

# Disrupting Escalation of Terror in Russia to Prevent Catastrophic Attacks

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## Executive Summary

The recent spate of deadly terrorist attacks in Russia has plunged the country into what President Vladimir Putin has rightfully described as a “total war” against the networks of terror. This article will analyze the trends in this war, and will conclude that the logical outcome of the ongoing escalation in number, scope, and cruelty of terrorist attacks in Russia will be an act of catastrophic terrorism.<sup>1</sup> The horrendous hostage-taking drama in the North Ossetian town of Beslan—in which more than 330, including 160 children, were killed—clearly demonstrates that ideologically-driven extremists have already passed the moral threshold between conventional terror acts and catastrophic terrorism.<sup>2</sup>

We will demonstrate that networks of these extremists are constantly expanding their capabilities, both organizational and operational, in this total war to inflict damage of catastrophic proportions on Russia either by conventional means or through the use of nuclear, biological and chemical (NBC) materials. We will also demonstrate that the most violent and organized of these networks—the anti-Russian insurgents in the Northern Caucasus—are becoming increasingly motivated to resort to acts of catastrophic terrorism, as their current tactics of conventional attacks have failed to have any impact on the Kremlin’s staunch refusal to negotiate either with the Islamist or secular wings of separatists in the region. The hostage-taking drama in Beslan in September 2004 is the latest evidence of the Islamist wing’s preparedness to kill hundreds of non-combatants, including children, as well as sacrifice their own lives as they strive to win

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<sup>1</sup> This article acknowledges existing differences in the expert and academic communities on what constitutes a terrorist attack. For purposes of clarity and concision, this article relies on a definition of a terrorist attack commonly found among mainstream researchers of this subject. We define a terrorist act as an act of political violence that inflicts harm on non-combatants, but is designed to intimidate broader audiences, including state authorities, and is an instrument of achieving certain political or other goals. This essay defines an act of catastrophic terrorism as a terrorist attack involving the use of chemical, biological, or nuclear materials or weapons of mass destruction or conventional techniques to kill a significant number of people (1,000 or more).

<sup>2</sup> This article will refer to those religiously-motivated and separatist insurgents who have the motivation and capability to stage acts of catastrophic terrorism as “ideologically-driven extremists,” as distinct from “conventional insurgents,” who would limit themselves to “conventional” guerilla warfare and terrorist attacks of limited scale.

this war and coerce Russia into negotiations and eventual withdrawal from the North Caucasus.

This essay will also identify other actors who are capable of assisting, if not leading, terrorist attacks of catastrophic proportions in Russia, such as apocalyptic and messianic sects and extremist secular parties. The latter have displayed preparedness for political violence, and the former have demonstrated their ability to disperse into decentralized networks of cells, often remaining below the radar of law-enforcement and security agencies. We will argue that members of both religious sects and fringe political parties can be recruited to assist in acts of terror, while further pressure on some of the sects can prompt their messianic leaders to order their subservient followers to try stage an apocalypse through catastrophic terror acts.

We will go on to demonstrate that corruption has emerged as a major security threat in this war with terrorist networks, and to analyze the trade-offs between civil liberties and securities in Russia, to conclude that unrestricted expansion of the repressive powers of the state security apparatus will not pay off in this war.

The article will conclude with policy recommendations that Russian authorities identify potential actors, analyze their capabilities and motivations, and then proceed to dismantle those who pose the gravest threat, while keeping the rest of agents of terror on the run.

## **Actors that Pose a Threat of Catastrophic Terror**

Ideologically-driven extremists based in Chechnya and neighboring regions of the Northern Caucasus remain the most likely actors to perpetrate acts of catastrophic terrorism in Russia. These actors have already displayed formidable resilience, an ever-rising level of strategic and tactical planning for their attacks, and the capability and motivation to inflict massive indiscriminate casualties by, for instance, organizing an apartment bombing in the southern Russian city of Buinaksk in 1999.<sup>3</sup> Most recently,

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<sup>3</sup> A Russian court sentenced two natives of Dagestan, Isa Zainudinov and Alisultan Salikhov, to life in prison for their involvement in the planning of a deadly apartment bombing in the Dagestani city of Buinaksk. Russian prosecutors insisted that it was Chechnya-based warlord Khattab who ordered the blast that killed sixty-two people, when a powerful bomb went off in front of an apartment building in Buinaksk on 4 September 1999. Simon Saradzhyan, "After One Year, Blast Probe Still Drags On," *The Moscow Times*, 15 September 2000.

Russian law enforcement officials also maintain that Khattab ordered the bombings of apartment buildings that killed some 220 people in Russian cities during the fall of 1999. One of the alleged bombers and a native of Karachayev-Cherkessia, Adam Dekkushev, was arrested in 2002 and told investigators of the Federal Security Service (FSB) that it was this salafite-minded warlord who issued the order through his subordinate Sheikh Abu Omar, deputy chief of FSB Operations and Search Directorate Yevgeny Kolesnikov told reporters in Moscow on 17 July 2002 (*RTR Television*, 17 July 2002). Dekkushev also told investigators that the alleged terrorists had initially planned to bomb a dike in southern Russia to flood several settlements in hopes of killing thousands, but then changed their mind. Alexander Shvarev, "Zrya My S Rebyatiami Etim Zanimalis (We Should Not Have Been Doing This With Guys)," *Vremya Novostei*, 19 February 2003.

two female natives of Chechnya, acting by proxy of an Islamic radical group associated with Al Qaeda, blew up two planes to kill themselves and all other people on board.<sup>4</sup> However, the most horrendous casualties to date in a single attack were registered when a group of gunmen from Chechnya and Ingushetia took more than 1,200 people hostage in a school in a southern Russian town (Beslan) in September of 2004. After two days of a tense stand-off, the terrorists, who claimed to be acting on orders of the most notorious of the Chechen warlords, Shamil Basayev, detonated explosives and shot at hostages. More than 330 hostages were killed in explosions, shot by the terrorists or died in crossfire before the terrorists were overwhelmed by vigilantes and troops on 3 September 2004.

The capacity of the extremists in the Northern Caucasus for such attacks is vast. These groups include organized, well-trained and well-equipped guerilla fighters capable of carrying out simultaneous multi-object attacks on guarded facilities; in addition, the groups have access to an array of other powerful organizational resources through corrupt officials, sympathetic law enforcement agents, and links to organized crime and other terrorist organizations, including Al Qaeda. There is also no shortage of man-

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According to Alexander Litvinenko, former Lt. Colonel of the FSB, however, it could have been the FSB that organized the apartment bombings. Litvinenko, who claims to have spoken to Gochiyayev, has not backed his allegations with any direct evidence, however. Yuri Felshitsinskii and Alexander Litvinenko, *Blowing Up Russia: Terror From Within* (New York: Liberty Publishing House, 2001). Fragments from the book are available at <http://2001.NovayaGazeta.Ru/nomer/2001/61n/n61n-s00.shtml> as of 12 June 2002.

