

ETHNICITY AND DEMOCRACY IN DAGESTAN

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Abstract

Few states would seem to be better candidates for ethnic civil war than Dagestan. Even by regional standards, Russia's southern-most republic is remarkable for the extremes of its ethnic diversity and economic deprivation. In recent years, these conditions have been aggravated by the economic and political instability brought on by post-Soviet transition; by an influx of refugees from bordering republics; by organized criminal activity spilling across the border from Chechnya; by the withdrawal of all international relief organizations; and by pressures from of an Islamic fundamentalist movement. Most dramatically, there have been three separate invasions by Chechnya-based militants.

Why is there peace in Dagestan? What is the basis for Dagestan's stability, and how is that stability best described? This paper uses survey and interview data to address these questions about Dagestan's present and its future prospects.

Introduction

Why is there peace in Dagestan? Few states would seem to be better candidates for ethnic civil war. Even by regional standards, Russia's southern-most republic is remarkable for the extremes of its ethnic diversity and economic deprivation. With thirty-four ethno-linguistic groups, Dagestan is by far the most ethnically heterogeneous of Russia's republics. Along with neighboring Chechnya, it is also the poorest. In recent years, these conditions have been compounded by the rigors of social transition; by the collapse of a central authority that previously guaranteed order and subsidized most of the Dagestani economy; by unemployment figures as high as 80 percent; by an influx of refugees from the three bordering republics that have been mired in violent ethnic strife; by a virtual blockade during the first Chechen war; by organized criminal activity spilling across the border from Chechnya¹; by the consequent withdrawal of all international relief organizations; and by pressures from of an Islamic fundamentalist movement with foreign funding.

Most dramatically, Dagestan was invaded on three occasions² by Chechnya-based militants.³ The last two of these incursions produced 32,000 Dagestani refugees⁴ who were entirely without assistance from any international relief agency for seven months afterwards, and who thereafter received only the most minimal attention from international NGOs. These events also exacerbated tensions between Dagestan's indigenous Chechen-Akhin population and its other ethnic groups. Since these invasions, Dagestan has seen an increase in Russian federal troops for whom the locals, until recently, have had little affection.

Through these events, Dagestan's stability has contrasted with protracted ethnic fighting in neighboring Azerbaijan, Chechnya, and Georgia. Dagestan has seen, and will continue to see, cases of serious conflict. But mechanisms existing within Dagestani society have so far prevented these from escalation. Ethnic relations in Dagestan are extraordinary not only for their rich diversity, but also for their relative tranquillity.⁵

Why is there peace in Dagestan? What is the basis for Dagestan's stability, and how is that stability best described? How important is ethnicity in Dagestan, and what other factors contribute to

Dagestani identity? How do ethnic divisions within Dagestani society influence political attitudes? What role does religion play in Dagestan's stability, and how do Dagestanis regard the spread of Islamic fundamentalism? How do they view their membership in the Russian Federation? What threats do Dagestani people perceive to the stability of their Republic? Finally, is Dagestan simply avoiding large-scale conflict or is it also consolidating an authoritative political structure?

In the spring of 1999, I received funding from the National Council for Eurasian and Eastern European Research and from the National Research Council to investigate these and other issues by means of a population survey, elite interviews, and analysis of event data. On 4 August 1999, as I boarded a plane in New York for the flight to Moscow, I was handed a Russian newspaper reporting the invasion of Dagestan. Events of the next six weeks bore dramatic witness to Dagestan's stability. Dagestanis overwhelmingly resisted the invasions of August and September 1999 and reaffirmed their union in the Russian Federation.

The upheaval and displacement from those incursions combined with the war on Dagestan's western frontier to postpone the start of the survey until 30 March 2000, after which it was conducted throughout Dagestan continuously until 13 April. The formalized closed survey of 1001 respondents from across the Republic involved the administration of a twenty-seven-question instrument.

In Dagestan, there are geographically expansive monoethnic areas; there are geographically compact monoethnic areas; and there are multiethnic areas. In expansive monoethnic areas, attitudes commonly differ among members of the same ethnic group residing in the mountains, in the foothills, and in the plains. During the first phase of selection, the survey sample was stratified in accord with authoritative demographic data available in *Natsional'nosti Dagestana*⁵, with respect to ethnic groups, urbanites and villagers. Villagers were further stratified among categories of lowlands, foothills, and highlands.

In the second phase of selection, individual respondents were selected from voter registration lists in the sites that were chosen in the first phase. The lists are compiled by electoral commissions and include all people 18 years and older who are who officially are registered as residing in each area.

Random selection from these lists was accomplished according to a “step method”. The size of the “step” was determined by dividing the total number of names on any given list by the number of respondents required from that area. As a consequence, the size of the “step” varied, but generally it was greater than 12. In a case, for example, where the “step” was 14, we contacted every 14th person on the list. In the event of the unavailability of, or refusal by, one of these selectees, the next person on the list was contacted.

Randomizing features of this method generally yielded samples that were proportionate to demographic data with respect to age and gender. However, random sampling in many Dagestani villages, conducted at virtually any time, is likely to lead to over-representation of women, as many men go to cities for purposes of employment. Therefore it was necessary to compensate by sampling in urban areas that were further stratified with respect to gender, so as to balance the number of men in the survey in accord with demographic data. When interpreting the tabular data that follow it must be borne in mind that data for villages are disproportionately female, and data for towns are disproportionately male. Given the high levels of unemployment in Dagestani villages, this limitation was unavoidable.

Measures of this sort are required in Dagestan since many people do not have telephones, and since Western survey methodologies are challenged by the extremity of Dagestan’s cultural and infrastructural obstacles. Anthropological considerations apply to research methodology in so far as local cultures must be given consideration if responses are to be elicited. This sometimes raised conceptual and contextual issues that went beyond the translation of the instrument into multiple languages.

Even so, political inquiry in Dagestan invariably encounters reticence on the part of some respondents to speak openly on issues of controversy. As a consequence, some items contain missing values, which are not always randomly distributed. For these items the following tables show valid and overall percent of distributions. Discussion in the text is based on overall percentages. Since this point was particularly significant for items involving opinions on Islamic fundamentalism, there is a separate analysis for missing values in these cases. Analysis with respect to ethnic groups includes only the nine largest, in order to guarantee a sufficient number of cases. Most of the time the number of cases is n=955

out of a total sample size of n=1001, whereas the overall percentage in the beginning of each table is computed on base of all 1001 cases.

In order to provide a qualitative supplement to the quantitative survey data, 40 open-ended interviews, were conducted from 3 April to 22 May 2000 with members of Dagestan's professional, scientific, and creative intelligentsia. Interviews were conducted orally according to a prepared list of 28 questions, and were recorded on tape with permission or otherwise stenographed. In addition, event data was collected continuously over twenty-one months from 15 July 1999 through 15 April 2001, and was compiled in a series of articles and papers.⁶

At the same time that the fieldwork was being conducted, events brought a new urgency to an understanding of Dagestan's stability. Following the Russian presidential election, the Kremlin embarked upon a centralization of power in Russia's regions. This process of centralization arrived in Dagestan in the spring of 2000 when federal officials requested that the attorney general of Dagestan identify all articles of the Dagestani Constitution that did not match the Constitution of the Russian Federation. In early May 2000 Dagestani officials appealed to the Constitutional Court of the Russian Federation to grant dispensation concerning disparities in many articles of the Dagestani Constitution with respect to its federal counterpart. Yet before the Court could rule on the appeal it had already begun to hear another case which challenged the institution of ethnic electoral districts. These districts had provided for the proportionality of ethnic representation in the People's Assembly to within a tenth of a percentage point of the groups' representation in the population as a whole. When subsequent Federal pressures led to the alteration of several articles in Dagestan's constitution, including changes in its electoral system,⁷ a new issue was added to this study: In what ways, and to what extent, was recentralization likely to affect Dagestan's stability?

For purposes of this study, *stability* is understood in both negative and positive terms: *Negative Stability* is the absence of widespread and sustained violence, such as that which has characterized other administrative units in the Caucasus. *Positive Stability* is the legitimation of democratic institutions and the consolidation of democratic practices under the rule of law. Negative stability is a necessary

condition for positive stability; positive stability is a sufficient condition for negative stability. This study of Dagestan’s stability begins with a look at how Dagestanis identify themselves.

How do Dagestanis view themselves?

The stability of ethnically heterogeneous states is often determined by issues of identity and mobilization. Observers have suggested that separatist tendencies threaten Dagestan’s stability at two levels of organization. Some have argued that Dagestan is at risk of fragmentation because its ethnic diversity interferes with an overarching sense of Dagestani identity. Others⁸ have claimed that Dagestan is poised to separate from the Russian Federation.

In order to explore these issues, the survey presented respondents with a list of potential referents of identification and asked them to select the two that were of greatest significance for their personal identity.⁹ As indicated in table 1, three quarters of the population see themselves as Dagestanis, and nearly two-thirds identify themselves as belonging to Russia, while only 14.5 percent founded their identity principally upon their ethnicity. Thus, one component of Dagestan’s stability is this sense of individual integration as Dagestanis and as members of the Russian Federation.

| | n | Dagestan | Russia | Ethnic group | Religion | Community |
|-------------------|--------|----------|--------|--------------|----------|-----------|
| Overall | (1001) | 73.6 | 63.6 | 14.5 | 10.5 | 5.9 |
| Avars | (279) | 73.7 | 52.7 | 14.3 | 12.9 | 8.2 |
| Dargins | (172) | 77.9 | 63.4 | 9.3 | 6.4 | 5.2 |
| Kumyks | (134) | 73.1 | 68.7 | 12.7 | 10.4 | 6.0 |
| Lezgins | (130) | 83.1 | 73.8 | 15.4 | 4.6 | 3.1 |
| Laks | (50) | 76.0 | 64.0 | 12.0 | 10.0 | 4.0 |
| Russians/Cossacks | (71) | 59.2 | 88.7 | 12.7 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Chechens | (53) | 47.2 | 22.6 | 39.6 | 50.9 | 11.3 |
| Azeris | (39) | 69.2 | 69.2 | 17.9 | 10.3 | 10.3 |
| Tabasarans | (27) | 96.3 | 85.2 | 0.0 | 7.4 | 0.0 |
| Men | (486) | 72.9 | 60.9 | 17.1 | 12.3 | 7.2 |
| Women | (515) | 74.2 | 66.2 | 12.0 | 8.7 | 4.7 |
| Village | (496) | 78.4 | 63.9 | 11.7 | 7.9 | 6.9 |
| Town | (503) | 68.7 | 63.4 | 17.1 | 13.1 | 5.0 |

Nevertheless, there are important differences in self-identification for members of different ethnic groups. The most notable exceptions are, on the one hand, Dagestan's ethnic Russians, for whom Russia is much more important than Dagestan, and, on the other hand, Dagestan's Chechen-Akhins, for whom Dagestan and Russia are weaker referents than for other Dagestanis. For these two groups, cross-border ethnic ties are of great importance. This is not as markedly the case for either Azeris or Lezgins, though both groups have large populations of ethnic kin in Azerbaijan. Yet, after Chechens, ethnic identification is most important to Azeris and Lezgins respectively. For Chechens, ethnic identity, religious identity, village identification are all of striking importance. This is Dagestan's least integrated ethnic group.

Tabasarans and Lezgins identify most strongly with both Dagestan and Russia or see other sources of identification as less available for them. The result is particularly striking with respect to Lezgins who otherwise appear in the survey as relatively alienated from Dagestani politics. Religion is not an important entity of reference for Russians, who are outside of the majority Muslim faith, nor for Lezgins. Though Muslim, the latter group tends to have a greater orientation toward Western values, following an exposure to the cosmopolitanism of Baku at the turn of the twentieth century. Lezgin culture emphasizes education, which leads some toward secularism.

Identification with Dagestan is higher in villages than in towns, while identification with ethnic group is higher in towns than in villages. The monoethnicity of most villages does not evoke ethnic contrasts as a stimulus to ethnic identification. Predictably, men tend to identify more strongly than women with ethnic group, community and religion. In many societies, these entities of reference are most salient for those with political interests, who are most often male. On balance, neither ethnic nor religious mobilization is presently so pronounced as to surpass identification with either Dagestan or Russia.

