Buying the Peace: assessing the role of corruption in post-conflict Chechnya

Christopher Holt

Abstract
Conventional approaches to corruption in post-conflict scenarios have treated such practices as an impediment to the restoral of peace and stability. However, recent work has offered a more ambiguous approach: a tolerance of corruption can have positive impacts by ‘buying off’ those with the capability to reignite conflict, and by providing civilians with a means of survival. This dissertation looks at how such an approach can be applied to the case of Chechnya, arguing that a tolerance of corruption has been an integral part of the Russian Federation’s strategy in the North Caucasus republic. Ultimately, corruption has been a key component in achieving Russia’s goals of maintaining relative stability and territorial integrity.
Introduction

Post-conflict situations pose a number of challenges for those working to prevent a return to war. Animosity between previously warring factions persists, breakdown of infrastructure and state institutions, and social upheaval offer peace-keepers a Herculean task, and seriously undermine reconstruction efforts. What is able to thrive in such conditions is corruption: absence of order, non-existence of legal authority, and lack of mainstream economic opportunity means that armed groups readily engage in corruption for financial gain, whilst civilians caught up in the turbulence will participate in corrupt activities as a means of survival. Conventional approaches to corruption in post-conflict scenarios have viewed such practices as a major impediment to restoring peace and stability. The lack of transparency and accountability that comes with corruption is said to undermine attempts to rebuild state apparatuses, and prevents the regaining of societal trust that is destroyed in the chaos of war. However, recent approaches to post-conflict scenarios have questioned whether corruption can offer a positive role. Such approaches question if corruption is able to play a role in subduing those actors that have the ability to reignite conflict. Allowing potential ‘peace-spoilers’ to engage in corrupt practices and seek financial gain from newly acquired positions of power can be tolerated in preference to a renewed outbreak of conflict. A tolerance of corruption at an individual level also offers civilians a means with which to survive: conflicts destroys state institutions and the infrastructures of a formal economy, so bribery of corrupt officials offers a means of accessing goods and services otherwise unavailable. This dissertation seeks to establish whether corruption can indeed offer the positive outcomes described above when applied to post-conflict scenarios. The post-conflict situation under scrutiny is that present in the Chechen Republic, in the Russian Federation.

Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, Russian federal forces have been engaged in a protracted conflict against separatist insurgents (both secular nationalist and later radical Islamic) in the republic, which is situated in the strategically significant North Caucasus. Corruption has been a major facet of the conflict since its outbreak, with all sides participating in its practice. Whilst a low scale Islamic insurgency is ongoing, major conflict in the republic has come to an end, in large part due to Russia’s policy of ‘Chechenisation’. At present, major reconstruction efforts are underway to rebuild from the huge devastation caused by the wars. Corruption persists in the republic, and is essentially considered endemic. Yet rather than approach its presence negatively, this dissertation seeks to show that a toleration, and even active engagement in certain corrupt activities by Russian and pro-federal Chechen have served as a catalyst to the restoral of relative peace and stability in the republic.
It obvious that there a major obstacles to studying corruption, especially if, as is claimed in this dissertation, legal authorities are engaged in such practices themselves. The opaque nature of corruption means that solid figures on the rate of such incidences are hard to come by. So whilst this dissertation seeks to include quantitative data on corruption, the scarcity of such data means there is also reliance upon qualitative information. This includes surveys conducted regarding individuals’ experiences of corruption in Chechnya, reports and articles composed from the firsthand experiences academics, investigators and journalists, and in-depth analyses conducted by experts over a long-term period. With such information available, we should be able to make a solid assessment as to corruption’s role in post-conflict Chechnya.

Chapter 1 conducts a literature survey concerning the role of corruption in postconflict situations. What emerges is that there is a growing body of recent work that argues, contrary to conventional understandings, that corruption can play a positive role in reducing the likelihood of further political violence and by providing civilians with the means for survival. The second chapter offers a background to the situation in Chechnya, charting the rise of elite figures key to the republic’s present situation whilst contextualising corruption as a major aspect of the conflict and beyond.

Chapter 3 follows on by analysing how a tolerance for, and active engagement in corrupt practices came to constitute a key component of the Russian and pro-federal forces strategy for achieving relative peace and stability, whilst realising the goals held by the Russian leadership.

Chapter 4 looks at the situation in Chechnya today by making an assessment of the quality of the peace gained following the continuation of the aforementioned strategy for peace in the republic, whilst Chapter 5 looks at how the corruption that persists in Chechnya may politically affect both the Kremlin and the loyalist Chechen leadership in the future.

This dissertation concludes by stating that in the case of Chechnya, the practice of corruption can be said to have played a substantial and positive role in the restoral of relative peace and stability.

**Literature Survey**

Traditional accounts of corruption in post-conflict scenarios have speculated that the practice is an impediment to peace and stability. Following the end of the Cold War, there has been a notable increase both in the number of interventions in post-conflict situations. The ‘victory’ of the liberal-democratic ideals translated into a consensus regarding the role of interventions as a means of peace-keeping and enforcement throughout protracted conflicts (Cheng & Zaum, 2008, p. 301).
Once some semblance of peace and stability is achieved, liberal-democratic values are carried through to the reconstruction stage. The emphasis is placed upon establishing and nurturing liberal-democratic institutions. Such institutions are deemed necessary for they are presumed to be the only way in which all stakeholders in the post-conflict scenario are given assurance of fair representation and freedom from political marginalisation, which may have been an underlying cause of the conflict.

Associated with these institutions are the protection of human rights, the rule of law and implementing the conditions for economic growth. The liberal-democratic tradition assumes a deviation from this path undermines the chances for a permanent conclusion to conflict. Corruption is deemed to be such a threat. Corruption thrives on a distinct lack of transparency and accountability, which allows those engaging in its practices to utilise the apparatus of government to ensure illegitimate streams of revenue are maintained. The corrupt practices of elites are particularly damaging. Elite corruption in post-conflict situations is most likely orientated along factional lines. This can exacerbate the dynamics which may have served to foster conflict in the first instance, by enforcing political differences and grievances amongst political factions. Moreover, in post-conflict scenarios financial aid is an essential component for reconstruction efforts: corrupt practices siphon off such aid and prolong the process of establishing the conditions necessary for stable economic growth and effective public services: When money and resources available to government are diverted by corrupt officials instead of being channelled for the benefit of citizens, the clock turns back on social and economic development (United States Institute for Peace, 2010, p. 4).

If the local population is unable to rely upon the government in place to deliver public services and denied political access, alternative centres of power may be sought and established, along with alternative means of service deliverance. The divisions created heighten instability and the possibility of conflict as loyalties and recognitions of authority become distinct. However, recent approaches to the subject are far more ambiguous concerning its role. The origins of this once again derive from the increased usage of international intervention for peace-keeping purposes in the last decade of the 20th Century.

Studying these interventions and the internal dynamics of the states where they were taking place highlights the role of war-time economies in perpetuating conflict. Even with the attainment of peace or a ceasefire, the structure of these wartime economies would persists. An understanding of the political economy of conflict becomes an important asset in determining how to achieve peace, or at least hold off conflict (Berdal & Malone, 2000; Berdal, 2005; Pugh, et al., 2003). The approaches resulting from these assessments of war economies have led to a more ambiguous understanding of
corrupt practices during post-conflict situations. With the increased study of corruption in post-conflict scenarios, however, there is a risk of the concept becoming a catch-all term that hides the underlying dynamics and structures at work.

It is therefore important to define what we mean by corruption. Recent works on the subject of corruption have used broad definitions. Michael Johnston has defined corruption as, ‘the abuse of public roles or resources for private benefit’ (2007, p. 12), International agencies such as Transparency International have adopted definitions along a similar line with, ‘the misuse of entrusted power for private gain’ (2014). Mark Philp outlines three problems with these definitions (2008). Firstly, they fail to distinguish acts of corruption from other forms of wrong-doing, such misappropriation and general stealing: as Philp points out, stealing is illegal yet we should be careful not to regard certain actions committed by those in public office as acts of corruption. Whilst the use of the phrases ‘the misuse of entrusted power’ and ‘the abuse of public roles’ denote that it is a public position which is being manipulated, they fail to capture a particular type of abuse that distinguishes corruption from other forms of transgression. In addition, while these aforementioned definitions highlight the role of private gain in corrupt practices, they fail to mention the use of public office to ‘benefit one’s party, sectional interest, or some organization or group’ (2008, p. 311). A further problem arises over what we should label a ‘misuse’ or ‘abuse’ of public office. The previously mentioned definitions certainly raise this question. One step is to apply a universal set of rules and standards, yet such a move would be highly unfeasible given the complexities and intricacies of different political systems. Equally, however, it would be unwise to simply utilise the rules and norms present in each country as a means for determining what abuse is. On one level it renders any definition relative, and in some cases, where there are little to no agreed upon rules and norms, there can almost be no acknowledgment of corruption existing (pp. 311-312).

