



INGUSHETIA: BUILDING IDENTITY, OVERCOMING CONFLICT

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Introduction

The Republic of Ingushetia is the smallest in terms of territory of Russia's republics, and numbers 412,997 inhabitants.¹ It was established on 4 June 1992 as a result of the separation from the dual-nationality Checheno-Ingushetia. A large part of the republic is taken by high mountains, the highest peak is 4451m, and the remaining part has a high population density. Birth rates are high and having six or seven children is common in rural areas.

All Ingushetia's leaders came from a security background. General Ruslan Aushev became the first president, but in 2001 was removed by Moscow and replaced with Murat Zyazikov, who was elected to the presidency in controversial circumstances in May 2002. In October 2008 Zyazikov was dismissed. General Yunus-Bek Yevkurov was nominated by President Medvedev and approved as president by the People's Assembly of Ingushetia. Ethnic Ingush oligarch in Moscow Mikhail Gutseriyev, co-owner of Rusneft, and his relatives are among the richest people in Russia.

There is no major industry or budget revenue source in the republic, and it is subsidised by the federal centre. Local opinions perceive the republic's facilities and infrastructure as backward, although field observation did not confirm this. Roads and public buildings have been constructed, communication systems work and housing is of good standard. Consumer goods are on sale and people appear able to buy them. However, there are fewer municipal buildings, such as social clubs and libraries, and overwhelming dissatisfaction with medical facilities. Ingushetia's border with Georgia complicates intra-republic movement. A special permit is required to visit Jeirakh district where a strict border regime is maintained. Ingushetia remains the most isolated among the republics, as there is little there to attract visitors.

In one focus group the older generation respondents were asked to assess what has changed for the better compared to the Soviet times. The benefits of the new era were identified as: (a) consumerism: one can possess things which were inaccessible before; (b) the republic has its own government; (c) roads have improved; (d) federal subsidies are paid; (e) information flow is much richer. Problems nevertheless remain. They are analysed below. The analytical narrative follows the original methodology of the study. All respondents were guaranteed anonymity to enable frank expression of opinion, hence referencing is minimal. The field research was conducted by Anna Matveeva and Igor Savin in December 2011.

¹ Federal State Statistics Service, Results of 2010 Population Census, http://www.gks.ru/free_doc/new_site/perepis2010/perepis_itogi1612.htm, accessed 30 December 2011.

Sources of social tensions

1 Ethnicity/identity

Ingushetia is one of the most mono-ethnic republics of the Federation: the Ingush make up 94.1 percent (385,500) and closely-related Chechens are 4.6 percent (18,800).² Ethnicity played a powerful role as a mobilising factor for the Ingush group actions in 1992 during the Ossetian-Ingush conflict and continues to play a dominant role in strengthening cohesion of the society. Its positive function is expressed through establishment of the new republic, adoption of its symbols, creation of the republic's institutions and building of Magas, the new capital. The republic began constructing its own autonomy as a result of separation between Chechnya and Ingushetia in 1991. The conflict accelerated internal political change, when former Soviet Community Party appointees were leaving their positions, and there was an influx of new people into public office and creation of new administrative structures.

However, the negative consequence is that ethnic consolidation presents a persistent barrier to reconciliation with the Ossetian neighbours. Important pillars of the modern Ingush identity are constituted by a history of victimhood: deportation to Central Asia in 1944 and the Ossetian - Ingush conflict over Prigorodny district. Ethnicity plays the key role in framing a collective image of an 'alien' out of 'other': socially-accepted attitudes towards Ossetians are distinctly negative.

The subject of the conflict in Prigorodny was brought up at their own initiative only by the Ministry of Nationalities focus group respondents. Others did not mention it as a priority problem, but when questioned specifically, articulated the narrative of an 'Ossetian nemesis'. The claim to Prigorodny lands is highly symbolic, deriving from the demand for 'territorial rehabilitation', i.e. the return of Prigorodny to Ingushetia jurisdiction as was the case before 1944, even if such claims are sometimes framed as a livelihood problem.

According to the 1989 census, 32,000 Ingush lived in North Ossetia (not all of them in Prigorodny) and a door-to-door survey in 1992–1993 undertaken by the Office of the Presidential Representative in the Zone of Ossetian-Ingush Conflict gave a figure of up to 42,000 Ingush in North Ossetia. According to the Ministry of Nationalities of Ingushetia data with a reference to FMS, in 2008 there were 10,268 persons who had a status of a 'forced migrant' and were eligible for return. Currently 600 families who have this status are left in the republic. The Ministry of Nationalities reported during the field visit that 60,000 had been originally displaced, but 13,000 do not have the status and are not legible. Activist groups cited a figure of 100,000.

Several villages where the Ingush had lived before the conflict, such as Terk and Chernorechenskoye, fall into the protected water reservoir area where residence is prohibited, and the population has been moved away, including Ossetians and Russians. There is no return into the zone no.1 in which the regime is the strictest,

² Ibid. 2010 population census.

but the rules were recently relaxed in relation to zones no.2 & 3 where some settlement is possible, and some Ingush were returned there. The village of Novy (New) is being built for those who cannot return to their original villages near Chermen. The Ingush returned to Tsarkoye village where their current numbers exceed the resident population numbers in 1989.