In a further set of questions, survey respondents were asked to estimate how important several entities of reference might be for a majority of Dagestanis, and also how important those same referents were for the self-identification of the particular respondent. In addition to the referents in table 1, respondents were also asked to consider the significance of social class, social movements and political parties, and Europe, both for the identification of the majority of Dagestanis, and for themselves.¹⁰

This time Dagestan, ethnicity, Russia, religion, and community, in that order, were the principal landmarks of Dagestani identity. Social class, social movements, and Europe were less significant. Again, most Dagestanis identified themselves more strongly with Dagestan than with any other point of reference, but this set of questions also revealed that an even greater proportion of Dagestanis presumed that a majority of their fellow citizens did the same.

Table 2: Importance for majority and self-identification with Dagestan

| | n | mean of majority evaluation* | number of missing cases | mean of self-identification | Number of missing cases |
|-------------------|--------|------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| Overall | (1001) | 1.24 | 37 | 1.37 | 41 |
| Avars | (279) | 1.18 | 7 | 1.23 | 8 |
| Dargins | (172) | 1.13 | 5 | 1.20 | 1 |
| Kumyks | (134) | 1.20 | 3 | 1.21 | 6 |
| Lezgins | (130) | 1.13 | 0 | 1.60 | 1 |
| Laks | (50) | 1.21 | 2 | 1.36 | 3 |
| Russians/Cossacks | (71) | 1.51 | 4 | 1.62 | 5 |
| Chechens | (53) | 2.02 | 9 | 2.06 | 6 |
| Azeris | (39) | 1.31 | 4 | 1.34 | 4 |
| Tabasarans | (27) | 1.15 | 0 | 1.44 | 0 |
| Men | (486) | 1.22 | 11 | 1.33 | 13 |
| Women | (515) | 1.26 | 26 | 1.40 | 28 |
| Village | (496) | 1.19 | 6 | 1.31 | 8 |
| Town | (503) | 1.29 | 31 | 1.43 | 33 |

*Calculation of means based on cases without missing values. Answers were coded as follows: Very important 1, not very important 2, not important 3. Displaying only median values would hide much of the variation in the data. Therefore means are shown, although data have not been measured on a well-tested interval scale.

When self-identification is considered, the largest three ethnic groups identify themselves most intensively with Dagestan, while Russians, Lezgins and especially Chechens are least likely to identify themselves with Dagestan. Russians and Chechens are also less likely to view the majority as identifying with Dagestan. Again, the weaker self-identifications appear to be linked to cross-border ethnic ties. The disparity between Lezgin estimates of the majority and Lezgin self-identification may be indicative of the sentiment, common among Lezgins, that they chronically lack adequate representation in Dagestani politics, due in part to the remote location of their ethnic territory at Dagestan's southern extreme. This contributes to a general sense of alienation among Lezgins that is also reflected in their self-identification

for all other referents. The disparity between tables 1 and 2 on the point of Lezgin self-identification shows that while Lezgins identify more with Dagestan and Russia than with any other referents (table 1) the intensity of their identification with these and other referents is weak (tables 2-4).

For this question set, the second most important source of identification was a sense of belonging to an ethnic group. Yet table 3 shows that Dagestanis tended to overestimate the significance of this factor for the majority, with an overall mean of 1.38, as compared to an overall mean for self-identification of 1.72. Ethnic self-identification is one of the best indicators of ethnic mobilization, and is therefore key to an understanding of Dagestan's stability. Kumyks stand out in this regard. They were the first of Dagestan's ethnic groups to organize an ethnic movement in response to migrations by members of highland groups into their traditional lowland ethnic territories.

Table 3: Importance for majority and self-identification with ethnic group

| | n | mean of majority evaluation* | number of missing cases | mean of self-identification | number of missing cases |
|-------------------|--------|------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| Overall | (1001) | 1.38 | 52 | 1.72 | 62 |
| Avars | (279) | 1.41 | 10 | 1.67 | 15 |
| Dargins | (172) | 1.38 | 8 | 1.64 | 23 |
| Kumyks | (134) | 1.33 | 9 | 1.55 | 9 |
| Lezgins | (130) | 1.23 | 2 | 1.86 | 2 |
| Laks | (50) | 1.38 | 3 | 1.71 | 1 |
| Russians/Cossacks | (71) | 1.55 | 6 | 1.84 | 7 |
| Chechens | (53) | 1.45 | 9 | 1.69 | 0 |
| Azeris | (39) | 1.50 | 1 | 1.76 | 1 |
| Tabasarans | (27) | 1.22 | 0 | 2.12 | 1 |
| Men | (486) | 1.32 | 18 | 1.64 | 23 |
| Women | (515) | 1.42 | 34 | 1.79 | 39 |
| Village | (496) | 1.28 | 15 | 1.67 | 25 |
| Town | (503) | 1.47 | 37 | 1.77 | 37 |

*Calculation of means based on cases without missing values. Answers were coded as follows: Very important 1, not very important 2, not important 3. Displaying only median values would hide much of the variation in the data. Therefore means are shown, although data have not been measured on a well-tested interval scale.

Elite interviews explored issues of ethnicity through a series of five questions.¹¹ Sixteen out of 40 interviewees stated that socio-economic transition has stimulated an increase in ethnic nationalism. Many respondents explained this increase in terms of ethnic tensions rising in proportion with economic decline

and redistribution, while others saw it as a result of greater openness about differences that had always existed. Several respondents argued that ethnic nationalism had been suppressed by Soviet internationalism and had surfaced during the transition, in part, because it was used by leaders seeking support and followers seeking benefits. Yet several respondents indicated that leaders of ethnic movements had failed to achieve deep and enduring support.

Many suggested that the ability to deal openly with ethnic issues was related to a decline in their salience. During and after perestroika, as ethnic issues came to be more public, their private significance diminished. Two respondents argued that the importance of ethnicity to individuals varies inversely with its public salience: "...If the state takes proper care of this matter, then people gradually stop to consider it so important..." A few respondents posited a cyclical development of ethnic nationalism during the last decade. Some attributed the current decline of ethnic nationalism to modernizing and market forces that placed professional qualifications ahead of ethnic ties.

These views would tend to explain why Dagestanis overestimate salience of ethnicity for the majority as compared with self-identification. Ethnicity previously was of greater significance in Dagestan than it is today; views of the majority change more slowly than views of the self. If ethnicity has a greater public significance (when the majority is considered) than personal significance, then this suggests ethnic differences may be receiving institutional mediation that is satisfactory to many Dagestanis.

Yet eighteen interviewees believed that ethnicity remains an important or very important aspect of socio-political relations. They remarked that members of one's ethnic group tend to be more reliable, and that conflicts with them are less likely to end in violence and covert retaliation. They said that ethnicity becomes an issue especially when leaders of different ethnicities clash. When asked if some ethnic groups were better represented in positions of power, only four respondents replied in the negative. Most identified Avars and Dargins, the two largest groups, as dominant. Thus, while the importance of ethnicity is declining, it remains a powerful force in Dagestani life.

The survey showed that a middle range of identification is occupied by religion (table 4) and by community/*djamaat*.¹² About a third of the respondents thought that each of these was an important referent for the majority of Dagestanis. Yet in contrast with Dagestani and ethnic identity, self-identification with each of these is generally stronger than the estimated evaluation of the majority. The over-estimation of majority identification is slight in the case of the *djamaat*, but significant for religion. Only Russians and Lezgins deviate from this pattern.

Table 4: Importance for majority and self-identification with religion

| | n | Mean* of majority evaluation | Number of missing cases | mean of self-identification | number of missing cases |
|-------------------|--------|------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| Overall | (1001) | 1.86 | 137 | 1.74 | 90 |
| Avars | (279) | 1.80 | 33 | 1.67 | 20 |
| Dargins | (172) | 1.84 | 27 | 1.71 | 24 |
| Kumyks | (134) | 1.76 | 19 | 1.46 | 8 |
| Lezgins | (130) | 1.88 | 7 | 2.05 | 8 |
| Laks | (50) | 1.77 | 6 | 1.82 | 5 |
| Russians/Cossacks | (71) | 2.33 | 17 | 2.08 | 7 |
| Chechens | (53) | 1.70 | 7 | 1.61 | 12 |
| Azeris | (39) | 1.97 | 9 | 1.76 | 1 |
| Tabasarans | (27) | 1.89 | 0 | 1.48 | 0 |
| Men | (486) | 1.81 | 47 | 1.67 | 18 |
| Women | (515) | 1.92 | 90 | 1.81 | 68 |
| Village | (496) | 1.80 | 39 | 1.68 | 31 |
| Town | (503) | 1.93 | 98 | 1.80 | 59 |

*Calculation of means based on cases without missing values. Answers were coded as follows: Very important 1, not very important 2, not important 3. Displaying only median values would hide much of the variation in the data. Therefore means are shown, although data have not been measured on a well-tested interval scale.

The overall mean of self-identification with the *djamaat* is 1.83, but the significance of this referent in Dagestani life may be best illustrated by contrast with the identification of the ethnic Russian population, for whom the *djamaat* tradition is absent, and for whom the significance of the community is dramatically less than for any other group, with a mean of 2.41.

Dagestanis believe that Russia is the third most important point of majority identification. Russia's overall mean of 1.58 places it behind Dagestan and ethnicity, but ahead of religion and *djamaat*. In accord with table 1, majority identification with Russia is rated lowest by Chechens with a mean of

2.39. Class divisions are of minor importance for most Dagestanis with an overall self-identification mean of 2.25. Among Tabasarans, Azeris, and Lezgins, class counts for almost nothing at all, whereas Laks, Avars and Russians regard class as slightly more important. Of even less importance than class identity is identification with political parties and social movements with an overall mean self-identification of 2.50.

The insignificance of political parties and social movements that have sprung up in Dagestan since perestroika was emphasized to one degree or another in all of the interviews. Many respondents, and particularly those who also expressed communist sympathies, voiced their unfamiliarity with, or hostility toward, such organizations. Respondents generally remarked that whereas these organizations may initially have formed around genuine social or political objectives they quickly lost organizational momentum and became fronts for the personal interests of bosses or wealthy patrons. In other cases, interviewees characterized such organizations as ephemerally organized around a handful of committed activists.

However, some organizations were praised in varying degrees for their efficacy or popular support. These included the Communist Party, the Trade Union of Truck Drivers and Small Business Entrepreneurs, and the ethnic movements of the Avars and of the Kumyks. With these two exceptions, attitudes toward Dagestan's ethnic movements were negative or dismissive. It was felt that, though some were significant shortly after the collapse of the Soviet Union, they are of little or no consequence today.

On balance, the estimation of majority identification with ethnic groups ranked ahead of the estimated majority identification with Russia, with respective means of 1.38 and 1.58. But the estimation of majority identification with ethnicity was substantially overestimated when compared to the ethnic self-identification of the respondents, with a mean of 1.72. On the other hand, the extent of the majority identification with *djamaat*, and especially with religion, was somewhat underestimated when compared with self-identification. In other words, Dagestanis tend to think that ethnicity is more important to others than it is to themselves, and tend to think that the religion is less important to others than it is to themselves. This suggests either that the salience of ethnic cleavages has been overplayed, or that ethnic

cleavages are being addressed by existing institutions in a manner that reduces their divisiveness and satisfies many individuals. It also suggests that the importance of religion may have been underestimated.

Contrary to conventional wisdom, the preeminent identification with Dagestan, transcends the Republic's ethnic diversity. While ethnic cleavages remain important, and while some groups, such as Lezgins and Chechens, remain considerably less integrated than others, these results suggest that ethnic cleavages have been generally overrated in comparison with unifying tendencies that result from strong identifications with Dagestan, with Russia, and with religion. This identity appears to contribute to the negative stability of Dagestan; it helps to explain why the Republic has not descended into protracted conflict. But is there any indication of positive stability?

How do Dagestanis view their political system?

