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**MAIN TRENDS OF PROCESS TRANSFORMATION OF  
NATIONAL-STATE STRUCTURE OF CHECHNYA**

A. M. Bugaev (a)\*, Sh. A. Gapurov (b), S. S. Magamadov (c)

\*Corresponding author

(a) Kh. Ibragimov Complex Institute of RAS, Staropromyslovskoye Highway, 21a, Grozny, Russia,

(b) Kh. Ibragimov Complex Institute of RAS, Staropromyslovskoye Highway, 21a, Grozny, Russia,

(c) Kh. Ibragimov Complex Institute of RAS, Staropromyslovskoye Highway, 21a, Grozny, Russia,

*Abstract*

The article analyzes the main trends of transformation in the national-state structure of Chechnya. The chronological scope of study covers the Soviet era and the early years of the political crisis of 1989-1991. The development of national statehood of the Chechen people in this period took place according to the Stalin project of the early 20s of XX century. In the USSR, the research in the field of Soviet national politics had been the focus of political parties. At the same time, their given aim at demonstrating and popularizing any achievements in this vital area as undisputed triumphal victories was rigorous. Soviet social scientists, including historians, were constantly in demand as “court” theorists of the national policy of the CPSU and its propagandists. The reconstruction of the true history of the USSR peoples was not a part of the task of the ruling party of ideological circles of the USSR. Apologetics prevailed over academic interest. Therefore, when the processes of renewal of public and state foundations began, the essence of Soviet myths was uncovered; the real problems accumulated during the era of socialist modernization (begun in 1917 by the Bolsheviks and buried by them in 1991) emerged acutely. The revolutionary restructuring of Soviet society inflicted a serious blow not only to the ideology, but also to the national-state structure of the USSR, its constituent parts (unions and autonomous republics, autonomous regions and districts) created according to Stalin’s templates.

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**Keywords:** Chechnya, Chechen people, national statehood, autonomy.



## **1. Introduction**

The Chechen people, before the establishment of Soviet power, did not have an experience in building their national statehood. In the early years of the Russian revolution, representatives of the mountain elite attempted to create state forms of self-determination for their peoples. After the October 1917 takeover, these plans had failed. The victorious Bolsheviks proposed a form of self-determination to these peoples. During the years of socialist modernization, only their formal improvement took place, having reached the highest political level – the ASSR in the mid-1930s of XX century. However, during the Great Patriotic War, the autonomy of some peoples, including the Chechen and Ingush ones, was abolished. The interrupted process was resumed after the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU. However, it was not possible to complete that process at that stage. The crisis of the early 90s of XX century completely destroyed the Stalinist foundations of national-state structure of Chechnya.

## **2. Problem Statement**

A comprehensive and objective study of the issues of nation building in Chechnya had become possible only with the beginning of the perestroika processes. However, the political crisis that led to the collapse of the USSR, as well as similar phenomena that engulfed some of its regions, particularly Chechnya, interrupted those positive cognitive processes. That is why, in modern conditions, when Chechnya became an equal subject of the Russian Federation, the analysis of the main trends of its national-state development is an urgent task of liberal arts.

## **3. Research Questions**

The subject of the study is the national-state structure of Chechnya.

## **4. Purpose of the Study**

The authors' goal and task is to reconstruct the main modernization trends of multifaceted process of building and improving the national statehood (autonomy) of Chechnya.

## **5. Research Methods**

The main methods used in this study are systemic and problem-chronological methods.

## **6. Findings**

Soviet and Russian historiography in the study of the most complex problems of nation building has accumulated an interesting experience. Back in the early 20s of XX century, when the construction of the Soviet national statehood of released peoples accelerated and their unification processes intensified, resulting in the formation of the USSR, these issues attracted the attention of academic community. (Ivanov, 1935). It should be noted that the interest was not momentary dictated by the tasks of current moment. The subsequent searches, both scientific and applied, were devoted to the analysis of saved up practical experience. The priority was to study its state legal aspects. At that time, the first steps were taken regarding its historical understanding, including regional context and mountain component (Bugaev, 1978). At that

time (in the North Caucasus) official documents were published; later on the reports and speeches of local political figures (Aliyev, 1927), their memories and a number of scientific articles and special works (Ananov, 1924; Butaev, 1921).

