

**THE CAUCASUS EMIRATE:
EMERGING FORCE OR
JIHADIST FANTASY?**

BY

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THE CAUCASUS EMIRATE: EMERGING FORCE OR JIHADIST FANTASY?

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The ongoing conflict in Russia's North Caucasus region continues to pose a threat to the stability of not only Russia, but to areas well beyond its borders. What began as an independence movement for one small ethnic group from the Russian Federation has evolved into a front in the global jihadist movement. As the movement for Chechen independence faltered, insurgents increasingly relied on Islamic ideologies to expand the conflict and attract support and funding from the greater Islamic community. The current insurgent leader declared the creation of the Caucasus Emirate in 2007, which corresponds to Russia's North Caucasus region and purports to represent Russia's Muslim community. After nearly two decades of war, Russia has been unable to fully return stability to the area and the insurgents continue to attack Russian security forces in the region, as well as engage in horrific terror attacks in the heart of the Russian Federation. This Strategy Research Project examines the most likely outcome of this conflict based on key factors identified in contemporary theories explaining weak actor victories in asymmetric conflicts.

THE CAUCAUS EMIRATE: EMERGING FORCE OR JIHADIST FANTASY?

Despite the extended duration of the conflict and highly-publicized terrorist attacks against Russian civilians over the past decade, relatively little attention is paid to the ongoing insurgency in Russia's North Caucasus region. What started as an independence movement fueled by ethnic nationalism for a tiny republic of the Russian Federation has evolved into a regional separatist movement and a battleground for the global jihadist movement. Despite the Russian government declaring an end to the Second Chechen War in April 2009,¹ the conflict has not ended. Violent attacks across the region have continued and, in some areas, increased. Meanwhile, extremists from within the insurgent movement have conducted horrific terrorist attacks against civilian targets in major Russian cities. The insurgents, taking inspiration from global jihadist movements, have declared Russia's Northern Caucasus region to be the "Caucasus Emirate" and Doku Umarov, a Chechen Islamist, has declared himself the leader of this unrecognized political entity.

The purpose of this paper is to examine the nature of this conflict and what the most likely outcome will be based on current trends. This conflict has continued, at varying levels of intensity, for seventeen years. After nearly two decades of fighting, where is the insurgent movement headed? Do the insurgents have a realistic chance of gaining independence from Moscow? This paper will attempt to look at these questions looking through the lens of contemporary theories regarding the factors determining success or failure of an insurgent movement.

Background to the conflict

The current insurgent conflict in Russia's North Caucasus region is the continuation of struggle for control over this mountainous territory that began in the early part of the 19th century. In order to secure communications routes through newly acquired territories south of the Caucasus mountain range, the Russian Empire began to assert its influence in the territory north of the mountains. The Russians needed nearly thirty years to conquer the majority Muslim region and sporadic episodes of violence and resistance to Russian authority continue to the present day. In the aftermath of the Russian Revolution of 1917, both a secular and an Islamic republic were founded, but both were short-lived and defeated by the Bolshevik movement and the region was incorporated into the Soviet Union.² During World War II, some Chechens revolted and Stalin later deported entire Caucasian ethnic groups to the Central Asian republics in retribution. Khrushchev overturned Stalin's decision in 1958 and allowed the displaced groups to return.

Lingering suppressed animosity toward Russian rule came to the surface upon the collapse of the Soviet Union. In 1991 Chechnya declared its independence from Russia as the "Chechen Republic of Ichkeria" under the leadership of former Soviet general Dzhokar Dudayev. The First Chechen War broke out in 1994 when President Boris Yeltsin ordered Russian forces to reestablish constitutional order in the rebellious republic. After two years of brutal conflict and charges of atrocities from both sides, the two sides signed a cease-fire agreement in 1996. The result of the fighting was de facto independence for Chechnya and deaths estimated at over 100,000.³ Although the conflict had stopped, chaos prevailed in Chechnya. The fighting had destroyed the

