the roots of conflict over “citizens’ distrust of authorities and government” as well as “corruption and prejudice among representatives of state bodies, and their inability to provide justice and defend people’s interests.”¹⁷⁴ Medvedev further conveys that if corruption levels do not decrease, “no results will be in sight.”¹⁷⁵ According to Mikhail, one of my interviewees, one of the main reasons for them wanting to leave the Russian Federation is because of the high level of corruption on the government level and the closed political system, further stating that because of this, there is no hope for the future.¹⁷⁶ The federal government is aware that it is part of the problem in the prolongation of conflict and instability in the NCFD. In terms of transparency, the Transparency International Corruption Perception index in 2010 placed Russia behind Nigeria, Iran,

¹⁷¹ Snetkov 2011b, p.5, quoted in representative opinion poll by VTsIOM from 4-5 September 2010
<<http://old.wciom.ru/novosti/press-vypuski/press-vypusk/single/13802.html>>

¹⁷² Ibid. p.6, quoted in representative opinion poll by the Levada Center from 9-13 April 2010
<<http://www.levada.ru/press/2010041504.html>>

¹⁷³ Russian Presidential Executive Office, 19 November 2010

¹⁷⁴ Russian Presidential Executive Office, 24 August 2012

¹⁷⁵ Russian Presidential Executive Office, 11 August 2010

¹⁷⁶ “Mikhail”, person of menial position in Dagestan, interview with author, November 2012

and Pakistan, countries renowned for corruption.¹⁷⁷ It must take concrete steps to resolve this grievance, such as enforcing the rule of law in order to be increasingly viewed as credible by the North Caucasus population. However, to help improve the situation, on July 29, 2011, Medvedev created the Interdepartmental Commission on Countering Extremism, whose existence is to implement state policy on countering extremism, coordinate the activities of federal executive authorities and provide organizational and methodological guidance to implement these efforts.¹⁷⁸ Additionally, the 2011 Russian government's National Anti-terrorism Committee (NAK) meeting also outlines its goals that show that it is trying to implement a population-centric COIN strategy. Its five objectives that year were to strengthen law enforcement and security in the NCFD, strike terrorists, reintegrate insurgents who have abandoned the militants, develop the district's socio-economic infrastructure, and strengthen the moral and spiritual values of the resident of the NCFD to prevent them from becoming radicalized.¹⁷⁹ This is more reminiscent of a population-centric strategy than one that is enemy-centric in nature because its aims are broader than the neutralization of insurgents.

Russia's "Development First" strategy requires hundreds of billions of roubles to be spent in the NCFD. The massive amount of funding into these republics promotes opportunities for rampant corruption. Credibility is lacking among the regional governments because of their lack of legitimacy in the minds of the local population. For example, in 2011, Valery Dzutsev reported that only 8.6% of the population in Ingushetia said they trusted their president, Yunus-Bek Yevkurov.¹⁸⁰ However, Yevkurov propagates that "everything we do is for the people."¹⁸¹ This development illustrates that the government has not successfully conveyed to the people that their position is to improve the situation in the republic and that they can implement solutions on their own, without Kremlin interference. Their words are not matching their actions in a way that wins them their population's "hearts and minds". Also, this is connected with the levels of corruption in republican governments in the NCFD.

In October 2010, Alexander Khloponin stated that the increase of crime and the lack of development in the region were to be blamed more on poor governance and corruption, rather than ethnic conflict.¹⁸² Furthermore, in 2011, Medvedev demanded an end to the "outrageous" levels of

¹⁷⁷ Baev 2011, p.15, quoted in <http://www.transparency.org/policy_research/surveys_indices/cpi/2010/results>

¹⁷⁸ Russian Presidential Executive Office, 29 July 2011

¹⁷⁹ Russian Presidential Executive Office, 22 February 2011

¹⁸⁰ O'Loughlin et al. 2011, p.18, quoted in *The Economist*, 'The Peaceful Exception: A New President Has Worked Wonders', 7 April 2011, <<http://www.economist.com/node/18527530>>

¹⁸¹ Feifer 2011

¹⁸² Nichol 2010, p.15

corruption in the republics' governments.¹⁸³ From 2008-2010, the Kremlin instituted an anti-corruption campaign in Kabardino-Balkaria. Large anti-corruption billboards are still found throughout the North Caucasus lining highways and main intersections. I saw two such billboards outside of Nalchik, Kabardino-Balkaria and Magas, Ingushetia. In a focus group, many of the participants agreed that the campaign was not very effective.¹⁸⁴ In my interview with Alexei, he stated that corruption is still a big problem in government, causing a relationship of distrust to continue.¹⁸⁵ This development also causes the Kremlin to lose credibility in the minds of the regional population because they appointed these "corrupt" republican leaders. Pavel Baev is absolutely correct to say that use of political power for self-enrichment further alienates society, which has caused many to turn to radical Islam.¹⁸⁶ High levels of corruption in government prevent much-needed development as well as investment in the region. Baev further alleges that regional governments deliberately overestimate unemployment and poverty figures to attain more government funding from which they can use for their own luxuries.¹⁸⁷ A population-centric strategy can never be successfully implemented in the North Caucasus unless the regional governments become accountable to the people and corruption is severely diminished. Its results have shown that governments not only lose legitimacy and credibility, but some disenfranchised civilians embrace Salafist Islam and join the Caucasus Emirate.

Multiple reports state that regional governments lack credibility because many of them hire officials based on ethnicity. In Dagestan, a republic comprising thirty-four ethnic groups, the Avar ethnic group holds many of the republic's government posts.¹⁸⁸ In February 2011, Medvedev voiced this regional concern and said it was "completely unacceptable" and called on regional leaders to "eradicate" this policy.¹⁸⁹ Unity and long-term stability in the North Caucasus republics, especially in those with multiple ethnic groups residing in them, will be very difficult to establish when the government fails to represent the whole population, not only one ethnic group.

Republican governments are also financially dependent on the federal government for survival. Federal subsidies make up 60-80% of the North Caucasus republics' operating budgets.¹⁹⁰ Therefore, regional governments lack sovereignty and become "puppets" of the Kremlin, while they

¹⁸³ Baev 2011, p.15

¹⁸⁴ Matveeva 2012, pp.33-34

¹⁸⁵ "Alexei", journalist in Kabardino-Balkaria, interview with author, November 2012

¹⁸⁶ Baev 2011, pp.15-16

¹⁸⁷ Ibid. p.18

¹⁸⁸ Aliyev 2010, p.328

¹⁸⁹ Malashenko 2011, p.6; and in Russian Presidential Executive Office, 11 February 2011

¹⁹⁰ Berman 2011

are viewed by their populations' as more puppet-republics than credible independent republics. This increases hopelessness and the inability to forge a stable future.

During a focus group in Chechnya, a participant noted the divide between the authorities and the local people: "The authorities do not trust the people, and we do not trust the authorities. They exist by themselves and we exist by ourselves."¹⁹¹ Similar statements were voiced in a focus group in North Ossetia.¹⁹² "Hearts and minds" cannot be won unless this divide between the government and the people is closed.

What makes regional leaders lack credibility in the international sphere is their blame of their republics' problems on factors beyond their control. In June 2009, President of Chechnya, Ramzan Kadyrov, said Washington D.C. was the "control center" of the Islamic insurgency in the region.¹⁹³ Additionally, Yevkurov accused American and British intelligence services of sponsoring fatwas in the region to "break Russia apart", with the deputy interior minister of Kabardino-Balkaria stating similar ideas.¹⁹⁴ To increase their credibility, regional leaders must take increased responsibility for their republics' affairs, match their words with actions, reduce corruption, and make a more effective effort in combatting instability.

5.3.3 Capability of the Regional Governments to Implement Strategy

The capability of regional governments, meaning the regional presidents and their leading cabinet of ministers to successfully implement a population-centric counterinsurgency strategy is severely limited because of the problems of legitimacy and credibility. Their reliance on federal subsidies prevents them from controlling their own budgets. The dominance in many of the republics' legislatures of one or two ethnic groups prevents the needs and grievances of other groups from being addressed, while corruption wastes federal subsidies and programs are not fully funded and implemented.

Currently, the power belongs with the federal government in implementing a strategy due to the weakness of regional governments. However, it itself is having trouble implementing change in the regional governments. They have voiced their concerns and proposed change, yet there have been little positive results. Resorting back to federal power to appoint regional presidents would not solve this problem. The majority ethnic-Russian republic of Stavropol Krai, who experience less

¹⁹¹ Matveeva 2012, p.29

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ de Waal 2010

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

instability and acts of terrorism than the other republics of the NCFD has shown public interest in withdrawing from the district due the district's inefficiency.¹⁹⁵

However, there have been some successes. Former president of Dagestan Mukhu Aliyev said that his government has improved ethnic relations in his republic, including improving relations with Azerbaijan, and the issue of Chechen repatriation into the Novolakskiy region which he noted was the most complex inter-ethnic issue in Dagestan.¹⁹⁶ Alexei said that there are visual signs that the governments, both federal and republican are developing the North Caucasus and that problems in the republic are not just in the government, but in society as a whole.¹⁹⁷ He also made note that the ethnic conflict between the Kabardins and Balkars in Kabardino-Balkaria is really only on the societal level and not a cause for friction in the republic.¹⁹⁸

According to a rural municipality administrator in Ingushetia, the people are most eager to appeal to municipal authorities to solve problems, yet they have little power, therefore having to rely on district authorities, which are largely ineffective in solving local issues.¹⁹⁹ Local and regional governments hold regular meetings on how to solve local and regional issues, yet they are mainly dependent on the federal government to implement programs that address grievances and develop their governed areas. Regional leadership must be given more empowerment in the future when they become more developed so they can be viewed as more credible by the population and prove that they can be a capable government without the Kremlin's domination towards their political survival.

5.4 Government Cooperation with the People of the North Caucasus Federal District

One of the most important aspects of a population-centric counterinsurgency strategy is engagement with the population. The government must identify the grievances of the target population and work with them to solve these issues. During a focus group in a community in Kabardino-Balkaria which had recently been host to a counter-terrorist operation, a participant said this:

During these six months nobody has expressed an interest in how we live here. This is the most upsetting thing. The authorities are at war with their own people. It is a shame. Why are we worse than other districts? We wish that the President had visited just once.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁵ Baev 2011, p.19

¹⁹⁶ Holland et al. 2010, p.11

¹⁹⁷ "Alexei", journalist in Kabardino-Balkaria, interview with author, November 2012

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ Matveeva 2012, p.29

²⁰⁰ Ibid. p.29

From this, one can conclude that the government is not directly involved with the population in seeking solutions to regional issues, instead relying solely on counter-terrorist operations to bring stability which has been an unsuccessful strategy for years and only increased levels of violence.

However, the federal government launched in October 2009, the “Peace to the Caucasus” project which seeks to initiate dialogue between government officials and civil society representatives, community leaders and grass-roots organizers.²⁰¹ However, according to Dagestani sociologist Enver Kisriev, little has been done to take this effort beyond the “talking stage”.²⁰² Anna Matveeva, after directing many focus groups throughout the NCFD conveys that, “...peoples’ needs remain unanswered, as the ability to tell authorities about problems rarely precipitates action in response.”²⁰³ During my travels I did not see or hear of any meetings between the regional governments and the people, so I am unsure as to how citizens voice their needs to the government.²⁰⁴

In order to unite the people inside the republics and the region, the governments will need to work more with local leadership and the people. It is their “hearts and minds” that must be won for long-term stability to be established. In the words of Zhamal Attaev, editor-in-chief of a Balkar-language newspaper in Kabardino-Balakhia said there is a, “lack of confidence in the future” and government representatives need to “...visit their places [of representation] as often as possible and to raise awareness about what we face and what it may lead to.”²⁰⁵ On the positive, there are a growing amount of individuals in the Kremlin and the regional governments that are aware of the need to develop vital links with the regional population to solve grievances and establish themselves as legitimate, credible, and capable governments.

