FROM PRAGMATIC PROTEST
TO STRATEGIC SILENCE?

Norway’s Policy towards the Russo-Chechen Conflict

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Hilde Kristin Røsstad
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In December, on a hillside near Grozny, I met with exhausted Chechen refugees while artillery shells rained down on the suburbs only a few kilometers away. Such experiences are a reminder that foreign policy is not merely concerned with impersonal forces. It concerns the lives of individual human beings – their needs, interests and rights. In fact it often concerns the most fundamental of all rights, the right to life.¹

¹ Statement on Foreign and Security Affairs to the Parliament by Foreign Minister Knut Vollebæk, 20.1.2000
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1: INTRODUCTION

"The Norwegian people’s deep respect for human worth means that the safeguarding and promotion of human rights is a cornerstone of all our policies."

Norwegian governments throughout the 1990s consistently promoted an image of Norway as a “peace nation”, a human rights advocate and the United Nations best friend and supporter. In accordance with this notion, Norwegian Foreign Minister Bjørn Tore Godal’s comments on the recent Russian military invasion of Chechnya, in early January 1995, were robust and highly critical. Boris Yeltsin, Russia’s first president and leader of a nascent democracy in Russia, had launched a full-scale war on one of Russia’s own autonomous republics in December 1994. This was unwelcome news that worried Norwegian authorities. Godal informed the Norwegian press that he had sent a letter to his Russian counterpart strongly condemning the Russian military invasion and the subsequent disregard of human rights in the small Chechen republic.

However, Godal’s and other internationally expressed concerns and condemnations of Russian military action seemingly did not change Russian authorities’ approach to the situation. Opportunities to sanction Russia occurred several times during the 1990s. However, none of these were exploited. Norway’s succeeding governments, on their part, consistently rejected the use of measures or sanctions other than verbal criticism. Norway was also, throughout the period, just as consistent in its explicit recognition of Russian territorial integrity, which included Chechnya, and Russia’s right to fight terrorism within own borders.

Russo-Chechen peace treaties were signed in 1996 and 1997, however, these led in the end to little other than a hiatus between 1996 and 1999. A second war in Chechnya was initiated in 1999. The second war was officially declared over by Russian President Vladimir Putin in early 2001. However, due to constant armed activity in Chechnya, it has been difficult to proclaim the end of the second war, despite official Russian declarations. Since 1994 thousands of people have been killed, and thousands more are still missing in the small republic. The Russo-Chechen conflict has overall received little attention in spite of being one

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4 "Tiltagende vestlig kritikk av Russland" [Increasing Western Criticism of Russia], Morgenbladet, 13.1.1995; «Utenriksminister Godal protesterer i Kreml» [Foreign Minister Godal protests in the Kremlin], NTB, 9.1.1995
5 James Hughes, Chechnya: From Nationalism to Jihad, London 2007: 131
of the gravest humanitarian situations of the 1990s and 2000s, not least in regards of the massive human rights violations.\(^6\)

The quest of the present thesis is to explain a possible discrepancy between Norwegian governments’ presentation of Norway as a “peace nation” and human rights advocate, versus Norway’s actual conduct in foreign affairs. This postulated discrepancy will be examined in light of how three succeeding Norwegian governments related to the Russo-Chechen conflict. Put in the form of an idiom: did Norway practice what it preached concerning human rights advocacy in relation to the Russo-Chechen conflict and its massive human rights violations? With this in mind, what kind of policy did the Norwegian government conduct towards the Russo-Chechen conflict throughout the 1990s until 2001, and why did Norway choose this approach?\(^7\)

**WITH ATTENTION TO DETAIL**

Before providing a theoretical framework it can be useful to establish which factors dominated Norwegian foreign policy in general, and towards Russia in particular, in the 1990s. By doing this, it is possible to pose the question of what factors dominated Norwegian policy towards the Russo-Chechen conflict.\(^8\)

A White Paper headed by the Labour party’s Foreign Minister Thorvald Stoltenberg in 1989-90, is often spotlighted in explaining Norwegian Foreign Policy in the 90s. The White Paper, *Development trends in the international society and their effects on Norwegian foreign policy*, sometimes referred to as was a defined strategy for Norwegian foreign policy in the upcoming years.\(^9\) A long list of national, regional, and global foreign policy and interests and aims followed.\(^10\) It purported that Norway should strive to initiate processes, to be active and creative, and have a facilitator role in peace-processes.\(^11\) The paper underlined the advantage of Norway being a small country without a colonial past, and other aspects of great powers deemed unfortunate in the 1990s international community.\(^12\)

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\(^{7}\) When Norway is used as actor in this thesis, Norway equals the Norwegian government.

\(^{8}\) The term policy is here used in a very general manner to describe the act of relating and reacting to the Russo-Chechen conflict.


\(^{11}\) Tamnes 1997: 341.

Norway was also engaged as peace facilitators in several processes in the 1990s and considered its engagements in many ways successful. It is almost possible to claim that some of the enthusiastic Norwegian participators were soaring on a “peace-high”. Jan Egeland’s claim that foreign policy had become Norway’s best export article was perhaps not all true, but efforts were clearly made in the spirit of the saying. Norwegian historian Rolf Tamnes has called this on peace and development engagement policy. The engagement policy can be characterized as an ethical foreign policy driven by idealism and value diplomacy, such as human rights activism, humanitarian aid, and environmental issues. The Norwegian peacemaking efforts can be seen as an attempt to find a place in the post-Cold War world. It had become less certain what kind of interests and position a small country like Norway had, and what strategies was best to promote a small country’s position in an international context. The Norwegian MFA lost its explicit security political mandate it had been custodian of during the Cold War. However, by establishing a position as important peace facilitators, the Norwegian government, especially the MFA, earned itself a new and important mandate.

Uncertainties nonetheless characterized the situation in the 1990s. Qualms were linked to the new relations with a new version of NATO and the post-Soviet Russia in a reforming state. Norway was still firmly positioned within the alliance after NATO’s summit meeting in London in 1990. However, it was an unfamiliar situation for Norway that its allies no longer regarded the Northern areas and Norway itself with a security focus. Other areas were perceived more challenging by NATO, and the security concerns in the northern areas had to a large degree become local rather than international concerns. An additional momentum was that the Norwegian people had turned down membership in the European Union (EU) in a national referendum in 1994. This was the second time the Norwegians chose to remain outside

the European community. The first time was in 1972.\textsuperscript{21} Both of Norway’s immediate Scandinavian neighbours, Sweden and Denmark, joined the EU at this point. Norway feared being sidelined, as the EU was attempting to establish foreign policy coordination through the European Political Cooperation (EPC). The EPC aimed at revitalizing the Western European Union (WEU) as its defence and security arm in Europe. As a non-member of the EU Norway only obtained consultation arrangements with the EPC and associate membership of the WEU.\textsuperscript{22}

NORTHERN NEIGHBOURS IN A NEW ERA

Three sets of factors have been distinguished as essential in Russo-Norwegian relations in the 1990s. First, Russia’s relation to the West in general, and to NATO and USA in particular, affected Norway’s relation with Russia. A consequence of Norway’s NATO membership and the close security cooperation Norway has had with the USA since the Second World War. During the Cold War, the international framework was paramount to Russo-Norwegian relations. In Norway the political turnabout in Russia in the late eighties and early nineties led to a sort of euphoric feeling towards the Russians, as the final wrap up of Soviet communism altered the Norwegian view of Russia. The general Norwegian conception in the early nineties was that Norwegians and Russians could return to their natural and pre-Cold War relations.\textsuperscript{23} The ideological change that occurred within Russia with the dissolution of the USSR did not necessarily change the essential international framework. Structural factors, such as Russia great power status and Norway’s membership in NATO, an alliance that Russia continued to recognize as an obstacle to own security interests, remained unchanged.\textsuperscript{24}

Second, Russo-Norwegian bilateral relations were affected by the Russian domestic situation. Russia experienced tendencies of a state in dissolution during the 1990s, due to huge economical problems and internal fractions. The struggle for political power, prestige and pressured resources often affected the surrounding world.\textsuperscript{25}

Third, the relations were affected by Norwegian policy in the high north. There were several issues where Norway and Russia was opposed to each other in the border region of the northern areas in both land and at sea. Among them was the Barents Sea, of massive

\textsuperscript{21} Tamnes 1997: 147.
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid: 144.
\textsuperscript{23} Geir Hønneland, «Vårt bilde av Russerne»[Our perception of the Russians], i Lars Rowe and Geir Hønneland(edt.), Russlandbilder: Nye debattinnlegg om naboskap i nordområdene, Bergen. 2007: 16.
\textsuperscript{24} Torunn Laugen, «Mot et kaldere klima? Utviklingen av det bilaterale forholdet mellom Norge og Russland på 1990-tallet», Internasjonal politikk, 59, 1, 2001: 92
\textsuperscript{25} Laugen, 2001: 92
importance to both Norway and Russia, has been a disputed area for many decades. Fish and petroleum, Norway’s two main exports, are both linked to the sea. This has had, and still has, important implications for Norwegian foreign policy. Unlike the mainland border, established in 1826, the bilateral maritime boundary has been somewhat problematic defined and less consequent. The disagreement boiled down to diverging opinions on how to most properly delimitate the maritime borders. Norway wanted to use the median line, whilst Russia wanted to use a meridian based sector principle. They both favour the principle that will leave their own country the most area and resources.

In the 1970s Norway and the Soviet Union had managed to reach some arrangement. In 1978 they agreed on a so-called Grey Zone where they were responsible for their own vehicles and citizens; an area that was not accounted for, but considered an international free-zone.

Foreign Minister Thorvald Stoltenberg initiated a new approach to the northern areas through the Euro Arctic Barents Sea Region along with Russia, Sweden, and Finland. The Barents Region was officially inaugurated on 11 January 1993 through the signing of the Kirkenes-declaration. The main areas of co-operation were environment, student-exchange and promoting commerce. There were several strategies behind the project. Foremost to bring Russia closer into the European sphere and make the Northern area an interesting place to the rest of the world, also after the vigilance of the Cold War was gone. The governance of the fishing resources was kept within a Russo-Norwegian bilateral cooperation that had existed in more or less the same form since 1976.

The post-Cold War Russo-Norwegian relations in the high north were nevertheless characterized by uncertainty and unpredictability. The Norwegian authorities worked hard to establish a peaceful and cooperative link with the Russians in this new epoch. The Russian presidential candidate Boris Yeltsin was in Norway, as in other Western nations, celebrated as a good man and a hope for a possible Russian democracy. When Yeltsin won the elections, the

34 Riste 2005: 278.
expectations for his future achievements were running high. However, Yeltsin was soon on a warpath towards Russia’s own Parliament and towards the small mountain republic, Chechnya.

Norway had many reasons to react and respond to the outburst of the Russo-Chechen armed conflict. It concerned security in its largest neighbouring state Russia, it occurred within an OSCE member state, and moreover the conflict caused violations of many of the universal values that Norway claimed it stood for and promoted. Nonetheless, Political Scientist Tore Nyhamar explicitly claims that Norwegian considerations for human rights were, in the course of the Russo-Chechen conflict, subordinated the fear of “falling out” with Russia over matters that did not directly concern Norway.

**SOME THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES**

Russo-Norwegian relations are often analyzed in terms of basic *realist* thinking. Small Norway, with its estimated 4.5 million people cannot outrun its geography as neighbour to Russia, a regional great power. The bilateral relation between the two was, and still is, asymmetric, especially with regards to military capabilities and human resources. According to basic theory of *realism* the state is the most central actor in international politics. The world is also perceived as anarchical due to the lack of a superior global authority with executive power. A following realistic supposition is that the distribution of material power establishes states’ room for manoeuvre. Whereas a great power can do what it has the power to do, a small state accepts what it must accept. In this perspective a small state will always have to tread carefully in relations with great powers. Realism theory stresses military and economical capacities. A state’s capacity to maximize its own security and power through economic and military means is in this perspective decisive. Norway’s effort to balance the asymmetrical relation with Russia is apparent through the import of security through NATO and close relations with the USA.

An additional theoretical perspective is based on *liberal* theory of international relations, which stresses interstate integration and interdependence. This perspective was, and is, visible in Norway’s approach to foreign affairs through its confidence in economical integration and cooperation as conflict resolving factors in international relations. The global

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36 Phone Interview with Knut Vollebæk, 17.2.2010
anarchy becomes modified in this perspective, because the actors recognize that cooperation is
the best solution for everyone. In an analysis of Norway’s policy in the northern areas the
Norwegian conviction that inter-cultural and economic cooperation was stabilizing is central.
The Euro Arctic Barents Sea Region cooperation and other similar international organizations
and treaties are examples of this. The United Nations (UN) is also such an organization that
clears the ground for mutual understanding and agreements. That is not to say that this forum
does not allow national interests on the agenda, but the point of departure is an understanding
that mutual obligations and treaties affects and “frames” eventual conflicts in international
politics. Liberal theory recognizes conflict potential in interstate dynamics, while stressing that
smaller actors have the possibility to affect their own room of manoeuvre.39

A constructivist based perspective claims that national, regional and international norms
and perception affect the conduct in foreign affairs on any given level. The power to define
what conduct is legitimate or not and what is morally right and wrong can be considered a
structural ideological power. An actor can “sell” a good idea, or convince others of something
and thereby attain power of definition.40 In regards of this thesis it can be helpful to discern
“what conflict” the Norwegian Government related to and how. It is important to be aware of
narrative constructions of conflict based on prejudice and myths, and show plain awareness of
the fact that there are several ways to present a given conflict. This is because the version
“bought” by the external actors relating to it is fairly decisive on how they relate to it. The
following is a simplified example of such a perspective: When Norway supported the
“humanitarian bombing” in Kosovo it was perceived as legitimate, because the Kosovo-
Albanian people were perceived as threatened by genocide. The Chechens were not perceived
to be under the threat of genocide, and Chechnya’s secessionist regime was also perceived as
nesting terrorists and mafia enterprise. Concerning the latter, it would be regarded as Russia’s
legitimate right to protect territorial integrity and security for its citizens. Thus, it was not
legitimate for external actors to intervene.

Questions of national identity and legitimate behavior and conduct are central factors of
a constructivist perspective. A Norwegian perception of the Norwegian “peace tradition” and
“peace nation” is well established, although thoroughly contested both inside and outside
Norway.41 This perspective implies that perceptions of one’s own role affects and “frames”

40 Ibid: 23.
41 Tamnes 1997: 343; «De sa vi ikke kunne klare det», NY TID, 15.6.2001; Sverre Lodgaard, «Helhetsperspektiver
på norsk utenrikspolitikk», Internasjonal Politikk, no. 3, 2002; Sverre Lodgaard, «Helhetsperspektiver på norsk
Norwegian defense and security policy. The ideas of Norway as “the good keeper”, i.e. the sensible and wise administer of the northern areas suits such a self image perfectly. On the regional level it refers to the good historical Russo-Norwegian relations and on the international level sovereignty and states’ administrative responsibility. It is strategically important for Norway to show or convince the world that Norway is the “most dependable keeper” of the great resources of the North. The international normative environment is central. The idea of Norway as human rights advocate also suits Norway’s self image. Norway presents itself as an inexhaustible promoter of human rights and criticizes regimes for human rights violations across the globe. However, Norway has not tended to criticize Russia. Here, Norway cannot historically refer to itself as critical and outspoken on human rights violations.

Joseph Nye Jr. Professor in Political Science established the terms hard and soft power in “Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics”. Hard power is understood to pressurize others, through economic or military means, to act against their own will. Hard power strategies are neither possible nor desirable from a Norwegian perspective. The exception is that hard power has some relevance through alliances, such as NATO. More important to Norway is soft power. The term is based on a perception that political actors, states for instance, can affect other actors conduct, action and interests through ideological and cultural advances. To Nye these acts can often be considered strategic. Nevertheless, they also need to be considered valuable by other actors. The international, regional and national normative environment is given much importance. Nye referred to Norway by stating that the Norwegian role in peace negotiations and similar engagement can increase Norway’s room of manoeuvre, and facilitate access to important decision arenas. It thus contests the idea of Norwegian foreign policy of peace facilitating and humanitarian- and development aid as something being purely altruistic.

With the transnational NGO-organizations, global media, and the World Wide Web, which accelerated to new heights through the nineties, there was created an international public that challenged the traditional inside-outside divide between domestic and foreign policy. The term public diplomacy refers to the fact that the public, to a much greater degree than earlier, discusses foreign and security political matters, and the media reports, especially on conflicts, in a much more direct way. Foreign policy is now also performed in public, not only in closed
sessions by professional diplomats and politicians.\textsuperscript{45} It has become possible for people other than the political elite to be updated on conflicts through television and internet, and see pictures directly from war zones and follow the development from day to day. The NGO’s reportage and criticism of political leaders has gained wider legitimacy in the early 1990s. This, however, changed somewhat with the US led operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, where Western authorities was less willing to listen to criticism uttered by human rights advocates.\textsuperscript{46} Nonetheless, because of human rights focus in the 1990s, it became more important for political leaders to show awareness of human rights in public. In conflicts with severe human right violations, such as the Russo-Chechen conflict, it became harder for the foreign policy makers and actors, to keep matters withdrawn from the public, at least without making some sort of effort to legitimize their actions, or lack of action, through open discussions.\textsuperscript{47} Due to this development soft power can be considered strategically more important.

A timeline of seven years has been useful to discern developments in the Norwegian policy throughout \textit{two} Russo-Chechen wars, \textit{three} succeeding Norwegian governments and \textit{a regime change} in Russia. This thesis’ main focus is events that took place from 1994 until 2001. It would be possible to go back to 1991, when Chechnya declared its sovereignty. However, I find it better to start with the Russian invasion in 1994 because of the explicit Norwegian reactions that followed. The analysis ends in 2001 for two main reasons: First, the second war was officially declared over by President Vladimir Putin. Second, a discussion on the period after the attack on the World Trade Center, and what is by many seen as a change of paradigm in international politics, would go beyond the scope of this thesis’ time and pages. Nonetheless, the timeline has been stretched here and there to be able to explain particularities, or place them in a context. By doing this it is also possible to point out some of the development after 9/11, without making a thorough analysis.

In order to have a handle on what kind of conflict Norwegian authorities were relating to, Russo-Chechen relations and the conflict is presented in Chapter 2, before the empirical chapters. To be able to discern factors of Russo-Norwegian relations, which may have affected Norway’s policy towards the Russo-Chechen conflict, it is essential to examine how Norway related to the Federal State of Russia in that period. Therefore, a short historical background of Russo-Norwegian relations will be presented in the following part of the introduction.

\textsuperscript{45} Matlary 2002: http://www.sv.uio.no/mutr/publikasjoner/rapp2002/Rapport46.html
\textsuperscript{46} Hughes 2007: 135.
\textsuperscript{47} Matlary, 2002: http://www.sv.uio.no/mutr/publikasjoner/rapp2002/Rapport46.html
NEIGHBOURS THROUGHOUT A THOUSAND YEARS

Contrary to the Chechen people, the Norwegians have usually enjoyed overall peaceful relations with the Russians. The following excerpt of Russo-Norwegian relations is in compliance with the glossy image that is brought forth when Norwegian and Russian political leaders meet. It is possible to trace relations of trade and royal intermarriage between Norway and Russia through written sources a thousand years back. In the 18th and 19th century an annual trade market, since called the Pomor-trade, brought the cultures together. More than 300 hundred ships left Russia for northern parts of Norway every summer, to trade Russian flour for Norwegian fish. Naturally, given geography and trade interaction, Norwegian decision makers in Oslo were more sceptical towards the Russians than their northern countrymen.

After a short period of independence from Denmark in the 18th century, Norway entered a union with Sweden. During the Swedish-Norwegian Union, the awareness of “the Russian threat” was said to be particularly felt in Swedish elite circles. It was claimed that the Swedish authorities used this “threat”, i.e. ‘if Norway stood by itself, Russia could invade Norway’, to keep Norway in line. The same Russophobe ideas were however also widespread in Norway.

In the early 1900s Russia favoured Norway’s dissolution from Sweden because it would weaken Sweden’s potential power. Thus, Russia was the first of the great European powers to acknowledge the national sovereignty of Norway on 29 October 1905. Norway was correspondingly among the first states in Europe to recognize the Soviet regime as the legitimate government of Russia following the Russian Revolution.

55 Ibid: 133.
During the Second World War, the Germans kept 90,000 Soviet citizens in Norway as prisoners of war. There was a great deal of interconnection between these and the Norwegian civilian population, which tried to help them with food and refuge. In 1944, the Red Army liberated the eastern part of Finnmark and as is often highlighted since, withdrew from this area the following year.

Norway’s relations with the Soviet Union (USSR) were strained because of the Cold War. The struggle for world dominance between the USSR and the USA followed from 1945 all the way into Mikhail S. Gorbachev’s period in the 1980s. Caught between the two superpowers, Norway at first avoided, as best as possible, quarrels between the USA and the USSR. What has been called a bridge-building position is also regarded to have been as a general disengagement from international affairs. After rumours that Norway might receive the same “threatening invitation” as Eastern European states and Finland, Norway’s position changed. In 1949 Norway openly chose sides with the USA in the conflict by entering the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and thus opposed the USSR-based defence organization, the Warsaw Pact.

Sharing 196 kilometres of common border with Russia is a constant factor in Norwegian foreign policy, and the peripheral geographical situation, another. Norway was strategically important in the Cold War, as the only NATO country with a common border to the USSR. The small country thus “enjoyed” a central position. According to historian Olav Riste, two sets of formulae determined the course of Norwegian security policy: “In relation to the Soviet Union, the ‘deterrence’ obtained through membership of the Atlantic Alliance would be paired with efforts of ‘reassurance’ that such membership was strictly for defensive purposes.” Self-imposed restrictions became a key term in Norwegian foreign policy in the North. Consequently, Norway was among other averse to having NATO-exercises in the high north and did not want to have nuclear arms stationed in Norway.

The self-imposed restrictions did not only concern NATO and “bases policy”, but also other levels. Norway, for instance, was reluctant to criticize the USSR of maltreatment of

60 Ibid: 199.
Christians, Jews and political dissidents, while Norwegian governments would strongly condemn other regimes elsewhere. The tense situation that had been an omnipresent factor of Russo-Norwegian relations during the Cold War was in part relieved when Mikhail S. Gorbachev came to power in 1985. Gorbachev was of the opinion that the USSR needed reform to manage economically and politically. His government launched many broad reforms in Russian society, Perestroika, and promoted openness on many levels, Glasnost. Gorbachev was also more sympathetic to the West than his predecessors and strengthened diplomatic relations with USA, and Western European nations.

The reforms and the openness undermined the structures that the USSR was built on, and the Soviet empire started crumbling. Added to the situation came an international wave of nationalism over Europe making it harder to keep federations such as the USSR and Yugoslavia together. Smaller scale conflicts were rumbling beneath the surface. Some of the conflict had been frozen by the Cold War and some were seemingly a consequence of the dissolution itself. Chechnya could be placed in the latter category. In the USSR the forces promoting reform, secession and national independence eventually managed to overcome the conservative communist forces trying to reform the USSR in function. International political relations changed drastically with the dissolution of the USSR and the change brought with it uncertainty to the international order. Part of the changes was the wars erupting inside nation states. The questions of how the international community should deal with conflicts, such as the Russo-Chechen, soon arise. Reactions and responses towards the conflicts would vary greatly among Western government. As all conflicts and situations are different this can be regarded as obvious, however at times it seems as Western governments operated with a double set of morals.

LITERATURE

This is, as far as I have been able to find out, the first thorough study on how Norway related to the Chechen conflict. James Hughes, professor of Comparative Politics states in his book, Chechnya: from Nationalism to Jihad that, previous studies of the international aspects of the

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64 Torbjørn L. Knutsen, «Politikk og praksis i historisk lys.»[Politics and Practice in Historic Light], in Birgitte Kjos Fonn, Iver B. Neumann og Ole Jacob Sending(red.), Norsk utenrikspolitis praksis: Aktører og prosesser, Oslo 2006: 257.
65 The West is defined as the members of the NATO in 1994; Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, Holland, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Germany and the USA + Sweden, Finland, Austria, Switzerland.
Chechen conflict, focused on how Russian foreign policy makers had managed the conflict internationally: “The determinants of the Foreign Policy of other states [...] on the question of Chechnya are a much-neglected field of study.” In line with Hughes, no overwhelming amount has been written on this specific topic in Norway. Although, there are several Norwegian authors that tap into it, while exploring the Chechen conflict in general or Norwegian foreign policy per se.

Aage Borchgrevink mentions Norwegian decision makers’ lack of response to the conflict and general tendency to ignore it in his book Den usynlige krigen: Reiser i Tsjetsjenia, Ingushetia og Dagestan [The Invisible War: Travels through Chechnya, Ingushetia and Dagestan]. Ingvald Godal has also noted what he considers political silence brought to the fore in his book Tsjetsjenia: Der enkene blir selvmordsbombere [Chechnya: Where the widows become suicide bombers]. Similarly Siri Lill Mannes with Livvakt i helvete – Aleksandr og krigen i Tsjetsjenia [Bodyguard in Hell – Aleksandr and the War in Chechnya] and Åsne Seierstad with stories from the Chechen war in De Krenkede: Fortellinger fra Tsjetsjenia [Angel of Grozny: Inside Chechnya], have explicitly criticized the way the Chechen conflict has been overlooked.


The solid collaborative historical work, and exhibition catalogue, “Norge-Russland: Naborder gjennom 1000 år” [Norway-Russia: neighbours through a 1000 years], has supplied background material for Russo-Norwegian historical relations. Norwegian relations with Russia in the 1990s are to a certain extent covered in literature on fields of national security, and the cooperation in the Barents Sea. All the books mentioned above on Norwegian Foreign

70 Ingvald Godal, Tsjetsjenia: Der enkene blir selvmordsbombere, Oslo 2003.
71 Siri Lill Mannes, Livvakt i helvete, Oslo 2006.
75 Even Lange, Helge Pharo and Øyvind Østerud (ed.), Vendepunkter i Norsk utenrikspolitikk: Nye internasjonale vilkår etter den kalde krigen [Turning points in Norwegian Foreign Affairs: New International conditions after the Cold War], Oslo 2009.
Policy covers Russo-Norwegian relations. Professor II and Senior Researcher of Political Science Geir Hønneland have written several books on Norwegian-Russian relations since the end of the Cold War. Småstat og energistormakt: Norges sikkerhetspolitiske rolle i nord [Small State and Energy Great Power: Norway’s Security Political Role in the North], co-written by Hønneland has provided most parts of the thesis theoretical approach and some background material. Hønneland focuses more explicitly than many on the fascinating perspective of perception between the two neighbour states.

There exists today a fairly large amount of literature on the Russo-Chechen conflict and the perceptions of the conflict are as many as works or more. I have had to be selective, and I have used three works as main background material. The first is “Chechnya: Tombstone of Russia” by journalist and historian Anatol Lieven. The book is comprehensive and deals with the North Caucasian history and the contemporary social condition and politics in both Russia and Chechnya. He also provides personal experience of the conditions during the first war, and firsthand knowledge about many of the main protagonists he met when he stayed there. However, Lieven, as many others, end up describing the conflict with a mythological tendency.

In Chechnya: from Nationalism to Jihad, Professor of Comparative Politics James Hughes takes a more sober approach. Nonetheless, he analyzes the history and cultural factors of Russo-Chechen relations, which have often been taken for granted as causes, but with a critical distance. In addition, he adds a theoretical approach, the dynamics of conflict, which presents an alternative to the many “either – or” explanations, showing instead the dynamics and development of both protagonist and circumstances. “Chechnya: from Past to Future”, is a reader edited by Richard Sakwa. The volume are brought together by leading experts from all sides of the conflict, with Western, Russian and Chechen perspectives on the conflict, explaining the conflict’s context and causes. In addition, I have used several other books to explain particularities, or more thoroughly comprehend the context.

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78 Hønneland, 2005: 106-165.
SELECTING SOURCES and METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

This is an empirical study and the thesis’ analysis is based on qualitative research. The narrative builds on analysis of newspapers articles and primary sources such as, statements to the Norwegian Parliament, speeches, and whitepapers, and some interviews. In order to answer my research questions I have used diverging and broadly based basic theoretical approaches to analyze the source material I have had at hand. This is done along with a reading of secondary literature, to put the material into a wider context.

The topic of this thesis made it natural to explore the Royal Norwegian MFA’s archive. However, after seven months of having my application processed, I was unfortunately denied any access to this material, on the basis that the MFA does not give access to matters of current interest and affairs still in process. The archive of the Norwegian Parliament (Stortinget) has been of great use, although I have mainly looked at published sources. I have drawn on the Foreign Ministers Annual Address on Foreign Policy to the Parliament and the following debates, but also other statements and speeches by the foreign-, defence- and prime ministers as well as press releases from the succeeding governments.

The newspapers in Norway have covered the Chechen conflict, if not to a great extent. The Norwegian News Agency (NTB), which serves over 70 Norwegian newspapers, offering broad coverage of national and international affairs, has been a great source. The newspapers have been useful as a tool in finding information, on how the Norwegian MFA handled the situation officially, and how the ministry portrayed it to the Norwegian public. Although these newspapers have different profiles, the media in Norway is often claimed to be part of the broad consensus orientation in Norwegian foreign policy.

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82 Brev til Hilde K. Røsstad fra det Kongelige Utenriksdepartement 22.5.2009, 08/07123-6. “Departementet finner at det ikke kan gis innsyn i overnevnte materiale, siden det ikke gis innsyn i saker som ikke er avsluttet eller på saksområder som fortsatt er aktuelle. Dokumentene i saken er i det alt vesentlige graderte og unntatt offentligheten. [The Ministry finds that it can not grant access to the above mentioned material since access is not granted to file-cases that have not been closed, or in issues that are still in train.]

83 See Appendix II with tables on the media analysis of the search subject Chechnya compared to Kosovo.

84 The Oslo based and conservative Aftenposten [the Evening News] is Norway’s largest newspaper, and considered by many as the nation’s leading newspaper. Morgenbladet [the Morning News] is a weekly newspaper with emphasis on culture, art, literature and politics. Klassekampen ['the Class Struggle'] is a daily left-wing newspaper with a largely critical perspective on the political establishment. Nordlys [the ‘Northern Light’] is a regional paper for the northern part of Norway and its main focus is on regional issues like fish, tourism, culture, petroleum and regional development. Bergens Tidende [the Bergen Times] is a liberal regional newspaper in western Norway. Vårt Land [‘Our Nation’] is published in Oslo, and is the largest newspaper with a Christian editorial outlook in Norway. The Oslo based Dagbladet [the Daily News] is the former party organ of the Norwegian Labour Party, and mostly confined to the area of Oslo. Dagbladet [the Daily Magazine] is Norway’s third largest newspaper and an Oslo based liberal profiled tabloid. Verdens Gang (VG) [the ‘Course of the World’] is Norway largest newspaper. The Oslo based tabloid VG is often referred to as a red top newspaper.

85 Henrik Thune, Torgeir Larsen og Gro Holm, «Budbringerens utenriksmakt? Medias innflytelse i norske utenrikspolitiske beslutningsprosesser»[the Messenger’s influence on foreign policy? The media’s influence on...
This claim is based on two observations. First, the Norwegian press corps’ profession-ethics is strict about what is regarded a legitimate source, when covering Norwegian foreign policy, compared to other domestic areas of journalism. Reportage of this sort usually occurs when a “legitimate critic”, i.e. representatives of political parties, military, NGOs or specialists, denounces the government’s action. Second, the possibilities to run critical source-based journalistic practice are limited by the fact that final foreign political decisions and choices often take place within processes that are exempt from the public. These processes tries to unite party political opponents, public discussions on foreign policy are narrow, and the decision making occurs through a consultative organ, between the government and the Parliament.

Due to this strict profession-ethics where journalists usually reports only on what has been said or done by “foreign policy authorities”, the Norwegian newspapers are fairly reliable sources. The newspapers will therefore mainly be used as providers of information only, and will not be regarded as a voice of its own. A methodological problem using only Norwegian papers is the disproportionate focus by the journalists on Norwegian actors compared to the overall situation. These actors would often be mentioned more briefly, or not at all, in other countries papers, which would not perceive the Norwegians as important as the Norwegians would themselves.

Interviews with former Ministers of Foreign Affairs Bjørn Tore Godal and Knut Vollebæk have been undertaken. Accordingly conversations with some of the advisors and state secretaries of respective Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Cecilie Landsverk, Odd Gunnar Skagestad and Kim Traavik have taken place. Apart from some recollection problems, they all shared privileged insight with me, and helped me to shed some more light on how Norway related to the wars in Chechnya.

87 Ibid: 219, 224.
Before the Chechen conflict in the 1990s, there had been little Norwegian awareness of the Northern Caucasus, and little contact between Norwegians and Chechens, or North Caucasians in general. Exceptions are the author Knut Hamsun’s and the Norwegian national hero Fritjof Nansen’s respective travels through the North Caucasus in the early 20th century. Russia and Chechnya, on the other hand, have shared close relations for over two hundred years with varying degrees of tension. The two recent wars involve a conundrum of history, nationalism, petroleum and religion. Furthermore, the wars have put human rights aside, at times strained Kremlin’s relations with Western powers, and caused cold shudders to spread throughout neighbouring countries.

Two central questions can be posed peering into the blood-stained history of the North Caucasus and the two recent Russo-Chechen wars (1994-96 and from 1999 until time of writing). First, why was it exactly Chechnya that wanted national sovereignty, in light of the fact that none of the surrounding republics held the same sovereignty claim in such a zealous and inexhaustible manner? Second, why has Russia fought so ardently to keep this mountain nation within its borders?

Conflicts are usually complex, and to present a balanced conflict narrative is seriously challenging. A conflict account less than 18 pages worth is perhaps infeasible. Nonetheless, it gives a rough idea of a situation through the shedding of light on important factors, events, protagonists and dynamics. Several ways of presenting and explaining conflicts can, and will hopefully, always be found and the Russo-Chechen conflict is not an exception. Narratives of the Russo-Chechen conflict are often painted with broad strokes of black and white with little attention for detail. Myths created by reviewing Russo-Chechen relations through the biblical story of David and Goliath, or the story of “the lone wolf’s unending struggle against the great bear”, are examples of this. It makes exciting stories, but does little to promote future peace and reconciliation. The myths are often based on the notion of the resistance met by the Tsar’s generals in the 1800s and the classical romantic literature of Mikhail Lermontov, Alexander

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88 Knut Hamsun, I æventyrland; Oplevet og drømt i Kaukasien, København 1903; Fritjof Nansens Gjennem Kaukasus til Volga, Oslo 1929; Map over Chechnya is provided in Appendix I.
89 I use Western as a collective term to include the countries and people of Western Europe and North America.
Pushkin and Leo Tolstoy presenting the “noble savage”.\textsuperscript{91} Many of these romantic elements have also been reproduced by Western journalist and academic writers on the war.\textsuperscript{92}

Common Russo-Chechen historic relations have often been given too much importance, and this is still often done when someone wishes to draw attention to Chechnya.\textsuperscript{93} Chechen culture, traditions and especially religion, has been increasingly in focus. There has also been a tendency of personalizing the conflict, for instance spotlighting bad relations between President Yeltsin and Chechnya’s first president Dzhokhar Dudaev. What we can refer to as the Russian version has been claimed to be the most powerful voice in the main narrative upon which both political action (and to some extent public opinion) is based. This has above all been the situation within the Russian Federation. However, this has also increasingly been the situation in other countries, since the attack on the World Trade Center 11 September 2001, or one could argue since Vladimir Putin came to power.\textsuperscript{94} The Russian government portrays its action as an important and necessary contribution to, or at least part of, the West’s “war on terror”. The Federal actions are presented as an effort to help the Chechens deal with atrocities committed by criminals within their own group.\textsuperscript{95} What has often been neglected are the dynamics of conflict as an explanatory factor. The two recent wars should be seen in the light of the history of Russo-Chechen relations. Nevertheless, the recent conflict is also a distinct and separate affair that erupted after more than 50 years of reasonably tranquil relations.\textsuperscript{96}

**CONQUEST AND RESISTANCE**

When Chechnya claimed national sovereignty from Russia in 1991, the area had more or less been integrated in the Russian Empire for about 150 years. In the late 18\textsuperscript{th} century Catharine the Great established Russian forces in the North Caucasus on a permanent basis. Sheikh Mansur Ushurma led his Chechen, Dagestani, Kumyk and Kabardin Mountaineers followers to victory against the Russian army. However, he later failed to unite them and after six years of fighting he was caught by Russian forces in 1791. He died in captivity.\textsuperscript{97} In Russian history writing Sheikh Mansur’s and other North Caucasian’s resistance in those years are often referred to as revolts.

