

# **EVOLUTION OF ETHNO-NATIONAL SEPARATISM IN CHECHNYA: FROM AUTOCHTHONOUS LIBERATION STRUGGLE TO TOTAL WAR**

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Submitted to  
Central European University  
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In partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

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Word Count: 17090

Budapest, Hungary  
2010

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## **ABSTRACT**

Among the ethnical conflicts which occurred after the disintegration of the USSR and the breakup of the world's bipolar order, the conflict in Chechnya proved to be the most large-scale that had ever been witnessed on the territory of the former Soviet Union. Russia had to encounter a new type of local conflict on its territory, threatening its integrity and sovereignty. Initially begun with the demands for the recognition of independence and national self-determination, the Chechen separatist project unexpectedly altered its goals and the substance of its struggle during the continuous confrontation with the Russian federal center. From the ethno-national discourse and liberation tasks, the Chechen Resistance changed over to the radical Islamic doctrine employed as an ideological platform of struggle. The causes and factors that brought about this evolution have remained disputable and not sufficiently explored to the present time. The aim of my research consists in analyzing this transformation of the Chechen ethno-national separatism in the context of the political thought of Carl Schmitt and in the light of his works devoted to the explanation of the role of the irregular fighter and the significance of sovereign power and new forms of enmity in the changing world political order.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Professor Alexander Astrov, my thesis supervisor, for his invaluable help and guidance in the preparation of this work, for his confidence in me and his instructive feedback in all controversial aspects of my research.

Also, I want to express my gratitude to the Department of International Relations and European Studies for supporting my field research trip and for offering me an opportunity to plunge into the absorbing environment of my research topic.

I would also like to express my special thanks to Dr. Ekaterina Sokirianskaia for her invaluable help in my research, as well as for her essential support and advice without which my field research trip to Chechnya would not have been so safe and efficient.

Finally, I would like to express my warmest thanks to all human rights activists who helped me during my field trip, and to my interviewees for their trust and readiness to recount the past events.

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# INTRODUCTION

The decline of the international political order based on the sovereign nation-state system in the twentieth century brought to serious challenges to the traditional norms of international law and the adopted principles of waging wars. The changing nature of military operations, the obsolescence of the former routine of conflicts between equal states and the emergence of threats emanating from non-state actors have significantly transformed the existing Eurocentric perceptions of war and enmity and become symptoms of the changing world order.

The new conflicts of modernity are characterized by distinctly partisan nature. Under these circumstances, the state has lost its exclusive entitlement to declare war that the post-Westphalian system and the whole framework of international law were founded on. New forms of war have created challenges to the legitimacy of state power and to the liberal democratic legal order oriented toward the capacity of recognizing and fighting the just enemy. In the circumstances when the state has no longer an overriding monopoly on the legitimacy of violence, the crisis of the international law becomes the most apparent and dramatic.

In response to the new threats, states have chosen the way of restricting law for the sake of restoration and preservation of order. In this process, the political space loses its content and destination, its instrumentality turning into a mere set of emergency actions aimed at restoring order, these measures being permanently maintained for preservation of sovereignty. In this regard, the operation of law in the environment of continuing emergency

may become restricted by sovereign power. The process when state of emergency becomes a norm in a threatening situation has turned to be a characteristic feature of the political system of modernity. However, the space of law in the conditions of permanent emergency has ceased to be unequivocal, since the force of law does not assume of exceptions and limitations imposed by sovereign power. In the contexts of an armed conflict, when norms of international law and civil liberties are victimized by the state for the sake of maintaining order, the political space becomes diffused, and the distinctions between making war and carrying out police operations, between true combatants and hard-core criminals are effaced.

Taking emergency measures under the rule of a sovereign was termed as 'state of exception', the expression that was for the first time introduced by the German theorist Carl Schmitt, one of the most prominent representatives of political thought who anticipated the changing of the character of waging war and the pattern of the existing political order in today's world. In his works, Carl Schmitt predicted the preconditions leading to the dissolution of the existing order, a dramatic consequence of which was a change of the notion of enmity under the conditions of the state of exception.

The real enemy of the Westphalian system is currently being replaced by a criminalized figure of the bandit and terrorist who is intentionally ousted from the space of international law and order in his confrontation with the state. Thus, the state deprives the non-state actor and irregular fighter of his status of an equal adversary, a real enemy, this denoting that the latter is hence bereaved of the protection by international provisions of law. Through the process of sovereign power's discrimination of the combatants of the enemy, the essence of the antagonist has changed from the 'just enemy' of the 'jus publicum Europaeum' to the criminalized and de-humanized enemy of today who is condemned to annihilation. In such a

manner, modern states willfully deprive the non-state actor of his legitimate space of struggle, and, hence, his resistance of the political purport and meaning by downgrading irregular combatants and declaring exceptional and emergency measures.

The theoretical paradigms of Carl Schmitt assume a special importance nowadays in view of the increasing threat of asymmetrical conflicts and due to the proclaimed War on Terror. In the conditions of waging this new kind of warfare and constructing a new world order, the distinction between the figure of the irregular fighter as the last defender of his land and that of the radical terrorist as an absolute threat to humankind becomes more and more obliterated, and these notions are factually placed on the same shelf.

The given work is devoted to analysis of the Chechen conflict as one of the most controversial contestations in the post-Cold War era. A distinctive process that predestined the ultimate outcome of the conflict was a transformation of the figure of the representative of the Chechen Resistance from the real partisan and defender of his land, as per Schmitt, to a terrorist seized by the idea of total war. The Chechen conflict found itself incorporated into the discourse of the 'War on Terror', although it started as a classical ethno-political separatist conflict based on cession claims. Thus, the main aim of the work consists in studying the causes behind and factors of this transformation by placing the Chechen conflict in the context of worldwide tendencies and changes in the categories and forms of military activities and alterations in the practice of international law.

The first theoretical part of the investigation deals with analyzing the works of Carl Schmitt, examining the categories of sovereign power, state of exception and the figure of the partisan

as the basic theoretical tools enabling to interpret the nature of the Chechen Resistance. The second part of the work is allotted to empirical analysis of Russian discourse during the first and second war campaigns in Chechnya, as well as to evaluation of the internal transformation of the Chechen Resistance in the context of the sustained asymmetrical confrontation with Russia and the striving of the Chechens to achieve the legitimate status of the struggle.

## **Contribution and Importance**

Despite the enormous number of research works devoted to the analysis of the Chechen conflict, the reasons behind Chechen separatism and its consequences yet remain debatable and controversial. The efforts devoted to the analysis of the conflict, as a rule, represent descriptive analysis and describe the current of the events, the previous history of the clash and the developments in their temporal extension, as well as explore the role of decision-makers and the factors of the escalation of the conflict. Several books containing the fullest description of the stages of the Chechen conflict and of the period between the two war campaigns became the basic source used while preparing the outline of the present investigation.<sup>1</sup>

Furthermore, it was necessary to consider two more groups of contributions relevant to the present investigation. The first group includes studies devoted to the analysis of small wars

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<sup>1</sup> See Valery Tishkov, Carlotta Gall and Thomas de Waal, Moshe Gammer, Gail Lapidus, Anatol Lieven

and to the theory of asymmetrical conflict, which enables to incorporate the conflict in Chechnya into the context of asymmetrical wars.<sup>2</sup>

Another group of works explores the first and second Chechen campaigns in the geopolitical context, as well as their impact on the changing of political equilibrium in the Caucasian region and on the modification of the vectors of Russian domestic and foreign policy.<sup>3</sup>

However, despite the availability of an enormous quantity of books and investigations in this subject area, they rather lack clear and precise interpretation of the transformation of Chechen ethno-national separatism and of the transition toward the radical ideology of Salafism, as well as the consequences of this transformation in the context of the global world order and the challenges to international law, as an obvious symptom of the changes in the nature of modern warfare. It appears apparent to me that the processes that took place in the course of the conflict between Russia and the insurrectionary Chechnya may be interpreted by means of the theoretical categories of Carl Schmitt who anticipated these changes as early as the last century, which have become manifest only by now.

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<sup>2</sup> See Ivan Safranchuk, Mark Kramer, Robert M. Cassidy,

<sup>3</sup> See Sergei Markedonov, Aleksei Malashenko and Dmitry Trenin, Aleksei Arbatov

# Chapter 1: Sovereign Power and the Figure of the Partisan in Modern Politics

Creating and sustaining political order as a basis for providing and securing human life has been the most vital issue of political theory throughout its history. Many philosophers, such as Aristotle, Machiavelli, Hobbes and Montesquieu, studied and interpreted what factors contributed to constituting political order and what conditions created a foundation for implementing it. The wars of the twentieth century became real challenges to the theoretical interpretation of the notion of political order. The incipient process of the disintegration of nation-states after World War I, the severe crisis of the system of international relations, particularly in the domain of war and peace legislation and the subsequent catastrophe of World War II made scholars rethink the significance of sovereign power, as well as the operation of the space of law in the conditions of *extremus necessitates casus*<sup>4</sup>. Carl Schmitt who witnessed the rise and downfall of Weimar Republic described in his writings how the power of the state and the instrumentality of law manifest themselves at the borderline between normalcy and exception.

Schmitt anticipated the main dilemma of modernity regarding the correlation of political order and an emergency situation when the political comes out properly in the time of a crisis when exceptional powers come into force in order to restore the state of legal normalcy. Schmitt and later on Webber and Agamben treated the state of emergency as occupying the first place and assumed that ‘the exception is more interesting than the rule’.<sup>5</sup> In conditions when an exception overrides the rule of law, ‘the pure politics’ of modernity shows itself as a

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<sup>4</sup> Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology. Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1988), 10

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, 15

disturbing tendency of today's political order basis.<sup>6</sup> While analyzing the nature of an exceptional situation, Schmitt rests in many ways on the legacy of the Thomas Hobbes and his theory of sovereign power and its role in establishing and sustaining political order.

In Hobbes's theory of sovereignty and order, the state of war of all against all and total anarchy can be overcome only by the judgment of supreme power. Every member of society should obey the will of the sovereign in exchange for the preservation of one's life and security. 'Authority and not truth makes law' in Hobbesian understanding of political order.<sup>7</sup> By way of a social contract, the sovereign monopolizes use of force and a right of law and judgment. And the sovereign can suspend the rule of law for the sake of providing order and security.