5.4 Judicial system

The judicial system in the NCFD is largely untrusted by the regional population. A man from Chechnya stated that local disputes are largely settled by a mullah from the local mosque or by a tribal elder because the federal courts are expensive and the system is corrupt because the authorities themselves do not follow the law.²⁰⁶ In a focus group in Dagestan, participants also cited their increased use of spiritual leaders and religious institutions to settle disputes.²⁰⁷ In a Kabardino-

²⁰¹ Aliyev 2010, p.339

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Matveeva 2012, p.30

²⁰⁴ Author’s trip to the North Caucasus Federal District, November-December 2012

²⁰⁵ Orazava 2011

²⁰⁶ Matveeva 2012, pp.28-29

²⁰⁷ Ibid. p.28

Balkaria focus group, one person said, “But in our country the law is completely in the hands of those in power.”²⁰⁸ Therefore, the judicial courts in the North Caucasus are generally and increasingly viewed by the population as not credible because of the high levels of corruption. Since the regional population seeks the authority of religious leaders, some of whom are Salafist and operate Sharia courts which are illegal in the Russian Federation, the divide between the government and the population remains.

A positive step is the Russian government’s move to increasingly use the legal system to prosecute terrorists and terrorism-related crimes. Many people, as will be stated in the next chapter on military operations, complain that those suspected of being or aiding terrorists are killed without first being convicted in court. In March 2010, Medvedev stated to the Russian Security Council that an effort should be made to reflect on how terrorism is prosecuted under criminal law and its prevention through the judicial system.²⁰⁹ By taking this step, the Russian government is displaying to the North Caucasus population, the Russian population as a whole, and its international audience that terrorists and those that support them are regarded as persons under the law of the Russian Federation, not as inhumane fighters or persons, unworthy of a courtroom. However, the government must take steps to counter corruption in the judicial system to increase credibility in the legal system and decrease the population’s willingness to use religious institutions or illegal Sharia courts to settle disputes which only further prevent reconciliation of the conflict and the prospect for legitimate, credible, and capable government control in the region.

²⁰⁸ Ibid. p.30

²⁰⁹ Russian Presidential Executive Office, 31 March 2010

6 THE KREMLIN'S INFORMATION CAMPAIGN

Dmitri Medvedev, February 2011: *“Once again, to conclude, I would like to say this: this is our country and our land, and it is our responsibility to restore order – for all of us and, above all, for our children. And we will restore it.”*²¹⁰

6.1 Information Campaign Targeting the Non-Ethnic Russian Population

After the fall of the Soviet Union, ethnic nationalism among non-ethnic Russians rose in the North Caucasus and contributed to the instability in Chechnya and the other non-ethnic Russian republics. Salafism eclipsed nationalism as the primary pan-Caucasian identity in the mid-2000s as stated in the Caucasus Emirate chapter of this thesis. In my interview with Alexei, they said that Salafists do not consider themselves “Circassian”, “Chechen”, “Ingush” or any other ethnic identity. They identify themselves only as “Muslims” since this is their “eternal” spiritual identity, while their ethnic identity is only temporary until their physical death.²¹¹ Ethnicity cannot unite the North Caucasus because of the multitude of different ethnicities living there; it can only create divisions. Therefore, Salafism seeks to use Islam and the Muslim identity to unite the North Caucasus population against the Russian “infidels”. The Russian government must counter this insurgent-developed identity in the North Caucasus as well as present propaganda throughout the ethnic-Russian population that non-ethnic Russians are “Russian” citizens and are considered as equals in the Russian Federation, both socially and legally. In Chechnya, both of my interviewees, Oleg and Vyacheslav felt Russian and considered Chechnya to be part of the Russian Federation.²¹² However, Sergei, the taxi driver from Ingushetia who I interviewed voiced his view saying that Russia and Ingushetia are both horrible places to live.²¹³

What I believe is being seen and recognized by the Russian government is the need to create a new social vision for the people of the North Caucasus. One person who works for the Canadian government has mentioned that Russian instability from the fall of the Soviet Union until the election of President Vladimir Putin occurred for such a long time because Russians blamed the intellectual class for not offering an alternative social vision.²¹⁴ It was not until the “Putin school of thought” appeared with the election of Putin that general stability came back to the Russian Federation.²¹⁵ Now the same phenomenon is occurring in the NCFD. There has yet to be an

²¹⁰ Russian Presidential Executive Office, 22 February 2011

²¹¹ “Alexei”, journalist in Kabardino-Balkaria, interview with author, November 2012

²¹² “Oleg”, economist in Chechnya, interview with author, November 2012; and in “Vyacheslav”, retired security services officer in Chechnya, interview with author, November 2012

²¹³ “Sergei”, taxi driver in Ingushetia, interview with author, November 2012

²¹⁴ Canadian Security Intelligence Service 2010, p.35

²¹⁵ Ibid.

alternative vision for the young people of the NCFD coming from the federal government, while Salafism presents itself as an alternative to a growing number of young people.

Russian leadership has only recently come to the realization that a new state identity is essential to state unity. During the beginning of Putin's first term as president, he rejected the notion to construct a new official Russian ideology that the Russian people could unite around.²¹⁶ In 2007, during a much publicized speech to the Federation Council, he noted that "searching for a national idea" was "ridiculous".²¹⁷ However, Dmitri Medvedev during his presidency advocated the opposite in a State Council meeting in 2011 announcing,

Our major challenge is to forge a future national identity.... Our task is to create a full-fledged Russian nation while preserving the identity of all the peoples inhabiting our country. Only then will we be strong.²¹⁸

In 2012, during Putin's third term as President, he eventually adopted the view of creating a new Russian identity. The Presidential Council on Interethnic relations, of which Putin heads, unveiled a document, no longer using the term "Russian people" but replacing it with "multi-people Russian nation".²¹⁹ This new national identity, which could be considered to be a new state ideology, is part of the government's new strategy to unite the Russian Federation under a new banner of multiculturalism which they plan will help bring stability to the NCFD.

Additionally, this new ethnic policy requires all citizens, regardless of ethnicity, to be equal before the law, requiring ethnic conflicts to be settled "openly and without prejudice" and that all regions of Russia are to "receive a chance for development and progress."²²⁰ The Russian government recognizes the need for united action to end instability in the NCFD through a political-economic-military-ideological nexus while placing responsibility on solving these ethnic conflicts to the regional governments.²²¹ This signals a "unity of effort" comprehensive strategy by the Russian government. It acts to attack the roots of the grievances that prolong the insurgency, including ethnic divisions.

The Russian Federal government is not the sole actor in Russia that recognizes the need to counter the roots that perpetuate regional instability. The Director of the Federal Security Service (FSB), Alexander Bortnikov also believes that the conflict and instability will not end by using force

²¹⁶ Baev 2008, p.3

²¹⁷ Ibid. p.3

²¹⁸ Russian Presidential Executive Office, 11 February 2011

²¹⁹ RT, 18 October 2012

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ Ibid.

alone.²²² Both Bortnikov and Medvedev advocate working with the citizens of the North Caucasus, regardless of religion to gain support of Russian Muslim leaders and unite the Muslim population towards supporting the Russian government.²²³ Words have been converted into action: Medvedev, Putin, and many other Russian leaders have held meetings with Russian Islamic organizations such as the Coordination Centre of Muslims of the North Caucasus, the Central Spiritual Board of Muslims, the Russian Council of Muftis, the Russian Association of Islamic Harmony, and the Spiritual Board of the Muslims of the Republic of Tatarstan to address Muslim adaptation into Russian society and the prevention of extremism and terrorism.²²⁴ This is encouraging news because the Russian government is working with Islamic leaders to understand their grievances and how they can be solved in an effort to integrate non-ethnic Russians into mainstream society. The Russian government is not trying to force the Muslim leaders to act in a certain manner, but seeks to come to solutions through dialogue, cooperation and coordination. A problem with this is some in the Muslim community in the North Caucasus view Sufi Mufti's that cooperate with the Kremlin as corrupt and "puppets" of the Kremlin.²²⁵ Anna Matveeva discovered that young people in the North Caucasus find Sufi muftiyat propaganda to be "dull" while they say that joining the insurgency is "prestigious", although many of them do not approve of the violent methods of the Caucasus Emirate.²²⁶ The Russian government has voiced its priority to develop positive relations with the Islamic world.²²⁷ Working with Muslim leaders must remain a priority for Russian leaders, yet Muslim leaders must be given as much autonomy as possible without subordinating effectiveness to implement its strategy of unity to avoid discrediting the Sufi muftiyat as a mere tool of the Russian government.

In regards to the national identity issue, Zhamal Attaev, editor-in-chief of the "Zamal" newspaper in the Balkar language argues that the lack of a state ideology since the fall of the Soviet Union has allowed the instability in the North Caucasus to continue and spread.²²⁸ He argues that the people of the North Caucasus have lived through much harder economic times but have not used violence to remedy their situation.²²⁹ It is this kind of argument that speaks to the power of identity playing a role in the instability in the North Caucasus. As I already stated, Salafism destroys ethnic identity and its traditions. During my interview with Alexei, he told me that Islam has destroyed the cultural

²²² Russian Presidential Executive Office, 18 July 2011

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ Russian Presidential Executive Office, 5 July 2011a

²²⁵ Feifer 2011

²²⁶ Matveeva 2012, p.12

²²⁷ Russian Presidential Executive Office, 5 July 2011a

²²⁸ Orazova 2011

²²⁹ Ibid.

identity and traditional life since Islam was introduced in the North Caucasus two-hundred years ago.²³⁰ They noted Chechnya, Dagestan, and Ingushetia as the primary regions where cultural identity has been lost.²³¹ These three republics constitute the most instable and have hosted the most terrorist attacks in Russia over the last few years. The lack of cultural identity causes many young men to become victims of Salafist ideology which gives them an ‘eternal’ Muslim identity while blaming regional problems on the government which can be solved through jihad, instituting Sharia Law and an Islamic caliphate in the region.

One problem and grievance in the North Caucasus is the belief among the Caucasian population that the Russian government has falsified the history of the region. For example, the Circassian peoples feel betrayed that the Russian government has not acknowledged the deportation of the Circassian population to the Ottoman Empire in 1864 or acts of genocide that occurred during the same century.²³² The Russian government has seemed unwilling to acknowledge these events to avoid embarrassment and an obligation to right the wrong. It is difficult to win the “hearts and minds” of a population that feels its history is falsified by its leaders. However, Medvedev has made an effort to counter history that “engender negative stereotypes” about a particular ethnic group.²³³

6.2 Information Campaign Targeting the Ethnic Russian Population

The second branch of this information campaign is to convince the ethnic-Russian population that non-ethnic Russians, including those in the NCFD are equal Russian citizens under the law. A nation-wide survey conducted in October 2012, resulted in 41% of respondents calling Russian Muslims “traitors to the Russian people”, while a mere 1.8% considered conversion to Islam positively.²³⁴ I believe these figures display Russian society’s suspiciousness of Muslims, largely because of the two Chechen wars, terrorist attacks in Moscow and Beslan initiated by Muslim extremists from the North Caucasus, and the large amount of Russian financial aid going towards the development of the North Caucasus coming from the ethnic-Russian taxpayer and diverting development funds away from ethnic-Russian republics. When I interviewed Boris in St. Petersburg, he told me how dangerous it was and that I would “be killed”.²³⁵ This illustrates to me

²³⁰ “Alexei”, journalist in Kabardino-Balkaria, interview with author, November 2012

²³¹ Ibid.

