

LEGITIMACY, SUCCESS AND REBELLION IN CHECHNYA: THE RISE AND FALL OF
CHECHEN INDEPENDENCE

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ABSTRACT

Alison S. Tomas: Legitimacy, Success and Rebellion in Chechnya: The Rise and Fall of Chechen Independence
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This paper traces rebel legitimacy in Chechnya from 1990-2007 to determine the impact of heightened legitimacy on rebel outcomes of success. The findings of this analysis suggest that the ability of Chechen rebels to obtain legitimacy amongst national political elites, the international community, and the local population contributed significantly to the movement's ability to access resources, networks, and materials that contributed to the movement's initial success in the early 1990's. Consequently, reduced legitimacy in the later years of the rebellion facilitated challenges to rebel ability to access materials and avenues that support successful rebellion outcomes.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The protracted conflict in Chechnya is commonly framed as the unfortunate rise of extremism in a peripheral, uncontrollable region of Russia¹. The conflict remains a complex, deeply engrained phenomenon that in recent years has produced thousands of casualties, and created a sense of lawlessness in the Russian oblast². Although Chechens have rebelled for decades against tsarist, Soviet, and Russian power, repeat rebellions have ultimately failed to secure positive outcomes for Chechen independence³. Possibly the most successful rebellion, was the one led by Dudayev in the 1990's, which resulted in Chechen separatist de facto control of the territory. The success of this rebellion, however, was short lived, ending after less than two decades at the hands of a crushing counterinsurgency (COIN) campaign launched by the newly established Russian state⁴. While Russian anti-rebellion methods have produced positive results by war terms, rebellion remains, and Russia has, ultimately, still failed to secure its own legitimacy in Chechnya⁵.

This paper seeks to examine the effects of legitimacy on rebel success, to better understand legitimacy's role and weight in influencing rebellion. If rebellion can be understood as "a fight for control of political space"⁶ against a legitimate power, then the rebellion in Chechnya can be understood as the Chechen separatists' attempts to assume control of official political space in Chechnya, that was previously occupied by the Soviet Union. Rebel legitimacy requires recognition by states, civilians, and institutions that the rebel group is the more appropriate actor for receiving political support, engaging in political negotiations, and controlling political

territory than the state actor⁷. The ability or failure of rebel groups to obtain legitimacy from external actors can determine the avenues of access open to rebel groups to obtain success.

Traditional definitions of rebellion perceive conflict as the open, armed opposition or resistance to the rule of a legitimate government power⁸. These definitions paint a relatively clear picture of the what constitutes rebel conflict against state actors. The picture of political legitimacy, however, is less clear as the subjective determination, contextual realities, and opinions of state, external, and civilian actors are needed to fully portray rebel legitimacy⁹.

Bringing legitimacy into the rebellion context is important for several reasons. First, examining legitimacy dynamics in rebel conflicts allows for a wider understanding of the ideological drivers of rebel activity, objectives, and support networks. Second, examining rebellion through legitimacy allows for a neutral evaluation of rebel actors, supporters, and motivations outside of traditional state-rebel roles, where states are assumed to hold legitimate power, and rebels are assumed to lack such power. Third, assessing legitimacy in rebellion allows for a deeper unraveling of actor involvement, roles, and allegiances. Looking at rebellion through a legitimacy lens warrants an examination of attitudes, ideologies, and perspectives of actors involved in the rebellion that can provide insight into their intentions, justifications, and means for supporting or failing to support rebels.

Despite the importance of legitimacy in understanding rebellion and insurgency, legitimacy literature in rebellion contexts is underdeveloped. Bruce Gilley (2011) conducted a statistical analysis to assess the strength of a correlation between 100 indicators expected to provide state legitimacy and cumulative perceptions of state legitimacy. Study findings indicated that states with active rebel conflict were significantly more likely to host low legitimacy indexes¹⁰. Similar evaluations of legitimacy in rebel groups have not been examined, but could

provide substantial insight into domestic insurgency dynamics. In particular, such analyses could provide deeper examination into the interplay between rebel and state legitimacy, and how legitimacy contributes to rebel and state capacity and success. The lack of research on rebel legitimacy leaves gaps in understanding the impacts of rebel legitimacy on both rebel and state roles in conflicts.

Current literature also lacks a definitive analysis of how varying levels of rebel legitimacy affect rebellion outcomes. Absence of such analysis reduces the effectiveness of claims that legitimacy is an important aspect of rebel dynamics or outcomes. This research supports claims that legitimacy is beneficial to rebel groups, by showing that rebel groups that achieve higher levels of legitimacy are awarded with greater access to legitimate political space, resources, and relations with external actors. This paper presents a framework that dissects a causal relationship between levels of rebel legitimacy; access to resources, diplomacy, and political space; and how access or denial of access to these resources contributes to rebel success. This framework is applied to a case study evaluation of the separatist rebellion movement in Chechnya from 1990-2007.

Similarly, legitimacy literature focuses on legitimacy awarded through official avenues, namely states and civilians. This analysis incorporates an evaluation of how non-legitimate actors, such as other rebel or insurgent groups, award legitimacy and the difference in effects and implications this form of legitimacy provides.

While legitimacy is not the only contributor of rebel success¹¹, findings from this analysis suggest that the presence or absence of legitimacy in rebel groups substantially influences rebel capacity to achieve success. Understanding these dynamics helps to clarify why and how certain rebel groups are restricted from, or have greater access to different types of resources. Evaluating

a causal relationship between the resources legitimacy awards and outcomes on success provides insight into how rebel groups harness opportunities to obtain resources and achieve success.

This paper is organized into seven chapters. This paragraph concludes chapter one, which provided an overview of the importance, gaps, and need for examining the relationship between rebel legitimacy and success. Chapter two reviews existing literature on rebel legitimacy and success, and concludes with a detailed description of the analytical methods used in this research. Chapters three through six apply the framework detailed in chapter two to the Chechen Rebellion from 1990-2007. These chapters evaluate how legitimacy awarded through political space (chapter three), external actors (chapter four), civilian support (chapter five), and organizational management (chapter six) influenced success and failure in the Chechen rebellion. The paper concludes with chapter seven, which summarizes the key arguments and findings of the analysis.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter is organized into three sections intended to provide an extensive overview of literature, thought, and methodology relevant to this analysis. Section one assesses contributions and gaps in current literature on legitimacy in rebel groups. Section two builds on contributions and gaps in existing literature on rebel success in conflicts. Section three presents a detailed overview of the paper methodology, framework development, and case study application.

The complexity of the perception, measurement, and determination of legitimacy, success, and the Chechen context warrants an examination of context from a variety of backgrounds. Gaps in literature on legitimacy and Chechnya produced a need to incorporate non-academic sources to more comprehensively place legitimacy and the Chechen rebellion in context. As such, sources were assessed from various sectors, including academic literature, counterinsurgency (COIN) manuals, development reports, and policy analyses.

It is important to note several key challenges in examining literature on Chechnya. First, accurate, neutral sources on the Chechen rebellion are limited after 2000. Russia's restriction of media and foreign access to Chechnya in 2000 drastically reduced external access to Chechnya and subsequent research, media, and policy analysis coming from the region¹². From 2000 to 2007, state media outlets, rebel propaganda sites, and accounts of foreign humanitarian organizations with restricted regional access, produced the vast majority of information on Chechnya¹³. While limited, these sources can still produce key aspects of information. For example, the Chechen extremist site Kavkaz.org is often used by foreign journalists and policy

analysts to obtain non-state based information. A Russian journalist notes that, while the accounts are exaggerated, they are often based off real events and policies¹⁴.

The second challenge with Chechen sources is an inherent lack of direct civilian perspective. The diversity of populations in Chechnya further contributes to the challenge of capturing accurate opinions of the Chechen population in its entirety. Military support, elections, and media provide some insight into popular opinion from 1990-1998. In his book *Chechnya: Life in a War-Torn Society*, Valerie Tishkov incorporates an ethnographic perspective of Chechen life from the initiation to the First Chechen War to early 2000¹⁵. Civilian perspective is largely constrained following 2000 due to two factors. First, Russia's stronghold on access to the region restricted foreign presence, monitoring, and connection with the Chechen population¹⁶. Second, an established Russian military presence in 2000 and implementation of harsh punishments against rebel supporters presents questions into the validity of civilian public statements, that may be influenced by fear of reprisal¹⁷.

Legitimacy and Rebellion

Contemporary literature on rebel legitimacy provides a strong foundation for understanding legitimacy's role in rebellion power dynamics. Rebellions are often understood as a struggle between a state that holds power and one or more rebel groups seeking to obtain power through achieving legitimate rule¹⁸. Within this dynamic, it can be assumed that when one actor gains power or legitimacy, another loses power or legitimacy¹⁹. Fearon (1995) argues that protracted conflicts occur when neither the state nor rebel actors have the capacity or power to achieve victory over the other. In the case of Chechnya, this dynamic is present in the failure of the Chechen rebellion to eliminate Russian control at any given point, and Russia's failure to fully eradicate rebel activity.

In the context of this argument, legitimacy is defined as the acceptance of an organization's "right to rule" over a designated territory by civilians, social institutions, and political elites. Legitimacy is based on several key assumptions. The first assumption is that legitimacy is not static and is subject to change depending on insurgent capacity, conflict context, as well as population needs and perceptions²⁰. The second, is that legitimacy is multidimensional, occurring at all levels of an insurgency, and is the outcome of variety of social, cultural, geographical, political, and economic processes²¹. Third, it is assumed that, while insurgency is a bid for power between a rebel group and a state, external actors can influence balances of power between both actors.

This analysis aligns with literary perceptions of rebellion as an inherently political movement, with social, ethnic, religious, geographic, and military components²². In seeking political power, rebel groups inherently pursue access to political space. Politics, however, dictate many other aspects of governance, economic productivity, and social activity. As such, legitimate political rule is obtained through non-political avenues in addition to political means²³.

Current literature provides deep insight into the factors that award rebel groups with legitimacy. Key arguments of the key factors known to award legitimacy are summarized in the following paragraphs in this section.

Several studies independently evaluate the effects of political practice and support on awarding legitimacy to insurgencies. Risa Brooks (2009) analyzed the effects of support from established political institutions on insurgency. The analysis concluded that insurgencies with support from established political institutions achieve greater levels of legitimacy, which translates into greater access to resources, external support and other factors that contribute to insurgent sustainability. The study also found that insurgencies receiving support from these

institutions achieved higher levels of overall success, and were engaged in longer-lasting conflicts, as they had greater capacity to challenge states²⁴. Allen Buchanan (2002) conducted a study analyzing the effects of democratic elections and practices (respectively) within insurgent organizations as contributors to legitimacy. The study concluded that greater levels of democratic practice, exercised through elections and political institutions that on this argument by examining the role of democratic elections and institutions of insurgencies²⁵.

Much has also been written to determine the legitimating effects of negotiations on rebel legitimacy. Negotiations can indicate acknowledgement from state or other actors that rebel groups are a legitimate force that can participate, dictate, and formulate discussions with legitimate actors. Negotiations may entail compromise, interaction, and developing relationships between states and insurgent groups²⁶. Two groups of thought dictate negotiation literature: 1) that negotiating with rebels provides legitimacy to illegitimate organizations and should be avoided at all costs²⁷; and 2) that negotiating with rebels has the potential to support conflict resolution and state-building initiatives and should be considered on a case by case basis²⁸. Bapat (2001) contributes to negotiation literature by perceiving terrorism as a form of communication, used only when all other forms of communication are cut off to the organization. He argues that when states end negotiations, incidences of terrorism often rise²⁹.

Rebel literature also focuses on civilians as significant contributors of legitimacy to rebel groups. There are three key factors that most strongly influence civilian support: 1) the ability of a state or rebel group to provide goods and services³⁰; 2) violence enacted against civilians³¹; and 3) aligned ideology³². Bethany Lacina (2015) made several interesting conclusions regarding the role of violence in influencing civilian support. First, civilians favor actors they view as their protectors. This perception can be strongly influenced by propaganda and differences in

frequency, brutality, and messaging behind acts of violence committed by an actor against civilians. Second, civilians favor sides that commit fewer and less brutal acts of violence. Third, in instances where both sides are prone to brutal and common acts of violence, civilians favor the actor they relate to ideologically³³. Another interesting argument for civilian support, made by Chowdhury and Krebs (2009), is that legitimacy will only be achieved if an actor's movement and treatment of civilians is based in local context, tradition, and ideological values. Anna Zelkina (1993) argues that Russia has ultimately failed to secure legitimate rule in Chechnya, because it has not incorporated Chechen realities and identities into Chechen policy.

