TERRORISM IN CHECHNIA: DEFINITION OF THE PHENOMENON AND ITS EXPLANATION

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"Much has been written about terrorism; albeit a phenomenon that seems to have been studied in detail, it remains sinister, enigmatic, irrational, and defying complete understanding."[1] It is hard to deny this opinion of prominent Russian Orientalist Georgy Mirskiy: it can be applied both to the theoretical-methodological side of the phenomenon and to a case study of terrorism in Chechnia. In the past ten years the concept of terrorism has been closely associated with Chechnia; this definition, as well as the much more recent coinage, counter-terrorist operation, have been accepted by the Russian expert community

[1] G.I. Mirskiy, "Drakon vstaet na dyby," *Posev,* No. 7, 2003, p. 14.

to the extent that they require no further explanation. Both of these phrases have even become journalist clichés, incantations devoid of any scholarly meaning. Paradoxically, terrorism and the counter-terrorist operation in Chechnia as two specific problems remain outside the limelight of attention. Normally, they are discussed together with other, wider, problems: the relations between the federal Center and the separatists, between the Kremlin and the pro-Russian administration of Chechnia, the military-political aspects, and the problems of Islamic revival in the Caucasus. Meanwhile, any attempt at a meaningful investigation of the phenomena of "Chechen terrorism" and the "counter-terrorist operation" runs across difficulties of a scholarly and applied nature that call for profound investigation rather than superficial descriptions.

Here I shall attempt to discuss terrorism in Chechnia as an independent political phenomenon, investigate, in particular, its specific problems, identify its place among other separatist political practices, deflate the concept of terrorism as applied to Chechnia, distinguish between the terrorist acts of local separatists and common banditry and criminal activity, analyze these "terrorist rhythms" in order to explain their frequency and the causes behind their acceleration and slowing down, and discuss whether the term "counter-terrorist operation" can be applied to Russia's policy in Chechnia after 1999, as well as the causes and possible results of its use.

"Chechen Terrorism": An Attempt at Definition

Terrorism which is called "Chechen terrorism" cannot be unequivocally described as ethnic or religious, even though ethnic Chechens predominate among the perpetrators of terrorist acts and among those who plan them; there are also Arabs and RF citizens from Daghestan, Karachaevo-Cherkessia, North Ossetia, and the Stavropol Territory, ethnic Russians among them. Their Islamic rhetoric cannot conceal the fact that the slogan "Islamic purity and defense of faith" comes second after the idea of the republic's independence in the ideological repertoire of independent Ichkeria. Political scientist Oumar Alissoultanov correctly points out: "The militant trend of Islam ... as believed, [was] 'imported' by Arab and Daghestani missionaries. However, it remains marginal in Chechnia. During the first and the second wars, it earned some popularity among the rebels. Some rebels' fractions, supported by Islamic fanatics from abroad, defined their struggle as *jihad* against 'pagan' Russia, and declared the 'liberation' of Caucasian Muslims and the creation of an Islamic State as their ultimate goal. However, for the majority of the rebels, despite repeated reference to Islamic values, their cause was primarily political and not religious."[2] It seems that another specialist in Islam, Alexei Malashenko of Russia, was also right when he wrote that radical Islam was actively exploited by the Chechen separatists with different degrees of intensity as a means of justifying their terrorist acts (it was most prominent in the latter half of the 1990s).[3] Separatist groups, too, treated radical Islam as a means of struggle differently.

It seems that the terrorist acts of the Chechen separatists that resounded all over the world were carried out for the sake of "liberating Ichkeria," rather than for the sake of Islamic purity. Shamil Basaev's raid of Budennovsk on 14 June, 1995; Salman Raduev's invasion of Kizliar in January 1996, and the terrorist act in a Moscow theater on 23-26 October, 2002 were accompanied by demands to stop the fighting, withdraw the RF Interior Ministry troops and units from Chechnia, and start political negotiations about the republic's future status. Contemporary "Chechen" terrorism can be more correctly described as separatist terrorism with certain ethnic and religious overtones.

[2] O. Alissoultanov, "The Chechen Crisis: Genesis, Dynamics, and Recent Trends," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 2 (26), 2004, p. 19.