²³² Blandy 2007, p.6, quoted in Marina Marshenkulova & Azamat Bram, ‘Outrage at ‘Fake’ Circassian Anniversary’ *Caucasus Reporting Service*, no. 413, 5 October 2007 <http://www.iwpr.net?p=crs&s=f&o=339639&apc_state=henh>

²³³ Russian Presidential Executive Office, 5 July 2011

²³⁴ Vatchagaev 2012, quoted in ‘В России к русским мусульманам относятся как к предателям, заявляют татарстанские ученые’ [translated: In Russia, the Russian Muslims are treated as traitors, say scientists in Tatarstan] *Interfax*, 11 October 2012, <www.interfax-religion.ru/?act=news&div=48317>

²³⁵ “Boris”, son of a law enforcement officer who recently came back from a six month deployment to Chechnya, interview with author, October 2012

that ethnic-Russians outside the NCFD are not hearing or believing the government message that the situation is improving in the NCFD. However, the Russian government remains committed to developing the NCFD, considering it as a part of Russia. Medvedev has gone as far to call Islam a “traditional religion” of Russia.²³⁶ Medvedev has divulged that “interethnic harmony and communication between cultures” should be invested primarily in the Russian education system to create a new generational paradigm in thinking. He states that the education system is the best engine to use since it “determines the way they [students] relate to the surrounding world”.²³⁷ Additionally, Medvedev envisions allocating state grants to the Ministry of Communications and Mass Media to create media products (i.e. propaganda) to consolidate “interethnic and interfaith harmony”.²³⁸ A nation-wide information campaign to merge ethnic and non-ethnic Russians towards a single identity and equality under the law is a positive development towards winning the “hearts and minds” of its target population, in this case being the entire population of the Russian Federation.

From the very early stages of the Russian government’s new development strategy for the NCFD, Medvedev has made clear to the Russian people that the population of the North Caucasus constitute a part of the Russian Federation. In April 2010, he stated,

Everyone must understand – and not just understand but use the appropriate terminology – that people who live here in the Caucasus are the citizens of our nation, not ‘immigrants’ from the North Caucasus. This is not a foreign province - this is [part of] our country. A huge number, the vast majority of people who live here are normal, honest and decent, but there are some criminals as well. Of the people living in all other parts of our country the overwhelming majority are normal and perfectly decent people, but there are some criminals too.²³⁹

In January 2011, he argued that,

It is vitally important to prevent the incitement of ethnic and religious hatred, propaganda of xenophobia and violence. We realise that this undermines the foundations of our multinational state. This is another fundamental threat to the existence of our state, along with terrorism.²⁴⁰

Medvedev illustrates that the Russian government has taken a strong position on uniting the NCFD and its non-ethnic Russian population with the rest of Russia. His strong language leaves no room for misinterpretation. He considers the ethnic and religious divide a dire threat to the existence of the Russian Federation. Russian leaders have always believed in a strong, unified state to remain a

²³⁶ Russian Presidential Executive Office, 22 February 2011

²³⁷ Russian Presidential Executive Office, 11 February 2011

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ Russian Presidential Executive Office, 1 April 2010

²⁴⁰ Russian Presidential Executive Office, 25 January 2011

strong global actor. If its new strategy is unable to solve the instability in the NCFD, it will cause Russia to be viewed by the international community and potential enemies as a weak global actor, causing it to lose prestige in the international community and encourage foreign agents to act against it to further destabilize it, weakening its influence and capability to act beyond its borders.

Development of the NCFD is also part of the Kremlin's strategy to integrate non-ethnic Russians. For example, the Russian government has built or has supported the building of Islamic universities, madrassas, and cultural centers in the hope that it will solve regional problems and cause Russia's Muslims to feel like Russian citizens.²⁴¹ Cultural and economic development is fundamental to integrate and increase the prospects for long-term peace and stability in the region. It is a visual display of Russia's commitment to the maintenance of Islamic identity in the North Caucasus while working towards increasing stability in the region.

²⁴¹ Russian Presidential Executive Office, 5 July 2011

7 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Dmitri Medvedev in 2010: *The situation “requires additional measures, not only security and preventive measures, but also steps to stimulate the region’s economy, invigorate the job market and bring down unemployment.”*²⁴²

7.1 “Development-First” Strategy of the Russian Government

In population-centric COIN, after an area of operation has been cleared and controlled by counterinsurgent forces they must “build” relations with the target population to address grievances and this usually includes improving the economic conditions, including bringing stability to the AO. The Russian government is taking steps to address the economic grievances of the NCFD and has implemented a long-term economic stability strategy.

In June 2010, Medvedev advocated that a “unifying concept” for the North Caucasus republics was needed that could create a “large amount of jobs and attract investments.”²⁴³ Alexander Khloponin, the presidential envoy to the NCFD presented his strategy for the region called, “Strategy for the North Caucasus development by 2025” which Putin approved in September 2010.²⁴⁴ It is designed to bring stability and sustainable economic growth to the region. Khloponin’s economic vision is based upon open markets, free movement of capital and public-private partnership.²⁴⁵ As mentioned in the “governance” chapter of this thesis, the Russian government has realized that instability in the North Caucasus will not be solved with military force alone, but by solving the region’s social problems. To reiterate, in 2010, Medvedev conveyed that, “Apart from the security side of things, we also need to... work with the people, work with communities and offer them better conditions for life.”²⁴⁶ It is within the Russian government’s interest to bring prosperity and stability to the NCFD. Establishing long-term stability will further unite the Russian Federation and cause it to be viewed as a stronger actor on the international stage. Additionally, a country that struggles with internal instability is less likely to focus or effectively contribute to the stability of the international system. Main, Sherr and Smith allege that Russians, “...equate prosperity with stability, stability with order and order with a strong and respected state.”²⁴⁷ Therefore, order must be established in the NCFD, and this is aided by addressing the economic concerns of the region.

²⁴² Nichol 2010, p.4

²⁴³ Russian Presidential Executive Office, 18 June 2010

²⁴⁴ Górecki 2011

²⁴⁵ Leahy 2010b

²⁴⁶ Russian Presidential Executive Office, 31 March 2010

²⁴⁷ Main 2003, p.4

The “Development First” strategy aims to create jobs *en masse* for the regional population, invest billions of roubles into the region’s infrastructure and attract foreign and private investment.²⁴⁸ The specific objectives of this strategy are to reduce unemployment in the region to 5% and increase salaries by 250%.²⁴⁹ This strategy is divided into four sectors: tourism, transport, energy and banking.²⁵⁰ Its implementation is divided into two stages; its first phase (2010-2012) was devoted to constructing “priority projects”. Some of the “priority projects” were the construction of an oil refinery in Chechnya and new port terminals in Makhachkala and Derbent.²⁵¹ The second phase is the “active growth” (2012-2025) stage where the “priority projects” will gradually be completed and working.²⁵² This is also where economic progress will begin to grow at an accelerated rate.

The government’s foremost “priority project” is the establishment of a “tourism cluster” in the North Caucasus. At present, the government is in the early stages of building five “world class” ski resorts in the NCFD by 2020, in Arkhyz, Karachaevo Cherkessia; Elbrus-Bezengi, Kabardino-Balkaria; Mamison, North Ossetia-Alania; Tsori and Armkhi, Ingushetia and in Matlas, Dagestan.²⁵³ A fifth will be built in the more stable republic of Adygea which neighbors the federal district.²⁵⁴ The ski resort in Arkhyz has already opened to visitors in 2012 although construction is still continuing.²⁵⁵ The hope is to attract Russian and international tourists to the region which will create jobs, attract investments, and stabilize the region. According to Khloponin, the tourism cluster in the federal district will be able to accommodate over 175,000 visitors daily with the eventual goal of attracting up to 10 million visitors per year.²⁵⁶ These numbers, while seemingly idealistic, are based in historical reality. During the mainly stable Soviet era, over 20,000 visitors visited Chechnya per month to enjoy its outdoor tourism such as skiing and horse riding.²⁵⁷

Attracting these amounts of tourists to the district will dramatically increase the influx of non-government revenues entering the district. It will empower the regional governments in the district and influence them to work harder to solve remaining grievances in their respective republics because it is in their political interest to maintain these revenues. Therefore, I believe corruption will remain in the district in the future, but have a more covert presence. What is important for the

²⁴⁸ Russian Presidential Executive Office, 22 February 2011

²⁴⁹ Górecki 2011

²⁵⁰ Leahy 2010b

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² Ibid.

²⁵³ Vestnik Kavkaza, 7 February 2012; and in Mission of Rossotrudnichestvo in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland 2012

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

²⁵⁵ Vestnik Kavkaza, 26 December 2011

²⁵⁶ Russian Presidential Executive Office, 3 February 2012

²⁵⁷ Mackinnon 2012

federal and regional governments is to remove the stereotype of rampant overt corruption and government inefficiency which scare away some investors and tourists which prevents the district's economic growth potential.

Alexey Malashenko presented that in 2011, 100% of the budgets of Chechnya and Ingushetia, and 80% of the budget of Dagestan were subsidized by the federal government.²⁵⁸ Lowering these figures is a priority and in the interests of both the federal and regional governments. With increased revenue, regional governments will rely less on subsidies from the federal government which will enable them to have more legitimacy, credibility and capability that will aid in winning their populations' "hearts and minds". For the federal government, this will result in having more funds to develop other regions in Russia.

However, there are arguments that the economic conditions in the NCFD are not comparably worse than in other regions of Russia, or a cause of instability in the region. Baev asserts that the real level of income is comparably higher in the North Caucasus republics than in central Russia, and that it is the "paternalistic political system" based on corruption that is to blame for social grievances.²⁵⁹ I cannot argue against Baev's claim from my experience of travelling in the NCFD. Living conditions are not deplorable in the district nor are they comparably different to conditions in various other Russian regions or cities I have visited from Vladivostok to Nizhny Novgorod, or Petrozavodsk. All have similar issues such as aging infrastructure. During my interview with Alexei, he reiterated Baev's claim alleging that,

You can make a good living in the North Caucasus, but there are some very poor people, but life here is the same as in other parts of Russia, and not as bad as they have it in some remote Siberian regions.²⁶⁰

They also asserted that the majority of problems in the district are not the fault of the government, but of society that fails to seek positive change. The journalist argued that the,

Problem of dependency [of the regional society] on the Russian government for development is not a fault of the government but the people as a whole who fail to seek change. They blame the government but do not voice solutions or positive developments in society. They are not society-changers so they are stuck in a circle of dependency and hopelessness....they do not believe they can change their society, but they can! They are not powerless.²⁶¹

²⁵⁸ Malashenko 2011, p.1

²⁵⁹ Baev 2010, p.2

²⁶⁰ "Alexei", journalist in Kabardino-Balkaria, interview with author, November 2012

²⁶¹ Ibid.

Vyacheslav, the retired security services officer in Chechnya, stated that life in the republic during the two Chechen wars was terrible but that life is now improving for everybody.²⁶² Oleg, the economist in Chechnya, made a good living as an economist but he said there is not enough work, and hopes to move to Sochi where there is more work.²⁶³ Continuing on this theme, Kuchins, Malarkey, and Markedonov argue that the regional problems in the NCFD are not confined to this region, but exist throughout Russia. They state that reform will never be implemented successfully in the North Caucasus until the Russian government recognizes that many of the same issues exist in other regions of Russia.²⁶⁴ I agree that corruption and administrative inefficiency are also a problem throughout Russia, including in the federal government, which must present an admirable example to regional governments and society as a whole. As I have stated in my “governance” chapter, Putin and Medvedev have voiced that corruption must be addressed. Individuals are being arrested and convicted in court on corruption charges but there still does not appear to be a systematic solution to decrease corruption other than the threat of imprisonment. The “Development First” strategy may create thousands of jobs and attract tourists and investors but it cannot reach its full potential until bureaucratic barriers and corruption are addressed.

