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Chechnya - the Russian Federation in crisis
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Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Group
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Republic</th>
<th>Income per person</th>
<th>Population '000</th>
<th>Population '95</th>
<th>% of Russians 1989</th>
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Source for demographic chart: The Economist, 14 January 1995: 95
Major Issues

The breaking away of Eastern Europe from the Soviet orbit in 1989/90 and the break up of the Soviet Union into 15 "successor states" in 1991 would appear to have been but the first and second stage of what might be an ongoing unravelling of "the Russian Empire". The third stage might be the disintegration of "Russia" itself.

Tsarist policies made Russians the conquerors and colonisers of hundreds of ethnic groups. Lenin's policy of turning this "indivisible" empire into a Federation of ethnically-defined constituent parts was designed to offer an imaginary autonomy to people who would in time lose their nationalist aspirations. Stalin's policies of dividing related peoples, grouping together unrelated ones and deporting 'suspect' ones were designed to improve central control. Ironically, the above policies only strengthened ethnic identification, heightened separatist aspirations, and offered ethnic groups the administrative infrastructure to pursue greater autonomy. The new Russian Federation has inherited these and other difficult legacies of Tsarist and Soviet policies.

The Chechens were one of the last Caucasian people to be conquered by the Russians and they have strong memories of the Russian conquest, colonisation, political and territorial manipulation and, most significantly of all, the thirteen year deportation to Central Asia. In 1991 a defacto division of the joint Ingush-Chechen Republic occurred when the leader of the All-National Congress of the Chechen People, General Dudayev, overthrew the Soviet government in Chechnya, declared de facto independence and called for elections, which he later won. Russian President Yeltsin declared the election void, but the Russian troops send to arrest Dudayev were blockaded at the airport by Chechens. Moscow could do little more than refuse to recognise Chechen independence, impose a blockade and hope the defiant regime would collapse. The more Moscow denounced Dudayev, however, the more easily he was able to position himself as a hero, silence his rivals and project his influence.

By 1994 General Dudayev was seen in Moscow not only as an unwanted precedent (given the independence aspirations of several other Federation members) and a threat to stability in the Caucasus, but also as an obstacle to Russia having its way in the negotiations with Azerbaijan over a proposed new oil pipeline route. With civil war breaking out in Chechnya the time seemed right for covert Russian action. The latter culminated in the November coup attempt in which dozens of Russians were captured. Although the Russian parliament set about negotiating the release of the hostages, the Yeltsin administration (clearly perceiving Chechnya as part of Russia despite the fact that it had not signed the new Federation Treaty and possibly not wanting to appear impotent before their nationalist critics) called upon all "illegal military formations" to disband, started to demonise the Chechens and opted for overt military action.
While Russian land forces advanced on Grozny, the Russian air force carried out a progressively less discriminating bombing campaign, forcing most of the Chechen population of Grozny to flee. A New Year’s Eve ground assault on the city centre met with stronger than expected resistance and resulted in hundreds of casualties on both sides. After a brief truce and, it would seem, despite a Presidential decree, bombing and shelling resumed. By mid-January Russian ground forces surrounded the burnt-out Chechen Presidential palace.

On 20 January 1995, after a campaign which had produced thousands of military and civilian casualties and hundreds of thousands of displaced people, Yeltsin announced the end of "the military stage of restoring the power of the Russian Federation’s constitution". Two weeks latter fighting is continuing in Grozny and in the countryside to the south and Russian troops look as if they may be engaged there for months, possibly years to come. Even an election might not end the conflict as a new Chechen parliament could conceivably call a referendum on independence - presenting Moscow with yet another dilemma.

The war in Chechnya has many wider implications. The cost of the war may make more difficult the task of stabilising the economy after the inflation and currency crisis of late 1994 and of securing the International Monetary Fund loan upon which the 1995 budget is counting. The degree to which President Yeltsin has let power slip to an inner unelected circle and allowed press censorship may increase antagonism between the executive and parliament and between militarists and reformers, and may even increase the possibility of a "creeping military coup". The high civilian casualties may have undercut Moscow’s hopes of reasserting a more influential role in the world and complicated Russia’s relationships with such bodies as the European Union, the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe and NATO. The US administration has expressed concern, but not yet echoed calls from the Republican Congress for outright condemnation of Russia. The Australian Government has yet to make a statement on the subject.

The war in Chechnya may also encourage the very calls for greater regional autonomy throughout the Federation which the Russian action was intended to prevent. Chechnya was only one of at least three republics which initially refused to sign the new Federation treaty and which formed their own militia (the others being Bashkortostan and Tatarstan) and is only one of at least eleven republics which have constitutions or major laws declaring the primacy of local laws over federal ones (the others being Bashkortostan, Buryatia, Ingushetia, Kalmykia, Karelia, Mordova, Sakha, Tatarstan, Tuva and Udmurtia). Five republics have demanded the right to float their own currencies and collect their own taxes and in several republics there are militant nationalist organisations which have created parallel parliaments or national assemblies. Given the lack of agreement about the legitimacy of Russia’s current borders, conflicting regional economic objectives, the aspirations of many of the non-Russians for greater territorial autonomy and the unpredictable allegiances of army units, the sustainability of the Russian Federation could come into question.
Introduction

The new Russian Federation has inherited the difficult legacy of Tsarist and Soviet policies. The former made Russians the colonisers of a vast territory, and a minority in many parts of what they came to consider their own state. The latter left behind a raft of economic, social, ethnic and environmental problems. The successor political authorities to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union have so far been unable to broker an accommodation between all the forces at play (political parties, economic complexes, ethnic groups, ambitious individuals) and the post-Soviet transition period is being characterised by instability and crises.

In the dying days of the USSR military interventions in such Soviet Republics as Lithuania, Georgia and Azerbaijan proved the catalyst for the radicalising of entire nationalities. Now a post-Soviet Russian campaign in Chechnya, intended to quickly replace the elected leader of a small territory which had refused to sign the Russian Federation treaty but was nevertheless named in the new Russian Constitution, has succeeded only in galvanising opposition to Russian rule in that territory, destabilising the Government in Moscow and in bringing the future viability of the Federation into question.

This paper will offer background on Tsarist and Soviet nationality policies, explore some of the political and ethnic tensions within the new Russian Federation, examine the forces at play in the lead up to the Chechnya crisis, and consider what the war tells us about decision making procedures in Moscow. It will then offer an analysis of the implications of the war, not only for Chechnya, but for the Russian economy, Russian democracy, President Yeltsin, Russian foreign policy and the Federation as a whole.