<sup>4</sup> After days of intensive search and analysis, the Federal Security Service (FSB) announced on 30 August that bombs had brought down two planes, which crashed almost simultaneously on 24 August, killing all eighty-nine people on board. "Today without a shadow of a doubt we can say that both airplanes were blown up as a result of a terrorist attack," Lieutenant-General Andrei Fetusov of FSB told a Russian news agency.

Initial examination of the crash debris offered no evidence to suggest that the planes had been brought down by terrorists, according to the FSB. However, as the search progressed, FSB investigators found traces of a powerful explosive in the debris of both planes. Amanta Nagayeva and Dzhebirkhanova, whose first name was not released, are the two Chechen women whose names were registered among the passengers of the two flights. Both worked in the Chechen capital of Grozny and shared an apartment there. While a Chechen police official told *Izvestia* that a background check on both women revealed no ties to the rebels, this newspaper managed to establish that Nagayeva's brother has been missing since he was detained by federal servicemen three years ago in Chechnya. Vadim Rechkalov, "Drugie Dve Shakhidki," *Izvestia*, 30 August 2004. On 27 August, a little-known group, named the Islambouli Brigades, claimed responsibility for downing both planes. The group had been earlier reported to have ties to Al Qaeda. A group with a similar name—the Islambouli Brigades of Al Qaeda—claimed responsibility for an attempt to kill Pakistan's prime minister-designate in July. Al Qaeda has reportedly cultivated ties with the radical Islamist wing of the Chechen separatists. President Vladimir Putin also said on 31 August that the downing of the planes highlighted the links between Chechen rebels and international terror networks. The FSB and other government agencies have refrained from blaming Chechen rebels for the attacks, which the Russian press speculated could have been carried out by two female natives of Chechnya that were among the passengers.

power that is determined and ready to sacrifice their own lives and engage in indiscriminate killing. These suicide bombers have become one of the most worrisome manifestations of the growing determination of Islamist extremists.<sup>5</sup> The religious motivations of the female bombers are often coupled with the desire for personal revenge for the loss of suicide bombers' relatives: in one such case, two wives and a sister of a killed Chechen warlord participated in successive deadly bombings.<sup>6</sup>

In addition to plotting and executing attacks using conventional arms, the extremists have also been seeking to acquire chemical and nuclear materials with the intent to use them in terrorist attacks. During Russia's first military campaign in Chechnya in 1994–96, Chechen separatists acquired radioactive materials,<sup>7</sup> threatened to attack Russia's nuclear facilities,<sup>8</sup> plotted to hijack a nuclear submarine,<sup>9</sup> and attempted to put pressure on the Russian leadership by planting a container with radioactive materials in Moscow and threatening to detonate it.<sup>10</sup> During the second campaign, they planted ex-

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<sup>5</sup> After the theater raid, Chechen suicide bombers led eleven attacks that reportedly claimed the lives of 295 people, mostly Russian civilians. Several attacks were averted. Shamil Basayev claimed responsibility for all the attacks, repeatedly acknowledging on the rebel website Kavkazcenter.com that he has trained some forty more female suicide bombers.

<sup>6</sup> Sergei Dyupin, "Vdova ne Prihodit Odná (Widow Doesn't Come Alone)," *Kommersant*, 10 August 2004.

<sup>7</sup> Chechen fighters removed several containers of radioactive materials from the Grozny branch of Russia's Radon nuclear waste collection site prior to the seizure of the facility by federal troops in January 2000, according to a Russian magazine's sources in the Russian Ministry of Defense. Yury Gladkevich, "Poshel v Gory (Into the Mountains)," *Profil*, 20 March 2000, quoted in "Radwaste Reported Removed from Radon Facility in Grozny," NIS Nuclear Trafficking Database, Center for Nonproliferation Studies, Monterey Institute of International Studies Nuclear Threat Initiative, available at <http://www.nti.org/db/nistraff/2000/20000230.htm> as of 19 June 2002.

<sup>8</sup> Then-Chechen president Dzhokhar Dudayev warned that his fighters might attack nuclear plants in Russia in 1992 to discourage Moscow from trying to counter his republic's independence bid. He issued a similar threat again in 1995 when the military campaign was already underway in the republic. "Dudayev Grozit Perenesti Voinu v Glub' Rossii, (Dudayev Threatens to Transfer War Into the Depths of Russia)," *Vechny Chelyabinsk*, 1 February 1995.

<sup>9</sup> "V Chechne Nashli Plan Zakhvata Rossiiskoi Lodki (Plan to Hijack a Russian Submarine Found in Chechnya)," *Lenta.ru*, 4 February 2002; available at [www.lenta.ru/vojna](http://www.lenta.ru/vojna) as of 4 July 2002. Also reported in "Nachalnik Operativnogo Shtaba Maskhadova Gotovil Plan Zakhvata Rossiiskoi Atomnoi Podlodki (Chief of Maskhadov's Operational Staff Was Preparing a Plan to Hijack Russian Atomic Submarine)," *RIA-Novosti*, 25 April 2002.

<sup>10</sup> Chechen warlord Shamil Basayev tried to blackmail Russian leadership with a crude radiological device. Basayev began with threats to organize undercover attacks with radioactive, chemical, and biological substances against Moscow and other strategic sites in Russia unless peace negotiations, which began on 5 July 1995, proved successful.

plosives in chemical storage tanks, scouted Russian nuclear facilities, and established contacts with an insider at one such facility.<sup>11</sup> So far, these and other actions have failed to coerce the Kremlin into concessions or negotiations, a development that has contributed to further radicalization of the separatist movement in Chechnya, with even previously moderate figures pledging allegiance to the militant Islamist course.

The strongest manifestation of this evolution has been Chechen separatist leader Aslan Maskhadov's July statement that Russian cities are legitimate targets for the rebels, and that mass murder of Russian civilians would be a legitimate measure.<sup>12</sup> He also blamed Western governments for siding with the Kremlin on the Chechnya issue, adding that the separatist cause would not seek legitimacy with such a corrupt partner. The statement removes any constraints the extremists had placed on escalating the terror war, and opens a path for closer cooperation between the separatist wing and Islamists in implementing terrorist attacks.

