A multidimensional approach to conflict analysis: the Russo-Chechen conflict
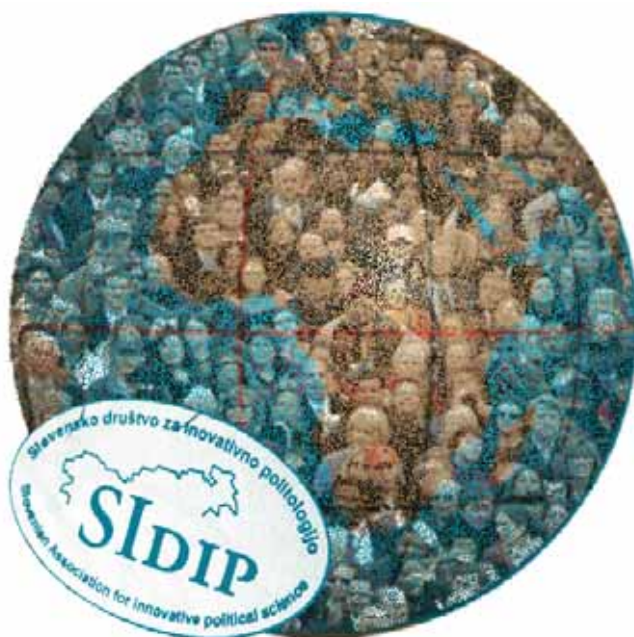
By: Ali Askerov

Abstract:

This paper describes the ethnopolitical conflict between Russia and Chechnya, and explores the causes of the war and violence between these two nations that started in the early 1800s and continues today. The accurate analysis of conflict is important for a number of reasons, but above all, because without its accurate diagnosis, suggestions for successful resolution would practically be impossible. The Russo-Chechen conflict is one of the most long-lasting ethnopolitical conflicts in the world. Its over two hundred years of history is replete with violence and atrocities that escalated and deescalated this conflict from time to time. Many books and articles are written about this conflict to explain its origins and causes relating to one or more of the factors of nationalism, religion, interests, and geopolitics. This paper, however, employs a multidimensional approach to its analysis by employing a number of theories of conflict and violence without specifying priority to any causal factors as it is impossible to weigh the causative factors to identify the hierarchical interrelationship among them. This paper argues that a multidimensional and multilevel approach to conflict analysis is needed to understand root causes of complex conflict correctly that is important for making effective policies of conflict resolution.

Keywords: conflict | theory | analysis | Russia | Chechnya

Article:

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A Multidimensional Approach to Conflict Analysis: The Russo-Chechen Conflict

Ali Askerov[1]

Abstract

This paper describes the ethnopolitical conflict between Russia and Chechnya, and explores the causes of the war and violence between these two nations that started in the early 1800s and continues today. The accurate analysis of conflict is important for a number of reasons, but above all, because without its accurate diagnosis, suggestions for successful resolution would practically be impossible. The Russo-Chechen conflict is one of the most long-lasting ethnopolitical conflicts in the world. Its over two hundred years of history is replete with violence and atrocities that escalated and deescalated this conflict from time to time. Many books and articles are written about this conflict to explain its origins and causes relating to one or more of the factors of nationalism, religion, interests, and geopolitics. This paper, however, employs a multidimensional approach to its analysis by employing a number of theories of conflict and violence without specifying priority to any causal factors as it is impossible to weigh the causative factors to identify the hierarchical interrelationship among them. This paper argues that a multidimensional and multilevel approach to conflict analysis is needed to understand root causes of complex conflict correctly that is important for making effective policies of conflict resolution.

Key words: conflict, theory, analysis, Russia, Chechnya

Introduction

The eighteenth century Russian imperial policies of expansion towards the Caucasus necessitated conquering the mountain people living in the Northern Caucasus including the Chechens among others. It was not an easy task for the Russians, and it took more than a century for them to take control of the region. Russia faced strong resistance and a number of rebellions, which in general it failed to subdue. It is hard to say that the Russian Empire conquered Chechnya totally before Soviet rule, despite the

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fact that the people of the Northern Caucasus were defeated by Russian troops in 1848. The Chechen oblast was created in January 1922, and in 1936 the Chechen and Ingush regions were reunited in an autonomous oblast (Seely, 2001: 77).[2] On February 23, 1944 the Chechen and Ingush nations *en masse* were deported from the North Caucasus into exile on the basis of a decree of the State Committee for Defense. The pretext was their collaboration with the Germans occupying the neighboring regions (Seely, 2001: 82-86). Within ten days, almost half a million Chechens and Ingush had been sent off to Kazakhstan and Siberia. One third of the Chechen and Ingush population died during this tragic process (Lapidus, 1998: 9). The Chechen-Ingush autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic established in 1936 was abolished. Almost overnight it disappeared from the maps and books, and the Soviet press of the time never mentioned anything about its people. After the death of Josef Stalin in 1953, the Chechen and Ingush people were allowed to return to their homes in 1957. Upon the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991 the Chechens declared their independence from the Russian Federation, thus renewing the Russian- Chechen conflict.