Russia: from Empire to Federation

An extensive Russian Empire started to unravel with the breaking away of Eastern Europe from the Soviet orbit in 1989/90 and the break up of the Soviet Union into fifteen sovereign states in 1991. These "successor states" have been attempting to disentangle themselves from one another, to establish themselves as nation states, to develop more democratic political mechanisms, to attract overseas investment, to rebuild their economies and to grapple with ethnic tensions. Meanwhile, however, the process of unravelling appears to be continuing within the "successor states". Over 200 ethno-territorial conflicts can be identified within the lands of the former Soviet Union. The on-going "geopolitical disintegration" can be clearly seen in the Transdniester's pull away from Moldova, Crimea's from Ukraine, Abkhazia and South Ossetia from

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1 Szajkowski, Bogdan, "Will Russia disintegrate into Bantustans?", World Today, August-September 1993: 172.
Georgia, Nagorno-Karabakh from Azerbaijan, Karakalpakia from Uzbekistan. The process can also be seen to be testing the accumulated relationships which constitute the fabric of the largest of the 15 successor states and the inner most part of the Empire, the Russian Federation.

The Russian Federation, or Russia as it is often but perhaps misleadingly called, is, in this early phase of post-Communist transition, deeply divided. It is divided socially (witness the contrasting lifestyle of the rich businessman and begging pensioner), economically (witness the income gap with the collapse of state subsidies between the northern and eastern regions which are rich in resources and the central regions which are dependant on marginal agricultural and defence-orientated industries), and politically (witness the number of political parties and the absence of any discernible middle ground). It is also divided ethnically.

Tsarist rhetoric had the Russian Empire being "one and indivisible" and Soviet rhetoric had the Russian Federation a "partnership of equals". Neither was the case. Tsarist Russia was an empire constructed out of hundreds of conquered ethnic groups. A Kiev-centred Russian State started to absorb Finno-Ugric speaking tribes to the north in the 12th and 13th century A.D., and in the 16th century, after 250 years of Tatar rule, a Moscow-centred Russian State resumed expansion to the north and began expanding to the east. The Islamic Khanates on the Volga were conquered in the mid-16th century and Siberia in the late 16th century. The regions between the Black Sea and the Caspian were conquered gradually in the 18th and 19th century.

Lenin’s policy of turning this empire into a Federation of ethnically-defined constituent parts was designed to offer an imaginary autonomy to people who would in time lose their nationalist aspirations. Stalin’s policy of redrawing boundaries to divide related peoples and group together unrelated ones was designed to improve central control. Where central control was in any doubt, Stalin attempted to obliterate the identity and culture of whole peoples. For example, in a series of operations between December 1943 and January 1945 more than 1 million people, mostly from within the Russian Federation (e.g. the Karachais, Balkars, Ingushi, Chechens and Kalmyks from North of the Caucasus), were rounded up by Interior Ministry troops, loaded on to railway freight cars and deported to "special settlement zones" in Central Asia. Although some people in these areas may have co-operated with the Germans, tens of thousands of these same people had been executed by Germans for not co-operating and now hundreds and thousands (mostly women and children) were to die as part of a massive "ethnic cleansing".

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Ironically, Tsarist and Soviet policies which were intended to dilute ethnic identifications only strengthened them, policies intended to end separatist aspirations only heightened them, and policies intended to facilitate better control of ethnic groups ended up giving ethnic groups the administrative infrastructure to pursue greater autonomy.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the rise of Boris Yeltsin, and, in December 1991, the abrogation by Russia, Belarus and Ukraine of the Union Treaty of December 1922, work began on a new Russian Federation Treaty. Signatures for the new "replacement" treaty were sought by March 1992 but Tatarstan and Chechneo-Ingushetia refused to sign (Tatarstan subsequently signed). According to the chairman of the Council Of Nationalities of the Supreme Soviet, Ramazan Abdulatipov, a majority of signatories were dissatisfied with the treaty. The prerogatives of the Federation’s constituent parts (e.g. with respect to secession) and the demarcation of powers between the centre and the regions (e.g. whose laws should prevail in which areas?) remained unclear. The leaders of many krais (provinces) and oblasts (regions) were, for example, jealous of the ethnic republics’ right to have additional bilateral agreements with Moscow and of the economic concessions some had written into such agreements. They were also angered by President Yeltsin’s opposition to the krais’ and oblasts’ acquiring the constitutional right to issue their own laws.

In 1993 the Yeltsin administration began work on a new Russian Federation Constitution. In September 1993, after much debate, Yeltsin suspended the old constitution. The leading parliamentarians Khasbulatov and Rutskoi defied Yeltsin with paramilitary forces. Yeltsin imposed a two week state of emergency during which the defiant parliamentarians were driven from the White House and criticism of the draft constitution was prohibited. In December 1993 a new parliament was elected and a referendum on the new constitution, was accepted as having passed. According to the Constitution of December 1993 the Russian Federation consists of 89 members (federal territorial units) - 21 autonomous republic, six krais, 49 oblasts, two cities of federal status, one autonomous oblast and 10 autonomous okrugs (districts). For the same reason many constituent territories were dissatisfied with the treaty, many were dissatisfied with the new Constitution. There was, for example, no provision in the new Constitution for secession. The constituent parts of the Federation were named in the Constitution (in the case of Chechnya - without Chechnya having agreed, or signed the Federation treaty). From Moscow’s perspective the only legal way to secede would be to change the constitution, which under Article 135 required either three-fifths of the members of the two houses of Parliament (the upper Federation Council and the lower State Duma) agreeing to form a Constitutional assembly, which then voted for the change by a two-thirds majority, or by the change being approved.

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4 Szajkowski, Bogdan, "Will Russia disintegrate into Bantustans?", World Today, August-September 1993: 174.
by a majority in a Federation-wide referendum in which more than half the registered voters voted.

In the lead up to the signing of the new Federation constitution in 1993 at least 10 oblasts, krais and cities declared themselves republics and 14 more said they aspired to republic status. It is also noteworthy that several major oblasts and okrugs (along with half the republics) voted against Yeltsin’s position in the Constitutional referendum in April 1993.

Dissatisfaction and centrifugal pressure have been even stronger among the Federation’s 21 republics. Chechnya was only one of at least three republics which initially refused to sign the new Federation treaty, considered themselves fully independent states subject to international law and which their own militia (the others being Bashkortostan and Tatarstan) and is only one of at least eleven republics which have constitutions or major laws declaring the primacy of local laws over federal ones (the others being Bashkortostan, Buryatia, Ingushetia, Kalmykia, Karelia, Mordovia, Sakha, Tatarstan, Tyva and Udmurtia). Five republics have demanded the right to float their own currencies and collect their own taxes, and in several republics there are militant nationalist organisations which have created parallel parliaments or national assemblies. Tatarstan, a Republic which fits into all of the above groups, extracted from Moscow independent control over all its exports, including arms exports. Tyva has amended its republican constitution to included the right to secede from the Federation. The Confederation of the Peoples of the Caucasus has proposed the setting up its own army, airforce and anti-aircraft defence systems.5

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Part I Chechnya

Background

The Chechens were one of the last Caucasian people to be conquered by the Russians. For nearly twenty-five years the third Imam of Dagestan, Shaykh Shamil, united the Chechens and Dagestanis in a fierce war of resistance against the Russians. After the defeat of Shamil’s forces in 1857, the region was garrisoned and colonised by Russians, the most significant community of which include Cossacks. A Chechen Autonomous Oblast was established by the Soviets in 1922 and a neighbouring Ingush Autonomous Oblast was established in 1924. The Chechens and Ingush are speakers of two related Nakh languages and are both, at least nominally, Sunni Muslims (many of the eclectic Murid sect of Sufism). Their languages, however, are distinct and they identify as separate peoples. Despite these separate identities, perhaps because of them, the two people were forced to combine in 1934 into a single Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (with the Chechens dominating the east of the country and the new ASSR capital, Grozny, and the Ingushetians dominating the west). In the late 1930s the Chechens rebelled against the merger.

