



Armed violence and poverty in Chechnya

A mini case study for the Armed Violence and Poverty Initiative
November 2004

Hooman Peimani
Centre for International Cooperation and Security
Department of Peace Studies

The Armed Violence and Poverty Initiative

The UK Department for International Development (DFID) has commissioned the Centre for International Cooperation and Security (CICS) at Bradford University to carry out research to promote understanding of how and when poverty and vulnerability is exacerbated by armed violence. This study programme, which forms one element in a broader “Armed Violence and Poverty Initiative”, aims to provide the full documentation of that correlation which DFID feels is widely accepted but not confirmed. It also aims to analyse the processes through which such impacts occur and the circumstances which exacerbate or moderate them. In addition it has a practical policy-oriented purpose and concludes with programming and policy recommendations to donor government agencies.

This report on Chechnya is one of 13 case studies (all of the case studies are available at www.bradford.ac.uk/cics). This research draws upon secondary data sources including existing research studies, reports and evaluations. The analysis and opinions expressed in this report are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views or policy of DFID or the UK government.

1. Introduction

Russia has been the scene of a bloody civil war since the early 1990s. The rise of an independence movement in Chechnya right after the Soviet Union's disintegration finally kindled a highly destructive civil war in terms of human lives, urban and rural residential areas, infrastructure, economic facilities (farms and manufacturing) and the environment. The armed conflict has continued to this date with no realistic chance for its end in the foreseeable future thanks to the incompatibility of the two sides' interests. Whereas the Chechens seek independence from Russia, the Russians want to keep Chechnya as part of an undivided Russia. Moreover, the conflict has been expanding to other parts of Russia, mainly Chechnya's neighbouring republics of Ingushetia and Dagestan, only to make its resolution even more complicated by turning a local conflict into a regional one engulfing the entire Northern Caucasus.

Given the existence of Chechen militants in Georgia's Pankisi Gorge neighbouring Chechnya from where they have launched attacks on the Russian troops stationed in that republic, the Chechen war has the potential to expand to Georgia. This issue led to a dangerous confrontation between Russia and Georgia in 2002 when Moscow accused Tbilisi of tolerating the armed Chechen militants.¹ In short, due its highly destructive impact on human lives, rural and urban areas, farming and industrial installations and infrastructure, its long-term impact on the lives of the Chechens and their neighbours, and its potential to spread to other parts of Russia and to the neighbouring countries, Chechnya's armed conflict merits a thorough study as an ongoing case of armed violence with a clear and strong impact on poverty.

2. The context of armed violence

2.1 *Parties to the conflict*

The armed conflict in Chechnya has pitted the Russian military and law enforcement forces, along with the forces of the Chechen government loyal to Moscow, against the Chechen militants since the early 1990s. The Russian government aims at restoring its full sovereignty over the rebellious republic and uprooting the Chechen independence movement once and for all. Unlike the Russian forces, the Chechen armed opposition is not a cohesive entity. It consists of many small fighting units with religious and secular tendencies, which pursue a common objective: independence for Chechnya. They all oppose Russia's rule over their territory, but they have differences in terms of the exact nature of their desired independent Chechnya. Hence, they can be broadly divided into two groups each led loosely by one of the two major Chechen military leaders.

One group consists of the forces loyal to ex-Chechen President Aslan Maskhadov who was elected in 1997 when Chechnya was practically independent. Leading a major force fighting against the Russian troops, he has shown a willingness to find a negotiated settlement to the conflict with Moscow. By and large, his army has confined its operations to attacks on military targets i.e. the Russian security forces

¹ Stephen Mulvey, "Why Russia Threatens Georgia Over Pankisi," BBC News World Edition, 12 September, 2002. (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/2253792.stm>; Accessed on 18/8/2004)

and the pro-Moscow Chechen military force and officials as well as counter-attack operations.

The other group include the supporters of Shamil Basayev who consider armed struggle as the only way to achieve Chechnya's independence. As the most active extremist group fighting the Russian troops and their Chechen supporters, his armed supporters have been accused of launching operations against civilians, including various hostage-takings and bombings of public places/residential areas, in Russia's Caucasian republics (Chechnya, Ingushetia and Dagestan) and also in Moscow. In September 2004, for example, his supporters took hundreds of children and their parents hostage in a school in North Ossetia (Baslan), which ended in a human catastrophe leaving over 300 dead when the Russian forces stormed the school.² Although Moscow blamed both Basayev and Maskhadov for the incident, the latter denied any involvement and called for the trial of Basyev by Chechens after achieving independence for Chechnya.³

Apart from independence for Chechnya, some of the Chechen extremists have other objectives such as the creation of a state consisting of Chechnya and its neighbouring Dagestan and/or Ingushetia and/or the formation of a religious state. Among those subscribing to these objectives, a well-known military leader was Abdurrahman Khattab, a Saudi or Jordanian national, who fought for years against the Russians until his death in 2002 as a result of an alleged Russian intelligence operation. The Chechen armed groups also include those of warlords who command their own armies and switch loyalty from one party to the conflict to another depending on the circumstances. They are involved in organised crime, including drug-trafficking and kidnappings.⁴ A good example of one such warlord is Akhamd Kadyrov who fought against the Russians during the 1994-96 war. He then took sides with the Russian government to become the pro-Moscow Chechen president, a position he held until May 2004 when he was assassinated. His son (Ramzan Kadyrov) has since commanded his father's private army.⁵

2.2 Motivation

The current conflict's roots can be traced back to the Russian military campaign in the late 18th century to conquer the Caucasus, including Chechnya. It met a fierce resistance and turned into a defeat for the Russians in 1785 at the hands of a broad ethnic coalition of Caucasian Muslims under Chechen leader, Sheikh Mansur Ushurma.⁶ After two long wars with Iran, Russia's capture and subsequent annexation of the entire Caucasus by 1828 instigated another round of armed struggle by the Chechens and Dagestanis under Imam Shamil seeking to regain their independence,

² North Ossetian President Orders Govt to Quit, Breaking News, ie, 8 September 2004. (<http://www.breakingnews.ie/2004/09/08/story165599.html>; Accessed on 8/9/2004)

³ "Chechen Leader Condemns Basayev," RUSSNET, 27 September 2004. (<http://rusnet.nl/news/2004/09/27/currentaffairs01.shtml>; Accessed on 1 October 2004)

⁴ Regions and Territories: Chechnya, BBC News World, 14 July 2004. (http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/country_profiles/2565049.stm; Accessed on 19/8/2004)

⁵ Nick Paton Walsh, "A Headless Monster," *The Guardian*, 21 May 2004. (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/chechnya/Story/0,2763,1221483,00.html>; Accessed on 20/8/2004)

⁶ David Damrel, "The Religious Roots of Conflict: Russia and Chechnya." Originally published in *Religious Studies News*, September 1995, Vol. 10, No. 3., p. 10, reprinted by <http://www.iol.ie/~afifi/Articles/chechnya.htm>; Accessed on 25/8/2004.

which lasted for about 35 years.⁷ On a smaller scale, the Chechens unsuccessfully rose up against Russia in 1865, 1877, 1879 and the 1890s.⁸ The Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 enabled the Chechens to have a short period of independence characterised by about 8 years of war against the White and Red armies at the end of which Moscow re-established its control over Chechnya.⁹ The Chechens rebelled against Moscow in the 1930s when the Soviet regime began its forced collectivisation of agriculture, which the Soviet troops suppressed. The “iron fist” policy of the Soviet government reached its peak when Stalin ordered the exile of the entire Chechen population to Central Asia and Siberia in 1944, as Moscow was deeply suspicious about the Chechens’ loyalty during World War II; they were only allowed to return to Chechnya in the late 1950s.¹⁰ Many Chechens died in exile because of the harsh living conditions.¹¹

In the contemporary era, the independence movement began in the last months of the Soviet Union when a nationalist Chechen and Soviet air force general, Jahaer Dudayev, was elected president. Although he claimed to receive 90 percent of the votes in the October 1991 elections, Moscow refused to recognise his presidency. The lack of a viable military option in the early months of the Soviet Union’s collapse made the Russians inclined to negotiate an autonomous status for Chechnya, but not the demanded independence. Led by President Boris Yeltsin, the Russian government sought to end Chechnya’s practical independence in 1994 when it initiated a large-scale military operation that resulted in an estimated 80,000 casualties on both sides and the massive destruction of cities and villages.¹²

Despite the capture of Chechnya’s capital, Grozny, the Russian forces proved unable to control the republic while tolerating constant heavy casualties. Moscow’s installation of a loyal government in Grozny in 1995 and its signing of an autonomy agreement with the latter failed to help calm the situation. Having rejected the government’s legitimacy, the Chechen militants continued their fight and recaptured Grozny in 1996. In that year, the realities of the situation forced the Russian government to sign a peace agreement with the Chechen militants to end its military operation and to withdraw its troops’ from Chechnya. Moscow had to accept implicitly the latter’s practical, but not official, independence. Chechnya remained a practically independent state under a new president, Aslan Maskhadov, who in 1997 replaced President Dudayov after his death.

In September 1999 newly appointed Prime Minister, Vladimir Putin, sent the Russian troops back to Chechnya when a series of bombing in Moscow resulted in about 200 deaths for which he blamed the Chechens. His subsequent election as president only expanded the scale of the military conflict as he committed himself to end Chechnya’s independence. At the price of heavy destruction, the recapturing of Grozny in February 2000 did not end the conflict, which has since taken tens of thousands of

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid; Timur Aliev, “Chechen Refugees Fear Forced Return,” Institute for War and Peace Reporting, CRS No 134, 20 June 2002. (http://www.iwpr.net/index.pl?archive/cau/cau_200206_134_1_eng.txt; Accessed on 18/8/2004)

¹¹ “Chechnya: A Brief History,” *The Guardian Unlimited*, 2002.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/flash/0,5860,257882,00.html>; Accessed on 24/6/2004)

¹² “Basic Facts,” Ccharm (Children of Chechnya Action Relief Mission), 2004. (<http://www.ccharm.org/facts.html>; Accessed on 23/8/2004).

civilian lives apart from killing thousands of militants and Russian troops.¹³ Russia is still unable to fully control Chechnya despite its heavy-handed policy, which has provoked criticism from human rights organisations inside and outside Russia. The Russian government's passage of a new constitution for Chechnya and its recognition of the latter's autonomy during a 2004 referendum have not helped to ease the situation.

