An Analysis of the Russian Federation's Counter-terrorism Methodology in dealing with Islamic Extremism, and what the United States stands to gain from it

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Abstract

Russian foreign policy has played a pivotal role in U.S. strategic security since the end of World War II, and has been the single largest factor in shaping how the United States has conducted its own foreign policy since then. The Chechen insurgency has been of particular interest to scholars, policy makers and counter-terrorism officials. This thesis seeks to answer the question of how Islamic Extremism in Russia specifically impacted U.S. strategic security policies, procedures, or practices. It will accomplish this by providing an introduction of why this topic was selected and what the United States stands to gain from the research. The thesis evaluates, organizes and synthesizes all evaluated research and describe the methodology that will be used throughout work. Data analysis of the evaluated research provided a framework of the Chechen insurgency in Russia, specifically covering a historical context and regional and strategic implications. The thesis looks into what the Russians sought to achieve and the actions they took, followed by an analysis of their performance and effectiveness. The thesis concludes with a determination of what U.S. policy makers and counter-terrorism professionals can take away from the research and ways the United States can posture itself for success against Islamic extremism in the North Caucasus.
# Table of Contents

Abstract...........................................................................................................................................i

Chapter 1: Introduction.......................................................................................................................1
  Research question..............................................................................................................................1
  Why the research question was selected.........................................................................................1
  Why the research question is relevant............................................................................................1
  What the U.S. stands to gain from research....................................................................................2
  Thesis statement..............................................................................................................................3
  What the thesis seeks to accomplish...............................................................................................3

Chapter 2: Literature review............................................................................................................4
  Evaluation of research......................................................................................................................4
  Organization of evaluated research..................................................................................................17
  Synthesis of evaluated research........................................................................................................17

Chapter 3: Methodology..................................................................................................................19
  Description of methodology.............................................................................................................19

Chapter 4: Data analysis..................................................................................................................20
  (4.1) Framing the Islamic insurgency within Russia ..........................................................................20
    Providing a historical context..........................................................................................................20
      The reign of the Tsars....................................................................................................................20
      The reign of the Soviets................................................................................................................20
      Events following the dissolution of the Soviet Union.................................................................21
      The first Chechen war ..................................................................................................................23
      The inter-war period....................................................................................................................25
      The second Chechen war ..............................................................................................................27
      The aftermath of the second Chechen war...................................................................................30
      Modern operations and events......................................................................................................30
    Regional implications......................................................................................................................32
      How troubles in the Northern Caucasus affect neighboring states ............................................32
      The Northern Caucasus as an oil hub between Europe and Asia ..............................................32
      The influence of Turkey within the region...................................................................................32
Strategic implications.................................................................33
The Northern Caucasus as key terrain in the global jihadist movement..............33
What the Russian Federation sought to achieve ..................................................34
What the Russian Federation sought to achieve on a policy/strategic level ............34
What the Russian Federation sought to achieve on an regional/operational level .....38
What actions the Russian Federation took .......................................................39
What actions the Russian Federation took on a policy/strategic level ..................39
What actions the Russian Federation took on a regional/operational level ..........42
Analysis of performance and effectiveness .......................................................45
(4.3) What U.S. strategic security stands to gain and why ..................................47
What U.S. policy makers can use from analysis of Russian performance/effectiveness 47
What U.S. counter-terrorism officials and those at the operational level can use from analysis of Russian performance/effectiveness ........................................51
What actions can the U.S. take to posture itself for future success ....................53
Chapter 5: Conclusion..........................................................................................57
References...........................................................................................................59
Chapter 1: Introduction

Research question

How does Islamic Extremism in Russia impact U.S. strategic security policies, procedures, or practices?

Why the research question was selected

The research question was selected due to the continual need to seek refinement and efficiency in U.S. tactics, techniques, and methodology when dealing with the ever growing threat of Islamic extremism. While it certainly would be problematic to infer that if a solution works with one state actor it will undoubtedly work in another, U.S. counter-terrorism professionals can still refine their own processes which can yield outstanding results in neutralizing extremist organizations and support networks. By analyzing extremist acts, the context they were committed in, and also what conditions were present and absent that made it successful or a failure, counter-terrorism professionals can develop best practices and update poor or irrelevant methods. The research question at its very core represents what the U.S. can stand to gain from analyzing how other states deal with a similar problem.

Why the research question is relevant

The United States’ experience with countering insurgencies and Islamic extremism has been inconsistent with many more instances of failure than success. However, they are by no means the only state on the international stage dealing with this problem. The Russian Federation, perhaps the nation which has had the most profound impact on American foreign policy since the end of World War II has dealt with its own insurgency in the Northern Caucasus for years. This insurgency, according to former President Dmitry Medvedev, is the greatest domestic threat to Russian security (Blank, 2012). This conflict spawned primarily out of
Russian misrule in the region, and has evolved into an especially virulent strain of Salafi fundamentalism the goal of which is to break away from the Russian state (Blank, 2012). From 2007 to 2009, terrorist attacks in the border areas between the Black and Caspian Seas have increased dramatically, and civilian and government casualties have continued to rise to present day (Nichol, 2009). Attacks have also begun to spread outward from the region, leading many experts in the field to believe that this form of extremism is operating on a much broader scope and with greater intensity than previously believed. (Nichol, 2009)

Despite this rise in violence, there has been little to no attention by the United States nor a desire by leaders to draw out potential lessons. This conflict while one the United States is not actively engaged in, is still a valuable contemporary case study that may have profound ramifications if neglected. The opportunity for the United States to advance its own strategic position by taking the lessons learned from this conflict and applying them to their own policies, procedures, or practices is unmatched. One such example that the United States can use to further its own foreign policy is the in-depth analysis of a facet of Russian military doctrine known as *maskirovka* or “something masked” (Ash, 2015). This stratagem articulates various means of military deception, and could well be a tool to be put into action by a military commander or counter-terrorism professional against an insurgency or extremist group. These lessons learned are not an end unto themselves, however with sufficient analysis and appropriate implementation, could become an invaluable weapon in the arsenal against Islamic insurgency and extremism.

**What the U.S. stands to gain from research**

This research enables the United States to develop an optimal set of practices that can be utilized to deter, prevent, and minimize the effects of these groups and individuals. The rationale
behind the selection of the research question stems largely from the tendency for organizations in the strategic security realm to be reactive to extremist threats and not proactive. This will never change; it is the extremist threats U.S. officials are aware of however, that demonstrate the need to incorporate solutions that have already been validated under similar conditions. By identifying the variables needed to effectively neutralize an extremist cell or group and their support network well in advance, U.S. counter-terrorism professionals can then proactively work to undermine their legitimacy, deny them the ability to effectively maneuver, or even target specific population nodes to render an extremist cell completely ineffective.

**Thesis statement**

Islamic extremism in Russia poses an indirect threat to the United States and should influence U.S. strategic security policies, procedures, and practices.

**What the thesis seeks to accomplish**

This thesis conducts a holistic analysis of the Chechen insurgency within the Russian Federation. This includes: framing the Islamic insurgency within Russia, the Russian government’s response to Islamic extremism within its borders, and what U.S. strategic security stands to gain and why. If left unchecked, Islamic extremism in the North Caucasus will serve as both a base of support and springboard for the global jihadist movement. By conducting this analysis, the U.S. can be more effectively postured to prevent and counter this form of extremism on its own soil or its interests overseas.
Chapter 2: Literature review

Evaluation of research

Studies Institute.

Credibility: Dr. Blank has been an authority on Russia and Eastern Europe since 1989. The Strategic Studies Institute is part of the U.S. Army War College, and is the home of research and analysis at the strategic and national security level.

Reliability: The reference is considered reliable, and is the lead agent for geostrategic analysis in the United States Army. The Institute is comprised of well-known experts in their respective fields, who have conducted strategic level study and analysis to develop policy recommendations to further the understanding of the nature of land warfare and how senior leaders can optimally employ joint and combined military forces.

Impact on the Field of Strategic Security: This reference is used to drive policy and strategic level decisions and can even be presented to a congressional audience to assist them in making informed decisions in the event the United States deems that its interests abroad are threatened by Islamic extremism within the region. As such is has significant bearing on the field of strategic security and the formulation of national security policy.

Summary discussion of the reference and the plan to use it: As a source, this reference will contribute throughout every major theme of my work. It will help frame the overall problem set, highlight and analyze Russian governmental response, and even illustrate points that the U.S. can adapt and learn from to improve its own geo-political posture.

http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2012/03/a-threat-to-the-west-the-rise-of-
islamist-insurgency-in-the-northern-caucasus

Credibility: Dr. Cohen is a well-respected political analyst specializing in Russia and Eurasia. He has testified numerous times before Congress, and has conducted countless interviews for a wide range of media outlets. The Heritage Foundation is a conservative think tank that has greatly influenced policy over the past three decades.

Reliability: The reference is considered reliable, and well cited. As a conservative organization, there is a potential for inherent bias in what specific points are articulated and for what purpose as well as the potential to be hyper critical of the Russian Government.

Impact on the Field of Strategic Security: The Heritage Foundation has greatly contributed to foreign policy for several decades and will likely continue to do so in the future. Dr. Cohen’s work has been briefed to the key decision makers of the State Department, USAID, and the Pentagon.

Summary discussion of the reference and the plan to use it: This reference will contribute greatly to each theme within my work. It will also be particularly useful in illustrating the complexity and fragility of U.S. allies in the region and the strategic ramifications of both Russian and U.S. involvement. This reference will be instrumental in providing macro level analysis of the situation and why actions of the Russian Government contributed to the current state of things.
http://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/the-russian-counterinsurgency-operation-in-
chechnya-part-1-winning-the-battle-losing-the-wa

Credibility: This reference has been presented at the Central Eurasian Studies Society
Annual Conference as part of the Small Wars Journal by Mr. Janeczko. This journal is an online
magazine that focuses on unconventional and guerrilla warfare, as well as counterinsurgency.

Reliability: This reference is especially well cited, and has been validated through several
well-established authorities in related fields.

Impact on the Field of Strategic Security: This paper provides an in depth historical
baseline through recent history of Russians and the Chechen Insurgency. It details pivotal battles
and operations through a focused yet intense lens. Because of this focused scope, it does not
have as much of a far ranging effect, but does make ample contributions to the body of work and
the field at large.