Studies by Fearon, Kasara, and Laitin (2007), GSDRC Report (2010), Government Counterinsurgency Manuals, and Podder (2013), examine the impact provision of services has on influencing civilian support. A RAND study of 89 insurgencies evaluated the strength of a correlation between fifty values and overall levels of state legitimacy. The study found that provision of welfare and basic services provided one of the strongest correlations to state legitimacy for all the indicators³⁴. While this study examines state legitimacy, support from other studies by suggest that this concept can also be applied to insurgent actors who are able to provide "state-like" services. The GSDRC report also suggests that civilian support of an insurgency increases if an insurgency provides services to populations the state is unable or unwilling to provide³⁵.

Anderson and Black (2007) and Ethan Frisch (2011) provide just a few analyses that apply theory of organizational management to insurgencies to better understand insurgent capacity, function, and trajectories. I build on these arguments by applying literary evaluations of how law, provision of services, and management of propaganda campaigns contribute to insurgent legitimacy. Thomas Nachbar (2012) evaluates the relationship between insurgency,

legitimacy, and law arguing that how an insurgency implements and interacts with law portrays a strong representation of the insurgency's legitimacy. In her book, *Compliant Rebels*, Hyeran Jo (2015) also examines why some rebel groups follow international law in conflicts, arguing that those that comply with international law do so to bolster international and national perceptions of the insurgency as a legitimate actor. The same studies that evaluated the impact of effective mobilization of goods, services, and programs on civilian support linked these processes to improvements in insurgent legitimacy³⁶. Mobilization of goods, services, and programs can be a strong indicator of an insurgency's ability to function. Processes that entail efficient mobilization of goods, services, and programs can provide strong evidence of insurgent success in economic control, political functioning, and procurement of resources³⁷. The ability to manage these processes at a federal level indicates control over logistical networks, the national economy, and political structures³⁸. Insurgent propaganda and media efforts are another attributing factor to insurgent legitimacy. Propaganda and media present avenues for recruitment, spreading of ideology, and presenting voice to supporters, the international community, and sceptics. Propaganda and media provides the opportunity to communicate widely with populations, without requiring access to official or traditional platforms of communication³⁹.

This analysis addresses several key gaps in existing literature on legitimacy in rebellion. First, literature fails to produce a comprehensive, well-rounded evaluation of factors that produce legitimacy in rebel groups. While the studies mentioned above address pieces of the rebel legitimacy puzzle, none address multiple factors in a given study, or place individual factors in the greater context of rebel legitimacy. This analysis evaluates multiple legitimating factors in a single context to determine their relationship to other legitimacy factors and allow for an evaluation of the impact of individual factors in the greater context of rebellion.

This analysis also addresses gaps in legitimacy literature concerning external actor involvement in conflicts. External actors and external support are increasingly identified as significant influencers of rebel success⁴⁰. DeRouen and Sobek (2004) completed a study to evaluate the determinants of success in rebel groups. Their analysis suggests that external support is the greatest determinant of conflict outcomes, with greater levels of support contributing to greater levels of success⁴¹. However, external actors have not yet been incorporated into discussions on legitimacy in rebellion. By evaluating legitimacy awarded by external actors, this analysis connects debates on external support to legitimacy literature.

This analysis also contributes to contemporary legitimacy literature by applying legitimacy concepts to the rebellion in Chechnya. Russia consistently ranks lowest on the state legitimacy index and in legitimacy evaluations⁴². Local rejection of Russian legitimate rule and repeat rebellions suggest that legitimacy literature could introduce beneficial interpretations of conflict in Chechnya. This assessment introduces the application of legitimacy theory to the context of Chechnya, to highlight its relevance to regional context.

Successful Rebellions

The base definition of rebel success is the deposition of the state government structure and assumption of power by a rebel group or the achievement of de facto rule over a designated territory⁴³. The contemporary reality of insurgencies and the growing presence of global and transnational factors complicate traditional definitions of insurgent success. In Syria, for example, multiple insurgencies with different objectives are occurring simultaneously⁴⁴. The protracted nature of insurgencies can also mean that achievement of success in a given time period, does not equate to overall success of the insurgency or state. The Chechen insurgency's achievement of de facto status in 1996 and loss of that status in 1999 is a great example of

temporary success. Likewise, gains in smaller-scale successes in insurgencies, such as sustainable support of populations, can indicate stronger levels of success than temporary de facto status or control of territory. For example, al-Shabab has not achieved control of official governing structures, but has achieved sustainable success in popular support by providing welfare services to populations the government lacks the capacity to provide⁴⁵.

Several studies address how and why insurgencies end. The RAND corporation finalized research on 87 insurgencies in the twentieth century to determine factors that contribute to ending insurgency. Insurgencies were grouped into three categories: 1) those that ended with insurgent success; 2) those that ended with state success; and 3) those that ended without state or insurgent success. The study noted that each insurgency was influenced by local factors, but several noted patterns emerged. First, actors that won insurgencies tended to have substantially higher proportions of civilian support. Similarly, actors that lost insurgencies had lower proportions of civilian support. Insurgencies that effectively captures political systems and mobilization of resources had substantially higher chances of success. States were more likely to achieve this, as states were more likely to have access to political and economic structures at the beginning of a conflict. The study also notes that the end of an insurgency does not require the full eradication of an insurgent organization or state⁴⁶.

Many government counterinsurgency manuals also include detailed descriptions of factors that indicate insurgent successes or failures. Factors include evidence of civilian support, economic control, political control, and negotiations with legitimate actors⁴⁷.

Several academic studies also provide insight into the factors that influence success in rebellion. Fearon and Laitin (2004) present one of the more clear-cut descriptions of rebel success, crediting success to natural resources, presence of ethnic conflict, and distance between

conflict and the state capital. Paul Collier, Anke Hoeffler, and Mans Soderbom (2001) argue that economic inequality, moderate ethnic division, and low per capita income produce longer conflicts, and support positive rebel outcomes. They also argue that conflict environments that heavily influence conflict outcomes are largely molded before conflict onset. Halvard Buhaug, Scott Gates, and Paivi Lujala (2009) build on earlier arguments to answer why some civil wars are more protracted and how rebels achieve successful outcomes. They list key geographic factors (distance from government administration centers, availability of safe havens, and rebels based on periphery) and civil capacity as the leading determinants of conflict duration and outcomes. Finally, Jacob Aronson, Paul Huth, Mark Lichbach, and Kiyoun Chang (2015) provide a detailed argument of how and why rebels win. Material capabilities and rebel access to resources is the strongest determinant of rebel success. Rebel success can also be influenced by state economic and military capacity, civilian information to support rebel military objectives, availability of shelter and safe havens, and access to external support. The study also found that highly favorable rebel outcomes are extremely rare and often occur without state concession.

While conflict literature has contributed to understanding how geographic, resource, and external actor presence influences rebel outcomes, legitimacy arguments have not yet been incorporated into outcome considerations. This analysis fills this gap by addressing how rebel legitimacy can produce avenues that can lead to these factors, thereby influencing rebel success.

Methodology and Analysis: Developing a Framework for Assessing the Effects of Legitimacy on Success

The variety of sources, concepts, and methodologies in contemporary literature provide insight into the challenge of defining and tracking the presence and effects of rebel legitimacy. This analysis provides a qualitative framework that guides legitimacy analysis in rebellion contexts. The framework addresses gaps in existing literature that fail to provide a

comprehensive examination of multiple legitimating factors, by identifying, organization, and defining existing factors of legitimacy into a single framework. The framework then builds on this evaluation of determinants of legitimacy to provide a structured methodology for assessing and tracking factors that lead to rebel success.

The first step taken to develop this framework, was to identify and define factors of rebel legitimacy. The literature review contributed to substantially to determining the causes of legitimacy in conflicts. Legitimacy factors were incorporated into the framework if directly applicable to insurgency and rebel contexts, and if they were connected to avenues known to produce rebel success. For example, democratic elections in rebel groups can contribute to legitimacy amongst the international community, which can open channels to achieve resources, propaganda support, and diplomacy. The factors that held the strongest correlation to increasing insurgent legitimacy were: democratic elections; support of political institutions; support of political elites; access to formal negotiating processes; ideological connection to civilian populations and identity; protection of civilians; external connection to and support of rebel ideology; external material support; development of and adherence to internal and international law; effective ability to mobilize resources, programs, and services; and implementing effective propaganda and media campaigns.

These factors are further organized into four categories of legitimacy: political space, external support, civilian support, and organizational management. The factors of each category produce legitimacy in similar areas, and contribute to similar avenues of success. For example, civilian protection and civilian ideological appeal developed stronger rates of legitimacy among civilian populations than external actors. Similarly, organizational factors produced stronger levels of legitimacy amongst foreign actors, which allowed rebels access to foreign diplomacy,

networks, and resources. This categorical organization allowed for a pointed analysis into different aspects of rebel group functioning. For example, legitimacy awarded through organizational management holds vastly different implications for obtaining resources, diplomacy, and the means by which a group can achieve success, then legitimacy achieved through civilian support.

It is important to note the challenges of identifying, measuring, and defining legitimacy on a mass scale. This assessment attempts to evaluate the opinions and public standpoints of civilians, elites, institutions, foreign actors, and Islamist supporters, among others. The descriptions in this assessment are by no means a complete understanding of all attitudes amongst all groups that were active in the rebellion. Rather the assessment relies on public rhetoric, political activity, and the sources availability to deduce the perceptions of majority populations and public figures that can provide insight into these contributions.

It is also important to define success in the context of this framework. Conceptualizations of success were derived from academic literature, COIN manuals, and development reports. Non-academic assessments were incorporated into these definitions, as they provide a more detailed, measurable assessment of factors that indicate rebel success and failure. The framework evaluates rebel success as an intended outcome of rebel activity, and achievement of the intended goal to assume political rule over military, social, political, and economic activity in a given territory. Success is understood to be a process, in which achievements of territorial, social, economic, and military gains support the process of achieving full political control.

The framework builds on definitions of both legitimacy and success to assess a causal relationship between levels of legitimacy; access to resources, networks, and relations produced by heightened legitimacy; and successes achieved as a result of accessing these resources. The

legitimacy factors point to areas in which rebel groups can take action to bolster their legitimacy, or fail to take action, thereby reducing their legitimacy. If the presence or removal of a legitimating factor is confirmed, rebel action taken as a result of heightened or reduced legitimacy will be tracked to determine the outcomes of heightened legitimacy on rebel access to resources, relationships, and networks. If a connection between legitimacy and resource avenues is identified, the outcomes of rebel access to these avenues will be traced to evaluate how these avenues contributed to rebel success.

The rebellion in Chechnya, active from 1990 to 2007, was identified as a case study for this framework for several reasons. Chechnya was chosen as a single case study due to to allow for an initial in-depth analytical application of the framework. The complexity of the rebellion in Chechnya makes it both a challenging and intriguing case for analysis. For the purposes of this paper, the “Chechen rebellion” refers to the separatist movement led by the de facto government and separatist insurgency, motivated by the objective of achieving an independent Chechen state. This specific rebellion was chosen for several reasons. First, the movement experienced high rates of success from 1991-1996 and a rapid deterioration in success following 1996. The rapid growth and reduction in success allows for a neutral analysis of the influence of legitimacy factors on rebel success in a context with relatively stable actor involvement, natural resources, geographic territory, and objectives. Additionally, this time frame allows for an evaluation of the natural initiation and end of the movement to establish the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria. 1990 signified the beginning of the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the initial rebel control of government administration buildings, military bases, and territory. In 2007, Dokka Umarov, the fifth and final leader of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria, declared the dissolution of the republic, and the establishment of its replacement, the Islamic Caucasian Emirate⁴⁸. The

dissolution of the state and Islamist rhetoric accompanying the development of the Islamic Caucasian Emirate challenges the connection of the post-2007 insurgency to the initial movement. After 2007, the insurgency also adopted rhetoric, practice, and ideology that connected the movement to international jihadi movements. While it can be argued that this movement is, in fact, a continuation of the domestic separatist movement, the dissolution of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria and growing involvement with transnational jihadism present considerations that have yet to be addressed in academic literature, that are outside the scope of this paper. As such, the focus of this analysis ends in 2007⁴⁹.

The actors involved in the Chechen separatist rebellion also must be defined. Although many groups were active in shaping the political, social, economic, and security environment in Chechnya from 1990-2007, the focus of this analysis is the Chechen separatist insurgency and the de facto government of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria. These two actors present an interesting case for examination for several reasons. First, these forces held crucial roles in shaping, maintaining, and leading the Chechen separatist rebellion. The leading role of these actors in shaping political, social, and military space in Chechnya in the 1990's represented their ability to access legitimate Chechen political space in ways criminal organizations, warlords, and other active organizations failed to achieve. These two actors also facilitated the bulk of military and political activity directly targeting the Russian government and Chechen independence from 1990 to 2007. Another key justification for examining the two actors is that de facto and insurgent leaders remain the only non-Russian affiliated Chechen political groups to facilitate negotiations and communications with foreign actors. Both the insurgency and de facto government have in some way influenced or been targeted by foreign media, assistance, research, and perception. These two entities were on the radar of the international community in

a way local criminals, warlords, radicals, and religious leaders were not. The de facto government remains the only non-Russian affiliated Chechen political entity to engage in economic, political, and social negotiations with foreign states and institutions.

