Power Ideas and Conflict:

Ideology, Linkage and Leverage in Crimea and Chechnya

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The concepts of linkage and leverage address mechanisms by which international and domestic politics intersect and interact. Levitsky and Way have used these concepts to account for the dynamics of regime change, explaining why some regimes democratize and others do not, but the causal dynamics that turn different sets of linkages into leverage are underspecified in their account. In fact, they originally conceived of linkage and leverage as alternative modes of interaction (2006). The linkages covered in their discussion are limited to tangible quantifiable structural factors, ranging from economic and aid linkages to people-to-people contacts and communication. In this article, we not only extend the concept of linkages and leverage to the realm of conflict studies, we also add an important linkage – ideas about political power which we call *power ideas* – and we expand on the causal mechanisms that turn linkages into leverage in a conflict situation.

Nations, regions or groups are characterized by a multitude of linkages. We argue that the existence of linkages per se does not explain the outbreak of conflict or its prevention, or its dynamics. Linkages need to be politically empowered by a process of mobilization which taps into popular and elite-level concerns. Ideological narratives figure prominently in this process of mobilization, and where ideas themselves are one of the prominent linkages between nations, regions or groups, the

scope for mobilization is enhanced. The exact extent to which anyone believes in the mobilized idea is ultimately less significant than the power of the idea to mobilize elites and masses and escalate or defuse conflict.

We argue that the roles of ideas and ideology as international linkages are an important underestimated aspect of the debates on linkage and leverage in international politics. Power ideas, as defined above, are an essential component part of ideology. Ideology and collective identities, as much as material interests, shape elite and mass actions and allegiances. Ideologies are inherently about group identities in that they are culturally embedded "symbol-systems" for the ordering and filtering of social and historical time (Geertz 1964). Ideology provides the framework in which political positioning occurs, agendas are set, and decisions are taken and translated into action. It is used to then justify the exercise of power and policy. Elites, governments, and groups, gain normative coherence and traction for legitimating or de-legitimating policy and actions through ideology. Equally, we need to take account of the obscurantist function of ideology. For while its purpose is to decode and order perceptions, it does so by recoding meanings, structures, events, processes, aims and so on, often metaphorically, and embedding these in political identities, and ultimately using these to account for policy. These features and functions of ideology are widely accepted in the social sciences. Of themselves, ideas and ideology are hard to gauge systematically, but at critical junctures during a conflict the strength and causal force of these factors and the ways in which they can be politically mobilized become apparent. We cannot read or navigate conflict dynamics without understanding the role of ideologies.

Clearly not all ideas or ideologies have the potential to significantly shape or reshape domestic or international politics, but some ideas have the power to do both. These are the ideas we call *power ideas.* Since the fall of communism we have experienced a twenty-five year crisis in international relations over the management of conflicts emanating from two of the most significant power ideas that have shaped that crisis: nationalism, and Islamism. These two ideas are at the heart of our analysis. Ideas such as nationalism or Islamism represent a linkage that can be activated to reinforce other linkages, and ultimately turning them into leverage. Fundamentally, these power ideas are the antithesis of each other. Nationalism is an essentially secular organizing principle for the state domestically, and for the order of international relations. While there are competing interpretations between the modernist, constructivist analyses of nationalism and state-building, and more ethnically determined visions, secularism is one of the key defining features of nationalism (while accepting that some nationalisms may be fused with religious identities). Islamism, in contrast, is a rejection of secular and national territoriality and all such rooted forms of state-building, and aspires to the creation of a theocratic transnational dominion. We examine the impact of the power ideas of nationalism and Islamism in the cases of two major conflicts in the region: Crimea and Chechnya. Rather than directly comparing the two cases with their distinctive features, the aim here is to expand from the local to the international to understand in each case the role of international linkages, including power ideas, shaping different stages of conflict and the causal mechanisms that transform linkages into leverage.

The nationalism power idea rose to a hegemonic level in Europe and Eurasia as a major factor in the collapse of communism (Beissinger 2002). The break-up of the

Soviet Union turned Crimea into an international case for Russia, whereas Chechnya was a conflict within the territorial boundaries of the Russian Federation, and therefore seen as a domestic matter. But such distinctions were far from being clear-cut in the 1990s, when Russian nationalism exerted a tremendous force in Russian domestic politics, and where the Russian elites' conception of what constituted the boundaries of a Russian homeland and what was "foreign" were fuzzy. For many Russians Crimea was part of a historical Russian homeland that had only recently and unjustifiably been removed from Russian jurisdiction in 1954 under Khrushchev and placed within the then Ukrainian SSR. Many Russians struggled to come to terms with the fact that the international order treated the collapse of the USSR as an end of empire and quasi-decolonization where the principle of *uti posseditis juris* meant that Soviet era administrative boundaries became the internationally recognised frontiers of new states. In the case of Crimea, however, where there was a Russian nationalist mobilization for independence in the early 1990s, that power idea was successfully managed in an interaction between Moscow, Kyiv and Crimean elites (with support of the OSCE), culminating in the creation of a Crimean autonomy within the otherwise unitary Ukrainian state. That arrangement was in part facilitated by a Russian foreign policy under then President Boris Yeltsin that was sensitive to regional and wider international ideas and pressures about what constituted rule-oriented "good behaviour" in accepting how the collapse of the USSR was to be managed. There was also a strategic security factor at work, as Yeltsin was prepared to sacrifice Russian nationalist ideology on Crimea in return for an agreement with Ukraine which guaranteed a vital strategic security interest - the continued use by Russia of the Crimean bases for its Black Sea Fleet.

The ideational linkage at work here was not only the triadic one between Russia, Ukraine, and Crimea, but was also shaped by a powerful pull on the Yeltsin administration for it to be integrated into Western international fora and norms. Moreover, Russia in the 1990s lacked significant leverage in any foreign policy issue that the Western Powers perceived to involve their "vital" interests. As its political clout was debilitated, its economy was broken, and its military was in disarray, the only leverage Russia could apply internationally was through working multilaterally. To a great extent that meant accepting a reduced status in international affairs, and subordinating itself to a Western alliance dominated by the USA on many key foreign policy issues, The puzzle here is what changed in the period between the negotiations over Crimean autonomy as a means of conflict-prevention in the 1990s and the annexation of Crimea by Russian President Vladimir Putin in 2014? What had changed in the balance between constraints and enabling conditions shaping Russia's perceptions of its international status and interests, and the willingness to mobilize the power idea of nationalism, whether in Russia, Crimea or Ukraine?