\textsuperscript{91} A selection of works: Alexander Pushkin, *Prisoner of the Caucasus* from 1820; Mikhail Lermontov, *A hero of our time* from 1839; Leo Tolstoy, *Hadji Murad* from 1911.
\textsuperscript{93} A recent example is: Audun Trellevik, «Menn som forsvinner»[Men whom disappears], *Dagsavisen*, 27.3.2010
\textsuperscript{94} Helland 2006: 13.
\textsuperscript{95} Ibid: 13.
\textsuperscript{96} Tishkov 1997: 188-189.
\textsuperscript{97} Lieven 1998: 306
perhaps a better word. Fighting continued sporadically for half a century from Mansur’s death.98 The 1860s was the decade when the generals of Tsar Alexander II completed the conquest of the North Caucasus. The Russian regime was consolidating its power. Compared to the many European colonizers, often motivated by trading possibilities and commerce, the colonization of the North Caucasus was primarily motivated by geopolitical concerns.99 The “small peoples” of the Caucasus had throughout the centuries constantly been invaded by others: Rome, Parthia, Iran, the Byzantines, the Arab caliphate, the Khazar kaganate, the Seljuks, the Mongol Timur, the Golden Horde, the Safavids, and the Ottomans among others.100 In the 18th and 19th century, the area was scene of a struggle of control between Sunni Muslim Ottoman Turkey, Shi‘i Iran and the Orthodox Christian Russia.101

There existed no such thing as a nation, or area, called Chechnya at the time of the conquest. Although, the Chechens inhabited most parts of the same area as they do today.102 However, “the Russian conquest of the Caucasus”103 did not solely affect the Chechens, but a plurality of people such as the Ingush, Dagestanis, Abkhaz, Ossetians, Circassians and many more.104 On the other hand, it is often said that in comparisons with other indigenous people of the North Caucasus, the Chechens are known as the most rebellious throughout the history of the Russian empire, the Soviet Union and post-communist Russia. They have indeed had their share of trouble with various Russian/Soviet regimes and vice versa.

A continuous 30 years of resistance was lead by the legendary Dagestani religious and military leader Imam Shamil during the Russo-Caucasian War in the mid 19th century. The densely forested highland of Dagestan and Chechnya provided ideal conditions for guerrilla warfare. Shamil, nicknamed the Lion, surrendered in 1859 as he saw his forces exhausted and the holy struggle, ghazawhat, as completely devastating to the region and its people.105 In 1864, the revolt called the Battle of the Daggers came about due to the arrest of the Chechen Sufi and pacifist religious leader Hajj Kunta.106 The Russian-Ottoman war in 1877-78 led to new uprisings

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98 Lieven 1998: 306
99 Consider, for instance, the role of the large European trading companies, the Hudson Bay and the Dutch or British East India companies; Michael Khordarkovsky, «Of Christianity, Enlightenment, and Colonialism: Russia in the North Caucasus, 1550-1800», the Journal of Modern History 1999, 2: 394-430
102 Khordarkovsky 1999: 394-430.
103 Title of the The Times journalist John Baddeley’s romanticised book from 1908 about the people, culture and history of the Caucasus; John Baddeley, The Russian Conquest of the Caucasus, London 1908.
in Chechnya and Dagestan. Revolution throughout Russia led to further revolt in Chechnya in 1905. Through the years 1917-21, with the Bolshevik seizure of power, there was a final Checheno-Dagestanian struggle for allegiance to Islam and independence from the Russian regime.\textsuperscript{107}

In 1921 the Chechens, Ingush, Ossetes, Karachai, and Balks were united in the Soviet Mountain Republic. Yet, only three years later, they were organized into separate autonomous regions, and raised to the status of Autonomous Republics. Disturbances again broke out between 1929 and 1935, which led to many Chechens being executed as a reprisal in 1937. The Chechen nationalist Hassan Isvailov led an uprising against Russia in 1940, and his group allegedly joined the German front in June 1941.\textsuperscript{108}

**THE DEPORTATION**

On Stalin’s order 478 479 ethnic Chechens and Ingush were deported on 22 February 1944, charged as Nazi-collaborators \textit{en masse}.\textsuperscript{109} It did not only affect Chechens and Ingush. Kalmyks, Karachai, Balkars and Crimean Tatars were also deported by Stalin’s regime.\textsuperscript{110} The deported peoples were unloaded onto the steppes of Kazakhstan and other settlements throughout Central Asia, where it is estimated that one quarter of the deportees died.\textsuperscript{111} These figures include the fact that in half a dozen Chechen villages the Russian deportation troops were unable to move the inhabitants. Instead of being deported, the villagers were massacred in barns and mosques by Russian troops.\textsuperscript{112}

The deported nationalities were eliminated from all Soviet official documents and the great Soviet encyclopaedia as if they had never existed.\textsuperscript{113} During Nikita Khrushchev’s period, 1953-64, the Chechens and Ingush were allowed to return to their homeland. Although Khrushchev never withdrew the Nazi-collaborator charges, the Premier initiated investigations into the massacres committed during the deportations, and went for a fresh start by denouncing

\textsuperscript{107} Lieven, 1998: 317.
\textsuperscript{110} Nekrich 1978
\textsuperscript{113} Lieven 1998: 319.
the deportations as crimes of the Stalin-era. The autonomous republics were re-established.\textsuperscript{114} The Chechens as a people has suffered hardships, and their shared North Caucasian history with the Russians has, as shown, at times been outright gruesome. However these events in themselves cannot provide the main explanatory cause of a war taking place 60 years later. Nonetheless, it is well known that misuse of history can provide belligerent leaders with narratives they can use in their agitating rhetoric, as was done, deliberately or not, by the Dudaev regime in the 1990s.\textsuperscript{115} The Russo-Chechen shared history is not all battles and blood.

**INTEGRATION AND SOCIAL UNREST**

From the Khrushchev-period, and up until 1991, is seen by many as a peaceful period with cultural and economic prosperity.\textsuperscript{116} Still, instances of social unrest occurred from time to time. There were tensions between ethnic Chechens and Russians in the Chechen-Ingush Republic. Ethnic Chechens and Russians lived in fairly distinctly separated areas within the republic. Whereas Russians mostly populated the urban areas, ethnic Chechens dominated the countryside. Intermarriage seldom took place between ethnic Chechens and Russians, as they did in some other autonomous republics with mixed populations.\textsuperscript{117} Also, 90 percent of the ethnic Chechens, although fluent in Russian, placed the Chechen language above Russian in terms of daily use. In other ethnic republics within the Russian Federation, Russian was usually dominant as practiced language, also within the non-Russian populations.\textsuperscript{118}

By the end of the 1980s the Chechen Ingush Republic lagged behind the rest of the Russian republics in most aspects of socio-economic development.\textsuperscript{119} Half the population was under 30 years of age, and unemployment among ethnic Chechens reached 30 per cent. Not surprisingly, there was a growing discontent among ethnic Chechens in the republic. Chechnya was the only ethnic republic that did not have a person from their own ethnic group in a leadership position. An increasing nationalist tendency, which focused on their indigenous culture as separate from the Soviet/Russian, gradually got a firmer foothold. A demand for more autonomy became apparent. This was conceded by the Soviet regime to ease the fervour in the republic, but perhaps the initiative came too late. Nonetheless, in June 1989 Doku Zavgaev

\textsuperscript{117} Mikhailov 2005: 51.
\textsuperscript{118} Ibid: 51.
\textsuperscript{119} Sakwa 2005: 1-2.
became the first Chechen to lead the republic as head of the Chechen Communist Party Organization.120

**DISSOLUTION**

In Boris Yeltsin’s struggle to undermine the authority of Premier Mikhail Gorbachev and gain support in the upcoming election throughout Russia, he supported secessionist groups in republics within Russia. He let slip the now famous phrase: “Take as much sovereignty as you can swallow.”121 Many people took this literally, causing great enthusiasm and support, also within the Chechen republic.

The disintegration of the USSR was accelerated by a failed coup in August 1989 launched by a group of conservative communists against Premier Gorbachev. It was uncertain to people in both the union republics and the autonomous republics to what leader they owed their loyalty. Was it to the conservative coup initiators; the reformist Gorbachev; or the new Russian leadership in pursuit of democracy headed by Boris Yeltsin? There were different conceptions as well on whether the union should disintegrate altogether or be redesigned in a new way.122

The USSR’s collapse was a period of deep and general crisis for Russia. The state institutions were altered; the national economy suffered from the collapse of the Gorbachev economy and the loss of the Eastern European markets; and the population’s savings were wiped out by hyperinflation. The Russian national identity also went through a crisis due to questions of the “what constitutes Russia now”, “who are Russian” sort. The great Red Army was deprived of its highest authority, its purpose and ideology. Soldiers had to go for months without wages and new equipment, and it was a despairing situation for many men in Soviet uniform. This situation would also lead way to massive plundering and corruption during the Russo-Chechen wars.123

**YOU SAY YOU WANT A REVOLUTION**

The crisis in the USSR and Russia presented an opportunity for the political mobilization of a national identity in Chechnya that aspired to independence. In November 1990 a congress aiming to celebrate Chechen culture was held in Grozny.124 The congress consisted mostly of clan-elders and excluded much of the urban population. The urban population was Russian-Chechen-dominated, less inclined to traditional observation of Islam and Chechen custom and overall

120 Sakwa 2005: 3.
122 Gall and Waal 1998: 89.
124 Gall and Waal 1998: 76.
more Sovietised.\(^{125}\) This difference has also been obvious in the recent conflicts, where the most zealous resistance towards Russia has come from the southern Chechen highland.

The congress initiative was supported from different groups with diverging agendas. Doku Zavgaev, the first ethnic Chechen to be head of the Chechen Communist Party Organisation, contributed to the making of the congress in an attempt to consolidate his newly achieved power in the republic. He wanted to smoothen over the uneasy situation between the diverging alliances in the Chechen society. Yeltsin supported the congress with the aim of putting pressure on the local Soviet authorities, i.e. Doku Zavgaev, to speed up political change on a larger scale.\(^{126}\)

Dzhokhar Dudaev, the first ethnic Chechen to achieve the title of Air force General in the Soviet Army was elected Chairman of the Congress. He had already taken part in the Estonian revolution; by refusing to obey Gorbachev’s orders to deploy Soviet Special Forces into Estonia by closing off the airspace.\(^{127}\) This choice of Chairman turned out to be unfortunate for Doku Zavgaev, because Dudaev had in stark terms criticized Zavgaev for not having strongly enough condemned the Communist coup attempt in August. The communist elite, with Zavgaev as head, including moderate intellectuals, were fairly rapidly swept away by brutal revolutionary political events unfolding under the leadership of Dudaev.\(^{128}\) Dudaev had able men under his command, who were preparing for war and who knew the Soviet/Russian army from the inside: Aslan Maskhadov and Shamil Basaev, described below, became the main protagonists on the Chechen side after Dudaev was killed by a laser guided missile while using a satellite phone.\(^{129}\)

Former Colonel in the Soviet Artillery Aslan Maskhadov was later to become the first and only elected President of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria. He was by many seen as the most moderate of the Chechen separatist leaders. He was however not able to gather the factions of the post-war Chechnya between 1997 and 1999. Although he is often spoken of in positive terms, he gained no international support as President and had to fight against both internal and external forces.\(^{130}\) Maskhadov was killed by Russian forces 8 March 2005.\(^{131}\)

Shamil Basaev who would become Chechnya’s legendary commander, and the Kremlin’s proclaimed “enemy nr.1” until he was killed in a car explosion July 2006.\(^{132}\) At the start of the Chechen conflict he had already obtained a reputation as a terrorist when he hijacked a Russian

\(^{125}\) Sakwa 2005: 3.
\(^{126}\) Ibid: 3.
\(^{127}\) Hughes 2007: 23.
\(^{128}\) Sakwa 2005: 3-4.
\(^{130}\) Ibid: 95-97.
\(^{131}\) Sakwa 2005: 14.
airplane in 1991. Basaev had been trained by Soviet forces, and he had fought against the Georgians on the Abkhazian/Russian side. Basaev would become Chechnya’s legendary and charismatic field commander, but also notorious for the terrorist operations in Budennovsk and Beslan.133

Dudaev was elected President in Chechnya on 27 October 1991 where he gained 85 percent of the votes. The dodgy state of the election proceedings brought about loud protests. Dudaev gave himself emergency powers, officially for a month only, but he never surrendered them.134 In November 1992 the Ingush proclaimed their own republic, separate from the Chechens and firmly placed within the Federal Republic of Russia. The democratic reforms many were hoping for in Chechnya faltered at an early stage.135 The Chechen civilian society suffered in the years before the first war erupted. The nascent regime of Chechnya was upheld by a shadow economy and had large internal problems to deal with. Money laundering, human trafficking with open slave-markets, drug trade, and illegal weapon transactions were all main components of this economy. During the Yeltsin period law enforcement was too underfunded and poorly trained to protect businesses and enforce binding contracts on most levels. It therefore became necessary for many people to join a protection racket usually controlled by local mafia. The Chechen mafia, notorious for its brutality, clan loyalty and safe havens in the Chechen highland, controlled the Russian criminal underworld.136 Mafia enterprise became a bearing structure in Chechen society, seemingly accepted by the Grozny regime under Dudaev. Kidnappings turned into a profitable and common activity, and train robberies an almost weekly affair.137 It was not a new phenomenon, but the criminal problems emanating from the Chechen republic in the period leading up to the first war presented a massive problem to the Russian government.138

On 2 November 1991 Dudaev and his government claimed full independence from Russia. Yeltsin responded to the increasingly lawless circumstances by declaring a state of emergency in Chechnya in November 1991, and threatened to use military force. The threat was real enough, but the Russian troops that performed the half-hearted intervention were quickly surrounded by Dudaev’s national forces. The operation was called off by the Russian parliament, and Yeltsin’s operation turned into an unpopular blunder.139 His military forces were put on buses

and driven out of Chechnya. The Kremlin supported, however, from that point on pro-Russian forces in the Caucasus. It developed into a “half-force variant” where Russian authorities sustained the Chechen opposition’s against President Dudaev in August-November 1994.

MASTERS OF WAR

In December 1994 Russia invaded Chechnya, and two years of brutal war followed. However, it was not only Chechnya that was on the brink of armed conflict in the Russian federation. Some political commentators at the time believed that several other republics, such as Tatarstan, were more likely to erupt into war than Chechnya. Contrary to Chechnya, President Yeltsin managed to sort out a functional agreement with Tatarstan. But why did he not manage the same with Chechnya? Why did Russia invade Chechnya and why at this point? The answers provided are as many as the works providing them. However, “the origins of the Russian invasion of Chechnya in late 1994 are complicated and still somewhat mysterious, despite the availability of memoir accounts, interviews, and some documents.”

As shown above, the historic relations cannot account for the turn of event alone. Neither can Dudaev’s revolution as it went on for three years before the invasion. However, the increasingly generally criminal situation in Chechnya and a series of bus-hijackings in the summer of 1994 is often seen as either triggers or pretexts of the first war. These hijackings has been connected to what has been described as a social tradition of banditry for younger Chechen males has functioned as a form of national resistance towards Russia. This type of action, which included robbery and kidnapping, contributed to trigger the intervention in Chechnya in 1994, and has been used by Russian authorities as an excuse to impose military control on the “uncivilized” and “banditry” people. Such an argument, however, can be considered tainted by the tendency of reading myths about the Chechen people into the situation of the nineties.

Russian decision makers of this mindset thought they would be met as liberators by the people in Chechnya from what was often referred to as a “bandit-regime”. This misfired most likely because it triggered the Chechen people’s collective memory of ardent struggle against Russian invaders for centuries. Opposed to perceiving the Russian military as liberators, the Chechen people, even the moderates who approved of being a republic within the Russian federal

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140 Hughes 2007: 27.
145 Evangelista 2002: 3.
system, united against the Russian invasion.\textsuperscript{146} It is in addition by many emphasized that Yeltsin’s popularity had for a while been low and the ratings seriously wavering by 1994. In this respect, some of his advisors thought he could benefit from a “small victorious war”.\textsuperscript{147}

In the period leading up to the first war, Dudaev made several attempts to meet with Yeltsin. Dudaev’s repeated foulmouthed comments about Yeltsin did not help him set up such a meeting. Yeltsin’s closest advisors repeatedly advised Yeltsin not to meet with Dudaev.\textsuperscript{148} However, Chechnya had, in addition, a couple of other assets that were important to the Kremlin, perhaps most importantly the geostrategic situation.

**GEOGRAPHY AND PETROLEUM**

Natural resources and the geopolitical position of Chechnya contributed to the wars in several ways. A strategic argument was that Yeltsin and his government wanted to set an example against a domino-effect on aspiring secessionist republics, fearing that the drive for independence would pick up elsewhere in Russia and lead to an eventual destruction of Russian territorial integrity.\textsuperscript{149} Eastern Caucasus lay on the edge of Russia’s two main lines of communication to the Transcaucasia: the capital coastal road via Derbent to Baku and the Georgian military highway from Vladikavkaz to Tbilisi. It would be a considerable obstruction to the Russians to have a labile sovereign Chechnya in the midst of the area.

During the Soviet era Chechnya’s oil production constituted 21.5 million tonnes per year. In 1991 it was down to 6 million tonnes.\textsuperscript{150} Today, official output stands at less than 2 million tonnes per year. Illegal extraction is estimated to be between 100,000 and 2 million tonnes per year. Grozny had the largest refinery in the USSR, but it was unsuitable for Chechen oil, which was therefore shipped to a special refinery in Tuapse on the Russian Black Sea coast. During the bombing of Grozny the Petro-Chemical facilities were severely damaged.\textsuperscript{151}

Illicit siphoning and refining of Chechen oil was an economy of its own. The profit was split between the Russian military and the Chechen warlords and was perhaps the most obvious petroleum related prolonger of the conflict. There are a couple of more indirect ways to add to the picture: First, Russia became more dependent on oil revenues during the Yeltsin period, which saw a decline in state economy and a weaker state structure. Second, the USA, and other Western government’s increasing interest for Caspian oil, and the Baku-Tblisi-Ceyhan pipeline

\textsuperscript{148} Gakaev: 23; Tishkov 1997: 187-188.
\textsuperscript{149} Evangelista 2002: 3.
\textsuperscript{150} Said 2007: 131.
\textsuperscript{151} Ibid: 131.
that completely evades Russian territory, was perceived by parts of the Russian military and political establishment as direct challenges to Russia’s interests in the region.\footnote{ Said 2007: 136-137.}

A large oil consortium in Azerbaijan, with British Petroleum and Norwegian Statoil as leaders, wanted, along with Russia, to lead the oil in the already existing pipelines through Chechnya. This demanded stability. Precisely because of the instability, alternative pipeline-routes were explored, both through Georgia and Turkey.\footnote{ «Sjevardnadse drøfter oljepolitikk i London» [Shevardnadze discusses oil politics in London], \textit{NTB}, 15.2.1995; Anatol Lieven, 1998: 312; Unfortunately, discussions on the part that energy and petroleum have played, both as triggers for the two wars themselves, but also as to how Norway and other Western government’s have related to the situation in Chechnya, goes beyond the capacity of this thesis’ time schedule and page-limit.} The violence in Chechnya in the 1990s affected Dagestan and should be seen in connection with trans-national petroleum companies’ rivalry for the oil of the Caspian basin.\footnote{ Mikhailov 2005: 25.} This can have made it more difficult for the Kremlin to accept international involvement in the resolution of the conflict.\footnote{ Said 2007: 131.}

So, not only was it important to keep the Federal State of Russia from disintegrating even more, but it was also a question of natural resources. Nonetheless, even though these matters have been of key concern to the Kremlin, it has not been proclaimed as the Kremlin’s basis for invading the small mountain republic twice. The second war was launched in 1999 by Prime Minister, Vladimir Putin after a period of two years of Chechen independence. As will be shown in chapter 4 and 5, it was a period with little social, political and economic prosperity and with almost total political isolation. Putin gradually turned the wars in Chechnya into campaigns against terrorism linked to Islamism.\footnote{ Emil Pain, «The Chechen War in the Context of Contemporary Russian Politics», in Richard Sakwa (ed.), Chechnya: From Past to Future, 2005: 25.}

FAITH

Religion has been seen as an increasing part of the conflict, but it has been difficult to define its role, which moreover has changed with the dynamics of the conflict. There is no consensus among scholars or parties involved in the conflict as to what extent religion promoted conflict with the Russians. The Chechens are Muslims, as are most people of the Northern Caucasus. There are distinct cultural differences from the orthodox Christianity and the Soviet atheism in Russia, without claiming, in Huntington manner, that this difference has been a natural cause for conflict.\footnote{ Mikhailov 2005: 47.} The Islamization of the Caucasus has gone through different stages, in the course of over 1000 years and diverging versions of Islam were imposed depending on the respective
rulers. The Chechens usually follow one of the two Sufi orders Quadiriya or Naqshbandiya. Sufism is a mystical oriented version of Islam, where the goal for the worshipper, in addition to leading a correct Islamic life, is to reach a spiritual connection with the Deity, “to become one with God”. The Sufi tradition has been present in the Northern Caucasus through the centuries, but it was mainly in the early 19th century that the Sufi orders established their dominance. Naqshbandiya-Mujaddidiyya-Khalidiyya was introduced first and was after thirty years largely supplanted by the Quadiriya. The person introducing the Quadiriya brotherhood was al-shaykh al-Hajj Kunta al-Michiki al Iliskhani. He preached to end the armed struggle, and the war exhausted Chechens gathered around his authority. His popularity aroused Russian suspicion, and he was arrested and died after five years in Russian captivity. The Quadiriya movement, which had started out opposing armed resistance to Russia, “turned into its sworn enemy”. Later, branches of the Quadiriya took part in all, and lead many, uprisings against Russian rule – tsarist, Soviet and post-Soviet alike. In the Soviet Union, the Chechens were not allowed to practise their religion, and even after the reconstitution of the Chechen-Ingush Republic in 1957, they were still not allowed to build mosques. It is hard to estimate the extent and the significance of Islam, in particular Sufism, in Chechnya by the time of the Soviet collapse. Religious practice was severely controlled by Soviet authorities and Sufi orders were suppressed. The Sufi-orders themselves, however, are secret and allow the followers pragmatic deception to avoid detection, and are therefore hard to control.

It has been asserted by many conflict experts and politicians that the conservative Islamic branch of Wahabism took firm hold of certain groups in Chechnya in the early nineties. It has further been assumed that this lead to a radicalisation of the Chechen insurgents and intensified the use of terrorism as a political weapon. Wahabism is an ultra-conservative Sunni-Muslim

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159 Gall and Waal 1998: 25.
162 Gammer 2006: 55.
163 Ibid: 60.
164 Ibid: 60.
165 Ibid: 60.
167 James Hughes, 2007:12.
168 I will consequently use the term Wahabism, as the scholars of the secondary literature I use in this chapter. A theoretic discussion on Salafism and Wahabism is too time and space consuming for this thesis. For a light version of the differences see: Vikør 2002: 45-49.
tradition established by 18th century Arab reformer Muhammed Ibn Abd Al-Wahab.\textsuperscript{169} The Saudi kings, consolidating their power, supported him and it is still state religion in Saudi Arabia today.\textsuperscript{170} Today, the term “wahabi” often refers to a group of only loosely related movements, “many of which do not espouse violent action.”\textsuperscript{171}

**RELIGION AND TERRORISM**

Horrifying images from the Childrens School in Beslan and earlier terrorist attacks made it more legitimate for the Kremlin to internationalize its idiom of the conflict as one that matched Western concerns about Islamic terrorism.\textsuperscript{172} Shamil Basaev was supposedly one of the senior leaders who took an increasing interest in a Wahhabist-direction. He left Chechnya several months in 1994 for the military training camp, Khost (al-Qaida’s main base), in Afghanistan with some thirty of his soldiers.\textsuperscript{173} It is assumed that Basaev there became part of the Wahabi jihad.\textsuperscript{174} The notion that Basaev himself was a Wahabist is nonetheless disputed. Basaev came from the traditionalist Chechen highlands where Sufi Islam and Chechen customs, Adat, were observed. Shamil Basaev was allegedly himself named after the legendary Imam Shamil the Lion, and his birth town Vedeno, in the Chechen highland, was permeated by political and religious traditions.\textsuperscript{175} The association between the Chechen radicals under Basaev and al-Qaida were highlighted, and Putin was forceful in presenting the Russian position in international affairs.\textsuperscript{176}

Basaev second in command in Chechnya was the Saudi Arabian with the *nom de guerre* al-Khattab. In early 1995, when al-Khattab joined the Chechen resistance movement, he was one of Bin Laden’s senior commanders. Through these connections the Chechen insurgents were provided with money and military resources.\textsuperscript{177} The insistence, however, that there were many Arab fighters in Chechnya has been proven false. There were some, among them al-Khattab’s small group of fighters called the “Islamic International Brigade”, but not more than a few dozens all in all.\textsuperscript{178}

\textsuperscript{169} Richmond 2008: 160.  
\textsuperscript{170} Vikør 2002: 47-48.  
\textsuperscript{171} Richmond 2008: 160.  
\textsuperscript{173} Hughes 2007: 101.  
\textsuperscript{174} Ibid: 101.  
\textsuperscript{175} Ibid: 100.  
\textsuperscript{176} Ibid: 135.  
\textsuperscript{177} Ibid: 102.  
\textsuperscript{178} Lieven 1998: 84; Hughes 2007: 102.
Although using Wahabism as an ideological justification for acts of terrorism, “individuals such as Basaev would more accurately be described as militants or separatists.”179 Close associates of the Chechen military commander such as Maskhadov, however, argue against Wahabi-influence on the Chechen fighters.180 They argued that Basayev was too traditionalist to be personally engaged with Wahabism. Political scientist Julie Wilhelmsen does not agree with Russian authorities’ version that Basaev and his followers or other Chechen insurgents were Wahabi or religious fundamentalists. They fought for sovereignty from Russia. She did, however, find that Chechen insurgents at times were intentionally associated with al-Qaida for pragmatic reasons i.e. economical funding and military training from sympathizers in the Middle East.181

When Maskhadov on 4 January 1999 decreed that the religious Shari’a laws should rule Chechen society, it caused outrage in the Kremlin and public opinion across the Russian Federation.182 The tradition of Shari’a, however, is not foreign to Chechnya, although it has to a large degree been adapted to the reigning customs, adat. Maskhadov’s decree was by some regarded as evidence that Maskhadov was not a moderate, and that he supported Basaev more than he officially claimed to do.183 However, Maskhadov’s reason for introducing Shari’a can have had many pragmatic causes. The Chechen President was unable to establish control over a post war society in anarchic conditions. He received no support from the Kremlin or international organisations. He needed to consolidate his power by trying to please more extremist tendencies such as Basaev’s radical Islamic rhetoric. As such, it was perhaps a desperate strategy.184 Maskhadov was torn between choosing civil war or concessions to extremist groups.185

Several factors provide a backdrop to the religious fervour gripping Chechnya in the nineties. With the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the Muslim peoples of the Northern Caucasus were once again allowed to practice their faith, which had been suppressed by Soviet authorities. In the wake of the massive Russian reforms, a breakdown of the economy combined with faltering local and federal authorities, an increase in criminal activity and corruption in Chechnya was obvious. Islam’s message of equality and social justice, because of this, became very

179 Richmond 2008: 161.
180 Hughes 2007: 158.
182 Hughes 2007: 104.
185 Hughes 2007: 104.
appealing to a people who had lost their faith in the secular authorities. The brutalities and losses of war came in addition. Turning to religion in trying times is a well-known phenomenon. As a final point, similar to former days of Chechen resistance movements, Islam can once again have become somewhat synonymous with resistance in the small republic.

The Dudaev-regime that led Chechnya into the first war with Russia, is considered most considered to have had little to do with Islamism. They did perform some traditional ceremonies in public, but these seem more of a façade than a real commitment, but it did bring support in the traditionalist areas. Nonetheless, the Kremlin said they were fighting bandits and terrorists. Individual Chechen insurgents did carry out terrorist operations. James Hughes suggests that “a balanced assessment of the use of terrorism by Chechens demonstrates that it has been used sporadically rather than systematically, and in reaction to Russian intervention.” He further claims that both terrorism and Islamization in Chechnya is a product of the conflict, and had in turn had significant impact on how the conflict developed and was perceived.

“The conflict in Chechnya is still a separatist conflict – not a religious war, not a war against international terrorist networks.” The quote is taken from Julie Wilhelmsen conclusion in her dissertation on the relation between Chechen insurgents and Islam from 2004. Wilhelmsen thought that if the Kremlin pursued the same brutal tactics in the years to come, they would be responsible for a development in a more fundamental religious direction in Chechnya. Her assertion was supported by descriptions of how the Federal counter-insurgency operations have accelerated “the recruitment of individuals into the ranks of militant groups professing Islamic principles.” It can seem as if the Kremlin gradually through the application of rough methods has created the terror problem it all the way has claimed to be combating.

For instance, many Chechen youth, especially boys, are at risk of being put into so-called filtration camps, suspected of insurgent activity on the grounds of being of the right age. These detention centres are often synonymous with torture, disappearances and death. Therefore, many young Chechens choose to join Islamic bannered groups that still fight against federal forces. Support from other Islamist political groups in the Middle East, or Africa, can additionally have encouraged stricter religious practise. A lot of moral support might also be secured for Chechen insurgents by being part of a global jihad, not only economical benefits. Global movements

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186 Richmond 2008: 160.
188 Ibid: 204.
190 Ibid: 68.
191 Richmond 2008: 162.
strengthened by the use of the World Wide Web should not be underestimated in matters like these.\textsuperscript{192}

**HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE CASE OF CHECHNYA**

The wars played out in Chechnya challenged a whole spectrum of human rights obligations that Russia had recognized and committed itself to. Among the most fundamental human rights is the right to life and freedom from torture and ill-treatment. These are central in international humanitarian law, in “political binding” documents within the OSCE framework, and in many global and regional conventions and declarations, including the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR).\textsuperscript{193} Nonetheless, these are the rights Russian authorities most often have been criticized for violating. “In both wars, as in all developments in Chechnya over the last ten years, the trend has been from ‘bad to worse’.”\textsuperscript{194}

The extensive human rights violations in Chechnya have been thoroughly documented by NGO’s such as Amnesty International, Memorial, Doctors without Borders, Human Rights Watch, the Norwegian Helsinki Committee and others. The documentation has only increased in volumes. Despite this, the conflict has been neglected and experienced double standards compared to other conflicts such as the human rights situation in Kosovo. After 11 years with more or less constant armed conflict and violence, the Norwegian Refugee Council stated in 2005 that “Chechnya constitutes the most serious human rights crisis in Europe today.” Based on documentation from humanitarian organizations such as Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International and Memorial, it was stated that the civilian population has suffered “grave and massive human rights violations, including extrajudicial killings, disappearances and torture, including rape.”\textsuperscript{195} The 1998 Russian law gave legal “protection” (immunity) to state officials, military and security personnel engaged in counterterrorism.\textsuperscript{196} The Russo-Chechen conflict’s brutality has not been confined within the borders of Chechnya.

External journalists, lawyers and human rights activists that have been engaged with the conflict, have to an extensive degree had their lives threatened, and in many cases been murdered. The Russian journalist Anna Politkovskaya was perhaps the most well known of these activists. In October 2006 she was gunned down on her way home, after preparing extensive

\textsuperscript{192} Tishkov 1997: 188.
\textsuperscript{196} Hughes 2007: 140; Cherkasov and Grushkin 2005: 141-143.
documentation on the widespread and systematic use of torture by Russian forces and their proxies in Chechnya. Another menace to Russian society is the increase of Russian soldiers that return from warfare in Chechnya with damaged nerves, criminal minds, as drug-addicts or with alcohol problems, not able to function in every-day life. In Chechnya the infrastructure was severely ruined, the school system nonexistent and a whole new generation knows little beside war.197

THE DYNAMICS OF CONFLICT

Even with the above conflict elements in mind it is hard to tell why such a human tragedy came to unfold. An important premise for understanding a conflict is to take into account the dynamics of conflict. In accordance with this conflict-dynamics perspective it is not necessarily correct to talk about the reasons for a conflict, because the conflict may just as well consist of several conflicts intertwined. A conflict also goes through different phases with alterations of key issues and changing protagonists.198

The dynamics of the conflict is thus an explanatory point of view that helps understanding the Russo-Chechen Conflict. To focus simply on Russo-Chechen history, geopolitics, protagonists, or terrorism is just not adequate. All of the above-mentioned explanatory factors have to be seen as interactive factors that have triggered or facilitated armed action. The Chechen conflict started off as a secessionist nationalist conflict within the Russian Federation ignited by the wave of the nationalist movements in the nineties. It soon developed into an armed standstill with guerrilla warfare and acts of terrorism as spotlighted ingredients. By the second half of the 1990s the conflict was somewhat transformed “into a struggle driven largely by ideas based on religious and racial exclusivism.”199 The study of the transition of the Chechen insurgents from nationalists to jihad warriors is a good example of the dynamics of the Russo-Chechen war. The conflict has been so-called Chechenized because the Russian authorities have to a gradually degree fought through Chechen proxies. The violence has increasingly been carried out by Chechens against Chechens.200

The best way to answer the two initial questions, “of all the Russian republics – why Chechnya?” and “why has Russia gone through two wars to keep this republic?” is by starting with a different question: Why did the first war take place? Several explanations and alternative explanations can, as shown, be found. Nonetheless, as soon as the first war had started the

198 Hughes, 2007: x.
199 Ibid: xi.
200 Ibid: 118-119.
conflict changed. Many of the protagonists radicalized and so on. The situation was severely changed after two years of war and Chechnya lay in ruins. Russian families had lost thousands of sons as soldiers in Chechnya, the Chechen society was thoroughly brutalized and acts of terrorism were escalating outside Chechen borders. The state of Chechnya and the causes of the second Russian war are therefore probably to be found in the fact that the first war was launched, and that no one took responsibility to get Chechnya back on its feet after the first war. The causes of the conflict today are results of the first and especially the second war and the brutality that was exercised, rather than the “bad historic relations from the days of the Tsar” or the geopolitical Russian interests for that sake. Therefore, the answer to the second question may invalidate the first question. If Russia had not invaded Chechnya in 1994, Chechnya might not have been the republic maintaining the claim to sovereignty in such inexhaustible manner. Perhaps that was a consequence of the war.

Today the “peace” in Chechnya is ruptured with violence, insecurity and unemployment. Armed action between insurgents and Federal Forces are still taking place every week and spreading to neighbouring republics such as Dagestan and Ingushetia. Militant and Islamic movements across the borders of the North Caucasian Republics are spreading violence, destruction and terror, also in the capital Moscow. It seems Yeltsin was right in his predictions of war in Chechnya in 1994:

Intervention by force is impermissible and must not be done. Were we to apply pressure by force to Chechnya, this would rouse the whole Caucasus, there would be such a commotion, there would be so much blood that nobody would ever forgive us.201

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Russia’s military offensive against the Chechen insurgents in December 1994 did not pass unnoticed in Norway. Fighting in North Caucasus was reported in Norwegian newspapers as early as November 1994.\footnote{«Russland og Tsjetsjenia på grensen til krig» [Russia and Chechnya at the brink of war], \textit{NTB}, 29.11.1994.} Further, on 13 December several Norwegian newspapers stated that Russian military forces had clashed with Chechen insurgents on numerous occasions.\footnote{«Russere og Tsetsjenere i åpen kamp» [Russians and Chechens in open fight], \textit{Aftenposten}, 13.12.1994; «Nye kamper i Tsjetsjenia» [New fighting in Chechnya], \textit{NTB}, 13.12.1994; «Drept av raketter» [Killed by rockets], \textit{VG}, 13.12.1994.} One must assume that the Norwegian Embassy in Moscow had kept the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, MFA, well informed on the situation, so that the news did not come unexpectedly to the ministry.