Summary discussion of the reference and the plan to use it: While most references have a
great deal of versatility and can be used heavily throughout a work, this reference instead focuses
on one aspect of the conflict, and does so exceedingly well. I personally will still be able to use
this resource when discussing historical framework and Russian responses, however, this is
largely due to the fact that the structure of my paper happened to be relatively compatible with
this resource. This resource will still be invaluable to my own work, by allowing me to dig into
the weeds and draw out tactical and operational level lessons that the U.S. can benefit from.

Janeczko, M. N. 2012, November 02. The Russian Counterinsurgency Operation in Chechnya

Credibility: This journal is an online magazine that focuses on unconventional and guerrilla warfare, as well as counterinsurgency.

Reliability: This reference is especially well cited, and has been validated through several well-established authorities in related fields.

Impact on the Field of Strategic Security: This paper further expands from Part 1, and continues to provide an in-depth historical baseline through recent history of Russians and the Chechen Insurgency. As it wraps up from Part 1, it does not have as much of a far ranging effect, but when combined does make ample contributions to the body of work and the field at large.

Summary discussion of the reference and the plan to use it: I personally will still be able to use this resource when discussing historical framework and Russian responses. This resource will still be valuable to my own work, by allowing me to provide greater detail and draw out tactical and operational level lessons that the U.S. can learn from.


Credibility: The Council on Foreign Relations is a not for profit public policy think tank that is both well respected and well established. The Council historically has created independent task forces of experts with diverse backgrounds in order to offer findings, prescribe policy, and produce reports.

Reliability: The reference is considered reliable, although citations are not directly imbedded with the reference.
Impact on the Field of Strategic Security: Coming from a well-respected source, this particular reference has a modest impact on the field of Strategic Security as a whole.

Summary discussion of the reference and the plan to use it: This reference provides a sound introductory, albeit sweeping baseline developed for an audience unfamiliar with the topic. However, while it does not go exceedingly deep, it does make directed points regarding causation and both asks and answers relevant questions. This format actually helped remind me to answer my own similar questions and remain on target, and may yet color my future work from an organizational and formatting aspect.


Credibility: Dr. Mankoff is an Adjunct Fellow at the Council of Foreign Relations and a subject matter in Post-Cold War Russia. The Council on Foreign Relations is a not for profit public policy think tank that is both well respected and well established. The Council historically has created independent task forces of experts with diverse backgrounds in order to offer findings, prescribe policy, and produce reports.

Reliability: The authenticity of the reference can be checked, and is considered reliable.

Impact on the Field of Strategic Security: This reference has the potential to have significant impact on the field of strategic security due in large part to the fact that it represents a fairly holistic synthesis of Russian actions post-Cold war.

Summary discussion of the reference and the plan to use it: This reference will be used pretty consistently throughout the entirety of my work. Dr. Mankoff has proven consistently to be a sufficient arbiter of truth with succinct and holistic analysis. I believe this will be especially
useful when looking at what the future holds for the region and what the U.S. stands to gain from its analysis.

http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/mar/chronology.asp?groupId=36504

Credibility: The University of Maryland is a well-established university and has a strong reputation for academic excellence.

Reliability: The authenticity of the reference can be checked, and is considered reliable.

Impact on the Field of Strategic Security: Despite coming from a well-respected source, this particular reference will have a negligible impact on the field of Strategic Security as a whole. This is due to simply chronologically listing key events and providing no additional analysis.

Summary discussion of the reference and the plan to use it: I plan to use this reference to highlight specific dates and key events that occurred during the Russian and Chechen conflict.

http://www.eurasianet.org/node/68287

Credibility: This reference is a product of the Central Eurasia Project which is an initiative of the Open Society Foundation. This foundations mission is to promote democratic governance human rights and various reform.

Reliability: The reference is considered reliable. It is important to note however that due to its advocacy of social, economic, and legal reforms, it may be inherently critical of Russian methodology.
Impact on the Field of Strategic Security: This reference will have a minor impact on the field of strategic security due to the limited scope and depth of material.

Summary discussion of the reference and the plan to use it: Due to the aforementioned limited scope and depth, this reference will be limited to use in specific contexts. I have included it primarily because it has helped demonstrate potential research opportunities and trends to explore at greater length. Specifically, it helped highlight the ways in which the Russian government planned to deal with Chechen extremism at the time.


Credibility: The Congressional Research Service is designed to create findings and prescribe policy directly to national leaders in a non-partisan environment. It is a highly credible reference.

Reliability: The authenticity of the reference is considered highly reliable.

Impact on the Field of Strategic Security: This reference has a profound impact on the field of strategic security as it is the preeminent body from which Congress draws its factual information and bases its decisions. Its impact cannot be understated as it pertains to driving forces behind U.S. policy.

Summary discussion of the reference and the plan to use it: This reference will contribute greatly to each theme within my work. It will also be particularly useful in illustrating the value of why this conflict matters to our own national interests. This reference will also be instrumental in providing macro level analysis of the situation and why actions of the Russian Government contributed to the current state of things.
http://www.globalissues.org/article/100/crisis-in-chechnya

Credibility: This reference appears to be a fairly credible source, however does not come from a well-known source or big name within the field of strategic security.

Reliability: The reference is considered reliable, although citations are not directly imbedded with the reference.

Impact on the Field of Strategic Security: This reference will have a minor impact on the field of strategic security due to the limited scope and depth of material.

Summary discussion of the reference and the plan to use it: I plan to use this source while framing the situation as a whole within Chechnya and also to help articulate certain aspects of the Russian


Credibility: The reference is highly credible and the BBC has a long established reputation as a leading source of unbiased news.

Reliability: The accuracy of the reference can be checked and it is considered reliable.

Impact on the Field of Strategic Security: This reference will have a modest impact on the field of strategic security at large. This is due to the focused nature of the material, specifically covering Russian maskirovka techniques, and also the medium on which it is presented.
Summary discussion of the reference and the plan to use it: This reference will be used as a tactical level example of methodologies the U.S. can stand to learn from analyzing the Chechen conflict. This article specifically highlights Russian military strategy and will be used extensively within that same theme. Because of its specific nature however, it will be of little material value throughout the rest of my work.


Credibility: This reference has gone through a significant selection and vetting process to be on the JSTOR archive, and is considered credible.

Reliability: The reference is reliable and is well cited.

Impact on the Field of Strategic Security: This reference has significant bearing on the strategic security field. This is due in large part to focusing on the Russian military aspect of the Chechen conflict, which is a more high visibility topic, while balancing macro and micro level analysis.

Summary discussion of the reference and the plan to use it: This will be used while discussing my themes regarding Russia’s actions to counter the Chechens, and also what the U.S. can gain from such analysis. This reference will be of great value during this latter part as the most obvious methodologies that the U.S. can use will be military and tactics focused methodologies.

Omelicheva, M. Y. 2009 *Russia’s Counterterrorism Policy: Variations on an Imperial Theme.*

Credibility: The Terrorism Research Initiative is a well-respected and established think tank that seeks to disseminate terrorism related information for academic advancement as well as policy prescription.

Reliability: The reference is well cited and the information within it can be easily corroborated.

Impact on the Field of Strategic Security: This reference has significant bearing on the strategic security field. This is due in large part to focusing on the Russian policy forming aspect of the Chechen conflict. This reference also highlights societal paradigms and cultural nuances that have driven Russian leadership and macro level decision making.

Summary discussion of the reference and the plan to use it: This reference will contribute greatly to each theme within my work. It will also be particularly useful in illustrating the complexity and fragility of the Chechen conflict. This reference will be instrumental in providing macro level analysis of the situation and why actions of the Russian Government contributed to the current state of things.


Credibility: Mr. Boot is a Senior Fellow at the Council of Foreign Relations as well as a leading military historian. Strategicka is a series of publications from the Hoover Institution at Stanford University. These publications primary goal is to use conflicts of the past as valuable lessons for dealing with present conflicts. The Hoover Institution is a public policy think tank that has helped to shape U.S. foreign policy decision making.
Reliability: The reference is considered reliable. The Hoover Institution is comprised of well-known experts in their respective fields, each with multiple publications, congressional testimony, and media interviews.

Impact on the Field of Strategic Security: This reference will likely have only modest impact on the field of strategic security due to the medium on which it is presented as well as the lack of consistent depth in analysis.

Summary discussion of the reference and the plan to use it: This reference will help establish a baseline of understanding for my target audience by shaping specific points in which to further illustrate and initial level formatting of my points. Due to the lack of significant depth, this reference will only be used in a limited capacity.


Credibility: Dr. Hosking has been an authority on Russia for several decades, and has published numerous works which many consider to be staples of Russian studies.

Reliability: Hosking’s work is very well cited and has been substantiated by several other experts within the field.

Impact on the Field of Strategic Security: This reference has the potential to have significant impact on the field of strategic security due in large part to the fact that it represents a fairly holistic synthesis of Russian history and actions leading up to present day.

Summary discussion of the reference and the plan to use it: As a source, this reference will contribute throughout every major theme of my work. It will help frame the overall problem set, highlight and analyze Russian governmental response, and even illustrate points that the U.S. can adapt and learn from to improve its own geo-political posture.

Credibility: The RAND Corporation is a non-profit institution that helps improve decision making and policy through research and analysis. It is perhaps the most well-known and established think tank within the United States.

Reliability: The authenticity and accuracy of the reference can be checked, and the reference is considered reliable.

Impact on the Field of Strategic Security: This reference has significant bearing on the strategic security field. This is due in large part to focusing on post-Cold War trends and support for external insurgent movements. This reference also highlights societal paradigms and cultural nuances that have driven Russian leadership and macro level decision making.

Summary discussion of the reference and the plan to use it: This reference will be incorporated significantly throughout the entirety of my work. Specifically it will be used to highlight the thought process of Russian leadership at the time, and provide timely points for further analysis when discussing what the U.S. stands to gain from studying this conflict.

Credibility: Dr. Graham Allison is an especially accomplished leading analyst in U.S. national security and defense policy and is the director for the Belfer Center at Harvard's Kennedy Center.

Reliability: The reference is considered both reliable and accurate.

Impact on the Field of Strategic Security: This reference has the potential to have significant impact on the field of strategic security due in large part to the fact that it represents a fairly holistic synthesis of recent Russian activity and is specifically designed to advance U.S. strategic policy.

Summary discussion of the reference and the plan to use it: This reference will form the basis of what the U.S. stands to gain from deeper analysis into this conflict. This reference will illustrate many of the current trends within the Russian Federation, and will compare them to the types of threats that the U.S. faces. This will greatly assist my efforts to draw specific and tangible methodologies at multiple echelons from both Russian successes and failures.


