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## CHECHNYA AND THE NORTH CAUCASUS

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## Analysis

# The North Caucasus after the Georgia-Russia Conflict

By Stacy Closson, Berlin

## Abstract

Russia's military action against Georgia and its recognition of the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia may have strengthened calls for independence by groups within some of the North Caucasus republics and further undermined the stability of an already troubled region. Most importantly, the fighting in Georgia has activated the trade flows of arms and fighters between the North and South Caucasus, increasing the potential for conflict in both places. Since the war, Russia has faced levels of violence on its own territory not seen since the last Chechen war.

## North-South Caucasus Ties

Prime Minister Vladimir Putin argued that Russia's August military action in Georgia was aimed in part at quelling instability in the Russian republics of the North Caucasus in a mid-September meeting with the Valdai Discussion Club – a collection of academics from around the world. He stated that, "certain non-governmental organizations in certain republics" had "raised the question of separation from Russia under the pretext of the lack of protection given to South Ossetia." That is, the Russian military incursion into Georgia was necessary, in part, to quell calls for independence from some of the seven North Caucasus republics. Putin did not mention from which republics these calls emanated: Adygea, Dagestan, Ingushetia, Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachaevo-Cherkessia, North Ossetia-Alania, or Chechnya.

Russian officials provide different measures of the seriousness of the situation in the North Caucasus. Putin's spokesman, Dmitry Peskov, confirmed that despite the government's recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Russia stood behind the principle of territorial integrity. He said that while there were some separatists and extremists in the North Caucasus, their activities were not significant and suggested that their calls for independence did not warrant consideration. At the same time, the commander of Russia's Interior Troops, General Nikolai Rogozin, reported that up to 500 militants were currently active in the North Caucasus and Russia had 30,000 troops stationed in the region. These forces conducted over 2,000 operations and killed 50 militants in 2007, and even more in 2008.

The aftermath of the Georgia-Russia conflict and the recognition of South Ossetia and Abkhazia as independent states present a major challenge for ensuring stability across the Caucasus. Most important is the extent to which relations between the North and South Caucasus will affect the levels of militarization.

During the Georgian war, some North Caucasian republics sent military aid and fighters into Abkhazia and South Ossetia ultimately establishing themselves as semi-autonomous actors in the broader Caucasian theatre of conflict, posing a potential threat to Russian interests in the future.

## Fighters and Arms

A major challenge facing Russia is how the ties formed among groups in the North and South Caucasus as a result of the August conflict will affect regional stability. There is a direct historical correlation between heightened activities in the North and South Caucasus and an increase in transfers of fighters and weapons across the region. During the Chechen wars of the 1990s, there was a lucrative trade of arms across the region and Georgians played an active intermediary role between Russian and Chechen businessmen. Dmitry Butrin, Chief of the Economic Policy Desk at Kommersant, reported that the recent conflict between Russia and Georgia will once again fuel a breeding ground for lucrative sales of military weaponry by the security services that dominate North and South Ossetia. Just in the past two months, large weapons caches, as well as an anti-air missile defense system of foreign origin, have been discovered by Russian forces in Chechnya.

Prior to the August conflict, informal trade had weakened as a result of periodic disruptions to the north-south corridor across the Georgian border since 2004. The disruptions came in part because of the reform efforts of the Saakashvili government to strengthen border and customs regimes, and the closure of informal trading markets on the de facto Georgia/Ossetian-Abkhazian borders. It was also due to Russian sanctions imposed in 2005 on goods and travel from Georgia. Moreover, in spring 2008 after the Russian government officially lifted a 1996 embargo on Abkhazia and South Ossetia and provided development assistance,

including repairing a railroad connection from Russia through Abkhazia, economic relations in these regions was re-oriented north.

This south-north trade began to reverse direction in the lead up to the August conflict, when the informal arms transfers increased in proportion to the movement of “volunteers” from the north into Georgia. The Black Sea Press in May 2008 reported warnings from South Ossetia’s *de facto* President Eduard Kokoity that an alliance with the North Caucasus was needed to prevent genocide against his people. Georgian television showed that the Confederation of the Peoples of the North Caucasus was preparing to support Abkhazia in the case of a conflict with Georgia. In the first week of May, 700 soldiers were re-deployed from Khankala military base in Chechnya to Abkhazia. Units from the North Caucasus were already serving as peacekeepers in the Gali region of eastern Abkhazia. Then in June the Russian news agency Regnum reported that Russian Cossacks from Karachaevo-Cherkessia were preparing to serve on the border between Abkhazia and Georgia. There were even accusations in the Georgian press that it was the Chechens who were responsible for a series of attacks in Abkhazia during July, supposedly as part of a provocation to Georgian military action.

During the August conflict, the North Caucasus groups divided their sympathies based on co-ethnic ties, relations with Georgia, and degree of allegiance towards Russia. The populations also sometimes differed from their leadership. For example, the Chechens and Ingush sympathized with Georgia, but their leaders came out very publicly against Saakashvili’s “invasion” of South Ossetia. The Chechen rebel leader Umarov criticized Russia and appealed to the Caucasus peoples not to get involved in the conflict. Nevertheless, as with the war in Abkhazia in the early 1990s, several thousand Chechen troops served as border guards along the Abkhaz and Ossetian border. Chechens also helped the Abkhaz to clear out the Georgian-government-backed Abkhaz government-in-exile from the Kodori gorge in upper Abkhazia. Chechens from the Vostok battalion fought in South Ossetia, reportedly both propelling the Georgians out of Tskhinvali, as well as saving many Georgian civilians from revenge attacks by Ossetians and Russians. There were unconfirmed reports that Chechens may have fought with the Georgians, related to more unconfirmed reports that Chechen rebels were still seeking safe haven in Georgia’s northern Pankisi gorge. In an interview, Chechen President Kadyrov admitted that he was not in command of the over 17,000 volunteers eager to fight in Georgia.

Groups of fighters from the other republics, on the other hand, were united with their governments in supporting Russia and the Ossetians. The Adygea and Cherkess formed groups of fighters and, alongside Chechens, participated in removing the Abkhaz government-in-exile from the Kodori gorge. They also temporarily patrolled Georgian villages in the Gali region of Abkhazia. A unit of Cossack volunteers was present in Sukhumi during the war and pledged their solidarity with the Abkhaz should Georgia try to invade. Another Cossack unit was apparently fighting around Gori, Georgia. Likewise, the North Ossetians stood by their brethren in South Ossetia, providing shelter for refugees and even soldiers to fight alongside the Russians. North Ossetia continued to act as the *de facto* fourth actor in the South Ossetian conflict, along with Russia, Georgia, and the South Ossetians, as a member of the Joint Control Commission, responsible for conflict resolution and peacekeeping operations in the South. At the same time, the North Ossetians had trained the South’s military and provided leadership and arms in the lead up to the conflict.

The Dagestan government was the only republic to remain neutral, pre-occupied with violent clashes on its territory and border problems with Azerbaijan. For some Dagestanis, it was disturbing that the Vostok battalion fighting in and around Tskhinvali and Gori was headed by a wanted man who allegedly had killed their Dagestani kin in a Chechen village in June 2005. Dagestan is viewed as the most troubled area in the North Caucasus at the moment. It serves as a major transit route for drugs and weapons from Central Asia through the North Caucasus and westward to the Black Sea. This corridor became even more lucrative after Afghanistan increased heroin production and demand for weapons grew in the Caucasus. The Dagestani-Azeri border has been the scene of regular incursions with both sides accusing the other of inciting violence. The Lezgin Sadval movement, which aspires to its own territorial autonomy on land that is now partly in Dagestan and partly in Azerbaijan, comprises a combined population more than twice that of the Abkhaz in Abkhazia. Since August, Azeri and Russian security forces have been conducting counter insurgency operations in the border region against alleged Dagestani militants.