Tidings of a war stirring in the North Caucasus had been generally talked about in the Norwegian media since 1992, and it is hard to imagine that it had not been discussed in diplomatic corridors.\footnote{«Kaukasus i etnisk brann»[Caucasus ethnically aflame], \textit{Aftenposten}, 2.10.1992; «Et utall etniske konflikter raser i det gamle SSSR»[innumerable ethnical conflicts rage in the old USSR], \textit{NTB}, 28.10.1992; «Russisk frykt for omfattende krig i Kaukasus»[Russian fear for comprehensive war in the Caucasus], \textit{NTB} 10.11.1992; «Kaukasus- Kruttønna som kan eksplodere»[Caucasian powder barrel that might explode], \textit{NTB}, 4.2.1993; «Ustabilitet» [Instability], \textit{Dagens Næringsliv} 19.5.1993.} At this time, however, the Kremlin had launched conventional war on its own citizens in a part of their own state. Norway’s Labour Party Government, along with other Western governments, had to respond in some way to an increasingly violent situation.

This chapter concerns how the Norwegian government responded and related to the eruption of the first Chechen war in December 1994 and throughout 1995. This chapter seeks to observe what dominated the Norwegian official response and approach. It is also an effort to see what means, i.e. political, economical or diplomatic, Norway had to affect the situation.

**NORWEGIAN RESPONSE TO THE RUSSIAN INVASION**

On the morning of 11 December 1994, around 40 000 Russian troops were ordered over the Chechen border. For all involved, the situation was rather gloomy from the outset. The Russian army was not well prepared for the neatly organised resistance arranged by Chechen officers, of whom many had their military ranks from the Soviet Army. The Russian’s equipment for intercommunication was poor, and their food supplies ran out at an early stage. The moral of the many young untrained Russian soldiers was reported by present journalists.
Nevertheless, after about two months of bombardment from airplane raids, fierce ground combat and heavy casualties on both sides, the Russians captured the Chechen capital Grozny. The Chechen capital was almost levelled by the Russian bombing, and the civilians suffered badly during this phase of the war. Shamil Basaev, the young Chechen field commander formed the last Chechen military stand in Grozny, then withdrew his division and went into the villages and forests of the Chechen highland to lead guerrilla warfare.

The first public Norwegian response to the Russian invasion came in a newspaper article in mid-December 1994. The article claimed that the Norwegian Defence Minister Kosmo had only reluctantly deprecated Russia’s military invasion. The journalist continued by saying that: “Norway and other Western countries are apparently afraid to damage their relations with Russia, and prefer to consider the conflict as an internal Russian affair.” Defence Minister Kosmo was quoted in the same article saying that he couldn’t regard the Russian invasion merely as an internal Russian problem. Foreign Minister Godal’s comments came two weeks later, on 2 January 1995, when he expressed his disappointment over the Kremlin’s attitude on the matter. The Russian government would not listen to advice, to be “sensible” and end the military action, Godal exclaimed. Then he added to his comment that it was an internal Russian conflict.

Siri Bjerke, State Secretary in the MFA, established in a news broadcast 7 January, that the Norwegian Foreign Ministry regarded the use of violence employed by the Kremlin as deeply disturbing. She declared that the MFA did not view the use of military force in Chechnya as an internal Russian affair, and underlined that Norway had protested to the Russian government.

When Norwegian Defence Minister, Jørgen Kosmo, again commented on Russia’s warfare in January 1995, he underscored the political unrest in the former Soviet Union and specifically remarked on what he called “a bloody and unintelligible war in Chechnya.” His address had a post-Cold War perspective and focused on what he regarded as challenges.

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205 «Fristen utløpt, Russiske fly på vingene» [Time limit expired, Russian fighters on their wings], NTB, 17.12.1994; Gall and Waal 1998: 16-17; Carlotta Gall and Thomas de Waal were both eyewitnesses in the first Chechen war where they worked as reporters; Lieven 1998: 107.
208 «Norge vil ha stans i kampene i Tsjetsjenia» [Norway calls for a halt in the fighting in Chechnya], NTB, 2.1.1995
209 «UD: Dyp uro over Russerners voldsbruk i Tsjetsjenia» [MFA: Deep concern of Russian violence in Chechnya], NTB, 7.1.1995
linked to the new foreign political situation. He characterized the Russian situation on the whole as uncertain and unstable: “The way the conflict in Chechnya is developing, it is obvious that it will have consequences for the domestic political situation in Russia. It is too early to indicate, what kind of effect this will have on political relations between Russia and Norway.”  

These representatives of the Norwegian government did not seem to agree whether the conflict was an internal Russian matter or not. In a recent interview however, former Foreign Minister Bjørn Tore Godal reiterated once more that the government had perceived it as an internal conflict. From the Norwegian government’s point of view the eruption of conflict in Chechnya was at first seemingly perceived as one out of many domestic disturbances occurring in the wake of the Soviet Union’s dissolution in 1991.

In addition there was great scepticism about the invasion in the Russian society at the time. This was also true among the officers in the Russian army. Many officers foresaw a recurrence of the quagmire war the Soviet military had fought in Afghanistan from 1979 to 1989. Moral concerns were aired as well. A Russian general considered it a criminal act to use military force against the nation’s own citizens, and resigned in protest. In the course of the war, more than 500 other officers followed his demonstrative action. This scepticism in the Russian society was perceived as an indication that Russia was on the “right” and democratic path, and that the war would be brought to an end in the near future. It was to last over two years.

Receiving the news of the total destruction of Grozny, Foreign Minister Godal remarked on 9 January 1995 that he was horrified by the development in the Chechen conflict. “This is regular warfare”, Godal said, seeming somewhat surprised. It seems as if the Norwegian MFA, as well as other Western governments, did not quite grasp the scope of the situation in the Chechen republic at first.

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211 [Slik konflikten i Tsjetsjenia nå utvikler seg, er det åpenbart at den på sikt får innenrikspolitiske følger i Russland Hvilken betydning dette får for forholdet mellom Norge og Russland er ennå for tidlig å ha noen klar formening om.]; Ibid.
215 Gall and Waal 1998: 211.
216 Ibid: 176-177.
WESTERN REACTIONS AND RESPONSES

Most Western government’s reacted strongly to the Russian warfare in Chechnya. Norway’s reaction towards the invasion did not differ from the general set of reactions among Western European governments. Along with the Russian decision makers that launched the military operation, it seems as if most Western powers believed that it would be a short military operation to wipe out the Dudaev regime and stabilize the area. They were all surprised at the resistance that met the Russian soldiers. The Chechen people united behind a regime that was rather unpopular with most part of the Chechen population. This had not been foreseen by Russian authorities who, it has been claimed, thought they would be received as liberators.219 The invasion quickly turned into a quagmire for the Russian military. Thus, the consequences of a prolonged armed conflict started to appear on television screens throughout the world.

The devastating images made it harder for the Western governments to publicly support Russia’s military effort to preserve territorial integrity by such brutal means. When asked what his immediate response to the news of the invasion was, Godal claimed years afterwards that his principal worry had been the civilians situation. He had felt: “a strong surmise that human rights were not first priority among the Russian military forces.”220 War brings out the best and the worst no matter who is involved and the Russian army had a reputation of faltering discipline in its ranks.221 The decade that had commenced with optimism regarding freedom and democracy in Russia was taking an ugly turn.

The French Foreign Minister Alain Juppe warned Russia that a prolonged military campaign could damage Russia’s efforts to get more involved in Europe. He added that if Russia continued to undermine human rights in the Chechen area then the French reactions would come in much harsher terms.222 The German Chancellor expressed his opinion by saying that the Russian military campaign towards Grozny was “pure madness”. Vice-President of the USA, Al Gore, claimed he had warned the Russians in December 1994 not to go through with the military campaign.223

To most of the Western governments, the criticism remained rhetorical.224 This does not necessarily mean that it cannot be considered as a form of sanction. According to historian Quentin Skinner words and theories are not empty phrases. Rather, they are conscious and

223 Ibid.
224 «Økende vestlig bekymring over russisk felttog» [Increasing Western concern over Russian military campaign], NTB, 3.1.1995; «Granatene regner over Grosnyj og kritikken øker», NTB, 9.1.1995.
mindful attempts to alter and reinterpret the world through the words that are chosen to describe it. The battle for words and definitions is an attempt to influence how the world is arranged through the attempt to dictate how we understand and talk about it. Skinner distinguishes the importance of how legitimacy is conditioned by the reigning linguistic and political universe. This limits the potential legitimization and thus the potential act. It is even more important that if someone wants to achieve change, they have to be able to legitimize it.225

In accordance with this thinking, Norwegian authorities did not just utter critical words towards Russia by condemning its invasion of Chechnya, but actually acted by condemning Russia’s action. It can thus be considered a Norwegian political act in the same way as launching a sanction of sorts against Russia. Also by uttering a condemnation together with several other governments Norway took part in establishing what was a state’s legitimate conduct or behaviour at that time. The condemnation can be seen as an effort to make Russia’s decision makers change their minds about the military intervention and make them see that it was not the right way to proceed to solve the conflict.

As Yeltsin was making efforts to establish a Western inspired state and society, this effort of trying to make Russia “ashamed” of its conduct in Chechnya may have been effective in the first period. Norwegian diplomats and Foreign Minister Godal also “felt” that this approach had an effect on the Russian decision makers and that a common understanding existed.226

The Danish government became the exception among the Western governments early on. Danish Foreign Minister Niels Helvig Petersen was one of the more critically outspoken Western politicians, who also put some practical measure behind his statement.227 The Danish government postponed ratifying the Partnership for Peace Treaty (PFP) as a direct consequence of the military invasion. The PFP had been launched at the NATO Brussels summit in January 1994. The intention with the PFP was to facilitate transparency in national defence planning, budgeting processes, the democratic control over defence forces, as well as enhancing respective peacekeeping abilities and capabilities through joint planning and exercises.228

226 Interview with Bjørn Tore Godal, 9.12.2009
228 Wagnsson, 2000: 82.
Nonetheless, despite Gore’s initial statements, Yeltsin soon received support and understanding for the intervention from Warren Christopher and William Perry, respectively USA’s Secretary of State and Defence, and eventually also from President Clinton himself.\textsuperscript{229} What brought on this ambivalence in the Western governments’ reactions? An anonymous diplomat stated one of the first days of January 1995 that the West was placing all their bets on Yeltsin. The diplomat’s cynical conclusion was that it was not worth spoiling Western relations with the Kremlin over the conflict in Chechnya.\textsuperscript{230} The diplomat’s analysis has since been backed up by researchers and academics. “On the issue of Chechnya, the self-interest of states and the international organizations in preserving good relations with Russia, and protecting the material dimension of the relations, has consistently trumped concerns over other more value-based issues such as democratization and human rights”.\textsuperscript{231} The West had formerly put all their money on another horse, namely Gorbachev, who was ousted from power in 1991.\textsuperscript{232} The track favourite had become Yeltsin.

“In terms of scale and abandonment of international laws on rules of engagement, Chechnya was comparable to the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Unlike Milosevic, however, Yeltsin was a reformer considered to be sympathetic, compliant even, to Western interests.”\textsuperscript{233} The West had invested in the success of Yeltsin’s domestic reforms and was not going to abandon him over Chechnya.\textsuperscript{234} It is asserted by many that the USA and the Western European states did not pressurize Yeltsin during the first war mainly for fear of damaging the more important strategy of keeping Yeltsin in power.\textsuperscript{235} Lecturer of politics at the University of East Anglia, Mike Bowker’s presentation of Western responses in his article “Western views of Chechen conflict” pretty much sums it up:

Thus throughout the crisis the Western governments have always publicly backed Moscow’s policy on Chechnya. The West has refused to recognize Chechnya’s claim, and has accepted Moscow’s right to defend its territorial integrity, if necessary by force (jus ad bellum). On the other hand, the West has occasionally spoken out against Russia’s conduct in the war and the violation of human rights by the Russian authorities (jus in bello), but it has always been reluctant to back such rhetoric with any kind of meaningful sanction.\textsuperscript{236}

\textsuperscript{230} «Økende vestlig bekymring over russisk felttøg», \textit{NTB}, 3.1.1995.
\textsuperscript{231} Hughes 2007: 128.
\textsuperscript{232} «Økende vestlig bekymring over russisk felttøg», \textit{NTB}, 3.1.1995.
\textsuperscript{233} Hughes, 2007: 129.
\textsuperscript{234} Bowker 2005: 229.
\textsuperscript{235} Hughes 2007: 129.
\textsuperscript{236} Bowker 2007: 223.
SECESSION – AN UNWANTED CHILD OF INTERNATIONAL POLITICS

The emphasis on territorial integrity is an important explanatory factor of how Norway and the West in general dealt with the Russian warfare. The West sympathized with Russia’s loss of territory compared to the geography in the days of the USSR. Professor in Russian regional studies at the Norwegian Institute for Foreign Affairs (NUPI) Iver B. Neumann argued that this was the reason for Godal’s careful comments on the matter. In addition did neither Germany nor Norway favour a situation with a large country in a labile fragmenting situation, Neumann stated.237

In accordance with Neumann’s analysis, State Secretary Jan Egeland defended the Norwegian policy from accusations of being too mild towards the military invasion. He firmly established that Norway had never recognized Chechnya as an independent state, nor had any other country for that matter.238 Egeland stated that there was a difference in regards of the Baltic nations that had received support from Norway in their struggle for independence and Chechnya. Russia had ruled Chechnya for a much longer period of time and Chechnya had not been a sovereign state before the USSR, as the Baltic nations had been.239 Egeland also claimed that if Chechnya or any other regions within Russia wanted to claim their independence, this had to be done by peaceful means.240 The fact that Russia had invaded Chechnya three years after its sovereignty claim, and that the Chechen secession had not been an act of war, was not considered in his comment. Neither did he discuss the fact that Chechnya had never actually recognized Russian rule. In the article he supported the political custom that had developed with the dissolution of the communist unions Yugoslavia and USSR.241

Foreign Minister Godal was clear on this point in the interview, where he stated that the Norwegian government had been resolute not to support a separatist movement in Russia at the time. Norway did not want a more fragmented Russia. This was, he said, a foreign political concern that Norway shared with other governments.242 Throughout the winter of 1995, statements by France, Germany, and the USA supported this line of thought.243

237 «Russerne frykter muslimsk løsrivelse» [Russia fears Muslim secession], NTB, 2.1.1995.
238 «Feil om Tsjetsjenia» [Wrong about Chechnya], Aftenposten, 10.1.1995.
239 «Indre anliggende» [Internal Affair], Aftenposten, 7.1.1995
241 Ibid.
Thus, when US president Bill Clinton, in one of his more spectacular speeches, compared Yeltsin with Lincoln and the Chechen war with the Civil War in the United States of America in the 1860s, he made clear an important point about secession: it is unwanted in today’s world of international politics. In the article “The Sustainability and Future of Unrecognized Quasi-States”, Professor of Russian and Central European and Balkan Area Studies Pål Kolstø enunciate this: “In the post WWII period, the unwritten rules of international relations have contained extremely strong restrictions against the creation of new states.” Further, he added that secessionist states will in “most cases – eventually be reabsorbed into the parent state or agree to an autonomous status within the parent state in a federal arrangement. This last outcome is the preferred option of the international community.”

Iver B. Neumann (NUPI) summed up the Norwegian response in four key terms in accordance with Kolstø’s view: internal affairs; territorial sovereignty/integrity; international consensus; and diplomacy. He mentioned that there had been approaches by Western governments towards the Kremlin, i.e. diplomatic attempts in regards of the Chechen conflict. But these attempts were exception, because most of the political world outside Russia had responded carefully, and there had been put little pressure on the Kremlin in this particular matter. Neumann’s arguments were in line with the narrative above, but he went even further by narrowing it down to one word: realpolitik.

It seems obvious in the Norwegian government’s response that it wanted to keep in line with the rest of the western world. There was of course no way of knowing how the conflict would develop and the responses that came from the MFA have to be seen in light of this. The Russian military campaign was legitimized by the Kremlin through the argument of preserving territorial integrity. The conflict was by the Norwegian Government perceived as an internal separatist conflict, to avoid further encroachment of Russia’s territorial integrity. As showed above, this was also to a certain extent seen as legitimate by most of Western governments. There was an international consensus that this kind of secession was unwanted and an understanding that Russia had to go to war to avoid further disintegration. Diplomatic activity to preserve good relations with the Yeltsin government was first priority.

244 Bowker 2005: 225.
246 Kolstø 2006: 723.
248 Ibid.
249 Hughes 2007: 128-134.
Yet, there was a Western ambivalence in the reaction to the military invasion due to the “excesses” and “lack of proportionality” in the Russian response to the Chechen insurgency.\footnote{«Norge vil ha stans i kampene i Tsjetsjenia» [Norway calls for a halt in the fighting in Chechnya], \textit{NTB}, 2.1.1995; Hughes 2007: 128-134.} The outrage and unpopularity the military invasion caused both inside and outside Russia, and the availability of the conflict through mass media forced the Western government’s to respond.

The response however, except for Denmark’s sanctions of postponing agreements, was mostly diplomatic and performed through “Skinnerian” speech-acts, such as condemnations of the disproportionate use of violence. No other practical political, economic or military sanctions were effectuated. However, what means did the Norway have to affect the situation in Chechnya? In accordance with the general international pattern of response and motion of disdain towards the Russian military action, Foreign Minister Godal sent a letter of protest to his Russian colleague Andrej Kosyrev.\footnote{«Utenriksminister Godal protesterer i Kreml» [Foreign Minister Godal protests to the Kremlin], \textit{NTB}, 9.1.1995.}

\textbf{GODAL’S LETTER TO KOSYREV}

Norway’s Ambassador in Moscow, Per Tresselt, delivered Godal’s letter to Andrej Kosyrev. In the letter Godal demanded that the fighting should come to a complete halt and negotiations had to be initiated. Godal’s letter maintained that “the situation in Chechnya is not only a tragedy to the area itself and Russia, but to the entire international community”. Godal demanded full stop in the war in order to start negotiations.\footnote{«Utenriksminister Godal protesterer i Kreml», \textit{NTB}, 9.1.1995.}

Furthermore, the letter suggested that the conflict could threaten the democratic reform process in Russia, and encumber on the many parties involved in the reforming process. It stressed the violations of basic human rights that the civilian population was being subjected to by Russian forces. Godal stated in the letter that the conflict could not be solved by military means. In addition, it was of the greatest importance that the International Red Cross and United Nation’s High Commissioner of Refugees was given the opportunity to assist with humanitarian aid. Increasingly many Chechen civilians became internally displaced (IDPs) and the civilian populations were suffering severely. Shortly after the Russian invasion, in December 1994, Norwegian Ambassador Tresselt offered Norwegian humanitarian aid at a
meeting with Russian authorities. The offer, however, was declined as the Russians told Tresselt that the situation did not call for it.255

Godal’s letter requested, furthermore, that his Russian colleague Andrej Kosyrev should work with international organizations to find a solution, primarily through the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Looking back, Godal believed that the Russians had listened to the criticism that came with regards to the conflict. He argued that Norway was the one country, within the NATO framework, that Russia at the time had close and good relations with. Godal thought this created some Russian goodwill towards Norway. He added, however, that the Russian reactions to Norwegian criticism ranged from total rejection and accusations of false propaganda to sincere reflection over the situation.254

Russian Foreign Minister Kosyrev had been appointed Prime Minister by Boris Yeltsin in October 1990.255 He had been elected to the State Duma through the Murmansk Oblast in North West Russia and was rather Western-oriented. Although Godal felt he and his Russian counterpart were on the same wavelength, Kosyrev’s views on matters were not necessarily shared by his colleagues in the Russian government.256 Godal stated time and again the need to involve the OSCE, but he avoided suggesting whom within the OSCE that should take the lead.257

The OSCE had only a couple of years before developed from the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe into an organization broadly recognized from West to East. Russia was already integrated in the OSCE, and therefore it was considered even more appropriate to deal with the conflict there. Russia was very sympathetic to the OSCE, and wanted to see OSCE become an alternative to NATO.258 Russian military intervention in Chechnya broke several agreements within the OSCE and other agreements and treaties Russia had inherited through the USSR. This is also true whether the Russo-Chechen conflict was perceived as an internal affair or not, or whether Russia’s right to intervene with armed forces was recognized or not.259 In this regard, Russia undermined the legitimacy of the organization it constantly promoted to be the main organization for security in Europe.

256 Interview with Bjørn Tore Godal, 9.12.2009
257 «Norge vil ha stans i kampene i Tsjetsjenia», NTB, 2.1.1995
258 Wagmsson 2000: 85.
259 «Forsvarsminister Kosmo urolig: Jeltsin kan ha tapt kontrollen»[Defence Minister Kosmo worried: Yeltsin may have lost control], Aftenposten, 10.1.1995.
NATIONAL SECURITY AT THE CROSSROADS

In 1995 Norway was at the crossroads with regards to national security and defence policy, and this may have affected how Norway related to the Russian invasion. Russia was in a labile state and still a powerful neighbour with massive military resources. It was at this time also on the warpath in its own state. Norway was still a small state dependant on importing security. The international security structure was rapidly changing and for Norway it was important to keep up, especially with the changes in NATO and the EU. After preserving western security since 1949, NATO lost its *raison d’être* when the Warsaw Pact dissolved. With the fall of the iron curtain a lot of the member states wondered what would happen to the Alliance. Some believed it would be dissolved. However, NATO had been tailored into a modern suit. At the 1990 NATO summit in London, it became clear that the organization had “both the will and the ability to reform itself in order to meet new challenges.”

NATO established the North Atlantic Cooperation Council, NACC, to include the former East Bloc nations in a consultative relationship. In 1994 the Partnership for Peace was instituted. This programme took NACC a step further with the same countries being able to cooperate with the alliance about defence strategy, military planning and participation in peacekeeping activities.

Through President Yeltsin the Russian Federation had moved toward cooperation with NATO, and NATO had established a permanent joint council to include Russia on a permanent basis. From the beginning of the process Norway had stressed the need for an open dialogue with Russia on the broader problem of European security. In this regard Norway had initiated the Euro-Arctic Barents Sea programme to transcend borders that had been impossible during the Cold War. According to Foreign Minister Godal, Norway had a more open and close dialogue with Russia than any other Western government. Increasingly deeper disagreements between Washington and EU over security related issues came to the fore in this period. Norway was still a member of NATO and a neighbour to Russia, but also one of three European nations *outside* the EU, after the Norwegian population once again had turned down membership in the 1994 referendum. The first had been in 1972. The power triangle consisting of EU, USA and Russia was somewhat imbalanced to Norway. If the USA decided to pull out attention and efforts from Europe, Norway would be dependant on the EU.

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261 Ibid: 279.
262 Ibid: 279.
The attention towards the so-called High North where Russia and Norway meets also received less attention from NATO and EU in this period.265

Efforts in the EU towards creating a common foreign policy through the European Political Cooperation, EPC, were steadily becoming more effective. Causing more concern with the Norwegian government, perhaps, was the efforts towards revitalizing the Western European Union, EU’s Defence and Security arm.266 The Norwegian government feared that Norway could become completely sidelined in Europe and completely dependent on the US. As a result, Norwegian national security became a prominent issue for the government.267

Godal told the Norwegian parliament that remaining outside the EU, Norway had fewer possibilities of safeguarding its own interests. He claimed that Norway was marginalized in the establishment of an international framework, where Norway as a member could have promoted its own interests. The foreign minister pressed the importance of bilateral relations with the respective European nations to keep at least one foot inside Europe. In addition, he said, it became more important for Norway to make efforts in the international forums where Norway was a full member, for instance NATO and the UN.

What happened with regard to the EU would to a large degree be decisive to how the relations of the Central- and Eastern European countries and how NATO developed.268 Godal was accused by several Parliament members of “whimpering” over loosing the national referendum on Norwegian membership in the EU. The Labour Party wanted membership in the European Union and considered it a serious problem to remain an outsider. The political parties opposed to Norwegian membership in contrast perceived it as an advantage.269 Nonetheless, the labour government perception of this as a problem made them work intensely to secure Norwegian interests from outside the European Union.

PROMOTING NATO’S ENLARGEMENT

NATO had concurrently with EU’s enlargement, announced ambitions to extend the list of members. This would have political implications on the Russo-Norwegian relations. Russia was not particularly fond of the idea, and Norway supported it. From the Norwegian government’s point of view a NATO enlargement should be in accordance with other integration processes in Europe and strengthen European cooperation structures. The

265 Skogan 2003: 43.
266 Riste 2005: 278.
267 Ibid: 278.
government wanted to make sure that a NATO enlargement in an eastern direction, incorporating Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary, would unite the need to preserve the alliance’s core functions with a broader European perspective.\textsuperscript{270}

According to Godal it was vital for Europe that the relations between the USA and Russia were in a manner of cooperation and not confrontation. Russia needed to be part of the all-European cooperation processes and not isolated, he said. Norway’s security was greatly affected by the development of Central and Eastern European countries’ relations with both NATO and the EU. Norway had important interests to preserve due to its geopolitical situation and being Russia’s neighbour.\textsuperscript{271} Norway’s efforts in preserving good relations with both Russia and NATO, was a solid Norwegian tradition, consistent with Norway’s policy towards the Soviet Union throughout long stretches of the Cold War.\textsuperscript{272}

With his eyes fixed on Russia, Godal meant that it was apparent that the foreign political- and security situation had changed the last years. Godal claimed that the war in Chechnya was an illustration of the conflict potential in a new era. The explosion of ethnic conflicts in the nineties created uncertainties and chaotic discomfort. The new challenges for regional security in regards of the extended security idiom of many small ethnic conflicts could not be handled by NATO alone in Godal’s opinion.\textsuperscript{273}

On 9 March 1995 Foreign Minister Godal held an address on security issues at an international conference at Bolkesjø.\textsuperscript{274} He claimed that it was very important for Norway to have regular and close contact with both NATO and the Kremlin in the process of an eastward bound NATO enlargement. The speech was focused on Russia’s position. Godal said that time had come to formalize the relationship between Russia and NATO. This could take place in the shape of a cooperation agreement that reflected Russia’s special position in Europe, as a regional great power. One natural aspect would be to have regular meetings at different political levels. “Strengthening the relations with Russia is perhaps the single most important factor to hamper new confrontations and deviations in Europe.”\textsuperscript{275} Godal’s statement with its emphasis on Russia underscored how momentous this was in the eyes of the Norwegian government. The liberal perspective is here obvious. Stressing the importance of

\textsuperscript{274} «Utenriksministeren: Russland må ikke isoleres» [Foreign Minister: Russia must not be Isolated], \textit{Aftenposten}, 10.3.1995
\textsuperscript{275} «Utenriksministeren: Russland må ikke isoleres», \textit{Aftenposten}, 10.3.1995.
incorporating Russia into Western structures shows how Norway tried to use international political structures to stabilize Russia’s position, and thus, promote its own security.

Godal made it clear that to enlarge NATO was not an unfriendly act towards Russia. He said this was very important to emphasize, “given that Norway and Russia are neighbours”. He wanted to ensure that Russia was not faced with unpleasant surprises and that the cooperation was bilateral. However, this did not mean that Russia had a veto, and further that the Russians would have to agree to certain fundamental principles. “The actions and events in Chechnya is a dramatic example to a conflict we cannot accept”. Godal’s language in this speech demonstrates Norway’s clear support for the NATO enlargement, while at the same time appeasing Russia’s aversion to this action.

In November 1995 State Secretary Siri Bjerke met with the Russian Vice Secretary of the Russian National Security Council, Vladimir Rubanov, to discuss the upcoming election of the State Duma (the Russian Parliament) and NATO’s enlargement in an eastern direction. Rubanov was originally in Oslo to attend an academic conference on the conflict situation in the Caucasus, but agreed to meet with the Norwegian MFA. According to Bjerke their conversation dealt with general issues, and no bilateral issues or problems were brought up. Rubanov claimed that both Russia and Norway wanted stability in Europe and that the peace negotiations in Chechnya strengthened the possibilities for a peace arrangement at that point in the war.

Bjerke emphasized that from a Norwegian point of view, it was important that NATO had a central part to play in the development of the new security structures in Europe. However, she also underscored that the relations with Russia needed to be strengthened, because Russia’s role in the new European security structures was vital. The early 1990s was perceived as a change of paradigm in Western relations with Russia, and Bjerke showed how important it was perceived to be to include Russia in this. However, Russia was invited on Western premises. If the choice was up to Russia, OSCE would have replaced NATO.

Bjerke maintained that Norway supported the enlargement of NATO, but asserted to Rubanov that it was going to take some time before the enlargement would take place. She said that Norway understood the Russian concern with regards to the enlargement. Rubanov,

276 «Utenriksministeren: Russland må ikke isoleres», Aftenposten, 10.3.1995
277 Ibid.
278 «Viktige drøftinger med russisk toppbyråkrat» [Important consultations with leading Russian bureaucrat], NTB, 24.11.1995
280 Ibid.
on his part, focused on specific areas of cooperation with NATO, not least within the framework of Partnership for Peace. The opposition against NATO enlargement was huge in Russia, and several leading politicians had strongly spoken out against it and criticized the Western position in this matter. The only clear exception to the many different views on the outlining of foreign policy in Russia was exactly the unanimous protests against NATO enlargement. From the Russian side it had frequently been repeated that a NATO enlargement would bring the alliance’s eastern borders all the way up against Russian territory.

RUSSIA – A MOMENTUM OF WORRY IN NORWAY

The Chechen conflict caused great concern in Norway. Defence Minister Jørgen Kosmo claimed that he feared that Yeltsin had lost control over the military. He was also worried about the reports of massive human rights violations in Chechnya. It seems as if Norwegian decision makers did not know what to make of the Russian authorities at the time. They expressed themselves in worried, even, astonished terms regarding the Russian authority’s actions and declarations. “Next month we’re heading to Washington D. C. to discuss these issues”, Kosmo told the Norwegian newspaper Aftenposten.

It was the development in Russia that concerned Kosmo the most. The Defence Council was called upon for the first time in many years. It had been established in 1934 and functioned as a forum of meetings between the Norwegian military and political leadership. There had been regular meeting activity between 1948 and 1955, but from the late fifties the meetings occurred sporadically. Eventually the Council had become a peripheral institution and a debate forum for discussions on budgetary questions. This was seen as a token of the supremacy of the political leadership in Norway and shows that the military leadership had less influence on the creation of Norwegian security policy.

Kosmo thought there were obvious reasons to be alarmed by what was happening in Russia at the time. The situation in Chechnya gave the impression that there had not been any good coordination between the civilian leadership and the military leadership. In regards to the civilian management of the Russian army, it had been somewhat of a worrying-factor to

283 «Viktige drøftinger med russisk toppbyråkrat», NTB, 24.11.1995
285 Ibid.
286 Knut Einar Eriksen og Helge Øystein Pharo, Kald Krig og internasjonalisering 1949-1965, bd. 5 av Norsk Utenrikspolitisk historie [Cold War and internationalisation, vol. 5 of Norway’s Foreign Political History], Oslo 1997: 23.
the Norwegian Authorities the last couple of years. Neumann said that it was not clear how the decision to invade Chechnya had come about. He hypothesized that it could be the military trying to cover up problems among its top brass. Signals had also pointed in the direction of a more political active military and that they were already controlling parts of Moldova and Tadzhikistan through political influence. The state Duma had been sidelined in its opposition to the invasion of Chechnya. It had voted forth a resolution stating that the handling of the crisis was unsatisfactorily. The resolution was reportedly barely commented on by Yeltsin’s staff. It seemed as if Yeltsin’s government as such had little to do with the decision, but that the responsibility was to be found in the Russian Security Council.

“What is happening in Chechnya clearly shows Kremlin’s lack of ability to handle domestic political issues in a common political and democratic way. This does not make us feel safer. It is too early to draw conclusions of what we are now observing in Russia”, Kosmo stated. He had noticed that some Russian political commentators had observed tendencies to a more authoritarian and centralized governing. He continued his statement by saying that if this were the case, it would have clear implications for Norwegian politics. The situation, in Kosmo’s view, did not encourage relaxing Norwegian security policy in the high north. Kosmo was seemingly not very optimistic on behalf of Russia’s democratic development. What implications Kosmo were thinking of can only be guessed at, but it seems as if he thought Norway would not have the stabile, European and democratic Russia that it had imagined in 1991 as a neighbour in the near future.

Kosmo remarked that Russia’s behaviour in Chechnya was a violation of international agreements and conventions Russia had signed and inherited directly from the Soviet Union. First and foremost, regarding to basic human rights and the civilian population’s right to protection in crisis and conflict: “The systematic bombing of apartment flat areas is clearly in violation of humanitarian law.” The Defence Minister wanted the Council of Europe and the UN to apply pressure on the Kremlin. He did not, however, say in what way this should be done. Kosmo was considerably more outspoken than his colleague, foreign minister Godal, when he commented on the situation in Chechnya.

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287 «Forsvarsminister Kosmo urolig: Jeltsin kan ha tapt kontrollen», Aftenposten, 10.1.1995
288 «Russerne frykter muslimsk løsrivelse», NTB, 2.1.1995
289 «En advarsel til Russland’s naboer» [A warning to Russia’s neighbours], Aftenposten, 6.1.1995
290 «Forsvarsminister Kosmo urolig: Jeltsin kan ha tapt kontrollen», Aftenposten, 10.1.1995
291 Ibid
292 Ibid.
Senior Researcher Neumann remarked that Norway had been caught in a jam with regards to its great neighbour. As the rest of the West, Norway feared that Chechnya was only the first target and that the next thing to go could be the entire reform policy and glasnost. Although Godal had protested concerning Chechnya, Neumann did not think that Norway dared to take their criticism too far without broad backup. Norway was a vulnerable small neighbour state, he stressed. The tendency was that Norway criticized the violations of international laws and human rights violations, but was ambivalent as to how eventual sanctions should be initiated.

State Secretary Siri Bjerke in the MFA confirmed Neumann’s assumptions. She said that the war in Chechnya was a serious strain on the dialogue between Western governments and the Kremlin. However, “eventual economical sanctions or non-dialogue with Russia is out of the question. That is not a solution, and can have unprecedented consequences for Norway.” Bjerke stated that Norway’s policy was political pressure on Russia, support to the OSCE’s presence in the conflict area, and humanitarian aid. The political pressure consisted as far as can be seen, of communicating to Russia that its actions in Chechnya were unacceptable. In a constructivist perspective this is in accordance with the idea that actors can have definition power and thus define what legitimate conduct is. Norway was here taking part together with other Western governments in defining what was legitimate conduct, and “trying to convince” Russian authorities of this. As the Western governments in many ways had monopoly on this structural ideological power, it can also be considered in a realist perspective of strategic use of soft power. Bjerke made the point that Norway’s decision makers perceived their options as few in regards of responding to the conflict situation.

Although Norway had little hard power to place behind it condemnations, there were other options. Denmark, for instance, set an example with its postponement of agreements with Russia. Why did not Norway perform similar actions on their many fields of cooperation with Russia? Was Norway afraid of its grand neighbour? State Secretary Bjerke did not elaborate on what was encapsulated in the expression “unprecedented consequences” in response to eventual Norwegian sanctions. It probably did not refer to a potential Russian military invasion. Still, it may have referred to the fear that Russia would sabotage cooperation in areas essential to Norway, for instance the cooperation to destruct nuclear

waste in the High North. Norway had more at stake than Denmark, which did not share borders or bilateral administration of natural resources with Russia.