In 1944, as punishment for alleged collaboration with the invading German armies, Stalin deported the Chechens and Ingushetians (along with others) en masse to Central Asia and dissolved their ASSR. In 1956 the surviving deportees were allowed to return, and they did so almost at once. In 1957 the joint ASSR was reconstituted, but without some of the Ingush lands which Stalin had allowed to be absorbed by North Ossetia.

Memories of the Russian conquest, colonisation, political and territorial manipulation, and, most significantly of all, deportation, live on among the Ingush and Chechens. In 1990 the Chechens led the way in the creation of the Confederation of Caucasian Mountain Peoples, a body intended to represent 16 different people sharing the North Caucasian mountain culture.

In 1991 fresh calls from Chechens for the division of the joint Republic were opposed both by the Republic’s Soviet administration and by the North Ossetians, who feared an Ingush state "on its historical borders" would include a part of Ossetia. A de-facto division of the Republic happened nevertheless with the rise of the All-National Congress of the Chechen People, and the election of a Chechen president, Dzhokhar Dudayev. Dudayev, born in 1944, had reportedly experienced Stalin’s deportation and, although he rose to the rank of major general of in the Soviet Airforce in 1988, his and his Estonian wife’s experience of Russian discrimination has reportedly left him with no love for Moscow. The Chechen All-National Congress rapidly moved from

envisaging a sovereign Chechen republic within the Soviet Union in November 1990 to calling for Chechnya's complete independence in June 1991.

In August 1991 Dudayev used the opportunity of the coup in Moscow to overthrow the Soviet government in Chechnya, declare de facto independence and call for elections in October. Dudayev won the election but Russian President Yeltsin declared the election null and void and issued a warrant for Dudayev's arrest. The battalion of Interior Ministry troops send to enforce Yeltsin's will were blockaded at the airport by Chechen militia and civilians and forced to withdraw.

Chechnya's unilateral independence

In 1991 the Russian Federation could do little more than refuse to recognise Chechen independence, leave seats in its parliamentary bodies for the absent Chechens and impose a largely ineffectual blockade. The Chechens had an ally to the south in the still powerful former Georgian president Zviad Gamsakhurdia (to whom they had offered temporary sanctuary) and a compatriot in a position of power in Moscow, Ruslan Khasbulatov, the Speaker of the Russian Supreme Soviet. As Dudayev faced considerable personal opposition inside Chechnya from some important clans and the intelligentsia (though these may not have opposed independence), the hope in Moscow was that the unrecognised regime would collapse of its own accord.

In 1992, the more Moscow denounced Dudayev, the more he was able to position himself as a national and Islamic hero, and the more easily he was able to silence his rivals with denunciations and martial law regulations. The clans within Dudayev's alliance turned their gunmen into state law enforcement officers and proceeded to plunder the economy (e.g. diverting Chechnya's oil revenue into their private pockets, defrauding the Russian State Bank).7

General Dudayev also seemed keen to project his influence beyond Chechnya. There is little evidence that Dudayev "dreams of establishing hegemony over the 41 North Caucasian peoples in the mould of Imam Shamil, the 19th century hero and inspiration of the Caucasian Wars against the Russians", but he was instrumental in having the Confederation of Caucasian Mountain Peoples send troops to assist the Abkhazians in their struggle for independence from Georgia.

In December 1992 Ingushetia formally broke away to become a republic on its own within the Russian Federation, although control over the Sunzhenskii district on the Ingush-Chechen border remained in dispute. Ingush President

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7 Galeotti, Mark, "Chechnia - Russia's Sicily?", Jane's Intelligence Review, March 1994: 129.

Aushev, a military man with a distinguished Afghan war record, is said to have made it clear that he will resist any Chechen empire building (although now he is reportedly openly supporting Dudayev’s stand against the Russians).

In 1993 negotiations were underway between Russia, several Russian and international oil consortiums and the Azerbaijan government over the exploitation of Azerbaijan’s large oil reserves and over export pipeline options. The latter included upgrading the pipeline from Baku to the Georgian Black Sea port of Batumi and then linking south to the Turkish end of the Midyat-Ceyhan pipeline, originally built to export Iraqi crude. The Russians, however, favoured building a pipeline from Baku to Novorossyk on the Russian Black Sea coast - via Chechnya (the main oil pipeline, road and rail connections between Azerbaijan and Russia already pass through Chechnya). The scene was set for a substantial conflict of interest between Moscow and Chechnya.

The prelude to the war

By 1994 Moscow saw Dudayev not only as an unwanted precedent and a threat to stability in the Caucasus but also an obstacle to Russia having its way in the Azerbaijan oil negotiations. The situation seemed more conducive to covert Russian action than it had in 1991. Gamsakhurdia had been defeated in Georgia, Khasbulatov and the old Parliament had been blasted out of the Parliament building and a civil war had broken out inside Chechnya. Three of the republic’s 18 districts, Nadterechnyi, Ust-Martanouskii and Gudermesskii, threatened secession and several opposition factions had united to form an "interim council" led by Umar Avturkhanov. The civil war intensified in September and October 1994, culminating in an opposition assault on Grozny on 27 November. The assault, in which about 100 opposition fighters died, failed and many of the several dozen fighters captured by Dudayev’s forces turned out to be Russian servicemen. The extent to which these Russians had been fighting under direction from the Ministry of Defence in Moscow is unclear but Moscow had clearly been supporting the opposition.

Following this failed assault the Yeltsin administration appears to have become more anxious than ever to resolve the crisis. The administration may have felt it could no longer allow Chechnya to set a precedent which other disaffected Federation members might follow (particularly the other predominantly non-Russian Muslim autonomous regions in the North Caucasus and on the Volga). It may also have felt it could not afford to jeopardise its economic reform agenda by appear impotent before the Government’s nationalist critics (some of whom advocate the restablishment of the Tsarist unitary state) and could not

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afford to let the conflict give rise to terrorist attacks in Moscow.\textsuperscript{10} It is indeed possible that in exchange for General Grachev’s support at the time of the August 1991 coup and the 1993 confrontation with parliament, Yeltsin had agreed to defend a set of Russian vital interests which put preservation of the Federation and Russian influence throughout the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) above cooperation with the west.\textsuperscript{11} The Yeltsin administration was also clearly aware that Chechens were popularly regarded by Russians as corrupt and criminal - the mafia of post-Soviet Eurasia. Although most Chechens spoke Russian, lived like Russians and worked well beside Russians, Chechen criminal gangs were the most visible in Moscow (the collapse of the economic and social order having created the conditions for a crime wave and the collapse of the communist system having exposed previously hidden corruption and crime to public view).