There is discrepancy in data received from the two sides: the Ossetian side maintains that three villages are closed for return, while the Ingush side says that 10 villages are closed and seven are partially open in a sense that the Ingush families can live in some parts of a village but not in others. The procedure for return is such that the local authorities and village community members should accept the return of a family who would be their neighbours. In cases when such permissions were not granted (yet), disagreements revolve around whether the local authorities stick to a line emanating from the republic's leadership (Ingush argument) or whether the villagers indeed do not wish to accept certain families.

Return is complicated by the perception that headmasters deny school places for Ingush children, e.g. in Chermen, by the limited numbers of Ingush in the police in North Ossetia and by the inability to settle anywhere in a village – it is allowed only in designated parts. Opinions on inter-ethnic relations differed: some respondents maintained that ordinary people treat the Ingush well, but alter their behaviour for the benefit of the local authorities. Others said that Ossetians are friendly insofar as the Ingush visit but do not try to settle. Most young people never interacted with the Ossetians unless they live alongside them.

The issue of how the conflict is described in Ossetian history books was raised. It was expressed that

“If we live in the same country, it is wrong to teach a one-sided view. Both sides of the story should be represented. It is also wrong to use loaded language to describe the events. A mutually-acceptable version should be elaborated for a national textbook which should be used on both sides.”

In Ingushetia the events of 1992 are not taught as a part of school curriculum. The ‘History of Ingush people’ school manual covers the period up to the 20th century. High schools have hours allocated to teaching of local history, where the choice of topics is left to the teacher who normally avoids discussing the conflict in the classroom. The university history courses include lectures covering the conflict, but have no set curriculum, and the coverage is left to individual lecturers.³

Privately, some Ingush respondents expressed that they continue to maintain social ties with the Ossetians without problem. Educated people of the older generation regret the loss of belonging to Vladikavkaz with its developed city life and urban infrastructure. It may be that there is no particular emotional hatred towards the Ossetian, but a sense that the Ossetians have a stronger lobby in Moscow and that ‘a third party [the federal authorities] should make us make peace with each other.’

³ Respondents at the Ingush Institute of Humanities focus group, Magas, December 2011.

Ethnicity was the key element in forming a political position to separate from Chechno-Ingushetia, in which the Chechens who belong to the kin Vainakh group played a dominant role. This explains the complicated attitude towards the Chechens who are a more famous and bigger nation (the 6th largest group in Russia). The need to separate from the dual-nationality republic, different interests of the two groups and conflict of historiographies mean that the national intelligentsia on both sides have divergent perspectives on the above and other issues. The first 'History of Ingushetia' publication (2011) by the Ingush Institute of Humanities produced a controversial reaction on the Chechen side. The Ingush academics expressed that they failed to receive archive documents and museum exhibits in response to their request to the Chechen Academy of Sciences. It was noted that 'some in Chechnya are sensitive about the emergence of a separate Ingush identity.' This issue had been raised in 1992 following the separation, but was not resolved at the time. Subsequently, the two wars in Chechnya destroyed much of the archive and museum heritage.

The presence of 30,000 IDPs from Chechnya produces mixed reactions. 29 temporary residence centres (TRCs) currently function for the displaced from Chechnya and North Ossetia, but the authorities intend to close them down. On the one hand, sympathy towards those who suffered in the wars continues. On the other hand, pressure on social infrastructure in conditions of high population density and a permanent humanitarian burden are unwelcome. Many Chechen IDPs were said to aspire to stay in the republic, but it is difficult to get naturalised and obtain a residence permit, which in theory should be possible as all of them are Russian Federation citizens, but in reality face various administrative obstacles. Another issue is connected with the republic's borders which in 2011 had to be demarcated. When Ingushetia seceded from Chechnya, border issues appeared of little relevance as both republics were swept by bigger challenges. They emerged when formal arrangements had to be established.

The mono-ethnicity of the republic is not viewed as an asset, but as a handicap. A regret that minorities left is felt across ages and social groups. It was expressed that it is a loss that Russians left and would be good if they returned. Russians are seen as a symbol of the good old times, and do not present a threat and a competitor in the same sectors. Presently cultural, educational and language policies work towards strengthening of the Ingush identity and weakening of the 'all-Russia factor.' The most evident is the decline of Russian language. Cultural norms typical in Russia, e.g. that men and women can share the same cinema hall or young people of both sexes can go to a café together, do not apply in Ingushetia.

The clash between tradition and modernity creates a dynamic tension, when society uses modern means, such as Internet and mobile technology, but strives to revive earlier social norms. Local customs (*adat*) form an important reference system in which the society develops. Certain customs against which the Soviet system pursued an uncompromising fight, are making a come back, such as blood revenge and honour killings. The communities are caught between *Shari'a*, customary law

and the Russian secular system which evolved through the Imperial, Soviet and modern times.

Another identity marker that explains the formation of an 'them and us' dichotomy, is an uneasy mix of an all-Russian and Caucasian identity. All-Russian identity is much stronger among the older generation. Anti-Caucasian attitudes in mainland Russia, populist discourse, 'Up with the Russians!' football chants, use of derogatory terms and the way central media reports on 'Caucasian cases' were passionately condemned by the respondents. Here the public thinking is contradictory: one focus group asked to create a centre for resolution of conflicts in the Caucasus and at the same time wanted the term 'Caucasian' to be banned. It was remarked that if Russian state identity is based on the multi-confessional character of the Federation, the state leadership should not be overtly Christian. "Putin and Medvedev should not be shown on the TV with a candle in the church. If they wish to be Christian, they should keep it private." However, people do not see anything strange in very public displays of Islam in Ingushetia.