Philp seeks to overcome these definitional challenges by offering the following: Corruption in politics occurs where a public official (A), acting in ways that violate the rules and norms of office, and that involves personal, partisan or sectional gain, harms the interests of the public (B) (or some subsection thereof) who is the designated beneficiary of that office, to benefit themselves and/or a third party (C) who rewards or otherwise incentivizes A to gain access to goods or services they would not otherwise obtain’ (p. 315).

This definition has significant analytical precision. This precision lies in the fact that Philp states that corruption can be distinguished from other misdemeanours given that corruption involves a violation of the expected standards of the public office held. Having a conception of corruption is to recognise that a political office has both a particular function within society, and that
particular standards are attributed with the carrying out of that function (p. 312). An act of corruption, as opposed to another act of malfeasance, has particular negative political consequences. It is also important to note that this definition recognises that not all acts of corruption are necessarily illegal. This builds upon work by the World Bank regarding the notion of ‘state capture’: a process of political subversion by corrupt networks which embed, extend and renders corrupt gains legitimate through the introduction of legislation (World Bank, 2002). This strengthens this definition compared to other legal forms which ultimately overlook important instances of corruption. Philp’s definition also highlights the difficulties of constituting what corruption actually is, given that different societies and cultures will undoubtedly retain differing political and legal norms, and thus have differing expectations regarding the duties of political office. Yet while differing expectations persist, it is hoped, with this definition, that a degree of universality can be achieved through agreement over the general point that corruption concerns the subversion of public office.

Using this more precise definition of corruption, we can begin to look at what effect corruption may have during post-conflict situations, such as that which has existed in Chechnya since the end of major hostilities, and most notably since the ascension of Ramzan Kadyrov to power. As previously mentioned, recent approaches to corruption have fostered an ambiguous understanding of the phenomenon. Whilst corruption in post-conflict situations has a wide variety of consequences, the literature reveals two major themes. The first looks at the ability of corrupt practices to potentially buy off ‘peace spoilers’ (Cheng & Zaum, 2008, p. 303). The second looks at the quality of peace achieved in a post-conflict where corruption takes place. What is important about the two themes is an admission that corruption has the potential to play some role in achieving peace in a post-conflict environment. The creation of power-sharing arrangements amongst warring factions has frequently been an important apparatus for ending intra-state conflict. Even with the end of major conflict, a security dilemma still exists amongst the parties concerned. Research has shown that establishing power-sharing institutions can help to dissolve the mistrust present through inspiring mutual confidence, with a view to a more enduring peace (Hartzell & Hoddie, 2003; Le Billon, 2003). These agreements, whilst solving the larger, more immediate issue of ending hostilities and securing peace, often come with the understanding that those in power are able to exploit the positions they hold via the economic opportunities presented. Such opportunities could include assuming control of ‘state resources, building patronage networks and political power structures, allowing illicit economic activities to continue, and receiving bribes for public contracts’ (Cheng & Zaum, 2008, p. 303). Following the brutal series of wars within the Democratic Republic of Congo, rival rebel leaders were given unrestricted acces to state coffers and resources having signed
the 2002 Global and All Inclusive Agreement. Bergling has noted how NATO supported local actors in Bosnia that favoured their troops presence, over those that expressed reluctance, in spite of real concerns about corruption (2008). It’s fair to say that in cases of intra-state conflict, there is a resolution for peace as soon as possible, especially when the international community or outside actors become involved in one way or another. This seems obvious, but the overwhelming interest for peace means that negotiators are often willing to make concessions that will more than likely foster corrupt practices. Reno has stated that many of those negotiating for peace often have little appetite for any genuine political reform, especially if such reform threatens to reverse a tentative peace settlement or ceasefire in place: hence negotiators will ‘tolerate the incorporation of elements of patrimonial politics with only partial reform’ (Reno, 2008, p. 398). In effect, peace negotiators come to condone the institutionalisation of corrupt practices in the interest of peace, a fact which local actors are fully aware of it seems (Keen, 2000).

The literature has also recognised the potential for the buying-off strategy to backfire. For such a strategy to work requires that all factions feel they garner an equal benefit from the terms of peace. In post-conflict situations, it is highly likely that the elites still hold significant influence over the previously warring factions, factions that may have access to arms, or at least are capable of wielding violence against rivals. Such a situation was witnessed in the case of Chechnya and the tumultuous inter-war period of de facto independence between 1996 and 1999. Problems can arise intrafractionally as well. Rebel groups may have fostered a significant degree of support through promises to eradicate corruption rampant in the government they fought against. If the group’s leaders fail to make headway with this manifesto, when they themselves becoming embroiled in corrupt activity, it is foreseeable that the political grievances of the rebel base toward such activity will persist, now being directed toward those that once led them. The persistence of such grievances leaves any peace achieved highly unstable.

A further risk with the condonement of corruption from peace settlements is the potential for destabilising social inequalities: As groups empowered by the outcome of the war continue to sustain dominant political and economic positions through corruption, they may prevent the redistribution of power by stifling institutional checks and balances (Le Billon, 2008, p. 353).

As inequalities persist and become ingrained as a result of the new elites’ corrupt practices, social divisions and new political grievances arise that can serve as a future source of conflict. The risk of conflict can become increasingly likely through the formation of a vicious cycle, whereby entrenched social inequalities as a result of corruption, lead to a greater reliance upon corrupt practices, thereby further entrenching inequality (You & Khagram, 2005).
This point brings us onto the second prevailing theme in the literature: that of the quality of peace that exists in the presence of corruption. Ultimately, what peacekeeping and the subsequent peace-building attempt to do is restore intra-societal trust to a level which is conducive to peace. This means trust between individuals, between identifiable groups and between the population and those governing them. Intra-state conflict shatters much of this trust: population displacement, focused atrocities as well as conventional fighting, along with general fear all contribute to the creation of a pre-societal state. The bonds of trust broken by acts of war are a necessity for establishing a functioning modern economy and society (Looney, 2008). Once again in the case of Bosnia, it was found that the absence of a social contract was one of the main hindrances to fighting corruption effectively (Pugh & Divjak, 2008, p. 374).

Interpersonal trust is an incredibly important aspect of a well-functioning economy. Financial exchanges are grounded upon certain guarantees: that all transactions are fair and no one party in the exchange is being cheated. In a properly functioning society, individuals can expect government agencies and certain regulatory bodies to act as guarantors of fair exchange, and give assurances that those engaging in unfair transactions can expect to be suitably prosecuted for their misdeed. However, corruption can effectively lower these levels of trust, which have already been severely compromised as a result of war (Seligson, 2002). Corrupt practices can also jeopardise chances for stable economic recovery, given corruption’s detrimental effects upon trust and predictability (Anderson & Marcouiller, 2002). Consequently, with a lack of trust, and lack of support from relevant authorities, individuals will seek protection from private sources, often unsanctioned legally (Gambetta, 1999). As Rose-Ackerman demonstrates, corruption has severe consequences for a postconflict country’s potential for economic growth and investment (2008), as well as undermining the legitimacy of the country’s political institutions (Anderson & Tverdova, 2003). The case of Afghanistan is a good example as to how the exposure and influence of corruption on the daily routines of individuals can be detrimental to the purposes of peacebuilding and state reconstruction in a postconflict scenario. It has been found that 70 per cent of the Afghan population have been forced to engage in bribery for various reasons: every year the average person pays the equivalent of US$100 in bribes, a figure equal to two month’s salary for a civil servant. (Torabi & Delesgues, 2007). As Goodhand notes:If the key challenge of post-conflcit peacebuilding is the construction of legitimate political authority, the widespread perception of corruption undermines the emergence of this authority. Corrupt officials are the face of government in the districts and the discourse on corruption has been skilfully mobilized by the Taliban and anti-government elements (Goodhand, 2008, p. 412).
The prevailing trend in the literature heavily suggests that, in the long-term, corruption is highly detrimental to the process of reconstruction and state-building. However, this dissertation will argue that corrupt practices do not necessarily undermine the quality of peace vis-à-vis the break down in societal trust. As indicated by the experiences of individuals in Chechnya, corrupt practices can attain a degree of trust through the shared complicity of engaging in corruption itself, and through the establishment of trusting relationships due corrupt activities having patron-client or ‘quid pro quo’ character.

