

Governance under Polycentric Rule: Goods Provision, Dispute Resolution, and Symbolic Practices in Dagestan

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How are civilians governed after a period of violent state collapse? What implications do the relationships between state and non-state authorities have for governance? The paper addresses these questions by drawing on original survey and interview data from the North Caucasus republic of Dagestan, as well as a rich secondary literature. Despite a seemingly strong Russian state organized through vertical power, significant variation exists in who governs locally and which governance domains they regulate. This paper argues that understanding the current governance trajectory in Dagestan requires attention to the sequence between the incorporation of informal authorities and violence. I show that despite criminal and terrorist violence in the late 2000s, the overall political order in the republic has persisted because violence occurred after the institutionalization of polycentric governance (Ostrom 2005; Murtazashvili 2016) in Dagestan in the 1990s. However, the multiplicity of authorities does not necessarily result in better governance outcomes for civilians, particularly in goods provision.

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In February 2018, the Prime Minister of Dagestan, Abdusamad Gamidov, two of his deputies, and the Minister of Education were arrested. Just three months earlier, the mayor of Makhachkala, the capital city, was also arrested. The arrests are perceived as attempts by Russia to dislodge Dagestan's clans from state institutions. They've tried before. In 1998, Russian Deputy Interior Minister arrived in Dagestan with the aim of investigating corrupt politicians and disrupting the clan and criminal networks that were increasingly penetrating the state. The arrests that followed included Magomed Khachilayev, the leader of the Lak ethnic movement and Deputy of the People's Assembly along with his brother Nadir Khachilayev, the Lak State Duma deputy and the head of the Union of the Muslims of Russia. The Mayor of Kaspyisk, Ruslan Gadzhibekov, Minister of Justice, Tadzhidin Bishamov, and the head of the Tabasarnsky District, Sheihmagomed Hurmagomedov were also arrested; charges were also filed against the Head of Dagestan's Pension Fund, Sharaputadin Musayev, before he fled the country.

Yet, the 1998 purge did not dislodge the fragmented clan system, which by then had a hold on institutions for the allocation and distribution of resources. It also did not undermine the prominent role of religious authorities - followers of Sheikh Said Afandi - in dispute resolution, nor that of local authorities in land allocation. By the late 1990s, Dagestan had developed a "semipermeable membrane" (Driscoll 2012) between state and non-state elites. Many state bureaucrats maintained a firm footing on their informal basis of power, as leaders of ethnic movements, criminal entrepreneurs, or both. This horizontal arrangement is characterized by the selective incorporation of informal authorities into state institutions who could continue pursuing their private objectives as long as they did not threaten the center. The result was a state penetrated by clan networks that utilized state institutions and administrative assets to allocate resources.

At the local level, communities could utilize their ties to these clan networks to resolve conflicts and lobby for access to resources. But many lack linkages to republic-level bureaucrats. *How are civilians governed in this institutional context? What are the alternatives available to state institutions locally, when and why are they used, and with what implications for governance?*

I pursue two goals in this paper. First, I trace the formation of polycentric governance in Dagestan beginning with the collapse of Soviet institutions the 1990s. I argue that understanding Dagestan's current overall governance trajectory requires paying attention to sequence between violence and the pattern of integration. Unlike in neighboring republics, the collapse of Soviet institutions did not trigger violence in Dagestan.<sup>2</sup> As a result, the pattern of elite incorporation - the bargains struck between state and non-state authorities - became institutionalized prior to violence.

When violence did break out within the republic, it was at the criminal-terrorism nexus (Phillips 2018), most often remaining localized and fragmented in nature. Thus, the second goal of this paper is understanding the impact of violence. I show that violence, escalating in the late 2000s and peaking in 2011, was relatively clustered geographically. Due to its relatively contained and fragmented nature, it did not aggregate to significantly impact the republic-level governance trajectory, which has remained fairly stable since established in the late 1990s. At the republic level, though individuals within key positions have changed, the institutional configuration undergirding governance has not. Dagestan has retained a system of polycentric governance where centers of decision-making are independent yet overlapping (Murtazashvili 2016: 3). Nevertheless, the involvement of numerous actors has not improved governance

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<sup>2</sup> See Derluigan (2003) and Zurcher (2007) for extensive accounts on the factors that helped prevent the immediate breakdown of violence in the republic.

outcomes for civilians, resulting in them shirking their responsibilities more often than competing for residents' loyalties.

## **Methods**

I use interviews, local newspapers, and original survey data to describe and trace the development of governance in Dagestan. I collected data over nine months of fieldwork in the North Caucasus, three of which were in Dagestan. In the first part of the paper, I rely on qualitative data from interviews and accounts from local newspapers *Chernovik* and *Novoe Delo* to process trace the initial impact of state collapse on Dagestan and the reconstitution of governance. Additionally, I draw on secondary literature, particularly to capture the governance processes in the 1990s.

Since there are not systematic written records of informal governance and I am interested in comparing governance by state and non-state actors, I conducted a republic-wide survey of 1333 respondents between June and July 2018, using clustered sampling to select villages stratified according to ethnicity, lowland/highland distinctions, and exposure to violence. Within villages and cities, my local survey enumerators selected households randomly and interviewed individuals within them based on predetermined quotas that mirrored the known population.<sup>3</sup> Since many other variables like economics, terrain, and urbanization are correlated with the lowland/highland and ethnic variables according to local experts and author observations, and since data on them is not readily available, I suggest my sample is a diverse republic sample targeted to match known population estimates.

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<sup>3</sup> It is also important to note that the Census in Dagestan under-represents the urban population. Many individuals living in the cities, or even outside the republic, remain registered in their home villages. Therefore, I over-represent the urban population compared to the census such that the sample was roughly 50% urban 50% rural. I talked to local economists, academics, journalists, and government officials prior to doing so and all suggested this was the best choice to attain a more representative sample.

I use survey data to provide additional description of violence and governance. Specifically, I utilize data on both community violence and individual-level victimization to assess whether and how much violence impacted whether state or non-state authorities provide different dimensions of governance in communities, or if they are co-produced. I also take disorder seriously, allowing for the option that some services and goods may simply not be produced. In the context of a predatory state, communities may be able to organize collective action to deliver goods, services, and order but this outcome is not a natural result of effective state absence; it requires the capacity to organize non-state governance.

I analyze violence through two methods. First, I use an original dataset of violent events at village or city identified.<sup>4</sup> I used event reports from Kavkaz-Uzel to compile information about the forms and locations of violent events between 2005 and 2018. Additionally, I incorporate reports of rare events such as assassinations of administrators and informal authorities from local newspapers like Chernovik and Novoe Delo.<sup>5</sup> Though it can be problematic to draw mostly on a single source for studying violent events, most of my local contacts suggested KavkazUzel is the most accurate source of information. I ran the data by several local contacts in academia, journalism, and law to ensure its quality - the consensus was that it accurately represents patterns of violence to the best of their knowledge. While several scholars have systematically studied violence in the North Caucasus (Zhukov 2012; O'Loughlin et al 2011), their datasets stop in 2010 or before, missing the period when violence reached its peak in the republic. Thus, they are not effective for understanding the conflict in Dagestan specifically. Second, I asked questions about violence in the survey, specifically which violent events happened in respondents'

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<sup>4</sup> Unfortunately, this information is not available at the neighborhood level within cities.

<sup>5</sup> While the reporting technically starts earlier in 1996 it is scarce and irregular until 2005. Therefore, I while I include events dating to 1996, the dataset most accurately captures events from 2005.

communities and whether they impacted the individual personally. Using both of these resources allows me to capture rare events that may not show up in respondents' survey answers while triangulating the newspaper reports with perceptions of individuals' living in the communities. Given the challenge of accurately documenting violent events, I do this to ensure the quality of the data.

In the sections that follow, I first trace how the polycentric system of governance developed, beginning with Soviet collapse in the 1990s to demonstrate how local and informal elites were incorporated into the state.<sup>6</sup> Then, I describe the violence that followed - what form it took, its prevalence, and how individuals across the republic interpreted it. Finally, I examine the present-day governance arrangement to understand if violence restructured the polycentric system established in the 1990s. I examine governance multidimensionally, from traditionally studied coercion and extraction to less commonly incorporated dispute resolution and symbolic practices. This provides an overview of who controls which governance domains and sheds light on the breadth of their regulation in Dagestan as a whole. I demonstrate that, at the republic level, violence did not displace the overall pre-existing governance arrangement, though there is variation across domains of governance.

### **Clan Networks and Development of Polycentric Governance in a Shadow State**

*“Everything was decided by three or four people with massive influence. They could gather a meeting of two hundred, three hundred thousand people if they wanted - people did not ask questions - if they were needed they mobilized” -Interview 1. 2016*

*“Now, as you know, practically everyone in government, in the People's Assembly, in municipal organs, they are all people that came to power in the 1990s after the collapse of the Soviet*

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<sup>6</sup> Many of my interviewees would push me to start earlier with the Caucasian Wars. While it is true that the present governance arrangements cannot be viewed in a historical vacuum, I would assert that Soviet collapse represented a sufficiently radical break that we can begin the story there. Moreover, numerous excellent accounts of historical Dagestan exist (Gammer 1994; Ware and Kisriev 2010).