Recent changes in socio-cultural, political and economic life are viewed critically by many Dagestanis. Table 5 shows that the worst changes are perceived by those we surveyed to have occurred in the economy, followed by politics and socio-cultural life.¹³ These results are not unique, and can be found in most of the successors of former socialist states.

Table 5: Perceptions of Changes in . . .

| | n | Economy | | politics | | cultural life | |
|-------------------|--------|---------|-------------------------|----------|-------------------------|---------------|-------------------------|
| | | mean* | number of missing cases | Mean | number of missing cases | mean | number of missing cases |
| Overall | (1001) | 2.56 | 45 | 2.45 | 136 | 2.26 | 73 |
| Avars | (279) | 2.41 | 17 | 2.40 | 26 | 2.13 | 11 |
| Dargins | (172) | 2.67 | 10 | 2.61 | 22 | 2.37 | 15 |
| Kumyks | (134) | 2.73 | 3 | 2.55 | 15 | 2.28 | 8 |
| Lezgins | (130) | 2.65 | 4 | 2.53 | 14 | 2.54 | 11 |
| Laks | (50) | 2.57 | 1 | 2.50 | 8 | 1.96 | 1 |
| Russians/Cossacks | (71) | 2.58 | 2 | 2.33 | 7 | 2.16 | 3 |
| Chechens | (53) | 2.55 | 4 | 2.47 | 14 | 2.33 | 10 |
| Azeris | (39) | 2.54 | 0 | 1.97 | 5 | 2.33 | 6 |
| Tabasarans | (27) | 2.42 | 1 | 2.27 | 1 | 2.54 | 3 |
| Men | (486) | 2.52 | 22 | 2.42 | 60 | 2.29 | 38 |

| | | | | | | | |
|---------|-------|------|----|------|----|------|----|
| Women | (515) | 2.60 | 23 | 2.49 | 76 | 2.23 | 35 |
| Village | (496) | 2.49 | 20 | 2.46 | 67 | 2.32 | 36 |
| Town | (503) | 2.63 | 25 | 2.45 | 69 | 2.20 | 37 |

*Calculation of means based on cases without missing values. Answers were coded as follows: Changes to the better 1, changes no better/no worse 2, changes to the worse 3. Displaying only median values would hide much of the variation in the data. Therefore means are shown, although data have not been measured on a well-tested interval scale.

Among different groups, Dargins, Kumyks and Lezgins are more concerned than Avars and Tabasarans about the deterioration of the economy. Since life in many Dagestani villages was always impoverished, villagers are less concerned about recent changes than townspeople. The economic decline has hit women harder than men, as is often the case in transitional societies.

Many Dagestanis are reluctant to speak openly about politics, as illustrated by the greater number of those who declined to state an opinion about political changes. The numbers of missing values are particularly high for Chechens, who are perceived in Dagestan as an out-group following the 1999 invasion of Dagestan by Chechnya-based militants, and for Dargins. Dargins are regarded by many in Dagestan as presently the most powerful group since the chair of the State Council and the mayor of Mahachkala are both Dargins. There are also, however, important divisions among Dargins, as illustrated by the fact that some Dargin villages have been the scene of the most defiant fundamentalist activity. Those Dargins who declined to state an opinion about changes in the Dagestani political system may have been concerned about criticizing other Dargins. Once again, women see political changes in a less positive light than men.

Dissatisfaction with recent economic and political changes is consistent with a preference for socialism displayed by most Dagestanis in table 6.¹⁴ Predictably, those who see changes for the worse would favor a return to a socialist state. Less than a quarter of the population favors “Western democracy”, only one tenth would choose for Dagestan to become an “Islamic state”; and those who would so choose also want to see Dagestan more independent (Spearman’s Rho: -0.34).

Again, differences between ethnic groups are telling. Chechens are least in favor of a socialist state (28.3 percent) and are the strongest supporters of an Islamic state (35.8 percent), but they offer nearly as strong support for Western democracy (34.6%). This suggests that Chechens, more than any

other group, are prepared to make a break with the Soviet past, but are divided on the choice of Eastern and Western paths. Comparatively low support for a socialist state can also be found among Laks (48.0 percent) and Avars (53.8 percent). An Islamic state is especially unattractive for Azeris (2.8 percent) and Lezgins (4.6 percent). Western democracy is most attractive for Laks (38.0 percent), though there is also significant support among Avars (30.1 percent). Kumyks are least interested in Western democracy (11.2 percent). Women favor a socialist state due to their disproportionate deprivation during the recent transition. Men are more likely to favor an Islamic state, as are villagers.

| overall percentage | Islamic state | Western democracy | socialist state |
|--------------------|---------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| Overall | 10.9 | 22.5 | 63.4 |
| Avars | 13.7 | 30.1 | 53.8 |
| Dargins | 13.4 | 19.2 | 64.0 |
| Kumyks | 9.7 | 11.2 | 76.1 |
| Lezgins | 4.6 | 20.0 | 75.4 |
| Laks | 12.0 | 38.0 | 48.0 |
| Russians/Cossacks | - | 18.3 | 71.8 |
| Chechens | 35.8 | 34.0 | 28.3 |
| Azeris | 2.8 | 17.9 | 71.8 |
| Tabasarans | 11.1 | 18.5 | 70.4 |
| Men | 14.0 | 21.8 | 61.5 |
| Women | 8.0 | 23.1 | 65.2 |
| Village | 13.9 | 23.6 | 62.4 |
| Town | 8.0 | 21.3 | 64.6 |

We asked interviewees to respond to three questions on this topic: 1) What political *regime* do you consider the most acceptable in Dagestan: Islam and Shari'a, Western democracy, socialism, or something else? 2) How would you estimate chances for the establishment of (the regime type specified by the respondent)? 3) If Western democracy was chosen, what is needed or what is lacking in Dagestan for the establishment of a stable Western democracy?

Drawing more adherents than any other form of government, socialism was specified by nine of the respondents. Most respondents expressed this preference laconically, with doubts about the possibility of its fulfillment. Western democracy was the preference expressed in eight interviews. Most

respondents were also skeptical about possibilities for its establishment, but one respondent thought that there was hope for democracy because of the democratic traditions of Dagestan’s *djamaats*. In contrast, with adherents of socialism and Western democracy, the five respondents tending toward Islamic rule estimated greater probabilities for the achievement of their preference, in part because of its basis in Dagestani traditions. Two respondents anticipated a rapprochement of Islamists with communists.

Ten interviewees did not favor any of the suggested regime types. Five of these argued that “we should return to our ethnic roots, to our history” and find there an acceptable political structure. Three simply stressed that “the law should be firmly obeyed.” Two respondents expressed doubts that any distinguishable political system is feasible in Dagestan.

These results do not indicate that Dagestan has achieved the consolidation of democratic practices under the rule of law that is requisite for positive stability. The absence of positive stability was further evident when survey respondents were asked to evaluate Dagestan’s political institutions, which are displayed by table 7 in order of their perceived efficacy.¹⁵ Low mean scores indicate a higher level of efficacy. Highest ranking among government institutions are the State Council and the Cabinet of Ministers (means 2.44). Next are the People’s Assembly and the organs of law enforcement (means 2.46). Last is the Ministry of Economy (mean 2.59). This result, when compared with table 6, shows how transitional problems lead to low trust in government institutions. Again, economic development proves to be of utmost importance.

Table 7: Evaluation of Institutions– Means

| | State Council | People's Assembly | Government (Cabinet of Ministers) | Law-enforcement organs | Ministry of Economy | polit. parties, soc. movements | religious organizations |
|-------------------|---------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Overall | 2.44 | 2.46 | 2.44 | 2.46 | 2.59 | 2.53 | 2.11 |
| Avars | 2.39 | 2.39 | 2.41 | 2.33 | 2.50 | 2.51 | 2.02 |
| Dargins | 2.45 | 2.52 | 2.44 | 2.45 | 2.63 | 2.58 | 2.12 |
| Kумыks | 2.45 | 2.46 | 2.40 | 2.64 | 2.66 | 2.52 | 2.07 |
| Lezgins | 2.64 | 2.59 | 2.62 | 2.65 | 2.73 | 2.61 | 2.40 |
| Laks | 2.52 | 2.43 | 2.55 | 2.40 | 2.60 | 2.72 | 2.02 |
| Russians/Cossacks | 2.39 | 2.48 | 2.38 | 2.47 | 2.62 | 2.58 | 2.21 |

| | | | | | | | |
|------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Chechens | 2.50 | 2.50 | 2.51 | 2.57 | 2.55 | 2.12 | 1.87 |
| Azeris | 2.21 | 2.30 | 2.22 | 2.29 | 2.47 | 2.54 | 2.12 |
| Tabasarans | 2.38 | 2.31 | 2.35 | 2.35 | 2.42 | 2.36 | 2.57 |
| Men | 2.44 | 2.42 | 2.44 | 2.45 | 2.59 | 2.55 | 2.07 |
| Women | 2.45 | 2.49 | 2.44 | 2.48 | 2.60 | 2.52 | 2.15 |
| Village | 2.40 | 2.46 | 2.40 | 2.48 | 2.57 | 2.45 | 2.11 |
| Town | 2.45 | 2.45 | 2.49 | 2.45 | 2.61 | 2.62 | 2.11 |

Answer were coded as follows: Performance of the institution is good (1), satisfactory (2), and bad (3). Displaying only median values would hide much of the variation in the data. Therefore means are shown, although data have not been measured on a well-tested interval scale.

Of greater importance, however, is the fact that very large percentages of the population are dissatisfied with all political institutions. This suggests that in Dagestan, state institutions are not creating stability so much as consuming stability generated elsewhere. Nor is satisfaction higher with political parties and social movements. On balance, they are ranked low, with a mean of 2.53. This underscores the significance of religion. Religious organizations receive the highest evaluation with a mean of 2.11. Table 8 shows those ethnic groups that were either relatively high or relatively low in their rankings of these institutions.

Table 8: Evaluation of institutions – Differences between ethnic groups

| Item (mean) | better than average | worse than average |
|--|--|---|
| Religious organizations (2.11) | Chechens (1.87) Avars (2.02) Laks (2.02) | Tabasarans (2.57) Lezgins (2.40) Russians/Cossacks (2.21) |
| Political parties, social movements (2.53) | Chechens (2.12) Tabasarans (2.36) | Laks (2.72) Lezgins (2.61) Russians/Cossacks (2.58) Dargins (2.58) |
| State Council (2.44) | Azeris (2.21) Tabasarans (2.38) Russians/Cossacks (2.39) Avars (2.39) | Lezgins (2.64) Laks (2.52) Chechens (2.50) |
| Cabinet (2.44) | Azeris (2.22) Tabasarans (2.35) Russians/Cossacks (2.38) | Lezgins (2.62) Laks (2.55) Chechens (2.51) |
| People's assembly (2.46) | Azeris (2.30) Tabasarans (2.31) Avars (2.39) | Lezgins (2.59) Dargins (2.52) Chechens (2.50) |
| Law enforcing organs (2.46) | Azeris (2.29) Avars (2.33) Tabasarans (2.35) | Lezgins (2.65) Kumyks (2.64) Chechens (2.57) |
| Ministry of economy (2.59) | Tabasarans (2.42) Azeris (2.47) Avars (2.50) | Lezgins (2.73) Kumyks (2.66) Dargins (2.63) Russians/Cossacks (2.62) |

Table 8 shows that there are some ethnic groups that seem to be comparatively content with Dagestan's political institutions (from State Council to Ministry of Economy). These groups include Tabasarans (noted 5 of 5 times), Azeris (5) and Avars (4). On the other hand, Lezgins are dissatisfied with the working of Dagestan's political institutions (noted 5 times of 5 times), and so are Chechens (4). Clearly, these groups are politically alienated. Unlike Lezgins, however, Chechens draw relative satisfaction from religious and social organizations.