2.3 How and when the conflict became violent

The Chechen militants have fought on and off against the Russian troops stationed in Chechnya since 1994. The first round of war (1994-96) was followed by about 3 years of peace, which was ended in December 1999 when the Russian military initiated its second round of war; it has continued to this date. In addition, the Chechen militants have targeted the pro-Moscow Chechen governments, which Moscow formed when its forces recaptured Grozny in 1995 and 2000. The latter's low- and high-ranking officials and security forces (police and militia) have been a target of assassinations, kidnappings and ambushes. Hundreds of their rank and file have fallen victim to such operations, including Chechen president Akhmed Kadyrov, who was assassinated in May 2004.¹⁴

Some factions of Chechen fighters, including the one led by Shamil Basayev and Abdurrahman Khattab, have targeted Russian and non-Russian civilians in Chechnya, Ingushetia and Dagestan in the course of their operations against the pro-Moscow local administrations or during violent hostage-takings in those republics, as well as in Moscow. The aforementioned hostage-taking of about 400 children in a North Ossetian school in September 2004 and of the audience of a Moscow theatre in October 1992 are two well-known recent examples of Basayev's operations.¹⁵ In both cases hundreds were left dead and wounded. The Russian authorities have accused the Chechen separatists of bombings of civilian targets since the early 1990s. A blatant example is the September 1999 bombings of residential areas in Moscow during which about 200 people were killed. While contested by human rights activists, then Prime Minister, Vladimir Putin, put the blame on the Chechen militants and authorised the second round of war in Chechnya. More recently, in late August 2004, a Chechen suicide bomber blew herself up near a metro station in Moscow leaving dozens dead and wounded.¹⁶

Human rights organisations have accused the Russian forces operating in Chechnya of extensive and systematic human rights abuses with impunity. They have included use of excessive force in their operations in residential areas causing unnecessary heavy civilian casualties, killings and massacres of civilians and suspected militants, arbitrary arrests of non-combatant Chechens and rapes and gang-rapes of children and adults, demolishing urban and rural residential dwellings and forcible displacement of civilians.¹⁷

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Nick Paton Walsh, At least 10 Die in Moscow Suicide Blast, *The Guardian*, 1 September 2004.

(<http://www.guardian.co.uk/russia/article/0,2763,1294546,00.html>; Accessed on 1/9/2004)

¹⁵ "400 Taken Hostage at Russian School," *The Guardian Unlimited*, 1 September 2004.

(<http://www.guardian.co.uk/russia/article/0,2763,1294774,00.html>; Accessed on 1/9/2004); Nick Paton Walsh.

¹⁶ Nick Paton Walsh.

¹⁷ For example, see: "Russian Federation: IDPs in Northern Caucasus Endure Violence and Destitution," *Global IDP Database*, 2004.

2.4 Patterns and organisation of the violence

The two parties to the Chechen civil war have adopted two different military tactics reflecting their military capabilities. The Russian troops have resorted mainly to massive classical military operations in which they have utilised their heavy conventional military assets (e.g., aircraft, helicopters and tanks). This has ensured the extensive destruction of most part of Chechnya and heavy civilian casualties, while proving ineffective in uprooting the Chechen militants who, unlike conventional armies, are not concentrated in specific locations. On the contrary, the Chechen militants have mainly resorted to guerrilla warfare to avoid facing the Russian military in a classical war, as the latter is far superior to them in terms of numerical strength and military hardware. Thus, they have launched frequent small-scale hit-and-run attacks on small groups of the Russian security forces and those of the local Chechen government.

The armed conflict in Chechnya has been mainly confined to that republic. However, especially since 1999, the Chechen militants have sought to expand the conflict to the neighbouring republics by attacking the republican and Russian security forces stationed in Ingushetia and Dagestan as well as the republican authorities and their civil servants. Some Chechen factions have also resorted to hostage-taking in those republics and in Moscow. Expanding the war to other parts of Russia has been partly a component of a long-term plan advocated by some Chechen factions to “liberate” and unite in a state the three Caucasian Russian republics. It has also been partly a deliberate military tactic to deny the Russian military the opportunity to concentrate its assets in Chechnya. By making it spread its forces in three republics, the militants have sought to increase the cost of operation for Moscow, while making the divided Russian troops more vulnerable to small-scale attacks. As a recent example, in June 2004 President Putin had to order the reinforcement of the Russian security forces in Ingushetia after the Chechen militants killed about 100 people during their attacks on its police stations and border posts.¹⁸

2.5 The role of the state

Since the rise of the independence movement in Chechnya, the main objective of the Russian government has been to reintegrate the republic into the Russian federation. To that end, it has resorted to an all out war, which has undermined the security of the Chechen civilians, while failing to achieve its stated objective. Although there is no doubt that Moscow wants to restore normalcy and security to Chechnya, it has so far failed to do so as its military intervention has expanded the conflict to just about everywhere in the republic. Its extensive and in many cases indiscriminate use of heavy weapons has turned many urban and rural parts of Chechnya, including many residential areas, into rubble, destroyed farms and factories, severely damaged the infrastructure and resulted in a large number of civilian casualties. The expansion and contraction of battlefields has created a variety of restrictions for the non-combatant civilians who have become a target of ill-treatment on the grounds of their possible support for the Chechen militants. The existence of many checkpoints has worsened

(<http://www.db.idpproject.org/Sites/idpSurvey.nsf/wViewSingleEnv/Russian+FederationProfile+Summary>;
Accessed 24 August 2004)

¹⁸ Carolynne Wheeler, “Putin Gives Ingushetia More Troops,” *The Guardian*, 24 June 2004.

the situation by creating additional restrictions on people's movement. Apart from this, the Russian troops and their pro-Moscow Chechen force (Kadyrovtsy) have been involved in the kidnapping (abduction) of Chechens for political and criminal purposes whose numbers estimated at a few thousand.¹⁹ In addition, the chaotic situation in Chechnya has provided grounds for the rise of warlords and organised crime involved in all kinds of illegal activities with the effect of further undermining the people's security and safety.²⁰ In short, the Russian government has failed to ensure the security of the non-combatant Chechens.

3. The significance of small arms and light weapons (SALW)

3.1 How and when SALW became available

The Soviet Union's fall had a major impact on all its unprepared constituent republics. Apart from its effect on their political, economic and social pillars, the new reality ended the Soviet era's state monopoly of arms, which only allowed bearing arms by the security forces. In the chaotic situation emerged right after the sudden collapse of the Soviet system, the new Russian government was unable to maintain the Soviet era's firm control of society and the state machinery. The Soviet military stationed in the territory of the Russian Federation, which simply became the Russian military, was facing a variety of Soviet era problems, including serious financial problems worsened by the declining economy. In many cases, the Russian government was even unable to pay the salaries of the military personnel on time. Having lost the, now totally discredited, Soviet ideology and morality, the weakening and eroding military discipline, desertions of military personnel, and poverty and corruption made arms available to anyone who could afford them, including the Chechen militants.²¹

In addition, the looting of police and military bases, especially in the Russian republics with predominately non-Russian populations such as Chechnya, provided arms to the rising pro-independence Chechen groups. The desertion of many Chechen military personnel from the Russian army also provided the Chechen militants with supplies of arms and ammunition. Finally, the pro-independence government of Chechnya under Dudayev controlled the republic, including its defence industry and military facilities, whose products and stocks provided an indigenous source of supplies for the Chechen militants. Consequently, in the early 1990s Russia lacked the monopoly of weapons and therefore the unrivalled capability to deal with any eruption of mass dissent, while the Chechen nationalists were arming themselves.

¹⁹ Nick Paton Walsh, "A Headless Monster."

²⁰ Rapporteur: Lord Judd, United Kingdom, Socialist Group, "The Conflict in Chechnya - Doc. 8630, Council of Europe – Political Affairs Committee, 25 January 2000. (<http://assembly.coe.int/documents/workingdocs/doc00/EDOC8630.HTM>; Accessed on 20/8/2004)

²¹ Ken Silverstein, "Comrades in Arms - Meet the Former Soviet Mobsters Who Sell Terrorists Their Guns," *Global Witness*, January/February 2002. (http://www.globalwitness.org/campaigns/forests/liberia/art_wm000102liberia.php; Accessed on 13/9/2004); Roman Kupchinsky, "How Russian Army Sold Its Arms," *RFE/RL*, 6 May 2002. (<http://tchetchenieparis.free.fr/text/army-sold-arms-6-5-02.htm>; 5 October 2004)

3.2 The supply and demand for SALW

There are no reliable and publicly available statistics on the extent and magnitude of supply and demand for SALW. However, there is no question that the continuation of the armed conflict has created a steady demand for SALW, which will remain in place so long as it continues. The small-scale military operations of the Chechen militants require SALW as their main weapons. Apart from the above-mentioned ways for the Chechen militants to procure arms, seizing the weapons of captured Russian military facilities has been another method. For example, a videotape released in 2004 showed Shamil Basayev-led Chechen militants removing weapons from a Russian weapon depot.²² As surprising as it may sound, the Russian military operating in Chechnya has been involved in selling arms to the militants.²³ In the absence of the Soviet unifying ideology, low morale, low salaries and/or corruption are used as to justify this trade.

3.3 How they are used, and why

The two sides to the Chechen conflict use SALW in their operations. While they are mainly used in battles involving the military personnel of the two sides, both the Russian forces along with their Chechen allies and the Chechen militants have used them in operations against non-military targets. Using SALW, certain extremist Chechen groups have targeted pro-Moscow civilians in Chechnya and its neighbouring republics as well as Russian civilians in Moscow during their attacks, bombings of non-military facilities and violent hostage-takings as mentioned before. Such operations have left hundreds dead and wounded since 1999.

The Russian forces have also used SALW in their operations against non-combatant Chechen civilians. The Chechen civilians have been targets of armed violence by the Russian troops who suspect them as potential supporters of the militants. In some cases, non-combatant civilians have also fallen victim to acts of revenge. Apart from various documented human rights abuses, including arbitrary arrests, torture, rape and extra judicial executions, the Russian troops have been implicated in massacres of civilians and suspected militants or their supporters and in intentional destruction of non-military facilities such as houses and farms.²⁴ As a result of such acts, constant fighting and insecurity, tens of thousands of Chechen civilians have had to leave their homes to settle as refugees in the neighbouring republics, mainly Ingushetia.