7.1.1 Federal Government Investment and Incentives

The Russian government has made a concrete effort to invest hundreds of billions of roubles into the NCFD. This money has contributed to funding infrastructure, education and development projects as well as the creation of a special economic zone to attract private and foreign investors. Khloponin proposed the creation of a “Zone for Territorial Development” (ZTR) in Stavropol Krai by 2012 applicable to the four pillars of Khloponin’s “Development First” strategy: tourism, transport, energy, and banking which is designed to attract investment to the region by giving investors various economic incentives.²⁶⁵ The ZTR is located around the towns of Mineralnye Vody and Pyatigorsk.²⁶⁶ I have visited Mineralnye Vody twice. The city and surrounding region is quite developed and there is solid evidence of mass investment. In the evening when driving through some streets it could be mistaken for an American or Western European city. Car dealerships such as Porsche, Jeep, Mercedes-Benz, Renault, Ford, and many others line the main road.²⁶⁷ The bus

²⁶² “Vyacheslav”, retired security services officer in Chechnya, interview with author, November 2012

²⁶³ “Oleg”, economist in Chechnya, interview with author, November 2012

²⁶⁴ Kuchins et al. 2011, p.21

²⁶⁵ Leahy 2010b

²⁶⁶ ITAR-TASS 2011

²⁶⁷ Author’s trip to the North Caucasus Federal District, November-December 2012

station and roads are immaculate and even the bridges have colored lights shining from them in the evening.²⁶⁸

Through 2000-2010 the Russian government invested around \$30 billion into the North Caucasus with plans from 2011-2021 to invest a further \$13.4 billion.²⁶⁹ To put these figures into perspective, the 2010 figure of \$6 billion worth of investment accounted for \$1,000 per person in the North Caucasus, six times the Russian average.²⁷⁰ Putin's goal is to annually increase the district's GDP by 10%.²⁷¹ Grozny has literally been rebuilt with government investment. I am convinced that a tourist ignorant of the republic's history could visit and leave without ever thinking there were two wars centered here in the last twenty years. Modern skyscrapers, a giant mosque, high-end stores, and a variety of entertainment venues make Grozny a delight to visit. Grozny is the gem of the North Caucasus but other cities are being rebuilt as well. Magas, the new capital of Ingushetia that is still being built is currently home to only a few hundred people yet has dozens of newly built apartment complexes and houses that will be able to house thousands when people start to move there in the near future, enriching the living conditions of many Ingush families.²⁷² The main shopping street in Vladikavkaz, North Ossetia had new stores such as Reebok, Passage, and United Colors of Benetton, not much different from a new shopping complex appearing in North America.²⁷³ In all the major cities I visited, a "*Торговый Дом*", roughly translated, "trading house", has been or is in the process of being constructed. They host newly-launched local businesses which have the capability to attract investment into the region or create high-tech jobs.²⁷⁴ The Russian government is making it as simple and easy as they can to attract investment into the region because they are eager to solve instability in the region. There have been positive results from these government investments. All the republics in the district have experienced economic growth since the government made a determined effort in 2010 to implement its economic growth strategy.²⁷⁵

Terrorists have targeted the successes of these investments as they are a threat to their efforts to create further instability and enrage the regional populace against the government. When insurgents see government successes that threaten their cause, they attack it. In a counterinsurgency, an

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

²⁶⁹ Alexseev 2011, p.1

²⁷⁰ Ibid. p.1

²⁷¹ Ibid. p.1

²⁷² Author's trip to the North Caucasus Federal District, November-December 2012

²⁷³ Ibid.

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

²⁷⁵ Economic growth figures for each of the republics of the North Caucasus Federal District from 1999-2012 can be found in this source: Kuchins et al. 2011, p.14, quoted in Северо-Кавказский федеральный округ [translated: North Caucasian Federal District], <http://openbudget.karelia.ru/budnord/russian/fo_sevkav.htm>

occurrence or increase in terrorist or insurgent attacks does not necessarily mean that the insurgents are strong or are winning. It could be that the insurgents are acting out of desperation to attack counterinsurgent successes. After the suicide bombing at Domodedovo Airport, Medvedev came out and explained that this attack was because of the government's success in the North Caucasus:

The bandits choose the 'best' sites for showing who is in charge. That is their whole logic. This is why they blow things up in Moscow. This does not mean that there is something wrong with our investment policies. We are moving in the right direction. This infuriates them and they are thus trying to spoil everything. This is their reaction to our policies.²⁷⁶

It is clear that government investment has resulted in positive developments in the NCFD. Due to increased regional production from initial federal subsidies, Yunus-bek Yevkurov, the President of Ingushetia stated in June 2012 that over the previous two years they have decreased their healthcare subsidies by 8% to 84%.²⁷⁷ However, he also noted a continued severe lack of nurses and low wages.²⁷⁸ Additionally, federal subsidies have enabled Ingushetia to replace most of their farming equipment and employ more people in the agriculture sector.²⁷⁹ Its oil and gas industry has increased output around 17% since Rosneft began investing in 2012 which increased the republic's annual revenue to over 600 million roubles.²⁸⁰ From 2010-2011, there has been a 20.5% increase in industrial production in Ingushetia.²⁸¹

Industry is not the only area where government investment has benefited the region. The daily living of the regional population is also being positively affected which is the primary target for winning "hearts and minds". Job wages in Dagestan increased 22.2% in 2011 and 24.4% in 2012, while consumer spending increased 5%.²⁸² Therefore, in 2011, Dagestanis were able to increase savings by 15.6% in 2011 because of increased earnings.²⁸³ These are all positive developments that will allow the regional population to improve their living standards, reject the "shadow economy" because they are able to make a commendable living from the Russian economy, and increase their support for the Russian government.

²⁷⁶ Russian Presidential Executive Office, 22 February 2011

²⁷⁷ Russian Presidential Executive Office, 9 June 2012

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

²⁸¹ Ibid.

²⁸² RIA Dagestan, 16 August 2012; and in Alikhanova, 19 December 2011

²⁸³ Alikhanova, 19 December 2011

7.1.2 Government Incentives for Private and Foreign Investment

With many of the republics in the NCFD still generally perceived as unstable by the international community, the Russian government has implemented initiatives for private and foreign investors to invest in the district's economy. Attracting foreign and private investment into the region is essential in its information campaign to the Caucasian, Russian, and international communities that progress in development and stability is real, and not a concept of the imagination. In 2010, Putin advised the regional governments of the NCFD and the United Russia party to "open up" to attract private investment.²⁸⁴ At the end of 2011, the Russian government signed a federal law which provides a government-guaranteed 70% return on private and foreign investments in the special economic zones in Russia, including the "tourism cluster" in the North Caucasus.²⁸⁵ The state-owned Vnesheconombank (VEB), a state-owned bank of Russia has been especially opened in the region that will help fund development projects in the NCFD.²⁸⁶

Regional governments are also taking the initiative and have created medium-term investment attraction strategies. In Dagestan, they have adopted a 2012-2016 strategy to ensure they can fulfill investment goals and attract further investment.²⁸⁷ It requires cooperation involving the regional and local government leaders with businesses, decreasing bureaucratic barriers and by providing tax and grant benefits with the hope of creating 18,000 jobs in the republic over that period.²⁸⁸ Former Dagestani President Magomedsalam Magomedov made it clear in March 2012 that, "The work on attracting investments has been and will be the priority direction for us..."²⁸⁹ This portrays positive developments to the regional population because it means that the regional governments are becoming more capable and effective, which will help the government to win the "hearts and minds" of the regional population.

To signify how important the development of the NCFD is to the Russian government, Dmitri Medvedev, while president of Russia, met with international investors who are involved in the establishment of the "tourism cluster" with representatives from France, Austria, Italy, South Korea, and the United States in attendance.²⁹⁰ This signifies that the Russia government is truly committed to the establishment of peace and stability in the NCFD which sends a positive message to the

²⁸⁴ Hahn 2010

²⁸⁵ Russian Presidential Executive Office, 3 February 2012

²⁸⁶ Leahy 2010b

²⁸⁷ Abdullaev 2012a

²⁸⁸ Ibid.

²⁸⁹ Abdullaev 2012b

²⁹⁰ Russian Presidential Executive Office, 11 March 2012

regional population that the Russian government has a long-term interest in the region and considers it equally part of the Russian Federation.

7.1.3 Private and Foreign Investment

Attracting private and foreign investment is essential in ushering in long-term stability to the North Caucasus and winning the regional population's "hearts and minds". Investments by the Russian government in the North Caucasus are not necessarily an accurate signatory of change, prosperity, or stability in the region. It is the investments by private and foreign investors that enunciate change in the North Caucasus environment as it generally signals stability and low enough risks for investors to make profits, which restores hope of 'normalcy' in the district.

During my travels in the North Caucasus I observed many joint Russian and foreign business projects. The most notable, located a few miles north of Nalchik, in the town of Nartkala was a large Russian-Italian business called "Alitatek". Outside its factory was a large sign exhibiting that this company was a joint Russian-Italian venture.²⁹¹

Investing in small businesses is worthwhile but it will not create the jobs and revenue needed to decrease the region's dependency on Kremlin subsidies. Therefore, many foreign investors have invested in the "tourism cluster" and supporting industries in the North Caucasus that is being aggressively promoted by the Russian government. Electricity provision for the region has also attracted international investors. The plans are to build five coal-powered plants in the most energy-deficient regions.²⁹² South Korean companies, Korea Western Power and CHT Korea will own 50% of the joint venture with the other 50% owned by the Russian government.²⁹³ Caisse des Depots et Consignations, a French company has also invested €15-20 billion into a power project.²⁹⁴ It plans to increase their investment in the region to \$1 billion due to their belief that it will only take five to ten years to recoup their investments, faster than investment return in Europe.²⁹⁵ Chinese companies Vanda Group Co. Dalian Ltd. and China Oceanwide Holdings Group Co. Ltd signed a Protocol of Intent on cooperation towards the "tourism cluster" with investments reaching \$3 billion which involves not only tourism infrastructure, but residential and commercial construction.²⁹⁶

²⁹¹ Author's trip to the North Caucasus Federal District, November-December 2012

²⁹² RT, 2 November 2011

²⁹³ Ibid.

²⁹⁴ Ibid.

²⁹⁵ RT, 24 February 2012

²⁹⁶ RIA Dagestan, 6 June 2012

Obviously, the “tourism cluster” and its related industries are the main interests of private and foreign investors. However, international companies are also investing in the agricultural sector of the North Caucasus, which has deep roots in the traditionally agrarian region. In October 2012, joint Russian-Italian agricultural industrial park “AgroDagItaliya” purchased over 2,640 hectares of land in Dagestan for the development of poultry and livestock farms with the eventual plan of acquiring 35,000 mini-farms.²⁹⁷ The project mainly involves Dagestani businesses and when completed should employ 16,000 people.²⁹⁸ Schools, hospitals, sports facilities and other important infrastructure will be built surrounding the industrial park to support the local employees and benefit the greater region.²⁹⁹ Also in 2012, Turkish company “Nergiz” planned to invest \$500 million into the Dagestani textile business and build a textile factory in the republic which will create around 5,000 jobs in the region.³⁰⁰

Regional governments are also reporting positive results in attracting private investment. According to Ingush President Yevkurov, private investment figures into Ingushetia tripled from 2010 to 2011 with a realistic opportunity to receive nearly 20 billion roubles in 2012.³⁰¹ However, private and foreign investment is still low in the region because of the high levels of corruption and instability that deter potential private and foreign investment. In 2011, the NCFD attracted a mere 2.5% of foreign investments in Russia.³⁰² Baev refers to the business environment in the North Caucasus as “criminalized”.³⁰³

The investments in the NCFD, federal, private, and foreign are mainly designed to create large clusters of jobs for the local population. It can be argued that these actions are taking the North Caucasus backward to the days of collective work in the Soviet Union. Collective work is also a common vision held by the United Nations in Agenda 21, agreed upon in June 1992 and reaffirmed in 2002, of which Russia is a signatory which promotes global, national, and local sustainable development.³⁰⁴ Collective work projects will allow the Russian governments, federal and regional to keep the population under their control while establishing their trust by solving various regional and local grievances. It is a plan that works in Russia since centralized control is part of their political tradition.

²⁹⁷ Abdullaev 2012c

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

²⁹⁹ Ibid.

³⁰⁰ RIA Dagestan, 7 June 2012

³⁰¹ Russian Presidential Executive Office, 9 June 2012

³⁰² RIA Dagestan, 24 November 2011

³⁰³ Baev 2011, p.19

³⁰⁴ Agenda 21 can be viewed on the United Nation’s website at:

<<http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?page=view&nr=23&type=400&menu=35>>

7.1.4 Unemployment

Official government unemployment figures in the NCFD are estimated around 30%.³⁰⁵ If the projected job numbers from the creation of the tourism cluster and other large projects come to fruition, unemployment figures will drop dramatically. The sugar beet farm project in the Tarumovsky district of Dagestan is projected to directly employ 3,000 people in the greenhouses with a further 15,000 jobs created indirectly.³⁰⁶ The five tourist resorts are forecasted to gradually create around 500,000 jobs in the region.³⁰⁷ The construction of the resorts alone will create 20,000 jobs for the local people,³⁰⁸ while the construction of the “Nergiz” textile business is estimated to create approximately 5,000 jobs.³⁰⁹ Since the Russian federal and regional governments view instability in the North Caucasus as a social problem, they are successfully attempting to create stable economic conditions in the region.