The legitimacy, and hence stability, of a political system may depend upon perceptions of fair and open access to political positions. Moreover, people usually desire that political representatives should prove responsive to their interests and concerns. Table 9 indicates what respondents think to be necessary for those seeking high political positions.¹⁶

Table 9: What is needed to reach high positions? – means

| | Determination, force | Support of authoritative individuals | Intelligence, good education, discipline | Financial resources |
|-------------------|----------------------|--------------------------------------|--|---------------------|
| Overall | 1.63 | 1.44 | 1.67 | 1.35 |
| Avars | 1.53 | 1.43 | 1.67 | 1.30 |
| Dargins | 1.60 | 1.44 | 1.62 | 1.39 |
| Kumyks | 1.68 | 1.53 | 1.70 | 1.33 |
| Lezgins | 1.81 | 1.22 | 1.69 | 1.37 |
| Laks | 1.48 | 1.50 | 1.60 | 1.32 |
| Russians/Cossacks | 1.50 | 1.46 | 1.63 | 1.42 |
| Chechens | 2.16 | 1.86 | 2.02 | 1.44 |
| Azeris | 1.50 | 1.63 | 1.58 | 1.31 |
| Tabasarans | 1.52 | 1.15 | 1.37 | 1.30 |
| Men | 1.66 | 1.44 | 1.69 | 1.34 |
| Women | 1.60 | 1.45 | 1.64 | 1.35 |
| Village | 1.61 | 1.37 | 1.59 | 1.29 |
| Town | 1.65 | 1.53 | 1.75 | 1.40 |

Answers were coded as follows: Needed for reaching a high state position – necessary (1), preferable (2), and not necessary (3). Displaying only median values would hide much of the variation in the data. Therefore means are shown, although data have not been measured on a well-tested interval scale.

For those seeking political office, financial resources are regarded as the most important attribute, (mean: 1.35), followed by support of authoritative individuals (1.44). Of secondary significance are the

personal characteristics of those seeking political influence: determination and force (1.63), and a mixture of intelligence, education and discipline (1.67). However, these “personal resources” are rated as more important by females. All of these resources required for a successful career are estimated as being more important in villages than in towns, which testifies to the closer contact that villagers are likely to have with political leaders active in their *djamaats*.

Azeris, Avars and Tabasarans, all of whom provide relatively positive assessments throughout many of these tables, are above average in their views on the importance of all characteristics. On the other hand, Chechens have a below average evaluation of the importance of any resource, suggesting a general sense of exclusion from the political system that reappears at numerous points in this study.

Table 10: Most important reason to vote for a candidate

| Percent | 'S/he pays more or helps me specifically' | | 'S/he is a person of my own ethnic group' | | 'S/he is an intelligent, honest, decent person' | |
|-------------------|---|---------|---|---------|---|---------|
| | valid | Overall | Valid | overall | valid | overall |
| Overall | 11.9 | 11.9 | 7.6 | 7.6 | 80.5 | 80.5 |
| Avars | 13.6 | 13.6 | 6.5 | 6.5 | 79.9 | 79.9 |
| Dargins | 14.6 | 14.5 | 10.5 | 10.5 | 74.9 | 74.4 |
| Kumyks | 11.9 | 11.9 | 6.0 | 6.0 | 82.1 | 81.1 |
| Lezgins | 6.9 | 6.9 | 6.2 | 6.2 | 86.9 | 86.9 |
| Laks | 4.0 | 4.0 | 8.0 | 8.0 | 88.0 | 88.0 |
| Russians/Cossacks | 8.5 | 8.5 | - | - | 91.5 | 91.5 |
| Chechens | 18.9 | 18.9 | 26.4 | 26.4 | 54.7 | 54.7 |
| Azeris | 12.8 | 12.8 | 5.1 | 5.1 | 82.1 | 82.1 |
| Tabasarans | - | - | 11.1 | 11.1 | 88.9 | 88.9 |
| Men | 12.8 | 12.8 | 9.5 | 9.5 | 77.7 | 77.7 |
| Women | 11.1 | 11.1 | 5.8 | 5.8 | 83.1 | 83.1 |
| Village | 10.1 | 10.1 | 10.5 | 10.5 | 79.4 | 79.4 |
| Town | 13.7 | 13.7 | 4.6 | 4.6 | 81.7 | 81.7 |

In table 10, most respondents claim to base their votes upon the intelligence, honesty and decency of a candidate (80.5 percent).¹⁷ On the other hand, ethnic considerations are viewed as negligible (7.6 percent). Ethnicity is more important to villagers and men than to townspeople and women.

Does this electoral self-assessment coincide with views about the voting behavior of fellow citizens? Table 11 shows that this is largely the case. Yet while the order of the three items is unchanged, the two tables contain significant differences. First, Dagestanis either exaggerate the importance of candidates' intelligence and honesty as far as their own voting behavior is concerned, or they tend to think badly about those for whom they vote.¹⁸ Second, and nearly inversely, they either overestimate common desires for allocation and service responsiveness on the part of candidates, or they are not entirely honest about the motives of their personal votes. Third, it is evident, once again, that Dagestanis believe that ethnicity plays a more important role for others than for themselves. While it is a commonplace of survey research that respondents evaluate their own motives more generously than those of their neighbors, views about the role of ethnicity in voting behavior tend to corroborate those about the limited role of ethnicity in Dagestani identity.

Table 11: Presumed reasons to vote for candidates (in overall percent of respondents)

| Candidates are ... | 'opinion shared by majority' | 'opinion is rare' |
|---|------------------------------|-------------------|
| ... intelligent, honest, decent people, who really represent us and help people | 50.0 | 18.9 |
| ... persons who pay more or specifically help me | 41.0 | 13.1 |
| ... persons of my own ethnic group, even when they can not help me personally | 22.8 | 21.8 |

Especially in a democracy with competitive elections, ethnic cleavages often are a challenge for system integration and stability. Since both satisfaction with political institutions and desires for Dagestan's future are related to ethnicity, a final table demonstrates the extent to which voting decisions may be shaped by ethnic affiliation.

Table 12: Personal and presumed reasons to vote for candidates – Differences between ethnic groups

| Reasons to vote (overall percentages: personal/presumed) | Personal vote | | Presumed majority vote | |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| | Clearly above average | Clearly below average | clearly above average | clearly below average |
| "Candidates are ... intelligent, honest, decent people, who really represent us and help people" (80.5 / 50.0) | <i>Russians/Cossacks</i> 91.5 <i>Tabasarans</i> 88.9 Laks 88.0 Lezgins 86.9 | <i>Chechens</i> 54.7 Dargins 74.4 | <i>Kumyks</i> 59.7 <i>Russians/Cossacks</i> 56.3 Laks 56.0 | <i>Tabasarans</i> 25.9 <i>Chechens</i> 26.4 <i>Azeris</i> 38.5 |

| | | | | |
|---|--|---|--|---|
| ... persons who pay more or specifically help me" (11.9 / 41.0) | <i>Chechens 18.9</i> | Laks 4.0 Lezgins 6.9 <i>Russians/Cossacks 8.5</i> | <i>Russians/Cossacks 54.9</i> Laks 48.0 <i>Chechens 47.2</i> | <i>Tabasarans 7.4</i> <i>Azeris 25.6</i> Lezgins 31.5 |
| ... persons of my own ethnic group, even when they can not help me personally" (7.6 / 22.8) | <i>Chechens 26.4</i> <i>Tabasarans 11.1</i> Dargins 10.5 | <i>Azeris 5.1</i> Kumyks 6.0 Lezgins 6.2 | <i>Chechens 41.5</i> Dargins 27.3 | <i>Tabasarans 11.1</i> <i>Russians/Cossacks 14.1</i> <i>Azeris 15.4</i> |

Names of ethnic groups in *italics* indicate that the ethnic group occurs in the table at least four times

Four ethnic groups are noteworthy in this table: Chechens, Russians, Tabasarans, and Azeris.

- Chechens vote more often for persons of their ethnic group and for those candidates promising compensation. This behavior is reflected in their expectations for the majority. Accordingly, they tend less than any other ethnic group to base their own decisions on the candidate's honesty, and, they are less convinced that the majority of voters would appreciate this criterion. This is a coherent picture of an overtly defensive ethnic group, which is suspicious of other groups and tends to base choices on immediate interests. It may also be indicative of differences between Chechen culture and that of other ethnic groups.
- Like Chechens Russians are an out-group in Dagestan; yet they are outstanding in their claim to vote on grounds of candidates' honesty. More than others, they also extend this motive to other groups. Less than other ethnic groups, they think that ethnicity plays a major role in voting decisions. In contrast with Chechens, their status as an out-group may lead them to discount the political significance of ethnicity. However, they think more than others that "special pay and help" is important in this respect – at least for others, since they themselves claim to refuse such motivation. On balance, normatively correct and realistic judgments shape their answers.
- Far above average, Tabasarans claim to base their voting decisions both on candidates' honesty and on ethnic considerations. However, they tend not to attribute these motives to others, nor do they tend especially to think that others base their votes on personal compensation. In this respect, they are very much like Azeris. These, however, vote less along ethnic lines than do Tabasarans.

Interviewees were asked how people become powerful leaders and how leaders are connected with their supporters. Only seven respondents discussed this topic neutrally or in a positive tone. Other responses were characteristically negative in their assessment of leaders and their methods. Leaders frequently were described as self-seeking, manipulative, acquisitive, and violent, obtaining their positions by means of force or financial clout. Fifteen respondents focused upon the importance of money for the achievement of leadership positions. Nine discussed violence and criminal activity as prerequisites for power. Eight interviewees thought that kinship ties were important for achievement of high position; yet, significantly, only three respondents saw ethnicity as important to political ascent. Finally, eight interviewees denied that Dagestani leaders have any mass support at all.

Interviewees also were asked to discuss conflicts among elites.¹⁹ Twenty-nine respondents said that conflicts arose out of the struggle for money and power. Twelve interviews discussed the causes of intraelite conflicts in terms of socio-psychological factors such as ambition, pursuit of fame, jealousy, incompatibility, and absence of restraint. Five respondents stated that conflicts emerge as a result of certain situations, a combination of different circumstances; in another five interviews such circumstances were described as political. One denied the existence of serious conflict between prominent leaders on the ground and believed that they are fundamentally unified in their interest.

Nine respondents thought that he who has more money or power is more likely to emerge victorious from a conflict. According to several respondents, many conflicts are resolved by bribe, threat, force, and *razborka* (quarrels). Thirteen interviews discussed a resort to violence when peaceful methods fail. However, most often there are at least initial negotiations. These involve mediators respectable to all sides, such as elders or social and political superiors.

According to many respondents, a rich experience of conflict resolution has been accumulated in Dagestan; yet folk traditions were cited more often than Islamic Shari'a, which was mentioned in only one interview. According to several interviewees "conflict resolution is an art that you learn from your father, uncle, or older friend." The best-known tradition of conflict resolution in Dagestan is "*maslat*" (or "reconciliation", as mentioned in five interviews), also known to Kumyks as "*kimbeldy*" (one reference).

But eight respondents agreed that today fewer people resolve their conflicts traditionally. Young people usually try to solve problems with a bribe or with murder. Several respondents thought that even when law-enforcement organs were involved in a conflict, Dagestanis prefer to resolve it without a court.

Interviewees also were asked about the extent to which Dagestan's political elite could be considered united. Respondents who perceived separate groupings of elites were asked about the basis for their differentiation. Seven interviews discussed a ruling elite united in the service of their own interests. Nine respondents thought that the ruling elite is united, while also identifying some subgroups of elites, which were described as constantly shifting and realigning. Twenty-two respondents thought that Dagestan does not have a united ruling elite, but numerous different groupings that come into conflict and form alliances with each other on a more or less continuous basis. A range of reasons were cited for the formation of these groups: ethnicity, clans, fellow villagers, and old friends. But almost all cited common interests of one sort or another, and many thought that these interests were partly or entirely material.

Thus, whether or not they considered elites to be united, thirty-one interviewees believed that Dagestan is ruled by shifting groups of elites. This view is consistent with our description of Dagestani politics in consociational terms.²⁰ Depictions of elites who are skillful at resolving conflicts among themselves are also consistent with consociational models.