The literature has raised some important questions and areas for analysis relevant to our investigation of the post-conflict situation in Chechnya. The themes emergent from the literature of corruption as a buy-off for potential peace spoilers and as a factor in the quality of peace, each with their own routes of investigation, can be aptly applied to the functioning of the Russian backed government of Ramzan Kadyrov. What is interesting to note is that much of the literature regarding the role of corruption in post-conflict peace-keeping has a heavy focus upon the role of international actors such as United Nations. Such actors have a certain vision when it comes to what kind of state should be ultimately achieved once the process of peace-building and reconstruction is ‘completed’. In Chechnya, no such organisation has a significant presence or role to play in the reconstruction process. This role has been played by the Russian Federation, importantly with Vladimir Putin as its president. An important part of this essay will be to see how the priorities of the Russian Federation, as the main benefactor to the reconstruction efforts in Chechnya, perhaps differ from those of a more ‘conventional’, ‘UN-style’ post-conflict handling effort.

A History Corruption and Elites in post-Soviet Chechnya

The recent history of Russia’s southern frontier with the Caucasus has been largely defined by Moscow’s attempts to subdue and control the Chechen people. For more than a century and a half following Peter the Great’s annexation of the littoral areas of Dagestan in 1722, Russia has employed both military force and colonialist policies in an attempt to quell what became a notoriously rebellious corner of their vast empire. The Russian literary greats of Lermontov, Pushkin and Tolstoy through recanting their experiences in the region romanticised the concept of the Chechen ‘freedom fighter’ struggling against imperial occupation. Such romanticism has been adopted by a number of journalistic accounts of the most recent wars (Bennett, 1998; Politkovskaya, 2001; Smith, 1998), and to a certain extent has shaped the analyses of some academics, which promote the role of ethnic hatred in the conflict (Dunlop, 1998; Tishkov, 1997). A notable addition to this discourse is the mass deportations to Central Asia under Stalin in 1944. Russian ‘hatred’, or at the least intense mistrust, toward their Caucasian subjects is an explanatory factor behind the exceptional power structure that
existed following the reestablishment of the Chechen republic in 1957. Central control was maintained and nationalism subdued in most Soviet republics with a ‘dyarchy of native first secretary and Russian second secretary’ (Miller, 1977), with the Russian deputy retaining the most power.

However, in the case of Chechnya no such structure existed. The mistrust between that Chechens were excluded from most positions of power in the Soviet nomenklatura (Gakaev, 2005, p. 24), and it was not until 1989 that a Chechen, Doku Zavgaev, headed the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) in the Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Republic. Hence, the development of Chechen elites has been relatively recent historically. It is only with the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the initiation of events leading up to the Chechen wars that we see elite structures begin to emerge in Chechen politics. It is in studying the formation of these elite structures that we might gain an understanding of the dynamics of elite corruption in Chechnya today.

Whilst the literature may vary on how to exactly characterise their motivations, what does arise about the emergent Chechen elite is their status as ‘outsiders’ (Gakaev, 2005; Hughes, 2007). Chechens had been offered little in the way of opportunity within the strictures of the Soviet nomenklatura, and the upheavals of the 1920s through to the 1940s had disrupted the traditional patterns which would ordinarily garner political and religious elites. What is indicated from the literature about the collapse of the Soviet Union is the dawn of Chechen opportunism. This opportunism is complex, given that it can be understood in several ways. Certainly one aspect notable for this investigation is the economic opportunity created in the post-Soviet space for Chechens who were in majority poorly educated and disenfranchised:

[A]ccompanying the seizure of power by Dudaev and his outsider groups was the development of a dismissive attitude to work, to accumulating personal and public wealth through honest labour. Easy criminal ways of making money through financial manipulations, robbery of Russians in the towns and other forms of banditry, fabulously enriched thousands of people without kith or kin or any occupation very quickly, creating a ‘new elite’ out of yesterday’s poorly-educated outsiders. They became the social basis of the new regime (Gakaev, 2005, p. 24).

Whilst the economic opportunities created for Chechen in the last days of the Soviet Union are no doubt of significance, their importance must not be overstated as Gakaev later indicates by stating that the root cause of the Chechen wars lies in the competition between the elites of the federal centre and Chechen mafia groupings over oil profits (p. 25). Due deference must be given to the genuine desires for Chechen nation building exhibited by Dzhokar Dudaev, the figurehead of the Chechen separatist movement, and those around him such as Zelimkhan
Yandarbiev (Hughes, 2007). What is more accurate to say is that among the elites genuinely aspiring for Chechen independence were those who bandwagon in order to seek financial gain. For example, Dudaev received significant political and military support from former Moscow crime boss, Beslan Gantemirov, of whom Hughes describes as a ‘freebooting criminal warlord interested in the opportunistic material gains’ (p. 24) that would come from independence (Dunlop, 1998, p. 95; Gall & de Waal, 1998, pp. 92-93).

Accompanying this opportunism and more subversive element of criminalisation of the elite was the de-Russification of Chechnya in the years preceding the first conflict (Russell, 2011). The ethnic Russians living in the republic had been encouraged to do so by the Russian authorities since the late nineteenth century (Hughes, 2007, pp. 9-10). In doing so they had effectively become an instrument of modernisation, with each new wave of migrants to the region bringing specialist expertise for economic and infrastructural development. With the emigration of ethnic Russians in the early 1990’s, Chechnya underwent a process of ‘de-modernization and archaization of life’ that came with the disruption of ‘the existing balance in the social, economic and labour spheres’ (Markedonov, 2009). Consequently, the retreat of Russian dominance from elite structures in Chechnya allowed for ‘natives’ to take their place, all the while creating conditions for unruly competition as positions of power sought to be filled. In spite of this turbulent environment, Chechens were mostly united in their fight against Russians following the invasion of December 1994, albeit under the banner of various local warlords such as Shamil Basaev, Arbi Baraev, Salman Raduev and Ruslan Gelaev. Dudaev alongside a fellow former Soviet Army officer, Aslan Maskhadov, oversaw the Chechen defence.

Corruption and illicit activity for private gain have been central features of Chechen politics and society ever since the collapse of the Soviet Union and the consequent turbulence as separatist elements in the republic fought for statehood. Dudaev and Mashkadov, both of whom had served with high rank in the Soviet military, were acutely aware of the need to muster and militarise a force capable of resisting the inevitable attempts by the Russian Federation to regain control of the republic. The Chechen leadership ordered the mobilisation of all men of fighting age (between 15 and 55 years old). Given that Chechnya was a key regional base for Soviet military stockpiles, the armament of these men was made all the more possible. In addition, in one of the first major instances of corruption in Chechnya, this process would be facilitated by Russia itself. In late 1991 to 1992, extraordinary quantities of military hardware and munitions would be transferred into Chechen hands: some of it was formally handed over, some seized outright and others sold illicitly. According to Soviet garrison commanders, when Dudaev ordered the immediate withdrawal of troops from Chechnya, the word from their superior Pavel Grachev was for a swift withdrawal and to
leave all stockpiles behind. It is claimed by some officers that Dudaev and Grachev, who were both acquainted from their time serving in Afghanistan, had agreed to split the weapons stocks between them. Such a claim was denied by Grachev (Bespalov, 1995; Hughes, 2007, p. 26; Khlystun, 2001). It is also generally acknowledged that, whilst the authority of the Russians had been removed from Chechnya, Dudaev’s government kept in close contact with individuals within the command structures of the Russian military. This relationship between the secessionists and corrupt elements facilitated a number of activities such as oil sales, the importation of Western goods into Russia, drug trafficking and arms trading, all of which sought to empower the Chechens and enrich the Russians (Hughes, 2007, p. 26). Journalists reporting from Grozny at this point in time commented on how the city had established an open arms bazaar (Seely, 2001). The chaos of the Soviet Union’s collapse was mirrored by the situation on the ground in Chechnya itself. The Chechen republic did have potential when it came to gaining income: it did not pay taxes to the Russian government, yet received pension funds and other social subsidies, and whilst small compared to the rest of Russia, there was an established oil and petrochemicals industry. Much of the welfare and subsidies supplied by the Russians failed to reach their intended recipients, and dealing with oil and petrochemicals became rampant with criminal and corrupt activity. In the period of 1992 to 1993, due to a failure of salary payments and a flight of ethnic Russians who largely operated them, state services and functions began to disintegrate. There was a general breakdown in civil order, a process accelerated by the availability of weapons to the male population: many of these men have been left destitute by the breakdown of the Soviet support system and were deprived of sources of employment in both Chechnya and Russia, leading many to form armed groups. These groups frequently preyed upon the vulnerable, in particular ethnic Russians, who were relatively wealthy and were unable to rely upon clientelist protection schemes (Hughes, 2007, pp. 63-64). The situation in Chechnya under Dudaev meant that Russia and the outside world readily labelled the republic as under the control of criminals, an image no doubt enhanced by the fact that Dudaev’s own entourage included criminalistic elements. It must be borne in mind, however, that much of this criminality was a consequence of Russia’s blockade of Chechnya: the Russian authorities control of the ground and air outside of Chechnya meant that much of the illicit trade that crossed the borders involved at least some complicity with the Russians.