However, the history of the development of national statehood of individual nations, in particular the Chechen one, remained insufficiently studied. And this was despite the fact that in the process of its development (ethnogenesis) quite an interesting experience was accumulated which over time turned out to be "inconvenient" (to put it mildly) for Stalin's projects of social reorganization. After deportation in 1944, the biggest part of written and published materials was subjected to withdrawal from libraries and scientific circulation. Some of the materials were destroyed.

For a long period time, even after the historic decisions of the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU, which exposed the personality cult of Stalin and its consequences, including deportation of entire nations, the history of Chechen and Ingushetia was not investigated in the framework of serious academic projects. Therefore, until recently, the Chechen people did not have their own written history. And this despite the fact that even in XIX century, and later in different periods of XX century, serious works were published on the extensive topics. Many prominent Russian scientists, in particular I. G. Guldenshtedt, P. G. Butkov, B. Dalgat, U. Laudaev, A. A. Berger, A. V. Potto, N. F. Dubrovin, R. A. Fadeev, D. A. Milyutin and others, many of whom were not only witnesses of fateful historical events, in particular Caucasian events, but also their immediate participants had left behind a rich scientific heritage.

During the Soviet era M. Abazatov, A. G. Avtorkhanov, Sh. B. Akhmadov, Ya. Z. Akhmadov, V. B. Vinogradov, N. G. Volkova, Zh. Zh. Gakayev, Kh. A. Gakayev, Z. A-G. Goigova, N. P. Gritsenko, S. N. Dzhuguryants, S. A. Isaev, T. A. Isaeva, K. I. Efanov, L. N. Kolosov, V. P. Krikunov, E. N. Kusheva, I. R. Loov, A. Nekrich, Kh. Oshayev, I. Razgon, A-Kh. Salamov, N. A. Tavakalyan, V. I. Filkin, A. I. Khasbulatov, P. I. Yusupov (Akhamdov, 2001; Akhamdov, 2005; Akhmadov, 2006) and many others made a significant contribution to the study of the history of the Chechen people.

In the late 70s and early 80s of the past century, under the leadership of Academician A. L. Narochitsky the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> volumes of the History of the Peoples of the North Caucasus since Ancient Times ... were prepared and published; the 3<sup>rd</sup> and the 4<sup>th</sup> volumes were completed under the guidance of the corresponding member of the USSR Academy of Sciences Yu. A. Polyakov. However, they had never been published due to the USSR collapse.

At the beginning of the current – III – millennium, generalizing works on the history of the Chechen people were prepared and published (Akhmadov, 2008). In these collective works covering epoch-making events, the historical aspects of multifaceted processes of the development of national statehood (autonomy) of the Chechen people were marked. However, it can be said that the paradigm (vector) of further tasks of their comprehensive research was set.

Before the Soviet era, the Chechen people did not have a complete national experience in state building, although it had a tradition of non-hierarchical [tribal, communal – teip; toxum – interteip (union)] structure with its inherent elements of patriarchal democracy (Ilyasov, 2004). At first glance, it may even seem paradoxical that historically for a long period of time the Chechens did not have any need for formal institutions of superstructure and lived in original (pre-state) self-governing groups, i.e. tribal (blood-related) communities (teips-taipas). It is quite natural that such statement does not give any reason to believe