[3] See: A.V. Malashenko, *Islamskie orientiry Severnogo Kavkaza,* Moscow, 2001.

In addition, "Chechen terrorism" can hardly be defined as terrorism in the strictly academic sense of the word because, among other things, those who planned and carried out these terrorist acts never shouldered political responsibility. The ties between the masterminds behind them and the Chechen separatists were usually revealed during the investigation process and court proceedings.

It is hard to identify "Chechen terrorism" and analyze it because the concept itself is being devalued in numerous memoirs (mainly written by former officers of the army and special services), in the press, and even in academic writings: it is applied to a wide range of illegal acts.[4] They describe banditry and attacks on Russian military facilities as terrorism without formulating any political aims, hostage taking, and slave trade. The best possible definition of the phenomenon of terrorism requires special theoretical and methodological investigation, yet I think it is necessary to say here that "Chechen terrorism" cannot be fully identified with the deviant behavior of certain defenders of "free Ichkeria." I believe that "Chechen terrorism" is part of Chechen separatism which manifests itself in various forms and results. In short, not everything that has taken place in Chechnia since 1991 can be described as terrorism.

Academic writings abound in often highly emotional definitions of terrorism. For example, Richard Falk, an American expert in international law, describes any type of political violence carried out without adequate moral or legal justification as terrorism, irrespective of whether it was carried out by a revolutionary group or a government.[5] Most students of terrorism agree that it is hard to identify it and offer a more or less consistent definition of it. They all agree, however, that terrorism is a political act and politically motivated violence. According to Georgy Mirskiy, it is precisely the political side of terrorism that allows researchers "to discount mafia wars and gangster gun fights even if their methods are very similar to those used in political acts."[6] From this it follows that "Chechen terrorism" today carries out politically motivated actions and has nothing in common with the banditry of marginalized independence fighters. But this is not to say that a stricter approach to the definition of this kind of terrorism politically or legally justifies the activities of ordinary criminals. All we are talking about is two different forms of social behavior in post-Soviet Chechnia.

The Russian authorities regard terrorism in Chechnia not as a means (one of many) the separatists are using, but as their ultimate aim, precisely because the concept of terrorism has become too vague. The term "counter-terrorist operation," which is very unfortunate from the political standpoint, is closely connected with the above. Let me remind you that "at the time the federal armed forces were sent to Chechen territory in the fall of 1999, it was stated that the counter-terrorist operation would last for two months."[7] The operation turned out to be much longer, which means that the authorities fell into their own trap. The number of terrorist acts in the country has not declined—it has grown. The forms and methods have also changed: today, suicide terrorists are widely used. The problem is rooted in the wrong definition of the meaning and nature of the political challenge, rather than in the Russian leaders' ability (or inability) to address the problem of the republic's continued existence within the Russian Federation. There are cases when purely academic problems of terminology produce political results.

Regrettably, in 1999 the Russian authorities were much more concerned with their rating than with anything else and failed to explain to the public the obvious: control over the mutinous republic and suppression of the seats of open resistance would force separatists to turn to terrorism. A blitzkrieg in such situations is impossible. The evil is not rooted in the bombing of apartment blocks, it is rooted in the causes that make separatist sentiments popular in Chechnia. The Chechens have preserved their archaic political culture; their society has a negative attitude toward social and economic modernization and liberalization; and on top of this, force in the Caucasus is regarded as a universal means of dealing with local and global problems. On the whole, the people in Chechnia do not approve of Russia's efforts to incorporate Chechnia.

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[4] See: A.G. Mikhailov, *Chechenskoe koleso. General FSB svidetel'stvuet,* Moscow, 2002; V. Stepakov, *Bitva za "Nord Ost,"* Moscow, 2003; M.P. Trebin, *Terrorism v XXI veke,* Minsk, 2003.

[5] See: R. Falk, *Revolutionaries and Functionaries. The Dual Face of Terrorism,* E.P. Dutton, New York, 1988, p. XIV.

[6] G.I. Mirsky, op. cit.

[7] V.A. Koreniako, "Federal'niy tsentr i chechenskiy krizis (nekotorye voenno-politicheskie i psikhologicheskie problemy)," *Sotsial'no-politicheskaia situatsia na Kavkaze: istoria, sovremennost, perspektivy,* Moscow, 2001, p. 61.

