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## THESIS

**CHECHEN FEMALE SUICIDE TERRORISM**

by

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June 2017

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**CHECHEN FEMALE SUICIDE TERRORISM**

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

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## **ABSTRACT**

The protracted conflict between Chechnya and Russia ultimately led ethnic Chechen separatists to ally with Islamic jihadists at the turn of the 20th century. This thesis focuses on one product of this alliance: the emergence of female suicide terrorism (FST) in the first (1994–1996) and second (1999–2009) Chechen wars. Previously, the use of FST as a tactic had been confined to secular groups. In this thesis, factors that precipitated the rise of FST in Chechnya are explored. Despite the eventual alliance of Chechen separatists with Islamists, this thesis finds the factors that specifically apply to female suicide terrorism to be primarily secular. By identifying contributing factors in the Chechen case, this research provides a framework to identify conflicts in which a popular movement's tactics may escalate to terrorism and the employment of FST.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The protracted conflict between Chechnya and Russia, extending over three centuries, ultimately led secular Chechens to ally with Islamic jihadists in the second Russo–Chechen war. This thesis focuses on one result of this alliance: the emergence of female suicide terrorism (FST). Prior to Chechen FST, the use of FST as a tactic was confined to secular groups. Sana’a Mehaydali is generally believed to have been the first female suicide bomber. She was a member of the Syrian Social Nationalist Party when, in 1985, she carried out an attack against Israel in Lebanon; the secular organization used the tactic on five more occasions.<sup>1</sup> These strikes were later followed by attacks in the early 1990s by the secular Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka and the secular Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) in the late 1990s. The Chechen case is interesting for several reasons but initially draws attention because it used women to a much greater degree than other movements. This research examines factors that precipitated FST and suggests that recognition of these factors may aid in preventing similar developments around the globe.

### A. BACKGROUND

By the end of the first Russo–Chechen war in August 1996, Chechen separatists had come under the influence of radical Islamic groups—an alliance promoted to fulfill the common goals of both movements. The FST that arose suggested that Chechnya might serve as a model for radical Muslim organizations in other parts of the world. Many of the terrorist acts perpetrated in Chechnya since 1995 consisted of hostage taking and suicide bombings carried out by the Martyrs Brigade (Riyadus Salikhin)<sup>2</sup> while the female suicide contingent within the brigade was called the black widows, or *shahidka*,

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<sup>1</sup> Mia Bloom, “Female Suicide Bombers: A Global Trend,” *Daedalus*, 136, no. 1 (2007): 94.

<sup>2</sup> Mia Bloom, *Bombshell* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 32.

(“female martyrs”).<sup>3</sup> This group represents a significant departure from historical tactics; FST has existed in modern times but was confined to secular groups.<sup>4</sup>

Chechnya was absorbed by Russia after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, but, preoccupied with developing a new government and processes, Russia essentially left the Chechens to govern themselves. In 1994, Russia invaded Chechnya to quell separatist activity and thus set off the first Chechen war. In the aftermath, Chechnya experienced a leadership vacuum in government, exhaustion of funds for further opposition, and a shortage of fighting men. As a solution, Chechen leadership entered into ad-hoc alliances with Islamist terrorist organizations that could provide training, funding, and fighters.<sup>5</sup> Ultimately, this collaboration led to the adoption of terrorist tactics, perpetrated in both Chechnya and Russia, including FST.

FST is the ultimate tactic for organizations outmatched in numbers and materiel.<sup>6</sup> It affords shock value in a culture that views killing as a man’s domain; it guarantees fear, disruption, and public outcry; and it achieves notoriety for the cause, yielding eight times more media coverage than for male suicides.<sup>7</sup> These reasons, however, do not explain why Chechen separatists formed the loose partnership with Islamic jihadists that led to the adoption of this tactic.

## **B. SIGNIFICANCE**

In the Chechen case, an alliance evolved between two movements without previous ties but with overlapping goals. By analyzing this development, other such potential alliances may be anticipated and prevented. Chechnya’s insistence on independence was not a new phenomenon when the USSR fell in 1991; the Chechen

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>4</sup> Mia Bloom, “Female Suicide Bombers Are Not a New Phenomenon,” *Washington Post*, August 6, 2014, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2014/08/06/female-suicide-bombers-are-not-a-new-phenomenon>.

<sup>5</sup> Roland Dannreuther, “Islamic Radicalization in Russia: An Assessment,” *International Affairs* 86, no. 1 (2010): 114.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 24–25.

<sup>7</sup> Dannreuther, “Islamic Radicalization in Russia,” 22.

struggle runs throughout its troubled history with Russia.<sup>8</sup> The radical Islamism operating out of the Middle East in the early 1990s was not new to Russia or Chechnya either. Separately, FST was used in Sri Lanka and Lebanon in 1985 and 1991, respectively. Thus, while the elements of armed separatist movements, radical Islam, and FST had been seen before, their combination in the Chechen conflict was unprecedented.

Identifying the factors that contributed to the use of FST and which may impel unrelated groups or movements to band together similarly for mutual benefit is critical information in developing policies concerning separatist movements. This research uses the Russo–Chechen conflict and its complex interplay of relationships as both a case study and a dynamic model for mitigating or preventing alliances that lead to extreme tactics such as FST.

### **C. RESEARCH QUESTION**

This thesis asks, was the deployment of FST by Islamic jihadists religiously motivated and a new tactic whose use may proliferate? On the other hand, was the tactical usefulness of FST peculiar to Chechnya, free of religious motivation, and unlikely to spread elsewhere?

### **D. HYPOTHESES**

Given Chechen history, it is posited that the separatist–Islamist partnership occurred in response to external pressures—the occupation, the vicious tactics employed by Russia, human-rights violations, and failure of negotiation or compromise. With no perceived options available, Chechen rebels accepted the support of Islamists; and ultimately, to gain attention and influence, employed FST as a tactic.

A more nuanced hypothesis is given to explain the nature of the FST attacks: while some appeared religious in motivation—and even specifically claimed by Islamist groups within Chechnya—the reasons expressed by the perpetrators themselves overwhelmingly concerned a secular vision of independence. The ultimate causes lay in

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<sup>8</sup> Annika Frantzell, “The Radicalization of Chechnya: A Case Study of the Spread of Radical Islam in Chechnya,” Lund University Libraries, Sweden (2006), 9, <https://lup.lub.lu.se/student-papers/search/publication/1323707>.

broad national ambitions or personal retaliation, or both, and the religious coloration was owing to the involvement of Islamist partners.

Finding answers may have significant implications in U.S. understanding of separatist movements and how they might evolve. Chechnya has demonstrated a longtime desire for independence and openness to partners who would support its cause. Spurned by the West, Chechen military groups collaborated with willing Islamist organizations. Other separatist movements may likewise resort to Islamist groups seeking access and power. These secular–religious alliances could prove difficult for the international community to eradicate.

## **E. SOURCES AND METHODS**

This thesis provides a historical analysis of circumstances, events, decisions, and individuals in the Russo–Chechen conflict, centering on Chechnya’s bids for independence and the employment of FST. The source material for this research consists primarily of books, journal articles, and U.S. government documents, including Congressional Research Service reports. The few primary sources available in English are also used, such as that produced by Chechnya’s former foreign minister who fled to the United States and produced a firsthand account of the struggle for independence.<sup>9</sup>

A single case study—the Russo–Chechen conflict—is used as a basis of analysis because of the singularity of the FST phenomenon examined. Descriptive statistics are provided to illustrate the degree to which FST was used in the conflict. Historical context is described in some detail.

## **F. THESIS OVERVIEW**

The thesis contains five chapters. Chapter II provides a literature review focusing on common motivations for terrorism, suicide terrorism, and FST specifically, concluding with key questions. Chapter III traces the Chechen conflict from 1785 to 2009, the end of the second Chechen war. It provides significant examples of FST.

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<sup>9</sup>Ilyas Akhmadov and Miriam Lansky, *The Chechen Struggle: Independence Won and Lost* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), xi.

Chapter IV analyzes FST in light of the questions raised in Chapter II to suggest why the Chechens used this tactic and partnered with Islamists. Conclusions and implications are found in Chapter V.

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## **II. TERRORISM, SUICIDE TERRORISM, AND FEMALE SUICIDE TERRORISM**

This chapter surveys the literature on terrorism, suicide terrorism, and FST to propose an analytical framework for analyzing the conditions under which Chechen FST took root. Three key insights are derived. First, terrorism is a tactic used by the ‘weak’ to counter the ‘strong.’ Second, while suicide terrorism is typically a last resort, it is also a rational choice in the absence of alternatives. Finally, though FST has existed in secular groups such as the Tamil Tigers and Kurdistan Worker’s Party (PKK), it is comparatively rare in Islamist-motivated groups. This last observation raises questions about the conditions that gave rise to FST in Chechnya, which are posed at the conclusion of the chapter.

### **A. WHY GROUPS CHOOSE TERRORISM**

A common challenge before studying issues in terrorism is to find a working definition. Alex Schmidt’s research, for example, lists more than 100 descriptions of terrorism, as reproduced in Table 1.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 40.

Table 1. Definitions of Terrorism as Compiled by Schmidt et al.<sup>11</sup>

**Table 1. Frequencies of definitional elements in 109 definitions of terrorism**

	Element	Frequency %
1	Violence, force	83.5
2	Political	65
3	Fear, terror emphasised	51
4	Threat	47
5	(Psychological) effects and (anticipated) reactions	41.5
6	Victim - target differentiation	37.5
7	Purposive, planned, systematic, organised action	32
8	Method of combat, strategy, tactic	30.5
9	Extranormality, in breach of accepted rules, without humanitarian constraints	30
10	Coercion, extortion, induction of compliance	28
11	Publicity aspect	21.5
12	Arbitrariness; impersonal, random character; indiscrimination	21
13	Civilians, noncombatants, neutrals, outsiders as victims	17.5
14	Intimidation	17
15	Innocence of victims emphasised	15.5
16	Group, movement, organisation as perpetrator	14
17	Symbolic aspect, demonstration to others	13.5
18	Incalculability, unpredictability, unexpectedness of occurrence of violence	9
19	Clandestine, covert nature	9
20	Repetitiveness; serial or campaign character of violence	7
21	Criminal	6
22	Demands made on third parties	4

Source: Alex P. Schmidt, Albert J. Jongman et. al, *Political Terrorism: A New Guide to Actors, Authors, Concepts, Data Bases, Theories, and Literature*. New Brunswick, Transaction Books, 1988, pp. 5-6

Rather than attempt an inclusive definition, Bruce Hoffman provides five major qualities of terrorism in *Inside Terrorism*:

1. Terrorism is political in aims and motivations.
2. It is violent, or threatens violence.
3. Terrorism has far-reaching psychological effects beyond the victim or target.
4. Terrorism is conducted by a group with a chain of command or cell structure.
5. It is perpetrated by a subnational group or non-state entity.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Source: Schmidt et al., *Political Terrorism: A New Guide to Actors, Authors, Concepts, Data Bases, Theories and Literature* (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1988) 5–6.

<sup>12</sup> Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, 43.



Hoffman asserts that the purpose of terrorism is

to create power where there is none or to consolidate power where there is very little. Through publicity generated by their violence, terrorists seek to obtain the leverage, influence, and power they otherwise lack to effect political change on either a local or an international scale.<sup>13</sup>

These criteria are useful in analyzing what terrorism is and why it is employed. Martha Crenshaw explains terrorism in her book *Terrorism in Context*:<sup>14</sup>

Terrorism is a conspiratorial style of violence calculated to alter the attitudes and behavior of multiple audiences. It targets the few in a way that claims the attention of the many. Thus, a lack of proportion between resources deployed and effect created, between the material power of actors and the fear their actions generate, is typical. Among systematic and organized modes of civil or international violence, terrorism is distinguished by its high symbolic and expressive value.

Crenshaw asserts the need for context to explain the choice of terrorism, including political, social, and economic factors. She notes that terrorism usually occurs after other attempts at resolving grievances have failed—as a last resort after non-violent methods or conventional military methods have been tried.<sup>15</sup> The road to terrorism is described by Crenshaw as a complex chain of events that ends with a decision.<sup>16</sup> There is no one trigger for this decision, but rather, an accumulation of factors largely informed by how the group perceives the actions of the adversary over time. History is critical: “both causes and consequences of terrorism can only be understood in terms of interactions among political actors, primarily governments and oppositions, at specific points in history,”<sup>17</sup> and the past molds the perceptions of those who live under the “burden of history.”<sup>18</sup> Crenshaw lists four ways in which history can be a causal factor in

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>14</sup> Martha Crenshaw, *Terrorism in Context* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010), 4.