The religious motives behind the separatists' anti-Russian resistance emerged at the end of the first military conflict in Chechnya in 1996, when several dozens of Arab Islamist fighters, led by the Jordanian-born warlord Emir Khattab, became involved.<sup>13</sup> A *de facto* independent Chechnya has served as a training ground for Wahhabi jihadists. Volunteers from Central Asia, the Caucasus, and the Volga region, as well as citizens of Saudi Arabia, Jordan, China, Pakistan, and Malaysia learned explosives techniques there, along with guerilla warfare and Wahhabi theory.<sup>14</sup> Alumni of Chechnya's training camps have become a core of the extended anti-Russian terrorist networks in Karachayevo-Cherkessia, Kabardino-Balkaria, Ingushetia, and Dagestan, actively participating in the anti-government insurgency, both by fighting in Chechnya and waging sabotage activities in their native republics.

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The July 1995 talks failed, and four months later—on 23 November 1995—a Russian TV crew found a lead container filled with radioactive cesium-137, which had been planted by Basayev's men, in Moscow's Izmailovskii Park. In addition to tipping off the media, Basayev also claimed that his agents had smuggled in four more such packages, and that at least two of them contained explosives, which could be detonated at any time, turning the containers into "dirty bombs." Grigorii Sanin and Aleksandr Zakharov, "Konteyner Iz Izmailovskogo Parka Blagopoluchno Evakuirovano (Container Has Been Successfully Evacuated From the Izmailovskii Park)," *Segodnya*, 25 November 1995.

<sup>11</sup> "Tver Region. Captain of A Regiment Which Guards Kalininskaya NPP Is Suspected of Having Supplied Secret Information to Chechens," *Regnum*, 19 November 2002.

<sup>12</sup> The full text of the interview is available at Maskhadov's website, [www.chechenpress.info/news/2004/07/18/08.shtml](http://www.chechenpress.info/news/2004/07/18/08.shtml), last accessed 11 August 2004.

<sup>13</sup> Khattab reportedly was fighting against the Soviet Army in Afghanistan in the 1980s and retained connections to what later emerged as Al Qaeda. After the first war in Chechnya, Khattab set up at least seventeen training camps in Chechnya. Michael Wines, "Russia Releases Tape to Support Claim of Chechen Rebel's Death," *The New York Times*, 27 April 2002, A7.

<sup>14</sup> Gennady Troshev, "Emir Khattab: Shtrihi k Portretu" (Emir Khattab: Touches to Portrait)," *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 27 April 2002.

In Dagestan, Wahhabi extremists—led by a Dagestani warlord, Rappani Khalilov—are accused by local officials of carrying out the bombing of the Victory Day parade in Kaspiisk in 2002 that claimed the lives of forty Russian servicemen and civilians. His terrorist group, *Jennet*, has also proclaimed a war against the Dagestani police, and has audaciously executed more than forty police officers in the past two years.<sup>15</sup> Dagestani Wahhabis also led the first in a series of the apartment building bombings that led to the second Chechen war. Sixty people died in a blast in September of 1999, and Khattab was implicated by Russian officials in ordering the attack.<sup>16</sup>

In Ingushetia, the local Wahhabis participated in a June 2004 raid that was commanded by the leader of the Chechen Islamist extremists, Shamil Basayev, on police and military installations in Ingushetia. Sixty Ingush police officers and prosecutors were purposefully executed by the attackers, and about thirty civilians were killed in the crossfire.

In Kabardino-Balkaria, local Wahhabi leaders, the Shogenov brothers, helped Basayev to dispatch female suicide bombers to Moscow in 2003. In August 2003, Russian security services killed the Shogenovs in a massive crackdown on Islamist cells in the republic. However, the local Wahhabi organization *Yarmuk* apparently was not wiped out; in August, 2004, two police officers were killed in a confrontation with the Wahhabis near the republican capital Nalchik, and the ensuing search operation led to another clash, in which a cache of explosives was seized by law enforcement officers.<sup>17</sup>

The Wahhabi cells have also been active in the Muslim republics of Russia's central Volga region, Tatarstan and Bashkortostan. In 1999, Tatar religious extremists bombed the major Urengoi-Pomara-Uzhgorod natural gas pipeline traversing the republic. Ten bombers have been sentenced to prison terms of between twelve and fifteen years.<sup>18</sup>

In Chechnya itself, the ideology of the resistance has been gradually shifting from separatism to *jihad*, in an apparent effort to expand the sympathetic constituency abroad, thereby gaining additional political and financial support for the cause. Thus, in August of 1999, Basayev and Khattab led two raids into the neighboring Russian republic of Dagestan under the proclaimed goal of establishing an Islamic state on the territory of the Caucasus.<sup>19</sup> The ensuing Russian military campaign is framed by the Islamist wing of the Chechen insurgency as a crackdown on true believers, while the

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<sup>15</sup> Sergei Rasulov, "Diversanty Unichtozhayut Dagestanskikh Militsionerov (Saboteurs Destroy Dagestani Policemen)," *Gazeta*, 11 March 2004.

<sup>16</sup> Nabi Abdullaev, "Buinaksk Apartment Bombers Convicted," *The Moscow Times*, 20 March 2001.

<sup>17</sup> Timur Samedov, "Prishol, Uvidel, Upustil (Came, Saw, Missed)," *Kommersant*, 20 August 2004.

<sup>18</sup> "Za Vzryv Gazoprovoda Vahhabita Prigovorili k 15 Godam Kolonii (Wahhabi Sentenced to 15 Years in Prison for Bombing Gas Main)," *RIA-Novosti*, 28 November 2002.

<sup>19</sup> The text of Basayev's Islamic Shura declaration of the Islamic State of Dagestan on 10 August 1999 can be viewed at the *Russky Zhurnal's* news archive at [www.russ.ru/politics/news/1999/08/10.htm#7](http://www.russ.ru/politics/news/1999/08/10.htm#7), last accessed on 6 May 2004.

extremists' struggle is depicted as *jihad*.<sup>20</sup> Religion has been since then primarily used by these extremists for legitimization of their actions and for framing their struggle as part of the worldwide *jihad*.<sup>21</sup>

As demonstrated above, the radicalization of the Chechen insurgency along religious lines has created the following strong motivations among extremists to commit catastrophic terror acts in Russia:

- The struggle began to be perceived as a defense of the extremists' basic identity and dignity.
- Losing the struggle would be unthinkable, with fighting against Russia becoming a holy duty.
- The struggle is at a stalemate, and cannot be won in real time or in real terms. It can be easily reconceived then on a sacred basis that evokes grand scenarios, blurring the notion of the sympathizing constituency behind the Chechen cause and allowing indiscriminate attacks on an open-ended range of targets.
- More importantly, even the extremists' switch to suicide bombings has failed to affect the Kremlin's hard-line policy towards them. This failure may—and probably will—push the frustrated leaders of the extremists to planning terrorist acts of catastrophic proportions.