republic's infrastructure and economy and the Chechen separatist movement attracted the attention of the international jihadist movement. Experienced mujahedeen, led by the Saudi Ibn al-Khattab, came to Chechnya to support the fight against the Russians. Their Wahhabist doctrine gained influence in the Chechen resistance movement and the influx of international fighters during this period led to a change in the objectives. Chechen independence remained the primary goal, but regions outside Chechnya were increasingly included as objectives for independence and Muslim self-governance. In August 1999, forces led by al-Khattab and Chechen fighter Shamil Basayev invaded the neighboring republic of Dagestan. Russian forces repelled this invasion, but during this period a series of bomb explosions in Moscow apartment buildings shocked the population and the Russian government immediately attributed the acts to the Chechen rebels. The force behind the bombings remains a source of conspiracy theories, but the results of these attacks were clear - Russia forces, now directed by Prime Minister Vladimir Putin again moved into Chechnya, marking the beginning of the Second Chechen War. The current conflict is now entering its second decade with no resolution in sight. Russian efforts at pacifying and controlling the region have had some success, but periods of relative stability have consistently been followed by increased attacks against Russian targets. In October 2007, the new leader of the northern Caucasus resistance, Doku Umarov, declared an end to the unrecognized "Chechen Republic of Ichkeria" and announced the creation of "Caucasus Emirate."⁴ This virtual republic considers its territory to be not only the entire region of the Russian North Caucasus, but it also claims to represent all Muslim peoples of the former Soviet Union, which

represents a significant expansion of the original objective of the Chechen separatist movement.

Factors fueling the insurgency

The North Caucasus region consists of seven Russian republics: Adygea, Karachay-Cherkessia, Kabardino-Balkaria, North Ossetia-Alania, Ingushetia, Chechnya, and Dagestan. These republics are bordered by the Caspian Sea in the east, Georgia and Azerbaijan to the south, Russia's Stavropol *krai* to the north, and Krasnodar *krai* to the west. The population of these republics is approximately seven million, with the Muslim faith predominating in all but North Ossetia-Alania. Sunni Islam is the predominant branch in the region, with a majority Shia population in Dagestan. The region is home to over 40 ethnic groups and as many languages. Due to the mountainous terrain and a history of conquest, the region is one of the most ethnically diverse on earth. The classic Arab designation for the region, *jabal al-alsan*, means "the Mountain of Languages."⁵ This extremely high level of ethnic diversity is due to the region's mountainous terrain as well as its strategic location as both an east-west and a north-south corridor between Asia and Europe.

A number of factors have fueled the insurgent movement. A floundering economy is undoubtedly one of the primary reasons behind high levels of discontent in the region. Poverty levels are among the highest in the Russian Federation. Unemployment of young males is estimated at 50-75 percent. This problem is exacerbated by high population growth, particularly in Dagestan and Ingushetia – not surprisingly, two of the republics in which the insurgent movement is most active. The level of the shadow economy is approximately 80 percent across the region.⁶

The bleak economic conditions contribute to a variety of social problems. In the absence of jobs, many have turned to crime as a means of generating income. Kidnapping for ransom has a long history in the region and the problem has increased over time. Corruption is pervasive at all levels of society and trust in government institutions is low. In the absence of the political ideology provided by the Soviet Union, the moral and spiritual vacuum had been filled by various forms of Islamic faith, many of which are enjoying a renaissance after seventy years of Soviet repression. Although traditional forms of Sufism are the dominant form of Islam in the region, decades of opposition to Russian rule has given exponents of Wahhibist fundamentalist beliefs the opportunity to establish bases of support in the North Caucasus.

Insurgent Objectives

While the initial goal of the Chechen resistance movement in the early 1990s was to establish a state independent of Russia, over the past two decades the movement has changed significantly and the influx of Islamist practitioners and jihadists has strongly influenced the objectives of the movement. Over time the Chechen independence movement was adopted by Islamists that have stated an ambition to remove the Russians from the region and establish a “Caucasus Emirate” under sharia law. Although this change in objective was vociferously opposed by the Chechen government in exile based in London, it has taken root among insurgents in the region.⁷ The insurgent leadership seems willing to pursue limited operational objectives in the near- to mid-term and use time to its advantage. Based on an assessment of insurgent activities and pronouncements, some of these specific objectives may include: establishing pockets of control, obtaining the support or neutrality of the local

population, discrediting the Russian government, targeting Russian popular support for counterinsurgency efforts, and targeting government officials by intimidation or death.⁸

The insurgents continue to attempt to draw attention and support to their cause by terror attacks in Russian cities, but they appear to have overestimated their ability to divert jihadists from theaters such as Iraq and Afghanistan. Part of their strategy is to stay viable until jihadist fighters can turn their attention away from these more important theaters of operation.