<sup>15</sup> Martha Crenshaw, “The Logic of Terrorism,” In *Terrorism in Perspective* by Sue Mahan and Pamela L. Griset, 25, London: SAGE, 2008.

<sup>16</sup> Crenshaw, *Terrorism in Context*, 5.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 13.

terrorism.<sup>19</sup> First, those with grievances may mine history to provide support for nationalist and separatist action. Memories of past struggles may provide motivation for present terrorism. Next, ethnic groups preserve their identity by opposing the absorption of other ethnic communities that would dilute their values and traditions. A group may terrorize the newcomer to turn back colonization or occupation. Third, chronic grievances, patterns of discrimination, inequality long endured, and deep loyalty to values, symbols, and myths may combine to excuse terrorist actions. Finally, terrorism may flourish where hatred of a stronger power is systematic and abiding.<sup>20</sup> For Crenshaw, context over time goes far in explaining the choice of terrorism. History is not simply background information, but a continuous, ever-unfolding record of events that may overwhelm social or religious scruples and make the use of terror seem inevitable.

Michel Wieviorka's research focuses on the social conditions that lead to terrorism, noting it is based on social, cultural, political, economic, religious, and educational factors—which explains why terrorism is typically described in extensive detail and there is no universal definition.<sup>21</sup> Wieviorka states that any of a number of factors may play a part in making terrorism seem viable. He describes the worldview of terrorist groups as informed by both “continuity” and “rupture.”<sup>22</sup> Continuity is provided by the ideology of the group, whether anarchist, Marxist, Islamist, or other, while a rupture is that aspect of the ideology that has been interpreted, reinterpreted, or misunderstood to satisfy the present needs of the group.<sup>23</sup> Terrorism may become thinkable when there is a fundamental change in how a group understands its ideology. It may also become acceptable when perceived not only as a blow to the enemy, but a benefit to the group.<sup>24</sup> Thus, ideological change is among the conditions that inspire terrorism.

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 14–16.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 14–16.

<sup>21</sup> Michel Wieviorka, “Terrorism in the Context of Academic Research,” in *Terrorism in Context*, ed. Martha Crenshaw (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), 598.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 600.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 599.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

Terrorism is a tool the weak may use to overcome a superior power. Kaarthikeyan Shri argues that the terrorism is useful in clearing away political impediments, citing the case of the Tamil Tigers, in which the government acceded access to employment and education.<sup>25</sup> Fernando Reinares argues that when weak groups feel marginalized in political decision-making, they may turn to terrorism if they are unable to prevail in conventional warfare or are out of time.<sup>26</sup> Crenshaw adds that when a group's agitation for reform is dismissed and ambitions are flatly denied,<sup>27</sup> terrorism may be perceived as a valid response.

Terrorism provides an excellent ratio of effort to results, which helps level the playing field between unequal partners. Clark McCauley observes that the target is constrained to spend time, money, and energy on security. The civil liberties and privacy of the people are inexorably infringed upon as the state appropriates greater power (such as increased surveillance) in an effort to prevent attacks,—which arouses anti-government sentiment among the people and boosts mobilization efforts for the attackers.<sup>28</sup>

Mia Bloom argues that groups choose terrorism as part of a tactic she calls “outbidding.”<sup>29</sup> Terrorism is not only useful against the enemy, it also serves as a recruitment tool as competing organizations vie to recruit followers to an increasingly popular movement. Outbidding encourages radicalism as groups distinguish themselves by their extreme actions.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> D. R. Kaarthikeyan Shri, “Root Causes of Terrorism?,” in *Root Causes of Terrorism: Myths, Reality and Ways Forward*, ed. Tore Bjorgo (New York: Routledge, 2005), 132.

<sup>26</sup> Fernando Reinares, “Nationalist Separatism and Terrorism in Comparative Perspective,” in Bjorgo, *Root Causes of Terrorism*, 126.

<sup>27</sup> Crenshaw, *Terrorism in Context*, 13.

<sup>28</sup> Clark McCauley, “Psychological Issues in Understanding Terrorism and the Response to Terrorism,” in *Psychology of Terrorism*, eds. Bruce Bongar, Lisa M. Brown, Larry E. Beutler, James M. Breckenridge, and Philip G. Zimbardo (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 22–23.

<sup>29</sup> Mia M. Bloom, “Palestinian Suicide Bombing: Public Support, Market Share, and Outbidding,” *Political Science Quarterly* 119, no. 1 (2004): 61.

<sup>30</sup> Reinares, “Nationalist Separatism and Terrorism in Comparative Perspective,” in Bjorgo, *Root Causes of Terrorism*, 127.

In sum, though terrorism is a loose term, the common reasons that groups might resort to it include longstanding anger and frustration, military and political advantages, and as a publicity and recruitment tool.

## **B. WHY GROUPS CHOOSE SUICIDE TERRORISM**

Although known for perhaps millennia,<sup>31</sup> suicide terrorism (ST), whether by secular or religious groups, has increased in the last 30 years.<sup>32</sup> Bloom describes the conditions under which groups chose ST as a “complexity of motivations,” defining it as “contingent violence,” in which the next act is shaped by the reactions of the target audience.<sup>33</sup> Major factors in the use of ST are foundational decision-making, conducive circumstances, and intended outcomes.

There are tactical reasons for ST, but, according to Robert Pape, strategic logic is at the core of this choice when ST is the only recourse against a stronger military force.<sup>34</sup> Pape develops a sophisticated exposition of this logic and the conditions under which groups employ it, proposing that ST “compel[s] democracies to withdraw military forces from the terrorist’s national homeland.” Pape also observes that groups that use suicide attacks generally share distinctive features within their histories and are motivated by a similar desire to govern their homelands without interference.<sup>35</sup> Finally, Pape argues that coercion is the main purpose of ST and finds that terrorist groups achieve gains about half the time.<sup>36</sup> He notes that of the eleven campaigns that involved ST in 1980–2001, six were aimed at favorable policy changes.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> David C. Rapoport, “Fear and Trembling: Terrorism in Three Religious Traditions,” *American Political Science Review* 78, no. 3 (1983): 665.

<sup>32</sup> Audrey K. Cronin, *Terrorists and Suicide Attacks* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, August 23, 2003), <http://fas.org/irp/crs/RL32058.pdf>.

<sup>33</sup> Mia Bloom, *Dying to Kill : The Allure of Suicide Terror* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 90.

<sup>34</sup> Robert Anthony Pape, *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism* (New York: Random House, 2005), 21, 30.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.

<sup>36</sup> Robert A Pape, “The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism,” *American Political Science Review* 97, no. 3 (2003): 351.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

Mohammed Hafez critiques several theories as to why groups choose ST, including religious fanaticism, psychological trauma, and group dynamics (especially the bonds of friendship), finding none of these explanations adequate.<sup>38</sup> Hafez settles on ST as a “rational and purposeful method of political contention in the context of asymmetrical power,”<sup>39</sup> citing the versatility and accuracy of ST, its efficiency and effectiveness, its psychological impact on the target audience, and the encouragement it provides to supporters.<sup>40</sup> The successful adoption of ST requires sophisticated infrastructure, resources of various types, and commitment from the group and community.<sup>41</sup> Hafez describes ST as instrumental in nature—the most effective means to reach strategic goals.<sup>42</sup> He lists several effects that are tactically important against a stronger foe, including disrupting the status quo, sabotaging negotiations, showing determination, coercing compromise, publicizing grievances, and undermining the legitimacy of the ruling power.<sup>43</sup> He also notes that military occupation by a foreign government is a prevalent condition in ST.<sup>44</sup>

Mia Bloom agrees with Pape and Hafez that suicide attacks are a rational and strategic choice used only when a group is losing military conflicts decisively.<sup>45</sup> She also concurs on the significance of an occupying force in influencing ST employment.<sup>46</sup> Bloom’s theory of suicide attacks holds that

non-state actors tend to resort to atrocities in the second iteration (or more) of conflict after the other strategies have failed to yield the desired results,

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<sup>38</sup> Mohammed M. Hafez, *Manufacturing Human Bombs: The Making of Palestinian Suicide Bombers* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2006), 9–11.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 13–14.

<sup>41</sup> Hafez, *Manufacturing Human Bombs*, 25.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>45</sup> Bloom, *Dying to Kill*, 89.

<sup>46</sup> Bloom, “Death Becomes Her: Women, Occupation, and Terrorist Mobilization,” *PS: Political Science & Politics* 43, no. 3 (2010): 95.

and when facing a hurting stalemate. At this juncture, atrocities will appear to be a good idea.<sup>47</sup>

In other words, ST is the choice that remains after others have been exhausted. Bloom stresses that many iterations of struggle are generally present, in which the root conditions have persisted, open conflict has recurred (possibly many times), and the group has found no other successful means of influence. ST attempts to control the conflict by gaining the attention of the target and media, thereby increasing power. Political survival is generally a more important motivator than ideology.<sup>48</sup>

Ariel Merari traces modern suicide attacks to World War II kamikaze pilots, who used an element of conventional warfare (aircraft) in an unconventional manner that assured their own deaths. The first suicide attacks that Merari deems terroristic were launched on the Iraqi embassy in Beirut in 1981.<sup>49</sup> After 1981, the tactic proliferated among secular and religious groups as political results accrued. Merari notes that ST can achieve significant gains for the causes it represents—examples include the withdrawal of forces from Lebanon, the Oslo peace accords in 1993, and the Israeli elections of 1996. Though the acceptance of ST has grown, Merari agrees that suicide attacks are a last resort in extreme circumstances.<sup>50</sup> He also argues that ST is a social construct, requiring the support of community resources—no politically motivated suicide attack has been perpetrated by a lone wolf.<sup>51</sup>

ST has several big payoffs. According to a 2003 Congressional Research Service (CRS) report, the primary reasons for using ST are its large death toll and undeniable effectiveness.<sup>52</sup> The report, authored by Audrey Cronin, finds that 48% of deaths from terrorist attacks are attributable to ST, though ST represents 3% of attacks overall.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Bloom, *Dying to Kill*, 89.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ariel Merari, “Social, Organizational, and Psychological Factors in Suicide Terrorism,” in Bjorgo, *Root Causes of Terrorism*, 72.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 82.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 81.

<sup>52</sup> Audrey K. Cronin, *Terrorists and Suicide Attacks*, 9.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

Cronin describes ST as tactically simpler with better results<sup>54</sup> in promoting the cause, conferring legitimacy (owing to the high investment the suicide makes), and generating increased money, clout, and manpower.<sup>55</sup>

Islamist-motivated ST is a relatively new phenomenon, beginning with the 1983 bombing of the U.S. embassy in Beirut, which used technique and technology superior to the ST of the past.<sup>56</sup> Merari finds that the best predictor of ST is whether a group is Islamist and shows that since 9/11, 76% of ST has been carried out by Islamist groups.<sup>57</sup> Merari argues that Islamic extremist goals are actually political in nature rather than religious, because not all Islamic groups accept suicide.<sup>58</sup> By this logic, in predicting ST use, cultural background and ideology are not as essential as a perceived existential threat to the group's cause.<sup>59</sup> Hafez supports this assertion, contending that Hamas and Islamist jihad draw on deep nationalist feelings to persuade individuals to commit ST.<sup>60</sup>

### **C. WOMEN AS VEHICLES OF SUICIDE TERRORISM**

The strategic foundations of ST apply to FST, but with an added rationale for the preferential use of women. For practical reasons, women have advantages over men in executing a clandestine mission or conveying a message discreetly. Statistics suggest that groups have learned to appreciate these benefits. Of the roughly seventeen terrorist groups that have employed ST, over half use FST as an option.<sup>61</sup> There were more than 230 suicide bombings by women between 1985 and 2008, constituting about 25 percent of all ST in the world.<sup>62</sup> These statistics imply high awareness of FST efficacy.

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<sup>54</sup> Cronin, "Terrorists and Suicide Attacks," 11.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Anne Speckhard and Khapta Akhmedova, "Talking to Terrorists," *Journal of Psychohistory* 33, no. 2 (2005): 126.

<sup>57</sup> Merari, "Social, Organizational, and Psychological Factors in Suicide Terrorism," in Bjorgo, *Root Causes of Terrorism*, 81.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 82.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 84.