It is impossible to discuss the above in any detail within the scope of a single article. One thing is clear, though: separatism and political violence in Chechnia have deep-rooted historical and cultural reasons. So sending in federal forces will not cut down the number of terrorist acts; it will increase, which means that the wave of terrorist activity will rise even higher. This is the price of military control over the most troublesome region in the Russian Federation. It would have been much wiser to talk about a military operation as part of the general anti-separatist strategy. The term "counter-terrorist operation" forced the Russian Federation to vindicate itself and look like a country unable to control terrorism. This gives rise not only to the academic, but also to the applied task of clarifying the essence and nature of "Chechen terrorism" aimed at creating an adequate state policy in Chechnia and formulating an ideology of anti-separatist actions.

Chechen separatists have been using terrorism as a means of struggle with varying degrees of intensity: when the Russian army and other power structures scored victories over organized illegal armed units of separatists (Budennovsk, 1995), the separatists intensified their terrorist activity to minimize the effect of Russia's victories. Terrorism was used as a means of attracting the world community's attention to Chechnia's problems and presenting Russia's actions negatively. This explains why at the initial stages of the political struggle (1991-1994), terrorism was of secondary importance, which cannot justify other, no less destructive, forms of political struggle by the founders of independent Ichkeria.

The "First Ichkeria": Terrorism as a Means of Secondary Importance

The social and political situation in Chechnia became aggravated in November 1990 when an Executive Committee elected by the Chechen National Congress (CNC) passed a decision on the republic's state independence. In the summer of 1991, the CNC was transformed into the National Congress of the Chechen People (NCCP) under the leadership of Major-General of the Soviet Air Force Jokhar Dudaev (he retired in 1990). Early in September 1991, the NCCP leaders started carrying out their plan to separate Chechnia from Russia. During the storming of the Supreme Soviet of the Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Republic, the only legitimate body of republican power at the time, 40 deputies were mercilessly beaten up; Iury Kutsenko, chairman of the City Council of Grozny, was murdered. The political murder of a member of the "old regime" was a symbolic act. According to Akhmar Zavgaev, who saw the events of 6 September, 1991 with his own eyes, "Mayor of Grozny Iury Kutsenko was murdered. He was thrown out of a third-floor window. I think it was a trial balloon of sorts. They (the "Ichkerian revolutionaries."—*S.M.*) wanted to see how the Russian leaders would react to the death of a man who was the mayor of Grozny and first secretary of the city C.P.S.U. committee. No reaction followed."[8] The NCCP activists also illegally detained the prosecutor-general of the Chechen-Ingush A.S.S.R. and kept him under arrest for a week because he branded their actions as unconstitutional.

On 5 October, 1991 NCCP armed fighters captured the building of the republican KGB and mortally wounded Lieutenant-Colonel N. Aiubov, who was on duty. In response to the resolution of the Presidium of the R.S.F.S.R. Supreme Soviet on the Political Situation in the Chechen-Ingush Republic dated 8 October, 1991, the NCCP announced mobilization of all males between the ages of 15 and 55 and described the document as interference in the internal affairs of the independent republic. On 27 October, 1991, "free elections" controlled by NCCP fighters were held. According to different sources, some 10 to 12 percent of the total number of voters came to the polls to elect the first president of the "independent Chechen Republic—Ichkeria." On 2 November, 1991 General Dudaev, the newly elected president, is-

[8] "'Den banditizma, terrorizma i proizvola.' 10 let nazad nachalas noveyshaia chechenskaia istoria," *Kommersant-Daily,* 6 September, 2001.

sued a decree on Sovereignty of the Chechen Republic.[9] With his decree No. 178 of 9 November, 1991, Boris Yeltsin introduced a state of emergency in the Chechen-Ingush A.S.S.R. On the same day, three Chechen terrorists armed with guns and hand grenades hijacked a Tu-154 aircraft with 171 passengers on board flying from Mineralnye Vody (in the Caucasus) to Ekaterinburg (in the Urals). On their demand, the aircraft landed in the Turkish capital of Ankara. This was the hijackers' way of protesting the state of emergency in Chechnia. The next day the passengers were sent to Ekaterinburg. It seems that at the first stage of the "Ichkerian revolution," the terrorist acts (murder of the mayor of Grozny and the hijacking) were more than mere acts of intimidation. They were the means of legitimizing the new "sovereign state" and forcing Moscow to make political concessions.