Russian Objectives

The North Caucasus region is strategically and historically significant to Russia. It lies along Russia's southern border, separating Russia from the South Caucasus region and the Middle East. The North Caucasus also feature prominently in Russia's history, having been incorporated into the Russian Empire in the 18th century and the region's exotic location and cultures provide the setting for many of Russia's most beloved novels . The region is also economically important as Russia's natural resource pipelines from the Caspian Sea region run through it. Russia also is concerned about a possible separatist domino-effect, starting in the North Caucasus and then expanding into the heart of the Russian Federation in the predominantly Muslim republics of Tatarstan and Bashkortostan. Thus, in order to maintain its territorial integrity, Russia has been steadfast in its efforts to suppress separatist movements in the region. Russia's ultimate objective is to stabilize the restive region and restore the government's ability to effectively govern throughout the North Caucasus .

Analytical Framework

One approach to assessing whether the Caucasus Emirate has the characteristics necessary to prevail over Russia is to review the body of scholarly research that has attempted to identify the key variables that have allowed a weaker power to defeat a stronger one through an insurgency. In 1975 Andrew Mack examined conflict in the post World War II era and found that in most cases the insurgents won by “the destruction of the external power’s political capacity to wage war.”⁹ Mack argues that the overwhelming strength of the strong actor creates asymmetric gaps in both military capabilities and in political resolve. Since the weak actor does not have the ability to win the conflict militarily, it must exploit the strong actor’s relative lack of political will to prevail. During the Cold War, the levels of national commitment on the part of the U.S. and France in Vietnam and Algeria were no doubt significant, but not at the same level of the insurgents, who were literally fighting for their survival. The limited political objectives of the war, from the perspective of the populace of the external power, limited the ability of the country to take the steps necessary to prevail. Unable to impose its will militarily, the insurgent side was able to exploit the domestic political environment and make the war politically unwinnable.

In another explanation of the how the weaker side can win wars, Ivan Arreguin-Toft attributes conflict outcomes to the interaction of each side’s choice of strategy. Arreguin-Toft concludes that actors lose when they choose the right strategy and lose when they adopt the wrong one. He argues that both sides have two basic strategies – direct and indirect. The strong actor usually wins when both sides choose a similar strategy, either direct against direct or indirect against indirect. If each side takes

differing approaches, the weak actor has an opportunity for success. For example, a weak actor may succeed using guerrilla warfare (indirect) if the strong actor chooses a conventional military approach (direct). On the other hand, strong actors increase their chances of success by using an indirect strategy against an enemy also using an indirect approach.¹⁰

Jeffrey Record proposes that neither political will nor strategic interaction best explains how weak actors win. In his 2007 book, *Beating Goliath: Why Insurgencies Win*, he finds that the attribute of insurgent movements that most closely correlates to victory is level of external support. He also makes an important point that while these factors are important to achieving success in an insurgency – the strong side still usually wins. Military axioms such as, “Quantity has a quality all its own” and “God is on the side of the big battalions,” speak to the importance of this phenomenon. Weak side victories are unlikely and are usually due to a combination of superior strategy, stronger will, and external assistance.¹¹ Even when all three factors are present, a weak side victory is by no means guaranteed.

While scholarship on this topic may be divided, these three factors – will, strategy, and external support – are clearly important factors to consider when evaluating the likelihood of success of an insurgent movement. The roles that each of these three factors play in the war in the North Caucasus is a subject worthy of more detailed analysis and may provide some insights into the potential outcomes of the conflict.

The Role of Strategic Approaches

During the first phase of the Chechen War, from 1994-1996, Russia took a conventional military approach to resolving the situation in Chechnya. Russia initially viewed the rebellion in Chechnya as the Soviet Union had viewed political uprisings at home and throughout Eastern Europe during the Cold War. The Soviets had succeeded through the application of overwhelming conventional force and expected to do so again. Prior to the Russian invasion in 1994, Defense Minister Pavel Grachev predicted that he could capture Grozny in “two hours with one parachute regiment.”¹² Russia rushed headlong into Chechnya using a conventional military attack with the expectation of an easy victory. The Chechens, on the other hand – aware of their own limited resources – adopted a strategy of guerrilla warfare from the outset and were able to inflict major damage on the ill-prepared Russian units. Chechen success on the battlefield led to a stalemate which resulted in de facto independence from Russia according to the peace accords of Khassaviurt in August 1996. However, during three years of de facto independence, the self-proclaimed Chechen Republic of Ichkeria failed to create the necessary institutions and mechanisms of statehood, which led to the resumption of hostilities three years later.