*Union. Then everyone that was tough, with broken ears and noses, became administrators and took power.” - Interview with Sagidpashsa Umahanov in Chernovik 03/22/2013*

The career trajectory of Abdusamad Gamidov, the Prime Minister whose arrest was mentioned in this paper’s opening, reveals the inner workings of Dagestan’s governance system. Abdusamad Gamidov is the brother of Gamid Gamidov, a champion wrestler and founder one of the first commercial banks in Dagestan in the 1990s. In 1996, Gamid Gamidov was appointed Finance Minister of Dagestan. After he was assassinated a few months later, Abdusamad effectively inherited his post. He also took on the informal role as head of the “Mekiginski” clan, named for the village Mekegi where the brothers were born. Several other key figures in Dagestan emerged from this clan, including the heads of two of Dagestan’s major cities, Izberbash and Kaspiysk, and a previous mayor of the capital.<sup>7</sup> Clans like Mekiginski, which gained access to power in the 1990s form the backbone of the state in Dagestan.

As Dagestan expert and senior research fellow at the Gaidar Institute in Moscow describes, since the collapse of the Soviet Union, it has largely been impossible to become a government official or a businessman in the republic without alignment with one of these clans. The clan system operates as well documented patronage systems do - when a member receives a Ministry or a government post, they employ their family and co-villagers, distributing jobs accordingly. This in turn, creates a loyalist base and ensures the head of the clan has a group ready to mobilize, sometimes with violence, if his<sup>8</sup> position or status is threatened. By the end of the 1990s, Dagestan “came to be dominated by approximately two hundred powerful families, or six to seven thousand people (on 2.5 million), who dispose of nearly 85 per cent of the local

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<sup>7</sup> Sirashudin Gamidor, Abdusamad’s brother was a Deputy in the City Council in Kaspiysk, Magomed Suleimanov was the previous head of Makhachaka, Abdulmejid Suleimanov was the head of Izberbash and cousin of the Gamidovs and Jamal Omarov was the previous head of Kaspiysk.

<sup>8</sup> In all of the cases in Dagestan known to the author, the heads of clan are male.

wealth” (Derluguian, 1999: 12). Summarizing the economic impact of the clan system in their case study of Dagestan, Ware and Kisriev (2010: 44-45) write:

This highest elite was supported by another 5-7 percent of the population who had significantly improved their financial situation. Another 20-25 percent managed, often by means of extraordinary effort, to raise their income two to five times above the living wage. Approximately, 70 percent of the population lived in deep, and deepening poverty...Even in the capital, the overwhelming majority lived in crumbling apartment blocks where electricity and running water were at best unreliable.

Beginning in 2013 with the spectacular arrest of Makhachkala’s mayor, Said Amirov - I use spectacular because the arrest truly was a spectacle with helicopters whisking Amirov away - many of the main clans’ leaders have been arrested. Others, like Gamid Gamidov, were assassinated in years prior. Yet, in this section, I show that these attempts to disrupt clans within the state through violence and coercion, has removed and replaced individuals, but not displaced broader logic undergirding governance institutions in which numerous independent authorities govern.

When the Soviet Union collapsed, Dagestan’s ethnic heterogeneity, mountainous terrain, natural resources, and low economic development all made the republic a likely case for the outbreak of violence. Moreover, several ethnic groups, like Lezgins in south Dagestan, found themselves separated by new borders from co-ethnics in neighboring states, causing them to challenge the physical integrity of the republic itself. Responding to these demands shaped the initial priorities and governance patterns of both state and non-state elites. This section compares how state and non-state elites navigated civilian demands and governed amidst the ensuing crisis. I show that state elites, focused on maintaining power and preventing large-scale violence, shirked broader governance responsibilities to civilians. Non-state elites, on the other hand,



prioritized representation and symbolic politics. Amidst institutional ambiguity, neither state or non-state elites delivered effective order, security, dispute resolution, or goods provision, though nascent institutions slowly developed. With elites focused on horizontal bargains, civilians were left to meet their collective goals as they could. Examining this initial period lays the basis for who governed and how state prior to the onset of violence.

Prior to Soviet collapse, Dagestan's elites established an informal, yet institutionalized way to balance among among the largest of the 14 ethnic groups within the state.<sup>9</sup> From 1948 onwards, Dagestan's top three positions - the first secretary of the Communist Party, chairman of the Sovmin, and chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet - were split across the three main ethnic groups - Avar, Dargin and Kumyk. Soviet collapse, not only undermined state institutions, but brought the existing power balance and groups' access to resources into question. Establishing a new framework for distributing power became the main priority.

With Moscow no longer determining who held leadership positions, Dagestan's Soviet-era leaders sought ways to remain in office. Groups previously excluded from formal power, on the other hand, including religious authorities and representatives of ethnic groups, saw an opening to renegotiate their access to the state and their groups' broader control over resources, particularly land.<sup>10</sup> Numerous theories dating to Mancur Olson's model of stationary banditry (1993; 2000) demonstrate that when groups have short time horizons their behaviors are likely to become more predatory and opportunistic (Arjona 2016; Cheng 2018). Focused on gaining or holding access to offices, elites prioritized their short-term interests and acted accordingly. Even

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<sup>9</sup> The Soviet state formally recognized 14 but many of these were composed of smaller groups joined together that speak distinct languages and have since been split creating roughly 40 ethnic groups in modern-day Dagestan.

<sup>10</sup> As in all the cases at hand, land conflicts date back to Soviet era policies which resettled groups from the highland to the lowlands and into neighboring territories. Urbanization escalated these tensions as groups considering the lowland territories historically theirs saw their rights further threatened.

those focused on longer-term policies, mostly cultural autonomy and control over land, believed that access to state offices was the best way to ensure these objectives were met.

Amidst the crisis, National Fronts, or ethnically-based movements, started forming seeing a chance to alter their power within Dagestan and renegotiate land rights. While conflicts over land had broken out during the Soviet period as well, they now took new form and scale.<sup>11</sup> Tenglik formed first, organized by the Kumyk population and led by Salav Aliev. The group mobilized around claims for land rights to the lowland territory in Dagestan and greater autonomy. National Front of Imam Shamil, the Avar movement, formed in response. A contact involved in the mobilizations described how in his words, the legendary mafioso, Gadzhi Makhachev, assumed leadership of the National Front of Imam Shamil (Interview 1 2016). Indeed, Makhachev had two prison convictions, one for rape and robbery and the other for intentional serious bodily injury, intentional minor injury and illegal weapons possession (Vatchagaev 2013).<sup>12</sup> Perceiving their resources and power threatened, other ethnic movements mobilized as well.<sup>13</sup> My interviewee described how in this environment, everyone splits according to “one of ours or not.”

The movements’ leaders became key figures in raising questions about distribution and ownership of land and economic resources, as well as both fomenting and regulating large-scale conflicts. My interviewee proceeded to describe one particularly tense situation that began over a local land conflict in Kazbekovsky district. As the conflict escalated, the Kumyk movement blocked the Baku-Rostov federal highway in October 1991, triggering a direct confrontation

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<sup>11</sup> Conflicts broke out between Chechens and Avaras in Novoluki in 1964, in Chipaev in 1976 and 1985 and in Novolak in 1989 for example (Adiev 2009: 71).

<sup>12</sup> A detailed biography of Makhachev can be accessed at: <https://jamestown.org/program/once-considered-a-rising-star-dagestans-gaji-makhachev-may-be-heading-for-a-fall-2/>

<sup>13</sup> See Adiev (2009) for a detailed local account of the land conflicts and inter-related ethnic mobilization in the 1990s and Bruce and Ware (2013) for an English-language account of the National Fronts.

between thousands of Avar and Kumyk civilians. After Chechens started joining with Kumyk side, united over similar territorial disputes they had with Avar residents of Novolak district, Avars from rural districts mobilized in mass on Makhachakala's central square. Makhachev egged on the members of the National Front of Imam Shamil, causing thousands of cars to head toward Khasavuyrt where the blockade was mobilized. The direct interjection of republic leaders, local and republic religious authorities, and Kumyk and Avar leaders with pre-existing ties diffused the situation; they were able to convince the movements' leaders that once blood is spilled, all out war would break out and they would lose control over what they started; this was the closest Dagestan came to war (Interview 1 2016). This episode demonstrates the central role of newly powerful clan leaders in controlling mass mobilization, regulating security and conflicts, and distributing resources - particularly political offices - in the early 1990s. Though seemingly representing the interests of entire ethnic groups that transcended kinship lines, as groups' leaders were incorporated into political offices, it became increasingly clear they represented much narrower clan interests, some of which crossed ethnic divides, as will be discussed below.