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<sup>20</sup> See Basayev's numerous statements on the rebel website Kavkazcenter.com.

<sup>21</sup> Reacting to this shift, the U.S. Department of State designated three Chechen rebel groups—Islamic International Brigade, Special Purpose Islamic Regiment, and Riyadus-Salikhin Reconnaissance and Sabotage Battalion of Chechen Martyrs—as foreign terrorist organizations in February 2003. The Chechen rebels' *jihad* doctrine is represented by judgments of the major ideologue of violent *jihad* and the mentor of Osama bin Laden, Palestinian Sheikh Abdullah Azzam, taken out of his work *Defense of the Muslim Lands*, and of a Muslim theologian Ibn Taymiyya (1263–1328), a favorite theorist of radical Muslims. Both encourage the participation of women and children in the fighting.

Operatives of another Al Qaeda-linked network, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, have been spotted in Russia recently. Three IMU members suspected in a March attack in Uzbekistan that killed forty-seven people were arrested in May and June of 2004 in Russia's Muslim-populated Volga regions.

Compared to other neighboring ethnic groups preaching Islam, the Chechens have not developed an indigenous school of religious thought and have retained many ancient animist traditions and beliefs. The extremely formalized and de-spiritualized Wahhabism that perceives *jihad* as external warfare (contrary to the Northern Caucasus' traditional sufi Islam, that views *jihad* as a struggle of a Muslim with his own vicious impulses) quickly took root among the Chechen youth, who saw it as a revolutionary and “purifying” doctrine.

Inside Chechen terror networks, the preaching of mullahs defines the rebels' modus operandi, since both sources of religious and operational authority coincide in their leadership, called the *Majlis-ul Shura* (People's Council). The *Shura* unites warlords, Wahhabi scholars, and Maskhadov's few foreign envoys. Any criticism from religious authorities from outside the rebels' cause is repelled by the *Shura*, which denies their legitimacy because of their siding with Moscow.

Another threat is posed by messianic and totalitarian religious sects operating outside the Northern Caucasus. On the surface, this threat currently appears far less robust than the menace of Islamist extremists in and around Chechnya. However, we should not underestimate the long-term destructive potential of messianic sects, as this threat may grow to deadly proportions as the Russian authorities accelerate pressure on them as well (due to reasons beyond conventional logic and analysis).

The demise of Soviet Union left an ideological vacuum, which religious groups that were well-established in pre-revolutionary Russia (such as the Russian Orthodox Church and Islam) but were suppressed under the Soviet regime were unable to fill completely. As a result, not only various “benign” traditional confessions began to reclaim believers or proselytes in the post-Soviet era, but also a number of what authorities have branded as sects or cults, seeking to establish new religions, began to scout for followers in Russia and other Soviet republics.

Federal government and Russian Orthodox Church experts estimated that there were anywhere between 300 and 500 of what they classified as “sects” operating in Russia as of 2003.<sup>22</sup> There were up to one million followers of sects and other “non-traditional” religious organizations in Russia, with 70 percent being young men between 18 and 27, according to a 2003 roundtable, which drew experts from the Interior Ministry and other government agencies as well as from the Russian Orthodox Church.<sup>23</sup> And, according to one of this roundtable’s participants—the director of the Research Center for Development Strategies and National Security, Igor Oleinik—some of these sects have begun to develop ties with terrorist organizations. Alexander Dvorkin, Russia’s leading expert on these religious groups, also notes the phenomena of “totalitarian sects merging with . . . terrorism” in his recent book.<sup>24</sup>

The Japanese doomsday cult Aum Shinrikyo has provided perhaps the most illustrative example of how a messianic sect can expand across Russia unhindered by law enforcement despite its efforts to recruit defense industry specialists and acquire WMD technologies. At one point, this cult, which dispersed anthrax spores in the Japanese capital in 1993 and sprayed sarin gas in the Tokyo subway in 1995, had more followers in Russia than in any other country, according to the U.S. Senate Government Affairs Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations.<sup>25</sup> The cult actively recruited scientists and technical experts in Russia (among other countries) in order to develop weapons of mass destruction. Aum allegedly managed to recruit followers even among employees

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<sup>22</sup> Materials of roundtable “Totalitarian Sects—Weapons of Mass Destruction. Program of Disarmament” held in Moscow in October 2003.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Alexander Dvorkin, *Totalitarnye Sekty. Sektovedenie* (Nizhni Novogrod, Russia, 2003).

<sup>25</sup> A report from the Russian State Duma’s Security Committee put the number of Aum’s Russian followers at 35,000, with eleven branches outside of Moscow and at least seven inside of the Russian capital. Staff of the Senate Government Affairs Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, “Global Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction: A Case Study on the Aum Shinrikyo,” 31 October 1995, available at [www.fas.org/irp/congress/1995\\_rpt/aum/part06.htm](http://www.fas.org/irp/congress/1995_rpt/aum/part06.htm) as of 31 July 2002.



of the Kurchatov Institute.<sup>26</sup> The sect also managed to infiltrate the town of Obninsk, where the Institute of Nuclear Power Engineering is located, which had a functioning reactor until 2002.<sup>27</sup> In addition to recruiting followers, the cult also sought to acquire various weapons in Russia.<sup>28</sup>

It was only after the 1995 attacks in the Tokyo subway that Russia's law enforcement machine finally swung into action, with Aum's facilities across the country either raided or closed and the sect banned in the same year. Russian members of the sect demonstrated both their motivation and capability to stage acts of terror after the arrest of the cult's leader, Shoko Asahara, in Japan. Four activists planned to stage a series of terrorist acts and take hostages in Japan in 2000 to blackmail the Japanese authorities into releasing Asahara so they could covertly ship him to a secret location in Primorsky Krai's settlement of Slavyanka.<sup>29</sup> The crackdown has failed to break the will of some of Aum's Russian followers, and some 300 of the sect's members could have been still operating in Russia as of April 2004, according to a Russian television report.<sup>30</sup>

To date, Aum Shinrikyo remains the only cult that has been publicly known to seek WMD technologies in Russia with practical use in mind. However, there are other cults active in Russia, operating as networks of largely underground cells, virtually unhindered despite the fact that their leaders have preached that the "judgment day" is imminent and their followers have displayed readiness to sacrifice their lives.

The so-called White Brotherhood has proved, perhaps, the most sophisticated of messianic cults when it came to surviving a crackdown by authorities. This sect was established in Ukraine by an electronics engineer, Yuri Krivonogov, who studied methods of influencing the psyche at a KGB institute in the Soviet era.<sup>31</sup> The cult,

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<sup>26</sup> For instance, there are references in the documents seized from Aum's "construction minister" Kiyohide Hakawa to the desired purchase of nuclear weapons. The documents contain the question, "How much is a nuclear warhead?" and lists several prices. Staff of the Senate Government Affairs Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, "Global Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction: A Case Study on the Aum Shinrikyo," 31 October 1995, available at [http://www.fas.org/irp/congress/1995\\_rpt/aum/part06.htm](http://www.fas.org/irp/congress/1995_rpt/aum/part06.htm) as of 31 July 2002.