During the Second Chechen War, Russia recognized the futility of conventional attacks against a guerrilla enemy and gradually adopted a broader counterinsurgency strategy. Russian leadership now acknowledges that the poor social conditions in the region are contributing to the unrest and President Medvedev stresses the need to “work with the people, work with communities and offer them better conditions for life.”¹³ By reorganizing the Southern Federal District to create the North Caucasus Federal

District, Moscow is attempting to put a greater focus on the region. The first presidential envoy to the region, Alexander Khloponin, is focusing on economic development and fighting corruption.¹⁴

One of the pillars of this approach has been to identify and support local leaders that are willing to take orders from Moscow, a policy known as “Chechenization.” The most prominent example of this approach has been with Ramzan Kadyrov in Chechnya. In February 2006, President Putin nominated Kadyrov to be the Chechen president with the mission to restore order to the troubled republic. In exchange for political and massive financial support from Moscow, Kadyrov has managed to restore a degree of normality to Chechnya, but he has been repeatedly accused of gross human rights violations in the process of doing so.¹⁵ In particular, his name has been linked with the deaths of prominent journalists and human rights defenders.¹⁶ This policy of using Chechens to control Chechens has provided some stability in Chechnya, but it remains to be seen whether this approach will be viable in the long term.

Russia is also committed to a strategy of weakening the insurgent movement by targeting its leadership. Russia has had considerable success in eliminating insurgent leaders through a variety of techniques. The success of this approach suggests that the Russian intelligence and security services have become more adept at coordinating their activities.¹⁷

As the Russian strategic approach has evolved over time, what began as a Chechen independence movement has become a regional insurgency, backed by an Islamist political ideology. The influx of foreign jihadist fighters into Chechnya was welcomed in the First Chechen War, due to their ties to the global jihadist network and

their financial connections. Jihadists became increasingly influential as they took responsibility for training Chechen troops both militarily and politically.¹⁸ This increased jihadist influence led directly to the attacks from Chechnya into Dagestan in 1999, which marked the start of the Second Chechen War.

Doku Umarov's establishment of the Caucasus Emirate in 2007 marks a significant milestone in the movement's strategy. The goal of creating of an independent Chechen state was eclipsed by the desire to establish an independent emirate on Russian soil. This move can be seen as an act of desperation on the insurgents' part, in an attempt appeal to Muslims worldwide and generate greater interest – and support - for the cause. Despite this change in objective, the insurgent side still pursues a strategy of guerrilla warfare combined with terrorist activities and is unlikely to acquire the resources necessary to adopt a more direct strategic approach.

The Role of Will

Determination, or will, has long been recognized as a critical aspect of successful military operations. Unlike the failed great power interventions in Afghanistan and Vietnam, Russia has vital national interests in the region and is less susceptible to domestic and international pressure to resolve the conflict. As described earlier, Russia has vital interests at stake, particularly in regard to its own existence as a sovereign state and the possibility of a cascade of independence movements on its territory. President Medvedev described the situation in the North Caucasus as Russia's most important domestic policy issue¹⁹ and he has gone so far as to make Prime Minister Putin responsible for socio-economic development in the North Caucasus.²⁰

Russia is firmly committed to asserting its sovereignty over the region, although this resolve has not always resulted in effective policies. Russia has also been aided also by terrorist operations undertaken by the insurgent side in the past decade. During the First Chechen War, the Chechen side fought primarily against Russian military and security units, with only an occasional terrorist attack in the local area. Russian popular sentiment was divided and didn't necessarily approve of its government's actions in Chechnya. These domestic pressures against the conflict helped push Moscow into a negotiated settlement with the rebel leadership. Due to the increased use of terror against civilians throughout the Russian Federation, public sentiment has hardened against the insurgents. Over the past two decades, the Russian government has established significantly more control over the media, which has also aided its efforts to limit domestic opposition. International pressure against Russia has also been limited. Due to insurgent terrorist attacks, Russia has successfully portrayed its internal struggle as a front in the global campaign against Islamic terrorism, which has muted criticism from abroad. Russia also benefits from a relatively benign geopolitical situation. It faces no serious conventional military threats from abroad and is thus able to dedicate the resources of its security ministries to dealing with the situation in the North Caucasus.