Credibility: Octavian Manea possesses an MA in International Relations from Syracuse. LTC Schaeffer is an Army Special Forces Foreign Area Officer who received his MA in Russian, Eastern European, and Central Asian Studies from Harvard. LTC Schaeffer has planned and executed counterinsurgency and counter-terrorism operations in the Caucasus Region and is a uniquely qualified source.

Reliability: The accuracy of the reference can be checked and it is considered reliable.
Impact on the Field of Strategic Security: This reference has the potential to have significant impact on the field of strategic security due in large part to the fact that it asks well directed questions regarding the Russian thought process during the Chechen conflict.

Summary discussion of the reference and the plan to use it: This reference will contribute greatly to the second and third theme within my work. It will be particularly useful in illustrating many of the operational level nuances within the Chechen conflict.

Organization of evaluated research

The selected research has been organized primarily by theme. The included themes are: An initial framing of the Islamic insurgency within Russia, the Russian governmental response to insurgent extremism within its borders, and what U.S. strategy stands to gain and why. The goal is to present a historical context of the conflict leading up to the present situation in order to create a baseline shared understanding. This will include information from such references as Blank, Laub, and Nichol. From this point this thesis will begin incorporating a more in depth analysis of the Russian government’s responses to certain events and the road to how those decisions came to be made. This will be especially evident by incorporating research found in Ash and Janeczko. The thesis will then progress to how Russian policy and military decisions exacerbated or quelled the insurgency. This second theme will be especially critical in setting the conditions to introduce the main point of the thesis and what the U.S. stands to gain from a conflict on the other side of the world. This will be driven in large part by research from Daniel and Allison.

Synthesis of evaluated research

The research question asks: in what way does Islamic Terrorism in Russia specifically impact U.S. strategic security policies, procedures, or practices? The above literature reviews offer insight into how the Chechen Insurgency has grown from its infancy to become a
significant threat to the Russian Federation. It provides a contextual baseline that while covering macro level forces, also delves into how populations have been mobilized, and how resources effectively marshalled on both sides. The research then shows how the Russian government’s actions in the form of military intervention during the first and second Chechen war, as well as internal policy towards Chechnya has at times exacerbated the conflict and in recent years, quelled it. This research transitions from the action, reaction, counteraction of Russian security forces and Chechen extremists to a more removed perspective seeking to exploit the lessons learned in the interest of advancing U.S. strategic security. The research pulls these hard fought lessons learned from every echelon, ranging from military tactics and techniques such as maskirovka to legislative and policy stratagems that have led to the current situation on the ground. The research has taken these potential tools and techniques and filtered them through the lens of U.S strategic security. As a result some methods and procedures that worked for the Russian Federation cannot currently be employed by the U.S. while others can provided certain conditions are met.
Chapter 3: Methodology

Description of methodology

The type of research utilized throughout this thesis, is a qualitative meta-analysis. The type of research, data, and information collected and used ranges greatly, and includes: demographic data of Muslims in Russia, macro-level economic and social factors that inhibit or facilitate extremist growth, and Russian counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency measures. An extremist group's composition, resources, disposition, and recent activity, are also key data that will be focused on throughout this analysis. The information will be analyzed through an objective lens with the emphasis placed on the actions of the extremist groups and the responses by the Russian government. The insurgency will first be framed, with subsequent illustration of how the Russian government responded, and finally detail what the U.S. stands to gain from studying this conflict. Information will be organized among the aforementioned themes while still maintaining an emphasis on the specified end state. The analysis will relate to the problem and its presentation within the thesis, by following a logical path first highlighting the operational environment of the Chechen insurgents and the Russian Government. The insurgency’s actions and attacks, will then be presented to show what the Russians did or did not do at multiple echelons of responsibility. Once complete, anything that could be beneficial for the U.S. strategic security posture will be identified.
Chapter 4: Data analysis

Framing the Islamic insurgency within Russia

Providing a historical context

Events during the reign of the Tsars

The origins of the Islamic insurgency in Russia’s Northern Caucasus have a long and bloody history going back well over two centuries. In 1785, Sheik Mansur led the first recognized resistance of the Chechens to deal with Russian encroachment onto their lands (Maryland, 2012). Generals of the Russian Empire would conquer and eventually colonize much of the Northern Caucasus in the latter half of the 18th century (Cohen, 2012). Warfare continued sporadically for another century, and Russian generals employed especially brutal scorched Earth tactics to subjugate the Chechen populace. Chechnya was formally annexed by Russia in 1859. Only six years later, as many as 39,000 Chechens were exiled by the Tsar’s forces to Turkey (Maryland, 2012). Since this period, Muslim religious observance and distance from Russian authority to the Northern Caucasus has enabled much of the people there to maintain their own culture and distinctly Sufi Islamic identity (Cohen, 2012).

Events during the reign of the Soviets

During the Bolshevik Revolution, many North Caucasus Muslims saw the collapse of the Russian Empire as an opportunity to shed their oppressors and gain autonomy from the Russian state. The Soviet Red Army proved far more devastating, and ruthlessly used air power and chemical weapons to crush resistance efforts (Cohen, 2012). As the world entered the Second World War, some Chechens and Ingush units directly or indirectly collaborated with Nazi units to attack Soviet forces, provide intelligence, or sabotage and subvert their efforts. Consequently, Stalin deported hundreds of thousands of residents from the North Caucasus to Northern Kazakhstan and Siberia (Shah, 2004). Stalin feared that the people within the region would
continue working with the Nazis in return for an independent Chechnya once the war was over with. Stalin deported anywhere between 400,000 and 800,000 Chechen people, with as many as 100,000 dying in the process (Shah, 2004). This event greatly explains why Islamic extremism within the North Caucasus is especially more anti-Russian than other ethnic minorities, and why it is still alive.

After Stalin’s death in 1953, Nikita Khrushchev allowed the formal repatriation of the Chechen and Ingush people. These people coalesced into a Chechen-Ingush Republic in 1957 in their traditional homeland. They proceeded to clash with other ethnic groups, notably Avars and Dargins, which occupied the region during World War Two (Maryland, 2012). Due in large part to relocation and secularization, Islam was pushed to the fringes of society, and because of this lacked both educated and moderate imams. This opened the door for extremist religious leaders to fill that void, and helped to introduce a population that had seen decades of hardship to radical Islam (Cohen, 2012). It wasn’t until 1978 that Mosques were permitted to reopen in Chechnya (Maryland, 2012).

**Events following the dissolution of the Soviet Union**

After the fall of the Soviet Union, a former Soviet air force general named Dzhokhar Dudayev was elected president of Chechnya in 1991. Dudayev declared Chechnya’s independence from the Russian Federation citing other republics being given independence as precedent (Cohen, 2012). However, the Russian Federation led by Boris Yeltsin argued that Chechnya had never been an independent region within the Soviet Union, and as such did not have a right to secede. This was likely in order to avoid having more republics secede in much the same way that western countries tried to prevent their own colonies from breaking free following World War II (Shah, 2004). This was an especially volatile time for the Russian
Federation as they faced a crisis that threatened their legitimacy and sovereignty within the region and on the global stage. As every other republic clamored for independence, the Russian Federation was trying to regain control of a situation that had rapidly deteriorated out of their favor. Feeling they were hemorrhaging land, resources, human capital, and key terrain they deemed critical to their national defense, the Russian Federation was attempting to salvage the last vestiges of the Soviet Union; saying nothing of the loss of regional and global influence they could do little to control.

Chechnya was very likely not granted independence for other geopolitical and economic reasons as well. One big reason was that the disorder within Chechnya that resulted from the Soviet Union dissolving reinforced the Russian belief that their independence would further undermine the territorial integrity that was already in a precarious state (Shah, 2004). The biggest reason for Chechnya being denied independence was that oil was, and remains a significant factor within the region. Grozny, the Chechen capital, is home to a major oil refinery along the oil pipeline that runs from Azerbaijan and Chechnya towards Ukraine. Controlling this was economically critical for the Russian Federation to ensure that their oil need were met (Shah, 2004).

The Russian Federation’s denial for the independence of the Chechen people only further fueled anti-Russian sentiment. This led to numerous rallies and protest marches, as well as strikes and demonstrations. After declaring that his organization had assumed legislative and executive power within Chechnya, Dudayev and his forces consolidated power, and began forming military units and securing weapons plundered from Russian military installations (Maryland, 2012). Russian families living within Chechnya began moving out of the region en masse providing another indicator of unrest. Dudayev declared that Chechnya would pursue an
independent foreign policy and reach out to other Islamic countries such as Turkey (Maryland, 2012). Inter-faction fighting plagued the Dudayev regime during this period as they attempted to consolidate power. This further destabilized the region until the Russian Federation felt they could no longer let the situation deteriorate.

The first Chechen war

In December of 1994, President Yeltsin ordered the Russian army and security services to occupy Chechnya and remove the Dudayev government from power in order to restore order to the republic (Cohen, 2012). This would be the largest military action since the invasion of Afghanistan, and was intended to be a short operation to suppress Russian separatist sentiment. The politically splintered Chechens united behind Dudayev who embodied the resistance against Russia, and clashes ensued between Chechen fighters and Russian soldiers (Maryland, 2012). Russians led with massive artillery bombardment and air strikes, which effectively reduced Grozny to rubble, before Russian soldiers and armor marched in in a show of force. Grozny was eventually secured for the most part by Russian forces, but only after fierce fighting in the city center. Yeltsin prematurely declared military operations over, however Chechen forces adapted their strategy and assumed a form of guerrilla resistance based along traditional clan lines. Guerrilla resistance elements clashed continuously with Russian forces for control of the region over a grueling several month period and was directed by Dudayev’s government which had gone into hiding as the Russians gained control of the city center (Maryland, 2012).

The ensuing conflict was brutal. Chechen fighters, many former Soviet soldiers with experience fighting the Mujahedeen in Afghanistan, fought a defensive war of attrition designed to target their enemy’s morale and enthusiasm to fight. These fighters galvanized by the united purpose to drive out the Russian army they perceived as invaders, engaged the Russians in both
treacherous mountain terrain and within the confined city streets of Grozny (Janeczko, Small Wars Journal, 2012). Chechens would fight in groups of 10-20 men moving in and out of buildings to engage Russian troops asymmetrically, and use the terrain to neutralize their enemy’s numerical advantage.