The Russian Parliament and its Defence Committee were, on the other hand, clearly anxious to not overreact. The head of the Duma’s Committee on Defence, Sergei Yushenkov, spoke by phone with General Dudayev on 28 November and reported that nothing threatened the lives of the prisoners seized in the fighting in November 1994 and that his committee would check into how and on whose orders the men turned up in Chechnya.\textsuperscript{12} Most members of the Russian Parliament and the leaders of all the main parliamentary factions, although not prepared to recognise Chechnya’s independence, were clearly prepared to negotiate a way through both the immediate crisis and the longer term dispute over Chechnya’s status.\textsuperscript{13}

On 29 November the permanent members of the Russian Federation Security Council met. The Council includes the President, the speakers of both houses of parliament (the only two members not appointed by the President, Vladimir Shumeiko and Ivan Rubkin- neither of whom are regarded as reformers), the heads of the three "power ministries" (Defence- Pavel Grachev, the Interior- Viktor Yerin, and Security- Sergei Stepashin), the head of the President’s elite personal bodyguard, Alexander Korzhakov (who has on several occasions attempted to use his name and forces to influence economic policy) and the secretary/chief of the Security Council Oleg Lobov (an old friend of Yeltsin’s). The Security Council was less prepared than most parliamentarians to negotiate with the Chechen Government. The Nationalities Minister, Nikolai Yegorov (a


\textsuperscript{11} Brustad, James H., "Russian Vital Interests and Western Security", \textit{Orbis}, Fall 1994: 609-611.


Russian from the north Caucasus), although not part of the Security Council, was also clearly in favour of decisive action in Chechnya.

On 30 November Yeltsin issued an ultimatum that all "illegal military formations" lay down their weapons within 48 hours. Within a few hours Russian aircraft launched strikes against Grozny's airport and airfields. The bombing of Chechnya continued even as a State Duma delegation, including Yushenko, was in Grozny to discuss the release of prisoners. The Delegation called for an end to the bombing and said the Russian Army should not be sent in under any circumstance. On 8 December the last of the Russian prisoners were released and both houses of Parliament voted against the declaration of State of Emergency. Vladimir Shumeiko, the speaker of the upper house of Parliament, the Council of the Federation, and one of the two non-Presidential appointees to the Security Council, was prepared to have Chechnya sealed off but declared that his chamber would not ratify any presidential decree introducing a state of emergency in Chechnya.¹⁴

On 9 December Yeltsin instructed the government to use "all means available" to disarm "illegal groups" in Chechnya. Russian forces, which had been amassing on the Chechen border, entered Chechnya on 11 December. The permanent Russian Federation Security Council members (with the possible exceptions of the parliamentary speakers) were clearly in favour of strong action in Chechnya but it is still unclear who actually ordered the attack on Grozny. At the time Yeltsin appears to have been resting at the Black Sea coastal resort of Sochi (poor health appearing to have resulted in several absences from office in 1994). On 13 December, in Yeltsin's absence, the Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin had told the country that the military option was the only one left to defend Russia's constitution and the country's territorial integrity. The Defence Minister Pavel Grachev would have had to order the assault, and it is possible that he did so without having the decision vetted by Yeltsin's national security assistant, Yuri Baturin, with whom he is reportedly on very bad terms (so bad that most communication between the two is said to go between the deputy-minister for Defence, Andrei Kokoshin).¹⁵ It is even possible that he and his "war party" colleagues in the inner Presidential circle suggested to Yeltsin that he have a rest. It is more plausible, however, that Yeltsin had been at the centre of the decision making and was later secretly promoting the speculation in the Moscow press that he had been deviously sidelined. Clearly some close aides to Yeltsin had no hand in the decision. Otto Latsis, a member of a consultative presidential committee

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was reported as saying "The problem is not so much that decision-making procedures have been breached, but that there are no procedures at all".\footnote{16}

\section*{The War}

Russian land forces made slow progress in the first fortnight of the campaign. Poorly trained conscripts had been sent (the better trained troops not arriving till much later) and Russian commanders (who had been trained for a tank war on the north German plain) were reluctant to kill civilians blocking their way and reluctant to commit their men to bloody street-fighting.\footnote{17}

The Russian air force carried out a progressively less discriminating bombing campaign, forcing most of the Chechen population of Grozny to flee to Chechen villages in the mountains. Many of the ethnic Russians civilians, however, had nowhere to go. A New Year's Eve ground assault on the centre of Grozny met with much stronger resistance than had been expected and resulted in hundreds of casualties on both sides. A truce on 9 January proved little more than an opportunity for both sides to re-group and bury their dead. Bombing and shelling of the Grozny city centre soon intensified and by mid-January Russian ground forces surrounded the burnt out Chechen Presidential palace. On 20 January 1995 Yeltsin's announcement that "The military stage of restoring the power of the Russian Federation's constitution in Chechnya has actually finished".

The war has produced thousands of military and civilian casualties. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has reported that more than 440,000 people have been displaced. 180,000 people are believed to have fled to the neighbouring regions of Ingushetia, Dagestan, North Ossetia and the Stravropol region of southern Russia. A further 260,000 people are believed displaced inside Chechnya.\footnote{18}

\begin{flushleft}
\footnote{16} Shihab, Sophie, "Who's calling the shots in Russia?", \textit{Le Monde} 16 December as presented in the \textit{Guardian Weekly}, 25 December 1994. \footnote{17} Even General Ivan Babich, who had experienced inter-ethnic conflicts in the Caucasus as the commader of the Russian troops guarding the border between Georgia and break-away Abkhazia, criticised the war and refused to fire on Chechen civilians. \textit{The Age}, 21 December 1994. \footnote{18} CARE Australia, \textit{Media Release}, 31 January 1995. \end{flushleft}
Part II  The implications of the war in Chechnya

a) For Chechnya

The devastation of the Grozny city centre has clearly not ended the war. There have been reports that sniping is continuing in the city centre, that an estimated 3500 Chechen rebels remain in the city, that the south and east of the city are still not under Russian control, that the Russians are suffering hit-and-run attacks behind their lines to the north and that bridges and mountain roads are being mined to the south. General Dudayev has sworn repeatedly to continue the war in a guerrilla campaign from the southern mountains and to take the war to Moscow (presumably in the form of a terrorist campaign). The former has happened, the latter still awaited.

79 per cent of the 3000 people polled in mid-January in major Russian towns favoured an immediate halt to fighting and an immediate withdrawal of Russian troops and moral is so low among the Russian troops continuing the campaign that even an elite Interior Ministry unit (from Yekaterinburg in the Urals) has mutinied. To overcome the Chechen resistance, however, Russian troops might have to be involved in Chechnya for many months, perhaps years to come.