Every member should comply with the will of the sovereign in order to be protected and guarded. Accordingly, the will of the sovereign should rank the highest of all and be not subject to anyone else's judgment or supervision. It must reside above all laws, as they are established and validated by this authority.<sup>8</sup> Whatsoever form this sovereignty might assume, it is intrinsically boundless. Hobbes is an adherent of strong absolute state authority, because in his thinking it is solely this power that can eliminate all remnants of 'the state of nature' and settle all disputes and insoluble contradictions. It is also able to overcome extreme conditions threatening society either from outside or emerging within a state as irrepressible conflicts of civil wars.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 12

<sup>7</sup> George Schwab, *The Challenge of the Exception. An Introduction to the Political Ideas of Carl Schmitt between 1921 and 1936* (Berlin, Duncker & Humbolt, 1970), 45

<sup>8</sup> Michael C. Williams, *Hobbes and International Relations: Reconsideration. International Organization*, Vol.50, No.2 (Spring, 1996), 231-236

<sup>9</sup> Ibid

For Hobbes, it is an agreement between people and the sovereign that is resorted to in order to put an end to war of all against all and provide political order. Guided to a large extent by the mindset of Hobbes, Schmitt proceeds further. According to him, there can be no genuine agreement between the sovereign and his subjects as there is nothing that can be agreed about. As per Schmitt, the political does not manifest itself in the undivided authority of the sovereign and the legitimacy of his power through an agreement with society. Rather, it is a decision and not a discussion that the political requires.<sup>10</sup> And the decision in its turn does not exhibit in the conditions of normalcy but in the environment of a crisis and a threat to the existing order. Through his decision, the sovereign achieves a monopoly on power and legitimacy and can exercise his will with respect to restriction of law in order to resolve some exceptional issue. The sovereign can thus create and decide an exceptional situation simultaneously, as he acts 'inside' and 'outside' the law.<sup>11</sup> His ruling is subject to norms and at the same time he is vested with a right to intimate emergency measures and temporarily suspend the provisions of law for the sake of preserving the order. As Schmitt puts it: "He stands outside the normally valid legal order and yet belongs to it, because he is competent to make the decision as to whether the constitution can be suspended entirely".<sup>12</sup>

Thus, according to Schmitt, a characteristic manifestation of such a political action was demonstrated by Article 48 of Weimar Constitution in compliance with which the president could temporarily suspend the rule of law and 'exercise his power adequately to restore order'.<sup>13</sup> In this manner, the notion of sovereignty itself and the whole implication of its

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<sup>10</sup> Schmitt: Political Theology, 5

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 7

<sup>12</sup> Ibid

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, 11

legality is based on the possibility of decisionism and ‘it is precisely the exception that makes relevant the subject of sovereignty’ and it is what renders his power unlimited’.<sup>14</sup>

However, at a later date Schmitt referred to an entity that is capable of bidding defiance to the will of the sovereign and the legality of its power. In his work “The Theory of the Partisan” he comprehensively investigates how both of these categories – the state of exception and the figure of the partisan – correlate with the idea of restricting the operation of law. For Schmitt, there exists an obvious antithesis between the legitimate power of authority and the illegitimacy of the partisan who is simultaneously a bearer of the political in the Schmittian sense and whose struggle, while remaining outside the space of law, has at the same time its legal meaning. The figure of the partisan, an irregular fighter, appears to be the most controversial as this warrior is the only force which can challenge the will of the sovereign as he exists beyond the sovereign’s authority and by his mere status challenges the whole system of law based solely on the recognition of a equal and legitimate adversary.

In the subsequent sections, I will study the notion of the partisan and examine his place and role in the existing world order. A particular heed will be paid to analyzing the evolution of the figure of the partisan in the context of the changing world order and the crisis of the modern system of International Law.

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 12

## 1.1. The Partisan as Man of Exception in the Existing Order

Despite the emerging threat of worldwide class struggle, the prerogative to declare and wage war belonged to the state over the whole period of history, and the state as the main subject in the framework of the Westphalian system remains the basic form of the organization of the political. However, the phenomenon of guerilla war failed to fit into this established order, yet partisans were capable of organizing politico-military struggle regardless of and contrary to the will of state power. The significance of irregular partisan war was in many ways rethought because the figure of “a soil defender” represented a new category, his own paradigm of the political and his own way of subdividing into enemies and friends. For all his exclusion from the world order and established rules of waging war, the partisan has become increasingly prevalent since the time of the national guerilla against the Napoleonic invasion and grown into a serious force of internal resistance in world wars. By his mere existence, the partisan has challenged the whole traditional European concept of war and made reconsider the conception of the political.<sup>15</sup>

Following the viewpoints of Carl Clausewitz, Schmitt makes the partisan a special category of a fighter and a political figure who is intrinsically no warrior in the formal meaning of this notion.<sup>16</sup> His struggle is not regulated by the system of international law which renders his war not entirely real and informal. In the existing system of the classical models of regular

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<sup>15</sup> Carl Schmitt, *The Theory of the Partisan : Intermediate Commentary On the Concept of the Political* (University of Michigan, 2004), available at [<http://www.scribd.com/doc/8005192/Theory-of-the-Partisan-by-Dr-Carl-Schmitt>]

<sup>16</sup> David Chandler, *War Without End(s): Grounding the Discourse of ‘Global War’*, *Security Dialogue*, Vol 40 (2009)

European interstate wars, the partisan is a strange phenomenon, ‘an exception’ to parties in regular warfare.

The exclusiveness of the figure of the partisan is rethought by Schmitt based on the fact that in the context of the existing world order the partisan contends the state law of determining an enemy, because he stays beyond the framework of the prevailing system of entitlement to declaring war, which belongs to the state. He himself can create a situation of emergency and define the category of the enemy whom he opposes, although this right belongs solely to the sovereign, by convention. Staying beyond the scope of international law of war, he is aware of himself as a fighter, rightless and excluded from the space of law, without reckoning on mercy and the observation of the treatment rules of prisoners of war.<sup>17</sup>

According to Schmitt, the prerogative of determining an enemy, internal or external, is an inalienable substance of political action, on which the category of statehood as such is based. It is with this capacity of differentiating between an enemy and a friend that the political begins and, conversely, it is with a loss of this ability that the political ends up. As Schmitt puts it, in accordance with the formed political order only the sovereign enjoys the right and authority to determine an enemy, be he an external adversary in the form of a sovereign state or an internal antagonist. Defining the friend/enemy dichotomy presents, thus, a foundation of a political decision and is essential for any manifestation of the political as such. If the state is a political body, then the definition of its enemy constitutes its principle of identity, “hence it is the task of the state to be clear about who its internal and external enemies are”.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Carl Schmitt: *The Theory of the Partisan*, 7

<sup>18</sup> Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political* (University of Chicago Press: 1996), p. 25

Understanding the category of the enemy, thus, presupposes that a certain community of people countervails another similar alliance. Therefore, only a public enemy can be a real enemy. War that assumes the existence of “an external adversary” constitutes no aim or content of politics, yet this factor is always present as “real possibility”.<sup>19</sup>

Determining a real enemy enables the sovereign to exercise his will and power, and thus the notion of war becomes a degree of legal and political ordering, as for Schmitt ‘good enmity makes good stability’.<sup>20</sup> But the real enemy in terms of the existing traditional order means that war can be waged against an equal nation-state under the norms of international law. Being a figure excluded from this system and the norms of international law, the partisan is a priori barred from the notion of the real enemy, but at the same time he remains a force which it is not possible to ignore.

In such a way, the partisan appears to be that “redundant” figure in the world order that does not fit in with the established system and defies the rules of the game adopted among national sovereign states which ‘subject actual conflicts to certain rules of the game by multilateral agreements’.<sup>21</sup> The partisan who is a priori extralegal and who personifies irregular war, becomes an entity that is withdrawn by the state from the realm of ‘the just enemy’ and placed into the sphere of threat posed to political order, ‘expecting neither justice nor mercy’.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Chantal Mouffe, *The Challenge of Carl Schmitt* (London, Verso: 1999), 9

<sup>20</sup> Ibid

<sup>21</sup> Ibid

<sup>22</sup> Carl Schmitt: *The Theory of the Partisan*, 7

For Schmitt, the international system of law is not capable of recognizing the partisan as a real combatant since the state does not accept him as a public enemy. And the tragedy of partisan struggle consists in that the partisan being a party in the traditional warfare system is doomed to stay beyond the space of law regulated by states, remaining in the sphere of the criminal. The paradox of the figure of the partisan, therefore, lies in the fact that though the partisan's fighting remains entirely legitimate in the moral aspect (due to the solely defensive nature of his struggle and owing to the purpose of protecting his own land), in the formal aspect the figure of a people's defender is willfully subverted and ousted into the sphere of the nonlegal and criminal, and therefore the partisan is subject to annihilation. By criminalizing the partisan's struggle, states maintain the formal regularity of classical European interstate war between equal powers for which 'war conducted formally should be considered just on both sides'.<sup>23</sup>

Through the limitation of warfare to duel-like conflicts, states restricted the space of enmity and excluded the possibility of international civil war, as per Schmitt, subordinating war to fulfilling rational tasks.<sup>24</sup> However, later on, in his work "The Nomos of the Earth"<sup>25</sup> Schmitt, while stating a crisis of the existent world order, admits that the category of the 'unjust enemy' and the downgrading of an irregular adversary to a criminal exclude the limitations of war inscribed in modern war laws and result in shaping a new conception of the enemy. This new form of enmity as being a total enemy and 'an enemy of humanity' threatens to lead to a transformation of limited war waged by legally equal sovereign powers into total war.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> William E. Scheuerman, Carl Schmitt. *The End of Law* (Boston, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers: 1999), 146-147

<sup>24</sup> Carl Schmitt: *The Theory of the Partisan*, 7

<sup>25</sup> Carl Schmitt, *The Nomos of the Earth in the International Law of the Jus Publicum Europaeum* (New York, Telos Press: 2003)

<sup>26</sup> Ibid

In the conditions of the criminalization and depoliticization of combatants by the state, the actions of the non-state actor are described as criminal and inhumane, which entitles the sovereign to maintain emergency measures and thus suspend the operation of law and treat an irregular fighter not as a regular combatant but ‘a criminal enemy’ of all mankind or a threat to community order. The only countermeasure of the partisan that enables him not to slip into criminality and that vests him with legitimacy in his confrontation with the sovereign power is his telluric nature and his attachment to his own land that predefine the defensive nature of the partisan’s war.<sup>27</sup> However, when the partisan turns from defensive to offensive struggle and resorts to war which is not limited by the mere protection of his land or when the main task of his struggle - flinging back the invader of his land and sheathing the sword - changes, the partisan switches over to absolute enmity, especially frightful and uncompromising, in case his new aim becomes the following of some abstract radical idea.

## **1.2. Transformation of the Real Partisan into the Figure of the Modern Terrorist**

The figure of the partisan as the hero of the national guerrilla, who was not recognized by international law and by the rules of waging war, was projected by Schmitt onto the categories of the friend/enemy dichotomy and the concept of the political. Schmitt not only defined the figure of the partisan as particularly political and legitimate, he discerned in him the serious organized power of people’s resistance, capable of defying the prevailing might of the adversary represented by the legitimate authority of a sovereign state.

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<sup>27</sup> Carl Schmitt: The Theory of the Partisan, 13

The image of the real partisan for Schmitt is constituted by a peasant defending his land from an invader, when the forces of the regular army have been defeated or seized by occupational powers. Schmitt argued that irregular partisan war had become a special force in opposing colonial occupation of the nineteenth century.<sup>28</sup> And over the period of the twentieth century, the power of partisan war preserved its significance, because it was capable of confronting the asymmetrical force of the adversary owing to its autochthonous defensive nature. This peculiarity of the partisan made him a practically invulnerable opponent whom it was possible to defeat, but impossible to conquer.