The insurgent movement, on the other hand, is divided between nationalists seeking to gain independence for their specific republics and more radical, jihadist-oriented individuals seeking to establish an Islamic emirate on Russian territory. This divide has existed for over a decade, but became public in the spring of 2010, when a group of Chechen field commanders directly challenged Umarov's leadership. They argued that decisions should be made by committee rather than decree and sought the

appointment of an independent emir for Chechnya.²¹ In July 2010, Umarov announced his resignation as emir and identified one of his Chechen critics, Aslambek Vadalov, as his successor. He later overturned this decision in August, claiming that the previous announcement had been “completely fabricated.”²² Vadalov, along with over 20 Chechen field commanders, then disassociated himself from the Caucasus Emirate and Umarov. This high-level infighting suggests that the insurgent movement in the North Caucasus is lacking a clearly defined, agreed-upon political-military end state. The situation is further complicated by the ambitions of other regionally-focused ethnic separatists, particularly in Ingushetia and Dagestan. The religious and ethnic diversity of the region leads to a wide variety of goals and objectives. The differences between the factions are significant and provide Russia with obvious seams that can be exploited in order to further its objectives. Russia used this approach during the Second Chechen War, when it was able to use a split in the Chechen opposition to co-opt one group of rebels to act on Moscow’s behalf and fight against their former allies.²³ The existing divides within the insurgent movement suggest that it will have difficulty establishing a compelling narrative to influence the population to support its objectives.

The Role of External Support

In his 2007 book, *Beating Goliath: Why Insurgencies Win*, Jeffrey Record argues that the attribute of insurgent movements that most closely correlates to victory is level of external support.²⁴ While recognizing the importance of having a viable strategy and maintaining popular support for the insurgent side, he finds that tangible external support is critical to its success. He analyzes insurgent movements from the American Civil War to the Soviet-Afghan war and concludes that a high level of external support

was a necessary condition for the success of the insurgent movements. Adding additional support to Record's conclusions, a recent RAND study of 30 insurgencies found that the ability of insurgent groups to obtain tangible support, defined as personnel, financing, material, intelligence and sanctuary perfectly predicted the outcome of the conflict.²⁵

Who are the external actors providing support to the insurgent movement in the North Caucasus? On the surface, the answer is that no state is openly providing the insurgents a significant amount of support. The North Caucasus conflict has attracted the attention of the international jihadist movement from the period of the First Chechen War. But while the current level of support from Islamic countries is increasing, the support is considerably less than during the late 1990s and early 2000s when prominent jihadists such as Ibn al-Khattab were actively participating in operations.²⁶ The ongoing U.S.-led operations in Iraq and Afghanistan is believed to have reduced interest in the Chechen conflict and attracted jihadi fighters to these theaters.

Currently no state recognizes the legitimacy of the Caucasus Emirate or openly provides support to the insurgent cause. During the First Chechen War, the Chechen side was able to earn a degree of moral support from the international community, based on its desire for self-determination and Russia's brutal operations to restore its control over the territory. This moral support quickly disappeared after the Beslan terrorist attack of September 2004 and the Chechen cause became inextricably linked with the international terrorist movement. While external financial support from jihadist organization and supporters is no doubt finding its way into the North Caucasus, the amounts do not appear to be sufficiently large to be decisive. As a political entity that

exists only in the minds of the insurgents and their supporters, the Caucasus Emirate lacks control over any significant portion of territory and does not have an infrastructure capable of gathering the necessary military and financial resources common to successful insurgent movements.²⁷

Insurgents frequently must rely upon external support for access to weaponry. In the notable recent cases of successful insurgent movements, Afghanistan and Vietnam, outside states provided large amounts of weapons and military material to the weaker side. This dynamic has not appeared in the North Caucasus. Russia has successfully managed to prevent any significant flow of outside weapons and material into the region. On the contrary, insurgents are far more likely to obtain weapons from Russian military units either through theft or illicit sale, a problem that has plagued Russian forces from the outbreak of conflict in 1994.²⁸

Sanctuary is an important component of external support. The only states to share a land border with the North Caucasus region are Georgia and Azerbaijan. While in the past, Chechens had been able to operate in these countries, Russian pressure on Georgia and Azerbaijan to eliminate armed resistance groups from their territories has met with success. Azerbaijan actively cooperates with Russian special services to stop the flow of fighters from Azerbaijan into Dagestan.²⁹ Georgia's initial response was that it was incapable of dealing with Chechens crossing the border. However, fearing Russian intervention on its territory, Georgia addressed the problem by accepting the proposal to have the U.S. military provide training and equipment to the Georgian military.