In Chechnya the power idea of nationalism also took hold in the late 1980s and early 1990s, A radical secular Chechen elite aspired to national self-determination along the lines of the "return to Europe" in Central and Eastern Europe. Chechnya, like Crimea, was a 'victim' of the *uti posseditis* principle applied internationally to manage the break-up of the USSR. In theory, the norm held that there was to be no secession from secession, though Western powers later broke with this norm over Kosovo in 2007 (Hughes 2013). In contrast to the stance on Crimea, Russia under Yeltsin was reluctant to negotiate with Chechen nationalism by offers of autonomy, and Chechen nationalists led by Dzhokhar Dudaev recalcitrantly adhered to an

absolutist position on self-determination. Consequently there followed a decade or more of bloody conflict. The puzzle here is less with understanding how the power idea of nationalism took hold in Chechnya in the late 1980s, but why that power idea was largely displaced by the power idea of Islamism by the late 1990s and with what consequences for the conflict domestically and internationally. Chechnya became a conflict motif for the surge in Islamism under Al Qaeda from the late 1990s. The power idea of Islamism was also adopted by Russia from 2000, at least nominally, as a way to coopt local loyalist elites and use them as proxies to manage the conflict and reduce the violence to a residual level compared to the latter 1990s.

Here, following the questions set out in the introduction to this special issue, we trace the role of international linkages in the evolution of conflict in Crimea and Chechnya respectively, before drawing within-case and cross-case conclusions about the causal role of ideas and ideologies as linkages affecting conflict dynamics and outcomes.

The Case of Crimea: From Accommodation to Annexation

The sudden annexation of Crimea by Russia in March 2014 was a shock to international politics. Ukraine's territorial integrity was made null and void despite the international guarantees provided by Russia, the US and the UK in the Budapest Memorandum of December 1994. Russia shattered a Western perception that a rule oriented new system of international norms had been established after the end of the Cold War (Burke-White 2014). Russia completed the whole process within a matter of days, including occupation by its military forces, breaking the political links between Crimea and Kyiv, holding a regional referendum, and formalizing the status

of the region and the city of Sevastopol as subjects of the Russian Federation (Allison 2014; Sakwa 2015, 100-120). How do the concepts of linkage and leverage help us understand these developments that contrast sharply with the negotiations and moderation behind conflict prevention in the 1990s?

From the fall of the USSR in 1991 to 2014 Crimea was analyzed as a rare example of "non-conflict" among the cluster of potential and actual post-Soviet territorial conflicts and a critical case in the wider comparative study of conflict (Sasse 2007). The potential for conflict in Crimea in the 1990s revolved around several regional, national and international dimensions: its unclear status within the newly independent Ukrainian vis-à-vis Kyiv; its post-Soviet relations with the former imperial centre Moscow, in particular the uncertainty over the naval bases in Sevastopol; the tension between the cultural and political domination of the ethnic Russian(-speaking) majority of the region and the Crimean Tatars returning to the peninsula from the places of their deportation. Even in Western perception and media discourse the likelihood of a violent conflict loomed large (*The Economist* 17 July 1993; *The Guardian* 15 May 1994*)*.

The Russian nationalist narrative projects the continuity of a “Russian Crimea” from the age of Catherine the Great to the present, while ignoring Crimea’s centuries as an independent Crimean Tatar Khanate and as a part of the Ottoman Empire prior to the region’s incorporation into the Russian empire. The deportation of the Crimean Tatars under Stalin in 1944 remains outside the mainstream Russian imagination of Crimea, and the transfer of Crimea to the jurisdiction of the Ukrainian SSR under Khrushchev in 1954 is not accepted as a legal basis for Crimea’s post-

Soviet belonging to independent Ukraine (for more details on the transfer of 1954, based on archival sources, see Sasse 2007, Chapter 5; on the Crimean Tatars see Williams 2001; Uehling 2004). Crimea as a setting for repeated large-scale national defeat has been reappropriated into a Russian narrative about 'national glory' and resistance symbolized by the two sieges of the city and military base of Sevastopol during the Crimean War and the Second World War (Plokhy 2000; Qualls 2009; Brown forthcoming 2015).

Among the explanations for non-violence in Crimea, the process of elite bargaining and negotiations over an autonomy arrangement for Crimea have been highlighted as the critical factor in conflict-prevention in the 1990s (Stewart 2001; Sasse 2002 and 2007). These lengthy negotiations over Crimea's constitutional status from 1990-1998 involved all the main political actors – the leaders of the regional Russian nationalist movement, the Crimean Tatars' leadership, representatives of the political institutions in Crimea and in Kyiv, the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities and the regional OSCE office in Crimea, and, in the background were bilateral discussions between the governments in Kyiv and Moscow over energy supplies to Ukraine and the Russian bases in Sevastopol. The process provided sufficient incentives for all the key parties to a potential conflict to remain involved in the political negotiations until satisfactory compromises were reached (Sasse 2007). Several structural background factors facilitated this political process and helped to neutralize regional Russian nationalist mobilization. First, after the fall of communism Russia had many external linkages with newly independent neighbouring states, and Western powers, but it had only weak leverage as a foreign policy actor. The Yeltsin leadership's policy showed no obligation towards diaspora co-ethnic Russians, but rather prioritized vital

strategic foreign policy and security interests, recognition by and integration with Western states, and good relations with the newly independent states over the interests of Russian diasporas (in Ukraine, the Baltic states and Kazakhstan) (Kolstø 1996; King and Melvin 1999; Smith 1999). Yeltsin concentrated on securing a new agreement with Ukraine on the Black Sea Fleet bases, which militated against supporting Crimean Russian nationalism so long as an agreement was likely. Moreover, by the mid-1990s the Yeltsin leadership was absorbed by a major internal war against separatists in Chechnya, which severely constrained its scope for support for nationalist separatism in other successor states. On the contrary, as Yeltsin personally had been a pivotal figure in the break up of the USSR, under his leadership Russia became one of the most vocal advocates of recognizing the new state boundaries fashioned out of the USSR.

Second, Russian nationalist separatism in Crimea was debilitated by the lack of clear-cut ethno-linguistic cleavages and the unevenness of ethnopolitical mobilization in the region. The Russophone Slav majority in the region was composed of both ethnic Russians, ethnic Ukrainians and people of mixed heritage, and the ethnically distinctive Crimean Tatars were initially primarily Russophones, thereby creating a number of cross-cutting ethnic and linguistic cleavages and a baseline regional identity of 'Crimeans' (*krymchane*) (Sasse 2007, Appendix 2). Third, Crimea's economy was strongly interlinked with Ukraine's and the region was heavily dependent on Kyiv. Over 80% of Crimea's water supply comes from Ukraine through the Soviet-era Dnipro canal. Crimea is also dependent on energy supplies via Kyiv, in particular electricity (about 90%). Ukraine as a whole, in turn, was heavily dependent on subsidized Russian energy resources, but the supplies were routed through

Ukrainian infrastructure. Peripheral regions such as Crimea were particularly badly affected during the economic crash after 1991, and the crisis was exacerbated in Crimea by the reliance of the local economy on Soviet tourism, and the Soviet military-industrial complex – both of which collapsed with the end of the USSR. The Russian nationalist movement came to power in the region at a time of socio-economic cataclysm and was quickly seen as incompetent in addressing Crimea's economic challenges, resulting in a sharp decline in public support in Crimea for separatism by 1996. Equally, Russia's own economic crisis made it an unattractive object for unity for some in Crimea.