While both the Russian Federation and Chechen fighters attempted to weaken one another’s resolve through vicious acts, it is argued that the Chechen fighters outstripped their Russian counterparts (Janeczko, Small Wars Journal, 2012). These acts were learned through years of previous asymmetrical conflicts and included such things as hanging Russian dead and wounded in windows of defensive positions to force Russians to fire at their comrades in an attempt to engage rebels. Other tactics that were employed include the extensive booby trapping of both Russian and Chechen bodies, as well as snipers aiming at soldiers’ groins to deliver an agonizing and humiliating death. These same snipers would also aim to purposefully wound Russian troops in an effort to bait subsequent rescuers who would move to their fallen comrades. Chechen fighters would also launch surprise attacks from behind enemy lines or gain access to bases by dressing up in Russian uniforms. These tactics coupled with crumbling public support at the lack of progress, took a dramatic toll of the Russian Army and security services (Janeczko, Small Wars Journal, 2012).

The conflict reached a tipping point in 1996, when a Chechen warlord by the name of Shamil Besaev and roughly one hundred of his fellow fighters seized approximately 1,500 civilians and barricaded themselves in a hospital. After several failed attempts by Russian security forces to retake the hospital by force, dozens of civilians were killed and hundreds more were wounded. This would prove to be the final straw for the Russian government. Dealing with a massively unpopular war in which several generals had already resigned, as well as other
threats to Russian Sovereignty President Yeltsin caved. He agreed to the terrorists demands, withdrew from Chechnya, and signed the Khasavyurt Accord which recognized the independence of Chechnya. Over 70,000 civilians would die during this conflict, while hundreds of thousands would become internally displaced persons. Thousands would also die on both the side of the Russians as well as the side of the Chechen fighters (Cohen, 2012).

After the victory in Grozny, Chechnya imploded. The local government became ineffectual, the local economy collapsed, and unemployment grew out of control. Radical elements and criminal organizations exploited this power vacuum to full effect. Sharia law was imposed and criminal activity flourished with local gangs attacking and plundering nearby Russian villages. The region as a result, found its new self-governance at risk to emerging extremist Islamic elements (Cohen, 2012).

The inter-war period

This period saw the growth of a different type of insurgent, one more motivated by religious fervor and zealotry instead of solely on nationalist ideals and the idea of independence. Numerous factors contributed to this evolution of Chechen and Caucasus fighters following the first Chechen War. These included: the regions colonial experience at the hands of the Russians and their vicious counterinsurgency methods, the ineffective and corrupt Russian backed local governance, and the resulting lack of socioeconomic development and low standard of living. Other factors included Chechen cultural aspects of martial courage and blood revenge as well as the influence of the global jihadi movement and ideology, especially through the internet (Blank, 2012). Al-Qaeda and other extremist organizations from both the Middle East and Central Asia were instrumental in this transition to a Salafi based insurgency in the Caucasus, and provided both passive and active support to support the Islamist movement in the Caucasus (Cohen, 2012).
Some of the ways these organizations actively supported the Chechen Islamist movement was by financial support and by importing extremist theologians and religious leaders. This enabled their extremist brand of Islam to spread throughout the region and develop ways to subvert Russian rule.

This Salafi-Islamist theology reached critical mass in 2002 when the Chechen Republic effectively replaced the constitution with a version of Sharia law, further diminishing Russian sovereignty within the region. This form of Sharia law would ultimately promote jihad in the entire North Caucasus (Blank, 2012). Unlike Islam’s more commonplace emphasis on the greater jihad which searches for faith in Allah, the supposedly true Salafi version of Islam promotes a kinetic struggle rather than the more introspective version found in mainstream Islam. It also promotes an aggressive form of global jihadism requiring Muslims to support a holy war against any nonbeliever (Blank, 2012). Al Qaeda continued to intervene and influence the Chechen national separatist movement, and heavily relied on the internet as much as both Wahhabi and Salafi teachings. They also capitalized on the region’s population leveraging young idealists and seasoned fighters which had fought the Russians just years earlier. The Chechen Republic, under these Jihadist influences, soon began expanding and eventually became institutionalized in 2007 when the Chechen leader Dokku Umarov declared the region part of the Caucasus Emirate. This emirate declared sovereignty over the entire northern Caucasus, and from the Caspian to the Black seas. It also declared a jihad against any country fighting Muslims around the world, specifically the U.S. (Blank, 2012).

Emboldened with a new influx of additional resources, the newly formed Caucasus Emirate created a political and military strategy in which to achieve its goals. Their objective was to ultimately create a credible alternative, people of the North Caucasus could look towards
to ensure their governance and essential services. This would eventually directly challenge the Russian Federation’s ability to rule the region. The political strategy of the Caucasus Emirate was multipronged, and included at its foundation basing its judicial system on the establishment of Sharia courts (Blank, 2012). Once this had been achieved, they would then enforce Sharia law by attacking establishments that promoted such things as drinking, prostitution, and gambling. These attacks would target both workers and patrons. The Caucasus Emirate would then fund the military, police, and other governmental entities by collecting taxes in the name of the Islamic tithe. The Caucasus Emirate then advanced their information operation and propaganda strategy and focused on proselytizing their ideology through various mediums especially the internet. Their military strategy was designed to complement this political strategy, and much like during the first Chechen War, target Russian institutions, official, and personnel. Also like the first Chechen War, personnel referred to police, military, intelligence, and civilian (Blank, 2012).

**The second Chechen war**

The second Chechen War was triggered by the invasion of Dagestan by approximately 2,000 Chechen, Dagestani, and international Arab Wahhabists from neighboring Chechnya in August of 1999. These forces were eventually repelled back into Chechnya, and Chechen forces retaliated through a series of bombings killing over 300 people in the span of a few weeks (Blank, 2012). Russia subsequently escalated their response by mounting an enormous air campaign over Chechnya and staging soldiers for a potential ground incursion. In early October of 1999, Russian forces initiated a two pronged advance from the North towards Grozny. With the disastrous failures of the First Chechen War still fresh in their mind, Russian commanders resolved themselves to avoid many of the previous mistakes. Russian security forces advanced
slowly, and with extensive use of both airpower and artillery in an effort to weaken Chechen defenses and deal a psychological blow to the Chechen populace (Blank, 2012). This military advance resulted in hundreds of thousands of civilians fleeing the region for neighboring republics.

The second Chechen War was both longer and more violent than the first conflict, with numerous atrocities committed by both belligerents. Acts of retaliation were commonplace, and the conflict escalated to levels never before seen in the region. International media outlets widely circulated the extensive and indiscriminate destruction of villages and disregard for human life leading to condemnation from the international community. This was countered by Russian government propaganda that perpetuated images of Russian soldiers valiantly fending off wave after wave of Islamic extremists. This struck a chord with the Russian public, which saw the Caucasus Emirate as a direct affront to peace and stability in the region (Janeczko, The Russian Counterinsurgency Operation in Chechnya Part 2: Success, But at What Cost?, 2012, November 02).

The Chechen fighters, already highly mobile by design, employed similar tactics from the first Chechen War. Using small groups armed with RPGs and heavy automatic rifles, Chechens attacked convoys, aircraft, and isolated pockets of Russian soldiers. Chechen fighters, thanks in large part to their ties with other extremist organizations, also used sniper rifles, military grade explosives, and night vision equipment to gain parity against their Russian enemies (Janeczko, The Russian Counterinsurgency Operation in Chechnya Part 2: Success, But at What Cost?, 2012, November 02). Chechen fighters made extensive use of mines and improvised explosive devices (IEDs), scattering them all over poorly mapped roads and rough mountainous terrain. IEDs were often disguised in everyday items such as cigarette packages, soft drinks, and cell
phones in order to maim Russian security forces, and degrade their confidence of winning (Janeczko, The Russian Counterinsurgency Operation in Chechnya Part 2: Success, But at What Cost?, 2012, November 02).

While the Chechens engaged the Russians in much the same way as they previously did, The Russian military waged an almost unrestricted war against the Chechen people. This further exacerbated acts of retaliation and contributed to the worsening atrocities committed by both sides. It also gave Chechen civilians justification to take on extremist based identities, and join the insurgency in its infancy (Janeczko, The Russian Counterinsurgency Operation in Chechnya Part 2: Success, But at What Cost?, 2012, November 02). As the Russians advanced on Grozny, formal Chechen military units were driven from forward bases into the mountains, and lost the distinction between soldier and civilian as their units were disbanded or destroyed. This proved for Russia to be an increasingly difficult problem to deal with effectively. As a result, Russian forces grew frustrated and viewed Chechen civilians as criminals, supporters, or even fighters, and directed their fury accordingly (Janeczko, The Russian Counterinsurgency Operation in Chechnya Part 2: Success, But at What Cost?, 2012, November 02).

The second Chechen War resulted in a definitive Russian victory, as they ultimately seized Grozny, and established direct rule in May 2000. In June, Moscow appointed a pro-Russian regional government led by Akhmad Kadyrov to bring stability to the region. In March of 2003, the new Chechen constitution was passed in referendum, and the Chechen Republic was granted significant autonomy. However, it remained firmly within Russian rule (Janeczko, The Russian Counterinsurgency Operation in Chechnya Part 2: Success, But at What Cost?, 2012, November 02).
The aftermath of the second Chechen war

The period following the Second Chechen War, however, was hardly a smooth transition. More than 4,370 Russian servicemen would be killed with more than 15,550 wounded in Chechnya from 1999 to December 2002 (Janeczko, The Russian Counterinsurgency Operation in Chechnya Part 2: Success, But at What Cost?, 2012, November 02). By 2003, over 100 Russian Soldiers were killed each month, with unofficial estimates as much as three times higher. The unmatched success of the Caucasus Emirate insurgency during this time period intensified Russian frustration and directly attacked the collective psyche of the Russian populace. These numbers had begun to take a toll on the Russian populace, and deteriorated much of the resolve towards military action against this persistent and determined form of Islamic extremism. The Pro-Russian government that was installed in the Chechen Republic would become a short-lived victory, as Chechen fighters would continue to defy the Russians in any way they could.

This period following the Second Chechen War, signaled the end of traditional Chechen resistance, and is often credited with propelling Chechen insurgency and extremism to the forefront. Russian responses to this low intensity conflict were hampered by the lack of coordination amongst military branches and unit commanders. The institutional insistence of maximizing the number of field grade and general officers also exacerbated this problem, and slowed the organizational speed in which the Russians could effectively react. The Chechen insurgents proved to be too elusive and nimble for the monolithic Russian military machine, which only had a handful of enemy casualties to show for their efforts.