The victory of the Chechen separatist forces only gave rise to further elite competition in the now de facto independent republic. Whilst pro-Russian elites had ceased to be of significance, what emerged following the triumph of the opportunists was a wide range of victors, including criminalistic warlords, more secular separatists and fundamentalist Islamic jihadists. The variance in the motivations of these groups would undermine any serious prospect for state-building in the
republic. Following the end of the first conflict in 1996, Aslan Maskhadov (having assumed the presidency following the death of Dudaev) was left with an economy that was virtually destroyed, with around 40% of the pre-war population of the country now internally displaced or living in overcrowded villages (Hughes, 2007). The warlords had little interest in restoring any sense of law and order: many had profited greatly from the ransoms collected from kidnapping and contract assassinations. Hostagetaking and contract assassinations were now lucrative business. The OSCE Assistance Group in Chechnya 1999 report offered a bleak picture of the situation in the republic: Against the backdrop of ever-worsening socio-economic conditions; crime, unrest and acts of terrorism have acquired endemic proportions, adding to a volatile political situation and a general break-down of law and order. In particular, hostage-taking and abductions for ransom have seen a sharp rise. Expatriates believed to be capable of raising large ransoms, have become prime targets for perpetrators of kidnappings (OSCE, 1999, p. 29).

Maskhadov’s campaign against the hostage crisis of 1999 was severely undermined, if suggestions that members of the Chechen leadership were themselves regular beneficiaries of extortion payments (Tishkov, 2004, p. 111). The profiteering by armed groups from the conditions created by warfare was by no means confined to hostage-taking. The Chechen Republic had lost control of its income or expenditure, not having composed a budget since 1992. Tax collection ceased, and as a consequence the state treasury received none of the expected revenue from the sale of oil and its by-products in 1999. From 1998, the pillaging of oil resources reached unparalleled proportions and fighting erupted between the government and the armed opposition over oil assets and other economic interests. As the majority of oil wells were seized by armed groups, the state’s industrial oil production dropped from 4,200 tons a day in 1998 to 400 in the following year (p. 188). Large scale embezzlement and corruption only grew following the first conflict. As a local newspaper described:

Billions embezzled in Chechnya’s agriculture, construction industry, and oil production show that corruption has entered the war. It’s no longer an exception when bribe-takers, extortionists, and swindlers in public offices trample the law underfoot. They use their posts and influence in various power structures to grab millions before withdrawing into the shadows and the commercial sector. The new era has opened many opportunities for state officials. The old proverb “Would you sit near a spring and not drink?” has acquired a new, sinister meaning (p. 190).

With such extreme conditions, engaging in corruption proved to be an essential means of survival for the civilian population. With most state institutions and services in complete disarray or simply non-existent, ‘cushioning the shocks of the conflict’ or survival itself would not have been possible without engaging in illicit activities or bribery (Zabyelina, 2014, p. 41). Through forced
collaboration with those that held access to resources, the military commanders and the 
representatives of ruined state institutions, an environment was created where the practice of 
buying services and favours, including illegal ones, was common place (p. 41).

A key explanation for this continued chaos within Chechnya-Ichkeria and cause of concern 
for Maskhadov was the pervasive rise of radical forms of Islam amongst the warlord elites, in 
particular Shamil Basaev, who promoted Wahhabist doctrine. The evolution of this radical Islamism 
within Chechnya was an important aspect of the manoeuvrings of elites groups. Whilst at its 
inception, the struggle for independence had been motivated by a largely anti-colonialist, secular 
sentiment, the Chechen leadership had utilised Islamist rhetoric as a tool of mobilisation and 
propaganda in the years leading up to and during the conflict: Dudaev characterised the fighting 
with Russia in the tradition of *ghazavat* (holy war), mosques were sponsored in the organisation of 
resistance, and, following the death of Dudaev, Yandarbiev supported the Islamisation of the 
judiciary by proposing the introduction of *shari’a* courts. However, it was the influence of Shamil 
Basaev and his militia that proved the biggest factor in the rise of political Islam amongst the 
Chechen elite (Hughes, 2007; Russell, 2007; 2011). Basaev had evolved over the course of the war 
from a secular nationalist into a proponent of Wahhabism. His infamous Abkhaz Battalion were 
heavily utilised in the conflict for their use of powerful shock tactics in the form of terrorism and 
suicide bombing. The success of this unit attracted admiration from many of Chechnya’s young 
fighters. In spite of Basaev’s heroic status amongst the Chechen people, few trusted him: the 
extreme form of Islam he promoted was unattractive and foreign to a predominantly Sufist 
population. Such mistrust was demonstrated in the results of the 1997 presidential election. The 
more moderate Maskhadov received 64.8% of the vote, compared with Basaev who gained just 
23.5% (Souleimanov, 2007, p. 132). Consequently, the only foreseeable way for the more radical 
elements of Islam to maintain a foothold was, as criminal elements had done, to maintain the lack of 
law and order in the republic. Indeed the threat of violence from Basaev and his heavily armed, 
radicalised militiamen spurred Maskhadov to accommodate. In early 1999, he furthered 
Yandarbiev’s work by decreeing the transition to *shari’a*, and later suspended the Parliament in 
preparation for the introduction of an Islamic constitution (Hughes, 2007, p. 104). Such moves 
provoked shocked reactions from the international community.

By the end of 1997, discussions with the federal centre regarding the status of Chechnya had 
reached an impasse. There was now little prospect of any substantial reconstruction aid being sent, 
and upon the advice of his Minister of Foreign Affairs, Yevgenii Primakov, Yeltsin did all he could to 
prevent *de jure* independence of the republic, including threatening to cut off all diplomatic ties with 
any country that engaged with the Chechens (Kullberg, 2003). The only source of external aid that
Maskhadov could hope to receive would be from Wahhabist organisations based in the Arab World, which only further consolidated the position of Basaev and the jihadists (Hughes, 2007, p. 102). Amidst this turmoil was the Grand Mufti of the republic, Ahkmet Kadyrov. As the religious leader of the country’s more traditional Sufi Islam, Kadyrov held a far more moderate stance amongst the Chechen elite and had been a source of support for the beleaguered Maskhadov against the rising tide of Wahhabist influence in the country. But with each concession that the president made to Basaev and the radical elements of the Chechen elite, Kadyrov’s support became steadily less forthcoming. As the leader and effective embodiment of Chechnya’s more moderate religious sentiments, fundamentalist Islam was a serious threat to his political position. Kadyrov ‘had been appalled by Mashkadov’s toleration of the emergence of... (the so-called Wahhabis)’ (Sakwa, 2005, p. 19). It seems the Mufti, who had already survived an attempt on his life in October 1998 (Akaev, 2005), would finally relinquish his support for Maskhadov following the president’s decision to concede to Basaev through the said establishment of a shari’a government in early 1999 (Russell, 2011, pp. 1079-1080).

Opportunity arose in the form of Russia’s Chechenisation policy, in which Moscow sought Chechen proxies to support and manage the turbulent situation within the republic. As Hughes notes, the ‘policy was driven by the paramount importance for Russia of achieving a peace settlement that retains Chechnya under Russian sovereignty – decolonization is not an option’ (Hughes, 2007, p. 118).