**NORWEGIAN HUMANITARIAN AID**

In response to the military invasion and the ongoing war, Norway could, in addition to attempting to convince Russian authorities to end the war, assist with humanitarian aid. In early January 1995 Siri Bjerke encouraged Norwegian NGO’s in a news-broadcast to contribute with humanitarian aid in Chechnya. She avowed that the MFA would regard all initiatives for humanitarian aid as positive and that the MFA would support these by economic means. Initially the Norwegian government gave two million Norwegian kroner (NOK) to the International Red Cross.\(^{296}\)

However, two million NOK and two months later, the NGOs that had applied for economical means had not received the support they had been promised. Stein Støa of the Norwegian Refugee Council had asked for 9 million NOK in humanitarian aid to help Chechen refugees. After a month they had not received an answer. Støa suggested that it was a problem of bureaucratic tardiness. He saw the authorities’ lack of response as “incredible”. Applications for humanitarian aid usually moved with speed through the system but apparently not this time, he said.\(^{298}\) Yet, the MFA’s press spokesman Ingvard Havnen rejected the accusation of bureaucratic tardiness. He claimed that it was hard to find cover for it in the MFA’s budget, and added that there was no intention of handing out more money at the present time.\(^{299}\) Then on 16 March 1995, the MFA gave seven million NOK in humanitarian aid divided between the Norwegian Red Cross, Norwegian Refugee Council, the Norwegian Church Aid and the UN High Commissioner of Refugees.\(^{300}\)

Gunnar Andersen, also in the Norwegian Refugee Council, summed up his view on the situation in an interview in mid-March. He claimed that the Norwegian MFA had used too long a time on the treatment of the applications for humanitarian aid to Chechnya. 5-6 weeks passed before they received a response to the applications and UN appeals for economic support. In addition, he thought that Norway gave too little economical support to ease what

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298. «UD somler med å gitte støtte til Tsjetsjenske flyktninger» [MFA dawdles to give aid to Chechen refugees], *NTB*, 13.3.1995.
299. Ibid.
300. «Norsk nødhjelp til Tsjetsjenia» [Norwegian Humanitarian Aid to Chechnya], *NTB*, 16.3 1995.
he called a humanitarian catastrophe in the North Caucasus.\footnote{Andersen argued that both the slow treatment and the low amount granted, was connected to the fact that Russia was not on the OECD-countries list of states that could receive aid. He stated that political will could have overcome these types of bureaucratic hinders.\footnote{In October 1995 a press release stated that the MFA gave a new nine million NOK in support of the humanitarian situation in Chechnya. The press release stated that by this additional support, Norway had in total contributed with 18 million NOK the first year of the war. The contribution was assigned the continued precarious situation of the civilians in Chechnya.\footnote{Compared to other conflict and humanitarian catastrophes Norway has given little support to Chechnya. Compared to the humanitarian support given to the former Yugoslavia, the Chechen humanitarian crises received small amounts. Between 1991 and January 1995 Norway supported Yugoslavia with 400 million NOK in humanitarian aid. This was the largest humanitarian effort in Norwegian history.\footnote{By anticipating the events and jumping forwards in time, this is made even clearer: In 1999 when two humanitarian crises unfolded one after the other in Kosovo and Chechnya, Norway allocated NOK 575 million to Kosovo.\footnote{What was allocated to the situation in Chechnya and the humanitarian crises is not to be found in any gathered total.}}}\footnote{Perusing the 1999 and 2001 annual reports for Norwegian engagement for human rights, Russia and areas within Russia are not enlisted in the statistics. Chechnya is mentioned in the reports, but is not to be found on the statistical overview.\footnote{In oral question-time on 19 January 2000 foreign minister Vollebæk was asked about what efforts had been made by Norway to ease the humanitarian situation in Chechnya. Vollebæk responded that Norway had been among the first to contribute with economical aid to the area. He continued by stating that: “up till now NOK 20.3 million kroner has been distributed to this end.”\footnote{The...}}}}

Compared to other conflict and humanitarian catastrophes Norway has given little support to Chechnya. Compared to the humanitarian support given to the former Yugoslavia, the Chechen humanitarian crises received small amounts. Between 1991 and January 1995 Norway supported Yugoslavia with 400 million NOK in humanitarian aid. This was the largest humanitarian effort in Norwegian history.\footnote{By anticipating the events and jumping forwards in time, this is made even clearer: In 1999 when two humanitarian crises unfolded one after the other in Kosovo and Chechnya, Norway allocated NOK 575 million to Kosovo.\footnote{What was allocated to the situation in Chechnya and the humanitarian crises is not to be found in any gathered total.}}

Perusing the 1999 and 2001 annual reports for Norwegian engagement for human rights, Russia and areas within Russia are not enlisted in the statistics. Chechnya is mentioned in the reports, but is not to be found on the statistical overview.\footnote{In oral question-time on 19 January 2000 foreign minister Vollebæk was asked about what efforts had been made by Norway to ease the humanitarian situation in Chechnya. Vollebæk responded that Norway had been among the first to contribute with economical aid to the area. He continued by stating that: “up till now NOK 20.3 million kroner has been distributed to this end.”\footnote{The...}}
foreign minister ended his reply by stating that the government would consider giving more money if it received an appeal for aid, but added: “The problem with Chechnya is that it has been difficult to get in means and equipment, precisely because there has been an ongoing war there.”

NEW AND IMPROVED RUSSIA

The Norwegian authorities seemed consoled by the resistance within the Russian society towards the war in Chechnya. They saw in these democratic forces at work, and seemingly the resistance would put an end to the war. The Russian leaders also gave the impression that the war would be short. In March 1995, an attempt was also made to bring the conflict to a cease-fire, but it was fruitless.

The warfare continued with Russian progress and international pragmatic blessings, but also with more brutality. Word came out that Russian troops had committed massacres in the villages they went into. The most infamous episode was in the village of Samashki on 7 April 1995, where over a hundred civilians were killed and had their houses and barns burnt to the ground by Russian soldiers. News about the character of the war, and the harsh Russian methods reached Western governments, and Western media. The protests within Russian society against the warfare in Chechnya had so far not led forth. The war was in its fourth month, and still raging. Godal claimed that it was to a high degree uncertain if the parties in the conflict wanted a political solution. He claimed that it was of greatest importance that Norway used its bilateral contacts to pressurize Russia on the matter and that Norway would stand as central support to peace-initiatives by international organizations like the OSCE. A discrepancy between words and deeds was appearing:

“All efforts have to be made to make sure that the Chechen conflict isn’t allowed to become a threat to the democratic reform process in Russia.” What did Godal mean by “all efforts”? In the particular situation Godal thought it best not to isolate Russia because of the conflict, but rather maintain political dialogue and use that to present Norway’s point of view, namely that of promoting a truce and negotiations for a non-violent political solution. In the name of political stability, it was in everyone’s favour that Russia continued the political and

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312 Ibid.
economic reforms with economical support from the Western governments. Godal’s statements were in accordance with what his State Secretary Bjerke expressed in January. “Norway has great interest in furthering the economical and political reform process in Russia, and want Russia as an active partner”, Bjerke said in an open meeting about Chechnya initiated by the Refugee Council. She continued by saying that Norway was going to pressurize Russia, but that it would not be possible to go beyond the scopes of international organizations. What did Bjerke mean by pressure? Bjerke presumably meant verbal criticism, and mostly within international organizations. Norway was not going to take any sanctioning action against Russia alone.

What can be deduced from Godal’s declaration of efforts? By what Godal continued to allege and express, it seems as if the main threat to the Russian democracy was not violation of human rights in Chechnya. It seems that Godal perceived withdrawal of political support and economic aid to Yeltsin’s democratic reforms as more threatening. The development in the civil society in Russia gives the opposite impression. The consequent support of Yeltsin says something about the perception of the situation at the time. Western governments believed they would strain a democratic political development by criticizing undemocratic actions performed by their democratic light-carrier Yeltsin. Professor Daniel Heradstveit at NUPI told Aftenposten that: “Western cynicism will turn out to be misfortunate realpolitik because it will not stabilize Russia, which is the West’s intention”. Heradstveit may retrospectively have been correct in his analysis. Western governments thought they were supporting a democratic movement. They did not want to sanction Russia for the invasion of Chechnya and the human rights violation in fear of disturbing this positive process. In practice Western governments ended up supporting undemocratic developments. This is however the wisdom of the present looking down its nose on the past.

Human rights expert, Asbjørn Eide however, agreed with the Norwegian government’s policy. He said that it was difficult to proceed with any different policy in the Chechen case. There was no doubt that Russia was violating human rights through infringements of the civilians and terrorizing the population. In this way Russia was violating its responsibility in OSCE, Eide underscored. Eide thought the most important thing Norway could do was support democratic efforts and movements in Russia, not least through informal channels and

315 Ibid.
an active but silent diplomacy. Again, Eide’s statements showed how broadly based the perception of value diplomacy as an effective means to fight undemocratic ideas and conduct was at the time. One such channel where promotion of constructive ideas could be served was the newly established Euro-Arctic Barents Sea Region.

The overall target for the government’s Barents initiative was in Godal’s words of a broad security political character. To establish a stabilizing pattern of cooperation between Russia and the Nordic countries had been the main strategic goal of the Barents co-operation. The Euro-Arctic Barents Region, commencing its third year of existence early January 1995, was presented as a Norwegian contribution to integrate Russia into European cooperation.

The second main aim was to strengthen the economical and social development in the Barents Sea region itself, and between Russia and Norway. The Barents Region had become a crucial part of Norway’s relations with Russia, and through it a vital tool to improve relations.

In the scope of Russia making a brand new effort to be democratic and European, Yeltsin, consequently, needed a victorious end to a war that was becoming increasingly embarrassing and politically burdensome both within the Russian Federation, and in relation with the Western governments and other international institutions. This came to the fore as the celebration of the peace 50th peace anniversary for the Second World War moved closer in time. The celebration was taking place in Russia and was hosted by President Yeltsin.

**PEACE ANNIVERSARY WITH THE CHECHEN CONFLICT AS BACKDROP**

On 9 May 1995, Norway’s Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland met one international politician after the other during the commemoration of the end of the Second World War. The prime minister was reportedly satisfied with the meeting with her Russian colleague Victor Tsjernomyrdin. Prime Minister Brundtland told the press that she had made it perfectly clear to him that Norway reacted strongly against what was happening in the Chechen war. As a silent and symbolic protest against the war in Chechnya, none of the Western leaders were present during the military parade on the Poklonnaja-hill. The Russian leadership did not

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316 Ibid.
318 Ibid.
319 Ibid.
322 Ibid.
question the minimal participation of the World Community in the settlement of the conflict; in turn, the latter did not expect to achieve much.\textsuperscript{323}

Peace negotiations in the Russo-Chechen war was brought on by a large Chechen hostage operation barely a month after the peace anniversary. Chechen field commander Shamil Basaev’s birth town, and stronghold of the separatist movement, Vedeno, had fallen after a Russian air raid. 11 members of Basaev’s family were reportedly killed, including one of his wives and two of his children. Seemingly as a result Basaev took 30 of his men into Russian territory on 14 June 1995, notifying neither the Chechen President Dudaev, nor his senior commander Aslan Maskhadov.\textsuperscript{324} In the Russian city of Budennovsk he launched a mass hostage taking, a huge operation involving approximately 1200 hostages. The goal was to pressure the Kremlin to negotiate. The situation turned into a passé once more, and a cease-fire was established. The peace-efforts made by both sides seemed to settle things into order, for a while.\textsuperscript{325} By the end of 1995 heavy fighting re-erupted.\textsuperscript{326}

While Norway and other Western governments verbally exclaimed their abhorrence over the Russian conduct, attempting the sphere of influence, battles between Russian troops and Chechen insurgents continued to be fought. The civilians of Chechnya were caught in the midst.

\textsuperscript{323} Cherkasov and Grushkin 2005: 133.  
\textsuperscript{324} Lieven 1998: 33; Hughes 2007: 100.  
\textsuperscript{325} Hughes 2007: 86.  
\textsuperscript{326} Wagnsson 2000: 140.
4: NORWEGIAN POLICY TOWARDS THE FIRST CHECHEN WAR

A second large Chechen hostage operation in Russia transpired on 6 January 1996. Receiving massive attention in international media, the operation became a reminder to the Kremlin and the Western governments of an ongoing war. “Norway is strongly against the utilization of hostages in the Chechen conflict”, said Foreign Minister Bjørn Tore Godal when asked to comment on the hostage situation 15 January. However, he did not want to comment any further due to lack of information on the situation. His only source of information had so far been CNN. Godal ended the press conference by encouraging “the parties to refrain the use of violence”.

The sitting Labour government had expressed its antipathy, and protested, towards the Russian warfare in Chechnya throughout 1995, in line with many other Western governments. The government had not followed its condemning rhetoric with measures of economic or political sanctions, or otherwise. Besides encouraging Russia to refrain from violence – what was Norway’s policy towards the first Russo-Chechen War? In terms of room of manoeuvre – what diplomatic, political, and economic means did Norway have to affect the situation in Chechnya? What could Norway do, and what did they want to do?

JANUARY 1996

In a peaceful part of Europe heated discussions were taking place: A debate on whether to accept or reject Russian membership in the Council of Europe in Strasbourg was the cause of the fuss among the member states. The continued Russian warfare in Chechnya was seen by many in Norway, and other member-countries, as the main objection to Russian membership in the Council. The subject had already been discussed over several years, and Russia’s application had previously been rejected. In Norway there were clear disagreements on this question between the Labour government, who was positive, and oppositional political parties in the Parliament.

327 «Godal: Nei til gisler i Tsjetsjenia-konflikten» [Godal: No to hostages in the Chechen conflict], NTB, 15.1.1996.
329 From here on: “ the Council.”
330 «Europeisk rullett»[European Roulette], Bergens Tidende, 23.1.1996.
332 «Norge støtter Russisk medlemskap i Europarådet» [Norway support Russian membership in the Council of Europe], NTB, 31.1.1996.
That the Chechen insurgents were by no means neutralized and the war was not over had become clear when Chechen commander Salman Raduyev launched the “lone wolf” operation on 6 January 1996. He was seemingly copying Shamil Basaev’s large operation in Budennovsk. Near the Dagestani border town Kizlyar in Pervomayskoye district, Raduyev’s unit had assaulted a federal military helicopter airfield. The armed group destroyed two out of three helicopters and killed about thirty people in the attack. Raduyev then led his unit into the town itself and reportedly took between 2000 and 3400 inhabitants hostage in the town hospital buildings. After a few hours they released all but 120 of the hostages and headed towards the Chechen border in buses. The federal forces attacked the bus convoy by air artillery, and the Chechen fighters sought shelter in the nearby Dagestani village, Pervomayskoye. For eight days Chechen insurgents and Russian forces fought and by the time the Chechens escaped, the small town was completely in ruins. There were several losses on both armed sides, and many civilians were killed in the rumble.

In the following six months, there was no Russo-Chechen refrain from use of violence. Instead, the war raged at its most volatile throughout the first six month of 1996, until a peace agreement was reached in July 1996. At the same point in time, about 600 000 people reportedly voted with their feet against the conditions in Chechnya. Almost 200 000 ethnic Chechens were internally displaced (IDPs), and both ethnic Russians and Chechens were fleeing over the border to the neighbouring republics, seeking shelter from the storm.

PROMOTING RUSSIAN MEMBERSHIP – A DEMONSTRATION OF NORWEGIAN CONSENSUS ORIENTED FOREIGN POLICY

The Norwegian Labour government followed the same course as the preceding year, when it supported Russian membership in the Council of Europe in January 1996. The Labour government had its mind set on voting in favour of Russian membership and was supported by the Liberal party of Norway. The Norwegian Progress and Conservative Party, however, were against accepting Russia as member, as long as the Chechen war prolonged. The Conservatives though, did not want the parliament to instruct the government on this matter,

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333 Words always have different connotations attached; I have tried to choose as neutral words about the actors in the conflict as possible.
334 «Trusler og harde krav i tsjetsjensk gisseldrama» [Threats and tough demands in Chechen hostage drama], NTB, 9.1.1996; «Gislene løslatt i morges» [Hostages released this morning], VG, 10.1.1996; Evangelista 2002: 41.
335 «Kan ikke være verre i helvete» [Cannot be worse in Hell], VG, 24.3.1996; «Jeltsin gjorde henne til enke» [Yeltsin made her a widow], Dagbladet, 23.3.1996; Wagnsson 2000: 76.
336 «14 000 på flukt fra Tsjetsjenia» [14 000 fleeing from Chechnya], NTB, 2.1.1996; «600 000 flyktninger etter Tsjetsjenia-krig» [600 000 refugees after Chechen war], NTB, 4.1.1996.
and therefore voted against a proposition by the Progress Party, intended to deny the government to vote in favour of Russian membership.\textsuperscript{337}

The Russo-Chechen conflict did not only stir the surface of Russo-Norwegian relations. The conflict raised fundamental questions of human rights and a discussion of what distinguished internal conflict from other conflicts. As the 1990s saw an “explosion” of ethnic conflicts inside sovereign nation states, these questions concerned many Norwegian politicians in general, and were openly discussed in Parliament. Did Parliament influence how the Norwegian government treated the Russo-Chechen conflict in this first period? The question is posed to see if domestic pressure was put on the government and to analyze the situation in a domestic perspective. Due to the level of brutality, the conflict came to be mentioned and discussed several times in open parliamentary sessions. At this time it is not possible to investigate if the situation in Chechnya was on the agenda of the Extended Committee of Foreign Affairs.\textsuperscript{338}

The necessity for Norway as a small state to have a reining national consensus on foreign affairs has been generally agreed upon since Norway was granted independence in 1905.\textsuperscript{339} Among the Norwegian political parties there has, in addition, traditionally been little foreign political interest. Two foreign political subjects have been the source of much debate and political disagreement: NATO and the EU. The consensus tradition was seen as especially important throughout the Cold War when Norwegian security policy was firmly placed within NATO and based on close cooperation with Washington. A political split has been apparent in what the diverging political parties considered important. The left-wing parties were usually more concerned with humanitarian aid and global peace efforts, whereas the Conservatives and the dominant Labour party were, roughly speaking, more concerned with state security, geopolitics and economy. The compromise between the political left and right had formerly been to put as much effort into the UN, as they did in NATO. That policy was maintained through the 1990s.\textsuperscript{340}

The general consensus was not disrupted by the Russo-Chechen conflict. Little effort was in reality made by Parliament to make the government do anything radical or front a different policy towards the conflict. The Russo-Chechen conflict was discussed in parliament, and some of the parties expressed themselves as being disappointed by the way

\textsuperscript{337} «Norge støtter russisk medlemskap i Europarådet», \textit{NTB}, 31.1.1996.

\textsuperscript{338} It is not in writing moment possible to check if the conflict situation was discussed in the Extended Committee of Foreign Affairs.

\textsuperscript{339} Eriksen og Pharo 1997: 18.

\textsuperscript{340} Janne Haaland Matlary and Audun Halvorsen, i Birgitte Kjos Fonn, Iver B. Neumann og Ole Jacob Sending, 2006: 193.
the government handled it. However, the debates mostly functioned as a forum where the conflict could be discussed and agreed upon. It could also be considered a “test ground” for the government to see how much the Russo-Chechen conflict engaged public opinion and how much money for humanitarian aid it should allocate. In early 1995 a strong cross-party stance in parliament had expressed that the Norwegian government had to follow a sharper tone in its condemnation of Russia’s abuses in Chechnya.341

The Centre Party, prior to the parliament debate, had in 1995 been the only Norwegian political party that had criticized the government publicly on its response to the Chechen conflict. In Norwegian newspapers the Centre Party demanded a tougher approach towards Russia. The party had also written a letter to the Norwegian MFA in an effort to encourage a more direct criticism towards Russia on the matter. The Centre Party stated that Norway should bring the issue to the OSCE. Although Godal had been positive about bringing the case to the OSCE, he had not taken the initiative for Norway to do this. The Centre Party thought that Bjørn Tore Godal had been too careful in his statements regarding the Russian military invasion and were sceptical to his definition of the conflict as an internal Russian affair. The Central party’s concern may have been deep felt, but it was also an opportunity to promote itself as more concerned with human rights than the government, thus creating goodwill in domestic politics. This can in many ways be considered as an oppositional attack on the sitting government. The chance to alter what the opposition had viewed as a too soft policy by Labour towards Russia, came little over a year later, when three of the oppositional parties in the Parliament formed a new government.

RUSSIA AND THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

In Europe it was widely believed that Russian membership in the Council of Europe would enhance security and stability in Europe, but also strengthen the democratic forces at work within Russia. This was the main argument on the “pro-side”. This way of perceiving the situation was also why not only the Government, but also the majority of the Norwegian Parliament ended up supporting Russian membership.342 Bjørn Tore Godal confirmed this explicitly when he said that the MFA “felt that through [Russian] membership in the

341 «Fordømmelse av Russland» [Condemnations of Russia], *Aftenposten*, 1.2.1995.
European Council Norway got an additional structure, which the Russians had to relate to and that could be a natural place to discuss basic questions.\textsuperscript{343}

James Hughes, Professor of Comparative Politics, claims that with regard to Europe and Russia, two “prominent opportunities for the use of some form influence or conditionality” on the Chechen situation occurred in the mid-nineties. They were both in turn neglected.\textsuperscript{344} The first one came precisely when Russia applied to join the Council of Europe in 1995. The application was initially suspended due to the war in Chechnya.\textsuperscript{345} The Council had not stopped evaluating Russia’s application, although Russian membership had been postponed. During the meeting of the Council’s Political Committee in Copenhagen in December 1995, an updated and critical report on Russian membership had been put forth. Nonetheless, German, French, and other Western European leaders, one after another, publicly endorsed Russian membership.\textsuperscript{346}

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council commenced the final debate as to whether Russia should become member of the Council. The debate resulted in a plenary vote the following Thursday. The result had been expected to be the 2/3 in favour that was needed to welcome Russian membership. However, doubts had been raised during the discussion after the last hostage incident in Chechnya. Acceptance of Russian membership had been fairly clear prior to the “lone wolf operation” and the Russo-Chechen showdown in Pervomayskoye. The Kremlin received a hasty visit from the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Daniel Tarschys. The visit had the sole mission of discussing further procedures in light of the development in Chechnya with the Russian leaders.\textsuperscript{347}

The leading politicians in the Kremlin, consulted by Tarschys, however, were of the opinion that they shouldn’t afflict Russia with another prestigious defeat. The matter had already been suspended a year before, due to the armed conflict in Chechnya.\textsuperscript{348} It had also been commented, or threatened, that a negative outcome in the Russian membership matter would be perceived as indirect support to those who wanted to solve the Russo-Chechen conflict with inhuman methods and terror.\textsuperscript{349}

\textsuperscript{343} Interview with Bjørn Tore Godal, 9.12.2009.
\textsuperscript{344} Hughes, 1997: 131.
\textsuperscript{345} What Hughes sees as the second opportunity, (which, against the chronology, is already discussed in chapter 3), arose when the “EU and Russia negotiated the primarily economic Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) in the mid 90s.” Though, as discussed below, the opportunities were neglected.
\textsuperscript{346} «Europeisk rullett», Bergens Tidende, 23.1.1996.
\textsuperscript{347} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{348} «Europeisk rullett», Bergens Tidende, 23.1.1996.
\textsuperscript{349} «Solid ja til Russland i Europarådet» [Solid yes to Russia in the Council of Europe], NTB, 25.1.1996.
Russia was elected into the Council of Europe as the 39th member on 25 January 1996 by 165 parliament votes against 35. Another 15 had withheld their vote. Russia was included on the terms that the Russian actions in Chechnya were attuned with their international obligations, and treaties of the Council. Boris Yeltsin and Western European governments had just prior to the voting made a real effort of lobbying in the halls and corridors of the Council of Europe. Yeltsin himself was very proud of the achievement and took much credit for having achieved Russian membership. Yeltsin’s Russia was given one year to ratify and sign the ruling conventions on human rights, protection of minorities and forbid and put a stop to the use of torture. In contrast, the oil wealthy Azerbaijan with numerous Western oil investors, including Norwegian Statoil, was not accepted as a member until 2000. The main reason was all along the unresolved dispute between Azerbaijan and Armenia, the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

The Western European governments saw Russia’s membership as a victory and support for the pro-western forces in Russia. However, not everyone agreed with Yeltsin and his supporters in the Western European governments. The Russian human rights activist Sergei Kovaljov appealed to the Council of Europe not to open up for Russian membership unless the Council insist that Russia respect human rights and follow the political situation in Russia very carefully. Others critical to Russian membership pointed to the fact that the Council’s own Commission of Human Rights (ECHR) had stated that Russia could not be considered a legal state and did not fulfil the membership criteria. Hallgrim Berg, of the Norwegian Conservative party, and the Swiss Christian-democrat Dumeni Columberg, voted against Russian membership. They felt that the Council’s legitimacy was weakened, because they did not consider Russia as a constitutional democratic state. On the other side the Socialists, Christian-Democrats and Liberals in the Parliament acclaimed Russia’s improvement in areas of democracy, especially regarding liberty of speech and free media.
DISAPPOINTING RUSSIA – A DEMOCRACY MISCARRIED?

It seems as if the Norwegian government in 1996 still, more or less, perceived Russia as something that was daily becoming more European, as did many other Western leaders. This again seems to have affected how Norway related to the Russo-Chechen conflict. With the wisdom of hindsight it can seem as if the Norwegian government, as well as other Western governments, had some misperceptions about Yeltsin and the new Russian democracy.\(^{357}\) In most public statements Labour government officials spoke positively of Yeltsin and his newly democratic Russia. Foreign minister Godal said he felt he had very good contact with his colleague Kosyrev, and Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland, as I will show below, wrote something of a tribute to Boris Yeltsin after his visit in Norway.\(^{358}\)

In the mid-1990s, however, the perception of Russia’s leadership did seem to change slightly in Norway. From being overly enthusiastic about Yeltsin and his reforms, more scepticism crept into the public discussions on Russia. Many commentators and politicians in Norway saw a new course of a more nationalist turn in Russia that the surrounding world had to deal with from that point on.\(^{359}\) Professor of Political Science has described what he has called the “misery discourse” of how Russia was portrayed in Norway increasingly from the mid-1990s. Norwegian reporters delivered news about poverty in Russia, alcohol problems, the nuclear waste problems in the high north, and the Russian prostitutes and organized crime crossing the border over to Norway in the north. In contrast, they presented Norway as the sound and helpful neighbour that provided advice and aid to the “poor giant”.\(^{360}\)

State Secretary Åslaug Haga, of the Bondevik I government, confirmed this image of Russia painted in dark colours, almost astonishingly accordantly. When addressing an assembly at the Carnegie Endowment for Peace, in Washington on 19 October 1998 she gave focus to the “alarming state of nuclear safety in north-western Russia”, and problems “typical of present-Russia, such as corruption, organised crime, official inertia, and a breakdown of political, economic and social networks. She told the American audience that some of this “social confusion” was already spilling over into Norway. Among them “busloads of Russians

\(^{357}\) Lieven 1998: 243.
\(^{358}\) Interview with Bjørn Tore Godal, 9.12.2009.
\(^{360}\) Hønneland, 2005:108-111.
on tourist visas including Russian woman who prostituted themselves for lack of other income, smugglers of Russian vodka and cigarettes, and I am afraid sometimes even people, guns and drugs.\textsuperscript{361} She said she did not want to be too pessimistic, but that Russia was stilling sinking deeper into crisis. However, the Russian society had shown itself resistant to crisis.\textsuperscript{362}

Changes also took place on the Russian political scene. Most of Yeltsin’s “family” had, naturally enough, had their careers within the Soviet Communist Party. It was the same Russians that woke up on the morning of 26 December 1991, although the Soviet flag had been raised for the last time the day before.\textsuperscript{363} Nonetheless, during Yeltsin’s first period, the process of completely reforming the main structures of society was commenced. Russia was rapidly transformed into an open economy with decentralized political structures, except for the highest federal level. Although these changes were real and evident enough, there were all the time conservative forces wanting to return to a communist regime, and a less Westernized course. This divergence in the broader debate on Russian foreign policy was at this time split in two main ideological blocks: the pro-western liberals, called the internationalists or atlantists; and the nationalists or the neo-patriots.\textsuperscript{364}

The turn away had accelerated since 1993, when what has been called a “honeymoon” period in Russian foreign policy thinking on the West.\textsuperscript{365} This became more apparent when Godal’s friendly counterpart, the atlantist Andrej Kosyrev, left the Yeltsin government, along with five other ministers, after the Russian parliamentary election 17 December 1995. It seemed as if Kosyrev left by own will, but he had the preceding year received several political blows, some dealt to him by President Yeltsin himself, and others by opponents of a more nationalist conviction. He was replaced by Jevgenij Primakov.\textsuperscript{366} The 66 year old Primakov had until this appointment been leader of the Russian Federal Foreign Intelligence Service (FSB).\textsuperscript{367} Primakov was not as interested in the Barents Sea or other projects underpinned in the West as his predecessor had been.

Foreign Minister Vollebæk, who succeeded Godal in 1997, regarded the perception of Russia and Yeltsin at the time retrospectively in an interview. He recalled that the Norwegian

\textsuperscript{362} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{363} Blakkisrud, 2009: 209.
\textsuperscript{364} Wagnsson 2000: 76.
\textsuperscript{365} Ibid: 79.
\textsuperscript{367} «Primakov ny utenriksminister i Russland», \textit{NTB}, 9.1.1996.
government had not naïve in its perception of Yeltsin, although Yeltsin had been viewed as a positive force that opened up the Russian society and someone who made it possible for the common man in the street to be more politically involved.\textsuperscript{368}

However he recognized that there had occurred a change between the first Yeltsin period around 1991 and the period where Vollebæk was in government. In 1991 bilateral relations with Russia had seen a wholly different dynamic. During the first years there was considered to be more possibilities for influence, cooperation and interaction in the northern areas. In the mid-1990s it changed with the appointment of Primakov and others. The process of democratization staggered in the mid-1990s and Yeltsin’s connection with former allied reformers were broken.\textsuperscript{369} The Norwegian government had worried about the development, but all along there had been hopes of further improvement despite the setbacks. The invasion of Chechnya had been seen as a warning-signal. It was perceived in Norway, according to Vollebæk, as a dilemma of how to support the positive tendencies in Russia without compromising on important ideals and values. The government saw the Russian democratic development as a course in the right direction, if not a course in a straight line. The discovery of Russian intelligence officers attempting to recruit Norwegian spies in Norway, and other spy-affairs came as a huge surprise to the Norwegian government, who thought that those days had ended with the end of the Cold War.\textsuperscript{370}

Criticism against authoritarian tendencies came increasingly also forth from within Russian society.\textsuperscript{371} The Russian Bellona co-worker Alexandr Nikitin was arrested in January 1996 on grounds of uncertain charges. Human rights activist Kovaljov thought that Norway should get engaged with the matter on behalf of Nikitin. Kovaljov was in Norway to accept the Helsingfors Committee’s Sakharov Award for his work with peace efforts and human rights in Chechnya. Norwegian interests were also touched by this matter, because Norwegian environmental workers in Bellona had indirectly been accused of espionage.\textsuperscript{372}

Kovaljov encouraged Foreign Minister Godal to talk to Primakov about Nikitin’s legal security during his visit in Moscow. Kovaljov met with State Secretary Siri Bjerke and the

\textsuperscript{368} Phone Interview with Vollebæk, 17.2.2010.
\textsuperscript{369} Geir Flikke, «Gorbachev and Yeltsin as leaders» and «Russia’s stillborn democracy? From Gorbachev to Yeltsin», Internasjonal Politikk 2002, 3: 374.
\textsuperscript{370} Phone-interview with Vollebæk, 17.2.2010; «Full støtte til regjeringen i utvisningsaken» [Full support to the government on the extradition affair], NTB, 12.3.1998; «Spionene: Krangel ved ambassaden» [The Spies: Quarrel by the embassy], Dagbladet, 13.3.1998.
\textsuperscript{371} «Kovaljov», Aftenposten, 20.2.1996.
\textsuperscript{372} «Menneskerettsveteran: -forsøk på justismord på Nikitin» [Human rights veteran: attempted judicial murder], NTB, 19.2.1996.
Parliament’s committee of foreign affairs during his stay. The 65 year old man had recently resigned from the chairman position of the President’s human rights committee. For the occasion he had sent a very critical letter to the President with an account of what he considered an unfortunate development. When Godal had his first meeting with his new colleague, foreign minister Jevgenij Primakov, in Moscow 2 March 1996, he mentioned Nikitin and his case. Reportedly, they then discussed NATO, but did not bring up Chechnya at all. At the end of this introductory meeting Primakov announced that President Yeltsin was “finally” visiting Norway.

PRESIDENT YELTSIN’S VISIT TO NORWAY

On 25 March 1996 Yeltsin landed on Norwegian soil where he was received by the Norwegian Crown Princess Martha Louise. The main assertion as to why Yeltsin chose to visit Norway was that a “Norway-visit” would most likely be a positive contribution to his election campaign at the time. The Russian president had already suspended his Norway-visit twice, due to ill health. He had also had a series of unfortunate public performances, where he among incidents “overslept” to a meeting with the President of Ireland. In general he often seemed drunk and unstable whenever he appeared. Yeltsin was in his final phase of the Russian Presidential election campaign and he needed goodwill. The election date was set for June, only months away, and his reasons for visiting Norway was therefore thoroughly discussed in Russian and Norwegian media. Norway and Russia had some issues to work out. Nevertheless, it was reckoned to be a nice event to be received by the King and Queen of Norway and to discuss, for instance, how well the cooperation in the Barents Sea was going. In other words, it would give Yeltsin a convenient chance to show himself and his government off to the Russian voters from the best possible side.

A few days before Yeltsin’s arrival there were many speculations on what the Russian President wanted to discuss. Spokesman for the Prime Minister told the media that if Yeltsin should choose a tough approach, he would receive the answers that were needed, already

373 "Menneskerettssveteran: -forsøk på justismord på Nikitin», NTB, 19.2.1996.
374 Ibid.
375 "Avslappet møte i Moskva» [Relaxed meeting in Moscow], NTB, 2.3.1996; «Russisk kritikk dempes» [Russian criticism is subdued], Aftenposten 3.3.1996.
376 "Tsjetsjenia-konflikten tveegget sverd for Jeltsin» [Chechnya conflict is a double-edged sword to Yeltsin], Aftenposten, 18.1.96; «Boris, Boris», Nordlys, 1.3.96.
377 "Boris kommer» [Boris is coming], Nordlys, 22.3.96.
380 Ibid.
explained to Russia by NATO’s Secretary General Javier Solanas, and US Foreign Minister Warren Christopher. The Prime Minister expressed by this comment that Norway was firmly within the alliance with NATO and the US, and would provide the same answers as Solana and Christopher. The first “talks” between Yeltsin and Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland were to take place under “four eyes only”, except for the interpreters and referents. There were also going to be talks between Foreign Minister Godal and Minister of Fisheries and Coastal Affairs and their counterparts. The Norwegian Prime Minister, the spokesman said, would be likely to mention the Chechen war, though the Prime Minister’s advisors thought that a “soft” approach towards Yeltsin was important. The Norwegian government was going to pay attention to Yeltsin’s “tone-of-voice in the conversations”, not least when it came to international matters. This strategy of precaution clearly shows that Norway did not want to step on Yeltsin’s toes during the visit.

For Norway, Yeltsin’s visit was an important opportunity to further dialogue with its great neighbour. The Norwegian government seemingly wanted the visit to run as smoothly as possible. If Yeltsin did not want to discuss Chechnya, inquiries about human rights, seemingly, were not going to ruin the good atmosphere. Yeltsin’s “tone-of-voice” was composed and friendly during his entire stay and this facilitated conversation on most areas. Next to the question of the nuclear facilities on the Kola Peninsula, most of the time had gone by discussing the bilateral marine delimitation between the continental shelves and the economical zones in the Barents Sea. The Prime Minister, according to “centrally placed sources”, had brought forth a map, whereon she drew and described and explained to her Russian guest, how and why the remaining issue could and should be solved. Earlier on, the Russians had wanted to make the disputed area into a common area. It had become confirmed that Norway and Russia really needed a defined border. While negotiating the border line, they also wanted to discuss how they could cooperate on the petroleum resources that were expected to exist in the area.

Four agreements were reached and signed during Yeltsin’s stay in Norway. The first agreement was a 14 pages very general common statement on the status of the relationship, expressing common desires to develop it further. A second agreement on common taxes was achieved and a third agreement on trade and economical cooperation, and a fourth protocol on

381 «Viktige tosidige spørsmål under samtalene Gro-Jeltsin» [Important bilateral questions in the Gro-Yeltsin conversations], *NTB*, 22.3.1996
382 «Viktige tosidige spørsmål under samtalene Gro-Jeltsin», *NTB*, 22.3.1996
383 «Jeltsin i Norge: Delelinjen kan falle på plass» [Yeltsin in Norway: the delimitation can be sorted out], *Aftenposten*, 27.3.1996
the fulfilments on the Petsjenga-Nikel project were also signed. “That was one more agreement signed than expected”, said Prime Minister Brundtland.\textsuperscript{385}

NATO’s plans of enlargement were not formally discussed, although Yeltsin openly criticized the plans in speeches and press conferences during his stay. Only minutes before Yeltsin had left Moscow for Norway, he had warned Norway and NATO of the planned enlargement in an eastern direction.\textsuperscript{386} As to the Chechen conflict, the Norwegian Prime Minister Brundtland had “openly” made clear the concern that reining both in Norway, and throughout the world, about the conflict and the humanitarian situation. Yeltsin responded by telling the Prime Minister about the “peace-speech” he was going to make the upcoming Sunday and that he wanted to try to end the warfare within June the same year.