### **Russia’s Unresolved Conflict: Prigorodniy Region**

The increase in the flow of arms and fighters across the region could increase the chances of conflict between Ossetia and Ingushetia. Up until last month, the South

Ossetian leadership had persistently stated that it wanted accession to the Russian Federation through unification with North Ossetia, the most prosperous republic in the North Caucasus. However, this desire clashed with the aspirations of the Ingush, who were displaced from their homes in North Ossetia's Prigorodniy district in 1992 during a brief but violent conflict with the Ossetians. In 1924 Vladikavkaz was divided into two by the Soviets and shared by the Ingush and Ossetians, but by 1994 Vladikavkaz and the Prigorodniy district were under the jurisdiction of North Ossetia. In spring 2006, the Russian closure to the Ingush of a historical site in Ossetia only increased their sense of injustice. Hampering the Ingush's ability to return home have been waves of South Ossetian and Chechen war refugees into North Ossetia in the early- to mid-1990s, occupying Ingush property. The latest move north of several thousand South Ossetian refugees during the Georgia-Russia conflict has reignited tensions. It is unclear if this has been a factor in *de facto* South Ossetian President Kokoity's recent change in policy from uniting with North Ossetia in the near-term.

Meanwhile, events inside Ingushetia increasingly pit society against the state. As Russia was fighting a war in Georgia, Magomet Yevloyev, the owner of the Ingushetiya.ru website, a critical news source on regional events, was murdered. He was shot dead in a police car after sharing an airplane with Ingush leader Murat Zyazikov, during which they allegedly sparred. For concerned Ingush, this was confirmation that the already highly unpopular Kremlin-appointed head of the republic, who oversaw a violent police state, was unfit to govern. Peace Human Rights Organization in Ingushetia had regularly protested against the power wielding structures and security services in the republic, whose internecine warfare had turned the republic into a low-scale conflict zone of attacks, shelling, abductions, and shootings. Another humanitarian organization, Human Rights Watch, reported in June 2008 that attacks in Ingushetia were reaching levels experienced in Chechnya over the past decade. This is doubly alarming given that there are only about 300,000 people living in Ingushetia as compared to more than a million in Chechnya.

Following Yevloyev's murder, the Ingush opposition appealed to the Secretary General of the United Nations and several western organizations to recognize their independence. In their appeal, they referenced the 1992 war and the most egregious acts of "genocide" carried out by Russian security services and "representatives of the illegal armed formations of South Ossetia".

Three months later, Putin removed Zyazikov and replaced him with Army Colonel Yunus-Bek Yevkurov. The new leader declared his two missions as suppressing armed underground opposition and curtailing the abuse unleashed on the population by the federal security units. He has also promised to help thousands of displaced Ingush from the Prigorodniy district return to their homes in what is now North Ossetia. The methods Yevkurov uses to implement his goals, combined with whether the Ingush deem their grievances addressed in relation to the Ossetians, will in a large part determine the future levels of violence. Meanwhile, Chechen President Kadyrov has hinted at a possible unification of Ingushetia and Chechnya.

### What Future for the North Caucasus?

It is clear that the Georgia-Russia conflict and the recognition of South Ossetia and Abkhazia as independent states present challenges for ensuring stability across the Caucasus. Their recognition has spurred nascent movements for independence in Ingushetia and increased calls for the return of displaced Ingush to their lands in the Prigorodniy district, now in North Ossetia. The August conflict has also increased trafficking corridors of fighters and arms across the Russia-Georgia border and heightened levels of violence across the region not seen since the last Chechen war. Attacks on Russian military units since October have resulted in over 40 servicemen killed and equal numbers wounded. Increased trade in arms and the movement of fighters could ignite another war within the North Caucasus republics or between North Caucasus rebel groups and Georgian forces.

However, next time some of the North Caucasus rebel groups may join the Georgians. This fall Movladi Udugov, the envoy of the Chechen rebels' top field commanders referenced an April 2008 meeting in which they discussed various options in the case of a Georgia-Russia conflict. He called the Caucasus squads fighting in South Ossetia in August "puppet formations" of the North Caucasian republics' "pro-Moscow regimes." In a longer battle, the Chechen separatists have anticipated a situation in which the Georgian government would appeal to them for military support. Were this to happen, they estimate that the insurgency in the North Caucasus could gain recognition as a political force.

To date, the international community has had a minimal role in affecting developments in the North Caucasus republics. The European bodies which formerly expressed regular concerns about human rights abuses in the republics in the 1990s grew more circum-

spect after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, when the previously reviled operations by Russian security services were re-categorized as part of an anti-Islamic terrorism campaign. The European Court of Human Rights has heard dozens of cases about Russian soldiers' abuses of Chechens, but it does not seem to have stemmed the violence either there or in Ingushetia and Dagestan. This past July, Prime Minister Putin terminated tax exemption benefits granted to most foreign non-governmental organizations (NGOs) operat-

ing in Russia. As a result, western NGOs, following the example of the United Nations, are leaving Chechnya, depriving the West of its primary source of information in the region. Meanwhile, foreign journalists can not travel un-chaperoned and those local journalists who investigate the inner workings of the republics are harassed, accused of being "Islamist sympathizers," or killed, with the most famous case being the murder of Anna Politkovskaya in 2006.

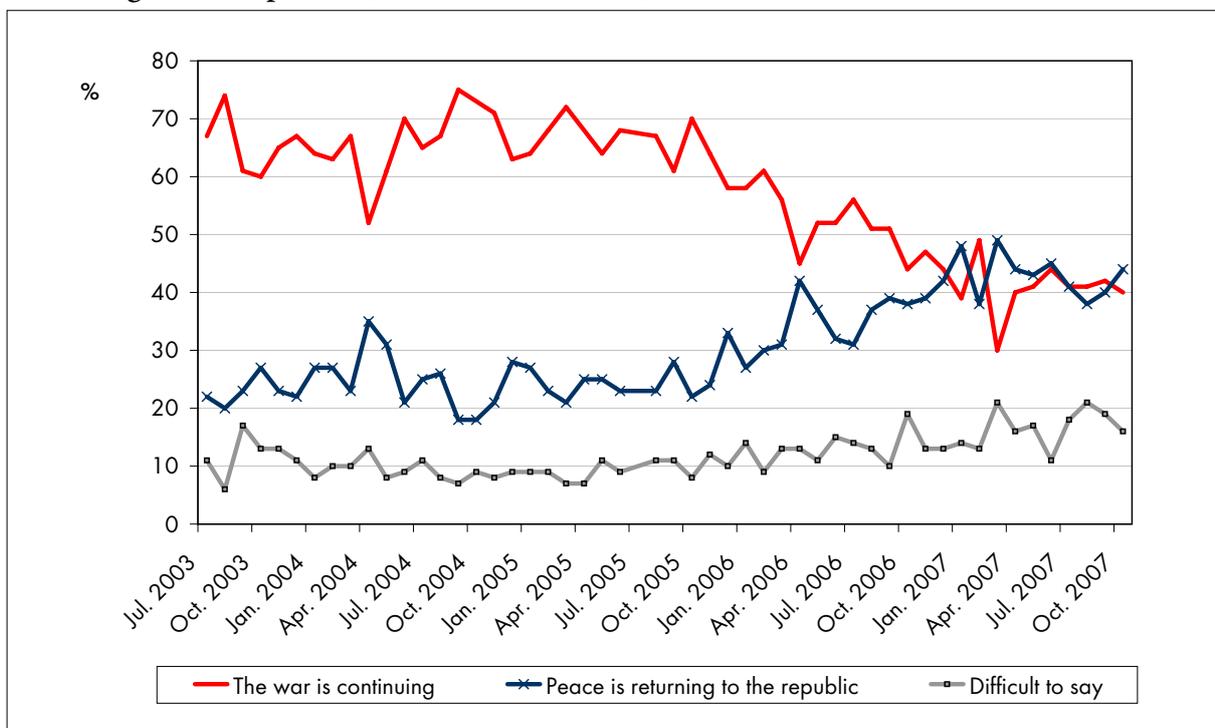
*About the author:*

Dr. Stacy Closson is a Trans-Atlantic Post-Doctoral Fellow for International Relations and Security (TAPIR) at the Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (the German Institute for International and Security Affairs) in Berlin.