In the Russian-occupied north-west of Chechnya the "Provisional Government of National Revival" led by the former Soviet oil and gas minister Mr Salambek Khadjiev, is reportedly waiting to be installed in Grozny. The United Nations secretary-general, Dr Boutros-Ghali, has offered to help organise elections and humanitarian aid in Chechnya. An election might not, however, end the conflict as a new Chechen parliament could conceivably call a referendum that would offer the Chechens a choice between autonomy within the Russian Federation and full independence. From Moscow's point of view, such a referendum would place no legal obligation upon the Federation to further consider the matter. It is indeed unlikely that they would allow such a referendum in the first place. If the Chechens did, however, vote for full independence, the decision would present Moscow with a dilemma and aggregate tensions between the executive and the representative bodies. The Russian constitution does not allow for secession but can be changed by either by a vote in both houses of the Russian parliament and/or in an all-Federation referendum.

21  The Sunday Age, 5 February 1995.
b) For the Russian economy

The war in Chechnya will have both direct and longterm budgetary impact. Russia had was hoping 1995 would be a year to stabilise the economy after the 1994 budget failed to prevent inflation and a currency crisis. The cost of demolishing Grozny is, however, running at many millions of dollars a day and the cost of rebuilding it, rehabilitating its refugees and garrisoning it being measured in the hundreds of millions. The Russian Government is going to have a difficult job satisfying the International Monetary Fund that the Russian Federation is still deserving of the next stage ($6 billion) in what would be the biggest loan in IMF history- a loan already factored into the 1995 budget.

The war may also indirectly effect the Russian economy by alienating from President Yeltsin many hither-to supporter of his and Prime Minister Chernomyrdin’s market-oriented reforms. Anatoly Chubais, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister in charge of economic reform, has been one of the few reformers in Moscow not to speak out against the war in Chechnya, possibly so as not to endanger the economic reform process.

c) For Russian democracy

The war in Chechnya has put enormous pressure on the fledgling Russian democracy, and this at a time of difficult economic transition. The Yeltsin administration has recently been attempting to project itself as in full control of Government and committed to democracy in Russia. Elena Bonner, the prominent human rights activist and widow of Andrei Sakharov, has, however, written that "With this act Yeltsin has crossed a Rubicon that will turn Russia back into a police state". Similar ominous warnings have come from Sergei Kovalev, Russia’s human rights commissioner. Both have been in Grozny during the fighting.

Many Russian and western commentators have concluded that effective power in Moscow has slipped to the unelected and non-accountable members of the "War Party" (described earlier). Whether Yeltsin has consciously turned inward towards this small but powerful clique or whether he has unconsciously (through ill-health and lack of judgement) let power slip to this group is unclear. It is not clear as Lev Ponamarev, a leading reformer) puts it, whether Yeltsin is at the centre of the "Party of War" or is surrounded by it. It is equally unclear whether he will go, however unwillingly, along with this group’s sometimes declared aim of having the (Russian Federation) Security Council take charge of the economy (and possibly also the country’s political life- if necessary by postponing the presidential election and declaring a state of emergency) or whether Yeltsin will heed the anti-militarist demonstrators and press and throw his weight back behind the moderates and reformers.

The reformists had seemed to be winning some battles (e.g. thwarting the Security Council’s attempt to sack the head of Russia’s state-owned television channels for showing unpalatable footage from Chechnya). The President has
also been recently reported as contemplating mending bridges with the democrats and replacing three figures closely associated with the war in Chechnya, Defence Minister Grachev, head of Counter-Intelligence, Sergei Stepashin and the Nationalities Minister Nikolai Yegorov. On the other hand, however, the President has endorsed attempts at press censorship, did not move against any of the leading hawks at the time of the war, is now rumoured to be considering either setting up a Presidential National Guard (there is probably less substance to the rumour that he might replace General Grachev with the even less popular chief of the Presidential security service, General Korzhakov).

d) For President Yeltsin

Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev has defended Yeltsin’s Chechnya policy by stressing, as the President had, the need to "return to the residents of the Chechen Republic, in full measure, the rights and liberties guaranteed by the Russian Constitution" and likening Yeltsin to Abraham Lincoln. Most erstwhile supporters who have been left out of the decision making have, however, been speaking out in public opposition to the President. The reformer Yegor Gaidar, leader of Russia’s Choice, led demonstrations against the war in Chechnya and Grigori Yavlinski, the leader of the central Yabloko bloc, called on Yeltsin to resign and let the acting presidency pass, according to the constitution, to the Prime Minister Victor Chernomyrdin (once seen as a conservative, but now seen as a moderate). Many of the liberals/moderates/reformers who had earlier supported President Yeltsin and the new Constitution (which gives the president near dictatorial power) for the sake of "market reform", now doubted that Yeltsin will be a plausible bulwark against conservative and militaristic policies.

President Yeltsin, who had already lost a large portion of his electoral support among pro-democracy Russians, seemed prepared to risk his remaining pro-democracy support at home and a share of that abroad by holding to a narrow concept of Russia’s vital interests. If he was calculating that only by forfeiting his liberal credentials and adopting the posture of a strong nationalist leader could he hope to survive the difficult economic transition and presidential election ahead, he may have miscalculated as the war in Chechnya has proved a public relations disaster. He has allowed himself to be closely associate with the war and with the unpopular Defence Minister, General Pavel Grachev.

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Reports that General Grachev said young Russian soldiers were dying for the motherland "with smiles on their faces" have outraged the Moscow public.25

A presidential election is due in mid-1996 and many predict Yeltsin's Presidency and role in Russia's transition to democracy are coming to an end. Some more ominously suggest that in addition to being the first democratically-elected Russian president, he might go down in history as the only one. Two prominent critics of Yeltsin's war in Chechnya have indeed been military men who consider the military should be more involved in politics and who continue to have overt political aspirations: General Boris Gromov, one of Grachev's deputies who was sacked for his criticims, and General Alexander Lebed, who as head of Russia's 14th Army in the Republic of Moldova openly supported Russian separatists, declared the Dniester Moldavian Republic and defied Yeltsin.26 By distancing themselves from Defence Minister Grachev, they have positioned themselves to later either take his job or move into other positions of influence from which they might be able to reverse the downscaling the armed forces and the "military-industrial complex" and support ethnic Russians beyond the Federation borders. There is little prospect of a dramatic military coup, but there is the possibility of a "creeping coup" with proponents of military rule increasing their influence upon the policies of the President and Government.

e) For Russian Foreign policy

While the war places new strains on the domestic policy of Russian President Yeltsin, it also places strains on Russian foreign policy. Chechnya's independence has not been recognised by any other sovereign state and most countries in the world seem to have accepted, at least initially, the view advanced by Russia's Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev that Chechnya is an "internal matter". The high civilian death toll, however, raised another set of questions. If Chechnya is part of the Russian Federation, indiscriminate aerial and artillery bombardment was in prima facie breach of the Russian Constitution (Articles 20 and 21 provide for a right to life and the dignity of the individual- even during a state of emergency), and if Chechnya is/was not it is in prima facie breach of such binding international agreements to which Russia is a signatory as the Final Act of 1975 and the Charter of Paris of 1990.27 Sergei Kovalev, the Russian Human Rights Commissioner who spent the first three weeks of the campaign in Grozny has argued: "when human


27 Ware, Richard, Russia and the Chechens, House of Commons Library Research paper 95/4, 10 January 1995: 12.
rights are violated on a mass scale, this is not an internal affair of an individual
country but something which concerns the entire world community."  

