The ethno-violence nexus: measuring ethnic group identity in Chechnya

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Published online: 18 Dec 2013.

To cite this article: Craig Douglas Albert, East European Politics (2013): The ethno-violence nexus: measuring ethnic group identity in Chechnya, East European Politics, DOI: 10.1080/21599165.2013.848796

To link to this article: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/21599165.2013.848796

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The ethno-violence nexus: measuring ethnic group identity in Chechnya

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(Received 12 February 2013; final version received 12 September 2013)

If scholars and policy-makers are to understand contemporary ethnic conflict, we must first understand ethnic group identity. I make the case that ethnic group identity has substantial effects on collective action, particularly violent conflict, and a mechanism must exist to predict behaviour to properly measure ethnic group identity. This study asks, then: what exactly is ethnic group identity and can it be accurately measured? I address this by developing the Ethnic Group Identity Index (EGII), which seeks to measure the strength of ethnic group identity. I then use the EGII to measure strength of ethnic group identity within Chechnya. The implications abound for policy-makers in matters of conflict management strategies for the Russo-Chechen conflict, and more generally, for all ethnic politics.

Keywords: Chechnya; conflict; political culture; post-communism; Russian Federation

Ethnic identity is more important than meets the eye. Scholars often note its importance in passing, but they miss the forest for the trees. This oversight has tragic consequences. If scholars and policy-makers are to understand contemporary instances of ethnic conflict, we must first understand ethnic group identity. This study asks, then: what exactly is ethnic group identity and can it be accurately measured? It makes the case that ethnic group identity has substantial effects on collective action, particularly violent conflict, and a mechanism must exist to predict behaviour to measure ethnic group identity. I address this limitation by developing the Ethnic Group Identity Index (EGII). I then use the EGII to measure strength of ethnic group identity within Chechnya though a brief illustrative case study. The implications abound for policy-makers in matters of conflict management strategies for the Russo-Chechen conflict, and more generally, for all ethnic politics.

This paper fills a serious and unfortunate gap in the ethnic studies literature. Measurements of ethnic identity are limited to the individual level and rely solely upon survey methods. This paper develops a measurement that focuses on the group level and does not rely on survey data. For many ethnic groups, for instance, the Chechens, it is difficult for outside researchers to conduct surveys, and even if one could do so, one cannot always rely on the information given due to cultural prudence on behalf of the participants. The EGII allows researchers to measure and determine the strength of ethnic group identity without individual-level data needed. Once identity can be measured in this way, larger generalisations and theory-building can occur that link identity and violence in a more robust way than ethnic studies is able to presently achieve.

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This paper asserts that ethnic group identity significantly affects ethnic group behaviour. There is some basis to assert that identity may play a role in causing ethnic conflict, though there is significant debate in the scholarly literature. Identity adds fuel for both the causes of an ethnic conflict and the intensity of violence in battle. Generally, most political scientists have ignored the role identity plays in ethnic violence. However, several scholars have written about the affects identity has in creating the conditions for violence based on perceptions of threats to their ontological security (Giddens 1991; Kinnvall 2004; Steele 2005; Mitzen 2006). The strength of ethnic group identity likely affects whether or not members in a contentious political environment use peaceful and legitimate means to assert their ethnic rights. Certainly, ethnic traits determine inter-group interaction and affect how the in-group views outsiders (Debelo 2012). Again, the present author does not believe the relationship between identity and violence can be properly understood without a way to first measure ethnic identity. However, it may perhaps be useful to briefly develop the link between identity and violence in order to support even the possibility of the link.

The literature on the ethnic security dilemma establishes the foundations linking identity to violence (Posen 1993; Kaufman 1996; Roe 1999; Snyder and Jervis 1999). Posen (1993), for instance, argues that group identity is a power capability between groups, at times increasing offensive and/or defensive capabilities. Further, he argues that this group identity creates an in-group/out-group distinction that allows Group A to perceive Group B’s solidarity as offensive. Because ethnic group identities are exclusive, according to Posen, they are defensive and hence aggressive when threatened or when a threat is perceived. At least this is how oppositional groups view them. Lake and Rothchild (1996) argue that ethnic conflict is partly caused by collective fears of the future created through memories of the past and worst-case thinking. Fear, in general, creates anxiety and uncertainty of the future. Thus, a group seeks security against a potential future conflict. According to Steele (2005, 526), fear is “a response to something that threatens one’s survival; anxiety is an emotional reaction produced when a person’s self-identity is challenged”. This fear is caused by the uncertainty of other ethnic groups’ intentions; the fearing group unites further, strengthening their group identity.

This group identity, as Posen states, is then seen as an offensive threat. The offensive threat then creates fears of uncertainty in the other, causing them to solidify from fear of the opposing group’s intentions. In other words, it is not just a group that fears, but it is their existential identity that fears. Thus, as Steele (2005, 528–529) asserts, groups with an identity view threats to this identity as existential threats to the collective. It is reasonable then to assume that groups recognising threats to its identity will behave according to traditional security dilemma models where violence based on perceived threats, in this case threats to identity, becomes possible.

Group identity creates a sense of “being” within an individual. It allows the individual to “know” oneself. Knowing one’s self and being at ease with whom one is creates a sense of stability. This stability is perceived as security. Thus, the identity that a group provides is, in essence, a form of security. Mitzen (2006, 342) writes: “For some, deep forms of uncertainty threaten this identity security … Since ends are constitutive of identity, in turn, deep uncertainty renders the actor’s identity insecure” (Mitzen 2006, 342). As with physical security, identity security can create feelings of uncertainty if threatened by another group identity. Group identity can constitute an offensive threat to one’s physical security; this threat to one’s ethnic group, then, threatens not just physical security, but also existential identity. If the ethnic group creates an identity for individuals and the existence of the ethnic group is threatened, then so is one’s identity.

The Copenhagen School (Waever et al. 1993; Buzan, Waever, and De Wilde 1998; Roe 1999) argues that group identities are directly associated with the group’s existence. According to Bryn Hughes (2008, 75): “The widened view of security they subscribe to includes the idea that a group’s identity can be the referent of security and therefore both the legitimate object of...
protection and the source of threat”. It argues that identity is the solidifying element that binds a group with its territory and to its government (or traditional governing structures). As a group is expected to retaliate when its territory is seized or when its government is threatened, so too is it expected to respond if its identity markers are attacked. Identity is thus conceptualised by the Copenhagen School as an integral part of society that must be protected. As one scholar puts it: “The security of a society can be threatened by whatever puts its ‘we’ identity into jeopardy” (Waever et al. 1993, 42). Although the link between identity and violence is not a law of politics, the above certainly gives reason to believe that this link is possible. Hopefully, with the establishment of an index capable of measuring identity more concretely, this link can be investigated more thoroughly; this paper develops such an index.

Although these explanations linking identity and violence are probable, their validation is not possible without a rigorous understanding of ethnic group identity. Experts cannot test the relationship between identity and security without being able to measure identity. To date, no such measure exists. The EGII, presented herein, remedies this problem. The EGII seeks to assign numeric values for strength of ethnic group identity. Eventually, scholars may be able to use this measure to help determine when ethnic identity reaches a strength that may inspire individuals to engage in violence. The EGII is not at this point yet, but it is a step in the right direction. This paper proceeds in three sections. First, it explains and describes the EGII. Then, it tests the EGII’s validity through a brief case study of the Chechens in Russia. Finally, it discusses the implications for policy-makers in Chechnya, and in general. First, it is necessary to conceptualise ethnic group identity.

It is commonplace for today’s scholars to note that identity is constructed and that it changes over time. The idea of an index does not disagree with this point, nor does the fact that identity is constructed negate the possibility of measuring such an identity. Just because an identity is constructed and perceived does not mean it is not real to ethnic group members. To members participating in an ethnic group, they believe that identity is real: they attach significant meaning to group attributes and they participate in the creation and maintenance of this identity. Although it may be constructed, there are commonly agreed to indicators of identity that are generally believed within ethnic studies that reflect what ethnic group members believe constitute their identity. And attempting to measure this identity does have merit and evidence to support the endeavour.

Of course, measuring this identity does present problems, especially considering that identity is malleable and changes over time. The index does take this factor into consideration and attempts to account for change in the index itself. Firstly, the index has two types of variables: the first are variables that are unlikely to change over time, such as group name, territory, and except for the obvious, length of group existence. These are fairly static variables. However, there are more malleable variables as well. These represent those that are continuously constructed and are likely to change over time. The index accounts for this change in two ways. Firstly, the index is meant to be a first step towards establishing a database that will hopefully include numerous ethnic groups that provides identity measures for each of these groups. Of course, this database will have to be continuously updated to account for change that is likely to occur in ethnic group identity construction.