The discourse on juxtaposition of a Caucasian and an all-Russia identity revolves around the notion that people regard themselves as Russian citizens in the version which appears to suit them: "we are the same citizens of Russia, but we should not be treated like all other Russia's citizens in all [every] cases. We have our own specificity and we require special treatment."⁴

2 Religion

Religious infrastructure is as follows: The Spiritual Board of Muslims [or *muftiyat*] is the main interface between the mosque and the state, but it is possible to register a separate mosque at the Ministry of Justice, e.g. if it adheres to a certain Sufi *virid*⁵ and be autonomous from the *muftiyat*. There are 55 *madrassas* in the republic (three in Nazran) signifying that religious education is gaining momentum, 67 Friday mosques (including in Prigorodny) and over 200 local everyday mosques. Islamic institute in Nazran was closed down and presently an Islamic university exists in Malgobek. It has a wide range of subjects and its graduates can work in a variety of secular jobs. 180 students study there. 120 men study at the Islamic institute in *stanitsa* Ordjonikidzievskaya, which already had three sets of graduations. Graduates can only work in mosques and schools. A religion foundation course was introduced at schools in 1998 taught by 250 people paid out of the state budget.

Home-based informal religious education apparently exists, although the official clergy denies it. It does not appear that it substitutes secular education or that informal Islamic institutions replace state functions. Unregistered mosques also may exist. Islamists used to have their own mosques, but they were closed down. A *qaziate* (*shari'a* court), functions under the auspices of the *muftiyat*. It mostly considers civil cases and provides arbitration, settles compensation claims, recovers

⁴ A view expressed in the students' focus group, December 2011, Nazran.

⁵ Fraternity.

debts and reconciles sides in disputes. It does not have enforcement powers and both sides should agree to refer their dispute to *qaziate*.

State-sponsored religious policies are assessed by the older respondents as contributing to the needs of an increasingly religious society. The introduction of a religion foundation course at schools was assessed as successful in preventing further radicalisation among youth. The *qaziate* performs a genuine function conducive to community needs.⁶ At the same time, competition among Muslim clergy between individuals who are more committed, but less connected with the authorities, and those who thrive because of the connections, causes dismay. Younger people are frustrated with the lack of commitment and communication skills among the official clergy. They do not trust religious authorities who do not live according to the rules.

Overall, religion is a growing element which consolidates the nation. The leitmotif is that 'the national cause has outlived itself and religious cause moved to the forefront'⁷ Secularism, on the contrary, is in retreat, withering away amidst the spread of public expressions of a religious way of life. Religion serves as a powerful identity marker: it is impossible to be an Ingush and not be a Muslim: "If you are outside religion, you are outside of society." In an absence of a secular constituency there is nothing to oppose the religious advance, even if not everybody is happy with it. Religion rules in ritual and public norms, but real behaviour and morality may be different, such as secret drinking, betrayal for the sake of career, desire to get rich at any cost.⁸

Inter-confessional tensions between Islam and Christianity are not articulated publicly, but are acted upon. The Pokrov church at stanitsa Ordjonikidzievskaya was shot at with machineguns and a grenade launcher three times between 2009–2011. When two young Ingush women converted to Christianity, one was killed and the other went into hiding.⁹ An initiative to build interconfessional rapprochement by Muslim and Christian Orthodox clergy ended in a fiasco when both the mosque and the church from where the respective clergy came from were set on fire.

Religion undermines other affiliations among young people, and defines the most important cleavages in society. Intraconfessional tensions exist between the traditionalists who adhere to Sufi *tariqats*¹⁰, and the 'new' Muslims who are locally called '*Wahhabis*' or 'those who headed for the forest'.

Religion plays a formative role in the ideology of the struggle against social injustice and a perceived moral breakdown in society. The most acute tensions are between the secularists and the Islamists, associated with armed opposition to the ruling

⁶ A person among the respondents who had an experience of using *quaziyat*, interview, Nazran, December 2011.

⁷ University focus group respondent, Nazran, December 2011.

⁸ Marem Yalkharoyeva interview, Nazran, December 2011.

⁹ Anonymous interview in Ingushetia, December 2011.

¹⁰ Order. '*Tariqat*' means a path towards cognition of God. As there are different paths, there are different *tariqats*. The term is normally applied to Sufi orders.

establishment and to the secular order. Underground groups are based in forested terrain [hence the expression of 'headed for the forest'], while others live in the communities, leading a seemingly ordinary life. In the views of young respondents, the Ingush society consists of those who joined underground armed groups, those who combat them (security structures) and the rest of the people caught in-between, some of whom share the sentiment behind the armed struggle, but do not approve of the violent methods used.

There exist two ideas: one which calls for peaceful Islam, and the other, for militant Islam. If one evaluates both ideas objectively, one has to admit that the 'forest' idea is stronger. The system of education of people's [official] spiritual leaders is weak. We all see that [they] read monotonously in mosques, but if one wants to convey a message, one should know how to do this. Such leaders are few and they are seldom allowed to practice. There must be leaders whom young people would listen to.

An idea of 'fighting Russian power which always oppressed us' forms a streak in the Islamist appeal, but arguably, not a main sentiment. This is confirmed by relatively scarce attacks on the federal representatives and security forces.

3 *Generation Gap*

Most respondents interviewed, especially the younger ones, were adamant that no such thing as a generation gap exists. However, interviews with older respondents and field observation showed that differences are many. Life prospects for the bulk of young people are narrower and include law-enforcement sector for men, teaching profession and other public service for women, private business organised through family networks, agriculture and crime. The older generation had other elements, such as belonging to all-Union professional networks, work at industrial enterprises or service in the Soviet army. Thus, their experience and expectations differ.

