

Islamic Militancy in Eurasia

Professor Stephen Blank

Strategic Studies Institute

US Army War College Carlisle Barracks, PA 17013

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As of 2013 Islamic militancy and terrorism as well as the threat of their further extension exist throughout Eurasia, i.e. the former Soviet Union, Afghanistan, South Asia, and the Middle East. Naturally we can attribute explanations for so many manifestations of this phenomenon to varying causes and depend on local conditions. Nevertheless in all of these cases we find two recurring elements that go to comprise this threat. In all of the cases of actual or potential terrorism we find what Max Manwaring of the US Army War College has called “illegitimate governance.” And in many cases, not least that of Russia, this governance is getting worse. The second phenomenon behind Islamic militancy and terrorism (which are not always the same things but frequently do overlap) is state sponsorship. Often state sponsorship of terrorism or of Islamic or ethnic unrest exploits failures of governance in adjacent or nearby states and promotes militancy and/or terrorism as a deliberate act of state policy. Indeed, in various places and times, Russia, Iran, and Pakistan have each sponsored terrorists and subversive militants in nearby countries even as they are either vulnerable to or suffering from serious terrorist attacks on themselves. And certainly Iran and Pakistan are still doing so.

In Central Asia as well as in all the other afflicted areas listed above we find pervasive examples of Manwaring’s “illegitimate governance.” Tajikistan’s government is, for all practical purposes, a family run criminal conspiracy that is deeply involved in the drug trade to the point where diplomats have been arrested with large quantities of narcotics on them. Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan are brutal autocracies and extremely corrupt and avaricious governments whose depredations upon the indigenous population in the Uzbek case were probably the cause of the large uprising in Andijon in 2005. That uprising, which appears to have been violent before being brutally repressed, was nonetheless precipitated by the government’s efforts to snuff out and expropriate rival mercantile elements. Should government controls weaken we could reasonably expect to see similar phenomena in the future. In Kyrgyzstan we have a weak central government – though it may be gaining strength – that still cannot effectively or fully control its southern regions where crime and the drug trade flourish and where ethnic animosities are simmering. Meanwhile in Kazakhstan recent incidents suggest much greater socio-economic and political unrest than were expected by the government or by foreign experts. Those episodes also caught the government by surprise and it calls these signs of opposition terrorism even though that is not usually the case. But clearly these cases alarm the Kazakh authorities. Though Kazakhstan is the most benevolent of these states and doing better than any of them, it too is highly corrupt, run by a family, and like the other Central Asian regimes has no reliable mechanism for succession of the current ruler. Therefore while terrorism remains latent in Central Asia; in the event of major economic crisis or succession, we can expect, particularly in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, succession crises that could lead to insurgencies and terrorist movements vying for power if state power breaks down. Adding to the dilemma is that we have no reliable way of measuring the incidence or likelihood of terrorism in Central Asia.

The problem here is that virtually every form of dissent and opposition has been labeled by local governments as Islamic fundamentalism or worse and then harshly repressed. As a result there is neither a political vocabulary or movement or space available to dissenters other than the religious one of Islam and that is driven underground. Indeed I know of no published research that accurately tracks the likelihood or incidence of genuinely militant or terrorist (not necessarily the same thing) movements in Central Asia. A further problem here and in Azerbaijan is the fact that in all these places the religious authority is an arm of the state and thus inherently politicized. Thanks to that politicization in many cases we see the withering away of

genuine spiritual meaning without which existence becomes extremely difficult in any civilization. Moreover, in many cases there are reports of a withering of genuine knowledge of Islam among the faithful. There is thus a distinct possibility of a population that is unable to combat the siren song of radical Islam with appropriate intellectual tools. Since many of these state clerics are not particularly well educated and lack the resources that are being invested by Salafi or Shiite extremists supported by Iran, Saudi Arabia, or other actors, the ensuing spiritual vacuum could easily create an opportunity that radical religious-political elements could then exploit.