**Opinion Poll**

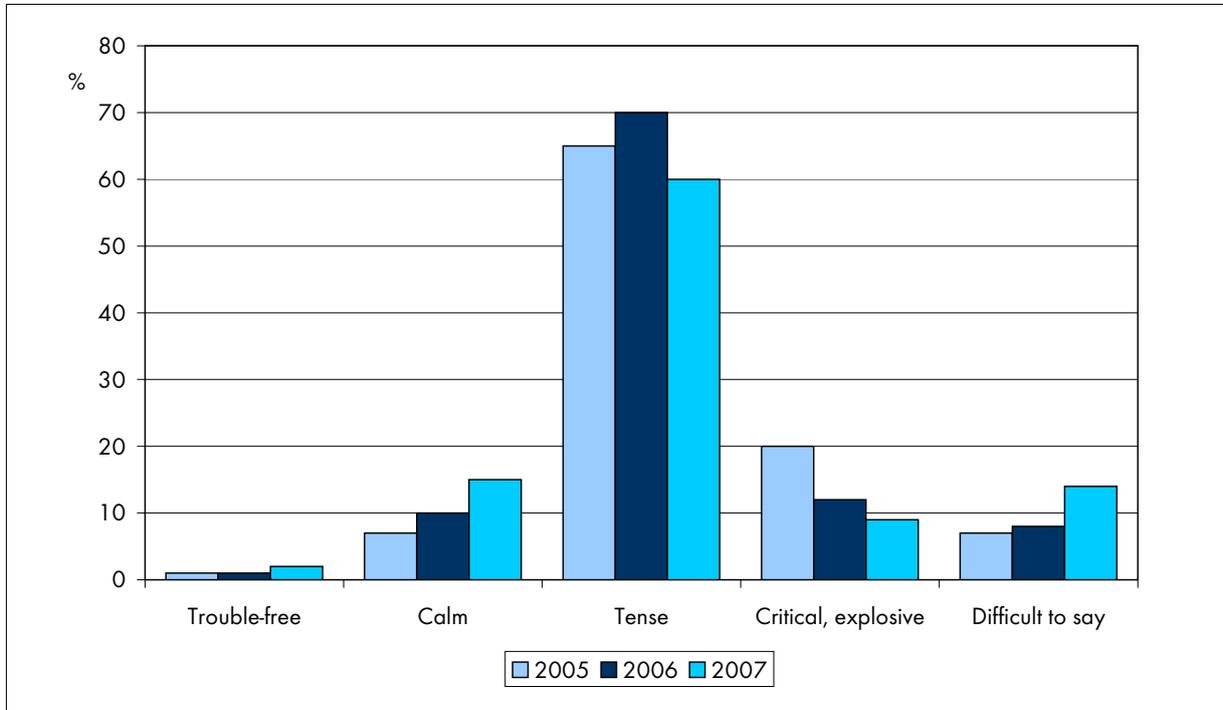
**Russian Public Opinion on the Conflict in the North Caucasus**

What Do You Think Is Happening in Chechnya – Is the War Continuing Or Is Peace Returning to the Republic? (Levada, 2003 – 2007)



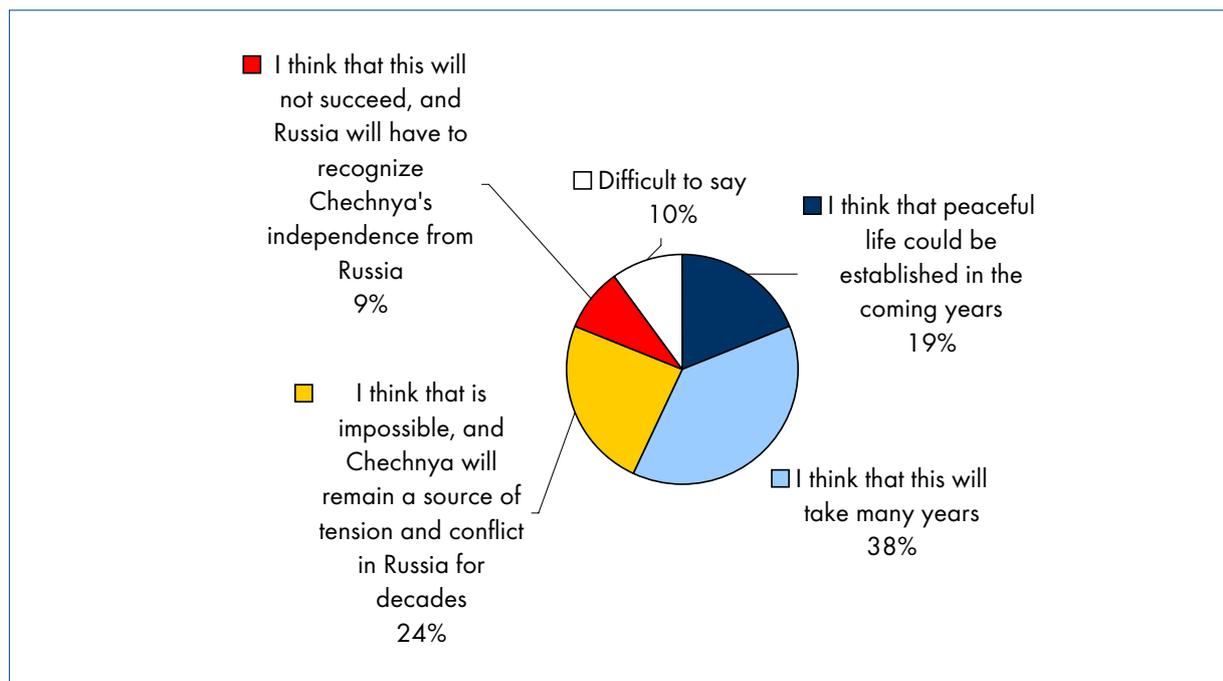
Source: <http://www.levada.ru/tabl03.html>, October 2007

**How Would You Regard the Situation in the North Caucasus in General? (Levada, 2005 – 2007)**



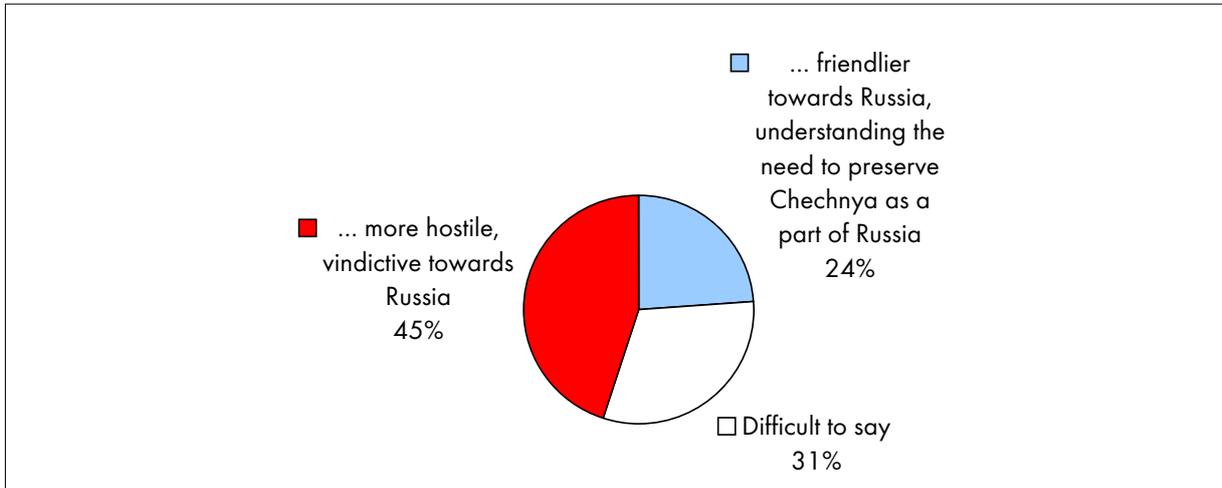
Source: <http://www.levada.ru./press/2007082204.html,%2023.%20August%202007>, August 2007