On the information side, Medvedev stated that decreasing unemployment and poverty levels in the North Caucasus was “even harder than looking for and destroying terrorists”, but that the government would make an effort to solve these issues.³¹⁰ This message sends hope to the regional population signifying that the government has a long-term commitment in the region to restore stability by decreasing unemployment and poverty.

Medvedev, Putin, and Khloponin have all expressed that jobs in the region must be filled by the regional population and not by Russians from outside the region or using foreign labor. Khloponin said that he not only wants to create jobs, but give the jobs to “the people living in the North Caucasus.”³¹¹ Medvedev agreed saying that jobs should go “...first and foremost to the people in the regions, to people currently with or without employment in the regions of the North Caucasus...”³¹² During my interview with Alexei, he said that there are many foreign workers in the region brought in from south-east Asia which angers the local population.³¹³ In Nalchik, I witnessed a group of foreign workers from south-east Asia constructing a building.³¹⁴ In order for the Russian government to win “hearts and minds”, the people of the NCFD must feel they are the ones who will benefit from government initiatives and programs. Therefore, the Russian

³⁰⁵ Kuchins et al. 2011, p.15

³⁰⁶ Abdullaev 2011

³⁰⁷ Russian Presidential Executive Office, 3 February 2012; and in *Vestnik Kavkaza*, 2 November 2011

³⁰⁸ RT, 24 February 2012

³⁰⁹ RIA Dagestan, 7 June 2012

³¹⁰ Berry 2010

³¹¹ Russian Presidential Executive Office, 3 February 2012

³¹² Ibid.

³¹³ “Alexei”, journalist in Kabardino-Balkaria, interview with author, November 2012

³¹⁴ Author’s trip to the North Caucasus Federal District, November-December 2012

government has taken positive steps to alleviate unemployment by creating mass employment projects in the region and relying primarily on the local and regional work force to fill these positions. This will give the regional population; especially its young people the opportunity to be a constructive part of society and decrease opportunities for them to become attracted to Islamic fundamentalist propaganda. However, unemployment figures in the region do not take into account the existence of the vast “shadow economy”. Pavel Baev asserts that it could be the “real problem” of the North Caucasus.³¹⁵ The “shadow economy” is in direct competition with the legitimate Russian economy and employs thousands of people illegally in the region while the government wrongly interprets them to be unemployed in its statistics. Baev alleges that regional governments deny the existence of the “shadow economy”, deliberately over-estimating unemployment figures to receive more federal funding.³¹⁶ It enflames corruption in the region which is a major grievance held by the regional population, ultimately preventing total regional government control of their region’s economy and decreases their ability to solve the corruption grievance to win “hearts and minds.”

According to my interview with Alexei, he alleged that the issue of employment among young people is more a societal problem, than one created by the government. If there were no jobs in the region, the Russian government would not have to bring in foreign workers from Vietnam and elsewhere he began. Furthermore, there are many jobs for young people, but they are “low-end” jobs. They said that young people desire a successful job right away, referring to a good paying job in an office.³¹⁷ This seems reminiscent of the youth in North America and Europe as well. Anna Matveeva agrees through her work the existence of a widespread “shadow economy” in the region and that unemployment is not viewed as a reason of poverty, but one of injustice.³¹⁸ The government has taken steps to create mass employment in the region and address corruption, although there has yet to be serious action taken to directly combat the “shadow economy”, reducing the population’s reliance on the government for survival which does not contribute towards winning “hearts and minds”.

³¹⁵ Baev 2011, p.18

³¹⁶ Ibid. p.18

³¹⁷ “Alexei”, journalist in Kabardino-Balkaria, interview with author, November 2012

³¹⁸ Matveeva 2012, p.15

7.1.5 Essential Services

Essential services are indeed essential to the daily lives of people in the region. Services such as an efficient transportation and energy network as well as a functional and productive education and health sector are an integral part of bringing hope and stability to an AO.

From my observations, towns in the North Caucasus republics are supplied with gas to heat their homes. It is witnessed by the presence of yellow gas pipes alongside main roads and lining the fences of residential areas.³¹⁹ Heat is essential in interior of this region as it becomes quite cold during the winter. Road conditions are average compared to the other regions in Russia. Some are comparably better than roads in Moscow or St. Petersburg due to massive government investment. Some rural and residential streets are appalling and can hardly be defined as functional roads.³²⁰ In 2012, the Russian government allocated billions of roubles to the construction of roads in the NCFD.³²¹ Dagestan was provided 2 billion roubles for the construction of roads, with a large increase to 11 billion roubles in 2013, and a further 4 billion roubles allocated for 2014.³²² Potholes are largely absent and many of the main highways have been recently paved, including the main road between Makhachkala and Derbent, Dagestan.³²³ Gordon Hahn noted that by 2015 a 150-kilometer highway will link Stavropol and Cherkessk with Sukhum, the capital of Abkhazia.³²⁴ Currently, public and private transportation from towns such as Cherkessk, Stavropol, and Nalchik must drive to Sukhum via Sochi due to the fact that there remains no other road connection between Abkhazia and Russia, resulting in hours more driving. This road connection would enhance cultural exchange and increase trade between Russia and Abkhazia, ushering more money into the NCFD and further strengthening Abkhazian-Circassian relations.

Running water exists in many of the towns in the NCFD. However, running water is not always available on demand. In my hotel in Vladikavkaz, the hotel shut off the water supply during the day and part of the evening, while ensuring it would be available in the morning for guests.³²⁵ Mikhail Loginov, a journalist based in St. Petersburg stated that most villages in Karachaevo-Cherkessia have a gas supply while many are without running water.³²⁶ During my stay in a private home with a family in Grozny, Chechnya, running water was always available yet the gas had to be manually

³¹⁹ Author's trip to North Caucasus Federal District, November-December 2012

³²⁰ Ibid.

³²¹ Kaniev 2012

³²² Ibid.

³²³ Author's trip to the North Caucasus Federal District, November-December 2012

³²⁴ Hahn 2010

³²⁵ Author's trip to the North Caucasus Federal District, November-December 2012

³²⁶ Loginov 2012

turned on to heat the water.³²⁷ Essential services such as electricity, gas, and running water were not a problem for them or inhabitants of the area.³²⁸

One area of investment that must be improved upon in order to increase knowledge, training, and hope is in the sector of education. During my interview with a journalist in Nalchik, they said that education in the North Caucasus is of a very low quality, while the best students are sent to universities in Moscow or St. Petersburg.³²⁹ In regards to their university course, they said that students knew more about the subject than the professors, as their professors' knowledge of issues were based solely upon reading textbooks and not aided by personal experience. Professors would then enforce the textbooks viewpoints on the students, condemning the ability for free-thinking in the classroom.³³⁰ In 2010, Medvedev conveyed the need to develop the education system in the North Caucasus, especially in Dagestan.³³¹ He stated,

We need to draft a comprehensive programme for developing education in the region, and this needs to be a programme that will see the region's secondary and higher education establishments teach the skills and train the professionals that are really in demand. The region's education system must not turn out people with much-touted and prestigious professions with which the market is already over-supplied, but needs to train people in the areas essential for Dagestan's social and economic growth.³³²

Additionally, Medvedev noted shortcomings in the physical state of schools and the way in which Russian and Caucasian history and traditional Russian Islam are taught in schools.³³³ Education is a means to an end. It is essential to winning the "hearts and minds" of the next generation of NCFD. It is the younger generation who are the primary recruits for jihadists. Providing young people with quality education in areas which are required for social and economic growth in the region will make them less susceptible to jihadist propaganda, since these young people will have the qualifications for jobs that are directly needed in their environment. Their hope will be restored that a stable and prosperous future for the region is attainable with the help of the Russian government. Medvedev has voiced his position to require teaching the true history of the Caucasus and Russia, no longer ignoring or rewriting history for the sake of state unity. As I already mentioned in the "governance" chapter of this thesis, the credibility of the federal government is lacking due to the fact that it has ignored the sometimes brutal history of Russian intervention in the North Caucasus

³²⁷ Author's trip to the North Caucasus Federal District, November-December 2012

³²⁸ "Oleg", economist in Chechnya, interview with author, November 2012

³²⁹ "Alexei", journalist in Kabardino-Balkaria, interview with author, November 2012

³³⁰ Ibid.

³³¹ Russian Presidential Executive Office, 11 August 2010

³³² Ibid.

³³³ Ibid.

which has angered some regional ethnic groups. Quality education is needed to bring true propaganda back into the classroom to address social grievances some ethnic groups hold against the government and gain their support in rebuilding their communities. The government has answered by investing millions of roubles into the modernization of the education system in the region. Funds are directed to increase the salaries of teachers to be above the average regional wage, training and certification of teachers, and equipping schools with new textbooks, literature, and visual equipment.³³⁴ The Russian federal and regional governments are working effectively to eliminate the economic grievances of the regional population and this enables them to win their “hearts and minds”. However, efforts must be made to decrease corruption and government bureaucracy which slows economic growth and deters investment.

³³⁴ Ragimkhanova 2011

8 COMBAT AND CIVIL SECURITY OPERATIONS

Dmitri Medvedev in February 2011: *“Those who are willing to change should get a chance. Those who want blood will choke on their own blood.”*³³⁵

8. 1 Support of the Regional Population: Legitimacy, Credibility, Capability

The Russian military has not largely been present in the NCFD since 2002. The Internal Troops of the Ministry of Interior (MVD) are the main security organ of the Russian government in the region.³³⁶ In this chapter when I refer to the military I mean the MVD. They are viewed as legitimate by the population in the NCFD. As they view the federal government as its legitimate government, they view the military as its arm of force. However, according to David Kilcullen, for military and security services to be considered legitimate they must move from major combat operations to a law enforcement role.³³⁷ From my reading and observations, the Russian military and security services have made the transition to a law enforcement role. There are no tank divisions patrolling the countryside. Russian forces rely on sweep operations (*zachistki*) to perform law enforcement requirements, such as identity checks. However, from my observations, military and law enforcement personnel mainly remain static, meaning that they do not patrol. Rather they guard government buildings and the population is free to be infiltrated by militants.³³⁸ This lack of sustained presence does not enable them to win “hearts and minds” because trusted networks are not established and when counterinsurgent forces do appear, civilians are afraid of them. However, the Russians must have a good informant network because they perform a number of successful raids to capture militants inside residential areas. I discuss this in more detail further in the strategy sub-chapter. The main question that must be answered is whether the military and law enforcement organs of the Russian Federation are credible and capable actors in the region and implementing a population-centric COIN strategy. Although the vast majority of the people in the NCFD view the military and law enforcement as legitimate, their credibility is questioned by many. The rampant corruption that exists within the regional governments of the NCFD also exists within the military and law enforcement agencies.