Turkey was possibly the first country to express its concerns, to call for respect
for human rights and to send humanitarian aid. After three weeks of bombing
civilians, the public in Europe and America was pressuring western
Governments to also speak out against the bloodshed. Among the first western
foreign ministers to do so were those from Norway, Sweden, Denmark and
Germany. After his violent criticism of the Human Rights Commissioner
Kovalev and Parliamentary Deputy Yushenko, Russian Defence Minister
General Grachev was declared unwelcome in Germany. Public opinion has also
gradually forced the US administration to express concern, but not to echo the
calls coming from the Republican Congress for outright condemnation of
Moscow's handling of the situation or for an end to economic aid. Washington
is clearly anxious not to undermine Yeltsin's position in Moscow or to
undermine Moscow's control over the members of the Russian Federation (and
the latter's widely dispersed nuclear arsenal). The US Administration might
also be waiting to see who wins the struggle for power in Moscow before
charting a more definitive course in their Russian policy.

Whatever the immediate international response to events in Chechnya and the
whatever the future composition of Moscow's leadership, the debacle in
Chechnya may undercut Moscow's hopes of reasserting a more influential role
in the world. It has already complicated Russia's relationships with a number
of international groupings and organisations. The European Union has
condemned the use of force and withheld a trade agreement from signature.
The Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, while not
recognising Chechnya's independence, condemned the infringement of human
rights and sent a mission which later called Russia's use of force
"disproportionate and indiscriminate". Most recently, the Council of
Europe's parliamentary assembly has frozen indefinitely Russia's application
for admission to the organisation in protest at the war in Chechnya. Ernst
Muehlemann, a Swiss member of the Council's commission which decided
upon the freeze was reported as saying "Those who bomb civilians cannot
count on the support of the Council of Europe". The war will renew the
determination on the part of ex-Warsaw Pact countries to improve their own
security by moving towards membership or associated membership of NATO,
contrary to one of Russia's main foreign policy objectives. Russian will do
little to reduce this determination if, later this year, it unilaterally changing
(i.e. breaching) the limits placed by the Treaty on Conventional Forces in

28 Ware, Richard, Russia and the Chechens, House of Commons Library Research paper
95/4, 10 January 1995: 14-15.

29 The Sydney Morning Herald, 1 February 1995.

30 Weekend Australian, 4 February 1995.
Europe on the number of tanks, armoured vehicles and artillery pieces which they can deploy in the Caucasus from November 1995 onwards.\textsuperscript{31}

The Australian Government has yet to make a statement on the subject of Chechnya. CARE Australia has, however, launched an appeal for Chechnya and prepared an Australian team to visit the territory and assess the humanitarian situation.\textsuperscript{32}

\textbf{f) For the Federation as a whole}

The war in Chechnya may encourage the very calls for greater regional autonomy throughout the Federation which the Russian action was intended to prevent and Moscow could not again easily contemplate a military solution to a disagreement over Federation status. For most of 1994 reduced inflation and a relatively stable rouble helped to keep the Federation together, but in 1995 the rouble is falling and inflation rising- reducing the appeal to many Republics of being a tax-paying subject of the Russian Federation.\textsuperscript{33}

Given the lack of agreement about the legitimacy of Russia's current borders (many Russians identifying more with Slavs outside the Federation borders than with non-Slavs within them), conflicting regional economic objectives (e.g. between the resource exporters and the industrial regions), and the unpredictable allegiances of army units, some commentators have questioned (even before the war in Chechnya) whether the Russian Federation is a sustainable state.\textsuperscript{34}

To analyse briefly the forces at play in these republics and their implication for the Federation, it is convenient to divide the republics into four groups.

The North Caucasian Republics\textsuperscript{35} cover areas annexed in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. All have below-average income per person. With the exception of the Republic of Adygheya (formerly an Autonomous Oblast) on the Kuban river, all adjoin one or more other members of the group and in all the ethnic Russians are in the minority. Many of the republics suffered the deportation of large sections of their population under Stalin and in all there

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item\textsuperscript{31} Ware, Richard, \textit{Russia and the Chechens}, House of Commons Library Research paper 95/4, 10 January 1995: 15.
\item\textsuperscript{32} CARE Australia, \textit{Media Release}, 31 January 1995.
\item\textsuperscript{33} "How many other Chechnyas?", \textit{The Economist}, 14 January 1995: 47.
\item\textsuperscript{35} For additional background notes on the Republics of Karachay-Cherkessia, the Kabardino-Balkar Republic, the Republic of North Ossetia, the Ingush Republic, the Republic of Dagestan and the Republic of Kalmykia, see Appendix.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
are groups expressing separatist aspirations. Islam is not central enough to these peoples’ sense of identity to make a holy war likely, but events in Chechnya are likely to inflame their common animosity towards Moscow. On 11 December 1994, the day Russian forces entered Chechnya, delegates to a meeting of the Confederation of Caucasian Mountain Peoples being held in the Kabardo-Balkaria capital Nalchik declared that unless Russia abandoned the use of force, the peoples of the Caucasus would be compelled to leave the Russian Federation. A further meeting due to take place in Dagestan on 7 January was postponed after local authorities prevented delegates from other North Caucasian republics from travelling to Makhachkala. The President of Ingushetia, Ruslan Aushev, was reportedly trying to arrange a meeting of north Caucasian leaders. The North Caucasian Governments know they can expect little support for separatist causes from Georgia to the south (the Shevardnadze administration having entered into military agreements with Russia in an attempt to stop its own autonomous regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia from breaking away completely). They also know that any North Caucasian republic pushing for independence is likely to be isolated not just economically, but also politically as Moscow exploits local ethnic and territorial disputes to "buy-off" neighbours. Nevertheless, a long guerilla war in the Chechen mountains is likely to increase popular resentment of the Russian presence in the North Caucasian republics (just as the war in Afghanistan increased such resentment in Soviet Central Asia) and this in turn will lead to increased pressure upon the North Caucasian governments to demand greater autonomy.

