



SOFIMUN
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SECURITY COUNCIL

CHAIRPERSON:
HAYK HAKOBYAN & ISKREN CEKOV

**TOPIC: (A) – THE SITUATION IN
CHECHNYA**

BACKGROUND GUIDE





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Topic A: The situation in Chechnya - summary

With the impending collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, an independence movement, initially known as the Chechen National Congress was formed. This movement was ultimately opposed by Boris Yeltsin's Russian Federation, which argued, first, that Chechnya had not been an independent entity within the Soviet Union—as the Baltic, Central Asian, and other Caucasian states had—but was a part of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR) and hence did not have a right under the Soviet constitution to secede;

In the ensuing decade (and two regional wars: First Chechen War 1994-1996 and Second Chechen War 1999-2000) of continuous Russian armed intervention in the region, the territory was locked in an ongoing struggle between various factions, usually fighting unconventionally and forgoing the position held by the several successive Russian governments through the current administration. Various demographic factors including religious ones have continued to keep the area in a near constant state of war.

Topic A: The situation in Chechnya – background guide

History of "independent Chechnya" began as a farce. In the summer of 1991, the world learnt that some loosely defined part of the Checheno-Ingushetia had seceded from the RSFSR and the USSR and proclaimed itself an independent state called the Chechen Republic. According to a resolution of the National Congress of the Chechen People (NCCP), the supreme guiding body of that state lacking clearly defined borders was the NCCP Executive Committee chaired by retired general Dzhokhar Dudayev.

Russian forces entered Chechnya in 1994 in a bid to curb the violence and return Chechnya to a Russian republic. It soon became clear that victory was neither easy nor certain, and the death toll on both sides rose. Amid growing public outcry over rising losses in the Russian army, Moscow withdrew its forces under a 1996 peace agreement, which gave Chechnya substantial autonomy but not full independence. The Chechen chief of staff, General Aslan Maskhadov, was elected president.

However, Chechnya was in ruins and Russia failed to invest in reconstruction. General Maskhadov could not control brutal warlords who grew rich by organised crime, kidnapping and murder. In August 1999, Chechen fighters went to support a declaration by an Islamic body based in the Russian Republic of Dagestan of an independent Islamic state in parts of Dagestan and Chechnya. This body also called on all Muslims to take up arms against Russia in a holy war. President Putin and the Kremlin acted fast and in a few weeks the rebellion had been crushed.

Explosions in Russia in the same year saw President Putin send troops back into Chechnya to bring the country into line. The Kremlin maintains its victory, but the problem continues.

The Kremlin called a referendum in March 2003, which approved a new constitution giving Chechnya more independence but specifying that it remained a part of Russia. Moscow ruled out participation by the armed opposition and there were widespread concerns that the instability of the republic would affect the validity of the constitution.



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Brought to their knees after years of war, Chechens have temporarily accepted Russian rule. The Chechen attempt to achieve independence is not over. Nationalists are still convinced about the righteousness of their cause and are unwilling to submit to Moscow. Islamists have engaged in scores of anti-Russian terrorist acts and have aligned themselves with the most extremist elements in the Muslim world. The region will not know peace for a long time and extremism, nationalism and Islamism are likely to grow and prosper in Chechnya and the rest of the Caucasus.

During the entire conflict the international community's response was either very modest or not at all present. Possible lasting peace and prosperity might be achieved by increasing participation and co-operation of the international community with Russian and Chechen governments to provide an economic incentive package for peace in Chechnya and appeasement of separatist elements in the region.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

Moscow perceives the killing of fugitive rebel leader and former Chechen president Aslan Maskhadov in March 2005 as an important step in the right direction, accusing him of national and international terrorism. Others point to Mr Maskhadov's repeated condemnation of attacks on civilian targets. There are concerns that current pro-Russian president Alu Alkhanov will not have the strength to hold the country together, despite his calls for peaceful democracy.

Chechen separatist terrorism in Russia has recently come to the forefront of the international media. In October 2002, Chechen rebels held 800 hostages in a Moscow theatre. Most of the rebels and 120 hostages were killed when the Russian forces stormed the theatre. In September 2004 hundreds were killed or wounded - many of them children - during the siege at a school in Beslan, North Ossetia. These come on top of regular bombing campaigns and suicide attacks.

President Putin's reaction to these deplorable acts of terrorism has always been with force. Many have questioned his hard line with Chechnya, and there have been reports of human rights abuses by both sides in Chechnya. The European Court of Human Rights has ruled that Russia committed serious abuses, including torture and extra-judicial killing, in Chechnya. The unanimous ruling came after the court heard claims brought by six Chechens. Russia has accused the West of hypocrisy and double standards in its criticism of Russia's conduct in Chechnya.

However, Mr Putin maintains that it is not Chechen terrorism against which he is battling, but Islamic fundamentalist terrorism. The Kremlin is quick to remind critics that Islamic Shari'ah law and courts were introduced during Maskhadov's time in power, and that the most violent attacks on Russia have been made by those rebels, led by Shamil Basayev, adhering to the radical Wahhabi sect of Islam. It is thought that the rebels have close links with al'Qaeda.

OIL

As you know, oil is one of the major driving forces in today's world. A major oil pipeline carries oil from fields in Baku on the Caspian Sea and Chechnya toward the Ukraine. Grozny has a major oil refinery along this pipeline. However, there are various pipelines in discussion that does not involve Russia.

There are accusations that external (Western) forces have been used to promote and help destabilize the region, to promote succession to ensure a split from Russia. This would allow them



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to benefit from a smaller, weaker nation (if Chechnya is successful) that will also make it easier for the West to ensure the resources they want can be further controlled. It has also been suggested that Islamic extremist terrorist groups such as Al Quaeda and others have been involved in some aspects of the Chechen war, and earlier, when such terrorist groups were supported by the west to destabilize the former Soviet Union.

FUTURE PROSPECTS

It would seem that the Chechen opposition is fractious and its support amongst the general population has seriously diminished. The Chechens want a stable government and a stable region with autonomy. The Russians want a stable region under Russian rule. The existence of a large oil pipe running through Dagestan gives Russia the incentive to stabilise the region, but also the incentive to control it.

Before a stable government can be established in Chechnya, the violence must be curbed. President Putin has insisted that he will not negotiate with terrorists; therefore it is imperative that we find the means to implement a ceasefire at the very least. This, delegates, I leave in your very capable hands.



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Suggested Reading and Additional Sources

Topic A: The situation in Chechnya

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