This is not a new problem in the region. Ever since the 1990s, terrorists and civilians alike have used the military and law enforcement as someone to co-opt for their survival and advancement in society. Chechen terrorists have been reported to pass through checkpoints by paying bribes,

³³⁵ Russian Presidential Executive Office, 22 February 2011

³³⁶ Baev 2010, p.3

³³⁷ Kilcullen 2009, pp.50-51

³³⁸ Author’s trip to the North Caucasus Federal District, November-December 2012

allowing them to cache their weapons and explosives in Moscow and in other regions of Russia.³³⁹ Baev asserts that in some areas, local police are hired by clans to become the “muscle” in racketeering.³⁴⁰ In 2009, the assassination of the Interior Minister of Dagestan, Adylgirey Magomedtagirov was originally thought to be a terrorist attack but after an investigation it was discovered that it was a contract killing carried out by a military officer from the 33rd Mountain Brigade.³⁴¹ The Russian government has also acknowledged the troubling extent of corruption in the region. In 2010, Deputy Prosecutor General Ivan Sydoruk drew attention by stating that the law enforcement system as a whole in the North Caucasus is “deeply corrupt” and the “traitors”, being the corrupt officers, should be fired.³⁴² Also in 2010, Medvedev mentioned a root cause of the instability in the region was corruption in the law enforcement system.³⁴³

Not only have regional experts and the government noticed this troubling trend, but most importantly, the people of the North Caucasus, whom the Russian government is trying to win their “hearts and minds”. At a focus group in Kabardino-Balkaria, an individual presented that, “There are law enforcement organs and the criminal world, that’s all. Lately there is no difference between the organs and the criminals.”³⁴⁴ Alexei said that corruption within the military and law enforcement is “not too bad”, yet called the FSB “the biggest bandit of them all”.³⁴⁵ During my travels in the NCFD, I passed through many road checkpoints and had my documents checked on the street by police yet I never experienced any problems nor did I see any examples of corruption.³⁴⁶ However, if some people cannot see a difference between the military/law enforcement organs and organized criminal groups, they will never view them as an actor that will bring peace and stability to the region, thereby making trusted networks impossible to form. Past evidence illustrates that relations are formed between individuals and the military and law enforcement because of “mutual benefit” or by coercion, not legitimate positive relations which are needed to win “hearts and minds”. Furthermore, it seems that ignoring my personal experience, rampant corruption in the military and security elements in the region is deeply affecting the government’s ability to stabilize the region and gain the trust of the population.

³³⁹ Turbiville Jr. 2005, p.10

³⁴⁰ Baev July 2011, p.15

³⁴¹ Ibid. p.15, quoted in Yulia Rybina and Nikolay Sergeev ‘Dagestani Minister Was Done by a Military Hired Gun’ *Kommersant*, 27 February 2010

³⁴² Baev 2011, p.15, quoted in Sergei Mashkin ‘Refutable Evidence’ *Kommersant*, 28 October 2010

³⁴³ Gulf Daily News, 3 January 2010

³⁴⁴ Matveeva 2012, p.28

³⁴⁵ “Alexei”, journalist in Kabardino-Balkaria, interview with author, November 2012

³⁴⁶ Author’s trip to the North Caucasus Federal District, November-December 2012

In a population-centric counterinsurgency, the military is subordinate to the government in implementing change and stability in an AO. As I have argued earlier, “hearts and minds” cannot be won through force, violence or technology. It must be won through establishing links with the target population, truth presentation and persuasion, ending with a change in the target population’s behavior which supports the counterinsurgent’s interests and subordinates the insurgent to establish stability. However, due to weak governance in the NCFD, especially pertaining to the individual regional governments, the military is still viewed by the people of the North Caucasus as the main instrument of the Russian government to carry out its policy in the region. Russian Military and law enforcement personnel are largely incapable of winning “hearts and minds” because they are not trained in proportionality. There is no policy for this, only statements from Putin, Medvedev, and Alexander Bortnikov, the head of the Federal Security Service (FSB).

At the present time, the Russian government deploys volunteer police officers and military personnel from other regions of Russia to provide security in the NCFD, alongside local law enforcement. Tours of duty last approximately six months.³⁴⁷ It is a very short deployment and in my opinion does not allow personnel to work effectively to stabilize the region. A quote by David Kilcullen, “day-tripping like a tourist in hell”³⁴⁸ fits this case. Deployed troops and law enforcement have little time to understand and work with the local society and quickly acquire a “short-timer” mentality who is more worried about ensuring their own survival and leaving the conflict environment than working with the people and solving grievances. In October, I carried out an interview in St. Petersburg with Boris whose father, from the Samara Oblast had just returned from a six month police deployment to Grozny, Chechnya. He said that I should not travel to the region because his father had said there is “nothing but blood, death, and sorrow” there, and that I would “be killed”.³⁴⁹ This is the complete opposite view I received when travelling there and talking with local people. They were surprised that I had visited Grozny, but there was no fear for my safety or a dismal outlook in the city.³⁵⁰ What this illustrates to me is that deployed military and security personnel still carry an anti-Caucasus bias from the Chechen war times, do not care about solving the root causes of instability, and instead are more focused on fulfilling their duty and leaving.

Throughout the region, military and police personnel rely on securing the population by guarding government and FSB buildings, and by having permanent checkpoints at main intersections on

³⁴⁷ Baev 2011, p. 12

³⁴⁸ Kilcullen 2006, p.5

³⁴⁹ “Boris”, son of a law enforcement officer who recently came back from a six month deployment to Chechnya, interview with author, October 2012

³⁵⁰ Author’s trip to the North Caucasus Federal District, November-December 2012

highways, regional border crossings, and entrances to major cities.³⁵¹ However, as I stated in my “governance” chapter, many people rarely see government or military personnel, except during a *zachistkok*. The law enforcement that provide everyday security at check-points, in the towns and cities are primarily “DPS” traffic police who are perceived by many as inefficient and unskilled.³⁵²

However, Russian military and security services have a variety of *spetsnaz* forces highly capable of carrying out special operations. The FSB has special units like Al’fa and Vypmel while the Ministry of Internal Affairs has Vityaz who are specifically trained in counter-terrorist tactics and a variety of other specialized tasks.³⁵³ These units have carried out a number of successful operations against insurgents in rural and urban environments. The rest of the Russian military and law enforcement personnel are not trained to win “hearts and minds” and some may argue that neither are *spetsnaz*.

Near the end of 2011, Putin announced that the government would invest about 3 trillion roubles into the defense industry complex to equip the Russian military for the 21st century.³⁵⁴ This would replace at least 70% of Russian military equipment, however much of the funding for land forces is being spent towards procuring new missiles, tanks, and air defense systems.³⁵⁵ These new funds and equipment will not necessarily aid Russian forces in bringing stability to the North Caucasus because much of the investment is going towards offensive or defensive weapons with a high lethality capability, fit more for war with a conventional enemy, not in a counterinsurgency where proportionality is vital. Additionally, Baev argues that there have already been delays in creating a professional military and troop numbers have been cut, leaving many brigades without the man power to fulfill their duties.³⁵⁶ This contributes to a force that overly depends on force and violence to achieve results and does not win the trust of the regional population. This I find especially troubling because no matter what the government does successfully in other sectors to win “hearts and minds” of the regional population, the actions of military and security personnel damage gains made by the government and prevent long-term stability from becoming a reality.

³⁵¹ Ibid.

³⁵² Ibid.

³⁵³ Turbiville Jr. 2005, p.4-7

³⁵⁴ Latukhina 2011

³⁵⁵ Russian Presidential Executive Office, 3 July 2012

³⁵⁶ Baev 2010, p.2

8.2 Strategy & Tactics

The president of Russia is the “commander and chief” of the Russian military and security forces. Since 2010, the government has declared its intention to reject its previous enemy-centric military strategy in favor of an encompassing population-centric counterinsurgency strategy. In July 2011, Medvedev conveyed,

But to support a ‘tally of corpses’, as one of you put it, would be a road to nowhere. Of course, when we are talking about fighting terrorism.... This idea of ‘an eye for an eye’, and this notion that after any terrorist attack...we will simply liquidate the terrorists, and the more the better, is a thing of the past now. We cannot simply kill all those who spread the seeds of terror, but need to try to educate them and return them to our society.³⁵⁷

This strategy seeks to reduce Russia’s reliance on conventional military tactics to defeat the Caucasus Emirate and Islamic extremism in the NCFD. Additionally, by proposing the reintegration of willing insurgents, the government will attain this using non-military elements of its national power such as social services. This is in direct contrast to its strategy in the 1990s to mid-2000s which relied exclusively on the use of military force to attempt to bring stability to the North Caucasus.³⁵⁸ It should be noted that Russia’s enemy-centric strategy did eliminate a significant number of terrorists yet it failed to bring lasting stability to the region. In fact, Russia’s strategy was and is quite successful in capturing and killing terrorist leaders and fighters. In 2012, Russian interior troops and police killed over 300 militants and detained nearly 500, including over 40 leaders.³⁵⁹ However, Russian forces are not interested in winning “hearts and minds” and combatting the roots of the instability in the region. History has shown that as a result of relying on an enemy-centric strategy in Chechnya, insurgents merely spread to the other North Caucasus republics where Russian military forces were less in number, allowing them to remobilize as the pan-Caucasus Caucasus Emirate terrorist organization. As is the rule even in population-centric counterinsurgency strategy, fighting terrorists, “cannot be conducted in accordance with pacifist principles and with velvet gloves.”³⁶⁰ Not all terrorists are willing or capable of being reintegrated into society. These individual “hard-line” terrorists will need to be captured or eliminated using force which the Russian government has stated.

³⁵⁷ Russian Presidential Executive Office, 5 July 2011b

³⁵⁸ Sir 2009

³⁵⁹ RIA Novosti, 16 October 2012

³⁶⁰ Cohen-Almagor 2005, p.267

Positively, Russian forces are now being mobilized for a disarm, demobilize, and reintegration (DDR) strategy against insurgents.³⁶¹ Those terrorists who are willing to surrender and reintegrate into society as peaceful citizens are currently being given that opportunity. For example, Matveeva stated that some Russian officials have declared that some who join the insurgents do so for personal reasons, whether drug addiction, debt, and bad family relations.³⁶² These individuals are especially susceptible to being reintegrated into Russian society because they are likely not Islamic fundamentalist ideologues.

The Russian security strategy is moving towards intelligence-led operations to thwart potential terrorist acts and arrest or eliminate insurgents before they take action against the Russian populace or security forces. The director of the FSB, Alexander Bortnikov has stated that the military and security services are focusing on disrupting terrorist plots that are still in their planning stages. In 2010, this prevented the occurrence of 66 terrorist crimes and 94 in 2011.³⁶³ Intelligence-led operations are vital in preventing terrorist attacks, lead to less civilian deaths and provides the opportunity to plan and use proportional force to avoid collateral damage. It enables trusted networks with the target population to be maintained. It also shows the target population that they are capable of such professional and proportional force which can lead to increased credibility and the establishment of better relations between the security forces and the population to win their “hearts and minds” and ultimately bring stability to the region. President Putin has voiced the importance of proportionality and avoiding civilian casualties by its military and security forces, further stating that, “...we pay a high price for every mistake” and “...all counter-terrorism operations must be planned scrupulously, and the actions of forces deployed by the various ministries and agencies must be well-coordinated.”³⁶⁴ However, the actions of the military and security forces contribute to only one area of a population-centric counterinsurgency strategy. Security is essential as already stated in my theory section, where it is imperative in order to “build up” an area and bring stability. Both the government and security services realize the need for additional measures to bring peace and stability to the NCFD, yet there are still many improvements to be made.

A counterinsurgency is more complex than a conventional war due to the fact that the primary role of the military, police, and security personnel is not to kill or capture insurgents but to secure the

³⁶¹ Kilcullen 2009, p.179

³⁶² Matveeva 2012, p.13

³⁶³ Russian Presidential Executive Office, 19 November 2010; and in Russian Presidential Executive Office, 7 February 2012

³⁶⁴ RIA Novosti, 16 October 2012

target population. It is much easier to kill or capture an army than it is to continually provide security for an entire target population while simultaneously neutralizing insurgents that try to re-infiltrate the target population. Matveeva, discovered during her trip to the region that law enforcement in the region, who are used to dealing with ordinary crime, lack the knowledge or expertise to effectively work in a COIN environment.³⁶⁵

The Russian government has invested in the training and equipping of its *spetsnaz* who are capable of carrying out operations in a COIN environment because of their small footprint, high mobility and ability to complete a wide range of tasks with skill. For example, they have been trained in mountain warfare to pursue insurgents in difficult terrain where conventional forces are not adequately trained in these advanced tactics.³⁶⁶

The Russian government has displayed serious interest in decreasing the military's reliance on conscript forces in favor of a professional army.³⁶⁷ Professional soldiers are better trained for operations in a variety of environments and are less likely to suffer from a "short timer" mentality because they are "professional soldiers". Conscripts are not effectively trained in peacekeeping, stability, or rescue operations which are vital in a COIN environment.³⁶⁸ Therefore, Russian forces lack the knowledge and skills to implement a population-centric counterinsurgency strategy in conjunction with the federal government. Their tactics in the NCFD reflect this unsuitable training.