**Will the Russian Authorities Finally Manage to Improve the Situation in Chechnya and Provide Order and Peaceful Life? (Levada, 2007)**



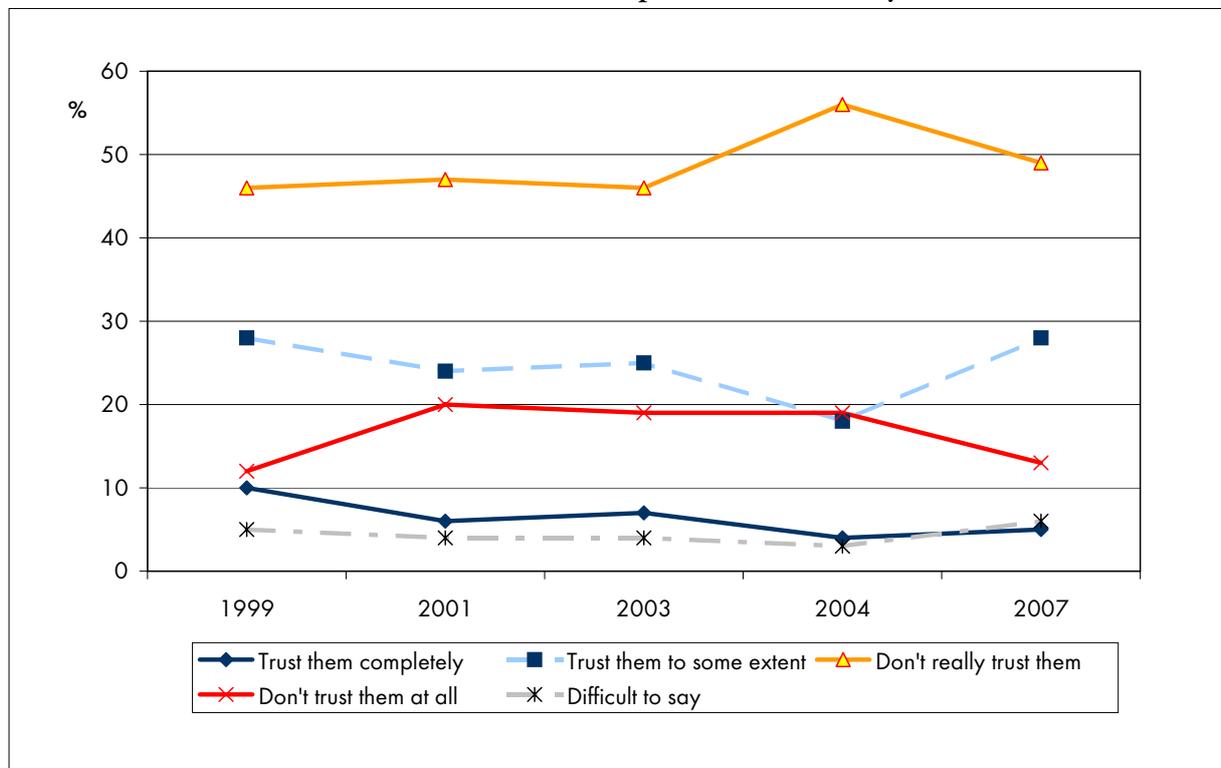
Source: <http://www.levada.ru./press/2007112901.html,%2030.%20November%202007>, November 2007

The Next Generation of Chechens (Who Are Now 10–12 years Old) Will Be ... (Levada, 2007)



Source: <http://www.levada.ru/press/2007112901.html>, November 2007

To What Extent Do You Trust Russian Media Reports From Chechnya? (Levada, 1999 – 2007)

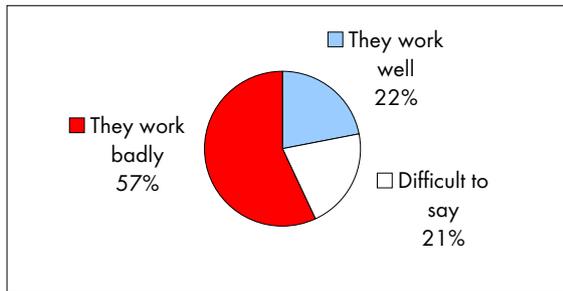


Source: <http://www.levada.ru/press/2007082202.html>, August 2007

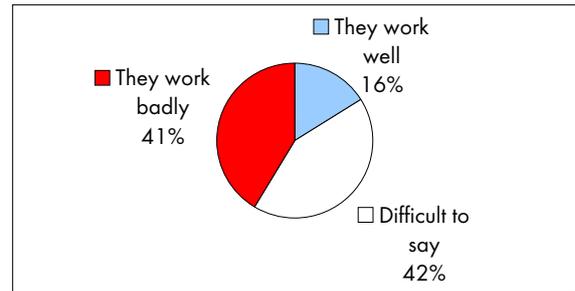
## Views of Inhabitants of Dagestan on the State of Affairs in Their Republic

As a Resident of the Republic of Dagestan Are You Satisfied or Not With the Work of:

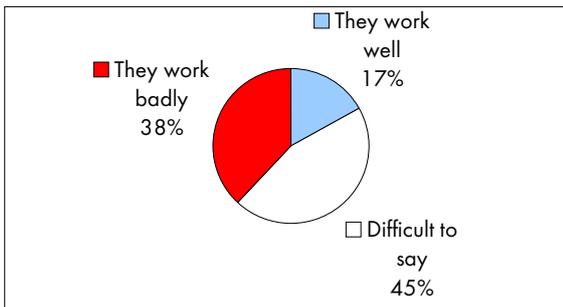
### Police



### Courts at Different Levels

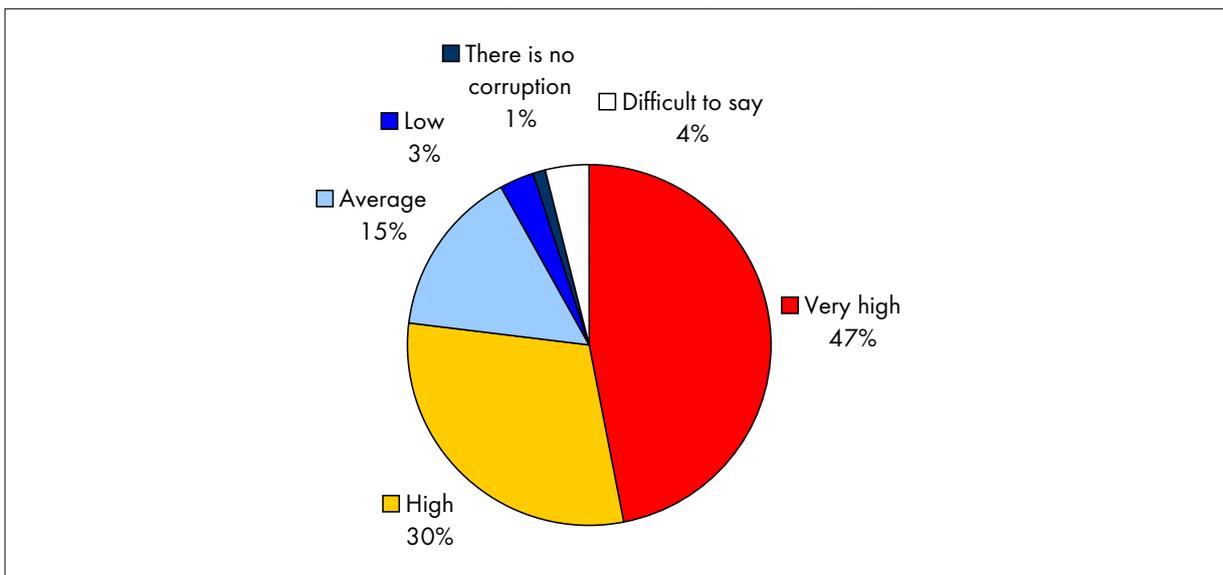


### the Officials of the Government of Dagestan Responsible for the Economy



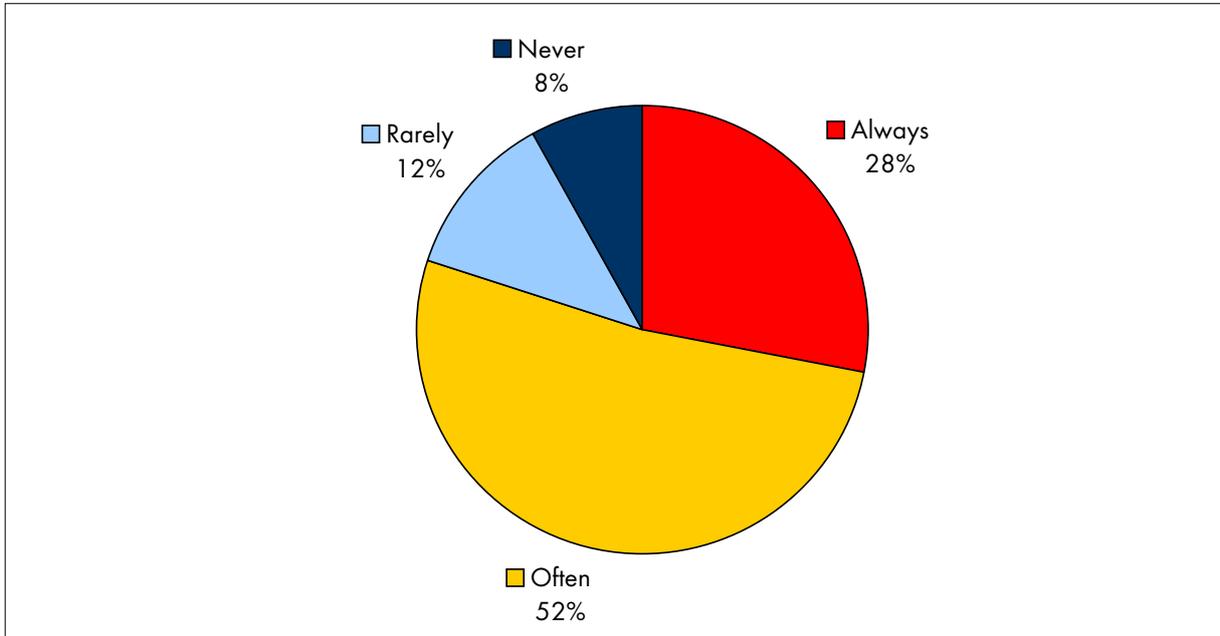
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September 2008

## How Do You Assess the Level of Corruption in the Republic of Dagestan? (VTsIOM, 2008)



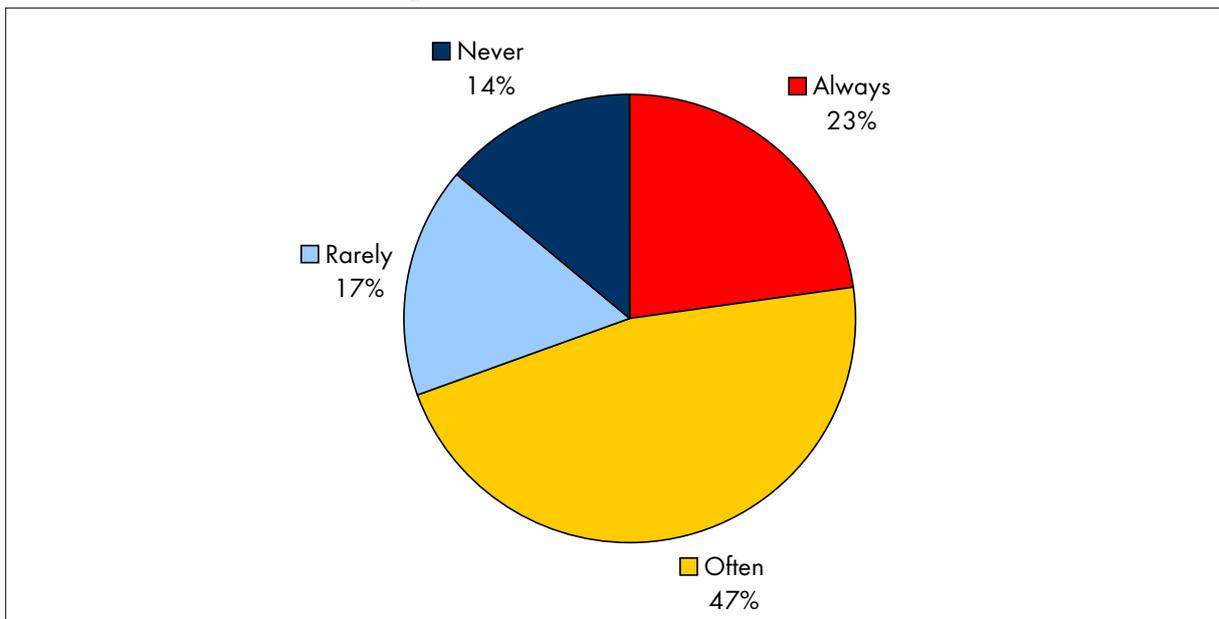
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Have You Ever Encountered Corrupt Practices in Public Authorities? (VTsIOM, 2008)



Source: [http://wciom.ru/arkhiv/tematicheskii-arkhiv/item/single/10703.html?no\\_cache=1&cHash=1d152c4320](http://wciom.ru/arkhiv/tematicheskii-arkhiv/item/single/10703.html?no_cache=1&cHash=1d152c4320), September 2008

Have You Ever Encountered Nepotism in Public Authorities? (VTsIOM, 2008)



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Data for the graphs compiled and translated by Katerina Malygina.

## Analysis

# War and Peace in Chechnya: The Role of Ramzan Kadyrov

By Laurent Vinatier, Paris

## Abstract

The Chechen war is over, but the peace within the republic remains fragile. Then Russian President Vladimir Putin appointed Ramzan Kadyrov president of Chechnya in March 2007 and he now concentrates vast powers in his hands, making all the important political decisions, controlling the financial flows from Moscow, and ruling over a large number of security forces loyal to him. The situation in Chechnya has greatly improved over the past two or three years, but the challenges to establish an effective peace remain. Kadyrov did not manage to completely eliminate the old guerilla resistance, which is still able to carry out attacks against Russian and pro-Kadyrov forces. Also, there is a danger that the simmering clan struggles within the republic could intensify and erupt into open conflict. Violence might occur if, for example, Moscow decided to shift its support to a leader other than Kadyrov, which might ultimately result in changes to the power configuration within the republic.