When the Chechen leader Johar Dudayev declared his nation's independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, Russian President Boris Yeltsin hesitated to take decisive measures against it; instead, he pursued a neglect policy in the region until 1994 when the first Chechen war started. This three-year period gave the Chechen fighters an opportunity to stockpile weaponry, most of which was purchased from the Russian military itself (Ganguly and Taras, 1998: 144). This fact was one of the central reasons for the bloodiness of the new Russo-Chechen war.

The war of the early nineties however, was not a war between two organized armies but rather a war between the well-organized Russian military institution and the Chechen guerrillas. This fact brought about a situation in which making distinctions between combatants and non-combatants has proved to be very difficult, thus contributing to massive human rights abuses (Cornell, 1999: 85-100).

Conflict exists when two or more parties have incompatible goals (Mitchell, 1981: 15-18). In this case, the Russian goal is incompatible with that of Chechnya, since Russia tries to protect its own territorial integrity through retention of Chechnya, whereas the latter strives for its independence meaning secession from Russia. Both parties in conflict regard their

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[2] In Russia, oblast is an administrative division corresponding to an autonomous province.

positions as legitimate by manipulating such well-established principles of international law as territorial integrity and self-determination respectively.

The last two phases of the two-century long Russo-Chechen conflict are the two wars in 1994-1996 and 1999-present time. The 1994-1996 war ended with the military victory of the autonomous republic of Chechnya over the Russian Federation who had an enormous military force. However, as later events showed, in reality there was no permanent winner in this bloody war, because the peace appeared to be very fragile.

The war between Chechnya and Russia has been bloody like any other war with a huge cost of human lives, and has been extraordinarily tragic with the number of civilian victims. The geographical borders of this war have never been drawn. It has been to the town of Budyonnovsk, Moscow, and Beslan, a town located in the neighboring Republic of North Ossetia. In this war, innocent civilians have suffered far more than the combatants have. Children have been victimized throughout the war. Many children were killed, some lost their parents, and many are left without shelter and schools.

The nature of the Russo-Chechen conflict is violent. Analysts call it a war rather than a conflict, at least, because of the one-sided large-scale armed operations that have taken place in the region (Williams, 2001: 128-148.). However, it can be regarded as an example of terrorism too: both state and non-state. Civilians in Chechen villages and towns are terrorized by the Russian military, while civilians almost everywhere in the Russian Federation are terrorized by the Chechen guerillas. Fresh in Chechen memories are the ways Russian troops resorted to overwhelming use of force against civilian targets and committed legions of crimes during the fighting in the village of Tsotran-Yurt and the town of Argun.[3] Drunken Russian soldiers massacred at least 80 Chechen civilians in Tsotran-Yurt in early January, 2002.[4] As a result of the tragic school siege by the Chechen guerrillas in Beslan, North Ossetia on September 1, 2004 about 500 civilians were killed by Russian military, approximately 200 of them were children.[5]

Examples of state and non-state terror in and around Chechnya are plenty. To end the terror, or at least, to transform the conflict into another stage where the form of struggle would be more civilized and non-violent, it is

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[3] RFL/RL Newsline 1/11/2002.
[4] US State Department spokesperson of the time Richard Boucher expressed concern in this regard at a press briefing in Washington on 10 January 2002.
[5] See, for example, *Izvestiya*, September 5, 2004; *Hurriyet*, September 5, 2004.

necessary to understand the root causes of the conflict. Only an accurate analysis of this conflict will make it possible to produce some effective means to handle it.

K. Lewin put it years ago that there was nothing as practical as a good theory while advising applied social psychologies (Lewin, 1951: 169). However, this view is contested by other scholars on the grounds that theories are a luxury in evaluation research (Scriven, 1991: 360), or they have stifling effect on practice (Thomas, 1997: 75-104). In fact, theory can mean very different things to different people. In general, a theory is an explanation of what is going on in the situation or whatever we are researching (Robson, 2002: 61). Also, a theory explains why a particular answer is predicted. To select and coordinate conflict resolution efforts at different levels to successfully de-escalate and transform the protracted social conflict we need to diagnose its root causes thoroughly by employing a multidimensional approach. In our case, for example, there are a number of theories that, taken together, can explain the root causes of the Russo-Chechen conflict better than any single theory. To explain and understand the conflict between Russia and Chechnya I would like to apply nine contingent and inherent theories to this case study: *basic human needs, structural and cultural violence, frustration aggression, structuration, rank disequilibrium, social identity, relative deprivation,* and *psychoanalysis.* It should be noted that there certainly are some other relevant theories applicable to this case too, although this paper is limiting itself with only the aforementioned ones.