Proportionality is of the utmost importance for security forces to avoid upsetting the regional population which can damage trust and their ability to win "hearts and minds." The general Russian public does not seem to mind the use of armed force to defeat terrorism without addressing its root causes. A survey by VTsIOM in 2010 published that 75% of Russians believe that terrorism can only be defeated by force.³⁶⁹ This is in contrast to what the Russian government is trying to propagate: that "law abiding citizens" must be protected and violence must be directed against terrorists.³⁷⁰

Ingush President Yevkurov readily admits that soldiers have committed abuses against civilians when carrying out operations.³⁷¹ Matveeva acquired statements from locals that "torture, arbitrary detention, arrests of relatives of Islamist suspects and incidences when innocent people were

³⁶⁵ Matveeva 2012, p.32

³⁶⁶ Blandy 2007, pp.2-3

³⁶⁷ Oliker et al. 2009, p.139

³⁶⁸ O'Connor 2011

³⁶⁹ Shuster 2010

³⁷⁰ Russian Presidential Executive Office, 16 October 2012

³⁷¹ Feifer 2011

blamed for unresolved cases.”³⁷² Acts like these are unacceptable and are inclined to an enemy-centric strategy where the main strategy is to deplete insurgent numbers while the civilian population is not viewed as a group that is to be co-opted. Masha Lipman of the Carnegie Endowment Center goes as far as to claim that “russifying” Ingushetia is not the objective of Russian forces that “ignores the needs of the people”, but that it is the Ingush police that “brutalize” the people.³⁷³

There have also been reports of stereotyping by security forces by victimizing men with beards or women with headscarves.³⁷⁴ I have witnessed this perceived fear of stereotyping. During my travels one of my interviewees refused to walk near a government building which had armed police standing outside because they feared they might be questioned or harmed because they had a thick beard.³⁷⁵

One of the most frequently and controversial tactics used by Russian military and law enforcement personnel is called the sweep operation. A *zachistok* (plural: *zachistki*) is the Russian term for a sweep operation. They are common practice in counterinsurgencies from Northern Ireland, to Cyprus, Afghanistan, and Iraq. It involves the surrounding of an entire town or district of a town to conduct identity checks, search for illegal weapons and extremists, and prevent the movement of people to secure the area from extremist presence and supporters. During my travels in the NCFD I did not witness a *zachistok*. During my interview with Alexei, he said that these sweep operations do occur throughout the region but they had not witnessed one.³⁷⁶

In 2010, Medvedev stated that 50 counter-terrorist operations (*zachistki*) were carried out by Russian military and security forces in the NCFD.³⁷⁷ By years end, FSB Director Bortnikov stated that as a result of these operations, 332 terrorists were killed, 530 terrorists and their supporters were arrested along with the confiscation of thousands of weapons and ammunition, hundreds of IEDs, and 1.5 tons of explosives, most of which were confiscated from secret caches.³⁷⁸ The year 2012 saw similar successful results.³⁷⁹ *Zachistki* are productive in identifying terrorists and confiscating their weapons and means of support. It should be noted that through the

³⁷² Matveeva 2012, p.14

³⁷³ Al Jazeera’s Inside Story, 2009

³⁷⁴ Dannreuther et al., p.10, quoted in Walter Richmond, ‘Russian policies towards Islamic extremism in the Northern Caucasus and destabilization in Kabardino-Balkaria’, Moshe Gammer (ed.), *Ethno-Nationalism, Islam and the State in the North Caucasus* (London: Routledge, 2008), p. 97

³⁷⁵ Author’s trip to the North Caucasus Federal District, November and December 2012

³⁷⁶ Ibid.

³⁷⁷ Russian Presidential Executive Office, 19 November 2010

³⁷⁸ Ibid.

³⁷⁹ RT, 21 October 2012

implementation of such operations, most of the leadership of the Caucasus Emirate have been killed and attacks have decreased.³⁸⁰ However, are these operations being carried out with proportionality to win the “hearts and minds” of the target population?

Prior to 2010, Russian forces had been accused of gross misconduct when carrying out *zachistki*. Some have alleged that Russian forces engaged in pillaging, kidnapping, and unrestrained violence against civilians.³⁸¹ As will be described further in this chapter, these acts are still occurring.

In order to more effectively win “hearts and minds”, *zachistki* are including local military and security forces within federal military ranks or having local forces carry out *zachistki* on their own. These people come from the region and can better identify with the local population, compared to Russian forces deployed from various ethnic-Russian regions. Local forces have better environmental knowledge the AO, such as the terrain and the people better than Russian forces who are alien to the area which is an asset in winning “hearts and minds”. People want to feel secure and the use of local forces will aid in Russian forces understanding their environment and cause locals subject to search to be more receptive to *zachistki* because they can better identify with them than with ethnic-Russian forces. Statistics taken after *zachistki* showed more success in terms of decreased violence after an operation when local forces were used independently or in conjunction with Russian forces. A study in Chechnya from 2000-2005 conducted by Jason Lyall discovered that there was a 70% decrease in insurgent violence after a Chechen-led *zachistok* compared to a Russian *zachistok*. Additionally, results showed that insurgents responded with violence at a much slower rate after a Chechen *zachistki* compared to a Russian one.³⁸² Lyall’s most applicable finding is that there is a large there is a direct link between decreased insurgent violence and the use of co-ethnic *zachistki* who have informational advantages (i.e. intelligence and cultural awareness).³⁸³ However, it has been reported that when ethnic-Russian forces carry out *zachistki* by themselves they use heavy weaponry such as tanks which are perceived by the public as offensive destructive weapons.³⁸⁴ In response, insurgents feel the need to respond with a terrorist attack at a rate five times higher than those after a Chechen-led *zachistok*.³⁸⁵ In Gimry, Dagestan, it was reported that during a *zachistok*, security forces cut down trees, killed livestock, and pillaged the town while a resident stated that “The authorities don’t enforce the law, that’s why people dislike them.”³⁸⁶ In

³⁸⁰ Nichol 2010, p.1

³⁸¹ Nichol 2009, p.1

³⁸² Lyall 2008, p.2

³⁸³ Ibid. p.2

³⁸⁴ Ibid. p.12

³⁸⁵ Ibid. p.22

³⁸⁶ Feifer 2011

response, villagers say that they have embraced Sharia law to defy Russian authority.³⁸⁷ In the Malgobek district of Ingushetia in August 2012, the military artillery indiscriminately shelled the surrounding forests which terrified the locals while four suspected insurgents were forced from their homes and shot in front of their family.³⁸⁸ *Zachistki* are successful at killing insurgents and capturing their supplies and can be useful in winning “hearts and minds” when carried out with proportionality and cultural sensitivity, but Russian tactics have shown that they are very ineffective in winning “hearts and minds” which is more important in implementing long-term stability.

Federal military cooperation and contact with regional and local security services as well as the target population is essential for winning “hearts and minds”. It enables military and security forces to understand the population, especially their way of life which can be used to use to gather intelligence, identify potential insurgents, and use appropriate and proportionate force when armed force is needed.

Coordination between multiple security agencies are needed to share intelligence and carry out operations that will be more effective and efficient. For example, in certain operations, Dagestan police may work with the FSB, Interior Ministry, and Russian *spetsnaz*.³⁸⁹ Annual counter-terrorism drills are held involving the numerous security agencies and government ministries, such as Caucasus-2012 to improve effectiveness and efficiency.³⁹⁰ It is imperative to minimize the opportunities for collateral damage which could lead to damaged relations with the target population and increase the efficiency and effectiveness of security forces and government ministries involved in securing the region. Putin has called for the “care [of] our law-abiding citizens” and this training can aid in this effort.³⁹¹

Chechnya has its own local security forces which have been quite successful in suppressing acts of terrorism. Dagestan is now using the Chechen case as a model and creating their own locally-manned forces to carry out operations and spread pro-Russian ideology.³⁹²

The reintegration of insurgents who are willing is a goal of the Russian government. Medvedev said that it is the federal and regional governments’ duty along with Muslim leaders to reintegrate those who have not taken part in “heinous offences”.³⁹³ “Heinous offences” is quite a vague term. Does it

³⁸⁷ Ibid.

³⁸⁸ Dzutsev 2012

³⁸⁹ Agentura.Ru, 3 September 2010

³⁹⁰ RIA Novosti, 16 October 2012

³⁹¹ Bridge 2012

³⁹² Kuchins et al. 2011, p.4

³⁹³ Russian Presidential Executive Office, 5 July 2011a

mean participating in a terrorist attack? If so, does this mean that they must be arrested or killed for such actions and prevented from ever becoming a normal citizen in society?

At present there are reports of tension between federal troops and local units that compete for ‘successes’, usually in the form of killing ‘insurgents’ instead of securing the regional population.³⁹⁴ Since April 2009, when the Russian government officially declared an end to its counter-terrorist operation in the North Caucasus, paramilitary forces in Chechnya were subjected under the control of Chechen President Kadyrov who is able to use these troops in whatever way he sees fit, which has led to many reports of gross misconduct against civilians.³⁹⁵

8.3 Border Protection

Protecting the borders of the North Caucasus, especially its southern border with Abkhazia, Georgia, South Ossetia, and Azerbaijan is vital to protect the regional population from foreign terrorists entering Russia and prevent insurgents from leaving Russia to rest, regroup, and re-equip themselves to fight another day. It has been reported that foreign fighters from Arab countries pay locals between \$2,000-5,000 to fight with them.³⁹⁶ To some youths who do not work, this is a lot of money and encourages them to take part in jihad even though they may not necessarily agree with the fighters ideologically. Caucasian youth regularly travel to the Middle East for ‘education’ where they become radicalized and recruited by terrorist organizations such as al Qaeda to carry out attacks in Russia.³⁹⁷ As I have already mentioned in my “Caucasus Emirate” chapter, foreign fighters frequently travel to the North Caucasus to fight against Russian forces and spread jihad.

The strengthening of the southern border has been a priority for the Russian government since mid-2005. Since July of that year, the Russian military has deployed two specially-trained mountain brigades into the difficult terrain of the Caucasus mountain range.³⁹⁸ Thankfully for the Russian military forces, many of the mountain passes are impassable because of snow and adverse temperatures from November-June each year.³⁹⁹ Vladimir Pronichev, head of the Border Guard Service of Russia stated that the Russian government plans to construct 1,340 border facilities from

³⁹⁴ Baev 2011, p.12, quoted in D. Kolchin ‘A New Army is Raised in Dagestan’ *Nezavisimoe voennoe obozrenie* [translated: Independent Military Review], 26 November 2010

³⁹⁵ Ibid.

³⁹⁶ Blandy 2007, p.1, quoted in Tat’yana Gritsenko, ‘Poligon dlya dzhikhada’ [translated: Ground for Jihad] *Vremya Novostey* [translated: News Time], no. 164, 11 September 2007 <<http://www.vremya.ru/2007/164/4/186748.html>>

³⁹⁷ Snetkov 2011a, p.3

³⁹⁸ Mountain brigades are posted in Botlikh, Dagestan and Zelenchukskaya, Karachaevo-Cherkessia, cited in Blandy 2007, p.2

³⁹⁹ Ibid. p.3, quoted in C.W. Blandy, ‘North Caucasus: Problems of Helicopter Support in the Mountains’ *CSRC Caucasus Series*, vol. 7, no. 24, August 2007, p. 7

2005 to 2011 and spend 60 billion roubles to improve detection technology and enable the hiring of more border personnel.⁴⁰⁰

Mobility in border areas for local residents is strongly controlled by Russian border forces which require locals to carry documentation that can identify them as living in the area.⁴⁰¹ As a non-Russian citizen I was not allowed to travel close to the southern Russian border without a permit that could be obtained by visiting the local FSB office.⁴⁰² In North Ossetia-Alania, I was only permitted to travel on federal highways and visit only a few towns on the way because of tight security controls with the threat of arrest and deportation, although I was allowed to travel on the federal highway to South Ossetia because it is tightly controlled.⁴⁰³ These actions are required for the safety of the regional population and the defense of the Russian Federation. It also enables security forces to identify potential insurgents and suspected individuals who are visiting an area illegally and may be involved in illegal activity.