Although arduous, this task is not impossible. I note that other databases do monitor cases continuously, update, and change the cases often. For instance, even though the Correlates of War Project (COW) and Polity IV Project (Polity) are not identity-based data sets, they involve rigorous data collection efforts in order to provide researchers with data that are updated periodically. In addition, the Minorities at Risk Project (MAR) collects political, economic and cultural data below the state level on 283 ethnic groups, and the data set is updated periodically. Thus, while the EGII would involve the collection of data pertaining to group identities within states,
cross-national (as well as sub-national) time-series data can be collected and updated periodically in respect to the variables that comprise the four categories of the EGII. In addition, given the data collection efforts by MAR over the past two decades, the scope of data collection that would be required to construct and update the EGII has merit and precedence in the field and may be beneficial to ethnic studies scholars. The EGII is a step towards creating a database that records and traces ethnic group identity and accounts for changes in identity through time. Used as such, the EGII has potential to offer myriad data and ethno-narratives that could provide useful information for scholars within and across relevant disciplines. However, this is not the only way the EGII can be used.1

A second way is that scholars can use the EGII to measure any ethnic group identity at any given point of time. This has great benefits and does not require the constant updating that the database will. Scholars can take any ethnic group at any given point, and by using the EGII, attempt to measure strength of identity of that specific group at a specific time. This may allow scholars to form more general hypotheses covering multiple aspects of ethnic studies and will help test larger ideas, such as the relationship of violence to identity. The EGII, used in this manner, provides much more than a snapshot. It may provide an accurate measure of ethnic group identity of a group at any given time. Scholars can then use identity as a variable to test and correlate to other variables that are important to ethnic conflict and ethnic studies more generally. Although difficult to measure identity, the EGII is hopefully a step in the right direction and may lead to a better understanding of how identity affects politics.

This paper attempts to access the contestation of identity, that is, the degree of agreement within a group over the content of their identity (Abdelal et al. 2009, 18). It measures how consistent members of a group are in understanding their own group identity. Measuring identity then, even a constructed identity, includes the consensus and congruence of the norms and variable believed to constitute the identity; it also includes agreement about meanings and understandings of what constitutes the out-group (Abdelal et al. 2009, 29). Thus, this paper seeks to measure a group’s identity contestation. Further, one must concede that approximating ethnic identity is not an exact science. Because of the unavoidable subjectivity, commonly agreed upon elements of identity are required to form the basis for precise judgments. Although measuring the variables is partially subjective, the measures are still valid and rigorous if done properly. The scholar must do extensive research, engulfing oneself in the existing literature on the ethnic group’s history. In researching a specific case study, the researcher will be able to approximate, through cross-referencing the appropriate case literature, the strength of particular variables. This process can be reproduced and checked by other scholars to see if they receive the same results. Because the index is composed of elaborate categories and sub-variables, most problems associated with subjectivity are eliminated.

Although it is well mentioned in the literature that identities are fluid, this paper accepts Cox’s (1986) and Abdelal’s et al. (2009, 28) argument that identities can be treated as fixed at certain times. Abdelal et al. write:

[...]ven if one assumes the social world is a constructed one, there may be periods and places where intersubjective understandings of these social facts are stable enough that they can be treated as if fixed and can be analyzed with social scientific methods.

Therefore, arguments of constructed identities or the fluidity and evolving natures of identity need not discount the validity and seriousness of the index. Hopf (2002) further substantiates this claim. He articulates (2002, 4): “The theoretical account of identity … provides for the empirical inductive recovery of those descriptions, their interpretation and aggregation into discursive formations”. In other words, certain variables can be investigated that are symptomatic of the
underlying identity. Each variable of ethnic group identity, then, is understood for measurement purposes, as a concrete, ontological given. With the possible link between ethnic group identity and violence described, it is appropriate to discuss the former in more detail.

One must remember that whether or not ethnic identity is constructed, one can still measure and conceptualise it based on how groups perceive their own identity, and what attributes the group believe are important. This paper does not approach ethnic group identity from either an essentialist or constructed view; rather, it seeks to create an index that most accurately reflects what scholars and ethnic members themselves generally agree to as constituting ethnic group identity. Scholars have proposed various criteria to explain what indicators compose an ethnic group. Weber (1968) provides the first modern conceptualisation, arguing that ethnic groups share subjective beliefs in common descent, based on physical characteristics, customs, or both. Taylor-Umana, Yazedjian, Bamaca-Gomez (2004) add to Weber’s conceptualisation that ethnic members share a common history and culture such as dress, art, music, food, literature, and language. Toft (2003) expands this definition by including a territorial homeland “an association with a given territory”. de Tocqueville (2004, 48) comments on how important territory is for consciousness and group bonds created by traits he associates with land. He writes: “The family represents the land, the land represents the family; it perpetuates its name, its origin, its glory, its power, its virtues”. Territory represents both history and the promise of a future.

Geertz (1963) believes that assumed blood ties, race, language, region, religion, and custom comprise ethnic group traits. Isaacs (1975) writes that the ethnic group is marked by birthplace or origin, name, language, history, religions, and nationality, and Smith (1981) argues that ethnic groups are distinguished by four traits: (1) the sense of unique group origins; (2) the knowledge of a unique group history and belief in its destiny; (3) one or more dimensions of collective cultural individuality; and (4) a sense of unique collective solidarity. These definitions suggest ethnic groups have an understanding of group distinctions. Distinctions and the recognition of commonalities between members are what distinguish an ethnic group from an ordering principle (sharing only ethnicity, but without an attached bond). Many scholars do not carefully differentiate between ethnicity and the ethnic group, which causes considerable difficulties in ethnic studies (Dawod 2006; Albert 2012). Presently, an ethnic group is distinguished from those who simply share ethnic traits by group members who are conscious that they belong to a group (Smith 1979). This conceptualisation is supported by Jenkins (1997), who insists that groups are made by their very groupiness, and by Horowitz (2000) who contends that groupness makes ethnic attributes important; the attribute does not make the group important.

Classifying members based on ethnicity helps distinguish one group from another (Eller 1999), not only for social scientists, but also for group members. While members of ethnic groups understand that they share ethnic traits, this sharing does not in itself constitute an ethnic group identity. Group identity begins to form when members define their existence, and apply meaning to this existence, based upon their ethnic group criteria. Ethnic group identity is an entity to which members of ethnic communities attach their ontological security. These distinctions, then, help create identities that supply the impetus for collective action. This action may lead to conflict. Whether it is originally imagined or constructed, ethnic group identity is nonetheless important to questions of rights, discrimination, and socioeconomic privileges. Scholars define identity in numerous ways and contexts. The present analysis fits within the larger theoretical framework of social identity theory, conceptualising social identity as “that part of a self-concept which derives from [one’s] knowledge of [one’s] membership in a social group together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership” (Tajfel 1981, 255). Isaacs (1975) argues the traits that connect and give meaning to a group create a basic group identity, which forms from primordial affinities or attachments. Self-concepts are based on individual memberships in one or more groups. Group identity is, as defined by Monroe, Hankin, and
Van Vechten (2000) social categories and attributes of the self that are shared with others, allowing one to see others as oneself. Members of an ethnic group not only see each other as similar, but they perceive that they share a unique, exclusive identity with other members of their group. People who have different group characteristics are seen as separate entities.

Ethnic identity may have psychological benefits for group members (Jaspal and Cinnirella 2012). Being a part of something larger than oneself increases self-esteem. This offers a happier or more complete life (Isaacs 1975). It provides individuals with a sense that their existence lives on through their ethnic group. Esman (2004) argues that ethnic solidarity increases self-esteem by identifying with an enduring, meaningful tradition. Because of this meaning, ethnic identity provides the remote catalyst for collective action or ethnic mobilisation. Identity is the tool that members use to demand their rights. It is a bond to one’s ethnic group that excites people to act (Harff and Gurr 2004). The stronger the ties are, the stronger the potential for mobilisation. As Taras and Ganguly (2002, 9) write: “The strength of an ethnic political movement depends on the strength of ethnic identity”. Such claims demonstrate the importance of determining whether a group has an ethnic identity, and if so, how to measure its strength. Further, one can indicate a group’s ethnic identity by thorough research into primary and secondary ethnic literature that describes ethnic traits in detail. This assessment focuses on determining the strength of a group’s attachment to variables such as collective memory and history as well as specific cultural markers (Cross and Komnenich 2005). The remainder of this paper concentrates on establishing an index that measures strength of ethnic group identity, which is then applied to ethnic Chechens.