Basic Human Needs

Basic human needs theory has an ambivalent nature, since it does not have uniformity. Different scholars explain it differently, however, its core idea is one and the same: all human beings have certain basic needs that if not satisfied can be a source of conflict. It should be noted that some scholars, Johan Galtung for example, describe their work as a basic needs "approach" (Burton, 1990: 301). John Burton and others such as Abraham Maslow (hierarchy of needs), Paul Sites (who gives emotional groundings to basic needs), and Oscar Nudler has elaborated and discussed basic human needs theory (See Maslow 1962; Burton, 1979; 1990). Burton argues that there are universal basic needs such as identity, recognition and security, without the satisfaction of which the individual will find the norms of the society to be inappropriate because to secure his needs one

cannot use these norms. In this situation, he will invent his own norms and be labeled deviant. He will disrupt himself as a person, rather than forgo these needs (Burton, 1979: 17; 28; 182). There are also some material needs such as needs for shelter and food; however, non-material needs such as identity, security and recognition are more productive of violence, if unsatisfied. A good application of this argument is the case of Chechnya. Identity needs of the Chechens, among many others have been severely violated over a long time resulting in a violent conflict.

According to Herbert Marcuse, there are true and false needs. The vital ones that include nourishment, clothing, and lodging are one's true needs, the satisfaction of which is the precondition for the realization of all other needs. False needs are those that are imposed upon people by particular social interests to repress them, and these needs perpetuate aggressiveness, misery, and injustice (Fitzgerald, 1985: 88). It is not easy to decide what elements of the basic human needs approaches are or should be the core constitutive elements of this theory, but whatever parts of it are generally accepted the situation is the same: the theory is applicable to the Chechen case in one way or another. Let's consider its relevance to the case further through the views of J. Galtung.

As discussed above, there are many human needs approaches each with considerable particularities that are well elaborated in the book *Conflict: Human Needs Theory* edited by J. Burton (See Burton, 1990). One of many basic needs scholars is J. Galtung whose list of basic human needs mainly includes security needs, welfare needs, identity needs, and freedom needs (Galtung, 1990: 309). Despite the fact that he thinks this list of needs "has a Western bias-and may be of some use as a checklist to discuss problems of Western societies" (Galtung, 1990: 312-315), I will discuss the Chechen conflict on the basis of this list of needs, at least because it gives a clear idea about the needs which, when violated, exacerbate ethnic conflict. Moreover, a researcher has a luxury of freedom of interpreting the relationship of this theory with the case within the framework of cultural, regional or structural context.

All human beings have security needs, which are specified by Galtung as needs against assault, torture, and wars, both internal and external. Galtung also defined the satisfiers of security needs as police and military. The Chechens' needs for security have been violated by Russia for a long time. In the middle of 1940s, almost the entire nation was sent to exile enforced by the Soviet military and police, who, by definition, were supposed to satisfy the Chechens' security needs as citizens of "the single

Soviet nation". Probably the Chechens had good reasons to lose their trust of the Soviet military and police as "security satisfiers" (Galtung, 1990: 309) forever.

Another important set of needs specified by Galtung as welfare needs have also been unmet for Chechens for a long time. Galtung explains welfare needs as needs for protection against climate, environment; needs for protection against diseases; needs for nutrition, water, air, and sleep, etc. In 1944 when Chechens were forced to leave their homes, they were deprived of their welfare needs. Thousand of Chechens died on sealed carts because of lack of water and food, bad sanitation, and disease (Williams, 2000: 101-134) as they were forced to find refuge in a climate very different from the Northern Caucasus in Northern Kazakhstan and Siberia. Many people in exile succumbed to diseases, and some of them died in their new and inhospitable places. Not only unprotected against diseases, the Chechens were intentionally put into conditions where risk of getting sick was much higher.[6] Moreover, people leaving their farms, homes and jobs behind likely starved, i.e., their needs for nutrition were also unmet, at least, as long as they were strangers in their new places. Shortage of food and water, absence of physical freedom, shortage of clothes and shelter, absence or insufficiency of medical care etc. explains to some extent the reasons for the massive loss of human lives that the Chechens suffered in exile.