3.4 Did availability of arms spark the violence or follow it?

As discussed earlier, the rise of the independence movement in Chechnya with a political demand of secession from Russia to reorganise itself as an independent state is the natural outcome of the Russian forcible annexation of Chechnya in the 19th century. Having suppressed nationalism among ethnic minorities as an anti-

²² "400 Taken Hostage at Russian School," *The Guardian Unlimited*, 1 September 2004. (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/russia/article/0,2763,1294774,00.html>; Accessed 1/9/2004)

²³ Dale Hurd, "Back to the Future: Is Russia Returning to Totalitarian Rule?" *CBN News*, 24 October 2004; Roman Kupchinsky, "How Russian Army Sold Its Arms".

²⁴ "Chechen Envoy Confirms Missing Toll," *BBC News*, 5 August, 2002, 16:50 GMT 17:50 UK. (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/2174431.stm>; Accessed on 3 October 2004); Paul Wood, "New Evidence of Chechen Massacre," *BBC News*, 22 December 1999. (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/575091.stm>; Accessed on 3 October 2004)

proletarian ideology, the sudden collapse of the Soviet Union created a power vacuum, which provided suitable grounds for the Chechens' stifled desire for independence to reemerge after about 170 years of suppression. Yet, negotiations over Chechnya's independence between the Chechens and the Russians failed, thanks to the two sides' incompatible objectives. Thus, the Chechen movement subsequently turned into an armed struggle as the Chechen bid for independence met Moscow's predictable opposition. The Russian government, like any other government, could not accept its country's disintegration.

Within this context, as mentioned earlier, the availability of arms in Chechnya made resort to armed violence for the Chechens a feasible option when political efforts proved to be useless for a peaceful achievement of independence for Chechnya for two major reasons. They were Moscow's categorical rejection of Chechnya's independence and the Russian military's massive military campaign to re-establish Moscow's sovereignty over the breakaway republic. However, such availability was not the reason for armed violence. Speculatively, armed violence would have initiated at a later stage in the absence of abundance of weapons in Chechnya in 1994 i.e. when the Chechen militants could have found suppliers in Russia and in its neighbouring Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) where SALW were also available for the same reasons as in Chechnya, the Soviet Union's fall.

Yet the extent of armed violence on the part of the Chechens during the first Russian military campaign (1994-96) was certainly due to the abundance of arms – SALW and also heavy weapons – in Chechnya. For that matter, the availability of SALW played a role in the timing and the scale of armed violence. That is to say that in 1994 Russia could have restored its sovereignty over Chechnya without facing any armed resistance should weapons of all sorts, light and heavy, not have been available in Chechnya. The absence of such weapons would have forced the Chechen militants to delay their armed resistance until their stockpiling of weapons was significant enough in number and fire power to make possible a sustainable armed resistance to the Russian forces. Such a scenario could have delayed their resorting to arms for months if not years. However, the availability of such weapons in September 1994 provided the Chechen militants with a significant fire-power and thus enabled them to slow down the advancement of the Russian military in Chechnya by engaging them in fighting not just in one single battle, but in an increasing number of them all over Chechnya. Nevertheless, their existence in large quantities in Chechnya was not the reason for the initiation of armed violence in 1994. Weapons only provided means to the Chechen militants towards achieving the Chechens' aspirations since their forcible integration into Russia: independence and statehood.

3.5 *The impact on human security*

Undoubtedly, the armed violence in Chechnya has had a major negative impact on human security. The expansion of the armed conflicts over the whole of Chechnya has disturbed and/or interrupted, if not completely stopped in cases, the daily life of non-combatant Chechens. The Russian forces' extensive and indiscriminate use of heavy weapons has turned most parts of the rural and especially urban areas into rubble. The loss of dwellings and income-generating premises has denied the means of income to many Chechens with an expected lowering impact on their living standards (e.g., in terms of food, housing, health and education), while it has spread a well-founded fear

among the Chechens who no longer feel safe even in their homes. The expansion and contraction of the war zone can turn a peaceful neighbourhood into a main battle ground only to leave scores of civilians killed and wounded. Caused by their constant sense of fear and insecurity, the internal displacement of about half of Chechnya's population (600,000) and the migration of many of them to the neighbouring republics (200,000 to Ingushetia alone) to live as internally displaced persons (IDPs) under difficult conditions has damaged family ties. Concern about arrests by the Russian and pro-Russian Chechen force with unpredictable outcomes has forced many young male Chechens to avoid public places or seek safety in remote areas in Chechnya or elsewhere.

Kidnappings and disappearances of Chechens have been another aspect of the armed violence, which have been practiced extensively mainly, but not exclusively, by the Russian forces and the Kadyrovtsy. Many children and women have fallen victim to rapes and other types of sexual harassment. Furthermore, numerous checkpoints and insecurity on roads have created barriers to the Chechens' free movement and their free access to markets. The mentioned impacts on human security have been the result of the armed violence and its expansion to affect almost the entire Chechen population, but not of the use of SALW per se. However, both sides' use of SALW could be considered as a factor in undermining human security for its effect on the continuation of the armed violence. Having said that, one should focus more on the impact of heavy weaponry on endangering human security as the Russian military's extensive, inappropriate, excessive and indiscriminate use of this has been a major factor in undermining human security due to its extensive destruction of many rural and urban parts of Chechnya, including Grozny, and its resulting high civilian casualties.

4. Social and cultural aspects of armed violence

4.1 Attitudes to armed violence and security

4.1.1 The Chechen militants

Immediately following the Soviet Union's fall, the bid of the Chechens to negotiate a peaceful secession from Russia proved unrealistic as the Russian government was only prepared to negotiate an autonomous status within Russia, as enjoyed by some other Russian republics such as Tataristan. The government only tolerated the practical independence of the republic until it felt strong enough to crush the pro-independence forces and to restore its control over the breakaway republic. Its massive military campaign and its determination to achieve its objective at any price resulted in the destruction of many rural and urban areas in Chechnya and heavy casualties especially on the Chechen side, combatants and non-combatants alike. In such a situation armed violence became the only realistic means by which the Chechen militants could possibly achieve their political objective of independence. It also became a necessity for defending the lives of the Chechen combatants as Russia's iron fist policy towards them left no room for expecting clemency and good treatment from Moscow. That made their laying down of arms out of the question.

A decade after the first Russian military campaign, the second Russian campaign, a more destructive than the first one, now in its fifth year, does not justify a change of policy by the Chechen militants. More than ever, the possibility of a peaceful independence seems completely unrealistic, which makes resorting to arms the only available option towards that end. That is notwithstanding the fact that there is no realistic ground to expect an independent Chechnya achieved through armed violence in the foreseeable future, although Russia's full and unchallenged control over Chechnya and its rooting out the entire independence movement seems equally unrealistic. Added to the mentioned reasons, President Valdimir Putin's categorical refusal to negotiate with the Chechen militants, including Aslan Maskhadov, makes armed violence their only option.²⁵

4.1.2 The Russian government

The Russian government considers its resort to armed violence in Chechnya as justifiable and well within its rights as a sovereign state. It considers armed violence as a necessary means to restore its sovereignty over Chechnya, to ensure Russia's territorial integrity and to end the negative impact on its security of the Chechen armed conflict. Unsurprisingly, it is concerned about the loss of a republic, which, apart from its significance as a Russian territory rich in oil, is on the route of most of its oil pipelines through which Russia exports oil. Its loss would be an unacceptable scenario for Moscow as the loss of a territory is unacceptable to any other state. It is also unacceptable for the major disruption that it would cause in the Russian oil exports, the single largest source of revenue and foreign currency and the main single factor behind the country's GDP growth since 1991. Added to these concerns, Moscow is especially worried about the possible domino effect of Chechnya's independence on other parts of Russia, in particular on the Northern Caucasus housing three republics, apart from Chechnya. Dagestan, Ingushetia and North Ossetia do not have strong pro-independence movements. However, there have been signs of growing discontent in the first two republics dominated by non-Russian ethnic groups, including a major armed attack by the Ingush militants on the Ingush government facilities in June 2004, which left over 100 dead and scores wounded.²⁶ This is a dangerous sign for Moscow since the Chechen war has already expanded into those republics to a limited extent.

To this, one should add the operation of some Chechen extremists in other parts of Russia, mainly Moscow, where they have resorted to hostage-takings and bombing affecting the Russian capital's security. The explosion in August 2004 of two Russian airliners was just a recent example.²⁷ Given these factors, the Russian government is determined to crush the armed Chechen militants and to end the Chechen independence movement. For this matter, it has resorted to arms in a massive way through the deployment of over 40,000 troops and extensive use of heavy weaponry. In short, the Russian government views armed violence as a necessity to deal with the situation in Chechnya and to ensure the security of its country and its territorial integrity. Therefore, it is prepared to keep Chechnya as part of Russia at any price in human and material cost as indicated by its acceptance of heavy casualties for its

²⁵ "Rebels Vow to Kill Election Winner," *The Seattle Times*, 2 August 2004.

(http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/nationworld/2001994560_wdig02.html). Accessed on 18/8/2004.

²⁶ Carolynne Wheeler, "Putin Gives Ingushetia More Troops".

²⁷ Nick Paton Walsh, "At least 10 Die in Moscow Suicide Blast."

troops, its tolerance of their brutality towards the Chechens as documented by human rights organisations and the heavy destruction of Chechnya's urban and rural areas.

4.2 Identity issues around armed violence

Opposition to the Russian role has been part of Chechen culture over the last two centuries, a reaction to Chechnya's forcible integration into Russia in the early 19th century. This opposition has been translated into decades of armed struggle against the Russian/Soviet troops after its annexation by Russia. The iron fist policy of the Russian/Soviet governments towards the Chechens has ensured the survival and intensification of the anti-Russian sentiment among the Chechens. Thus, the Chechens' negative experience as an involuntary member of Russia has helped create a culture of resistance and acceptance of resorting to arms, which has created a cultural and psychological ground for waging war. This sentiment, along with its logical supplement i.e. a desire to establish an independent Chechen state, has certainly contributed to the formation of an environment prone to armed violence. Yet, such sentiment, reflecting in part the acceptance of armed struggle to meet a political goal, is not the reason for the decade-long armed conflict in Chechnya, as the latter has its roots in a strong desire for independence seemingly achievable now only through fighting and not by a peaceful means.

