

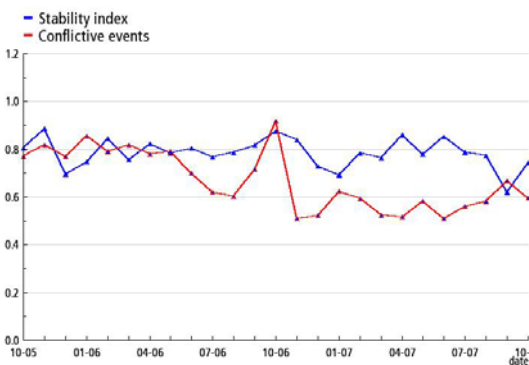
RUSSIA | DAGHESTAN | Trends in Conflict and Cooperation

SECURITY

A number of serious clashes between police and illegal armed groups occurred during September – October in the Makhachkala, Khasavyurt, Kizilyurtovsky districts and some other locations in Daghestan. On 17 September Rappani Khalilov known as one of the leaders of Daghestan's terrorist underground circles and accused of masterminding more than 60 acts of terror in the republic was killed. On 1 October, Daghestan's Minister for Interior A. Magomedtagirov said in connection with this event that "almost all terrorist groups that existed in Daghestan have now been

liquidated." It seems, however, that terrorist activities have not only failed to subside but on the contrary, have been stepped up. R.Khalilov's death has apparently led to an upsurge of politico-criminal violence. An authoritative *kadi* (Islamic judge) in the Gubden settlement who opposed Wahhabism was killed. On 30 September an unprecedented case of violence occurred in the mountainous Gunib district near Gonoda settlement: an unidentified gunmen shot down nine villagers for no apparent reason. Very few details are still known about this tragedy. It is possible that this was a case of vengeance on Minister Magomedtagirov. On the same day in Makhachkala the head of the criminal police in Kizilyurtovsky district (where the operation against Rappani Khalilov was carried out) was killed near the entrance of his home.

Country Stability and Conflictive Events



Source: FAST event data

Developments in Daghestan leave no doubt presently that the struggle between the law enforcement bodies as well as the republic's authorities and implacable politico-criminal organizations turned into a fierce war not contained by any legal norms. Members of politico-criminal groups are being hunted down to be liquidated. Unannounced sanctioning by authorities of such forms of crime-fighting removes any restraints to the law enforcement structures. It should be noted that even at the end of 1990's and in the early part of 2000's this struggle proceeded with at least ritualistic observation of legal norms. At present, the operations are aimed at destroying the enemy with no risk mitigation as to the lives and property of civilians in the zones of special operations.

Law enforcement structures in their relations with the civil society have therefore become a force that is controlled by no one. There were reports increasingly leaked to the public on cases of criminal misuse of power by law enforcement bodies under the pretext of the "struggle with Wahhabism." The majority of the population in Daghestan does not regard law enforcement bodies as an institute of maintaining security, social order and stability. On the contrary, they are viewed as alien and corrupt destructive forces.

POLITICAL

In the first half of September Major-General Vyacheslav Shanshin was appointed as the new head of the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation (FSB) department in Daghestan. It may well be that the policy of ruthless, military-style onslaught on underground armed groups, which have manifested itself lately, resulted from this appointment.

There are many reasons to conclude that initial moves by the new president of Daghestan, Mukhu Aliev, aimed to strengthen law and order have failed. The proclamation of the rule of law only provoked a series of mass civil actions against the local authorities misusing their powers across Daghestan. All attempts to follow the legal norms in resolving these conflicts were met with tacit but unanimous resistance by the ruling class on all levels. It was not overcome and, hence, the order in the republic is being enforced by means of unconditional support from the re-

publican centre to the local authorities and the use of unrestrained force in relation to any kind of protesting from the civil population.

This became apparent in September by the events in the Khasavyurt district. On 9 September, a group of armed people – members of Alimsultan Alkhamatov's private security force (Alkhamatov is the head of Khasavyurt district and ethnic Kumyk) – attacked the Novy Kurush settlement inhabited mostly by Lezghins (settlers coming from the mountainous Kurush village). The pogrom was unprecedented for Daghestan and could possibly trigger destabilization. However, attempts by republican authorities to punish the head of Khasavyurt district were countered by a well-organized resistance. On 20 September, more than 3,000 people rallied in support of their leader A. Alkhamatov near Endirei settlement where he lives just off the federal road "Kavkaz." Participants of the rally "condemned deceptive publications of the republican newspapers," that covered the incident on 9 September. One of the written slogans they displayed read "Mukhu Aliev, beware! "Chernovik" digs a hole for you too!" Chernovik (Draft) was the name of the newspaper that covered the incident in Novy Kurush most critically and in a comprehensive manner. As a result, the most rampageous and notably, inter-ethnic conflict remained unresolved with no one being brought to justice. This confirms that the ruling class in Daghestan in spite of growing public protests is becoming more consolidated outside the legal system and is transforming itself into a self-interest group. Such a process leads to civilian protests and is being channeled towards illegal activities. The mechanism of violence, therefore, is being fuelled even further.

SOCIAL

Non-political protesting actions in Daghestan are becoming increasingly well-organized and massive. Communities in settlements where electric power has been turned off because self-governance bodies did not pay the bills, for example, resorted to road blockades on federal highways and picketed energy companies offices and administrative buildings.

On 19 and 20 October mass demonstrations of citizens enraged by constant black-outs and interruptions of water supply in their homes occurred in Makhachkala. On 19 October, several thousands rallied in front of the city administration building on the central square. The next day people living along one of the busiest high streets in the city put up barricades to block traffic. The city lights went off, traffic lights were not functioning either, traffic jams were everywhere, and in some places large crowds of aggressively disposed people began to form. Interruptions in providing communal services are apparently caused by "conflicting economic interests." The problem is that these conflicts are resolved at the expense of ordinary citizens and thus trigger mass public protests.

Another disconcerting social phenomenon is spontaneous mass violence in rural communities provoked by seemingly unimportant day-to-day confrontations and domestic quarrels. Previously most of these incidents were backed by well-organized criminal groups and local communities, which acted as peace-makers.

OUTLOOK

Daghestan as well as the entire country is experiencing the difficult period of the parliamentary elections campaign in which real political struggle has been made virtually nonsensical. Essential political issues are and will be resolved at the top level through negotiations between the ruling elites. The confrontation between competing political-economic groups/interests within Daghestan remains acute but will be pushed away from the visible political scene and will go on under the carpet, often accompanied by episodes of political violence.

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