

## **Russia's Federal Policy in Dagestan and its Implications since 1991**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The 'Republic of Dagestan' or simply 'Dagestan' is situated in the North Caucasus region and has 'republic' status within the Russian Federation. It is one of the 85 federal subjects of the Russian Federation. Till 1991, Dagestan was a part of the Soviet Union in which it had the status of 'Dagestan ASSR (Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic)' (\*The 1993 Constitution of the Russian Federation; \*Subjects of the Russian Federation). After the Soviet dissolution 1991, Dagestan ASSR ceased to exist and in its place came the 'Republic of Dagestan' within the Russian Federation. However, this transition from a highly centralised state system, *i.e.* Soviet Union, to a highly decentralised state, *i.e.* Russian Federation, was devastating both politically as well as economically for entire Russia, including Dagestan.

The 1991 Soviet collapse and the subsequent transition of Russia from socialist economy to the market or capitalist economy was one of the most astonishing geopolitical events of the century. This event is also comparable to the collapse of the Ottoman and Habsburg empires during the First World War. The Soviet disintegration started on the peripheries and in the non-Russian areas. The Baltic States were the first to declare independence from Soviet Union. In 1987, Estonia, a Baltic Republic, demanded autonomy which was immediately followed by the remaining two Baltic Republics, *viz.*, Lithuania and Latvia. All other republics then followed suit and parted ways one after another. The USSR existed for almost 75 years and suddenly in

December 1991, it died a peaceful death leading to the emergence of 15 independent sovereign countries on the world stage out of the former, among them were some new states with unfamiliar names, and the event was mournfully called by Soviets the "parade of sovereignties". Massive chunks of territory were torn away from the largest political landmass in the world leaving geopolitical confusion in their wake. Among all those 15 republics that emerged independent from the Soviet Union, Russian Federation was the most powerful (Clemens, 1997: 137-138; Fuller, 1994; Lovell, 1996; Saunders and Strukov, 2010).

During Mikhail Gorbachev's rise to power in 1985 who was the last Soviet leader, the USSR was in the grip of severe economic and political crises. Seeing the severity of the situation, Gorbachev introduced a two-tiered policy of reform: "Glasnost (freedom of speech)" and "Perestroika (rebuilding) a program of economic reform". Under perestroika, he intended, indeed, to reconstruct both the CPSU party as well as the Soviet political system. Through glasnost, Gorbachev unknowingly unleashed people's sentiments and ignited their political feelings which had been built up for many years, and which ultimately became instrumental in the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Furthermore, perestroika too failed to yield the desired results which he had earlier predicted. Armed with this newly allotted freedom of speech, called glasnost, the people of the Soviet Union began criticizing Gorbachev regime for its failure to protect the country's economy. Thus, glasnost and perestroika were also one of the main reasons behind

Soviet collapse (Fuller, 1994; Lovell, 1996; Stoner-Weiss, 2009: 4; Saunders and Strukov, 2010).

On 25 December 1991, Mikhail Gorbachev resigned as the last leader of the Soviet Union and Boris Yeltsin, who was the President of Russian Republic's Parliament, became the first President of newly independent Russia. On the same day, for the last time the Soviet flag of hammer and sickle was hoisted in Kremlin, and then it was replaced by the Russian tricolor. The Soviet collapse was a peaceful transition resulting in the emergence of multiple independent republics from a single Communist state. In January 1992, the Soviet Union ceased to exist. After Soviet Union met its demise, a new entity came up in its place which was called the "Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)" comprising 12 independent countries, except the Baltic States, of the erstwhile Soviet Union. The CIS member countries had full political independence and were associated with each other in economic and, to some extent, military spheres. Immediately after Soviet collapse, the newly independent Russia aggressively started pursuing economic reform programs of mass privatization under Yeltsin in order to revive the stagnant economy of the country (Fuller, 1994: 19; Lovell, 1996).