It is important to note that the de facto government and separatist insurgency were functioned as separate entities and experienced disagreement on some key areas until 1999. The insurgent invasion of Dagestan in 1999, is perhaps the greatest indicator of the complex, yet intertwined relationship between the de facto government and the insurgency. Chechen separatist insurgent forces invaded the Russian-controlled Republic of Dagestan to “liberate” the state from Russian control, despite heavy condemnation from de facto government leadership. When Russian troops entered Chechnya, however, the government switched messaging to support insurgent action, and militarily supported the insurgency’s fight against Russian troops. The leadership, resources, and military activity of the de facto government and separatist insurgency merged temporarily during the First Chechen War, and completely in 1999 as the de facto government lost control of political, geographical and economic territory and institutions.

This framework will be applied to the case study of the Chechen Rebellion in chapters three through seven. The framework will be used to guide an evaluation of the impact of rebel legitimacy in opening avenues for success in four key areas: political space, external support, civilian support, and organizational management.

CHAPTER 3: POLITICAL SPACE, LEGITIMACY, AND SUCCESS IN THE CHECHEN REBELLION

In order to understand how legitimacy contributed to Chechen separatist gains and losses in domestic political space, it is important to understand the contextual realities of political space in Russia and Chechnya from 1990-2007. Political space in Chechnya in the early 1990's can only be described as chaotic, unorganized, and influx⁵⁰. The breakup of the Soviet Union, rise of Chechen nationalism, developing Wahhabism, and continued presence of warlords, criminals, and radicals presented significant challenges to securing Chechen political space in the early years of the rebellion⁵¹.

Following his victory in the 1991 Soviet-Chechen elections, Dudayev harnessed the chaos of the breakup of the Soviet bloc and insecure Chechen environment to insert himself into the role of leader of the independence movement⁵². Legitimacy awarded to his rule through various means contributed to his ability to maintain control of Chechen political space, despite rampant criminal activity, a destitute economy, and administrative corruption.

Putin's rise to power and developing insecurity in Chechnya from 1999-2000 brought about a drastic shift in Russian-Chechen political space, attitudes, and policy⁵³. One month before Russian presidential elections, Putin was faced with responding to the Moscow apartment bombing and the Chechen separatist insurgency's invasion of Dagestan to liberate the Islamic majority republic from Russian rule. The pending elections and increasingly insecure environment in Chechnya influenced the president's decision to implement harsh measures to crack down on Chechen rebellion⁵⁴. The apartment bombings and invasion of Dagestan greatly

reduced the rebellion's legitimacy. The bombings and repeat invasions of Dagestan represented a growing security concern to Russian and international actors⁵⁵. The Chechen insurgency is credited with committing both the invasion of Dagestan and the apartment bombings. The de facto government publicly decried both the invasion of Dagestan and the apartment bombings, in an attempt to retain favorable perceptions amongst Russian actors and the international community⁵⁶. External perceptions recognized the de facto government's inability to control insurgent activity, or maintain security. This perception decreased perceptions amongst Russian administration, elites, and civilians of the Chechen government as a legitimate political actor, who could maintain control and rule over Chechnya⁵⁷.

Legitimacy catapulted the momentum of the independence movement in several key ways. First, the movement obtained early sympathies from international and domestic actors, as well as wide-spread support from the Chechen population⁵⁸. Public acknowledgement in different arenas in Russian political space both restricted the Russian government's ability to react harshly to the bid and opened avenues for rebellion leaders to access diplomacy, resources, and effectively declare control over Chechen political space⁵⁹.

Three factors, in particular, contributed to awarding the rebellion legitimacy in Russian-Chechen political space: support of political institutions and elites, democratic elections, and negotiations. The three factors provide the strongest indicators of areas where insurgents managed to harness legitimacy to achieve greater access to the resources and relationships political space contributed to rebellion success.

Support of Legitimate Political Institutions and Political Elites

Political actors, namely elites and political leaders, awarded the Chechen separatist movement with varying levels of legitimacy from 1990 to 2007. These actors effectively

introduced and, eventually, reduced legitimate perceptions of Chechen independence into official Russian and Chechen political space.

The initial submission of a bid for independence in 1991 sent shockwaves across the Soviet Union⁶⁰. The administration failed to predict the republic's bid application, and became faced with the possibility of either illegally rejecting the bid or losing the Chechen-Ingushetia Republic to independence. Fearing the effects an independent Chechnya would have on border security, national security, and the economy, the federal government ultimately decided to reject the bid⁶¹.

Although Russia failed to accept the Chechen bid for independence, the state continued to provide financial assistance to Chechnya⁶². Absence of Russian administration and military presence in Chechnya from 1991-1998, led the Russia to rely on Dudayev and his administration to manage political and economic activity in Chechnya⁶³. This dynamic awarded the de facto government with legitimacy, even without open acknowledgement of independence, as Russia was forced to recognize de facto leadership as the controlling power over Chechen politics, society, and the economic productivity. This acknowledgement forced Russia to maintain relations with the de facto government, which included a continuation of certain forms of financial and logistical support that were provided to Soviet-Chechnya⁶⁴.

Possibly the greatest representation of this relationship is Russia's funneling of financial assistance through Dudayev's administration to maintain Chechen oil refinery production from 1991-1994. It is worth noting that during the early stages of Chechen independence, Russia anticipated a solution, in which Chechnya would remain under Russian control. As such, Russia feared losing the Chechen oil refineries and mining facilities it had invested in under the Soviet Union⁶⁵. The welfare packages were intended to prevent the collapse of these industries so that

when Russia regained control of Chechnya it could continue to use the facilities without delay⁶⁶. The political dynamic in Chechnya put Russian administration in a challenging position. Russia could reduce the legitimacy and capacity of the de facto government by reducing economic assistance, but would reduce their own economic gains from the refineries and would produce additional challenges when Russia regained control of the refineries. Ultimately, the government decided to acknowledge the de facto government as the practical point of contact for the oil refineries and negotiate continued maintenance of economic productivity through their regime⁶⁷. In awarding assistance to the de facto government, Russia acknowledged the government's ability to effectively manage funds to sustain oil productivity, as well as their control over the Chechen economy. This recognition solidified the rebel role in economic productivity in Chechnya.

Russia's provision of economic assistance to the Chechen de facto government had two effects on rebel legitimacy. First, Russia funneling economic assistance through the de facto government instead of Russian administration confirmed Russian acknowledgement of the de facto government as both an appropriate, and the only reasonable recipient of economic aid. This move also confirmed Chechen control of territory, economic activity, and facilities in the region. Second, this move also helped to secure the de facto government's legitimacy as the coordinating power over Chechen oil refineries. Russia's acknowledgement of the Chechen Republic as the actor through which economic and political relations should be funneled awarded the republic with control over economic negotiations with Russia and foreign states.

The republic's control of economic productivity supported the development of independent economic production, relations, and outputs⁶⁸. The control and maintenance of oil production likely would not have been possible without Russian involvement in oil production

through economic assistance and providing oil to refine⁶⁹. As such, Russian assistance played a crucial role in preventing collapse of the Chechen economy in the early 1990's. Virtually all Chechen state funds were produced through these refineries⁷⁰. The loss of economic productivity from the refineries would have been devastating to an already suffering economy. Further, the state would have virtually no legal or official economic outputs, as the bulk of all other activity was produced in the Chechen black market⁷¹.

The attitudes of the Russian administration towards the de facto government shifted drastically after the First Chechen War⁷². Chechen victory left the Yeltsin administration humiliated, and further contributed to declining popular support. Further, while the administration before the war largely assumed that Russian military action would end the rebellion, the outcomes of control over Chechnya after the war became vague and unpredictable⁷³.

Following the war, Yeltsin supported the de facto government in early plans to rebuild oil pipelines that had been destroyed during the war. Russia intended to assume the bulk of financial responsibility for the project⁷⁴. Russian support of the project signified Russia's continued dependence and stance on Chechnya.

Vladimir Putin's rise to power and developing insecurity in Chechnya from 1999-2000 brought about a drastic shift in Russian-Chechen political space, attitudes, and policy. Putin portrayed a stark change in Russian leadership. An ex-KGB agent, pushing Russian nationalism and enforcing no-nonsense politics, Putin presented a stark change in Russian leadership compared to Yeltsin, the president that facilitated the demise of the Soviet Union, lost the First Chechen War, and was perceived as weak and undirected. Shortly after Yeltsin's resignation and a month before official Russian elections, Putin was faced with responding to the Moscow

apartment bombing and the Chechen separatist insurgency's invasion of Dagestan to liberate the Islamic majority republic from Russian rule⁷⁵. Putin's administration developed rhetoric around images of these events that painted the rebellion movement as Islamic terrorism, and a threat to Russian national security⁷⁶. Putin's administration introduced new conversations of Chechen independence into political space, whereby both the de facto government and the insurgency were terrorists, and posed threats to Russian national security.

Putin revoked many of the legitimating aspects of Yeltsin's policies, including foreign assistance to the government. In 1999, Russia ceased all provision of aid to the de facto government, signifying a shift in legitimate perception of Chechen leadership in Russian leadership and administration⁷⁷. The removal of aid left the republic financially independent, and struggling to obtain oil to produce through refineries, and the financial capacity to maintain refinery production. The reduction of legitimacy severed the rebellion from Russian political space, financial assistance, and material support. The reduction of Russian resources had immediate impacts in reducing Chechen economic productivity, and diplomatic power⁷⁸.

Russia's rhetorical mixing of the de facto government and the insurgency further contributed to delegitimizing perceptions of an independent Chechnya in domestic political space, as civilian and political perceptions of the government were increasingly linked to incidences of terrorism and Islamism.

Following the war, Russia continued its battle against the Chechen economy by announcing that the destroyed oil refineries would be rebuilt in Kabardino-Balkaria, outside of Chechen borders and control⁷⁹. Russia did not initiate moves to re-develop Chechen infrastructure and economic productivity until 2005, when Chechen government administration and territory were firmly under the control of Ramzan Kadyrov. Putin's removal of de facto

leadership from political space and control of Russian priorities also signified a shift in Russian perceptions of Chechnya as a legitimate political actor, to perceptions of the de facto government as an illegitimate actor.

Russian elites present another interesting evaluation of legitimacy in Chechnya. By most accounts, the initial independence bid received ample support from Russian academics and a large portion of Russian politicians⁸⁰. Russian academics that favored Chechen independence produced a substantial body of public writing and thought to justify independence. This writing was largely organized around two areas of thought. The first, was the legal and ideological authority of the Chechen peoples to establish a nation-state. There second, was a consideration of the benefits of removing Chechnya, an ethnically diverse, predominantly Muslim population, from a developing, ethnically Russian state.⁸¹

Support from Russian academics and select political elites contributed to awarding legitimacy and fast forwarding the momentum of the movement in two key ways. First, the ample body of writing produced by Russian elites in public, official political space allowed for a conceptualization of the legitimacy of the Chechen separatist movement in official Russian political space⁸². The placement of such ideology allowed for substantive discussions on Chechen independence to take place in official political arenas. Second, the power of elite writers, and use of legal and nationalist rhetoric to justify the movement all contributed to influencing positive perceptions of Chechen separatism as a legitimate and justified act amongst state, elite, and civilian actors in both Russia and Chechnya. Polls in the early 1990's suggest that Russian civilians were largely sympathetic to Chechen independence⁸³.

Both these factors opened avenues for Chechen independence to enter Russian political space as a realistic avenue for advancement. The involvement of Russian elites also contributed

to influencing how the Russian administration could and did react to the bid for independence⁸⁴. Elite legitimization of the movement's justification made brute military force less appealing. Yeltsin feared isolating academic and elite support of Yeltsin's administration, which was already suffering from declining popular support⁸⁵. Political legitimization of the independence movement contributed to Russia's willingness to hold more traditional political negotiations with Chechnya, resulting in their ability to negotiate and establish political and economic power in Chechnya.

Support for the Chechen movement amongst Russian administration and political elites decreased rapidly after the initiation of the First Chechen War⁸⁶. Russian academics became disillusioned from the idea of a peaceful transition to independence after the First Chechen War. By 1999, Russian academics had completely pulled support of Chechen independence. Rhetoric and framing of the Chechen independence movement in Russian literature shifted substantially during this period presenting the movement as one of terrorism instead of a legitimate quest to develop a nation-state. In November 1999, the Russian Academy of Academics of Socialism and the Union of Internationalists delivered a conference condemning the Chechen independence movement as terrorism⁸⁷.