that the emerging ethnic group did not have a sense of purpose in transforming its self-organization in raising the status of its forms. There are also no apodictic (reliable) arguments convincingly illustrating the causal relationships between the lack of Chechen stratum or, in other words, classical social differentiation. In our opinion, the dominant factor was that, since ancient times, the Chechens recognized its constitutional principles, firstly, the rule of law of an individual, its sovereignty, and secondly, collectivism as a universal form of life support. The principle of joint responsibility for each and all, and at the same time of everyone for all was domineering one. Such codification was the basis of the custom, i.e. adat (a set of ethical rules – Abuzar Aydamirov) – the main and informal regulator of interpersonal and, to a large extent, social relations (Saidumov, 2006). The customs, as the researchers note "consolidated the most rational behaviors that have been developed for centuries, useful for the society in certain situations, passed down from generation to generation and reflected the interests of all members of society". As long as the community was self-sufficient and satisfied with its internal microworld, a special institution or mechanism of governance, especially coercion, was not required. Thus, the Chechens were people whose "... patriarchal-clan democracy flourished" (Avtorkhanov, 2003) – "pre-political consciousness". As prominent French researcher Fustel (2011) noted "among the communities ... in a certain era all the elements were in a harmonious balance. It was possible to see their nature under specific condition the idea of which was not to transfer our modern concepts to those ancient times".

The national historical experience is unique in its originality, "an inevitable specific feature" due to combination of objective and subjective factors.

The officially proclaimed vector of national-state structure of Chechnya became apparent during the period of the Russian revolutions of 1917. The liberal wing representatives of the mountain elite developed a doctrine of self-determination of mountain peoples within the framework of future new Russian statehood immediately after the February Revolution. However, after the Bolsheviks came to power, they headed for the proclamation of a sovereign state. Due to historical circumstances these projects were not implemented.

In spring of 1920, the Bolsheviks triumphed in the regions of the North Caucasus, establishing their power. From that time until the end of the Soviet era the process of building autonomy and its modernization was carried out in Chechnya.

In the early 90s, when the process of disintegration of the once mighty Soviet Union became irreversible, not only the present, but also the past of the nations that made up its common community for more than seventy years were severely tested. Their future was also at risk.

The situation was out of control in megacities. The forces became more active, irresponsible activities provoked illegal behavior of destructive elements on the periphery, especially in the national regions; "temporary workers" traditionally formed the backbone of the ruling elite.

Similar events took place in the Chechen and Ingush Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic - a multinational and multireligious autonomous republic. The situation had changed unpredictably after 19 August 1991. From that moment on, the situation in the republic was almost entirely controlled by the elements, as a result of which, the statehood (autonomy) of the Chechen and Ingush peoples began to collapse.

A comprehensive and objective study of this period is an urgent task. At the same time, many hasty conclusions and generalizations, assessments and predictions should be subjected to a serious academic

audit. It should be noted that both in the political sphere and in the scientific community the tragic events that occurred in Chechnya and Ingushetia during this period are called the “Chechen crisis”. (Brief annotated bibliography of the Chechen conflict, 2002). The authors of the article do not share this approach. At the same time, the authors proceed from the obvious fact that the crisis in Chechnya and Ingushetia was provoked and forced by the crisis of the federal and Russian statehood, the first of which almost instantly collapsed, and the second, as a result of short-sighted policy of the federal ruling elite, populist statements of its “leaders” pushed the activation of centrifugal forces, was on the verge of collapse. In that situation, Chechnya and Ingushetia, as a national-state entity, turned out to be a weak link. Its official bodies (the Supreme Council and the Council of Ministers - the Government) legitimate in all respects, therefore, having the right to take measures in the framework of the existing Constitutions that ensure law and order, under extreme conditions turned out to be ineffective, which the radical forces took the advantage of.

As a scientific problem, this topic is vast and multifaceted. Moreover, its individual aspects still have practical significance. Therefore, both practitioners and representatives of the academic environment, although sporadically, pay attention to their study. In search of an answer to complex questions, understanding the reasons for sudden radicalization of the situation in Chechnya and Ingushetia, researchers refer to an analysis of complex and controversial historical process of the formation of the Chechen people’s statehood (Schneider, 2007). Undoubtedly, without deep and comprehensive historical analysis, it is almost impossible to get well-founded answers. But, as it is seen, the drama that broke out in Chechnya and Ingushetia at the turn of the 80-90ss of XX century did not have a significant causal relationship with similar processes of historical prescription, although the incompleteness of tasks of national-state structure of the Chechen people was one of the reasons for drama.