A parallel and intertwined battle was beginning over the republic's religious institutions. The removal of restrictions on religious practice led to widespread religious mobilization, but also triggered new divisions. Even before Soviet collapse, conflicts began over the leadership of local mosques, such as the 1989 conflicts in Buinaksk and Tarki (Ware and Kisriev 2010: 89-90). Given the stark ethnic tensions at the time, religious authorities were perceived as a potential sources of unity and dispute resolution, crossing ethnicities. And in fact, there are numerous local disputes where imams become mediators, such as in land conflicts in Kalinaul and Leninaul (Novoe Delo 03/06/1992). Yet, disputes over control of religious institutions also began

to exacerbate interethnic cleavages. In 1990, the First Congress of Muslims of Dagestan founded the Spiritual Directorate of the Muslims of Dagestan (DUMD) and elected Bagautdin Isaev, a Kumyk, as mufti. In 1992, however, a group of Avar Islamic leaders overthrew Isaev, putting Said-Akhmed Darbishgadjiiev in place instead (Ware and Kisriev 2010: 58). Kumyk and Dargin movements refused to participate or send representatives to new Committee of Alims (Novoe Delo 03/06/1992), creating their own religious institutions instead. After 1992, the Muftiat and Dagestan's formally recognized religious institutions have been dominated by Avar tariqatists, specifically followers of Said Afandi Cherkeyevsky. Murids from his Sheikh Afandi's Gumbetovsky district have dominated the top posts within the DUMD as well (Yemelianova 147).

The President of Dagestan from 1994 to 2006 and leader of the Levashi clan, Magomedali Magomedov, is widely credited with navigating both the ethnic and religious divisions to contain instability between the different groups during this tumultuous period. Recognizing the weakness of state institutions and diffuse power spread among informal leaders, "Ded," or grandfather as most Dagestan's residents refer to Magomedov, selectively intervened into the disputes to remove challengers to his rule but also to balance competing interests and demands. In the 1994 constitution, he formally institutionalized inter-ethnic balancing within the political system, accommodating the largest nationalities in the executive and legislative branches. Many of my interviewees credited Magomedov with avoiding political destabilization.

Yet, Magomedov's political maneuvering was more concerned with distributing power among key clan leaders that could mobilize masses than with resolving the social, political, and economic issues within the republic. Magomedov, and therefore the state administration, was preoccupied with establishing formal electoral institutions and preventing the outbreak of large-

scale violence. Seeking to formally guarantee representation of the republic's constituent nationalities and avoid interethnic confrontations, Magomedov pursued constitutional reform, passing a law "On Elections to the People's Assembly of Dagestan." The law designated sixty-six of the 121 single-mandate districts with multinational populations as "national electoral districts," such that candidates of a single predetermined nationality could run for office (Ware and Kisriev 2010: 66). This pushed for competition within ethnic groups rather than between them. Magomedov sought to identify the key informal leaders that could ensure the loyalty, or at least demobilization, of the groups following them. A contact deeply familiar with the processes described,

Once the National Fronts formed, their leaders started trying to transform their mobilization capacity into access to administrative positions and the economic resources. Magomedov, whose clan was in power at the time, handed out administrative offices to pacify informal leaders' demands. For example, by 1995 Gadzhi Makhachev - leader of the Avar movement - was made the head of Dagneft', the Dagestan affiliate of Russia's oil company, Rosneft. By 1998, Makhachev was the Prime Minister of Dagestan. Of course the different leaders started vying for power and primarily relied on their clans and djamaats for support. One of the only multiethnic clans was Amirov's since he was able to buy off many of the other leaders and create a strict hierarchy among them underneath himself. (Interview 62 2019).

State officials explicitly acknowledged the possibility that incorporation of informal leaders into the state could have negative consequences for governance outcomes for civilians; however, the response was to create "professional" districts to also set aside offices for candidates with higher education (Ware and Kisriev 2010: 67). Demobilization was prioritized over governance outcomes for Dagestan's residents or the potential long-term consequences.

A local scholar echoed the observation above that being a leader of an ethnic movement was insufficient to receive a government office. Instead, Magomedov identified leaders that were

willing to become part of the state bureaucracy and were willing to compromise their groups' demands (Interview 75 2019). Several Chechen and Kumyk leaders were not incorporated for this reason. When Magomedov could not directly replace a leader, he used the guise of ethnic balancing to appoint leaders to high positions in those Ministries. For example, Magomedov appointed Said Amirov as a deputy prime minister under Prime Minister Abdurazak Mirzabekov, ensuring he had someone loyal high in Mirzabekov's ranks. Said Amirov, of Dargin ethnicity like Magomedov, also headed the clan from Djangamahi, a village in the same district Magomedov's Levashi. Magomed therefore ensured that while Dargin's controlled the top political post, he prevented large-scale violence by allowing Avars to control the state-recognized religious institutions in the republic, and installed Kumyks and Lezgins - the next largest ethnic groups - to key posts in the new government.

By the end of the 1990s, state offices were distributed across the main clans, who were using their newly gained administrative power to further allocate power. By 1998, Amirov became the mayor of Makhachkala, aligning his extensive clan networks with that of Magomedov. Amirov's sons were installed in high posts in the judiciary and legislature. His brothers and nephews also received prominent positions and business contracts throughout the republic. Along the clans making headway into the capital were those controlling individual districts and cities. Avar Saidpasha Umahanov became the head of Khasavuyrt, while Kumyk Alimosaltan Alhamatov controlled the surrounding district. Sagid Murtazaliev, though away from the republic for his sports career in the 1990s, joined the ranks of clan leaders as the head of Kizlyar district in 2003 and went on to be the head of the Pension Fund. Magomed Khachilaev, transformed his position as leader of the Lak movement and his criminal connections to become a deputy in Dagestan's National Assembly. By 1995, he was appointed head of the government

of the republic's fisheries committee, gaining control of one of the three most lucrative branches of the republic's economy. In 1996, his brother Nadir Khachilaev who was also closely involved in the Lak movement and became a key figure in Dagestan's religious community, leading the Russian Union of Muslims, also received a position in the State Duma.

Few of these new government bureaucrats cut their ties to criminal networks, informal business networks, and for some armed militias. This is best exemplified by the Khachilaev brothers; in 1997 Magomed Khachilaev's paramilitary militias and police clashed in an armed standoff, prior to the brothers organizing an armed occupation of government buildings in Makhachkala a year later. That year, 1998, Kolesnikov arrived to begin the first round of arrests attempting to break up the clan networks that had penetrated the state, beginning with Magomed Khachilaev. However, as the opening quote describes by that point in time the shadow state had become institutionalized; the removal of individuals would not alter the governance system.

### **Governance outcomes for civilians**

How did the incorporation of clans and creation of a shadow state impact governance outcomes? Remembering the period, interviewees consistently emphasize that the state could not provide a basic level of security or goods. Though clan leaders - now republic or district elites - occasionally delivered for the broader population, providing a sports complex or paving a road, these were inconsistent and unsustainable. As one interviewee described of a district head,

it was a typical scheme, he went around all the Kumyk villages and built sports complexes and said everyone will train now. It raised the community pride but they [him and the city mayor] were constantly competing and trying to undermine each other. They realized they had to distribute the territories" (Interviews 34 2017).

That happened throughout the republic as the territories were divided among the clans, often establishing small dynasties. Derbent, for example, the biggest city in the South of

Dagestan became firmly rooted in the hands of the Kurbanov family, which ruled it since Soviet times and helped navigate relations with neighboring Azerbaijan. Clans, like Kurbanov's, that gained or maintained access to republic level resources provided symbolic shows of support through big acts like the aforementioned sports complexes. Yet, numerous districts like Tsuntintsky and Tsumadinsky remained without paved roads and others remained without stable electricity (Aduiev 2009: 60-61).

The lack of effective goods provision was not just in mountain districts. On the lowlands in multi-ethnic districts, distribution of resources stirred further ethnic tensions. For example, within Karabudakhent district, this led to residents of Gubden seeking to break away from the district because the village remained without consistent drinking water, gas, electricity, a kindergarten that could fit its children and other necessary infrastructure. The residents argued this was because they did not have someone actively lobbying their needs with the administration, which was the way to solve problems around goods provision (Novoe Delo 04/06/2007). Their mobilization led to tensions with a neighboring village, causing republic administrators, elders, and religious authorities, along with OMON and district police to be brought in to resolve the conflict (Memorial 06/19/2009).<sup>14</sup> This incidence is not unique.

State provision of social services, an expectation leftover from the Soviet system, generally decreased. In an April 1992 interview, the Minister of Healthcare stated there is not funding to pay for anything beyond the minimum salaries for healthcare workers and treatment of emergency patients - the state can no longer afford to provide a minimum level of care for free (Novoe Delo 04/03/1992). By August, healthcare workers in Kaspysk went on strike after not being paid a salary for three months Novoe Delo

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<sup>14</sup> <http://old.memo.ru/hr/hotpoints/caucas1/msg/2009/06/m182482.htm>



08/14/1992). Even when salaries were paid, overall in Dagestan they were 2.9 lower than the overall Russian average (Novoe Delo 01/29/1993). The state's economic incapacity was not limited to salaries but extended to public goods. By October 1993, four or five transport routes had to be cancelled within the capital due to the poor quality of roads; though there was finally some funding allocated for infrastructure it was insufficient to cover costs, leaving about half the roads in poor condition (Novoe Delo 10/15/1993). Further, as the Minister of Transport pointed out, the crisis is presenting itself not just in the lack of goods but in an inability to track statistics on what is coming in and out of the republic (Novoe Delo 06/18/1993), a basic state function that none of the non-state actors sought to or could fill.