<sup>60</sup> Hafez, *Manufacturing Human Bombs*, 46.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 143.

<sup>62</sup> Bloom, "Death Becomes Her," 92.

Women make useful suicides partly because of the social impact of their action. The media afford eight times more coverage to female ST than male,<sup>63</sup> and the self-destruction of a woman or girl arouses greater horror and pity, especially if they have children. Terrorist organizations exploit this disparity for recruiting, exciting group morale, and spreading their message.<sup>64</sup> In an article in the *New York Times*, Lindsey O'Rourke confirms the outperformance of FST in both domestic and foreign media.<sup>65</sup> This benefit exceeds the value of the mayhem wrought by the act itself.

Foreign occupation has often been accompanied by contempt for the native population and, often, traumas and atrocities such as torture, rape, and execution. These violations of the human person tend to breed revenge in both sexes, sometimes to the point where ST is embraced as the ultimate expression of rage. Farhana Ali describes terrorism against an occupier as an attempt to achieve freedom from tyranny.<sup>66</sup> Recruiters encourage women to resist for a variety of reasons related to their trauma and victimization, including revenge, dignity, and group survival.<sup>67</sup>

Marginalized groups may use women to perpetrate suicide attacks because of their greater entree to public and private places, which allows them to penetrate targets and avoid scrutiny. Bloom argues that this is why women succeed in killing four times more victims than male suicide bombers.<sup>68</sup> Ness also notes that women avoid detection better,<sup>69</sup> move more freely because they are not expected to be dangerous, and are searched less thoroughly at checkpoints, so as not to violate the religious clothing some women wear. Ness observes, "the dividing line between combatant and non-combatant

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 96.

<sup>64</sup> Bloom, "Female Suicide Bombers," 100.

<sup>65</sup> Lindsey O'Rourke, "Behind the Woman, Behind the Bomb," *The New York Times* 2, no. 8 (2008): 2.

<sup>66</sup> Farhana Ali, "Rocking the Cradle to Rocking the World: The Role of Muslim Female Fighters," *Journal of International Women's Studies* 8, no. 1 (2013): 28.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Bloom, "Death Becomes Her," 93.

<sup>69</sup> Cindy D. Ness, "The Rise in Female Violence," *Daedalus* 136, no. 1 (2007): 89.



has become increasingly blurred.”<sup>70</sup> Mia Bloom asserts, “The underlying message conveyed by female bombers is, “Terrorism has moved beyond a fringe phenomenon and insurgents are all around you.””<sup>71</sup> O’Rourke also acknowledges the freedom and relaxed inspection women are afforded.<sup>72</sup>

Bloom and Ness find that groups may resort to FST when a shortage of men occurs, and that women can be used to shame men into fighting by assuming their roles.<sup>73</sup> Propaganda has many uses, and FST speaks loudly to the men of the country.

FST by religiously motivated groups has historically been rare. Though Hamas deployed a female suicide bomber, Reem al-Riyashi, in 2004, her action was rejected within the social structures of the time,<sup>74</sup> which did not approve of a mother’s leaving two children behind. Some declared she was not a true Muslim woman, accusing her of extramarital affairs.<sup>75</sup> Other Palestinian FST attacks were sponsored by secular groups. Pape joins the conclusion that women involved in ST are secular in outlook and do not represent religious ideology, offering the example of the Lebanese attack as having been perpetrated by secular organizations.<sup>76</sup> Though Islamist groups support the majority of ST, when women are involved, Pape argues that close examination shows the attack is secular in origin, because the concept of women as suicide terrorists is not rooted in Islamic practice or generally accepted in Islamic tradition. Pape asserts that in cases where Islam seems to play a role, the perpetrators were native to the area and oppression and occupation were present, as in the case of the Chechens,<sup>77</sup> Tamil Tigers, and PKK.

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<sup>70</sup> Ness, “The Rise in Female Violence,” 91.

<sup>71</sup> Bloom, *Dying to Kill*, 144.

<sup>72</sup> Lindsey A. O’Rourke, “What’s Special About Female Suicide Terrorism?,” *Security Studies* 18, no. 4 (2009): 687–89.

<sup>73</sup> Bloom, “Female Suicide Bombers,” 99; Ness, “Rise in Female Violence,” 89; Cindy D Ness, “In the Name of the Cause: Women’s Work in Secular and Religious Terrorism,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 28, no. 5 (2005): 360.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 367.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> Robert A. Pape and James K. Feldman, *Cutting the Fuse: The Explosion of Global Suicide Terrorism and How to Stop It* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 210.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 258.

## **D. SUMMARY**

From the literature, this research extrapolates the following questions as salient in analyzing the Chechen case:

1. What are the critical elements in the history of the Russo–Chechen conflict?
2. How did the Chechen resistance evolve?
3. Is Chechen FST best described as secular or religious in nature?

## **E. CONCLUSION**

This chapter examines the literature concerning the causes of terrorism, ST, and FST to develop a framework for the investigation of FST in Chechnya. Chapter III provides a study of the Chechen conflict, beginning with the Russian invasion of 1785 and ending with the second Chechen war in 2009. Chapter IV returns to the questions above to analyze Chechen FST.

### III. CASE STUDY: THE RUSSO–CHECHEN CONFLICT

This chapter contains a longitudinal case study of Chechnya’s struggle for independence from Russia, which began in 1785 and continued to 2009, when Russia ceased military operations in Chechnya. In tracing the events that have shaped Russo–Chechen relations, a basis for understanding Chechen radicalization and use of FST may be formulated.

Russo–Chechen history can be divided into three periods: 1785–1994 (from Catherine the Great to the brink of modern war), 1996–1999 (the first Chechen war and interwar period), and 1999–2009 (the second Chechen war). A predominating theme of harsh subjugation is woven through the years, punctuated by inhumane policies and acts of cruelty that invited extreme resistance. Two distinguishing qualities of the Chechen people are vital to consider: they have fiercely resisted invasion throughout their history and, until the end of the 20th century, fought for secular independence, not for a caliphate or other religious cause.

#### A. CHECHEN HISTORY

The people of Chechnya call themselves “Nokhchii,” referring to the Nakh branch of the Caucasian languages that dominate the region; “Chechen” is a label the Russians applied.<sup>78</sup> This thesis uses “Chechen” for simplicity, but notes that the people did not originate the name and its use may be interpreted as promoting Russian colonialism and assimilation. The Chechens have dwelled in the Near East from ancient history, predating the existence of Russia. The claim that Russia displaced the natives and took what was rightfully their homeland is difficult to counter.<sup>79</sup> While the Chechens have rarely been a focus of Caucasian historiography, they are acknowledged as a people who do not initiate conflict or expansion, but will vigorously defend their territory from prospective

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<sup>78</sup> John B. Dunlop, *Russia Confronts Chechnya: Roots of a Separatist Conflict* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998) 1.

<sup>79</sup> Moshe Gammer, “Nationalism and History: Rewriting the Chechen National Past,” *Secession, History and the Social Sciences* (2002): 120.

invaders,<sup>80</sup> among whom have been the Sassanids, Byzantines, Arab caliphate, Khazars, Chinggisi, Timur Leng, Nadir Shah, tsars, and Soviets.

Historically, the Chechens lived in large groups of clans, known as *tukhum*, affiliated on the basis of land rather than family heritage.<sup>81</sup> A *tukhum* is the sum of many *teip* (clans). Each clan descended from a common ancestor, was led by an elder, and had a court to administer justice.<sup>82</sup> The *teip* could be broken into smaller components based on family ties important to the individuals involved. A member of the Chechen community, therefore, has historically had many identities, but individuals tend to find greatest significance in the heritage they hold in common.<sup>83</sup>

Traditional Chechen culture did not recognize a supreme authority in peacetime, but if the whole community were threatened, the *tukhums* united and chose a military leader.<sup>84</sup> This dynamic of an outsider threat as a sole and sufficient unifying factor is important. The Chechens had no permanent political cohesion before their encounter with Russian expansionism, but eventually required such against a military so large and powerful.<sup>85</sup>

## **1. Islam in Chechnya**

The Chechen culture was largely pagan before the 1780s, and their customs and traditions were often passed down in the form of storytelling.<sup>86</sup> Christianity and Judaism passed through Chechnya without much effect. Islam failed to take root in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, when the Mongols attempted an invasion;<sup>87</sup> and even as late as the 1770s, a Russian traveler observed the “‘religious chaos’ of Muslim, Christian, and pagan rites

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<sup>80</sup> Amjad Jaimoukha, *The Chechens: A Handbook* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 24–25.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 60–61.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

<sup>83</sup> Joanna Swirszcz, “The Role of Islam in Chechen National Identity,” *Nationalities Papers* 37, no. 1 (2009): 61.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>86</sup> Swirszcz, “The Role of Islam in Chechen National Identity,” 61–62.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

among the people.”<sup>88</sup> Islam was by no means integral to the culture, and leading up to the 1800s, there was no single belief system. However, Chechens would soon find reason to organize under one standard to oppose Russian imperialism.

Following the Treaty of Paris in 1763 and relaxation of tension in Europe, Catherine the Great determined to regain the Caucasus from the Turks.<sup>89</sup> Her plan was put in motion in 1785, when Russian forces stormed the house of a Chechen imam, Sheik Mansur, whom Russia considered a revolutionary. Mansur’s supporters killed 600 Russians and captured 200.<sup>90</sup> This clash was the beginning of hostilities between the people of Chechnya and Russian forces. Known as the “first *gazavat*” (holy war), it was the first of nine recognized apexes of conflict.<sup>91</sup> Beginning in 1785, Mansur led a fight against Russian occupation under the aegis of Sufi Islam. Well matched to the individualistic, independent-minded Chechens, Sufism tended to flourish in places without central organization or national ties and blended well with tribal social structures, customs, and traditions.<sup>92</sup> Besides supporting the core values the community had upheld for centuries, Sufism offered discipline and dedication to a people who were only loosely affiliated.<sup>93</sup> Adherents were active in community issues and quick to protect Muslim interests against foreign rulers. These benefits suited the Chechens, who were looking for a uniting principle around which to unite against a stronger foe. Sufi Islam thrived in Chechnya and was widely adopted as a platform from which to fight Russia.

As Russian imperialism gained ground in the Caucasus in 1816, Tsar Alexander I appointed General Yarmolov governor of the region, relegating full control.<sup>94</sup> Yarmolov is significant for two reasons: he built Fort Groznaya (1819), which later became the capital of Grozny; and he is the first Russia official confirmed to have committed

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Jaimoukha, *The Chechens*, 39.

<sup>90</sup> Francine Banner, *Making Death Visible: Chechen Female Suicide Bombers in an Era of Globalization* (ProQuest, 2009), 65.

<sup>91</sup> Gammer, “Nationalism and History,” 121.

<sup>92</sup> Swirszcz, “The Role of Islam in Chechen National Identity,” 64–65.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 65.

<sup>94</sup> Jaimoukha, *The Chechens*, 42.

atrocities against the Chechen people. Yarmolov enslaved women as concubines for officers, permitted rape, and had an entire village killed in 1819 to persuade Chechens to move where he directed.<sup>95</sup> James Hughes describes Yarmolov as ordering

the wholesale physical destruction of villages, deforestation to remove ground cover, and a scorched earth policy to reduce Chechen morale and resistance by starvation, and finally ethnic cleansing by expelling Muslim peoples from across the Caucasus into the Ottoman Empire.<sup>96</sup>

These atrocities led to the second notable Russo–Chechen conflict, “the revolt,” 1825–1827.<sup>97</sup> Adding to his burning of villages, murder of women and children, and destruction of livestock and crops, Yarmolov instituted a policy of deporting captured Chechens to Siberia.<sup>98</sup> Exile was used to subjugate the Chechens for centuries, providing their strongest motivation for resisting occupation. Meanwhile, ethnic-Russian settlers were imported to dilute the Chechen culture and control the region politically.<sup>99</sup>

Islam grew during the Sheik Mansur resistance, but as of the 1830s, was not firmly imbedded in Chechen culture. It would become so in the next 25 years, as Chechens began accepting help from Sufis outside the region who supported their drive for independence.<sup>100</sup> In 1834, Chechnya’s greatest imam came to power: Shamil,<sup>101</sup> who spread Islam, rejected pagan practices, and battled Russian hegemony for 25 years, using guerilla warfare to gain victories.<sup>102</sup>

## **2. Russian Political and Military Action**

Despite Shamil’s resistance movement, the Russians continued using military force to subdue and annex the land and in 1844 ordered the deportation of Chechen

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 43.