Chechenisation had been a policy within the region since 1995, having been suggested by presidential advisor Emil Pain (Fuller, 2004), and a number of prominent Chechens had been co-opted to the Russian side, but it was only the former mayor of Grozny, Gantemirov, upon his release from a Russian prison, who had played a significant role in the second conflict, leading his gantemirovtsy (‘followers of Gantemirov’) a paramilitary force under Russian direction. As Vladimir Putin replaced Yeltsin as president of the Federation, a greater emphasis was given to the Chechenisation policy. The policy was given greater importance considering that it would allow the federal centre to undermine Maskhadov’s presidency further. However, the viability of Chechenisation only became realised following Kadyrov’s decision to abandon Maskhadov and engage with the Russians. Kadyrov’s revulsion of the encroachment of Wahhabism into Chechen elite politics, seemingly facilitated by his former ally, finally convinced the former Mufti (relieved of his status by Maskhadov in August 1999) that his interests now lay with the Russians. In October 1999, shortly after the commencement of the second conflict, Kadyrov diverted his loyalty to Moscow and the federal centre. As we shall see in the next chapter, a tolerance and implicit support
for corruption amongst the newly converted Chechen loyalist would become a key component of Russia’s Chechenisation policy. This component can said be to the ‘buying the peace’ strategy.

**Perspectives on the ‘Buying the Peace’ Strategy**

**The Russian/ Putin perspective**

There is an interesting question regarding as to why Chechenisation was a policy given heavy emphasis in the second conflict by Putin. When the former FSB officer was chosen by Yeltsin to succeed as Prime Minister in 1999, Putin had strong support from the military/security establishment within the federal government, known typically as the *siloviki*. Within their ranks were a desire and an expectation to take a hard stance against the Chechens. The *siloviki*, in particular those from a military background had viewed the First Chechen War as a great humiliation, one exacerbated by the cuts to their budgets in subsequent years. The second Chechen conflict provided an opportunity for the armed forces to reclaim some greatness and take revenge against the ‘bandits’ who had somehow defeated them a few years beforehand. Furthermore, there was a genuine security concern about the North Caucasian republic, which had become all too evident due to the criminality rampant in everyday life, the increasingly radicalised nature of the Chechen leadership and the risk of terrorist action against the Russian heartland (the attack launched by Basaev and his forces into Dagestan also proved a concern for energy orientated elites in Moscow, as destabilisation of Chechnya’s neighbour would threaten at the time Russia’s only viable land corridor the newly constructed Transneft pipeline between the Caspian Sea and Novorossiisk).

At the heart of the *siloviki* philosophy are the concepts of *derzhavnost* (holding that Russia should remain a great power) and *gosudarstvennost* (maintaining that the Russian state should be strong in order to keep the country together): the situation in Chechnya in 1999 was a threat to these ideals (Russell, 2007). Putin’s assumption to power pushed these ideas to the forefront, and the new president was under pressure to let the generals unleash their forces in Chechnya once more with no toleration for negotiation.

Putin and those around him had already recognised the fruitlessness of any potential negotiations with Mashkadov and the moderates given their impotence over the rampant radical Islamic elements in Chechnya (Lentini, 2005). And yet despite this and the objections of his generals, Putin was fully prepared to engage the Chechenisation policy once Ahkmet Kadyrov had revealed himself as a suitable collaborator. The most satisfactory explanation for the co-option of Kadyrov rests upon two motivations. Firstly, the collaboration of native elites by an imperial power was a classic counterinsurgency tactic, utilised several times beforehand, notably by the British in Malaya and Kenya during the Mau Mau rebellion (Hughes, 2007).
Employing Kadyrov and those fighters loyal to the Mufti (the initial core of the kadyrovtsy) provided the Russians with an additional force with which to subdue the fundamentalist insurgents. Given this militia force’s notoriety for heavy-handed tactics, little concern lay with notion of a morally fought counterinsurgency. Secondly, Kadyrov’s appointment as head of the civil administration in Chechnya (following his surrender of the republic’s second city of Gudermes), in which the Mufti was given relative autonomy whilst still answering to Moscow in some capacity, was a means by which to incorporate Chechnya into the power vertikal that was developing under the new president. Given his position as head of mainstream Sufi Islam in the republic, Kadyrov retained a great degree of political clout amongst the population and other elites. The quality of this relationship continued, as Ramzan assumed power following his father’s assassination (and the necessary time had passed for him to reach 30, the minimum age for the Chechen presidency).

The Kremlin, it seems, has been comfortable to maintain Ramzan Kadyrov’s position as the undisputed leader of the Chechen republic for several years now. The second war presented many of the same dynamics as the first. In conjunction with the support and promotion of the pro-Moscow Kadyrov family came a recognition that securing stability and order in Chechnya was as much about economics and financial support as it was about suppressing and eliminating separatist forces. Reconstruction aid had always been included into the Russian federal budget, even by Yeltsin from 1997 to 1998. Following the re-establishment of Russian control, the Program for Reconstruction in Chechnya was set up in 2001, through which huge sums of federal money was pumped into the republic. Between 2002 and 2006, the Russia devoted 30.6 billion roubles (US$916 million) to the republic’s restoration programme (Kommersant, 2009). According to the Chamber of Accounts, in 2010 the North Caucasus Federal District received 167.8 billion roubles (US$5.4 billion) and 270 billion roubles (US$8.6 billion) in the following year (Kavkazskiy Uzel, 2012).

At the end of 2012, the Russian government approved the State Program for the North Caucasus through 2025, which dedicated 2.5 trillion roubles (US$ 80.9 billion) of spending towards the region over the next 13 years (RIA, 2012). Unsurprisingly, such enormous expenditure in region with a history of corrupt practices has not been without issues. Further problems lie with the Russian state itself, frequently touted as being riddled with corruption, with even the Federal Audit Chamber making admissions to such activity in both the central and Chechen administrations: a bulletin of the Audit Chamber makes reference to ‘cases of illegal payments and embezzlements’ of funds earmarked for the republic (Accounts Chamber of the Russian Federation, 2003). Two years later, Sergei Ryabukhin, the chief accountant of the Audit Chamber, stated in an interview that around 2.23 billion roubles in 2003 and 1.8 billion in 2004 were lost though ‘financial violations’ on a scale ‘that could make one simply cry’ (Muradov, 2005). Of the funds that do reach Chechnya, a similar
pattern occurs: A significant portion of the aid very often ends up in the pockets of high officials and those closest to them, who are from what are in effect closed power clans (Souleimanov, 2011).

In 2012, the Prosecutor General’s Office announced that 2.5 billion roubles of state funds were embezzled in the republics of the North Caucasus. Alexei Melnikov, the head of the prosecutor office in the North Caucasus branch, blamed “corrupt officials working in cahoots with law enforcements for the money drain” (Arsovka & Zabyelina, 2013, p. 18). A total of 1,400 corruption-related violations were reported in the region in 2011 with more than 1,000 leading to criminal cases (p. 18). Most of the cases were brought in action against state officials, law enforcement agencies and other power agencies. The rapid inflow of aid indeed provided ample opportunities for embezzlement and rent-seeking. According to the Prosecutor General’s Office, accountants of the Chechen military units allegedly misappropriated 113 million roubles intended as rewards to the soldiers participating in counter terrorism operations in the North Caucasus. Interfax reported that the perpetrators purchased luxury cars and immobile property with the embezzled money. In another case in 2009, the embezzlement of 64 million roubles was discovered in the Chechen military unit (p. 18). Yet whilst cases occur, the Kremlin has continued to maintain the flow of aid to the republic. Much of this reasoning can be revealed by the loyalist Chechen perspective of the Chechenisation policy.

The Chechen/ Kadyrov perspective
Following the ‘Chechenisation’ policy instituted by Putin’s government, the guarantor of stability in the North Caucasian republic has been Ramzan Kadyrov. Kadyrov, with substantial financial support and subsidisation from the Kremlin, has engaged in a strategy best characterised as ‘buy or die’. Perhaps in recognising that one of the major dynamics driving the conflict were the economic opportunities that arose from the instability, Kadyrov has continued a programme of amnesty for former rebel fighters, or boeviki, that began under his father’s tenure. In 2005, Alu Alkhanov admitted that 7,000 former boeviki made up half of Chechnya’s forces of law and order, a figure which is considered to have risen: three years after Alkhanov’s admission it was thought that around 15,000 former rebel fighters constituted the kadyrovtsy (Russell, 2008, p. 670). Such amnesties, initially established by the Russians as means of ensuring that federal servicemen would be exempt from war crimes tribunals, were subsequently handled by the Kadyrov administration. Through pledging allegiance to Kadyrov, former rebels given pardon and gain a lucrative position within government agencies or the Chechen security services, often termed the kadyrovtsy (followers of Kadyrov). In terms of ‘legitimate’ expenditure, it has been estimated that the payroll for the kadyrovtsy alone comes to at least $72 million per year (p. 671). Given the alternatives, engaging in
these amnesties is a highly attractive proposition for former boeviki. A steady source of legitimate income (it is said that former rebels earn around $500 a month (Russell, 2009, p. 219) along with any subsequent ‘perks’ are surely more preferable to engaging in high risk activities, such as kidnappings, or associating one’s self with radical separatist elements, which are regularly targeted by federal and pro-Russian forces. As Russell states: It is hardly surprising, therefore, that many potential Chechen opponents of Kadyrov have allowed themselves to be co-opted into his elite in order to gain their share of the relatively abundant booty currently on offer (2011, p. 1075).