Some of the economic issues stemmed from lack of funds and noncompliance with laws, but problems were also caused by corruption and embezzlement. While all of Russia was going through a period of economic crisis, a point state officials emphasized to explain their ineffectiveness,<sup>15</sup> criminality and state bureaucrat's shirking their responsibility further undermined delivery of goods and services in Dagestan. In an August 10, 1993 interview, the head of the MVD in charge of economic crime stated that just the cases filed with the police show 30 million in theft (Novoe Delo 08/10/1993). Gubden exemplifies how resources, even when distributed, were handled. A villager described how nearly 200m roubles (£2.08M) destined to build a reservoir dam and sewage treatment plants disappeared,

We wrote Putin a letter at the time of the presidential election, asking for inclusion in the national Clean Water project,' farm worker Magomed Aliyev tells me. 'And most of us villagers – 96%, I think – gave him their vote. Putin allocated 183m roubles (£1.9M) to our village. We built the dam, and accounted for the grant. But then it sank by about half a metre! How could they have built it

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<sup>15</sup> Interview with Finance Minister, Novoe Delo 01/17/1992.

so that it couldn't take the pressure of the water? They obviously decided to cut corners. So the concrete cracked and the water seeped away. And there used to be a river there that was our main source of water.<sup>16</sup>

By the time any money made it to the village level, each level preceding it had taken a cut. Pensions, one of the main sources of funding from the federal center, also became a central source of corruption as state employees pocketed the money (Novoe Delo 06/17/1994). The Chair of the Economics Department at Dagestan Government University at the time published an opinion piece in Novoe Delo (03/12/1993) to explain what he perceived to be the cause of economic hardship. He wrote,

bandits and rackets are constantly stealing cattle and sheep from regular citizens and the police are not doing anything. Everyone knows who the bandits are but the police do nothing - just like previously most people don't care about regular citizens who are barely getting by.

The Chair highlighted not just the criminality but the unwillingness of police to interfere in economic crimes. In a 1993 interview, Kurban Bulatov, a member of the justice department's division in charge of taxes, stated that most businesses in the capital and republic more broadly do not pay taxes and are not registered. Despite the creation of a "tax police," numerous businesses operate without registration or paying taxes, despite new laws that a business owner has to show that they pay taxes prior to opening a bank account. Further, there are parts of the capital where tax inspections are not done at all (Novoe Delo 11/12/1993). Interviews suggest that while tax inspections were not done sometimes, other times businessmen simply paid the inspector a smaller amount than

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<sup>16</sup> <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/odr/gubden-dagestan-where-radicals-police-themselves/> Open Democracy 11/06/2015.

owed in taxes to avoid receiving a fine and registration. The shadow state not only meant corruption at the top but created a log that penetrated through the institutional ranks.

The state shirking its responsibility for goods provision extended to other spheres. State elites were hesitant to resolve the numerous land disputes bubbling to the surface as well. For example, in 1994, roughly 200 residents of Kostek organized a protest and delivered 2000 signatures to republic administrators seeking a resolution to their conflict with neighboring New Kostek over the division of land. At that point the conflict had been dragging on for two years without resolution and threatened to evolve into a broader ethnic conflict between Dargin and Kumyk groups. Numerous similar conflicts existed throughout the republic. Yet, for fear of making decisions that could anger either group, administrators chose to do nothing, passing the buck. Not only did they ignore conflicts between villages and over large tracts of land, they also allowed land to be sold in Makhachkala without any control such that numerous individuals commonly had documents to the same property. While individuals and communities clearly identified resolving property disputes as the responsibility of state administrators, evident by their repeated appeals for state officials to resolve these issues, state officials undermined their own authority by foregoing the control designated to them.

One interviewee, in the “intelligentsia” camp at the time described who ended up in charge of decision-making in the 90s: “we had read Dostoevsky but we did not have anything other than knowledge while those that has sat in prison had brute strength, which was the biggest resource to solve problems” (Interview 57 2017). Average citizens could not compete with the clans, and now state-supported, militias. Residents repeatedly called on the government to take control of the security situation. In 1993, *Novoe Delo* journalists wrote, "Over the last several

years there have been over 50 terrorist attacks on significant actors in the republic and not a single one has been uncovered" (Novoe Delo 03/09/1993). People with money turned to private security firms, which operated with approval from security forces (Novoe Delo 03/12/1993). This further fragmented security institutions and highlighted the state's inability to provide security as had come to be expected.

State ineffectiveness and fragmentation opened an opportunity for non-state authorities to gain legitimacy by filling state functions. Numerous scholarly and empirical accounts suggest that when state institutions fail, civilians develop alternate ways to govern and solve collective problems (Bellagamba and Klute 2008; Menkhaus 2007; Raeymaekers et al 2008; Scott 2010; Cheng 2018). The low bar for governance set by state bureaucrats meant that an actor capable of providing a minimum level of security, goods, or dispute resolution would likely deliver more effective governance.

Civilians sought to find ways to organize themselves and solve problems collectively outside ineffective state institutions. Though as mentioned, there were major challenges with basic infrastructure, the first priority for many residents in collecting community funds was for mosque construction. As one man described, after the fall of the Soviet Union ethnic movements dominated the political scene in Dagestan but there was a parallel religious process going on. When they started building thousands of mosques and gained the chance to take hajj people did not hold back anything. They sold their cows, gave away everything just to build the community mosque (Interview 2 2016). Communities raised funds not only for mosques but also madrassas, Islamic education centers. As all my interviewees pointed out, this is not obligatory and people give what they can, though social pressures surely play a role. How full funding for

mosques is raised remains opaque, even for residents, sometimes remaining in the hands of the local imam, sometimes being handed over to the DUMD (Interview 79 2019). By 1998, there were 1,670 registered mosques in Dagestan, 9 Islamic universities, 25 madrassas, and 670 maktabas (Ware and Kisriev 2010: 90). Yet, given the economic crisis and corruption, which diverted money into elites' hands, average residents even in areas that had a strong collective action capacity could not substitute for the state and provide goods broadly. Estimates suggest that "the majority, 71 percent of Dagestan's population, lived with an income under subsistence level in 1998" (Hunter 2004: 99-100). Thus, civilians simply went without many public goods like new schools and paved roads.

While limited in their economic resources, community djamaats found it easier to substitute for the state to organize security. By May 1994, groups in Khasavuyrt, Babaurt, Kazbek, Novolak, Kizilurt, Kizlyar, Tarumovsk, and Nogay districts and in the cities of Khasavurt and Kizilyar sought permission from the Council of Ministers to create armed committees to secure order, fight crime, protect civilians, and their property from criminal border gangs (Novoe Delo 05/20/1994). These were typically organized locally through informal security rotations within their villages. When large scale conflicts occurred, such as the 1998 invasion from Chechnya, these groups also mobilized as self-defense units. However, they were rarely permanent organizations. Some of the larger militias had ties with major clan leaders, such as the militia in Novolak that was directly linked to the Khachilayev brothers. Each of the clan leaders in the 1990s could mobilize three to four thousand young armed men when needed (Interview 1 2016). For most civilians, however, state inability to provide security, and clan selective provision of security, intensified disorder.

Religious authorities came to play a particularly prominent role in dispute resolution both openly and behind the scenes. Their role was not only in mediating conflicts. For example, in one specific land conflict, it was the local imam that told the residents the Quran says each nation has a right to their own land, which in turn escalated the land conflict (Interview 43 2017). As state institutions and courts became weak and corrupt, religious authorities came to offer an alternative venue for dispute resolution. Though a full study of the role of religion and legal pluralism is beyond this study, more than the other governance domains, non-state authorities substituted for the state in dispute resolution. There was regional variation however, with religious authorities less prominent in Southern Dagestan and more closer to Chechnya in Khasavuyrt, Kazbekovsky, Buynaksky, and Untsukul'sky districts and in Dargin regions (Interview 2 2016). When the DUMD Sufi leadership started to ally with corrupt state institutions, the appeal of Salafism intensified, especially among youth who had opportunities to study in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Syria.

Led by Bagautdin Kebedov, the radical religious community critiqued both Sufi and moderate Salafi believers for deviations from the Quran (ibid. 99-100). Clashes between the groups often occurred over how to pray, burial customs, and symbolic practices such as whether monuments to Imam Shamil could be erected (Novoe Delo 09/27/1991). In May 1998, a few villages within Buynaksk district - Karamakhi, Chabanmakhi, and Kadar - declared themselves autonomous from Dagestan under shari'a. In these and several other communities Salafism took on more extremist elements, calling for a change in the political system, while also offering an organized, and often well-armed source of protection from criminals and corrupt police for its

members (Ware and Kisriev 2010: 95). For months the state took a stance of non-interference until the mufti was murdered in August. On September 1, after a meeting between the villages' representatives and republic leadership, the state agreed to allow the village leadership to enforce order in their territory as long as the villages lived according to the constitution and cooperated with the restoration of order (ibid: 108-109).