Furthermore as US and ISAF troops prepare to withdraw from Afghanistan there is great apprehension throughout Central Asia and Russia that the area might become vulnerable to Islamic terrorism originating in Afghanistan and then spreading into Central Asia or for Afghan based groups to assist indigenous terrorist groups.. And there have been previous attempts at just such a diffusion of Islamic radicalism. Meanwhile despite continued statements by US military leaders in Afghanistan that the Afghan army is capable of taking a leading role in providing security after 2014 and in fighting the Taliban, and that the future Afghan government can prevail, among the Afghan public (as well as many foreign governments) there seems to be a widespread expectation that the government will fall and that the army will not or cannot fight. Consequently outside of the US military-political leadership there is a widespread expectation of a future civil war. Uzbekistan's President, Islam Karimov publicly stated in 2010 and repeatedly thereafter that an unstable and conflict-torn Afghanistan means that the threat to all of Central Asia will remain. Tajikistan's leadership has also made similar repeated statements. The other Central Asian governments and Russia have made similar statements. Thus there is a widespread expectation of a rising terrorist threat after 2014.

Four particular contingencies are easily imaginable if things go badly in Afghanistan.

- Obviously the greatest threat is that the Karzai government will fail to secure Afghanistan and that the Taliban, supported by its associated terrorist groups, if not the ISI, will relatively quickly triumph and take over Afghanistan. In that case the way will be open for all manner of international Islamic terrorist groups to operate there with impunity, including those aiming to unseat Central Asian regimes and attack India, the US or other European and Middle Eastern states. Moreover, they will presumably enjoy governmental support from the new Afghan state if not the ISI as well as mutual cooperation among themselves to expand their activities into neighboring states and forge alliances, either tactical or strategic, with internal opposition forces in Central Asian states, India, or further abroad. In turn this could lead to an upsurge of terrorism or even insurgency in vulnerable Central Asian countries.

- Alternatively Afghanistan falls into a civil war that simultaneously presents the Central Asian states with the classic security dilemma of the possibility that they may be forced to intervene against their better judgment in Afghanistan, or support some other major power(s)' intervention there or that the war will spill over into their territories. Or else their territories might become the site of an insurgency. The local regimes are fully aware of both these possible outcomes and dread them.

- A third possibility is one of protracted civil strife or civil war in Afghanistan once the US departs. If this is the case rather than a relatively rapid collapse of the Karzai regime then not only are the neighboring states, including India, vulnerable to a Taliban effort to prevail by expanding the front to include them, using affiliated Central Asian terrorist groups as proxies, Afghanistan will come under increased foreign pressure from all the interested parties, Russia, China, India, Pakistan, NGOs, IFIs etc. possibly once again NATO and the US. In this outcome

everyone will be in some way extending the past history of the area by which Afghanistan became an object of major international contestation among the great powers, a rivalry that will inevitably pressure Central Asian states to support one or another side in this civil war and deal with great power requests for bases, logistical support, etc. Tajikistan's example is a harbinger of that trend. Not only will they be vulnerable to heightened threats of terrorism, drug running (especially to raise revenues for continued fighting), they will also face this intensified foreign pressure, probably mainly from Russia and China, if not India, Pakistan, and Iran too, without the benefit of the US counterbalance that they now enjoy and which allows them to deflect these other pressures.

- Fourth, a rapid Taliban takeover or a long-term civil war also undermines the Central Asian states' security because it will negate the economic gains they have made and are making from investing in Afghanistan and connecting those investments in trade, electricity, and potentially oil and gas with South Asia or the global market.

Finally there is the question of state-sponsored terrorism by Pakistan of groups operating in both Afghanistan and India, if not elsewhere. Until this pattern is decisively broken and terminated it would be very risky to count either on the security of Afghanistan or of India or for that matter Pakistan. Although Pakistan's situation goes beyond the bounds of this hearing; it is well known how potent a threat to it these terrorist groups are and how difficult it remains to break the relationships that have grown up between them and the Inter-Services Institution (ISI) in Pakistan. Without this rupture neither Pakistan nor its neighbors and potentially Central Asia as well can truly count on security. So in Central Asia the reality of illegitimate governance prepares the field for terrorism, while simultaneously the prospect of state sponsorship in the context of ISAF's departure from Afghanistan and domestic conditions in Central Asia creates grounds for genuine concern for the future there

### **Azerbaijan**

Turning to Azerbaijan we find another variation of the dangers raised by the combination of misrule and foreign or state sponsorship. Azerbaijan's security, by virtue of its geography and energy capabilities, is a vital US interest and must be recognized as such. Nevertheless its political system resembles most of those in the post-Soviet Union in its authoritarianism and ideological justification of such a regime by virtue of a strong president centralizing power and authority in his hands. In other words, it too is prey to the pitfalls of illegitimate governance. Like Middle Eastern and Central Asian autocracies it also contains a strong element of familial and even dynastic aspiration. President Aliyev has astutely expanded and transformed the elite from regional clan groupings into bureaucratic factional ones, linked by patronage in typical patron-client relationships. But Azerbaijan has been more fortunate than many other such regimes because of the huge economic development generated by its plentitude of oil and gas.