The republics along the Volga cover territories conquered by Ivan the Terrible in the mid-16th century. Despite calls at the time of the October 1917 revolution for a single predominantly Turkic state called Idel Ural, the Soviet leaders employed the same divide-and-rule tactic used in the Caucasus and created six separate dependent states. Today all six republics have substantial Russian populations, in some cases exceeding the population of the titular nationality, but together they are home to most of the Federation’s twenty million Muslims. They all adjoin one or two members of the same group and have all experienced declining personal incomes. Many have oil, straddle the railways and pipelines which connect Siberia to European Russia and have nuclear facilities (though not nuclear weapons) located on their territories. Some, such as the Republic of Bashkortostan and the Republic of Tatarstan, initially refused (like Chechnya) to rejoin the Russian Federation and only rejoined after bilateral agreements on greater autonomy. Nowhere on the Volga

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36 Ware, Richard, Russia and the Chechens, House of Commons Library, 10 January 1995: 9.

37 "How many other Chechnyas", The Economist, 14/1/1995: 47.

38 For additional background notes on the Republic of Mordova, the Chuvash Republic, the Republic of Mari-El, the Republic of Tatarstan, the Republic of Bashkortostan and the Udmurt Republic see Appendix.
are separatist sentiments as strong as in Tatarstan, where the Government is calling for CIS membership, where parliament has prohibited citizens from performing military service outside of the Volga-Urals Military Districts, where the popular President Mintimer Sheymiyev supports "gradual implementation of Tatarstan's state sovereignty" and where nationalists are reviving calls for a Volga Turkic state or confederation. The leaders of the Volga republics met on 4 January 1995 to criticise the "fratricidal war" and Mr Yeltsin for failing to consult them before starting it.40

The three large resource rich republics in the north of the Federation (Karelia, Komi and Sakha)41 cover areas where the indigenous titular population are now in the minority and on average the populations enjoy above-average (and rising) incomes. These Republics are unlikely to express ethnically or linguistically-based separatist aspirations, but are likely to use their considerable resource wealth to extract the most favourable membership conditions. As these Republics are probably better off with floating commodity prices and a competitively priced rouble, separatist sentiments could be aroused by protectionist policies more suited to the industrialised parts of the Federation (e.g. export quotas and administrative pricing of commodities)42

The four republics in southern Siberia are all on or near the Mongolian border43. The indigenous people in the area speak Turkic or Mongolian languages. Three of the four (the Republic of Altay, formerly the Gorno-Altay Autonomous Oblast; the Republic of Khakassia, formerly an Autonomous Oblast; and the Republic of Buryatia, formerly the Buryat ASSR) have large Russian majorities and are unlikely to turn their backs on the Federation. The Republic in the middle of these three, however, while enjoying a similar income per person, is demographically very different. In Tyva the titular nationality, the Tyvans (who share with the Mongolians a Buddhist nomad tradition), are in the majority. Tyvans have been calling for looser ties with the Federation and have adopted a new constitution which leaves open the possibility of seceding from Russia.

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40 "How many other Chechynast", The Economist, 14 January 1995: 47.

41 For additional background notes on the Republic of Karelia, the Republic of Komi and the Republic of Sakha, see Appendix.


43 For additional information on the Republic of Tyva, see Appendix.
The Future

The Russian Federation faces a difficult future. There is continuing debate over economic direction. The appropriate relationship between the various parts of the Federation is still in dispute. Confidence in the authority of the new political institutions, at a time of structural transition, is very low. There is an often paralysing antagonism between the executive and representative bodies. Laws have been adopted only to prove inoperative. Russian military equipment is being sold-off unofficially, military personnel are participating in unofficial wars and some military commanders appear more aligned with their region than with Moscow. Nuclear weapon design and manufacturing facilities are located in some of the most volatile regions.

The nationalists who are calling for the abolition of autonomous territories and a return to the Tsarist "one indivisible" Russia are, given Russia's inability to enforce this concept, only likely to inflame separatist aspirations. Similarly, the military and industrial leaders who are calling for a return to discipline and the command economy, will probably simply end up trying to profit from privatisation. Those liberals who have spoken out in support of human rights and dialogue will have difficulty convincing the electorate at the mid-1995 Parliamentary elections that the Federation can be kept together by peaceful means.

Four alternative scenarios might be posited. The first is that centre-periphery tensions continue to increase, Moscow again uses force to control regional unrest and Russia drifts back to being a police state. The second is that centre-periphery tensions continue to increase, Moscow hesitates to use force, petitions for independence or greater autonomy become more frequent and the Federation at least partially disintegrates (without any alternate framework being in place). The third is that the centre-periphery tensions continue to increase, and Moscow negotiates its way through to an "asymmetrical federalism" (e.g. the arrangement with Tatarstan). The fourth is that centre-periphery tensions are relieved by preemptive redrafting of the Russian Federation Constitution (reducing the President's power to establish a state-of-emergency in member republics and offering member republics a straight forward mechanism for secession) and by offering dissident republics the opportunity to join a treaty-based confederation or community or an expanded Commonwealth of Independent States.

Western Governments, in the meantime, will struggle with their often conflicting interest in supporting human rights, supporting a stable Russia, supporting Russian economic reform and supporting Boris Yeltsin. It might try to make assistance to Russia conditional upon Moscow respecting human rights (even in disaffected parts of the Federation) and to have the assistance targeted to projects such as nuclear emergency training, reactor dismantling, chemical weapons destruction, and environmental cleanups, but may, despite its own reservations, also feel broader economic assistance essential.
APPENDIX

Additional background notes on selected Republics

In the North Caucasus:

The Republic of Karachay-Cherkessia is situated on the Kuban river, evolved out of the autonomous Oblast that was created in the late 1950s when the Karachay (speakers of a Turkic language) and Cherkessk (speakers of an old Caucasian language) were permitted to return from enforced exile in Central Asia.

The Kabardino-Balkar Republic consists of Kabardins and Balkars, who, although both muslim peoples, have less in common than do the Kabardins and neighbouring Cherkess (both speakers of old Caucasian languages) or the Balkars and neighbouring Karachai (both speakers of Turkic languages). Despite, or perhaps because of, this, a Kabardino-Balkar ASSR was established in 1936. In November 1991 the Balkar People declared the sovereignty of Balkaria and the formation of a Republic of Balkaria. The former chairman of the republic’s Supreme Soviet, however, won the 1992 presidential election and in March 1994 the new president announced the establishment of a Chamber of Nationalities, in which Kabardins, Russians and Balkars would be equally represented.

The Republic of North Ossetia is situated in the middle of the Northern Caucasus, and the population is divided from their fellow Ossetians, speakers of an old north-eastern Iranian language, in South Ossetia, by the international border with the Georgian region.


The Republic of Dagestan, although a predominantly Muslim region, it is the most ethnically mixed of all the Caucasian republics, with the largest ethnic group, the Avars, consisting of less than 30 per cent of the population, and other groups including (in descending numbers) Darghins, Kumyks, Lezghis, Russians, Laks, and Tabasaran.