The ways of achieving social success for the younger generation has changed since Soviet times, as nepotism plays a bigger role in securing careers. It was stressed that blood ties are important in getting a job and that without the help of relatives it is difficult to get anywhere. The pattern is the same in public and in private sectors. Many expressed that it was hard for young people to find formal jobs, although nobody complained of poverty. Young people talked about employment not in terms of income generation, but as a way of self-fulfilment.

Prestigious and non-prestigious jobs exist, as the presence of cheaper labour migrants from Uzbekistan shows, and men are more likely to engage in non-prestigious jobs outside their republic. The research did not unveil evidence that formal unemployment is likely to lead to violent behaviour. The formally unemployed are engaged in the building industry, act as drivers and work on the land. They are also drawn into public works organised by the municipal authorities

where they are supposed to be paid up to four hours a day, but money does not always come.

Socialisation at the workplace between people of diverse backgrounds reduced due to a decline in public sector employment, while the private sector is often organised along family lines. Alternatives to socialisation at the workplace or colleges for the young people are few. They do not have the same cultural facilities as their parents did, for instance a cinema, or festivities where people could meet, or organised outings in the countryside. Mechanisms of social control also altered. Although the custom is that the younger defer to the old, in reality the younger generation exercises social control over the older who are more tolerant to drinking, smoking, socialising with the opposite sex and generally are more drawn to 'European culture'.

Ways of influencing social behaviour of young people include what is fashionable globally, but relevant locally, which may be *hijab* schools that carry a message of defiance, belonging to a like-minded group and adhering to a fashion. Many young people are at a crossroads – they have active, curious but unengaged minds which can be turned in different directions, from positive to destructive. The role of the internet and mobile technology is prominent in accessing new ideas, creating new linkages and forms of solidarity. Some students are willing to go and fight for a 'just cause' in the Middle East, a sentiment apparently derived from the internet. In a society where social interaction is limited, virtual participation becomes more relevant.

A problem of communication between generations is apparent not only in relation to prophecies of the official clergy, but also when older people try to explain the new life in the old terms, such as of the Soviet dissident discourse.¹¹ The influential figure for young people is the first president, Aushev, because he reflects the awakening of political consciousness of the Ingush, had a popular mandate and is distinguished for personal courage. The other role models are famous wrestlers and boxing champions (one woman kickboxing champion). It is worth noting that no respondents mentioned the oligarch Mikhail Gutseriyev as a role model.

4 *Migration*

Ingushetia has only four towns and intra-republic migration from rural to urban areas does not lead to much difference in lifestyle. Still, those Ingush who migrated from Grozny find it more difficult to settle in, as they are accustomed to a more urbanised life. Azerbaijanis are also newcomers. The abundance of traders and agricultural produce from Azerbaijan shows that like elsewhere in Russia, they have a comparative advantage over the locals in food industry and retail. Azerbaijanis were said to wish to settle permanently and obtain Russian citizenship, but this is difficult.

¹¹ "Why are they saying this? They are elders and supposed to be wise, they should know better", was a reaction of a younger person after a focus group with distinguished older people.

In terms of life chances, young people believe that in central Russia employment opportunities are fairer. Job competition and recruitment interviews exist there, and it is possible to apply through an ad and get a job on merit. In Ingushetia “the only job I’ve ever seen openly recruited for, was of an office cleaner”, said a student. Out of nine respondents in a youth focus group five declared their willingness to leave the republic after graduation. Integration into local society in big cities of the Federation was not perceived as a problem by the would-be migrants.

Russian Minority

According to the 2010 census, 3,200 Russians live in Ingushetia. The federal programme on repatriation of Russians who left and support for the remaining population is underway. The Russian respondents were very grateful to the federal and republic’s authorities for the support they receive. Rebuilding of Pokrov church and a job creation scheme are diligently implemented by the republic’s authorities.¹² The Russians stressed that local police look after their interests. Still, the prospects and the desire to return among those who left are weak.

Firstly, the community is ageing: middle-aged and old people, mostly women, are left behind. There is roughly one christening per month, seven weddings occurred in two years, but they were mostly old couples who decided to have a church ceremony. The funerals, however, are plenty.¹³ There are hardly any young men left, and women who wish to marry look outside. Secondly, it does not take much to scare people off. The Russian cemetery visited has been booby-trapped and an explosion took place at the burial of a Russian teacher, in which the funeral procession members were maimed. The cemetery is abandoned, as relatives take their dead for burial elsewhere. A notice from families and friends is placed on the gates apologising for being unable to provide care for their dead.¹⁴

One effect of the vastly-diminished numbers of Russians is a declining knowledge of the Russian language among children. This is a problem when Ingush children enter schools where the official medium of instruction is Russian, while they speak only Ingush and the teachers are also mostly Ingush. In practice, the teachers speak a mixture, trying to explain the material and educate their pupils in Russian. Sometimes pupils can read a text without understanding the meaning. They also have two hours of Ingush per week.¹⁵

Communities and institutions: relations and mutual trust

5 *Political institutions*

¹² Interview with Tamara Yandiyeva and focus group respondents at stanitsa Ordjonikidziyevskaya, 18 December 2011.

¹³ Interview with Russian Orthodox priest, Pokrov church, 18 December 2011.

¹⁴ Visit to the cemetery, stanitsa Ordjonikidziyevskaya, 18 December 2011.