J. Galtung elaborates identity needs in more details by listing various needs under the rubric of needs for roots, belongingness, support, esteem, association with similar humans; needs for understanding social forces; needs for social transparence; needs for a sense of purpose; needs for realizing potentials, and needs for self-expression and the like (Galtung, 1990: 309). Galtung also presents some need satisfiers like political activity, religion, ideology, jobs, leisure, etc. As such, it is hard to say that all the former Soviet people other than the Chechens had their identity needs met. The identity problem for all the ethnic groups was endemic of the former Soviet Union. However, when some former Soviet republics achieved their national independence in 1991 and reached conditions necessary for their national identities to be satisfied, Chechens were also inspired to declare their independence thus starting a new era in the Russo-Chechen conflict.

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[6] See, for example, Seely, 2001:83-84.

Another important need defined by Galtung is that of freedom, which is also presented as a need to avoid repression (Ibid). This need of the Chechen people was violated in the extreme, as they were deprived of the choice of place to live, choice of way of life, choice of people and places to visit and be visited, etc. For these mountaineer people whose dearest value is freedom life in exile was incredibly hard.[7] The core of Chechen culture rests on the notion of freedom, and the everyday usage of this word in spoken language is ubiquitous.[8]

We can come to two conclusions regarding the Russian/Chechen conflict. First, all the aforementioned needs were restricted for the Chechen people, and this generated conflict over time. Second, those unmet basic needs exacerbated the already existing conflict, which started with Russian attempts to conquer Chechnya in the eighteenth century. Obviously, basic human needs theory or approach as Galtung calls it (Gammer, 2006: 301), gives a broad insight to this conflict. In this case, the violation of basic human needs for the Chechen people in 1944 probably exacerbated the already *manifest conflict*[9] having influenced attitudes and thus the behavior of the parties. It can be argued that the already existing conflict could not be generated again, but it could be reshaped, intensified or escalated.

Structural and Cultural Violence

The basic human needs discussions have direct relationships with *structural violence,* a concept introduced by J. Galtung, which means that violence has another meaning rather than physically violent behavior (Galtung, 1969: 167-191). Galtung's *structural violence* concept falls within what Rhodas calls *methodological structuralism* (Cheldelin, 2003: 14). Structural violence is not actual physical violence; it arises from social, political and economic structures that give rise to unequal distribution of resources and power. The sources of structural violence, as its name suggests, are political systems, social and organizational structures. These very structures deprive people of the basic needs that Burton advocates.

The concept of cultural violence was also introduced by J. Galtung as integrating with direct and structural violence (Galtung, 1990: 291-305).

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[7] See, for example, Flemming, 1998:65-145.
[8] See, for example, Gammer, 2006:6.
[9] Christopher Mitchell defines manifest conflict "as conditions in which parties posses incompatible goals and are pursuing some overt strategy vis-à-vis their opponent in order to achieve those goals", Mitchell, 1981: 49.

Galtung defines cultural violence as any aspect of the culture that can be used to legitimize direct or structural violence. The aspects of a culture are exemplified by Galtung as religion, ideology, language, art, stars, crosses, crescents, flags, anthems, and the like (Ibid: 291). There are linkages between structural, direct and cultural violence, and this is relevant to the Russo-Chechen conflict. The Chechen fighters translate their popular songs that all Chechen youth know by memory into direct violence, whereas the Russians perform their cultural symbols such as perception of Russia's regional hegemony into direct and structural violence.[10] The Russians made a sustained effort to make the Chechens see themselves as inferior and born savages, especially over the last fifteen years keeping them outside Russian society by applying intolerant behavior against them in the Russian cities.[11]

The Chechen understanding of freedom is also a fertile ground for the justification of direct violence. Freedom is a central concept in Chechen culture. It also has shaped Chechen psychology. Today Chechen nationalists attach their concept of freedom to modern Western political connotations, but M. Gammer argues that its meaning goes far beyond the Western and the Islamic sense of the word. In daily greetings or while ending regards Chechens say *marsha woghiyla, marsha ghoyla, marshala doiytu* which literally mean 'enter in freedom', 'go in freedom', and 'wish freedom to you', respectively (Gammer, 2006: 6). Therefore, *marsho-* freedom- as a concept has its origin in the culture itself. It wouldn't be hard for the Chechen guerillas to make attempts to justify any violence against the Russians whose actions are perceived by the Chechens to violate their freedom.

