

The Moscow metro bombings and terrorism in Russia

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The terrorist attacks in Moscow on 29 March that killed 40 and injured over 100, and the subsequent attacks in Dagestan and Ingushetia highlight a serious problem in Russia. The Russian authorities, led by President Medvedev, quickly responded by promising the swift pursuit and destruction of the terrorists, the review and improvement of anti-terrorism procedures and enhancement of social and economic measures to address the causes of terrorism in the North Caucasus. Two criminal cases were opened with the charges of terrorism, and an operational and investigation group established, initially comprised of 30 people drawn from the Investigative Committee of the General Procurators Office (SK) and Federal Security Service (FSB). Moscow also linked the attacks to the international context, noting both the international training and preparation of the terrorists and thus the need for international cooperation to address the issue.

This opens up an extremely complex issue. Not only is terrorism in Russia a highly sensitive issue and prone to rumour, scandal and numerous conspiracy theories, but it has very long and thorny roots, made up as they are of intertwined economic and social, political, ethnic and territorial, and legal/governance issues, as well as the strong influence of the protracted and brutal war in the North Caucasus, which has contributed significantly to a radicalisa-

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tion of the local population.² Moreover, the investigations into the specific case of the Moscow metro bombings are ongoing – at the time of writing, despite the speed with which the FSB announced concrete results in the investigation, a number of questions appear to remain open (not least because the FSB has been sparing in giving details),³ and committees are still “out”, preparing their responses to the President’s orders after these attacks.

This research paper specifically addresses the security aspects of terrorism in Russia, focusing particularly on events in Russia and Russian views of them. It first sets the Moscow attacks in the broader context of terrorist activity in Russia, focusing on the attacks on law-enforcement bodies, before looking at the responses of the Russian authorities and the domestic political context. Finally, it turns to the potential for including counter-terrorism in the NATO-Russia Council (NRC) agenda as an issue of common practical interest.

TERRORISM IN RUSSIA

The new Russian National Security Strategy, published in May 2009, downplayed the threat of terrorism in Russia.⁴ Moscow also lifted the broad Counter Terrorist Operation (CTO) in Chechnya in April 2009. However, since

late 2008, assassinations, bombings, ambushes of law enforcement columns and gun fights take place on an increasingly frequent, if not quite daily, basis across the North Caucasus region. Of particular note is the increase in suicide bomb attacks.

These attacks target both civilians and senior officials and law enforcement personnel, both selectively and indiscriminately. Indeed, the overall scale of attacks on law enforcement is a particular feature of terrorist activity in Russia. Official statistics vary, but the Investigative Committee (SK) of the Prosecutor General’s Office announced that crimes against law enforcement rose by 37% in 2009 compared to 2008 and that 567 law enforcement officers, mostly Interior Ministry (MVD), were killed across in 2009 (a further 1713 were wounded). Vladimir Ustinov, Presidential Envoy to the Southern Federal Region, announced that terrorist acts in the North Caucasus increased by 30% in 2009 to 786 acts.

Such attacks include major assaults on MVD regional headquarters buildings, for instance the suicide bombing which destroyed the MVD HQ in Nazran, Ingushetia on 17 August 2009, large-scale car bombings, and numerous attempts on the lives of senior officials. While the repeated attempts made on the lives of Chechen President Ram-

² A considerable amount of work exists examining the range of complex causes of terrorism in the North Caucasus and Russia more broadly. See, for instance, Blandy, C. *North Caucasus: on the Brink of Far Reaching De-Stabilisation*, CSRC Paper 05/36, Camberley: CSRC: 2005; Blandy, C. *Municipal Reform in the North Caucasus: A Time Bomb in the Making*. CSRC Paper 07/07, Swindon: Defence Academy of the UK, 2007; Dannreuther, R. “Islamic Radicalisation in Russia: An Assessment”, *International Affairs*, Vol.86, No.1, 2010; Hahn, G. *Russia’s Islamic Threat*. Yale: Yale University Press, 2007; Plater-Zyberk, H. *Beslan: Lessons Learned?* CSRC Paper 04/34, Camberley: CSRC, 2004; Sagromoso, D. “Violence and Conflict in the Russian North Caucasus”, *International Affairs*, Vol.83, No.4, 2007. There is a huge literature on Chechnya itself and the Chechen war, including Sakwa, R. (ed.) *Chechnya: From Past to Future*. London: Anthem Press, 2005, Russell, J. *Chechnya: Russia’s War on Terror*. London: Routledge, 2007, and the work of numerous journalists who have highlighted the brutality of the conflict.