4.3 The gender dimension

The armed violence in Chechnya has affected Chechen women in different ways. As part of a population experiencing a very destructive armed conflict, they, along with other Chechens, have suffered from all the political, economic, social and security problems associated with the war. However, they have also fallen victim to grave human rights abuses directed at them as women. Reports released by human right organisations, including Amnesty International, indicate widespread sexual abuse, including rape, of Chechen women, combatants and non-combatants, by the Russian military.²⁸ Yet, the prevalence of a sentiment of impunity has prevented the prosecution of those who committed the crimes. The only exception has been the trial of Colonel Yuri Budanov who kidnapped, raped and strangled a Chechen woman (Kheda Kungaeva) on the claimed suspicion of her possessing information about Chechen fighters. He was finally sentenced to 10 years of imprisonment, in July 2003, 3 years after the crime.²⁹

Apart from the above-mentioned impacts on women, the Chechen armed violence has dragged women into the conflict as participants i.e. as militants fighting the Russian military. Being the member of an ethnic minority, their involvement in that capacity

²⁸ "Russian Federation", *Amnesty International Report 2001*, 2001. Amnesty International. (<http://web.amnesty.org/web/ar2001.nsf/webeurcountries/RUSSIAN+FEDERATION?OpenDocument>; Accessed 5 October 2004); "Russian Federation", *Amnesty International Report 2002*, 2002. Amnesty International (<http://web.amnesty.org/web/ar2002.nsf/eur/russian+federation?Open>; Accessed 5 October 2004); "Russian Federation", *Amnesty International Report 2003*, 2003. Amnesty International (<http://web.amnesty.org/report2003/rus-summary-eng>; Accessed 5 October 2004); "Russian Federation", *Amnesty International Report 2004*, 2004. Amnesty International (<http://web.amnesty.org/report2004/rus-summary-eng>; Accessed 5 October 2004).

²⁹ Russian Federation: The Case of Kheda Kungaeva, Amnesty International, AI Index: EUR 46/029/2004 (Public), News Service No: 153, 23 June 2004. (<http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGEUR460292004?open&of=ENG-RUS>; Accessed on 18/8/2004)

started in the very initial phase of the conflict in the early 1990s. However, it has significantly grown over the last few years partly due to the deepening and expansion of the armed conflict and partly because of the direct impact of the latter on certain women. As a recent well-known example, half of the Chechen militants who took hostage a few hundred Russians in a Moscow theatre in October 2002 were women.³⁰ As stated by the released hostages, some of them were “black widows”, meaning the widows of Chechen militants who were reportedly the “most aggressive of the hostage-takers.”³¹

Additionally, many Chechen women have acted as “kamikazes” (suicide bombers) especially since 2000. For instance, six out of seven Chechen suicide bombers who carried out their missions in Russia between May and September 2003 were women.³² Two “black widows” were implicated for the blowing up of two Russian passenger airliners and another for an explosion near a metro station in Moscow in August 2004.³³ Factors such as the devastating impact of the conflict on the Chechens and their growing sense of frustration aside, rampant ill-treatment of Chechen women by the Russian military, including rape is believed to be a major reason for the radicalisation of Chechen women and especially for their volunteering for suicide bombings. According to Chechen actress Zulaikhan Badalova who heads the Moscow Centre of Chechen Culture, some of these militant women “may have been raped in front of their relatives, or seen their relatives tortured and killed. ... In the second military conflict [, which started in 1999,] the cruelty of Russian soldiers towards Chechen women has reached a pathological level. ... I personally know several women who were raped by troops in front of their fathers, brothers and husbands. After such treatment, women die or go mad or become kamikazes.”³⁴

5. Social capital and armed violence

5.1 Social relationships and power dynamics

The Chechens are a family-oriented nation who believe in strong family bonds, help their relatives and respect elders. The devastating war in Chechnya has had a major impact on the Chechens. The formation of a large number of female-led families has been one of its by-products. This is the outcome of the absence of men (husbands, fathers, brothers and sons) from their households because of their joining the militants, their escape, detention, imprisonment or killing by the Russian forces. In consequence, many Chechen women, including those living as IDPs in Ingushetia, have become the only breadwinner for their families. There are no reliable statistics on their number, but certain facts suggest their number should be in tens of thousands. According to an estimation made in 2004, “80,000 people were killed in the 1994-6 war [in Chechnya]. Estimates vary for the present conflict [, which began in 1999]:

³⁰“Putin: ‘We Could Not Save Everyone ... Forgive Us,’” *Sunday Herald Online*, 27 October 2002. (<http://www.sundayherald.com/28783>; Accessed on 19/8/2004)

³¹ Ibid.

³² “Inside the Mind of a ‘Black Widow’”, BBC, 4 September 2003, 17:56 GMT 18:56 UK. (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/3081126.stm>; Accessed on 23/8/2004).

³³ Nick Paton Walsh, “At least 10 Die in Moscow Suicide Blast.”

³⁴“Putin: ‘We Could Not Save Everyone ... Forgive Us.’”

according to Memorial, 20,000 people have been killed, and 2,000 have disappeared without traces during the ‘clean-up’ operations conducted by the Russian forces.”³⁵

The same reasons have forced many children to take responsibilities for their family as a means to compensate for the loss of their male family members. Many young boys and girls now have to take care of their siblings in the absence of their mothers, who have to find any available job despite their training for better positions, while helping their mothers with domestic chores. This situation has affected their education and health. Uneducated children are growing in number of whom many do not know Russian or are not fluent in it, a sign of loss of interest in Russia.³⁶

There is a growing number of parentless children taken care of by their surviving extended family members (e.g., grandparents), while many others have to live on their own, staying with other parentless children wherever they can.³⁷ Such children have formed a major source of recruits for the Chechen militant groups, given their deep hatred towards the Russians.³⁸

5.2 Positive and negative aspects of social capital in relation to armed violence

Thanks to the extent of the armed violence and its deep negative impact on just about all Chechen families, the positive aspects of social capital, i.e., strong family ties, does not serve as a disincentive for continuing the conflict. Loss of family members and/or their persecution by the Russian forces has actually damaged the cherished family bonds and so serving as an incentive to continue the conflict.

The war’s damage to family cohesion, the loss of homes and the lack of opportunities for a peaceful and predictable life in the war-torn republic have created hatred among the Chechens, in particular the younger generation. Added to the insecurity caused by the war itself, there is a strong sense of insecurity created by the constant abduction by the Russian forces and the Kadyrovtsy of Chechens suspected of ties with the militants. Since 2000 when Moscow regained Grozny, a few thousand Chechens have been abducted whose fate, in most cases, has remained unknown.³⁹ They have included many children and elderly abducted by the Kadyrovtsy.⁴⁰ Added to the loss of one or both parents and/or siblings and relatives during the Russian military operations, the impact of such acts on families has been devastating. The killing of many adults, men and women, or their inability to work due to the conflict have created many angry children who at a very early stage of life have to rely on themselves for their own needs and those of their surviving family members. They have become a source of recruitment for the militants. Lack of employment opportunities has also created an additional incentive for many young Chechens to join the militants to earn an income. According to estimations for the period 2002 to

³⁵ Basic Facts.

³⁶ Sabrina Tavernise, “With Few Bonds to Russia, Young Chechens Join Militants,” *The New York Times*, 19 November 2002. Reprinted by Ccharm <http://www.ccharm.org/news/article30.htm>; Accessed on 18/8/2004.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Nick Paton Walsh, “A Headless Monster.”

⁴⁰ Ibid.

2004, the unemployment rate in Chechnya was between 85 percent and 90 percent.⁴¹ In May 2004, Gadzhi Makhachev, who represents Dagestan in the Russian State Duma identified high unemployment in Dagestan as a reason for the expansion of the Chechen conflict to that republic, which hosts a large Chechen IDP community.⁴²

Since the beginning of the armed conflict in Chechnya, there has been a changing attitude among the youth who, unlike their parents, have seen the Russians only as their enemy. In particular, the existing sense of suspicion about Chechen youths, make them a target of daily harassment, for instance, at checkpoints manned by the Russian troops and the Kadyrovtsy.⁴³ For female Chechens, the brutality committed against them as rape victims or witnesses to such crime and their loss of their male relatives have created additional incentives for them to view the Russians as enemy.

Being ill-treated, many young Chechens find joining the militants to be the only logical choice. It is partly for revenge and partly to defend themselves, while working towards the creation of an independent state, a more than ever tempting scenario given the weakening of ties with Russia in all aspects of life. Various factors, including the destruction of many educational institutions, sporadic operation of the remaining ones and the forcible migration of many teachers have weakened the Russian language among the youth with an impact on their weakening ties with Russia.⁴⁴ This is yet another reason for them to see more in common with the militants than the Russians. Unsurprisingly, the youth form the majority of the Chechen militants. For example, all the members of the Chechen team involved in the October 2002 hostage-taking in a Moscow theatre were young, led by 25-year-old Movsar Barayev.⁴⁵

6. The political economy of armed violence

6.1 *The economic significance of weapons*

The protracted armed conflict in Chechnya has created an environment of lawlessness throughout the republic. This has been manifested in the rise and expansion of armed banditry and organised crime as well as in the targeting of civilians and their properties for their real or perceived backing of the pro- or anti-Moscow forces by the two sides to the conflict. Both the Russian forces and the Chechen militants have victimised civilians for their alleged ties with their opponents.

As for the Russian forces and the Kadyrovtsy, they have committed grave abuses against civilians, including arrest, detention, imprisonment, summary executions and massacres, apart from destroying many urban and rural residential areas.⁴⁶ Moreover,

⁴¹ Islamic Relief, "Chechnya Facts," 2004. (<http://www.islamic-relief.com/projects/Chechnya>; Accessed on 25/8/2004); "Russian Federation: Limited Income Sources for Most Households in Chechnya (2002)," *Global IDP Database*, 2004. (<http://www.db.idpproject.org/Sites/idpSurvey.nsf/wViewCountries/9DE9B9AAF81254D0C1256CD10045FFC3?OpenDocument>; Accessed on 24 August 2004)

⁴² Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 16 August 2004.