Relative Deprivation

First put forth by Ted Gurr in his book *Why Men Rebel*, relative deprivation theory relates to the conflict situation brought about by "actors' perception

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[10] The famous song starts with these words: We are wolves, compared to dogs, we are few…we have survived, even though we are banned. See Gammer, 2006:1-2.
[11] In many cases, the Chechen citizens of Russia have been a subject to attacks by the Russian police and nationalistically motivated people in Russian cities. See, for example, Chechnya: Russian Racism http://www.tjetjenien.dk/baggrund/racism2.html (accessed 02.20.2008)

of discrepancy between their value expectations and their value capabilities." (Gurr, 1969: 24). Its central proposition is:

$$RD = \frac{Ve - Vc}{Ve}$$

where RD stands for relative deprivation, Ve stands for value expectations, and Vc stands for value capabilities (Crosby, 1979: 107). Value expectations are people's beliefs that they are entitled to certain goods, and conditions of life, whereas value capabilities are the goods and conditions that people think they are capable of getting and keeping. A sense of entitlement is likely to grow faster than it can be fulfilled, thus generating anger and unrest. The wider the distance between value expectations and value capabilities, the greater the perceived structural violence. The greater the perceived structural violence, the greater the possibility for an aggressive response from the suppressed actor who is experiencing deprivation. If people fail to achieve their aspirations, they then experience relative deprivation. The theory of relative deprivation is closely related to the frustration aggression theory, as R. Rubenstein argued elsewhere.[12]

The theory of relative deprivation is also applicable to this conflict. In our example, Chechen value expectations include entitlement to certain goods, conditions of life, and prestige whereas value capabilities are the goods, conditions, and prestige that the Chechens "think they are capable of getting and keeping" (Jeong, 2000: 69). If we regard the Chechens as a group of people who believe that they are relatively deprived both politically and economically because of the Russians (or Russian rule), the source of their anger and aggressiveness towards the latter can probably be understood better. Here, this theoretical situation is primarily related to *attitudes*, a component of conflict, which contributes to the formulation of *behavior*, another component of conflict. The reverse is also probable varying from case to case. Moreover, both *behavior* and *attitudes* may affect *situation*, as new issues or goal incompatibilities are introduced (See Mitchell, 1981).

At the very least, the history of the Russo-Chechen war shows that the Chechens believe they are entitled to independence or freedom. This belief is the greatest part of the value expectations of the Chechens. While believing that they have the capability to achieve independence, Chechen

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[12] I remember Dr. Rubenstein arguing this in classes persuasively when I was his student at George Mason University.

efforts have been thwarted, thus leaving Chechens discrepancy between value expectations and value capability.

Rank Disequilibrium

The theory of rank disequilibrium is related to status inconsistency. For example, one may be high on educational status, but low on job, security and income status (Galtung, 1964: 96-99). As the status inconsistency grows, the perceived structural violence becomes greater, which in turn, generates a condition where a frustrated actor responds aggressively to the perceived source of inconsistency. To illustrate, Russian citizens with Central Asian and Caucasian origins hardly occupy high positions in Moscow, despite their high level of education. Here identity belongingness and structural violence as well as ethno-nationalism may also be relevant. Russian security personnel alienate Chechen nationals forcefully by beating and detaining them in Russian cities, as well as indiscriminately bombing civilian areas of Chechnya. Meanwhile, ironically, Russian authorities talk about the preservation of Russia's national unity.[13]

Galtung argues that aggression is most likely to happen in social positions in rank-disequilibrium. "In a system of individuals it may take the form of crime, in a system of groups the form of revolutions and in a system of nations the form of war." (Galtung, 1964:98-99). In the Chechen case, rank disequilibrium is wide enough to bring about aggression and violence in a system of groups that contributes to the war between Russia and Chechnya.

Frustration Aggression

Frustration-aggression theory stresses that human beings who are prevented from getting what they desire naturally become frustrated (See Dollard, 1939). The energy blocked and accumulated inside a person is directed to the source of frustration through aggressive action. Life in any society is inevitably frustrating and therefore tendencies towards aggressive behavior are continuously generated because aggression is always a consequence of frustration. Similarly, frustration always leads to aggression. As D. Sandole argues, there are three important factors for consideration in examining frustration aggression: (1) the importance of the

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[13] See, for example, Cornell, 1999:85-100.

frustrated (blocked) goal; (2) the intensity of the frustration (blocking); and (3) the frequency of the frustration (blocking) (Sandole, 2003: 99). The degree of the importance of the frustrated goal is likely to be associated with the intensity of frustration against that goal. In turn, greater frequency of blocked goal attainment generates more intense attacks by the frustrated against the frustrating. Indeed, the oppressive policies of Moscow on the Chechens create a source of frustration, which in turn generate aggression in different forms including terror activities.

According to Galtung, the difficulty with this theory is that it is non-structural; therefore, it does not sufficiently take into account the social context (Galtung, 1964: 96). However, situations causing aggression are closely linked with structures. Understanding frustration-aggression requires making a thorough structure-related analysis. Thus, our holistic approach to the case acquires more importance as the theories in some sense complete each other.