³ ‘FSB snova raportuet o zaderzhannikh po delu o teraktakh v Moskve i Kizilyare no podrobnosti ne soobshchaet’, 2 April 2010, <http://www.newsru.com/russia/02apr2010/fsb.html>

⁴ For an examination of the Security Strategy Giles, K. *Russia’s National Security Strategy to 2020*. NDC Review Series, Rome, June 2009. Available at: <http://www.ndc.nato.int/research/series.php?icode=9>



zan Kadyrov (26 July 2009 and again later that year) and Ingush President Yunus-Bek Yevkurov (22 June 2009), of whom more below, were unsuccessful, the list of assassinated senior officials is lengthy.⁵

The use of secondary bomb attacks is particularly to be noted – terrorists deliberately exploding second bombs shortly after the first, seemingly targeting the emergency response/investigators.⁶ Alexander Bastrykin, Chairman of the Investigative Committee, was injured and hospitalised in this way at the scene of the Nevsky Express attack. Kizlyar Police Chief Vitaliy Vedernikov was killed by the secondary (suicide) bombing in Kizlyar, Dagestan, on 31 March, apparently by an attacker dressed in militia uniform.

Terrorist activity in Russia is not limited to the North Caucasus region. Russian security forces claim to have prevented attacks on Moscow in both September and October 2009 and also to have killed one suicide bomber on his way to Moscow in March 2010, and to have captured another with his explosives in Moscow itself. An alleged further attempt to conduct a bomb attack on the Moscow metro on the 7 April also failed. But the Nevsky Express train between Moscow and St. Petersburg was derailed by an explosion (which killed 27, including Sergey Tarasov, Head of Federal Road Agency, [Rosavtodor] and former Vice-Governor of St Petersburg and Boris Evstratikov,

Head of Russian State Reserves Agency [Rosreserv]) in an attack that Russian authorities now link to the recent attacks on the Moscow metro.⁷ One version of the attacks on Moscow suggests that the attackers were just two of a group of 30 suicide bombers trained, of whom 9 have so far launched their attacks.⁸ Despite tightened security, therefore, further major attacks, including in Moscow cannot be ruled out.

It should be noted, too, that while the main focus of attention on terrorist activity in Russia is on “Islamist” North Caucasian groups, there are other groups of increasing prominence that use similar terrorist tactics. An ultra-right wing Russian organisation was the first to claim responsibility for the Nevsky Express attack. This claim was eventually discounted, but MVD authorities also claim the arrest of members of a youth nationalist organisation planning a bomb attack in Moscow in mid-March 2010.

THE RESPONSES OF THE RUSSIAN AUTHORITIES

The authorities have sought to respond to the terrorist threat over the last 18 months with a series of conceptual and practical measures and reforms. Conceptually, these include a reconsideration of the protection of the transport network at the national level and attempts to develop new measures to counter terrorism including emphasis on security, legal and economic and social measures. Practi-

⁵ The list includes General Major Valery Lipinsky, deputy head of the regional interior forces headquarters for the North Caucasus on 30 December 2008; Minister of the Interior of Dagestan Adilgeri Magomedtagirov and Abdurazak Abakarov, head of logistics in the Interior Ministry, on 5 June 2009, and the head of Ingushetia’s forensics and investigations centre, Magomed Gadaborshev on 7 July.

⁶ Usually associated in the West with targeting emergency response units, some senior Russian experts also note that this is an effective means of attacking civilians too, who gather after the first explosion.

⁷ There was a similar attack on the Nevsky Express in August 2007, in which there were no fatalities.

⁸ There is a degree of uncertainty here, since another source suggests that of the group of 30, 13 have been killed.



cally, Medvedev has created a North Caucasus Federal District (NCFD),⁹ appointing Alexander Khloponin as Presidential Envoy to the District. Khloponin was promoted to the rank of Deputy Prime Minister, and given Federal economic powers and responsibility for personnel and security. Khloponin's appointment thus fulfils the goal set by Medvedev in his speech to the Federal Assembly in November 2009, in which he had emphasised the need for both the clear criteria to measure the effectiveness of the Federal authorities and a single individual to be personally responsible for the situation in the region.¹⁰