The new kadyrovtsy, thanks to the flood of money from Moscow, have substantial opportunities for enrichment through corruption and illicit activities. One of the key areas for such profiteering has been the construction sector. As previously stated, the wars destroyed much of, if not completely levelled Chechen towns and cities. As a result massive building projects and reconstruction efforts have been undertaken as an exemplar of the success of Kadyrov and pro-federal forces in bringing peace and stability. Much has been made of the construction and completion of Europe’s largest mosque in the centre of Grozny for example, the opening of which was attended by both Kadyrov and Putin. The construction boom in the capital and other towns has meant ample opportunity for embezzlement and rent-seeking by the corrupt officials supervising the projects. There has been an array of ways construction companies have engaged in manipulations through the creation of fictional workers or through announcing fictitious, non-functioning or false project costs, all of which have been devised as a means of siphoning off federal subsidies or avoiding the payment of taxes (Zabyelina, 2014, p. 43). The frequency of the embezzlement centres on the fact that construction firm managers feel perfectly within their rights to do so, as they themselves are expected to pay higher ranking government officials for their privilege: as an industry explained following such a case, the problem cannot rectified by the dismissal of certain officials, as it is a system that is ingrained and has been functioning for many years (Ibragimov & Ivanov, 2012). Significant incidences of corruption have also taken place in areas such as healthcare, housing and war compensation (Zabyelina, 2014, pp. 43-45).

Whilst the incidence of corrupt activities in the Chechen republic is rampant, Kadyrov is careful in ensuring that there is at least some dissemination of the money that has been flowing into the North Caucasus. The Chechen leader has complete control over the Ahmed Kadyrov Memorial Fund, for example. All those working in the public sector are obliged to pay tribute to the fund. Whilst it’s fair to say that a substantial proportion of these tributes remain with Kadyrov (as indicated by his extravagant lifestyle), this body is responsible for funding much of the reconstruction efforts in the republic. As a result, it is hard to distinguish between overt corruption and what is really an ‘unofficial’/‘quid pro quo’ tax (p. 46). One may also view the ‘buying off the
peace spoilers’ strategy occurring in Chechnya in terms of securing reparations: though unorthodox in Western eyes, the cyclical nature of public sector corruption in Chechnya lubricated largely through Russian funding, works as a means gaining compensation for the republic’s woes over the years.

The Quality of Peace in Chechnya
Clans, Political-Military Groupings and the Structure of Corruption

There is some dispute as to how large a part clans (or teips as they are referred to in Chechnya) actually play. Some have emphasised their importance: Russian ethnologist Sergei Aroutiunov describes the existence of around 150 teip units in the Chechen republic, with various fragmentations into smaller village based units and lineages, which in turn are united into around nine larger units known as tukhums. Aroutiunov, along Chechen traditionalists such as Khozh-Akmen Nukhaev, have advocated for the Chechen institutions to be reflective of this social make-up. For example, it is posited that the republic should be split into mountainous and lowland regions, with the latter being governed by secular Russian laws and the former to be left to the rule of Tribal elders (Sokirianskaia, 2006, p. 454). Others have rejected the teip system’s existence outright: the Rector of the Ingush State University has claimed that the trappings of the teip system, with its elders and customary laws, are constructs to promote the image of a primitive society which in turn are used to rationalise control by the federal centre (p. 454). In spite of these divergent viewpoints, the teip continues to play a role in the morphology of corruption in postconflict Chechnya, yet at the same time it is important to note that the dynamics of said corrupt practices do not orientate solely along teip lines. Sokirianskaia’s fieldwork study of the significance of Vainakh (Chechen-Ingush) family structures rejected the idea that, following the collapse of the Soviet Union, teips in their traditional social context as a large tribal grouping consisting of hundreds of family units have very little political or social relevance in modern Chechen society.

However, the notion of the teip still retains some significance on a smaller colloquial scale with reference to extended families, and in this context is said to be an important source of nepotism and social mobility (Sokirianskaia, 2006). Viewing the teip in this form is important with reference to corruption in Chechnya today. The Kadyrov family is part of the Benoi clan, the largest clan in Chechnya. Under Ramzan Kadyrov’s administration, the ease with which an individual can gain employment is greatly facilitated should that individual happen to be a member of the Benoi clan. As Jonathan Littell describes: If you’re not a native of Benoi, you’ll find life much more difficult. But any lad from Khosi-Yurt will get a job simply as his birthright...The Benoi teip is a very large one, and in the corruption process it gets narrowed down to a village, or to close and distant relatives.
But if you’re a native of Benoi, you will have an easier time than the members of other teips (Prague Watchdog, 2009).

Though very relevant, it is important for us not to overstate the emphasis placed upon teip affiliation today. As Sokirianskaia’s study argues, the concept of the teip has little significance when compared to what she refers to as ‘political-military groupings’, a unit formed on the principles of personal loyalty that includes the supporters of an influential public figure (2006, p. 464). Such units revolve around the nucleus of these influential public figures. The kadyrovtsy grouping is a prime example of this. Whilst many of the kadyrovtsy may be drawn from the Benoi, this is less so about maintaining deeply felt blood ties and teip loyalties than it is about ensuring levels of trust amongst those with the Kadyrov unit. Indeed, prominent members of the kadyrovtsy, such as Muslim Khuchiyev, the mayor of Grozny, belong to other teips. Granted, as Jonathon Littell further elaborates, these men are ‘isolated individuals, and they can’t provide protection to their fellow teip members, i.e. they can’t create their own clans in government’ (Prague Watchdog, 2009), but as their inclusion shows, loyalty to the figure heads of these political groupings usurps that to a teip. Chechen politics has been dominated by the interactions of these political groupings. One only needs to look at the rivalries and vying for power seen following the Second Chechen War to see that strongmen attachment rather than clan origin are what matters. The aggression between the kadyrovtsy and those loyal to the Yamadaev brothers is a prime example, and all the more important when bearing in mind that both the Kadyrov and Yamadaev families are of the Benoi teip.

Whilst it is certainly the case that members of the Benoi clan are given preference when it comes to gaining employment in the Chechen government, what this masks is a preference given to the Kadyrov extended family: Ramzan Kadyrov simply doesn’t trust strangers, people who are not his relatives or who don’t belong to his teip. And so what you have in the government are its representatives – not the whole teip, of course, but a segment of it – the Kadyrov family (Prague Watchdog, 2009).

One must bear in mind that the Benoi teip, being the largest in Chechnya, will not always consist of individuals or other families known or liked by the kadyrovtsy (we may point once again to the case of the Yamadaevs). It is more a case of those closest to Kadyrov and members of his extended family, with whom he places the greatest trust, are Benoi themselves. Therefore, we can re-iterate the point that the political dynamics of Chechnya, and hence the incidence of corrupt practices, are shaped by modern political-military groupings rather than traditional clan structures.

The Quality of ‘Peace’
It easy to draw comparisons between the Chechnya of today and that of the height of the war: safe to say, one can easily remark on the impact of the reconstruction program being rolled out across the country, most notably in the centre of Grozny (Weir, 2012). Chechen officials have been to remark on the republic’s transformation: Kadyrov himself has even claimed that the situation in Chechnya is ever ‘safer than in England’ (Radio Free Europe/ Radio Liberty, 2013). Assessments by Western commentators have noted the situation: Mark Gaelotti has stated that, ‘considering the rise of chaos in the rest of the North Caucasus, the irony is that Chechnya is a haven of peace’ (Barry & Schwirtz, 2009). But many of these same commentators have held reservations, and upon scratching the veneer reveal that what exists in Chechnya today may not be the Western archetype of a functioning society i.e. in terms of our discussion, one with low levels of corruption/ high levels of societal trust: In Chechnya, money solves everything. Money buys you a degree in medicine even if you cannot give an injection...You can become a university professor even if you have nothing to teach. In a country where young people under the age of 30 can have impressive careers and quasi-magically become representatives, deans, and Heroes of Russia, there is nothing money cannot buy - it is only a matter of price.