Again, according to frustration-aggression theory, human beings who are deprived of what they desire naturally become frustrated, and the energy blocked and accumulated inside a person is directed to the source of frustration through aggressive action (Jeong. 2000: 67). It is not easy to locate this theory in our example of Russian-Chechen conflict, since it is difficult to measure how much the Russians have frustrated the Chechens, and how much this frustration has generated aggressive behavior toward Russia. However, it is not hard to imagine that people would become very frustrated, if the Soviet NKVD troops tried to fit as many people as possible into a rail cart to maximize efficiency (Nekrich, 1978:125). In 1944, carts taking Chechen people into exile were sealed, and the trips to Kazakhstan, Siberia and Central Asia were 2-3 weeks long. Frustration coming from the Russian side helps shape the Chechen attitude as aggressive, and these aggressive feelings, in turn, result in aggressive behavior, which exacerbates the conflict situation. For example, on an individual level, for a very long time the Chechen men were forced to remain at their homes or at the filtration centers.[14] This was a Russian policy to block their "terrorist" activities.[15] However, by doing so the Russians also blocked along with other rights, the men's energy, and freedom of movement. Gradually, the frustrated men directed their aggression to the source of frustration. The reverse also may be true, as the Russian soldiers being frustrated by the

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[14] For filtration centers, see, for example, Seely, 2001:284-286.
[15] See, for example, Politkovskaya, 2003: 54-56, 62-63.

Chechens become aggressive. Therefore, as frustration generates aggression, aggression itself generates aggression through generating frustration.

Structuration

The underlying assumption of the analytic framework of structuration theory is that there are institutional and discursive continuities that enable conflict as a form of human conduct, and are reproduced by actors in strategic interactions. The two important elements are agent and social structure, whose central relevance is the reproduction of institutional practices (See Jabri, 1996). So, what are the sources of this conflict at hand: the social actions of individuals or institutional structures? This more than two hundred-year old conflict can be regarded as a social continuity institutionalized over time. Thus, we can argue that the conflict is a practice derived from purposive human conduct situated within embedded institutional frameworks. This argument makes both human nature and social structure important for the emergence and generation of violent conflicts.

It is important to explain how the agent and social structure relate to one another in the process of production and reproduction of human conduct. In fact, it is clear that individuals are social beings, thus, "these categories cannot be neatly separated." (Rubenstein, 2003:55). Indeed, structuration theory presents agents and structures as mutually constitutive entities; therefore, instead of considering them separately, we need to conceptualize fundamental mechanisms, where the primary concern is with the constitutive potentials of social life. These mechanisms are helpful to explain how generic human capacities and conditions generate courses and outcomes of social processes and events in very different ways (Cohen, 1989: 17; Jabri, 1996: 76). This is related to the "social practice ordered across time and space" proposed as a domain of study by Anthony Giddens (Giddens, 1984: 2). As such, social practice entails the clarification of the interrelatedness of the individual and social structure, between which there is an epistemological conflict. Anthony Giddens sees this as ontological, not "subject to refutation on empirical grounds, but requires substantive research on particular social phenomena such as human conflict to determine how these processes and properties operate and appear in any given context." (Jabri, 1996: 77; Cohen, 1989: 17). Research of a particular conflict is of necessity conducted within its own time and

space continuum. Since the basic purpose of structuration theory is to show how agency and structure are mutually constitutive so that action is only meaningful in terms of its relationship to structure, and structure only exists as such in terms of human behavior, a contextual framework for the research of a social conflict simultaneously applies to both agency and structure.

Structuration theory applied to the Russo-Chechen conflict implies that it is necessary to add the role of agency to structure. As discussed above, structure does not alone give rise to the reproduction of the institutional practices. The social continuity of the Russo-Chechen conflict means that it is institutionalized over time. If so, the element of a purposive human conduct situated within the embedded institutional structures has existed for a period of time. Thus, both human nature and social structure are important for the latent conflict to become manifest. Structuration theory is built on the notion that it is the mutuality of structures and agents that constitute a whole. Therefore, both human and structural factors should be equally used to analyze the Russo-Chechen conflict.

Psychoanalysis

Aspects of human psychology may also explain why Chechens cannot forget the past difficult days keeping the conflict ever alive. How does political power foster genocide, mass murder and other organized acts of violence against a minority? How do difficult life conditions, mistreatment of a group and attacks on human life contribute to intractable conflicts? Ervin Staub argues that difficult life conditions have psychological effects on people and in dealing with them people often scapegoat. People adopt ideologies that bring some hope and at the same time identifying other groups as enemies (Staub, 1985: 61-85). The psychological effects of difficult life conditions eventually bring about violence (Ibid). This argument can be applied to both Soviet policies towards the Chechen people during World War II and the Chechen attitude towards Soviet and Russian rule thereafter. Difficult life conditions and threats arising from the invasion of the Soviet Union by nazi Germany associated with the suspicions of Chechens' cooperation with the Germans became the reason for the mistreatment of the Chechen people by the Kremlin in 1944. The results were the exile of the entire nation in Siberia and Kazakhstan. Similarly, Chechens were greatly influenced by overt Soviet mistreatment, as well as difficult and restrictive life conditions they faced in exile after being forced to

leave their homeland. Indeed, they hold all Russians responsible for their tragedy rather than the Kremlin or the Soviet leader Stalin at that time.