<sup>27</sup> S. Romanyuk, "Totalitarian Sects in Russia," *Observer* 5 (1999).

<sup>28</sup> Staff of the Senate Government Affairs Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, "Global Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction: A Case Study on the Aum Shinrikyo," 31 October 1995, available at [http://www.fas.org/irp/congress/1995\\_rpt/aum/part06.htm](http://www.fas.org/irp/congress/1995_rpt/aum/part06.htm) as of 31 July 2002.

<sup>29</sup> Dmitry Sigachev and his three accomplices were arrested by Russia's Federal Security Service in the summer of 2000, and subsequent searches of their apartments netted an arsenal of guns, photographs of populous areas of Tokyo and other Japanese cities, as well as enough explosives to stage twelve "powerful explosions." The four went on trial, and Sigachev confessed during one of the hearings in a Primorsky Krai court to having planned terrorist attacks in Japan. "A Member of the Russian Branch of Aum Shinrikyo Found Unfit to Stand Trial," *Kommersant*, 2002. Sigachev was sentenced to 8 years, while two of his three accomplices were sentenced to 6.5 and 4 years respectively.

<sup>30</sup> "Aum Shinrikyo Changed Its Name," *Vesti* news program, Rossiya Channel, 16 April 2004.

<sup>31</sup> "White Brotherhood Zombifies Urals," *Rossiiskaya Gazeta*.

which stated its messianic ambitions in July 1990, quickly expanded into Russia, with branches operating in as many as forty-five Russian cities as of 1993. Members of this sect believed that Krivonogov's then wife Maria Tsvigun is simultaneously the mother, wife, and re-incarnation of Jesus Christ, and referred to her as "Mary David Christ." As for Krivonogov, he positioned himself as a re-incarnation of John the Baptist. The sect's doctrine said Tsvigun will at one point ascend to Heaven, with Judgment Day soon to follow. According to their teachings, only 144,000 faithful followers will survive the Judgment Day, and sermons delivered by its leaders contained calls to kill those who oppose the White Brotherhood. The sect's newspaper at one point called on the followers to prepare "as 12,000 souls should perish as sacrifice," and told them that it is "their duty to wash off the sins of unfortunate mankind with your blood."<sup>32</sup>

The cult's members planned a mass suicide on 24 November 1993 in the Ukrainian capital of Kiev. The suicide was to have coincided with the "assumption" of Tsvigun, but Ukrainian police cracked down on the sect two weeks earlier, after Tsvigun and her supporters tried to seize the Sophia Orthodox cathedral in Kiev. This helped to avert the mass suicide, but it should also not cast doubt on the followers' preparedness to sacrifice themselves. The fact that one sect member committed suicide after being expelled from the sect demonstrates how attached and subservient followers of the White Brotherhood are.<sup>33</sup>

More than 600 sect members, including Tsvigun, were detained in Ukraine in late 1993. To protest the arrests, more than 150 cult members went on a hunger strike. Tsvigun was tried and convicted in 1994, along with several other leaders of the sect, including Krivonogov. The sect was widely believed to have fizzled out in the wake of the convictions of its leaders and a ban slapped on the White Brotherhood by Ukrainian authorities.

However, these beliefs turned out to be groundless, as the sect continued to operate, largely underground. The sect continued to maintain a low profile when Tsvigun was released in August 1997 and Krivonogov walked free in 2000, but followers of Krivonogov have re-emerged in several Russian regions.<sup>34</sup> The sect has managed to

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> *New Religious Organizations of Destructive and Occult Character in Russia*, Second Edition (Belgorod: Missionary Department of the Moscow Patriarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church, 1997).

<sup>34</sup> Followers of the sect re-emerged in the Vladimir region in August 2000. "Emissaries of the White Brotherhood Appear in the Vladimir region," *Mayak* radio station, 8 August 2000.

In a more recent development, two young women surfaced in the central Russian city of Oryol in May 2003 to praise Maria Tsvigun, whom sect members refer to as "Mary David Christ," and solicit donations. One of the women said there were only a few members of her organization in Oryol, but their number is growing. "Oryol: A Totalitarian Sect Re-emerges in the City," *Regnum* news agency, 12 May 2003.

survive despite the jailing of its leaders as—probably in accordance with a contingency plan—it became decentralized to operate in small cells, whose members in many cases practiced the techniques of underground activities and brainwashing new adepts. Members of the sect would live in rented flats with an average of fifteen to twenty people in each, and they would regularly change apartments. Activists were advised to spend not more than three days in one city, a practice that made the apprehension of the leaders and an examination of their activities difficult.

Such a structure and operational mode has allowed the White Brotherhood to retain its potential, which could be easily expanded the way a peace-time army regiment can be quickly brought up to full strength in case of war. The sect maintains a Web site that can be used to alert members in coded messages. Both Russian and Ukrainian law enforcement agents have expressed concern that there is a “high probability” that members of this sect have the capability to engage in anti-public and terrorist acts.<sup>35</sup>

Some totalitarian sects, such as the “New Generation Church,” use systemic violence to subordinate their members. Leaders of this sect beat their followers, including children, killing at least one in the Siberian town of Aldan.<sup>36</sup> The fact that sects such as Aum and White Brotherhood have managed to recruit thousands of followers and operate across Russia has proved that messianic cults and groups—including Al Qaeda cells, whose leaders strive for catastrophic terrorism—can operate without the awareness of Russian law enforcement agencies.

The White Brotherhood leadership is known to have recruited members in Russia’s depressed defense industry towns, and we can only guess what suicidal missions their leaders may assign to their followers if they are cornered in the current crackdown on “non-traditional” religious groups, which has outlawed even Jehovah’s Witnesses in Moscow.<sup>37</sup> One sect, named “Mother of God Center,” even had officers of the elite

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The sect’s followers were also seen in 2003 singing the praises of the White Brotherhood in suburban trains that shuttle between the Ural city of Yekaterinburg and neighboring towns. The local followers applied for registration as a religious organization in the Sverdlovsk region, but their application was rejected, probably in accordance with the Yeltsin-era law on religion. “Yekaterinburg: Followers of the White Brotherhood Re-appear in the Urals,” *Novyi Region* news agency, 18 June 2003.

<sup>35</sup> *New Religious Organizations of Destructive and Occult Character in Russia*, Second Edition (Belgorod: Missionary Department of the Moscow Patriarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church, 1997).