## The Rise of Kadyrov

Irony abounds in today's Chechnya. President Ramzan Kadyrov governs the Chechen Republic with a high degree of autonomy from Moscow. Kadyrov, who was appointed president by the Kremlin in March 2007, has great discretion over the funds he receives from Moscow, and although Moscow still has tens of thousands of troops stationed in Chechnya and the North Caucasus region, it is Kadyrov's forces that control the streets and provide security. In a manner that causes great discomfort in Moscow, the current state of affairs resembles the situation in Chechnya during the time of its de facto independence from Russia under Dzhokhar Dudayev (1992–96) and Aslan Maskhadov (1997–99). After two bloody wars, Chechnya still enjoys a degree of autonomy that is unparalleled in the context of the Russian Federation. Of course, the comparison with the 1990s is not correct insofar as the situation inside Chechnya is not one of open warfare and the socioeconomic situation has vastly improved. Still, the question remains whether Ramzan Kadyrov is the right man to bring lasting peace to Chechnya, and whether Chechnya's arrangement with Russia can hold.

Ramzan Kadyrov is the son of the late Chechen president Akhmad Kadyrov, who was assassinated in May 2004. During the first Chechen war (1994–96), Ramzan Kadyrov fought against the Russian forces. The Kadyrov clan later defected to Moscow and in the second Chechen war, beginning in 1999, he fought alongside Russian troops against Chechen rebels. After the death of his father, Ramzan became deputy prime minister and later acting prime minister of the Chechen Republic. As soon as he turned 30, and thus was old enough to be eligible for the post of president accord-

ing to the new Chechen constitution, the Kremlin appointed him president – an act which the Chechen parliament approved.

Kadyrov carries out what Moscow calls the process of “Chechenization.” First and foremost, Chechen forces provide security within the republic in the place of Russian federal troops. Likewise, the Chechen state is building up the capacity to be able to carry out essential political, economic and social functions. Russia basically agreed to provide money and political support, but wants to reduce to a minimum its direct involvement in Chechnya, as well as its military presence on the ground. It remains to be seen whether this strategy, which is essentially focused on the person of Ramzan Kadyrov, proves successful. There have been substantial improvements in the economic and sociopolitical life in Chechnya, but anyone following events on a daily basis knows that the conflict in Chechnya is not entirely over. The old guerilla resistance has not disappeared. Rivalries among different Chechen clans remain virulent and have the potential to turn into conflict. This article describes these different problems, underscoring how they greatly complicate the chances for a sustainable peace.

## Economic Revival

Russia only began to undertake serious efforts to improve daily life in Chechnya in 2004. Before then, Moscow's only real objective was to crush the Chechen guerilla forces. The turning point, it seems, came after the Beslan tragedy in September of that year, when the Russian authorities became increasingly aware of the necessity of giving the people in the troubled North Caucasus hope for a better future through improved

living conditions. Russia increased financial help substantially and tried to make sure that the federal funds allocated to the republic actually reached their destination.

By 2008, the situation in Chechnya had improved considerably. Large scale stabilization projects are currently under way in the economic and social spheres. Kadyrov distributes and supervises the federal funds and other resources issued for reconstructing the republic, such as the compensation payments for those who lost their property during the wars. He thus benefits from the important financial assistance flowing from Moscow, which amounted to some 20 billion Russian rubles (roughly \$740 million) in 2006, according to First Deputy Chairman of the Chechen Government Odes Baisultanov. He also manages additional money flows related to local oil and petroleum product concerns and the construction and transport businesses, which are channeled through the Akhmed Kadyrov Fund without transparency. There is no public information on the amount of money these sources generate. Another source of income is from taxes. Recently, the Chechen government obtained the right to control a proportion of its domestic tax revenues, which amount to not more than 500 million rubles annually (\$18.5 million). In July 2008, the Russian Federal government approved the Federal Targeted Program "Socio-economic Development of the Chechen Republic for 2008–2011," the total funding of which amounts to about 120 billion rubles (\$4.4 billion).

Given that his political survival greatly depends on support from Moscow and also because he wants to remain popular among the Chechen population, Kadyrov is keen to appear as the guarantor of political and economic stability. He launched a battle against corruption in order to make the allocation of funds more efficient, an area where Kadyrov seems to have had some real success. The bazaars are again functioning, offering a large variety of goods, from vegetables to mobile phones. Since 2005, electricity, gas, and water have been restored, at least in the center of Grozny. Buildings are being reconstructed at great speed, including, of course, official ones.

Nevertheless, while foreign observers agree that life in Chechnya is slowly returning to normal and living conditions have greatly improved, serious problems remain. The unemployment rate, for example, remains an extremely high 70 percent. Many people survive only thanks to a thriving black market and because of strong family support.

### From Large Scale War to Low Scale Conflict

During the last four years, there has been no large scale conflict in Chechnya. Nevertheless, the rebels, reduced to a few fighting units organized under the leadership of Doku Umarov, are still active and carry out deadly attacks. In October 2008, for example, there have been 13 attacks reported on the Russian forces and their local allies in Chechnya: 18 servicemen have allegedly been killed, and another 14 wounded, according to independent Chechen press agencies (notably *Kavkazki Uzel*). Fighting the guerillas is difficult since the conflict long ago spread to other republics in the North Caucasus and is not confined within the borders of Chechnya any more. For example, during the same month, in Ingushetia, militants launched at least 29 attacks on the Russian Army and local police, killing 15 people and seriously wounding 16. Nine attacks were reported in Dagestan in which seven people were killed, and two attacks occurred in Kabardino-Balkaria. Even in Karachaevo-Cherkessia, a relatively quiet part of the North Caucasus, there was a gunfight on October 2 between a group of local militants and security forces.

It would be an exaggeration to attribute the improvement in Chechnya to Ramzan Kadyrov alone. Certainly, the Russian army presence and the spread of the conflict to other republics helped to improve the security situation in Chechnya. But Kadyrov's role was nevertheless crucial. The economic and social renewal makes the separatist groups in the mountains less attractive for the young generation. Corruption and nepotism did not disappear, but the possibilities offered by the Chechen government in education, administration and business-related areas (such as reconstruction) offer real opportunities to rising cohorts. Additionally, arbitrary arrests and police pressure are declining. Individuals now feel more secure, proving that the Chechen security forces under Kadyrov's direct control are more effective and better behaved. There is a clear contrast with the first years of the second conflict, when the Chechen people suffered terrible abuses by Russian soldiers and pro-Russian Chechen militias. Given the extensive unemployment, there are still numerous potentially discontent young people, but the number of volunteers for *Jihad* is not as high as it was in previous years.

Kadyrov is restoring his authority through economic reconstruction and enhancing overall security. Yet a sustainable peace can only be reached if there is a solution to the problem of fundamentalist and radical tendencies within Islam, which manifests itself in its most extreme form in the militant units operating from bas-

es in the mountains of Chechnya. Kadyrov needs to win the battle against Chechen militants, but in order to win broader support among the population, he also needs to find a way to reach a political solution to the Islamist question in Chechnya, which would ultimately strengthen his legitimacy as the ruler of Chechnya.

### The Problem of Insurgency

Despite significant losses in the ranks of the Chechen separatist movement in recent years (the last major setback was the killing of Shamil Basayev in June 2006, who was the most respected, but also most notorious, leader of the Chechen military wing), Chechen rebels are still carrying out attacks on Russian and pro-Russian Chechen forces on a regular, almost daily basis. One of the most spectacular attacks occurred on October 19, when a troop column was ambushed in Ingush territory, near the border with Chechnya. Unconfirmed reports claimed that in the subsequent clashes, some 50 Russian soldiers were killed, whereas the Russian military only acknowledged three deaths. A few days before, fighters carried out a series of audacious acts, including the occupation of two foothill settlements – Muzhichi and Yandare – sizeable villages, with populations of more than 1,000 and 10,000, respectively.