Rumour about who would be appointed particularly focused on Deputy Prime Minister Dmitri Kozak (who was Presidential Plenipotentiary in the Southern Federal District 2004-7), then-Deputy Minister of the Interior Colonel General Arkadi Yedelev (of whom more below), Dagestani businessman Suleiman Kerimov and Mikhail Gutseriev. The latter's potential candidature was particularly interesting given that Gutseriev, the former head of Russneft, had fled Russia following charges of tax evasion. The rumour focused on his apparent authority in the Caucasus, and that Yevkurov had lobbied Medvedev about his

potential usefulness in the region (the latter point was denied by the Ingush authorities).¹¹ With his appointment, Khloponin, who has considerable experience in regional economic development, has now become a key figure in the Russian effort to address terrorism.¹²

Some have sought to emphasise an evolving difference in style of approach to Russian counter terrorism between President Medvedev and Prime Minister Putin, underscoring Medvedev's greater emphasis on economic and social measures to address the root causes of terrorism in the North Caucasus as opposed to the rough language and robust use of force of Vladimir Putin. Such differences should not be overplayed – Medvedev has indeed highlighted the need for economic and social development of the North Caucasus, stating it repeatedly in his major speeches, including in his Address to the Federal Assembly. But he has also given orders in no uncertain terms to destroy terrorists ('уроды всякие'/'all sorts of scum') "systematically" – to stamp out terrorism in Russia with 'unflinching resolve', that terrorists should be killed 'without emotion or hesitation'. Following the Moscow metro attacks, he stated that anti-terrorism measures should be

⁹ The North Caucasus Federal District is being created from part of the Southern Federal District and includes Chechnya, Dagestan, Ingushetia, Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachay-Cherkessia, North Ossetia and Stavropol Kray.

¹⁰ Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly, 12 November 2009. www.kremlin.ru. Subsequently, Medvedev stated that the North Caucasus 'cannot be the responsibility of just one deputy prime minister appointed specifically to this task... we cannot allow a situation in which a deputy prime minister is appointed and then everyone simply washes their hands and says "wonderful, someone has been put in charge so we can relax and let them take care of everything"'. Speech at Meeting on the North Caucasus Federal District Development, 27 February 2010. www.kremlin.ru

¹¹ *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 19 November 2009. http://www.ng.ru/editorial/2009-11-19/2_red.html; <http://www.newsru.com/russia/28oct2009/gucesiev.html>

¹² Aleksander Gennadievich Khloponin was born on 6 March 1965 into a diplomatic family (interpreter, State committee for international economic relations) in Sri Lanka. He was educated in the international economics department of the Moscow Financial Institute (1989) and began his career in Vneshekonombank USSR (1989-1992), before moving to senior positions in "Mezhdunarodnaya finansovaya kompania" [International Financial Company] (1992-1996), and then in June 1996 General Director and Chair of the board of Norilsk Nickel, which he led out of deep crisis, including securing a significant increase in earnings for his workers. In 2001, he became Governor of Taymyr Dolgano-Nenetski Autonomous Okrug, and quickly increased earnings of the local population by 39% - a record in Russia. He became Governor of Krasnoyarsk in 2002, replacing the late General Lebed. From 21 October 2005, Khloponin became a member of the committee for implementation of priority national projects (Natsproyekti), of which then President Putin was the chair. As such, he is both clearly an effective political operator, and part of the current establishment with important direct connections to the highest authorities. See, for instance, Zenkovich, H.A. *Putinskaya entsiklopedia. Sem'ya, komanda, opponenti, preemniki*. Moscow: Olma Media Grup, 2008.



both more effective and more harsh, merciless and preventive.¹³

Alongside presidential efforts to enhance economic and social measures, force on a considerable scale, including the use of artillery, armoured columns and helicopters, is thus likely to remain a central element of Russian domestic counter-terrorism. The emphasis remains on catching and destroying the terrorists, including the use of pre-emptive strikes, rather than finding and trying them. Though criticised particularly in parts of the print media, such a robust approach finds favour with the Russian electorate: according to a recent poll, some 75% think that terrorism can only be dealt with using “tough methods”. (At the same time, it should be noted that another series of polls suggested that 88% thought that the Russian leadership, in one way or another, definitely or likely bears some responsibility for the metro attacks, and 55% of respondents think that the special services knew of the preparations for the attacks but could not prevent them).¹⁴

In the case of trials of captured terrorist suspects, it should be remembered that in December 2008, Medvedev signed a law barring suspected terrorists from being tried by jury, instead being tried by selected judges. Subsequently, in response to the Moscow metro bombings, the

Federation Council has advocated reinstating the death penalty for terrorists and Medvedev has called for drafting amendments to the law to toughen criminal penalties for people involved in terrorist activities, including their accomplices (to be very broadly defined to include ‘even those who do no more than cook soup and wash clothes’).¹⁵