By 1996 Russia and Ukraine were finalizing a strategic agreement on the Black Sea bases and desired harmonious bilateral relations. As the Crimean Russian separatist movement collapsed, the political negotiations intensified between the moderate elites of the region and the elites in Kyiv. The main function of the agreement on autonomy status was symbolic, although it provided some limited scope for the use of Russian and Crimean Tatar languages alongside Ukrainian as the state language, and there was a special tax regime for the region. However, Crimea did not manage to capitalize on these provisions for limited autonomy. The region remained a net recipient of transfers from the Ukrainian central budget and contributed only about 3% to Ukraine's GDP, 1.4% of its exports and 3% of its tax base (Institute of International Finance 2014: 6).

Nationalism as a power idea in Crimea was oriented towards Russia but primarily framed as mobilization for Crimean independence. Ultimately, the ideational linkage was not reciprocated by the key external actor – Russia. The overtures of the leader of

the Crimean Russian movement, Yurii Meshkov, to Moscow were only met with a lukewarm reception (Sasse 2007; Reid 2015; for interviews with Meshkov, see MKRU 2014 and BBC News 2014). Yeltsin and then Prime Minister Chernomyrdin even refused to meet him. There were some Russian politicians, most notably Moscow mayor Yurii Luzhkov, who backed the Crimean separatists in and beyond the 1990s but they had little influence on foreign policy (see, for example, Hill 2001; Kyiv Post, 4 June 2010)**.** Without the external activation of the ideational linkage by Russia, the focus stayed on the domestic power interactions between the pivotal national and regional elites.

Revisiting the questions posed in the introduction to the special issue, we can see that the Crimean case in the 1990s demonstrates that the absence of a clear political opportunity structure – resulting from Russia's state weakness and Yeltsin's preference for accommodation with Ukraine and the West – limited the causal role of external linkages, including the power idea of nationalism, in stoking conflict in Crimea. External constraint allowed for the relations between domestic national and regional elites to remain negotiable and for an 'institutional processing point' – the discussions about autonomy – to channel the moderated external linkages to both the West and Russia. The result of the constitutional accommodation of the Crimean issue strengthened, at least temporarily, the region's institutional links to Kyiv. The 1996 Ukrainian constitution introduced the 'Autonomous Republic of Crimea' as an asymmetrical element in the otherwise 'unitary' state structure of Ukraine. The 1998 Crimean constitution, Ukrainian legislation and a series of Constitutional Court decisions further refined the content of the autonomy status. The Crimean Tatars and

their campaign for recognition as an indigenous people further tied the peninsula politically to Kyiv.

What had changed by 2014?

In February 2014 Russia achieved a quick military take-over of Crimea, the incorporation of the region and the city of Sevastopol' into the Russian Federation, and the disruption of most links between Crimea and the rest of Ukraine. This stark contrast between two critical episodes – 1991-96 and 2013-14 – allows us to explore the role of international linkages in the reopening of a conflict-issue after a critical period of conflict-prevention. One obvious difference between the immediate aftermath of the collapse of the USSR and 2013-14 is that there was a change of political regime in Russia, with the succession of Yeltsin by Putin. Furthermore, Putin set about the revival of Russia as a Great Power by a centralizing authoritarianism domestically - rebuilding a state "power vertical" and restoring authority and coherence in domestic politics – and by reasserting the primacy of more independently determined Russian national interests in foreign policy. Putin, in contrast to Yeltsin, showed a more genuine interest in the status of Russian co-ethnics in the "Near Abroad", especially in the Baltic States, and a willingness to use this issue when convenient.

Given that Russia's military weakness was such that Russia could effectively only project itself as a regional power, it was with and in the newly independent states that Putin sought to assert Russia's linkages and leverage. One such strategy was to intensify existing linkages as a way to allow for them to be turned into leverage at some point. Energy dependencies, trade relations and cultural linkages through the

Russophone populations across the Former Soviet Union provided the three main pillars of this linkage-leverage nexus. Since independence Ukraine had been the key test case for Russia to retain its predominant role in the former Soviet space. Ukraine's ambivalent foreign policy hovered between closer integration with the CIS (Russia-led) and Western integration (with the EU and NATO). Ukraine's dependence on Russian energy resources (over two thirds of Ukraine's gas and oil supplies; see Woehrel 2009) and trade with Russia (about 30%; see European Commission 2013) gave Russia significant leverage over Ukraine to ensure that this strategic ambivalence was sustained.

The 2004 'Orange Revolution' sent a warning signal to Moscow that a major part of the Ukrainian elite aspired to a more consistently Western-oriented reform path, but factional and corrupt domestic Ukrainian politics stalled such reforms. The election of President Yanukovych in 2010 signified a shift in power domestically to the Russophone south-east of Ukraine and a new tilt towards accommodation with Putin's Russia compared with his predecessors. On the whole Yanukovych maintained the ambivalent "double vector" foreign policy of his predecessors, and he manouevred between Putin's pressure for Ukraine to join the Eurasian Economic Union, and US and EU pressure to continue Ukraine's European "choice" by negotiating on the Association Agreement and free trade area with the EU (Dragneva and Wolczuk eds. 2013).

Throughout the 2000s voting patterns in Crimea were in line with those in Ukraine's south-east (Tsentral'na Vyborcha Komisiya 1998-2012), thereby consolidating the perception of the Crimean issue having been resolved. Moreover, the strong support for President Yanukovych and his Party of the Regions in the years

prior to 2013 did not single out the region as a potential separatist hotspot (Tsentral'na Vyborcha Komisiya 2010). Russian interests in Crimea were well served by the combination of Yanukovych's rule, his support for the Russian language in the south-east through regional laws, and no immediate uncertainty about the long-term arrangements for the bases in Sevastopol. Russian action in Crimea in 2014 thus came at a moment when the region was well integrated into Ukrainian political structures. The sequence for the reawakening of Russian nationalism as a power idea was the following: it occurred first among the Russia's ruling elites and was subsequently re-mobilized among Crimea's political elites and a broad section of the regional population.