The deterioration of Russian elite support contributed to reducing the legitimacy of the rebellion movement in the same way awarding support contributed to legitimacy. Lack of support reduced the rebellion's legitimacy in official Russian political space and rhetoric. In the same way positive perceptions of the rebellion fostered positive opinions of the rebellion amongst Russian civilians, elites, and politicians, negative portrayals of the rebellion movement produced negative perceptions of the movement amongst these same groups.

Reduction in Russian elite academic and political support had several important effects on the rebellion's access to political space and accompanying benefits. First, rising negative perceptions of the rebellion in political space reduced the ideological flexibility in official political space of awarding Chechen independence. In particular, growing associations with Islamic extremism and acts of terrorism influenced decisions made by actors in political space to begin to treat the rebellion as an insurgency versus a legitimate political regime. Lack of support from Russian elites allowed Russia to pursue a harder stance against Chechnya without fear of political repercussions from elites⁸⁸. This enabled Putin to implement policies revoking rebel legitimacy, and reducing economic and political negotiations with rebel actors, with the backing of Russian elite writing and influence. As a result, rebel legitimacy was substantially reduced in official Russian political space.

Chechen political elites also played crucial roles in affecting the rebellion's legitimacy. Initially, Chechen political elites supported the movement, as they believed it would increase their power in Chechnya. Chechen elites were particularly attracted to the opportunity to benefit from access to and control over an independent Chechen oil industry⁸⁹. Dudayev's leadership and the initial momentum of the movement seemed to confirm the potential for success of an independent Chechnya. For these reasons, elites awarded Dudayev with legitimacy in Chechen political space, by supporting his leadership, cause, and activity⁹⁰. The support of Chechen political elites allowed Dudayev to access the resources, power, and networks of elites, and reduced Russian presence in these networks. As a result, Dudayev was able to access previously established political, social, and economic networks supported by Chechen political elites, many of whom had been active in Soviet-Chechnya⁹¹.

Support of Chechen elites declined drastically by the start of the Second Chechen War. Maskhadov's inability to gain control over a rapidly deteriorating economy, political system, and security environment challenged assumptions that an independent Chechen state would produce greater avenues to economic, political, and social power in Chechnya⁹². Perhaps the strongest indicator of a shift in the Chechen political elites is the actions of Akhmad Kadyrov, the Republic of Ichkeria's then-Chief Mufti. Kadyrov, initially a staunch supporter of Chechen independence, became disillusioned with the insurgency, growing Wahhabi influence, and the protracted conflict with Russia⁹³. He negotiated a deal with the Russian government, leading insurgent troops to a devastating ambush in 2000, that contributed significantly to Russian victory over insurgent forces. In return, Kadyrov was inserted as interim President of Chechnya, and received state backing during the 2003 elections, that put him in power. Back in power, Kadyrov reinstated the power of Chechen political elites who retained a pro-Russian stance and retained connections from Soviet Chechnya⁹⁴. Many of those inserted into power were belonged to Kadyrov's Sufi administration under the rebellion⁹⁵.

The removal of Chechen elite support effectively reduced the rebellion's access to political space in Russia and Chechnya. Under Kadyrov, Chechen elites returned to activity mimicked under the Soviet system, such as attending Orthodox Christian services with Russian politicians⁹⁶. Rebel leaders were isolated from this system and its resources, and Russia was reintroduced into political space, by supporting Chechen elites⁹⁷. It has been argued that Ramzan Kadyrov, elected as President of Russian-mandated Chechnya in February 2007, is under control of Russia due to Russian financial payments and certain types of support that directly benefit Kadyrov and Chechen political elites⁹⁸.

The initial recognition of the Chechen independence movement as a legitimate movement amongst domestic political elites and administration significantly contributed to bolstering the legitimacy of the insurgency itself. Decreases in this support reduced the rebellion's access to official political space, and correspond to a direct reduction in rebellion control of political resources, administration, and economic productivity. Shifts in support of these actors indicated a shift in power, whereby the insurgency lost its support of the most powerful people in Russia and Chechnya. The rebellion's dislocation from political space, institutions, and elites also represent a dislocation of political power in Chechnya.

Democratic Elections

In 1990, Dudayev, a newly retired Red Army General, returned to Chechnya to pursue a career in local politics⁹⁹. Soon after returning, he was voted president of the Executive Committee of the All-National Congress of the Chechen People. This unofficial political party served as the main form of political opposition to the Soviet party in Chechnya, and was based on a platform of Chechen sovereignty. In this position, Dudayev led two significant riots against Russian administration buildings in Grozny and a Soviet military base outside Grozny. The riots effectively removed Russian officials and military from both posts¹⁰⁰.

Dzhokhar Dudayev, was officially elected as President of Chechnya in October 1991. Upon election, Dudayev had popular support winning the election by a 60% majority vote¹⁰¹. Monitored by representatives from the UN, OSCE, and over 20 foreign countries, the election was, arguably, the most democratic in Soviet and post-Soviet Chechen history¹⁰². When Dudayev declared Chechnya an independent state months later, the democratic nature of his election lingered. Both the representation of Chechen voice and the undeniable support of Dudayev and the movement for independence bolstered perceptions of Dudayev as a legitimate

ruler over the Chechen Republic, making representative decisions for Chechen civilians in the eyes of the international community, Chechen civilians, and Russian civilians. The early show of democracy by the Chechen government posed a stark contrast to historical Russian administrative management of politics in Chechnya¹⁰³. Russian undemocratic tendencies were highlighted following Dudayev's declaration of independence, when Russia sent troops to Chechnya in an attempt to militarily remove Dudayev from power and insert a Russian-backed leader¹⁰⁴.

The leaders of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria maintained an awareness of the legitimating benefits awarded by democratic elections in the early years of the movement. Upon Dudayev's assassination in 1996, his vice president, Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev, assumed power in accordance to the Chechen constitution¹⁰⁵. The following year, elections were held and Aslan Maskhadov was voted into the Presidency with a 65% popular vote, over Shamil Basasev, the leader of the insurgency¹⁰⁶.

Dudayev's democratic leadership heightened the legitimacy of the rebellion movement. Popular vote of Dudayev, and apparent support amongst civilians for the independence movement confirmed that the government was acting in adherence to the desires, needs, and realities of the Chechen population¹⁰⁷. Democratic leadership determination also set the tone for anticipated political practice and representation in Chechen political space. Democratic leadership both confirmed and increased support of Chechen civilians whose voices were largely ignored in Soviet Chechnya¹⁰⁸. It also bolstered support from Western states and international institutions that perceived Dudayev and his administration as a potential democratic ally in Eurasia¹⁰⁹.

The assassination of Maskhadov in 2005 marked a shift in the rebellion's democratic determination of leadership. By 2002, Russia had fully regained control of government buildings and had reestablished a Russian-controlled administration and military presence¹¹⁰. In 2002, Putin hand-picked Ahkmad Kadyrov to be inserted into Chechen leadership. Kadyrov's Presidency was confirmed in 2003, although the democratic nature of elections was contested¹¹¹.

Russia's recapturing of control of official Chechen political space, challenged the legitimacy and capacity of rebel leadership. As the rebellion lost access to formal political institutions, rebel activity was forced to operate increasingly underground. Formal elections, leadership, and management of administration facilitated by Kadyrov presented ideological and capacity threats to rebel leaders. In 2005, the rebellion lacked access to the means through which formal elections could be facilitated. As such, the leadership positions of Sadulayev, and later Dokku Umarov, were determined by a small council of rebel leaders¹¹².

The declining inclusion of Chechen populations in determination of rebel leadership represents a growing distance between the population and the rebel movement. As the movement is forced to move underground, becoming less accessible to Chechen civilians. The insurgent's lack of representation of populations, due to lack of access to political space and the populations themselves, contributes to decreased the legitimacy of insurgent leadership. Without elections, there is no confirmation that insurgent leaders represent popular opinion, belief, or choice¹¹³. There is also no communication or connection between insurgent leaders and civilians that would indicate democratic leadership. This dislocation decreases the legitimacy of insurgent leadership to successfully enact, determine, and fulfil the needs of Chechen citizens.

Potential for Negotiations

Access to negotiations between Chechen rebels and the Russian state is another factor that influenced rebel legitimacy. Negotiations between the Chechen insurgency and the Russian state were common in the early years of the insurgency. From 1991-1998, Chechnya and Russia maintained regular communication and actively facilitated negotiations, and honored negotiated arrangements¹¹⁴.

The earliest negotiations between the Russian state and Chechen de facto government were initiated in 1991 and targeted Russian-Chechen control of Chechen oil refineries¹¹⁵. The bulk of Russian oil production in the North and South Caucasus was refined and distributed through facilities outside of Grozny. The oil refineries also served as the base of independent Chechen economic productivity¹¹⁶. As a new state facing severe economic challenges and high rates of unemployment, Chechnya recognized the need to maintain control of oil refinery production. It also recognized the need to secure buyers for oil production. Negotiations with Russia facilitated both needs¹¹⁷. A determination was made that Russia would pay Chechnya to use the oil refineries, allowing Chechnya to reap the economic benefits of oil production, while Russia continued to profit off of selling oil externally and using the oil internally¹¹⁸.

Russia's willingness to negotiate with the de facto government to reap the economic benefits held substantial implications for state perceptions of the rebel movement's legitimacy. Instead of ceasing economic activity with the de facto government, Yeltsin's administration maintained open communication, and negotiations with the de facto government regarding Chechen oil industry¹¹⁹. In allowing Chechnya the power of negotiation, Russia relinquished some of its own legitimacy and power over the Chechen economy.

Several outputs were produced through this relationship that contributed to rebel success. First, Russian negotiations helped rebels secure control over Chechnya's economic productivity,

relationships, and processes¹²⁰. The de facto government harnessed this power to initiate economic relationships with foreign states, including Georgia, the U.S., and European states¹²¹. The government was also able to keep economic outputs of oil productivity that could be used to implement state services and programs¹²².

Russian and rebel groups also held active negotiations during the First Chechen War. Chechen rebels effectively negotiated several cease-fire agreements with the Russian State¹²³. Two key negotiations were the Khasavyurt Accord and the treaty “on peace and principles of Russian-Chechen relations” signed at the end of the First Chechen War. On August 30, 1996 the Khasavyurt Accord was signed by Maskhadov (acting as chief of staff), and Russian General Alexander Lebed¹²⁴. This agreement formally ended the First Chechen War and negotiated the withdrawal of all federal military troops and government entities from Chechnya. The treaty was followed by the treaty “on peace and the principles of Russian-Chechen relations” signed in 1997 by Yeltsin and Maskhadov (acting as president). This treaty effectively provided a framework for Russian-Chechen relations and formally recognized de facto status of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria¹²⁵. This treaty, and its acknowledgement of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria’s de facto status forced Russia to accept the insurgency as the legitimate, if temporary, power in Chechnya.

Achievement of de facto status marked the highest levels of legitimacy for the Chechen rebellion¹²⁶. De facto status legitimated, legalized, and secured the republic’s control of Chechen economic activity, civilians, and governance. Negotiations also awarded the Chechen rebellion with the power to voice its concerns, needs, and demands directly to the state. The negotiation process entailed Russia acknowledging rebellion needs, and addressing them where appropriate¹²⁷.

The 1997 Treaty marked the final negotiation between Russia and the Chechen insurgency. In 1999 Putin implemented a policy of non-negotiation with Chechen separatists, mimicking international trends of non-negotiation with terrorists¹²⁸. This policy effectively severed avenues for communication and negotiation between the Russian state and rebel leaders. This policy also signaled an end to Russia's treatment of the de facto government as a legitimate power that warranted a diplomatic and economic relationship with Russia¹²⁹.

Putin's non-negotiation policy was increasingly effective during the Second Chechen War. Maskhadov reached out to Putin several times to negotiate cease-fire agreements or peace settlements during the Second Chechen War and was repeatedly rejected¹³⁰. Russia's failure to acknowledge negotiations was met by increasingly brutal, guerilla-type warfare enacted by the rebellion¹³¹. The Russian rejection of two requests for cease-fires in 1999 were immediately followed by large-scale terrorist attacks. Rebel leadership stated that these attacks were a response to lack of Russian acknowledgement of cease-fire discussions¹³². Near the end of the war Maskhadov attempted to negotiate a settlement of succession, entering a peace agreement in which Chechnya would no longer operate as an independent state, but this too was rejected by Russia¹³³. The Second Chechen war, itself, ended without a formal peace agreement or negotiation. Putin declared the war over in 2000, but has retained an active troop presence and counterterrorism operations through to 2007¹³⁴. Despite Russia's declaration of victory, incidences of terrorism, insecurity, and violence continued to rise¹³⁵.