Another psychological approach, *chosen trauma,* set forth by Vamik Volkan is also applicable to this protracted violent conflict (See Volkan, 1997). Volkan argues that a member of another group is perceived as a "container" of unacceptable psychic content previously built into unconscious mechanisms (See Volkan, 1990). According to this argument, it is possible to claim that Russians became an enemy of Chechens through an unconscious psychological process. "In group dynamics, the most hated aspects of ourselves and our own group are transferred to other groups who are depicted as an enemy" (Quoted in Jeong, 2000: 68). At this point, we turn to the Russians and try to understand their behavior towards Chechens, because Russians also may have chosen traumas. Otherwise, Russians probably wouldn't think of Chechens as identical with potential and actual terrorists. We note that the dominant group, the Russians, also have a need for physical and emotional security, which is threatened by the presence and historic evidence of Chechen guerillas. The capture of a hospital in Budyonnovsk, a theatre building in Moscow, and a Russian boat in Istanbul, taking tens of hundreds as hostages remains a fresh remembrance.[16]

The memory of the many conflicts with the Russians remains alive for Chechens and played a decisive role in many Chechens' willingness to take up weapons against their "historic other" in 1994. It is argued that the gravest event affecting the Chechens' collective psyche was the event of tragic mass deportation from their motherland to Kazakhstan and Siberia toward the end of World War II (Williams, 2000: 101-134). This tragic event has a salient role in shaping the collective actions of Chechen people against the Russians.

A process of dehumanization of enemy and nationalistic propaganda on both sides have induced very bloody actions as reflected in *Prisoners of the Mountains*, a film by Sergei Bodrov.[17] The fact that the film is based on Leo Tolstoy's short story *Prisoner of the Caucasus*[18] written in 1872, reveals the reality of unchanged goal incompatibility between the parties in conflict for over a century. What has changed are conflict behaviors and

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[16] Associated Press, 1995.

[17] It is a Dendy Films release.

[18] The story is about an old Chechen man who captures two Russian soldiers and takes them to his mountain village. His intention is to trade them for his son held by the Russians. If the deal falls through, he will have to kill the Russians.

attitudes evidenced in the dynamic processes occurring throughout the history of this intractable conflict influencing each other and changing from manifest to latent form, and vice versa. These dynamic processes have engendered new conflict situations on different levels exacerbating and deepening the initial one.

Interestingly, the two people most responsible for Chechen deportation were not ethnic Russians; Stalin and Beria were ethnic Georgians. However, Chechens have always held Russians responsible for these tragic events. In their collective memory, the Russians carried out the deportation policy (Williams, 2000: 101-134). This is a sign of the Chechen stereotypes of Russians.

Identity

Social identities have been a driving force behind many intractable social conflicts in the world. Different scholars define social identity differently, and I will consider of their definitions here. Henri Tajfel provides one of the most common definitions of social identity: "that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership in a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership." (Jussim, Ashmore, and Wilder, 2001: 6). Another definition by Peter W. Black is that "the concept refers to the social use of cultural markers to claim, achieve, or ascribe group membership."(Black, 2003: 121). Milton Esman defines the term as "the set of meanings that individuals impute to their membership in an ethnic community, including those attributes that bind them to that collectivity and that distinguish it from others in their relevant environment." (Esman, 1994: 27). According to Kelman and Eriksen, social identity does not reside exclusively within the individual; rather it resides within one's cultural community at least to some extent (Jussim, Ashmore, and Wilder, 2001: 6). Identities may vary from individuals to groups and they may be long enduring or relatively short-lived.

Clearly, there is no unanimity among experts on the definition of identity. This may fuel the controversies over the formation and persistence of ethnic identity. Whatever the definition, it is widely accepted that conflicts and identities have strong relationships with one another. Identities can cause conflicts, but they can contribute to conflict resolution as well.