The Maidan mobilization (November 2013–February 2014; for more detail see Onuch and Sasse forthcoming), the ouster of Yanukovych in late Feburary 2014 and the coming to power of an unelected interim government that was acerbic in its antagonism to Russia unhinged the political equilibrium on Ukraine and Crimea in Russian policy. The Yanukovych regime had played a bridging role, linking regional, national and external (Russian) elites and subordinating external linkages to domestic politics. With the forced removal of Yanukovych, the external linkages with Russia suddenly gained in political salience and transformed into leverage. Annexing Crimea was a way for Putin to punish Ukraine and set limits to Western intervention. Putin admitted on the first anniversary of the annexation that a meticulous plan to orchestrate a swift military and political take-over of Crimea had long been prepared and its implementation decided upon when Yanukovych was ousted on 23 February 2014 by the mass protests of the Maidan (*Rossiya 1* 2015; *New York Times,* 9 March 2015).

The case of Crimea demonstrates that for external linkages to acquire causal significance they need to be politically mobilized. The Crimean case is instructive in that it captures both the more long-term process of building and maintaining linkages and a critical moment of mobilization. The essence of the power idea of Russian nationalism at the critical juncture of early 2014 was that it drew together three key elements and concentrated them in an emotive appeal to Russians: first, an assertion of Russia's 'historical right' to Crimea (Sakwa 2015: 120-148; for a discussion of three interrelated Russian narratives about Russia's right to Crimea, the Ukrainian far right and Crimea's own drive to join Russia, see Biersack and O'Leary 2014: 252-256); second, a consolidation of domestic popular support for the Putin regime framed in direct opposition to the West, including hostility to pro-West opposition within Russia; and third, an attempt to veto the expansion of Western linkages and potential leverage. Russian action was a direct attempt to set limits to the possibilities of Ukraine's elites to capitalize on the opportunities provided by the pro-Western and EU-oriented political direction and success of the Maidan.

Once the political opportunity for a sudden assertion of leverage presented itself, the nested linkage structure accelerated and reinforced the effect. The fact that about 15,000 Russian military personnel were already stationed in the region in connection with the leased Black Sea Fleet bases (Cecire 2014) provided a basis for a speedy military take-over by special troops flown in from Russia. The hastily arranged regional referendum in Crimea and Sevastpol (16 March 2013) on joining the Russian Federation officially recorded 83.1% participation and 96.8% in support

of joining Russia (ITAR-TASS 17 March 2014)[1]. Putin quickly empowered a clientelist political elite around Sergii Aksenov who was appointed Crimean prime minister. The official request of the Crimean government to join the Russian Federation, the Russian parliament's preparation of a legislative basis for this territorial change to be framed as 'legal' and in response to Crimean demands (Simpson 2014; *Reuters* 8 March 2014), and the recognition of Crimea and Sevastopol as two new subjects of the Russian Federation was achieved in a matter of days, being confirmed in a special presidential address on 18 March 2014 (for live coverage, see euronews 18 March 2014). President Putin used that occasion for an emotive nationalistic appeal to those present and the Russian public at large to justify his policies against a background of claimed anti-Russian Western actions since the end of the Cold War. The annexation of Crimea formally signaled the start of a new era in Russian-Western relations, and it significantly boosted his popularity in Russia.

The fact that Crimea's linkages were overwhelmingly with Kyiv and Russia[2] also meant that once the domestic linkages had been disrupted, Russia could extend its own linkages to the region. From 18 March 2014 all Crimean residents were automatically declared Russian citizens (unless they renounced this decision within a one-month period). Russia's federal Human Rights Ombudsperson, Ella Pamfilova, has estimated that at least 100,000 Crimeans were unable to obtain Russian citizenship during the first year and are now considered 'foreigners' (High Commissioner for Human Rights in the Russian Federation 2014: 95). The arrival of

[1] These are the figures reported by the Mikhail Malyshev, the head of the referendum commission in Crimea on the day after the referendum, 17 March 2014. The figures reported as official do currently not appear on the Crimean election commission website.

[2] The cultural linkage of the Crimean Tatars to Turkey, more specifically to a diffuse Crimean Tatar diaspora, had been somewhat more relevant politically in the 1990s.

an estimated 200,000 displaced people from the war zone in eastern Ukraine further complicates this process (ibid.)

Crimea's first Russia-administered census of October 2014 shows the Russian segment of the population increasing (from 60.4% in 2001 to 65.3%), the Ukrainian segment decreasing (from 24% to 15.1%) and the Crimean Tatar population higher than in 2001 but relatively stable compared to the immediate pre-annexation period (10.3% in 2001 and 12.1% in 2014) (*Euromaidanpress*, 16 April 2015). Out-migration of Ukrainians and an individual re-classification by Crimeans who had previously identified as Ukrainians account for most of the change in the share of the Ukrainians, while the Russian share has been boosted by these two trends and possibly already the influx of refugees from the eastern regions of Ukraine.

Russia's linkages and leverage have, ironically, been strengthened by Kyiv, which has gradually cut its linkages in response to Russia's annexation of Crimea. The essential water supplies through the Dnipro Canal were stopped just north of Crimea in March 2014, leading to serious water shortages in the region. Russia has put down new pipelines to channel water and dug deep wells in eastern Crimea to partially counter these shortages (*Sputnik International* 4 April 2015). Kyiv also cut its supplies of food, industrial products and electricity and stopped the train and bus services linking Crimea to the rest of Ukraine (*Wall Street Journal* 26 December 2014). Estimates vary, but at the most Crimea can cover between 10-30% of its electricity needs through its thermal power stations, and its dependence on food and other delivered goods stands at about 90% (*Deutsche* Welle 14 March 2014, Euromaidanpress, 12 November 2014). Ferry links to Russian ports cannot make up the shortfall. Regional gas needs are said to be covered by about two-thirds from local

off-shore gas (and to a lesser extent oil) reserves (*Deutsche Welle* 14 March 2014). The state company *Chernemorneftegaz* and other state companies have been reregistered as Russian state companies; private companies either left or had to reregister under Russian law. While the effects of the sanctions on the Russian economy have varied by sector (Connolly, forthcoming), it is clear that US and EU sanctions have further isolated Crimea and its population from Ukraine and the West. The tourism industry in particular has been devastated. Western investors and companies, including Visa Inc. and Mastercard Inc., have stopped their operations in the region (*Wall Street Journal* 26 December 2014). The creation of a free economic zone in Crimea with tax exemptions for investors for a twenty-five year period from 1 January 2015 is unlikely to speedily turn around the economy (*pravda.ru* 1 December 2014).