Over the next two years, the authority of the government increasingly weakened while that of the Islamic Djamaat increased, particularly in Avar villages near Chechnya and in the mountains (ibid 109). In a survey conducted by Robert Bruce Ware and Enver Kisriev in 2003, the scholars found that those in cities, women, older people, and those belonging to smaller ethnic groups in Dagestan's south were more likely to view "Wahhabism," what became the state's term for non-traditional Islam, as extremism. By 1999, the Dagestan's People's Assembly passed a law banning Wahhabism. Though the timing reflected an increase in perceived threat of extremist religious ideology, it was also a reflection of pressure from the DUMD, which used the law to expand their control over religious affairs and religious education in the republic (Gammer 2005:842-843). The DUMD became a key ally in fighting religious extremism for the state, a discourse increasingly dominating republic and federal statements with the escalating war in Chechnya. The alliance between state and Sufi religious authorities and official recognition of DUMD nevertheless left the religious organization with great autonomy as a "republican religious organization" that would cooperate, but remain independent from the state. Moreover, many religious authorities continued to operate outside DUMD hierarchies. Estimates suggest that in 2003, out of more than 2000 mosques in Dagestan and only half were registered with the state; out of the 17 Islamic universities, only 8

were registered and certified. (Chernovik 10/02/2003). Outside of the city centers, in many villages, it was religious authorities that remained the centers of power rather than the administration.

Despite these prominent splits within Dagestan's religious communities and state wavering for how to address them, religious authorities remained an important source of dispute resolution in the republic. When asked to evaluate institutions in Ware and Kisriev's survey, religious institutions ranked higher than all state institutions (ibid. 132-133). Therefore, recognizing the DUMD benefited state elites. Nevertheless, when asked about their identification, most respondents chose Dagestan and Russia with only 14.5 percent choosing ethnic group and 10.5 percent choosing religion (130). This was echoed in their question about the guiding principles for a Dagestan state - with the exception of Chechens, an Islamic state received less than 15 percent in all other ethnic groups. These findings suggest that while religious institutions became prominent in post-Soviet Dagestan, it was not at the expense of identification with the Russian state or an overall desire to live outside its legal institutions. Instead, many residents wanted to function better. A report prepared for the Kremlin in 2005 showed that 65 percent of the population of Dagestan thought the courts worked poorly and 63 percent viewed the activities of law enforcement negatively.<sup>17</sup> Dispute resolution was fragmented within the republic with residents seeking out help across forums to resolve ongoing conflicts.

Concerned primarily with the material aspects of governance - though focused on their private interests - state and non-state authorities had little interest in controlling the symbolic practice of Dagestan's residents. Nevertheless, the power struggles over

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<sup>17</sup> <https://kopomko.com/spravka-ob-obstanovke-v-respublike-dagestan-i-merah-po-eyo-stabilizatsii-polnyiy-tekst-2005-g/>



representation in offices also extended to occasional struggles over control over public spaces. For example, questions arose involving religious elites with a newly public role as to whether monuments, even to revered authorities like Imam Shamil, were permitted (Novoe Delo 09/27/1991). Nevertheless, state actors did not seek to maintain control over symbolic decision-making as they had in the Soviet period, turning down projects to put up new monuments (Novoe Delo 11/07/1991). Competition between different groups, particularly ethnic groups, for state symbols prevented decisions at other times, such as when discussions over a new state hymn began (Novoe Delo 12/2/1994). The state's lack of interest in controlling symbolic politics and competition among different groups resulted in most decisions taking place locally within communities.

Thus, by the early 2000s, republic elites in Dagestan, composed largely of clan leaders, found themselves allied with Sufi religious leaders to establish control over the republic. The 1990s were a period of political struggle over control of the republic institutions. Magomedali Magomedov, himself leader of a major clan, managed the contentious period by selectively incorporating informal leaders into state institutions, prioritizing short-term stability over effective goods provision, dispute resolution, or security. However, authorities retained vast autonomy in this arrangement, some continuing to operate outside the state and others retaining one foot in the informal realm. Many key issues, like land disputes, were left unsettled. The competition between clans and religious authorities was not entirely peaceful, as the next section will make clear. Nevertheless, I argue, violence in Dagestan, mostly exacerbated existing political competition without overturning the polycentric governance system with numerous independent sources of authority, institutionalized by the early 2000s. The governance

institutions set up have remained incredibly stable, outlasting the violence and the attempts to dismantle clan systems that followed.

### **Violence in Dagestan: Localized Violence at the Criminal-Terrorism Nexus**

Dagestan is often contrasted with Chechnya and Ingushetia as a case that avoided violence (Derlugiain 1999; Zurcher 2007). Its ability to avoid large-scale violence is largely credited to the political balancing described above (Derlugiain 1999; Kisriev 2003; Zurcher 2007; Ware and Kisriev 2010). Yet, the fact Dagestan did not join Chechnya's attempts at secession does not mean it escaped violence entirely. Instead, the outbreak of violence in Dagestan occurred after the institutionalization of polycentric governance. To understand the organization and nature of violence, I use two strategies. First, I composed a dataset of violent events using KavkazUzel reporting between 2005 and 2018.<sup>18</sup> Second, I use survey responses on civilians' perceptions of violence in the republic. The data show that when violence did break out it was localized, mostly criminal violence, which the state responded to with more localized counterinsurgency sweeps. Even when violence escalated, it was geographically concentrated. While violence eliminated numerous *authorities*, I show that it did not restructure republic-level governance *institutions*. Polycentric governance persisted.

Violence in Dagestan has been classified as spillover from neighboring Chechnya (O'Loughlin et al 2012), a mixture of "nationalist" and "Islamist" violence (Toft and Zhukov 2014), and "street warfare with 'jihadi violence'" (International Crisis Group 2008). While each of these captures parts of the dynamics, I suggest the discrepancies are

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<sup>18</sup> The data extends back to 1996 but there are only a few observations in each of the following years. The data becomes reliable beginning in 2005 so I focus on this time period and use qualitative descriptions for the previous years. Given that existing accounts suggest violence in Dagestan did not peak until the late 2000s, this should not create significant data reliability concerns.

indicative that the case is best understood as a series of *localized armed conflicts*. The motivations for violence vary based on the local power struggles and grievances, creating enclaves of local, mostly criminal violence, rather than aggregating to a cohesive, republic-wide conflict. Violence in Dagestan, more than Chechnya or Ingushetia, is best understood as “politics by other means,” (Clausewitz 1918). Violence was the extension of elites’ fight for power, breaking out when, finding themselves unable to remove their competitors through existing political institutions, elites instead sought to eliminate each other through violence.

Existing scholarship has convincingly established that even during conflicts with explicit macro cleavages, the public objectives of armed groups seldom match onto how and why violence is used on the ground, which reflects more parochial objectives (Scott 1979; Kalyvas 2006). In Dagestan, it was not just the motivations driving the actors, but organization of violence itself that was primarily localized, concerned with splitting power and settling conflicts. According official data, there were eighty-six terrorist acts and other crimes committed against representatives of power in Dagestan between 1990 and June 2001 (Kisriev 2003: 110), resulting in 160 individuals killed and 300 injured (Novoe Delo 05/22/2001). Said Amirov, himself the target of numerous assassination attempts, described the “criminality and terrorism” in a 1994 interview as the result of a battle between old and new elites, which often took on an ethnic or clan nature (Novoe Delo 01/14/1994).<sup>19</sup> Several cases support Amirov’s interpretation. For example, in 2003

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<sup>19</sup> By 1994, Novoe Delo published that the republic had over fifty terrorist attacks, but many targeted “visible representatives of government.” Yet, the newspaper went on to point out two key points. First, it was not uncommon for even a simple car accident to escalate to an ethnic conflict at the time, suggesting that much of the violence was driven by parochial concerns. My interviews confirm this. Second, the story went on to say that “given that all of the credit and financing coming into Dagestan is getting distributed between the officials with billions going to

the man sentenced for killing the head of Kaiytagskiy district stated in his testimony that the cause of the murder was that the administrator did not support the assassin's father in the previous election (Chernovik 10/30/2003).

Despite the underlying private and criminal patterns of violence, groups often instrumentally utilized ethnic and religious discourse, exacerbating those cleavages. As a result, violence, relatively contained within clan networks in the 1990s, increasingly drew in regular civilians. Partially driven by spillover from Chechnya, the expansion of local crime networks and tension between religious communities increased regular civilians' exposure to violence. By 2003, non-state violence increasingly targeted security officers, religious authorities, and civilians. State agents responded with village or district-level counterinsurgency sweeps. This escalated to what many scholars term an "Islamic insurgency" (Ware and Kisriev 2010; O'Loughlin et al 2011; Toft and Zhukov 2015; Zhukov 2012; Bakke et al 2014; Souleimanov and Aliyev 2015; Ratelle and Souleimanov 2017).