TO WHAT END?

The Russian media emphasized Yeltsin’s need to make an effort to dissolve the Russian military campaign in Chechnya because of the upcoming election.\textsuperscript{387} Various polls were conducted in Russia with questions relating to the Russo-Chechen war throughout the first war. The results showed that the war was increasingly unpopular in Russia, and increasingly a burden to Yeltsin’s image as a democratic politician.\textsuperscript{388} “The peace-process plan launched in April 1996 can therefore be seen as largely driven by the presidential campaign.”\textsuperscript{389} The Russian President was homewards bound and his visit was very positively referred to in the Russian media the days after his return from Oslo.\textsuperscript{390} Yeltsin had gained what he sought in Norway.

A week after Yeltsin’s visit, Norway’s Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland had an optimistic op-ed about Russo-Norwegian relations published. “It favours Norway in every possible way if Russia has success with their reforms. Therefore we have to support a positive development, politically and by a strong economical engagement.” In that way, Brundtland thought Norway would have the best chance to affect the development.\textsuperscript{391} Brundtland’s commentary in \textit{Aftenposten}, 3 April 1996 was a tribute to the good cooperation with Russia throughout the centuries and to the areas that were functioning well.\textsuperscript{392}

\textsuperscript{385} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{386} «Jeltsin advarer NATO» [Yeltsin warns NATO], Nordlys, 26.3.96
\textsuperscript{387} «Hjem til skamros» [Home to extravagant praise], \textit{VG}, 27.3.96
\textsuperscript{388} Wagnsson 2000: 145-183.
\textsuperscript{389} Hughes 2007: 87, 109; Bowker 2005: 229
\textsuperscript{390} «Hjem til skamros», \textit{VG}, 27.3.96; «Positiv russisk presseomtale av Jeltsins besøk» [Positive Russian reporting on Yeltsin’s visit], \textit{NTB}, 27.3.96.
\textsuperscript{391} Gro Harlem Brundtland, «Boris Jeltsins Russland» [Boris Yeltsin’s Russia], \textit{Aftenposten}, 3.4.1996.
\textsuperscript{392} Gro Harlem Brundtland, «Boris Jeltsins Russland», \textit{Aftenposten}, 3.4.1996.
Despite making it clear that Norway could not accept the war in Chechnya, she did not think it would get better in Chechnya if the surrounding world showed their opposition to the war by closing doors or reducing the aid that could contribute to Russia’s progress. She stated that it would not help the Chechen people to isolate Russia on areas where Norway and Western countries could help. Her vision was that if the West proceeded in such a rejecting way, Russia would follow its own path and that would not do anyone good. She continued by stating Labour’s strategies for the Barents Sea cooperation. Norway was building a framework for new openness, growth and new optimism, she wrote, not least through the Barents sea-cooperation, where Russia was Chairman. It is evident from the Prime Minister’s comment that she was convinced that Russia was on the right path, and if only the West “showed the right way”, it would continue in the right direction.

Gro Harlem Brundtland was indeed selective when she chose her images of the democratic Yeltsin. For instance she described the image of Yeltsin in front of the White House in Moscow, on top of a tank with his megaphone during the coup attempt in September 1991. However, she did not mention when Yeltsin had attacked the Russia parliament with armed forces in 1993. She added to her op-ed that the image of the warfare in Chechnya also was a strong image that “we cannot accept.” It can almost seem as if the Norwegian government regarded President Yeltsin as somewhat of a “good Tsar” who could not be held responsible for the acts of his brutal footmen.

THE LEBED-MASKHADOV PEACE AGREEMENT

On 31 August 1996 the first Russo-Chechen war was officially brought to an end with the signing of the Khasavyurt ceasefire agreement also called the Lebed-Maskhadov peace agreement. Yeltsin and the Kremlin had been serious about ending the armed conflict. Yeltsin was re-elected for a second period, and the peace process plan was on schedule. The negotiations had been facilitated by the head of the OSCE Assistance Group in Chechnya, Tim Guldiman. The group had been established at the 16th meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council on 11 April, 1995. The negotiation process had been led by the Russian general, Security Council Secretary, and newly appointed envoy to Chechnya Alexander Lebed, and the Chechen field commander Aslan Maskhadov. When President Dudaev was killed by a
Russian missile the process sped up. The political status of Chechnya was to be decided upon in negotiations within a period of five years. Russian federal troops began to withdraw, although the last troops were not out before the end of 1997. Russian policy towards Chechnya, after this, was characterized mainly by passivity. No serious negotiations on the status of Chechnya, as prescribed in the Khasavyurt agreement, took place, since both sides were stuck in their positions and not open for compromises. Russia chose not to support the relatively moderate Chechen president Aslan Maskhadov, against his more radical challengers.

**BJØRN TORE GODAL’S STATEMENT ON HUMAN RIGHTS**

Bjørn Tore Godal’s statement to the Parliament on human rights on 10 October 1996 touched upon most troubled areas in the world. Russia was conspicuous in its absence. Firstly, Godal’s statement contained brawny proclamations of Norwegian efforts:

> Never before have so many people who are imprisoned, persecuted or missing received so much effective assistance from Norwegian diplomats or relief organizations. Never before have we so actively confronted power-seeking leaders with specific violations of human rights and concrete proposals for improvement.

He continued by stating that the active line Norway was pursuing was not without cost. Norway was occasionally the target of serious accusations by regimes that wanted to avoid becoming focal point of Norway’s critical attention. His following example was Kenyan authorities. Godal did not provide an example where Norwegian security or national interests was at stake. Godal referred to the UN when he stated that military force to stop a state from violating the rights of its citizens should only be applied if international peace and security was at stake. The international society had a right and a duty to react when states failed to display a minimum of respect to its citizens: “In such cases, the principle of national autonomy must take second place.” In the eyes of the Norwegian government, dialogue and incentives were the best way to promote human rights, and this was put to effort in all bilateral relations Norway had.

> The government’s opinion was that economic sanctions should only be used as “a last resort when other measures have been tried and found wanting.”

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398 Wagnsson 2000: 141.
400 Statement to the Parliament on Human Rights by Foreign Minister Bjørn Tore Godal 10 October 1996.
401 Ibid.
402 Ibid.
results might be difficult to predict and did not always correspond to the intentions. The government did not view unilateral Norwegian sanctions as an effective means of exerting pressure. The symbolic effect was argued to be stronger in Norway than abroad. It is usually easy for regimes to find substitutes for relations with Norway. It could also have disproportionately severe effects on Norwegian industry and could undermine confidence in Norway as a trading partner.\textsuperscript{403} Unilateral Norwegian sanctions will seldom, if ever, Godal said, be an effective means of exerting pressure. Norway is small and vulnerable, and the government objected to the idea that countries could boycott another without being authorized by the UN.\textsuperscript{404} Godal was aware that the government was occasionally criticized for being inconsistent in the measures it employed or for using apparently conflicting measures. To this he remarked that the means should always be adapted to the ends, and the overriding objectives should be to always find ways of improving the situation as effectively as possible.\textsuperscript{405}

The statement proceeded by leading the Parliament through a couple of cases. China and Indonesia were two regimes where the Norwegian government had chosen to maintain dialogue even though it was concerned with the human rights situation. Norway recognized the social and economic progress that had been made in China and also the great challenges the large society was facing.\textsuperscript{406} By comparison, there were plenty of reasons to criticize human rights violations in Russia in general, and Chechnya in particular. But the Norwegian government chose not to. In fact, Godal did not even mention it. An integral part of the government’s commitment to human rights was the concern about the treatment of minorities such as the Kurds and the Tibetans. The situation in Russia had similarities to quite a lot of the cases he mentioned.

Norway could support or perform sanctions against regimes, even if they were not UN based. On request by the leader of the democratic forces in Burma, Aung San Suu Kui, the government supported isolation of the military regime in Burma. This was done through economic sanctions and international censure. Due to the issue of the Fatwa regarding the publication of Satanic Verses by Salman Rushdie, Iran was an additional country that in Godal’s opinion represented a totally unacceptable violation of the most fundamental norms of international law, which normal relations with could at the time not be maintained.\textsuperscript{407}

\textsuperscript{403} Statement to the Parliament on Human Rights by Foreign Minister Bjørn Tore Godal 10 October 1996.
\textsuperscript{404} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{405} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{406} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{407} Statement to the Parliament on Human Rights by Foreign Minister Bjørn Tore Godal 10 October 1996.
On the question of why Russia had been excluded in the statement, Godal has stated that he could not remember. He added to his answer that at times the government could avoid mentioning the state in concern to see that it did not disturb eventual processes at hand. However, he took the precondition that it did not necessarily concern this particular episode. Even though Norway at the time seemingly “had a thing” for secret negotiations, there was nothing to indicate that Norway was involved in the North Caucasus at the time.⁴⁰⁸

Peace processes were at hand in Chechnya at the time. An OSCE mission team had been sent with Norwegian representatives. State Secretary Jan Egeland had a year previously commented to journalists that, due to Norway’s “status” as peace facilitators in the mid 1990s, several requests for mediation were received also from the Caucasus. Egeland concluded his view on the matter by stating that the government had to decline inquiries if they did not meet the requirements for Norwegian engagement. That is, Norway had to be represented in the area preferably on “both sides” of the conflict, there had to be Norwegian expertise on the area available, and “both parties” had to have confidence in Norway.⁴⁰⁹ Norway seemingly did not have any representatives in the North Caucasus that could have established such mediation contacts as they had in Guatemala, for instance. Even if they did, it is by no indication given that they would have involved themselves without Russia’s acceptance.

THE KILLING OF INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS EMPLOYEES IN NOVYE ATAGI

Tragic news reached the Norwegian MFA on the morning of 17 December 1996. Unknown assassins had killed six expatriate employees of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in the small Chechen town of Novye Atagi. Among the victims were the two Norwegian nurses – Gunhild Myklebust and Ingebjørg Foss.⁴¹⁰ The ICRC hospital they worked at was financed and provided by the “people of Norway and the Norwegian government as a gift to the Chechen people”.⁴¹¹ It had at first been somewhat of a tug of war with the Russian authorities before Norway was allowed to place it in Chechnya.⁴¹² The violent incident in Novye Atagi caused withdrawal of most Red Cross Workers.⁴¹³

State Secretary Jan Egeland exclaimed that Norway’s government wanted a clear message to reach local and federal authorities in Russia and Chechnya: those responsible for

⁴⁰⁸ Interview with Bjørn Tore Godal, 9.12.2009
⁴¹⁰ The other health-personnel assassinated were Canadian Nancy Malloy, Spanish Fernanda Calado, Johan Joost Elkerbout from Netherland, and Sheryl Thayer from New Zealand.
⁴¹¹ «To norske skutt i Tsjetsjenia»[Two Norwegian shot in Chechnya], Aftenposten, 17.12.1996.
⁴¹² «Røde Kors’ sykehus trakassert»[Red Cross hospital harrassed], Aftenposten, 24.9.1996.
⁴¹³ «Ebbas beste gave»[Ebba’s greatest gift], VG, 20.12.1996.
the atrocities had to be captured. He continued by stating that a similar impairment had never struck Norwegian or International aid work before. Spokesman of the MFA, Ingvard Havnen said that this was probably the worst attack on Norwegian aid workers that had ever taken place: “The MFA is shocked by what has happened, and the MFA will provide all possible assistance in regard of it.” Nevertheless, Norway did not want to send police to Chechnya to investigate the murders. They received invitation to participate in the investigation from Chechen spokesmen to the Nordic countries, Usman Fersauli. Ingvard Havnen, spokesman for the Norwegian MFA, said the department had concluded that it would not make much difference and that the MFA trusted that Russian and Chechen authorities did their job.

Spokesman Havnen was asked if the episode would have consequences for Norwegian efforts, i.e. the hospital and Norwegian health workers and OSCE observers, in Chechnya, whereby he responded that it was too early to comment on. Havnen claimed that more information was needed. He added that before the incident there had been a general impression, based on observations of the Norwegian MFA and the ICRC, that the security of the ICRC employees had been satisfactory. Aid-worker Terje Engevik, who had been part of the Norwegian Red Cross mission group that decided where the hospital should be placed, supported this as he said that Novye Atagi had been considered completely safe.

Nonetheless, the overall security situation in Chechnya had been just as labile to foreigners as it had been to Chechen citizens since the first outbreak of war. Already within a month of the establishment of the hospital, in September 1996, there had taken place a threatening incident at the grounds of the Hospital. Norwegian journalist Kjell Dragnes reported that the guerrilla leader, Basaev’s secundant, the Saudi al-Khattab, came to the hospital and demanded that the crosses, the emblem of the Red Cross, were taken down. The intruding armed group quarrelled with the elders of the village surrounding the hospital, and the elders had managed to calm down the intruders. The episode ended by a settled compromise where the red crosses, except for the emblem above the main entrance, were painted over with white paint.

414 «To norske skutt i Tsjetsjenia», Aftenposten, 17.12.1996.
415 «Ikke norsk politi til Tsjetsjenia» [No Norwegian police to Chechnya], VG, 27.12.1996.
416 Ibid.
417 «To norske skutt i Tsjetsjenia», Aftenposten, 17.12.1996.
418 «Tragedien i Tsjetsjenia – Vi følte oss trygge» [The tragedy in Chechnya- We felt safe], Aftenposten, 18.12.1996.
419 In the article he is named Hattab, however, everything in the article, indicated that this concerned al-Khattab; «Røde Kors’ sykehus trakassert», Aftenposten, 24.9.1996.
The Khasavyurt Peace-Agreement signed in July had not made the situation much better. In contrast to the official peace in Chechnya, episodes like the one that occurred in Novye Atagi showed that it was a fragile hiatus and that armed groups were still ranging the area. In September 1996 Elisabeth Ranheim, a Norwegian nurse at the hospital in Novye Atagi, reported that they received persons with gunshot wounds every single day, although there had been a declaration of peace in the area three months previously.\(^421\) Aid workers had several times before this media covered incident been threatened and kidnapped in the region. Kidnapping had been a rather frequent phenomenon for some years.\(^422\)

A while after the attack on the Red Cross hospital the security situation was regarded too dangerous, and the result was that other humanitarian aid organizations withdrew their people from Chechnya, among them Medicines sans frontiers (MSF) and Medicines du Monde.\(^423\) OSCE was the only remaining international organisation represented in Chechnya.\(^424\)

**HUMANITARIAN AID**

Humanitarian aid had been a way for Norway and other countries to contribute and provide assistance to the civilians in Chechnya. It had supported the civilian population with a hospital and personnel. The security situation, however, derogated to such a degree, as seen above, that all efforts were withdrawn for a period. By the winter of 1997 the Norwegian government had given NOK 1.5 billion to humanitarian efforts. The main priority areas had been the former Yugoslavia, central Africa, the Palestinian territories, Afghanistan and Sudan. In March 1997 State Secretary Jan Egeland in the MFA, raised doubts about the motives and effects of humanitarian aid in conflict regions.\(^425\)

Egeland claimed that humanitarian aid had been brought into the centre of international politics in the nineties. This contributed positively to the possibility of organizing operations that in only a few days could rescue hundreds of thousands of people in need. However, he also saw the potential for humanitarian aid to become a pretext for


\(^{423}\) «Natt-sermoni for de drepte»[Night ceremoni for the killed], *Dagbladet*, 19.12.1996.


powerful decision makers in organizations such as OSCE, the UN Security Council, and NATO, to avoid further political involvement in a conflict. If a humanitarian crisis was improved through humanitarian aid, the situation would not “demand” action. This could in turn make the surrounding world leave the situation be, indirectly prolonging the conflict, because the situation would no longer be completely desperate.\(^{426}\)

Vollebæk did not agree with Egeland’s overall view on this. He remarked that what Egeland stated, would be the same as abusing money to dodge political engagement. Vollebæk considered it more as a sign of a guilty conscience towards the civilians in those kinds of conflicts. According to Vollebæk the least external organizations or governments could do was to help civilians in warzones, especially when it was not possible to settle the conflict.\(^{427}\) Whether basic humanitarian assistance in Chechnya made the surrounding world’s demands for a peaceful solution less forceful or not remains an open question. The two possibilities here represented by Vollebæk and Egeland were both viable to the situation in Chechnya.

**PEACE TREATIES, INDEPENDENCE AND OTHER FRAUDS**

The OSCE played an important role in the first Russo-Chechen war. Head of the OSCE Assistance Group Tim Guldiman was by many seen to have been instrumental in facilitating the negotiation process that led to the Khasavyurt Agreement. In January 1997 the OSCE was going to supervise what would be the first and last national Presidential and Parliamentary election in the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria. Maskhadov was elected first Chechen president of the Chechen republic of Ichkeria in an election process, which was deemed by the OSCE to be decent and fair. There were some objections to the proceedings due to young men in groups harassing voters at a few places. These hoodlums were often supporters of Basaev, who came in second place to Maskhadov. Maskhadov had broad support as a moderate candidate in a war-weary population.\(^{428}\)

The OSCE also assisted in bringing about the Treaty on Peace and Principles of Mutual Relations between the Russian Federation and the Chechen Republic, signed by president Yeltsin and Chechen president Aslan Maskhadov in Moscow May 1997. Chechnya’s final status was stated to be settled within 2001 through negotiations. These negotiations did not come about as soon as Maskhadov was expecting. The Chechen president

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\(^{427}\) Phone-interview with Vollebæk, 17.2.2010.

was fighting a strenuous battle to maintain authority and received little support, although Sergej Stepasjin commented that “Maskhadov is supported by Russia and other countries and should be able to consolidate his authority”. On December 1998, Maskhadov reportedly expressed his “readiness for any dialogue with the Russian government”. Yeltsin however was reported in Russian newspapers to have annulled his directive to negotiate a treaty, along the lines of the treaty with Tatarstan. After spring 1997, the prevailing view in the Kremlin was that no third party mediation was necessary. Russian authorities claimed that the OSCE task had been carried out in full, and by this implicitly stated that there was no need for continued involvement. Hawks in the Kremlin and the Russian military have also been blamed for doing everything they could to get revenge on the “Chechen bandits” that “defeated” them.

LABOUR OUT

On 17 October 1997 a coalition government took seat in Norway. The Bondevik I government consisted of the Christian democrats, the Centre Party and the Liberal Party. The government was headed by the Christian democrat and protestant priest Kjell Magne Bondevik. It claimed it was more concerned with human rights than its predecessor. The government even had a minister of human rights. Filling the position of foreign minister was Knut Vollebæk, a department official in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and advisor to former foreign minister Thorvald Stoltenberg through many years. Three days into his office as foreign minister, Vollebæk was leaving for an official visit to China, prearranged by the former political leadership.

Before the fresh foreign minister left for China, the Bondevik I government loudly announced to the Norwegian press corps that it was much concerned with human rights in China and this would be attended to during conversations with the Chinese leaders. Reminiscing the first days in office, Knut Vollebæk made perfectly clear that human rights’ activism was something the new government wanted to be seen as part of its trademark. The

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429 Evangelista 2002: 56.
430 Ibid: 56.
432 Skagestad 2008: 164.
433 Said 2007: 139.
434 «Menneskerettigheter teller mest» [Human rights counts the most], Aftenposten, 21.10.1997.
government’s representatives therefore deliberately highlighted it at all possible times the first period to establish it as a characteristic feature.\textsuperscript{336}

Did the high human rights-profile that the new government emphasized have implications for the policy towards the Russo-Chechen conflict? Recollecting the Bondevik I period, Vollebæk found it hard to see that the Bondevik I government he was part of led a more activist-policy in regards of the conflict, than did the antecedent Labour government.\textsuperscript{337}

As shown in foreign minister Godal’s account of Norwegian policy on human rights, China had been on top of the priority list for some time.\textsuperscript{338} It can thus be seen as a mere effort, or strategy, made by the Bondevik-government to distinguish the new heads of the Norwegian state as more concerned with human rights than the former Labour government, and simply enough, an effort to achieve goodwill on the domestic political scene.

Criticism was early on voiced against the Bondevik I government. Professor Daniel Heradstveit at the Norwegian Institute for Foreign Affairs showed little initial confidence in the fresh Norwegian Prime Minister. He expected that he would confirm the standard “silence” on difficult conflicts that did not engage the media and the general population. He posed the rhetorical question of why Prime Minister Bondevik had chosen to visit Burma and not Algeria. His point was to show that the new government was affected by popular concerns as to what was most important. He claimed that it was a matter of identification, the less the Western society could identify itself with the parts of the conflict, the less concerned were Western people and the less attention was received by the conflicts. Insurgents in Chechnya, Algeria and North Korea had no popular face to front their campaign as compared to Burma’s Aung San Suu Kui, the Palestinians’ Yasser Arafat and Tibet’s Dalai Lama.\textsuperscript{339}

Even though the members of the Bondevik I government had been critical to the Labour government while in opposition, positioned as government it would not make itself distinct with a tougher policy toward Russia than its predecessor. It can in the end be considered foremost to have served a domestic strategy to promote the government’s good will.

Compared to other Norwegian political parties the Norwegian Labour Party has had a unique position in Norwegian foreign politics and policy making. In the fifties they could

\textsuperscript{336} Phone-interview with Knut Vollebæk, 17.2.2010; «Populistisk utenrikspolitikk»[Populistic foreign policy], Bergens Tidende, 24.9.1997; «Norsk utenrikspolitikk i støpeskjeen»[Norwegian foreign policy in the making], Aftenposten, 29.9.1997
\textsuperscript{337} Phone-interview with Knut Vollebæk, 17.2.2010
\textsuperscript{338} Statement to the Parliament on Human Rights by Foreign Minister Bjørn Tore Godal 10.10.1996.
almost draw out the main lines of Norwegian foreign policy on their own party congresses.\textsuperscript{440} The Labour party has also had tight links with Norwegian political research institutions and has had the largest collection of foreign political experts within their party. However, the consensus tradition of Norwegian foreign policy is well established.\textsuperscript{441}

Thorvald Stoltenberg, Thorbjørn Jagland and Bjørn Tore Godal are three Norwegian politicians that are distinguished as foreign political veterans. All of them are from the Labour party. All of them were part of outlining Norwegian foreign policy in the nineties.\textsuperscript{442} Foreign minister Bjørn Tore Godal had served as chairman in the work with the “famous” Whitepaper, “development trends in the international society and their effects on Norwegian foreign policy”. He thus brought political continuity through his own person as foreign minister in the mid-1990s and as defence minister in 2000-2001.

However, it was not only Godal and the Labour party that brought continuity. Professor of history Terje Tvedt has described what he calls “elite circulation” between Norwegian foreign politicians and heads of the Norwegian NGOs such as Norwegian Red Cross, Norwegian People’s Aid and/or Norwegian Church Aid.\textsuperscript{443} “Over time, a practice has been developed, where a small number of individuals circulate between leading positions in the political sphere and the sphere of the NGOs, in addition, the same persons distributes the systems resources between the actors of this system, often without openness and parliamentary control.”\textsuperscript{444} An example is MFA State Secretary in this period, Jan Egeland, who later became head of the Norwegian Red Cross abroad, UN official, Secretary General of the International Red Cross and, today, Director of NUPI.

The strategy for Norwegian foreign policy in the nineties, and also the Barents Sea cooperation, as shown in the introduction, had been presented by Thorvald Stoltenberg. As mentioned above one of the main advisors to Stoltenberg through many years, was MFA official Knut Vollebæk, at this time foreign minister of the Bondevik I government. Stoltenberg had for example also been President of the Norwegian Red Cross.\textsuperscript{445}

An additional momentum in regard of how different the conduct of Norwegian foreign policy could be is that, the small nation Norway has little hard power to place behind its demands in most regards. Any alleged actual aspiration to do well is restrained by

\textsuperscript{440} Matlary and Halvorsen 2006: 199.
\textsuperscript{441} Riste 2005: 10.
\textsuperscript{442} Matlary and Halvorsen, 2006: 199.
\textsuperscript{443} Terje Tvedt, Utviklingshjelp, utenrikspolitikk og makt: Den norske modellen, Oslo 2009: 129-130.
\textsuperscript{444} Tvedt 2009: 129, [Over tid er det utviklet en praksis hvor et lite antall personer sirkulerer mellom ledende posisjoner i state og organisasjonsliv, samtidig som de samme personene, ofte uten åpenhet og parlamentarisk kontroll, fordeler systemets resurser mellom aktørene i systemet.]
\textsuperscript{445} Tvedt 2009: 132.
considerations of what state and situation Norway is facing. It follows that the ability to lead a substantially different or “better” foreign policy for the Bondevik I government was limited.

CORRODING CHECHEN CONDITIONS

The Khasavyurt Agreement and the following Moscow peace treaty can be seen as an uneasy truce.\textsuperscript{446} The two hopeful agreements signed by the Chechen president Maskhadov and Russian president Yeltsin held high promises that the two parts would never again raise arms against each other. The Russian army had more or less been unwillingly forced into the situation with poor equipment and it was defeated by a small insurgency army. Left on its own, Chechnya and the Maskhadov regime did not receive much support from the outside world, or in the words of James Hughes: “After the agreements of 1996 and 1997, Russia and the international system consigned Chechnya to a limbo status, effectively acknowledging Russia blockade.”\textsuperscript{447}

Neither of Russia, the UN, the EU nor OSCE gave the financial aid needed to improve the situation, build infrastructure, and pay wages and pensions. The aid organisations, as shown, had all retreated from the area because of the labile security situation.\textsuperscript{448} The Chechen republic was not disarmed. Maskhadov was unable to gather the fractions in the small republic in the period between the signing of peace treaty of July 1997 and the second Russian invasion in September 1999. His power was constantly challenged by former allies, such as Shamil Basaev. The small republic was in a political and infrastructural mess. Kidnapings were again thriving. Acts of terrorism were increasingly occurring outside Chechnya more often than before. The window of opportunity that had been created through external involvement, negotiations and the peace treaty was soon closed. The future did not bode well for Chechnya in a period of “peace” that eventually led to a second war.\textsuperscript{449}

\textsuperscript{446} Said 2007: 139.
\textsuperscript{447} Hughes 2007: 133.
\textsuperscript{448} Ibid: 133.
\textsuperscript{449} Said 2007: 139; Bowker 2005: 229.
Due to its OSCE chairmanship in 1999, the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs became strongly engaged with two ferocious conflicts of escalating nature, both on European soil: the Kosovo conflict and a second Russo-Chechen war. Norwegian foreign minister Knut Vollebæk assumed the turn take position as Chairperson-in-office of the OSCE on 1 January 1999. On his first day in office he commented that: “[t]he challenge will be Kosovo, and both I personally, and the OSCE as organization, will be judged by what happens in Kosovo.” Little could Vollebæk know that an additional conflict would concern him and the OSCE just as much in the upcoming fall. Russia invaded Chechnya a second time in September 1999. The second Russo-Chechen war can in many ways be seen as the test of how Norway balanced the chairmanship function with the close alignment to the USA, as Russia’s neighbour, as a state outside the EU and a high profile as human rights advocate. How did the OSCE obligation affected Norway’s “policy” towards the Russo-Chechen conflict, and why?

NORWAY AND THE OSCE CHAIRMANSHIP

Already in 1998 when Norway, under foreign minister Vollebæk, entered the OSCE Chairmanship troika, the foreign minister had clear ambitions as to what he wanted to promote and achieve as Chairman-in-office. The OSCE troika consists of the Chairperson-in-Office assisted by the previous and succeeding chairperson. This structure ensures continuity of the organization’s activity. In 1999 the troika consisted of Poland, Austria and Norway. Vollebæk explicated four areas that were to guide his period. First, he wanted to promote consensus among the 54 member states. “One criterion for the success of Norway’s chairmanship will be whether it has the ability to balance the need for quick action against the need to find broadly based solutions.” Second, he wanted to enhance the “moral authority of the OSCE as a community of values”. A third primary aim was to define OSCE’s role in

450 «Vollebæk: Alarmerende signal fra Kosovo» [Alarming signals from Kosovo], NTB, 1.1.1999.
453 http://www.osce.org/about/13518.html (13.5.2010)
454 «Fortsatt OSSE-press mot Russland» [Continued OSCE pressure against Russia], NTB, 1.1.1999; In 1998 the troika consisted of Denmark, Poland and Norway, and in 2000 it consisted of Norway, Austria and Romania.
456 Ibid: 5.
conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation. His fourth area of priority was to enhance the operational capabilities of the organization. He considered the leadership task to be a challenge for Norway, but not a task too large. He ended his speech by saying that it was in Norway’s interest to “take on responsibility and play a role in resolving burning issues in today’s Europe.”

Vollebæk’s State Secretary at the time, Janne Haaland Matlary, considered it the largest task Norway had ever had. The OSCE area consisted, after all, of 55 nations from “Vladivostok to Vancouver”. With main focus on human rights she continued by stating why it was important for Norway to engage, but also with what would be Norway’s contribution as leaders of the organization:

First, she stated that Norway was obliged to be concerned with human rights violations, no matter where these might occur. Second, Norway was through the OSCE member of the same security and cooperation organization as nascent democracies in Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia, and also bound by the same standards for human rights and democracy. She asserted that stability and peaceful development in the East had implications for European security and, thus, Norwegian security. The OSCE’s struggle for human rights had been the main driving force since the beginning of the CSCE in 1975, she proceeded.

Norway was going to concentrate its efforts as chairman on the long term process of solving internal conflicts; increase Norwegian participation in the OSCE missions; and work to see that human rights and democracy received higher priority. In Central Asia, especially Caucasus, she perceived it of greatest importance to build local networks of non-governmental representatives that could work for what she called legitimate community interests. Norway would reinforce the OSCE office for democratic institutions and human rights (ODIHR). There was still a need for meetings for evaluating the respective countries compliance with the OSCE-commitments. This was where Norway would speak out and point out major violations. In spite of Vollebæk’s enormous energy and efforts put into the organization, the Norwegian OSCE period did not exactly, as will be shown below, see the fulfillment of Vollebæk and Matlary’s goals.

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460 Ibid.
461 Ibid.
462 Janne Haaland Matlary, «Norsk politikk i OSSE» [Norwegian Policy in the OSCE], Dagbladet, 2.2.1998.
Norway did engage in solving internal conflicts. In March 1999 the Bondevik government supported NATO’s decision to bomb Serbian forces in Kosovo. The situation in Kosovo early January 1999 had not promised peace. The truce between the Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic’s Serbs and the Kosovo-Albanian insurgents who had committed themselves to outright independence, were frequently broken. Massive human rights violations were perpetrated by both sides and it seemed as if Serbian leader Milosevic was carrying out ethnic cleansing in the region.\(^{463}\) The OSCE mission in Kosovo was not successful. Chairperson Vollebæk had to withdraw the OSCE observers even before all of them were in place.\(^{464}\) Violence and massacres escalated after the observers left.\(^{465}\) NATO threatened to bomb Serbian targets if a peace agreement could not be reached.

Norway, usually averse to sanctions if it is not founded in UN legislation, supported the NATO bombing. The relationship between Russia, who sympathized with Serbia, and the NATO members became strained. Several other countries, Sweden for instance, and other members of the UN, were against the “humanitarian bombing”. They did not see the legitimacy of the arguments for a humanitarian intervention. Norwegian Prime Minister Bondevik responded to the Swedish sceptic position by saying that NATO had to go through with the bombing or else it would have been an empty threat that would weaken NATO’s legitimacy.\(^{466}\) In the UN Security Council two permanent members, China and Russia, dealt with the same challenges that were taking place in the former Yugoslavia. Both of the great powers had areas that wanted to achieve secession and sovereignty. In China several provinces wanted independence, whilst Russia was struggling with Chechen aspirations, amongst others. To China and Russia it was thus an unpopular decision to support independence for Kosovo, thus legitimizing a secessionist movement that was similar to the ones China and Russia had within their borders. The controversial NATO bombing of Serbian targets nonetheless commenced on 25 March.\(^{467}\)

In a press conference the Norwegian Prime Minister Bondevik, foreign minister Vollebæk and defense minister Eldbjørg Løwer defended NATO and Norway’s decision.\(^{468}\) Bondevik refuted that Norway was at war because, he argued, Norway had not declared war

\(^{466}\) «Norge er i krig. Bondevik i natt: Tungt ansvar»[Norway at war, Bondevik: Heavy responsibility], *Dagbladet*, 25.3.1999.
\(^{468}\) Ibid.
against another state. He preferred to call it participation in a limited military operation. Bondevik did not, when requested, define the difference between limited military action and war. The Norwegian government insisted that it was a humanitarian intervention. The Prime Minister asked rhetorically what the alternative was, and answered that it would have been to let Milosevic continue the severe violence against the Kosovo-Albanians. The NATO operation was not defined by a time limit, but the prime minister hoped it would be over in the shortest possible time. The two main purposes were to reduce the Serbian military capabilities and “make Milosevic think things through and decide to sit down by the negotiation table.”

Even though, according to Bondevik, it was: “with heavy-heart that we send Norwegian forces into battle”, Norway chose to support NATO and by this showed strong allegiance towards USA.

The NATO allegiance seemed stronger than Norway’s allegiance towards the UN. In addition to Norway’s support of a controversial intervention, Vollebæk’s double-role was considered unfortunate by Russia and others. The question posed was how the OSCE could function as a conflict-preventive organization when the chairmanship, Norway, was members of NATO. Vollebæk himself did not deem it to be a problem to be in official capacity as both. Vollebæk had in 1998 stated that he considered it a crucial advantage that Norway at the same time as the OSCE engagement was a committed member of NATO and familiar with the operating procedures of the Alliance, because NATO was majorly involved in the peace efforts in former Yugoslavia.

**BANDS OF BANDITS AND RUSSIAN HAWKS**

Concurrently in Chechnya, disorder thrived. Without external economic or political help, President Maskhadov was locked in an unpleasant and seemingly hopeless position. He could not deliver relief to his citizens, whose living conditions were little improved. In addition, he did not manage to control the warlords that had fought besides him during the first Russo-Chechen war. It provided extremist groups led by Shamil Basaev and others with a chance to pursue their own economic and political agenda. Kidnapping, robbery and criminal

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469 [- Jeg vil reservere meg mot ordet krig. Vi er med i en begrenset militær aksjon, sa Bondevik.] «Norge er i krig, Bondevik i natt: Tungt ansvar», Dagbladet, 25.3.1999
470 Ibid.
471 Ibid.
exploitation thrived and concerned not only the civilians in Chechnya, but also the population in the surrounding republics.\textsuperscript{474}

Every once in a while Russian officials were sent as special envoys to Chechnya. On several occasions, however, a local warlord managed to kidnap them. Needless to say, this had little reconciliatory effect on the Kremlin. When the Russian General Gennadij Sjipigun was kidnapped from the airport after talks with President Maskhadov in March 1999, Sergej Stepasjin, then Interior Minister, reportedly threw a fit and threatened Chechnya with a new war.\textsuperscript{475} It was the second Russian envoy this had happened to in a short period of time. Valentin Vlasov, Yeltsin’s special envoy to Chechnya, had been detained and kept as prisoner in Chechnya from May to December 1998, thoroughly marked by it when returned.\textsuperscript{476}

The same Vlasov turned up at the Norwegian embassy to Moscow in late January 1999 to inform the OSCE mission group about the situation in Chechnya. Odd Gunnar Skagestad, the Norwegian leader of the mission had been in Moscow for about a week, patiently waiting for the situation in the republic to improve, so that he could head into Grozny. The OSCE mission group had been forced to leave its office in Grozny in 1998, when the security situation became intolerable. With his suitcases ready the only thing holding him and his six delegates back was lack of carte blanche from Russian authorities due to deteriorating security situation in the republic.\textsuperscript{477} According to Skagestad Russian authorities would not provide security for the OSCE staff in Grozny, it is unclear whether this was due to incapability or unwillingness to do so.\textsuperscript{478}

Prior to a meeting with Foreign Minister Vollebæk March 1999, Primakov, Prime Minister since August 1998, calmed the “war-talk” when he told journalists that he “was not going to be dragged off into a war adventure in Chechnya”.\textsuperscript{479} President Yeltsin, allegedly, from his hospital bed, had given Primakov warrant to “solve” the crisis in Chechnya.\textsuperscript{480} Several commentators saw this as an attempt by Yeltsin to get rid of Primakov by giving him an impossible task. Primakov did not swallow the bait. General Leontij Kuznetsov, leader of the Moscow military district, affirmed this policy when he made clear that the Russian Army

\textsuperscript{474} Hughes 2007: 96.  
\textsuperscript{475} «Russland vil ikke ha noen ny krig i Tsjetsjenia» [Russia does not want a new war in Chechnya], \textit{Aftenposten}, 12.3.1999; Hughes 2007: 96.  
\textsuperscript{476} «Farlig oppdrag for norsk OSSE utsending» [Dangerous mission for Norwegian OSSE delegate], \textit{Aftenposten}, 29.1.1999.  
\textsuperscript{477} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{478} Conversation with Odd Gunnar Skagestad, 15.4.2010.  
\textsuperscript{479} «Russland vil ikke ha noen ny krig i Tsjetsjenia» [Russia does not want a new war in Chechnya], \textit{Aftenposten}, 12.3.1999.  
\textsuperscript{480} Ibid.
did not want a new war in Chechnya.\footnote{Ibid.} It has since been claimed by central Russian decision makers such as former Prime Minister Sergej Stepasjin, that the invasion of Chechnya had been carefully planned already in March 1999.\footnote{«Tsjetsjenia-krigen nøye planlagt» [Chechen War carefully planned], Aftenposten, 22.1.2000.}

President Maskhadov reportedly made solid efforts, unfortunately in vain, to retrieve general Sjipigun, who later turned up dead. No talks on Chechnya’s final status were commenced, although Maskhadov tried to initiate this. It is in addition claimed that military views in Russia that Chechnya was “unfinished business” did not improve the situation.\footnote{Matthew Evangelista, \textit{The Chechen Wars: Will Russia Go the Way of the Soviet Union?}, Washington D.C. 2002: 73.} A new war might not only restore morale, but also replenish military power, which had been significantly depleted by the 1994-96 war and further run down by budget cuts in its aftermath.\footnote{Hughes 2007: 108.}

The situation was described by both sides with the word \textit{tupik}, dead-end.\footnote{Hughes 2007: 97.} As the relations between federal authorities and Chechnya were maxing out, a new kid in town appeared, and along with a couple of major incidents described below, tipped the situation in favor of a second Russian invasion.