The non-negotiation policy was followed by a rapid rise in terrorism at the hands of the rebellion. The end of negotiations removed the rebellion from legitimate means of communication with the state, which reduced their ability to express needs, to advocate for Chechen needs and separatist movement, and to have their needs acknowledged and addressed

by Russia¹³⁶. Yagil Henkin (2009) notes the shift in rhetoric of the notorious Chechen insurgent leader, Shamil Basayev, in the hostage crisis in 1996, in which he promises not to kill civilians, and in hostage situations in 2004 and 2005, in which Basayev openly celebrates the killing of civilians¹³⁷. Increasing reliance on terrorist tactics to communicate and negotiate with Russia and civilian populations contributed significantly to decreasing the insurgency's legitimacy.

Russia's non-negotiation policy dislocated Chechen insurgents from legitimate avenues of communication and diplomacy with the Russian government. This policy indicated an end to the Russian government's treatment of the rebellion as a legitimate political force, and as such, reduced the rebellion's ability to have its needs heard, justified, and addressed through traditional political corridors. The removal of negotiations from Russian-rebel relations contributed to rebel territorial losses during the war, loss of economic independence from the destruction of oil refineries, and inability of rebel leaders to represent, voice, and secure the needs of ethnic Chechens in domestic political space¹³⁸.

The non-negotiation policy also led rebel groups to pursue non-traditional means of communicating with and overpowering the Russian state. Following Putin's retraction of negotiations, rebels increasingly performed acts of terrorism, hostage taking, and intimidation to gain power¹³⁹. Growing use of these methods, further developed state, civilian, and external perceptions of the rebellion as an Islamist extremist movement, versus a separatist movement. External perceptions of the rebellion as a terrorist organization further alienated rebel ability to access negotiations with state and external actors. Virginia Page Fortna (2015) conducted a study that found that rebel groups that utilize terrorism as a tactic produce longer conflicts, but ultimately achieve fewer successes as terrorism alienates groups from external support and resources.

CHAPTER 4: EXTERNAL SUPPORT

External support is another influencer of rebel legitimacy. External support for rebellions can be provided by international institutions, foreign states, foreign non-governmental organizations (NGOs) foreign extremist organizations, migrants, and foreign religious institutions¹⁴⁰. These actors can perceive rebel groups as legitimate if the actions or ideologies of the group align with external actor objectives, ideology, and goals¹⁴¹. External actors can provide a range of ideological and material support to support rebel activity. External actor perceptions of legitimacy are formed around their own ideologies, objectives, and needs¹⁴². For example, one of the leading reasons the U.S. supported the early Chechen bid for independence, was due to the belief that Chechen-controlled refineries would produce cheaper, more easily controlled oil products, than Russian-controlled refineries.

Two factors influence external actors to provide legitimacy and support to rebel groups. The first, is support of a rebel group's ideological basis¹⁴³. External actors often support rebel ideology if the ideology aligns with the actor's own set of principles and ethnics, or if the rebel group's ideology is beneficial to the goals of an external actor. Another legitimating factor is the provision of resources, recruitment, and access to logistical networks¹⁴⁴. Studies by Bynum (2010) and Fearon (2000) have linked external support to rebel sustainability, as material support provided by external actors bolsters rebel capacity¹⁴⁵. While external actors can provide support to organizations perceived as illegitimate, support is more likely to be sustainable and have greater investment if the receiving group is perceived as legitimate.

Legitimacy awarded through external actors can create several key avenues that translate into success. First, external actors provide legitimacy through ideological support, applied through propaganda or media campaigns, or advocacy. Ideological support can be applied domestically, in an actor's own political space to shape foreign and domestic opinions of rebel movements in their own political space. Ideological support can also be applied in the international arena to influence the action or opinion of foreign actors¹⁴⁶. This propaganda shaping can provide an ideological basis the state can harness to justify foreign assistance, international advocacy, and military or humanitarian intervention¹⁴⁷. External actor support can also contribute to a rebel group's ability to access international political space, the transnational economic relations, and relations with foreign states and businesses¹⁴⁸. These avenues develop rebel legitimacy by allowing rebel groups access to "legitimate" challenges of resource procurement, economic activity, diplomacy and communication, and receiving support. Access to these avenues bolsters insurgent capacity by increasing the resources and connections available to rebel groups¹⁴⁹. Access to "legitimate" resources also bolsters perceptions amongst legitimate actors that rebel groups have the potential to become legitimate political actors¹⁵⁰.

It is important to note that two forms of external support are available to rebel groups. "Legitimate" external actors act within legal means of international and domestic law, have access to traditional means of diplomatic communication, and actions are dictated by international rules, norms, treaties, and environments. "Illegitimate" external actors, include extremist organizations, radicals, criminals, and warlords. These external actors operate largely outside of the law, maintain financing and resources through illegal activity and criminal networks, and black markets. Assistance from "legitimate" and "illegitimate" actors have vastly implications on legitimacy. For example, al-Qaeda assistance to Chechen rebels reduced

perceptions of legitimacy amongst the international community, but increased the rebels' legitimacy amongst Islamist organizations¹⁵¹. Perceptions of legitimacy as an “illegitimate” actor awarded the Chechen rebellion access to resources, international propaganda platforms, and heightened international attention to Chechnya. Both avenues provide different types of resources, benefits, and connections¹⁵².

In Chechnya, ideological support and propaganda campaigns, as well as provision of materials, recruitment, and access to logistics networks have strongly contributed to bolstering rebel legitimacy. The strongest external support factors that contribute to legitimacy are support of insurgent ideology and propaganda, and providing access to materials, recruitment, and logistics networks.

Ideology and Propaganda

In the early stages of the bid for Chechen independence, Chechnya received cautious support from the U.S., U.K., and UN¹⁵³. Chechen independence occurred at a challenging time for the international community, that was balancing newfound concepts of international humanitarianism; foreign assistance to conflicts in Eastern Europe, Africa, and Asia; and re-establishing relationships with a post-Cold War Russia¹⁵⁴. The Chechen bid for independence proposed an inherent conflict of interest to these values¹⁵⁵. International actors also balanced these considerations with the potential benefits of a Chechen state. Many believed an independent Chechnya would provide freer access to its oil production. Many also hoped that Chechnya would provide a reliable, democratic ally to the West in Eastern Europe¹⁵⁶.

Dudayev's early independence movement appealed to newfound international liberal values in several ways. First, the democratic nature of Dudayev's elections, support of Chechen citizens and presented the possibility for the successful development of a democracy in

Eurasia¹⁵⁷. The de facto government's rhetoric and constitution presented components of democracy, adherence to international law, and attention paid to humanitarian needs of the population¹⁵⁸. An independent, democratic Chechen state would produce a Western ally on Russia's border that could support the influencing and spread of democracy in Eastern Europe and Central Asia¹⁵⁹.

An independent Chechen state also presented the potential for foreign powers to secure economic and diplomatic ties in Eurasia. In particular, Chechen economic independence from Russia and control of its oil refineries also presented the possibility for Western powers to reduce dependence on Russia for oil, and held the potential for foreign powers to invest in the budding industry to their benefit¹⁶⁰.

Despite the definitive impossibility of military or humanitarian intervention in Chechnya, the international community intervened in the early movement through ideology and propaganda. Bill Clinton is credited with harnessing his relationship with Yeltsin to influence Russia's diplomatic treatment of the de facto Chechen government towards a softer, non-military approach in Chechnya¹⁶¹. UN and EU Agencies attempted to gain access to Chechnya during the wars to monitor human rights abuses and needs. Human rights abuses committed by Russia and Chechen separatists were decried in official UN channels¹⁶².

Following the First Chechen War, growing security concerns, particularly rising Islamic extremism, produced a decline in international community support for Chechen independence¹⁶³. The Chechen government's ineffectual ability to manage the growing rise of terrorism, militias, criminals, and corruption decreased international perceptions of the government's potential to operate as an independent state¹⁶⁴. These perceptions were fueled by Maskhadov's cabinet, which included rebel leaders, such as Shamil Basayev, who was responsible for the hostage

crises in 1995 and 1996, and an attempted impeachment of Maskhadov in 1992¹⁶⁵. Maskhadov's inability to gain control of economic and political activity in Chechnya, further reduced international support by alienating expectations of benefiting from an independent Chechen oil economy¹⁶⁶. A succession of high-profile attacks launched by Chechen insurgents in the late 1990's formally secured the reduction in international support of the Chechen government. In 1998, Chechen insurgents initiated a hostage crisis that resulted in the deaths of four British engineers at the hands of Chechen extremists¹⁶⁷. That following year, Chechen insurgents committed the Moscow apartment bombing, and invasion of Dagestan. The government's inability to secure economic productivity or security led the majority of foreign investors, humanitarian organizations, and diplomats to cease investment, implementation, and economic activity in Chechnya¹⁶⁸.

International opinions of the Second Chechen War were mixed. In 1999, Russia severely reduced foreign state and institutional access to Chechnya, reducing the international community's involvement in monitoring war crimes and providing humanitarian assistance¹⁶⁹. International support further declined after the September 11th. Following the attacks, Russia framed the Chechen rebellion as part of the greater global trend towards Islamic extremism. Putin attempted to develop relations with the U.S. based on a shared sense of victimization from Islamic extremism¹⁷⁰. The ideological War on Terror, further alienated the insurgency's legitimacy in the international community due growing fears counterinsurgency activities targeting Islam, terrorism, and the transnational al-Qaeda network, which Chechen insurgents were known to be connected with¹⁷¹. Increasingly brutal attacks launched in retaliation against Russian military brutality during the Second Chechen War seemed to confirm the title¹⁷². From

2002 to 2004 Chechen insurgents launched seven deadly terrorist attacks, further securing their terrorism title and further alienating international sympathy¹⁷³.

The ideological shift in the international community from one of humanitarianism, global peace and supporting development of national identities shifted to one of fear, survival, and alienation of perceived Islamic threats¹⁷⁴. These perceptions contributed to reducing the legitimacy of the movement, that became looped in with the harsh, often dehumanizing perception of Islamic extremism. These perceptions greatly impacted the rebellion's access to international political space, diplomatic channels, and resources. Stricter laws in the U.S. and EU against terrorist organizations, reduced avenues through which assistance could be provided in Chechnya¹⁷⁵. The rebellion's failure to distance itself from growing international perceptions of Islamic terrorism substantially reduced their legitimacy in the eyes of the international community. By 2002, Chechen separatists were recognized by the UN, U.S., and several other states across Europe as a designated terrorist organization¹⁷⁶. The formal recognition of terrorism severed the rebel group from opportunities of negotiation, diplomacy, and foreign assistance through international institutions and many foreign states. As a result, rebel actors found themselves cut off from the ability to develop economic relations, obtain resources and materials, and voice ideological and humanitarian needs in formal diplomatic platforms¹⁷⁷.

Foreign Islamic actors have also played a significant role in influencing the Chechen rebellion's ideological path. Moshe Grammer (2008) found that the lack of Islamic schools in Chechnya, due to resource restraints and anti-Islamic policies from the Russian Federation, led many Muslim Chechens to seek Islamic schooling abroad. These schools exposed the younger Chechen population to Wahhabi theories of Islam, that were easily incorporated into the case of Chechnya, where war against a perceived foreign oppressor had been waged for decades¹⁷⁸.

Wahhabism played a substantial role in directing the insurgency's ideology in the later years of the movement. It also contributed significantly to the rebel's ability to garner support from al-Qaeda¹⁷⁹. Chechen rebels became acquainted with the founding members of al-Qaeda as foreign fighters in the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in the 1980's. Within the conflict, Chechen and Afghan rebels had important similarities. The social structures of both groups were organized around a complicated mixture of Islamic, communal and tribal practice. Both groups were engaged in a fight with the Soviet Union to remove a foreign colonial-type power from their traditional land. These ideological similarities allowed Afghan rebels, later organized into al-Qaeda, to sympathize and internalize the Chechen independence movement¹⁸⁰.

When Dudayev declared independence in 1991, the established al-Qaeda movement sent one of their prominent leaders, Abu Abdullah, to Chechnya to establish training camps, teach Wahhabism, and support the separatist cause¹⁸¹. Abdullah is credited with helping plan key insurgent activity during the First and Second Chechen wars, including the invasion of Dagestan and encouraging the rise in jihadi tactics after 2000¹⁸². He also served as a mentor to insurgent leader Shamil Basayev, who led key military operations in the Chechen Wars, and played an active role in the insurgency until his death¹⁸³. Abdullah acted as the main point of contact between al-Qaeda and the insurgency. He opened Wahhabi schools in Chechnya, reducing the need for young Chechens to travel abroad to attend religious schools. He also provided military training, and al-Qaeda-based ideology¹⁸⁴.