<sup>96</sup> James Hughes, *Chechnya: From Nationalism to Jihad* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 8.

<sup>97</sup> Gammer, “Nationalism and History,” 121.

<sup>98</sup> Jaimoukha, *The Chechens*, 44.

<sup>99</sup> Swirszcz, “The Role of Islam in Chechen National Identity,” 68.

<sup>100</sup> Banner, *Making Death Visible*, 66.

<sup>101</sup> Gammer, “Nationalism and History,” 122.

<sup>102</sup> Jaimoukha, *The Chechens*, 46.

dissenters. The Treaty of Paris, which ended the Crimean War in 1856, was silent on the Russian occupation of the Caucasus, from which the Chechens understood that they were alone in their plight and the Russians inferred that the West would not interfere.<sup>103</sup>

With the West turning a blind eye, Russian forces continued to employ extreme tactics against the civilian population. Before Chechnya was finally annexed in 1861, a last uprising in 1860 left the people decimated. In 1840, the Chechen population stood at over a million, but by 1867, had declined to 116,000, reflecting 500,000 killed and 100,000 deported.<sup>104</sup> During these 27 years, Russia awarded land and dwellings to those who supported the occupation and the inflow of ethnic Russians continued.

Ultimately, the Russians were too many and too strong for the small population of Chechens, who failed to reclaim their ancestral land. A major rebellion from 1904–1906 resulted in deportations to Siberia by the thousands.<sup>105</sup> In 1917, the Bolshevik revolution revived hopes of independence. The Chechens convened the first north Caucasian congress, which elected Islamic leaders and tribal elders to prepare for possible action.<sup>106</sup> The Chechen Autonomous Republic was formed, and schools, universities, and publishing houses were founded.<sup>107</sup> The chance for Chechen independence lay in the chaos created by upheavals of power in Russia. Nevertheless while the Chechens resisted the Red Army with skirmishes and guerilla conflict in the northern Caucasus, the military arm of the revolution was too powerful. The Bolsheviks gained control of Russia in 1921 and the Chechen rebellion was put down in 1925.<sup>108</sup> True to form, the Chechens fought for independence as Russia morphed into the Soviet Union—but attacked only those adversaries who were occupying territory they believed was their own.

By 1929, Chechnya was officially expanded by the Soviet regime to include Grozny, which was 70 percent Russian, and smaller areas with no Chechen descent, to

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 51.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 54.

<sup>107</sup> Banner, *Making Death Visible*, 68.

<sup>108</sup> Jaimoukha, *The Chechens*, 55.

further transform society and behavior.<sup>109</sup> Collectivization was in full swing, and the Soviets had no tolerance for Chechen separatism. Land was seized and put under state control, to be joined with other holdings to make larger farms. The Chechens lost autonomy over many aspects of their lives as Moscow controlled the land and people. Suspicious of Islam and of religion in general, the Soviets forbade its practice, fearing expansion.<sup>110</sup> The period 1931–1933 saw numerous revolts against the Soviets and protest over the establishment of 490 collective farms and official suppression of Islam. During this time, roughly 70 acts of violence against Russian settlers were recorded in state documents—which may be considered terrorism<sup>111</sup> or, alternatively, as resistance and protest. Rebellion in the later 1930s precipitated the mass removal of Chechens suspected of anti-Soviet attitudes. An estimated 14,000 were executed or sent to concentration camps in 1937.<sup>112</sup>

It is important to note that these revolts were not incited by Islamic leaders attempting to promote religion goals. Rather, secular Chechen intellectuals, reared in the Soviet state, took the lead. Though imams had led earlier struggles in Chechen history, the purpose of these revolts was political independence, not the promotion of an Islamic state.

### **3. Operation Lentil**

Throughout the 19th century and into the 20th, Russian authorities enforced crushing policies against Chechen resistance. Confiscation of property, the attempted obliteration of Chechen identity, scorched-earth campaigns, and deportation were standard. A crackdown that steeled Chechen resistance was Operation Lentil (1944), Stalin's attempt to end the Chechen problem<sup>113</sup> by eradicating the people from the Caucasus, principally by deportation to Siberia and other parts of the Soviet Union.

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<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Swirszcz, "The Role of Islam in Chechen National Identity," 71.

<sup>111</sup> Banner, *Making Death Visible*, 68.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Jaimoukha, *The Chechens*, 60.



Official documents from the Soviet era provide the justifications used for deportation—whether to defuse ethnic tensions, stabilize political situations, punish disobedience to Soviet authority, or liquidate banditry.<sup>114</sup> Nikita Khrushchev admitted in his 1956 “secret speech” (made public in 1989) that there was no military reason for the deportations.<sup>115</sup> The Soviets estimated 20,000 Chechen Muslims were involved in anti-Soviet activity, so the original plan aimed at wiping out the Sufi Muslim Brotherhood.<sup>116</sup> By January 1944, however, the plan had expanded to include all Chechens.

By February 23, 1944, about 120,000 Soviet troops were deployed to the area and the deportations began.<sup>117</sup> Over the course of a week, thousands were shipped to far locations. The evacuation was so inhumane that up to half died in transit or within months of arrival at their destination. Horrendous cruelties were routine: 700 persons were immolated in a locked barn, thousands were shot and dumped in a lake, and the elderly and sick were executed to save the trouble of moving them.<sup>118</sup> Exile locations were strictly arbitrary; Chechen families were rounded up and loaded onto trains with no concession to keeping them together.<sup>119</sup> Some guerrilla attacks were conducted during the operation, with some fighters escaping into the mountains to resist<sup>120</sup> and holding out for three years. By the end of Operation Lentil, up to 800,000 Chechens had been shipped to Siberia and Central Asia. Confirming that Stalin was targeting the people and not a geographical region, the Soviets rounded up Chechens living elsewhere in the Soviet Union as well.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Dunlop, *Russia Confronts Chechnya*, 61.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

<sup>116</sup> Dunlop, *Russia Confronts Chechnya*, 62..

<sup>117</sup> Banner, *Making Death Visible*, 68.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>119</sup> Carlotta Gall and Thomas De Waal, *Chechnya: Calamity in the Caucasus* (New York: New York University Press, 1998): 71.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.

<sup>121</sup> Dunlop, *Russia Confronts Chechnya*, 65–66.

The exiles were required to register weekly with police, and if they left their assigned area were subject to twenty years' hard labor.<sup>122</sup> They were disenfranchised beggars in lands unprepared for them and which could not accommodate them; they suffered chronic privation, and within five years about a quarter had died.<sup>123</sup> Housing was a problem throughout the exile. There were 31,000 families deported to Kyrgyzstan in 1944, for example, and by the end of 1946, only 5,000 families had found housing.<sup>124</sup> Work was not readily available, and idleness and poverty solidified their bitterness.<sup>125</sup> They were cheap labor in the few places that offered employment.

With the Chechens culled, Stalin redrew the map of the north Caucasus to wipe them from memory. He expanded former boundaries and imported Soviet sympathizers, giving them the land, farms, and houses of deportees. The scope of the evacuation meant that only about 40 percent of farms could be managed, and the area fell into neglect.<sup>126</sup> After Stalin's death in 1953, some policies were eased, notably the requirement to register once a week.<sup>127</sup> Returning Chechens found their homes occupied by Soviet sympathizers, their towns and streets renamed by the regime, and no work to support their families.<sup>128</sup> The exile yielded lasting and intractable effects. Surviving such a searing experience together awakened their sense of a common enemy and national identity rooted simply in being Chechen.<sup>129</sup> The people maintained their native tongue more successfully than any other Soviet people did<sup>130</sup>—a form of resistance described as the “single most sensitive catalyst of national protest.”<sup>131</sup> Chechen resolve never

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<sup>122</sup> Gall and De Waal, *Chechnya*, 71.

<sup>123</sup> Matthew Evangelista, “The Chechen Wars,” (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2002), 14.

<sup>124</sup> Dunlop, *Russia Confronts Chechnya*, 69.

<sup>125</sup> Robert Seely, *Russo-Chechen Conflict, 1800–2000: A Deadly Embrace* (New York: Psychology Press, 2001), 71.

<sup>126</sup> Dunlop, *Russia Confronts Chechnya*, 74.

<sup>127</sup> Gall and De Waal, *Chechnya*, 72.

<sup>128</sup> Banner, *Making Death Visible*, 69.

<sup>129</sup> Gall and De Waal, *Chechnya*, 74.

<sup>130</sup> Banner, *Making Death Visible*, 69.

<sup>131</sup> Gail Warshofsky Lapidus, “Ethnonationalism and Political Stability: The Soviet Case,” *World Politics* 36, no. 4 (1984): 572.

wavered, so that ultimately the Soviets failed to end the Chechen problem, and in the years of displacement, the people continued to raise families and the population started to recover. Crucially, the leaders of Chechen separatism after the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 were a generation that had survived staggering hardships and bore firsthand memories as motivation.

#### **4. Post-Soviet Chechnya**

The post-exile years saw no significant uprisings, as it took several decades for the Chechens to regain strength. As the population slowly rebounded, the people found employment or worked their farms. However, their long-deferred aspirations were only dormant. In 1990, Dzhokhar Dudayev, an ethnic Chechen and Soviet air-force general, returned to Chechnya to head an unofficial Chechen national congress. He called for independence and set dates for presidential and parliamentary elections in October 1991.<sup>132</sup> General Dudayev was elected president and moved to establish a separate Chechnya. On November 2, 1991, Chechnya formally declared independence from the disintegrating Soviet Union. For the most part, the Soviet Union did not respond, and Chechnya was left as a quasi-independent state, owing to the distracting power plays of presidents Yeltsin and Gorbachev, the Communist Party, and the Kremlin.<sup>133</sup> This high-priority Russian strife delayed conflict with the Chechens for three years, during which time they presented no threat, but solidified their independent state.

#### **B. THE FIRST CHECHEN WAR (1994–1996)**

In 1994, with political struggles raging, Yeltsin looked to boost his chances in the 1996 presidential election by mobilizing public opinion against Chechnya,<sup>134</sup> portraying himself as the protector of Russia by provoking an old enemy. The Russians had substantive reasons to oppose Chechen independence, including concerns over border security, a potential loss of billions in oil revenue, and fear of a domino effect among

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<sup>132</sup> Omar Ashour, "Security, Oil, and Internal Politics: The Causes of the Russo–Chechen Conflicts," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 27, no. 2 (2004): 131.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid., 134.

other republics.<sup>135</sup> It must be emphasized that Russia was not attacking any form of Islam in what became the first Chechen war, but countering a secular independence movement. Russian troops encircled Chechnya in year 1994, making the inhabitants recall the weight of Russian force and the deportation, and consider what might happen again.<sup>136</sup> Russia initiated military operations on December 11, 1994, with a massive bombing and shelling campaign on the city of Grozny to destroy the self-proclaimed Autonomous Chechen Republic.<sup>137</sup> There were many problems with the destruction of Grozny. First, the Russians were attacking a civilian population rather than a military target.<sup>138</sup> Moreover, the attack was primarily on ethnic Russians; up to 60 percent of the dead were Russian.<sup>139</sup> Grozny was shelled at about 4,000 blasts an hour, which was so frenetic that the International Court of Justice declared that Russia “violated the right to life of unarmed civilians on a massive scale.”<sup>140</sup> The stated cause for the attack was economic—concerns about regional oil production, specifically. Grozny served as a conduit for Russian oil supplies and held strategic importance to the Russians for that reason. In spite of Grozny’s economic importance, the Russians destroyed many refineries, demonstrating more interest in punishment than economics. Amid this holocaust, one appalling event stands out, perpetrated in Samashki village in April 1995. Samashki was hit with several days of artillery fire, after which 3,000 Russian troops entered and slaughtered up to 100 people in a bloodbath.<sup>141</sup> In August 1995, evidence of chemical weapons was discovered.<sup>142</sup> The brutal treatment of civilians was routine in the first

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<sup>135</sup> Ashour, “Security, Oil, and Internal Politics,” 128–29.

<sup>136</sup> Brian Glyn Williams, “Commemorating “the Deportation” in Post-Soviet Chechnya: The Role of Memorialization and Collective Memory in the 1994–1996 and 1999–2000 Russo–Chechen Wars,” *History and Memory* 12, no. 1 (2000): 106.