Despite its current seeming stability Azerbaijan is vulnerable. Although there are many stabilizing factors beyond continuing high economic growth, even that growth is in question given some recent economic trends and the fact that Azerbaijan depends inordinately upon European purchases of its energy while Europe's economy continues to stagnate. The other stabilizing factors are the self-confidence of the elite, the prevalence of strong informal institutions and a government based on "understandings" rather than formal institutional and legal accountability and rules among that elite. Furthermore, if the energy price and demand for Azeri hydrocarbons stays high the regime can buy time to buy off potential threats to itself from within. Third, there is widespread political culture which is hardly democratic in nature and confirms, according to some analysts with the well-known "congruence thesis." This thesis

basically states that the government tends to be stable and retain its legitimacy if its authority pattern is congruent with other authority (and value) patterns of the society. Thus the regime appears to be stable for now. Nevertheless there are many signs of ferment below the surface and we know from the Arab spring and earlier revolutions that a seeming stability can fall apart quickly without onlookers and even interested parties being aware of that trajectory.

As a political system Azerbaijan strongly resembles other post-Soviet and even Arab regimes in its basic structures:

- We find the overwhelming dominance and even many manifestation of the cult of personality of the ruler, President Ilham Aliyev
- Strong signs of an attempt to make the ruling family permanently dynastic and dynamic element of the regime that could last even after the current President
- The absence of guaranteed human rights and increased signs of repression. Indeed, there are more political prisoners in Azerbaijan than in Belarus hardly an enviable record. This could become dangerous especially as more signs of opposition make themselves felt, e.g. the rise of Salafi Islam preachers and congregations. But that is not the only potential source of Islamist opposition.
- Pervasive corruption to the degree that President, Ilham Aliyev was named by the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project as corruption's person of the year for 2012. This is not the kind of publicity the regime seeks abroad.
- Sham elections resulting in the dominance of a presidential party in the Parliament that is quite limited in its scope to perform true legislative functions.
- Despite the economic growth signs of regional and other forms of widespread inequality in the distribution of economic wealth.
- A form of politics heavily weighted to familial connections or to strong patron-client ties making the entire system a vast patronage network
- An anti-liberal and anti-democratic political culture buttressed by repression, and manifested in the prevalence of "understandings" or informal institutions and ties over formal-legal rule.
- A low-trust society and a weak, disorganized civil society and divided opposition
- Excessive dominance in the economy of hydrocarbons leading to the well-known resource curse that features prominently in energy-dominated economies
- Signs of the oppression or repression of ethnic or religious minorities leading to ever more recurrent protests
- Ongoing efforts by the state to formulate and disseminate a state nationalist ideology to create a legitimacy narrative and an image of a united state. In Azerbaijan's case this effort is buttressed by the threats connected with the unresolved conflict with Armenia in Nagorno-Karabakh
- And like all these other states that it resembles we find the absence of a discernible legal formula for succession to the president and transition to a new ruler. This is an Achilles heel of all such regimes and the prospect of a succession crisis interacting with other crises generated by authoritarian misrule could lead to a partial or even more complete disintegration of the system as we have seen in the Arab world.