Al-Qaeda affiliates also supported the Chechen rebellion's propaganda efforts. Many of the movement's successful social media campaigns are mirrored after al-Qaeda and ISIS propaganda campaigns and rhetoric. Since 1998, al-Qaeda supported the Chechen cause on extremist social media platforms, portraying positive reinforcement for Chechen independence,

and supporting the removal of Russia from the North Caucasus¹⁸⁵. Al-Qaeda support in developing independent Chechen separatist propaganda media and harnessing their own platforms to sell the Chechen separatist cause provided the rebellion with international recognition and legitimacy amongst international Islamist groups. Training and propaganda development support helped the rebellion establish its own propaganda campaign. Al-Qaeda support was particularly effective in supporting the establishment of Chechen separatist social media presence, which allowed rebels to communicate with a wider, international audience. Al-Qaeda also promoted Chechen insurgents and their cause on international al-Qaeda platforms, which contributed to the cause gaining legitimacy amongst Islamist organizations globally¹⁸⁶.

Chechen diasporas were also key external supporters of the rebellion. In particular, the early Chechen insurgency benefited heavily from propaganda efforts by Jordanian-Chechen communities living in the Middle East¹⁸⁷. Jordanian-Chechens abroad helped mobilize sympathy for the Chechen cause in states across the Middle East¹⁸⁸. This mobilization led sympathetic Middle Eastern states to adopt pro-Chechen platforms in international diplomatic arenas¹⁸⁹. Several states, including Jordan, Syria, and Iraq also accepted Chechen refugees following the Chechen wars¹⁹⁰. The Chechen cause was easily mobilized in many states still recovering from legacies of Western colonialism.

Middle Eastern sympathies for the Chechen cause began to decline in 2003 following the succession of rebel terrorist attacks in Russia¹⁹¹. Many states in the Middle East fighting al-Qaeda units began to identify more with Russia and a shared fight against terrorism than with an increasingly extremist Chechen insurgency¹⁹². The reduction in the rebel cause's legitimacy created a shift in diplomatic rhetoric, and domestic propaganda from pro-Chechen separatism, to anti-Chechen terrorism. This ideological shift contributed to fewer champions actively

supporting Chechen independence in international diplomatic arenas. Jordan and Syria also implemented changes in immigration policy, reducing Chechen diaspora and refugee access to visas¹⁹³.

Provision of Resources, Financing, and Access to Logistical Networks

External provision of resources, financing and access to logistical networks presents another important indicator of rebel legitimacy. Upon declaring independence, the de facto Chechen state benefited from many of the resources Russia left behind¹⁹⁴. The use and destruction of rebel resources and destruction of Chechen oil pipelines forced rebels to seek alternative methods of procuring resources from 1996-2007¹⁹⁵. A devastating war, followed by a deteriorating security environment meant that businesses were producing little productivity, and had little security in the safety of infrastructure and employees¹⁹⁶. By 2002, Russia had regained control of Chechen government buildings, oil refineries, and military bases. Rebel losses in these areas resulted in the movement being completely cut off from the legitimate Chechen economy¹⁹⁷.

Initially, the de facto government attempted to distance itself from Islamic extremism in Chechnya¹⁹⁸. The Chechen separatist insurgency, alternatively, welcomed training, arms, and resources from Islamist supporters, particularly al-Qaeda affiliates¹⁹⁹. After the First Chechen War, a desperate need for supplies, soldiers, and allies increasingly influenced the de facto government's dependence on Islamist supporters, warlords, and criminal networks to obtain resources²⁰⁰. While the numbers of foreign fighters are contested, an active presence of foreign Islamic fighters has been confirmed in both Chechen wars²⁰¹. Following the Second Chechen War, the complete retraction of assistance and support from the international community, led the movement to rely almost exclusively on al-Qaeda to obtain funding, arms, and other materials²⁰².

The increasing interdependence between the Chechen insurgency and al-Qaeda affiliates contributed to the Chechen black market becoming a trafficking hub for Afghan trafficking and poppy trade²⁰³.

Greater legitimacy amongst al-Qaeda affiliates opened avenues for rebel actors to profit from al-Qaeda criminal and poppy networks, increased affiliation with these networks further alienated international perceptions of the rebellion a legitimate political entity²⁰⁴. As the government, insurgency, and crime became increasingly intertwined, differentiation between legitimate political actors and criminals became blurred. Efforts to provide foreign diplomacy and assistance to Chechnya became increasingly challenging, as the politicians and leaders in Chechen political space were increasingly associated with criminal networks and activity²⁰⁵. By the start of the Second Chechen War, Russia had become a more appealing ally, through which foreign assistance and diplomacy could be channeled²⁰⁶. Increasing reliance on Russian over the de facto government to manage economic and political matters in Chechnya, signaled a reduction in external perceptions of rebel legitimacy. Ultimately, this shift contributed to a distancing of external material support and diplomacy with the de facto government, in favor of Russia.

Delegitimization of the rebellion was further confirmed by earmarking of foreign assistance for terrorism from 2003-2007. During this time, Russia welcomed a stream of foreign assistance for Chechnya²⁰⁷. The bulk of this assistance was earmarked as part of a greater “hearts and minds” campaign to help Russia combat its growing “Chechen terrorist problem”²⁰⁸. The targeted nature of this assistance had several key effects on shifting legitimacy in the Chechen insurgency. First, the provision and negotiation of funds with the Russian Federation clearly identified the international community’s recognition of Russia as the legitimate ruler of Chechnya. Second, the targeting of the assistance as part of a “hearts and minds campaign”

signaled the international community's recognition of the insurgency as a terrorist organization, and thereby an illegitimate actor in Chechen political space. In providing assistance to combat terrorism, the international community also invested in the eradication of the Chechen insurgency. This framing of foreign assistance had stark consequences on delegitimizing the Chechen insurgency. While originally supported as a legitimate separatist movement in the early 1990's, by 2000, the rebellion's legitimacy was severely reduced by growing perceptions of terrorism. The shift in perception contributed to swaying international actors to rely more on Russia to manage economic, political, and social matters in Chechnya. As such, the rebellion was effectively removed from external channels that had previously awarded it with the ability to negotiate, voice its needs and objectives, and receive financial and material support.

CHAPTER 5: CIVILIAN SUPPORT

Civilian support constitutes another important factor that determines rebel legitimacy and success. The acknowledgement of civilians of their perceived ruler has significant implications for the legitimacy of the ruling body. Civilians award legitimacy through adhering to law, voluntary military service, accepting rebel management of economic activity, not resisting rebel political activity, and actively participating in public elections²⁰⁹. In performing these actions, civilians support the functioning of the ruling system²¹⁰. Effective political systems represent and act in the best interests of civilians, and will receive support from civilians to ensure the active maintenance of the system's functioning²¹¹. Traditionally, states manage political functions, protect civilians, maintain security, and provide key services. However, if civilians perceive a non-state actor as a more legitimate actor in these roles, civilians may award more support and legitimacy to the non-state actor to sustain their support of the population²¹².

The factors that most strongly affect civilian support of rebel groups are connection to rebel ideology and perceptions of rebel groups as civilian protectors. Civilian support opens avenues for rebels to recruit volunteers and obtain resources, information, and shelter²¹³. Access to these resources can translate into rebel military victories, control over populations, economic control, and sustainable access to local resources, all of which produce successful outcomes in rebellion²¹⁴.

Two main factors bolster rebel legitimacy among civilians. The first is the ability of the rebel movement to appeal to civilian ideology, identity, and tradition. The second is civilian perception of the rebel group as a protecting agent.

Legitimacy through Ideology, Identity and Tradition

The Chechen identity is constructed from a complex interplay of religious, social, cultural, and political factors²¹⁵. Some argue that Russian rule has never been fully accepted by the Chechen population as legitimate²¹⁶. In part, this is due to a stronger connection to communal ties, religious institutions, and tribal governance than a national identity among the Chechen population²¹⁷. The conceptualization of an independent Chechen state arises out of a sense of perceived legitimacy of Chechen populations to rule over their own peoples and territory.

The early rebellion was largely mobilized around Chechen nationalism and the right of Chechen populations to declare an independent nation-state²¹⁸. Dudayev himself presented fitting leadership for such a campaign, as his life portrayed a stereotypical image of the Chechen identity and reality. An ethnic Chechen, he returned to Chechnya in 1959 with his family, who had been deported to Kazakhstan in 1944 under Stalin's orders. After attending university in Moscow, Dudayev launched a successful career with the Russian Red Army, retiring a war hero. Upon returning to Chechnya, Dudayev entered local politics as an advocate for Chechen independence, pushing a campaign formulated from a mix of social, religious and ethnic symbolism²¹⁹. Dudayev's appeal to Chechen identity and lifestyle contributed to the population's ability to connect with his ideology and vision for the rebellion.

The legacy of Stalin's deportation of ethnic Chechens in 1944 also awarded an ideological driver for the rebel movement. Grammer (2009) believed that the deportation and a lingering sense of victimization served as a stronger unifier of ethnic Chechens than a shared ethnic or religious identity. Recent memories of Chechen victimization spoke more strongly to a diverse Chechen population than historical constructs of nomadic lifestyles that had little impact on contemporary realities of the population²²⁰.

In 1991-1992, Chechnya experienced a mass emigration of ethnic Russians and non-Chechen minority populations out of the Republic²²¹. The mass emigration solidified the unity of a Chechen population, and the de facto government's ideological right to rule the population. In just two years, the Russian population dropped from 36% of the Chechen population to 1.5%.²²² By 2002, 93.7% of the population in Chechnya was ethnic Chechen, compared to 65.4% in 1991²²³.

The ideological connection between civilians and the rebel movement vastly contributed to widespread civilian support of the rebellion. A number of indicators suggest that public support for Chechen independence and Dudayev's rule was relatively high and wide spread²²⁴. In Chechnya, rebel declaration of independence and establishment of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria was met with a peaceful transition. Civilians did not riot, protest, or reject the determination²²⁵. Additionally, thousands of civilians volunteered to join the Chechen military upon the declaration of independence and more were present when Russian troops entered Chechnya to remove Dudayev from power in 1991²²⁶.

Achieving legitimacy amongst Chechen populations contributed to several key insurgent successes. First, popular support made it easy for the government to recruit and mobilize volunteers for an army, that proved crucial in maintaining the government's control of Chechen military bases, administrative buildings, and oil refineries²²⁷. Chechen support of independence from Russia helped increase legitimacy in external perceptions of the rebellion cause. Higher levels of legitimacy contributed to external support of the rebellion. Chechen civilians also provided information to the insurgency from 1991 through to 2002²²⁸. Several rebel ambushes and military victories during the two Chechen Wars were achieved through information provided by civilians²²⁹. Civilians also provided safe havens to rebel leaders and militia during and after

the wars²³⁰. These safe havens became particularly important and dangerous after 2000, when the rebellion lost access to political space and was forced to operate in hiding from Russian security forces. Chechens for an independent state contributed to external support of the movement's legitimacy.

The movement experienced a stark ideological shift after 1996, which challenged perceptions of its legitimacy amongst civilians. Growing Wahhabi influence in insurgent rhetoric, tactics, and motivations alienated large portions of Chechen populations who identified with less conservative, Sufi forms of Islam and were largely secular in practice²³¹. Life under an Islamic state had vastly different implications for Chechen populations than the secular, modern state headed by Dudayev. In particular, many Chechens found it difficult to identify with a state that increasingly called for the inclusion of sharia law in the constitution, seclusion of women, and participating in translation jihadi wars²³². These ideals did not mesh with the realities of a population that identified more strongly with Europe than the Middle East, had some of the strongest gender equality in the Russian Federation, and rarely attended religious services²³³.

While the full effects of civilian support from 2000 to 2007 are difficult to assess due to lack of data, state control of media, and implementation of harsh punishment against rebel supporters and families that could deter expression of anti-Russian opinion. Support for Russian rule is assumedly low, indicated by low voter turnout in public elections, political brutality against civilians, and media reports of rampant human rights abuses and corruption²³⁴. Russia's maintenance of military presence in Chechnya, and growing numbers and scale of terrorist attacks from 2000 to 2007 indicate the rebellion continues to receive enough recruitment, resources, and support to sustain activity²³⁵. What portion of recruitment and resources comes from the population versus external actors, such as al-Qaeda, is more difficult to determine. The

rebel's media website, Kavkaz.org, posts weekly reports of civilian murders, disappearances, and violence at the hands of Russian security forces²³⁶. Such accounts may indicate justification for rebellion recruitment.

Protection of Civilians

The ability, perception, and implementation of civilian protection enacted by rebel groups presents another factor that contributes to rebel legitimacy amongst civilian populations. The early rebellion organized much of its rhetoric around the grievances and victimization of Chechens who were deported on Stalin's orders²³⁷. The deportation order was one of a number of anti-Islamic, anti-Chechen policies implemented by the Soviet Union from 1920-1954, the effects of which remained in the living memories of Chechen populations²³⁸. The bid for independence was justified as much by a conceptualization of national identity as by the appeal of protection from future Russian policies. The pending breakup of the Soviet bloc in 1991 and transformation of Russia into an ethnically Russian state further exacerbated Chechen concerns over their freedoms, safety, and role in an ethnically Russian state²³⁹. The potential for independence brought with it a hope for security of Chechen identity and livelihoods.