Modern operations and events

The years following the Second Chechen War were marked by several aggressive attempts by Russian governmental forces to destroy the insurgency. This was done through over
one thousand counter-terrorist operations, designed to clean up the Northern Caucasus. These counter-terrorist operations involved, direct action raids and clearance operations. Critics of these operations questioned the legality of such actions, and alleged Russian troops engaged in stealing and excessive violence. Chechen civilians also believed them responsible for the disappearance and occasional ransom of their friends and families. This drove the Chechen population further away from accepting the Russian government’s legitimacy and served to only increase violence throughout the region. This violence arguably reached a crescendo in September 2004 with the attacks on a Beslan grade school. This attack resulted in the death of over 350 people mostly children, as Russian security forces stormed the compound. The attack resulted in international condemnation for its mishandling and major reforms within the Russian government. Comparable attacks, as well as assassinations and suicide attacks, would continue to plague the Russians for the majority of the early 2000’s (Nichol, 2009). From 2004 to 2005, Russians also dealt with an increase in violent protests and demonstrations most notably from pardons and acquittals of Russian soldiers accused of war crimes during the Chechen wars (Maryland, 2012).

The Caucasus Emirate insurgency also dealt with several hurdles of their own, namely the effective targeting and elimination of notable veteran leaders within their organization. The deaths of such individuals as Doku Umarov, led to continual power struggles resulting in seismic shifts within the groups dynamic, strategy, and organizational structure (Marzalik, 2014). As new leaders took over, many seemed ready to abandon dated ideology in order to broaden the scope and operational capabilities of the Caucasus Emirate, and leverage resources and support from other international extremist organizations. It is important to note that during this time the ethnic Chechen influence over the organization diminished with Aliaskhab Kebekov who
became the first non-Chechen to lead the Caucasus Emirate in 2014. This also indicated a shift away from previous commanders with a military background to those who were Islamic authorities (Marzalik, 2014).

The Caucasus Emirate has not been the only major security policy priority the Russians have faced in the past few years however, especially as they have become noticeably more active on the international stage. In 2007, they were accused of orchestrating cyber and influence operations within Estonia. A year later, they were one of the co-belligerents of the Russia-Georgia Conflict. Most recently, in 2014, they invaded eastern Ukraine and annexed the Crimean peninsula to the condemnation of the international community. Currently the conflict with Ukraine remains unresolved, and Russia has intervened in Syria and taken an active role in an air campaign against ISIL. With so many geopolitical potential hotspots, it is easy to see why the threat of the Caucasus Emirate has taken a back seat. Despite these numerous factors, the situation within the North Caucasus has the potential to come to the forefront again in explosive and violent fashion.

**Regional implications**

Several regional implications exist as long as the Caucasus Emirate remains a key factor within the area, and threatens to undermine Russian domestic security. This is especially true as Russia has become more involved in Ukraine and active in the fight against ISIS. The fragile nature within the region exacerbates the already tenuous stability along the borders of U.S. allies, Georgia and Azerbaijan. This unrest within the North Caucasus further increases the border security in already problematic areas such as the borders of Georgia and Russia as well as Azerbaijan and Armenia. The lack of properly guarded borders facilitates criminals and traffickers as well as increases the risk of cross-border extremist activities (Cohen, 2012).
Destabilization within the North Caucasus is a threat to not only Russia, but also Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan. This is because Grozny is a central oil and gas node, with pipelines running North-South and East-West. This links the Caspian Sea to Western Europe, and passes through Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Turkey. Large oil and natural gas reserves also exist within the Caspian basin, providing a significant share of Europe’s energy needs. As additional pipelines become operational within the region, their vulnerability to insurgent sabotage continues to grow (Cohen, 2012).

Turkey’s involvement in the North Caucasus has also made the situation difficult. Before the Second Chechen War, in the late 1990s, Russia accused the Turkish government of harboring Chechen extremists. Turkey has recently attempted to demonstrate its diplomatic and political prowess in the region. They have challenged Cyprus’ offshore natural gas exploration, denied to open their borders with Armenia, and even have attempted to break Israel’s blockade of the Gaza Strip by facilitating flotillas of Hamas and other Islamic extremists (Cohen, 2012).

**Strategic implications**

The Caucasus Emirate if left unchecked has profound strategic implications. This is a direct result in the change in tone the conflict has experienced over the past decade. This tone has shifted from one of a struggle of independence, to one that has become more about promoting radical Islam. This also transforms the fundamental nature of the conflict and elevates it to a critical nexus of the global Islamist movement. If successful, this Caucasus Emirate will serve as a sanctuary for Islamic extremist organizations and as a base of support in close proximity to Russia and U.S. European allies. This type of sanctuary would be similar to when Al Qaeda took refuge in Afghanistan before the events of September 11, 2001 (Cohen, 2012). This Caucasus Emirate also creates a strategic level threat by exacerbating the already
porous borders in the region. This enables illegal traffickers in drugs, people, weapons, and nuclear materials relative ease to move from one place to the other. These activities also undermine legitimate government and economic development, and have negatively influenced relations between U.S. and Russia. More importantly for U.S. interests, this Caucasus Emirate could disrupt U.S. foreign policy activity in the region, as well as logistical support for such things as continued operations in Afghanistan (Cohen, 2012).

**The Russian government’s response to Islamic extremism within its borders**

**What the Russian Federation sought to achieve**

**What the Russian Federation sought to achieve on a policy/strategic level**

To better put into context how and why the Russians dealt with the Caucasus Emirate the way they did, one must first look at the situation from their perspective. One must look what the overall situation was and how it was perceived, what they had originally intended to accomplish, and what actually happened upon implementation of their policies and strategy. Only once these conditions are met are we be able to holistically and objectively assess how successful they were in dealing with this form of Islamic extremism. The Russian state, including both its political elite and general public, perceive their country as the descendant to both the USSR and Russian Empire (Omelicheva, 2009). Leaders, notably President Putin, have tried since the collapse of USSR to tap into that historical identity as a superpower and bridge it into the modern identity it seeks to present to its populace and the international community. This was especially necessary during this time as the Russian state had lost numerous former republics, reducing its geographic size and diminishing its strategic position. This unfavorable strategic position was due to the denial of access to warm water ports, resources, and access of terrain deemed critical to its overall defense. This Russian identity was further threatened by a military capability deemed
ineffective at countering anything in the West, and the country’s diminished standing within the international community (Omelicheva, 2009).

These factors directly contributed to the Russian involvement in Chechnya, which deemed it a pseudo-autonomous region that succeeded only in drawing radical Islamists as part of an ideological vacuum. This allowed the Russians to justify their involvement as a means to preserve both the identity of the Russian state as well as its physical geographic borders from further deterioration. It also represented a paradigm historically used by imperial occupants to justify authoritarian methods against anti-colonial sentiment and perceived insurrection (Omelicheva, 2009). This has been exacerbated in Chechnya and similar republics by the antiquated views of the general Russian populace that the Chechen people are backwards, and not truly Russian. Most members of the general populace rely on historical anecdote to further this archaic belief that the Chechen people have some predisposition to violence. Because of this view that ethnic Chechens are not truly Russian and prone to violence, there is also a calling to protect both those of Slavic origins as well as the Orthodox church from Islamic extremism (Omelicheva, 2009).

Because of these factors, it is clear to see that the Russian Strategic campaign must be aimed as much towards the general Russian population and international community as it is at the Caucasus Emirate. This begs an interesting question, if this is the case, how do the Russians define success in Chechnya? The answer may be surprising and completely anathema from what most in the West consider to be success. Russia defines success in Chechnya as both separatist violence and Islamic extremism not spreading into the rest of Russia, not posing a threat to topple the administration, nor interfering with Russian influence overseas. If these conditions are met, then the counterinsurgency campaign has been deemed a success, and any methods used
to achieve that state are considered satisfactory (Schaefer, 2012, June 28). While many may think this strategy completely unfathomable and completely different from any strategy in the West, it really isn’t. Looking at it another way, it is simply a micro form of containment, similar to the type of containment utilized by the West at the height of the Cold War to stem the spread of Communism. A result of this type of thinking is the realization that a whole government approach would be unnecessary and inefficient, and may be why the Russian state used a primarily military solution during both wars. Also because of this limited objective end state, there was no need for expensive reconstruction projects or time consuming efforts to win over the local populace, which is a major reason there is such a profoundly alarming amount of violence that still exists in the region (Schaefer, 2012, June 28).

To clarify, this is not to say that the Russian strategy has exclusively relied on military intervention to achieve effects, and keep the Caucasus Emirate at bay. Since the second Chechen War, there has been a considerable paradigm shift and acknowledgement that elements of soft power are needed to truly prevent Islamic extremism from harming the Russian state. Russian senior leaders and policy makers have recognized the need to attempt to balance counterterrorism and counterinsurgency efforts through investment into the local population and through socioeconomic development (Blank, 2012). By their own metric, the regional containment of Islamic extremism, they have seen a relatively high degree of success by focusing along non-military lines of effort. This has included better intelligence gathering and dissemination, as well as emphasis on interoperability and coordination between all units and agencies. The use of well-choreographed information operations as well as amnesty programs, have also played a critical role in controlling the narrative and portraying the region as stable.
This new paradigm been especially evident with the rebuilding of the city of Grozny, once almost completely destroyed (Blank, 2012).

Despite these strides to emphasize the local population and socioeconomic development, many question the sincerity of these efforts, and instead view them as a means to subsidize the region and control critical aspects of the population’s life. By ensuring Moscow backed leaders remain in control, and controlling the resource flow going into and out of the region, Russia can dictate the quality of life for the regions inhabitants. This means that if violence starts to become more commonplace, Russia can pull funding and resources to dissuade inhabitants from continuing to be violent. The thought is that if the regional population is focused on feeding their families and getting them healthcare, they are less likely to resort to extremism out of fear that that they will not be able to provide these things for their families. While, Machiavellian in nature and diametrically opposed to how the West would conduct such operations, they have been successful in suppressing the Caucasus Emirate (Blank, 2012).