For the genuine partisan, the struggle can only be defensive and limited by the territory he fights for. After the aggressor has been defeated, the fighter of the irregular army grounds his arms and returns to the category of a peaceful peasant. In this defensive, or as Schmitt puts it, *telluric* nature of the irregular fighter consists the legitimate power of the partisan carrying on his struggle beyond the space of international law. The autochthonous fighter, according to Schmitt, is a genuine ‘national and patriotic hero’ who always knows his real enemy and whose legitimacy is based on his commitment to the land and order that he defends.<sup>29</sup> The struggle of the partisan remains entirely territorialized and limited, he possesses mobility, acting on his own land, and rests upon the support of the populace, continuing to be at the same time ‘one of the last sentries of the earth’.<sup>30</sup>

One more significant feature of the partisan which, according to Schmitt, which gives him power and ability of achieving headway in asymmetrical confrontation with the state’s might, is his intensively political reasoning of fighting, differentiating him from the figure of the

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid, 3-6

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, 13

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, 20

pirate and from the common criminal. He remains a political creature who has essential “relation to some kind of fighting, warring, or politically active party or group”.<sup>31</sup>

Yet, as Schmitt notes, herein consists not only the advantage but also the vulnerability of the partisan, which is fatal for his struggle. In the context of the state of exception, the legitimacy of partisan struggle is deliberately discriminated and depoliticized by regular state power. The task of the state involves opposing irregular partisan fighting through bereaving it of genuine legitimacy, ousting the partisan into the lawless space of exception where he is presented as a mere bandit and where he is deprived of all rights and, most importantly, of the political substance of his struggle.<sup>32</sup>

In order to oppose his criminalization and not to lose political commitment, the partisan may accept the support and intercession of a third party. Schmitt discerns the tragedy of the partisan in the fact that the figure of the real autochthonous partisan is doomed to transformation and falling under the influence of advancing technological progress on the one hand, and the control of some third engaged party on the other hand. In the conditions of preponderance of force and impossibility of achieving asymmetry to his advantage in the confrontation with the state, the partisan submits to the influence of the third force which Schmitt defines as a party interested in employing the partisan in the service of the third party's concerns. Schmitt argues that such process of engaging the partisan by the third power took place in the case of the revolutionary struggle in Russia and the Civil War in China when Lenin and Mao Tse-Tung fully utilized the extraordinary power and mobility of partisans, turning the defender of his land into a radical revolutionary:

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid, 21

<sup>32</sup> Ibid

“The autochthonous defenders of the home soil, who died *pro aris et focus*, the national and patriotic heroes who went into the woods, all elemental, telluric force in reaction to foreign invasion: it has all come under an international and transnational central control that provides assistance and support, but only in the interest of its own quite distinct world-aggressive purposes and that, depending on how things stand, either protects or abandons. At this point the partisan ceases to be essentially defensive. He becomes a manipulated cog in the wheel of world-revolutionary aggression. He is simply sent to slaughter, and betrayed of everything he was fighting for, everything the telluric character, the source of his legitimacy as an irregular partisan, was rooted in”<sup>33</sup>

Schmitt maintains that the partisan who fought exclusively in the name of the defense of his land and against occupation, could formulate a clear conception of the real enemy. Becoming a manipulative force of an abstract revolutionary idea, the partisan loses his ability of determining the real enemy, as well as the genuinely autochthonous nature of his struggle since his war becomes deterritorialized.

For Schmitt, this transformation of the figure of the partisan into a deterritorialized revolutionary was the most important and contradictory. Along with the telluric character of resistance, the new figure of the partisan seized by a revolutionary idea becomes degraded. The political substance of his war is lost, and real enmity gives place to absolute, unlimited and committed enmity. His war grows to be total and absolute due to the lack of political and strategic substance. As Schmitt puts it: “Annihilation thus becomes entirely abstract and entirely absolute. It is no longer directed against an enemy, but serves only another, ostensibly objective attainment of highest values, for which no price is too high to pay. It is

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid, 40

the renunciation of real enmity that opens the door for the work of annihilation of an absolute enmity’’.<sup>34</sup>

Schmitt is aware of the danger of a change-over to strategic or instrumental use of violence and shifting from the limited war of the *jus publicum Europeum* to total war supported by abstract ideology and not having clear-cut boundaries of war. The menace of global civil war becomes more ominously distinct when the Schmittian deterritorialized revolutionary is compared with the radical terrorist of today.

The figure of the terrorist is perceived today as the figure of an evolved partisan in the epoch of technological progress. However, apart from his tactical partisan techniques of struggle, the modern terrorist is distinguished from the Schmittian real partisan by the fundamental difference in the perception of the enemy. The uncertain vision of the enemy is not only the consequence of the fact that the modern terrorist is detached from his land and deterritorialized in the same way as Schmitt’s revolutionary. The abstract and speculative idea of justice makes no ‘war’ in the proper sense out of the hostilities of the terrorist, because there is no political relationship, no strategic engagement, no intentionality relating means to the ends. His war is total in view of the fact that it does not presuppose any political solution. This is why, the danger of global civil war, against which Schmitt warned, is embodied today by the figure of the evolved committed partisan who has fallen outside the framework of spatial and political struggle and is no more restricted by the necessity for defending his land and the order.

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid, 67

In the subsequent section, I will study how this transformation can be understood in the conditions of the changing of modern war's nature and in the light of the destruction of the traditional system of localized wars of the 'jus publicum Europeum'.

### **1.3. The New Form of Conflict: the Disintegration Symptom of the 'Jus Publicum Europeum'**

The phenomenon of irregular warfare and the increasing significance of the figure of the partisan were for Schmitt a direct consequence of the pervasive changes in the world order and of the crisis of the international system of law. The main substance of this crisis lies in the diffusion of political borders, the universalization of the world order and the retreat from localized wars waged by equal nation-states.<sup>35</sup> In order to explain these developments, Schmitt refers to the notion of Nomos that has spatial and legal content. Resorting to this category, which simultaneously combines in itself the concepts of law and order, Schmitt considered Nomos as the fundamental basis of legal mentality and public law, shaped by European civilization.<sup>36</sup>

The formation of the Eurocentric Nomos was associated with the ending of religious wars.<sup>37</sup> The latter finally assumed the normalizing and formal status after the making of the Westphalian peace that delivered European states from wars of annihilation and strengthened the notion of the legitimate enemy and the rules of making war and treating prisoners of war.

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid, 9

<sup>36</sup> Carl Schmitt: The Nomos of the Earth in the International Law of the Jus Publicum Europaeum, 19

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, 152

For Schmitt, the paramount importance of the Westphalian system appears in that the latter replaced the notion of *justa causa belli* existent in the Middle Ages by the concept of *justus hostis*. This made adversaries coequal, placed them onto equal grounds and ensured the system of conduct norms and regulation of conflicts within European states.<sup>38</sup>

The Westphalian system excluded the possibility of waging war of annihilation, global war, because the very notion of war envisaged an exclusively strategic interest. The significance of the power of the sovereign also plays an important part of a structurizing and organizing force that is entitled to determine the enemy and declare war. However, in “The Theory of the Partisan” Schmitt predicts the nascent threat to the existing Eurocentric Nomos, which consists in the transformation of a canonical duel-like war into a contestation without ‘real enemies’ and devoid of strategic content based on the conflict of interest of political opponents. The limited and regular warfare of Westphalia gave place to armed hostilities of liberal ideology, carried out in the name of lofty humane goals and aiming at creating an image of *just hostis*.<sup>39</sup>

Schmitt forecasts that this fundamental change in the understanding of war will lead to a diffusion of the notion of military involvement as such and to a replacement of the concept of war by police operations. Herein lies ‘the discriminatory concept of war’ due to which enemies become criminal opponents with respect to international law and order.<sup>40</sup> Another danger consists in the devastating effect of the right of sovereign power to declare a state of exception. In the context of the changing conception of waging war, the sovereign’s right is

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid, 50-55

<sup>39</sup> William E. Scheuerman: Carl Schmitt. The End of Law, 152

<sup>40</sup> Carl Schmitt: The Theory of the Partisan, 21

already not of an entirely structuring character, but he may unrestrictedly maintain the state of exception and continuous suspension of law in case of external and internal threats.

The struggle of the irregular fighter under the new conditions is the most tragic, since the partisan resides a priori beyond the legal space specified by the Westphalian system. The modern irregular fighter turns out to be a subject excluded from the legal and legitimate domain. Being a figure that is deliberately criminalized, he falls under the conditions of states' carrying out liberal struggle against inhumane criminals and slips into the space of the state of exception, where he is appears to be an absolutely rightless creature. The more intensively war is made by the irregular fighter, the more opportunities sovereign power has for taking emergency measures and maintaining the state of exception where law is suspended continuously, this leading to a comprehensive change of the existing order.<sup>41</sup>

Giorgio Agamben, who develops the ideas of Schmitt, discerns in these new conditions of the world order a threat of switching over to forms of biopower. He shows that such forms of power, not limited by any law, are conceived in the framework of law as extraordinary and directed at subjects ousted from legal order. According to Agamben, an exceptional situation in this case leads not so much to annihilation as to bringing man down to his bestial, biological functions and to bare life. Gradually, exception penetrates into a polity and becomes a rule. As a result, they construct concentration camps where the space of law is not operable and where the bestialization of men come to the fore.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> William E. Scheuerman: Carl Schmitt. The End of Law, 146

<sup>42</sup> Giorgio Agamben, Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press: 1998)

The partisan and irregular fighter is in this environment the most vulnerable figure facing the power of the state of exception, because he is not considered as a combatant by international law, and his status cannot be referred to that of a civilian either. He becomes an exceptional figure, 'the other', an indication of a crisis of power and order. Sovereign power cannot acknowledge 'the other' and the uncertain figure as an equal and real enemy. Due to this, he gets into an indefinite space, similarly to the situation in which refugees found themselves after World War I, deprived of their rights and ousted from the polity as 'unknown others'.<sup>43</sup> Denying the enemy the very quality of being human proceeds from the impossibility to determine who the enemy is, and accordingly no universal rules of treating this enemy.

Thus, in the conditions of the new world order the image of the enemy is blurred, and power is exercised outside the framework of international law. As a consequence, there follows the formation of the universal world order through non-localized, unlimited and total war. The phenomenon of terrorism became a reflection of the changing world order. The figure that replaced the partisan does not accept the telluric limitation of war. Now struggle is waged for the sake of some abstract categories of universal justice. Formerly the partisan remained a defender of a certain order by virtue of his telluric nature, now the modern terrorist as a symptom of modernity does not admit of the world order and does not extend recognition to political borders. His struggle is absolute, as well as void of political content, because for him there exists no real enemy, but prevails some purposeful orientation to carrying on endless and ideologically abstract struggle.

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<sup>43</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Decline of the Nation-State and the end of the Rights of Man*, in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers: 1975), 267-302

In the context of the enemy image transformation and the replacement of the figure of the partisan by the figure of the radical terrorist, modern local wars that involve the confrontation between non-actors and state authorities seem to be the most interesting phenomena for investigation. The example of the Chechen ethno-separatist project inscribed into the discourse of war against terrorism highlights this main idea about the new forms of conflicts in which there exists no notion of the real enemy and in which irregular resistance is dehumanized and criminalized by sovereign power in a continuous state of emergency. In the second chapter, I will study what influence the above factors exercise on the outcome of similar asymmetrical conflicts under the conditions of the new world order and which significance they have for international law of war and peace.

## **Chapter 2: The War in Chechnya as a Challenge to Law and Order**

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the emergence of new independent nation-states have caused a significant change in the world order and entailed further unpredictable challenges to peace and security in the space of the former USSR. The new historical epoch has brought about unforeseen crises in the changed Russian nationhood that launched its democratic developments. The transition from the centralized system of governance to federalism in Russia proceeded against the background of the emerging interethnic and border conflicts triggered after the dissolution of the USSR. The breakup of the world's bipolar political order did not yield the long-awaited stabilization. A sequence of local conflicts on the ground of ethno-political self-determination manifested a new stage of the history of the world's political order.