¹⁵ Interview with Tamara Yandiyeva.

Formal institutions are seen by the public as the main agent for responding to challenges facing society. They should be made to work properly, whereas disappointment results when this is not the case. Low levels of trust towards civilian and security institutions were registered. The main issues are governance based on corruption and nepotism, the republic's authorities unaccountable to the local constituency but motivated by pleasing Moscow, and arbitrary, non-transparent actions of security structures.

Corruption and nepotism not only undermine employment prospects, but create a sense of injustice and inequality of opportunity. It was commonly expressed that job-buying of senior appointments is widespread. Figures were given on how much this or that position costs, 'which is known by every student'. Respondents give bribe-taking as the reason for what they see as the poor professional qualities of government appointees and reluctance to take on better-qualified staff. It must be stressed that these are public perceptions that cannot be verified by the authors of this report. Investigations and prosecutions are rare. A case was cited where Moscow came close to launching a prosecution against officials towards the end of Zyazikov's rule when large sums of federal money went missing, but backed off in apprehension that the move might aggravate the security situation.

Some focus group respondents noted that "the number one problem is the lack of dialogue between the authorities and the population." Others expressed that the current Head of the Republic is more tolerant to dissent than the previous one, and that non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and opposition figures meet with him regularly and can express their views.

Levels of trust between institutions at different levels and communities vary. On the one hand, Ingushetia is a small republic where elite circles are fairly small and distances between people and power are not as huge as elsewhere. This makes the authorities accessible. For instance, respondents in Ekajevo noted that it is possible to express local concerns through the People's Assembly deputies and pass signals to the top through the district head. On the other hand, although the powers are willing to listen, little changes as a result. The republic's authorities are seen as part of a closed world of the 'federal outsiders': "the top guys feed on federal subsidies, the ordinary people only see terror from the powers."

All three republic presidents have been criticised in some way, with Zyazikov featuring badly. The presently-popular Aushev, believed to have been removed by the Kremlin for his opposition to the second war in Chechnya and to the arbitrary actions of the security structures, was said to be as detached from the people during his rule as the current powers are. The Muslim clergy also had turned against him. Aushev is blamed for destroying and privatising the republic's industries, and for standing up to Moscow for Chechnya too eagerly, while neglecting the interests of the Ingush. In this logic, Aushev was a good politician, but a bad 'statesman', with not enough flexibility in his dealings with Moscow to get benefits for the republic.

Ramzan Kadyrov compares favourably with Ruslan Aushev in the widely discussed example of Chechnya. Kadyrov is seen as a good manager who succeeded in extracting funds from Moscow and a creator who built something new from the rubble. The following quote is typical for young respondents: "I would like it to be here as it is in Chechnya. It is beautiful, ideal in Chechnya."¹⁶

However, it was stressed that Yunus-bek Yevkurov's leadership relies on more humane methods to combat Islamists and offers a way out for those disillusioned with the armed struggle, and in this sense compares more favourably to the rough treatment by Kadyrov. Yevkurov has been criticised for his personnel policy, but credited with the campaign to end blood feuds. He managed to reconcile 150 families, helping them to save face. Civilian authorities and Yevkurov personally were reported to have rescued young men during the security forces' attempts to unlawfully kill or abduct them. Yevkurov initiated the Ingush Games which became the Caucasus Games and a chance for the local youth to get into big sports. The Head of the Republic made steps to overcome isolation of the republic: pilgrims can leave for Mecca from Ingushetia's Manas airport. Still, Yevkurov is blamed for being too pliant to the centre in agreeing to formalise the settlement of the Prigorodny conflict, which means dropping the claim of territorial rehabilitation in exchange of return, compensations and normalisation of relations.

Although dissent is tolerated, there is no viable political competition in the republic. Local government bodies were formed only in October 2009 when the first-ever elections to the municipal bodies took place,¹⁷ but there is still no real self-government. The Federal Law on Local Government no. 131 caused negative feedback. Respondents noted that the three-tier system for a small republic is too cumbersome. Administrative heads are elected by the council deputies, not by the population. Self-nomination of candidates is made impossible, which is not conducive for a small republic where the federal parties are underdeveloped. The federal Constitutional Court made a ruling on 7 July 2011 to allow self-nomination in small constituencies, but this ruling is not observed.¹⁸ Interference from the top descends to a petty level: in Pliyevno municipality a village head was dismissed reportedly because of pressure from the leadership, although only the council can remove administrators. The village council elected a replacement – a candidate from Spravedlivaya Rossiya party (A Just Russia) – instead of the one preferred by Magas. The authorities hit back by making it impossible for the elected head to take office.¹⁹

¹⁶ Focus group at Polytechnic College, Nazran, December 2011.

¹⁷ Bogatyreva M, 'В Ингушетии проходят первые в истории республики муниципальные выборы,' 11 October 2009, <http://ingushetia.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/160526/> accessed on 2 January 2012.

¹⁸ The ruling says that 'municipal elections in small rural settlements with a small number of deputies' should not be held exclusively on the basis of proportional representation (party lists). However, this was not observed in 4 December 2011 elections to local bodies which were held on the basis of party lists. In Guseva D, 'Районных депутатов выберут «взакрытую»: Сельсоветы продолжают выбирать по партийным спискам,' 9 November 2011, <http://www.mn.ru/politics/20111109/306996093.html> accessed on 2 January 2012.