Crimea has become Russia's most subsidized region, comparable only to the investment in stability and reconstruction in Chechnya and Ingushetiya. Prime Minister Dmitrii Medvedev himself estimated the Crimea-related costs in 2014, including the damage done by Western sanctions, at $27 billion (*The Economist* 11 June 2015). 75-85% of Crimea's costs have to be covered by Russia's federal budget (ibid. Popov 2015). According to former Russian Finance Minister Aleksei Kudrin, Crimea may cost Russia $6-7 billion a year, not counting the indirect costs resulting from capital flight (*Sputnik International*, 31 March 2015). Exact figures are impossible to give, not least because new budget commitments have been added incrementally, but it is estimated that the Russian budget has earmarked about 150-200 billion rubles annually for the period 2015-2020 (Popov 2015). More specifically,

in October 2014 the Russian government quoted a commitment of 660 billion rubles for the development of energy and transport infrastructure, health care and education until 2020, supplemented by 50 billion rubles to plug the financial hole in the regional budget (*The Moscow Times* 30 October 2014). By 2015, the figure had been adjusted upwards to 736 billion rubles ($13 billion) for Crimea's development until 2020 (*Tass News Agency,* cited in *The Moscow Times* 17 July 2015). The envisaged allocation for the road and rail bridge between Crimea and Russia across the narrow Kerch Strait is about $4 billion (ibid.). The Russian Energy Ministry has also signed a contract for $830 million for the construction of an electricity cable linking Crimea and Russia's Krasnodar region by 2020.

Crimeans depend entirely on Russia for their wage and pension payments and bear parts of the costs of being cut off by Ukraine. Living costs in Crimea have, for the most part, risen above Ukrainian levels but stay below Russian levels (with average wages lower than in Russia). For example, the price levels for gas and food are higher than elsewhere in Ukraine but lower than in Moscow, and there have been frequent water shortages. Despite Ukraine now charging a high price for its electricity supplies to Crimea, Crimeans still pay highly subsidized rates more comparable to Kyiv than Moscow (Kireyev 2014).

The costs and logistical challenges associated with the take-over of Crimea are high, underscoring that non-economic ideological motivations, captured by the term "*Krym nash"* ("Crimea is Ours"; on *krymnashizm* see Popov 2015), are dominating decision-making. Moscow quickly broke with Putin's early promise to accommodate the indigenous Crimean Tatar population. A system of repression and control has been applied to the Tatars. The most prominent Crimean Tatar leaders, Mustafa Dzhemilev and Refat Chubarov, have been banned from Crimea for five years, the

main political organization of the Crimean Tatars, the Mejlis, has been declared illegal, people have vanished or have been arrested, and demonstrations and the use of national symbols have been suppressed. On 31 March 2015 the Crimean Tatar TV station ATR was closed down – it has since reopened in Kyiv (*Kyiv Post*, 18 June 2015). An estimated 10,000 Crimean Tatars have left Crimea and are now primarily living in Western Ukraine and Kyiv.

In sum, the Crimean case highlights the particular salience of ideational linkages and the mechanisms of turning these into leverage. The power idea of Russian nationalism, this time driven by Russian elites disillusioned with integration into a Western dominated rule-oriented international order, and backed by a supportive popular mood in Russia, proved an effective means of mobilization. A series of political developments and linkages between Ukraine and Russia had prepared the ground for this to happen, but a concrete political opportunity was provided only by the Maidan and the regime change in Kyiv. A nationalist ideational linkage with Crimea that had not been reciprocated by Russia in the 1990s was empowered in 2014 in a manner which took that ideology to its ultimate logic of annexation.

The Case of Chechnya: From Violent Nationalism to Coopted Islamism

It is a perverse outcome for Russia that Chechnya, which was framed by Russian elites as the most serious threat posed by Islamic fundamentalism to Russia's security in the early 1990s, is now informally one of the most Islamized parts of the Russian Federation. The puzzle in the Chechnya case is to explain how the two antithetical power ideas of nationalism and Islamization were in contention, and how it was that

Islamization triumphed. Faced by a secular nationalist independence movement led by Dzhokhar Dudaev in the early to mid 1990s, Russia fought two bloody wars to crush this challenge. There is disagreement in the scholarly studies as to when Chechnya became an Islamist challenge for Russia, with some viewing this case as a transformation from nationalism into jihad as a consequence of radicalization induced by war and by the disillusionment with the Western states policy of support for Yeltsin and non-recognition of Chechnya's self-determination (Hughes 2007a). Others, in contrast, view the case as an Islamist challenge from the outset (Hahn 2007). Under Putin's presidency from 2000 the policy solution devised to manage the Chechen insurgency was a neo-imperialist divide et impera strategy, termed "Chechenization". It required the cooption of a former rebel group, the Kadyrovtsy clique, and then its installation as a collaborationist regime, first under its elder Ahmad Kadyrov until his assassination in 2004, and then under his son Ramzan Kadyrov, who was appointed president of Chechnya by Putin in 2007. Putin views Kadyrov not only as the key to stabilization in Chechnya but also as a pivotal, special, regional client in Russia (Russell 2008 and 2011; Souleimanov 2015).

The use of "localization" or "nativization" under various guises has been a classic form of counterinsurgency since ancient times, and in particular for imperialist or imperial minded regimes. Such policies have been central to Russian, British, French and US efforts to occupy and control territory and crush rebellion over at least the last two hundred years. Generally, this policy takes two forms in practice: as part of an "exit" strategy, where occupiers are keen to minimize their own costs and casualties as they wind down a failed occupation; or as part of a long war of occupation, where occupiers use localization as part of a stabilization strategy, largely to heighten the

brutal repression of rebellion and to place their own forces at one remove from the day-to-day interface with and management of the conflict. In Chechnya from 2000 Putin seems to have opted for the second strategy.

As a consequence of "Chechenization", Putin accepted what has been termed "separatism without secession" – a higher degree of self-rule for Chechnya than any other Russian federal subject, and of a kind that sets it de facto outside the Russian constitutional order in a kind of "dual state" (Sakwa 2010). There is a tendency among some analysts, both inside and outside Russia, to flippantly deride the Kadyrov regime as a corrupt and erratic tin-pot dictatorship, but this view confuses Kadyrov's obvious crude personal propensities of taste with the objective political outcomes of his navigation of patron-clientelism under Putin. In fact, Kadyrov has been an astute political and military leader of Chechnya, extracting concessions from Russia in terms of latitude of self-rule, and economic support for reconstruction and social welfare, and tolerance of illegality that seemed impossible at the start of the second war in 1999-2000. Putin has supported his client Kadyrov with uncritical backing throughout a number of scandals, including numerous assassinations of critics of Kadyrov, or Putin, or both, which are often attributed to Kadyrov loyalists, but most important has been the enormous budgetary transfers, and no doubt also a great deal of off-budget funding, to build linkages and leverage between the two leaders. The disproportionality of the transfers has generated much grumbling at elite and popular levels in Russia about the "feeding" (*kormlenie*) of Kadyrov and corruption in the Caucasus. These complaints, however, are less concerned with the concept of administrative feeding per se, but rather with what is perceived as Putin's privileging of Kadyrov and the North Caucasus. Putin, however, has not allowed the

criticisms to deflect him from the policy of investing in Kadyrov. Moreover, it has been argued that both have employed corruption productively, at least in the short term, as a social "glue" to rebind the Chechen society broken by a decade of war and to enhance Kadyrov's authority (Zabyelina 2013).