**VLADIMIR PUTIN’S RISE TO POWER: A GREY BOLT FROM THE BLUE**

Regardless of motives and justifications, the second Russo-Chechen war had “a remarkable impact on the career of Vladimir Putin”.\footnote{\footnote{Said 2007: 141.} The former KGB operative was plucked from obscurity to become President Yeltsin’s successor. It is suggested by many that Putin’s legitimacy was built entirely on the war.\footnote{Ibid: 141.} When Basaev and his Saudi ally al-Khattab invaded the Botlikh highland area of Dagestan in early August 1999, the Kremlin was offered a legitimate reason to intervene militarily against Chechnya.\footnote{Hughes 2007: 105.}

Also, seemingly as a result of the Basaev-invasion, Sergej Stepasjin, who had taken over the Prime Minister post from Primakov in May 1999, and associated with the failure of the first war, was sacked and replaced by Putin, Yeltsin’s hand-picked successor. Yeltsin’s government had been a revolving door the last years.\footnote{«Russland’s mange regjeringsskifter» [Russia’s many regime changes], \textit{NTB}, 9.8.1999.} Putin, also called “the grey eminence”, had a low public profile in Russia, and both Putin and Yeltsin’s ratings on the
opinion polls, conducted in August 1999, were extremely low. The Yeltsin “family” had six months to build Putin’s authority before the Presidential elections.\footnote{Hughes 2007: 108.}

Vollebæk visited the Kremlin on 7 September 1999. He was requested to support, or at least display understanding of, the Russian military interventions against what the Russian foreign minister, Igor Ivanov, called Islamist separatists in Dagestan, the mountainous neighbor republic to Chechnya. Ivanov specified that the conflict was an internal Russian affair.\footnote{«Russlands ba Vollebæk om støtte i Dagestan» [Russia asks Vollebæk for support in Dagestan], \textit{NTB}, 7.9.1999.} Vollebæk visited both as Norwegian foreign minister and, perhaps more important to Ivanov, chairperson-in-office of the OSCE. Ivanov, according to Vollebæk, was seeking OSCE’s unambiguous condemnation of the Islamist guerrilla. Ivanov’s request was not immediately met by the chairperson, but Vollebæk did express his concern over the situation. He was careful to add that the Russian advance to “set things straight” in the region, had to be done by reasonable measures and avoid unnecessary use of force.\footnote{«Den snikende tragedien i Kaukasus»[Lurking tragedy in the Caucasus], \textit{Bergens Tidende}, 11.9.1999.} Vollebæk linked the situation to Chechnya, when he told the journalist that OSCE had not been asked to contribute to solve the armed situation in the region. The Islamist militants in Dagestan were closely knit with the insurgency in Chechnya, where the OSCE actually had a mandate, but could not perform its task due to the security situation.\footnote{«Russlands ba Vollebæk om støtte i Dagestan», \textit{NTB}, 7.9.1999.}

Things came to a head, and on 5 September 1999 Russian military forces attacked Chechnya’s Dagestan border with rockets and artillery. Before the Chechen attacks and the Russian assault had settled, a series of bombs went off in apartment blocks in Moscow, Volgodonsk and the Dagestani town of Buynaks. It has never been made clear who was behind the terrorist actions, but the blame was placed on Chechen insurgents.\footnote{Hughes, 2007: 110.} The apartment bombings fitted into the “pattern” of Chechen terrorism at Budennovsk and Pervomayskoye, although both Basaev and Maskhadov ardently denied any involvement. Basaev had always taken personal responsibility for his operations.\footnote{Ibid: 110.} Suspicion of the Russian Federal Intelligence Bureau (FSB) involvement was raised when federal security forces were “caught with their pants down” planting explosives in the basement of an apartment block in the Russian city Ryazan. It was later excused by the government as a counter-terrorist exercise.\footnote{Ibid: 110.}

Almost 300 civilians were killed and molested in the apartment building attacks and fear spread throughout the federation. The tragic incidents roused support for a military
intervention across the Russian Federation and through the layers of mass media and the public. Putin could portray the situation as a “counter-terrorist” operation.⁴⁹⁷

A SECOND RUSSIAN INVASION OF CHECHNYA

On 1 October, Russian federal forces invaded Chechnya and with overwhelming use of military power. 80,000 Russian troops were used against an estimated 3000 rebels.⁴⁹⁸ Russia’s leading human rights activist and former human rights commissioner under Yeltsin, Sergei Kovaljov was quoted in response to the second Russian invasion saying: “We borrow NATO’s methodology while acting on the basis of Milosevic’s ideology.”⁴⁹⁹ According to Senior Researcher at the International Peace research Institute, Oslo (PRIO), Pavel Baev, the massive grouping assembled moved slowly into Chechnya behind a barrage of artillery fire. Every point of resistance on the road towards Grozny was smashed by concentrated firepower, and the capital itself was thoroughly and systematically destroyed rather than stormed.⁵⁰⁰ “Nobody expected a low-casualty ‘peacemaking’ operation, there were few concerns about the ‘collateral damage’ and there was not much pressure to achieve a quick victory.”⁵⁰¹ The next two years the federal forces deployed step by step into the mountainous parts, taking control of towns and villages. Consolidating territorial control took a heavy toll. Nevertheless, from 2001 the troops were settled into fortified garrisons leaving them only for raids into the mountains or “cleansing”, Zakhista, of towns and villages.⁵⁰²

REACTIONS TO THE RUSSIAN INVASION

Foreign minister Vollebæk stated to inquiring journalists that he was seriously worried about the development in Chechnya. At the time of the invasion he was on a tour of the Central Asian states, encouraging more cooperation between them to prevent further deterioration in regional security. The OSCE had offered the Kremlin assistance to improve the situation in the Northern Caucasus, but it would not come to OSCE interference without invitation from Russia, he added. Norway’s ambassador to Moscow, Per Tresselt expressed concern on behalf of the OSCE Troika. The Troika, now consisting of Austria and Poland in addition to Norway, was primarily worried about the humanitarian situation. About 100,000 refugees

⁴⁹⁷ Hughes, 2007: 110.
⁴⁹⁹ Ibid: 118.
⁵⁰¹ Ibid: 118.
⁵⁰² Ibid: 119.
were on the move in the region, and it was a huge destabilizing factor. The OSCE had made efforts to be present in Chechnya, offered its services and at the same time recognized Russia’s territorial integrity and made a point of condemning terrorism.503

The Norwegian chairman was interviewed about the Russian invasion and said that the only effort the OSCE could attempt at that time, was to keep in touch with the various groups involved in the conflict. Although Vollebæk was considerate of the aversion to maintain dialogue with certain protagonists in conflicts like this, he referred to the experience of how important it was to achieve dialogue with everyone early on, in any conflict. His hope was that the Kremlin would initiate dialogue with the groups in Chechnya, and negotiate forth a peaceful solution.504

Vollebæk was asked if OSCE would have handled the situation different or been more “persuasive” if it had been a smaller state than Russia that was on the warpath. Vollebæk answered diplomatically that the OSCE was concerned with the situation in all the member countries and that the organization was built on consensus. It could not impose decisions on a member state. That was why the Troika had inquired the Kremlin on the matter and tried to evoke dialogue. He referred to the situation in Chechnya as a tragedy, and that OSCE in the end could only relate to Russian authorities and hope that the Organization could be helpful in the situation.505 The situation in Chechnya quickly challenged all four of Vollebæk’s explicated goals. The “ability to balance the need for quick action against the need to find broadly based solutions” seemed to come short, as Russia did not want any external involvement. Also, the “moral authority of the OSCE as a community of values”, that Vollebæk had wanted to enhance, seemed to be struggling to exist at all. Some would say it had received a seriously blow already in February 1999 when OSCE had to withdraw all its personnel and its leader, Vollebæk, supported the controversial bombing of Kosovo.

In 1998, Vollebæk’s State Secretary Matlary had found the OSCE standards for human rights to be satisfying and regarded the main challenge primarily to be to make sure that the member nations lived up to expectations. She continued by stating that the new political epoch made it possible to see that the standards were implemented through solid cooperation. In practice, she said, this meant that the OSCE could not only criticize human rights violation at OSCE meetings, but actually be present, and enforce practical action, in the

503 “Vollebæk vil ikke gripe inn uten Kremls samtykke” [Vollebæk will not interfere without Kremlin’s approval], Aftenposten, 3.10.1999.
505 Ibid.
area of concern.\textsuperscript{506} Obviously, as seen above, OSCE in the new epoch was not distinctively more effective than it had been before Matlary’s comment. The OSCE was not even \textit{allowed} to be present in the areas where it was needed the most.

Chris Hunter, senior researcher at the Centre for Peacemaking and Community Development (CPCD), in Moscow, claimed that the West was being too mild in its reactions to the Russian invasion of Chechnya at a conference at the PRIO in Oslo. He pointed out that Russia’s “internal conflict” violated commitments in the Council of Europe, and OSCE, and therefore should not be perceived as internal. Ingvard Havnen, Vollebæk’s spokesman, discarded Hunter’s criticism on behalf of Norway by claiming that there had not been lack of criticism from Norway’s government or the OSCE. He reminded Hunter that Russia had rejected all form for external assistance to solve the conflict and added to it that Russia was not the only perpetrator of violent escalation in the conflict.\textsuperscript{507} Hunter sparred that the surrounding world and the western governments should not accept that the Chechen civilians became the victims subjected to a second brutal war, no matter who the main perpetrators were. The conflict had to be solved politically, argued Hunter. The Russian military invasion would not end terrorism, it would only increase and radicalize the groups involved.\textsuperscript{508} Hunter claimed that it was possible to stall Kremlin’s military actions by economical sanctions, i.e. holding back funds from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), for instance.\textsuperscript{509}

Nonetheless, James Hughes argues, in his thorough study of the Russo-Chechen conflict, that “the leading European powers consistently deflected any attempt to \textit{seriously} sanction Russia for its policy in Chechnya, even at the height of the military campaign in late 1999”.\textsuperscript{510} Western media portrayed the second Russian invasion as a pretext for Putin to push himself as the successor of Yeltsin as Russian president, and this time the rhetoric from official Western circles sounded less supportive. While the official position hardly changed in practice, there was a greater willingness among Western leaders to criticize the war in public. The West still acknowledged Russia’s right to defend its territorial integrity, but was more open in its concern over proportionality.\textsuperscript{511}

However, “European leaders interested in improving their relations with Putin and Russia, and securing economic opportunities, frequently expressed their solidarity with Putin

\textsuperscript{507} «Russland får fritt spillerom»[Russia is given free reins ], \textit{Aftenposten}, 3.10.1999.
\textsuperscript{508} «Russland får fritt spillerom», \textit{Aftenposten}, 3.10.1999.
\textsuperscript{509} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{510} Hughes 2007: 131.
\textsuperscript{511} Bowker 2005: 231.
in his struggle against “terrorism” even before 9/11.”\textsuperscript{512} British Prime Minister Tony Blair exclaimed that they had made clear their concerns over Chechnya and any question of human rights abuses there, “though it is important to realize that Chechnya is not Kosovo… the Russians have been subjected to really severe terrorist attacks.”\textsuperscript{513} Tony Blair had a point: Chechnya was not Kosovo. However, the difference was not only the terrorist issue, but also that massive Russia was not small Serbia. Not only was Russia a large power, but it had several possibilities to influence control on international decision-making.

In regards of Kosovo Russia were part of the Contact Group along with the United States, United Kingdom, France, Italy and Germany. They were also part of the OSCE, which despite a membership of 50 nations, still acted on a consensus principle. Beyond this, Russia enjoyed veto powers in the UN Security Council.\textsuperscript{514} There existed a difference between Western Europe and the former Soviet-sphere nations in Eastern Europe. The latter were much more suspicious towards Russia and more sympathetic to the Chechen cause than the West due to the fact that Eastern European leaders in many cases had first hand knowledge of Russian control and oppression.\textsuperscript{515}

Compared to the first war there was also some difference as to how Russian leaders received the Western criticism. In the period of the first war Yeltsin made efforts to establish a Western inspired democratic state and society. The effort of trying to make Russia “ashamed” of its conduct in Chechnya by giving them “unwanted” attention may have been effective in the first period. Norwegian diplomats and Foreign Minister Godal also “felt” that this approach had an effect on the Russian decision makers and that a common understanding existed.\textsuperscript{516}

However, when Norway in March 1999 agreed to join forces with other NATO members in the bombing of Kosovo it opened for new problematic questions. When defending Norway’s participation to the Norwegian people, the Norwegian government took part in a western dictate of what was legitimate international conduct in a conflict situation. Bondevik used his carefully chosen words to legitimate Norway’s participation. As the Western nations legitimized an intervention by bombing another European power, Russia could use the same language and the same strategy in what the Kremlin considered an internal affair. In addition, the attempt to make Russia ashamed of its own conduct did not have the

\textsuperscript{512} Hughes 2007: 131.
\textsuperscript{513} Ibid: 132.
\textsuperscript{514} Weller 1999:
\textsuperscript{515} Hughes 2007: 132.
\textsuperscript{516} Interview with Bjørn Tore Godal, 9.12.2009
same effect on Russia after the Kosovo bombing as it had seemingly had had before. When Putin took over the leadership, Western criticism of Russia in Chechnya, in Abkhazia and North Ossetia was increasingly met by a deaf ear.

As Vollebæk stated, the OSCE would await acceptance from the Kremlin to become involved in the Russo-Chechen conflict. The ambitious Norwegian chairman’s hands were helplessly tied. When asked years later if Norway considered sanctions against Russia, Vollebæk answered that Norway usually prefers sanctions to go through the UN system.\(^{517}\) Vollebæk and the Norwegian government supported military sanctions against Serbia as a last resort to protect Kosovo-Albanians lives and stop the massive human rights violations against civilians. According to Vollebæk the NATO bombing of Serbian targets had support in UN Security Council resolutions, such as resolution no. 1199 of 23 September 1998, which stated that the situation in the Former Yugoslavia posed a threat to international peace and security. The decision and its resonance were - and still are - seen by many internationally as highly controversial.\(^{518}\) As for the situation in Chechnya, sanctions against Russia had never been seriously considered, according to Vollebæk:

> Neither Norway nor other countries has so far considered the use of sanctions as an appropriate means to pressurize Russian authorities. The introduction of sanctions would in my opinion lead to further isolation of Russia and make the efforts to establish political dialogue between the [conflicting] parts more difficult. Nevertheless, the government follows the development closely.\(^{519}\)

Parliament member Ingvald Godal (Conservative) was posing the above stated questions to Vollebæk during the Parliament’s *Oral Question Hour*, and did not seem quite satisfied with Vollebæk’s answers. Ingvald Godal inquired again, with the sanctions against Serbia and Milosevic in mind, how come Russia was not facing any such consequences, “not even economical sanctions.”\(^{520}\) Vollebæk replied that “I have to say that what took place in Kosovo was terrible and a striking violation of everything we understand by human worth.” Vollebæk’s answer seems suggests that Vollebæk considered what was taking place in Kosovo *exceptionally* bad and worse than what was occurring in Chechnya, as he uses this as argumentation for the moral side of the intervention argument. However, Vollebæk added:

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\(^{517}\) Phone Interview with Knut Vollebæk, 17.2.2010


\(^{520}\) Ibid.
“We have not left Russia alone. We constantly pressurize Russia, and my hope is that this pressure and the dialogue will be rewarding.”

Ingvald Godal claimed that there existed several economical measures that could have been expedient. He thought that if the Russians were allowed to get away with their conduct in Chechnya time after time, the threshold would become lower to intervene in additional areas. He claimed that if the Russians had met serious sanctions and non-acceptance during the first war in 1994-96, he believed that the chances of re-engaged Russian warfare would have been less. Godal also remarked that Norway had a tendency to act morally towards problems far away, but had a “sad tradition” of groveling at the Russian’s feet. He hoped that if the Council of Europe decided to suspend Russia, Norway would support it.

If measures were to have an effect, Vollebæk believed that the international community had to agree on them, and added that Norway had tried to affect such measures in various contexts where this was natural. At the same time Vollebæk wanted to remind the assembly that, sanctions and boycotts were last resort of international measures. “We wish to achieve a breakthrough for our view through dialogue of mutual efforts.” It was Vollebæk’s hope that it would not be necessary to follow the same procedures towards Russia as towards Serbia. Why the discrepancy of military sanctions in Kosovo, and none-at-all in Chechnya?

KOSOVO AND CHECHNYA – DIFFERENCES IN SEARCH OF AN EXPLANATION

It is possible to compare the secessionist situations in Chechnya and Kosovo, although many would not agree that it would be legitimate to compare the two. The latter could, for instance, argue that there waste historical differences and also refer to the acts of terrorism in Russia. Nonetheless, they were both secessionist conflicts occurring simultaneously. The Kosovo authorities called for secession from Serbia, as did the Chechen leaders from Russia. The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia consistently rejected any international interest in the affairs of Kosovo, which it considered an entirely domestic matter, much like the Russian stand towards the Chechen insurgency. The two conflicts also shared the fate of extreme brutality perpetrated against the civilian population. However, Kosovo received significantly more attention than Chechnya also in Norway, in mass media and official reactions.

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521 Parliament’s Oral Question Hour, Question 4, 19.1.2000
522 Ibid.
523 Ibid.
524 The comparative subchapter is only provided to shed some light on Western approach to Chechnya, and will not provide what is in reality a highly technical study of internal law, secessionist movements, etc.
525 Weller 1999.
526 See appendix II, Analysis of newspaper articles on Kosovo and Chechnya.
these things in mind a small discussion, on what many views as an inconsistency of Western
and in this regard Norwegian response is needed.

Professor Hughes claims that “the international approach to the secession of Chechnya
has an obvious comparison with that of Chechnya.” 527 As the EU and the USA according to
Hughes drove the UN toward recognizing Kosovo’s sovereignty, with or without Serbia’s
agreement, it became a clear double-standard compared with Western approach to
Chechnya’s secession. In the latter case there was absence of both international moral and
material support, but also an ever-present recognition of the Chechen conflict as an internal
Russian matter. 528 In the words of Hughes “it suggests that realpolitik trumped idealpolitik as
the U.S. and the EU refused to put international cooperation and lucrative trade at risk by
challenging Russia over Chechnya.” 529

Another side to a Chechnya-Kosovo comparative is that during the 1990s the Western
attitude towards humanitarian operations changed. The perception of the efficacy of
“humanitarian interventions” rose with what was seen as an effective intervention by NATO,
following the Srebrenica massacre in 1995, to force the belligerent groups in former
Yugoslavia to sign the Dayton treaty. 530 This had consequences for the perception of the
conflict between Russia and Chechnya:

European public opinion had sided with the “victims” – Croats, Muslims and Albanians in
Kosovo for whom independence and self-determination seemed the solution. These views of
“right” and “wrong” were by analogy projected on to Russia and Chechnya. It seemed easy
to from a distance to make judgements regarding the conflict. An equally simple solution
would be the participation of international forces in settling the problems of the Caucasus. 531

Public opinion and human rights organization played a large part in this. The latter, while
informing the world about the mass violations of human rights in a region, simultaneously
warned states and organizations against hasty action that could infringe norms and procedures
established by international law. 532 Human rights expert Asbjørn Eide’s comments in 1995
represented this point of view. 533 Norwegian NGOs did however increasingly condemn the
“mild” response/reaction towards Russia. 534

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528 Ibid: 196.
529 Ibid: 196.
530 Cherkasov and Grushkin 2005: 133.
531 Ibid: 133.
532 Ibid: 133.
533 See chapter 3, page 54-55.
534 See chapter 6, the self-imposed silence must cease.
It is feasible to say that the NATO decision to bomb Serbian targets in Kosovo undermined international organizations such as the EU, the OSCE and not least the so-called corner stone of Norwegian foreign policy, the UN. NATO had no UN mandate to proceed with the attacks, however NATO’s general secretary Javier Solana argued that it was a “moral duty” to intervene in Kosovo.\textsuperscript{535}

A central Norwegian diplomat claimed that Milosevic was planning or already perpetrating genocide in the Kosovo-Albanians and that was not what the Russians “had in mind” for the Chechens. Further, the Western governments felt that they could not stand on the sideline and watch a new massacre occur, such as the one in Sbreniça where Serbian forces killed 8000 Bosnian men without interference. It seems as if the general view was that the overall situation in Kosovo was “humanitarianly” speaking worse than what was taking place in Chechnya. However, the diplomat added that if NATO had intervened in Chechnya the way they did in Kosovo, it could ultimately triggered a Third World War.\textsuperscript{536}

OSLO SUMMIT MEETING, 1-2 NOVEMBER 1999

Although a pressing issue, Kosovo and Chechnya was not the only conflicts concerning the Western leaders in 1999. A Middle East Summit was taking in place in Oslo early November 1999. Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin attended the Oslo Middle East Summit Meeting along with USA’s President Bill Clinton, Israel’s Prime Minister Ehud Barak, and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat. Putin came instead of the, literally, grand old man Yeltsin, and it was an opportunity for Norway to establish contact with what was potentially Russia’s new leader. Political commentators claimed that the relations between the West and Russia were warming up again after the icy front caused by the NATO bombing.\textsuperscript{537}

Chechnya was on all diplomatic lips during the Middle East Summit. Prime Minister Bondevik discussed the situation under bilateral talks with Clinton, with Finnish President Martti Ahtisaari and Javier Solana, Head Coordinator of a united EU Defense and Security policy. Bondevik stated what was quite usual when referring to the Russo-Chechen conflict: “Chechnya is a difficult matter, and we have to respect Russia’s integrity as a nation. But we


\textsuperscript{536} Informant wanted to remain anonymous, however, the person is on the list of interviews.

\textsuperscript{537} «Lysning mot øst» [Brightening in the East], VG, 31.10.1999.
cannot accept the Russian Army’s conduct in the small republic.”\textsuperscript{538} Solana stated that they could not avoid commenting “when Russia acts the way they do in the Caucasus.”\textsuperscript{539}

Putin and Bondevik held a one hour long bilateral talk. Prime Minister Putin reportedly said that “Russia would not negotiate with terrorists”, but he would try to make it easier for international organizations to help the civilians.\textsuperscript{540} Putin did his best, according to Bondevik, to “explain” what was “really” taking place in Chechnya. Bondevik claimed he did not “buy” the Russian version altogether, but added that “Norway recognizes Russian territorial integrity”.\textsuperscript{541} Bondevik continued by saying that the government was very worried about the consequences for the civilian population in the midst of the military operation in Chechnya. There is an utmost serious refugee problem in the region, he said, and ended his comments by saying that if the Russian warfare continues on the same path, it could become a burden on Russian relations with Norway and other countries.\textsuperscript{542}

Bondevik had told Putin that the conflict needed to be solved politically, and the Russian prime minister reportedly agreed. Nevertheless, he repeated that Russia would not compromise with terrorists. The Russian army was busy removing “uninvited guests”, as the Russian Prime Minister called it, and liberating the Chechen population from terrorists. His final comment to Bondevik was that he was glad to have reached an understanding about terrorism’s threat against humanity through their conversation.\textsuperscript{543}

During the Russo-Norwegian press conference, good relations between the two nations were confirmed by both, and Putin said he wanted to make sure that Russo-Norwegian trade was further developed in the near future. The two prime ministers were both worried about the nuclear waste in the high north. The press conference also highlighted the fact that Russia was violating the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty. Putin himself wrote a declaration that due to the war in Chechnya, Russia had violated this agreement by having too many tanks, artillery guns, and other arms in an operative state. These would be withdrawn and destroyed as soon as Russia had neutralized opposition and controlled Chechnya. The declaration stated that Russia wanted to ensure as much openness and transparency as possibly.\textsuperscript{544}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{538} «Ahtisaari vil ikke love Norge forhandlingshjelp» [Ahtisaari will not promise Norway help in negotiations], \textit{NTB}, 2.11.1999.
\item \textsuperscript{539} «Ahtisaari vil ikke love Norge forhandlingshjelp» [Ahtisaari will not promise Norway help in negotiations], \textit{NTB}, 2.11.1999.
\item \textsuperscript{540} «Putin utelukker kompromiss med ”terrorister”» [Putin no compromise with ”terrorist”], \textit{NTB}, 1.11.1999.
\item \textsuperscript{541} «Putin utelukker kompromiss med ”terrorister”», \textit{NTB}, 1.11.1999.
\item \textsuperscript{542} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{543} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{544} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
One of four promised humanitarian corridors for Chechen civilians were held open a few hours concurrently with the Russo-Norwegian talks in Oslo. As Russian soldiers sealed it off again thousands of people waiting to leave the republic were told to come back another day. Only two carloads of refugees had been able to get through. The week before, Russia had closed the border for the first time. The act caused condemnation from a large variety of actors, from the president of the neighbouring Ingushetia Ruslan Aushev, to the UN and various other international organizations.545

On 2 November 1999 Russian authorities gave their clearance to send an OSCE mission led by Norway to survey the situation. The Chechen President, Maskhadov, in this period, reportedly sent letters to several OSCE state leaders, desperately seeking external mediation assistance.546

ISTANBUL OSCE SUMMIT MEETING, STILL NOVEMBER 1999

Chechnya became the main topic at the Istanbul Summit Meeting 18-19 November, and it led to a new icy front between the Western governments and Russia. Almost three weeks had passed since Vollebæk and the OSCE was promised entrance by Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov to survey the situation in Chechnya, but no permission was obtained from the Kremlin.547

During a press conference in Oslo 15 November, Vollebæk demanded that the Russians needed to come forth with a time schedule for withdrawal of Russian forces in Chechnya. He repeated the request to let the OSCE mission into northern parts of Chechnya and establish an OSCE office in Ingushetia.548

The past year had turned out to be a frustrating year for Vollebæk, although he claims he would have gone through it again if he was given the chance.549 He was a small state actor caught in a sticky structural web of power politics. Now a second conflict would bring the year to an even darker end for the energetic Norwegian chairman full of good intentions and will to make a difference. The role as Chairperson-in-office had from day one put the function as Norwegian Foreign Minister in the background, although he managed to keep up bilateral conversations if it suited the occasion. During the year he had 150 days and nights of traveling

545 «Putin utelukker kompromiss med ”terrorister”», NTB, 1.11.1999.
546 «Russland advarer mot OSSE-møte i Tsjetsjenia’s tegn» [Russia warns against an OSCE meeting in the sign of Chechnya], NTB, 10.11.1999.
547 «Vollebæk: OSSE sender folk til Tsjetsjenia» [Vollebæk: OSCE sends people into Chechnya], NTB, 2.11.1999
and visited 40 countries. Many from his team of 28 Norwegian diplomats would at the end of
the year be physically and mentally sick from exhaustion. Vollebæk had used enormous
amounts of energy and resources on the Kosovo conflict. It had not brought forth great results
on the part of OSCE. Not until the great powers involved themselves, especially through
NATO. OSCE, in spite of lots of will and good intentions, was seemingly too unconsolidated
and had little power to back up their decisions with.

During the Istanbul meeting Vollebæk was busy negotiating between Russian Foreign
Minister Igor Ivanov and the most powerful OSCE members, trying to find agreement on the
development of the re-engaged Russo-Chechen warfare. Three demands were at this point
directed to the Kremlin by the OSCE chairmanship. First, Russian authorities had to let the
OSCE mission team into Chechnya for observation. Second, OSCE should be allowed to have
a political role in the conflict. Third, an OSCE office had to be allowed in Ingushetia. The
British, French, American and Italian heads of state as well as Norway would refuse to sign
the renegotiated CFE-treaty until Russia yielded to all three of the demands that had been put
forth. During the Istanbul Summit, Russia was under more pressure over the situation in
Chechnya than it had been before. Norway took part in pressurizing Russia more fervently
than perhaps at any time during the first war, however, it was safely within the sphere of other
Western governments’ approach.

The fronts were staunch. The Russians had already, in early November, stated that
they did not mind discussing Chechnya, but they warned against making Chechnya the main
subject of the Istanbul OSCE meeting. Yeltsin said that the demands were out of the
question and that Russian forces were not retreating until every terrorist in the region was
wiped out. The Russian President left the Istanbul Summit in a demonstrative anger. The
unfolding of the summit itself looked disastrous. Vollebæk became worried that the
renegotiated CFE treaty stood in danger of not being signed by everyone since Russia had
broken the agreement in Chechnya and moreover would not yield with regards to OSCE
commitment in Chechnya. The original CFE-Treaty on reduction of conventional forces in
Europe had been negotiated in November 1990 between NATO and the Warsaw pact. Due to
the NATO enlargement with Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic, the treaty had been

551 «Russland advarer mot OSSE-møte i Tsjetsjenias tegn», NTB, 10.11.1999
552 «Presset Russerne på toppmøte i natt» [Pressured the Russians at the Summit Meeting], VG, 18.11.1999
553 «OSSE krise i natt: isfront mellom Russland og Vesten» [OSCE crisis: Icy fronts between Russia and the
West], Dagbladet, 18.11.1999
renegotiated in the course of 1999 and was ready to be signed at the Istanbul Summit.\textsuperscript{554} After what was referred to as tough negotiations in Norwegian newspapers, the Russian’s gave way to the three demands and the CFE-treaty was signed.

Norwegian Prime Minister Bondevik was so satisfied that he celebrated with a cigar stating that: “he was on Norway’s behalf proud of the carrying out of the Summit Meeting”.\textsuperscript{555} Vollebæk was also satisfied, but was already looking ahead towards the implementation of the signed Istanbul Summit Declaration. The “Chechen part” of the declaration ended up thoroughly vague. It “strongly reaffirmed the acknowledgement of Russia’s territorial integrity” and condemned “terrorism in all its forms”. It underscored the need to respect OSCE norms and measures to improve the humanitarian situation. The signatories agreed that a political solution was essential and that “assistance of the OSCE would contribute to achieve that goal.” It welcomed the willingness of the OSCE to assist in the renewal of political dialogue. It also “welcomed the agreement of the Russian federation to a visit by the Chairman-in-office to the region.”\textsuperscript{556} The latter part concerned Vollebæk, who didn’t see a point of going through with the inspection if he was not allowed into Chechnya itself. Russia’s foreign minister Igor Ivanov stated that Vollebæk would be let into Russian controlled territory, because they did not want him to end up as a hostage. Ivanov commented that he did not know if Vollebæk’s excursion would take place before New Year and that “we are not in a rush. We will find a time through diplomatic corridors.”\textsuperscript{557}

RUSSIAN REACTIONS

The diplomatic corridors leading to Chechnya related areas were long, twisted and difficult. In late November 1999, the Russian newspaper \textit{Nezavisimaja Gazeta} reported on what it regarded as Vollebæk’s “Chechnya schemes” behind Russia’s back, and remarked that Vollebæk’s visit to Chechnya as a consequence might not take place.\textsuperscript{558} The article contained facsimiles of two letters, one from Vollebæk to President Maskhadov and the other from Odd Gunnar Skagestad to the President of Ingushetia, asking for help to deliver the letter to Maskhadov. Sigvald Hauge, spokesman for the Norwegian MFA confirmed that there had

\textsuperscript{554} "Jeltsin til OSSE-møte for å forsvare Tsjetsjenia-krigen" [Yeltsin to the OSCE Meeting to Defend the Chechen war], \textit{NTB}, 15.11.1999.
\textsuperscript{555} "Vollebæk til Tsjetsjenia snarest mulig" [Vollebæk to Chechnya as soon as possible], \textit{NTB}, 19.11.1999.
\textsuperscript{557} "Vollebæk til Tsjetsjenia snarest mulig", \textit{NTB}, 19.11.1999.
\textsuperscript{558} "Russisk avis kritiserer Vollebæk" [Russian newspaper criticizes Vollebæk], \textit{NTB}, 27.11.1999.
been a recent correspondence between OSCE chairman Vollebæk and Maskhadov. However, he rejected all accusations of going behind Russia’s back.

The first letter from Maskhadov to Vollebæk concerned the humanitarian situation in Chechnya. Vollebæk replied in a letter to Maskhadov. “The Russians have been fully informed on what happened; they have received copies of the letters”, Spokesman Hauge told the press that similar reactions had occurred in Moscow before, and that the comment in the Nezavisimaja Gazeta could be seen in light of these. The episode took place only days before Vollebæk was supposed to meet with Russian foreign minister Igor Ivanov in Moscow. 559

Years later, Odd Gunnar Skagestad claims that the criticism of Vollebæk in Russian newspapers can be seen as symptomatic of the general view of Russian decision makers at the time, even as a signal from the authorities. 560 As head of the OSCE Assistance Group to Chechnya, Odd Gunnar Skagestad experienced episodes that showed the impatience Russia had for external involvement. As mentioned, it was not possible to stay in the OSCE office in Grozny, since Russian authorities would not guarantee security.

As Skagestad remained in Moscow, he could still keep daily correspondence with local OSCE representatives and others inside Chechnya that wanted to contact the outside world through the OSCE. Skagestad said that a constant call for help and attention was issued from Chechnya. The least he could do, in Skagestad’s opinion, was to forward the information he received on human rights violations and the general situation to the OSCE headquarters. 561

Russian authorities did not have high tolerance Skagestad’s correspondence, which they considered outside his mandate. Late autumn 1999 three warnings were issued from Russian authorities. First, Skagestad was called on the carpet by Russian authorities, who told him that they did not approve of his correspondence. At the same time the Russian embassy to Oslo visited the Norwegian MFA and Russian delegates showed up at the headquarters of the OSCE in Vienna expressing their opinion on the matter. After being “carpeted” by Russian authorities, Skagestad made a phone call to the Norwegian MFA to explain the situation, where he was told “not to worry about it”. 562 The Russian’s had made their point and the meeting between Ivanov and Vollebæk could take place. Vollebæk’s dialogue efforts eventually gave some results, he was promised a visit into Chechnya.