¹⁹ Varki T, 'В Ингушетии местные депутаты отстаивают результаты муниципальных выборов главы села Плиево,' 1 August 2011, <http://www.angusht.com/index.php?news=46695> accessed 2 January 2012.

The council complained to the Prosecutor's office which was aware of the illegality of the situation, but replied that "since we did not receive any instruction from Moscow, we would not interfere into the case."

The results of the December 2011 Duma elections recorded a 90 percent voter turnout in Ingushetia, of which 78.1 percent voted for United Russia party. The elections and the protests in Russian big cities were widely discussed and the republic's results were disputed. The overwhelming sense was that "we feel hurt by these unreal percentages attributed to us. We are also Russia's citizens and resent electoral fraud." However, no protests are possible, because people believe that this may entail putting their lives in danger.

Because neither Zyazikov nor Yevkurov were genuinely elected, it is natural for the people to view them as an 'alien' power accountable to the centre, but not to the constituency at home: 'they are not Ingush'. People are aware that decisions to keep or sack republic politicians are made by Moscow based on its own criteria, and are unsure whether their opinions matter.

6 *Security and law-enforcement institutions*

Local observers trace the start of a noticeable movement of young people into Islamist groups to 2004–2005 period when security forces began to shoot at the houses of suspected militants.²⁰ Insecurity peaked in 2007–2008 and has decreased since. In 2011 40 militants were shot dead by security forces and 31 persons were persuaded to submit themselves to the Republic's Anti-terrorist Commission. Twenty of them had the charges of participation in the illegal armed formations dropped.

Security authorities report a record reduction in people joining armed groups: no one 'headed for the forest' since September. Currently people born in the 1980s prevail among the groups' members. 11 people were put on trial in Malgobek, which at the time of writing was on-going. Photographs of suspected members of illegal armed groups are available on the Ingush Interior Ministry website²¹ and are placed on billboards at administrations and public places.²² Field observation showed that these measures are formal: Xeroxed images are of poor quality and barely legible, and there is no distinction between missing persons and those suspected of crime.

Respondents noted that, compared to the Zyazikov period, explosions, armed raids and killings of administrators and police became far less frequent, and incidents of ordinary crime decreased. At the same time, "we acquired the first suicide bombers from among the Ingush." It was also noted that the arrival of 'new' money brings new bouts of insecurity. Security operations were believed to bring success in uncovering arms caches in the woods and interrupting financial flows. Local police is vested with overseeing their territorial areas. It works with the Muslim clergy, elders and municipal administrations to keep track of the developments. As a result,

²⁰ Ministry of Nationalities focus group, Nazran, 16 December 2011.

²¹ Ministry of Interior of Ingushetia, <http://mvd-ing.ru/finder/crime/> accessed 2 January 2012.

²² Interview with Akhmet Kotiyev, Secretary of the Security Council, Magas, December 2011.

administrators come under attack from members of armed groups. The Ekajevo administration – visited for this report – which also hosts police premises, was blown up twice.

People avoid travelling by road after dark and get accustomed to living in conditions of insecurity. An Ingush woman who recently came to the republic from Kazakhstan initially reacted with dismay to the sight of armoured vehicles, reinforced checkpoints, special forces with machineguns and women in public transport discussing violent incidents as a mundane experience. She subsequently got used to it. However, in the words of another respondent, a persistent feeling that one might be in the wrong place at the wrong time and sadness when hearing news when somebody was attacked or killed create a joyless, depressive atmosphere. Public buildings either associated with the state, such as police stations, administrative premises, post offices, or deemed un-Islamic, such as a cinema, poolrooms or restaurants, come under attack. Just before the mission arrived in Nazran a radio-controlled improvised explosive device was detonated at the roadside, killing one serviceman and wounding two.²³

Political institutions are not viewed as a source of social tensions to the same degree as security institutions are. Security authorities have been blamed for shooting Islamist suspects on the spot without trial and for detention of relatives, especially brothers, of known or suspected militants. According to human rights groups, parents are pressurised into keeping quiet under a threat that other children could be also arrested. It was reported that security agencies use torture, unsanctioned arrests and searches. The population is insufficiently aware of their legal rights to insist on formal procedures to be observed. The prosecutor's office, vested with overseeing this is seen as providing a veneer of legitimacy to unjustified actions of the authorities.

There were also reports that police use raids on houses for personal enrichment, and that security structures can use detentions as fundraising opportunities and blackmail the families to buy their members out of custody. Often relatives of accused or killed Islamists refuse to believe that their children participated in the Islamist struggle and claim that charges against them have been fabricated. Security and civilian authorities maintain that this is a reaction of grieving parents who believe in their children's innocence no matter what, and that evidence against them is solid. Village administrators in Ekajevo, where a counter-terrorist operation against Said Buryatskii and his group took place in 2010, expressed that parents of the detainees kept appealing to them to exonerate their sons, who were of 'good character', and to have them freed from custody.

Abductions remain a problem. The practice started up under Zyazikov, when the first victims were abducted from Chechen IDP camps. The first abducted Ingush was a 75-year-old man taken in 2002. Typically, people are abducted when there is no legal evidence against them – evidence may be circumstantial or they simply might have

²³ http://mvd-ing.ru/news/?PAGEN_1=6, accessed 16 December 2011.

witnessed something they should not. There has been a wave of abductions in Prigorodny in 2004–2007 when 23 persons went missing (21 Ingush and 2 Chechens). An ethnic Ingush FSB officer Kilimatov was nominated by Moscow to investigate the cases and was killed by an Ingush assassin in 2007. After the murder abductions in Prigorodny stopped. In 2009 14 people were abducted and in 2010, 13 people.²⁴ According to Mashr, altogether over 200 persons are missing.