Corruption around state funding in Chechnya predates the consolidation of power by Kadyrov. The chief accountant of the Audit Chamber, Sergei Ryabukhin, found that almost $700 million in budget monies in 2003, and about $600 million in 2004, were lost in "financial violations" in Chechnya (Ryabukhin 2005). From 2002 to 2006, the Russian government allocated 30.6 billion roubles (then about US$916 million) to Chechnya within the federal programme for the republic's restoration. The corruption in this period was undoubtedly perpetrated in the main by Russian ministries and state agencies. This development funding approximates to the roughly one billion per year that Russia was spending on the war in Chechnya. According to the Russian Federation's Chamber of Accounts, the North Caucasus Federal District received 167.8 billion rubles (then US$5.4 billion) in 2010 and 270 billion rubles (then US$8.6 billion) in 2011. In December 2012, the Kremlin approved the State Development Program for the North Caucasus through to 2025, and a law passed in April 2014 allocated about 204.7 billion rubles (then about US$ 5.68 billion) to the North Caucasus region and stipulating that the funds be spent by 2020 (for these figures see *Razvitie Zevero-Kavkazskogo Federal'nogo Okruga*, 2014; Zabyelina, 2013: 42 [she has confused milliard with trillion, has somewhat different figures and her conversions are at March 2013 rates]).

The scale of destruction in Chechnya required an immense reconstruction effort. By 2002 the war had turned one third of Chechnya's population (about 300,000 persons) into internally displaced persons. Not one of Grozny's 4,664 apartment blocks was intact in that year, and some 32,000 private houses were badly damaged or destroyed. Health and ecological problems, particularly concerning mental health, post-traumatic stress disorder, tuberculosis, and water pollution remain major problems. From 2001 to 2014 about $14 billion was spent on federally funded reconstruction mostly through "targeted" special programmes like that mentioned above (International Crisis Group 2015). For example, in 2010, the year after Russia ended its military operations in Chechnya, the federal budget allocation for Chechnya, with an official population of just over 1.2 million (a vast overestimation by most accounts), was some $1.8 billion ($1500 per person). Dagestan, with its official population of 2.7 million, received less than $1.6 billion ($593 per person); Kabardino-Balkaria, with a population of 890,000, received $650 million ($730 per person); and North Ossetia, with a population of 700,000, received $400 million ($571 per person). Chechnya has continued to be by far the most fiscally privileged of the North Caucasus republics, partly because its socio-economic problems are widely seen as being of an order of magnitude worse than its neighbours, but also because of the close patron-client ties between Putin and Kadyrov, and the rewarding of Kadyrov's control of the insurgency. Fiscal transfers are an essential component of security containment and control, since they provide leverage for Kadyrov to build authority, for example by the expansion of security forces. This has allowed him to coopt former fighters and provide alternative lifestyle pathways for young people who might otherwise have been drawn into jihad. Russia is following a long established pathway in counterinsurgency of contaminating a developmental logic with a control logic, and

thus corruption and weaknesses in the effective delivery of social programmes and reconstruction have mattered less than a securitized vision of "stability".

In return, Kadyrov has devastatingly crushed the Islamist resistance in the most brutal and thorough manner. Russia, with some justification, declared its "counterterrorism operation" in Chechnya complete by 2009, and insurgent violence has become residual. Kadyrov achieved this feat largely by a shrewd combination of carrot and stick policies, including a wide scale amnesty for rebels in 2003-06 and the paying of veteran's pensions and the provision of employment opportunities in his own security forces, plus a deterrence policy of terrorizing the families and social networks of known rebels through collective responsibility and publicly demonstrative deterrent punishments. The Russian federal government has come to this astute combination of developmental logics, if skewed by corruption and counterinsurgency, belatedly because this policy required a credible partner from the Chechen resistance. The cooption of the Kadyrovtsy made the "Chechenization" strategy viable. As we shall discuss below, the result of this policy has been the de facto Islamization of Chechnya on a scale not tolerated in any other Muslim area of Russia.

The Nationalist Phase

The nationalization mobilization for independence in Chechnya in the 1980s/90s was part of the wider nationalist tide that was unleashed by Gorbachev's reforms and loosening of authoritarian controls. The combination of nationalist mobilization and democratic reforms undermined elite integration, forcing elites to abandon unpopular Soviet communism for the new power idea of nationalism (Beissinger 2002). In Central and Eastern Europe, the mobilization process by which the nationalism power

idea took hold and became hegemonic was generally viewed more favourably in the West compared with those in the USSR. This variable normative conception of how to manage the end of communism among the Western alliance states was most evident in the policy approach for managing the collapse of the USSR and Yugoslavia beginning in 1991. The reinvented international norm of *uti posseditis iuris* established that only the next highest administrative entities in both the USSR and Yugoslavia would be recognized as new states. Although this norm was later abandoned by the Western Alliance in the case of Kosovo in 2007, its application in the 1990s in effect blocked national self-determination for entities like Chechnya that did not have the required administrative status at the moment of break up. The irony is that the spirit of the concept of *uti posseditis iuris* was a much better fit for a place like Chechnya, which had been the subject of imperial conquest by the Russian Empire, had been colonized extensively by Slav settlers under the Soviet Union, and its Chechen inhabitants had suffered acts of genocide under Soviet rule during and after the deportation of 1944-5 (see Dunlop 1998).

In this early phase of the development of the nationalist power idea during the collapse of communism, Chechnya was rendered into a case of trapped nationalism by the bi-fold approach of the Western states to recognition. Firstly, the effect of European Community states's efforts to manage the disintegration of Yugoslavia was to actually preempt its collapse, with Opinion One of the Badinter Arbitration Committee being legally critical in this respect (Radan 1997). Secondly, the Western states accepted more or less without question the form of dissolution of the USSR enacted by Soviet era elites in the Belovezha Accord and Alma Aty Agreement of December 1991, with official recognitions following quickly.

Why was the nationalism power idea sustained for some years by the leadership of former Soviet general Dudaev that came to power in Chechnya in summer and autumn of 1991, despite the potential for a successful recognition being blocked regionally and internationally? Other nationalist elites in the Russian Federation, notably that of Tatarstan, ultimately chose to compromise with Moscow on their nationalist vision in return for greater economic and cultural self government. Even Chechnya's neighbouring and ethnically similar Republic of Ingushetia, also led at that time by a former Soviet General (Ruslan Aushev) rejected separatism and chose compromise with the Yeltsin leadership. Why was Chechnya distinct in its uncompromising position on self-determination, compared with other potential cases of conflict in the Russian Federation?