However, overall, there appears to be a lack of new ideas to deal with terrorism, since Medvedev has to keep ordering his committees to develop fresh proposals on countering terrorism. Thus his instructions on 1 April 2010 to Alexander Bortnikov, head of the Federal Security Service (FSB) and also head of the National Anti-terrorist Committee (NAK), Nurgaliev and Khloponin to prepare proposals for combating crime and terrorism essentially appear to repeat his order to the NAK to do so in June and in August 2009. Furthermore, it remains unclear how some proposed ideas, such as the reinstatement of the death penalty, will relate to other documents, such as the Russian Constitution.¹⁶ Other ideas also appear to remain contentious, for instance the decision to lift the CTO in Chechnya, which some blame for the upsurge in violence from spring 2009.¹⁷

The terrorist attacks also draw attention to the law enforcement agencies and their inability to deal with the pro-

¹³ Speech at the expanded Security Council Meeting, 9 June 2009; Speech at the Meeting of the Security Council to Stabilise the Socio-Political Situation and Neutralise the Terrorist and Extremist Threat in the North Caucasus, 19 August 2009; speech at special meeting following the terrorist attacks, 29 March 2010. All speeches available at www.kremlin.ru

¹⁴ http://wciom.ru/novosti/press-vypuski/press-vypusk/single/13395.html?no_cache=1&cHash=057bb4ce73&print=1; <http://www.levada.ru/press/2010041503.html>

¹⁵ Medvedev speech at Meeting with Leaders of Political Parties Represented in the State Duma, 2 April 2010. www.kremlin.ru. This could involve reformatting the objective and subjective aspects of the crime defined as terrorism under article 205 of the criminal code, he suggested.

¹⁶ In fact, the Russian Constitution (Article 49) enshrines the presumption of innocence until guilt is proven – which might suggest that the extermination of terrorists, by implication without trial, is unlawful according to the Russian Constitution.

¹⁷ Though the major CTO was lifted in Chechnya, local, temporary ones have been frequently implemented elsewhere in the region. CTOs involve document checks, checks on transport, traffic restrictions, control over telephone communications and evacuation of the population in parts of the area.



blem. Bastrykin has noted that the situation in the North Caucasus will not stabilise despite the fact that some 300 of the best investigators are working there – and he has called for the creation of a special unit to protect them. The various organs of power, Federal and Regional, do not coordinate their work effectively and often appear to be in competition, a point reflected in Moscow's attempts to establish coordinating bodies and streamline authority. It particularly appears that relevant and important information is not shared between organs significantly hampering coordination between FSB and MVD and emphasising a piecemeal practical approach.

Moreover, the organs themselves face accusations of corruption, theft and brutality, not just failing to prevent attacks but contributing to the problem rather than resolving it. Medvedev himself has repeated this accusation during speeches to the Security Council and also the Federal Assembly – stating that part of the significant level of state financing for the North Caucasus region are 'almost openly stolen by officials'. Medvedev has also pointed to the priority need for both 'optimising' coordination between the security agencies and thoroughly overhauling human resources organisation and work from patrol and sentry up to those in charge of relevant subdivisions of the law

enforcement organs. He has particularly emphasised the need to implement measures both to enhance competencies of law enforcement officers (noting that some regions in the North Caucasus lack professional law enforcement officers) and to punish those officers who either fail in their duties or abuse their authority – cases of which are 'abundant', he rued.¹⁸ Following the attack on Nazran in August 2009, Medvedev fired the Ingush Minister of the Interior and the SK filed charges of negligence against senior Ingush MVD personnel.¹⁹ Subsequently, in February 2010 Medvedev ordered the discharge of 17 MVD generals and regional interior ministers. He has also submitted a bill to parliament seeking harder punishment for police officers found guilty of corruption.²⁰

But reforming the main security organs, and creating new ones, such as the separate permanently active counter-terrorism operations unit in the NCFD ordered by Medvedev and a main MVD office for the NCFD ordered by Nurgaliev, to be headed by Colonel General Yevgeniy Lazebin,²¹ will be a long and difficult business, facing, as it will, deeply vested interests.²² At least in part it will simply reflect a shuffling of personnel. Some of those removed from their regional positions appear to have been "promoted out" – the former Interior Minister of Ingushetia,

¹⁸ See Medvedev's speech at the Meeting of the Security Council to Stabilise the Socio-Political Situation and Neutralise the Terrorist and Extremist Threat in the North Caucasus, 19 August 2009. www.kremlin.ru

¹⁹ "Posle terakta v Nazrani CKP vzbudil delo protiv militseiskikh nachalnikov", 20 August 2009, www.newsru.com/arch/russia/20aug2009/delo-nazran.html. Medvedev ordered a special investigation to discover whether the attack on the MVD HQ in Nazran succeeded as a result of irresponsibility, treachery or criminal conspiracy that could have been anticipated, suggesting that the attackers had accomplices within the police.