However, Dagestan's intralite violence diverges from consociational literature; nor is it clear that Dagestani leaders are consociationally connected to their followers in vertical social segments based upon ethnic or religious distinctions. Ethnicity is clearly of great importance to Dagestani society, but its significance for Dagestani identity is overestimated by Dagestanis themselves (table 3). While some interviewees suggested that ethnicity provides linkage between leaders and followers, most interviewees agreed that ethnicity had previously been exploited by prospective leaders seeking to cultivate a following, but that ethnic divisions had lost much of their political salience. Though ethnic ties are more important to Chechens than to Azeris, Kumyks, and Lezgins, when it comes to selecting a leader, all ethnic groups regard them as relatively unimportant.

In our previous study of consociational democracy in Dagestan, we hypothesized that vertical connections between leaders and followers were based not on ethnicity so much as on *djamaat* connections, giving rise to institutions that we described as “ethnopolitical parties”. This approach has found some support from event data in this study. Moreover, the political significance of *djamaat* relations was discussed by some interviewees. However, *djamaat* connections between leaders and followers did not emerge as a central theme in the interviews, nor was it among the more important features of self-identification in the survey. Some Dagestanis have remarked to us that their compatriots are reluctant to discuss ancient institutions, such as the *djamaat* in a context as formal as an interview or a survey. This may be the case, but for the present it must be said that neither survey nor interview data focus upon the centrality of the *djamaat* connections between leaders and followers.

Indeed the data indicate that the connection between leaders and followers in Dagestan is problematic. Surely there are indicators of a democratic culture, as for example the proportion of individuals who claim to vote for candidates on the basis of their positive personal qualifications. Yet this assessment diverges from assumptions about the motives of other voters, and starkly contrasts with views about the characteristics of powerful leaders. Indeed, when it comes to an assessment of how leadership positions are achieved positive, personal qualities are of least significance. Of greater significance are financial resources, support of other powerful individuals, and force.

A still more negative view of Dagestani leaders emerges from the interviews. Here leaders are depicted as corrupt, self-seeking, disconnected from their followers, and prone to violence when intralite negotiations break down. They are credited with having sophisticated conflict resolution skills, sometimes adopted from Dagestani traditions. Yet when these skills prove ineffective there is recourse to violence, and even when they prove effective they lend the appearance of a closed and undemocratic elite. Elitism is a feature of any consociational system, but a substantial alienation of Dagestanis from their leaders is indicated by general dissatisfaction with the Republic’s political institutions.

It must be said that dissatisfaction is inevitable given the scale of the current socio-economic transition, and that the foundation of democratic institutions has frequently preceded the establishment of

a genuinely democratic political culture. Though we previously have shown that Dagestan's formal institutions are comparable to those of a consociational democracy, and while event data from this study (see note 6) also provides evidence of consociationalism, the present survey and interviews indicate that Dagestan's political culture diverges from that which might be expected in a consociational system. Whether or not the political culture develops in a consociational manner will depend upon Dagestan's internal political dynamics. It will also depend upon the nature of existing threats to Dagestan's stability.

What are the threats to Dagestan's stability?

The survey asked respondents whom they would "trust in the event of an acute crisis", permitting more than one response.²¹ For a majority of Dagestanis, Russia is the second most important source of identity. Yet given the history of the Caucasus, it nevertheless seems remarkable that in case of an acute crisis most Dagestanis would trust in Russian Federal leadership (see table 13). Indeed, during the invasions of 1999 this point seemed to come as a surprise to the Kremlin. Yet it is placed in context by the fact that, on balance, Dagestani leadership does not even rank second overall as a source of critical support, but only third, after "myself, my relatives and friends". On the one hand, this is evidence of the significance of informal structures such as family, *tuhum*, and *djamaat*. On the other hand, it is indicative generally of the extent to which Dagestanis are alienated from their own leadership, and indicative particularly of the perceived weakness and the lack of resources of the Dagestani leadership in the case of an acute crisis.

Tabasarans, Azeris, Laks and Russians are most likely to rely on Russian Federal leadership; Chechens are least likely. Chechens, Laks, and Avars have least trust in Dagestani officials. Tabasarans, Azeris, Dargins, and Lezgins have comparatively greater trust in the government of Dagestan. The level of trust in the latter group is remarkable given their relative disdain of Dagestani institutions. Chechens have unrivaled trust in their ethnic and religious leaders.

Table 13: Trust in case of an acute crisis

| valid = overall percent | Russian Federal leadership | Dagestan leadership | leader of pol. parties and ethnic movements | Religious leaders | Myself, my relatives and friends |
|-------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------|---|-------------------|----------------------------------|
| Overall | 63.7 | 42.5 | 8.0 | 7.8 | 42.6 |
| Avars | 61.3 | 31.5 | 8.6 | 7.9 | 43.4 |
| Dargins | 64.5 | 54.1 | 5.8 | 3.5 | 41.9 |
| Kumyks | 61.2 | 37.3 | 8.2 | 9.7 | 50.7 |
| Lezgins | 66.9 | 60.8 | 3.1 | 3.1 | 28.5 |
| Laks | 72.0 | 30.0 | 6.0 | 10.0 | 50.0 |
| Russians/Cossacks | 70.4 | 38.0 | 1.4 | - | 56.3 |
| Chechens | 15.1 | 30.2 | 45.3 | 45.3 | 45.3 |
| Azeris | 74.4 | 56.4 | - | 7.7 | 46.2 |
| Tabasarans | 81.5 | 66.7 | 3.7 | - | 25.9 |
| Men | 63.0 | 45.1 | 9.1 | 8.6 | 43.6 |
| Women | 64.5 | 40.0 | 7.0 | 7.0 | 41.6 |
| Village | 66.7 | 48.6 | 8.5 | 6.9 | 34.1 |
| Town | 60.8 | 36.4 | 7.6 | 8.7 | 50.9 |

The military operations in August/September 1999 were not without consequence for various ethnic groups. On balance, there is not a clear majority perception either of more or less stability as a result of these events (table 14).²² Russians, Azeris and Lezgins tend to see a more stabilizing influence. Chechens see more destabilization than any other group, followed by Dargins and Laks. The former three groups tend to reside relatively far from the areas of violent conflict, while the three latter groups were in the thick of the fighting. Urban dwellers, who were largely distanced from the fighting, see more benefits than villagers. Women see fewer positive results than do men.

Table 14: Situation after the military operation in August/ September 1999

| | n | mean* | number of missing cases |
|-------------------|--------|-------|-------------------------|
| Overall | (1001) | 1.89 | 98 |
| Avars | (279) | 1.80 | 28 |
| Dargins | (172) | 2.01 | 12 |
| Kumyks | (134) | 1.96 | 12 |
| Lezgins | (130) | 1.75 | 14 |
| Laks | (50) | 2.05 | 6 |
| Russians/Cossacks | (71) | 1.70 | 5 |

| | | | |
|------------|-------|------|----|
| Chechens | (53) | 2.30 | 9 |
| Azeris | (39) | 1.74 | 5 |
| Tabasarans | (27) | 1.79 | 3 |
| Men | (486) | 1.82 | 41 |
| Women | (515) | 1.95 | 57 |
| Village | (496) | 1.93 | 53 |
| Town | (503) | 1.85 | 45 |

*Calculation of means based on cases without missing values. Answers were coded as follows: More stable (1), the same (2), and less stable (3). Displaying only median values would hide much of the variation in the data. Therefore means are shown, although data have not been measured on a well-tested interval scale.

Whom do Dagestanis see as a major threat? Corresponding to the trust invested in the Russian Federation, Russia is seen as the least threatening of four possibilities in table 15.²³ Chechnya is perceived as much more threatening, as the low mean of 1.27 suggests. Next in rank are the threats from Western and Eastern countries respectively. Some Dagestanis view Western culture and values as a threat to a traditional Islamic lifestyle. One interviewee was concerned that Western military or political adventures may destabilize the region by treating Chechnya like Kosovo. Those who see a threat from Eastern countries are most concerned about foreign support for Islamic fundamentalism in Dagestan.

However, different ethnic groups tend to see these threats in different lights. Chechens understandably fear Russia, but Avars and Kumyks also have greater than average reservations. Russians are predictably least concerned about a threat from Russia, followed by Lezgins, Tabasarans, and Azeris.

Table 15: Threat to Dagestan...

| | n | Russia | | Chechnya | | Western Countries | | Eastern Countries | |
|-------------------|--------|--------|-------------------------|----------|-------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|
| | | mean** | number of missing cases | mean | number of missing cases | mean | number of missing cases | mean | Number of missing cases |
| Overall | (1001) | 2.58 | 128 | 1.27 | 39 | 1.73 | 213 | 1.86 | 274 |
| Avars | (279) | 2.41 | 30 | 1.27 | 12 | 1.98 | 57 | 1.99 | 69 |
| Dargins | (172) | 2.68 | 26 | 1.23 | 10 | 1.61 | 45 | 1.76 | 49 |
| Kumyks | (134) | 2.46 | 13 | 1.13 | 2 | 1.69 | 34 | 1.90 | 45 |
| Lezgins | (130) | 2.85 | 18 | 1.23 | 9 | 1.40 | 21 | 1.80 | 36 |
| Laks | (50) | 2.67 | 11 | 1.22 | 0 | 1.74 | 16 | 1.65 | 16 |
| Russians/Cossacks | (71) | 2.72 | 7 | 1.06 | 2 | 1.60 | 9 | 1.65 | 11 |
| Chechens | (53) | 1.94 | 5 | 2.25 | 2 | 2.15 | 7 | 2.23 | 10 |
| Azeris | (39) | 2.91 | 7 | 1.36 | 0 | 1.71 | 8 | 1.86 | 10 |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|------------|-------|------|----|------|----|------|------|------|-----|
| Tabasarans | (27) | 2.80 | 2 | 1.37 | 0 | 1.14 | 6 | 1.56 | 18 |
| Men | (486) | 2.59 | 45 | 1.33 | 18 | 1.74 | 82 | 1.91 | 117 |
| Women | (515) | 2.56 | 83 | 1.22 | 21 | 1.71 | 131 | 1.80 | 157 |
| Village | (496) | 2.62 | 56 | 1.29 | 23 | 1.72 | 88* | 1.96 | 135 |
| Town | (503) | 2.54 | 72 | 1.26 | 16 | 1.73 | 124* | 1.77 | 139 |

*One case missing in calculation of the mean. **Calculation of means based on cases without missing values. Answers were coded as follows: Very serious threat (1), not very serious (2), and not serious at all (3). Displaying only median values would hide much of the variation in the data. Therefore means are shown, although data have not been measured on a well-tested interval scale.

Especially Kumyks and Russians see Chechnya as the most important threat for Dagestan, whereas Chechens are the only group that sees significantly less threat from Chechnya. For Chechens, the only serious threat is Russia, against which both Eastern and Western countries may be seen as potential allies.

A serious threat to Dagestan from Eastern countries is perceived especially by Russian and Laks. Again, Chechens are at the other end of the scale: no other ethnic group – with the possible exception of Avars – has less fear of Eastern countries. A lesser threat from Eastern countries is seen by men and villagers, both of whom tend to be more involved with Islam than women and city folk.

The opinions of the interviewees in many ways mirrored those of the survey. By far the greatest number of interviewees (15) saw the primary threat as coming from Chechnya. An additional respondent described the principal threat as “attempts to separate Dagestan from Russia.”

Five interviewees identified problems with Russia as the primary threat, but one of these was most concerned about the “lack of coordination between the Federation and the Republic,” suggesting the need for closer relations with Moscow. On the other hand, two respondents saw “Russian instability” as the primary external threat; one focused upon the “politics of Russia”; one saw a threat in “Russia’s mistrust of Dagestan’s loyalty,” and one saw the primary threat in “Russian chauvinism”.

Three interviewees were most concerned about “Western influence”, with one focusing upon “foreign culture, music, pornography”, and another concerned about competition over Caspian oil. Four interviewees were most concerned about threats that have come to Dagestan from Eastern countries. Three of these discussed “foreign Wahhabism,” while one focused upon “foreign Terrorism.” Three respondents did not think there was any external threat to Dagestan.

Most respondents thought that the greatest internal threat to Dagestan's stability was economic. Three of these focused upon "poverty in Dagestan", while another decried Dagestan's "economic backwardness", and two more were alarmed by "unemployment" and a growing "economic crisis". Six were most concerned about the increasing polarization of rich and poor.