As a result apart from the pressure of the unresolved conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh with Armenia, both Moscow and Tehran have sought to undermine Azerbaijan and incite unrest, and in Iran's case violence. Both Russia and Iran have sought to exploit fissures arising out of the Azeri government's domestic policies. For example, efforts at modernization and reform,

including policies that extend the traditional Azeri approach to Islamic issues that has been tolerant of religious minorities and not committed to any of the various existing brands of Islamism currently on view, have triggered substantial opposition from more traditionally religious elements of the population. Examples are the government's effort to ban the Hijab, women's facial covering. Iran, playing the Islamist card for all that it is worth, has quickly moved to incite and organize this community through agitation and propaganda against the Aliyev government. Thus we frequently find Iranian media denouncing Azerbaijan as an insufficiently Islamic or even anti-Islamic state. Azeri officials recount that on a daily basis Iran's media attacks Azerbaijan as following "anti-Islamic policies." Iran also has its own security concerns relating to the security of its own territory that possesses a large Azeri minority in the Northwest and also sees Baku's tolerant brand of Islam and pro-Western policies as a threat so it has real motives for exploiting this opportunity. Even though its Azeri minority has been loyal, Iran clearly does not trust it especially as in 1920-21 and 1945-46 efforts were made to launch separatist movements from what was then Soviet Azerbaijan.

In particular Iran is extremely anxious that Azerbaijan might allow itself to serve as a base for either the US or Israel's military forces that would then be used to threaten and target Iran due to its nuclearization program. Iranian media is particularly outraged by Azerbaijan's closeness to Israel seeing it as an act of betrayal of Islam. Media reports of such military activity, even though Azerbaijan regularly denies them and reiterates that it will not let its territory be used to attack Iran, trigger Iranian anxiety and anger. Indeed, on many occasions Iran has let it be known that it will hit back at Azerbaijan if any such strike occurs. Apart from the Iranian danger to Azerbaijan, these threats also furnish Moscow with a pretext for its huge, ongoing, military buildup in the Caucasus that could on its own part be used to strike at Azerbaijan. Given the sizable Iranian military capability in the Caspian Sea and its arsenal of missiles and of pro-Iranian terrorist groups at its disposal, these can hardly be considered empty threats.

Iran's anxiety to deter any US or Israeli "forward presence" in Azerbaijan has led its officials to make public (and presumably private) threats to attack Azerbaijan in retaliation for a US/Israeli attack on Iran. But beyond incitement Iran has also moved to more violent and clandestine activities. In early 2012 Azerbaijan arrested 22 people, including some Lebanese operatives of Hezbollah for a plot to assassinate Israeli and US diplomats and Jewish children in Azerbaijan. It also arrested Azeri religious extremists and found propaganda material and weapons in their homes. This episode perfectly exemplifies the linkage between internal and external challenges to Azeri security, especially as Azerbaijan also caught the Iranian agent who was leading the incitement against the regime, with weapons and Iranian literature. And in May Azerbaijan exposed a terrorist plan to kill foreigners at the Eurovision contest. In December 2012 there were new reports of a fresh plot even as Iran and Azerbaijan were discussing how to improve relations between them. Thus Iran has incited Azeri unrest and three separate terror plots against Azerbaijan's government, Israel's ambassador there, and Azeri Jews were uncovered in 2012.

Clearly Iran has been waging a low-level but unremitting and long-running campaign of subversion, terrorism, and threats against Azerbaijan, fearing that it may be used as a base by Israel or the US. And on many occasions Azerbaijan has received Iranian threats that it would be attacked if it granted the US or Israel a base there. Thus, Elhan Shahinoglu, head of the Atlas Center for Political Research said at a round table in Baku that, "Tehran does not limit itself with anti-Azerbaijan propaganda and enhances military presence near Azerbaijan's border. Presently

they are holding military trainings there, drug traffic from Iran's territory to Azerbaijan would not cease,"

More generally, Richard Giragosian, director of the Yerevan-based Regional Studies Centre (RSC) says that Iran looks at the South Caucasus as a region where it can procure "critical elements" for its nuclear effort that the sanctions have restricted: "Many [Iranian] Revolutionary Guard units have pursued over the past several years setting up joint ventures with foreign partners — front companies — designed to pursue technical spare parts for military use and nuclear centrifuge development." Front companies of this type were closed in recent years in Dubai and Kuala Lumpur. "There is new concern that Armenia, Georgia, and other countries may become attractive for such a pursuit.

