

# Review article: Chechen Combatants' Involvement as Foreign Fighters in Ukraine and in Syria and Iraq

Péter Marton  
Annamária Kiss

***Abstract:** This review article offers a preliminary assessment of the drivers of Chechen combatants' involvement in conflicts outside Chechnya: in Ukraine, and in Syria and Iraq. Countering the popular stereotype of a "warlike" Chechen people, it takes a look at the complex and varied reasons for Chechen involvement in different conflicts outside Chechnya. We are interested in investigating mechanisms of mobilization in the case of all the relevant Chechen factions (including the Moscow-backed local leadership of Ramzan Kadyrov, and Islamists) based on the so far scarce evidence that is available, calling for further research on the subject. The article begins with an overview of the scholarly literature on foreign fighters embedded in a discussion of related subjects that research on foreign fighters has tended to ignore thus far. This may help us develop a basic understanding of the phenomenon, to generate hypotheses as to what to expect. These shall constitute a benchmark against which differences between Chechen combatants' profiles in different conflicts, and in the ranks of different factions, may be discussed in a structured manner, identifying those critical issues that will need to be investigated further as more information on the subject becomes available.*

## **Introduction: The Need for a Broad Approach to Foreign Fighters**

Much of the available literature framed as research on "foreign fighters" focuses on Muslims who go abroad to join fighting