#### **Political crisis in Moscow during Soviet collapse:**

Soon after the introduction of reform programs, *glasnost* and *perestroika*, by Mikhail Gorbachev in 1986-87, the floodgates of protest and resentment opened within the Soviet Union. This led to a severe political crisis in Moscow. Gorbachev also introduced the New Union Treaty which was a draft treaty meant to replace the 1922 Treaty on the Creation of the USSR, and also to replace the Soviet Union by a new entity known as the "Union of Sovereign States". It was an attempt by him to reform and protect the Soviet Union from impending collapse. The treaty was scheduled to be signed between the Russian SFSR, the Ukrainian SSR and the Byelorussian SSR on 20 August 1991, but the Soviet coup d'état attempt that happened on 19 August, just a day earlier, had prevented this event from taking place (Clemens, 1997: 144-145; Grachev, 1996; Sturua, 1992; Kotkin, 2001; Hollander, 2000; Winters, 1999).

On 12 June 1990, Russia declared its sovereignty and restricted the application of Soviet laws, *i.e.* laws pertaining to finance and the economy, within Russian territory. The Supreme Soviet of the Russian SFSR adopted laws contradicting Soviet laws. In July 1990,

Boris Yeltsin, then President of the Russian Republic's Parliament, convened the Supreme Soviet of the Russian Republic and insisted on economic sovereignty for the republic. This enabled him to tighten his grip over the republic and grab control of its economy from Gorbachev. All other republics too followed Yeltsin's move. Ukraine began recalling its soldiers from the Soviet military and called for the setting up of its own military. The Communist Party split into two factions, *viz.*, the reformers and conservatives, which were critical about Gorbachev who was searching a middle path between socialist economy and market economy. He defended himself by showing support and allegiance for Communism and Socialism and referred to Lenin's New Economic Policy of 1921 as his method for tackling crisis. However, he appeared for many Russians as weak and unable to take a clear stand. People were getting skeptical about his stand, and thus held him responsible for economy's failure. Many people in the Soviet Union were also angry with Gorbachev for letting Germany reunify. Conservative and patriotic Communists believed that Gorbachev not only insulted but also disarmed the Soviet Union. They condemned Gorbachev arguing that he nullified the hard earned victory in World War II which had claimed around twenty million Soviet lives (Grachev, 1996; Sturua, 1992; Kotkin, 2001; Hollander, 2000; Winters, 1999).

In 1991, more Soviet factories were at the verge of closure. The Parliament in the Russian SFSR passed a few reforms towards promoting market economy and henceforth, funding to the Soviet agencies based in the Russian SFSR was stopped. Gorbachev found that the Soviet government was losing power and thus gave more priority to restoration and preservation of the Soviet Union. Gorbachev's ally, Foreign Minister Shevardnadze, resigned accusing him of acting as a dictator. Meanwhile, Gorbachev had no option but to give free hand to the conservatives of his party and some prominent people of the Soviet military to take necessary and extraordinary actions for preserving the USSR (Grachev, 1996; Sturua, 1992; Kotkin, 2001; Hollander, 2000; Winters, 1999).

These political crises prevalent in Moscow over a few years culminated into the 1991 Soviet coup d'état attempt, also called August Putsch or August Coup, and further angered the Russians against Soviet government, although it was a failure and collapsed in just two days. The coup attempt ended Gorbachev's reign and further consolidated Yeltsin's political power. It also contributed

in the demise of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) and accelerated Soviet disintegration resulting in the birth of some new nation states. The coup attempt was staged by some members of the Soviet government with the intention of taking away power from President Mikhail Gorbachev and restoring Soviet Union. The coup leaders were hardline CPSU members opposed to the latest reform program introduced by Gorbachev and the new union treaty which decentralized considerable portion of Kremlin's powers to the republics (Grachev, 1996; Gibson, 1997: 671; Sturua, 1992; Winters, 1999).