In view of these processes, Russia had to deal for the first time with a massive separatist defiance. The Chechen separatist project became a trial for the new Russian statehood. The secession claims advanced by the rebellious Chechnya and the subsequent armed conflict aimed at suppressing separatism - predetermined the internal politics and the foreign-policy strategy of Russia in the fore coming years. As Anatol Lieven remarked, the Chechen conflict became "a tombstone of Russian power".<sup>44</sup> Russia proved to be unprepared for such a challenge, and the Chechen slogans for the secession from Russia aggravated the situation and threatened further with "a parade of sovereignties". These developments in Chechnya were conceived as a process directed at destroying the integrity of the state. However, actions

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<sup>44</sup> Anatol Lieven, *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998)

of the Russian authorities and their futile expectations of resolving the Chechen conflict by “one air-borne regiment in two hours”<sup>45</sup> resulted in that the Northern Caucasus became for many years an eternal front zone and a real nightmare for the nuclear power state which appeared to be unready for resolving such local conflicts on its own territory.

The unexpectedly powerful Chechen Resistance unified by the idea of national self-determination proved to be capable of opposing the military and political pressure on the part of the Russian federal center. And the first stage of this armed conflict demonstrated the vulnerability and inexperience of Russia’s leadership and army in the confrontation with the incommensurably weaker adversary. Subsequently, this fact gave rise to proclaiming ‘the end of Russia as a great military and imperial power’ in the context of the Chechen conflict.<sup>46</sup>

It is necessary to admit that the ideological factor has played a substantial role in this asymmetrical standoff. The striving for the construction of national identity and statehood outside Russia was practically unanimously supported by the Chechen populace after the beginning of military campaign. The confrontation was built on the basis of the discourse of the new self-proclaimed Republic as equal to Russia, as a new state formation, and not as a mere group of marginal insurgents. Chechnya’s aspiration to occupy its own separate and equal position among other independent states ran counter to the Russian attitude of the non-recognition of the Chechens as a legitimate political force and an equal adversary.

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<sup>45</sup> Aleksei Malashenko, Dmitry Trenin, *Russia’s Restless Frontier. The Chechnya Factor in Post-Soviet* (Washington, Carnegie Endowment: 2004), 50

<sup>46</sup> Anatol Lieven, *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power*, 1

Contending the space of the legitimacy of the struggle became one of the crucial factors in the conflict. The main task of the initiators of the Ichkerian revolution was the recognition of their struggle. The recognition by the leadership and the populace of Russia. The recognition by the international public opinion. The separatists understood that the possibility of occupying a certain position in the world's political order implied transition of the internal confrontation with Russia into discourse of the confrontation of equal adversaries. This enabled them to oppose thereby the defamation of their struggle by the Russian federal center which insisted on the fact that Russia was fighting in Chechnya against bandits and rebels.

Chechen separatists continuously stressed that they fought for independence and wanted to be regarded as a state. When in January 1995 a representative of Dzhokhar Dudaev in Brussels was asked if Chechens contemplated a possibility of carrying attacks in Moscow's metro or on electricity plants he answered: "certainly not", adding that since the Chechens wanted to become part of international community they observe international laws and norms.<sup>47</sup> It was fundamentally important to oppose Russian discourse that presented Chechen separatists as bandits and mere criminals and defend the line that the Chechen Resistance represents a unified force and established statehood.

Naming the military conflict as 'restoration of constitutional order'<sup>48</sup> or 'a counterterrorist operation'<sup>49</sup> and not as a war as such determined the character of the conflict as a police operation, opening the possibility for the abuse of privileges of the military and for the

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<sup>47</sup> Yagil Henkin, 'I can fight, army against army' in *Ethno-nationalism, Islam and the State in the Caucasus : Post-Soviet Disorder*. Edited by Moshe Gammer (London, Routledge: 2007), 150

<sup>48</sup> Constitutional court of Russian Federation. Legislative acts, available at [\[http://www.zaki.ru/pagesnew.php?id=11576&page=1\]](http://www.zaki.ru/pagesnew.php?id=11576&page=1)

<sup>49</sup> The Decree of the Russian Federation, dated 23.09.1999 N 1255 c "Measures Directed at Increasing the Effectiveness of Counter-terrorist Operations on the Territory of the Northern Caucasus Region of the Russian Federation"

excessive use of force. This offered both the opportunity and the space for selectively applying the laws of military operations and treatment of prisoners of war creating the space of exception. As a result, the Russian military failed to understand to what end and against what enemy they were fighting. Hence, there followed a moral breakdown of the Russian army.<sup>50</sup> But for the Chechens the notion of the enemy was clearly defined, as well as unanimous was their understanding of the fact that not an armed conflict but a national liberation was going on.<sup>51</sup> The moral and ideological supremacy of the Chechen Resistance fighting for its land resulted in that under the conditions of the unequal power struggle the Chechens managed to win a moral and political victory. The signing of the Khasavyurt agreements and the de-facto independence of Chechnya turned to be Russia's humiliating loss in the local ethno-political conflict.

Many experts and politicians confessed that with the Russian defeat in the first Chechen campaign the myth of the invincibility of the Russian arms in the Caucasus was totally crashed.<sup>52</sup> Some experts have qualified this event as epoch-making and important for understanding the changing of the character of warfare in general and the latter's influence on the new world order. As Lieven puts it: "The victory of Chechens against such tremendous odds is striking moment in military history, with lessons to teach on matters as diverse as military anthropology, national mobilization, the limited effectiveness of airpower, the nature of urban combat and indeed the nature of warfare itself."<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Valery Tishkov, Mikhail Gorbachev, *Life in a War-torn Society. Ethnography of the Chechen war* (California, University of California Press: 2004), 127-132

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid*, 90-102

<sup>52</sup> Sergey Markedonov '15 years of war', Prague Watchdog, available at: [<http://www.watchdog.cz/?show=000000-000024-000004-000017&lang=1>]

<sup>53</sup> Anatol Lieven, *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power*, 2

However, one may say that no real change was yet seen in the nature of warfare after the first Chechen campaign. The actual dramatic transformation in the whole understanding of the enmity and violence of the conflict occurred later on in connection with the principal change of the ideological basis of Chechen separatism. It happened when the nationalistic discourse and the liberation struggle were replaced by the fundamental ideology of radical Islam. This transformation of the Chechen Resistance ushered in a new era in which the conflict in Chechnya has ‘made terrorism a fact of Russian daily life’.<sup>54</sup>

The new ideology of Jihad which penetrated into the war-torn Chechen reality after the end of the first campaign became a powerful mobilizing force and replaced the national idea of the Independent Ichkeria by the concept of total deterritorialized war. The shift toward brutal terrorist techniques, the non-observance of Geneva conventions and the recruiting of foreign mercenaries for the participation in the struggle have encouraged Russian efforts to depict the actions of the federal forces in Chechnya as a vital part of the global struggle against ‘international terrorism’. The legitimacy of the Chechens’ struggle, achieved during the first war campaign, was totally discredited by the consecutive transformation of the image of the real fighter, the defender of his land, into that of the radical terrorist.

Thus, the loss of the significance of the Chechen national idea and of the national liberation struggle has resulted in a complete ideological defeat of the Resistance and led to the latter’s ultimate withdrawal from the space of order and law. The discrimination of the national idea, which determined the outcome of the conflict, was accomplished at the cost of Russia’s pressure and in consequence of the voluntary change-over of the part of Chechen Resistance to radical Islamic ideology. Dramatic transformation of the Chechen separatism from ethno-

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<sup>54</sup> Aleksei Malashenko, Dmitry Trenin: Russia’s Restless Frontier, 2

national liberation struggle into Jihad has demonstrated how the limited warfare can turn into deterritorialized total war without real enemies and political content and no adversary to negotiate with. A new form of enmity as a forerunner of the changing world order and new understanding of violence and category of 'just enemy' brings us to the new understanding of the Schmitt's categories.

## **2.1. The Ethno-National Liberation Struggle for the 'Independent Ichkeria' Project**

During the first military campaign in the ideological discourse, the Chechen Resistance as a non-state actor in the context of confrontation with the Russian state, continually attained power balance. The legitimacy of its struggle was achieved at the expense of utilizing the national idea as an ideological basis of military operations and due to the defensive nature of the strife. At that time, Chechen separatists were distinguished by the feature of the real partisan (according to Schmitt's theory), i.e. being a genuine defender of his land and of the established order. This characteristic formed the telluric basis of the Resistance. At this stage, the main task of the Resistance was opposing the manipulative strategy of the intended de-humanisation of the Resistance pursued by Russian authorities. Russia's major task for reversing the situation and bringing the Resistance out of the legitimate field of struggle consisted in willfully discrediting the national idea and withdrawing the Resistance from the province of 'the just enemy' into the criminal sphere, thereby depriving the Resistance of a foundation for consolidation and of a reliance on the strong national idea. In the following sections I will trace the process of emergence of Chechen ethno-national separatism and the

role of the national liberation idea in confronting state power during the first military campaign.

### **2.1.1. Chechen National Identity Building and the Ichkerian Revolution**

The roots of the Chechen national revolution and ethno-national separatism go far into the history of the complicated relations between Chechnya and the federal center. These tensions were based on the Chechens' historical striving for secession from Russia, based on the recollections of the unjust Caucasian war and the deportation during the Great Patriotic War. In the Chechen cultural domain, there have always been present the idea of national identity and anti-colonial confrontation with Russia. The romanticizing of the proud and rebellious *wainakh* as a symbol of an ideal and an aspiration to freedom has been part of the national self-consciousness of the Chechens.<sup>55</sup> But this trend has been always considered rather as moderate nationalism, and until the early 90s the Chechens were rarely viewed by Russia as "an unhandy nation". Despite their singular freedom-loving mentality, the Chechens managed to integrate in the space of Soviet Russia, shared all incipient difficulties and voluntarily participated in all Soviet initiatives and wars.<sup>56</sup> Even notwithstanding the criminal deportation, by the beginning of the 90s Chechnya remained one of the most problem-free and quietest regions of Russia where Russians and Chechens lived on one territory and did not feel any mutual implacable hatred and antagonism.

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<sup>55</sup> Carlotta Gall, Thomas de Waal, Chechnya: A Small Victorious War (London, Pan Books: 1997), Valery Tishkov, Chechnya: Life in a War-Torn Society, 47-56

<sup>56</sup> Ekaterina Sokirianskaia, Ideology and conflict: Chechen political nationalism prior to, and during, ten years of war, in Ethno-nationalism, Islam and the state in the Caucasus : post-Soviet disorder. Edited by Moshe Gammer (London, Routledge: 2007), 103-111/

The Chechen national discourse began to be a delayed-action bomb only with the onset of the first Chechen campaign when the treacherous and ill-advised actions of Russia united the nation on the basis of the sentiment of injustice and a threat of repeating “the genocide of deportation”. Chechnya’s straining after national identity, thus, became sharp, radical and determined by the memories of the grievances against all those wrongful actions that Russia committed with respect to the Chechen nation.

Various explanations are furnished regarding the causes and the triggering mechanisms of Chechen ethno-national separatism. Most of efforts devoted to the Chechen conflict explain the reasons for the latter by the vivid national sentiment of the Chechens, their peculiar feeling of dignity and unwillingness to stay within the composition of the federal center, as well as by the irrational and insurrectionary nature of the Chechens. Others discern the causes of the origination of separatism in an inevitable conflict of two social-political projects, which was aggravated after the disintegration of the USSR. Initially, the life of the Chechens was regulated by their traditional law – *adat*. The status of every Chechen in the social medium was formed by himself based on achievements in the sphere of morality, ethics, courtesy, self-control and courage. This contradicted to the bureaucratic and hierarchical model of statehood wherein there was no place for *wainakhs*’ world order perceptions.<sup>57</sup> The horizontal social structure of the Chechen society arranged on the basis of the observance of *adat* came into antagonism with the Soviet system artificially enforced from outside.<sup>58</sup> In the social and economical aspects, the Chechens experienced the discrimination on the part of the federal center. This also concerned the suppression of religious freedom and the restriction of the right to use the Chechen language. Another factor of no little importance was the very

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<sup>57</sup> Aleksander Cherkasov, *Chechens: the Image of the Enemy*, in *Chechnya: Life in a war-torn society*. Edited by Tanya Lokshina (Moscow, Demos: 2007), 65-66

<sup>58</sup> Dmitry Furman. “Societies and States”. Andrei Sakharov Fund. Moscow, Poliform – Talburi, 1999.

personality of the charismatic general of the Soviet army Dzhokhar Dudaev who contrived to transform the moderate national discourse into the national revolution.