The strategy to subsidize the entire Chechen region was not directed at the insurgents, but primarily the population itself in an effort to dissuade them from providing passive and active support to those who actually took up arms against the Russian state. This subsidization of the Chechen economy has become so pervasive and successful, that the Chechen people are almost entirely dependent on Russia to sustain them. This comes mostly in the form of job availability, and serves to draw the attention of the populace away from supporting insurgents by giving them more pressing things to worry about. The thought is that if they are concerned about losing their homes, feeding their families, or their children’s future, they will be less inclined to support acts of extremism.
What the Russian Federation sought to achieve on a regional/operational level

From an operational standpoint, the Russians see the problem as a terrorism problem instead of a regionally aligned insurgency. They have only just recently implemented policies designed with the populace in mind, but are still heavily reliant on military and security forces to enforce them (Schaefer, 2012, June 28). This is due in part to the ease of employing the military with significant amount of manpower, resources, and existing infrastructure. But much of it is nested within strategic policy direction that defines victory in Chechnya as an absence of interference in the affairs of true Russians, as opposed to comprehensive and meaningful reform. With the local population a much lower priority, the Russian government has a greater allowable tolerance for the use of violence, and are not as constrained by minimizing collateral damage like countries in the west are. This is the Russian government’s way of justifying an enemy centric approach to protect and defend Russia proper (Schaefer, 2012, June 28).

Overall one would think that there has not been much change since WWII in how the Russians approach pacification. By subduing dissidents through the use of scorched earth policies (Boot, July 1, 2013). But in truth, the Russian style of conflict has really changed into a hybrid style of warfare. This style of warfare places a strong emphasis on military deception, and balances conventional forces, the employment of mercenaries and pro-Russian unconventional forces, while simultaneously making extensive use of information operations and electronic warfare. This new type of warfare was unveiled on the world stage with the cyber and electronic attacks against Estonia in 2007, and again during the ground invasion of Georgia in 2008. One could argue though that it was not until the Russian occupation of the Crimean Peninsula in 2014 that the international community sat up and took notice (Ash, 2015).
However, while this highly integrated form of warfare is just now starting to get attention, one wonders how long the same tactics and stratagems have been employed within Chechnya.

A critical component of this hybrid form of warfare is what the Russians refer to as maskirovka, or little masquerade, which is the foundation of their political and military deception operations (Ash, 2015). As demonstrated in Ukraine, these deception operations include everything from Russian Special Forces posing as Pro-Russian guerrillas, to creating political organizations with false ideologies. These operations are designed to control the narrative of a conflict, and more importantly the perceptions of friendly, enemy, and neutral parties. This maskirovka helps to generate the fog of war for all entities involved, and force an enemy to make a decision or commit to an action on false or fabricated information. This enables Russia to gain a position of relative advantage, and focus their combat power appropriately against an enemy that has erroneously extended himself. These deception operations are in large part why Russia has seen a great deal of success in the region, and has been able to suppress the local population, marshal the population of Russia proper, and misrepresent the severity of the situation to the international community. To do this, Russia has relied heavily on its media outlets, and its chess like maneuvering to play off elements of the separatist movement against the more radical elements of the Caucasus Emirate (Ash, 2015).

**What actions the Russian Federation took**

**What actions the Russian Federation took on a policy стратегический уровень**

From a strategic and policy perspective, Russia has proclaimed that modernization of Chechnya is critical to the stability of the region. However, the policies and legislation the Russian government has enacted has proven contrary to this claim, and have continued to violate the civil and human rights of Muslim and ethnic Chechens throughout the North Caucasus.
This has been due to several factors such as continued policies of subsidization and brutal policing practices. Russia’s definition of success also plays an instrumental role in the continued violence by letting it exist so long as both separatist violence and Islamic extremism does not spread into the rest of Russia, pose a threat to topple the administration, or interfere with Russian influence abroad. To achieve this, there has been a specific targeting of nationalist Chechen leaders, diplomats, and lawyers, more so than even radical religious leaders within the Caucasus Emirate. This has remained a pattern since the second Chechen war (Blank, 2012). Some argue that this focused targeting is Russia’s way of maintaining a tenuous equilibrium within the region by continually keeping both religious extremists and secular nationalists off balance in order to keep the conflict from reaching a boiling point. This would also advance the Russian propaganda campaign by maintaining the perception to the international community that the region has stabilized enough to not warrant their involvement. This targeting also plays into Russia’s internal propaganda strategy that the government is actively pursuing radical outsiders that threaten the sovereignty of the Russian state. This enables the Russian government to more easily justify martial action in the region and have tacit public support of their methods.

Russia’s security measures and policies are directly correlated to the historic policies adopted by the Tsarist and Soviet regimes, and have profoundly shaped modern Russia. Russia’s counterterrorism legislation and policies are also the result of Russia’s view of terrorism through a much more focused lens, and are driven almost exclusively by their experiences with Islamic militants and Chechen nationalists (Omelicheva, 2009). One of the more important pieces of Russian legislation following the Chechen wars was the 1998 Federal Law “On Combatting Terrorism”. This law became the foundation for Russian anti-terrorist efforts, and attempted to define terrorist activity and establish a legal framework for counter-terrorist operations. This law
failed, to include political motivation as a critical part of its definition of terrorism, but did identify the Federal Security Service (FSB) and the Ministry of Interior (MVD) as the lead agencies responsible for combating terrorism (Omelicheva, 2009). In 2006, the Russians replaced this law and introduced “On Counteraction to Terrorism”, which allowed the Russian military to be legally permitted to operate in a counter-terrorist capacity both inside and outside of the country. This did little however, to provide suitable means to defend Russian citizens and infrastructure against terrorism, and also did not clearly define what terrorism was. As a direct result, “On Counteraction to Terrorism” gave the state sweeping powers to deal with alleged instances of terrorism and allowed individual liberties and media freedoms to be suspended under certain circumstances (Omelicheva, 2009). Not only did the law lead to the suspension of individual liberties, it also created uncertainty in how the law should be enforced leading to politically motivated enforcement and inconsistent application.

“On Counteraction to Terrorism”, while designed as an offensive policy to counter terrorism, did little to defend or prevent attacks from occurring. This was due to the fact that Russian security and counter-terrorist agencies did little analysis on identifying causal factors and trends in crime throughout the region (Omelicheva, 2009). This could be attributed to several factors such as a lack of sufficient resources and qualified personnel, or the assessment that it was not needed so long as Islamic extremism was contained on the fringes of Russian society. Regardless, the law did not provide a coherent and holistic preventative strategy against terrorism, and demonstrated that the Russians were not focusing on the improvement of their own methodology or procedures.
What actions the Russian Federation took on a regional/operational level

The Russian Government made significant changes in the way they operated in between the Chechen wars, and have made noteworthy changes since then to effectively suppress Extremist activity in present times. Between the first and second Chechen war, the Russians shifted to a full governmental approach over a military centric campaign, recognizing the value of using the military as one instrument among many others in a concerted effort. The second Chechen War involved executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government, the Ministry of the Interior, The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the media, FSB, and the military; a profoundly more comprehensive effort to stabilize the region (Schaefer, 2012, June 28). The media played an especially important role, and highlighted to leaders and strategists their potential value in a counter-insurgency operation. The Russians had former rebel soldiers and commanders brought forward to publicly disparage their former cause and still active commanders, and also had various media outlets assist in propping up leaders that Moscow had installed in order to create a rift between the Salafi form of extremism and the more traditional independent variant (Schaefer, 2012, June 28). While the Russian Government made better use of elements of soft power and the integration of numerous agencies during the second Chechen War, operationally they were still presented with significant challenges.

Despite the advantage of hindsight from the first Chechen War, and better integration across wider lines of effort, the Russians had several challenges to contend with. The Russians still were not fully prepared for the determination of the Chechen extremists, and their willingness to resort to suicide terrorism in order to achieve their goals. This erased any sense of relative safety Russian soldiers could withdraw to or seek out, and produced a numbing dread more pervasive than the constant threat of snipers and mines (Janeczko, 2012, November 02).
This was complicated by the Russians desire for conventional warfare, while balancing their newer role in the counter-insurgency campaign. The notion that the Chechens could seemingly attack anywhere and at any time, coupled with similar gruesome tactics that were employed during the first war, resulted in what the Russians labeled “bez predel” or a war without limits. The use of indiscriminate violence from soldiers, police, and security officials was borne out of this perceived type of war, however, was seen by many as an inability to assert control over the situation (Janeczko, 2012, November 02). Another challenge during this time, was that the Russian military had a significant issue with discipline and unprofessionalism within both the non-commissioned officer and enlisted ranks. This became a critical challenge for the Russians due to the decentralized nature of counter-insurgency. In this type of conflict, non-commissioned officers and lower enlisted soldiers play a pivotal role, and have more direct interaction with the populace. They are expected to make decisions on a daily basis that might have strategic effects, and win or lose the support of the local population. This was further intensified by high ranking officers, which at several times during the second Chechen War, demonstrated a blatant lack of regard for civilian life (Janeczko, 2012, November 02).

These challenges set the conditions for innumerable abuses that would follow on the heels of the second Chechen War and continue to present day. It would also drive a permanent schism between the Russian government and the Chechen population. These abuses were spurred on by actions of the FSB and Ministry of the Interior during the second Chechen War. Both organizations created special task forces to eliminate militant extremists without trial, in order to support military battalions tasked with carrying out counter-terrorist and counter-insurgency operations. These task forces operated with virtual impunity and little to no oversight, and led to appalling patterns of brutalization (Omelicheva, 2009). Russian forces
commonly resorted to abductions of suspected fighters and their families, torture, and even execution in an attempt to gain control of the situation and reassert its influence in the region. Extrajudicial punishments on little or falsified evidence by federal and local forces became commonplace and indiscriminate, and played a large role in further radicalizing elements of the Chechen population (Blank, 2012). The Kremlin also expanded their strategy outside of the Chechen republic and increased the presence of troops throughout the entire North Caucasus under the pretext of improving security. One example of this in the years following the second Chechen War was the creation of mountain fighting forces which would be able to conduct or support counterterrorist operations with limited helicopter and artillery support (Blank, 2012). Perhaps the most important expansions of Russia’s strategy came from exerting control over mass media in order to control the counter-insurgency narrative (Omelicheva, 2009), and the development of military deception operations known as maskirovka.