Eleven respondents saw internal political issues as the greatest threat to Dagestan's stability. Five interviewees mentioned "corruption", "theft of power", or "bad leaders"; one described the "monopolization of power"; two concentrated upon the "struggle for power" or "change of leadership"; and two thought that the main problem lay in the imperfection of the electoral system.

Another ten respondents attributed the main problems to ethnic or kinship ties. Three of these talked about the "confrontation of clans"; three were most concerned about "ethnic nationalism"; one focused upon "ethnic separatism"; and one saw a threat in the "dominance of one ethnic group". Finally, one interviewee saw a threat in Dagestan's "lack of a national identity or concept".

Dagestan's invasion by Islamic separatists, and the subsequent federal military buildup both raise questions about Dagestan's relations with Russia. Should there be even closer relations between Dagestan and the Russian Federation or should Dagestan move toward greater independence? For the clearest possible analysis, variables are coded in the following way: opinions favoring closer relations with Russia are assigned a value of minus one, preservation of the status quo is assigned a value of zero, and opinions favoring a more independent Dagestan are assigned a value of one. Thus, every mean below zero indicates that a group wants a closer relationship between Russia and Dagestan; a group with a desire for a more independent Dagestan should have a mean above zero (table 16). The percentages for each answer are also shown.

Concordant with their trust in the Federal government, all ethnic groups prefer closer relations to Russia, or at least the status quo, in place of a more independent Dagestan, as indicated in table 16.²⁴ Though their interest in closer Russian ties is dramatically less than any other group, even Chechens do not want greater independence. Predictably, Russians are most in favor of closer ties with Russia.

Table 16: Future Relations between Dagestan and Russia

| | | even closer | status quo | more independent | mean | number of missing cases |
|-------------------|--------|-------------|------------|------------------|------|-------------------------|
| | N | overall | overall | overall | | |
| Overall | (1001) | 62.6 | 22.0 | 14.8 | -.48 | 6 |
| Avars | (279) | 56.6 | 20.4 | 22.9 | -.34 | 0 |
| Dargins | (172) | 56.4 | 27.3 | 14.0 | -.43 | 4 |
| Kumyks | (134) | 76.1 | 15.7 | 8.2 | -.68 | 0 |
| Lezgins | (130) | 66.2 | 26.9 | 6.9 | -.59 | 0 |
| Laks | (50) | 64.0 | 18.0 | 14.0 | -.52 | 2 |
| Russians/Cossacks | (71) | 84.5 | 12.7 | 2.8 | -.82 | 0 |
| Chechens | (53) | 37.7 | 26.4 | 35.8 | -.02 | 0 |
| Azeris | (39) | 64.1 | 17.9 | 17.9 | -.46 | 0 |
| Tabasarans | (27) | 40.7 | 48.1 | 11.1 | -.30 | 0 |
| Men | (486) | 63.2 | 18.9 | 17.5 | -.46 | 2 |
| Women | (515) | 62.1 | 24.9 | 12.2 | -.50 | 4 |
| Village | (496) | 60.3 | 23.6 | 16.1 | -.44 | 0 |
| Town | (503) | 65.0 | 20.7 | 13.3 | -.52 | 6 |

Answers were coded: closer (-1), status quo (0), and more independent (1). So a negative value of the mean stands for the wish of a closer relationship between Russia and Dagestan.

What factors other than ethnicity may lead to desires for greater independence? To find an answer to this question, we did a logistic regression analysis²⁵ with the desire for a more independent Dagestan as the dependent variable. The findings, displayed in table 17, may be summed up as follows: Older persons are less likely to want an independent Dagestan, and this is also true for persons who see no threat in Russia at all, but see Wahhabis as extremists. All of these are good reasons for a conservative attitude on this issue. However, an independent Dagestan is preferred by persons who do not see Chechnya as a serious threat, who trust their religious leaders and prefer an Islamic state to a socialist state. The picture is clear: religion-driven desires for change are an issue jeopardizing the status quo, and those in favor of such a change are undeterred by Chechnya's fate.

Table 17: Logistic regression for a more independent Dagestan

| | Odds ratio |
|---|------------|
| Gender (reference c.= male) | 0.832 |
| Age in years | 0.974*** |
| Educational attainment (reference c.= incomplete high school) | |

| | |
|--|----------|
| high school, prof., techni. | 0.942 |
| Higher education, university student | 0.868 |
| Place of residence (reference c.= village) | 0.838 |
| Threat for Dagestan: Russia (reference c.= very serious) | |
| not so serious | 0.645 |
| not serious at all | 0.332*** |
| Threat for Dagestan: Chechnya (reference c.= very serious) | |
| not so serious | 1.960* |
| not serious at all | 1.889 |
| Trust in religious leaders (reference c.= not mentioned) | 2.598** |
| Principles for the Dagestanis state: (reference c.= socialist state) | |
| Islamic state | 6.012*** |
| Western democracy | 1.662 |
| Wahhabis are extremists (reference c.= no) | 0.488** |
| Cox and Snell R –Quadrate | 0.527 |
| N=826 | |

* p<= 0.05, ** p<=0.01, *** p<=0.001

What is the threat of religious conflict?

Wahhabism is a puritanical form of Sunni Islam, generally associated with the Persian Gulf area , which made its way to Dagestan from Tajikistan in the early 1990s. Though Wahhabism was banned by law in Dagestan on 16 September 1999, there is no unequivocal definition of the term in the Republic. While Dagestanis commonly use the term to describe fundamentalist religious radicals who neither shave, nor drink alcohol, nor accept political authority, those toward whom the term is directed usually deny that they are Wahhabis. Instead they refer to themselves by other terms such as “Muslims of the Djamaat”.

Nevertheless from August 1996 to August 1999 there were numerous violent conflicts in Dagestani villages between traditionalist Muslims and “Wahhabis”. In the most notorious instance, a Dargin *djamaat* in Dagestan’s central foothills, consisting of the villages of Karamakhi, Chabanmakhi, and Kadar, sustained an armed resistance against Dagestani authority. Wahhabism made headlines in connection with the military operations in Dagestan during 1999 when a portion of the insurgents were referred to Dagestani “Wahhabis”.

Increasingly, “Wahhabism” has also become a controversial term outside of Dagestan. Some Western commentators²⁶ have claimed that Wahhabis do not have a significant presence in the Northeast

Caucasus, and that “Wahhabism” is a ruse of Russian propaganda intended to legitimize the military campaigns in Dagestan and Chechnya. Both the survey and the interviews referred to “Wahhabis” and “Wahhabism” without attempt to specify these terms beyond common Dagestani usage. On the contrary, we wanted to learn what the terms meant to Dagestanis.

The survey found that more than three quarters of Dagestanis share their government’s assessment: Wahhabis are extremists behind a religious facade.²⁷ Less than a tenth think they are simply a brand of Muslims, not terrorists. However, there are many missing values, suggesting that there was reticence to disclose opinions on this issue. In Dagestan, Wahhabism remains a controversial and dangerous topic.

Wahhabis are seen as extremists especially by Tabasarans, Azeris, Russians and Lezgins. Chechens, and to a lesser degree Avars and Dargins, disagree with such an evaluation. These groups are above average in their assessment that Wahhabis are not extremists, but Muslims. Prior to the military actions of 1999, most Wahhabite activity in Dagestan occurred in Avar, Dargin, and Chechen villages. Thus, as indicated in table 18, whatever else it may signify, the term “Wahhabism” denotes a genuine religious cleavage in Dagestani society, which has significant ethnic ramifications, which sometimes divides urban and rural residents, and which therefore represents a significant threat to Dagestan’s stability.

Table 18: Wahhabism

| percent | Wahhabis are Muslims, not extremists | | Some Wahhabis are just believers, others are religious extremists | | Wahhabis are extremists behind a religious facade | |
|---------------|--------------------------------------|---------|---|---------|---|---------|
| | valid | overall | valid | overall | valid | Overall |
| Overall | 11.4 | 9.1 | 39.3 | 30.1 | 87.1 | 77.0 |
| missing cases | | 20.5 | | 23.6 | | 11.7 |
| Avars | 12.4 | 10.4 | 48.6 | 36.9 | 80.4 | 69.2 |
| missing cases | | 16.5 | | 24.0 | | 14.0 |
| Dargins | 23.0 | 16.3 | 57.5 | 42.4 | 89.7 | 75.6 |
| missing cases | | 29.1 | | 26.2 | | 15.7 |
| Kumyks | 5.8 | 4.5 | 34.0 | 26.9 | 94.6 | 78.4 |
| missing cases | | 23.1 | | 20.9 | | 17.2 |
| Lezgins | 7.8 | 6.9 | 15.6 | 13.1 | 91.2 | 87.7 |
| missing cases | | 11.5 | | 16.2 | | 3.8 |
| Laks | 12.8 | 10.0 | 54.1 | 40.0 | 93.0 | 80.0 |

| | | | | | | |
|-------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| missing cases | | 22.0 | | 26.0 | | 14.0 |
| Russians/Cossacks | 2.3 | 2.8 | 35.7 | 21.1 | 98.4 | 85.9 |
| missing cases | | 23.9 | | 40.8 | | 12.7 |
| Chechens | 14.9 | 13.2 | 31.3 | 28.3 | 54.9 | 52.8 |
| missing cases | | 11.3 | | 9.4 | | 3.8 |
| Azeris | - | - | 18.2 | 10.3 | 94.6 | 89.7 |
| missing cases | | 38.5 | | 43.6 | | 5.1 |
| Tabasarans | 4.3 | 3.7 | 8.7 | 7.4 | 100 | 96.3 |
| missing cases | | 14.8 | | 14.8 | | 3.7 |
| Men | 10.3 | 8.2 | 40.9 | 31.9 | 83.1 | 72.0 |
| missing cases | | 20.2 | | 22.0 | | 13.4 |
| Women | 12.5 | 9.9 | 37.8 | 28.3 | 90.9 | 81.7 |
| missing cases | | 20.8 | | 25.0 | | 10.1 |
| Village | 13.4 | 11.3 | 40.0 | 33.3 | 84.1 | 75.8 |
| missing cases | | 15.5 | | 16.9 | | 9.9 |
| Town | 9.3 | 7.0 | 38.5 | 26.8 | 90.3 | 78.1 |
| missing cases | | 25.4 | | 30.2 | | 13.5 |

Is there a relation between the assessment of changes in economic, political, or socio-cultural conditions and opinions on Wahhabism? Table 19 displays the weak correlations that were found. Persons, who see improvements in socio-cultural life tend more often than others to recognize some Wahhabis as believers and others as extremists. A similar, if weaker, correlation applies to changes in the economy. Those who see a political decline tend to see Wahhabis as believers and not as extremists, but those who see a decline in both economic and political conditions tend to view Wahhabis as extremists.

Table 19: Correlation between Changes and Wahhabism – items

| | Wahhabis are just believers, not extremists | Some Wahhabis are believers, other are extremists | Wahhabis are extremists behind a religious façade |
|-------------------------------------|---|---|---|
| Changes in social and cultural life | n. s. | 0.121 0.001 | n. s. |
| Changes in economy | n. s. | 0.096 0.009 | -0.122 0.000 |
| Changes in political life | -0.152 0.000 | n. s. | -0.082 0.024 |

* Spearman-Rho and significance of the correlation. n. s. means not significant

When we examine the relation between views on Wahhabism and ethnic groups, we find that the only group which shows correlations worth mentioning are the Chechens (table 20). Two points bear

particular attention. First, there is a relatively strong correlation between those Chechens, on the one hand, who see changes in social and cultural life for the worse, and, on the other hand, those who perceive Wahhabis both as believers and as extremists. Second, there is again a relatively strong correlation between those Chechens who perceive the economy as declining and those who disagree with the view that Wahhabis are extremists. Those Chechens who are more dissatisfied with the transition are more inclined to accept Wahhabism.