Data on those killed in Ingushetia

Year	Total
2006	96
2007	127
2008	212
2009	304
2010	160

Proliferation of Islamist fighters is blamed on the ineffectiveness of the security agencies in the earlier period: "How did they allow it to happen?" was a common refrain. Security forces from North Ossetia or federal agencies based in North Ossetia are suspected of participation in abductions and raids [respondents cited circumstantial evidence], but it is uncertain whether this is the case.

Heads of security agencies are staffed by appointees from the centre, mostly ethnic Russians. The respondents noted this as positive: "when Russians are in top jobs, there is less suspicion of clan rule, and the information, signed by a Russian, which goes to Moscow, comes across as more plausible."²⁵ Apparently, there is no different perception on ethnic Russian or Ingush officers in security structures, because they are seen as a part of the same whole. A young man illegally detained and tortured was questioned by the family on who was beating him, and replied that they were police of both nationalities and they behaved the same.²⁶ It was said that "without locals, the federals would not have been able to do much here."²⁷

Assessment of the efforts towards stabilisation and perceptions of their impact

Resolution of conflict in Prigorodny District

28,000 Ingush returned to Prigorodny, but there are disputed numbers of who should be considered an IDP with a right to return. In October 2008 a federal law no. 274 was adopted that offered financial compensation to those who did not wish to wait for return, to buy new homes. About half of those eligible for return opted for the compensation. Few felt grateful for the repatriation programme or the compensation for lost housing. That was partly understandable from the bitterness and sense of grievance they had from before. The popular argument on the Ingush side is to regard the federal authorities as too lenient towards the Ossetians, instead

²⁴ All data on abductions and the figures of the dead provided by *Mashr*, interview, Karabulak.

²⁵ Focus group, anonymous respondents, Nazran.

²⁶ Interview with a relative of the young man, Nazran

²⁷ Human rights activist interview.

of pressuring them into allowing an unimpeded return and free settlement for the Ingush.

Repatriation of Russians

The Ministry of External Relations, Nationalities, Press and Information implements the 'Return and Arrangements for the [residing] Russian-speaking Population, 2010–2015' programme, for which 81 million roubles were allocated from the republic's budget for six years. 12,300,000 roubles were allocated for 2011, making it 50,000 roubles per household (£1,000). However, it is unclear how the 'Russian speakers' are defined. The Ministry appealed to the Prosecutor's office for explanation, and was told that a definition does not exist and that the programme may target all minorities. The Ministry fulfils the programme, but believes that return is unrealistic and the best it can do is to preserve the remaining communities.

Welfare

The interviewed urban and rural respondents evaluated their economic level as middle-income. Most women in rural areas do not have formal employment and tend to their children and garden plots. Federal subsidies mitigate the effects of unemployment. They are allocated dependent on population numbers. The 2010 census proved controversial because the censuses counted the *de facto* population which differs from the officially-registered one because of high migration. For instance, Ekajevo administrators believe that they have 31,600 residents, against 15,600 counted by the census. This would mean a decrease in subsidies for the village. Local businessmen engage in Muslim charity and sometimes allocate aid for the most vulnerable or sponsor a public activity, but none of them are rich.

Awareness programmes to prevent radicalisation

A punitive approach to security problems mostly prevailed under Zyazikov, while methods of persuasion have been boosted by Yevkurov. An Anti-Terrorist Commission was set up with participation from civilian and security officials, and civil society. It provides amnesty to those who have participated in illegal armed formations if they voluntarily submitted themselves to the Commission, but not from other crimes, such as robbery or murder. Such crimes entail a prison sentence, but voluntarily giving oneself to the authorities may reduce the term.

The Ministry of Nationalities implements the republic's programme on 'Spiritual and Moral Education.' It engages *muftiyat* in campaigning at mosques and on TV and held an academic conference on 'Islam in Russia.' The *muftiyat* delivers lectures to student audiences together with the Nazran imam, every first Monday of the month organises a meeting for imams to inform them of the important current issues and suggest possible topics for sermons, about which the imams can make their own decisions. However, the lack of authoritative Muslim leaders who could motivate the communities accordingly was noted.

Discussions at the *muftiyat* revealed that the programme is undertaken formally and with little conviction, no clear understanding exists on what are the doctrinal dividing lines between the traditionalists and the Islamists. The clergy was not interested in its target audience and was reluctant to engage with the popular websites, which publish unflattering commentaries about the official clergy and *muftiyat* in particular. There are no special programmes aimed at women and unemployed youth.

Radio Angusht was established in 2010 under the auspices of the *muftiyat* and is sponsored by a grant from the programme. Its aim is to project traditionalist Islamic beliefs to counterbalance Islamist propaganda. 30 percent of broadcasts are in Russian and 70 percent in Ingush. The topics are mostly allocated by the *muftiyat* and the ministry. The radio programmes inform the audience on how the world in its ideal state should be and proclaim general positions, but are reluctant to engage with the pressing issues of today, e.g. they avoid discussion of inter-ethnic fights involving young men from the republic, mostly outside Ingushetia. It also seeks to promote positive role models, such as famous Ingush sportsmen, *ulema*²⁸ who managed to sustain the community during conflicts and ethnic Ingush World War II heroes. There are no ratings on the numbers of listeners the radio station has, which ages and gender make up the audience and which broadcasts are popular.