The Republic of Kalmykia (Khalmg Tangch) covers the old territory of the Buddhist Mongolian-speaking Kalmuk. The Kalmyk Autonomous Oblast established in 1920, upgraded to an ASSR in 1935 but dissolved in 1943 when the Kalmyks were deported to Central Asia. A Kalmyk Autonomous Oblast was reconstituted in 1957 and an ASSR in 1958. The republic declared its
sovereignty in October 1990. Although President Kirsan Ilyumzhinov, who rules directly through a system of personal representative, abrogated the republican constitution and decreed, in March 1994, that only the Russian basic law would be valid in the Republic, he has also spoken of the need for economic autonomy from Russia. The latter could involve loosening or severing federal links.

On the Volga:

The Republic of Mordovia is on the upper Volga. The Mordvin (speakers of a Finno-Ugric language) came under Russian rule in the 13th century. An Autonomous Oblast was established in 1930 and an ASSR in 1934. In April 1993 the Republic had a serious confrontation with Federation President Yeltsin. The Republic's Soviet voted overwhelmingly to abolish the position of President of the Mordovian Soviet Socialist Republic, blaming the incumbent for economic hardships and creating one-man rule. Yeltsin issued a decree, arguably in violation of the Federal constitution, confirming the incumbent in power. The Mordovian Soviet ignored the decree, dismissed the government, and created a new Council of Ministers. In January 1994 the territory dispensed with the words "Soviet" and "Socialist" from its title. The weapons laboratory Arzamas 16 is located partly on Mordova territory.

The Chuvash Republic (Chuvashia) is on the middle reaches of the Volga. The territory of the Turkic speaking Chuvash was annexed by Russia in the 16th century. In 1920 a Chuvash Autonomous Oblast was established. It was subsequently upgraded to an ASSR. In 1992 it changed its name to the Chuvash Republic and in December 1993 a majority of the Republic voted against the new Russian Constitution.

The Republic of Mari-El is on the middle Volga river. The territory of the Maris (also known as Cheremiss, speakers of a Finno-Ugric language) was annexed by Russia in the 16th century. An Autonomous Oblast was established in 1920 and an ASSR in 1936. The Republic declared sovereignty in October 1990. Eighty percent of the Republic's industry is defence-related.

The Republic of Tatarstan is on the middle Volga. The territory, once the heart land of the Golden Horde, became the Khanate of Kazan after the dissolution of the Mongol empire. In 1552 the Muslim turkic-speaking Tatars were conquered by Russia. Some converted to Orthodox Christianity but most did not. An Autonomous Republic was established in 1920 and the Republic declared its sovereignty in August 1990. They are ethnically related to the Tatars who were deported from the Crimea to Kazakhstan in 1944 and who are still waiting to have their former lands restored. Since 1990 Tatarstan has sought its full independence. In 1991 the campaign for independence was accompanied by numerous acts of sabotage against oil pipelines in the area and led to confrontation with Moscow. In 1992 the republic's leaders refused to sign the new Federation treaty and said Tatarstan wanted to join the Commonwealth of Independent States as a fully-fledged state. A referendum,
declared unlawful by the Russian Constitutional Court, overwhelmingly found support for the proposition that "the Republic of Tatarstan is a sovereign state, a subject of international law, building its relations with the Russian Federation and other republics (states) on the basis of fair treaties". By 1993 there were 11 different organisations and movements dedicated to Tatarstan’s complete independence and amid Yeltsin’s and the ousted-Parliament’s competition for provincial support, the Tatarstan Government was able to extract major concessions from Moscow. In February 1994, after three years of negotiation, the President of Tatarstan signed a treaty with Russian President Boris Yeltsin which ceded extensive powers to the Republic (including over taxation), allowed it to retain its own Constitution (which described Tatarstan as "united", not "associated", with Russia). This resolution of the political crisis was followed by elections to the Federal Assembly in March 1994. The new parliament still has to work out the additional laws and regulations necessary to create a workable federal arrangement.

The Republic of Bashkortostan lies on the slopes of the southern Urals. The Bashkirs, a turkic-speaking Muslim people conquered by the Russians in the 16th century, are outnumber by Russians, but there is also a large Tatar community. The Republic, like its neighbour Tatarstan, was quick to declare its sovereignty in October 1990 and in December 1990 a majority in the Republic voted against acceptance of the Russian Constitution (which was approved in the Federation as a whole) and the republic’s Supreme Soviet adopted a new Constitution which state that its own laws had supremacy over federal laws. In 1993 the Republic signed the new Federation treaty, but only after 18 months of dispute and securing many new rights in a bilateral treaty (e.g. that all natural resources on its territory are the property of its population and not of the Federation and that issues relating to the utilisation of its resources will be regulated by Bashkir law). In April 1993 a referendum for economic independence from and treaty-based relationships with the Russian Federation was passed overwhelmingly. The republic has also proclaimed itself an "independent participant in international law foreign economic relations, except areas it has voluntarily delegated to the Russian Federation".

The Udmurt Republic covers the territories of the Votyaks (speakers of a Finno-Ugric language who were later called the Udmurts). The area under Russian rule in the 15th century. In 1920 a Votyak Autonomous Oblast was established and in 1934 it became the Udmurt ASSR. The Republic declared its sovereignty in September 1990. The republic manufactures rockets, communication facilities and accessories for nuclear weapons and stores chemical weapons.


In the North:

**The Republic of Karelia** on the northern Finnish border includes territory annexed by Russia in 1721 (which became an autonomous republic within the Russian Federation in 1923) and territory annexed from Finland in 1940 (to form the Karelo-Finnish SSR). The indigenous people speak a Finno-Ugric language. In August 1990 Karelia was the first autonomous republic to claim precedence for its laws over those of both the Russian Federation and the Union. In December 1991 Finland ended speculation by renouncing all claim to the territory.

**The Republic of Komi** covers a territory conquered by Russia in the 14th century. Like the Karelians, the Komi speak a Finno-Ugric language and once practised a shamanist religion. An autonomous Oblast was created in 1921 and an ASSR in 1936. The Republic declared its sovereignty in August 1990.

**The Republic of Sakha** (Yakutia) in northern Siberia. The Yakut language is Turkic but with considerable Mongolian influence. The people came under Russian rule in the late 17th century. An ASSR was established in 1922 and a Yakut-Sakha SSR proclaimed in April 1990. 50.3 per cent of the population were Russians and 33.4 per cent Yakuts.

In Southern Siberia:

**The Republic of Tyva** (as the then Republic of Tannu-Tuva) was a nominally independent state until 1944 when it was incorporated into the USSR as an Autonomous Oblast. In 1961 it became an ASSR within the Russian Federation. In October 1993 the Republic’s Supreme Soviet changed the Republic’s name from the russified Tuva to Tyva and adopted a new constitution which included the right to self-determination, the right to secede from Russia and the primacy of Tyvan laws over Federal laws. In December 1993 62.2 per cent of registered voters in Tyva voted in favour of the republic’s new constitution, but only 32.7 per cent in favour of the Russian Constitution.