559 “Russisk avis kritiserer Vollebæk”, NTB, 27.11.1999.
560 Conversation with Odd Gunnar Skagestad, 15.4.2010.
561 Ibid.
562 Ibid.
EYEWITNESS TO CHECHNYA’S DESTRUCTION

“It is difficult to be optimistic from what we’ve seen here today”. As chairman of the OSCE, Vollebæk was “finally” present in Chechnya, after endless attempts to make the Russians let an OSCE observation mission into the warzone. At a hilltop above Grozny he was the first and only Norwegian Foreign Minister who witnessed the conflict. Vollebæk and the rest of the observation group had witnessed grenades being launched and fighting right below them. “What did I find? I found that reality was not quite corresponding with the version presented by the Russians.”

The safe passages that Russia claimed existed for the civilians to flee to neighbouring republics were not safe. Vollebæk saw a bus carrying refugees bombarded by artillery and several people in it was severely hurt.

Earlier on, in December, the civilians of Grozny had been given an ultimatum to leave the city within six hours prior to massive aerial and artillery bombing. Vollebæk had at the time stated that the ultimatum was totally unacceptable and demanded a 24 hours truce in respect of civilians who sought to escape. The civilians were given some more time, but were could they go? The Norwegian chairman-in-office cannot have been very pleased with the situation. The observation group was only allowed into areas that were controlled by Russian military, for its own protection according to the Russian. The Russian authorities did not allow the establishment of an OSCE office in Ingushetia. The OSCE field mission sat 1.5 thousand kilometres away, in Moscow. In addition, they had just barely been allowed into Chechnya to observe the situation. All of the points of the declaration regarding Chechnya in the Istanbul Summit were printed letters on paper, the words would, it seemed, not be brought to life.

CHANGING OF THE GUARDS

On New Years Eve 1999, an elderly Boris Yeltsin in poor health handed over the presidency to Prime Minister Vladimir Putin until elections. Norway was about to see a different Russian leadership with a new attitude. Already as prime minister, Putin had explicitly expressed his desire to restore Russia as an international major power. His manifesto equated the “renewal

563 «Møtes i dødens svingdør» [Encounters at deaths’ revolving door], Dagbladet, 17.12.1999
564 Phone-interview with Knut Vollebæk, 17.2.2010
565 Ibid.
568 Blakkisrud 2009: 223.
of Russia” with restoring Russia’s pride in itself as “strong state power”. Putin had built a tough image and gained great popularity in Russia because of his handling of the Chechen conflict. To show his firm support to the Russian soldiers in Chechnya, Putin took on a somewhat alternative Santa Clause role during the New Year’s holiday: He flew a fighter jet to Grozny to personally award hunting knives to the Russian soldiers.

Putin’s background was so-called Siloviki, or Chekist, which refers to the security establishment. Putin was former FSB officer and head of the FSB in 1998-99. He was formally elected President on 27 March 2001 and made several changes to Russian society in the course of his first year as President. He unravelled the asymmetric federalism that had developed under Yeltsin. He forced Tatarstan and other republics to become fully integrated within the Russian federal constitutional and economic space, undoing the privileged status they had won from Yeltsin in 1994.

Putin also imposed state control of the mass media. Pressure for self-censorship was applied to oligarch owners of media and journalists, critical media organizations were closed down, and the circulation of critical print was obstructed. This had widespread consequences for the coverage of the second war in Chechnya. The Kremlin not only employed police action and judicial measures to strictly control the media’s access to Chechnya, in particular foreign media. This was to prevent the kind of negative images that had undermined public support for the first war, but, as showed above, engineered a revolution in media ownership and control in Russia. With the praise Russian free press and democratic behaviour received by members of the Council of Europe in 1996 in mind, it is possible to see how this changed during the years after Chechnya was de facto independent from Russia.

The new hard-headed leadership did not pass unremarked by Norwegian political commentators. The turn of attitude in the Russian leadership, and the society as a whole had however been noticed for some time already. Russia’s leading advocate for human rights, Kovaljov had seen the first Russo-Chechen war as the first great battle for democracy in the

569 Hughes 2007: 111.
570 Ibid: 111.
573 «Putin seiret i første runde» [Putin, victor of the first round], Aftenposten, 27.3.2000.
574 Hughes 2007: 123.
575 Ibid: 123.
post Soviet Russia. James Hughes claims “that the radicalized military-security interests had been vocal in Russian politics since 1996, and even had widespread political support in the Duma, as was demonstrated by its opposition to the Khasavyurt treaty and the peace agreements with Chechnya.”

Foreign Minister Vollebæk had shaken hands with the new regime and personally experienced that it was not a lightweight. Norway had never been as engaged in Chechnya as during Vollebæk’s position as OSCE chairman-in-office. A solid portion of effort had been put into the conflict’s never-within-reach-resolution, both in terms of resources and engagement. Vollebæk had balanced his roles well as OSCE Chairman. He had addressed the humanitarian situation in Chechnya and his concern, however, all the while closely aligned with USA and the EU, receiving much praise for his engagement from those circles. He did not receive much praise from Russian authorities by the end of the year, but he had maintained close dialogue with the Russians, and had not pushed their limits too a great extent – with the exception of the most intense negotiations of the Istanbul Summit. To the people of Chechnya and their situation Norway had – in the end – not made much of a difference.

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578 Hughes 2007: 108.
In Norway the political situation remained the same into the new millennium. As 1999 expired, Vollebæk’s position as Chairperson-in-office in OSCE was taken over by Austria’s temporary foreign minister, Wolfgang Schüssel, quickly succeeded by foreign minister Benita Ferrero-Waldner. Nonetheless, Norway’s engagement in the OSCE troika continued for another year.\footnote{Østerrike overtar formannskapet} [Austria takes over Chairmanship, NTB, 1.1.2000.]

Among Vollebæk’s wishes for the New Year was that “even though it may look dark, I hope we will see a political solution in Chechnya, in order to achieve stability.”\footnote{Statsrådnes ønsker for år 2000} [the Ministry official’s New Year wishes, Aftenposten, 3.1.2000.]

This chapter will attempt an evaluation of Norwegian foreign policy towards the second Russo-Chechen war after the OSCE engagement, with a light comparative perspective on Norwegian foreign policy towards the first Russo-Chechen war.

WITH BEST WISHES FOR THE NEW YEAR

In Vollebæk’s address on foreign policy to the Norwegian Parliament in January 2000 he expressed great concern about the civilians in Chechnya. He explicitly told the assembly that it was a very difficult situation and that the government were struggling to find the right approach to discourage Russia’s behaviour in the North Caucasus.\footnote{Statement to the Parliament on foreign affairs by Foreign Minister Knut Vollebæk, 20.1.2000, http://www.regjeringen.no/nb/dokumentarkiv/Regjeringen-Bondevik-I/ud/Taler-og-artikler-arkivert-individuelt/2000/utenriks-og_sikkerhetspolitiske.html?id=264274 (13.5.2010)}

The foreign minister claimed that Norway had contributed to pressurizing Russia to end the war in Chechnya and asserted that it was not acceptable that Russia had launched such massive military power. He continued by stating that Norway obviously recognized Russia’s territorial integrity and the right to defend itself against terrorism and added that Norway was not indifferent as to what means Russia utilized.\footnote{Viktig å opprettholde kontakt med Russland} [Important to maintain contact with Russia, NTB, 20.1.2000.]

Nonetheless, he underscored that it was important to keep up dialogue with Russia and contribute to integrate Russia further into Europe.\footnote{Viktig å opprettholde kontakt med Russland, NTB, 20.1.2000.} There was no divergence between active participation in international cooperation and preservation of national interests, Vollebæk claimed. On the contrary, he perceived that the Norwegian chairmanship in 1999 had strengthened the impression of Norway as a reliable and trustworthy partner in international relations.

Vollebæk himself had become exceedingly popular as diplomat and enjoyed good contact with several of the leaders of the Western governments. Vollebæk may also have been...
right in his assertion that his engagement had strengthened Norway’s image of good efforts in the name of peace and human prosperity. However, what did he achieve in terms of influencing an end, bringing forth negotiations or establishing observation in the second Chechen conflict?

Reviewing OSCE’s role in the Russo-Chechen conflict, differences between the two Russo-Chechen wars stands out. Numerous actors, both inside and outside Russia tried to help solve the conflict during the first Chechen war. While the OSCE acted as mediators in the first war, a truce was established and a peace treaty was negotiated forth. In the second conflict, the OSCE and other intergovernmental bodies were more restrained, and journalists were unable to report from the scene of events as they did during the first war. This means that even though the OSCE, under the leadership of Vollebæk, presumably did its very best, it did not manage to get a permanent foot within Chechnya, because the new Russian regime would not allow external involvement, as the Yeltsin government had at times allowed. Vollebæk remarked on this when asked to look back. He said that Putin had been remarkably resolute and consequent in refusing any external involvement or interference.

Conflict resolution aside, Vollebæk’s OSCE engagement had given Norway a unique opportunity to be in the midst of political decision making. However, Norway was still outside the EU and thus not part of important decision making. One of the first things the Norwegian government focused on in 2000 was how to avoid ending up in a political vacuum outside spheres of influence in the EU. The EU was about to establish a common defence and security policy, and Norway did not want to be left out. Norway also firmly supported the so-called EU-14 sanctions against Austria’s government.

The new Austrian coalition government, established in the end of 1999, caused a political storm of criticism all over Europe. One of the two political parties in government, the Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ) was perceived by many outside Austria to be not just a populist party but on the extreme right-wing. Head of the FPÖ, Jörg Haider, had uttered several statements positively referring to the German dictator Adolf Hitler and the Nazi’s employment policy. The EU-14 sanctions lasted for several months and gave Austria a cold shoulder on several diplomatic, economic, and social levels, causing the country thoroughly isolation. They were terminated after a commission of “three wise men” had examined Austria’s

585 Phone Interview with Knut Vollebæk, 17.2.2010.
commitment to “European values”, and found these to be more than adequate, and even above other member’s situation.

In addition to the unusual measures, the EU was outspokenly dissatisfied with Austria’s engagement as OSCE chairperson-in-office. The relations were so cold that Austria’s Benita Ferrero-Waldner would reportedly not consult with her predecessor, Vollebæk. European diplomats quoted in Norwegian newspapers said that it was an outrage that there had not been seen peace initiatives towards Chechnya from the OSCE. During another Middle East Summit, this time in Moscow, on 1 February, the situation in Chechnya had been raised several times, although only informally. Foreign Minister Vollebæk had brought up the subject over dinner with Russian foreign minister Igor Ivanov. Vollebæk explained to journalists that:

[w]e have all along made it clear that what is going on in Chechnya is totally unacceptable. But we will not under any circumstance allow Russia to isolate itself. Russia is Norway’s largest neighbour. It is fully possible to maintain a dialogue with those who govern Russia. The goal must be to affect Russia in the direction we want them to move towards.

Vollebæk gives an apt description of a perception in accordance with a constructivist perspective, which assesses that regional and international norms affects states conduct. The power to define what conduct is legitimate can be considered a structural ideological power. It seems that Norwegian authorities, here represented by Vollebæk, thought that it was possible to affect Russian authority’s minds as to what was considered right and wrong in the Western democracies. Julie Wilhelmsen’s conclusion in the review of the Council of Europe’s approach to the Russo-Chechen conflict shows that Norway shared this perception with others. She states that “the Council of Europe still believes that cooperation and engagement, combined with verbal criticism, with time will have a socializing effect and will change Russia’s perception and practicing of human rights.” However, it must be pointed out that this strategy, which had been pursued throughout the 1990s, had not improved the democratic or the human rights situation in Russia.

590 «Österrikes nye OSSE-leder inkompetent» [Austria’s new OSCE leader is incompetent], NTB, 23.2.2000; «Tiltakene mot Østerrike fortsetter»[Measures against Austria continues], NTB, 8.3.2000.
591 «Stor optimisme etter midtøsten-møte i Moskva»[Great optimism after Middle East meeting in Moscow], Aftenposten, 2.2.2000.
HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE SECOND WAR: PUTIN’S TURN OF THE SCREW

The second Russo-Chechen war has been compared to the first as “undoubtedly more brutal.” Lord Frank Judd, Rapporteur of the Political Committee of the Council of Europe, observation of the state of Chechnya during the second war provided the outside with a glimpse of the situation:

It was April 2000. Together with several colleagues I stood in the middle of Grozny. … Our group fell totally silent. In all directions the devastation of the city was terrible and total. … And this was at the beginning of a new millennium in a member state of the Council of Europe with all its commitments to peace, human rights and accountable democratic government. It would have been easy to despair.

The human rights situation was just as bad as Grozny’s condition. The Chechenization of the war, the deliberate use of Chechens to lead counterinsurgency, had an increasingly severe effect on the civil society. In addition to the same indiscriminate use of violence as performed by Russian troops, the proxies often caused cycles of revenge attacks and killings that would be launched against them and their relatives. The pattern of “dirty war” with war crimes perpetrated by poorly disciplined and brutalized troops on both sides was also a characteristic of both the first and the second war. From early on in the second war, the Russian military used overwhelmingly reckless force against armed resistance in civilian areas. “In absence of support from the civilian population, Russian forces employed torture systematically in attempt to extract intelligence.” Thousands of suspects were held in “filtration” or internment camps. There are in addition well-documented cases of massacres of civilians in towns and villages committed by Russian forces in late 1999. The commander of the involved forces, General Shamanov, was, seemingly subsequently, awarded the medal “Hero of Russia” by President Putin.

War is said to be the toughest test of any state’s ability to observe human rights obligations. The conduct of Russian authorities in Chechnya completely opposed the criteria of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), which not only demands that a state’s authorities refrain from the use of torture, but moreover demand that they actively take

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596 Hughes 2007: 120.
598 Ibid: 119.
600 Wilhelmsen 2005: 160-161
preconditions to avoid torture and punish violations. What behaviour Vladimir Putin’s personal comments about Chechen fighters encouraged among Russian soldiers is hard to say, but the comments such as “waste them in the shit house” and “strangle the vermin at the root” did not encourage mild treatment.

CONTINUED OSCE ENGAGEMENT FROM A NORWEGIAN PERSPECTIVE

The new OSCE chairperson-in-office, Austrian Benita Ferrero, was at this point constantly under political attack for allegedly not doing enough to ease the situation in Chechnya. This can however be regarded in light of how Austria was treated in general in this period of the EU-14 sanctions. The Norwegian newspapers had probably given Vollebæk disproportionate attention compared to what they in turn gave his unpopular successor, Austrian Ferrero. With this in mind, it nonetheless seems as some of the international engagement was cooled down and became less active in Chechnya from 2000 and onward. This is also confirmed by other material on the OSCE engagement. On 21 January 2000 the OSCE troika held a meeting where, among other issues, Chechnya was discussed. Vollebæk claimed that they had received signals from Russia that OSCE still had a part to play in Chechnya. As for Norway, the high profile the OSCE engagement had received in Norway during Vollebæk’s leadership was not as high anymore. The media reported significantly less on OSCE related material, but moreover the engagement of the Norwegian government changed with a new government.

The Labour government Stoltenberg I that succeeded the Bondevik I government on 17 March 2000 took on a more pragmatic foreign policy profile than its predecessor:

The main goal of our foreign policy is to secure Norwegian interests foremost in our own region. When we nonetheless are so deeply engaged in other parts of the world, both through development aid, contributions to peace, reconciliation and human rights it is due to our duty to make an effort for others, and a conviction that through such efforts we also secure our own long term interests.

This change of profile was also true in the character of the new foreign minister himself: Thorbjørn Jagland, Labour Party veteran and leader took over the post as foreign minister,

601 Wilhelmsen 2005: 151-170: 151
603 «Østerrikes nye OSSE leder incompetent», NTB, 23.2.2000.
although after some seemingly superficial public debate on whether he was suited for the position.\footnote{\textit{\textcopyright{} Ønsket kandidat}}, \textit{Dagens Næringsliv}, 16.3.2000.

In late March 2000 the Norwegian Helsinki Committee called out that Norway should make complaint to the International Court for Human Rights against Russia because of the violations in Chechnya.\footnote{\textit{Russland bør klages for menneskerettsdomstolen} [Russia should be complained to the ECHR], \textit{NTB}, 31.3.2000.\textit{\textcopyright{} Osse lammet i Tsjetsjenia}} the media how important it was to observe, not on top of foreign minister Jagland’s list of priorities.

To the OSCE Chechnya came second to Kosovo. A Norwegian diplomat who had held a central position in the work with the Chechen conflict told the media how important it was not to drop the matter.\footnote{\textit{Osse lammet i Tsjetsjenia}, \textit{Dagbladet}, 16.7.2000.\textit{\textcopyright{} Osse lammet i Tsjetsjenia}} The humanitarian situation was severe he said, and he perceived the consequences would become grave for the entire North Caucasian region if a political solution could not be found.\footnote{Ibid.\textit{\textcopyright{} Osse lammet i Tsjetsjenia}} Espen Barth Eide, State Secretary to Foreign Minister Jagland, defended in June 2000 Chairman Ferrero’s work and claimed she was “fairly active” and that she kept putting pressure on Russia over Chechnya.\footnote{Ibid.\textit{\textcopyright{} Osse lammet i Tsjetsjenia}} State Secretary Bart Eide had been sent as stand-in for foreign minister Jagland to the OSCE troika meeting with Austria and Romania. Bart Eide stated that the OSCE wanted to return to Chechnya as soon as possible, but “we can’t let Russia dictate the terms”.\footnote{Ibid.\textit{\textcopyright{} Osse lammet i Tsjetsjenia}} He added that “we don’t want to be hostages in there.”\footnote{Ibid.\textit{\textcopyright{} Osse lammet i Tsjetsjenia}}

The OSCE Assistance Group to Chechnya was not hostages. They were, however, paralyzed and unable to perform their mission. The establishment of OSCE presence with an office in Znamenskoe in northern Chechnya dragged out. The two basic prerequisites for the establishment, defining the status of the OSCE mission group and Russian safeguard of security had not been fulfilled. This was apparently due to Russian authority’s reluctance or inability to provide the necessary security arrangements.\footnote{Skagestad 2008: 170.} Finally, in June 2000, an agreement between Russian authorities and the OSCE reopened the Znamenskoe office, after two years without being present. The Assistance Group, as the only independent field presence of international organizations in Chechnya, ceased to exist at the end of 2002.\footnote{Ibid: 170.}

On 31 October 2000 foreign minister Jagland made a statement to Parliament on the Norwegian OSCE engagement: “The conflicts enhance the basic fact that it is foremost the
parts’ willingness to find a peaceful solution that is decisive. It serves no end to force political solutions, which the parts are not interested in.” He did not linger on the fact that Maskhadov time and again had tried to contact Russian authorities for negotiations, and was repeatedly brushed of as terrorist. Nor did he take into account that Russia had completely crippled OSCE’s functionality in Chechnya. Nor did he mention that most of the declarations regarding Chechnya and Russia were being overruled by Russian authorities. There were already disagreements between Western European diplomats and Russian authorities on what the declaration actually stated. At the OSCE summit meeting in Vienna 27-28 November 2000 the Russian delegation torpedoed, according to OSCE Chairperson Ferrero, the summit declaration of the 55 foreign ministers because of Chechnya, Georgia and Moldova. A planned declaration on the protection of children’s’ rights in war zones was also rejected, with Russian as the only objector.

Foreign Minister Jagland expressed his disappointment over the fact that the summit did not result in a declaration. He did not put the blame on anyone specific, but stated that some of the problems could probably have been sorted out before the summit meeting: “Perhaps the problems have grown bigger since the Istanbul summit and harder to pursue.” Russian foreign minister Igor Ivanov rejected the criticism directed at Russia in Vienna. He claimed that OSCE could not narrow its raison d’être down to human rights and crisis management, because that would damage European cooperation and security in a long term perspective.

RUSSIA AND THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE INTO THE RING FOR A SECOND ROUND

The humanitarian situation in Chechnya, however, also concerned other international organizations. In April 2000, the Human Rights commission passed a resolution in favour of an EU motion criticizing Russia “for disproportionate and indiscriminate use of military force, particularly against civilians”. “At the same time, the Council of Europe’s parliamentary Assembly (PACE) suspended Russia’s voting rights for its part in the Chechen conflict, although its membership was restored in January 2001 after Russia declared the war officially

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615 «Russland torpedoerte OSSE-erklæring» [Russia torpedoed OSCE Summit Declaration], NTB, 28.11.2000.
617 Ibid.
618 Ibid.
619 Ibid.
over.” Nevertheless, months after the war was declared over by Putin, the battles were still raging in Chechnya. The question of whether to suspend Russia from the Council on a permanent basis was brought up, but none of the foreign ministers of the member states supported this suggestion in May 2000, because it was perceived that it would only have negative consequences. One Norwegian newspaper article was found covering the possible expulsion of Russia from the Council of Europe. No statements by Jagland on this issue were obtainable.

Facing – and probably discomforted – by Russia’s increasingly tougher language and lack of amenability to reason, the Council of Europe maintained its criticism of human rights violations, but did not apply stronger measures. Wilhelmsen claims this soft approach has undermined the credibility of the Council of Europe as its demands of compliance with membership criterions were not observed, and the soft approach thus also undermined the legitimacy of the Council’s norms.

Despite the increasing verbal criticism towards Russia in 2000, Russia’s continued violations did not have any consequences. Both EU and USA were careful not to follow up the criticism with political measures or sanctions. Solids efforts were made to stabilize the relations with Russia. EU had along with other supportive countries, such as Norway since January, showed that they were not unfamiliar with the use of sanctions. Austria had been thoroughly sanctioned on several levels of boycott and isolation for months.

It was commented that double standards were obvious when comparing the EU-14 sanctions against Austria and the “free-to-go” responses towards Russia. Vollebæk claimed the opposite in a response to this accusation. He felt that EU’s response towards Austria showed that the EU took its own members conduct just as serious as external states’. Examining Austria’s foreign policy in a small state perspective, Paul Luif, claims that “Austria’s partners would have thought twice before introducing these unusual measures against a bigger country.”

Foreign minister Jagland had also supported the sanctions against Austria, and he had supported the military sanctions against Kosovo: the Serbian violations of human rights. He seemingly was spared what could have had become an uncomfortable situation when the

621 Bowker 2005: 231.
622 «Russland ikke utestengt fra Europarådet»[Russia not expelled from the Council of Europe], NTB, 11.5.2000
623 Wilhelmsen 2005: 167
626 «Tiltakene mot Østerrike forsetter», NTB, 8.3.2000.
627 Luif 2005: 111.
Ministerial Assembly of the Council of Europe voted on Russia’s continued membership within the Council of Europe. However, Jagland could vote as all the minister’s did in favour of Russian membership.\textsuperscript{628}

It has often been maintained that the Russo-Chechen conflict, as many other conflicts, was overshadowed by the events of 9/11, and that the terror attack was “solid gold” for Putin’s struggle to legitimize his efforts.\textsuperscript{629} The terror attacks of 11 September 2001 caused tremendous fear throughout the Western World and are often regarded as an incident that led international politics into a new paradigm. Foreign minister Jagland seemed convinced of this three weeks after the attacks: “It should be no doubt that what we have witnessed in New York and Washington will bear with it a breaking point in American and international politics.”\textsuperscript{630} This might be correct, but the interesting question in this regard is whether Norwegian leaders’ rhetoric and approach towards the Russo-Chechen conflict became subdued before or after 9/11? I will argue that a postulated watershed appeared before. The changes in Russia with Putin’s hard headed style as head of state, and his launching of a second brutal “campaign against terror”, can be seen as more paramount to this thesis than can 9/11.

JAGLAND AND CHECHNYA

Perusing statements, speeches and newspaper articles on Jagland as foreign minister, he rarely mentioned Chechnya. This is also true in reviewing the Stoltenberg I government as a whole. Compared to the general level of attention Chechnya received by the Stoltenberg I government’s predecessors, Jagland’s silence on Chechnya spoke for itself, as will be shown below. The silence of the new government toward the situation in Chechnya became an even bigger contrast in light of the fact that Vollebæk had almost (diplomatically) begged, every week over several months before New Year, to enter the Chechen warzone.

As Jagland was about to become new foreign minister in March it was said that “with Jagland as foreign minister the modest Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs would probably spend less time on solving problems Norway does not have.”\textsuperscript{631} In the new government’s initial

\textsuperscript{628} «Jaglands dilemma» [Jagland’s Dilemma], VG, 12.4.2000.
\textsuperscript{629} «Russland utnytter situasjonen» [Russia takes advantage of the situation], Aftenposten, 17.9.2001.; Hughes 2007: 131.
\textsuperscript{631} «Ønsket kandidat», Dagens Næringsliv, 16.3.2000.
declaration it was stated that a more positive approach to the EU and further development of the cooperation with Russia must be considered that most important foreign political tasks.\footnote{Statement to the Parliament on Security and Foreign Policy by Foreign Minister Thorbjørn Jagland, 3.10.2000}

In a meeting with Javier Solana, coordinator of the EU foreign policy, in April 2000 Jagland explicitly stated that: “It is important to maintain a solid pressure on Russia over Chechnya”.\footnote{«Ingen nye EU-utspill overfor Norge i sikkerhetspolitikken» [No new EU-initiatives on security policy towards Norway], \textit{NTB}, 14.4.2000.} In autumn, during the Parliament’s \textit{Oral Question Hour}, Jagland was questioned about Norway’s policy towards Chechnya. Parliament member Ingvard Godal, Conservative, asked: “in regards of Russia’s lack of response to the 25 April 2000 UN resolution on the conflict, the human rights organization Human Rights Watch has asked UN member countries to condemn Russia’s non-compliance. How will the government follow up the matter?”\footnote{Parliament’s \textit{Oral Question Hour}, Question 3, 15.11.2000, \url{http://www.stortinget.no/no/Saker-og-publikasjoner/Referater/Stortinget/2000-2001/001115/ordinarsporretime/3/} (13.5.2010).}

Jagland replied that the government shared the concern that had been expressed: “We have addressed the situation in Chechnya in several international forums, among them, in OSCE, Council of Europe and UN. Norway took part in making the motion in question, which sought to have special UN \textit{rapporteurs} in Chechnya. Norway will await their reports before reviewing the situation,” Jagland said. The foreign minister continued by stating that the OSCE chairmanship had given Norway opportunity to play an active role in the international efforts to promote a political solution, improve the human rights situation and to ease the human suffering in the area. “In power of our continued place in the OSCE chairmanship, we have been able to take active part in these efforts also this year”, Jagland added.\footnote{Parliament’s \textit{Oral Question Hour}, Question 3, 15.11.2000.} He stated that the engagement to deter the human rights abuses in Chechnya was not limited to multinational forums. “The situation in Chechnya has been discussed with the Russian on several occasions, most recently during Prime Minister Kasianov’s visit in Norway in the end of September. We will continue to address the human rights situation in Chechnya as long as it is reason to do so.”\footnote{Ibid.}

On 3 April foreign minister Jagland had his chance to address this situation when he, as the first Norwegian, held the main statement at the 56\textsuperscript{th} annual session of the UN Commission on Human Rights, in Geneva. According to the Press Release of the MFA, Jagland had confronted the practice of death penalty. He had also suggested that mechanisms should be
established to help protect human rights advocates and workers all over the world.\textsuperscript{637} However, Jagland was thoroughly criticised the following days for being “too polite” in his address. Reportedly the Norwegian foreign minister had not mentioned any specific countries and their human rights violations. “Jagland treads wearily, the statement is very general”, remarked Bjørn Engesland from the Norwegian Helsinki Committee. Petter Eide, from Amnesty Norway stated that if Norway wants more authority as peace maker this was a failed strategy. “He should have mentioned the Middle East, he should have mentioned Russia’s violations in Chechnya and he should have addressed the difficult human rights situation in China”, Engesland added.\textsuperscript{638}

“This is very unfortunate”, said Eide, he described what he perceived as a general negative development where none of the Commissions members wanted to criticize each other. Eide considered the entire purpose of the Commission, which was to protect and promote human rights in all of the world’s countries, was undermined.\textsuperscript{639}

In foreign minister Jagland’s statement on foreign affairs on 20 March 2001 he covered several areas regarding Russia, but Chechnya remained absent. He began by stating that: “[t]he Russo-Norwegian relations are good, nonetheless have we noticed the last year that Russia is still a challenging partner. In the bilateral relationship and in the High North we are facing a more self-conscious Russia.” It was not unnatural that Norway and Russia had different views and interests in certain questions, he said. However, what caused him some concern was that Russia, according to Jagland, partially were retrieving old patterns of reaction and conduct, especially on matters of common interest in the High North.\textsuperscript{640} He continued by arguing that Russian politics at the time had to be characterized as undecided and that, the Norwegian willingness to cooperate and the accommodating attitude interchanged with criticism, Jagland stated.\textsuperscript{641}

He further mentioned several issues of concern: The Barents Sea cooperation and people-to-people-cooperation in the High North, the cooperation on fishing resources, and securing the region’s nuclear waste among others. He also spoke of the potential future cooperation on the enormous energy resources in the region. However, energy related issues were according to Jagland dependant on a solution and an agreement on the bilateral maritime

\textsuperscript{638} «Jagland i FNs Menneskerettighetskommisjon: Til kamp mot dødstraff» [Jagland in the UN Commission for Human Rights: To Battle against Death Penalty], Aftenposten, 30.3.2001.
\textsuperscript{639} «Jagland i FNs Menneskerettighetskommisjon: Til kamp mot dødstraff», Aftenposten, 30.3.2001.
\textsuperscript{640} Statement to the Parliament on Foreign Affairs, by Foreign Minister Thorbjørn Jagland, 20.3.2001.
\textsuperscript{641} Ibid.
delimitation.\textsuperscript{642} Jagland did not mention the situation in Chechnya, neither did he mention the increasing criticism regarding human rights violations and Putin’s muffling of Press freedom.

Almost a year prior, in April 2000 Jagland had exclaimed that: “[t]his is a breakthrough in the international work for human rights.” The foreign minister was commenting on the UN resolution for the protection of human rights activists all over the world. According to Jagland the resolution was promoted by Norway, and the human rights commission asked UN Secretary General to appoint a special representative who could focus on States’ violations against those who work to promote human rights. “It is with great satisfaction that I can now establish that we have received huge support on this”, Jagland said, and added that no country had voted against the resolution. At the heart of this resolution were the violations, which persons who work with human rights had been subjected to at the hands of authorities in several countries.\textsuperscript{643}

However, by January 2001 this activist engagement had not become observable: “It is curious that Norway, who is usually concerned with freedom of speech and human rights, does not utter one word about the muffling of Press freedom in Russia”, commented Beate Slydal, Norwegian Forum for Freedom of Expression (NFFE) advisor.\textsuperscript{644} The NFFE is part of an international network that closely supervises the development in Russia. Slydal claimed that several signs indicated that Russia was increasingly using methods of the past: A mixture of legal tricks and mafia methods. The law was being used as means of power, and entirely criminal methods were to a larger degree than before used to “shut people’s mouth”, Slydal purported.\textsuperscript{645}

She stated that Russia was accustomed to power struggles and leaders that have not had scruples about “getting people out of the way”.\textsuperscript{646} The threshold, she continued, for making use of such methods was low. She claimed that the economical reforms in Russia have caused the Russian people such problems that it has undermined people’s confidence in an open society. She thought the frustrations dammed up in the Russian society to be something a leader could use to own advantage. A strong figure could be alluring, and people would be willing to take less notice of the dark side, she added.\textsuperscript{647}

Why did not the Western governments protest, as they had done regarding dissidents in the Soviet Union? Slydal’s answer was that Western politicians had been of the conviction that

\textsuperscript{642} Statement to the Parliament on Foreign Affairs, by Foreign Minister Thorbjørn Jagland, 20.3.2001.
\textsuperscript{644} «Norge tier om Putins undertrykkelse» [Norway is silent on Putin’s suppression], \textit{NTB}, 25.1.2001
\textsuperscript{646} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{647} Ibid.
a liberal economy with time would equal a liberal society. She was curious about why Norway’s government had not spoken up: “it is our large neighbour in the east, and we are usually otherwise concerned with issues that affect us: nuclear security and social decay. But not Press freedom, even though this is an area that we ordinarily are concerned with around the globe.”

In Jagland’s statement on foreign affairs two months later, he stated that Russia was in the midst of an extensive reforming process: “It is in our obvious interest that Russia succeeds in consolidating democracy and developing a sustainable economy.” To what extent the development will continue in this direction was up to Russia, however, he added that as neighbour country and together with Norway’s partners in Europe and North America Norway could provide important contributions. This way of verbally establishing the status quo in Russo-Norwegian relations had remained the same throughout three governments. It seems as the Jagland government were of same perception as its predecessors: Russia had to be influenced and affected into the right direction. This did seemingly no longer included public condemnation of Russian violations of human rights in Chechnya.

SPACES OF EXCEPTION

Norway was not alone in what was seemingly a general easy-going tendency towards Russia. Professor James Hughes finds it ironic that along with the increase of reports on the grave humanitarian situation, the “international criticism has become somewhat formulaic.” Hughes sees this in light of how Western governments themselves have become focal point of human rights activists. Due to human rights organizations criticism of Western governments’ “counterinsurgency practices in Afghanistan and Iraq, and over the erosion of democracy their influence over policy makers, and the media has declined.” Matthew Evangelista, professor of government and director of the Peace studies Program at Cornell University, claims that “in recent years people of the West, particularly the United States, have appeared to believe that the lives of civilians in enemy countries –or even countries that are target of ‘humanitarian intervention’ are worth less than the lives of their own countries soldiers.” Are Chechens worth less than other Russians - or Europeans - in the eyes of Russian and Western decision makers? Evangelista argues that there is evidence that Russian authorities sought to promote this belief in theirs dealings with Chechnya. Even though their military actions allegedly was

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conducted to keep Chechens within the federation, it was fought in a way as if the civilians in Chechnya was expendable compared to those of Russian soldiers.\(^{652}\) Referring to war rumours, Prime Minister Putin said that the Russian leadership would never allow a replay of the 1994-96 Chechen war, because it would lead to unnecessary casualties among the troops, he did not mention Chechen and Russian civilians\(^{653}\)

It is claimed that Russian authorities sought to place the massive human rights violation outside both federal and international law in both wars.\(^{654}\) A number of influential Western observers of the situation of Chechnya have, according to Evangelista, come to accept that a country is allowed, or even obliged, to protect its soldiers first, even at the expense of killing innocent civilians.\(^{655}\) Professor of Geography Derek Gregory has used Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben’s ideas to explain how Western authorities have managed to place people in Afghanistan outside international legislation and moral perception.

Gregory uses Agamben’s thoughts of how a political community is turned not on inclusion or belonging but on exclusion. Gregory’s argument is, in his own words: “highly abstract philosophico-historical.” Agamben’s thinking is based on terms from Roman law, foremost Homo Sacer, who was someone who fell outside both divine and judicial law. Homo Sacer could be killed because he was of no value to his contemporaries, marked as outcast. Gregory states that what matters is not only those who are marginalized, but even more, those who are placed beyond the margins, the exceptions. Agamben connected this exceptional position with political theorist Carl Schmitt’s key claim: “He is sovereign he who decides the exception.” These Hominés Sacri are thus included as the objects of sovereign power but excluded from being its subjects. Agamben calls them “mute bearers of life” deprived of language and the political life that language makes possible and placed in spaces of exception.

Giving names to the Chechen insurgents such as terrorists, bandits and criminals was to remove the Chechen separatists’ legitimate cause, and instead legitimize the “sound” efforts to remove such disturbing elements. Especially President Putin used extremely brutal language, so called Fenya- slang of the criminal world- when he talked about fighting Chechen insurgents, as showed above.\(^{656}\) Putin stated that “Chechnya was ‘a platform for the expansion of terrorism into Russia’, a ‘bandit enclave’ for foreign-funded ‘Islamic terrorists’, a ‘medieval

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\(^{653}\) Ibid.: 69.

\(^{654}\) Cherkasov and Grushkin 2005: 132.


world’. This goes to the core of power of ideas. As Russian authorities managed to make Chechnya, in the words of Agamben, a “space of exception” and Chechens “mute bearers of life” alongside what Western governments has done in Afghanistan and Iraq, intentionally and not, it was easier as Professor Evangelista states above, for the Norwegian government and others to accept what was going on.

NORWAY - A TAG-ALONG IN THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL?