The radio has a feedback function and the audience can submit questions on topics of interest, such as headscarves at schools, should Islamic radio provide secular news, should it broadcasts *nasheeds* [Islamic vocal music] in Arabic and should it have programmes in Russian. However, the feedback is not monitored. The topics of terrorism, explosions, Islamic martyrs and those ‘who headed for the forest’ are not discussed.

Work with the youth is also done through educational establishments. The state university involves the students in various social and educational activities, holds thematic forums and sends students to the youth political camp at Seliger with a view of offering them an alternative. The polytechnic College runs numerous activities, social clubs for students, takes part in all-Russia contests where it won prestigious awards, and has a dance troupe.

Public consultation mechanisms

A Council of *Teips* and a ‘Youth Government’ have been created to enable public consultation, but doubts were expressed with regard to their legitimacy and effectiveness. The Council of *Teips* was intended to represent all *teips*, each sending an elected representative to the Council. Questions were raised if the elections happened, and why a *teip* structure should substitute local government elections which would be more appropriate in the 21st century. Likewise, the ‘youth government’ has resigned, reportedly because it started to take its responsibilities too seriously.

²⁸ Muslim clergy.

Yevkurov created a public chamber and a human rights commission, but in the view of respondents who dealt with them personally, both are fairly ineffective. There is also an *Ulema* Council.²⁹ The intelligentsia respondents assessed the measures as being of mostly declaratory nature, poorly implemented or not implemented at all. There is a sense that the leadership at heart prefers a top-down approach as it is easier to govern by giving orders and instructions rather than building consensus around strategic issues. The Anti-Terrorist Commission headed by the Head of the Republic plays an important public relations role, but reintegration into society is hindered by blood vengeance from relatives of those killed by armed groups.

Federal authorities

Moscow civilian representatives seldom visit and engage in Ingushetia other than on the issue of Prigorodny where Moscow is perceived as biased. The 2008 war in South Ossetia resonated in a perception that Moscow was quick to come to the rescue of the Ossetians there, but “has not been solving problems of its own citizens [in Prigorodny] for nineteen years.”

Civilian administrators appointed by Moscow, such as Ingushetia’s ex-premier Alexei Vorobiyev (October 2009 – March 2011), were remembered well for a strict but fair approach to governance. Local perceptions are that Moscow is not dealing with eradicating corruption and is prepared to close its eyes on embezzlement of the federal transfers, as long as the security structures are allowed to operate unimpeded by the leadership.

There were comments on federal security appointees, that they come for a year, have better salaries, long holidays, rent flats in Vladikavkaz rather than in Ingushetia, do not speak the language and need to be accompanied by Ingush minders. The conclusion is that all powers should be given to the locals, as is the case in Chechnya, with minimal interference from the centre. This is certainly not what the centre is likely to concede. However, thought could be given to a better integration between central and local staff, for example to make external staff reside in the republic rather than in North Ossetia or make inroads into learning the language and culture.

The respondents, however, did not expect change in the short to medium term. They think that at some point another appointee with security background would be sent by the federal centre, who would not be much different from the previous ones.

Civil Society

The human rights field has a small but staunch constituency of activists. The ‘Mashr’ NGO works on the issue of disappearances, which in most cases are people abducted by security agencies, provides legal aid for the relatives of detained persons, conducts legal awareness and monitoring of the human rights situation. An NGO

²⁹ Council of Muslim clergy.

Coordination Council has been established. NGO respondents compared the present times favourably to the 1990s, stressing that civil society has emerged and the legislative base has become far more developed.

The intelligentsia was blamed for the lack of self-reflection and public discourse. There is a very narrow audience for critical journalism, as people mostly watch TV and do not read newspapers although they are fairly free to cover difficult issues, such as abductions, investigation and prosecutions, and to follow particular cases.³⁰

Conclusion

What people see in need of improvement in their lives was summarised by one focus group and reflects the prevailing discourse on priority problems:

- End of 'Wahhabism' / Islamism
- Entertainment/ leisure facilities and pursuits for young people
- The power should be elected, obey the law and be fair.
- Employment situation should improve. It should be possible to find a decent job without reliance on relatives.
- Federal media should behave responsibly and make efforts to promote inter-group accord in society.

Affected by isolation, low urbanisation and virtual mono-ethnicity, the republic is increasingly adopting an Islamic way of life where the secular constituency does not dare to raise a voice. It is drifting further away from Russian cultural and social space. It is unclear whether an Islamic quasi-state within the Federation is emerging, and, if so, where this would lead. The main fault line lies between traditional and new Muslims (or 'those who headed for the forest' or are looking that way).

Security in the last two years has improved and deadly attacks are rare. Resettlement of the displaced to Prigorodny district is underway, and the republic's leaderships of North Ossetia and Ingushetia cooperate in normalisation of relations. Still, tensions between Ingush and North Ossetian communities and local authorities remain, police cooperation is deficient and there are reportedly more people willing to return than are officially entitled to. However, the danger that interethnic violence can flare up again is low for now.

³⁰ Interview with Marem Yalkaroyeva, *Ingushetia* newspaper journalist, and focus group response from Vakhach Chapanov, *Maximum* information agency.

This case study is part of a wider research project implemented by Saferworld in the North Caucasus.

The main report, 'The North Caucasus: views from within. People's perspectives on peace and security' is available at:

Case studies from the individual republics can be accessed on the Saferworld website:

www.saferworld.org.uk/PPP/chechnya

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