<sup>137</sup> Svante E. Cornell, “International Reactions to Massive Human Rights Violations: The Case of Chechnya,” *Europe-Asia Studies* 51, no. 1 (1999): 85.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

<sup>139</sup> John B Dunlop, “How Many Soldiers and Civilians Died During the Russo–Chechen War of 1994–1996?,” *Central Asian Survey* 19, no. 3–4 (2000): 335.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, 88.

<sup>141</sup> Cornell, “International Reactions to Massive Human Rights Violations,” 90.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*.

Chechen war, justifying “genocide” to describe Russia’s scorched-earth approach<sup>143</sup> and revealing raw malice towards the Chechen people as a motivation.

Chechen military commanders responded with equally harsh actions, using terrorism and hostage taking as a primary tactic on at least two occasions. As discussed in Chapter II, terrorism is the tactic of choice when a weaker power perceives no alternative than to destroy where possible and degrade the enemy’s will. After months of guerilla fighting, elements of the Chechen resistance switched to terrorist tactics. In June 1995, Shamil Basayev led a group of Chechens into Russia, taking a hospital with hundreds of occupants in the town of Budennovsk. The Russians eventually negotiated with the Chechens, arranging their safe passage home and meeting demands for peace talks.<sup>144</sup> This act of terrorism did not result in an end to Russian aggression, but no hostages were killed and the Chechens returned safely. In 1996, a second terrorist act occurred when Chechen fighters took control of Pervomaiskoe, a village in Dagestan, in a raid similar to that at Budennovsk.<sup>145</sup> This time, the Russians were prepared and counterattacked, inflicting heavy losses. While neither of these skirmishes went far in ending the war, they demonstrated that the Russians were vulnerable and the Chechens could make demands.

The fighting in Chechnya persisted almost two years, with the Chechen resistance using guerrilla tactics primarily. In August 1996, the Chechens surrounded 18,000 Russian forces in the narrow streets of Grozny and forced Yeltsin to agree to peace talks, and ultimately to the withdrawal of troops by November 1996.<sup>146</sup> A ceasefire was signed on August 22, 1996. In May 1997, Yeltsin and Chechen president-elect Aslan Maskhadov signed the Khasavyurt Peace Accord, officially ending the war.

The first Chechen war (1994–1996) exhibited four key factors pertinent to this research: it was a secular separatist struggle; human-rights violations occurred on a massive scale; the West ignored the conflict; and the Chechens used terrorism minimally.

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<sup>143</sup> Gammer, “Nationalism and History,” 132.

<sup>144</sup> Jaimoukha, *The Chechens*, 67.

<sup>145</sup> Cornell, “International Reactions to Massive Human Rights Violations,” 87.

<sup>146</sup> Williams, “Commemorating “the Deportation” in Post-Soviet Chechnya: The Role of Memorialization and Collective Memory in the 1994–1996 and 1999–2000 Russo-Chechen Wars,” 107.

## **1. Secular Motivations**

As Katrien Hertog notes that the “Chechens were first fighting out of their zeal for the right to self-determination.”<sup>147</sup> The nationalism of the Chechens revolved around self-determination, fighting Soviet hegemony, and defending ethnic traditions.<sup>148</sup> The first Chechen war was not motivated by Islam, and certainly not by radical Islam. As noted previously, Islam was equal to other Chechen customs and traditions, but not a prime mover in the war. Throughout their history, Chechens had resisted foreign occupation; the first Chechen war was more of the same.

## **2. Human-Rights Violations**

Second, the wanton human-rights violations of the Russians had grave impact. The Russians knowingly bombed civilian areas, executed civilians, tortured prisoners, used chemical weapons, massacred villages, planted landmines,<sup>149</sup> interred men in “filtration” camps—the brutalities go on.<sup>150</sup> Sergei Kovalev, a Russian human-rights activist, calls it genocide.<sup>151</sup> By the end of the war, Grozny was razed. About 29,000 civilians were killed in the first three months of fighting; almost 12,000 Chechen troops were killed; and ultimately 120,000 civilians died.<sup>152</sup> The war was so disastrous, Chechens rank it with Stalin’s deportation.

## **3. The Silence of the West**

The war dashed any hope the Chechens may have harbored of assistance from the Western world. Though Russian atrocities were well known and the destruction of Grozny rivaled the worst devastations of World War II—and while most of the West

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<sup>147</sup> Katrien Hertog, “A Self-Fulfilling Prophecy: The Seeds of Islamic Radicalisation in Chechnya,” *Religion, State and Society* 33, no. 3 (2005): 249.

<sup>148</sup> Hank Johnston, “Ritual, Strategy, and Deep Culture in the Chechen National Movement,” *Critical Studies on Terrorism* 1, no. 3 (2008): 331.

<sup>149</sup> Cornell, “International Reactions to Massive Human Rights Violations,” 88.

<sup>150</sup> Seely, *Russo-Chechen Conflict, 1800–2000: A Deadly Embrace*, 89–90 and 284.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.

<sup>152</sup> Dunlop, “How Many Soldiers and Civilians Died During the Russo–Chechen War of 1994–1996?,” 332–34.

acknowledged this reality—there were no repercussions for the Russians, whether political or economic.<sup>153</sup> The United States disapproved, but never threatened any action, commenting that human-rights violations were an internal Russian matter.<sup>154</sup> The European Union condemned the severe use of force in Chechnya and considered sanctions, but stood by.<sup>155</sup> As Hughes explains,

international influences on the early negotiation of a peaceful resolution to the question of Chechnya were sacrificed to the national interests of Western governments in supporting the reformists under Yeltsin and demarcating Chechnya as an “internal” matter for Russia.<sup>156</sup>

The failure of the West left an indelible scar on the Chechen psyche and ultimately taught them to look elsewhere for support.

#### **4. Minimal Use of Terrorism**

Terrorism was not a large part of the Chechen resistance; the incidents given were the only notable instances in the first war. These acts were specifically intended to promote Chechen separatism and not motivated by Islam or jihadist practices.

### **C. THE INTERWAR PERIOD**

In the interwar period, 1996–1999, radical Islamists begin moving into the Caucasus, especially from Saudi Arabia, bringing foreign money and a religious-extremist mindset. Their influence took the form of funding and alternative leadership amid the failure of the secular government. Aslan Maskhadov, the president of Chechnya at the end of the first war, faced insurmountable obstacles in achieving and sustaining independence. First, the Russo–Chechen peace agreement frustrated resolution of the issue by putting off discussions for five years, during which time Russia was to cease military action and aggression. Meanwhile, the population was devastated, Grozny was in ruins, the economy was wrecked, infrastructure was nonexistent, and 70 percent of the

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<sup>153</sup> Cornell, “International Reactions to Massive Human Rights Violations,” 96.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, 91.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>156</sup> Hughes, *Chechnya*, 29.

men were unemployed.<sup>157</sup> For these desperate and disaffected men, the stockpile of surplus weapons from the recent war was a continuous temptation to action. Conditions were ripe for the involvement of Islamists, whose influence in the region was seen as potentially useful.<sup>158</sup> Adherents of Islamism had increased by the end of the war, because the jihadist groups were motivated to resist Russia for their own reasons.<sup>159</sup>

Maskhadov attempted to channel these elements by giving significant positions in the new secular government to warlords who had worked alongside radical Muslims, hoping to assuage ambitions and dissuade military leaders from joining the radical elements.<sup>160</sup> Maskhadov was not able to revive Chechen strength and morale during the interwar period, however, and groups such as the International Islamic Brigade (IIB), led by Ibn Khattab, gained influence. Though Maskhadov tried to maintain his administration's independent, secular goals, popular support waned and his control over these small but influential Islamist groups weakened. Shamil Basayev, a cabinet member and warlord, came under the influence of Khattab, abandoning his cabinet post and devoting himself to the Islamization of Chechnya as a member of the IIB. Under his leadership, a congress representing Chechnya and Dagestan was created, with the goal of an Islamic state that combined the two republics. Inevitably, clashes erupted between the governments, and the congress was outlawed in Grozny. It found a stronghold, however, in the Urus-Martan area of Chechnya, along with other splinter groups who opposed the Maskhadov government. From this location, training camps for Islamists were formed by the newly created Islamic International Peacekeeping Brigade (IIPB), with as many as 1,000 volunteers.<sup>161</sup> By 1999, four groups were operating in and around Chechnya with competing ideas of how the country should develop, but united against the Maskhadov

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<sup>157</sup> Yagil Henkin, "From Tactical Terrorism to Holy War: The Evolution of Chechen Terrorism, 1995–2004," *Central Asian Survey* 25, no. 1–2 (2006): 196.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> Julie Wilhelmsen, "Between a Rock and a Hard Place: The Islamisation of the Chechen Separatist Movement," *Europe-Asia Studies* 57, no. 1 (2005): 39.

<sup>160</sup> Cerwyn Moore, "Suicide Bombing: Chechnya, the North Caucasus and Martyrdom," *ibid.* 64, no. 9 (2012): 1785.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid., 1788.



presidency. Their existence created great instability.<sup>162</sup> Maskhadov, in a desperate attempt to stave off radical forces, declared for the first time that Chechnya was an Islamic state,<sup>163</sup> thus violating secular provisions in the 1992 constitution. Maskhadov's declaration had no effect on either the extremists or the Russian government, which viewed Chechnya as a seat of lawlessness and did not distinguish between legitimate leadership and irregular challengers. As Chechnya attempted to move towards independence, Maskhadov saw conflict with Russia approaching and made one last attempt to keep it at bay by confederating with Russia<sup>164</sup> and involving the UN in negotiations.

These activities did not impress the IIPB, who continued to move independently towards the unification of Chechnya and Dagestan under Islam. In August 1999, the IIPB, led by Basayev and Khattab, invaded Dagestan, believing they had the support required to control the region and establish a caliphate.<sup>165</sup> The Islamist invasion of Dagestan gave Russia the justification they needed to revisit the problem of Chechen independence. Presidential elections were approaching, and, with poor approval ratings, Yeltsin and Putin were looking for a cause. Based on the IIPB invasion, Chechnya was declared a harbor for terrorists and the ingredients for the second Chechen war were in place.

#### **D. THE SECOND CHECHEN WAR**

The second war differed from the first in two significant ways. First, it was sold by Russian leaders as a fight against terrorism and Islamic extremism in the region—as merely a workmanlike cleanup, unlike the first war with its independence issues. Thus, terrorism became a ready justification.<sup>166</sup> The other difference was that Chechnya was now under the influence of an array of Islamist groups that exerted significant pull. Even

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<sup>162</sup> Ibid., 1789.

<sup>163</sup> Jaimoukha, *The Chechens*, 71.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

<sup>165</sup> James Hughes, "Chechnya: The Causes of a Protracted Post-Soviet Conflict," *Civil Wars* 4, no. 4 (2001): 35–36.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid., 36.

more critically, the jihadists had converted some important military leaders to extremist ways and means. These factors made Russia's rationale for the second war seem legitimate, especially after the invasion of Dagestan by the IIPB.

Despite the IIPB invasion, the Russian public was not in complete support of another war until September 1999, when two bombs exploded in apartment buildings in Volgodonsk and Buinaksk, killing 300 and injuring up to 1,700. Putin quickly attributed these bombings to terrorist groups out of Chechnya, and the new war was accepted as a necessity.<sup>167</sup> Controversy surrounding this bombing persists—there has never been proof it was committed by Chechens, and some believe the Russians themselves planned the bombings to provide a *casus belli*. Operatives of the Russian federal security service were caught planting a bomb in a third location, but claimed they were conducting antiterrorism training.<sup>168</sup> Though the bombings remain suspicious, they provided ample reason to invade Chechnya at the time.

Russia began with an air campaign, dropping bombs in late September 1999 to enable ground troops to move in. Putin stressed that this was not a civil war within the Russian federation, but merely a fight against terrorism, and described areas of Chechnya as controlled by murderers and bandits.<sup>169</sup> Maskhadov pleaded that Chechnya was not responsible for the terrorist attacks, but was ignored. Ground troops controlled most of the region within a few months, employing a standard military action distinguished mainly by the number of troops involved, which was upwards of 100,000—well above the number in the first war.<sup>170</sup>

Though the invasion itself was not unique, two aspects are noteworthy. The first is Russia's conduct of the war, and how it evolved; the second is the leadership of radical Islamist groups within Chechnya and their actions during the war.

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<sup>167</sup> Hughes, "Chechnya: The Causes of a Protracted Post-Soviet Conflict," 36..

<sup>168</sup> Hughes, *Chechnya*, 110.