On 19 August 1991, a small group of Soviet leaders tried to stage a military coup against Gorbachev regime taking Gorbachev's illness and his subsequent inability to carry out governance as excuse. The eight-man State Committee for the State of Emergency in the USSR (GKChP) imposed an emergency for a period of six-months that resulted in a ban on rallies, demonstrations and strikes, and strict restrictions on mass movements as well as activities of the political parties, and press censorship. Soviet tanks rolled on the roads and streets of Moscow but the people of Moscow, led by Yeltsin, strongly protested the involvement of the troops and, sometimes, even formed human chains to block the movement of the military vehicles. Yeltsin declared the coup illegal and spoke from atop a tank in front of the Russian White House, the seat of the Parliament of the Russian SFSR, appealing to the Russian people to resist any attempt for overthrowing democracy through protests and indefinite general strikes. Supporting Yeltsin's stand, people took to the streets in protest against the coup. The mayor of Leningrad also organized resistance against the coup. Yeltsin drew huge support across the Russian SFSR resulting in mass demonstrations against the coup throughout Russia (Grachev, 1996; Gibson, 1997: 671; Sturua, 1992; Kotkin, 2001; Winters, 1999).

On 20 August 1991, there was a mass demonstration of around 200,000 people in front of the Moscow City Soviet; 50,000 people staged mass demonstration at the Russian White House; 200,000 people participated in anti-coup rally in Leningrad's Palace Square; and 50,000 people demonstrated against the coup in Kishinev, Moldavia. A day later came a dramatic situation in the coup when even the CPSU turned against the coup meant for the seizure of Soviet power and all the leaders involved in the coup were later arrested. The next day after the failure of coup attempt, a large number of people assembled in front of the Russian White House and

celebrated "a Rally of Victors". Within one week, a democratic government was revived in the Soviet Union (Grachev, 1996; Gibson, 1997: 671; Sturua, 1992; Kotkin, 2001; Winters, 1999).

Finally, by January 1992, Soviet Union ceased to exist and Russian Federation, along with 14 other republics, emerged as an independent sovereign state with its capital in Moscow. Boris Yeltsin became the first President of new Russia the same year thus putting an end to many years of political crisis in Moscow (Grachev, 1996; Gibson, 1997; Lovell, 1996; Sturua, 1992; Kotkin, 2001; Hollander, 2000; Winters, 1999).

### **Moscow's policy towards North Caucasus:**

North Caucasus lies in the southernmost territory of Russia consisting of Stavropol Krai, Krasnodar Krai, and the constituent republics, *viz.*, Republic of Karachay-Cherkessia, North Ossetia, Ingushetia, Adygea, Kabardino-Balkaria, Chechnya, and Republic of Dagestan. The region lies to the north of Caucasus mountain range extending over the area between Black Sea and the Caspian Sea. It connects South Caucasus bordering Georgia and Azerbaijan and is the juncture of three civilizations, *viz.*, Persian, Turkish and European. The geographical location and ethnic composition of the region are strategically quite significant to Russia, EU as well as the US. It not only provides a vital link between the two water bodies, *viz.*, the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea, but also holds important transportation routes linking Russia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia on land. Dagestan is ethnically the most diverse region of Russia, where around 40 ethnic groups with Caucasian, Iranian and Turkic descent are currently residing, and each one of them has its own language, culture, history and national identity (Sagramoso, 2007: 683-685).

North Caucasus has been the priority area of concern for the Russian Federation since 1991 as it is Russia's most unstable and volatile region, because of Islamic extremism, insurgency, separatism and ethnic violence, threatening to destabilize other regions of the Federation. The region also suffers from miserable socio-economic conditions forcing people to take to insurgency against Federation. It appears quite different from the rest of the country and showing symptoms of an unstable frontier zone. Chechnya, which has seen the rise of Wahhabism, terrorism and Islamic extremism in the early 1990s, is the main epicenter of disturbances in the North Caucasus; and the two Chechen Wars (1<sup>st</sup> war in 1994-