The intertwined and evolving nature of violence makes a clear classification of the conflict challenging, but not impossible. For example, the targeting of stores selling alcohol is often used to justify the coding of Dagestan as a religious conflict (see Malashenko 2014 for example). While religious motivations likely drove some of the actors, local journalists and those closely familiar with the groups operating in the republic consistently and confidently argue that many of the store owners were victims because they refused to cooperate with extortion rackets rather than their violation of

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businesses that don't exist there is probably a good chance some of these murders are a result of disagreements regarding credit and money" (Novoe Delo 03/25/1994). Again, many administrators seem not to have been targeted for their public role but because of private conflicts over resources.

religious norms. Specifically, an owner would receive a flash drive with a sum to be paid and the store was blown up if they did not cooperate. Moreover, it was not just stores selling alcohol that were targeted. As sports figure turned politician Buvaisir Sutayev explained in 2012, “Now we are having a boom of flash drives and SMS from terrorists - they send them to everyone in a row, pay or have an explosion, be killed...my cousin’s husband received one too, turned out it was a person that lived across the street from them” (Chernovik 09/11/2012). These were criminals demanding pay for protection rather than devout believers offended by the sale of alcohol. This problematizes the religious macro-cleavage of the conflict.

Moreover, even after violence peaked by 2011, it was geographically concentrated. Four cities account for 48.31% of the violence in the republic. In fact, violence from terrorism to assassinations of bureaucrats, counterinsurgency sweeps, security agent assassinations, and shootings was concentrated in the capital Makhachkala and Khasavurt, the city on the border with Chechnya. Outside the cities when violence did break out it was also mostly concentrated in specific villages. Even where conflict was explicitly based on religion, such as in Karamahi or Kadar, non-state mobilization and state counterinsurgency responses were focused on the village. As a police officer stationed in Karamahi after the 1999 attack there described, he did not even know the village existed prior to his assignment, highlighting the relatively contained organization of violence (Chernovik 10/16/2003). Most of the groups were named for the village where they organized, like Gimriskaya (Gimry), Novosaitlinskaya (Novosaitli), Gunibskiy (Gunib), Sogratlinksaya, (Sogratl), Buinakskaya (Buinaksk) and others. Many of my survey enumerators confirmed this sentiment - they were not aware of much of the

violence outside the Makhachkala and Khasavuyrt. Violence was not simply a spillover of religious, separatist conflict from Chechnya but commonly driven by local grievances, opportunities, and economic profit.

The case of Dagestan is thus best understood as being at the “criminal-terrorism nexus,” where violent groups are not “terrorist organizations” as typically defined, but “use tactics that have a great deal in common with more politically motivated actors” (Phillips 2018: 47). Similar to cases like Mexico, this included the use of terrorism and political assassinations (ibid). Local state administrators often colluded with the criminal groups to receive economic kickbacks or use the groups for their own political purposes or to settle scores, while others ignored the violence as they did many of the republic’s other issues (Interview 64 2018; Interview 86 2019).<sup>20</sup> Though much of the violence, therefore, targeted security officers and state officials, the tactics, such as explosions and shootings, impacted regular civilians, as did the counterinsurgency operations with which the state responded by mid and late 2000s.

The existence of numerous uncoordinated security institutions led to a bloated but ineffective security sector, unable to address the violence even when there were attempts

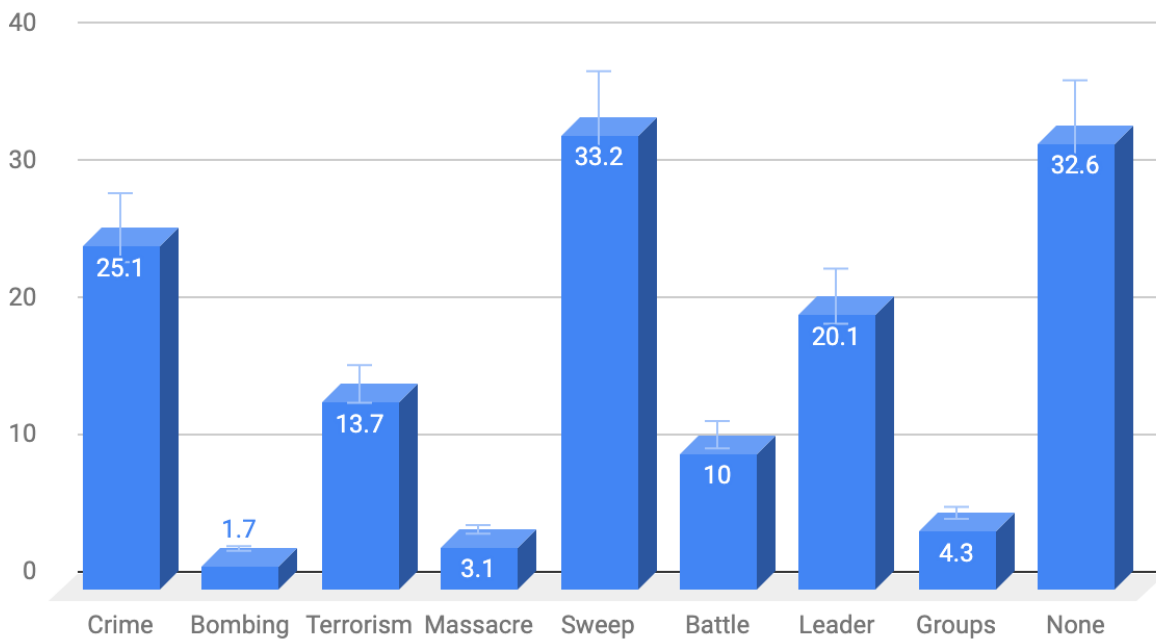
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<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, security forces had to demonstrate that they are working, resulting in ineffective policies such as the registration of roughly 40,000 individuals on the “profuchet” or list of individuals suspected of having ties with terrorism or religious extremism. Often, if an individual from a village was in charge of one of the bandit formations, the entire village will be placed on the list. For example, Novosaitli recently became famous for several of its young men going to fight in Syria. Yet, previously, one of the main figures responsible for terrorism against police officers within the republic came from Novosaitli. Though he lived in the capital, as two different respondents described, the state’s response was to harass and monitor all two and half thousand of the village residents and destroy all they had built as a community (Interview 45 2017; Interview 68 2019). Both emphasized that this was previously one of the most cohesive communities in the republic, laying their own roads and solving all their problems jointly, mostly through the mosque. This story, however, highlights the challenge of categorizing the conflict according to any single macro-cleavage.

to do so (Kozak 2005). At times this stemmed from the direct involvement of police in the “insurgent networks,” evident in cases like the arrest of Magomed Gajimagomedov and Hajimurat Gajiev for the murder of the imam in the village of Gotsatl; the former had once been a police captain, while Gajiev was the son of the republic’s prosecutor general, had a law degree and was employed in the prosecutor general’s office (Jamestown Foundation 2016).

The Kavkaz Uzel data suggested the most common forms of violence were shootings, followed by explosions, counterterrorism operations, and assassinations of security personnel. To corroborate the findings, I also asked questions about violence in my 2018 survey. By design, the survey over-represents targeting of informal authorities to capture these rare events. Nevertheless, individuals’ survey responses provide an idea of the prevalence of violence throughout Dagestan and its form. Individuals were first asked which form of violence occurred in their community.

### Community-Level Violence



Nearly 70 percent of respondents say that their community did experience some form of violence, with counterinsurgency sweeps being the most prevalent and crime (which the survey specified to be crime such as robbery, burglary, assaults, or extortion) being the second most common. This suggests that for most people, the state is actually the main source of violence they experience. However, the impact of different forms of community-level violence may differ. To understand this, I asked individuals follow-up questions about how the different forms of violence impacted their lives.<sup>21</sup> Looking at the most common form of violence, counterinsurgency sweeps, 55.3% of respondents that said it happened in their communities, said it did not impact them personally, 37.3% said they witnessed it but were not affected otherwise, and 4.8% said they experienced physical or mental injuries. For those that had crime in their community, again over half (53.0%) said it did not impact them, 21.9% said they witnessed it but were not otherwise impacted, 27.9% experienced loss of belongings as a result. The impact of having an authority figure killed in the community was reported to be even less (70% said no impact), whereas 50% of those that had terrorism in their community said it had no impact, 26.9% witnessed it, 12.8% report having physical or mental injuries as a result

The categories selected, though done after conducting roughly 70 interviews and reading local newspapers, may not fully capture the impact of violence, nevertheless. To see how people understood the impact of violence themselves, I asked them to assess

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<sup>21</sup> If respondents selected that a form of violence happened in their community, they were asked a follow-up about how it impacted them personally, checking all that apply from the following list: it did not, witnessed it, theft or loss of personal belongings, destruction of property, destruction of work or residence, threatened with violence or death, kidnapping or arbitrary detainment, injuries that resulted in physical disability for themselves or a family member, forced displacement within the republic, forced displacement beyond the republic, experienced physical or mental injuries, death or disappearance of close family member.



how much violence in had impacted their life overall. The responses are shown in the table below.