<sup>169</sup> Jim Nichol, "Chechnya Conflict: Recent Developments," (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2000), 3.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

## 1. Russian Atrocities

Russian leaders consistently maintained after the first war that Chechnya had a terrorist problem, insisting they were at war against terrorism, not Chechnya per se.<sup>171</sup> As noted, the West described the conflict as an internal affair. A Russian law passed in July 1998 provided a strict definition of terrorism and with it included a provision that was to bring repercussions:<sup>172</sup> namely, that the “law gave legal protection (immunity) to state officials and military and security personnel engaged in counterterrorism.”<sup>173</sup> This language effectively licensed atrocity over the course of the second war.

As the conflict unfolded, it became clear that brutal methods would again be routine. The Russians set up concentration camps and deployed weapons such as vacuum bombs (in which the air is filled with vaporized fuel, then ignited) upon villages throughout Chechnya.<sup>174</sup> Russian forces used mopping-up operations to go from village to village with the pretext of hunting terrorists, but preying on the inhabitants in unspeakable ways. Males taken into custody were often beaten, tortured, killed, raped, or held without charges indefinitely,<sup>175</sup> or they simply disappeared. Investigation of these incidents was rare, and convictions nonexistent. Between December 1999 and February 2001, 130 civilians were murdered in three villages, and not a single person was held accountable,<sup>176</sup> owing to the 1998 law. Those who escaped direct Russian violence might still face deportation: about 250,000 Chechens were shipped to other regions.<sup>177</sup>

The second Chechen war was relatively short in the battle phase (September 1999–May 2000) but fighting continued for several more years. In May 2000, Putin took control from Maskhadov’s separatist government and established a pro-Russian regime.

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<sup>171</sup> Svante E Cornell, “The War against Terrorism and the Conflict in Chechnya: A Case for Distinction,” *Fletcher Forum for World Affairs* 27 (2003): 27.

<sup>172</sup> James Hughes, “The Chechnya Conflict: Freedom Fighters or Terrorists?,” *Demokratizatsiya-Washington* 15, no. 3 (2007): 296.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

<sup>174</sup> Cornell “The War against Terrorism and the Conflict in Chechnya: A Case for Distinction,” 172.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid., 173.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

<sup>177</sup> Jim Nichol, “Chechnya Conflict: Recent Developments,” CRS Report for Congress, 2000, 5.

Major military operations were officially ended, though the Russians mopped up and conducted counterinsurgency until April 2009. A pro-Russian president now rules Chechnya, and there has been no further development in the Chechen quest for autonomy.

## **2. Islamic Terrorism**

As a tool of both Islamists and the Chechen secular resistance, terrorism increased during the second war. From the beginning of the war through the height of the violence in 2004, there were 36 terrorist attacks in Russia and Chechnya, with 22 of them suicidal.<sup>178</sup> Terrorist attacks were relatively few before the second war, and no ST was committed before June 2000.<sup>179</sup> Of the 22 suicide attacks, females perpetrated fifteen. Women also made up 65 percent of identified bombers.<sup>180</sup> This is the second largest percentage of female suicide terrorists in the world, after the PKK contingent.<sup>181</sup>

## **E. SUMMARY**

The subjugation and violence in Chechen's history with Russia created a uniformly hostile relationship. Historically, Chechens were satisfied to farm their own land, functioning within their clans and fighting if necessary, with no propensity to invade, expand, or terrorize. Russia created an enemy of the Chechens through imperialism, cultural hegemony, and gross mistreatment, instilling an abhorrence that has borne fruit for centuries. While the form of their resistance has ranged from conventional arms to guerrilla warfare and terrorism, the constant theme has been an adamant will to independence.

Chapter IV revisits the questions at the end of Chapter II in the light of the history recounted, identifying factors that may similarly influence other groups to employ FST.

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<sup>178</sup> John Reuter, "Chechnya's Suicide Bombers: Desperate, Devout, or Deceived?," *The American Committee for Peace in Chechnya* 8 (2004): Factsheet, 1.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid., Factsheet, 2.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid.

## **IV. ANALYSIS OF THE CHECHEN CASE**

This chapter synthesizes the research presented to address the questions posed in Chapter II as to critical aspects of the Russo–Chechen conflict, the evolution of the resistance, and whether Chechen FST was secular or religious in nature. Analysis of these questions is organized in five sections. First, Russian tactics are reviewed for their role in mobilizing Chechen resistance and the form this resistance took. Next, the secularism of the separatist movement is examined. The third section discusses the transition of some military leaders from secular independence fighters to Islamic extremists, and the fourth focuses on FST as it emerged during the second Chechen war in 1999. Finally, the chapter concludes by explaining the FST phenomenon and answering the research question.

### **A. INDUCEMENTS TO RESISTANCE**

This section examines Russian military and political actions that proved provocative in Chechnya, and the progressive response from guerrilla warfare to FST. The purpose is to correlate Chechen tactics with Russian incitement in the region as a foundation for further analysis.

#### **1. Russian Actions**

In a long history, Russia used a variety of methods to subjugate the Chechen people and gain dominance in the region. These methods had the unintended effect of solidifying resistance.

##### ***a. Military Tactics***

Russian involvement began in the late 1700s, with annexation occurring in the 1800s and multiple attempts at independence in the 1900s. Chechen civilians were on the receiving end of extreme tactics, most notably strikes on families, groups, villages, farms, and commercial centers. Area-wide weapons were used to destroy the people and landscape with broad strokes. Russia demonstrated unbending commitment to these tactics and indifference to the possibility that they might strengthen resistance.

The brutality of Russian tactics is exemplified by the attacks on Grozny in both Russo–Chechen wars. Grozny was an important commercial center, home to much of the petroleum industry and a major supplier of oil and gas to Russia. The city also had a high percentage of ethnic Russians in its high-rises. The Russians possessed good reason to spare Grozny due to economic interest. It was nevertheless attacked ferociously in both wars, with thousands of civilians killed and its infrastructure pulverized. As artillery bombardment exceeded the highest rates seen in World War II,<sup>182</sup> human-rights organizations decried Russian actions. Vacuum bombs were used as area weapons, rather than point targets, so that civilians were injured or killed in the blast while the proper target was prosecuted.<sup>183</sup> Tactics that deliberately use weapons against a population provoke a sense that the victims have nothing to lose and all restraint must be abandoned. This Russian heavy fistedness galvanized Chechen resistance, convincing partisans of the futility of conventional methods and tactics while disenchanting ethnic Russians.

***b. Occupation***

The Russian occupation is subject to discussion from opposing perspectives—though it is ultimately the Chechen perspective that answers why FST became thinkable.

The Chechens consider themselves indigenous and have perceived Russia as an interloper and occupier since the first colonial incursions. While Chechnya eventually was annexed to the empire, this political abstraction did not change Chechen views of their homeland or the illegitimacy of the Russian presence.

By contrast, the Russians assert that they expanded into unclaimed territory. There was no perceptible empire, state, or political organization in the area. Once the region was annexed in 1861 and officially Russian, they were no longer occupiers, but settlers. Russia made no significant effort to smooth relations with the Chechens over the years and generally treated them as aliens, reinforcing the Chechen understanding that they were not Russians. As armed resistance flared through the decades, Russia deployed

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<sup>182</sup> Svante E. Cornell, “International Reactions to Massive Human Rights Violations 86.

<sup>183</sup> For a more complete description of vacuum bombs, other types of bombs in the same category, and their effects, see <https://news.vice.com/article/a-new-kind-of-bomb-is-being-used-in-syria-and-its-a-humanitarian-nightmare>. The article references the use of these bombs by Russia in 2000.

troops to assure stability rather than consider a parley of any kind. Harsh policies ensured that the Chechens remained oppressed and without recourse.

***c. Civilian Targeting***

From 1785, the Chechens experienced severe reprisals for insubordination and revolt, as described in Chapter III. The literature suggests that mass deportation is the shaping technique that most effectively drove the Chechens to feel their helplessness and embrace terrorism, and ultimately FST. Stalin's deportation had a profound impact on the Russo–Chechen wars by molding a generation of men hardened by the cultural memory of this cataclysmic event, who came to positions of leadership in the 1990s.

In the Chechen wars, a significant technique for subduing the population was the arbitrary internment of tens of thousands of persons (mainly men) in 'filtration camps.' The imprisonment of potential male fighters had an unintended effect, however, of causing women to emerge as unexpectedly effective combatants. FST is an equalizing weapon, one that does not require skill or strength, but only will.

**2. Chechen Tactics and Techniques**

In the protracted resistance of the Chechen people, tactics evolved to incorporate changing conditions and lessons learned. Guerrilla warfare, terrorism, and FST are the most important.

***a. Guerrilla Warfare***

Guerrilla warfare is a useful combat tactic for forces too small or ill equipped to meet a conventional foe. Imam Shamil used this tactic to resist the first incursions of Catherine the Great's army in 1785, and guerrilla tactics allow the fighters of Chechnya to leverage their intimate knowledge of regional geography, weather, terrain, and community resources to defeat better-armed enemies unfamiliar with the local setting. Though guerrilla warfare proved an effective tactic through the second Chechen war, it was insufficient to secure victory.

***b. Terrorism***

In addition to guerrilla warfare, Chechen leaders used terrorism on two occasions during the first Chechen war when losing militarily. As noted in Chapter III, Basayev employed terrorism in 1995, taking hostages in two raids to coerce Russian withdrawal. While the hospital raid did not achieve major goals, greater freedom of movement for Chechen deportees was conceded. The Russians were more prepared for the second act and killed a number of perpetrators and bystanders. Though these outcomes were not all the Chechens desired, they did demonstrate to Basayev and other Chechen leaders that terrorism could be productive.

***c. Female Suicide Terrorism***

The use of terrorism increased during the second Chechen war, owing to the advantages of a large and easy victim toll and good media coverage. As the frequency of civilian violence against Chechens increased, Chechen terrorist attacks increased.<sup>184</sup> The first FST attack occurred in 2000, when two women drove a truck rigged with a bomb into a Russian military compound. John Reuter notes, “according to the Russian human-rights group Memorial, 2002 was witness to the largest number of recorded disappearances and extrajudicial killings of any year since the second Russo–Chechen war began.”<sup>185</sup> As shown in Table 2, FST peaked in 2003.

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<sup>184</sup> John Reuter, “Chechnya’s Suicide Bombers 1.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid.



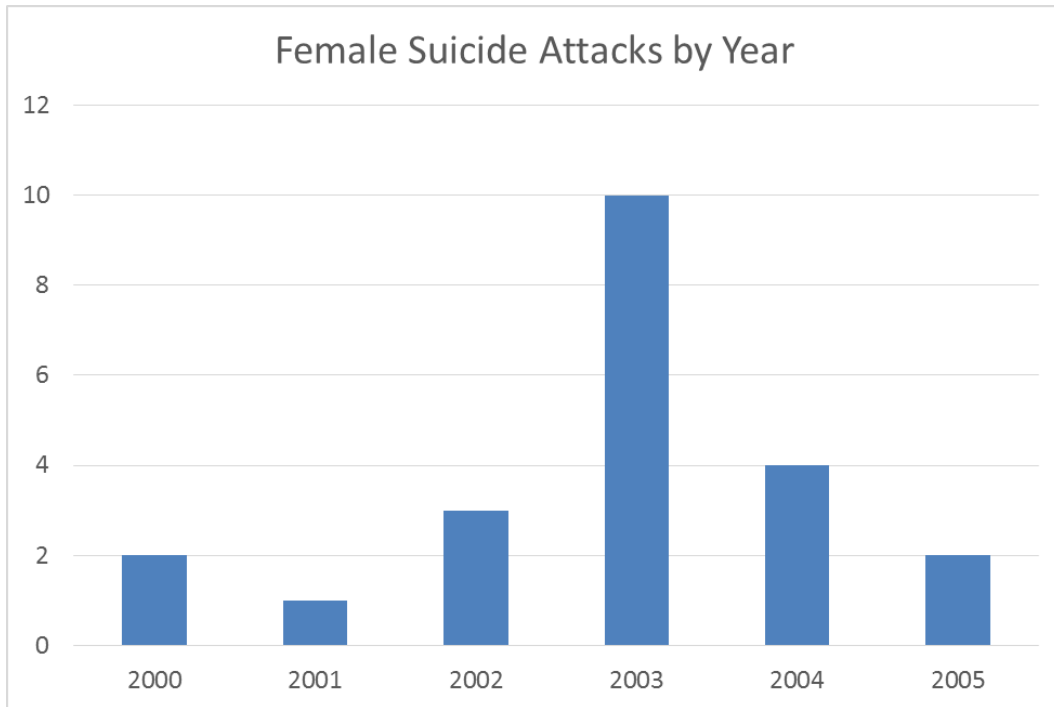


Figure 1. Chechen Female Suicide Attacks by Year<sup>186</sup>

Chechens have displayed throughout their history a willingness to employ whatever tactics were available against a greater force. These evolved over time from guerrilla tactics, to terrorism during the first Chechen war, to extensive use of FST during the second Chechen war, specifically in response to increases in violence against the civilian population.<sup>187</sup> The next section discusses the nature of Chechen resistance, whether religious or secular.