Dudayev's history as a successful Red Army general and early military successes against Russian troops in Chechnya bolstered perceptions of the rebellion's ability to protect civilian populations. This perception was further justified when Chechen rebels and civilian volunteers successfully deterred Russian troops from removing Dudayev from power in 1991. When Russian troops entered Chechnya in 1994 initiating the First Chechen War, Dudayev declared his government would protect civilian populations for Russian aggression²⁴⁰.

The perception of rebels as protectors was shattered during the First Chechen War. The government was able to negotiate cease-fire deals, and made large efforts to reduce civilian

casualties. However, by the end of the war, civilian casualties were estimated to be between 50,000 and 100,000²⁴¹. Additionally, while Dudayev and Maskhadov attempted to adhere to the rules of war, two large scale hostage crises were produced by rebel leaders. In both crises, civilians were used by the rebels as shields against oncoming Russian militia²⁴². The high number of casualties, despite cease-fire negotiations and peace agreements, contributed to a sense of failure and reduced legitimacy of the de facto government's ability to protect Chechen civilians.

Maskhadov's failure to establish economic, social, or political control after the First Chechen War, further contributed to a sense of failure and protection of the government. The war destroyed houses and businesses, produced casualties, and left hundreds of thousands of civilians in need of services and assistance²⁴³. Civilians and soldiers who lost houses, suffered injuries, and faced other challenges of war anticipated assistance the government did not have the capacity to provide²⁴⁴. The de facto government proved largely ineffective in providing basic support to soldiers, injured civilians, internally displaced persons, and returning refugees²⁴⁵. Inability to provide services that could protect and service needy civilians reduced civilian perceptions of the rebellion as a legitimate protector and political force.

The Second Chechen War presented even greater challenges to rebel ability to protect civilians. The increasingly brutal policies of the Russian military under Putin's command, lack of cease-fires, and virtual absence of media influenced rebel leaders to pursue harsher, guerilla warfare type tactics²⁴⁶. The Second Chechen War produced a rise in rebel-initiated terrorism, of which civilians were often casualties²⁴⁷. Rebel disregard for civilian casualties reduced the effectiveness of rebel claims that they were fighting to support and protect civilian lives. Greater movement towards guerilla warfare also brought war increasingly out of battlegrounds and into

cities. One such battle occurred in 1999 when Shamil Basaev was leading a battle against Russian troops. After suffering terrible losses, Basayev led the remaining rebel militia, followed by Russian troops, to his hometown, anticipating that familiarity with the terrain would provide a military advantage. Instead, Russian militia destroyed the town and killed nearly 100 villagers, including six members of Basayev's family. Civilian opinions of the rebellion were further reduced after incidences such as these, where the rebellion was perceived as putting civilians at risk²⁴⁸.

The Second Chechen War also presented crushing military blows against the rebellion on a scale not seen in the First Chechen War²⁴⁹. The failure of the insurgency to negotiate with the Russian government to secure peace deals challenged civilian perceptions of rebel ability to protect Chechen civilians against Russian forces. One of the main reasons for Kadyrov's defection from the insurgency is the perception that conceding to Russia as the surest way, possibly only way, to end the war and achieve security in Chechnya²⁵⁰.

While Russia declared victory over the rebellion in 2000, forces failed to achieve control of Chechnya until 2002²⁵¹. From 2002 up until 2007, Russia retained an active military presence of security forces in Chechnya and launched an ongoing counterinsurgency campaign to address the Chechen insurgency²⁵². Russia's COIN operations further challenged the legitimacy of rebel protection of civilians. After 2000, Russian troops were ordered to punish rebels and suspected supporters. Family members of rebels became targets for imprisonment, torture, and murder²⁵³. Over time, security forces largely failed to differentiate between Chechen civilians and Chechen insurgents, resulting in arbitrary arrests, torture, and civilian disappearances²⁵⁴. While the rebellion references such acts commonly in propaganda campaigns, rebels failed to openly challenge or deter Russian action. Rebel absence in civilian wrongs at the hands of the Russian

government effectively reduces any claims made by rebels after 2002, that their objectives included protecting civilians.

In fact, after 2002 rebel tactics increasingly shifted to acts of terrorism and jihad, over guerilla warfare and open altercations with Russia²⁵⁵. While these acts largely targeted Russian police, government, and military, civilian casualties were often produced in such attacks²⁵⁶. From 2000 to 2005, high-profile terrorist attacks committed by Chechen rebels produced roughly 777 civilian casualties from seven attacks, mostly by suicide bombs²⁵⁷. Comparatively, from 1994-1999 Chechen rebels committed only three high-profile terrorist attacks, implemented as hostage taking, that produced about 459 civilian casualties²⁵⁸. Rebellion rhetoric shifted from protecting civilians, to eliminating foreign influence and establishing a jihadi state. Rebel leaders began to utilize violence and intimidation in limited areas of control to make civilians adhere to sharia law and rebel objectives²⁵⁹. The determinant shift away from civilian protection in rhetoric, action, and objection drastically contributed to reductions in rebel legitimacy amongst civilians after 2002. Recent media interviews with civilians indicate the presence of anti-extremist attitudes in local populations²⁶⁰.

CHAPTER 6: REBEL LEGITIMACY THROUGH ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Rebel groups function like organizations in many ways. They depend upon adequate procurement and management of resources, finances, and human capital. They are run by individuals that develop different thought processes, motivations, and loyalties²⁶¹. They are often driven by an ideological goal implemented through a hierarchical structure²⁶². They are also driven by a code of conduct that dictates the actions and decisions of involved actors²⁶³.

The effectiveness or ineffectiveness of an insurgency's organizational management can greatly contribute to its legitimacy in the eyes of civilians and external actors²⁶⁴. Rebel groups that effectively manage legal systems, service delivery networks, and financial resources produce higher external perceptions of the group's ability to function successfully as a legitimate political actor. Greater levels of legitimacy in areas of organizational management contribute to trust amongst external actors that the rebel group can responsibly receive and manage certain financial, diplomatic, and political responsibilities²⁶⁵. This trust opens avenues for external actors to support rebel groups in ways that can contribute to success, such as provision of materials and financing.

Three factors that most drastically influence rebel legitimacy in the area of organizational management are implementation and use of law; ability to mobilize goods, services, and programs; and propaganda and media campaigns.

Implementation and Use of Law

Rebel creation, adherence to, and management of law have strong effects on external perceptions of legitimacy²⁶⁶. Rebel implementation of democratic principles, protection of civilians, and stable political practices in law bolster rebel legitimacy in the eyes of the international community²⁶⁷. Implementation of sharia law, authoritarian rule, or failure to introduce legal measures that protect civilians can reduce perceptions of legitimate amongst “legitimate” actors. However, laws can also appeal to “illegitimate” external actors by conforming to their ideals and beliefs. For example, al-Qaeda encouraged the implementation of sharia law into Chechen legal structures, which boosted the rebel group’s legitimacy amongst Islamist organizations²⁶⁸. Legal determinations can solidify Islamist perceptions of the rebellion as an Islamist organization, encouraging support from Islamist institutions. Similarly, the development of laws that allow civilian voice, ensure civilian freedom and protection, and incorporate civilian needs contributes to higher levels of civilian legitimacy, and open avenues to civilian support²⁶⁹. For example, pro-Chechen laws in the early Chechen constitution contributed to civilian support of the rebellion in its early years. The development of laws to protect civilians, and the de facto government’s maintenance of the law confirmed the de facto government’s support, and presented a shift from Soviet law, that failed to secure the rights and safety of Chechen populations and Islamic practices.

Adherence to law also affects rebel legitimacy. Creation of law is just a piece of establishing an effective legal system. Whether a rebel group follows and implements their laws contributes to evaluations of their ability to act as a legitimate political actor²⁷⁰. Rebel action taken in accordance to law may be perceived as more justifiable than action taken outside of law. For example, groups that have established codes for punishment are more likely to be viewed as legitimate in enacting punishment against an actor, if punishment and the crime are in line with

established rule of law. Punishment enacted outside of the decree, process, and methods outlined in law is perceived as less legitimate, and may be more likely to be attributed to civilian violence or terrorism²⁷¹.

Less than a year after declaring independence, the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria released its constitution²⁷². The Republic's leaders ruled by the constitution. In public and rhetoric, it was essential for Dudayev, and later Maskhadov, to be viewed as a legitimate state by the populations of Chechnya, Russia, and the international community²⁷³. Enforcing this perception was largely implemented through developing and following democratic procedures and rule of law²⁷⁴. The constitution established the republic as a democracy, based in the legal determination of the Chechen people. The constitution allows for a healthy checks and balances system between legislative, executive, and judicial branches. Insurgent leadership also committed to ensuring the law was represented by the will of Chechen populations. Legislature wording emphasizes the protection and rights of Chechen civilians, but fails to address rights for non-Chechen civilians²⁷⁵. While the constitution initially separated church and state, the de facto administration amended the constitution in 1994 to incorporate sharia law in response to growing demands from Islamic leaders²⁷⁶.

The de facto government also ensured close adherence to international law, humanitarian law, and law of war during the First Chechen War²⁷⁷. The insurgency was particularly careful to follow international law during negotiations with Russian troops, taking prisoners, and interacting with civilians²⁷⁸. The rebellion did this in an active attempt to boost its legitimacy in the eyes of the international community. Grammer (2008) presents a compelling narrative, in which Chechen rebel leaders believed Maskhadov to be "mad" due to his insistence on waging traditional, legal warfare, despite the losses it cost the movement. He publicly decried the two

hostage crises led by Basyaev, and declared rebel troops who used civilians as hostages would be punished as criminals under the Chechen constitution²⁷⁹. Active adherence to both international and rebel law produced a sense of reliability and honesty between rebel groups, and civilians and external actors. By obeying laws, the rebel group proved their commitment to protecting civilians, thereby garnering civilian legitimacy, and to upholding laws and policies, thereby improving international legitimacy.

The start of the Second Chechen war led to a decrease in adherence to international law by both sides²⁸⁰. Increasingly brutal policies, and lack of negotiation from Russian military forces were met with retaliating brutality and violence from the insurgency²⁸¹. Attempts to adhere to international law, such as one-sided cease-fire concessions, led to devastating rebel losses on several occasions²⁸². The rebellion's disregard for international law and growing application of terrorism and guerilla tactics in warfare made it easier for both Russia and the international community to categorize insurgent acts as terrorism, reducing the rebellion's legitimacy.

By 2000, the rebellion had lost all legal authority and implementation over Chechnya's populations, government, and territory. Rebel actors were stripped of legal authority in the Russian state²⁸³. In 2000, Russia implemented a series of laws that stripped suspected terrorists of many basic rights. Under these laws, individuals could lose right to legal trial, freedom of speech, and even citizenship²⁸⁴. Suspected terrorists and supporters often received no trial, facing imprisonment or death based on suspect alone. Harsh legal action could be taken even against advocates of Chechen human rights or autonomy, under the pretense that such action supports terrorism²⁸⁵.

After losing the power of law, accounts of insurgent activity among populations and growing acts of terrorism indicate that rebels increasingly relied on intimidation and terrorism to negotiate with Russian and civilian populations²⁸⁶. Laws implemented by the rebellion after 2000 were heavily embedded in sharia law and included policies such as the seclusion of women, stoning and beheading as punishment, and trial by Islamic council. Many of these laws contained elements that do not adhere to international law or democratic practices²⁸⁷. Implementation of sharia law also contributed to delegitimizing the insurgency among populations that did not want or follow sharia law. Such laws reduced civilian and international perceptions of legitimacy of the insurgency. Civilians failed to perceive the laws as legitimate interpretations or representations of their identities and livelihoods, and the laws often failed to protect secular and female populations²⁸⁸. Similarly, such laws reinforced perceptions of terrorism in the eyes of the international community, and a movement away from commitment to democratic practices and liberal ideals.

Mobilization of Goods, Services, and Programs

Mobilization of goods, services, and programs is another key indicator of rebel legitimacy. A rebel group's ability to mobilize goods, services, and programs supports its claims that it can and should function as a successful political entity²⁸⁹. Effective mobilization of goods, services and programs significantly impact perceptions of legitimacy amongst a number of actors. First, ability to mobilize these services supports rebel claims that it is able to function as a government, and can serve the best interests of populations. Second, rebel management of governance confirms the ability to adequately function in political space, through participating in and facilitating political, economic, and social activity.