1996 and 2<sup>nd</sup> war in 1999-present) between Russia and Chechen insurgents underline this argument that Chechnya is in the grip of brutal Islamic insurgency and extremism. Chechnya is a landlocked republic in the southern part of Russia, known as North Caucasus. It is bordered by Ingushetia in the west, Stavropol Krai and North Ossetia in the northwest, the Republic of Dagestan in the east and north, and Georgia in the south. Grozny is the capital city of Chechnya. In the 1990s and first half of 2000s, violence in the North Caucasian region was mainly confined to Chechnya, but after the first half of 2000s the level of violence and terrorist activities rose considerably in other republics of the region and also spread further beyond the region. The federal effort to stabilise the region is proving expensive. The establishment of a new “North Caucasus Federal District” in January 2010 under the former governor of Krasnoyarsk, Alexander Kholponin, failed to yield desired results and the situation continued to deteriorate (Kramer, 2004; Lieven, 1998; Tishkov, 1997; Kuchins *et al.*, 2011: 1-2).

The 1993 Constitutional crisis in Russia created problems for its peripheries. Many federal subjects, mostly in the North Caucasus, began either defying or ignoring Russia’s authority. The open defiance by the subjects stood entirely against the integrity, cohesion and legitimacy of the Russian Federation and increasingly became a matter of great concern for Moscow (Shariet, 1995). With this development emerged the fierce separatist insurgencies in many parts of North Caucasus, *viz.*, Chechnya, Ingushetia, Dagestan, Karachay-Cherkessia, Kabardino-Balkaria and North Ossetia-Alania, and the fiercest of all broke out in Chechnya in 1994. Chechnya had the status of “Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Republic” within Soviet Union. After Soviet disintegration and more importantly following 1993 Constitutional crisis in Russia, Chechens intensified their struggle for independence from the Russian Federation and declared full independence from Moscow declaring itself as “Chechen Republic of Ichkeria” (Shariet, 1995; Kisriev, 2003). The Russian Federation responded with a military campaign against the Chechen rebels in December 1994. However, the Federation suffered heavily in the hands of the Chechens and finally withdrew from Chechnya in August 1996. The de-facto independence of Chechen Republic of Ichkeria ended in August 1999 when Russia launched military campaign against it in response to the invasion of Dagestan by

Chechnya-based Islamist insurgents restoring the Russian federal control over the territory. However, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Chechen war induced a never ending conflict in the region and has become a big worry for Russia. The 2004 Beslan school siege or Beslan massacre in North Ossetia was the culmination of the conflict into the ugly school massacre by the Chechen and Ingush militants which claimed 385 lives, including 186 children. The separatist insurgencies in Chechnya and Dagestan escalated to Ingushetia by 2007 and engulfed the whole North Caucasus by 2009, and are still going on (International Crisis Group, 2008; Kisriev, 2003; Gidadhubli, 2004; Lieven, 1998; Tishkov, 1997).

Cornell (2001) calls the conflicts in the Republic of Chechnya as the most devastating and fatal event in the former Soviet space. He believes that post-Soviet Chechnya had lost the peace and thus failed to establish a peaceful society and a credible as well as functional system. He assumes a more benevolent attitude towards Chechnya and portrays Chechen war mainly in terms of the “Russian invasion and the Chechen struggle for the ideals of independence”, rather than calling it a separatist and secessionist conflict which Russia and most other authors believe (Cornell, 2001: 250).

### **New Constitution 1993:**

The 1993 Constitution of post-Soviet Russia was adopted following a political confrontation between the Russian President and the Parliament resulting into the constitutional crisis of 1993 which was resolved by using military force. The 1993 constitutional crisis was accompanied by bloody violence lasting for ten days and emerged as the single deadliest event in the history of Russia since the revolutions of 1917. It claimed 187 lives and wounded 437 people.

The new Constitution of Russia was approved on 12 December 1993 by the people who voted for it at the referendum. It came into force on 25 December 1993 abolishing the Soviet system of government. This Constitution replaced that of Russian SFSR adopted in 1978 when Russia was a Republic within the USSR. In 1991, a new state, *viz.*, the Russian Federation, emerged. The transformation of the state started a process of transformation of the Constitution. The 1978 Constitution was amended more than three hundred times. It was full of contradictions. It was quite obvious that the new country needed a new Constitution (Krylova, 1994; Saunders and Strukov, 2010).