Moscow is not far behind. From time to time reports surface of its attempts to incite unrest among Muslim minorities in Azerbaijan, namely the Avar and Lezgin peoples. Elsewhere in the Caucasus its record is still worse. President Putin admitted in August 2012 that the war in Georgia was a premeditated one dating back to 2006 and that it explicitly included the use of separatists in the plan to create terrorist-like provocations that ultimately led to war. After that war Russia unleashed an intelligence, bombing, and terror campaign in Georgia from 2009-12 to destabilize the Georgian government. Although that campaign failed it does show that Russia is fully ready to employ its assets in such ways to advance its interests. Likewise, Moscow has sold many weapons to Iran and Syria that then "migrate" to Hamas and Hezbollah and many of the weapons it has sold to Venezuela went straight to the FARC in Colombia, so Moscow's hands are hardly clean when it comes to supporting terrorists. Bearing all this in mind, it is clear that if a major crisis were to strike at Azerbaijan Russia and/or Iran might well attempt to use the subversive instruments at their disposal to exploit that crisis and those instruments could include support for terrorism. Therefore and in that context, it is very ironic that Russia ironically found itself now to be on the receiving end of terrorism in the North Caucasus.

### **The North Caucasus**

In the North Caucasus we see another example of the harvesting of the results of Russian illegitimate governance. This region, the poorest in Russia, is also arguably the most misgoverned area of the country. Indeed, recent press reports suggest that President Putin is about to replace most if not all of the regional governors. Meanwhile extrajudicial arrests and killings by government forces are on the rise in Ingushetia and probably that is not an unusual trend throughout the region as earlier evidence suggests. At the same time we have seen innumerable examples of corruption on a grand and petty scale throughout the region, most recently in regard to the Sochi Winter Olympics of 2014.

The misrule that lies at the root of this terrorist insurgency is therefore part of the essence of the system of power in Russia and reflects the overall degeneration of the Putin system that we see in so many other areas of Russian political life and state policies. For example, the overall system is characterized by an authoritarianism that is epic in its corruption (\$almost \$50 billion is reported to have left the country through corruption in 2012 according to state officials) and where the instruments of force are under no legal accountability, except to higher command levels. In other words none of them are bound by law. Not surprisingly the North Caucasus resembles or even epitomizes a Hobbesian state of nature and unending war.

The consequences of this war for Russia are already serious, if not dire. Apart from the war's serious financial costs Moscow's visible failure to terminate it has led the leading American analyst of that war, Gordon Hahn, to call Russia a failing state. Ethnic Russians are visibly emigrating out of the war zone reversing the historic pattern of migration that

accompanied and abetted the creation of the Russian empire, thus continuing trends seen a generation earlier in regard to Central Asia. Public disaffection has taken the form of riots in Moscow against the Caucasus' overall financial burden and some have even raised the possibility of simply letting the North Caucasus go, a recommendation that is still, however, unthinkable to most elites.

. Paradoxically, the insurgency in the North Caucasus directly stems from the strategy that was successfully employed to pacify Chechnya in 1999-2007 and to establish the Putin system with its infamous power vertical throughout Russia. The causes for this failure lie in the motives that drove Moscow's successful counterinsurgency campaign in Chechnya. That campaign's ultimate goal was not just the salvation of the state but rather its total reconstruction on the basis of an ever more centralized autocratic and authoritarian regime run from Moscow and increasingly driven by the personal acquisitiveness and greed of its ranking officials to the point where today corruption is the system and brutality, misrule, and harsh, violent repression is the norm. The two principal causes of the ensuing resurgence of violence in an already troubled environment are thus the destruction of local mechanisms of local self-governance in favor of corrupt, self-seeking toadies of Moscow, and the brutal anti-Islamic policies of Russian leaders that aggravated tensions in an area adjoining an insurgency and with difficult economic conditions.

That these trends were directly responsible for the upsurge of violence was already clear by 2006 if not earlier. Gordon Hahn observed then that Putin's policies to create "a power vertical" and dismantle the residual traces of genuine federalism established by Boris Yeltsin in order to create what amounts to a centralized unitary state lay at the heart of the causes for this insurgency. These measures included the following steps:

- The creation of new, extra-constitutional districts as a means to facilitate federal interference in regional politics;
- New legal requirements rendering federal law supreme in all spheres of life that it addresses;
- A "federal intervention" mechanism allowing the president (with court approval) to remove a regional governor or republic president and call elections to a regional parliament should they refuse to follow court findings in cases of conflict between federal and regional law;
- The termination of power-sharing treaties between the federal government and individual Russian regions, effectively ending regional autonomy;
- Reorganization of the Federation Council, the upper chamber of the Russian parliament, into a legislative body appointed by regional officials, half of whom are appointed by the Russian president;
- the re-centralization of budget revenues; and
- Presidential appointment, rather than popular election, of regional governors and republic presidents (and possibly even city mayors and district heads).