(http://www.rferl.org/features/features_Article.aspx?m=08&y=2004&id=699F1F15-B1F1-447F-946E-638D467584E8; Accessed on 25/8/2004)

⁴³ Sabrina Tavernise, "With Few Bonds to Russia, Young Chechens Join Militants."

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ "Putin: 'We Could Not Save Everyone ... Forgive Us!'"

⁴⁶ Nick Paton Walsh, "A Headless Monster."

they have reportedly looted the properties of the Chechens who have left in search of safety in other parts of Chechnya or in its neighbouring republics as reported in 2002. Accordingly, “federal soldiers and police on sweep operations arbitrarily detain men and women, and frequently loot and burn homes.”⁴⁷ Human Rights Watch have also reported looting by the Russian forces of the Chechen houses under their control in the period 1994-2001.⁴⁸ As for the Chechen militants, they have “assassinated, attacked, or threatened Chechen civil servants, seeking to intimidate Chechens who might cooperate with the Russian government”, including village mayors, deputy village mayors, deputy district chiefs, religious officials, policemen and educators.⁴⁹ Unconfirmed reports suggest that the militants have killed civilians for refusing to assist them, used civilians “as human shields,” forced “civilians to build fortifications,” prevented “refugees from fleeing Chechnya, while killing “elderly Russian civilians ... for no apparent reason other than their ethnicity.”⁵⁰

Given the widespread insecurity for the civilians and the absence of an organ to protect them, it is logical to expect that they seek to arm themselves to ensure their own safety and to secure their properties. However, there are no reliable reports on average civilians resorting to arms to protect their properties. In particular, given the Russian troops and the Kadyrovtsy have been the main source of insecurity for average Chechens, the idea of arming to protect one’s property seems to be out of the question, at least in most cases.

6.2 The ‘war’/ parallel economy

The armed conflict has made about half of the Chechen population (about 600,000 people) internally displaced of whom about 200,000 have fled to Ingushetia. Many of the latter have been forced to return upon the closure of their refugee camps, while the rest have remained in the republic. In the early 1990s, about 100,000 non-Chechen ethnic groups, including almost its entire Russian community forming the bulk of its administrators and technical personnel, left Chechnya to escape the looming conflict. This has resulted in major damage to the normal operation of the republic in all its aspects, including its economy. The heavy destruction of the Chechen cities and villages, its infrastructure, industries and agriculture have worsened the situation, with yet further deterioration as a result of the massive forcible migration of the Chechen and non-Chechens which limits the possibility of economic activities and the market. To this bleak economic situation, one should add the inability for normal operation of the remaining intact economic units due to the war, the absence of an environment conducive to economic activities, next to no incentive for investment by the Chechens and limited investment by the Russian government. The result has been the absence of

⁴⁷ “Russian Federation: Women in Chechnya Exposed to Rape and Sexual Violence (2001),” *Global IDP Database*, 2004.

(<http://www.db.idpproject.org/Sites/idpSurvey.nsf/wViewCountries/7765568BFC050EBFC1256BB20053B2F5?OpenDocument>; Accessed on 24 August 2004.)

⁴⁸ “Russian Federation: Reports of Widespread Looting by Russian Forces inside Chechnya (1999-2001),” *Global IDP Database*, 2004.

(<http://www.db.idpproject.org/Sites/idpSurvey.nsf/wViewCountries/F04193D2F6BB0DEBC12568C50045ABE5?OpenDocument>; Accessed on 24 August 2004.)

⁴⁹ “Russian Federation: Civilian Population in Chechnya Also Exposed to Violence from the Chechen Rebels (2000-2002),” *Global IDP Database*, 2004.

(<http://www.db.idpproject.org/Sites/idpSurvey.nsf/wViewCountries/1304ED7077B111C5C1256BB20048DBAE?OpenDocument>; Accessed on 24 August 2004.)

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

a viable economic system capable of producing well-paid employment opportunities as reflected in the high rate of unemployment in 2004 (85 percent). It is no wonder that “almost the entire population lives below the poverty line.”⁵¹

In such a situation, apart from joining the Chechen militants, working for the police and the Chechen government force and administration are the only employment opportunities available to a small number of Chechens. Thus, where the formal economy is not reliable, the informal economy (black economy) containing all illegal activities becomes prominent in which the Chechen militants, the average Chechens and the Russian military are all players. While statistics on the amount of revenue generated in that economy do not exist, it is known that its activities include trafficking of illicit products, chiefly, drugs, kidnapping for a ransom and illegal production of oil, and sale and export of its refined products. In their bid to fund their armies, at least some of the militant groups or their leaders allegedly resort to “drug smuggling and kidnapping to raise funds” with the effect of blurring the “distinction between rebel units and criminal gangs.”⁵² Some reports suggest that various militant groups involved in illegal activities, including Arbi Barayev (killed in May 2004) and Shamil Basayev, resort to violence to “eliminate their economic rivals in illegal activities or settle personal accounts.”⁵³

Apart from the Chechen militant groups, the Russian forces and some non-militant Chechens are involved in an “underground” oil industry. Chechnya is rich in oil and has an oil industry, most of which has been damaged or destroyed because of the war. Given the need for refined oil and the absence of a viable economy, some Chechens have set up small-scale refineries in their backyards supplied with oil extracted illegally from the damaged oil wells. This operation used to be controlled by the warlords, but, now, the Russian military forces have replaced them. They help the smuggling of refined oil into the neighbouring territories for which they receive “protection money”.⁵⁴ In addition, extortion at checkpoints has become a routine in Chechnya. The Russian forces manning the checkpoints have a fee schedule for cars, trucks and even humanitarian trucks carrying donated material by foreign and international organisations from Ingushetia.⁵⁵

7. The impact of armed violence on poverty

7.1 Micro level

7.1.1 Household and livelihood levels

⁵¹ “Russian Federation: IDPs in Northern Caucasus Endure Violence and Destitution,” *Global IDP Database*, 2004. (<http://www.db.idpproject.org/Sites/idpSurvey.nsf/wViewSingleEnv/Russian+FederationProfile+Summary>; Accessed on 24 August 2004.

⁵² “Russian Federation: Civilian Population in Chechnya Also Exposed to Violence from the Chechen Rebel Groups (2000-2002).”

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Marcus Warren, “Back Garden ‘Oil Barons’ Spring Up in Chechnya,” *Telegraph.co.uk*, 7 June 2002. (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2002/06/07/woil07.xml&sSheet=/news/2002/06/07/ixw.ord.html>; Accessed on 19/8/2004)

⁵⁵ “Russian Federation: Freedom of Movement in Northern Caucasus (2001-2003),” *Global IDP Database*, 2004. (<http://www.db.idpproject.org/Sites/idpSurvey.nsf/wViewCountries/D520646F1D2047E8C1256BB300284DA1?OpenDocument>; Accessed on 24 August 2004.)

The armed violence has had a direct impact on the Chechen's households and livelihood. The massive destruction of the infrastructure, including water, electricity and fuel networks, has created shortages of these essentials over almost the entire republic. The limited reconstruction efforts have improved the situation in certain areas, including parts of Grozny, but it is still far from normal in most parts of Chechnya.⁵⁶ For example, in many parts of Grozny, piped water has been contaminated with oil because of the damages to the oil and water pipelines.⁵⁷ The situation was worse among the IDPs in Ingushetia having in tents for years, although electricity and piped gas were available to some extent in at least most of the tent cities before their closure in 2003.

Given the new circumstances, the Chechens have to spend a much longer time than before to do shopping thanks to the erection of many checkpoints, damaged roads and transportation system and the closure or destruction of many shops because of the armed conflict. In this situation, members of households must spend a lot of time to find essentials such as food, water and fuel translated into extra work for many women and children in the absence of their male relatives. In particular, children now have to help with domestic chores as their mothers work outside the home to provide for their families. Therefore, the new reality have resulted in a change in gender roles as demonstrated in a growing number of female-led families and in boys and young men being forced to fill the gap left by their absent fathers. Alienation among the children and youth and their anger at the Russian authorities are an expected outcome of this situation. Moreover, the poor economic situation has been translated into the scarcity of income-generating resources thanks to the destruction of farms, factories and the service/retail industries. The lowering living standards have created malnutrition and ill health both among the Chechens in Chechnya and Ingushetia.⁵⁸

7.1.2 Intra-household

While the armed violence has negatively affected almost all the Chechens, the direct and indirect impacts of the Chechen armed violence have especially affected the socially vulnerable groups (pregnant and lactating women, infants and children from 0 to 36 months of age, invalids, the elderly without adequate social support, orphans, and children in single-parent families). According to an assessment by the Danish Refugee Council, they account for 16 percent of the Chechen population.⁵⁹ Inside

⁵⁶ "Russian Federation: Planned Education-Related Activities for 2004 in Chechnya and Ingushetia," *Global IDP Database*, 2004.

(<http://www.db.idpproject.org/Sites/idpSurvey.nsf/wViewCountries/C2D13F7E435345F9C1256E19005BE7E3?OpenDocument>; Accessed on 24 August 2004.); Water and Sanitation in 2004: International Community Helps Meet Basic Needs in Ingushetia and Chechnya," *Global IDP Database*, 2004.

(<http://www.db.idpproject.org/Sites/idpSurvey.nsf/wViewCountries/C2D13F7E435345F9C1256E19005BE7E3?OpenDocument>; Accessed on 24 August 2004).

⁵⁷ "Chechnya Conflict and Environmental Implications," ICE Case Studies, Number 93, June 2002. (<http://www.american.edu/TED/ice/chechnya.htm>; Accessed on 10 October 2004)

⁵⁸ "Desperate Decline: The Situation of Chechen Refugees in Azerbaijan," Harriman Institute, 30 September 2004. (<http://www.columbia.edu/cu/sipa/REGIONAL/HI/chechnya-azerbaijan.pdf>;

Accessed on 10 October 2004); Pierre Celerier, "Chechen Children Still Dying Despite International Aid Efforts," Agence France Presse (AFP), 19 November 2003. Reprinted by *ReiefWeb*

(<http://www.reliefweb.int/w/rwb.nsf/0/6512a215809e9bd2c1256de300554cf4?OpenDocument>; Accessed on 22 October 2004)

⁵⁹ "Russian Federation: Destitution in Ingushetia and Chechnya (2003)," *Global IDP Database*, 2004.