The most convincing explanation suggests that a combination of structural, cultural and personalistic factors produced this outcome. The structural elements included: Chechnya was ethnically homogenized by 1992 through the ethnic cleansing or flight of Slav settlers; Chechnya had sufficient oil reserves to provide economic independence; it was located on Russia's new international frontier and its dominant geography of mountain forest would facilitate resistance; Chechen-Russian relations were characterized by the legacy of colonialism and racial stereotypes which militated against negotiation and compromise; there were antipathetic interpersonal relations between Yeltsin and Dudaev. The latter is probably best accounted for by two factors – firstly, the fact that while Yeltsin was a product of the Soviet party nomenklatura, with all of its corrupt interpersonal ties, Dudaev appears to have been someone who rose through the professional ranks in the military as a result of talent; and secondly, Yeltsin was an alcoholic who favoured decision-making during

drinking binges, whereas Dudaev was teetotal and valued personal discipline. Dudaev and his associates were also particularly influenced by the form of nationalism that led up to independence for the three Baltic republics of the USSR, and he saw them as a model for Chechnya. Lastly, Chechnya's capacity to resist Russia was significantly enhanced by the seizure of weapons and war material from Russian stockpiles near Grozny (Hughes 2007a).

The Islamist Phase

In recent years there have been a growing number of scholarly studies which locate the Chechnya case within broader literatures on terrorism, insurgency and jihad. In particular there have been studies of the dynamics of insurgent and counterinsurgent violence (Kramer 2004-05; Hughes 2007b; Lyall 2009), studies of nationalist and Islamist rebel motivations (Janeczko 2014; Toft and Zhukov 2015), and studies of the role of indigenous forces in support of counterinsurgents (Souleimanov and Huseyn 2014), and studies of jihadi linkages between Chechen fighters and Al Qaeda (Sagramoso 2012). The main inferences drawn from these studies concern the nature and effectiveness of insurgent and counterinsurgent tactics. This is a genre that reflects the fact that the conflict in Chechnya has increasingly been framed as part of the wider Islamist global insurgency driven by Al Qaeda, and more lately by ISIS, and research is being led by a need to offer lessons for counterinsurgents (principally the USA) in its struggles elsewhere. However, such narrowly focused approaches that are driven by policy concerns with success in counterinsurgency, fail to address, let alone explain, the meta-level shift in the ideational basis for this conflict, from the leverage of one power idea to another, from nationalism to Islamic jihad.

We suggest that there is a conjuncture of three main push and pull explanatory drivers for this transformation. First, a key push factor was that it became clear during the process of fighting the first Russo-Chechen War in 1994-6, and in the immediate years following the democratic election of Aslan Maskhadov as Chechen president in 1997, that the national self-determination option for Chechnya was blocked, not only by Russia but by Western states. The USA and main EU powers prioritized good relations with Russia in this period, limited their interventions in the Chechnya case to inconsistent expressions of concern about the human rights dimension, and rigidly adhered for these political reasons to the policy of non-recognition of Chechnya's secession (for example, see Lapidus 1998). Second, there is a question as to whether disenchantment with secular nationalism in Chechnya was a top-down, bottom-up, or some process of interaction of the two. The evidence is sparse as there has been no large scale interviewing of Chechen insurgents. A reasonable assumption is that radicalization was also intensified by the personal lived experiences and common mutual brutalizing effects of war on the Chechen elites and masses, especially the fighters and their families. Russia and Chechen forces fought the wars as sectarian and race wars, largely abandoning the laws and norms of war and using violence indiscriminately and with extreme disproportionality (Gilligan 2009). Russian forces were by far the worst offender in this regard. A small number of spectacular terrorist acts against Russian civilians perpetrated by forces within the broad Chechen resistance coalition facilitated the demonization of Chechen resistance as "terrorists" by the Russian state, and fuelled the sectarianism and racism of Russia's military and security forces, as well as repugnance at Chechen "terrorism" internationally. It was the most Islamized section of the Chechen resistance under Shamil Basaev that led the

way in this kind of shock terror acts against Russian civilian targets (predating indiscriminate attacks by Al Qaeda). The bulk of the insurgent violence, however, fell within the laws and norms of war (Hughes, 2007b).

We should note that the demonization by Russia of the Chechen resistance as "Islamist" was an instrumentalized frame that started even in the autumn of 1991, before large scale violent conflict and several years prior to the actual process of Islamisation. The pervasive sectarian violence also intensified over time, as Russian war crimes in the first war were taken to a new extreme in the second Russo-Chechen war from late 1999, inducing reciprocal extremes of violence from the Chechen side. Attributing radicalization to the lived experience of conflict has its explanatory limits, since studies of the nature of violence in this conflict cited earlier tend to support the theory that the insurgency has been contained and deradicalized in Chechnya by the cooption of indigenous proxies who are even more brutal than the Russian forces. This containment in Chechnya is also part of the explanation for the diffusion of jihad to other parts of the North Caucasus. Paradoxically, it seems that extreme violence can radicalize and also deradicalize.

Third, the waning of nationalism as a power idea among the Chechen resistance was strongly affected by the pull of the alternative power idea of Islamic jihad. We should distinguish the leverage of jihadism from the growing religiosity, even if formal, within Chechen society after the fall of communism, which was a common trend across many religious groups in the former USSR. It is argued that an Islamist versus "moderates" cleavage developed within the broad Chechen separatist movement during the 1990s (Wilhelmsen 2005). However, the process of Islamization of the separatists in Chechnya was occurring sequentially unevenly, at least at the level of political and military leaders that is traceable rhetorically, and

from what we know of personal behavior. But, it was also a general trend that covered all of the key leaders in the 1990s. There is evidence of a steady Islamist radicalization of key leaders such as Dudaev, Maskhadov, Yandarbiev and Basaev, and that process can be traced through their public, and where reported, their private statements (see for example, the systematic study of the case of Yandarbiev in Hughes 2010). It was also occurring prior to the outbreak of the first Russo-Chechen war in December 1994.

The leverage of Islamic jihad on the Chechen resistance was the result of a radicalized opportunity structure internationally in the early to mid-1990s that created an opening for a new power idea. There was a new-found salience of the Salafist variant of Islamic jihad arising from the emergence and growth of Al Qaeda, following its foundation in 1988 in Afghanistan by Osama Bin Laden and others among the mainly Arab international contingent of fighters that had fought with the mujahideen against the Soviet forces and their indigenous proxies. The growth of Al Qaeda was contemporaneous with a number of violent conflicts involving clashes often between nominally Muslim and non-Muslim peoples including Bosnia-Hercegovina, Palestine, Kashmir, and Chechnya, among others. Osama Bin Laden, from his fatwa on jihad in 1996, reached out to embrace struggles like that in Chechnya, which were characterized by sectarian conflict, and which he portrayed as "massacres" of Muslims (Osama Bin Laden 1996). Furthermore, in addition to propagandistic support for the struggle in Chechnya, Al Qaeda provided from 1995 some small-scale direct support by sending experienced fighters and financial support to the Chechen resistance. The exact scale of the financial support is not known, and is usually exaggerated by Russian sources, but was unlikely to have been significant

overall, and the number of foreign fighters was likely to have been more in the range of the many dozens than hundreds. The pull factor in the leverage of Islamic jihad came from its form as a newly emergent power idea that was gaining traction as a moral and ideological force in a number of conflicts involving Muslims globally. This interaction was also partly mutual, as the key leader in the Islamisation of the Chechen resistance, Shamil Basaev, led a few dozen Chechen fighters to Al Qaeda's base in Khost in Afghanistan in summer 1994 for military and ideological training. Al Qaeda's promotion of a global "awakening" (as Bin Laden put it) of Muslims for jihad corresponded temporally with disenchantment in Chechnya with secular nationalism.