By playing on the heartstrings of national identity, however, Dudaev failed to unite the whole people for the secessionist opposition to Russia. By the beginning of the armed conflict with Russia, Dudaev did not enjoy the absolute support of the populace. The part of the Chechens preserved the attitudes of moderate nationalism, mainly, they were represented by the intellectuals.<sup>59</sup> The 1991 putsch in Moscow (initiated by the State Committee of the State of Emergency) became a fateful event when as a result of the then Russian authorities' worsened confrontation with the opposition and due to the ensued upheaval Dudaev and his milieu seized the power in the Republic, and the National Congress of the Chechen People declared the independence of Chechnya. After he rose to power, Dudaev started to intensively advance the discourse of intolerance toward Russia and of Chechnya's historical chance of establishing its own state.

But Dudaev and his milieu had no clear-cut visualizations of how an independent state should be constructed. Dudaev was rather a romanticized personality, occasionally untenable in the political aspect. The halo of the exceptionality of his being the only Chechen general of the Soviet army imparted to him exceptional piety and esteem among his entourage. However, he failed to master the issues of statehood and social restructuring. Behind his rhetorical declarations of independence loomed large the real difficulties of materializing the national project. These severities resulted in the crisis of the separatists' political project. A complete crash of the economy, unemployment and expanding criminality contributed to a disappointment in the society about the Ichkerian revolution. As Sergey Markedonov puts it:

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<sup>59</sup> Ekaterina Sokirianskaia: Ideology and conflict, 111

“If it had not been for Moscow’s delirious military intervention, Ichkeria would have exhausted itself very soon without any external pressure”.<sup>60</sup>

The victory of the radical national idea and the consolidation of the nation in its anti-colonial resistance and liberation struggle seen in 1994 were caused by the first treacherous air attack delivered by Russia and the latter’s support of the armed anti-Dudaev opposition in Chechnya. These actions convinced the Chechen people of the Russian aggression and consolidated them under the figure of Dudaev.

When Dzhokhar Dudaev came to power, he did not command an absolute support. But when the federal center announced that it was necessary to send some military forces, and when an airlifted force was landed in the [Grozny] airport, then all the people united against this operation. The historical memory of the deportation played its role at that moment. This intrusion was perceived as a regular attempt at annihilating the Chechen people.<sup>61</sup> Vakhit Akaev, professor of Chechen State University

Thus, the processes going on inside the Republic by the beginning of the first Chechen war cleared the way for the formation of ethno-national separatism, but they were not determinative for the subsequent escalation of the conflict. The activities of the federal center catalyzed and aggravated the situation in the Republic, creating the conditions under which the national idea proved victorious, and the Chechen were left with only one choice: to defend their ethnical identity.

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<sup>60</sup> Based on personal interview, May 2010, Moscow

<sup>61</sup> Based on personal interview, April, 2010, Grozny

### 2.1.2. The First Chechen War: Fighting for the Native Land

On December 11, 1994, the President of the Russian Federation Boris Yeltsin signed Decree No. 2169 “Measures for Ensuring Lawfulness, Legal Order and Public Security on the Territory of Chechen Republic”<sup>62</sup>. This document officially initiated the beginning of war in the North Caucasus. However, the word ‘war’ was ousted from the Russian official discourse, and the Chechen separatists were labeled as a group of bandits and rebels under the command of Dzhokhar Dudaev who was viewed ‘as nothing more than an unruly adventurer’.<sup>63</sup> As a result, the war turned into a farce. As General Gennady Troshev wrote afterwards in his memoirs: “I often recollect those December days when the military took the first steps toward restoring the constitutional order. Journalists immediately nicknamed this local operation a war, civil rights advocates - as genocide of the Chechen people, and politicians – as an adventure”.<sup>64</sup>

Was this war a political adventure of the Russian authority, which was necessitated by the sovereign’s mere decision in the situation of emergency or was it determined by the intention of the Russian authorities to prevent the further dissolution of the state and preserve its integrity? Up to the present day, there is hardly anyone who could definitely answer this question. But the fact is that the war had not been properly prepared for and thought over. And posing it as ‘a small victorious war’ was frustrated by the resulted disastrous consequences of this political venture. As Carlotta Gall and Thomas de Waal observed in their book: “In fighting the Caucasian wars, the Russians committed many of the mistakes

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<sup>62</sup> Constitutional court of Russian Federation. Legislative acts:  
[<http://www.zaki.ru/pagesnew.php?id=11576&page=1>]

<sup>63</sup> Aleksei Malashenko, Dmitry Trenin: *Russia’s Restless Frontier*, 17

<sup>64</sup> Gennady Troshev. “My War (Diaries of a Trench General)”. Moscow, Vagrius. 2001

which have characterized them in the region before and since. . . . Above all there was a constant underestimation of the people they were fighting against. The policy chosen was consistently one of total attack, leaving the natives no option but to resist as desperately as they could.”<sup>65</sup>

Having initially assumed an implacable attitude toward the Ichkerian separatists, the Yeltsin milieu intentionally chose a policy of discrediting the separatists, without considering them as real enemies and equal adversaries to negotiate with. Having demonstrated a disparaging attitude to the insurgents, as many observers believed, the Russian government finally abandoned the peaceful settlement of the conflict. “The opportunity for a compromise might have been existed, but was lost due to the human factor: Yeltsin pointedly refused to meet with Dudaev who had insisted that their meeting be one of equals”.<sup>66</sup> For Dudaev it was fundamental to gain the recognition of parity. This could have drastically reversed the situation. But instead of this, the Russian party declared war to the rebellious Republic and was fulfilling its political tasks in parallel. Yeltsin’s first visit to Chechnya became an episode of his election campaign.<sup>67</sup> Since this moment on, the Chechen conflict appeared to be inseparably connected with domestic political events inside Russia itself.

The Russian military invasion Russia was conceived by the Chechens as Russia’s obvious attempt at annihilating them as a nation. The recollections of the Russian colonial authority and of the deportation, elevated by the Dudaev milieu to the level of a political doctrine, instantly consolidated people under Dudaev and transformed the discourse of the conflict of

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<sup>65</sup> Carlotta Gall, Thomas de Waal, *Chechnya: A Small Victorious War*

<sup>66</sup> Valery Tishkov: *Life in a War-torn Society*, 70

<sup>67</sup> Aleksei Malashenko, Dmitry Trenin: *Russia’s Restless Frontier*, 21

the federal center with a group of terrorists into the war waged by the Chechen people against the invader.

“The first Chechen campaign, in the apprehension of the overwhelming majority of people, was an aggression by the Russian people with respect to the Chechen people. Correspondingly, people fought the same as in the Great Patriotic war. This was a patriotic war for them”<sup>68</sup> Timur Aliev, assistant of President of Chechen Republic

As Ekaterina Sokirianskaia notices: “It started as a war of Soviet generals and colonels, supported by romantics and nationalists”.<sup>69</sup> However all Chechen people had to suffer from hardships and effects of the war. This war had a secular nature, and the main mobilizing force was constituted by ethnical discourse – the defense of the nation from the aggression. That unexpected power of the rebuff of the Chechens, for which the Russian army proved unprepared, is logical and predictable from the viewpoint of the national laws of *adat* that prescribes the possession of the special sense of one’s own dignity, the determination to fight till the bitter end and the blood vengeance as an inevitable penalty for a committed crime. This fact took everyone by surprise. As Mark Kremer points out, “Russian troops and police, who outnumber the rebels by more than 50 to 1, have been unable to eliminate armed resistance in an area as small as Chechnya”.<sup>70</sup>

“In the first campaign, the Chechen Resistance achieved howling successes. Because there was enthusiasm and a sentiment of national unity. The Chechens defended their land. I saw the way the battles were fought during the first campaign, how desperate the resistance was. And what kind of combats were conducted. The Russian army was altogether stuck, it could do nothing and it was really a Chechen victory”.<sup>71</sup> Hussein Betelgereev, Professor of Chechen State University, Poet and Bard

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<sup>68</sup> Based on a personal interview, April 2010, Grozny

<sup>69</sup> Ekaterina Sokirianskaia: Ideology and conflict, 116

<sup>70</sup> Mark Kramer, “Guerrilla Warfare, Counterinsurgency and Terrorism in the North Caucasus: the Military Dimension of the Russian-Chechen Conflict”, Europe-Asia Studies, Vol 57 (March, 2005), 214

<sup>71</sup> Based on personal interview, April 2010, Grozny

The genuinely telluric and defensive nature of the Chechen struggle was set against the senselessness of the war for the Russian army. Having a vague understanding against whom and for what reason they are fighting quickly demoralized the army. ‘When a journalist in Chechnya asked the commander of an OMON unit, Colonel Aleksandr Ponomarev, why he was fighting, he responded: “Because of the political ambitions of someone back in Moscow”.<sup>72</sup> The war turned into a meaningless aggression both for the soldiers themselves who sustained losses in the conditions to which they were not accustomed, and for the command carrying on offensive struggle against the same citizens of Russia.

“This was a strange war. Chechens were hiding in basements, fearing bombardments, along with Russians. My farther evacuated a Russian woman from under a bombardment, risking his life. He saved her from her own compatriots. And if you could only see who was sent to fight in Chechnya. Just young guys, starved and scared, fallen prisoners by scores, whose mothers came there to take them away”.<sup>73</sup> Danilbek, former fighter

It is worthy of note that in the conditions of the vagueness of enmity and military tasks common soldiers admitted that their motivation of conducting a battle and of the recognition of Chechens as real enemies came only when their colleagues died, and when the war provoked their personal revenge for the perished fellows.