In order to understand how conflicts erupt, escalate, de-escalate, and become transformed or resolved, we must know how identities are formed

and re-formed (Kriesberg, 1998: 60). Jeong and Vayrynen argue that identity formation is generally explained with either human needs theory or the socio-psychological approach (Jeong and Vayrynen, 1999: 61). As discussed earlier, basic human needs theory dictates that identity is one of the most important basic needs that human beings strive for it.[19] As one of a person's basic needs is a need for identity, its non-satisfaction is seen as a source of a conflict. According to socio-psychological theory, however, the psychology of group relationship is essential for identity formation and for identity as a general concept. In addition, this theory stresses that the notion of friendship and hostility is inherent in human evolution. This notion plays an important role in the development of "we-ness" and "otherness". "We-ness" is a core of ethnicity, and comes from a positive projection, whereas "otherness" originates from negative projections (Jeong, and Vayrynen, 1999: 62).

Social identity theory can contribute as well to the discussion of causes of the Russo-Chechen conflict. In many examples, we can see how identity formation, re-formation, and shifting in salience are related to conflict eruption, escalation, de-escalation or resolution. During the 1920s with the establishment of the Soviet Union, the new identity- a Soviet identity- was formed. The people living within the boundaries of the country ultimately accepted the Soviet identity. In other words, people generally accepted themselves to be Soviet citizens. This meant that old hostile nations or societies like Ossetians and Georgians, Azeris and Armenians, or Chechens and Russians, and many others gained a new common identity, which existed until the early 1990s. Especially during the 1940s and 1950s, wartime and after wartime, the Soviet identity was highly salient. It is well known that soldiers fought against the Nazis and died on behalf of the Soviet Union, rather than, for example, Armenia or Uzbekistan. In the late 1980s, however, most people of the Soviet Union felt that their identities as Kazaks, Ukrainians, Tatars, Georgians, Turkmen etc. were more salient than their identity as Soviets. This shift in identity salience caused or escalated many conflicts on the territory of the former Soviet Union.

As Jeong and Vayrynen argue, with the failure of the modernist state building project, identity change, formation and reformation become more apparent (Jeong and Vayrynen, 1999: 59). In the 1950s and 1960s, people living in Yugoslavia regarded themselves as Yugoslavs. Today they are Serbs, Croats, Bosnians, Slovenes, and Kosovars, etc. Identity change

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[19] Ibid.; also, see for example, Galtung, 1990: 309.

does not take place instantaneously; however, it has close relationships with socio-political processes. The problem has been even more serious in the Soviet Union, since the number of different nations and nationalities constituting it were far greater than that of the former Yugoslavia. Perhaps, no nation of the ex-Soviet Union suffered more than the Chechens from the continuously changing socio-political processes in the Soviet Republics.

The Chechens in exile had been subject to identity change. In fact, the official policy of the Kremlin was a gradual assimilation of the Chechen people (See, for example, Williams, 2000: 101-134). The deportation years affected the Chechen's identity in many ways. For example, for about thirteen years most Chechen children were deprived of going to school. Thus, a new generation grew up illiterate (Ibid: 113). Ironically, this development was one of the many reasons that gave a rise to the sense of unity. Sufi Islam started to play an important role in Chechen society during this period leaving Chechens with a legacy of "underground Islam". While the Soviets aimed to assimilate the Chechens, and integrate them into the Soviet people, the exile years served to deepen the Chechens' sense of religiosity and nationalism (Bennigsen and Wimbush, 1986: 189).

Despite all the negative and positive changes in the identity of the Chechen people, they preserved the core of their national identity. This can be explained by the principle of pressure is equal to counter pressure. Their return back to their home was a great victory that nobody at that time talked about aloud. This had been a great encouragement for their further struggle for independence deepening latent grievances that erupted in a very violent form in the early 1990s.

Conclusion

In this paper, I employed a number of transdisciplinary theories that are relevant to conflict analysis and resolution to explain the root causes of the Russo-Chechen conflict that are important for formulating and mobilizing the necessary means for its transformation. However, despite the large number of theories used here, the list is not exhaustive. In other words, many more theories such as nationalism, negative theories of integration, internal colonialism, etc. can also be applied to the nature and root causes of this protracted social conflict. Also, many other aspects of this conflict related, for example, to the violation of women and children rights, or the destruction of the education infrastructure – all having an impact on the escalation of conflict- may be explained by other theories.

Finally, this paper used the holistic analytical framework to provide a comprehensive understanding of the Russo-Chechen conflict demonstrating that none of the theories discussed in this paper is enough to explain the complex causes of this conflict alone. Taken together the theories presented in this essay may be more productive and effective in explaining the causes of the conflict and the violence still a part of the Chechnya-Russian predicament. It seems necessary to acknowledge that a context-based and flexible multidimensional and multilevel approach to conflict analysis is needed to understand root causes of complex conflict correctly, which is important for making effective policies of conflict resolution.

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