Not surprisingly, these steps galvanized greater nationalism in several Muslim republics and the only available vocabulary of dissent was Islamic radicalism. So the insurgency has evolved from being originally an ethno-nationalist one to a religious one with ethno-national elements and apparently led by the Caucasus Emirate (CE). The CE openly proclaims its ties to Al-Qaida and similar groups and espouses a Salafist theology and politics of radicalism that epitomizes the term Islamic radicalism. Absent democratic federalism, Russia's complex ethno-geography and administrative structure are likely to produce outliers like the CE. And in Russia's Muslim republics, those outliers tend to be Muslim ethnic groups that then create a pool

of potential allies and recruits for radical Islamists. In Dagestan, Putin's harmonizing of regional and federal laws—and his (re)interpretation of the Russian Constitution—triggered the dismantling of Dagestan's political system, that had previously preserved inter-ethnic harmony among Dagestan's many small ethnic groups through pluralistic representation in the executive and legislative branches. As a result, by 2003, Dagestan's two largest Muslim ethnic groups, Avars and Dargins, were on the brink of a major inter-ethnic conflict as a result of disputes over power-sharing within the region's ruling State Council.

Simultaneously the newly empowered *Silovye Struktury*, (Power Structures), freed from any accountability either to local or central Parliamentary or even quasi-democratic officials and organizations, and having no standing other than their loyalty to Moscow, because Moscow had ousted any truly popular and locally authoritative figures from power, conducted a veritable orgy of corruption and brutal anti-Islamic repression. Again Hahn is instructive on this point. In the wake of the Beslan tragedy, a COIN or counterterrorist operation that went horribly badly in September, 2004, he observed that

Putin has called for—and the Russian Duma has prepared—new legislation granting the Kremlin vastly greater police and security powers in the name of “counterterrorism.” Given the inherently anti-democratic instincts of Russia's security services, this new leeway has inevitably reinforced heavy-handed law enforcement practices. In mid-September 2004, for example, Moscow police conducted a series of “counterterrorism” sweeps that resulted in the detention of more than 11,000 suspects. Authorities in the Moscow Oblast rounded up about 2,500 unregistered people during similar sweeps. Such tactics have been particularly aggressive in Russia's Muslim republics, exacerbating the alienation of Muslims from the Russian state. Meanwhile, Vladimir Ustinov, Russia's Prosecutor-General, has publicly proposed the detention of the families of hostage-takers, noting the policy could be broadened to families of all “terrorists,” however that might be defined. And, according to Ustinov, the round-up of family members of terrorists should be “accompanied by a demonstration to these terrorists of what might happen to (their families).” This proposal has met with widespread approval in the Russian Duma. Russian authorities have also undertaken several assimilationist policies, including bans on ethnic and religious parties and on non-Cyrillic alphabets as well as an attempt to establish mandatory courses on Russian Orthodox Christian culture in schools. In this political climate, grassroots targeting of Muslims has predictably expanded, with cases of assault and harassment rising exponentially.<sup>1</sup>

The reaction emerged quickly. By 2005 the entire region was on the brink of a massive outbreak of violence on top of what had already begun as the impact of Putin's policies made itself felt after 2002-03. Since 2006 Moscow has sown what it has reaped. But there is little sign that it understands the consequences of its actions. And in the absence of such democratic control over the power ministries and their forces uncontrolled brutality becomes a normal feature of military life that is only further augmented by the stresses of counterinsurgency.