The activities of Russia in Chechnya were regarded as an aggression not only by the West, but also by the Russian society itself. Journalists and human rights activists criticized the actions of the Russian authorities, and leaders of Chechen separatists were depicted as freedom fighters and victims of Russian imperial and military power. The rating polls of

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid, 220

<sup>73</sup> Based on personal interview, April 2010, Grozny

Yeltsin were decreasing.<sup>74</sup> The dehumanization of the insurgents as bandits no longer worked in Russian discourse. In the society, there was ripening a weariness from the war and a confidence in the senselessness of the conflict. The absence of a clear legal status of carrying out military operations provoked a misuse of the military's enforcement powers and a frequent use of excessive force against the peaceful populace, which made the fighting fiercer. If in the beginning of the war the warring parties adhered to Geneva conventions and cartel rules, then toward the end the warfare began to turn into a vicious circle of brutality.<sup>75</sup>

As Aleksei Malashenko writes: 'The vagueness of the mission, however, no less than Moscow's equivocal behavior both before and during the first campaign, greatly contributed to Russia's military and political defeat in 1996'.<sup>76</sup> The struggle of the Chechen separatists during the first campaign became legitimate in the eyes of the public in Russia and abroad. The formal termination of the military operations and the signing of the Khasavyurt agreements, shameful for Russia, became again a reflection of the domestic political changes in Russia and of the approaching presidential elections. The small victorious local operation launched by the federal center turned into the 'great victory'<sup>77</sup> for the Chechen separatists and a disastrous defeat of Russia. The result of the war led to a disappointment in the Russian society itself, reflected in the words of Vyacheslav Mironov: "Can anybody explain to me, for what sake we have destroyed this city, murdered so many people and ruined ours!- The most absurd and unskillful war!"<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Aleksei Malashenko, Dmitry Trenin: Russia's Restless Frontier, 66

<sup>75</sup> The Report of the Human Right Center Memorial. The History of the Conflict, available at: [<http://www.memo.ru/hr/hotpoints/chechen/france/ch01.htm>]

<sup>76</sup> Aleksei Malashenko, Dmitry Trenin: Russia's Restless Frontier, 68

<sup>77</sup> Valery Tishkov: Life in a War-torn Society, 180

<sup>78</sup> Mironov V. I have Been to This War. Chechnya. 1995. Moscow, 2001. pp.371-372

## 2.2. Islamic Discourse and Radicalization of the Resistance

In the created state of exception the Chechen Resistance was factually doomed to the transition to more radical forms of struggle. The political commitment imposed by a third force, according to Schmitt, resulted here in a well-formed transformation of the Resistance in the conditions of the impossibility of any further successful implementation of the national idea as the only factor consolidating people for the struggle. At this time, when the national idea started to fizzle out and lose its significance in the conditions of Russia's military supremacy and due to the weariness of the war, the revolutionary idea imported externally by radical Islamists lent ideological support to the Resistance and became a consolidating factor capable of replacing the played-out national idea.

Instead, the third force subjugated the Resistance and made it serve its ideology and tasks. The legitimacy of the struggle that was being achieved during the first war campaign was totally discredited by the consecutive transformation of the image of the real partisan into the concept of the radical terrorist.

In the following sections I will explore how the loss of the significance of the Chechen national idea and of the national liberation struggle has resulted in a complete ideological defeat of the Resistance which led to the latter's ultimate withdrawal from the space of order and law. The discrimination of the national idea, which determined the outcome of the conflict, was accomplished at the cost of Russia's manipulative role and in consequence of the voluntary change-over of part of the Chechen Resistance to radical Islamic ideology.

### 2.2.1 The Issue of ‘Enemy’ Construction in the Chechen conflict

A distinctive feature of any authority and what distinguishes sovereign power is the capacity to determine its friends and enemies. According to Carl Schmitt’s theory, it is the ability to determine an enemy that makes the essence of the political. Under the Westphalian order, the enemy of the state can be an equal entity against which the sovereign can declare war. A non-state actor standing in opposition with sovereign power is ousted from the ‘a real enemy’ or ‘a just enemy’ category. An irregular fighter remains illegal, a mere man of exception. In order to suppress the legitimacy of the irregular fighter, the sovereign deliberately dehumanizes him and criminalizes his struggle. This gives him the right to take emergency measures and exercise his power.

The category of the enemy holds a unique position in the Chechen conflict. The transformation of the Chechen Resistance proceeded not only within the Resistance itself, but was particularly manifest in Russian discourse. The threat of Chechen terrorism and then that of the international terrorism as a consequence of evolved ethno-political separatist projects drastically altered Russian political discourse and was reflected on its domestic and foreign policy. Also, the change in the discourse enabled the Russian authorities to assume emergency measures in Chechnya and take additional steps for settling the conflict and dealing with persons accused of participating in terrorist activity.<sup>79</sup>

The transition from the defensive strategy of struggle to radical terrorist techniques in Chechnya and the final transformation of the real defensive war into revolutionary Jihad had

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<sup>79</sup> The Report of the Human Right Center Memorial. The History of the Conflict, available at: [http://www.memo.ru/hr/hotpoints/chechen/france/ch01.htm]

been shaped in Russian discourse as far back as the time of the complete formation of the ranks of the Chechen Resistance itself. The notion of the fight against Islamic fundamentalism did not play any role either in the public statements of the Yeltsin administration or in the actual decision-making before the Dagestan invasion.<sup>80</sup> Although the process of Islamization and radicalization had been underway by that time in Chechnya, this activity found its reflection in Russian discourse only in connection with the announcement of the start of the counter-terrorist operation. Finally, this trend was shaped after the 9/11 events, when official propaganda linked the acts of Chechen rebels with international terrorism, thus downplaying the core element in the conflict, namely the Chechen struggle for national independence. As Anna Politkovskaya observed:

“The Russian state colors today bear the salvatory idea of the necessity for defending Russia from “international terrorism” embodied by Chechen separatists. The eternal stirring-up of this idea enables the Kremlin to manipulate the public opinion - at its pleasure. And what is interesting: “the raids of Chechen separatists” now emerge “timely” in the Northern Caucasus - each time when a regular political or corruption scandal begins in Moscow. In this manner, it is possible to wage war in the Caucasus decades after decades, the same as in the 19-th century...”<sup>81</sup>

This “instrumentalization” of the Chechen threat occurred at the time of the first Chechen war campaign, but then the Chechen Resistance was presented in the discourse as a matter of marginalized criminality and referred to criminal ‘others’, or ‘bandits. Chechnya seemed to be a place where ‘fusion of the criminal world with political power ... has become a reality’.<sup>82</sup> The Ichkerian leadership, on its part, attempted in every way to resist the efforts of the Kremlin aimed at discrediting the Chechen Resistance, both by using an elaborate

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<sup>80</sup> Emil Souleimanov, Ondrej Ditrych “The Internationalisation of the Russian-Chechen Conflict: Myths and Reality”, *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 60 (2008)

<sup>81</sup> Anna Politkovskaya, The second Chechen war, available at:  
[<http://www.bibliotekar.ru/rusPolitkovskaya/19.htm>]

<sup>82</sup> Ibid

informational campaigns and by forcing the Russian leadership to enter a dialog of two equal parties, which became unthinkable after Vladimir Putin coming to office. Thus, for instance, there was a meeting, notable from this point of view, with the participation of Boris Yeltsin and Zelimkhan Yandarbiev in the Kremlin in 1996, as well as the meaningful behavior of Sergei Stepashin who was Head of the Administrative Department of the Russian Federation Government Office at the time.

“I have come as head of the Chechen state to head of the Russian nation at the request of Moscow. And the same was recorded both in Russian and English. Otherwise I would not have gone there. But somebody had prepared Yeltsin as if I could be spoken with in a different way, despite my being a head. And he burned his fingers. He had to stand up from his armchair, where he had sat down. He was forced to sit down where I showed to him. In his office, in the Kremlin! And Stepashin, when we went out, told me: “I apologize for what has happened here”. This was a man with a grain of conscience and honor”.<sup>83</sup>

In response to the shaping of the discourse of Chechen statehood by Dudaev, official propaganda in the service of Russian discourse simply discredited the proud ‘wainakhs’ and freedom fighters, as they were presented in the West. By the beginning of the second Chechen war campaign, this instrumentalization assumed yet far more radical forms. Aslan Maskhadov once noticed: “I have kept thinking hard why there should always be war, why they should always keep labels ready for pinning on my people. Already for four hundred years we have been termed either as bandits, or terrorists, or aggressors”.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> The Lonely Chechen Wolf. Who Killed Zelimkhan Yandarbiev? available at [http://www.lenta.ru/articles/2004/02/13/zelimhan/]

<sup>84</sup> Victor Popkiv “Aslan Maskhadov: ‘I have tried to avert this war’”, *Novaya Gazeta*, 16 April (2000), 7

The second campaign was officially named as ‘a counter terrorist operation’.<sup>85</sup> Chechen bandits in the official rhetoric gave place to such notions as international terrorism, Jihad and religious fundamentalism. It was proclaimed that Russia was fighting in Chechnya not against telluric partisans as it was during the first campaign but ‘stood at the forefront of international terrorism’<sup>86</sup>. The terrorist discourse was advanced simultaneously at all levels of power. Being at a summit meeting in Turkey, Boris Yeltsin declared:

“You have no right to criticize Russia for Chechnya... Regarding those who have yet failed to understand it: we are simply obliged to timely stop the propagation of “the cancer tumor” of terrorism... Thousands of hirelings trained in the camps on the territory of Chechnya, as well as arrived from abroad, are really preparing to propagate ideas of extremism all over the world... There will be no talks with bandits and murderers!.. We are for peace and political settlement in Chechnya. It is for this sake that the complete liquidation of bandit formations, the elimination of terrorists or their trial are required”.<sup>87</sup>

Simultaneously, at each of his speeches, Vladimir Putin declared the intentions to struggle against “Chechen/international terrorism” more and more sternly as he was rising to power. He was quoted as saying: “*The terrorist threat* in Russia is continuing and even increasing”<sup>88</sup>, “*The pest of terrorism* has become a national problem of Russia”<sup>89</sup> or “Russia does not conduct negotiations with *terrorists*, it eliminates them” produced the right effect at the right time. Russian people joined the ranks of the strong leader who had promised protection and struggle with bandits using the harshest methods. He clearly termed the Chechen insurgents as terrorists and declared an unconditional beginning of a power action and further tough

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<sup>85</sup> The Decree of President of the Russian Federation, dated 23.09.1999 N 1255 c “Measures Directed at Increasing the Effectiveness of Counter-terrorist Operations on the Territory of the Northern Caucasus Region of the Russian Federation”

<sup>86</sup> Emil Souleimanov, Ondrej Ditrych: “The Internationalisation of the Russian-Chechen Conflict: Myths and Reality”

<sup>87</sup> Official Documents of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russian Federation, available at: [[http://www.mid.ru/dip\\_vest.nsf/99b2ddc4f717c733c32567370042ee43/30d93b83134c77aac3256886004d1ff5?OpenDocument](http://www.mid.ru/dip_vest.nsf/99b2ddc4f717c733c32567370042ee43/30d93b83134c77aac3256886004d1ff5?OpenDocument)]

<sup>88</sup> The Terrorist Threat in Russia is Increasing, available at: [<http://lenta.ru/russia/2000/01/21/mvd/>]

<sup>89</sup> Terrorism Became the National Challenge in Russia, available at: [<http://lenta.ru/russia/1999/09/14/rech/>]

struggle against terrorism. At that time, this fixation of the notion was necessary for gaining the people's support in the second war campaign. The public opinion squinted toward the encouragement of further enforcement measures in Chechnya.

It seems paradoxical, but in the context of this artificial discourse of the struggle against terrorism real, proved Chechen terrorism largely penetrated into Russia after the notorious events (the taking of hostages in the “Nord-Ost” cinema in Moscow, the explosions in the metro there and at the concerts in Tushino, the blasting of a commuter train in Yessentuki, the explosions in the planes in August 2004, the capture of hostages in Beslan, etc.).