Chechnya, it is estimated that at least 60 percent of the population reports being regularly unable to meet regular household expenses.⁶⁰ Chechen households with a very low level of income (about RUR 2,200 or US\$ 70 per month or less) rely on a variety of financial sources. In a context of persistent insecurity, many individuals engage in small trade activities to generate additional income.⁶¹

The IDPs are also especially affected as indicated before. For years, they have lived in “overcrowded conditions in temporary settlements, tent camps or with host families”, while lacking “basic food, medication, clean water and sanitation, and endure severe winter temperatures.”⁶² The authorities started closing down the IDP camps in Ingushetia in late 2003. The affected Chechens either moved to another camp or returned to Chechnya despite the continuing violence and insecurity.⁶³ In 2004 all refugee camps are closed and many IDPs have been forced to return, although large numbers have remained in Ingushetia in difficult condition outside camps without receiving any type of government support simply to avoid insecure Chechnya. Accommodation for most families returning to war-torn Chechnya consists of Temporary Accommodation Centres (TACs). Since the Chechen infrastructure is in ruins, health and education services for the returnees are limited, and housing standards “vary greatly across the TACs.”⁶⁴

7.1.3 Displacement and destitution

The protracted armed conflict has created a large internally displaced population. It is now estimated that about half of Chechnya’s population are displaced or have died.⁶⁵ Of the estimated 600,000 strong internally displaced population, about 200,000 have moved to Ingushetia and the rest are displaced all over Chechnya, while a much smaller number has settled in other parts of Russia, including Moscow. High unemployment rates of at least 85 percent in Chechnya and similar, if not higher, rates for the Chechens living in Ingushetia have ensured increasing poverty among the Chechens.⁶⁶ Given the high unemployment rate in Ingushetia (73 percent in 2003), there are very limited economic opportunities for the IDP job applicants, worsened by their lack of residency status, which prevents them from working legally.⁶⁷ According to a November 2003 survey in Ingushetia, about 90 percent of the Chechens residing there were either unemployed or underemployed and about one third of them had only temporary jobs.⁶⁸ As about 50 percent of the IDP families included at least one pensioner, their pension incomes contributed significantly to their households’ budget. Nevertheless, three quarters of IDPs in Ingushetia lived on less than 486 RUR (US\$16.2) per person per month (about a quarter of the official subsistence level in the republic), while 6.5 percent of IDP families living there did not have any income and relied entirely on humanitarian aid.⁶⁹ As reported, almost all IDP families in

<http://www.db.idpproject.org/Sites/idpSurvey.nsf/wViewCountries/4FC55DF4ACE78674C1256E190049AC9C?OpenDocument>; Accessed on 24 August 2004)

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² “Chechnya Facts”, Islamic Relief, 2004.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ “Russian Federation: Destitution in Ingushetia and Chechnya (2003).”

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

Ingushetia “regularly sell their household assets to complement their income” and “every third IDP family receives remittances from relatives or friends, be it cash, clothing or food.”⁷⁰ According to the Danish Refugee Council, 63 percent of the Chechens have a quality of life described as “poor or very poor and in need of humanitarian assistance”.⁷¹ In a comparative sense, the urban population of Chechnya is poorer than those living in rural areas as the latter, by and large, has the means to meet at least its basic subsistence as peasants.⁷²

7.2 Meso level

7.2.1 Markets

After a few years of disruption due to the intense armed conflict, trade in Chechnya and between Chechnya and Ingushetia and Dagestan has improved since early 2002 as movement of the people inside the republic has become less restricted as they are allowed to cross the republican borders. However, extortion at checkpoints manned by the Russian troops especially along the roads between Chechnya and Ingushetia and inside Chechnya is a serious problem. It restricts free movement of people and their access to markets as the troops force the drivers of all vehicles, including trucks carrying all types of products, including foods, and even those carrying humanitarian goods, to pay an illegal fee.⁷³ In addition, mines (estimated at 500,000) and unexploded ordnance (UXO) have the same restrictive effect. In particular, movement between villages is restricted because of “mined routes”, which “limits access to markets and hinders economic activities and traditional social contacts.”⁷⁴ Apart from this restrictive impact, mines/UXO have reduced the amount of locally produced food products to supply the republican markets. According to an estimation of the Chechen Ministry of Agriculture, “some 30 percent of all agricultural land in the republic is contaminated by mines/UXO, and livestock has been severely stricken. Economic necessity leads people to adopt unsafe behaviour. For example, “people collect wood or pick up fruit in mined areas.”⁷⁵ In consequence, the Chechen markets now heavily depend on imported products from other parts of Russia.

7.2.2 Social infrastructure

Chechnya’s social infrastructure has declined since 1991 due to the overall decline of service-providing institutions in the post-Soviet era and, more important than that, the devastating impact of a decade of war. The latter has severely damaged the social infrastructure, particularly the health and educational systems. In particular, many of their facilities have been destroyed during the Russian “security sweep” operations, such as those of 2001.⁷⁶ Consequently, they are unable to function normally and to meet the Chechens’ needs.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ “Russian Federation: Freedom of Movement in Northern Caucasus (2001-2003).”

⁷⁴ “Russian Federation: Civilians Exposed to Mines and Unexploded Ordnance in Chechnya (2003),” *Global IDP Database*, 2004.

(<http://www.db.idpproject.org/Sites/idpSurvey.nsf/wViewCountries/4A11E200B2FA36DDC1256E01005A46C7?OpenDocument> ; Accessed on 24 August 2004)

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ “Russian Media Mull Chechnya Abuses,” BBC, World Monitoring, Media Reports, 11 July 2001, 18:05 GMT 19:05 UK. (http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/monitoring/media_reports/1434473.stm; 19/8/2004)

7.2.3 Health system

Offering “sophisticated and reasonable quality care” prior to 1991,⁷⁷ the quality and capacity of the Chechen healthcare system have drastically declined since 1991. The destruction of many health care facilities, including hospitals, severe damage to many others, a shortage of medicine and equipment, and a shortage of medical personnel due to forced migration, killings and detentions have contributed to “decreased availability of services and the limited technical capacity of the remaining health personnel.”⁷⁸ The increasing costs of both consultations and supplies have practically denied medical services to many Chechens who simply cannot afford them.⁷⁹ Added to the poor water and sanitation network thanks to the war, as well as malnutrition, the declining health care system has resulted in about 84 percent of the children in the Chechen Republic having health problems.⁸⁰ It has also contributed to the re-emergence and rapid expansion of many diseases and epidemics such as tuberculosis (TB), venereal diseases, and hepatitis. Chechnya now holds the Russian record for TB (with 160 cases for 10,000 people, as opposed to the national average of 90), because of “inadequate living conditions in IDP settlements in Ingushetia and water and sanitation system in Chechnya”, while acute respiratory infections have become the “most widely spread infectious diseases among children in Chechnya.”⁸¹ Furthermore, HIV/AIDS has been increasing rapidly in Chechnya and among the Chechen IDPs in Ingushetia.⁸² As reported by the Chechen HIV/AIDS Prevention Centre, the HIV morbidity rate increased in 2003 to some 8.2 per 100,000 people, against 2.9 per 100,000 people in 2002.⁸³ Lack of testing and facilities to identify and take care of the affected people is contributing to the rapid expansion of HIV/AIDS especially because of infected IDPs travelling between Ingushetia and Chechnya without even knowing about their condition.⁸⁴

7.2.4. Education system

The sheer extent of armed violence and consequent insecurity has practically stopped the operation of the educational system over almost all of Chechnya during the first round of war (1994-96) and the initial years of the second round (1999-2000). During the 2000-2002 period, certain factors created major obstacles to the normal operation of schools. They included attacks on many schools, the destruction of many others as a result of indiscriminate bombing of neighbourhoods by the Russian forces, the insecurity caused by ongoing war in most rural and urban areas, the absence of many

⁷⁷ “Russian Federation: Prohibitive Costs of Healthcare Affects IDPs and Poorest Households (2002),” *Global IDP Database*, 2004.

(<http://www.db.idpproject.org/Sites/idpSurvey.nsf/wViewCountries/07ACDE395FA7F8E0C1256CD1003E5D36?OpenDocument>; Accessed on 24 August 2004.)

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ “Chechnya Facts”, Islamic Relief, 2004.

⁸¹ “Russian Federation: Precarious Health Situation Prevailing in Chechnya (2003),” *Global IDP Database*, 2004.

(<http://www.db.idpproject.org/Sites/idpSurvey.nsf/wViewCountries/053B0FBFC11AA8D5C1256E01005A0ABF?OpenDocument>; Accessed on 24 August 2004.)

⁸² “Russian Federation: WHO Reports Growing Number of HIV Cases in Ingushetia and Chechnya (2001-2003),” *Global IDP Database*, 2004.

(<http://www.db.idpproject.org/Sites/idpSurvey.nsf/wViewCountries/63FAB8E14093639DC1256BB3002C6BF7?OpenDocument>; Accessed on 24 August 2004.)

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

teachers due to forced migration to safer areas in Chechnya and Ingushetia, a shortage of equipment and educational supplies and the absence of a functioning republican government to finance and run the educational system. The situation has since improved to some extent thanks to the end of major battles in residential areas and the efforts by the Russian government to restore normalcy to Chechnya. Yet, in the last quarter of 2004, major problems still prevent the normal operation of the entire educational system. There are no official statistics on the number of destroyed and rehabilitated schools or on the actual number of students who attend the operating ones. However, reports suggest that “very few kindergartens” operate in Chechnya⁸⁵ and many schools remain at least partly destroyed or unusable.⁸⁶ Access to the operating ones for students and educational staff is dangerous since, apart from the overall insecurity, “large parts of the republic, including Grozny, are affected by the presence of landmines and unexploded ordnance.”⁸⁷ The continued attacks and counter-attacks in cities, including near their educational centres, contribute to insecurity. For example, in August 2004, “two militants blew themselves up when planting an explosive device near a school in Chechnya”.⁸⁸

As a by-product of the conflict, attendance in the operating schools has been decreasing because of “a lack of clothing” and “essential school supplies”, thanks to the armed conflict-created poverty for the Chechens and the Chechen government’s shortage of funds.⁸⁹ Apart from the material aspects, psychological factors are in place to prevent the normal functioning of the educational system for their traumatising effects on students. As reported by teachers, “most children have lost a parent or a brother or sister ... They have seen people die. They have fear and nightmares.”⁹⁰

However, despite the shortages of functioning schools, materials, teachers, funding and security, “there is an educational system, which functions “to some extent and [that] literacy rates are still very high.”⁹¹ Apart from the reported “considerable efforts” of the Chechen and Ingush ministries of education “to address education needs of the children affected by the crisis”, international organisations such as UNICEF and many NGOs are helping the latter both in Chechnya and Ingushetia to address the problem.⁹²

⁸⁵ “Russian Federation: Classroom Capacity in Chechnya Is Still Insufficient (2002),” *Global IDP Database*, 2004.