Finally coming to grips with the danger represented by these linked insurgencies. Moscow in 2010 proclaimed a 118 page socio-economic strategy for the region and appointed a new plenipotentiary, Aleksandr' Kholopnin to supervise the new strategy thus taking a page right out of the Tsars' playbook. However, this new strategy was compromised from the start and continued to fail. Proclaiming this new strategy in July 2010, Putin announced that the North Caucasus should become part of the international North-South transit transport corridor bringing

together Europe, Russia, and Central Asia, through overland and port projects. Moreover, large-scale investment projects, including those for the Sochi Olympics, should take place to sop up unemployment and bring domestic and foreign capital into the region. He also called for large-scale educational and cultural projects to create opportunities and to integrate the area into Russia's "informational space." A major part of this strategy, linked to the Sochi Olympics was the bizarre notion of turning this area into a major tourist attraction, e.g. a ski tourist park.. By 2013 the government was in full retreat from this bizarre notion as Moscow appears less willing to invest the financial resources it once promised into the North Caucasus and now seems intent on replacing failing officials with its own new men.

However, this strategy either in 2010 or today wholly omits any mention of the political deformities or the anti-Islamic policies that have stimulated support for Jihadist movements and that are probably the major causes of the insurgency. It is clear that Moscow erred greatly in proclaiming an end to the anti-terrorist war in Chechnya in 2009 but at least there it had an authority in power backed up by guns and money to provide a rationale for this decision. In the North Caucasus Moscow's strategy forfeited those advantages. The appointment of Kholopnin, a throwback to Tsarist governor-generals, failed to achieve anything because his functions were very limited and it merely represented a bureaucratic shuffling of the cards not a new policy. Through 2012 it is clear that Moscow was not prepared to confront the pathologies of its own system of governance. Moreover, the prognoses of the strategy for rapid economic growth in the region are not based on any genuine analysis, as is often the case in Russian formal official documents. Absent meaningful political reform neither the capital for investment nor the growth claimed here will occur, and there certainly will not be a reduction in unemployment to the degree that Moscow hopes for, or a loss of support for the rebels.

Indeed, Russian military men do not believe in the strategy. One general in Dagestan told Matthias Schepp of *Der Spiegel* that the war cannot be won quickly and will take years to suppress despite the tens of thousands of troops, police and intelligence personnel in the area. Moreover Islamists cannot be controlled by the normal means possessed by a state based on the rule of law -- which in any case is not Russia. Therefore it is naïve to hope that socio-economic amelioration can force radical Islam into retreat., especially as that instrument of reform is weakening. In any case given the pervasive corruption at the regional as well as central levels, the state is finding it increasingly difficult to cope with implementing any kind of coherent socio-economic program of action to meet regional needs. Neither do the Ministries of Finance nor of Economic Development see this strategy as feasible, a fact that casts doubt on the Ministry of Regional Development's Strategy, of July 2011. They claimed there is not enough money to support the program and would not approve it. As a result total development programs for the North Caucasus amount to \$10 Billion rather than the \$50 Billion called for in the strategy. Typically the government has consistently underestimated the costs of its strategy also causing problems. Thus the cost went from Putin's 2010 estimate of \$14 Billion to \$45 Billion when Viktor Barsegin, Minister of Regional Development presented the final draft. This suggests that there was not only insufficient funding for the program but also that it is not a serious plan if it tripled in value in less than 8 months. Such problems also suggest that not untypically it was a political program bereft of serious analytical support that can only compromise its future implementation. And, as suggested above, we may be seeing a retreat fro that plan as of 2013.

To be sure, Presidents Medvedev and Putin attempted reforms in 2008-11. Following the Chechen case they moved to improve intelligence gathering and dissemination and better inter-operational coordination among the Siloviki with the creation of federal and regional anti-

terrorism committees for searching out and destroying CE Amirs and operatives;. They removed from office the longest-serving and utterly corrupt regional bosses and republican presidents. And they launched another amnesty in 2006 that had some success. Russian security and local police forces have also become quite efficient at eliminating top CE leaders, with the exception of Umarov. Also during his second term, Putin undertook a massive reconstruction effort for Chechnya,

In Medvedev's 2009 presidential address he called the North Caucasus Russia's "most serious domestic political problem" and announced a federal program to invest 800 billion rubles in Ingushetia, which since summer 2007 had been the center of gravity of the jihad, with the largest number of CE attacks of any North Caucasus region. And then in 2010 he and Putin introduced this massive socio-economic strategy. Medvedev's new appointees to the North Caucasus each tried in his own way to improve local governance and in many cases campaign against corruption. But despite some improvements the attacks and insurgency continue with no sign of weakening through early 2012.