With his second decree, Dudaev called on all Muslims living in Moscow to turn the Russian capital into "a disaster zone for the sake of our common freedom from *kufr* (godlessness)."[10] The document was designed to enlist support outside the republic. In December 1991, Dudaev issued a decree on the Right of the Citizens of the Chechen Republic to Buy and Possess Personal Fire Arms and on Limiting the Right to Carry Them, which essentially allowed the autochthonous ethnos to possess fire arms.[11] Beginning in February 1992, armed detachments of separatists launched regular attacks against the army units and Russian Interior Ministry units stationed close to the Chechen border.

Before they switched to active terror outside Chechnia in 1995-1996, the leaders of the self-proclaimed Chechen Republic of Ichkeria, which remained unrecognized by the international community, began exterminating the "non-titular" population, Russian speakers in the first place. This went on until December 1994 when the Russian federal forces entered the republic; this policy was resumed in 1996-1999, the second period of independence.

About 220,000 people left Chechnia (according to the last Soviet population census of 1989, there were 294,000 Russians living in the Chechen-Ingush A.S.S.R.). According to the Minister for Chechnia Stanislav Iliasov, there were 500 Russians living in Grozny (the figure for 19 April, 2001); about 8,000 lived in the Naurskaia District; and about 5,000 in the Shelkovskaia District. According to Konstantin Kosachev, deputy chairman of the RF State Duma committee for foreign affairs, 21,000 Russians were killed in Chechnia between 1991 and 1999, not counting those who perished in the hostilities. Over 100,000 houses and apartments belonging to the non-titular population were captured by the Chechens.[12]

During their "first independence," the Chechens started capturing transportation means outside the republic. This deserves special consideration. On 24 December, 1993, in Rostov-on-Don, four Chechens captured a bus and later a helicopter with hostages. The helicopter and an aircraft carrying the ransom money and members of the Russian power structures left for Mineralnye Vody. Three of the four Chechens were detained in Chechnia (at the village of Bacha-Iurt, 15 km away from the Daghestanian administrative border). On 26 May, 1994, in the village of Kinzhal (Stavropol Territory), four Chechens captured a bus with students and schoolteachers on board traveling from Vladikavkaz to Stavropol. On 27 May, they were disarmed in Chechnia (in the village of Bacha-Iurt). On the same day, in Ingushetia (close to the administrative border with North Ossetia), eight Georgian citizens (working on the Trans-Caucasian highway) were murdered. According to the law enforcement structures of Ingushetia, the terrorist act was accomplished in several minutes, which testified, they said, to the fact that "professional terrorists" were involved. On 28 June, 1994, three men (two Chechens and one Kumyk) captured a regular bus with 40 passengers on board going from Stavropol to Mozdok. On 29 June, the perpetrators were detained as a result of a successful operation in the village of Braguny (Gudermes District). On 29 July, 1994, four Chechens captured a regular bus with 40 people on board going from Piatigorsk to Sovetskiy and demanded a ransom of $15 million. As soon as they arrived at the airport of Mineralnye Vody, the hostages were

[9] A.V. Malashenko, D.V. Trenin, *Vremia Iuga. Rossia v Chechne. Chechnia v Rossii,* Moscow, 2002, p. 16.
[10] *Sbornik ukazov prezidenta Chechenskoy Respubliki s noiabria 1991 po 30 iiulia 1992 g.,* Grozny, 1992, p. 4.
[11] Ibidem.
[12] See: N.N. Velikaia, S.L. Dudarev, "Iz istorii russkogo naselenia Chechni," *Rossia na rubezhe tysiachelitiy: itogi i problemy razvitia,* Armavir, 2000, pp. 71-86; "Stanislav Iliasov, 'V Groznom ostalos 500 russkikh,'" *Izvestia,* 19 April, 2001; K. Kosachev, "Chechenskaia dilemma. Svoe slovo dolzhen skazat prezident," *Nezavisimaia gazeta,* 3 April, 2001.