(<http://www.db.idpproject.org/Sites/idpSurvey.nsf/wViewCountries/14C7D68AF9B6A105C1256CD1003EEC84?OpenDocument>; Accessed on 24 August 2004.)

⁸⁶ Ibid.; Michael Eccles, “Journey to Hell: Visit to Grozny”, Islamic Relief, 2004. (<http://www.islamic-relief.com/SubMenu/Appeal/updates/Grozny.htm>; Accessed on 19/8/2004)

⁸⁷ “Russian Federation: Classroom Capacity in Chechnya Is Still Insufficient (2002).”

⁸⁸ Russian News and Information Agency Novosti, “2 Militants Blow Themselves Up in Chechnya,” 11 August 2004. (http://en.rian.ru/rian/index.cfm?prd_id=160&msg_id=4698826&startrow=1&date=2004-08-11&do_alert=0; Accessed on 19/8/2004)

⁸⁹ “Russian Federation: Classroom Capacity in Chechnya Is Still Insufficient (2002).”

⁹⁰ David Filipov, “War Haunts Youth of Chechnya.” *The Boston Globe*, 5 March 2004. Reprinted in *The International Herald Tribune*; (<http://www.ihf.com/articles/508839.htm>; Accessed on 19/8/2004)

⁹¹ “Russian Federation: Classroom Capacity in Chechnya Is Still Insufficient (2002).”

⁹² “Russian Federation: Planned Education-Related Activities for 2004 in Chechnya and Ingushetia.”

7.3 Macro level

7.3.1 Macro-economic impacts

The decade-long armed conflict has severely damaged Chechnya's economy, which began to decline, like anywhere else in Russia, when the Soviet Union collapsed. It heavily depends on the oil industry, as the republic is rich in oil, while serving as a transit route for most of the Russian export pipelines. Heavy fighting has completely stopped its operation on many occasions since the early 1990s. Since the Russian troops' capture of Grozny in 2000, the heavy destruction of wells, oil processing infrastructure (e.g., refineries) and the oil pipelines caused during the war has sharply reduced oil production and its related activities. Sensing the severity of the situation and the need for reversing the dismal economic situation, the Russian government has taken efforts to revitalise the Chechen economy especially since 2003. As reported in August 2004, after periods of nil or next to nil oil production, Chechnya is expected to produce two million tons of oil in 2004, while aiming at increasing its production to five million tons in 3-5 years.⁹³ Efforts have been made to operationalise light and consumer industries, including canning, fruit beverages and winemaking plants, as well as agriculture.⁹⁴ In the period 2002-2003, the grain harvest, for instance, was more than 350,000 tons.⁹⁵

The available funds for revitalising Chechnya's economy are still insignificant given the destruction of most part of its infrastructure and industries. The economic difficulties of Russia, on the one hand, and the continued war in Chechnya, on the other, do not leave much for the Russian government to invest in that republic. In 2002, it therefore allocated RUR 4.5 billion (about US \$142.4 million) for the overall reconstruction program to finance certain projects, namely "RUR 1.8 billion (about US \$57 million) for housing and utilities, about RUR 600 million (about US \$19 million) for the agro-industrial sector, RUR 250 million (about US \$7.9 million) for electricity, RUR 216 million (about US \$6.8 million) for public health, and RUR 120 million (about US \$3.8 million) for education."⁹⁶ That theoretically left only RUR 1.514 billion (US \$47.9 million) for investing in the economy. It is unknown how much of the 2003 allocated funds for reconstruction of RUR 5.175 billion (about US \$163.7 million) was actually invested in the economy.⁹⁷ Unable to significantly increase its funding, the government agreed in August 2004 to transfer from Moscow to Chechnya, the Direction of Federal Customer on Restoration, the institution in charge of funding the reconstruction works in Chechnya, to help the local Chechen authorities make a more efficient use of the available funds.⁹⁸

Added to the Russian transferred monies to Chechnya, the Chechen government has other sources of income for its reconstruction works, which are insignificant. For

⁹³ Ekaterina Lykova, "Chechnya Wants More Economic Independence," *Pravda*, 11 August 2004. (http://english.pravda.ru/main/18/89/357/13732_Chechnya.html; Accessed on 23/8/2004)

⁹⁴ "Russian Federation: Reconstruction Efforts for Chechnya from the Government (2002-2003)," *Global IDP Database*, 2004. (<http://www.db.idpproject.org/Sites/idpSurvey.nsf/wViewCountries/89B4E5CB0C78C306C1256CD1004A54D1>; Accessed on 24 August 2004.)

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ Ekaterina Lykova, "Chechnya Wants More Economic Independence."

example, oil export revenue generated RUR 232 million (about US \$7.3 million) in 2001.⁹⁹ Additionally, in the same year, certain Russian government enterprises, namely RAO Unified Energy Systems of Russia and OAO Gazprom gas concern, as well as the Russian Ministry of Railways, provided a fund of RUR 2.74 billion (about US \$86.7 million) for the restoration of “electrical energy, gas supply, oil industry and transport facilities.”¹⁰⁰ Figures for 2002 and 2003 are unavailable and it is unknown how much of such “extraordinary funds” was actually spent on the economy and its required infrastructure.

There are no official statistics on the value of trade between Chechnya and its neighbours. However, given the heavy financial reliance of the Chechen government on Moscow, the trade, which was resumed in 2002, should not be very significant.

Late in 2004, the Chechen government seemed determined to restore the destroyed economy of Chechnya as a necessary prerequisite to curb the seemingly never-ending armed conflict and to provide employment for the Chechens, including the returnees from Ingushetia. However, despite its determination and that of the Russian government, the continuation of the conflict is a major barrier to creating a viable economy, apart from the shortage of government funds, the weakness of the local private sector to share the investment burden with Moscow and the absence of foreign investment. While the destruction of the industries continues, the Chechen Militants attack those who work for the Russians and the pro-Moscow Chechen government resulting in the death of many low and high-ranking officials, including Chechen President Akhmad Kadyrov in May 2004.¹⁰¹ The resulting weakening of the already weak local government further retards its reconstruction efforts aimed at revitalising the economy.

7.3.2 Infrastructure

Chechnya’s infrastructure is severely damaged thanks to the length of the armed conflict and the Russian military’s extensive use of heavy weapons. The partial or complete destruction of facilities of the water, electricity, gas/oil, sanitation, and telecommunication and transportation networks has resulted in unavailability or unreliable availability of their services in many parts of Chechnya, including Grozny. While this situation creates daily major difficulties for average Chechens, the poor performance of the infrastructure is yet another factor preventing the Chechen economic revitalisation. Apart from low available funding for reconstruction, e.g., RUR 4.5 billion (about US \$142.4 million) and RUR 5.175 billion (about US \$163.7 million) in 2002 and 2003, respectively,¹⁰² the existence of half a million mines and a huge amount of unexploded ordnance is a barrier to the full rehabilitation of the destroyed infrastructure.¹⁰³ Nevertheless, there have been efforts to restore the damaged gas, electricity and water systems and to rebuild roads to some extent with a degree of success. There has been an improvement in providing basic services such as electricity and piped gas, including in parts of Grozny, thanks to limited amount of

⁹⁹ “Russian Federation: Reconstruction Efforts for Chechnya from the Government (2002-2003).”

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ “Rebels Vow to Kill Election Winner.”

¹⁰² “Russian Federation: Reconstruction Efforts for Chechnya from the Government (2002-2003).”

¹⁰³ “Chechnya Facts”, Islamic Relief, 2004.

reconstruction.¹⁰⁴ While some roads have been repaired, the regular train services between Grozny and Moscow were resumed in late 2004. However, basic necessities such as clean piped water is not available everywhere.

7.4 Regional and international levels

7.4.1 Cross-border impact

Without a doubt, the ongoing armed violence has had a major negative impact on the welfare of the Chechens. The expansion of the conflict to the neighbouring Ingushetia, in particular, and, to a lesser extent, to Dagestan has also affected the overall situation of those republics, both of which suffer from all the economic problems of the post-Soviet era, including high unemployment rates, e.g., 85 percent in Ingushetia in October 2002.¹⁰⁵ The massive outflow of Chechens resulting in the settlement of over 200,000 Chechens mainly in the neighbouring republics, particularly in Ingushetia, and, to a much smaller scale, in other parts of Russia, have not only denied Chechnya the ability to restore its normalcy, but a significant market with a population having a reliable purchasing power to sustain economic growth. Their existence in the neighbouring republics has also contributed to the worsening of the already poor economic situation in those republics. Aside from the Russian government's plan to restore normalcy to Chechnya, the Ingush government's dissatisfaction with the economic cost of the Chechen refugee camps for its republic was the major factor behind the forcible closure of all of them in Ingushetia completed by the end of 2003.