²⁰ "Medvedev Reiterates his Commitment to Police reform", 27 February 2010. <http://en.rian.ru/russia/20100227/158033482.html>

²¹ Colonel General Yevgeniy Pavlovich Lazebin. In 2002, he transferred from a senior position in the armed forces (First Deputy Commander of the Army Corps of the Siberian Military District) and was appointed Deputy Commander of Internal Forces, and head of combat preparation of interior forces of the (Federal) MVD. From 27 July 2005 to 30 June 2006 he commanded the combined federal forces group in the North Caucasus before returning to Moscow and appointment as Deputy Commander in Chief of Internal Forces of the MVD of the Russian Federation. Also see Shchegolev, K.A. *Kto est kto v rossii: ispolnitelnaya vlast'. Kto pravit sovremennoi rossiei*. Moscow: AST-Astrel, 2009.

²² A further point to watch in this regard will be the establishment of a unified investigative organ – in essence something of a Russian version of the FBI – the creation of which has been repeatedly mooted over time but which might gain traction after major criminal or terrorist incidents.



Musa Medov, was removed by Nurgaliev, but then promoted to a position in the central apparatus of the Russian MVD in Moscow.²³ One of those discharged in February, Colonel General Arkadi Yedelev, formerly Deputy Minister of the Interior, has now been appointed as one of Khloponin's deputies.²⁴

The creation of new groups may also further entangle lines of authority and responsibility – the establishment of the NCFD, for instance, would seem to cut across the responsibilities of the Southern Federal District, headed by Presidential Envoy Ustinov. There already appear to be hints of such jostling, for instance with Kadyrov attempting to emphasise that Khloponin will concentrate on economic problems (as opposed to security matters also). The frequency with which some of the most senior Russian officials, including Bastrykin and Nurgaliev, take charge of investigations personally also suggests an inability to rely automatically on the mechanisms of the law enforcement services and thus a need to take “manual control” of matters to ensure that they are handled effectively.

In sum, a critic would assert that there is a predominantly reactive flavour to Russian counter-terrorism. Practical reform of law enforcement agencies and the creation of new

groupings are less important moves than a clear anti-terrorist policy – which appears to be lacking. Nevertheless, the lack of such clarity does in turn tend to underscore the inefficiency and weaknesses of the counter-terrorist groups. Furthermore, the effort to address terrorism absorbs a considerable amount of both resources and time and attention of the most senior executive officials, and, despite tactical and operational successes, remains as a problem of strategic priority in a condition of rather bloody stalemate. This stalemate situation is illustrated by the point that the attacks in Moscow are presented as evidence of the success of law enforcement operations in the North Caucasus, obliging the terrorists to retaliate.

NATO-RUSSIA COUNTER-TERRORIST COOPERATION?

The attacks in Moscow were widely condemned by the international community, including by the NATO Secretary General, who reiterated the Alliance's commitment to cooperating with Russia in the fight against international terrorism. Indeed, this issue is one of the main areas in which the Secretary General sees an opportunity to reinvigorate NATO-Russia relations in the NRC.²⁵ Some Russian authorities, too, have suggested that the issue, due

²³ <http://www.newsru.com/arch/russia/25nov2008/musa.html>

²⁴ Yedelev is a highly important figure in Russian counter-terrorist activity. Born in 1952, he was educated at Tomsk Politechnical University and then on the higher KGB courses (1978). A candidate of legal sciences, he defended a dissertation entitled “criminal responsibility for terrorist crimes”. From 1978-2004, Yedelev served in the KGB, Federal Counterintelligence Service of Russia and then the FSB, seeing service in the North Caucasus and in 2002 being appointed to the position of Deputy Director of the counter-terrorist department of the FSB. In 2004, Yedelev was appointed first to the position of Deputy Presidential Envoy to the North Caucasus as a General-Lieutenant of the FSB and then in September to the rank of Deputy Minister of the Interior and to the command of regional staff counter-terrorist operations HQ in the North Caucasus. In this position he was involved in the issues relating to terrorist activity in Pankisi Gorge. On 18 August 2009, after the bomb attack on police headquarters in Nazran, he was appointed to authority over all police and security operations in Ingushetia. He is reputed to be friends with both Yevkurov and Kadyrov. He was rumoured to be a candidate to head the MVD NCFD office, before Lazebin's appointment. Given the trajectories of their careers, Yedelev and Lazebin are likely to have worked together in the past, particularly in the North Caucasus counter-terrorist HQ. “General Yedelev primenit svoi bogati opuit dlya rasshireniya vneshnikh svyazei regionov severo-kavkazskovo okruga”, *Kommersant*, 17 April 2010. Also see Shchegolev, op cit.