The EGII

The EGII (Table 1) provides four categories comprising several variables and subcomponents that measure ethnic group identity. Variables selected are attributes heavily cited in the literature as constituting ethnic identity. Each component chosen is recognised as a legitimate indicator or symptom of ethnic group identity. The variables of the EGII are not exhaustive, and this author envisions a growing number as others contribute to the EGII database. For now, only frequently cited and generally uncontested attributes of ethnic group identity have been included. The EGII provides and operationalises those variables and values necessary to measure the strength of an ethnic group’s identity. This paper argues that the more indicators and strength of attachments to these indicators a group has, the stronger the ethnic group’s identity.

Each category has four variables. This index separates each variable by strength; the stronger the variable, the stronger the ethnic identity. Each variable can be scored at 1 (weak), 2 (moderate), or 3 (strong). The variables are then added to get the composite score. Then the mean of the category is calculated. The mean is the category’s overall strength and keeps the same scale as each variable (1, 2, or 3). To assess the score for the EGII for a particular case-study or ethnic group, each category’s total score is added. This then is divided by the total number of variables to produce the overall mean score of a particular group. This mean score is also scaled from 1 to 3.

Although partially subjective, the measures are valid and rigorous if done carefully. The scholar must do extensive research using existing literature on the ethnic group’s history. Researchers are able to calculate the strength of particular variables by cross-referencing appropriate case literature. This process can be replicated by other scholars to test for similar results. The present case study is only a first step. Hopefully, more variables and categories will be added by others. Additionally, each variable is equally weighted to eliminate as much subjectivity as possible. With more cases and variables, however, it is foreseeable that the variables and categories will have to be weighted relatively. Such adjustments will be addressed in future research.

Briefly, Category I analyses objective traits or characteristics including the existence of a group name, length of existence, defined homeland and exclusive language. These are mostly
Table 1. Ethnic group identity index.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category: Observable traits</th>
<th>Weak (1)</th>
<th>Moderate (2)</th>
<th>Strong (3)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(a) Distinct group name</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Group existence</td>
<td>99 years or less</td>
<td>Between 100 and 499 years</td>
<td>500 years or more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) Ethnic territory</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(d) Distinct ethnic language</td>
<td>No distinct language</td>
<td>Distinct language spoken by a plurality of group members</td>
<td>Distinct language spoken by a majority of group members</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total score for Category I:
Mean score for Category I:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category: Myths, symbols, and stories</th>
<th>Weak (1)</th>
<th>Moderate (2)</th>
<th>Strong (3)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(a) Myth of common descent or ancestry</td>
<td>No belief in kinship ties</td>
<td>Only a minority believes in kinship ties</td>
<td>A majority believes in kinship ties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Ethnic election (chosen peoples)</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>There is a minority belief in ethnic election</td>
<td>There is a majority belief in ethnic election</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) Group heroism</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>There is a widespread belief of legendary battles.</td>
<td>There is a wide-spread belief in the existence of a war hero/martyr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(d) Common history (historical memory)</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>There is a limited presence in historical memories</td>
<td>Historical memories are widely shared</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total score for Category II:
Mean score for Category II:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category: Culture</th>
<th>Weak (1)</th>
<th>Moderate (2)</th>
<th>Strong (3)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(a) Religion</td>
<td>Non-religious</td>
<td>Religiously heterogeneous</td>
<td>Religiously homogeneous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Dress</td>
<td>No distinction between group dress in society</td>
<td>A minority wears distinct ethnic garb</td>
<td>A majority wears distinct ethnic garb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) Cuisine</td>
<td>No distinct group food</td>
<td>Some elements of a distinct food, but a majority is non-distinct</td>
<td>Some elements of are distinct/only important on special occasions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(d) Artistic works</td>
<td>No distinct style compared to other groups and/or is not widely appreciated</td>
<td>A majority is distinct and important in everyday life</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total score for Category III:
Mean score for Category III:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category: Solidarity</th>
<th>Weak (1)</th>
<th>Moderate (2)</th>
<th>Strong (3)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(a) Party factions</td>
<td>Many factions</td>
<td>Two factions</td>
<td>No major factions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Group objectives</td>
<td>Extremely divisive</td>
<td>Moderately divisive</td>
<td>Common</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) Group dispersion/concentration</td>
<td>Largely dispersed</td>
<td>Moderately dispersed</td>
<td>Majority of group is concentrated in one area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(d) Inter-marriage rates</td>
<td>20% or more is inter-married</td>
<td>11–19% of area is inter-married</td>
<td>0–10% of area is inter-married</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total score for Category IV:
Mean score for Category IV:
EGII total score:
EGII mean score:
categories and attributes. Category II refers to traits that compose the ethnic “story” of the group, as well as “ethnic election”, group heroism, and common/memorial history. Category III includes cultural traits and Category IV refers to group solidarity and traits that influence group cohesion. Variables are based upon scholarly literature for ethnic identity. Each variable is selected because the literature suggests these traits usually demonstrate ethnic group identity. Nash (1993) suggests that ethnic boundaries or markers symbolise and constitute the group. If these boundary mechanisms were breached with regularity, the group would also cease to exist. Arguably, stronger symptoms show stronger group identity. Because the index is based on case study analysis, one must be well acquainted with the ethnic groups in question before measuring each variable. The case measures can be reproduced, validated, and replicated by other scholars. A scholar must investigate primary literature through content analysis of cultural and political writings as well as census data. A variety of secondary sources, or literature that describes the group and its history, are also important (Hopf 2002).

Category I of the index measures observable traits, usually understood as group attributes. The first variable is a group name, which allows groups to differentiate themselves from “others” (Smith 2002). The group identifies itself through a unique “label”. If a group has a distinct name that it recognises, the variable is strong and scores a 3. If no distinct name exists, the variable is weak and scores a 1. No moderate score is needed. The second variable is length of group existence. An ethnic group must trace its existence well into history to “remember” itself as a collective community (Francis 1947; Smith 2002). If a group can only trace its roots within the past 99 years, the variable is weak and scores a 1; if it traces its existence from 100 to 499 years, it is moderate and scores a 2; if it traces its existence 500 years or more, it scores a 3. It is important to note that a group needs only to perceive, not prove, the length of its existence. The third variable concerns ethnic territory. Territory gives a group something physical to call “ours” as opposed to “theirs” (Waetjen 1999; Toft 2003). A specific territory affects group cohesion because of its correlation with the myths of memory (Smith 1996). Group memory is usually attached to a specific territory. To hold onto territory is essential for a group’s strength of identity (Staub 2000). It does not matter if the land is actually owned by an ethnic group, only that an ethnic group believes the land is or should be its own. This corresponds to weaker or stronger group identity. Territory is measured on a dichotomous scale: 1 represents no ethnic territory and 3 represents claims to ethnic territory. No moderate score is needed. Ethnic language is essential for the creation and maintenance of an ethnic group. Many scholars argue that having a similar language binds individuals together (Spicer 1971; Isaacs 1975; Harff and Gurr 2004; Taylor-Umana, Yazedjian, and Bamaca-Gomez 2004). If no distinct language exists, the variable is weak and scores a 1. If a plurality speaks a distinct language, the variable is moderate and scores a 2. If a majority of an ethnic group speaks the same distinct language, it scores a 3.

Category II encompasses a group’s myths, symbols, and stories. Myths are extremely important to understand ethnic group identity, nationalism and mobilisation (van Evera 2001; Kaufman 2001; Snyder and Ballentine 1996). Smith (1999) contends that myths create a commitment and bond for the group. Myths can be falsifiable stories used by nationalists to manipulate the population towards elite interests (Snyder and Ballentine 1996; Gagnon 2004). Myths can also be mythomoteurs, normative statements that cannot be falsified (Snyder and Ballentine 1996). For the EGII, myths include “myths of descent”, “ethnic election”, “group heroism”, and “common history”.