freed as a result of a special operation, in which four people were killed and 15 wounded; the four Chechens were arrested.[13]

It is impossible to give an unequivocal assessment of the above. On the one hand, the demands of those who captured the buses, airliners, and helicopters make it possible to classify these actions as banal hijacking. On the other, in 1993-1994 the hostage-taking was not spontaneous acts of individuals (as happened in March 1988 when the Ovechkins hijacked an airliner, or in December 1988 when Iakshiants and his criminal group captured another airliner). The leaders of independent Ichkeria deliberately supported all criminal acts against Russia and in Russia. Jokhar Dudaev and his cronies not only sheltered Russian criminals and criminals from other CIS countries in Chechnia (according to the RF Interior Ministry, over 1,200 habitual criminals found refuge in Chechnia in the early 1990s), they also helped to liberate important Chechen criminals from Russian prisons and move them to Chechnia.[14] It seems that the hijacking series of 1993-1994 can be regarded as part of the Ichkerian policies designed to turn Russia into a "disaster zone," they cannot be described as terrorist acts.

From this it follows that in 1991-1994 terrorism proper was not the separatists' main political instrument. Jokhar Dudaev and his closest circle used terror against alien ethnic groups and encouraged criminal activities in the Russian Federation in order "to get rid of kufr."

Terrorism— the Main Instrument of the Separatists

The separatists changed the nature of their operations in December 1994 when Russian armed forces and Interior Ministry units were sent to the republic. They started using terror and demanded that "the bloodshed be stopped." They appealed to Russian and international public opinion with a call "to stop the war by any means." Their ideologists pointed out that the Russian authorities left the indigenous population no other way of defending its political rights than armed struggle and terror.

In May 1995, Jokhar Dudaev announced that "the war would be moved to Russian cities;" on 14 June, 1995, a group of fighters under Shamil Basaev captured a hospital and several other buildings in Budennovsk (Stavropol Territory) taking 1,100 people hostage. It took five day to liberate them. The terrorist act, which cost 128 lives, turned out to be an effective military-political weapon: by that time the Russian forces had been fighting successfully in Chechnia, while Basaev's inroad tipped the balance. Moscow had to contact Dudaev and offered him a "zero option," under which both he and his pro-Russian opponents should resign.[15]

On 9 January, 1996, Chechen fighters under Salman Raduev entered the town of Kizliar in Daghestan and captured a maternity hospital and a town hospital with 2,000 people inside. The terrorist act claimed the lives of 24 local people, 13 hostages, and 35 military; 128 were wounded. However, 150 attackers were also killed and 30 taken prisoner. Those who survived escaped to Chechnia together with Raduev, their leader. This also urged Moscow to think about "peace talks"—both the Duma and the presidential administration agreed about this. In February 1996, the Duma deputies suggested that the captured separatists should be liberated and called on the RF president to set up a crisis-settlement commission. It was announced that the presidential administration had drawn up seven options of crisis settlement.

On 16 January, 1996, a group of pro-Chechen gunmen headed by a Turkish citizen, Mohammed Tocsan, hijacked the *Avrasya* ferry in the Black Sea port of Trabzon. There were ethnic Chechens in the

[13] See: A.G. Mikhailov, op. cit., p. 188.
[14] See: V.V. Marushchenko, *Severniy Kavkaz. Trudniy put k miru,* Moscow, 2001, p. 76.
[15] See: A.V. Malashenko, D.V. Trenin, op. cit., pp. 21-23.

group which captured the ferry with 212 Russian citizens and shuttle traders from Sochi on board. The group demanded that the Russian troops be withdrawn from Chechnia and the hostilities stopped. Two days later they announced that they were prepared to give themselves up to the Turkish authorities; they did this. Several days after that the ferry arrived in Sochi. The terrorists were sentenced to long terms of imprisonment; the leader was sentenced to nine years in prison. Soon after that some of the members escaped; in 1999, Mohammed Tocsan was arrested once more at the Istanbul airport. He said that in the case of *Avrasya* he had been acting under Shamil Basaev's direct orders. There were rumors that the Turkish special services were also involved in organizing and carrying out this act of terror.