There were also other, more tangible factors that could be considered to affect Norway’s policy towards the situation in Chechnya: If we backtrack to February 2000, Norway had been given a key position between Russia and NATO. Norway was leading a troika, consisting of Norway’s Ambassador Jakken Bjørn Lian, NATO’s Secretary General Lord Robertson and the leader of Russia’s Security Council Sergei Ivanov and would work to get the Russia-NATO Permanent Joint Council back on its feet. Spokesmen of both Russia and NATO expressed that they wanted the relations re-established despite of diverging opinions on several matters. After the terror attacks of 11 September 2001 it was commented that the struggle against international terrorism had brought Russia and NATO closer than ever since the dissolution of the USSR. After a meeting in NATO’s headquarters outside Brussels on 26 September 2001, NATO’s Secretary General Robertson referred to Russia’s foreign minister Ivanov as a “friend”, and emphasized the importance of the Russo-NATO relations. When asked if they had discussed the war in Chechnya, Robertson denied that it had been discussed in detail. However, he remarked that Russia were entitled to defend it territory from attacks “from that part of the world”, although he added that the response had to be proportional to the attack, and follow the rules of International law. “There will still be disagreements between NATO and Russia on those kind of matters”, said Robertson, “but there are more that unites us than separates us”, he ended.

Norway’s candidacy to the UN Security Council had been one of the four highest priorities to the Stoltenberg I government, and could also be considered on of these factors.

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657 Hughes 2007: 112.
659 «Norge i nøkkelrolle i samarbeidet NATO-Russland» [Norway in key position in the NATO-Russian cooperation], NTB, 17.2.2000.
660 «Tsjetsjenia kritikken tilhører fortiden i NATO» [Chechnya criticism belongs to the past in NATO], Aftenposten, 27.9.2001.
661 «Tsjetsjenia kritikken tilhører fortiden i NATO» [Chechnya criticism belongs to the past in NATO], Aftenposten, 27.9.2001.
After two years of competing against Ireland and Italy, Norway eventually won forth with its candidacy and was elected into the UN Security Council on 10 October 2000, formally taking its seat on 1 January 2001. When Jagland, a few days after the news of the membership admission, held a statement on Norway’s membership in the Security Council he précised that this would be a task the government would attribute highest priority. However, he added that Norway had to be level-headed and realistic about the possibilities to influence the Council’s decisions.

As the Norwegian membership in the UN Security Council went into its sixth month, the Norwegian Helsinki Committee wrote an article about the “hidden veto” in the Security Council, concerning Chechnya. USA, China and Russia made it impossible to discuss conflicts they recognized as within their own spheres of interest. The other members did not want to try to bring up the conflicts, because they knew forehand that one of the permanent members would use its veto right. The great power’s “hidden veto” hindered several conflicts that concerned the Security Council’s mandate from even being discussed. The most obvious of these “touchy” conflicts was according to Anne Marit Austbø, Chechnya.

The author focused on Norway’s part in the Security Council. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs had, according to the authors, presented the focus on human rights in UN mandates for peacekeeping mission as the best way for Norway to promote human rights in the UN Security Council. Norwegian authorities had, apart from that, no clear strategy as to how Norway could promote human rights within the work of the Security Council. Nor had Norwegian authorities commented on how the Security Council should relate to human rights.

In his statement on foreign affairs March 2001, Jagland stressed that the five permanent members – USA, Russia, China, Great Britain and France – in effect affected the Council’s efforts more than the rest of the members. This was, he said, not only due to their veto right, but also the experience those five had accumulated throughout many years of work in the Council. Although, there were according to Jagland, no doubt that also non-permanent members had the possibility to influence decisions with their views, by the help of solid skills based on insight and experience and good diplomacy.

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662 «Norge valgt inn i Sikkerhetsrådet», Press Release from the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 10.10.2000
663 Statement to the Parliament on Norway’s membership in the UN Security Council by Foreign Minister Thorbjørn Jagland, 14.11.2000
664 Anne Marit Austbø, «Norske initiativer i Sikkerhetsrådet» [Norwegian initiative in the UN Security Council], NY TID, 15.6.2001
666 Statement to the Parliament on Norway’s membership in the UN Security Council by Foreign Minister Thorbjørn Jagland, 14.11.2000
According to the Norwegian Helsinki Committee, the Security Council had earlier passed several resolutions, where conflicts with severe human rights violations had been defined as threats against international peace and security. These had also included internal conflicts. These resolutions had been passed in the early 1990s. The UN Security Council is the only UN organ that can pass binding decrees and enforce military or peacekeeping operations. When the Security Council had engaged with conflicts in Haiti, Somalia and the former Yugoslavia and other places it was, according to Austbø, interpreted as a sign of the international will to react against human rights violations.667

The optimism from the early 1990s had become increasingly toned down. Foremost because the Security Council had not been consequent in addressing conflicts with grave human rights violations. The UN Human Rights Commission had passed several resolutions condemning the human rights violations in Chechnya. The Norwegian Helsinki Committee encouraged the Norwegian government to pursue this and address the situation in Chechnya in the Security Council.668

Austbø argued that the human rights- and humanitarian catastrophe in Chechnya was not an internal Russian affair, but a threat to the security and stability in the whole Caucasus. Austbø claimed that it was not unheard of that even though anticipated that one of the permanent members would use its veto, conflicts had been brought up nevertheless. This had at times been done by political and strategic reasons, but also to pressure a member to change its policy. Austbø gave two reasons to argue why this was a measure Norway should exercise as a member of the Security Council. First, it could be effective as one of several measures to promote human rights in certain conflicts. Second, it undermined the legitimacy of the Security Council and thereby the UN when discussions on human rights violations was consequently avoided because of great powers’ hidden veto.669

To place the conflict in Chechnya on the agenda would have been a step in the opposite direction, she claimed. Such an initiative would have had political costs, and it might have infringed on the bridge building part Norway often played in international forums. Nonetheless, Norway’s important contribution could have been to promote a more consistent UN Security Council treatment of conflicts with human rights violations of such dimensions and character

668 Ibid.
669 Ibid.
that it threatens international peace and security. Such an initiative would have strengthened Norway’s legitimacy and credibility as a human rights advocate.\textsuperscript{670}

Because of the membership in the Security Council, the UN-dimension had become extra important in Norwegian relations with Russia, Jagland had commented in his statement on 20 March 2001. The permanent membership in the Security Council had become a main pillar in Russian foreign policy. Norway’s membership in the Security Council had become an important meeting place between Norway and Russia, foreign minister Jagland stated, and the government had already experienced that it saw eye to eye with Russia on several questions. “Our membership in the Security Council will consequently also contribute to strengthen our relations with Russia.”\textsuperscript{671}

The Foreign Minister had established three areas of Norwegian priority in the Security Council: First, he wanted to focus on the underlying causes of conflict and war - such as poverty, underdevelopment, disparity, and suppression. Second, the government sought to contribute to strengthen UN’s ability to plan and carry out peace operations. Third, Norway wanted to place a distinct focus on Africa’s challenges.\textsuperscript{672} The continent of Africa had indeed many pressing issues to be dealt with. It was in addition less sensitive than internal conflicts within the state borders of permanent members.

“THE SELF-IMPOSED SILENCE MUST CEASE”\textsuperscript{673}

Already by the end of 2000, a call for more Norwegian criticism against Russia appeared in the media. In a letter to foreign minister Jagland, Amnesty International, the Norwegian Helsinki Committee and Islamic Council Norway called for more engagement towards the situation in Chechnya.\textsuperscript{674} They suggested that Norway should use its newly achieved membership in the UN Security Council to focus on the Russo-Chechen war. During the presentation of Norway’s candidacy, Norway had promised to promote humanitarian law, transparency and responsibility among the UN members. For this to be something more than just words, Norway should publicly direct demands towards Russia, the letter purported.\textsuperscript{675}

\textsuperscript{670} Anne Marit Austbø, «Norske initiativer i Sikkerhetsrådet>, NY TID, 15.6.2001
\textsuperscript{671} Statement to the Parliament on Foreign Affairs, by Foreign Minister Thorbjørn Jagland, 20.3.2001.
\textsuperscript{672} «Norge - en ‘ræv-dilter’ i Sikkerhetsrådet?», Statement to Bergen’s Student Society on Norway’s membership in the UN Security Council by Raymond Johansen, 5.4.2001
\textsuperscript{673} «Dyster rapport»[Sombre report], Klassekampen, 31.5.2001
\textsuperscript{674} «Ber Norge fokusere på Tsjetsjenia i Sikkerhetsrådet»[Requests Norway to focus on Chechnya in the Security Council], NTB, 8.12.2000
\textsuperscript{675} «Ber Norge fokusere på Tsjetsjenia i Sikkerhetsrådet», NTB, 8.12.2000
In May 2000 Amnesty International’s annual report on human rights, the “world’s worst grade book” triggered the media’s attention to Chechnya once more. Amnesty claimed that 2000 had been a year of recession in regards of human rights in Russia, and Chechnya saw the worst of it. Russia was recognized among the “bullies” along with Sierra Leone, Israel, Columbia, Serbia, Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Zimbabwe and China.\(^676\) Even though authorities are familiar with the use of human rights rhetoric, the violations continue, claimed Petter Eide, Secretary General of Amnesty International Norway.\(^677\) Petter Eide’s example illustrates how important public diplomacy had become throughout the world. Governments and regimes all over the world talked the language of human rights, but their conduct towards groups within their own nations were often non-compliant with their words. The public and international emphasis may also have created expectations of engagement, which would not be lived up to by the main promoters, i.e. Western governments and NGO’s. James Hughes remarks that “the expectations of moderate Chechen leaders for international pressure on Russia were naïve.”\(^678\)

State Secretary Espen Barth Eide, present at the release of the Amnesty report, stated that: “We address the Chechen conflict as often as possible, even though we know Russia dislikes it. … We respect Russia’s sovereignty in Chechnya, but we are opposed to the disproportionate use of power.” He claimed that he did not accept the phrase “we are only fighting terrorists” when discussing the matter with the Russians.\(^679\) State Secretary Barth Eide claimed that the conflict in Chechnya was brutal because both parts behaved brutally. Russian authorities in Moscow had a special responsibility to protect the civilian population, and this was where the authorities had failed, according to the State Secretary. Norwegian authorities had repeatedly underscored this to the Russian authorities. “Even though the conditions are bad in Chechnya, this cannot be used to describe the situation in Russia in general”, he added.\(^680\)

Barth Eide showed that Norwegian authorities were well aware of different versions of the conflict. Nonetheless, he stressed that the situation was brutal because both parties were acting out brutalities. The prolonged conflict had severely brutalized protagonists on both sides. However there were many actors on the Chechen separatist side, such as Aslan Maskhadov, who repeatedly spoke out against acts of terrorism and attacks against civilians. These actors repeatedly sought dialogue with the Russian authorities, who again rejected them as

\(^{676}\) «Amnesty vil prioritere menneskeretter i Russland»[Amnesty will prioritize human rights in Russia], NTB, 30.5.2000

\(^{677}\) «Dyster rapport», Klassekampen, 31.5.2001

\(^{678}\) Hughes 2007: 128.

\(^{679}\) Slakter Russiske overgrep»[Deprecates Russian violations], VG, 30.5.2001

\(^{680}\) Slakter Russiske overgrep», VG, 30.5.2001
terrorists.\textsuperscript{681} These Chechens ended up fighting for their lives, because negotiations were out of the question. Maskhadov and others thus ended up joining forces with extremists such as Shamil Basaev.

Barth Eide claimed that Norway ran extensive human rights promotion indirectly through the Barents Sea cooperation. On the question why the Barents Sea cooperation had not focused explicitly on human rights, he stated that it was not something the State Secretary could answer to. Norway did achieve a great deal, even though the situation in regards of Chechnya was difficult, he added.\textsuperscript{682} This is once more an example of Norwegian authority’s confidence that Russia could be turned over and influenced into a democracy through cooperation and interaction with others.

"We do not question Russia’s sovereignty over the area, nor do we question Russia’s right to maintain law and order in its own state.” State Secretary Barth Eide admitted that there had clearly been committed violations far beyond any international standard for protection of civilians. However, according to Barth Eide, Russia had become “allergic” to the never-ending criticism and reacted with irritation and frustration. That made it exceedingly more difficult to proceed with human rights approaches toward Russia that would actually lead forth. Eide added that it was important to give the Russians a chance and that it was not correct to treat Russia as a “worst case” that does not want to take care of its citizens.\textsuperscript{683}

The Norwegian government still hoped to see Russia develop into a Western democracy. Barth Eide made a point of showing the frustration displayed by Russian authorities on continued inquiries about Chechnya. During the first Russo-Chechen war, it was easier to discuss Chechnya with the Russians. It was seemingly also easier to obtain understanding for external concern. During the first war, Russia was still making efforts to be part of the “good company”. When Putin came to power, it became remarkably more difficult for anyone concerned over the Russian conduct in Chechnya. This was true for both NGO’s and human rights activist, but also for other governments. Barth Eide, as he was presented in the newspapers, demonstrated an understanding of the Russian frustration.

It was not only Foreign Ministers that were worried of the development in Chechnya. Senior counsellor Jan Egil Mosand from the Norwegian Helsinki Committee, who had


\textsuperscript{682}«Amnesty vil prioritere menneskeretter i Russland», \textit{NTB}, 30.5.2000.

\textsuperscript{683}«Amnesty vil ha skjerpet kritikk av Russland Maner Norge til å vise større mot» [Amnesty wants sharpened criticism of Russia, urges Norway to show greater courage], \textit{Aftenposten}, 31.5.2001.
accompanied an observations mission into Chechnya and the refugee-camps in the neighbour republic Ingushetia, commented that: “It is still war in Chechnya, and the Russian army focuses mostly on the civilians.” According to Mosand the Russian authorities did everything in their power to force the Chechens back into Chechnya. They had cut off electricity, gas, and food deliverances to the refugee camps in Ingushetia. Tuberculosis and jaundice were spreading and the local hospital refused to receive Chechen patients.  

“For how long are we going to keep our eyes closed to the Russians gruesome violations in Chechnya?” Jan-Egil Mosand posed the question in a newspaper comment. He encouraged the Norwegian government to address the matter in the Council of Europe and the UN Security Council. Norway and its allies want to see a friend in the sociable President Putin, Mosand claimed. According to Mosand, Chechnya was perceived by Norwegian authorities as a Russian internal affair and did not threaten the good Russo-Norwegian relations. Mosand said that he understood that Norway needed to keep good relations with the large neighbour in the North-East. The need to cooperate with the Russians on administrating the resources in the Barents Sea region, and the cleaning up of nuclear waste was also by Mosand considered important. However, he stressed that Norway must be able to speak up and state that the crimes against humanity that are taking in place in Chechnya are not internal affairs. “What is happening in Chechnya is some of the worst I have ever seen”. Mosand had been to war zones in Africa, Afghanistan and Bosnia, and considered himself to have seen his share of brutality. The solid wall of silence met in the Western world is despairing, he said: “It is a betrayal to sit passively on the sideline, watching these terrible acts perpetrated on old people and children”.  

STICKING TO SILENCE: AFTERWORD

On 2 September 2002 journalist and human rights activist Anna Politkovskaya visited Oslo, where she held an address at the Nobel Institute. She spoke of the situation in Chechnya, and what she interpreted as a dangerous development in Russia with regards to neglecting human rights, and the tendency towards autocracy by the new Russian President Putin and his regime. Still alive and well, she thoroughly criticized the Western governments and their leaders on

684 «Bekymret for situasjonen i Tsjetsjenia»[Concerned about the situation in Chechnya], Klassekampen, 9.11.2001
685 «Flyktningerådet med nødtrap fra Tsjetsjenia»[Refugee Council with cries for help from Chechnya], NTB, 5.9.2001
their silence towards the situation in Chechnya.\footnote{«Europas dobbeltmoral», \textit{Amnesty International Norge}, 11.12.2002, http://www.amnesty.no/aktuelt/flere-nyheter/arkiv-reportasjer/europas-dobbeltmoral (13.5.2010)} State Secretary to Foreign Minister at the time, Kim Traavik said retrospectively, that when a person such as Politkovskaya visited Norway, Norwegian authorities paid close attention to her views on the situation in Chechnya. However, in this regard he stressed the different roles the Norwegian authorities had compared to NGOs. Norwegian authorities had to weigh out how to expose Norwegian attitudes towards the Russo-Chechen conflict. It was not granted whether it was best to criticize Russia publicly or bring the matter up discreetly.\footnote{Conversation with Kim Traavik on the phone 18.2.2010}

On 24 October 2002 a hostage crisis, at the hands of Chechens, arose in the Dubrovka theatre in Moscow. The Chechen perpetrators called for attention to their cause, and reportedly tried to reach government members outside Russia to negotiate. Several inquiries were addressed to Norway, but any Norwegian involvement was denounced that night.\footnote{«Norge ville ikke megle ved gisselaksjon», \textit{Aftenposten}, 22.10.2003.} The terror incident, where Russian forces killed most of the hostages by pumping poisonous gas into the theatre was thoroughly condemned by the Western European governments. Once again, less sympathy was earned for the Chechens. “I condemn the operation that Chechen separatist have launched against many hundred innocent civilians in Moscow, by keeping them hostage. No \textit{cause} can justify such acts”, Foreign Minister Petersen stated.\footnote{«Petersen: Terror av alvorligste slag» \footnote{[Terror of the gravest kind], \textit{NTB}, 24.10.2002.} Petersen pleaded that the perpetrators should release the hostages and ended by stating that: “Norway’s attitude is that a political solution to the conflict in Chechnya must be sought through dialogue between the two parts.”\footnote{«Petersen: Terror av alvorligste slag», \textit{NTB}, 24.10.2002.}}

A month later, in the anticipation of a forthcoming visit from the Russian President, Vladimir Putin, Norwegian Prime Minister Kjell Magne Bondevik had an op-ed published. The op-ed was a tribute to Norway’s peaceful relations with Russia throughout history. He emphasized that Norway, together with Russia, took a firm stand against terrorism. He did not mention Chechnya and the only sentence not overly positive was “[i]t is the leader of our largest neighbour state, a great power with economic prosperity, with huge human resources, but with large tasks waiting, who is paying us a visit on 12 November”.\footnote{[Det er statsoverhodet for vårt største naboland, en stormakt i økonomisk fremgang, med store menneskelige ressurser, men med store oppgaver foran seg, som kommer på besøk 12.november.], Bondevik, Kjell Magne, 2002: «Russland har skapt respekt og tillit»[Russia has created respect and trust], \textit{Aftenposten}, 10.11.2002., http://www.aftenposten.no/meninger/kronikker/article433156.ece. (13.5.2010)} The resemblance to Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland’s leading comment on Yeltsin was striking. As
opposed to Brundtland, however, Bondevik did not mention Chechnya at all. The public condemnation of Chechen terrorism was considerable, but Russian violations in Chechnya was according to the Norwegian government brought up in closed forums.\textsuperscript{692} At a time with more documentation than ever on the humanitarian catastrophe in Chechnya, the response towards Russian authorities was rather mild. Anna Politkovskaya’s appeals for stronger reactions was heard but not acted on.

A high profile in regards of human rights and humanitarian law is a characteristic part of Norwegian Foreign Policy, preferably however, when there aren’t any interests of greater importance at stake, interests that for instance are linked to allied nations or powerful neighbours. 693

Olav Riste, Professor of International History, states that when a small country like Norway maintains a high profile foreign policy, it should be important to ensure a “proper balance between shadow and substance.” Do Norway’s actual achievements underpin its grand ambitions as human rights promoter and advocate? Political scientist Tore Nyhamar’s quote above is one answer to this question, establishing an unambiguous point of departure, foreshadowing the thesis’ main conclusion.

WHAT CONFLICT?

What perception did Norway have of the Russo-Chechen conflict? The analysis of the source material available showed that Norwegian interpretation of the conflict changed over time, as natural is, as the conflict changed over time. It also shows that the decision makers were aware of the fact that the Russo-Chechen conflict was differently presented by different actors involved in the conflict. Prime Minister Bondevik went as far as saying that he did not completely “trust” the Russian version. Foreign Minister Vollebæk got to see with his own eyes that Russian authorities’ version did not match the actual situation he faced in Chechnya. Nonetheless, as Vollebæk stated in an interview, the Norwegian government could not explicitly question Russia’s official version, because they would easily be accused of spreading lies or false propaganda. It would also be deemed rude if Norway’s government entered conversations with Russians asserting a priori that what the Russians were saying was untrue. This discussion is not an effort to show that the Russian version was “all false” or that other actors’ versions were nearer to the “truth”. It is merely an attempt to show some of the difficulty of apprehending the conflict situation Norwegian decision makers were dealing with.

The first Russo-Chechen war was the first “television war” in the territory of the former Soviet Union.\textsuperscript{695} The journalists’ version of what was going on in Chechnya was reported straight into living rooms all over the world, even back to the protagonists themselves.\textsuperscript{696} What is interesting, nonetheless, is that the Russo-Chechen wars were also “information wars”. The Chechen insurgents’ version often won sympathy with Western journalists and popular opinion. The Norwegian government seemingly perceived it as a separatist conflict, and often referred to Chechens as separatists. This is supported by the stressing of Russia’s right to defend territorial integrity. The Chechen call for secession was, in accordance with this view, illegitimate. However, Norway, along with other governments, repeatedly criticized Russia for its excessive use of violence. Awareness of the human rights violations perpetrated by Russian forces was in place. Nonetheless, this criticism was increasingly followed by condemnations of Chechen acts of terrorism. Although the attention towards the situation had decreased before 9/11 2001, Norwegian authorities verbally associated Chechens with terrorism exceedingly often after the attacks on the Twin Towers.

According to Vollebæk looking back, it was hard to relate to Chechen leaders as legitimate political actors. Due of the use of terrorism by some Chechen protagonists such as Shamil Basaev, Russia considered all Chechen actors unreliable in the second war. This was not shared by Norwegian decision makers, who regarded President Aslan Maskhadov reliable enough for talks. However, the fact that the Kremlin’s version was the “official” version was an additional factor that made it hard not to accept it for the Western governments or openly question it, increasingly so after 9/11. There is an absence of an international consensus as to the difference between “freedom fighters” and “terrorists”.\textsuperscript{697} In this respect it is tempting to compare the legendary and notorious Shamil Basaev with the Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat. Up until late 1980s, Yasser Arafat was considered to be one of the world’s most dangerous terrorists. However, after taking part in negotiations with the Israeli government, he won the Nobel peace prize – and “the hearts” of the international establishment. Most of the original Chechen leaders, Dudaev, Maskhadov, Basaev and Sadulayev have been killed as terrorists. However, it is possible that in the future a Chechen leader, in cooperation with Russian authorities may accomplish a “change of heart”. As of yet, however, the Russian framing of the wars as legitimate and necessary campaigns against banditry and international terrorism have won acceptance. A reminder of Giorgio Agamben’s theory of spaces of

\textsuperscript{695} Tishkov 1997: 188.
\textsuperscript{696} Ibid: 188.
\textsuperscript{697} James Hughes, 2007: 145.
exception is here in place. So is the hopelessness many Norwegian decision makers seem to have felt in addressing the situation in Chechnya with Russian authorities. The Russian definition power isolated Chechnya and its regime and made it harder for international organizations and NGOs to get involved in Chechnya.

THE RUSSO-CHECHEN CONFLICT IN NORWEGIAN DOMESTIC POLITICS

To what degree was Norwegian policy towards the Russo-Chechen conflict affected by domestic considerations in form of Norwegian public opinion or national values? The Chechen conflict has by and large received little attention in Norway. Disturbing news and images of human rights violations and act of terrorism committed during the two wars has broken the silence days at the time. Norwegian politicians have concerned themselves with the conflict to a small degree, with a few exceptions.

The consensus tradition was not challenged by the Russo-Chechen conflict. Discussions took place in the Parliament and in the media, with occasional oppositional criticism of the government’s policy. Oppositional political parties’ criticism of the Norwegian governments’ “mild response” towards the conflict tends to follow three tendencies. First, it seems as if the criticism often was an ordinary “oppositional strategy” to gain goodwill in domestic politics. Oppositional parties criticized the government in general for not doing what “they should or could”, thus placing themselves in a flattering light as human rights advocates. Second, it often took form of criticism of the Norwegian government’s relations with Russia in general. Parties such as the Progress Party and the Conservative Party thought Norway led a too careful line towards Russia. Chechnya was in this regard used by these parties as an example of how Russia behaved, and that Norway should be worried about its large neighbour and take more military and strategic precaution in the High North.

Third, the sitting government was often accused of not being concerned enough of human rights in general. Chechnya was often brought forth as an example of this. With the Progress Party as only exception, most parties in opposition were given a chance to alter the Norwegian foreign policy of its predecessor. However, it should be observed that none of the governments conducted a policy towards the Russo-Chechen conflict widely different from the others. It should also be observed that it was many of the same individuals that “circulated” foreign political decision making despite changing governments. Except for the years holding the leadership of the OSCE troika, the Bondevik I government maintained the Norwegian foreign policy consensus towards Chechnya, despite of having a minister.
specifically working for human rights. The Bondevik I government used a different rhetoric, more ideological and less pragmatic than the Labour party government. Nevertheless, this did not alter the policy towards the Russo-Chechen conflict. Domestic factors had, consequently, little effect on how Norway related to the conflict.

REGIONAL CONCERNS

Regional considerations, such as the interest for natural resources, environmental threats and Russian neighborship in the High North, can be considered to have had a paramount affect on how Norway related to the Russo-Chechen conflict. The Barents Sea and the surrounding region were during the 1990s of massive importance to Norway. It is where “tiny” Norway and great power Russia physically touch each other. It is where fish and petroleum, two of the most important natural resources for both states, can be found. It is also an area containing huge environmental threats due to Soviet atomic waste left from the days of the arms race between USSR and USA. The area cannot be considered other than essential to Norway.

How important the Barents Sea region is considered was recently illustrated by Professor Iver B. Neumann. He denominated former foreign minister Thorvald Stoltenberg as the “Norwegian champion of foreign affairs”. He legitimized his choice out of the 12 foreign ministers Norway has had since 1972, by claiming that Stoltenberg had increased Norway’s room of manoeuvre in the international structure. This had been done through the foreign ministers’ calculations of what could and was needed to be done domestically and internationally to improve Norway’s position. Especially Stoltenberg’s efforts to establish the Euro Arctic Barents Sea Region cooperation was considered important. The High North has since only received increased attention from Norwegian decision makers.

The MFA’s main task has always been to preserve security for Norway and its citizens. As to the situation of being neighbours with Russia, a regional great power, Norway did not seem to fear a military response if it criticized Russia’s human rights violations “too harshly”. Norwegian decision makers seem to have had stoic confidence in NATO’s will and abilities to protect them. However, it can seem as if Norwegian decision makers were afraid that if they were too resolute in dealings with Russia and attempted sanctioning Russia over Chechnya, negative consequences would result. Not through a military invasion, or physical attack, but Russian decision makers might become difficult to “deal with”. Russia could “sabotage” important cooperation in the northern areas. Thus, the realist perspective is quite

698 Iver B. Neumann, «NM i utenriks» [Norwegian Championship in foreign affairs], Morgenbladet, 12.3.2010.
obvious in Norway’s overall relations with Russia. However, in regards to how Norway related to the Russo-Chechen conflict there are other perspectives that nuances the picture more than just establishing that Norway is a small state afraid of the large state Russia.

Norway worked hard through the 1990s to include Russia in all possible organizations and formal structures. A liberalist perspective on the efforts put into the Barents Sea cooperation underscores this. If Norway could integrate Russia in as many possible regional and international structures, Norway’s geographic situation would become a more secure place. Nonetheless, the confidence in the idea of moral persuasion seems to have affected how Norwegian decision makers related to the conflict, bringing us to the constructivist perspective. All of the decision makers I have talked to have underscored the point of asking the question “what would be the most effective way to affect Russia’s handling of Chechnya”. They all seem to consider that they did what was possible. All of them at one point verbally criticized the Russian conduct in public or closed forums. In the perspective of speech act theory this can also be considered political acts, and the criticism a form of sanctioning. However, this would not have been possible if this criticism was not perceived as legitimate by all parts. This can also be observed as Russian authorities were more receptive to criticism in the mid-nineties, than they were from 1999 and on.

The idea that Russia could be affected in the right direction seems to have been widespread among policy makers. On the contrary, as the second war unfolded, it was by many NGO’s and human rights activist regarded as a failed strategy. It had not been successful in convincing Russia to act less brutally. Part of this criticism was based on a general notion that Norway could have been more explicit in its criticism, taken more responsibility in international reactions against Russian conduct and not been “so willing” to promote Russian membership in organizations where Russia did not fulfil the requirements regarding human rights and democracy, such as the Council of Europe.

INTERNATIONAL STRUCTURES

*How much did international structures and considerations towards the USA, NATO, EU, UN and OSCE affect Norway’s policy towards the Russo-Chechen conflict?* To discern what international structures affected Norway’s relation to Russia in general, and to the Russo-Chechen conflict specifically in this period, several momentums must be kept in mind. The regional and international factors overlap and intertwine. The structural context of the Russo-Chechen wars can be characterized into two dissimilar periods in time.
These differences are evident in the responses to the conflict both domestically in Russia, but also internationally. Uncertainty reigned Europe in the early 1990s, especially in regards of what would become of post-Soviet Russia. The nascent democracy in Russia had been promising, and great optimism ruled European governments. Russia was seemingly eager to live up to westernized democratic standards of society and economy. Russia was in that perspective more willing, although perhaps not enthusiastically, to listen and adjust to external “advice”. Central Russian actors admitted that mistakes had been made launching the first Russo-Chechen war. Western governments, including Norway, while critical, were willing to turn a blind eye to selective violations in Russia as long as the overall situation was improving. The first Russo-Chechen war was notably different compared to the second due to how it ended. The first war was actually brought to an end through peace negotiations facilitated by external international structures, i.e. the OSCE. The, ultimately wasted, window of opportunity had presented itself in the three small years of relative peace in Chechnya. Instead of demanding to get involved, international organizations such as the Council of Europe, the UN and OSCE allowed Russia to isolate the independent Chechen Republic of Ichkeria.

During the second Russo-Chechen war the structural international political situation was more settled with regard to Russia. However, there was also a more pessimistic atmosphere. The Western European governments, including Norway, had since the mid 1990s lost some of the optimism toward the democratic development of Russia. Further, the Western European states, excluding Norway, were becoming increasingly dependent on Russian delivery of energy. With the “War on Terror” unfolding after 9/11 and the need for intelligence on Afghanistan grew, the Russo-Atlantic spirit of cooperation was strengthened.

Alongside this development, the criticism faded. Russia had, since 1999, gained a headstrong leader, who was seemingly more determined than Yeltsin: Vladimir Putin did not waver on his decision to proceed with the extermination of terrorists in what he called the anti-terror campaign in Chechnya. He was considered extremely resolute against any external involvement. This atmosphere made it unlikely that Norway alone would speak up and rebuke Russian conduct publicly.

It is in light of the international relations that the most distinct and exceptional Norwegian approach towards the Russo-Chechen conflict was displayed. Foreign Minister Vollebæk’s engagement as Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE displayed how Norway’s policy towards Chechnya was affected by the structures of international politics. It is hard to discard Vollebæk and the Norwegian MFA’s engagement and efforts to improve the situation in
Chechnya in this period. However, Vollebæk was helpless when the most powerful actors in international politics decided to handle the situation differently. Russia let the international community over the threshold only when it was convenient for the Kremlin. While he was head of the peace solution oriented organization OSCE, Vollebæk also supported the “humanitarian intervention” in Kosovo to discourage Milosevic’s ethnic cleansing of Kosovo-Albanians.

ALL IS RELATIVE?

“The Russo-Chechen conflict has received little attention.” This phrase has in some form been stated so many times that it almost invalidates the statement itself. Without claiming that “all is relative” one must ask – little attention compared to what? The question has appeared while I have examined much material on Chechnya. Some of the material has been specifically on Chechnya, such as NGO reports on human rights in general, or on the situation in Chechnya in particular. Norwegian newspaper articles that mention Chechnya in any way have also been examined. Years of foreign policy debates and other published documents have been perused to see what the documents can tell about Norwegian policy towards the Russo-Chechen conflict. Needless to say, the Russo-Chechen conflict has been discussed among Norway’s political elite; it has been written about in newspapers; thus it has received attention. It has definitely not been forgotten, which has also been another standard phrase. Journalistic coverage of foreign affairs tends to reflect the focus of the government, NGO’s or other “authorities” on the matter. Without blindly following the latter assertion, a media analysis can be used as an indicator.

Comparing the overall “coverage” of the Russo-Chechen conflict with another similar conflict did provide at least one perspective that removes some of the relativity. The search-engine Retriever provided an analysis of the media covering Chechnya, and Kosovo. The analysis result, which can be found in the appendix, confirmed “little attention” towards the Russo-Chechen conflict. As the Kosovo conflict escalated with the Kosovo-Albanian claim for sovereignty its coverage was threefold that of the Russo-Chechen conflict. During autumn 1999, the year of NATO’s bombardment of Serbia and Russia’s invasion of Chechnya, 9,969 articles are documented on Kosovo, as opposed to 1,724 articles on Chechnya. These are the most extreme numbers. Nonetheless, in 2000 as the war raged in Chechnya and Kosovo went into a period of lesser military activity the number of articles on Kosovo was 3,962, as compared with the 1,935 articles on Chechnya. This small and particular analysis is not intended to state much empirically about the coverage of Chechnya and Kosovo in the period.
However, it is meant to provide some perspective on the scale of attention the Russo-Chechen conflict has received.

ONE DISCREPANCY TOO MANY

Norwegian images of Norway as a peace nation and human rights advocate are many and strong. This image collides with reality when Norway interacts with Russia. Shadow and substance of Norwegian human rights advocacy is thoroughly imbalanced. The outspokenness when it comes to criticizing human rights violations seems to become muted somewhere across the Barents Sea and at the Jacobselv border. It seems to be the fear of disturbing the good historical relations and cooperation in the northern areas where Norway has essential resources that prevents Norway from criticising Russia. This again strengthens the impression that Norwegian decision makers have perceptions of Russia that does not correspond with the official version of Russo-Norwegian relations that they present publicly. Norwegian decision makers seem to be of the opinion that they cannot demand of Russia to live up to the standards Russia has committed itself to, through international treaties and agreements. If Norwegian authorities do not believe that Russia can function by the same standards required by others, it is less likely that Norway will demand it. Norway and the rest of Western Europe avoided seriously sanctioning Russia over its human rights violations in Chechnya in fear of disturbing an ongoing democratic process. Western Europe was seemingly afraid of isolating Russia and bringing about a “cold peace”.

Speculating in how the situation for hundreds of thousands of Chechens and Russians could have been different if Western European states had been more consistent in protecting human rights is perhaps pointless. Nonetheless, by allowing Russia to show utmost brutality against a specific group of people, in line with Derek Gregory, through creating a “space of exception”, the double standards have become obvious to all including Russia. Thus, it has seriously weakened the moral authority of human rights, its promoters and activists, and the organizations based on protecting basic rights for all people.

In an op-ed from November 1997 Senior Researcher at NUPI, Henrik Thune, wrote that the Norwegian government has engaged itself with matters and questions where there has reigned a broad consensus among the nations Norway wanted ”to play ball with”. However, he wrote, the government had remained more quiet and unclear on controversial issues such as the Kurds in Turkey, Algeria, East-Timor, Nigeria and Chechnya. He posed the question of

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whether Norway was willing to pay the cost of delivering the moral excellence Norwegian governments often invoke.\textsuperscript{701} In the case of Chechnya the answer was apparently negative.

\textsuperscript{701} Ibid.
APPENDIX

APPENDIX I: MAP OVER CHECHNYA
Dekning over tid

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Tsjetsjenia dekning</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>1 276</td>
<td>1 373</td>
<td>305</td>
<td>241</td>
<td>1 724</td>
<td>1 935</td>
<td>1 230</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kosovo dekning</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>2 329</td>
<td>9 969</td>
<td>3 962</td>
<td>4 433</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>1 405</td>
<td>1 608</td>
<td>542</td>
<td>2 570</td>
<td>11 693</td>
<td>5 897</td>
<td>5 663</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Sek</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tsjetsjenia dekning</td>
<td>2 083</td>
<td>10 369</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kosovo dekning</td>
<td>2 723</td>
<td>24 040</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4 806</td>
<td>34 408</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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**INTERVIEWS:**
Bjørn Tore Godal
Cecilie Landsverk
Kim Traavik
Knut Vollebæk
Odd Gunnar Skagestad

**OTHER:**
Brev til Hilde K. Røsstad fra det Kongelige Utenriksdepartement 22.5.2009, 08/07123-6

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