The first variable concerns common descent, ancestry, or assumed blood ties. Genealogy is not necessary to give significance to belief in a shared ancestry (Spicer 1971). The belief itself, real or imagined, provides the group with symbolic meaning and shared understanding (Connor 1994; Smith 1999; Horowitz 2000). This allows ethnic group members to view one another as kin and suggests a continuous spiritual bond (Kirk 2008). If there is no belief in
common descent, the variable scores a 1; if only a minority believes in common descent, it scores a 2; if a majority believes in common ancestry, it scores a 3. Category II’s second variable is *ethnic election*, where a group believes it exists to fulfill a special destiny (Cauthen 2004). This supplies solidarity in the face of oppression and compels individuals to become worthy of their ethnic origins (Smith 2002). Some groups who fail to fulfill their sacred mission believe they are then condemned (Cauthen 2004). If there is little or no belief, the variable scores a 1. If a minority holds the belief, the subcomponent scores a 2. If there is widespread belief in ethnic election, the value is strong, measuring a 3.

The third variable for myths is *group heroism*, which inspires pride and ethnocentrism. Smith (2002, 19) defines heroism as tales of “saints and sages … ancestors and heroes, and the courage, tenacity and fortitude of the common people in the face of oppression”. Past battles provide groups with a sense of either great honour or shame. This past creates a living memory; groups seek either to return to an era of historic victories, or to correct behaviour that led to catastrophic defeats (Spicer 1971; Smith 2002). Myths and stories provide lessons that inspire ethnic group members to re-establish heroic traits or to overcome the vices that led to their ethnic decay (Smith 2002). If a historic enemy continues to live in ethnic memory, it further solidifies the group. Either victory or defeat can influence the strength of ethnic group identity (Eller 1999). The group must believe in ethnic hero(es)/martyr(s) to score a 3. A score of 2 is given to those groups that have widespread belief in either victory or defeat in legendary battles. Groups that have neither score a 1.

These concepts are strengthened by the fourth variable, *common history*. Kaufman (2001) argues that ethnic identity is partly based on the group’s understanding of its own history. Pasic (1996) believes that history is the tool through which ethnic communities are imagined. Perhaps the most important element of common history is the existence of historical memories of which ethnic groups are a product (Smith 1991). Without memory, there is no ethnic group (Eller 1999; Schwartz 2000). Historical animosity and ethnic violence create a group identity that is explicitly opposed to the “other”, thus strengthening the “us”. These conflicts, animosities or myths need not be “real”, only perceived (Cross and Komnenich 2005). Some scholars suggest that memory is not something of the past but is actualised by the active remembrance, remaking, and re-performance of the actions. It is not only nostalgia but *anamnesis*, or living memory (Hahn 2005). Memory is an active agent in self-awareness and thus group awareness (Wojtyła 1995). It is an ontological event that exists as past, present, and future simultaneously. As Ratzinger (1988, 80) notes, memory “forms a historical continuity, setting fixed standards but never itself reaching a final point at which it belongs only to the past”. If no significant number of people believes in a common history, the value scores a 1; if only a minority holds the belief, it scores a 2; if a majority of the group shares the belief, it scores a 3.

Category III consists of four variables that demonstrate shared traditions. These are Religion, Dress, Cuisine, and Artistic works. It is especially important in this category to utilise primary sources, including ethnic websites. As argued above, the more traits a group shares and the stronger each trait is, the stronger the group’s identity. These variables receive a score of 1 if there is no evidence of sharing a cultural trait, or if the trait plays no significant role in a group’s culture; a score of 2 if the trait is shared by a minority of the population, or if the trait is reserved for special holidays or observances; and a score of 3 if a majority of the population shares the cultural trait on a daily basis.

It is well established that religion binds individuals (Enloe 1996; Seul 1999; Horowitz 2000; Acker 2004; Harff and Gurr 2004). Enloe (1996) argues that there are significant differences among religions and how those bear on ethnicity’s expression, and how this is maintained. She explains that religious distinction is a key factor of ethnicity. Based on this assertion, if religion is not important in an ethnic group, it receives a score of 1. If members of the same ethnic group
accept different religions or different sects of a religion, it measures moderately, with a score of 2. If the ethnic group is homogeneous in its religious beliefs, the variable measures strongly with a score of 3.

\textit{Dress} refers to an ethnic group having distinct traditional clothing. Dress receives a score of 1 if there is no distinction between ethnic groups; a score of 2 when a minority wears a distinct ethnic garb or if an ethnic garb is worn on special holidays and occasions; and a score of 3 when the majority wears a distinct ethnic garb. Regarding \textit{Cuisine}, a 1 is assigned when ethnic groups have no distinct food compared to others; a 2 when there are some elements of a distinct food, but most food is non-distinct; and a 3 when distinct food is the almost exclusive choice for a majority of the group. Likewise, \textit{Artistic works} receives a 1 if these have no distinct style compared to other groups and/or are not widely appreciated or highly regarded; a 2 if they have some distinctive elements and/or are only important and appreciated on special occasions; and a 3 if they are thoroughly distinct and important in everyday life.

Category IV is solidarity, which is divided into four variables: \textit{Group factions}, \textit{Group objectives}, \textit{Group concentration}, and \textit{Interrmarriage rates}. \textit{Group factions} denote whether a group has distinct political parties, either formal or unofficial. Distinct parties show that the group has separate organisational structures to impose one faction’s will over the other. \textit{Group factions} – defined by differing loyalties to family, tribe or clan, and party – suggest that group identity might not be strong enough to motivate a group to collective actions (Harff and Gurr 2004). Identification with local clans and factions may be stronger than identification with the larger ethnic group, which may fracture the common group identity and even cause intra-group violence (Harff and Gurr 2004). A group scores a weak 1 if there are many factions, a moderate 2 if there are only two factions and a strong 3 if there are no major factions.

\textit{Group objectives} demonstrate that an ethnic identity exists as the impetus for collective action (Posen 1993). Differences in goals imply that the group disagrees on pivotal issues; the group is divisive and lacks complete solidarity. Group objectives score a weak 1 if there are many conflicting goals; a moderate 2 if there are both conflicting and common goals; and a strong 3 if there are common goals agreed upon by the majority. \textit{Group concentration or dispersion} is the third variable. Gurr (1998) argues that group solidarity is strong where groups are highly concentrated. Therefore, if a group is widely dispersed, it scores a weak 1. If the group is somewhat concentrated, it scores a moderate 2, and if the group is highly concentrated, it scores a strong 3.

The last variable is the group’s \textit{Interrmarriage rates}. Esman (2004) argues that intermarriage may lead to assimilation and thus to the loosening of ethnic bonds; even when communities seem to be pluralistic and tolerant, most do not intermarry. Attachment to original ethnic communities diminishes through intermarriage (Francis 1947; Tzeng 2000; Esman 2004; Makabe 2005). High intermarriage rates demonstrate that individuals identify more with a civil notion of groupness (Gagnon 1994–1995; Brubaker and Laitin 1999). If an ethnic group has an intermarriage rate of zero to 10%, it scores a strong 3; 11–19%, it scores a moderate 2; 20% and higher, it scores a weak 1.

\textbf{The EGII and the case of Chechnya}

It must be noted that this portion of the paper could be a paper in itself. However, the present author has made all attempts to make the case study accurate and illustrative, without being too lengthy. Of course, much more attention could be given to each variable, but for the sake of length, this section illustrates only the essentials to illustrate the EGII.

Tishkov (2005) argues that most observers of Chechen identity fail to understand that it was created and manipulated by its leaders for political purposes. He argues that Chechens do not have a distinct enough identity to explain the war with Russia. He contends that what most scholars
perceive as Chechen identity was created immediately prior to conflict, maintained and crystalised during conflict, and continued to grow afterwards. Chechen identity was manufactured by those who wanted to mobilise towards their own goals. Although some of his critique may be true, Tishkov fails to consider the importance of the identity the Chechens perceive and define for themselves. The observations of social scientists matter far less to ethnic group identity than what the group itself perceives to be true.

**Category I: observable traits**

**Distinct group name:** Ethnic Chechens consist of several clan-based units. Each clan understands that it is part of a larger whole, which has its own name: *Nokhchii* is the plural, *Nokhchiin’qam*, “The Chechen People”, and *Nokhei* or *Nokhcho* is the singular. Chechens call their country either *Nokhchichoe* (The Chechen Home), *Kokhchiin mokhk* (The Chechen Country), or *Daimokhk* (Fatherland) (Jaimoukha 2005). This analysis illustrates that the group name “Chechen”, in its various forms, constitutes a distinct group and therefore measures a 3 for the variable distinct group name.