New military moves have not worked either. Kholopnin does not control the "Silovye Struktury" whose depredations appear to continue unchecked. Moscow has more than enough people in place to suppress the insurgency but its state structures which are uncoordinated, anti-Islamic, and either resort to indiscriminate violence, or are massively corrupt, patrimonial and anti-Islamic. As a result they undo any good caused by attempts at improved governance. In 2009 the FSB obtained overall control of the military operation and its figures report that 1 percent of the region's population, not a mere few hundred of insurgents, is active in the insurgency. Nonetheless it is the Ministry of Interior forces (the VVMVD) that bear the brunt of combat operations. It has received major increases in spending and improved weaponry as well as reforms to make it better armed, more mobile, and capable of fighting a counter-revolutionary war, but there is little to show for this activity as the insurgency continues without letup. Yet in late 2012 the regular army had to be called in, clearly a sign of the VVMVD's insufficiency. Finally Medvedev, in response to major demonstrations in Moscow in December, 2011 proposed to decentralize Russian administration and reintroduce elections for the post of republican presidents and governors, a policy he had rejected two years earlier specifically in regard to the North Caucasus, but which obviously was being considered again before the demonstrations in December. Putin has now reversed that policy returning to appointed governors who will undoubtedly incarnate all that is wrong with his system. Thus there is no sign that control over the armed forces that habitually abduct people for ransom and engage far too often in indiscriminate violence has stopped. Under the circumstances terrorism and insurgency will continue and we should make no mistake about it.

This insurgency, whatever its roots is now led by the Caucasus emirate a self-proclaimed Jihadi enterprise with links to al-Qaida and it will not go away anytime soon. As a result an intractable terrorist insurgency that is merely the latest installment in a two hundred plus year war has rebounded upon Russia and it has no viable answer other than to try and extinguish it by force, discredited neo-Tsarist political methods, or huge half-baked and easily corrupted economic programs. In other words, in the North Caucasus as elsewhere we see the interplay of illegitimate governance triggering the recourse to extremist Islamic rhetoric, political organization and violent military action. Indeed, in many ways the North Caucasus may serve as a paradigm of the phenomenon.

### **Concluding Remarks**

For the US cooperation with Iran is out of the question and with Pakistan the process has been very unresponsive and unrewarding as is well known. Neither can we truly engage in major cooperation with Moscow either in Central Asia or the North Caucasus. In Central Asia, Moscow simultaneously wants us to stay in Afghanistan, give it some sort of control over what we plan to do there, and at the same time eject us from our military bases or from any opportunity to effectuate long-term presence of a commercial and political nature there. In the North Caucasus it might be possible, as in Afghanistan, to organize a relatively low level of intelligence sharing about imminent threats. But cooperation would not go much further. There would soon be an outcry in this country against the brutality with which Russia conducts its counterinsurgency and counterterrorism policies. More importantly Russia will not allow anything that smacks of even the slightest abridgement of its sovereignty. Russia views sovereignty as the right to act without any legal accountability whatsoever in world affairs just as its government is traditionally autocratic at home and will not be bound by any kind of legal or institutional limitation or accountability. Consequently any attempt to raise the issue of international involvement, not to mention oversight, of Russian conduct in the North Caucasus will be dismissed out of hand. Furthermore one of the hallmarks of Putin's rule has been the systematic indoctrination of the elite and population in the belief that the US is Russia's enemy and seeks to undermine its supposedly foreordained rise to greatness. Any initiative regarding the North Caucasus would, under the circumstance, be regarded with utmost suspicion even if it was considered seriously.

The fact is that to bring about good governance that would preclude the outbreak of terrorism in these and other places is probably beyond our capability and resources, not to mention our understanding which, as Iraq and Afghanistan show, falls woefully short of the mark. And the US military is no more equipped to undertake those responsibilities than is the rest of the government. While we can prod foreign governments to behave in more liberal and democratic fashion towards their own citizens and provide security cooperation to their forces engaged in counterterrorism, the scourge of terrorism in these "wrecks of empire" is unlikely to disappear anytime soon. Indeed, given the persistence of illegitimate governance in all these places it is possibly more likely to increase than to decrease in the foreseeable future.

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<sup>1</sup> ., Gordon Hahn, "The Perils of Putin's Policies," *Journal of International Security Affairs*, X, No. 1, Spring, 2006, pp. 65-66