According to Internet sources maintained by groups close to Chechen or North Caucasus rebels, these attacks were coordinated by the pseudonymous Emir Magas (probably the Ingush Akhmed Yevloev). Magas is said to have replaced Shamil Basayev as the top military emir of the Caucasus insurgency. It is believed that Magas acts in close coordination with Doku Umarov, the political leader of the Chechen rebels and the heir to Aslan Maskhadov. Although the structure of the North Caucasus rebel network is somewhat unclear, it seems that Doku Umarov represents the nodal point for an insurgency that is today mostly active on the territories of Chechnya, Ingushetia, Dagestan, Kabardino-Balkaria, and sporadically also Karachaevo-Cherkessia and North Ossetia, where at the beginning of November 2008, a bomb exploded in the center of Vladikavkaz. Umarov's coordination capacity among all groups in the volatile North Caucasus region is growing largely thanks to his control over external financial support channels. The possibility remains of greater instability in the North Caucasus, starting from Chechnya and developing in Ingushetia.

### The Problem of Legitimacy

Kadyrov's main problem is that his presidency and his power originate in the Kremlin. In order to stabilize

this power, Kadyrov built a system of fear through his security services. Thus, although his popularity has increased due to visible economic and social stabilization efforts, his legitimacy hardly derives from the "classical" Weberian sources of charisma, tradition, or legality/rationality. None of these elements characterize Ramzan Kadyrov's rule. Young when he came to power, he never demonstrated any specific knowledge of religious or military affairs; nor does he embody particular Chechen customs. He cannot thus be considered a traditional leader. He grew up in the shadow of his father and did not show any particular bravery as a military commander, thus he lacks the charismatic aura that comes with being a war hero. Lastly, none of the electoral processes during his time in power can be called democratic. Outside observers declared the November 2005 and the October 2008 parliamentary elections to be neither free nor fair. Accordingly, Kadyrov was not only appointed by the Russian president, he was also confirmed in this position by a Chechen parliament that was not democratically elected.

Kadyrov thus finds himself in a dangerous situation. As long as he has to rely on his security forces to maintain peace and control opposing clans and parties, disenfranchised youth will join the ranks of radical Islamist groups. Interestingly, the same phenomenon is evident also in other North Caucasus republics, where power is concentrated in the hands of a few. Joining the rebels is a way to protect oneself against the regime, and, if necessary, to die an "honorable" death. In a situation where the law is used arbitrarily and serves the interests of those in power, people have to play by the same rules or take measures to fight and protect themselves.

This is exactly what recently led to the clash between President Kadyrov and the Yamadaev brothers – Ruslan and Sulim. The former is an ex-member of Russia's State Duma, the latter a high-ranking colonel in the Russian army and former commander of the "Vostok Battalion", which is officially under the jurisdiction of Russia's Ministry of Defense. In September 2008, Ruslan Yamadaev was assassinated in his car in Moscow and the killer has yet to be identified. A few weeks later, Sulim Yamadaev, who had sworn to find his brother's killer and avenge him, saw his Vostok battalion officially dissolved and was being removed to another high-level military position in Rostov, several hundred kilometers away from Grozny. The fate of the Yamadaevs are obvious sources of future conflict and considerably undermine the long-term authority of the Chechen president whom many believe is behind the killing of Ruslan and the removal of Sulim.

### Conditions for a Sustainable Peace

There is no doubt that Ramzan Kadyrov has successfully managed to bolster his domestic power position. After making economic and social improvements, he is now trying to build up his legitimacy by reviving traditional Islam and Sufism in Chechnya, thereby also counter-acting other Islamic tendencies imposed from outside (usually called “Wahhabism”). Kayrov’s priority is to appear as a local ruler with his own local bases of power, as opposed to a Russian puppet. He has had some successes with this project, but they have not been sufficient to build a durable peace in Chechnya.

Sooner or later, the Kremlin will have to allow free and fair elections, and he will also have to involve separatist leaders from abroad or even from Chechnya into

the political process. There is no other way to solve Chechnya’s dilemma between independence and security. Ideally, as a goodwill gesture towards the separatist side, the Russians should exclude Ramzan Kadyrov from the process, but in return, the rebels must abandon the prospect of a Chechnya outside Russia, at least in the immediate future. Akhmed Zakaev, the self-declared head of “Ichkeria” (the unofficial name for Chechnya), who lives in a London exile, could be allowed to take part without pressure, as well as some Chechen businessmen living in Moscow. For a sustainable peace in Chechnya, some potential keys are to be found within the recent and dynamic new emerging Diaspora.

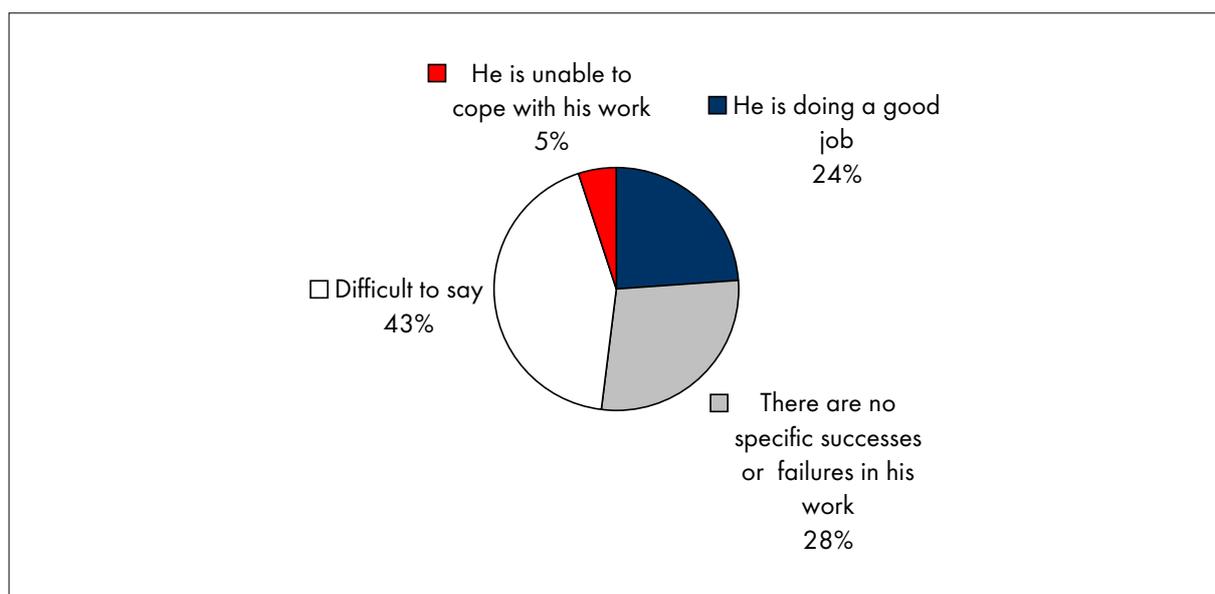
*About the author:*

Laurent Vinatier studies at the Institute of Political Studies of Paris where he recently completed his PhD entitled “Guerre en Tchétchénie, exil et diaspora. Etudes des structurations communautaires tchétchènes à l'étranger entre 1997 et 2007” (“War in Chechnya, Exile and Diaspora: Study of Chechen Community Building Abroad Between 1997 and 2007”). He also authored two books on Russia and the North Caucasus, *Russie: l'impasse tchétchène*, (Armand Colin, 2007, 180 pages) and *La Russie: de Poutine à Medvedev* (Unicomm, 2008, 220 pages).