**Length of group existence:** The Chechen nation originated in Shem Country thousands of years ago. Many Chechen chroniclers date Chechen existence to over 40,000 years ago. The first mention of the early Chechens, known as *Nakhchmateans*, is found in medieval Georgian and Armenian chronicles (Jaimoukha 2005). Arabic sources mention the *Nokhchii* as far back as the eighth century AD. The Russian term Chechen was first used in 1692, and the Russian country name, Chechnya, was first shown on Russian maps in 1719 (Jaimoukha 2005). Many Chechens claim their ancestors were first mentioned in the fourth century BC. Chechens have archaeological evidence suggesting they have lived in the same settled territory for an extremely long time (Lieven 1998). Most experts place clear-cut evidence of the modern understanding of “Chechens” as a group at the fifteenth century, because many of Chechnya’s epic tales, *illesh*, are traced to this era. Since evidence of Chechen existence as a distinct group can be traced back more than 500 years, this variable measures a 3 on the EGII.

**Ethnic territory:** While Russia currently controls Chechnya, its distinct borders are undisputed. Located in the Caucasus Mountain range in southwest Russia, Chechnya borders Russia’s Stavropol province to the north. It is bordered by Dagestan to the north and east. To its south lies the independent country of Georgia. On its western boundary are Ingushetia and a tiny sliver of North Ossetia. Clearly, Chechnya does have distinct boundaries. Because these are well established, the variable ethnic territory measures a 3.

**Language:** Though it shares some characteristics with neighbouring languages, the Chechen language has no contemporary relatives (Politkovskaya 2003). Baiev explains that many natives lost the use of Chechen language when it was banned by the Soviet Union. Many families used it in private to preserve Chechen culture (Baiev 2003). Chechen returned to schools in 1990, but Russia changed the traditional Chechen alphabet to both Latin and Cyrillic, leaving a great majority unable to decipher it (Wood 2007). Despite this, in 1989, 99.9% of Chechens claimed their national traditional language as their spoken tongue. Another 73.4% stated they were also fluent in Russian, but at least 94% claimed they speak only Chechen within their families. Since 1991, only 2% of Chechen children in primary schools still received schooling only in Russian (Mikhailov 2005). Chechens have a distinct, consistently spoken language, and when allowed, Chechens were eager to once again master their native literacy. The variable language measures a 3 on the EGII.

With each of the above variables measuring a 3, the total score for Category I is a 12, the highest possible measure. This part of Chechen identity is strong. This does not imply that
Chechnya’s ethnic group identity is strong, but that these four variables are. It is necessary to measure the other three categories in order to better understand Chechen identity.

**Category II: myths, symbols, and stories**

**Myths of common descent or ancestry:** “The Chechens … claim to be mythically descended … from the hero Turpalo-Nokhchuo” (Wood 2007, 12). The idea of ancestry and the dead is central to Chechen identity. Chechen society is based on the teip, an extended kinship community of family groups who argue they can trace their origins to a single individual (Meier 2005; Sakwa 2005a, 2005b; Wood 2007). However, because some teips are so large, many are broken into smaller family units such as gars and nekyes – substitutes for what are commonly known as clans. The Chechens see themselves as a piece in a larger, interconnected, cross-historical ethnic puzzle in which the dead and their memories help form the living. Celebrating the death of an ethnic brother is a pivotal part of being Chechen (Griffin 2001; Politkovskaya 2003). A customary duty requires individuals to remember seven generations of ancestors (Wood 2007). Chechens trace their teips throughout time and have loyalty to all generations (Zurcher 2007). These Chechen clans are familial units that are broken into subunits of smaller families and are sometime referred to as extended families (Sokirianskaia 2004–2005). Chechen society emphasises loyalty to the teip or clan one belongs to and knowledge of its lineage and history. Given this widespread belief in common descent and ancestry, this variable scores a strong 3.

**Ethnic election:** Chechens seem to form a new history rather than reverting to a “blessed”, glorious past. They have no concept of divine destiny or “golden age” to come. A sovereign and prosperous Chechnya is desired, but not “owed” to them. Chechens recall memories of warfare and resistance to Russian rule not to renew a desire for conflict, but to inspire progress. There was a slight increase of belief in a Chechen messianic mission after the first victory over the Russians (Souleimanov 2005), but this attitude was not widespread and it dissipated with the onset of the second Russo-Chechen war. Because there is no belief in ethnic election, this variable scores a 1.

**Group heroism:** Chechen memory is composed of a long cast of villains and saviours, military defeats and victories, which all comprise Chechen identity. As Ware (2005, 89) writes: “[A] defeat is a bitter and enduring affront to the Chechen self-conception … [A] victory … affirms the mythology of Chechen culture”. The first notable hero was Sheikh Mansur Ushurma (1732–1794), who ruled from 1780 to 1791 and was known for inspiring rebellious attitudes towards Russian aggression. Although there is no evidence of Mansur’s origins, his influence on Chechnya is beyond question (Wood 2007; Meier 2005).

Self-titled Imam Mansur also implemented policies stressing more traditional Islamic codes to purify Chechens’ souls and strengthen them for battle. Some Chechens attribute the Chechen warrior-ethos to Mansur. Legend claims that he slept fully armed because a Chechen must be prepared for everything (Smith 1998). The great Sheikh only won one major victory against Catherine the Great (1785) but was honoured because he combined religious teaching with military leadership (Gall and De Wall 1998). Mansur’s name still appears on streets, banknotes, and an airport, and his spirit is said to live on in every Chechen (Meier 2005).

After years of Russian incursions, a new hero emerged: Imam Shamil (1797–1871). Although claimed as Chechen by folklore and legend, Shamil was actually Dagestani, but modern Chechens still idealise him as one of their own. Shamil sought to create a resistance structured to beat the Russians. He created a functional Islamic administration through a system of local governors and implemented Sharia in place of the traditional adat (Lieven 1998), restricting smoking, drinking, women’s attire, as well as music and dance (Dunlop 1998). Shamil distinguished himself as both an important Islamic figure and as a warrior. When, in 1858, Shamil surrendered, Russian soldiers
allegedly saluted him for his courage and talents as a military leader. While Chechens revere his warrior-ethos, his legacy united Chechnya under a religious and moral code. An unlikely hero is the fabled grey mountain wolf, which epitomises everything a Chechen is and should be. It is their national symbol, pride, and ancient deity. Chechens believe fiercely in equality and wish “To be as free as a wolf” (Griffin 2001). Chechnya’s flag sometimes depicts the grey wolf, and poems are written in its honour (Smith 2001). One reads: “Hatred boils in the wolf, Agony grips his strong body. Then the shepherd sees the wolf’s eyes in the darkness and for the first time feels mercy, mercy for this greyskinned heir who dies so well” (Smith 2001, 154). Heroes and martyrs occupy essential roles in Chechen society. As such, the variable Group Heroism measures strongly with a score of 3.

**Common history:** Chechnya’s collective memory is one of the most significant factors of Chechen group identity (Wood 2007). Although contact between Russia and Chechnya dates to the time of Russian Tsar Ivan IV (The Terrible, 1533–1584), most historical memory centres on the Caucasian wars of the 1800s and Stalin’s mass deportations during the 1940s (Tishkov 2005). One of the most traumatic Chechen memories of the Caucasian wars is that of Russian General Alexei Yermolov (1777–1861), who was appointed commander-in-chief of the Russian forces in the Caucasus in 1816.

Russia tried to pacify the Caucasian peoples and control the mountain range as a buffer zone against encroaching Muslim influence from the south. Chechen resistance established a sense of struggles against a common enemy. Although there are several important figures of the Caucasian rebellions, Yermolov is quintessential. The general encouraged his men to rape Chechen women and girls, and to pillage all villages that would not succumb peacefully. Many women and children were sold into slavery. Yermolov constructed a line of forts along the Lower Sunzha River and deported Chechens from the area. Russian forces named the forts to strike fear into all Chechens: Vnezapnaya (sudden), Burnaya (stormy), and Grozny (fierce or terrible) (Dunlop 1998). Yermolov destroyed Chechen crops, killed livestock, and burned villages. The Chechens still hate Yermolov; he is remembered for saying “the only good Chechen is a dead Chechen” (Lieven 1998, 306).