**How much did violence after the collapse of the Soviet Union impact your life?**

Not at all	54.6%
Somewhat	27.9%
Moderately	14.3%
Significantly	3.2%
Refuse to answer	5.85%

Together the data suggest that while Dagestan was commonly described as one of the most dangerous places in the world in the late 2000s, its residents do not view it this way. The categorization overstates the republic-wide violence, instead likely drawing upon the violence occurring in Makhachkala, Khasavuyrt, and select villages. Since those villages - heavily surveilled and inaccessible to most researchers - were not included in the survey, the overall impact may be more severe than presented above. Moreover, “More than half of the ...terrorist attacks [in 2004] were aimed against high-ranking officials, one-third of attacks targeted deputies of various levels and law enforcement officials, while some other attacks were staged against servicemen and their family members” (Jamestown Foundation 2004). Nevertheless, it is incorrect to draw republic-wide conclusions about these select locations, as my local contacts repeatedly reminded me.

I do not seek to minimize the uncertainty and trauma this violence had on Dagestan’s residents. Several of the events, like the 2002 explosion at a parade in Kaspiysk where over a dozen children were killed had particular resonance among the

population and had a powerful symbolic impact. Moreover, attacks on police were so bad in the late 2000s that police officers refused to go outside in uniform. The deaths of several Islamic sheikhs, specifically Sirazhudin Khurikskiy in 2011 and Said Afandi Chirkeiskiy in 2012, also had a powerful impact on the republic's religious communities. Nevertheless, as I am to show in the next section, since violence was too local and happened after the institutionalization of polycentric governance, it did not reshape republic-wide governance.

### **Post-Violence Governance: Continuation of Polycentric Governance**

Prior to the outbreak of violence and its peak in 2011, authority in Dagestan was distributed across numerous actors, ranging from republic-level clan elites - operating as state administrators - to community djamaats who sought to establish social order locally and religious authorities, some of whom aligned with state bureaucrats but remained autonomous to them. Looking across dimensions of governance showed that the state primarily provided goods - though poorly, selectively, and through informal networks, while businessmen and communities filled in where they could, especially in construction of religious infrastructure. Dispute resolution was fragmented between religious authorities and state administrators, who were viewed as corrupt and inefficient but still sought out by a significant proportion of the population to resolve land conflicts and provide security given that this was perceived to be the state's role. Symbolic authority remained fragmented as religious and clan leaders contested who would dominate not just the material rewards of access to state resources but the ability to reshape public spaces and set norms of social order. Nevertheless, regulation of symbolic institutions and spaces was of minimal concern to state bureaucrats when compared to extracting

resources and holding on to power. Did violence reshape the polycentric governance arrangement and result in different governance outcomes for civilians?

Given that numerous of the clan leaders were just arrested in the previous year, many of them outlasted violence, which became relatively scarce by 2014. At this point, most of the powerful clans that came to power in the 1990s remained in office. For example, Magomedali Magomedov who left office in 2010, was shortly replaced by a different clan before his son became president in 2013. Several major clan leaders remain in power themselves like Sagidpasha Umahanov, who moved from Mayor of Khasavuyrt to Minister of Transportation, Energy, and Communication. Even with several major individuals removed or killed, authority within the state remains fragmented across clan networks. Further, the DUMD remains controlled by followers of Said Afandi and mosques, including within Makhachkala, continue to operate outside its authority entirely. In 2016, a muftiat-backed candidate directly opposed republic-elites, running for public office against them. The Muftiat perceived Avar favoritism, however, has brought it under criticism, particularly from the younger generations. As one interviewee described, the battle within the republic's religious organizations is often as fierce as in politics because influence, money, and status are similarly at stake (Interview 2 2016). Though most of the ethnic movements have demobilized or lost their authority, Kumyk's Tenglik remains active, continuing to lobby for control over the lowlands. Many of the property disputes in the 1990s, like that between Kostek and New Kostek, remain unresolved, even if temporarily subdued. Several oligarchs, largely Suleyman Kerimov and the brothers Ziyavudin and Magomed Magomedov, continue to influence decision-making at the republic-level despite residing in Moscow.

Given that authority remains organized in a similar polycentric manner, have the governance outcomes for residents changed? In a 2007 interview, Sheikh Sirashudin Hiruiskiyy Israilov, one of the prominent religious authorities in southern Dagestan described how he viewed the relationship between religious and state authorities. He said, “Everything should only be decided together. In every village, the imam and head of the administration should raise questions about mosques, clinics, schools, water- they need to start working. When they run out of resources they can appeal to the district and the republic. Administrators should provide funds and we should help” (Chernovik, 09/21/2007). In his account, governance should be harmoniously co-produced with responsibilities shared among multiple autonomous state and non-state authorities. Yet, this is far from always the case. While state and non-state authorities do cooperate occasionally, mostly at the local level within villages, state authorities often continue to shirk their responsibilities. Two quotes below best summarize the continued lack of state control across domains like security and dispute resolution.

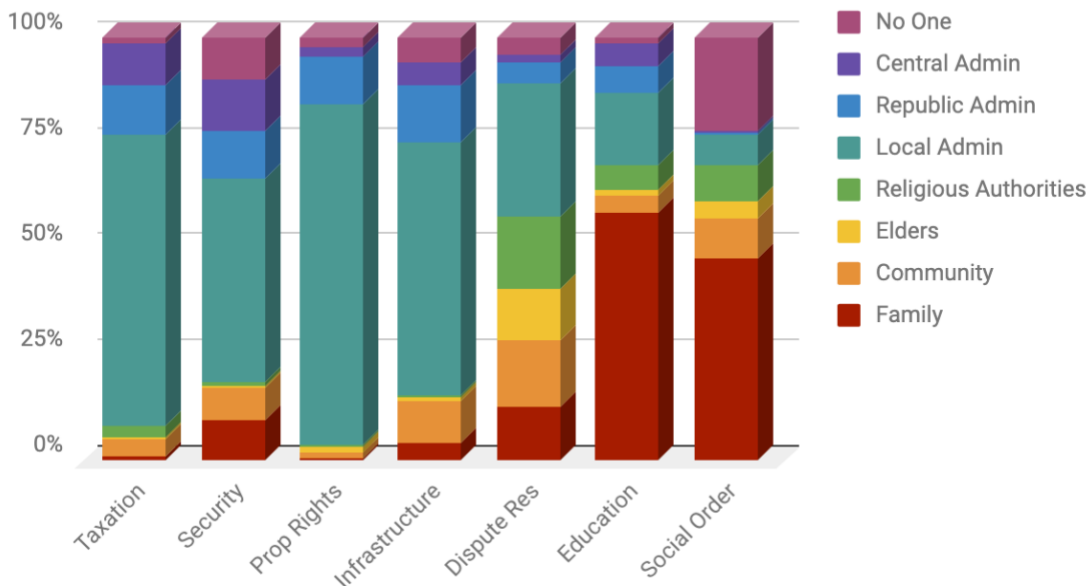
We organized village patrols here in the late 2000s and created a post at the village entrance where a young man would be overnight, controlling who was coming in and out of the village after 10PM. The community started a small fund to pay him, with approval of the administration. But of course we shouldn't have to do this. We should have an officer here that maintains security and we should know who he is in case something happens. There is supposed to be an uchastkoviy [officer] here but we have never seen him. There is a joint federal and republic [security] post a couple kilometers away but nothing in the village. So we created this group. - Interview 17 2018.

The community has always been very close-knit and has operated through reliance on local leaders to solve issues. The state has never been a serious contender for authority in comparison. It doesn't matter what the courts say or what state officials say. People will always listen to the informal authority, now it is someone in Leninkent. It doesn't matter that they are no longer living there,

anyone from the village will still go to this person and listen to them - the thought of doing otherwise is impossible to imagine. -Interview 7 2018.

These two statements highlight that state authority in the republic appears tenuous, despite Moscow’s recentralization policies and strengthening of Russia’s overall state capacity. To assess governance across the republic, I turn to the survey data. Though this captures individuals’ perceptions of governance, it allows us to see beyond fraudulent state-produced statistics and provides systematic information as to whether parchment institutions of control actually exist on the ground. Figure 2 below summarizes survey responses to the question, “who controls the following domains in your community?”