Those with less money buy pensions and benefits. Those with more money buy posts that give them power over the distribution of pensions and benefits. But the problem is not corruption per se, but the fact that it has somehow become normal. This system undermines the very foundations of society and creates a climate in which those who do not have the opportunity to collect bribes envy those who do, and those who are forced to pay a bribe today will extort one tomorrow if they have the chance (Kurbanova, 2012).

Such a situation is very much a product of the experiences of war: beyond being able to affiliate oneself with a political-military grouping, the only way one can gain protection or access to goods and services is through paying the resource holders, who in the case of Chechnya are usually political-military groupings. It is somewhat of a generalisation to think that Chechnya is awash weapons that can ensure one’s protection. Even during the war, unless one was attached to a large political-military grouping, arming oneself was quite a struggle (Tishkov, 2004). Money is thus the only guarantor of survival. With the ascendance of the Kadyrov political-military grouping to power, the same system prevailed, now in the guise of state institutions.

It is easy to bemoan such a system, but there are perhaps some interesting outcomes from said system that are not recognisable when perceived through a Western perspective. As we have stated, the ultimate goal of peacekeeping is to restore societal trust that is shattered from war. Regaining such trust through corrupt practices may seem unorthodox, but one can argue that the endemic nature of corrupt and the necessity to engage in it means there must some trust gained
through complicity. If corruption permeates all levels of state function, then so too must varying degrees of patron-client relationship. What cannot be guaranteed in such a situation however are assurances of fair exchange, and the presence of an unbiased regulator to rectified any injustice.

Gaining an incite into public perceptions in Chechnya is a good way to gauge how corruption affects society and everyday life. Between December 2008 and May 2009, a survey was carried out by the Caucasus Times in each of the capitals of the republics constituting the North Caucasian Federal District. This survey found that 83% of respondents were repeatedly exposed to corruption. In addition, the results of the survey also suggest that the most corrupt are the local government (45%) and federal agencies (33%). With regard to Chechnya itself, approximately 30% of respondents consider that the source of corruption is the problem of its citizens recurrently engaging in corrupt exchanges as a simpler and faster way to get hold of goods and services they need.

When answering as to which areas of the public sector where corruption is most prominent, the respondents listed: law enforcement (53%), higher education (51%), health services (49%), judiciary (39%) and tax agencies (28%) (Tekushev, 2009). A further survey was conducted by the Higher School of Economics at Moscow’s National Reserch University in 2010. According to respondents in Chechnya, the situation with regard to corrupt practices had deteriorated in recent years. As the survey data reveals, 34% of respondents recognised some increase in the diffusion of corruption arrangements, and 49% of respondents confessed they were expecting corruption to intensify in the future. Only 4% were optimistic and believed that situation with corruption in Chechnya and in the wider region of the North Caucasus was going to improve.

What was particularly interesting about this the survey was its coverage of questions and responses regarding the links between corruption and culture. The survey revealed that most respondents in Chechnya do not agree that there is a direct link between corruption and culture in the North Caucasus. Rather, the respondents acknowledge, there are corrupt officials who abuse their mandate and office privileges for private gain (60%). The problem of fighting corruption is thus a problem engraied in the lack of any real concernment of authorities against it (20%) (HSE, 2010). The respondents admitted that living in the North Caucasus is impossible without paying bribes. Socio-economic and political exchange based corrupt arrangements not only enrich the elite, but also help to enhance the safety and wellbeing of ordinary citizens by providing them with access to education and health services. This view is shared by 60% of respondents. The remaining 40% agreed with the statement that the entire society is built on ‘quid pro quo’ relationships (HSE, 2010). Whilst by no means an optimal state, corruption has ingrained itself so much so that it is a function of Chechen society, and in many ways such activities garner trust through said ‘quid pro quo’ and patron-client relationships. Though this takes place without adjudication, the character of such
relationships means that those paying bribes have certain expectations about goods or services due. In terms of peace, it means there is no longer a strong reason to engage in, or be subject to violence in order to achieve the necessities of survival. It is this semblance of peace, that allows Russian and Chechen officials to claim that the republic is on a positive path.

Whilst the experiences of ordinary citizens matter, assessing the quality of ‘peace’ in Chechnya is best informed by looking at what affect corruption has had on those those most capable of commencing conflict: those Russell has labelled the ‘entrepreneurs of violence’ (Russell, 2007). The radical Islamic insurgency, which has spread beyond the Chechen borders, is the most ever present threat to the ‘peace’ in the republic. The Islamic insurgency is still able able to attract many young male fighters to its ranks, in spite of claims made by Kadyrov that they are a spent force (Fuller, 2014). Even though many former boeviki have been persuaded to join the ranks of loyalist forces through financial opportunities, poverty, youth unemployment and the desire to attain a sense of dignity have driven many young men to go ‘into the woods’ and join the insurgency (Kurbanova, 2012). Whilst certainly not a ‘spent’ force as shown by the numerous suicide bombings and ambushes that take place both in the North Caucasus and the Russian heartland, the ability of the insurgency to make a serious bid for overthrowing the Kadyrov government is questionable given the strength and support given to the pro-Russian Chechens, the extent to which they are targeted by loyalist security forces and the distaste many in Chechnya’s population have for the extreme form of Islam they extoll. One might also query how intractable and resitant to corruption the insurgency can be: in an interview conducted by Reuters, a senior commander of the Islamic resistance claimed funds had been channelled to them by the Chechen leadership for ‘insurance’ purposes (Radio Free Europe/ Radio Liberty, 2010).

The other major potential for violence stems from within the pro-Russian camp: as we have discussed, former rebels constitute a significant part of the security forces in the republic today, and we must also consider the existence of political-military groupings that rival the kadyrovst. In terms of the former boeviki, the incentives gained from their current positions in the loyalist camp surpass the alternatives offered, as then US Ambassador William J Burns summarised: The thousands of guerrillas who have joined [the] militias have by now lost all ideological incentive. Since they already run the country, they feel themselves, not the Russians, to be the masters, and are not responsive to...nationalist calls; Basayev's [Wahabbist] message has even less appeal to them. Even if their current leaders are eliminated, all they will need is a new warlord, easily generated from within their organizations, and they can continue on their current paths (The Guardian, 2010).
The attractive salaries, the significant opportunities for financial gain through corrupt practices and the positions of power offered to the former rebels as part of the loyalist camp means that most have become sedated: whilst they are still armed and capable of violence, few would seek to bring down the established system of rule that proves highly beneficial to them. The potential for serious destabilisation in the republic through major challenges to Kadyrov have dissipated in recent years as the Chechen leader has sought to consolidate his position. On one front, Kadyrov’s main rival grouping led by the Yamadaev brothers has ceased to exist following the assassinations of Sulim and Ruslan (Doukaev, 2009), and the demobilisation of the Russian Defence Intelligence’s ‘Vostok’ battalion they headed (Caucasian Knot, 2008). Kadyrov has also seen off the challenge of Said-Magomed Kakiev. One of the few Chechen militants to support the Russians from the first war onwards, his kakievtsy came to form the Russian Defence Intelligence’s ‘Zapad’ battalion, which in tandem with the Yamadaev’s ‘Vostok’ battalion sought to balance those militia loyal to Kadyrov (Leahy, 2009). Whilst Kakiev escaped the fate of the Yamadaevs, the ‘Zapad’ battalion was likewise disbanded following pressure from Kadyrov, and its commander being forced to assume a role in the Russian military (Doukaev, 2009).

Whilst this vision of ‘peace’ is certainly not perfect in Western eyes, the violence that takes place in Chechnya, either from small scale attacks from the insurgency and that conducted by Kadyrov’s security forces can be considered ‘acceptable’ in the eyes of the Kremlin. What insurgency exists it is being tackled for the most part by Chechen forces, and whilst a significant degree of power and autonomy has been given to the North Caucasian republic, it crucially remains a part of the Russian Federation. The attainment of this relative stabilisation has been in part due a policy of tolerating corruption and state capture, and manipulation of corrupt practices in order to ‘buy off’ potential peace spoilers. The strategy is aggressive: the alternative offered to those unwilling to be brought into the pro-Russian fold is neutralisation through violence and assassination. Yet as evidenced by the relative peace and stability present today, it has been an effective one.