<sup>36</sup> Alexander Dvorkin, *Totalitarnye Sekty. Sektovedenie* (Nizhni Novogrod, Russia, 2003).

<sup>37</sup> In June of 2004, the Moscow City Court prohibited Jehovah’s Witnesses from engaging in religious activity under a provision that allows courts to ban religious groups considered to incite hatred or intolerant behavior. “City Court Backs Ban of Jehovah’s Witnesses,” *Associated Press*, 17 June 2004.

Special Forces Division, which is stationed in the Moscow region, serving as their “priests” to “baptize” their soldiers. This Russian-based sect also maintains a Praetorian Guard manned with physically fit men known as the “Legion of the Mother of God.”<sup>38</sup>

Just as police and secret services in Japan failed to identify what Aum’s real intentions were until the 1995 subway attack, it may prove difficult for Russian law enforcement and security agencies to discern whether the White Brotherhood and other messianic cults harbor similar messianic terrorism ambitions until they actually strike. It may also prove extremely difficult to locate and neutralize all branches of a messianic terrorist organization even after it strikes, as is the case with Al Qaeda cells in North America.<sup>39</sup>

Of course, one can accept the rather common notion that leaders of some such sects are rational and are positioning themselves as messiahs in order to achieve power through their followers. But it could just as easily be the case that they, like Asahara, truly believe in what they preach, and may one day order their followers to begin the Judgment Day, or their faithful themselves can decide it is time for such a day and try to stage an act of catastrophic terrorism. Whether it is the day Asahara is hanged or a leader of another sect is apprehended, we may learn only after a sect—some of which are known to have had nuclear weapons experts and special forces commandos among their members—stages such an attack, unless authorities act to both disrupt such cults and deny them the capabilities to carry out a catastrophic attack.

While they do not appear to be currently harboring any intentions to stage acts of catastrophic terrorism, activists from Russia’s extremist youth organizations have showed the capability to slip through gaps in security arrangements to embarrass Russia’s law enforcement community by their public attacks on top officials and infiltration into public buildings. The National Bolshevik Party, led by the writer Eduard Limonov, has excelled in carrying out symbolic assaults on government officials and facilities, ranging from throwing food at the Prime Minister Kasyanov in December 2003, to capturing the premises of the Health Ministry in Moscow in August 2004. In Russia, the NBP staged acts of protest against liberal economic reforms and the deconstruction of the welfare state. The party has also carried out several symbolic attacks in CIS countries, demanding more rights for the ethnic Russians living there. Police and

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The first major step to curb “non-traditional” religious groups was made in 1997 when then President Boris Yeltsin signed into law a controversial bill on religion that critics said placed strict restrictions on freedom of worship in Russia. The law granted special status to Russia’s conservative Orthodox Church. It also said faiths not registered with the state since 1982, when the Communist regime was in control, must register annually for fifteen years before they can proselytize, publish, or invite missionaries to Russia without restrictions. Dmitry Zaks, “Final Religion Bill Signed by Yeltsin,” *The Moscow Times*, 27 September 1997.

<sup>38</sup> Dvorikin, *Totalitarnye Sekty. Sektovedenie*.

<sup>39</sup> Simon Saradzhyan, “Russia: Grasping Reality of Nuclear Terror,” paper delivered at the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, Harvard University, March 2003.

security officials have responded extremely harshly to these actions, stimulating the sense of victimization and glorification of the NBP activists.<sup>40</sup>

Using such tactics against the NBP, involving an excessively brutal response to symbolic protest, clearly helps the organization to accumulate a pool of young operatives who have no fear of potentially violent confrontation with the state. As NBP activists see no effect from their actions other than publicity and repression, some of them may start to wonder whether more serious attacks will have the desired impact on authorities and the public.

A more disturbing development is that hatred toward the government itself—which is understandably represented by its most powerful institution, the Federal Security Service (FSB)—has already led to several actual terrorist attacks against the agency by young leftist radicals. Although nobody died in these and other bombings of symbolic installations, several leftist extremists have been convicted over the past several years to prison terms as long as nine years.<sup>41</sup> The most notorious attack, against the FSB building in Moscow in April of 1999, was led by four female members of the Russian Communist Labor party. The party perceives itself as revolutionary, and blames the parliamentary Communist Party of the Russian Federation for cooperation with authorities.<sup>42</sup>

None of the above-mentioned political groups have apocalyptic scenarios in their doctrines. However, the set of skills and expectations acquired by some of their adepts may gradually transform them into violent political entrepreneurs whose experience and knowledge may be used by those masterminding massive terrorist attacks. This probability will increase as the government continues to crack down on these largely benign radicals, and their frustration with the futility of their own relatively nonviolent tactics grows.

Such scenarios have already played out in several capitalist societies, where ultra-leftist organizations could not earn any public attention to their causes without deciding to resort to terrorism. The examples include the Red Brigades in Italy, the Red Army Faction in Germany, Shining Path in Peru, and the Japanese Red Army.

Fortunately, neither of the groups of ideologically-driven extremists operating in North Caucasus have so far managed to acquire weapons of mass destruction while, apart from Aum followers, no Russian sectants or political radicals have sought such weapons. *While realizing that an attack with nuclear, biological, or chemical materials may fail to produce heavy casualties, however, the ideologically-driven extremists*

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<sup>40</sup> See the party's website [www.nbp-info.ru](http://www.nbp-info.ru) for examples of glorification of the party's activists and the chronicle of the government crackdowns on the party.

<sup>41</sup> Nabi Abdullaev, "4 Women Sentenced in FSB Bombing," *The Moscow Times*, 15 May 2003.

<sup>42</sup> Another member of this organization, Alexander Biryukov, was convicted in 2001 for another FSB bombing in 1998. A member of Russian Communist Youth Union of Bolsheviks, Andrei Sokolov, was convicted in 2001 for bombing the monument to the family of the Russian tsars in Moscow in 1997. The bombings and other acts of protest led the FSB to announce the existence in 1999 of the so-called New Revolutionary Alternative, an underground leftist umbrella organization that stood behind the attacks.

may start conceiving an attack on a conventional facility, which could lead to catastrophic consequences. Some conventional industrial facilities, for example, if attacked or sabotaged skillfully, could explode and cause widespread damage and a high number of casualties. Facilities such as fertilizer plants and industrial refrigeration warehouses could under certain conditions be turned into “weapons of mass destruction,” according to a book on urban terrorism published in Russia.<sup>43</sup>

### **Corrupt and Ideologically-Driven Law Enforcement Agents as Force Multipliers for Extremists**

Corruption and outright recruitment of law enforcement officers by extremists in the Northern Caucasus has emerged as a major security threat, as the investigations of almost every new terrorist attack unearth cases of corrupt or ideologically-driven police officers who have assisted the attackers. The latest in the deadly string of attacks was organized by an Ingush policeman who had switched sides after disappearing in Ingushetia six years ago, according to investigators from Prosecutor General’s Office.