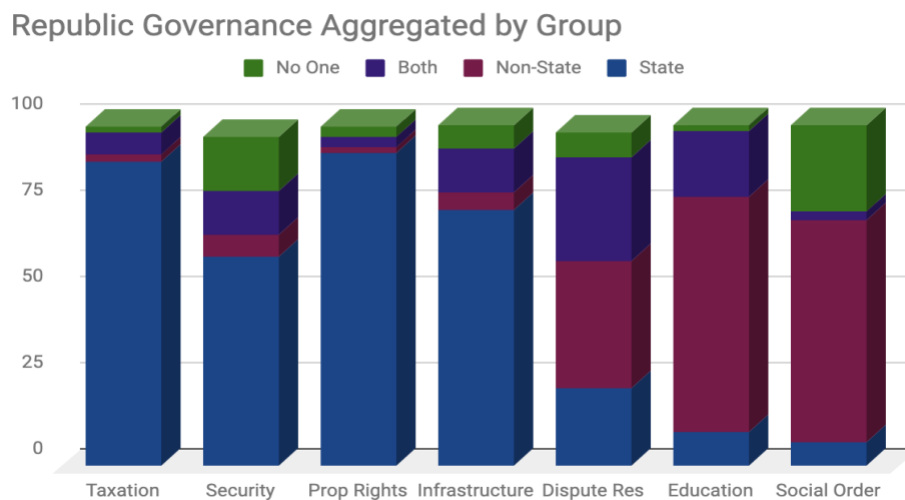
Republic Governance Regime



State authorities, specifically local administrators, actually seem to dominate the more material dimensions - taxation, security, property rights, and infrastructure. Clan networks embedded into the state continue to control economic resources directly through taxation but also indirectly through control over property rights, the most valuable resource in the region. Importantly, this does not mean they do so effectively.

Both interviews and the survey responses highlight that the republic and central state has not penetrated locally. Respondents often highlighted that the state in Dagestan is felt more through its absence, through what it fails to deliver, than its presence. This is evident in citizens' open-ended survey responses when they were asked how the state impacts their lives: 17.8 % said that it does not impact their lives or that its presence is not felt. Yet as we shift away from strictly material spheres of governance, non-state authorities become more prominent. Dispute resolution is nearly equally fragmented between state and non-state authorities, and the latter become prevalent in regulation of social order, a domain state authorities have consistently been comfortable overlooking, unlike neighboring Chechnya.

To understand if state and non-state actors compete or co-produce governance, I look to see if respondents selected only state actors, only non-state actors, both, or said that no one. The responses are visible in Figure 3. More than 10% of respondents said security, infrastructure, dispute resolution, and education are co-produced. Yet, non-state authorities have an independent role in governance as well, particularly in regulating disputes, education, and social order.



Overall, the evidence above highlights the asymmetry in authority across dimensions of governance. Considering the vertical organization of governance within the state, governance is relatively decentralized in Dagestan, with local administrators being particularly relevant. Yet, particularly in the less material dimensions, governance is also fragmented across actors. Unlike neighboring Chechnya, where state administrators have crowded out space for autonomous non-state authorities, in Dagestan the role of non-state authorities remains, particularly in dispute resolution, education, and social order. Additionally, 15.9% of the population continues to feel that no one provides security, a significant finding given the seemingly strong and authoritarian nature of the Russian state. The legacy of disorder in the 1990s has not entirely been displaced. To understand if violence had an impact more systematically, I compare responses from individuals who said their community did and did not experience violence on taxation, provision of infrastructure, dispute resolution, and social order to capture the material and symbolic dimensions of governance.

#### **Who controls taxation in your community?**

	<b>No Violence</b>	<b>Violence</b>	<b>NA</b>	<b>Total</b>
Both	19 ( 5.1%)	57 ( 7.4%)	6 ( 3.2%)	82 ( 6.2%)
No one only	5 ( 1.3%)	14 ( 1.8%)	7 ( 3.7%)	26 ( 2.0%)
Non-state	11 ( 2.9%)	14 ( 1.8%)	3 ( 1.6%)	28 ( 2.1%)
Other only	10 ( 2.7%)	4 ( 0.5%)	6 ( 3.2%)	20 ( 1.5%)
State	328 ( 87.9%)	681 ( 88.4%)	168 ( 88.4%)	1177 ( 88.3%)
Total	373 (100.0%)	770 (100.0%)	190 (100.0%)	1333 (100.0%)

#### **Who controls infrastructure in your community?**

	<b>No Violence</b>	<b>Violence</b>	<b>NA</b>	<b>Total</b>
Both	51 ( 13.7%)	100 ( 13.0%)	20 ( 10.5%)	171 ( 12.8%)
No one only	9 ( 2.4%)	73 ( 9.5%)	10 ( 5.3%)	92 ( 6.9%)
Non-state	19 ( 5.1%)	40 ( 5.2%)	7 ( 3.7%)	66 ( 5.0%)
Other only	8 ( 2.1%)	6 ( 0.8%)	1 ( 0.5%)	15 ( 1.1%)
State	286 ( 76.7%)	551 ( 71.6%)	152 ( 80.0%)	989 ( 74.2%)
Total	373 (100.0%)	770 (100.0%)	190 (100.0%)	1333 (100.0%)

**Who controls dispute resolution in your community?**

	<b>No Violence</b>	<b>Violence</b>	<b>NA</b>	<b>Total</b>
Both	89 ( 23.9%)	260 ( 33.8%)	54 ( 28.4%)	403 ( 30.2%)
No one only	20 ( 5.4%)	66 ( 8.6%)	9 ( 4.7%)	95 ( 7.1%)
Non-state	160 ( 42.9%)	261 ( 33.9%)	67 ( 35.3%)	488 ( 36.6%)
Other only	14 ( 3.8%)	21 ( 2.7%)	10 ( 5.3%)	45 ( 3.4%)
State	90 ( 24.1%)	162 ( 21.0%)	50 ( 26.3%)	302 ( 22.7%)
Total	373 (100.0%)	770 (100.0%)	190 (100.0%)	1333 (100.0%)

**Who controls social order (dress, social interactions) in your community?**

	<b>No Violence</b>	<b>Violence</b>	<b>NA</b>	<b>Total</b>
Both	10 ( 2.7%)	16 ( 2.1%)	6 ( 3.2%)	32 ( 2.4%)
No one only	60 ( 16.1%)	223 ( 29.0%)	49 ( 25.8%)	332 ( 24.9%)
Non-state	265 ( 71.0%)	478 ( 62.1%)	120 ( 63.2%)	863 ( 64.7%)
Other only	5 ( 1.3%)	9 ( 1.2%)	1 ( 0.5%)	15 ( 1.1%)
State	33 ( 8.8%)	44 ( 5.7%)	14 ( 7.4%)	91 ( 6.8%)
Total	373 (100.0%)	770 (100.0%)	190 (100.0%)	1333 (100.0%)

The results suggest that there are some differences in dispute resolution. Individuals who said their communities experienced violence more often said dispute resolution is co-produced rather than regulated more by non-state authorities in communities without violence.<sup>22</sup>

Disaggregating across types of violence suggests these results are driven by counterinsurgency sweeps specifically. There is also a shift in social order, such that those whose communities experienced violence were more likely to say that no one regulates of social order compared to respondents in communities without violence, who more commonly selected non-state actors.<sup>23</sup>

Again the result is driven by counterinsurgency sweeps. This suggests violence, specifically sweeps, are associated with a slight loss of control by non-state authorities in social order and dispute resolution, but not in infrastructure, which remains consistently regulated by state

<sup>22</sup> The difference in state authority alone is not significant but the difference for non-state authorities is.

<sup>23</sup> The difference in state authority alone is not significant but the difference for non-state authorities is.



authorities. While authority in dispute resolution and symbolic governance remains fragmented, as suggested by my qualitative interviews and participant observation, the survey data suggest that violence did slightly decrease non-state authorities' control over these two domains. The difference in the impact of violence on material realms - like infrastructure, security, and taxation - all of which do not exhibit significant differences in the role of non-state actors, and more symbolic domains - dispute resolution and social order - further highlights the need to understand governance as a multidimensional concept. One possible mechanism is that individuals in communities that experienced state violence in the form of counterinsurgency sweeps may simply be less likely to say that non-state authorities like religious authorities have a strong role in their community.

### **Conclusion**

This paper started by tracing the incorporation of informal elites, specifically clan leaders, into the state apparatus. Magomedov's decision likely stabilized the republic and prevented the outbreak of war. Nevertheless, the selective incorporation of authorities created a polycentric governance system where numerous actors who are independent of each other governed. Though previous studies suggest that authorities can cooperate to produce collective action and govern, in Dagestan this often led to a lack of effective governance, particularly in the state's ability to provide goods. While non-state authorities such as community djamaats worked to provide security and dispute resolution, these domains remain fragmented into the present. Unlike its neighboring republics, when violence did break out in Dagestan, it was more localized, creating enclaves of insecurity rather than impacting the republic as a whole. Further, though violence dislodged specific individuals, it did not displace the overall governance institutions established in the 1990s, though it did diminish the role of non-state authorities in more symbolic domains.

Dagestan is best understood as a case at the terror-crime nexus. While much of the recent existing literature has focused on the impact of violence, this paper suggests that when governance institutions are particularly entrenched, violence may be insufficiently widespread to displace them. Particularly when studying meso and macro-level outcomes, scholars must be attuned to the continuities that persist despite violence as they are to the way violence ruptures institutions and balance of power. In the case at hand violence, specifically counterinsurgency sweeps, had greater impact on the symbolic than the material domains of governance. Further research is necessary to understand the heterogeneous impact of violence across institutions.

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