ABSTRACT

This paper examines the impact of traditional Chechen culture, especially the continued practice of blood feuds, on violence in the republic. First, an in depth discussion of clannish society is used to show how and why such traditional characteristics and ancient customs have been allowed to thrive among the Chechen people, especially those living in the highlands. The focus then turns to the strong concept of honor that flourishes in Chechen society as the main motivator of blood feuds. The more detailed discussion of blood feud itself and its ancient and modern practice show the potential for and realization of widespread violence in Chechnya. The Chechens are a people with deep historical roots and a strong collective memory. The events of the past, especially conflict with Russia, greatly influence the events of the present and future. The modern Chechen identity is a unique mentality, which combines role of teip and its strong influence on society with the rise of nationalism, and later Islamic nationalism. The recent wars in Chechnya have also had a defining characteristic on the Chechen people and their psyche. When this kind of crisis is combined with the traditional Chechen culture and a propensity for violence, the outcome can be devastating, especially when violence is radicalized and politicized and used as a mobilizing force.