The given discourse was finally assigned in Russian official documents. The state of exception, thus, became continuous and it penetrated into normalcy. So, one of the basic provisions of the adopted the National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation was contained in the clause stating that “*Terrorism* poses a serious threat to the national security of the Russian Federation. *International terrorism* has initiated an open campaign for the purpose of destabilizing the situation in Russia”<sup>90</sup>. These above measures has afforded an opportunity for the suspension of law in the state of exception. It can be illustrated clearly by one of Vladimir Putin's statements wherein he emphasized that “There are such *criminals and terrorists* who must be brought outside law”.<sup>91</sup>

### 2.2.2 Time of the Lost Opportunities and the Second Chechen War

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<sup>90</sup> The National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation, Security Council of the Russian Federation, official documents, available at: [<http://www.scrf.gov.ru/documents/5.html>]

<sup>91</sup> Mikhail Tkachenko, Putin's Answers, available at [<http://lenta.ru/articles/2005/09/06/putin/>]

In the Schmittian sense, the irregular fighter is doomed to be pushed into the sphere of the criminal and non-legitimate in his confrontation with sovereign power. However, his struggle may be successful and morally legitimate in case it is defensive and telluric by nature and when it has political content. But being a politically committed creature, partisan can be seized by some third concerned power that can make him serve for an abstract revolutionary idea in exchange for imparting ideological sense to his struggle. Yet, this dramatic change in his ideology makes his struggle no longer defensive and territorized and thus no longer legitimate. The autochthonous defender of his own soil becomes a revolutionary serving the radical abstract idea. This theoretical assumption of Carl Schmitt seems to be applicable to interpreting and explicating the internal transformation of Chechen ethno-national separatism during the period between the two Chechen wars and during the second campaign.

The Islamic factor as a constituent of political and ideological practice unexpectedly and powerfully manifested itself in Chechnya during the first Chechen campaign. The secular Ichkerian project united the separatists on the basis of the national idea. The Islamic renaissance that occurred already in the course of the war began to exercise a strong influence on the Ichkerian leaders themselves, when as early as 1995 Jihad was declared to Russia, as well as on the whole Chechen society. As Dzhokhar Dudaev would state: “Russia...has forced us to take the Islamic path”.<sup>92</sup> The Chechen society, dominantly secular, started to actively recourse to religion, and Islam became an obvious trend and part of the new Chechen reality. Sufi Islam, traditional for Chechnya, however, did not become a political project. It remained a moderate religious factor. Radical Salafit Islam, unconventional for Chechnya, was shaped into an ideological project and became an influential trend in the war-torn society. Salafism,

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<sup>92</sup> Emil Suleimanov, “Islam as a uniting and dividing force in Chechen society”, Prague Watchdog, available at: [<http://www.watchdog.cz/?show=000000-000015-000006-000010&lang=1>]

or Wahhabism, artificially infused from outside, quickly grew into an ideological, as well as mobilizing force in the Northern Caucasus.

“Until 1993, nobody knew the word ‘Wahhabite’ in the Chechen environment. This is an artificially infused and monstrously destructive religious trend. Wahhabites can make themselves comfortable where there is weak authority. The power of Aslan Maskhadov was very weak. The Chechen people themselves asked Maskhadov to give them weapons for the struggle against Wahhabites. But again, Maskhadov showed a lack of determination, declaring that he did not want any civil strife and civil war”.<sup>93</sup> Suleiman Abdurakhmanov, Political Analyst, Executive of the Administration of President of Chechen Republic

Having proclaimed the creation of the all-Caucasian caliphate as its goal, the radical Islamist project implied the incorporation of Chechnya into universal Jihad. The new ideology of Jihad proved a successful and well-timed project for that part of the Ichkerian Resistance, which got disappointed with the secular and moderate national state-building project. Having succeeded in securing ‘a great victory’ in the clash with Russia, the single Resistance split on the ground of the religious factor.

Along with the failure of the project of national construction, the circles of moderate separatists lost the opportunity of achieving the complete ideological and political control over the Republic and proved to be incapable of resisting the penetration of the radical fundamentalist project into the Republic and its strengthening there.

The signing of the Khasavyurt agreements granted Chechnya a formal status of independence. But none the less, the victory of the Ichkerian revolution failed to implement the concept of national construction in the de-facto independent republic. An attempt at

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<sup>93</sup> Based on personal interview, April 2010, Grozny

building statehood on the basis of Islamic traditions did not yield any socioeconomic and political stability. Despite the fact of the legitimate election of the president of Chechnya, the actual governance of the Republic was massed in the hands of commands that presented “a confederation of warlords”.<sup>94</sup> Maskhadov was the last representative of democratic secular separatism. The long-awaited peace and the actualization of the course for constructing a democratic state were associated with his personality. The Chechens had become weary of the war by that time, and great was the burden of hopes and expectations which they laid on Maskhadov who managed to reach an agreement with Moscow.

However, in the opinion of many Chechens, Maskhadov was a brilliant military man, but a bad manager. Under the conditions of the economical collapse, breakdown and postwar chaos, the single camp of the separatists split into adherents of secular national identity and separatists who joined the colors of radical Islam. Although Maskhadov continued to identify himself as a leader of the all-Chechen Resistance, in fact he represented merely part of the Chechen army.

Dzhokhar Dudaev had an absolute authority. He taught others many things. Aslan Maskhadov lacked such qualities, under him everybody constituted himself a hero and wanted his share of the pie. Under Dudaev, people were advanced on the basis of loyalty to the revolution, Under Maskhadov, the main criterion became a success in the military career. As a result, those people who lacked education came to power, ambitious and accustomed to be in command.<sup>95</sup> Ekaterina Sokirianskaia, Memorial Human Rights activist

Shamil Basev was quickly gaining his leader positions in the Republic, he embarked on the opposition to Maskhadov and moderate separatists. As a result of the split in the Resistance, the national idea was completely discredited.

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<sup>94</sup> Sergey Markedonov, *Turbulent Eurasia* (Moscow, Academia: 2009), p. 79

<sup>95</sup> Based on personal interview, March, 2010

The topic of Islam became fundamental in political discussion. Political disputes were shaped into an ideological form. Chechnya became at one point a zone of comfort for Islamists ousted from Dagestan. Basaev grew out of the national idea, becoming a king of young radicals.<sup>96</sup> Ekaterina Sokirianskaia, Memorial Human Rights activist

The split in the Resistance and the strengthening of the activity of radicals was a turning point in the further escalation of the conflict with the federal center. Maskhadov failed to show toughness and stop this process. He explained his interference saying: “My major task was not to let a new war at any cost.”<sup>97</sup>

The ultimate changeover of the groups of Basaev and Khattab to terrorist techniques deprived the Resistance of that legitimacy of struggle, which it succeeded to achieve during the first campaign. As a matter of fact, through their actions ‘they branded Wahhabism as an ideology of terrorism, monopolizing Islam as a political instrument’.<sup>98</sup> The regime of the counter-terrorist operation, which was further introduced by Russia, thus enabled to withdraw the conflict from the legal space of military operations and established the situation of the eternal status of exception. In this case, the activity of the Chechen Resistance could not be considered to be proceeding between two equal state entities - already on the strength of the fact. It was due to this that the Ichkerian idea got ultimately discredited.

“In the second war, they attached a religious tint to the struggle for independence, and there occurred a rollback. I believe that the religious idea of struggle was specially thrown in, and the religious factor was substituted for the idea of independence. The West that supported us instantly turned away. Even those foreign journalists who had been here, they became kind of different persons. Only due to this, as it seems to me, the second campaign was lost. The idea of terrorism

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid

<sup>97</sup> Victor Popkiv “Aslan Maskhadov: ‘I have tried to avert this war’”, *Novaya Gazeta*

<sup>98</sup> Valery Tishkov: *Life in a War-torn Society*, 196

was opportunely and fortunately snatched up by the Russian party. This is such an unjust occasion in this whole campaign. This solely ruined everything.”<sup>99</sup> Hussein Betelgereev, Professor of Chechen State University, Poet and Bard,

The Chechen people itself realized the ideological difference between the first and second campaigns at the time when the discourse of the national-liberation and defensive war, which was initiated by the group of radicals, turned into a battle for an abstract radical idea:

“Many people appraised the march of Basaev and Khattab on Dagestan as an act of national treachery. These warlords provoked a response aggression of Russia, and their move gave rise to the unleashing of a new phase of violence in the Republic, exhausted by the war”.<sup>100</sup>Islam Tekushev, editor of ‘Caucasus Times’

“The second war started differently. It began with an idea of establishing a worldwide caliphate, many people were unwilling to battle for such an idea. But when the military operations commenced, most people were again motivated by the idea of defending their motherland and the populace that lives on this territory. But there were those who fought in the first war and refused to combat in the second one”.<sup>101</sup>Timur Aliev, Assistant of President of Chechen Republic.

### **2.2.3. The emergence of the Caucasus Emirate: from the ‘real enemy’ towards absolute enmity**

Carl Schmitt criticized liberal universalism for discriminating the concept of war and creating the figure of an unjust enemy, a creature that can be excluded and placed outside the space of law. This condition provides sovereign power with permanent possibilities of declaring the state of exception and exercising his power. But as Schmitt maintained, such policy could also shape a new form of enmity and thus bring about novel forms of global war that lacked any strategic and political content, when violence becomes absolute and the image of the

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<sup>99</sup> Based on personal interview, April 2010, Grozny

<sup>100</sup> Based on personal interview, January 2010, Prague

<sup>101</sup> Ibid

enemy blurred. By eliminating localized wars waged against real enemies under the Westphalian system, states open Pandora's Box containing a new form of warfare, total war, which is declared by a feeble irregular adversary who is already excluded from the space of the existing order. Now, there exists no definite territory any more for him to fight for, no nation which he must protect, but remain some abstract ideology and violence to which he resorts, as his right and his last argument in the struggle with the power which does not recognize him. This type of enmity does not seek recognition by the world order and does not need to be regulated by norms of international law.

The theoretical categories of Carl Schmitt are as actual today as ever, when non-state terrorism is announced to represent a political project. The proclamation of the Emirate Caucasus by the former head of Ichkerian Republic Doku Umarov became a final stage of the evolution of radical Chechen separatism. This event turned out to be the ultimate termination of the ethno-political project in the Northern Caucasus.<sup>102</sup> Begun with slogans of national renaissance and self-determination, the Chechen separatist project ended in declaring an extraterritorial radical formation that does not advance any political demands and does not advance any claims on national identity building.

This is a 'supranational project' as a well-known philosopher Geidar Dzhemal terms it.<sup>103</sup> The image of the real enemy, symbolized by Russia, was replaced by a diffused notion of an abstract enemy, the one who does not share the fundamental views of pillars of immaculate Islam. The abstract idea of determining what true faith is and the concept of absolute terror,

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<sup>102</sup> Emirate Caucasus becomes a reality, available at  
[<http://www.kavkaz.tv/russ/content/2009/09/02/67764.shtml>]

<sup>103</sup> Russia as a Cradle of renewed Islam. Interview with Geidar Dzhemal, available at  
[<http://www.watchdog.cz/index.php?show=000000-000004-000002-000070&lang=2>]

contained in the new project, finally ousted the ideological platform of national liberation from the discourse.

Many experts approach the analysis of the evolution of the radical wing of Chechen separatism from the evolution of terror as tactics of struggle and based on the changing of the active leaders of the Resistance, beginning with moderate standard-bearers like Dudaev and Maskhadov and ending with such radical separatists as Basaev and Umarov. It is the ideological evolution, and not the tactical one, that has a far greater significance for understanding the nature of the transformation of Chechen separatism.