Table 20: Dagestan's Chechen-Akhins and Wahhabism^{a)}

| | Wahhabis are just believers, not extremists | Some Wahhabis are believers, other are extremists | Wahhabis are extremists behind a religious facade |
|-------------------------------------|---|---|---|
| Changes in social and cultural life | n. s. | 0.527*** | n. s. |
| Changes in economy | n. s. | n. s. | 0.457*** |
| Changes in political life | n. s. | n. s. | n. s. |

^{a)} Indicated are Spearman's Rho and significance of the correlation; n. s. means 'not significant' on 5% level.
 * p<= 0.05, ** p<=0.01, *** p<=0.001

Who views Wahhabis as extremists? To get an answer, we computed a new variable: persons, who see Wahhabis as extremists, were coded one, all others were coded zero. Then, we did a logistic regression analysis displayed in table 21 and summarized as follows. Women see Wahhabis as extremists nearly twice as often as men. Those who see no threat at all for Dagestan from Russia, are also more than 2.5 times as likely to see Wahhabis as extremists. The same applies to persons, who want a closer relationship to Russia or at least maintenance of the status quo. On the other side, those who trust their religious leaders or do not see a serious threat for Dagestan from the Western countries are less than half as likely to see Wahhabis as extremists.

Because these issues are embedded in the contexts considered in previous tables, it is clear, first, that Wahhabism is very much an issue of Russian-Dagestani relations. Secondly, it is also clear that the attitude toward Wahhabism on the part of any particular Dagestani involves a triangulation of her/his

attitudes toward Russia, toward religion, and toward reactions of the Western world regarding events in the Caucasus.

Table 21: Logistic regression for “Wahhabis are extremists behind a religious facade”

| | Odds ratio |
|--|------------|
| Gender (reference c.= male) | 1.848** |
| Age (in years) | 1.015* |
| Educational attainment (reference c.= incomplete high school) high school, prof., techni. | 0.996 |
| Higher education, university student | 0.651 |
| Place of residence (reference c.= village) | 1.057 |
| Threat for Dagestan: Russia (reference c.= very serious) not so serious | 1.716 |
| not serious at all | 2.651** |
| Threat for Dagestan: Western Countries (reference c.= very serious) not so serious | 0.400*** |
| not serious at all | 0.128*** |
| Relationship of Dagestan and Russia: (reference c.= more independent Dagestan) closer to Russia | 2.692*** |
| Status quo | 2.565** |
| Trust in religious leaders (reference c.= not mentioned) | 0.355** |
| Cox and Snell R –Quadrat | 0.431 |
| N=721 | |

* $p \leq 0.05$, ** $p \leq 0.01$, *** $p \leq 0.001$

Because of the sizable number of missing values in the Wahhabism items, and because of the appearance that these missing values are not randomly distributed, we did a logistic regression to find out which parameters were the most influential ones for a refusal to answer all three items. The results are displayed in table 22. In sum, they say: Men were twice as likely to refuse to answer as women, younger persons refused more often than older, and persons having a high school diploma were only half as likely to refuse compared to persons with an incomplete high school education. Persons who see no threat at all for Dagestan in the Western countries were twice as likely to refuse to answer all three Wahhabism items. However, persons whose most important points of identification were not Russia and Dagestan, refused to answer all three items three times more often than others. These results suggest that at least some of those who refused to answer may not have seen Wahhabis as extremists. The results also

tend to support our general observations that Wahhabism tends to appeal to young men who are alienated from social, political and economic establishments.

| | Odds ratio |
|--|------------|
| Gender (reference c.= male) | 0.488* |
| Age (in years) | 0.979** |
| Educational attainment (reference c.= incomplete high school) | |
| high school, prof., techni. | 0.511* |
| higher education, university student | 0.906 |
| Place of residence (reference c.= village) | 1.376 |
| Threat for Dagestan: Russia (reference c.= very serious) | |
| not so serious | 0.985 |
| not serious at all | 0.857 |
| Threat for Dagestan: Western Countries (reference c.= very serious) | |
| not so serious | 1.307 |
| not serious at all | 2.186* |
| Importance of Russia for majority of Dagestanis (reference c.= very important) | |
| not so important | 1.256 |
| not important at all | 0.812 |
| Most important belongings for person: Russia (reference c.= not mentioned) | 0.495* |
| Most important belongings for person: Dagestan (reference c.= not mentioned) | 0.350*** |
| Cox and Snell R –Quadrate | 0.559 |
| N=688 | |

* p<= 0.05, ** p<=0.01, *** p<=0.001

We asked interviewees to name the factors that had “led to the appearance and dissemination of Wahhabism in Dagestan”. Opinions regarding these factors can be classified into eight categories. Since many individuals gave long lists of factors it was possible to classify some responses in more than one category. Among these eight categories, three factors stand out as being most significant:

- 1) Fifteen respondents mentioned economic problems, including a low standard of living, unemployment, and poverty.
- 2) Fourteen respondents mentioned alienation resulting from political problems, including weakness, deceitfulness, corruption, and indifference to the lives of ordinary people on the part of leaders in Moscow and Mahachkala.

- 3) Fourteen respondents mentioned various external factors, such as missionaries from Muslim and Western countries, their ideological pressure, and their finances

While these categories were most significant in terms of the number of responses, it was possible to identify five additional categories:

- 4) Seven respondents mentioned ideological factors occurring in the spiritual vacuum that emerged after the collapse of communism; the influx of Western ideology alien to Dagestani society; ignorance of the masses; and spiritual searching of the youth.
- 5) Four respondents mentioned a traditionally high level of Islamization among Dagestanis; their tradition of religious activity; and the historical role of Islam in Dagestan.
- 6) Four respondents mentioned an attraction to Wahhabism as an ideology of a clear and simplified Islam.
- 7) Four respondents mentioned competition among religious activists leading to ideological divisions among them.
- 8) Two respondents mentioned the Chechen factor; the influence of politico-ideological processes in the neighboring republic.

Why is Dagestan stable?

We asked interviewees the following questions about political stability: “In contrast to other regions of the Caucasus, Dagestan has been remarkably stable over the years. How would you explain this phenomenon? What peculiarities might have influenced our stability?” If any political institutions were mentioned we asked: “Why do these institutions provide stability in Dagestan?”

These questions evoked enthusiastic and loquacious responses, providing extensive textual material. Ten respondents did not agree that Dagestan was stable. Following are some of the more expressive arguments (interview and question numbers are indicated in brackets):

- “You call it stability? Constant explosions, assassinations, murders, tension... I agree that we neither did nor do not have a civil war, that we did not break down. But this is not stability. On the contrary, it is permanent instability.” (20.4)
- “What we have had all this time and what is continuing up to now could not be called stability. On the contrary, this is permanent instability, constant swinging of the pendulum from “unquiet” to “storm” and back... All this instability can be explained by the constant backstage struggle of groups from the top to the very bottom. “

Generally, the answers of those respondents who agreed that Dagestan displayed remarkable political stability revolved around the following topics. Seven focused upon Dagestan’s “multiethnicity”; no group has a majority, and smaller groups shift alliances to maintain parity among the four largest groups. Seven remarked upon the “Wisdom of the Dagestani government”. Six respondents mentioned the traditional “wisdom of the Dagestanis”. Two claimed the key lay in Dagestan’s “historical past,” or “traditions”. Three attributed Dagestan’s stability to “faith in Allah”.

But what emerged over and over again in nearly every interview was an overarching sense of Dagestani identity that prides itself on transcending and accommodating ethnic division in order to preserve traditions of stability. Several referred in various ways to traditional stabilizing influences of religion and religious leaders. Political leaders were credited primarily with an ability to recognize that their private interests were advanced through the preservation of stability.

We received fewer opinions regarding the role of political institutions in preserving stability. Two respondents discussed modern constitutional organs of executive and legislative power. There were three references to *maslat*, the traditional procedures of reconciliation; one mentioned *kunakhs*, a traditional bond of friendship and reciprocal protection between individual men of different villages; and there was one reference to *djamaat* and *tuhum*, Dagestan’s traditional village political structure together with the internal tribal structure that it contains. It is worthwhile to consider some of these views:

- “Among all regions of the Caucasus, only Dagestan stayed stable all these years. And the explanation is very simple. As I understand it, our society never took seriously attempts by

the dilettante politicians to involve the general population in their political games. Nobody here ever took political or ethnic movements very seriously. All this political froth [scum] exists only in their small, restricted world. But the society lives according to its own traditional, historic rules (as our grandfathers lived), and allows the politicians, like children, to play in the sand box but not to break windows as they play their games. Do what you want, but do not disturb our lives. Let them paint colorful placards, march with banners, let them play. For this reason stability is maintained.” (11.5)

- “In my opinion it is natural for any society to gravitate toward stability. Even a country at war dreams about peace and prosperity. People try to preserve stability when they have something to lose along with the loss of stability. It is elementary: a farm, a field, cattle, prosperity of a family. Any normal person would never gamble on it. The same applies on the scale of the entire republic. Who is trying to ignite a conflict with the federal power or between ethnic groups? People with unsatisfied ambitions. Apparently, there weren’t many. The leadership of the Republic stayed and stays with the federal center because it supplies financial aid in sufficient quantities to accomplish something here...” (12.4)
- “Dagestan was always a unit even though it was compiled from parts. Besides, our leadership was not interested in a breakdown [of society] into separate ethnicities. They wouldn’t have a place in a newly divided Dagestan. New leaders who dash into fights under their ethnic banners were unable to unite the majority of people. The number of leaders started to multiply; every raion, every village, had their leader. They could do something, but didn’t risk their reputation by trying to do something serious against another leader of the same ethnicity from the other *djamaat*. And they were too weak for it. The old leaders that head Dagestan now are all strong personalities. They didn’t see any rationale for themselves in a divided Dagestan. Rather they understood that their power would come to an end.” (32.4)

- “There is more faith in Allah in Dagestan than in other regions. Here people respect and adhere to the advice of religious elders. And these men would never provoke people to senseless violence. They would never call people to fight for their ethnicity, or for international communism, or for money, etc. Wise men are able to come to an agreement for their mutual satisfaction.” (33.4)
- “The thing is that Dagestanis always instinctively keep stability. We always have had strong clan and tribal relationships. People kept clan connections, and were careful to strengthen the clan, as these were conditions for the survival of the clan. Furthermore, a village could survive and protect itself only if close relations with other villages were established. These so-called ‘gregarious sentiments’ are preserved even now. Everyone had to live in peace with his or her neighbors to survive. They did not have the luxury to live otherwise. On the other hand, there were very tough laws in highland regions of Dagestan, the fear of inevitable punishment, the fear that someone would treat you or your relatives as severely as you treated them.” (10.4)
- “Yes, Dagestan remains stable. Because of the *barrakat* [beneficial characteristics of *tariqat* sheiks] of the deceased *ulema* [Islamic wisemen, knowledgeable of the Koran and Islamic law], but first of all, of course, by Allah’s grace.” (8.4)
- “There neither was nor is any stability. We just didn’t fall apart like Checheno-Ingushettia; didn’t kick out an entire ethnic group like the Ossetians did to the Ingushis; didn’t enter into a war, and then lose it along with part of our territory like Azerbaijan; didn’t quarrel and split with an entire ethnic group like the Cherkessians with the Karachais; and finally, we didn’t start a war of self-destruction with Russia. All of these are worth their weight in gold. Why? Maybe our leadership was cleverer and wiser. They didn’t forget about their interests, but stopped themselves just in time before it turned worse. Maybe because we are, by definition, a multiethnic republic and we cannot even think about nationalistic games. Our ethnic groups

are intertwined with each other by multiple historic and genetic connections; a common culture of relations emerged with those who live according to different traditions and speak different languages. It is customary, normal, not unusual, to communicate with a person of a different culture. All of our neighbors – Caucasians seriously ill with nationalism, i.e. dream about their ethnic state. And they are seriously trying to achieve their goal. We too have that kind of activist, dreamers of their Avar, Dargin, Tabasaran, Tsakhur, or Lezgin sovereign states. But it's all a folly. This is clear for any person with even average abilities who is able to distinguish reality from dreams. We are not seriously ill with nationalism. That is why no serious Dagestani leaders adopted such political goals. And that is why what happened with our neighbors didn't happen with us.” (24.4)

- “The negative example of Chechnya abolished sprouts of separatism in Dagestan early in the 1990s.” (36.4)
- “What we have here is stable instability. This is permanent, non-stop conflict and tension. Maybe that's why we don't have a massive, concentrated conflict.” (28.4)

This conception of stability through instability is a common theme among many of the ten respondents who denied Dagestan's stability and the thirty who affirmed it. As elaborated in previous analyses of event data from this study²⁸, it centers on the idea that the Dagestani political system is so relentlessly localized that most crises are local, that local crises occur with such frequency that none is sufficient for the concentration of either attention or resources, and that as a consequence most crises are extended neither in time nor in space.