²⁵ See, for instance, Anders Fogh Rasmussen's speeches on 3 August 2009, www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/opinions_56776.htm; 18 September (“NATO and Russia: A New Beginning”), www.nato.int/cps/en/SID-A2CD7FD4-D6B95A1D/natolive/opinions_57640.htm. He reiterated this view in interview with Russian media on 20 April 2010, “ob obshchikh interesakh rossii i nato”, <http://www.svobodanews.ru/content/article/2018513.html>



to its trans-national nature, is one in which Moscow seeks to cooperate with partners, including NATO. Such cooperation could be based on existing agreements between NATO and Russia, with updating the Joint Action Plan on Terrorism as an initial step.

Clearly, international terrorism poses threats to both Russia and NATO. At the same time, working out a cooperative, practical agenda, while in many ways desirable, will pose complex questions, each requiring a nuanced approach if misunderstanding and contradiction is to be avoided.

The first relates to differences over the definition of terrorism, who the terrorists are and how to approach the problem. Some Russian officials assert that there can only be one understanding of terrorism and that only terrorists themselves could think that there is anything good in the term. Other senior Russian officials, however, suggest that there is not just one understanding: Sergei Ivanov stated that while fighting terrorism gives ample opportunity for joint action, effective interaction will be difficult without agreement on defining terrorism.²⁶ Such views pose a dual ambiguity for NATO.

The first ambiguity is that some Russian officials define terrorism in a way that members of the Alliance – and even the Alliance structure itself – are seen to support and even enact terrorism. Some states, Ivanov stated, seek to exploit anti-terrorist activities as a pretext to achieving their own political and economic goals.²⁷ Such views are not uncommon, indeed they have formed an important dimension of Russian politics, taking particular prominence in the “enemy at the gates” rhetoric after the terrorist atrocity in Beslan in 2004, and subsequently in then-President Putin’s second term. President Medvedev has also asserted the role of international influence in terrorism in Russia, though this is to a somewhat lesser degree than his predecessor, and he has tended to emphasise domestic Russian problems.²⁸

Thus the “war on terror” is often seen in Russia as a tool for advancing US foreign policy interests and the conflicts in the North Caucasus are forced on Russia to keep its attention focused on domestic affairs rather than playing an international role.²⁹ Such a position has been stated frequently by senior Russian officials, including Yunus-Bek Yevkurov, who state that terrorism in Russia is supported particularly by the secret services of the US and UK.³⁰ Others who have argued similarly include Arkadi

²⁶ See speech by Ivanov, S. at the Munich Security Conference, 10 February 2008. http://www.securityconference.de/archive/konferenzen/rede.php?menu_2008=&menu_konferenzen=&sprache=en&id=217&

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Vuistuplenie na rasshirennom operativnom soveshchanii s chlenami Soveta Bezopasnosti, 9 June 2009, http://archive.kremlin.ru/appears/2009/06/09/1847_type63374type63378type82634_217520.shtml;

²⁹ See, for instance comments in the review by Kipp, J. of Slipchenko, V. & M. Gareev, *Budushchaya voina (Future War)*, Moscow: Polit.ru, 2005, in *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, 20, 2007.

³⁰ Yunus-Bek Yevkurov, a highly decorated Russian officer, will be familiar to NATO as the officer who led the Russian dash to Pristina in 1999. His career in airborne/parachute forces has included counter-terrorist operations in the North Caucasus, leading with distinction special services operations to expel Chechen combatants from Shali, Avtura and Venedo. Promoted to Colonel of Guards in 2004, he was appointed Deputy Head of Staff of Privolzhsko-Urals Military District. He is a key figure in Russian counter-terrorism. It should be noted that, like Medvedev, whilst asserting international influence on terrorism in Russia, he also focuses on domestic causes of extremism, including corruption in the law enforcement organs, high unemployment and a lack of trust in the system of power. He enjoys considerable support from Medvedev, and has adopted a vigorous anti-extremist approach, one which has gained recognition and support from the local population and even human rights groups. Many protested the attempt on his life, and laid wreaths in sympathy. See, for instance, Zenkovich, N.A. Dmitri Medvedev. Tretii president, *entsiklopedia*. Moscow: Olma Media Grup: 2009.