Yermolov deported many Chechens from the plains to the mountains, reversing native demographic trends. He also exiled captured Chechens to Siberia. Stalin built upon Yermolov’s legacy. In 1944, Stalin deported the entire Chechen population to Central Asia. Known to the Chechens as aardakh (Wood 2007), this became crucial to Chechen identity. This was such a destructive event that it could be called the “un-nationing” of a people, like Orwell’s “Unpersons” (Meier 2005). Even the words “Chechnya” and “Chechens” disappeared from the Soviet lexicon (Zurcher 2007). Yet exile only increased Chechen solidarity (Goltz 2003). The loss of 30% (between 170,000 and 200,000) of their population became a major galvanising trauma for Chechens (Wood 2007). Williams (2000) asserts that no event in Chechen collective consciousness provided a greater catalyst for warfare in the 1990s than Stalin’s deportation.

The collective memory of tragic grievances continues to increase, as Chechens perceive Russia’s most recent actions as proof of ethnic victimisation. This focuses Chechen identity and solidarity. Politkovskaya (2003) writes of Chechens wide-eyed with hatred, dreaming of avenging those who have offended them. Many believe attempts to systematically eliminate Chechens is metaphysical, happening always. As one Chechen explains:

> There is no difference in time or space between the Czar’s cannons against Shamil in 1854, the Bolsheviks seducing us to fight against the Whites in 1918, or Stalin deporting us in 1944, or Yeltsin rolling his tanks over our tombstones today. *Every fifty years*, the Russians attempt to eradicate us, because we have *never* submitted. And they will never succeed. (Goltz 2003, 101; italics original)
Collective memories appear to be the crux of Chechen identity, and the variable *Common History* therefore measures strongly with a score of 3.

Of the four variables for Category II, three scored strong 3s, and one scored a 1. The total score in this category is 10, with a mean score of 2.5 for the category. The EGII indicates that this part of Chechen identity is strong and critical for determining if Chechens will engage in deadly combat. This is for future research.

**Category III: culture**

To properly measure the strength of Chechen identity in this category, one must first understand significant cultural aspects that are not specific variables of the EGII. Chechens traditionally follow *adat*, a code of living that has provided the backbone of Chechen culture and morality (Meier 2005; Wood 2007). Although many argue its role is diminishing, it still remains important to many families. *Nokhchallah* describes what it is to be Chechen. If *adat* is institutional norms, *Nokhchallah* are individual norms. A significant part of *Nokhchallah* is its martial ethos, generally reflected by horsemanship, weapon-handling, and the defensive towers guarding villages (Wood 2007). Years of battle have reinforced the warrior society, as “Even today, mothers rock little boys to sleep with lullabies urging them to be brave warriors” (Daniloff 2003, 2). Part of the warrior-ethos is the Chechen tradition of *Ch’ira*, a blood vengeance or vendetta (Baiev 2003). Because Chechen society is anti-hierarchical and based on familial ties away from structured authority, *Ch’ira* is a way to solve societal problems. Chechen society is also known for its culture of hospitality (Wood 2007). Traditionally, a guest’s every request must be fulfilled (Baiev 2003) because Chechens believe that all individuals are creations of Allah (Smith 2001). Tradition demands that a stranger be welcomed, seated by the fire, and offered food and shelter for the night. Having established some elemental aspects of Chechen culture, this section now explains those aspects directly related to the EGII.

Religion: Though the ancient relatives of the Chechens venerated myriad deities, Islam is now the unofficial religion, with many gods being Islamised (Wood 2007). Conversion to Islam began in the sixteenth century, and the great heroes of the nineteenth century solidified its current role. Chechnya adopted Sufism, a mystical form of Islam. Two major sects, or *virids*, exist which clashed with the traditional familial clans known as *teips*. The first of these, *Naqshbandiya*, focuses on egalitarianism, strict adherence to Islamic code (*Sharia*), and defiance of enemy threats (Wood 2007). *Sharia* was not totally accepted by Chechens; they viewed it as opposing the traditional *adat*. *Naqshbandi* was, however, decentralised, making it less hierarchical and more appealing to *teip* lifestyle. It also lent itself to guerrilla warfare against the Russians. *Qadiri*, on the other hand, argued pacifism as a form of opposition. The sect also used music and dancing similar to Chechnya’s traditional *Zikr*, making it more compatible with the local culture than *Naqshbandi* (Wood 2007). Unlike *Naqshbandi, Qadiri* is more centralised. Chechnya today is an Islamic society mixing traditional *adats* with mostly Sufi practices. Together, they tend to, “preach family, neighborly, and communal values” (Politkovskaya 2003, 137). This element of Chechen society is perhaps one of the most important in creating a Chechen identity. Combined, traditional values and Sufi Islam replace the idea of “I”, with the idea of “we”, placing the communal above the self (Politkovskaya 2003).

After the first Russo-Chechen war, Chechnya experienced a surge of Wahhabi Muslims, a sect of Islam that emphasises orthodoxy based upon the life of the Prophet Muhammad and his immediate successors. This influence caused some Chechens to abandon Sufism and *adat* behaviour for a lifestyle based strictly on *Sharia*. Wahhabism attracted younger Chechens who thought it would better strengthen them against Russian aggression than the *adat* (Politkovskaya 2003). However, Wahhabism was more an annoyance than an influence. Most Chechens believed that
pure Islam was almost anti-Chechen, as Chechen religious affiliation is more spiritual, esoteric and, private. For Chechens, tradition, rather than Islam, controlled most daily activities (Smith 2001).

The call issued by Chechnya’s muftiate, forbidding Wahhabism, caused further division (Murphy 2004). Maskhadov, Chechnya’s president, banned the sect in 1998 and issued decrees to expel the Wahhabi intruders. His efforts only emboldened the Wahhabs, and by 1999, Chechnya was divided into two governments: Maskhadov’s and an alternate Islamic government (Murphy 2004). Many argue that Wahhabists’ current influence will decrease after a stable Chechen society forms, because Wahhabism is seen as a form of resistance rather than a sustainable lifestyle (Smith 2001; Politkovskaya 2003). Although Islam’s pivotal role is clear Wahhabism and Sufism vie for the prominent role (Souleimanov 2005). Because of this, religion in Chechnya is a homogeneous heterogeneity, which scores a moderate 2 for this variable.

**Dress:** Although urban Chechens wear some western styles, Chechnya’s distinct traditional dress is maintained in rural settings among the elders. On special occasions even urbanites don traditional clothing (Baiev 2003). Male Chechens wear a beshmet, which can best be described as a waisted garment with banana sleeves. The beshmet often stresses virility by accentuating a thinner waist compared to broad shoulders. The material and quality vary based on both cost and specific occasion. Colours are usually grey, bright red, or blue. Leather or rawhide shoes emphasise softness and silence, ideal for hunting, herding, or war.

On more festive occasions, a cherkeska is worn, which is made of a thin woollen cloth. A cherkeska is a collarless garment made of thin woollen cloth with a single-buttoned waist and flared sleeves extending below the hands, though these are usually rolled up. It is distinguished by symmetrical chest rows of gazymitzas, narrow vertical patch pockets intended for gun cartridges, though newer versions lack the gazymitzas. These garments usually have a narrow belt to carry swords, pistols or kinjal, a Chechen dagger with a long curved blade (Griffin 2001; Baiev 2003). The traditional Arab burka is worn on colder days with the papakha, a large round hat made of sheepskin. In wintery conditions, the traditional hood, or brashly is over the papakha.

Traditionally, women wear cotton or silk tunics that reach the ankle and have small stand-up collars. Sleeves cover the hands and often touch the ground. Underneath, women wear tapered slacks. A headpiece showing social and marital status is also worn. A young girl wears nothing under the hairpiece, but a married woman uses the kerchief to cover a chichi, a cloth bag with braids. These are worn outside the home or when meeting strangers (Baiev 2003). On certain occasions, a short, tight caftan is worn over the tunic, buttoned to the waist, with a stand-up collar. Traditional ornaments are often attached with gold embroideries. Chechens have a distinct type of dress, and traditional garments are still worn by many in the society. This variable scores a strong 3.

**Cuisine:** While distinct from most of the world, Chechen food shares some commonalities with its Caucasian neighbours. Since most meat is rare and expensive, mutton and poultry are most common. Common meals include chureks, or cornbread (siskal) with mutton lard, and a wheat stew with a lard base. Zhzhik-galnish, dumplings with boiled mutton and sauce made from chereemsha, or wild garlic, are a Chechen national favourite (Baiev 2003). Korta-kogish is a delicacy of boiled mutton served on a large platter. Traditionally, the head is served to the guest, who then chooses the first cut for himself. Unleavened wheat and barley bread are eaten daily with milk and cheese.