Obviously the separatists adjusted their tactics to the tactics and strategy the Russian Federation used in Chechnia. The separatists concentrated on terrorist acts and turned them into a powerful weapon of political information. On the one hand, in 1995-1996 these acts were used to demonstrate the impotence of Russia's special services and civilian administration; and on the other, they demonstrated to the world that "tiny Ichkeria" was fighting the "huge empire."

On 22 August, 1996, the Russian Federation and the Chechen Republic signed an agreement in Khasaviurt that recognized de facto Chechnia's independence. Ichkeria pledged itself to cease fire and defer from "all military operations, attacks, and special operations." This was not done.

"The Second Ichkeria": External and Internal Terrorism

During the "second independent Ichkeria" (1996-1999), the separatists organized terrorist acts not only against Russia; the warlords who remained outside the official structures in post-Khasaviurt Chechnia started a war of terror against the second president, Aslan Maskhadov, and his officials. On 25 October, 1998, after repeated demands by the Ministry of Shari'a Security of Chechnia that hostage-taking be stopped, Sh. Bargishev, who headed the ministry's department of hostage prevention, was murdered. The next day, 26 October, there was an attempt on the life of Mufti Akhmad Kadyrov. On 14 January, 1999 and on 21 March, 1999, unsuccessful assassination attempts were made on Minister of Shari'a Security A. Arsaev and President Maskhadov, respectively.

Meanwhile, Russia remained the main target. On 23 April, 1997, Chechen fighters blew up a railway station in Armavir (Krasnodar Territory), killing three and wounding more than ten people. Several days later, on 28 April, there was a blast in the waiting room of a railway station in Piatigorsk (Stavropol Territory) that killed two and wounded 17. Two Chechen women, Ayset Dadasheva and Fatima Taymaskhanova, were sentenced to 16 and 13 years in prison. Salman Raduev assumed responsibility for both acts.

On 19 March, 1999, a powerful explosion took place at the Central Market of Vladikavkaz (67 killed and over 100 wounded). Four people were brought to court: one of them (Adam Tsurov) was sentenced to life imprisonment, two (Umar Khaniev and Makhmud Temirbiev) to 23 years in prison, and one (Abdul Khutiev) to ten years in prison.

On 4 September, 1999, in Buynaksk (the Republic of Daghestan) a five-story apartment block inhabited by officer families of the 136th brigade of the RF Defense Ministry was destroyed by an explosion that claimed 64 lives (146 more were wounded). After three months of court proceedings, the Republican Court sentenced Isa Zaynutdinov to life imprisonment. Other participants were sentenced to varying (from three to nine years) terms in prison. The RF Supreme Court supported the sentence.

On 9 September, 1999, an apartment block in Moscow (at 19, Gurianov St.) was blown up killing 90; several days later, on 13 September another apartment block in Moscow (at 9, Kashirskoe Shosse, Building 3) was blown up (120 people perished); and three days later, on 16 September, 1999, a nine-story apartment block in Volgodonsk was blown up taking the lives of 18 people; 85 were taken to hospital; all in all 310 people were either killed or wounded. In January 2004, the Moscow City Court sentenced 42-year-old Adam Dekkushev and 37-year-old Iusuf Krymshamkhalov to life imprisonment as

those responsible for the blasts in Moscow and Volgodonsk. In his last address, Iusuf Krymshamkhalov asked for forgiveness, while Adam Dekkushev admitted part of his guilt and said that from the very beginning he had been against killing people and suggested that a technical facility should be blown up instead.

The court hearings were closed to the public, yet the sentence was read at an open sitting. According to the investigators, two warlords, Khattab and Abu Umar, were behind these acts. The Russian authorities announced that there were nine people involved in the bombings, three of them, according to official information, were killed in Chechnia in a skirmish with the federal forces. Boris Berezovskiy, notorious Russian oligarch, now living in Britain, put the blame for the Moscow and Volgodonsk acts on the Russian special services. Alexander Prokhanov, one of the ideologists of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation and editor of the *Zavtra* newspaper, offered a similar version in his novel *Gospodin Geksogen*. In 2001, the Stavropol Territorial Court sentenced five people from Karachaevo-Cherkessia to various prison terms as members of illegal armed units (their direct involvement in the blasts was not proven).