The new Constitution entails two different dichotomies, *viz.*, transition and consolidation, in the democratization process of Russia. In Russia's context, transition represents the time period, from 1993 to 1996, which begins with the collapse of the old authoritarian Soviet system and ends with the establishment of a relatively stable political system in the newly independent Russian state. The new Constitution ensured a transition from highly centralized unitary state to a highly decentralized federal state (Hatipo lu, 1998: 1). Consolidation is somewhat different from transition as it refers to the realization of a change in attitudes and substantial support for the newly established system which requires a relatively longer period of time. The consolidation of democracy occurred after 1996 in Russia. Transition aimed at the creation of a new regime seeking to yield more powers to the President than the Parliament, while the consolidation aimed at stability and the perpetuation of the established regime in Russia (Hatipo lu, 1998: 1-2; Zhuravskaya, 2010: 59).

After the 1993 Constitutional crisis, the "constituent units" were renamed as "federal subjects" in the new Constitution to reflect a more centralized form of federation. The new Constitution (1993) consisted of one hundred thirty seven articles. There were some provisions left which were crucial for the future *i.e.* 2008 constitutional development of the country. President Yeltsin believed that this new Constitution should be the Bridge to Democracy and a touchstone in Russia's transition from totalitarian dictatorship to democracy. The first words of the Constitution show how great the desire of the people to depart from the long period of isolation and become part of the world community (Krylova, 1994; Saunders and Strukov, 2010). The Constitution opens with the preamble which contains the following statement:

*"We, the multinational people of the Russian Federation, united by a common fate on our land, establishing human rights and freedoms, civic peace and accord, preserving the historically established state unity, proceeding from the universally recognized principles of equality and self-determination of peoples, revering the memory of ancestors who have conveyed to us the love for the Fatherland, belief in the good and justice, reviving the sovereign statehood of Russia and asserting the firmness of its democratic basic, striving to ensure the well-being and prosperity of Russia, proceeding from the responsibility for our Fatherland before the*

*present and future generations, recognizing ourselves as part of the world community, adopt the CONSTITUTION OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION"* (\*The Preamble of the Constitution of the Russian Federation).

Proclaiming Russia as the part of the world community, the Constitution declares that *"Russia shall be a democratic...rule-of-law state"* (\*Article 1 of the Constitution of the Russian Federation). Rule of Law is one of the fundamentals of the new constitutional system. The Chapter 2 of the Constitution is about "Rights and Freedoms of Man and Citizen" and contains forty seven articles. There are some provisions in the new Constitution which very succinctly show Russia's big departure from the Communist and Soviet past (Krylova, 1994).

It is well known that many rights and freedoms common for the most democratic societies were denied to the people of the Soviet Union. For example, the individual could be stripped of his citizenship; there was no freedom of movement; there was no ban for the state to use forced labor and unlawful methods were applied to the convicted in the process of the interrogation. At present, the provisions of the new Constitution on human rights are consistent with those which exist in any democratic society. The Constitution lays down: *"Human beings and their rights and liberties are the supreme values"* (\*Article 2). This provision is one of the fundamentals of the new constitutional system. It is a very important declaration for a country where a human being is given the supreme value. Now, it was stipulated in the new Constitution that a citizen of the Russian Federation shall not be stripped of the citizenship or of the right to change citizenship (\*Article 6). It is laid down also that everyone shall have the right to free travel, choice of place of stay or residence and he/she is free to leave the boundaries of the state as well as to have the right to freely return to the country (\*Article 27).

The 1993 Constitution, during adoption, defined a total of 89 "federal subjects", in which there were 21 republics, 55 oblasts and krais, 2 cities of federal importance, Moscow and St Petersburg, and 11 autonomous okrugs, including the Jewish autonomous oblast (Krylova, 1994: 402; Vazquez, 2002: 2). However, after several mergers of some subjects by 2008 the total federal subjects got reduced from 89 to 83 with 21 republics, 46 oblasts, 9 krais, 2 federal cities, 1 autonomous oblast and 4 autonomous okrugs (Derrick, 2009: 317-321;

\*Article 65).