8. Impact on poverty

8.1 To what extent can poverty processes and impacts be attributed to SALW?

As mentioned earlier, the protracted armed violence in Chechnya is the outcome of a variety of factors first and foremost, a political objective sought by the Chechens i.e. their demand for independence from Russia, which has met Moscow's opposition. It will therefore continue, in one form or another, so long as a significant percentage of the Chechens back this political demand. Within this context, the availability of SALW has been a factor explaining its initiation at a certain time and also its fluctuations (expansion and contraction), but it has not been its *raison d'être* and the factor in its continuity. Undoubtedly, the Chechen armed violence has significantly lowered the living standards of the Chechens and suddenly pushed many of them into poverty as discussed before. Its continuity will certainly be the most important single factor in the prolongation and expansion of poverty by frustrating or retarding efforts to restore the necessary normalcy for revitalising Chechnya's economy. In this regard, SALW as the major weapons used in the conflict can be considered as a factor

¹⁰⁴ Michael Eccles, "Journey to Hell: Visit to Grozny.," ¹⁰⁴ Fred Weir, "Life among Grozny's Ruins," *Christian Science Monitor*, 16 December 2002. Re-printed by Ccharm. (<http://www.ccharm.org/news/article56.htm>;
Accessed on 23/8/2004)

¹⁰⁵ Thomas de Waal in Magas, "Ingush Leader's Refugee Pledge, CRS No.149, 4 October 2002. Printed by Institute of War and Peace Reporting (http://www.iwpr.net/index.pl?archive/cau/cau_200210_149_1_eng.txt;
Accessed on 19/8/2004)

indirectly contributing to poverty. However, there is no direct correlation between the availability of SALW and poverty, while such correlation does exist between the ongoing armed violence and poverty.

8.2 The level(s) at which impact is greatest, the processes and who is most affected

When it comes to poverty in Chechnya, the Chechen armed violence has had major impacts on the micro, meso and macro levels added to its noticeable effect on the regional level i.e. its impact on Ingushetia. This is due to the intensity of the conflict over a long period of time leaving an impact on all the mentioned levels. However, evidence suggests that its greatest impact has been on the micro level given the astronomical effects of the conflict on the Chechens. Out of a population of a little more than a million, about 600,000 Chechens have become IDPs residing outside of their homes in Chechnya and Ingushetia, and to a smaller extent elsewhere in Russia.

The overwhelming majority of the Chechens, including almost the entire internally displaced population, accounting for about 90 percent of the entire population, now live below the poverty line as a result of the conflict. High unemployment rates of over 85 percent, loss of a reliable source of income, loss of properties and savings and the absence of a viable economy added to a sudden disappearance of government provided services, or their inadequacy, have all contributed to a sudden and sharp decline in the living standards of the Chechens. While this has been translated into poverty for about 90 percent of the population, apart from an insignificant percentage of the population doing extremely well financially because of their illegal activities (e.g., drug trafficking), involvement in government corruption or ties with the local government and military, the rest of the population has avoided poverty, while facing an uncertain future, as the continuation of the conflict could easily force them to join the poor.

8.3 Impact on relative versus absolute poverty

The Chechens' bid for independence, which began in late 1991, and the subsequent armed conflict has put Chechnya on the course of impoverishment. In the absence of detailed information and statistics on the Chechens living in absolute and relative poverty, it is rather difficult to measure the impact of the Chechen armed violence on each category separately. Under the circumstances, at the expense of oversimplification, one could categorise as absolute poor the Chechen IDPs who have lived in tents, makeshift houses or small and crowded dwellings of their relatives outside their normal place of residence without even basic necessities. Accounting for about 600,000 people, they have lost all their properties and means of income generation. They therefore have to rely almost completely on assistance provided by the Russian authorities and international organisations/NGOs. Given about 90 percent of the Chechen population of about 1.2 million live in poverty and about 600,000 of them live in absolute poverty, about 500,000 Chechens should be considered as relatively poor since they can still live in their pre-conflict area and have some means to provide for themselves. Based on this categorisation, one could argue that the Chechen armed violence has had a more significant impact on absolute poverty by turning about half of the population into people unable to provide for their basic necessities with their own means.

8.4 Impact on inequality and on redistribution of wealth

The armed violence in Chechnya has contributed to the expansion of inequality, a salient characteristic of the post-Soviet era in all the CIS countries, including Russia. The sudden collapse of the Soviet system sharply reduced the living standards of the average salaried people accounting for the overwhelming majority of the population, thanks to the total removal or downsizing of many Soviet era's government-provided services, bonuses and subsidies to ensure the minimum necessities for everyone.

Taking advantage of their ties with the government, a very small number of Russians has benefited from the post-Soviet era to become entrepreneurs or high civil servants involved in extensive corruption. The rise of organised crime all over Russia, including in Chechnya, has also contributed to the formation of this prosperous social strata. Thus, the post-Soviet society has been a highly polarised one with a very wide inequality gap between the very rich and almost the rest of the population, given the weakness of the middle classes.

War in Chechnya has worsened this situation for the Chechens who have suffered from the mentioned inequality like other Russian citizens in addition to their suffering from the Chechen armed conflict with all the aforementioned negative economic effects. In the absence of any significant investment by non-governmental sources (foreign and domestic) due to the war, the Russian government has been the only provider of investment for Chechnya. The practical independence of the republic until 2000 when the Russian forces captured Grozny and the severity of the conflict until 2002 made Russian investment almost impossible. Such investment has since been too insignificant to have a major impact on reversing the economic situation, given the gigantic scale of the destruction. Consequently, the Russian-wide gap between the majority of the population and the political and economic elite is much wider in Chechnya.

8.5 Reversible and irreversible impacts on poverty, and why

The armed violence-created poverty in Chechnya is phenomenal and will expand should the conflict continue. However, it is not an irreversible process. The end of conflict and the achievement of a durable peace will certainly prepare grounds to reverse the poverty trend. Provided the availability of the Russian government's allocated resources, including large-scale funds, as opposed to the existing small-scale, reconstruction efforts backed by a degree of foreign assistance provided by governments, international organisations, NGOs and individuals should help revitalise the devastated Chechen economy over a 3-5 year period. A durable peace will likely encourage investments beyond that amount required for reconstruction especially because of Chechnya's oil resources and its role as a major transit route for Russian oil exports. Yet, the mentioned activities, which will certainly help reverse the poverty trend overtime, can only happen if a durable peace is in place. The achievement of the latter requires, not just the seemingly impossible uprooting of the Chechen militants once and for all as Moscow hopes to achieve, but the addressing of the root causes of the conflict and the creation of a consensus in Chechnya to make it stay within the Russian federation. Perhaps, that would demand granting it a special status as a compensation for the seemingly unachievable independence, at least in the foreseeable future. Whereas many average Chechens may be interested in peace

without achieving independence to end the current intolerable situation, there is no sign of such willingness among the Chechen militants. Nor is there any sign to indicate Moscow's interests in ending the conflict through a peace process. In fact, by rejecting talks with Aslan Maskhadov, President Putin has left war as the only option to deal with the situation. Under such circumstances, the beginning of a long-term, large-scale and sustainable effort to revitalise Chechnya's economy and thereby to reverse the poverty trend seems to be unlikely in the foreseeable future.

8.6 Relationship to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

The post-Soviet era has been characterised by a reversal of many previous achievements in addressing inequalities, including gender inequality, and providing for the basic needs of the population in terms of the essentials, namely food, healthcare, housing and education. Since 1991 all parts of Russia have been faced with malnutrition, the reappearance of many epidemics and diseases such as Diphtheria and Hepatitis A/B, homelessness and a lowering standard in the educational system. As a continuous and strengthening trend, the overall lowering of living standards all over the country has put Russia on course in the opposite direction to the achievement of the MDGs aimed, among other developmental objectives, at halving extreme poverty, the proportion of people suffering from hunger, achieving universal primary education, reducing child mortality by three quarters, combating Malaria, HIV/AIDS and other diseases and at promoting gender equality and empowering women. As a clear example in this regard, poverty, which did not exist as a major social problem in the Soviet Union, has now become a growing phenomenon in Russia. According to the World Bank, in 2004, "poverty and inequality are still major issues. Almost 30 million Russians live in poverty with children particularly at risk. Moreover, income disparities have grown over the last decade".¹⁰⁶ In Chechnya, years of devastating war have worsened the bleak situation as experienced in the whole of Russia. Thus, it will be especially difficult for the Russian government to achieve the MDGs in Chechnya. Apart from the various obstacles such as inadequate resources as experienced all over Russia, in the case of Chechnya, the continuation of the armed conflict and therefore the continuing destruction of infrastructure and a prevailing sense of insecurity are two major barriers to achieve the MDGs. Hence, so long as the armed conflict continues, the achievement of the latter by 2015 seems to be unlikely.

¹⁰⁶ The World Bank. "Country Brief: Russian Federation." The World Bank Group Home Page, 2004. (<http://www.worldbank.org/ru/ECA/Russia.nsf/ECADocByUnid/28B188763C1F4BD1C3256EA6005D8848?OpenDocument>; Accessed on 22/10/2004)

9. Implications for aid programming

9.1 The relationship between development, humanitarian aid programming and SALW programming

As a matter of principle, armed violence and SALW programming should be taken into consideration when international donors program their aid packages designed for specific recipients. However, such consideration is not applicable to the case of Russia, with the effect of denying leverage to the international donor community to push for its desired objectives towards SALW for at least three reasons. Firstly, Russia is not a major aid recipient. For the time being, the Russian government has been the main provider of assistance packages to Chechnya as part of its responsibility towards its republic, which has been translated into a small degree of reconstruction effort. There is no strong indication of a change in this field in the foreseeable future. Secondly, to be effective, any major aid package requires a predictable and, at least to a large extent, peaceful environment in the targeted areas for development programs whose realisation in the case of Chechnya seems unlikely in the near future, given the unpredictable nature of the ongoing hit-and-run type of warfare by the Chechen militants. Thirdly, in the case of Chechnya, heavy weapons have been the main source of civilian and military casualties, destruction of the rural and urban areas, including farming and manufacturing facilities, forcible displacement of the Chechens and devastation of the local economy, although SALW have also contributed to the initiation and continuation of the armed violence with the above-mentioned negative effects.

As a result, the international donor community is not in a position to use its influence to help end the ongoing armed violence in Chechnya, in general, and to achieve its desired progress with respect to SALW in Chechnya. Nevertheless, the Western countries with a significant amount of investment in and/or trade with Russia could use such economic activities of importance to Russia as a means to help end the Chechen conflict by persuading Russia to consider negotiations as a means towards that goal. The latter's prolongation has contributed, as a factor, to the availability of SALW in Russia's Caucasian republics and their neighbouring states (Azerbaijan and Georgia).