Russia maintains good relations with most Middle Eastern countries, many of which could potentially provide people, financing, and weapons to the insurgent groups. Russia's likes to portray itself as a mediator between the Middle East and the West and has supported Hamas and Hezbollah in the hopes of gaining support throughout the Muslim world.³⁰ Russia is an observer nation in the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC). This status has paid some dividends to Russia, including a decision in the OIC to not support a resolution expressing support for Chechnya's independence.³¹ Russian seeks to establish its influence in the Muslim world by presenting itself as more understanding of Islam due to its large Muslim minority and its more tolerant stance toward Islam. This approach seems to be having the desired effect of reducing Muslim hostility toward Russia.

In the post Cold War era, the support of external non-state actors can also influence the outcome of an insurgent campaign. Diasporas, in particular, have played an increasingly important role in recent years.³² In fact, the most significant source of support comes from the international Caucasus diasporas, the largest of which is in Turkey and is estimated to be five million people. However, the Turkish government has clamped down on fundraising and transfer of funds to the Chechen resistance and accurate assessments of the level of financial support are not available.³³

Current trends and Likely Impact on the Conflict

One danger to the Russian approach is that its people may increasingly come to view the North Caucasus as foreign territory. As the ethnic Russian population continues to decrease and the influence of Islam – in any of its manifestations – continues to increase, Russians may no longer be willing to see their limited financial

resources diverting to the North Caucasus in hopes of stimulating the economy and bringing stability. At this time, however; the Russian populace continues to take a relatively neutral stance toward the fighting. Many Russians hold prejudices against the people of the Caucasus region and view their government's actions to restore order to a region viewed as an integral part of Russia as legitimate.

On the insurgent side, the radical elements within the movement may be strengthened as U.S.-led operations in Iraq and Afghanistan conclude and dedicated jihadists reorient on new objectives. The danger for Russia is particularly acute if the NATO mission fails in Afghanistan and the Taliban are able to regain control of the country. The Taliban recognized the Chechen independence movement in the 1990s and it seems likely that a Taliban-led state could again serve as a training ground for jihadists preparing to fight in the North Caucasus.³⁴

Conclusion

The preceding analysis of key factors associated with successful insurgencies is not meant to provide a definitive prediction of the outcome of the conflict in the North Caucasus. Three broadly-defined outcomes are still potentially viable and depend on actions that will be taken in the future. Russia may be able, given its near monopoly on military, economic, and diplomatic power, to establish the conditions necessary to bring the region to a state of normality and reduce violence to a manageable level. On the other end of the spectrum of outcomes, the insurgent movement may be able to increase its legitimacy among the population in the region if Russia fails to adequately address the problems caused by the stagnant economy, poor governance, and radical ideologies. If the Russian government becomes delegitimized in the eyes of the local

population, it may no longer be able to assert its control over the region, and the average Russian may no longer view keeping the region as part of Russia is worth the cost. The third, and most likely outcome, is that Russia will continue to deal with an insurgent movement in the North Caucasus for several years, but that the insurgent movement will not be able to establish an independent state in the region. The three factors most frequently correlated with insurgent victories: strategy, will, and external support, are not present in a sufficient degree to imagine that the insurgent side will prevail.

After many years of instability in the region, the Russian government seems to have identified the root causes of dissatisfaction in the North Caucasus and has over time shifted from a conventional military approach to a more sophisticated counterinsurgency strategy, emphasizing all elements of national power. This shift in approach, suggests that Russia has identified a strategy that can potentially resolve the conflict over time.

In the battle of wills, Russia also seems to have the upper hand. The Russian government has never wavered in its intention to maintain control over Chechnya and the broader North Caucasus region. In particular, Prime Minister Putin came to power based on his reputation in dealing with the crisis in the Caucasus over a decade ago and is still the driving force behind Russian efforts to pacify the region. Russia also benefits from the actions of its opponent, whose use of terrorist attacks has alienated potential supporters both in Russia and abroad. On the other hand, the insurgent movement remains splintered into those who are struggling for Chechen, or other ethnicity-based, independences and those that wish to establish a regional emirate. The

factionalism displayed by the various elements of the insurgent movement does not bode well for success against a powerful and determined opponent.

Russia has also been successful in eliminating potential sources of external support for the insurgents. No United Nations member-state recognizes the Caucasus Emirate or openly provides any form of tangible assistance to the insurgents. The radical insurgent policy of transforming the Chechen separatist movement into a theater for global jihad has not had the desired effect. As a prominent Russian analyst of the region noted, "separatism has become a non-starter in the North Caucasus."³⁵ Despite the years of violence and the establishment of a virtual state, the Caucasus Emirate has not been able to gather sufficient strength to separate itself from Russia and is unlikely to be able to do so in the future.

Endnotes

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