### 3. The Nature of Chechen Resistance

As discussed in Chapter III, regional Islam adapted more to the Chechen culture than did the culture to Islam. The struggle was not for a caliphate or other Islamic ambition, but for political and cultural self-determination. In the Chechen constitution is a

<sup>186</sup> Adapted from Anne Speckhard and Khapta Akhmedova, “Black Widows: The Chechen Female Suicide Terrorists,” in *Female Suicide Bombers: Dying for Equality*, ed. Yoram Schweitzer (Tel Aviv: Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies, 2006), 63-80.

<sup>187</sup> Reuter, “Chechnya’s Suicide Bombers: Desperate, Devout, or Deceived?,” Executive Summary, 2.

provision for the secularity of the state.<sup>188</sup> This orientation has represented the majority of Chechens throughout their history, and the two wars with Russia were consistent with this focus. Annika Frantzell observes, “the Chechen conflict did not erupt because Russia was suppressing Islam, but because Russia was suppressing Chechnya itself.”<sup>189</sup> That is not to say Chechnya is not majority Muslim, but only that their desire for independence was not for Islamic purposes.

Notwithstanding, some Chechens became more radicalized and complicated as to motivation. The following section discusses leaders who moved to Islamism and incorporated this ideology into the fight against Russia.

#### **4. Separatists Turned Islamists**

Chapter III notes that independent clans were quick to unite in case of need and select a military leader against an outside enemy. This clan system remained viable in modern history. The first Chechen war produced many warlords and warrior bands, and some were radicalized by Ibn Khattab. Khattab was a Saudi residing in Chechnya, supported by Saudi Arabian money, who propagated the extreme Islamic sect of Wahhabism.<sup>190</sup> In the 1990s, Khattab converted a handful of Chechen warlords, who committed to supporting his efforts in Chechnya—among them, Shamil Basayev.<sup>191</sup>

The reasons for this radicalization were various. Some had as much to do with practical advantages as religious conviction, including political influence, a platform from which to oppose the Maskhadov government, personal power, and money.<sup>192</sup> Chechens do not usually band together unless there is an adversary. Some warlords saw an opportunity to gain power by announcing themselves as opponents of the ineffective and unpopular secular government and leaders of a new regime. Basayev benefitted from

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<sup>188</sup> Jaimoukha, *The Chechens*, 71.

<sup>189</sup> Frantzell, “The Radicalization of Chechnya,” 18.

<sup>190</sup> Stephen R Bowers, Yavus Akhmadov, and Ashley Ann Derrick, “Islam in Ingushetia and Chechnya,” (2004): 399, [http://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/gov\\_fac\\_pubs/40](http://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/gov_fac_pubs/40).

<sup>191</sup> Hank Johnston, “Ritual, Strategy, and Deep Culture in the Chechen National Movement,” 334.

<sup>192</sup> Julie Wilhelmsen, “Between a Rock and a Hard Place, 39.

his access to Khattab's financial backing, weapons, and foreign fighters.<sup>193</sup> It is difficult to gauge how committed these warlords were to the tenets of radical Islam, but one indication may be their exclusive focus on the Chechen conflict, as opposed to global jihad,<sup>194</sup> which seems to point more to an exploitation of Islamism than a deep commitment to a new ideology. The question of whether Islamist forms of Chechen separatism exist today is difficult to judge. Chechnya's Russian-supported government, presided over by Ramzan Kadyrov, is run as a dictatorship that caters to Russia and punishes extremism harshly, so adherents are difficult to identify.<sup>195</sup>

As these warlords radicalized during the interwar period and second war, FST became a prominent tactic, and motivations appear to have grown more complex. The next section examines the phenomenon of FST in Chechnya.

## **B. THE EMERGENCE OF FST**

Chechen FST is notable because it was assumed to be religiously motivated. As mentioned earlier, Hamas used the tactic once, but because it was socially impermissible, it was not attempted again. If this is the case, why was it accepted by a Muslim Chechen population? If it was not religious, why did it appear so? This section considers evidence of FST both as religious and secular, according to the stated motives, goals, and objectives in some attacks. Three examples serve to demonstrate the complexity of the problem.

### **1. Examples of Chechen FST**

The first example considered—an act of FST by Elza Gazuyeva targeting Russian general Gaidar Gadzhiev—occurred November 29, 2001, in the Urus-Martan district of Chechnya. Gazuyeva was 23 years old and had lost several family members during the war. Gadzhiev allegedly forced Gazuyeva to witness the torture and execution of her

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<sup>193</sup> Ibid.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>195</sup> Maciej Falkowski, "Russia's 'Middle East': The Escalation of Religious Conflicts in the Northern Caucasus. Osw Commentary Number 207/04.04. 2016," (2016): 3.

husband and brother.<sup>196</sup> She is reported to have walked up to the general and asked “Do you still remember me?” before detonating a grenade.<sup>197</sup> Gazuyeva’s case is striking because of the intensely personal nature of the FST. Witnesses said she apparently knew the man and made no reference to Allah, the Koran, or religious motivations. No Chechen group claimed to be associated with the attack. This initial use of FST in Chechnya appears attributable to personal revenge.

Chechen women were first described as black widows after an attack on the Dubrovka theater in Moscow on October 23, 2002, during the second Chechen war. A group of about 40 terrorists, 19 of them women, stormed a theatrical performance and took close to 1,000 hostages. The men wore suicide belts and carried pistols, automatic weapons, and homemade bombs.<sup>198</sup> The women also wore suicide belts and were dressed in black robes with their heads covered, consistent with Islamist beliefs (as opposed to local Islamic practice, which does not demand female head covering). The men appeared to be in charge and threatened to kill everyone, while the women passed out water and food over the three-day siege. The demand was that Russia leave Chechnya and end military activities. On October 26, Russian forces pumped an unidentified gas into the theater, disabling the occupants and collaterally killing over a hundred hostages. Special forces then entered and dispatched the terrorists with gunshots to the head. Later reports showed none of the hostages was murdered by the terrorists; all were killed by the gas.<sup>199</sup> Though the women had time, their suicide belts were not deployed.<sup>200</sup> Some hostages reported the presence of religious banners, but the terrorists claimed the motive was specifically political: that Russia leave Chechnya.

The third FST example was perpetrated August 25, 2004, by Amanta Nagayeva and Satsita Dzhebirkhanova, who boarded separate flights at the Domodedovo airport

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<sup>196</sup> Robert W. Kurz and Charles K. Bartles, “Chechen Suicide Bombers,” *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 20, no. 4 (2007): 544.

<sup>197</sup> Francine Banner, *Making Death Visible*, 151.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*, 153.

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*, 157.

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.*

near Moscow and exploded both aircraft after takeoff, killing 90.<sup>201</sup> Nagayeva is known to have had a brother who was kidnapped three years earlier by Russian forces and never seen again.<sup>202</sup> There is no clear evidence that revenge for the missing brother was the motivation, and the bombers left no videos, letters, messages, or clues. An Islamic jihadist group claimed responsibility in a web statement,<sup>203</sup> but this was never confirmed accurate or truthful. Thus, the women's motives remain unclear.

Table 2 lists FST incidents from 2000–2005, a period that contains the most significant events of the second Chechen war. Note that the majority of attacks do not list a terrorist group as the perpetrator.

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<sup>201</sup> Kurz and Bartles, "Chechen Suicide Bombers," 546.

<sup>202</sup> Steven Lee Myers, "From Dismal Chechnya, Women Turn to Bombs," *New York Times* 10 (2004): 2.

<sup>203</sup> Kurz and Bartles, "Chechen Suicide Bombers," 546.

Table 2. Chechen FST Attacks 2000–2005<sup>204</sup>

Date	Place (CH = Chechnya)	Total Terrorist	Female	Male	Fatalities	Injured Victims	Hostages	Terrorist Outcome	Claimants
6/7/2000	CH, Alkhan-Yurt military base	2	2	0	2	5	0	Dead	
12/8/2000	CH, MVD building	1	1	0	n/a	n/a	0	Wounded, later dead	
11/29/2001	CH, Urus-Martan, Military office	1	1	0	1	3	0	Dead	
2/5/2002	CH, Grozny, Zavodskoy ROVD	1	1	0	23	17	0	Wounded	
10/23–26/2002	Moscow, Dubrovka Theater	40	19	21	129	644	<800	Dead	
12/27/2002	CH, Grozny, government complex	3	1	2	83	<200	0	Dead	Riyadus Salikhiin
5/12/2003	CH, Znamenskaya, governmental complex	3	1	2	59	111	0	Dead	
5/14/2003	CH, Iliskhan-Yurt, religion festival	2	2	0	18	145	0	Dead	
6/5/2003	North Osetia, Mozdok military base	1	1	0	17	16	0	Dead	
6/20/2003	CH, Grozny, governmental complex	2	1	1	6	38	0	Dead	Riyadus Salikhiin
7/5/2003	Moscow, rock festival	2	2	0	14	60	0	Dead	
7/11/2003	Moscow, Tverskaya Street	1	1	0	1	0	0	Survived	
7/27/2003	CH, Grozny, military building	1	1	0	?	?	0	Dead	
12/5/2003	Southern Russian near Yessentuki, train	4	3	1	41	<150	0	Dead	Riyadus Salikhiin
7/15/2003	Ingushetia, FSB office	2	1	1	2	31	0	Dead	
12/9/2003	Moscow, National Hotel near Duma	1	1	0	6	14	0	Dead	Riyadus Salikhiin
8/25/2004	Airplane TU-134 Moscow-Volgograd	1	1	0	43	0	0	Dead	Riyadus Salikhiin
8/25/2004	Airplane TU-154 Moscow-Sochi	1	1	0	42	0	0	Dead	Riyadus Salikhiin
8/31/2004	Moscow, subway station Rijskaya	1	1	0	10	33	0	Dead	
9/1–3/2004	North Osetia, Beslan school	32	2	30	330	470	1120	Dead	
5/5/2005	CH, Grozny	1	1	0	0	0	0	Dead	
5/8/2005	CH, Assinovskaya	2	2	0	0	0	0	Dead	
Total		105	47	58	827	<1982	<1920		

<sup>204</sup> Adapted from Anne Speckhard and Khapta Akhmedova, “Black Widows: The Chechen Female Suicide Terrorists,” in *Female Suicide Bombers: Dying for Equality*, ed. Yoram Schweitzer (Tel Aviv: Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies, 2006), 63-80.

The attacks carried out by the black widows differ in size, lethality, targets, and information available. Most occurred in 2003, following the largest barrage of violence ever aimed at the Chechen population, in 2002.

*a. Evidence of FST as Religious*

Chechen FST seems to be religious mainly because radical Islamic groups enabled them and generally supported any means necessary to accomplish the insurgency goals. The acts were numerous, the weapons of miscellaneous types, and the targets inconsistent. Several conclusions may be drawn. First, some of the attacks were claimed by the extremist group Riyadus Salikhiin, whose purpose was to create an independent Chechen state that was expressly Islamist and followed Wahhabism.<sup>205</sup> This group was led by former cabinet member Shamil Basayev. The involvement of Riyadus Salikhiin suggests that some FST was religiously motivated to some degree. Another factor that implicates religious extremism is the size and nature of the attacks. The theater assault was well-planned and large scale. The double bombing of aircraft on the same day indicates coordination. These attacks were inconsistent with resistance tactics employed by the secular Maskhadov government in the second Chechen war, inviting the assumption that radical jihadist groups were responsible. A final factor that points to Islamic motivation is the type of weapons employed, including truck bombs, suicide belts, and explosives of various kinds. These were tactics foreign to the secular resistance—only Islamist groups in Chechnya were known to employ them. These factors suggest that Chechen FST was primarily religious in nature.