In terms of the present study, this suggests that Dagestan preserves negative stability at the expense of positive stability. Large-scale, protracted conflicts are avoided through small-scale turmoil that inhibits the consolidation of democratic institutions and the rule of law. This view is also consistent with a dynamic balancing among elite subgroups as previously described. Yet while these patterns preserve negative stability they do so at the expense of positive stability. The former is promoted, but the latter is prevented by the frequency of local turmoil and the fragmentation of the political system.

The localization of politics in Dagestan encourages the pursuit of local, and all too often, private interests. Hence, there is an institutional propensity toward the type of self-seeking on the part of both leaders and followers that would doubtless occur in any case. Nevertheless this institutional propensity is significant because it suggests that the constitutional provision of democratic institutions may be ineffective in the promotion of democratic political culture. This is reflected in perceptions of corruption among the leadership and material motivations among fellow voters. Connections between leaders and followers have been strained by the growing polarization of rich and poor, and in so far as democratic values are emerging they are disappointed by the self-serving, sometimes criminal, excesses of those in power.

While Dagestan's constitutional arrangements are remarkably consociational, deteriorating connections between leaders and followers, along with violent inraelite practices, are inconsistent with consociational models. Over time, it is possible that institutions will shape culture, but once one ventures beyond Western Europe there are several consociational systems that have failed in this regard, and there is nothing to indicate that the result will be different in Dagestan. The incapacity of these arrangements to generate positive stability would account for some of the dissatisfaction toward Dagestan's political institutions that was revealed in the survey.

This dissatisfaction also results from the political failure to resolve (or in some cases, to address) Dagestan's fundamental problems. These are primarily economic, but they also involve questions about the integrity and efficacy of the political system itself. Moreover, these problems include threats to the negative stability that Dagestan has achieved. Among these threats, Wahhabism presents a special challenge because it is a current religious cleavage that plays upon those ancient ethnic divisions, which were formerly transcended, in part, by means of those traditionalist religious practices that Wahhabism opposes. Thus Wahhabism not only introduces a new cleavage to Dagestani social life, but also threatens to undermine one of the institutions by which Dagestanis traditionally have overcome social divisions.

The failure of the Dagestani government to effectively address problems such as these is one of the reasons that most Dagestanis would turn first to the Russian Federation for help. In 1999, the

Federation helped Dagestan to deal with threats from Wahhabism and from Chechnya. In 2000 it helped the Dagestani economy with a sixfold increase in budgetary transfers. But Russia also poses threats to Dagestan. Will Moscow's current program of centralization introduce instability through its alteration of Dagestan's political institutions? If Moscow perseveres in its reorganization of Dagestani politics, then its other consociational institutions are likely to follow its ethnic electoral districts into history. Moscow is taking a risk, since Dagestan has achieved negative stability with its present arrangements.

But since these practices have failed to achieve positive stability they lack deep popular support, and since most Dagestanis look to Moscow to solve their problems they are likely to be open to Moscow's leadership, even at the expense of their own institutions. Since most Dagestanis are more concerned about economic than political problems, continuing or increasing subsidies from Moscow will be crucial, provided that aid makes its way through Dagestan's political elite to reach ordinary people. If Moscow is able to stimulate economic growth²⁹ and curtail local corruption, then it may facilitate closer relations between leaders and followers and contribute to the development of Dagestan's democratic culture. Yet Moscow's failure could jeopardize Dagestan's negative stability.

Endnotes

The author is grateful for the analytical support of Prof. Dr. Werner J. Patzelt and Ute Roericht.

¹ Including a 310 percent increase in the hostage industry from 1995 to 1999, *Report of the Dagestan Bureau of Statistics*, Mahachkala, 2000. Also see Kisriev and Robert Ware, "Conflict and Catharsis: A Report on Developments in Dagestan following the Incursion of August and September 1999", *Nationalities Papers*, 28, 3, September 2000.

² Up to 50 percent of these militants may have been Dagestanis; others were from Chechnya and other nations.

³ On January 6, 1996; August 2, 1999; and September 5, 1999.

⁴ According to figures provided by the Moscow office of the UNHCR.

⁵ Ware and Kisriev, "Ethnic Parity and Democratic Pluralism in Dagestan: a Consociational Approach". *Europe-Asia Studies*, January 2001, 53, 1, 105-131.

⁵ Or *Ethnicities of Dagestan*, (Mahachkala: Statsbornik, 1996).

⁶ Ware and Kisriev, "Dagestan: Ethnic Parity and Religious Polarization", *Problems of Post-Communism*, 47, 2, March/April 2000; Ware and Kisriev, "The Islamic Factor in Dagestan", *Central Asian Survey*, 19, 2, June 2000; Kisriev and Ware, "Conflict and Catharsis: A Report on Developments in Dagestan following the Incursion of August and September 1999", *Nationalities Papers*, 28, 3, September 2000; Ware and Kisriev, "Russian Recentralization Arrives in the Republic of Dagestan: Implications for Institutional Integrity and Political Stability", *Eastern European Constitutional Review*, 10, 1, Winter 2001; Kisriev and Ware, "Democracy and Security in Dagestan", presented at the Association for the Study of Nationalities World Conference, New York, 6 April 2001; Kisriev and Ware, "A Summer of Innuendo: Contraction and Competition among Dagestan's Political Elite," *Central Asian Survey*, 20, 2, June 2000; Kisriev and Ware, "The Selection of Dagestan's Second People's Assembly", *Electoral Studies* (forthcoming); Kisriev and Ware, "Irony and Political Islam", *Problems of Post-Communism* (under consideration); Ware and Kisriev, "Dagestan's Cross-Border Ethnic Ties", *Nations and Nationalism*, (under consideration).

⁷ Ware and Kisriev, "Russian Recentralization Arrives in the Republic of Dagestan: Implications for Institutional Integrity and Political Stability", with Kisriev, E., *Eastern European Constitutional Review*, 10, 1, Winter, 2001

⁸ See for example M. Evangelista, "Russia's Fragile Union", *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists*, 55, 4, May/June, 1999.

⁹ The question was: "If you had to choose from among these categories those that are most important to you personally, what would you choose? Please choose no more than two. Possible answers were 'mentioned' (1) and 'not mentioned' (0).

¹⁰ The question was "Any person considers him/herself as a part of some whole. In your opinion, how important is it for the majority of Dagestanis to be part of . . ." Answers were coded (very important (1)/ not very important (2)/ not important at all(3). We used the category "very important". This was followed by: "For you, personally, how important is it to belong to the following social categories? Answers, used in the analysis, were important (1), not very important (2), and not important (3)

¹¹ The questions were: 1) In your opinion, has ethnic nationalism in Dagestan increased or decreased with the transition from socialism to free market and democratic processes? 2) In your opinion, why has it risen (resp. or diminished)? 3) Some say that ethnicity is a very important aspect of social and political relations in Dagestan, but others say that this is not so. What do you think? 4) (If the answer is that ethnicity is important) Please give us two or three examples of situations that would illustrate ethnic relationships? 5) (If the answer is that ethnicity is important) Why are ethnic relationships the focus of so much attention?

¹² The Dagestani *djamaat* is a village or historically connected group of villages that traditionally transcended the kinship ties of the several *tuhums*, or clans, of which the village was composed. Note that tables for self-identification with *djamaat*/community, majority identification with Russia, social class, party and Europe are not shown here.

¹³ The question was: "Dagestan has significantly changed during the last 10 years. The changes have significantly affected Dagestani society, economy and politics. Looking back, what do you think of these changes? These changes turned out to be for [the better (1)/ no better, no worse (2)/ the worse(3)]?"

¹⁴ The question was: "In your opinion, on what principles should the Dagestani state be built: a) on the principles of Islam and Shari'ah (1), b) on the principles of Western democracies (2), or c) on the principles of socialism (3)?"

¹⁵ The question was "How would you evaluate the activity of the following state institutions in Dagestan (good (1) – satisfactory (2) – bad (3))."

¹⁶ The question was "In your opinion, what is needed for a person to reach a high position in Dagestan (necessary - preferable – not necessary)".

¹⁷ The question was "There are different opinions among people about whom to vote for in elections and why. Choose from the following opinions the one you share. a. Who can pay more or specifically help me. Anyway they (the candidates) are not useful for anything else anyway (1). b. For the people of your own ethnic group. It is better even if they can not help you personally (2). c. For intelligent, honest, decent people who will really represent us and help people (3)."

¹⁸ Clearly more women than men think that most voters base their decision on the candidates' personal qualities

¹⁹ The questions were: Why do serious conflicts occur between high level leaders? How are conflicts between leaders usually resolved? Are there any rules of conflict resolution? Could you describe the development and resolution of specific conflicts?

²⁰ Ware and Kisriev, "Ethnic Parity and Democratic Pluralism in Dagestan: a Consociational Approach". *Europe-Asia Studies*, January 2001, 53, 1.

²¹ The question read as follows: "In whom would you place your trust (hope) in the event of an acute crisis in Dagestan (You might select more than one answer) ?" Possible answers were mentioned and not mentioned.

²² The question was: "After the military operations in the territory of Dagestan (August/ September 1999), in your opinion, did the situation in the Republic become more stable or less stable?" [more stable (1), the same (2), less stable (3)].

²³ The question was: "What external factors, in your opinion, could threaten the stability of Dagestan? How serious are these threats? 1) From Russia. 2) From Chechnya. 3) From Western Countries. 4). From Eastern countries." [very serious (1)/not very serious (2)/not serious at all (3)]

²⁴ The question was, "In your opinion, how should the relationship of Dagestan and Russia develop? (Dagestan should become even closer with Russia (-1)/ the present system of relation should continue (0)/ Dagestan should become more independent (1))".

²⁵ The dependent variable in a logistic regression is coded 0 and 1. A logistic regression defines the relation between dependent and independent variables in a totally different way than does a "regular" regression where one unit's change in the independent variable is connected with a certain change in the dependent variable. Logistic regression, however, uses 'odds ratios' instead that show the probability for a change in the dependent variable when the independent variable changes from one category into the next. Of course, comparisons of the influence of different levels of a independent variable on the dependent variable can be done only with help of a reference category; therefore such a reference category is stated in the table. It works like a dummy variable in regular regression analysis. An odds ratio larger than one means that the probability of an answer is higher than for the reference group, and an odds ratio smaller than one represent a probability which is smaller for this category compared with it's reference group. The Cox and Snell R-Quadrate is an indicator for the amount of explained variance in the model, comparable to R-Square in the linear regression.

²⁶ For example, Lansky, M., "Jihad Begins at Home: Wahhabism in Chechnya and Dagestan"; Monika Shepherd, M., "Inventing the Enemy: Wahhabi Terrorists in the Ferghana Valley." Both papers presented at Association for the Study of Nationalities, Harriman Institute, Columbia University, New York, 5 April 2001.

²⁷ Respondents were asked to (1) agree or (2) disagree with each of the following three statements "a) Wahhabis are Muslims, and they should not be considered extremists; b) There are Wahhabis who are just simple believers, and

other Wahhabis who are religious extremists; c) Wahhabis are extremists that hide behind a religious facade (or front).

²⁸ Kisriev and Ware, "Conflict and Catharsis: A Report on Developments in Dagestan following the Incursions of August and September 1999", *Nationalities Papers*, 28, 3, September 2000; Ware and Kisriev, "The Islamic Factor in Dagestan", *Central Asian Survey*, 19, 2, June 2000.

²⁹ As appears to be its intent in the development of Dagestan's petroleum transport facilities.