Officer Ali Tazieyv was serving in the Ingush police’s guard department when he was kidnapped by Chechen gunmen in the fall of 1998. Tazieyv was thought to have died in captivity, and was even declared officially dead by an Ingushetian court only to resurface as a leader of the horrendous hostage-taking attack on the southern Russian city of Beslan, investigators told *Russian press*. Tazieyv had used a fake passport, which identified him as “Magomed Yevloyev,” an alias used by Magas in his radio communications. Tazieyv led a group of Ingush and Chechen gunmen into the Ingush city of Nazran in June of 2004 to stage simultaneous attacks on a number of government buildings, military barracks, and an arsenal.

After these raids, four local policemen, including Lt. Magomed Aspiev, commander of a platoon of the Ingush OMON police commando force, and his deputy Alikhan Dolgiev were arrested on suspicion of assisting the attackers. Upon his arrest, Aspiev testified that Dolgiev had been recruiting policemen upon the orders of extremist commanders. A subsequent search in Dolgiev’s house netted not only a cache of arms, but also brochures and books preaching extremist Wahabbism, an indication that this policeman might have been fighting for an idea rather than money.

More disturbingly, a senior detective in the Ingush police’s internal affairs department reportedly used his ID to sneak notorious Chechen warlord Basayev in and out of Ingushetia in advance of the attack. In 2003–04, another police officer, Bashir Pliev, drove Basayev to Ingushetia in his own car, and also tipped him off to upcoming police raids and helped to deliver weapons.<sup>44</sup> Perhaps the highest-ranking of the alleged turn-coats is the former interior minister of Ingushetia, Daud Korigov. Korigov, who served as the republic’s interior minister from 1997–98 and held the rank of police colonel,

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<sup>43</sup> *Terrorism in the Metropolis: Assessing Threats and Protecting Critical Infrastructure* (Moscow: PIR Center, 2003).

<sup>44</sup> Irina Khalip, “Provodnik Basayeva: Im Okazalsya Sotrudnik Otdela Sobstvennoi Bezopasnosti MVD Ingushetii,” *Novazya Gazeta*, 18 August 2004.

gave rebels the use of a house he owned in the Chechen capital, Grozny, and was even seen there among the militants' captives, according to Vyacheslav Izmailov, a former army major who has worked on commissions to resolve kidnappings in Chechnya.<sup>45</sup>

There have also been cases in which Chechen extremists either changed their identity or surrendered to join pro-Moscow police forces in order to feed information to their accomplices, or even to participate in attacks staged by the extremists. Policemen have been repeatedly caught trying to sell arms to extremists, while cases of policemen either letting vehicles pass without inspection or issuing fake passports or residence registrations in exchange for bribes are reported almost monthly. Most recently, two policemen were arrested in Chechnya for not only selling arms to extremists, but also using their authority to ship these arms for them and give sanctuary to warlords.

It is this corruption that has in part prevented Russian troops, security services, and police from catching the most notorious of the Chechen warlords. For instance, several policemen were arrested for helping probably Russia's most wanted man, the warlord Shamil Basayev, to slip in and out of the Northern Caucasian republic of Kabardino-Balkaria last year. Basayev—who investigators believe to have ordered both the Beslan hostage-taking and the June raid in Ingushetia—lived for one month in a private house in the republic's town of Baksan.

And, while cases of conversion of policemen to extremist Islam on religious or other grounds (such as strong clan ties) have been mostly limited to the Northern Caucasus, corruption of law enforcement and other agencies is a region-wide phenomenon that allows terror groups to strike Russian cities hundreds miles away from their bases. A Kislovodsk court sentenced a local traffic police officer, Stanislav Lyubichev, to four years in prison for letting a shipment of explosives—a truckload of six metric tons of hexogen—drive by without checking it in 1999. These explosives were later allegedly used to blow up apartment buildings in Moscow in September of 1999, attacks that killed hundreds of people. More recently, a Moscow policeman was sentenced in February 2004 to seven years for registering Luiza Bakueva in Moscow in 2002 in exchange for a bribe. Bakueva went on to participate in the hostage-taking at the Dubrovka Theater (the “Nord/Ost” incident) in Moscow in October 2002.

Even more alarming is evidence that extremists could have tried to recruit an insider at a nuclear power plant which, if sabotaged, could wreak havoc of catastrophic proportions. In October 2002, the FSB detained a serviceman from a special unit that was guarding the Kalininskaya nuclear power plant in the Tver region. The FSB found in the officer a map of the plant with all “secret facilities” identified on it, as well as a list of coded phone numbers, the Regnum news agency reported. FSB agents managed to decode the phone numbers only to find out that they belonged to “natives of Chechnya.” The agency said that the arrest of the captain, whose identity has not been released, coincided with the storming of the Dubrovka Theater in Moscow on 26 October 2002.

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<sup>45</sup> Burt Herman, “Former cop allegedly among Russia school attack masterminds, one of many turncoats in law enforcement,” *Associated Press*, 16 September 2004.

As demonstrated above, cases of policemen either switching sides or turning a blind eye after having been bribed by terrorists prove that corruption or outright conversion of law enforcement agents has become a routine practice for the networks of ideologically-driven extremists in the Northern Caucasus and other groups. Should these networks try to resort to catastrophic terrorism, their capability to stage acts will be multiplied by the presence of corrupted or converted law-enforcers in their ranks or assistance from them.

### **Civil Liberties vs. Security in the War on Terror**

The reactions of top Russian officials and lawmakers after the Beslan terrorist attack in September 2004 once again confirmed Russia's choice of the security model that regards terrorism primarily as an assault against the state system, rather than against the rights of the state's citizens. Consequently, the scope of the anti-terrorist response is limited to the efforts of the state security services, with public oversight virtually being ruled out.

In reality, major terrorist attacks—like the hostage-taking raids in Moscow (2002) and Beslan (2004)—have prompted Russian lawmakers and senior executives to take legal and administrative initiatives that broadened the powers of the security services. These measures have increased the security services' funding, but not their accountability, particularly in terms of civil liberties. It is difficult to assess the incremental impact of this approach on interdicting terrorist attacks. What is increasingly clear, however, is that the efforts of Russia's security apparatus do not match the growing capabilities of the terrorists, and that the lack of public oversight and the diminishment of civil liberties results in decreasing chances for the effective overhaul of the security sector.