Obviously, this summary does not exhaust the wide range of difficult issues related to these well-known events and their consequences, which are still unresolved to the present. Therefore, the milestones of self-determination of the Chechen people, the collisions, including modern ones, will be the subject of scientific debates and discussions, academic generalizations and research for a long time. At the same time, the authors of the article are not inclined to absolutize any of these problems. The authors proceed from the fact that they are relevant from the point of view, firstly, of modern state and social practice, especially in the field of regional and national politics, and secondly, of scientific search for specific historical algorithms of pre-crisis, crisis and post-crisis conditions in Chechen society. This approach is necessary for a full-scale assessment of its past, in this case, the Soviet past, whose historical cycles, including critical ones, were permanently repeated, in the words of D. Vico, “in the form of a cycle; in the for of rise and fall”. The example of this can be the history of nation building in Chechnya during the Soviet era (Bugaev, 2006).

The historiographic fate of this topic, of course, is not simple. In the Soviet era, as one may know, for researchers in this field, the paradigm was set in advance and the conclusions were to indicate that in the USSR the national question was resolved “completely and finally”. In other words, the result had to fit into the generally accepted official discourse. Consequently, the assessments of the entire process as a whole, despite the collisions (to put it mildly) that actually took place, had to fit into the same discourse (Shastitko, 2002).

So far, the Russian scientists have created a serious historiographic base, which suggests that the study of a wide range of ethnic and political problems of the history of the Chechen people, including stages

of construction of its statehood, is not a peripheral task of Russian historical science. In varying degrees, different aspects of this multifaceted and extensive topic are reflected in monographs and scientific articles of famous domestic scientists (Shatitko, 2002; Krinko, 2010, 2014), etc.

Significant events in the academic life of the Chechen Republic were scientific and scientific-practical conferences that were held in 2004 and 2005 in Moscow on the initiative of the Russian Academy of Sciences, in particular the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology named after M.M. Miklukho-Maklay and the Integrated Research Institute (Grozny), as well as the Foundation for Humanitarian Assistance of the Chechen Republic (Moscow) (Chechnya at the turn of the century, 2004). Subsequently, a number of similar events were organized by the Government of the Chechen Republic, the Academy of Sciences of the Chechen Republic, Chechen State University, Chechen State Pedagogical Institute and the Regional Public Organization Intellectual Center of the Chechen Republic (Chechnya at the turn of the century, 2004).

Pluralism of opinions and assessments, albeit ambiguous, is widely represented in the collections of articles published under the auspices of the society Memorial, as well as the Andrei Sakharov Museum and Public Center.

Currently, the researchers and creative teams are taking measures necessary for a deep analysis of empirical material, its conceptual rethinking, and expansion of search topic (Bugaev, 2008). Purposefully, the work is underway to identify new sources (Katysheva, 2006).

## 7. Conclusion

The analysis of the problem allows to draw the following conclusions: The modernization of the processes of national-state structure in Chechnya, especially since the second half of the 1920s can be represented as a hyperbolic trajectory. However, the conflict was that the essence of national statehood itself (autonomy) did not actually change, including the Chechen one, although, despite its undoubtedly formal character, overcoming various barriers, national problems were solved. Secondly, the experience of state and political life was gained and accumulated. Thirdly, there was a strengthening of the ethnic community – the Chechen people as an integral part of the multinational Russian people.

At the same time, the analysis of the indicated problems shows that the research has not yet reached the proper level. It requires a comprehensive approach to assessing the complex processes that have taken place both in the country and in its separate regions. The task of establishing the role of both objective and subjective factors that undoubtedly influenced the entire course of building and strengthening the national statehood (autonomy) of the Chechen people is topical.

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