The ideological transformation of the Chechen Resistance began with employing slogans of radical Islam and exporting the struggle outside the territory of Chechnya. However, in this process, the ideological foundation of radical separatists continued to rest upon the idea of national liberation.<sup>104</sup> The withdrawal of Russian forces and granting independence to Chechnya remained to be the main demands of the struggle. The basic attributes and mottoes of Islam were secondary and auxiliary. The chief leader of radicals, Basaev, after declaring Jihad, kept on carrying amulets and talismans with him and did not observe the fundamental canons of “the unadulterated faith” of Salafism.<sup>105</sup> And responding to a question regarding the prioritization of the goals of his struggle, he said that the freedom of Ichkeria is more important than struggle for faith:

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<sup>104</sup> Based on the interviews with former fighters

<sup>105</sup> Based on the interview with Sergey Markedonov, Political Scientist, Head of Department of Interethnic Relations Problems, Institute for Political and Military Analysis, Moscow

... We, on our part, are waging a national liberation war. They are trying to pin labels on us; they are doing this in all possible ways... In the first instance, it means struggle for freedom to me. Because freedom is primary. If I am not free, then I will not be able to live up to a faith, in my way of thinking. Shariah is secondary".<sup>106</sup>

The form of the war that Basaev was engaged in, if one includes it into the context of the evolution of Schmitt's partisan, was yet an intermediate version between the war waged by the real partisan as the defender of his land and by the radical revolutionary, according to the ideological foundation. But this warfare proved to be a precursor of the ultimate transformation of the radical separatist wing and of the transition from tactical terror to that constituting a political project. Returning to the theory of the evolution of the partisan into the radical revolutionary in keeping with the theory of Schmitt, it is worthwhile to note the fact that, as per some sources, in his youth Basaev idolized Ernesto Che Guevara and dreamt to become a revolutionary since his childhood.<sup>107</sup>

But Basaev already embodied a basically new force. As Ruslan Aushev stated, in Beslan there was 'a new generation of fanatics who would seek to carry out ever deadlier and more spectacular attacks, perpetuating a cycle of grisly violence'.<sup>108</sup> He was concerned that unless the Russian government sought to negotiate with moderate rebels, the 'whole of the Caucasus might be consumed in a conflagration'. Despite the fact that Wahhabism and pure terror contradicts the mentality and structure of the Chechen society, the radical Islamic project turned out to be asked-for as a powerful ideological support of the major part of the fighters of the Resistance, weary of hopelessness and injustice:

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<sup>106</sup> Interview of Andrei Babitskii with Shamil Basaev, available at: [\[http://soprotivlenie.marsho.net/basaev/ABC.htm\]](http://soprotivlenie.marsho.net/basaev/ABC.htm)

<sup>107</sup> Shamil Basaev – Number One Enemy of Russia, available at: [\[http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/russian/special\\_report/bbcussian/2002\\_06/newsid\\_2385000/2385487.stm\]](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/russian/special_report/bbcussian/2002_06/newsid_2385000/2385487.stm)

<sup>108</sup> Mark Kramer: "Guerrilla Warfare, Counterinsurgency and Terrorism in the North Caucasus: the Military Dimension of the Russian-Chechen Conflict", 231

The national idea was already not working, and there was weariness caused by the war. A new consolidating force was needed. And Wahhabism is a vigorous project based on search for a universal idea that is addressed to man. Jihad restructures the system on the whole, this is a sacral universalistic project which appeals to social justice, to striving for creation and to the godlike architecture of life. <sup>109</sup>Andrei Babitskii, observer of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Prague

The federal party toughened its measures during the second Chechen war. People knew that nobody would spare their lives. And those who took part in the Resistance realized that they were not able to hold out. The men that were fighting for the freedom of their folk turned out to be sort of anchorites. People were afraid of reprisals; village inhabitants were scared to help, not even with some food. The men ate grass in the mountains. Only religion could consolidate them at the moment. <sup>110</sup>Aslan, former fighter

Considering the significance of the figure of Basaev in the context of the evolution of the Chechen separatist project, it is necessary to keep in mind that he represented but part of the Resistance and was not responsible for the ideological format of the Resistance, although playing one of the prominent roles in it. As Movladi Udugov characterized the role of Basaev in the movement: “Shamil Basaev has never been in the higher authority. He is, indeed, not such a fool. But he has always been the secret mainspring of all our affairs”. But the ideological basis of the Chechen underground was still determined by the moderate wing of separatists. <sup>111</sup>

In the opinion of some experts, Maskhadov’s follower, Abdul Khalim Sadulaev, was the first man in the capacity of President of Ichkeria who attempted to combine the Salafit doctrine with elements of national liberation struggle and who shifted to a position of extreme jihad. Formally, this transformation was strengthened by Umarov by his proclaiming the

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<sup>109</sup> Based on personal interview, January, 2010, Prague

<sup>110</sup> Based on personal interview, May, 2010

<sup>111</sup> Shamil Basaev. The File Prepared by Lenta.ru, available at: [<http://www.lenta.ru/lib/14160065/full.htm>]

establishment of Emirate Caucasus and declaring terror against the civil population as officially permissible tactics of struggle.<sup>112</sup> Thus, the ideological platform of the Resistance was finally transferred by Umarov from the realm of the national liberation conception to the sphere of radical terror. On the other hand, as early as 2005, in an interview with RFE/RL he did not exclude a possibility of applying terrorist techniques against peaceful populace: “If we resort to such methods, I do not think any of us will be able to retain his human face”, - he told.<sup>113</sup>

If one considers Emirate Caucasus as a political project, then the latter is void one of the most vital components of the political – the presence of clear-cut distinctions between the friend and the enemy. As Ugudov points out:

“...Today many Russian Muslims who live in Tatarstan, Bashkortostan, Buryatia, or Russians from different widely spread regions of Russia, who accepted Islam, swear an oath of allegiance to Doka Umarov as the legitimate leader of Muslims. And wherever a Muslim might be – in Moscow, Blagoveshchensk, Tyumen, Vladivostok – when he takes a religious oath, he becomes a sort of fighting unit”<sup>114</sup>

The image of a Russian as an enemy and occupant in the discourse gave place to the image of him as a universal enemy of Islam. The implication of the replacement of the real enemy by a new diluted notion of an enemy as an adversary of universal ideology is best illustrated by the words of Said Buryatsky, who used to say that “gone are the times, when we fought for freedom and struggled for this pagan notion. Now we are fighting for Allah. Gone are the times, when we fought against the Russians. Now, a Russian, if he practices Islam, is our

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<sup>112</sup> Sergey Gligashvili, “The choice of unfreedom”, Prague Watchdog, available at: [http://www.watchdog.cz/index.php?show=000000-000024-000005-000002&lang=2]

<sup>113</sup> Liz Fuller, “Moderate Leader's Death Accelerated Transformation Of Chechen Resistance”, RFE/RL, available at: [http://www.rferl.org/content/Moderate\_Leaders\_Death\_Accelerated\_Transformation\_Of\_Chechen\_Resistance/1756530.html]

<sup>114</sup> Ibid

brother. And finally, the third very important point: there is no need to tell us that people disagree with us. People abide in the state of infidelity, that is they have no right to judge about such things”.<sup>115</sup>

The boundaries of the new-generation war are also diffused. It has become practically impossible to localize military operations and bring them to a solution, because the new generation of the Chechen regular resistance does not enter any negotiations. This new type of enmity is already absolutely remote from the animosity of localized wars waged against real enemies of traditional warfare among equal sovereign states, but to exclude this threat does not seem to be possible either.

Through the intentional downgrading and criminalization of the moderate generation of separatists, who belong to the existing order and had clear political goals, the Russian party has aggravated the transformation of the separatist project toward encountering, as a result, unlocalized and spaceless violence.

Yet, many believe that the spread of radical Islam does not seem to be a long-term or profound trend in the North Caucasian reality. Violence makes people forget who they are, but the national idea remains a strong value even among those who associate themselves with the Emirate Caucasus. Still many others think that it has not fully disappeared but merely mutated in conformance to the new challenges of time and conditions.

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<sup>115</sup> Julia Latinina on Emirate Caucasus, RFE/RL available at:  
[<http://www.svobodanews.ru/content/transcript/1924277.html>]

“Ways of achieving independence may be diverse. The Ichkerian generation appealed to tasks of constructing a democratic state, to international juridical values. But all the same, they failed to be heard. As a result, a group of people emerged who advocate the same independence, saying simultaneously that there are no grounds to hope that the world would help them, and that this is a barren scheme. But our aim is holy, it is true. We will fight further for our national independence, but in doing so we will rest upon faith. Our struggle is just – this means that Allah will help us. But the goals of the fighting - separatism, constructing a national state – remain just the same, even for those who are called Salafits now. And the question of what paths to choose for attaining this – it has suffered some changes<sup>116</sup> Salambek, human rights activist

Due to my personal observations gathered during a field trip to Chechnya, the ethno-national discourse is still active among the Chechens, though it is suppressed and discriminated both by the Russian party and by the radical ideology of the Emirate Caucasus itself. However, the emergence of the Emirate Caucasus as a political project is an absolute symptom of the changing of the world order, with political boundaries and bounds of waging war diffused. Such structures that do not recognize the established world order and act beyond the range of international law appropriate the right to use violence, which initially belonged to the state, and make enmity absolute and subjugated to abstract categories of justice in their interpretation.

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<sup>116</sup> Based on personal interview, May 2010.

## CONCLUSION

The disintegration of the Soviet Union has had serious geopolitical aftermaths. The ensued local conflicts along the borders of the former Soviet Union bade defiance to peace and security in the context of the new emerging political order. The Chechen conflict has opened the history of the new democratic Russia, putting its integrity and proclaimed new democratic principles to test. Having begun as a local ethno-political conflict under secession slogans, it evolved into a radical Islamist project considered in the discourse of the struggle against international terrorism.

The present work provides one more interpretation of this transformation in the framework of the political philosophy of Carl Schmitt and his theory of the role of the irregular fighter in the changing world order. The categories of Schmitt's doctrine offer the possibility of considering the Chechen conflict in the light of the developing world order and the manifestation of new forms of warfare and enmity. The demise of the moderate separatist project in Chechnya and the actualization of the radical Islamic project which has transcended the scope of ethno-political and liberation tasks, assumes a new significance in the environment of the struggle with international terrorism and in view of the increasing activity of non-state actors.

Based on analyzing the Chechen conflict by the instrumentality of Schmitt's theoretical categories, the phenomenon of Chechen separatism may be viewed through the evolution of the spatial and ideological basis of the struggle – the factor that determined the outcome of the Chechen conflict. The significance of the telluric nature of the battle of the irregular

fighter is of a decisive significance today when a weaker antagonist opposing the state is criminalized and dehumanized for the sake of depriving his struggle of legitimate and political substance. The autochthonous and defensive character of the battle is the only factor that prevents the irregular fighter from slipping into the sphere of the criminal. As Carl Schmitt predicted, and as the conflict in Chechnya has demonstrated, the irregular fighter can become a manipulative force fighting for some abstract radical idea once he renounces the destination of defending his own land and gets under the control of a third force. Thus, his liberation struggle turns into an abstract and total war devoid of spatial bounds and political substance.

The strong national idea and efforts to build own identity characterized the Chechen ethno-national project and imparted the political and legitimate content to the struggle. The transformation of the Chechen liberation movement into a total war under the banner of Jihad and the demise of the national discourse have devalued the tasks of the Chechen Resistance and dragged it into a criminal space with diffused bounds of warfare and abstract universal goals. Russia, on its part, by choosing the strategy of the criminalization of the Chechen Resistance and depreciation of the national idea, proved to be unready for the transformation of the localized enemy into an extraterritorial terrorist structure. Embarking on the course of taking emergency measures and withdrawing the separatist project from the space of law and order, Russia encountered a new type of enemy that no longer needed to be recognized within the existing order.

Thus, the evolution of the Chechen ethno-political separatist project, which took place as a result of a number of internal and external factors, has promoted the new understanding of the roles of different political actors, such as the figure of the irregular fighter, and showed the

significance of the sovereign's decision that draws a distinction between the real and the unjust enemy, between war and police operation and, finally, between life and death.

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