As a Muslim identity took hold during the conflict, Russian policy reinforced this process by the propagandistic demonization and othering of Chechens as a group, as well as by the brutal military practices of its counterinsurgent forces on the ground. The attraction of jihadism was also enhanced by the inspirational fighting capability, determination and relative effectiveness of the Islamic jihad element in the resistance, most notoriously in that group of fighters led by Basaev (including the foreign fighters). We should also not discount a jihadi chic element, as the resistance borrowed rhetoric, totems and fashion from jihad historically, and from other contemporary struggles. The jihadis were also very proficient propagandists and used the internet to tap into international networks to promote understanding of their cause and highlight their successful military actions, and to locate the Chechen struggle within a broader repertoire of jihad globally. Even before his assassination by Russia in 1996, Dudaev, and other leaders such as Yandarbiev, had tilted away from nationalism toward a Chechen jihad as a mobilizing device for the struggle. By the latter 1990s, much of the resistance in Chechnya was operating within a jihadist

paradigm. During the second war Maskhadov and Basaev cooperated closely as a duumvirate in leading the resistance, and while they had tactical differences over the use of terrorist acts against civilians, there was a growing unity within the Chechen resistance after 2000 around Islamisation, and understanding the conflict in a sectarian frame. Indeed, prior to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Russian-Chechen conflict exhibited many of the features of non-discrimination and disproportionality in the use of violence that have subsequently been associated with both sides in the US-led wars with Al Qaeda.

It is a paradox of this conflict in terms of linkage and leverage that not only did the Chechen struggle transmogrify from nationalism to jihad but that the Russian policy devised under Putin to deal with the resistance had the consequence, perhaps unforeseen, of strengthening the Islamization of Chechnya. The *Kadyrovtsy* had a strong Islamic ethos in the sense that the head of the clique, Ahmad Kadyrov, was a religious leader. His son, Ramzan Kadyrov, first as prime minister and then president of Chechnya was given a free rein by Putin to use the most barbarous methods to crush the resistance, while also being indulged in a pseudo-Islamisation of Chechnya. From 2007 a partial Sharia legal system has developed and de facto has displaced the Russian Constitution in Chechnya, with Islamic dress codes, polygamy, "honour killings" of women, restrictions on alcohol and other aspects of Sharia openly imposed by religious courts and supported by Kadyrov. To demonstrate his Muslim credentials Kadyrov has built the largest mosque in Russia in Grozny, and he organized in Grozny in January 2015one of the largest protests in the Muslim world against the Charlie Hebdo cartoons.. For some commentators, Kadyrov's Chechnya is all but an "Islamic state" within Russia (Khodarkovsky 2015).

The successful counterinsurgency in Chechnya, together with the extra-territorial nature of the jihadi goal of establishing a Caliphate, has led to the spread of jihadist violence outside Chechnya and across the North Caucasus region. There has been a meta-level conceptual shift from political identification with particular national territories and groups, to a transnational sectarian concern with the "Muslim community", This process predated the Chechen-Al Qaeda linkages, as evidenced in Basaev's leadership of a Chechen "battalion" on the Abkhaz side during the war with Georgia in 1994. Over time, however, the form of Islamic jihadist ideology within the resistance in Chechnya became more global than locally rooted. It has become more externally influenced and more integrated with the wider international jihadist movement that has developed around Al Qaeda and more recently ISIS in Syria and Iraq.

Conclusion

Our analysis shows that what we have termed "power ideas" – fundamental ideas about how political power should be arranged - are particularly salient linkages at moments of crisis framed by external and domestic actors as critical junctures. These linkages can be instrumentalized to generate ideological leverage to change conflict dynamics. Both the Chechnya and Crimea cases highlight the political salience of power ideas shaping conflict dynamics. In both cases ideas and their instrumentalization by political leaderships have been pivotal to conflict outcomes. In the case of Crimea, Russia's initial policy was to deter Crimean Russian nationalism in the 1990s in favour of good bilateral relations with a Ukrainian state whose foreign policy zig-zagged between Russia and the West. By late 2013 Russian policy was

reconfigured to mobilize this same nationalism, leading to the annexation of Crimea in early 2014. Neither the linkage of the power idea nor a range of other Russia-oriented economic and cultural linkages, had changed. The main difference was a leadership change in Russia, from Yeltsin to Putin, and by 2013 Putin had abandoned Yeltsin's pretensions of integration with Western states around a rule-oriented international order in preference for a Russian nationalist inspired vision of Russia as a Great Power. The domestic political conditions in Ukraine - the Maidan protests and the resulting regime change in Kyiv, together with the pro-Western tilt of the new Ukrainian government ,– triggered Putin into instrumentalizing the power idea of nationalism in Crimea. Crimea is a case of revitalizing and capitalizing on existing linkages, turning them into ideational leverage at a critical juncture framed as part of a nationalist narrative around "Krym nash".

In the case of Chechnya, the puzzle is to explain the shift in the ideational logics of this conflict. For Chechen leaders the operationalization and then abandonment of the nationalism power idea for the ideology of Islamic jihad can be attributed to disillusionment with the West, as well as the growing pull of Al Qaeda internationally in the 1990s. In this case also, the conflict dynamics were a structuring device on the conflict itself, as the sectarian nature of the Russo-Chechen wars strengthened the linkages and leverage of sectarian identification. The paradox in this case, is that Russia framed its conflict in Chechnya almost from the very outset as a struggle against the "Islamic threat", yet from 2001 Putin's strategy of cooption of the *Kadyrovtsy* and "Chechenization" has resulted in a thorough Islamization of Chechnya.

Some external linkages just exist as part of geography or historical legacies; others are actively built over time or deepened by conflict dynamics. But not all linkages have leverage properties. In this article we have examined two power ideas that do have such properties and can – but do not have to - be turned into leverage by political opportunities and choices. Both their activation and de-activation by pivotal internal and external actors transforms the conflict dynamics. Our argument about the causal force of ideational linkages invites future research into other conflicts to take the role of external linkages in general and the role of ideas in conflict dynamics in particular more seriously.

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