**2. Evidence of FST as Secular**

Two main points persist throughout the history of Russo–Chechen conflict that are consistent with the rise of FST:

1. Chechens have resisted invasion and occupation throughout their history.
2. During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Chechens consistently fought under a secular political banner.

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<sup>205</sup> Kurz and Bartles, “Chechen Suicide Bombers,” 540.

During the second war, radical jihadists participated in the conflict and their goal of ending Russian rule coincided with secular aims. The Islamists supported FST, but, as shown in Chapter II, such an extreme tactic can persist only if the host society supports the tactic. The Chechen majority consistently supported independence with little deference to a specific tactic. From the 1800s, Chechens have been willing to accept outside assistance to achieve their desire for independence.

The Chechen response to Russia substantiates key points made in the literature about tactical progression from terrorism to FST, which may be summarized as follows:

**a. *Powerlessness***

Hoffman describes terrorism as useful for groups trying to establish power where none, or little, exists.<sup>206</sup> Chechnya has been chronically weak in confronting Russia throughout its history. Russia has been able to use military force and severe policies at will.

**b. *Desperation***

Crenshaw concludes terrorism is a last resort when other methods have failed.<sup>207</sup> Chechnya resisted occupation through more conventional means such as guerrilla warfare and attempted negotiation in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Crenshaw emphasizes a troubled history as a significant motivating factor for terrorism.<sup>208</sup>

**c. *Lack of Alternatives***

Hafez describes suicide terrorism as the most effective way to achieve strategic goals in an asymmetrical context,<sup>209</sup> such as that in Chechnya. Bloom describes suicide terrorism as a choice made after all others have been exhausted.<sup>210</sup> During the second war, Chechens perceived few or no alternatives after their secular government was dismissed by Russia in negotiations.

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<sup>206</sup> Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, 44.

<sup>207</sup> Crenshaw, "The Logic of Terrorism," 25.

<sup>208</sup> Crenshaw, *Terrorism in Context*, 5.

<sup>209</sup> Hafez, *Manufacturing Human Bombs*, 13, 26.

<sup>210</sup> Bloom, *Dying to Kill*, 89.



**d. Occupation by a Democracy**

Pape observes that societies will turn to extremes such as FST when they experience occupation by a democratic government in their struggle for independence.<sup>211</sup> Pape defines a democracy as a country that elects “their chief executives and legislatures in multiparty elections and have seen at least one peaceful transfer of power.”<sup>212</sup> Pape recognizes in the same article the Freedom House rating of Russia as only partly free but defaults to the above definition.<sup>213</sup> Pape explains democracies are specifically targeted because the public has a low threshold for suffering violence and have ability to influence policy.<sup>214</sup> Another reason democracies are targeted is because they have a reputation for restraint against the civilian population where authoritarian governments do not.<sup>215</sup> This allows the smaller, occupied people to use means of attack with less fear of retribution by the larger, more capable occupying force. The final argument is less convincing in the case of Russia but Pape acknowledges the challenge while still calling Russia a democracy.

**e. Paucity of Male Fighters**

Bloom and Ness posit that women step forward only when there is a shortage of men.<sup>216</sup> On a practical level, women can be more effective as terrorists, because they move freely where men cannot, arouse little suspicion, are more lethal than men due to lack of suspicion, and capture more media attention when successful. None of these considerations is religious in nature.

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<sup>211</sup> Robert Anthony Pape, *Dying to Win*, 38.

<sup>212</sup> Pape, Robert A. “Suicide Terrorism and Democracy.” *Suicide* (2006), 10.

<sup>213</sup> Ibid.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid.

<sup>216</sup> Bloom, “Female Suicide Bombers,” 99. Ness, “Rise in Female Violence,” 89. Cindy D Ness, “In the Name of the Cause: Women’s Work in Secular and Religious Terrorism,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 28, no. 5 (2005): 360.

*f. Extraordinary Traumatization of Women*

Anne Speckhard and Khapta Akhmedova concluded an extensive study of 34 Chechen female attackers to determine motivation, consulting family, friends, neighbors, associates, and when available, the decedent's own words. All the women profiled had experienced severe psychological trauma owing to an event of great magnitude, such as the death or disappearance of a loved one.<sup>217</sup> Only 20 percent of the attackers had any contact, even peripherally, with Wahhabist ideology before the trauma occurred.<sup>218</sup> In most cases of terrorist recruitment, the appeal is made through radicalized family or friends of the target, but in the Chechen case, recruits are shown to have radicalized out of trauma and stress.<sup>219</sup> Speckhard and Akhmedova find that an extreme religious group whose ideology includes nationalistic elements may provide victims of war-based trauma with a "type of psychological first aid that is necessarily short-lived."<sup>220</sup> The researchers assert that this type of religious response occurs only as it fits "a widespread societal need to respond to violent, bereaving, and traumatic situations they have recently experienced."<sup>221</sup> Islamist groups in Chechnya sharing a subset of goals with the secular government were able to exploit their posture to reach traumatized women. Speckhard and Akhmedova make several observations regarding Chechen FST: the women were able to act because of support from extreme groups and ideologies; they turned to these mainly unfamiliar ideologies as a result of unresolved trauma; and they self-recruited to gain access to revenge, social justice, and destruction of the enemy.<sup>222</sup> Mohammed Hafez recognizes psychological trauma as a plausible explanation that individuals may

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<sup>217</sup> Speckhard and Akhmedova, "Black Widows: The Chechen Female Suicide Terrorists," 66.

<sup>218</sup> "The New Chechen Jihad: Militant Wahhabism as a Radical Movement and a Source of Suicide Terrorism in Post-War Chechen Society," *Democracy and Security* 2, no. 1 (2006): 133.

<sup>219</sup> Speckhard and Akhmedova, "Black Widows," 71.

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

<sup>222</sup> Speckhard and Akhmedova, "Black Widows," 74–75.

volunteer for suicide attacks.<sup>223</sup> While radical Islam promised a means of achieving nationalist and separatist goals,<sup>224</sup> “the core political goals... are nationalistic.”<sup>225</sup>

### **3. Historical Precedence**

Finally, this research finds that the only other conflicts in which FST was used extensively were secular: the PKK and Tamil Tigers. Suicide terrorism is used almost exclusively as a tactic of rebellion against an occupying power.<sup>226</sup> Regardless of the perpetrators involved—even if an Islamist group—the suggestion is strong that the motivations of Chechen FST, while complex, were not primarily religious in nature.

### **4. Motivation as Complex**

Bloom describes suicide terrorism as having a “complexity of motivations”<sup>227</sup> and the Chechen case is no different. A summary of these motivations follows:

1. Chechen FST was employed for the secular purpose of gaining independence.
2. The tactic was employed as an ultimate measure against an overwhelming foe when other resistance failed.
3. Peaks in FST use corresponded with peak atrocities and human rights violations by Russia.

As Cindy Ness states, “Chechnya’s turn to Wahhabism, fanned by Arab mercenaries, appears to be more the product of political compromise to secure funding than of a Chechen commitment to Islamic beliefs.”<sup>228</sup> Nevertheless, the influence of Wahhabism is seen in specific actions taken by the Chechens, foreign funding, and the use of ultimate tactics such as FST, which the secular side had never employed.

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<sup>223</sup> Mohammed M. Hafez, *Suicide Bombers in Iraq: The Strategy and Ideology of Martyrdom* (Washington, DC: U.S. Institute of Peace Press 2007), 7–8.

<sup>224</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.

<sup>225</sup> Anne Speckhard and Khapta Ahkmedova, “The Making of a Martyr: Chechen Suicide Terrorism,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 29, no. 5 (2006): 483.

<sup>226</sup> Pape, *Dying to Win*, 23.

<sup>227</sup> Bloom, *Dying to Kill*, 90.

<sup>228</sup> Ness, “In the Name of the Cause,” 360.

It is impossible to state decisively that any given act of FST, or the trend generally, was primarily secular or religious in motivation, because of the collaboration and mutual influence of both sides and, in many cases, the severe emotional distress of the individual perpetrator as a preeminent factor. It is likely that in most cases a combination of factors is required. Chechen FST may be described as secular and political at its core, augmented by Islamist influence, and triggered by unbearably harsh treatment.<sup>229</sup> In supporting a longstanding secular fight for independence, Islamist groups were able to use an angry and chaotic situation to encourage an extreme activity that seemed righteous in the circumstances and commensurate with the trauma experienced.

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<sup>229</sup> Reuter, "Chechnya's Suicide Bombers," 28.

## V. CONCLUSION

This thesis investigates factors in the history of Russo–Chechen relations that encouraged the use of FST and which may apply in other secular independence conflicts. Religiously motivated FST was uncommon in 2001, and at that time had only been used once (by Hamas). A strong Islamist influence that arose regionally at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century introduced active female participation in the Russo–Chechen conflict. The literature suggests that FST was not motivated primarily by Islamist ideology, however, but stemmed, in a practical sense, from the general unavailability of fighting men and the greater freedom of movement afforded women, and, in a psychological sense, from the overwhelming pain and despair inflicted on Chechen women. Ultimately, this research concludes that FST was driven by secular, separatist ends, with Saudi Islamists providing financial support.

### A. SUMMARY

In the adoption of extreme tactics by any group, the following progression generally applies:

#### *a. Terrorism*

For weak contenders, terrorism is usually chosen after the failure of other tactics and the perceived exhaustion of alternatives. The conflict generally has a lengthy history and involves longstanding grievances.

#### *b. Suicide Terrorism*

A group may progress to ST for idiosyncratic reasons, but Pape’s assertion that it characteristically accompanies foreign occupation by a democratic state in the context of a separatist movement generally applies.<sup>230</sup> For the weak contender, ST may become a tool of choice because of its simplicity and low cost, efficacy in an asymmetrical

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<sup>230</sup> Pape, *Dying to Win*, 23.

struggle, and ready availability as the second iteration of an attack when a group fails to achieve objectives the first time.

*c. Female Suicide Terrorism*

The strategic reasons for FST are not different from male, but tactically, women have greater access to public and private places, freedom of movement, and skill in avoiding detection and disarming suspicion. FST yields better media coverage, and, in the propaganda war, the perpetrator's willingness to sacrifice her life seems the more poignantly desperate. FST has been deployed in secular struggles, but is non-existent in religious terrorism because local societies tend to reject women in this role.

Spanning three centuries, motivations in the Chechen case center on

- Desire for sovereignty
- Strong ethnic identity
- A history of resistance
- Severe treatment by the occupier
- Insurmountable military and political inferiority
- A sense of isolation and abandonment by the world

While Islamist influence may have encouraged and enabled FST, there is no clear evidence that any given act was committed expressly for religious reasons. Witnesses recalled no mention of Islam or Allah, only calls for Chechen self-determination and Russian withdrawal. Moreover, individual FST volunteers seem often to have been driven by personal revenge.

**B. POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

During the Russo–Chechen conflict, the West acknowledged the mistreatment of Chechen civilians but did nothing. There were no sanctions, pressures, inspections, or improvements in Chechen life. This inaction was a strong factor in Chechnya's accepting help from foreign Islamists.

Global conditions invite the Russo–Chechen experience to repeat itself in many places. Independence movements in which weak groups are fighting to gain power over stronger groups or an opposing establishment are common. Radical Islam, meanwhile, continues to spread.

It may be assumed that nothing prevents secular and religious partisans in a given location from joining forces as fellow travelers in pursuit of common goals. Religious zealots such as Islamists have shown themselves deftly opportunistic among powerless but impassioned warriors susceptible to outside influence. The likelihood of radical Islam’s gaining a foothold increases in areas where Islam is already practiced and a popular movement is not achieving its goals. The United States and multinational organizations would be well served to consider policies that would obviate Islamist alliances and present alternatives. Military assistance is not the only answer.

### **C. NEW QUESTIONS**

Presently, Chechnya is at peace under a Russian-installed government and president chosen by the Kremlin. There is no military occupation, but Chechen history predicts an eventual resurgence of separatism and accompanying violence. Follow-on research is recommended to examine the period from 2007 to the present to understand why FST waned then disappeared, why terrorism dropped significantly, and why Chechens are now willing to live quietly under Russian rule. Is this a latent period, in which the population is gathering strength for another resistance? Is this a signal that Chechens do not necessarily desire independent statehood, but only that Russia leave them alone? How long will Chechnya tolerate a Russian-installed government that essentially functions as a dictatorship? Will Chechnya settle into its formerly rejected status as a satellite of Russia—and if so, the reasons will be of great interest to observers worldwide.

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