Chechen cuisine includes everything from cottage cheese and pumpkin to potatoes, ramson, and stinging-nettle. They practice moderation with food and drink. Chechens also historically use an open hearth to prepare foods quickly. This tradition sets Chechnya apart from the habits of
other ethnic groups. Although Western and Far Eastern foods have made their way into Chechnya, Chechens still cherish their culinary traditions. This variable scores a strong 3.

Artistic works: While there are many similar artistic styles in the Caucasus region, a long tradition of native art separates Chechnya from its neighbours by expressing a distinctly Chechen worldview. Some art, notably pottery, dates to the end of the fourth millennium BC. Early Chechen art, typically carvings on towers and vaults, depicts the human hand to represent strength, power and skill. Pictures of swastikas or crosses in a circle represent purity and eternal fire. Further Chechen art, some of which is still used, references the sun, moon, other heavenly bodies, and fertility symbols (Jaimoukha 2005).

Chechens are also known for their painting, which, despite only dating to the beginning of the nineteenth century, has strengthened cultural traditions. Most art depicts stone structures, landscapes and other native scenes. More recent art either emphasises the atrocities of the recent wars or idealises freedom and liberty (Jaimoukha 2005). In the 1900s, Chechnya erected several notable art museums, though most were destroyed by war. While the wars have destroyed much of Chechnya’s art, they have inspired at least one masterpiece that serves as a national symbol of mourning for the victims of the aardakh: the Memorial to the Chechen Genocide. According to Goltz (2003), the memorial, located in an ancient cemetery, consists of a pair of hands imploring God for aid. An adjacent wall is engraved with the names of destroyed villages, as well as the number of missing and known dead from each. A large bas-relief is inscribed: “Never Forget and Never Forgive – Never Again” (Goltz 2003, 57).

Chechens are most famous for their stone towers, some of which are a thousand years old, spread like walls throughout the mountains. Construction of these towers peaked in the thirteenth–sixteenth centuries and stopped in the early 1800s. Towers served a variety of roles, including combat protection (b’ov, voi), semi-combat, siege towers, sanctuary in times of Ch’ira, symbols for ancestral clans, and dwellings (ghaala) (Jaimoukha 2005). Most of these towers were modest, especially those designed for war. It is clear that a majority of art in Chechnya is traditional, native, and exclusively Chechen.

In Chechnya, music is a combination of song and dance. Perhaps the best-known dance is the Zikr (Meier 2005). This religious dance is intended to be a spiritual drug, giving dancers an otherworldly high (Smith 2001). Zikr is a mainly Sufi ritual of a circular dance with incantatory ceremony intended as collective prayers which separate the performer’s self from evil desires (Politkovskaya 2003). The Naqshbandi perform a more discreet and quiet Zikr, while for the Qadiriya, Zikr tends to be frenzied and includes drums (Smith 2001). Karny (2000, 205) explains that the Zikr is not a dance but a “dramatic enactment of an encounter with God”.

Beyond the spiritual Zikr, Chechens have several types of native dances, instruments and music. The pondur – a three-chorded instrument with wooden casing – is used during storytelling. During war, this instrument was a prize to be captured by the enemy to devastate spirit and morale. Chechnya also uses the pipe, tambourine, drum, horn, whistle and ghema, a wedding flapper. Most Chechen fiddles (chiondarg) and accordions pre-date their Russian counterparts. Each instrument is assigned to a particular season and role. Many dances are accompanied by a Belkhi, or community get-together (Jaimoukha 2005).

The first recordings of Chechen music were in the mid-nineteenth century by the Decembrist Society. Chechen composer A. A. Davidenko toured the countryside in the 1920s, presenting tunes of historical significance, ancient rituals, love, and dance. The first full arrangement of Chechen folk music was published in 1926. The first Chechen radio broadcasts aired in 1927 (Wood 2007). Songs transition without a pause in between to maintain the mood, and the dance intensifies with each song. Many songs are dialogues requiring one man singing and others responding in chorus, followed by a woman and female chorus, usually becoming a competition. A Chechen dance is a story with a complete plotline. Most popular is the lezghinka,
which is unique to each Chechen village. Several modern song and dance companies keep Chechen music alive. These include: the Chechen-Ingushi State Song and Dance Ensemble; Grozny Philharmonic Society; The Vainakh (meaning “our nation” or “our people”); and several youth groups and companies such as Lovzar, Ziya and Bashlam. Many songs and particular lyrics became popular during the current Russo-Chechen wars, including lyrics which translate to “My city, the city of Grozny, oh, how I miss you, but I shall return to you” (Meier 2005, 9). Significantly, the National Anthem of Chechnya, which is worth reading in full, is a cross between music and literature:

We came onto this earth when the wolf cubs began to whine under the she-wolf’s feet. Our names were picked for us at day-break while the lion roared. Our gentle mothers nurtured us in our eagle nests. And our fathers taught us to tame the oxen of the forests. Our mothers dedicated us to our National and our Homeland. And we shall all rise up to the last one if our nation needs us. We grew up free as the eagles, princes of the mountains. There is no threshold from which we shall shy away. Sooner shall cliffs of granite begin to melt like molten lead than anyone of us shall lose in battle the honor of our noble nature. Sooner shall the earth begin to crack in silence from the heat than we shall lie under the earth, having lost our honor. Never to bow our heads to anyone, we give our sacred pledge. To die or to live in freedom is our fate. Our sisters heal our brothers’ bloody wounds with their songs. Our loving women see us off on our campaigns. If we shall be forced to starve from famine, we shall gnaw the roots of trees. If we shall be deprived of water, we shall drink the dew from the grass. We came onto this earth when the wolf cubs began to whine under the She-wolf’s feet. We pledge our lives to God, our Nation and our Homeland. (Found in Knezys and Sedlickas 1999)

Chechnya has many liturgical myths that detail ancient Chechens’ views of morality and ethics. Chechens have a Prometheus myth in which a man gives up the idea of the self for the happiness of the community. Chechens assert this myth is the beginning of their Nokhchallah, “evidenced” in that Prometheus’ fabled place of banishment is Mount Kazbek in the Caucasus (Karny 2000). Although many Caucasian nations have the Narts, mythical giants of extraordinary prowess, the Chechen version is notably unique. According to the tales, the greatest Chechen warriors came together in solidarity to battle the Narts.

The Chechen oral tradition was eventually printed and a vibrant written tradition soon took hold. Literature about Chechnya includes Hadji Murat by Leo Tolstoy, A Hero of our Time and The Dispute by Mikhail Lermontov, and Alexander Pushkin’s Prisoner of the Caucasus. Alexandre Dumas (as quoted in Meier 2005, 13) once wrote: “A Chechen … may be literally in rags, but his sword, dagger and gun are of the finest quality”. Additionally, In The Gulag Archipelago, Solzhenitsyn writes: “They respected only rebels. And here is an extraordinary thing – everyone was afraid of them … The regime which had ruled the land for thirty years could not force them to respect its laws” (quoted in Karny 2000, 272). Soviet authorities silenced Chechen literature and banned the Chechen language, destroying a large part of their ethnic identity. Chechnya made up for it by translating their language into Latin and Cyrillic. Further, the first Chechen newspaper, Serlo (Light), appeared in 1927.

The Soviets censored Chechen literature during the Cold War, but once the Soviet Union opened up, the Chechens began to speak out especially against their treatment under Stalin. Chechen literature was greatly revived during the Russo-Chechen wars. During and after the war, many books and poems were written solidifying a particular type of literature. Many of these are about the heroes of the recent Russo-Chechen wars. Several Chechen poems were quickly popularised after the death of the first Chechen president, Djokhar Dudayev (Tishkov 2004). Clearly, literature is distinct among Chechens, and even literature written by Russians sometimes expresses a clear Chechen quality that takes on strong meaning for ethnic Chechens. Accordingly, the Artistic works subcomponent scores a strong 3.
Chechnya’s ethnic group identity measures a moderate 2 for religion and strong 3’s for the rest of the index, including dress, cuisine, and artistic works. Category III receives a total score of 11 for the Chechens, with a mean score of 2.75. Like Category I and II, this category of identity appears very strong for the Chechens.

Category IV: Solidarity

**Party factions, Group objectives, Group dispersion/concentration:** In the case of Chechnya, three of the four variables measuring solidarity are interconnected. Therefore, this section will describe **Party factions, Group objectives, and Group dispersion/concentration** as a whole, and then analyse the different variables towards the end. The factions stemming from differences in religion, as well as the loyalty to *teip* and *adat* rather than Islam, must be remembered; however, this section leaves all but Wahhabism aside and describes several other factions.