Maskirovka, or little masquerade, while more recently in the news for its employment during the Russian occupation of the Crimean Peninsula has been developed by the Russians for years, and has been employed against the Caucasus Emirate and external rivals to bolster its position both within its borders and beyond. Maskirovka has several elements including: surprise, camouflage, maneuvers intended to deceive, concealment, the use of decoys and dummies, and disinformation (Ash, 2015). The Russians have capitalized on their control of TV and social media, and have often developed false or conceivably credible stories to confuse, create uncertainty within, or otherwise manipulate a target audience. This includes both the localized Chechen Population as well as the Russian population as a whole. They are also designed to affect the international community, and manipulate all audiences in a manner favorable to Russian foreign or domestic policy (Ash, 2015). Maskirovka is more than the clever
manipulation of information and the media, but a hybrid form of military and political warfare that artfully integrates and synchronizes mass media and now social media, aggressive military and law enforcement operations, and even prejudiced financial policy such as subsidizing economies of specific regions or entire states. Maskirovka seeks to control as many variables as possible to gain as total a victory as possible across diplomatic, military, information, and economic fronts. It might involve such actions as rigging local elections to ensure a Moscow backed candidate is elected while simultaneously employing mercenaries and Special Forces elements to conduct clandestine operations. Maskirovka is strongly and vertically aligned from the strategic to the tactical level, and well embraced by all participant organizations. These entities can not only execute their specified roles, but fully understand them in the context of other actors and with a common operating picture and end state (Ash, 2015). Because the Russian Government employed maskirovka so effectively, they were able to finally bring the Caucasus Emirate under control and bring their own unique brand of stability to the region.

**Analysis of performance and effectiveness**

With an analysis of what the Russian Federation sought to achieve and the actions they took to accomplish their objectives, one can assess the performance and effectiveness of the policies they put into effect. Because the Russian Federation adapted and waged a whole government campaign, but sought only to achieve a limited objective, they were quite successful in denying the Caucasus Emirate the ability to impact their overall sovereignty. Limiting the scope and nature of their objective to keeping Islamic extremism at bay instead of trying to eradicate it completely, also enabled the Russian Federation to better control the narrative and complete realistic short term sub-objectives. While contra to the counterinsurgency methodology in the United States and the West, there has been an incremental normalization of life within the region. This is not to say that the achieved result was not in violation of the legal,
political or human rights of the ethnic Chechens in the region, but rather that the brutal population control measures employed by the Russians have been effective to an extent.

While the Russian Federation has claimed victory against separatism and has stated that Islamic extremism has receded, reports of clashes between security forces and insurgents remain common place. The years following the new millennium brought a series of high profile incidents, many of which caused large numbers of civilian casualties. Russia continues to struggle with Islamic extremism, and resentment within the Chechen population continues to build and seethe (Omelicheva, 2009). The Russian Federation’s overhaul of their counterterrorism legislation created and refined organizations responsible for combatting extremism has provided some success, as has their efforts to streamline decision making from senior leaders. The major deficiencies within the Russian counterterrorism strategy are the lack of coherent and integrated socio-economic approaches and heavy handedness of military and security forces.

While the Russian Federation’s political and administrative reforms were designed to combat Islamic extremism and restore order, their indifference to the loss of human life and disdain of individual freedoms has greatly exacerbated the situation. Russia’s excessive and poorly coordinated reactions to Islamic extremism and brutalization of the local population have also advanced this degeneration. It has not been uncommon for Russian security forces to abduct, torture or even execute Chechens they believe pose a threat to the status quo; all of which contributes to the further radicalization of the population as a whole (Omelicheva, 2009). This overreliance on repressive and simplistic solutions to multifaceted security challenges represents a historical standard that has been documented since the time of the Tsars, through the rule of the Soviet Union and now the Russian Federation. (Omelicheva, 2009). Because of an additional
lack of oversight to these retaliatory instances of brutalization, the Russian Federation has been perceived as adopting short term responses to suppress extremism as it emerges instead of a coherent long term strategy. This forces the Russian security apparatus to reinvest additional manpower and resources to continually keep Islamic extremism at bay (Omelicheva, 2009).

Another factor in this brutalization of the Chechen population is the Soldier and leader development at lower echelons. The Russian military has not, and is still unable to, exercise the amount of decentralized control necessary to be successful in counterinsurgency and counter-guerrilla operations (Schaefer, 2012, June 28). One critical component of this is the underdevelopment of a non-commissioned officer corps, which is currently undergoing significant reorganization. This is compounded by pervasive corruption throughout all ranks and organizations, as well as the indifference of life from commissioned officers. The Russian Federation must account for these issues and develop a viable solution if it seeks to make qualitative progress against Islamic extremism (Schaefer, 2012, June 28).

**What U.S. strategic security stands to gain and why**

**What U.S. policy makers can use from analysis of Russian performance/effectiveness**

Before one can look at what U.S. policy makers stand to gain from an analysis of Russian performance and effectiveness, there needs to be an understanding of what our vital national interests with Russia are. Based on long standing analysis following the collapse of the Soviet Union, five major national interests have been identified and generally accepted by scholars within the strategic security community (Allison, 2011). Perhaps the most notable national interest between the United States is preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction as well as materials, components and delivery systems. Other notable national interests are ensuring global energy security and assuring the stability of the
worldwide economy (Allison, 2011). Perhaps most relevant to the rise of Islamic extremism within the Northern Caucasus is preventing sustained or large scale attacks on the American homeland, overseas interests or European allies. The final national interest with Russia is the idea of maintaining relative peace and security between European and Asian powers with the U.S. maintaining a leadership role (Allison, 2011).

With this understanding in mind, it is important to observe what the United States has been doing since the collapse of the Soviet Union not only for context, but also to get an idea of what policies and strategies have already been adopted and proven successful and what challenges still exist. As a general statement, the United States has supported the efforts of the Russian Federation to combat the Caucasus Emirate and other extremist organizations (Nichol, 2009). To caveat this, the United States has been increasingly vocal expressing concerns about widespread human rights abuses by Russian security and military forces since the early 2000s. As of Fiscal year 2010, the United States provided $7.0 million to support relief and recovery assistance programs, conflict mitigation, human rights efforts and humanitarian aid. This aid however, was conditional in that 60% of the assistance allocated to the Russian Federation would be withheld until it was confirmed that Russia had provided unrestricted access for international nongovernmental organizations providing humanitarian relief (Nichol, 2009). This excluded direct aid for medical support and human trafficking efforts. It is important to note that aside from focused financial support to the civilian population, the United States has provided only tepid support with the exception of some appeals for further cooperation against terrorism in general. While leaders from Russia and the United States have discussed the unresolved issues in the Northern Caucasus, these efforts appear halfhearted and dampened by Russia’s misrule in the region. Calls to bring the killers of notable Chechen leaders to justice and reports of
additional human rights abuses by formal U.S. State Department reports have stalled any cooperation efforts (Nichol, 2009).

President Obama’s policy to reset relations between the United States as Russia has seen significant improvement in the relationship between the two states, but is tenuous and in its infancy. This has more to do with an inability to break down the residual mistrust which has plagued both countries since the end of the Second World War (Allison, 2011). Many believe that greater difficulty lies ahead than what has been accomplished to date. These efforts for further cooperation and to reset the existing relationship, are further complicated by divergent values, national interests as well as disagreement in effective strategies in countering terrorism and insurgency. Despite both countries enduring significant attacks at the hands of Islamic extremists and remaining under threat of future attacks, the reality is that both Moscow and Washington will continue to be plagued by setbacks and disagreement until they resolve the issues of mutual distrust and better manage expectations (Allison, 2011).

With an understanding of the national interests at stake and the efforts the United States has made to date, an effective analysis can take place of what U.S. policy makers can and cannot use from what the Russians sought to achieve and the actions they took to counter Islamic extremism in the North Caucasus. It is critical to note that there are numerous policies and strategies that the United States cannot effectively replicate or employ even if similar extremist or insurgent conditions exist. This is due largely to the moral standard by which the United States seeks to abide by, the internal legal and political precedent it follows and its voluntary accountability to the international community and its own citizens. As such, many would argue that it is easier to determine what not to take from Russia’s strategy and policy, than what can be taken and applied to bolster the United States strategic security posture.
U.S. policy makers are able to take several lessons learned from Islamic Extremism within the North Caucasus. Most notably, policy makers can take the importance of employing comprehensive whole government solutions and avoiding military centric campaigns similar to what the Russian Federation employed during both Chechen Wars and in subsequent years. They are also able to capture valuable information on how to more effectively leverage all the elements of a state’s power such as its diplomatic, information and intelligence, military, and economic means to achieve desired outcomes. Policy makers can also bring a greater understanding of the human and financial toll associated with employing short term versus long term solutions, which has come to the forefront in recent years as the insurgency in the North Caucasus continues to clash with Russian security forces.

One thing that the Russians did well especially during the second Chechen war and that policy makers can learn from, was a vertical nesting of goals and objectives between all agencies and organizations from the strategic to the tactical levels. This helps ensure that resources and organizations are optimally employed and are actually accomplishing what they are directed to do. U.S. policy makers can also take valuable lessons learned regarding how the Russian Federation controlled the narrative and how it utilized mass media to complete its objectives. While policy makers within the United States cannot control media outlets in as totalitarian fashion as the Russian Federation due to constitutional protections, it can certainly coordinate with them and leverage their capabilities to more effectively marshal manpower and resources from the international community in an effort to improve and stabilize security within a specified region. Another critically important lesson that U.S. policy makers can take from how the Russians dealt with Islamic extremism in the North Caucasus, is the necessity to coordinate with multinational partners, especially those who are directly vested in the stability of the region. A
final lesson learned that policy makers can consider is Russia’s employment of population
control measures and how the policy eventually radicalized certain elements of the local
population.

**What U.S. counter-terrorism officials and those at the operational level can use from**
**analysis of Russian performance/effectiveness**

Many of the lessons learned from an analysis of Russia’s effectiveness and performance
against Islamic extremism at the strategic and policy level, can be carried forward by U.S.
counter-terrorism officials and those at the regional and operational level. Most notably, the over
reliance on the military as the primary organization to achieve results. The idea of fully shifting
to a full governmental approach is really executed at the operational level, and is also where the
majority of coordination and partnership occur. By recognizing that the military is but one
instrument among many, counter-terrorism officials can best appropriate resources and more
efficiently develop an optimal application of both hard and soft power to regain stability in a
region and improve overall security. Another lesson learned that can be carried over at the
operational level was limiting the scope and nature of one’s objectives, much like the Russians
did to keeping Islamic extremism at bay instead of trying to eradicate it completely. While
contrary to many Western schools of thought, in certain circumstances, it may enable the United
States to better control the narrative to the international community and domestic population, and
provide a clear and concise vision of what defines success.