The Counter-Terrorist Operation: Political Echoes of Terminological Vagueness

The bombings in Moscow and Volgodonsk and the invasion of Daghestan forced Russia to launch the so-called counter-terrorist operation. The number of terrorist acts, however, did not diminish—they became even more frequent, because the leaders of Russia and the RF special services had not formed a completely adequate idea about the phenomenon of terrorism. As a result there were certain miscalculations when political priorities regarding "peaceful settlement" in Chechnia were selected.

1. Deprived of their main armed forces routed by the federal troops and, thus, unable to openly resist the Russian armed forces and Russian Interior Ministry units, the separatists had no choice but to resort to terror. It was the military failures of the Arab states in their struggle against Israel that turned terrorism into a very popular political weapon. Obviously from the very beginning Moscow should have distinguished between counter-terrorist and military operations and recognized them as two fundamentally different operations. The Kremlin should have warned the public that a rise in the number of terrorist acts would be the inevitable price of military suppression of the separatists' open resistance.
2. Terrorism is also encouraged by the absence of a single decision-making center regarding Chechnia and its governance. Power in the republic is divided among the regional administration, the power structures (the Defense Ministry, the Interior Ministry, and the Federal Security Service of Russia), the Ministry of Chechen Affairs (before the cabinet reorganization of spring 2004), and numerous federal agencies (after the spring 2004 reorganization). The democratic elections in Chechnia were premature (it would have been wiser to achieve at least partial political stability).

These miscalculations gave rise to an even greater number of terrorist acts and the active use (since late 2002) of suicide terrorists. Journalists are fond of calling them "shakhids" (martyrs), in the same way as Palestine terrorists. I am convinced that suicide terrorist is a more adequate term since the religious motivation of the Chechen terrorists is much vaguer than in the Middle East.

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The Russian authorities and the public should acquire a much more adequate understanding of the phenomenon of "Chechen terrorism," in order to formulate the best possible political strategy in Chechnia. All previous attempts at the turn of the 21st century to settle the Chechen question (the republic's withdrawal and virtual declaration of independence in 1991-1994 and 1996-1999, the use of force in 1994-

1996, and the so-called counter-terrorist operation) created a difficult dilemma which the authorities find hard to accept: either Russia should establish military-political control over the republic by defeating the organized state and military structures of the separatists and stem the wave of terror (while going on with its anti-terrorist measures), or it should accept the fact that there is a "piratical" republic in the south of Russia. At first glance the second option looks easy and, therefore, attractive. In actual fact, it merely postpones the efforts designed to deal with the problem of terror. The political regime in the republic, which wants, above all else, to return to its golden age, can be described as a federation of warlords; its economy survives thanks to plunder. This political and economic regime can only survive in a politically unstable climate, which will spread to Russia's southern fringes and further on to the north. The "wait-and-see" tactic is impossible: the political and economic challenge cannot be kept within fortified borders; in the same way, any talks with the leaders of the "Ichkerian revolution" are useless: they cannot be convinced to stop their inroads into the neighboring areas or to discontinue hostage taking and slave trade. Left to its own devices, the centrally situated republic will spread its terrorist practices to other Caucasian regions of the Russian Federation and draw them into ethnic conflicts and separatist experiments.

Forced to peace, the "mutinous republic" will produce even more terrorist acts as the only possible weapon left to the separatists. It was wrong to announce the counter-terrorist operation would end by a specific deadline; this inevitably discredited the correct policy of "bringing peace" to the rebel territory. "Chechen terrorism" is not an end in itself—it is a weapon. The Russian authorities today should, on the one hand, prepare the public for the inevitably high price of incorporating Chechnia into Russia. And on the other, the Federal Center should work toward readjusting the social foundations in Chechnia (to minimize informal ties and modernize the social structure), which, so far, are breeding extremism (and terrorism). Russia should work toward all-round incorporation of Chechnia into the Russian Federation through military, social, economic, and humanitarian projects. This, and not a counter-terrorist operation with deadlines fixed in advance, is the only hope of success.