Early in 1991, a division began forming between Chechen nationalists, who wanted complete independence from Russia, and the moderate wing who were more willing to negotiate (Evangelista 2002). Dudayev, upon first coming into power, promoted a republic that would be Chechen, not Islamic, in nature (Mikhailov 2005). Within the nationalist camp were two smaller divisions: one sect wanted full sovereignty, while the other wanted only autonomy.

Pro-Russian forces – who maintained a complete loyalty to Moscow and wanted to remain a Russian republic – outnumbered both moderates and radicals. By fall 1994, Moscow believed loyal public figures had consolidated power and territory against the separatists. To a point, this was true; Dudayev only enjoyed spontaneous support, usually when doing so propelled a group’s interests (Mikhailov 2005). Dudayev’s main support came from rural citizens who lacked the benefits their urban counterparts received from the Soviet Union. A significantly high concentration of Chechens lived in rural districts (Mikhailov 2005).

Division between highlanders and lowlanders in the rural districts created further complications (Tishkov 2004). Dudayev was leading a revolution against Russia, so those that did not benefit from Soviet rule sided with him; those who benefitting formed the opposition (Wood 2007). Dudayev became more radical as he encountered more intragroup opposition and Moscow’s forces. The radical faction was not numerous, but it soon distinguished itself as effective in combat, especially once joined with Wahhabist forces. Inter-*teip* relations became another source of division. Many in Chechnya swear allegiance to their clans rather than the larger national unit (Sokirianskaia 2004–2005). As Chechens often remember affronts to their families by ethnic Russians, so too do they remember historical inter-*teip* animosities, which subdue larger national appeals at times.

By late 1994, conflict between elites and a divided society became clear (Mikhailov 2005). By New Year’s Day 1995, the official start of the first Russo-Chechen war, several smaller conflicts were taking place amongst groups inside Chechnya: Chechens who supported Dudayev; Chechens who supported autonomy but not necessarily Dudayev; Pro-Moscow Chechens who fought with Russian forces or were supplied by Moscow as proxy units; and the Russian military. Though war between ethnic groups sometimes helps solidify collective identity, the collective trauma of war instead created a division in Chechnya (Tishkov 2004). Some Chechens fought for nationalism, while others fought with the ultimate goal of creating an Islamic emirate. Pro-Chechnya Chechens were split between nationalist and jihadist camps (Moore and Tumelty 2009).

The above descriptions suggest that: (a) there were many group factions inside Chechnya, including pre-war, mid-war, and post-war society; (b) factions were split further by their rural versus urban population; and (c) each faction had diverging objectives that only merged for
self-interested purposes. Accordingly, it is accurate to score Chechnya at a weak 1 for factions, group objectives, and group dispersion.

**Intermarriage rates:** Chechnya has an extremely low intermarriage rate, mainly due to considerable cultural divisions between ethnic Chechens and their inter-ethnic neighbours (Mikhailov 2005). Some Chechen men marry Russian women, but it is discouraged, even considered treasonous, because it separates him from his cultural roots and upsets his parents, potentially damaging teip or even affecting adat (Baiev 2003). Census data reports more than 90% of Chechnya is inhabited by ethnic Chechens. Although exact statistics are not available, it is clear that Chechens have a low intermarriage rate, thereby giving this variable a score of 3. The other three variables in Category IV score 1’s, resulting in a total of 6 for Category IV, with a mean of 1.5. This is the lowest mean score for Chechnya in the EGII and could explain why the Chechens have not fared better in their war against Russia. Of course, several hypotheses could explain this score. What remains is to attempt to understand which came first: a strong Russian machine that made the Chechens disorganised and incohesive, or historical decentralisation within Chechnya. This is a question for future research.

Table 2. Chechnya’s scored EGII.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Strength of identity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Weak (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Category I: Observable traits</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a) Distinct group name</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Group existence</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) Ethnic territory</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(d) Distinct ethnic language</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total score for Category I: 12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean score for Category I: 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Category II: Myths, symbols, and stories</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a) Myth of common descent or ancestry</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Ethnic election (chosen peoples)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) Group heroism</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(d) Common history (historical memory)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total score for Category II: 10</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean score for Category II: 2.5</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Category III: Culture</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a) Religion</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Dress</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) Cuisine</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(d) Artistic works</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total score for Category III: 11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean score for Category III: 2.75</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Category IV: Solidarity</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a) Party factions</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Group objectives</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) Group dispersion/concentration</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(d) Inter-marriage rates</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total score for Category IV: 6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean score for Category IV: 1.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EGII total score for Chechnya: 39</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EGII mean score: 2.437</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conclusion

Chechnya’s strength of identity for Category I, *Observable traits*, measures a total score of 12 with a mean of 3; this category is strong. Category II, *Myths, symbols and stories* measures a total of 10 with a mean of 2.5; this category is moderate to strong. Category III, *Culture*, measures a total score of 11 with a mean of 2.75; this category is moderate to strong, leaning heavily towards strong. Category IV, *Solidarity*, measures a total score of 6 with a mean of 1.5, suggesting that this category is weak to moderate. Combining all four categories, the Chechens receive a total score for the EGII of 39, with a mean of 2.437, suggesting that Chechens have a moderate to strong sense of ethnic group identity (Table 2). As argued above, strength of ethnic group identity is connected to collective action, especially ethnic conflict and civil war. The literature is beset with supposed connections between action and identity, but without a rigorous measurement of group identity, such connections remain hypothetical. The EGII provides a more rigorous framework for measuring the ethnic group identity.

What is most important to policy implications is determining if a group actually has an ethnic group identity. Hypothetically, a group with a strong ethnic identity is unlikely to go away peacefully if its identity is not fully recognised. Even if only a small number are willing to fight for their identity (Schaefer 2011), the group is likely to remain and strive for recognition. For ethnic groups, identity is part of their ontological realness, intrinsically attached to perceived notions of security and existence. If one group targets ethnic traits of another group (for instance, silencing an ethnic language), the victimised group is likely to perceive it as an attack on their existence. This “identity cleansing” or “identicide” is construed by members of the targeted ethnic group as a threat to their very existence. Such threats, real or perceived, may incite retaliation. At this point, a traditional ethnic security dilemma occurs (Posen 1993), making deadly ethnic violence likely. In matters of ethnic groups without government control, this likely response is insurgency or terrorism, as in Chechnya. This connection between identity, security, and violence cannot fully be tested until a rigorous measurement of identity is created. This paper has attempted to begin such a measurement.

If scholars can single out those groups with strong identities, it may be possible to isolate the factors that cause ethnic tensions, and perhaps to mitigate conflicts before they begin. If we can accurately measure ethnic group identity rather than individual indicators of ethnicity, practitioners can determine whether a conflict is truly ethnic in nature, or whether ethnicity is being used as a scapegoat. An accurate way to measure identity helps pinpoint the ultimate and proximate causes of ethnic tensions and suggests ways to single out the largest oppositional factors, creating the conditions to alleviate ethnic war before it erupts into genocide.

The most important characteristic of an ethnic group is that all members recognise it as distinct and binding. This realisation is the basis of an ethnic group identity, by which individuals determine “selfness”. This selfness should receive more focus by ethnic scholars, for its existence in conflict makes ethnic atrocities likely. Perhaps through more rigorous investigations into ethnic studies, we can understand and prevent perceived ontological threats to group existential security. This author acknowledges that the EGII is a work in progress. It is just the first step towards understanding identity. It requires validation and reliability tests. Current research focuses on more case studies to include in the EGII database to develop a large N, so that comparisons can be made and reliability and validity tested. Further, such a database will need continuous maintenance and updating to account for changes in identity. However, even with this noted, the EGII provides a step in the right direction and offers valuable tools for those who investigate group identity.
Acknowledgements

The author thanks Dr J. Christopher Paskewich, Dr Martha Humphries Ginn, Dr Kathleen Searles, Dr Lance Hunter, Dr Melissa Powell-Williams, Kirsten Fitzgerald, his undergraduate research assistant, the journal editors, and the anonymous reviewers for their valuable feedback and comments. The author also thanks Nicole Rangel for her most valuable support.

Notes

1. I am grateful to Dr Lance Hunter for this argument and suggestion.
2. I am indebted to one of the anonymous reviewers for pointing this fact out to me.

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