Yedelev, whose new responsibilities include development of regional cooperation including relations with neighbouring states.³¹

Indeed, there are those who believe that NATO itself poses a “terrorist” threat. Army General Makhmut Gareev, who, as head of the Russian Academy of Military Sciences both has considerable influence with serving senior officers and contributes advice to the Ministry of Defence, has for instance argued that terrorists may seize entire countries, as was the case in Afghanistan and Kosovo, using large numbers of armoured vehicles, artillery and aircraft.³² Others have argued that after exercises in Georgia, NATO servicemen deliberately left weaponry and money in the region to ‘weaken Russia’.³³ There is some question both about how widely such views are held and the real weight they carry – essentially that, particularly when they come from serving politicians, they may be more a means to deflect blame from themselves rather than actual accusations.

Nevertheless, such statements, when couched in the overall tenor of Russia’s wider foreign policy aims and Russia’s approach to the Alliance, should not be simply dismissed as rhetoric since there is likely to be a significant proportion of Russian security service personnel who sincerely hold such beliefs, particularly amongst the (internal) security services. In this light, it is worth remembering that NATO would be cooperating with several organisations in

Russia, particularly law enforcement bodies the MVD, SK and General Procurator’s Office and others including the FSB, SVR and GRU.

Such views are emphasised by the second ambiguity regarding international anti-terrorist cooperation. Senior Russian officials frequently point to the political implications of different definitions of terrorism, noting that political and historical factors predetermine substantial differences in approaches. In more robust terms, they assert “double standards” which lead to states harbouring terrorists and accomplices and sponsors, “double standards” that assert that terrorists are sometimes called guerrillas, rebels or freedom fighters. Such differences in approach have led to problems between Russia and NATO member states, for instance when Russia has sought the extradition of Akhmed Zakayev. Moscow argues that giving asylum to those accused of terrorist activity (or complicity in it) undermines the counter terrorist front and encourages terrorist activities. However, there are concerns in many NATO member states about the robust “find and destroy” nature of the Russian approach to counter terrorism, and the likelihood of a fair trial being given to those who are extradited to Russia. Given the likely continuity, perhaps even invigoration of the robust Russian approach if there are further attacks, and changes in legal situation noted above, it appears likely that such differences between Russia and NATO member states will continue, complicating wider NATO-Russia cooperation.

³¹ “Medvedev dopolnil Putin”, *Moskovski Komsomolets*, 20 August 2009.

³² For more discussion of this and the new Russian military doctrine, see Giles, K. *The Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation 2010*. NDC Research Review, February 2010. <http://www.ndc.nato.int/research/series.php?icode=9>

³³ Dukuvakha Abdurakhmanov, Speaker of the Chechen Parliament, cited in Nivat, A. “Groznyaya Pamyat”, *Novoe Vremya/The New Times*, No.38, 26 October 2009. <http://newtimes.ru/articles/detail/8439/> Though, he also pointed to the responsibility of the Moscow Security Services and law enforcement organs for allowing the Moscow attacks. <http://echo.msk.ru/news/668000-echo.html>



Beyond differing definitions and approaches, there are more specific issues relating to other aspects of the NATO-Russia agenda that may complicate greater practical anti-terrorist cooperation between NATO and Russia. First, Russia advocates a coordinated international response, including through international organisations. Beyond the direct NATO-Russia dialogue, however, rarely do Russian officials point to potential NATO-Russia cooperation, instead focusing on other organisations, particularly for instance, the UN.³⁴ Furthermore, Moscow has sought to emphasise the potential role of the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) in counter terrorism operations,³⁵ and Russian attempts to invigorate NATO-Russia counter terrorism activity may therefore become linked to NATO-Russia-CSTO cooperation.

Second, several senior Russian officials, including Arkadiy Yedelev in July and Alexander Bortnikov in October 2009, have accused Georgia of harbouring fighters and Georgian special forces of assisting terrorists, including those with links to Al Qaeda, in attacking Russia. Nikolai Patrushev, Secretary of the Security Council also noted a Georgian trail after the Moscow metro attacks.³⁶ Indeed, Russia has long accused the Georgian government of being unable to regulate its borders and allowing Chechen separatists to launch raids against Russia from Georgian territory. In September 2002, Russian warplanes bombed Pankisi Gorge following one such raid on Russian territory launched by Chechen separatists. Later the same year,

Tbilisi extradited suspected Chechen separatists to Russia. But counter terrorism cooperation between NATO and Russia might be complicated by serious tensions in the Russia-Georgia relationship, particularly if Moscow seeks in future to pressurise Tbilisi into extraditing suspects to Russia or, particularly, to pursue those it accuses of being terrorists into sovereign Georgian territory.