**Corruption in Chechnya and Future Implications**

The question of corruption in Chechnya comes at an uncertain stage both for the republic itself and for the Russian Federation. As was witnessed with the recent annexation of the Crimean peninsula in Ukraine, Putin’s Russia has become an increasingly vivid presence in world affairs. All too much has been made of this as a resurgence of once thought deceased geo-political structures, indeed a new challenge to American dominance over the global political system. Whilst some claims made are exaggerated, no doubt the fallout of the crisis will have significant implications for how the West deals with Russia. Nominally labelled as a ‘counterterrorist’ operation by Putin’s government, the
second war and consequent counterinsurgency activity of recent years has fitted into the West’s narrative of the ‘War on Terror’. The need for good diplomatic ties with Russia for reasons including negotiations with Iran had meant that there was a reluctance to highlight other aspects of the Chechen situation, including Kadyrov’s rule and the question of corruption. This is not to say that strong views were felt by the United States on such matters: the WikiLeaks release of US diplomatic cables showed how the American ambassador to Russia viewed Kadyrov as a ‘warlord pure and simple’, and that sound ‘policy in Chechnya is likely to continue to founder in the swap of corruption, Kremlin infighting, and succession politics’ (Harding, 2010). Whilst such views had the intention of remaining hidden, future remarks are perhaps less likely to remain coealed. Should relations between the West and the Russian Federation continue to sour and stagnate, uninhibited criticism against Kadyrov’s endemically corrupt regime, the existence of which rests upon Putin’s endorsement, is set to be ‘free game’ for Western officials. As we have noted, the strategy of ensuring ‘peace’ in Chechnya employed by the Russian Federation is outside the purview of international law, yet this does not restrict Western commentators from making comparisons with a peacekeeping scenario that does, and from pressuring the Kremlin to concede greater international involvement in the republic’s future (Draganova, 2005). Whilst there is a seeming futility in such calls, they would nonetheless draw international attention to the incidence of corruption and other issues in the North Caucasian republic.

Interestingly, questions have been also been raised as to the longevity of Kadyrov as leader of Chechnya (Fuller, 2014). A draft law recently submitted to the State Duma allows the Kremlin to delegate authority to regions over various areas that were until recently under the remit of the federal centre. In addition, the new law would also give the Kremlin the ability to dismiss any regional leaders who failed to live up to these new responsibilities. Whilst many in both Russian and Chechnya have expressed concern over Ramzan Kadyrov’s tenure as leader, given his extravagant lifestyle and former opposition to the Russians, his ability to ensure some semblance of order in the republic labelled him a necessity for ensuring such conditions continued. Indeed, the thousands of police and security personnel under his control were an integral part of the security operation for the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi that largely focused on preventing terrorist attacks conducted by the Islamic insurgency still present in the North Caucasus. Yet not only did the event take place without incident, FSB director Aleksandr Bortnikov thanked the security services of several countries for their support in preventing planned attacks targeting the games, with no such input being accredited to any Chechen agencies (Caucasian Knot, 2014). In a similar move, the FSB director failed to mention any Chechen support in last year’s assassination of the leader of the Islamic insurgency, Doku Umarov (Caucasian Knot, 2014). Signs of Kremlin irritation towards the Chechen leader had
also emerged in late 2012 when Kadyrov advanced territorial claims over neighbouring Ingushetia. This incident is thought to be the reason behind Kadyrov’s absence at Putin’s address to the Federation council in December 2012 (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 2012). Much of this is speculation: for the most part federal pronouncements on the Chechen republic are largely positive. For example, the head of Russia’s Audit Chamber Sergei Stephasin has praised the post-conflict reconstruction efforts in Chechnya under Kadyrov’s leadership, characterising the republic as one of the regions in the Federation where subsidies are utilised with maximum effectiveness (Fuller, 2014). But nevertheless, the shadowy nature of Russian politics means that unveiling the true status of relations between the Kremlin and Kadyrov are far from certain. The new draft law aligns with the comments made by Maksim Shevchenko that Moscow is adjusting its approach to the North Caucasus: no longer will leaders in the region be given ‘carte blanche’, provided they maintain ‘order and stability’. In future these leaders will be required to promote economic development and ensure they respect the vertikal of power that Putin heads (Fuller, 2014). Should this approach come to apply increasingly to Kadyrov, the prevalence of corruption in the republic could very well become an issue that the Kremlin demands reform on. Then President Medvedev raised concerns that corruption in the North Caucasus is a major problem, the urgency with which it must be tackled being a matter of national security (Vesti, 2010).

Conclusion

Having conducted a review of the recent literature, this dissertation has found a substantial body of work that demonstrates that conventional ideas regarding the role of corruption in post-conflict scenarios to be unbalanced. Contrary to the view that corrupt practices in post-conflict scenarios undermine peacebuilding and reconstruction efforts, a tolerance for corruption to take place can be a boon for peace-seekers. By allowing former warring elites to assume power with the understanding that they may use their new positions to take advantage of financial opportunities presented via corruption, the likelihood of further conflict begins to diminish. This diminishment occurs as formerly dissenting elites and factions leaders gain a vested interest in preserving a system that allows for greater enrichment, both for themselves and for those who express fealty to them.

As this dissertation has shown, such an understanding of the import of corruption has been successfully applied to peacebuilding efforts in Chechnya. An investigation into the trends of the Chechen Wars, inter-war period and counterinsurgency operation show that corrupt practices have been present. This demonstrates that an underlying cause of the protraction of the conflict was due to the financial opportunities available in the turbulence of war. The conditions of the second conflict, with the rise of radical Islamic factions over secular nationalists in the Chechen camp, the
Chechenisation policy could be renewed under Putin. The acceptance of corrupt practices (effectively bankrolled the Kremlin) amongst the new loyalist Chechen elites and their followers became a key facet of the success of the Chechenisation policy. The Kadyrov family, holding great sway over the majority Sufi population of the republic, assume leadership of the new pro-Russian government.

As well as allowing them to stem the tide of Wahhabist influence infiltrating the republic, the Kadyrovs and their followers were able to gain considerable sums through the siphoning off of the large funds sent from Moscow for reconstruction purposes. Chechenisation was translated to lower levels, as these same subsidies were used to offer financial incentives to those boeviki willing to realign. These incentives carried over into the positions they would hold in the loyalist security and government agencies. Through these incentives, integration into the pro-Russian authorities has effectively removed the ideological predilections once held. The system in place, which both implicitly condones and institutionalises corrupt practices, means that few would have a desire to see a return to large-scale conflict. Bringing former rebels into the fold has meant that Moscow has been able to ‘outsource’ continuing counterinsurgency operations back to Chechens. For the Russians, tolerating and funding corrupt activity in the republic has meant Putin and the siloviki goals of retaining sovereignty and the integrity of the Russian state have been achieved.

This dissertation has also argued that contrary to the prevailing literature, postconflict societies where corruption is endemic can garner societal trust through the complicity of engaging in corrupt practices and the patron-client/‘quid pro quo’ relationships that are inherent in them. Chechnya has shown to be an exemplar of such a situation. The infiltration of corruption into state institutions and other sectors means that many Chechens view engaging in corruption as a necessary means of gaining goods and services, and a recognition that such engagements are ‘quid pro quo’ in nature. Chechen citizens also benefit from the cyclical nature of corruption in the republic as the ‘unofficial tax’ payable to the Kadyrov family go towards funding the reconstruction programs in the republic. In these ways, the tolerance of corruption can also be said to be of benefit to the general population, as well as elites, in post-conflict settings like Chechnya.

Questions still remain as to the future of Chechnya, as do questions about the role of corruption in the republic’s future. Speculations as to a new approach being adopted by the Kremlin towards the federation’s regions means the endemic corruption present in Chechnya could under increasing scrutiny, with the issue being used to realign Ramzan Kadyrov and the Chechen leadership under Putin’s power vertikal. Shifts in Russia’s diplomatic relations resultant of the Ukrainian Crisis could also mean that corruption in Chechnya becomes a cause for international pressure from the West.
Regardless, the case of Chechnya has shown that a tolerance for corruption (when used in conjunction with other measures) can have a positive impact in the strive for peace-building and reconstruction efforts in a post-conflict scenario.

Bibliography