During the two Chechen wars and into the mid-2000s, insurgents found refuge in the Pankisi Gorge in Georgia, a suspected al Qaeda training camp where they were ignored by the Georgian government.⁴⁰⁴ The Caucasus Emirate also claims to find refuge in Azerbaijan and as I have already mentioned in my “Caucasus Emirate” chapter, they have not just found refuge their but have carried out attacks in the country.⁴⁰⁵ The large diaspora of Caucasians in Turkey also provides refuge and finances for insurgents.⁴⁰⁶

Safe haven has also been found inside the borders of the NCFD in the harsh terrain of the Caucasus Mountains. The Untsukul region in central Dagestan which has many caves and uneven terrain makes it a popular area for insurgents to find refuge, while becoming a difficult target for Russian military forces to track and eliminate them.⁴⁰⁷

Financing of insurgencies by foreign powers is reminiscent throughout history. The Caucasus Emirate also benefits from such funding. In 2008, Vasily Panchenkov, the spokesman for the

⁴⁰⁰ McDermott 2005

⁴⁰¹ Blandy 2007, p.5, quoted in *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 31 May 2004

⁴⁰² Author’s trip to the North Caucasus Federal District, November-December 2012

⁴⁰³ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁴ Blandy 2007, p.1

⁴⁰⁵ Snetkov 2011a, p.3

⁴⁰⁶ Cohen 2012, quoted in Anna Tsurkan, ‘Taynaya politika Turtsii: kavkazskiy vektor’ [Translated: Turkey’s secret policy: The Caucasus vector] *Nacionalnaya Bezopasnost* [Translated: national security], 14 March 2008

<http://www.psj.ru/saver_national/detail.php?ID=9035>; and in Reuters, ‘Russia Links Chechens Shot in Turkey to Moscow Bombing’ *Hurriyet Daily News* (Istanbul), 26 October 2011,

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⁴⁰⁷ Blandy 2007, p.3-4

Internal Troops of the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs stated that Arab militants are using the Islamic *hawala* banking system to avoid tracking and detection by Russian security personnel.⁴⁰⁸ The *hawala* system is very difficult to detect and thwart because there is no written agreement of payment, only an oral promise. Payment is eventually made using a password or similar method, based entirely on an honor system, allowing payments to be made across long distances without suspicion and detection. In 2010, the FSB uncovered financial records of funding from individuals in the United Arab Emirates.⁴⁰⁹ The Association of Chechen and Caucasian Unity located in Turkey in areas of Chechen and Caucasian diaspora raises around \$130 million a year for Caucasian insurgents as well as extremist organizations in the Middle East, South Asia, and Bosnia.⁴¹⁰ The Turkish government has refused to ban the association even after demands by the Russian government.⁴¹¹ Captured documents from Dagestani militants have recorded that they are receiving tens of millions of roubles from financiers in Turkey, Jordan, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Saudi Arabia, UAE, and Europe.⁴¹²

However, local *jamaats* are known to attain funds through local racketeering and collecting *zakat*, one of the five pillars of Islam that is the giving of charity to those in need.⁴¹³ Baev also adheres to the belief that the Caucasus Emirate is largely dependent on domestic financial support rather than foreign support.⁴¹⁴ Górecki notes that the Caucasus Emirate acts like the mafia in that it extorts protection money from Caucasian businesses in the region.⁴¹⁵

⁴⁰⁸ Cohen 2012; and in Falkov 2009; and in Agence France-Presse, 2 January 2010

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid.

⁴¹⁰ Mahapatra 2013

⁴¹¹ Ibid.

⁴¹² Gulf Daily News, 3 January 2010; and in Kroupenev 2009; and in Kroupenev 2007

⁴¹³ Kuchins et al. 2011, p.11

⁴¹⁴ Ibid. p.11

⁴¹⁴ Baev 2011, p.16

⁴¹⁵ Górecki 2011

9 CONCLUSION

My analysis is based on the information I have gathered throughout my travels to the North Caucasus District, supporting government documents, analyses, and news articles. It must be remembered that “You cannot analyze information you do not have, and your analysis is only as good as the intelligence on which it is based.”⁴¹⁶ That is the problem all analysts face, especially in the environment of war and conflict where there is a conglomeration of information and one must sift through all the misinformation, disinformation, media “spin”, and sheer complexity of the situation. However, I believe through the last 18 months of research I have been able to come to a conclusion that can answer my research question: To what extent is the Russian government implementing a population-centric counterinsurgency strategy to bring long-term stability to the NCFD?

The government’s strategy is divided into two main parts: the economic, governance, information campaign in the hands of the president of the Russian Federation and Alexander Khloponin, while the military and security campaign is in reality a separate sector relying on an ineffective enemy-centric strategy. Though Medvedev and Putin have voiced for the military and security strategy to morph to a population-centric counterinsurgency strategy, the security establishment has not reformed in a way that can be concluded they are part of the solution to bring long-term stability to the NCFD. This divide results in a weak population-centric strategy overall because of the need for a unified effort to implement a coherent and successful strategy.

In terms of governance, the regional governments largely lack legitimacy, credibility, and capability. All current regional presidents have been appointed by the Kremlin while their respective populations’ question what the difference is between having a federally-appointed president over the Russian president himself leading their republic. They are regarded as “yes men” of the Russian president who have little freedom because their political survival is directly allied with their ability to carry out the Kremlin’s will in their republics. Their dependency on federal subsidies to fund their republics further prevents regional governments from being viewed as legitimate, credible or capable to lead. Regional leaders have expressed their willingness to listen to the regional population to solve issues yet they are almost powerless act upon their population’s needs without federal approval and the constant fear of the federal government “looking over their shoulder”. Overall the people do not feel empowered that they can affect the future of their republics because of federal involvement in their regional politics. This prevents trust between the

⁴¹⁶ Faddis 2009, p.17

government and the people from being established because the people feel largely powerless. The judicial system is also viewed as largely corrupt and some people use illegal Sharia courts to seek justice. Therefore, I must conclude that the governance sector of the Russian government's strategy is a failure in terms of being a population-centric strategy. The government has voiced their desire to work with the people yet there are too few examples of action being taken to accomplish this.

In terms of the information campaign, the Russian government is targeting both the ethnic and non-ethnic Russian populations. They now refer to the citizens of the Russian Federation as not part of a "Russian nation" but the more encompassing "multi-people Russian nation". Using these terms in nation-wide speeches displays to the non-ethnic Russian population that they are equal citizens alongside the ethnic-Russian population. In 2012, the Kremlin passed a law to legally declare all Russian citizens equal under the law. The government has also humbled itself to an extent and now acknowledges the dark periods of its history such as the Circassian genocide and the mass deportation of non-ethnic Russians in the 19th century. The government has declared a strategy to spread this ideology of equal citizenship in schools to create a new way of thinking in the Russian Federation towards legal and historical minorities. Government leaders are also regularly meeting with Muslim leaders and organizations to discuss issues that need to be addressed which also displays to the Caucasian populace that the government is truly committed to solving grievances in the region to create a stable environment. Polls show that a majority of the Russian population still hold a negative view of minorities and Muslims. Change will take time but I must conclude that the Russian government is implementing a population-centric counterinsurgency strategy in this sector because they are working to unite the people Russian Federation to forge a new unifying national identity that will aid in creating stability.

In regards to the economic development sector of the government's strategy to bring stability to the North Caucasus, this is the strongest example of them implementing a population-centric counterinsurgency strategy. They have a clear outlined strategy in the "Strategy for the North Caucasus development by 2025" outlined by Alexander Khloponin, a government appointee solely committed to developing the economy and enabling stabilization in the NCFD. There are clear objectives such as reducing unemployment figures to 5% and increasing regional GDP annually by 10%. The government has invested trillions of roubles into development projects into the region which are aimed to attain long-term income for the region such as the tourism cluster based around ski and health resorts throughout all of the seven republics. Jobs and suppliers are mainly being filled by the regional population which is reducing unemployment, giving people skills needed in their local economy, and provides long-term employment and income for the population which has

allowed them to increase their income and savings so they can focus on their future, something that was almost unheard of only a few years ago. The government is not only investing money into the region, but has implemented various business incentives to attract private and foreign investment which is needed to help develop projects, gain expertise, and promote these projects to foreign audiences so more will invest and tourists will visit these resorts. The government promises a guaranteed 70% return on investments by the private and foreign sector to decrease risk and increase the amount of investors and investments. The government is building business centers and large residential complexes and investing in essential services which are contributing to increasing the regional population's confidence in their economic future and improving daily living which helps in their effort to win "hearts and minds". As a result of these investments by the government and private sector, regional governments are relying less on government subsidies to fund their budgets which in the future will enable them to become more legitimate and credible governments.

The combat and civil security elements are the main detriment in the Russian government's ability to implement a population-centric counterinsurgency strategy. These forces, as in earlier time periods are marred by corruption, ill-trained and equipped, and have a recent history of carrying out abuses toward innocent civilians that prevents the formulation of trusted networks from being established between the regional population and government forces. A population-centric strategy is really "only as strong as the weakest player". No matter what advances the government achieves in winning "hearts and minds" and creating trusted networks, these are constantly strained and destroyed because of the lack of restraint and proportionality by military and security personnel. There still exists a genuine fear in the North Caucasus of security forces who are deemed to stereotype against practicing Muslims. Military and security forces are extremely capable to carry out an enemy-centric strategy, capturing and killing insurgents, but this does not address the roots of the insurgency or help in establishing long-term stability and in fact has only spread the insurgency from Chechnya to the other six republics of the NCFD. Soldiers and law enforcement officers deployed to the region have failed to adapt to their environment and have therefore contributed to the continuation of instability because they are more focused on not caring about the "end" of the "means" instead only caring about finishing their tour of duty and staying alive than being a part of the government strategy to end instability. Positive notes to be taken are that the government has officially declared an end to the enemy-centric strategy and it is merely their lack of reform that these services lack the efficiency and effectiveness to implement a population-centric COIN strategy. I believe it will take some years before Russian military and security personnel finally match their ground tactics with their population-centric strategy and proposal to reintegrate

insurgents who have not committed “heinous acts” against the government. The new influx of funds and weaponry into the Russian military will not necessarily aid in this change, but may help to ease the transition towards a population-centric strategy on the ground. Cooperation and coordination between government, military and security agencies are improving and operations are becoming more intelligence-led which will aid in reducing collateral damage and ultimately allow the government to gain the trust of the regional population. The government is also securing the southern border to prevent insurgent freedom of movement, foreign safe haven, and financing. Yet with high levels of corruption more needs to be done to secure the population from insurgent infiltration and support.

Overall the federal government’s strategy to implement stability in the North Caucasus cannot be called a coherent population-centric counterinsurgency strategy because in the cases of governance and combat/civil security operations, their words do not match their actions. The government has voiced their desire to work with the regional governments and population yet they have only achieved this thoroughly in their information campaign and economic development elements of their strategy. The governance element is improving in that regional governments are becoming more capable to serve their citizens because of increased revenue from their regional economies, due to federal, private and foreign investments and this will improve in the future as many of the “priority projects” begin to be completed and start production. The military and security element is by no means an actor in bringing stability to the region through a population-centric counterinsurgency strategy. However, they are slowly reforming and they could indeed become an actor of positive change to form the stable NCFD of the future. This is to the benefit of international peace and security which will benefit from one less environment where terrorists and Islamic extremists create instability, find safe haven and plan to destroy the current international system. It will also allow the security community to take lessons from Russian successes in formulating future population-centric counterinsurgency strategies in a variety of environments which will occur in the future. Most importantly, it will reunite the Russian Federation which has been divided since the fall of the Soviet Union and allow it to be a more prestigious, capable, and powerful actor on the international stage.

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