The new Russian Constitution embodied some of the constitutional principles which were well-known to the constitutional practice of many democratic countries but have never been recognized in the USSR. The constitutional principle — “Habeas Corpus” was first time incorporated in the new constitution of Russia. According to the Article 22 — “Arresting persons, taking them into custody and keeping them in custody are permitted only on the basis of a court decision. A person may not be subjected to detention for more than 48 hours before a court decision is rendered”. The other generally accepted principle of any democratic constitutional system is the so called presumption of innocence. However, this principle was never recognized by the 1978 Constitution of Russian SFSR. At present, this principle is incorporated in the text of the Constitution. According to Article 49 — “everyone charged with a crime shall be considered not guilty until his or her guilt has been proven in conformity with the procedures stipulated by the law and established by the verdict of a court of law”.

Krylova (1994) believes that the system of government envisaged by the new Constitution is an example of mixed Presidential and Parliamentary regime. It has been based on the principle of separation of powers and provides a certain system of checks and balances (\*Chapter 4-7 of Russian Constitution). The most important powers of the Russian President, as envisaged by the 1993 Constitution, are: — the appointment of the Chairman of the Government [\*Article 83(a)]; the appointment of the members of Government [\*Article 83(a)]; the dismissal of the Government [\*Article 83(c)]; the dissolution of the State Duma [\*Article 84(b)]. According to the Article 83(a), “*The President of the Russian Federation shall appoint by agreement with the State Duma the Chairman of the Government of the Russian Federation*”. The President also has the power to appoint and dismiss deputy chairmen of the Government and federal ministers if such a proposal is made by the Chairman of Government [\*Article 83(e)]. The new Constitution envisages the President as the guarantor of the Constitution and empowers him to ensure proper coordination between all entities of state power [\*Article 80(2)].

### **Administrative system in Dagestan during the**

### **period 1992-99:**

The Soviet disintegration and the ongoing political crisis had tragic consequences for the Caucasus. Dagestan, with its distinctly segmented ethnic and social structure and internal contradictions, was at the verge of acute inter-ethnic conflict. Under this volatile situation, a distinct and independent political system began to emerge and the deep rooted socio-cultural and ethnic features started gaining prominence anew in Dagestan’s politics. As a result, various political institutions emerged from this complex and sometimes conflictual process which still exist today in Dagestan (Kisriev, 2003: 2; Kisriev, 2004: 329).

The Republic of Dagestan was acceded to the Federation Treaty in March 1992. The 1992 Federation Treaty provided for priority of local legislation over the Russian legislation when the two were in conflict. Thus, it weakened the power of the federal government and provided significant economic, cultural, and legislative autonomy to the constituent units (now federal subjects) of the Russian Federation. Moscow retained control of currency, finance and banking, communications, justice, and space exploration, while sharing responsibility for the environment, historic preservation, education, and key areas of the national economy. The ethnic republics, in particular, gained substantive control of their own affairs while the oblasts received less independence, thus creating a system of asymmetrical federalism<sup>1</sup> (\*Federation Treaty 1992; Saunders and Strukov 2010; Gidadhubli and Kumar, 1993).

Dagestan is the most ethnically, culturally, territorially and linguistically diverse and extremely heterogeneous republic in the Russian Federation as it is home to 14 ethnic and 34 ethno-linguistic groups (Ware *et al.*, 2003: 04-05; Kisriev and Ware, 2001: 107). Its multi-national political system, although a complex system, is a clear example of ethnic speciality which took several centuries to evolve and has sustained the republic’s socio-political system. Dagestan adopted its own constitution on 26 July 1994, and during the adoption of the latter, a need was felt to accommodate all the ethnic groups in the political and administrative system of the republic based on consociational model of democracy (Kisriev and Ware, 2001: 106-107; Kisriev, 2003: 2-3; Kisriev, 2004: 334-335).