While intuitive to some, U.S. counter-terrorism officials can also learn another valuable
lesson from the Russian Federations ongoing struggle with Islamic extremism. They can learn
just how determined some forms of extremism can be and capitalize on the lack of preparation
by their Russian counterparts in dealing with a committed enemy willing to die to further his
cause (Janeczko, 2012). Usually this is a lesson learned the hard way at the cost of numerous lives both civilian and otherwise as it was for the Russians in the North Caucasus, and is something the United States should take pause to fully internalize, if it finds itself dealing with a similar enemy. U.S. officials operating at this level must also take into consideration how their actions will be perceived by the local populace and mitigate ways in which they are perpetuating the radicalization cycle. Heavy handed action as demonstrated by the Russians is not only morally and legally wrong, but can have lasting repercussions in much the same way it did following the second Chechen war.

The Russians use of *Maskirovka* and military deception, may be a valuable tool for both counter-terrorism officials and military commanders in certain circumstances. While the United States already employs joint combined arms maneuver and leverages diplomatic, intelligence and economic capabilities, it is arguably not as well nested vertically as the Russian system of *Maskirovka* from the strategic to the tactical level (Ash, 2015). Much of this is due to the aforementioned moral standards by which the United States seeks to abide by, the legal and political precedent it follows and its voluntary accountability to its citizens and the international community. Counter-terrorism officials and military leaders can still employ these hybrid techniques to integrate and synchronize the media narrative, military and law enforcement operations, diplomatic efforts and humanitarian operations in order to win over a population and deny insurgent influence on their own terms. *Maskirovka* seeks to control as many variables as possible with all the tools at one’s disposal in order to gain as complete a victory as possible or, at the very least, improve one’s relative position over the long term and across diplomatic, military, information, and economic fronts.
What actions can the U.S. take to posture itself for future success

The United States and its allies face a growing extremist threat from one of the most inaccessible and ungovernable areas in the world, the North Caucasus. This specific region has a significant potential to destabilize into a haven for Islamist extremism. The security of U.S. interests’ abroad and European allies is at stake, and the United States needs to work with its allies and the Russian Federation to monitor the situation to prevent the North Caucasus from backsliding (Cohen, 2012).

While many acknowledge that Russia matters to the United States strategic security equation, few are optimistic about efforts to effectively cooperate with them due in largely to the government’s questionable conduct in domestic and foreign matters (Allison, 2011). In spite of this, it is believed that some dialogue between the Russians and the United States must occur if the United States seeks to advance its foreign policy and keep extremist elements in the North Caucasus from becoming more actively involved in the global jihadi network. Some of the biggest challenges of more open dialogue between the United States and the Russian Federation are that both states national interests are so diametrically opposed that cooperation would not only be unlikely but impractical as well and not achieve results of substance (Allison, 2011). Another challenge is that Russian ideals differ so much that any compromise to achieve middle ground would lead to perceived sacrifices of U.S. values. Many still do not see the potential benefits as justifying the effort and believe Russia to be too volatile and unpredictable a player on the global stage (Allison, 2011). If open dialogue was a course of action determined necessary by senior leaders and decision makers, the United States must be under no illusion regarding Russia’s geo-political ambitions or sluggish pace of democratic change.
To posture itself for success, the United States would very likely have to work with the Russian Federation to achieve a lasting degree of security within the region. To do this however, the United States would have to meet several conditions to normalize relations. One such condition would be to advance Russia from the Jackson-Vanik Amendments limitations and pass new legislation on Russian corruption and human rights (Allison, 2011). The United States would also have to recognize that it has limited political leverage over Russia’s slow democratic transition, and the United States should not allow championing democratic principles to take center stage in its approach to working with Russia. The United States must also recognize that Russian-style democracy may never be one and the same as American-style democracy, and should manage its expectations accordingly. The United States should endorse Russian-led efforts at market and democratic development, and must avoid actions or decisions that could be perceived as interfering with Russia’s domestic politics (Allison, 2011). This does not mean that U.S. officials must adopt a position that does not reflect American values or ideals, but rather should express U.S. concerns without being patronizing should Russia violate international commitments through its domestic or foreign policies.

The United States would also be able to posture itself for success by exploring with Russia a concept of international stability that does not rely on a similar framework to the Cold War, and adopts one in which both states are potential partners instead of former enemies prepared to destroy one another (Allison, 2011). If such a concept were in place, the United States and Russia could begin to address the problems within the North Caucasus by jointly conducting a global terrorism threat assessment with a major output being to develop a list of the most dangerous extremist organizations and a list of critical targets to sanction or go on the offensive against. With this output, both states could then work to produce a concrete timeline
with clearly defined objectives and end states which seeks to attain the highest security and
stability for the region (Allison, 2011). With an agreed upon enemy and a coherent timeline with
clearly defined objectives, the United States and Russia could then begin to strengthen joint
capabilities by sharing and analyzing intelligence on extremist threats to both countries and their
allies. If this is something that has proven to be successful, both countries could then begin
establishing joint counter-terrorism task forces and conduct joint operations against extremist
elements in the North Caucasus. Task forces such as these have already seen a moderate degree
of success in Afghanistan, where Russian and U.S. forces have conducted counter-narcotics raids
(Allison, 2011). 

Success against Islamic extremism in the North Caucasus cannot be achieved by the
efforts of Russia and the United States alone, and involves deeper involvement from several
internal and regional actors. One prime example of this would be supporting moderate Muslims
who wish to take active measures against radical Islam in an effort to stem the spread of
extremist propaganda and recruiting efforts (Cohen, 2012). The United States should also reach
out to Azerbaijan and Georgia to assist them in combatting cross-border illegal activities and be
prepared to assist through the use of political and military aid or as part of the joint counter-
terrorism task force with Russia. The porous borders between the three countries (Russia,
Azerbaijan and Georgia) have long been a major security concern, and the United States should
seek to protect oil infrastructure and pipelines, and restrict the illicit inter-state transfer of people,
drugs or arms (Cohen, 2012). The United States should at all times seek to ensure that its actions
do not further repress civilian populations in the region and are in accordance with U.S. and
international standards. Besides military and political aid, the United States can also benefit by
cooperating with and training local law enforcement and intelligence organizations between
Azerbaijan and Georgia, and forge closer ties with civilian and military counterterrorism forces. These organizations enjoy comprehensive knowledge about the local area and can provide access and timely information about extremist networks (Cohen, 2012).

Another country which could be of value to the United States’ efforts to counter the extremism within the North Caucasus would be Turkey. Leveraging Turkey’s obligations as a member of NATO, the United States could gain valuable information on extremists and their support networks located throughout the country. The United States must also be willing to apply political pressure to Middle Eastern states to halt the funding and training of North Caucasus extremists by some of their nationals. By stopping cash from flowing to extremist organizations, it is possible to financially ruin extremists in the North Caucasus and prevent their integration into the global jihadi movement (Cohen, 2012). The creation of a joint financial task force to further disrupt this funding would be an invaluable asset to keep wealthy foundations and questionable charitable organizations from further radicalizing individuals on the fringes of society. The United States must also engage NATO and the European Union as well, to expand their counter-terrorism efforts and further information sharing measures through bi-lateral agreements (Cohen, 2012).

While this form of extremism poses the most serious threat to Russia’s security and sovereignty, the United States and regional partners have a strong interest in countering the Islamist threat. Critical to this is keeping the insurgency fractured and dislocated as much as possible from the global Jihadi movement. By leveraging economic and technical assistance, information sharing and cooperation, and public diplomacy, the United States, Russia and partner states can overcome this regional challenge (Cohen, 2012).
Chapter 5: Conclusion

The topic of Russian foreign policy has long been a cornerstone in the field of U.S. strategic security, and the Chechen Insurgency has been of particular interest to scholars, policy makers and counterterrorism officials since it began. The research question this thesis sought to answer was how Islamic Extremism in Russia impacts U.S. strategic security policies, procedures, or practices. By exploring this problem set in depth, one is offered a unique opportunity to look at a robust and fluid political landscape grappling with the multifaceted effects of Islamic extremism. The analysis of the research on how the Russian Federation addressed extremism, the lessons learned that the United States can employ under similar conditions, and how it can best posture itself for the future, indicates just how U.S. strategic security policies, procedures and practices are impacted. This analysis has highlighted how the Russian Federation has struggled to find adequate solutions for this threat, and uncovered several methods and best practices that may be well suited to protecting U.S. interests at home and abroad. The analysis has also validated the thesis statement which was that Islamic extremism in Russia poses an indirect threat to the United States and should influence U.S. strategic security policies, procedures, and practices. This thesis statement provided the lens from which this problem set was approached, and shaped the fundamental structure of the work itself. The thesis statement specifically drove the creation of the historical framework between the Russians and insurgents; how the Russian government approached the problem and the actions they took, and finally what the United States could stand to gain and better posture itself for the future.

The major conclusions that have been drawn from this analysis range from the complex historical narrative of the Russian and Chechen people, to specific paradigms that U.S. policy makers must adopt to further its interests abroad. The 200 plus year history between what is now
Russia and the people of the North Caucasus plays an enormous role in how this conflict has
developed. It has been exacerbated by Russian misrule in the region culminating in the Chechen
wars in the 1990s and the seething geo-political situation that currently exists. Another critical
conclusion is that stability does not exist in a vacuum, and both neighboring and other
international actors play an essential role in maintaining a sense of equilibrium within the North
Caucasus. The countries of Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Turkey must be committed to
seeking attainable solutions together to reduce criminality between borders and deny logistical
touch points between extremist networks. Another important conclusion gained from the
analysis is that Russia has a different definition of success and different metrics of how to
measure that success. They do not adhere to the same moral, legal and ethical obligations that
leaders in the United States have, and are willing to leverage all instruments of their power to
achieve desired end states. Another conclusion worth noting, is that the Russian hybrid form of
warfare and military deception scholars have observed in Estonia, Georgia, and more recently
Ukraine, are direct byproducts of their lessons learned dealing with Islamic extremism during the
Chechen wars. Another major conclusion revealed during the analysis is that the United States
has several national interests in the region, and must use holistic government approaches
alongside the Russian government to gain and maintain stability in the region. The conclusions
that have been drawn from this analysis will impact the way we perceive the challenge of Islamic
extremism within the North Caucasus, and provide a way ahead for U.S. policy makers and
counter-terrorism officials to eventually bring stability and security to the region.
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