## Opinion Poll

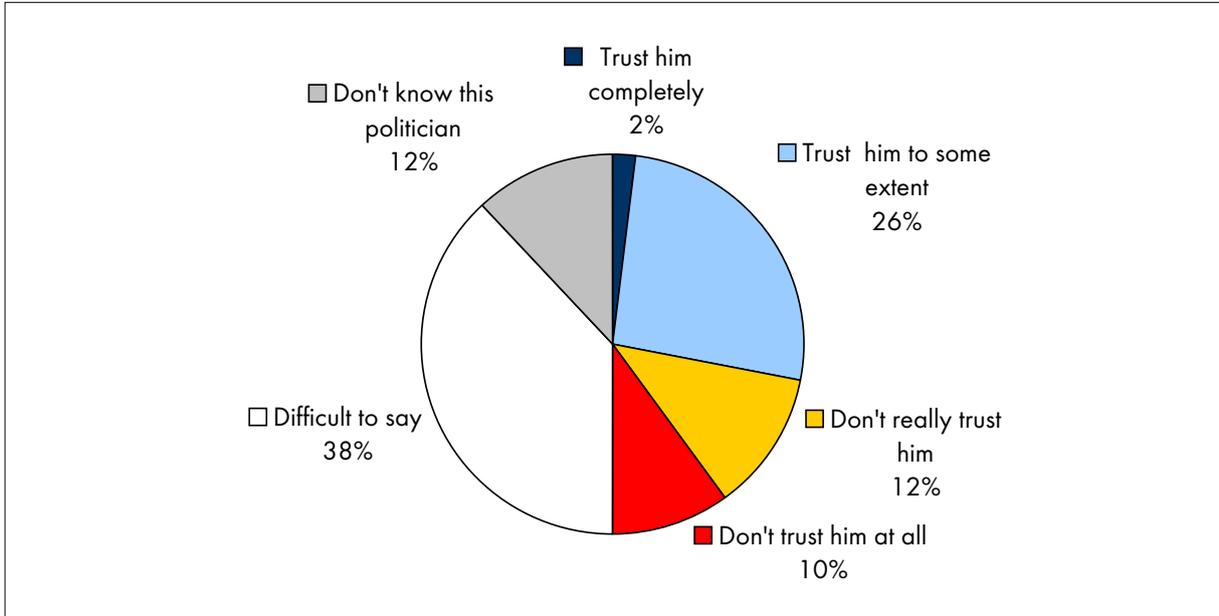
### Russian Views of Kadyrov

How Do You Rate the Work of Ramzan Kadyrov As Chairman of the Government of the Chechen Republic? (VTsIOM, 2007)



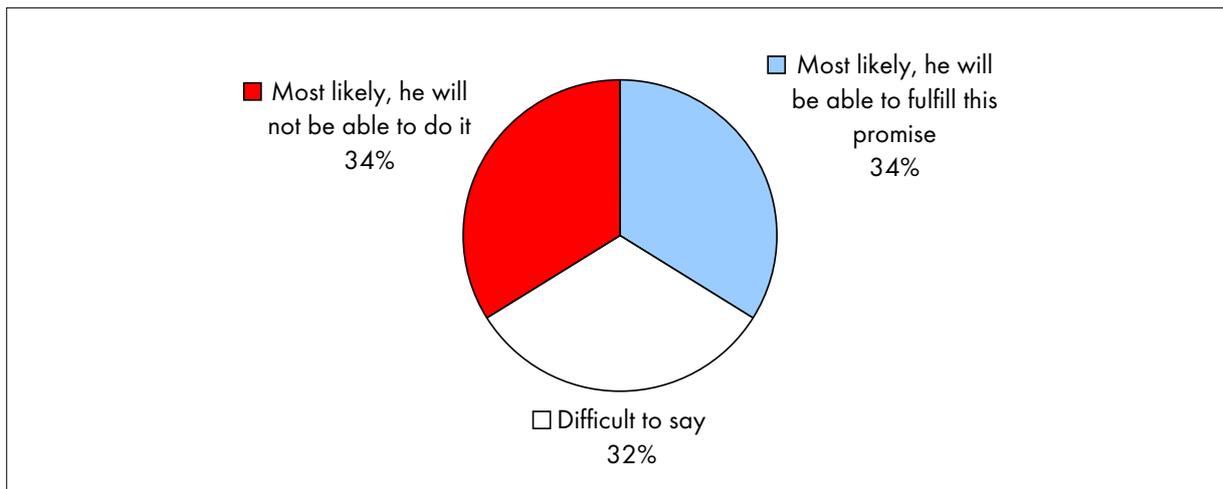
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**To What Extent Do You Trust Ramzan Kadyrov? (VTsIOM, 2007)**



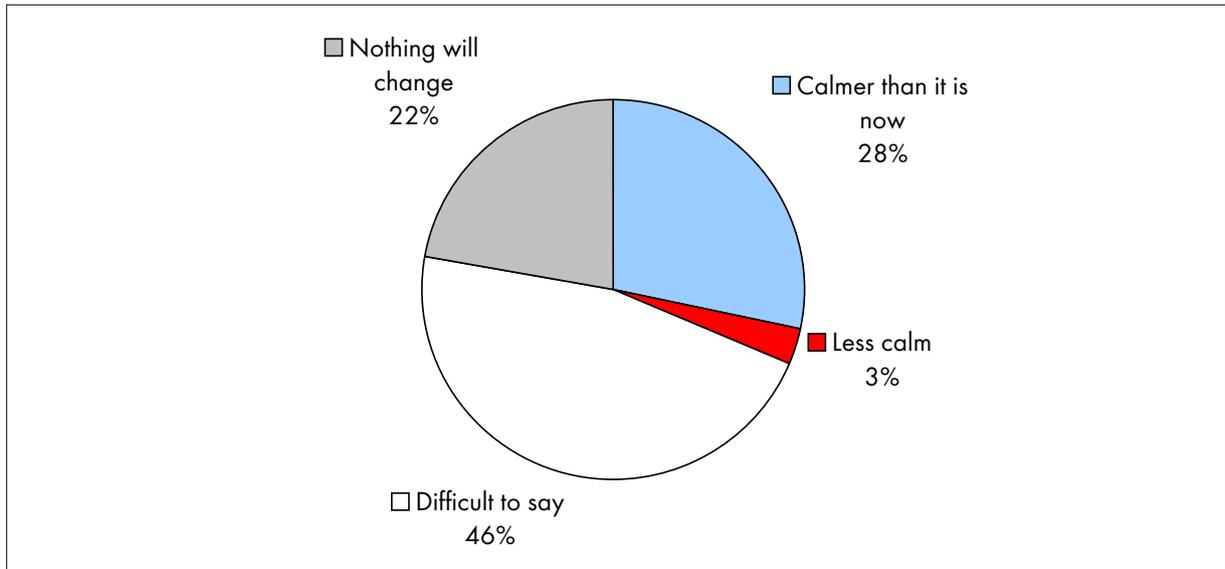
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**Some Time Ago, Ramzan Kadyrov Promised to Restore the Shattered Republic of Chechnya Over the Next Three Years. What Do You Think of this Promise? (VTsIOM, 2007)**



Source: [http://wciom.ru/arkhiv/tematicheskii-arkhiv/item/single/4061.html?no\\_cache=1&cHash=f4d62da1b8](http://wciom.ru/arkhiv/tematicheskii-arkhiv/item/single/4061.html?no_cache=1&cHash=f4d62da1b8), February 2007

**If R. Kadyrov Stays as Chechnya's leader, Will the Situation in the Republic Be Calmer Than It is Now, Less Calm, or Will Nothing Change in this Respect?**  
(Public Opinion Foundation, 2007)



Source: <http://bd.fom.ru/report/map/d070923>, January 2007

Data for the graphs compiled and translated by Katerina Malygina.

## About the Russian Analytical Digest

Editors: Matthias Neumann, Robert Ortung, Jeronim Perović, Heiko Pleines, Hans-Henning Schröder

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Research Centre for East European Studies • Publications Department • Klagenfurter Str. 3 • 28359 Bremen • Germany

Phone: +49 421-218-7891 • Telefax: +49 421-218-3269 • e-mail: [fsopr@uni-bremen.de](mailto:fsopr@uni-bremen.de) • Internet: [www.res.ethz.ch/analysis/rad](http://www.res.ethz.ch/analysis/rad)