The futility of this approach is best demonstrated by the situation in Chechnya, which was explicitly declared to be the primary zone of the state's anti-terrorist operation, where all anti-terrorist measures are applied in full force, to an extent that the local population is virtually deprived of all basic civil liberties. In the meantime, in the face of these measures by the Russian state, Chechnya has become a region where terrorist actors can plan and prepare terrorist attacks almost unobstructed.

The Federal Law on Fighting Terrorism (adopted on 25 July 1998, and amended and supplemented on 7 August 2000 and 21 November 2002) is the main legal pillar of the Russian government's anti-terrorist effort. Its provisions—which are not limited by law in either time nor scope—allow officials in charge of the counter-terrorist operation to suspend indefinitely the rights to property and freedom of movement, as well as media freedom in the zone of the operation, the borders of which are defined exclusively by the head of the operation's headquarters, who is appointed by the government. The law provides no time limits for the imposition of this status.

The real-life application of this law in Chechnya has degenerated into a pattern of brutalizing the local population and expanding the support base for the terrorists. The lack of oversight and the virtual impunity with which they operate has allowed security officials to conduct operations in Chechnya that completely neglect due process, in-



cluding abducting, torturing, and summarily executing local civilians. The notion of impunity has been striking roots in the law enforcement community outside Chechnya as well, with reports of abductions and brutal torture of suspects mounting increasingly from Ingushetia, Dagestan, and to a lesser degree, from other regions.

An assault on the freedom of the media is another major aspect of the trade-off between civil liberties and security that has not had a positive effect on the anti-terrorist effort. A month after the Chechen rebels' raid on the Moscow theater, the Russian Duma, dominated by factions submissive to the Kremlin, which was not satisfied with the media coverage of the hostage drama, introduced amendments to the 1991 Law on Media and the Law on Fighting Terrorism, which would ban publicizing information "obstructing" the conduct of the anti-terrorist operation and opinions that were construed as obstructing the operation or vindicating the attack. These broad definitions could be applied to almost all independent commentary, and would allow officials to crack down on virtually any media organization involved in the coverage of terrorism. Vladimir Putin, under considerable pressure from the Russian media community, rejected the law, which had been overwhelmingly ratified by the State Duma in November of 2002. The television media community then voluntarily adopted a charter that included almost all the demands of the legislators.

In the case of the Beslan crisis, the adherence to this charter—which required that journalists broadcast only official information—has led to a deception of public in underestimating the number of hostages by a factor of three and more while overestimating the degree of preparedness on the part of crisis response units. Lack of preparedness was one of the leading factors that led to the extraordinary number of casualties in the incident, which was a record high for a terrorist attack in Russia. We believe that more critical and independent coverage—without reaching an extent that could obstruct the response effort—would prompt more responsible and timely actions from the officials responsible.

In the aftermath of the crisis, prominent legislators vowed new changes to the anti-terrorist law that would further impinge upon the people's freedom of movement and once again increase funding for the security sector. These laws highlight a trend which, if continued, would move Russia beyond the choice between the criminal justice model of fighting terrorism, which is commonly found among liberal democracies in the European Union, and the national security model, which has been adopted by the United States in the wake of the September 11 attacks. Arguably, Russia cannot return to a totalitarian state, which would of course be better armed to combat terrorism than a semi-democratic regime. However, the current trends to expand the security sector's powers can land Russia in a deadlock some halfway between democracy and totalitarianism which is the worst of all options for a nation trying to battle terror, according to a recently-published study of correlation between state model and efficiency in fighting terror.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Alberto Abadie, *Poverty, Political Freedom, and the Roots of Terrorism*, RWP04-043 (JFK School of Government, Harvard University, October 2004), available at [http://ksgnotes1.harvard.edu/research/wpaper.nsf/rwp/RWP04-043/\\$File/rwp\\_04\\_043\\_Abadie.pdf](http://ksgnotes1.harvard.edu/research/wpaper.nsf/rwp/RWP04-043/$File/rwp_04_043_Abadie.pdf).

## Conclusions and Recommendations

As demonstrated in this essay, the threat of catastrophic terrorism in Russia is becoming increasingly real and imminent. It is a direct function of the existence of violent political actors and of the expansion of their organizational and operational capacities coupled with increasing availability of the means for catastrophic terrorist attacks (ranging from WMD and nuclear, biological, and chemical arsenals to potentially dangerous industrial facilities).

We argue that the Russian authorities have insufficient resources at their disposal to harden all of the potential targets, such as research reactors in cities and key industrial facilities. If the authorities do boost security at these facilities, given the creativity that terrorist groups have displayed, the latter would still be able to identify and select targets in the sprawling urban infrastructure that, if skillfully sabotaged, could cause massive casualties and damage.

We believe that a reorientation of security policy toward decreasing the number of potential terrorist actors and reducing their capabilities remains the only proactive approach that promises to decrease the threat of a catastrophic terrorist attack. This effort will require not only reforming the country's security apparatus, but also establishing effective public oversight over its work and boosting intelligence data exchange and other forms of cooperation between Russian law enforcement agents and their foreign counterparts.

Therefore, we recommend that the president establish a non-partisan commission that would bring together security, law enforcement, and public administration officials and independent experts to evaluate Russia's intelligence and law enforcement community. The panel needs to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of these agencies' structure, budgets, the skills of their leaders and other personnel, their interaction with the community, and their overall performance to determine whether these agencies are adequately financed and manned, empowered, fine-tuned, and focused on the interdiction of terrorism. The panel should also look into other countries' experiences in fighting terrorism and seek out best practices. The commission should look closely at both the EU states' criminal justice model of fighting terrorism and the United States' national security model to discern what advantages these models offer, with practical use in mind.

The panel should also share the non-classified core of its findings with the expert and academic community to formulate a full range of policy options and recommendations from which the leadership of the country can choose, be it such a daring option as a complete overhaul of the intelligence community, as recommended by the U.S. Senate's 9/11 Commission, or larger budgets for human intelligence. The president also needs to enhance civilian oversight of the law enforcement and security community to ensure they remain focused on implementing the enhanced anti-terrorist policies.

Beyond immediate and directly anti-terror related measures, we recommend a change in Russia's heavy-handed policy in the Northern Caucasus, to end abuses of the civilian population by police and troops, prevent ethnic strife, and defuse the political and economic frustrations that feed terrorism. The practice of forming entire elite

commando units of the Russian armed forces with natives that is currently used in Chechnya should be applied to the rest of the Northern Caucasus, which President Putin has rightfully described as both a “victim and springboard” of terrorism. It is critical, however, to ensure that these units observe Russian laws and human rights. Federal authorities also need to tame corruption among officials of law enforcement and other agencies in the region and elsewhere, in order to limit terrorist groups’ capabilities and to prevent them from easily gaining access to both materials and targets.

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