The People’s Assembly of Dagestan is the legislature or Parliament of the Republic of Dagestan. It was created

1. Asymmetrical Federalism refers to a federal system of government in which power and autonomy are unevenly divided between constituent states.

replacing the Supreme Soviet in 1995. It comprises 90 deputies elected by proportional representation for a period of 5 years through secret ballot and universal suffrage. In the administrative system, it is necessary that senior officials in various government branches must belong to the different ethnic groups, and the same is applied to their deputies too. Elections take place according to a majority system in single mandate constituencies with the goal of ensuring proportional representation and avoid ethnic confrontations within constituencies. Thus, Dagestan's political stability till 1999 owed much to its quasi-consociational political system (\*Parliament of the Republic of Dagestan; Kisriev and Ware, 2001: 106-107; Kisriev, 2003: 2-3; Kisriev, 2004: 334-335).

The 1994 Constitution of Dagestan and the electoral laws along with several rules of political behaviour established a consociational political system with the objective of giving comprehensive stability to the republic. The 1994 Constitution disapproved the absolute role of a single President of Dagestan, recognizing that the concentration of power in an individual would be detrimental to the whole political balance. The President of Dagestan is appointed by the Russian President and serves a four year term. His task is to function under the ambit of, and in compliance with both the Constitution and federal laws as well as the Constitution and laws of Dagestan; and the preservation of the unity and territorial integrity of the republic (\*President of the Republic of Dagestan). The State Council is the highest executive body elected by the members of the Constitutional Assembly. It is composed of 14 members comprising one representative from each of the 11 titular ethnic groups of the republic and remaining three representatives coming from ethnic Russian, Azerbaijani and Chechen communities. In order to check the concentration of power within a single ethnic group, a norm was set up under which, the post of chairman of the State Council would rotate on ethnic principle, *i.e.* the post must not be held for two consecutive terms by the persons of same ethnic group. The Chairman of the State Council would propose a Prime Minister who is not allowed to have the same ethnicity as of the former. The Prime Minister is the member and first deputy chairman of the State Council. The other members of the Council are elected according to the ethnic group. The Constitutional Assembly consisting of 242 persons is the organ that adopts a constitution and elects the Chairman of the State

Council. The members are elected in order to reflect proportional representation of the main nationalities in Dagestan (Kisriev, 2003: 2-3; Kisriev, 2004: 337-338; Hille, 2010: 307-308; Abdullaev, 1997).

With Putin's coming to power in 2000, the process of recentralization and reconsolidation of power slowly and steadily began in Russia, and Dagestan also underwent this development which changed its internal political system. The federal officials first sought to find out all those articles of the 1994 Dagestani Constitution that were not consistent with the Russian Constitution. It was found that the Russian Constitution was contradicted at 45 points by 25 articles of the Dagestani Constitution. Meanwhile in May 2000, the then Dagestani Attorney General, Imam Yarialiev, had appealed to Constitutional Court of Russia requesting it not to permit changes in the Dagestani Constitution and keep the latter intact. However, the People's Assembly of Dagestan, hurriedly and without waiting for the court's verdict, began the process of amending the Dagestani Constitution in order to make it consistent with that of the Russian Federation. As such on 22 June 2000, amendments to the Dagestani Constitution in the articles; *viz.*, Articles 65(6), 65(8), 66, 70, 75, 81(1)(5), 81(4), 81(7), 91(13), 112(3), 113 and 113(5)(2); were passed by the People's Assembly of Dagestan. Since, these articles were easily changeable so the People's Assembly agreed to modify them however; it managed to evade a few more modifications sought by the centre on the ground that further changes involved complex legislative procedures. Finally in 2003, the day came when the 1994 Dagestani Constitution was amended and brought fully within the compliance of the federal constitution. The amendment also changed the election of Dagestani President on the basis of rotation principle (Kisriev and Ware 2010: 154-162; Hille 2010: 308).

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