The ability to mobilize goods, services, and programs presented one of the Chechen rebels greatest weaknesses. By the end of the First Chechen War, and rise of Maskhadov to power, the failure of the de facto government to control basic services significantly reduced their legitimacy amongst domestic and external actors²⁹⁰. The removal of Russian military forces and administration from Chechnya in 1991, awarded the rebellion with a wealth of resources procured from Soviet facilities and infrastructure. The de facto government built a military from volunteers and captured military bases. The Chechen administration filled Soviet-Chechen administrative buildings in Grozny. The Chechen economy remained dependent on Soviet built oil refineries that continued production outside of Grozny²⁹¹.

In many ways, Dudayev and the Republic of Ichkeria inherited an uncontrollable system. Soviet rule left Chechen systems weak, corrupt, and unkempt²⁹². However, in gaining positioning to control these systems, Dudayev securely inserted the rebellion into official Chechen political space. With access to political space came a responsibility to control governance in Chechnya, especially in the absence of Russian administration and governance²⁹³. The Chechen population initially believed the existence of an independent Chechen state would improve civilian life, political representation, and economic productivity²⁹⁴. The hope for a better life encouraged many to support the cause through voting, military service, and resource contributions. These beliefs contributed to legitimacy of Dudayev and his administration's early initiatives to control Chechen resources and governance, despite severe challenges and ineffectual governments in early years. Similarly, the de facto government's assuming ability to mobilize goods encouraged legitimacy amongst foreign states that the government could effectively maintain political and economic control and management. Such activity fostered perceptions of the de facto government as a viable alternative to Russia in managing oil production out of Chechnya, and

potentially, for supporting the spread of democratic liberal values in Eurasia²⁹⁵. External actors intended to harness the opportunity for greater economic control in Chechnya, by initiating economic and political negotiations with the de facto government and putting pressure on Russia to support independence²⁹⁶. Economic considerations also put Chechnya on the international radar, which contributed to international media coverage and UN involvement²⁹⁷.

The administration's failure to gain control of economic or political governance over time contributed to a decline in the group's legitimacy amongst both civilians and the international community²⁹⁸. By the end of the First Chechen War, many of the resources and arms pilfered from fleeing Soviet forces had been captured, destroyed or used. Russian bombing and military campaigns destroyed large portions of the infrastructure in Grozny, including an estimated 50% of residential housing, and 90% of economic infrastructure²⁹⁹. Maskhadov had recently assumed leadership, following Dudayev's death, and faced the difficult realities of transitioning from the position of insurgent leader to president. His administration proved ineffective in gaining control of the economy, establishing rule of law, or personnel to establish effective government programs. The cabinet failed to provide basic government services, procure and mobilize resources, or establish control over devastated political infrastructure, deteriorating security environment, and declining economic productivity³⁰⁰. The government's inability to successfully govern Chechnya led many to question whether the de facto government was capable of running a state and reduced perceptions of its legitimacy in Chechen political space³⁰¹. Such perceptions discouraged international investment and assistance to a perceivably weak and ineffective government³⁰².

The Second Chechen War further incapacitated the government's ability to mobilize basic services and programs. The war further depleted resources, and caused additional strains to

economic and infrastructure damage. By the end, civilian and soldier casualties nearly doubled, as did displacement, and destruction of property. The Russian military had effectively destroyed what was left of Grozny's infrastructure and Chechen oil refineries, incapacitating independent economic productivity in Chechnya³⁰³.

Fearon (2000) argues that insurgency's main goal is survival, that military action is the staunchest way to secure this goal, and that when in survival mode this goal will come before all else, including protection of civilians and provision of services. From 2000 to 2007, the Chechen insurgency appears very much to be in survival mode. The insurgency not only failed to provide services to Chechen populations, but appears to have ceased trying to provide them. The bulk of the insurgency's resources after 2000 consisted of weapons procurement, mainly through extremist networks³⁰⁴, further delegitimizing perceptions of the insurgency to actively create and manage a political system. The lack of rebel focus and ability to provide basic services to civilian populations and establish control of governance further reduced rebel legitimacy amongst civilians. The group's failure to support civilian protection, livelihoods, and interests discouraged civilian support to the rebellion.

By 2002, Russian forces had re-gained control of military bases and government administration buildings in Chechnya³⁰⁵. Control of these buildings reinstated Russian control of Chechen political space. Without formal structures, the insurgency found itself removed from the means through which to provide programs, services, or goods to the Chechen population³⁰⁶. Russia's insertion of Kadyrov to power further reduced the power and control of the rebellion in official political space. Kadyrov allowed Russia to funnel financial, economic, and infrastructure support to Chechnya, while maintaining control of political affairs³⁰⁷. The insertion of Kadyrov challenged de facto legitimacy, as he presented an alternate option for domestic and external

forces to control Chechnya. Kadyrov, under Russian control, harnessed governance in Chechnya, and the obtained the official role of mobilizing resources, programs and services³⁰⁸. Chechen citizens no longer looked to rebel leaders for control, governance, or services, as they were no longer able to provide them.

The insertion of Kadyrov into leader of President in Chechnya also presented challenges to international perceptions of the rebel legitimacy. Kadyrov's provided an official, legitimate point of contact in Chechnya, through which assistance, diplomacy, and resources could be organized. By 2002, the rebellion had lost its platform, leverage, and capacity to receive and mobilize such resources in Chechnya³⁰⁹. As a result, it also lost its access to legitimate means of foreign assistance, resources, and networks to provide political and material support to civilians.

Control of Propaganda, Media and Messaging

In 1991, the declaration of Chechen independence was in local, national, and international news outlets. Initial reports of independence had highly legitimating effects on the movement. Reports on Chechen independence made international news, putting Chechnya and its movement on the international radar³¹⁰. Stories painted by Russian academics and foreign journalists were largely pro-Chechen independence, effectively influencing opinions abroad³¹¹. The largely pro-Chechen representations awarded a sense of legitimacy to the Chechen cause, where the Chechen people were seen as victims of Soviet oppression who deserved to be freed.

The Chechen Republic of Ichkeria's messaging mainly targeted the Chechen population and Russia³¹². Propaganda for an independent Chechen state was highly effective in mobilizing Chechen popular support for independence, combining an effective mix of ethnic nationalism, secular Islam, and lingering sentiments of victimization from the Soviet state. This form of messaging was successful in connecting with injustices felt among the populations and the hope

for a solution³¹³. The messaging contributed to developing legitimacy amongst Chechen civilians, which resulted in the ease of mobilizing civilians to support the early years of the movement.

The Russian invasion and start of the First Chechen War presented a shift in media images surrounding Chechen independence. Russian and foreign media outlets were highly active in the First Chechen War³¹⁴. The initial invasion challenged international perceptions of the Soviet bloc breakup as a movement towards a non-aggressive Russia and international security. TV in particular, presented powerful images of war, death, and destruction in Chechnya³¹⁵. Public opinion was exposed to both Chechen and Russian grievances during war, which had both legitimating and delegitimizing effects on the insurgency. Why the insurgency attempted to uphold international law and avoid civilian casualties, death presented by its independence was still presented on TVs across the world. In particular, live reporting of the 1996 hostage crisis provided horrific images of Chechen civilians being mowed down by Russian artillery after being used as human shields by insurgent forces³¹⁶. These perceptions challenged rebel claims that the rebellion was a legitimate political institution organized around protecting Chechen civilians.

The Moscow apartment bombings were regarded with dismay, and reported by media outlets harshly³¹⁷. Images from these bombings and clashes during the Chechen invasion of Dagestan largely justified the Russian military intervention in Chechnya. Media presence was largely restricted during the Second Chechen War, allowing Russia to control the messaging, images, and information coming out of Chechnya. The messaging further reduced the legitimacy of the insurgency as legitimate political actor and bolstered the legitimacy of Russia as the legitimate political force and enforcer of security.

After declaring the war over in 2000, Russia effectively shut down all Chechen and external media presence in Chechnya. Journalists, internet access, and Chechen media sources were heavily restricted. Those who continued to report, faced harsh punishments. Ann Politkovskaya was a Russian journalist renowned for her stories of Russian state corruption and violence, particularly in the North Caucasus. In October 2006, Politkovskaya was found murdered in the stairwell of her apartment building, in retaliation for anti-Russian reports³¹⁸.

At the same time, Russia launched an anti-Chechen propaganda campaign, that targeted national and international perceptions of the Chechen insurgency. The campaign was highly effective in the Chechen insurgency as a movement for Islamic terrorism, instead of the quest for an independent nation-state³¹⁹. The propaganda campaign, fueled in large part by media images from the Second Chechen War, followed by the 9/11 attacks was highly effective in eradicating perceptions of the insurgency as a legitimate independence movement. The campaign was also supplemented by an increase in terrorist attacks by the hands of Chechen separatists that were widely reported on by international journalists³²⁰. Stories of terrorism presented virtually the only news reports on Chechnya, further contributing to international perceptions of Chechens as terrorists and delegitimizing the insurgency.

The insurgency had begun to mobilize its own campaign, harnessing social media and internet sources to provide information and propaganda outside of Chechnya. After Putin declared victory in the Second Chechen War, Chechen insurgents launched the website Kavkaz.org., anticipating Russian censorship³²¹. To this day, Russia has failed to shut down the site, allowing the Chechen insurgency a continued outlet for propaganda, recruitment, and messaging to Chechnya and beyond³²². The site has been designated as a terrorist website and shut down in several countries, including the U.S. However, since 2000 the website has been

used widely by journalists, advocates, and policy analysts to decipher events in Chechnya as it presents virtually the only non-Russian media source for events inside Chechnya³²³.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION: SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

The Chechen separatist rebellion paints a compelling picture of the significance of legitimacy on rebellion outcomes. In Chechnya, rebel successes appear to increase significantly in response to avenues opened by actors that view the group as a legitimate entity. From 1991-1998, the rebellion achieved de facto rule of Chechnya, fostering support from Chechen civilians and institutions, Russian non-governmental actors, and many within the international community. In 2000, shifting domestic and international perceptions driven by growing Islamist rhetoric, weak organizational capacity, and reduced civilian support contributed to declining perceptions of the rebel group as a legitimate political force. The reduction in legitimacy manifested itself in reduction of external support, which contributed to significant rebel losses in economic, political, social, and territorial control.

This evaluation found that rebel achievements of legitimacy produced higher levels of support expressed through resources, diplomacy, propaganda at the hands of those perceiving the group and its cause as a legitimate political force. As such, higher levels of legitimacy could be tracked to higher levels of success.

This finding also produced several more detailed evaluations of the effects of legitimacy on rebel success. First, it can be understood that the greater number of actors that provide legitimacy to the rebel group, the more avenues to access resources, diplomacy and networks a rebel group achieves. In the case of Chechnya, both the insurgency and de facto government succeeded in establishing perceptions of the de facto government and the Chechen independence

movement as a legitimate political movement amongst non-governmental Russian populations, the international community, and Chechen civilians. Legitimacy influenced each actor's support of the cause via the resources and means available to them.

Similarly, decreased legitimacy in "official" political arenas, increasingly encouraged Chechen rebels to pursue legitimacy in non-official avenues, particularly through associations and support from Islamist jihadi groups. Legitimacy acknowledged in non-official avenues awards access to different channels of diplomacy, resources, and networks. Similarly, perceptions of legitimacy in non-official venues may vary from perceptions in official arenas. For example, while Western states base concepts of legitimate legal practices on liberal democratic values, Islamist organizations may perceive legitimate law as sharia law.

Not all factors of legitimacy need to be present to allow rebel groups to increase access to resources through legitimacy means. For example, from 1991-1994, during its highest period of legitimacy and success the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria failed to effectively control or mobilize government services, programs, and resources.

This analysis also indicates that insurgent success and legitimacy, do not correlate to insurgent sustainability. The modern Chechen insurgency experienced high levels of success in the early 1990's, but ultimately lacked the means to sustain their activities.

Another important finding is that certain factors of legitimacy correlate more strongly to certain areas of success. For example, legitimacy awarded through external actors, correlated strongly with achievements of material success and access to international diplomatic and economic space. These same factors proved to have little effect on civilian perception and support. In Chechnya, external actors tended to focus their perceptions of rebel legitimacy in areas that benefitted their objectives. For example, organizational management appeals strongly

to foreign states that seek to support rebel groups to develop economic or political relationships. Similarly, civilian perceptions were influenced most strongly by domestic considerations that directly affected civilian livelihoods.

More research is needed to evaluate the effects of rebel legitimacy on success in contexts outside of Chechnya. However, findings from the Chechen case produce findings that warrant a wider evaluation of legitimacy contributions to rebellion outcomes. Additionally, examining legitimacy provides insight into key factors of rebel success gained through external, state, and civilian actor involvement. This form of analysis allows for an evaluation of why actors host certain allegiances and provide assistance, and the weight such assistance has on rebel success. Ultimately, legitimacy frameworks warrant an examination into the voices of rebellion that are traditionally unheard, providing credit for their roles and justifications for decision-making in conflicts.

ENDNOTES

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- ³ (Azrael and Payin, 1998)
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