CONCLUSIONS

In working to establish a more developed partnership with Russia, NATO should be prepared to offer both condemnation of terrorist attacks and closer cooperation where possible – and there have been successes in the past. Not only has Russia joined Operation Active Endeavour, but cooperative operations have been carried out between Russian and NATO member state secret services. The terrorists that threaten Russia in the North Caucasus also oppose the West, comparing Russia with the USA and the UK particularly, and where there are terrorist links to Al Qaeda, interests also appear to coincide. It is also worth noting that the Russian leadership has accepted EU financial assistance for the reconstruction of the North Caucasus. At the same time, it should be remembered that if there appear to be common interests, there are also different starting points in defining terrorists and different approaches to dealing with them.

³⁴ The UN Security Council Resolution 1373 (2001) set the framework for the UN Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee in which some cooperation has taken place between Russia and Western states. Moreover, the 2006 UN Global Strategy to Counter Terrorism was agreed by all UN Member States.

³⁵ Moscow also seeks to develop counter terrorist cooperation in the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO).

³⁶ "Nikolai Patrushev: Vozmezdnie zhdgot ikh vsekh", Kommersant, 31 March 2010. <http://kommersant.ru/doc.aspx?DocID=1346238>



Certain apparent confusions emerge – the sum of accusations noted above about foreign secret services and the role of Al Qaeda appear to suggest that the West and its partners (including Georgia), and Al Qaeda are cooperating to attack Russia. How such confusions might play out in terms of counter-terrorism cooperation in areas such as Afghanistan and Pakistan, where a counter-terrorist agenda will meet other tasks, including counter-narcotics, is unclear. Additionally, it would be politically challenging to establish real practical cooperation in the light of the implications and accusations made by some Russian senior figures – including those who deal directly with terrorism in the North Caucasus – that NATO is either itself a “terrorist” organisation or one which aides and abets terrorist activity. Similarly, should there be more specific links and accusations made by Russian officials against individuals or groups originating from within NATO member states involved in terrorism affecting Russia directly, this is likely to limit significantly the ability of the Alliance to establish cooperation.

Beyond this, for the Alliance there are four specific points about Russian counter-terrorism which are likely to have an impact on establishing practical cooperation. First, that there are certain distinctions in approach cannot be overlooked, particularly between Russia’s “find and destroy” approach and the “catch and try” preferred by liberal democracies. Russia will also remain intolerant of what it sees as “double standards” and the refusal of NATO member states to extradite those Moscow accuses of terrorism. For some in NATO and its member states, significant practical cooperation with Moscow might smack of endorsement of Russian practices.

There may be other political complications further to these distinct approaches. Following the attacks in Beslan in 2004, the Russian authorities enacted a number of policies which were criticised in the West for undermining democracy – particularly the appointment of Regional Governors. Similar policies have not been implemented following the recent attacks. At the same time, it is worth noting the discussion of the reinstatement of the death penalty for convicted terrorists (which might involve altering or breaking the Constitution) and discussions among United Russia groups of altering and perhaps limiting how the media discusses the issue of terrorism. Though this is still a long way from legislation, increased prominence of such discussions may encourage concern in some Western circles (particularly in the media) about Russia’s democratic development – with potential ramifications for the Alliance’s ability to develop cooperation with Russia.

This relates to the second point – NATO will have to consider carefully with whom it will be working: attention should be focused on the organs and specific personnel with which and with whom NATO would be cooperating. As noted above, this particularly includes the MVD and FSB. Specifically, attention should go beyond the approaches of the President and Prime Minister, central figures though they are, and more towards specific officials who will be formulating and actually implementing policy – at one level, this means Bortnikov, Nurgaliev and Khloponin. At another, this means Ramzan Kadyrov, Yunus-Bek Yevkurov, Arkadii Yedelev and Yevgeniy Lazebin.

Third, for real cooperation to be developed as an element of a longer-term, prolonged NATO-Russia project, from NATO’s perspective Russia would need to imple-



ment deep security sector reforms in doctrine, legislation, personnel and operational and tactical approaches. In so establishing such cooperation through reform, Russia would be revealing weaknesses and flaws in its current methods and so opening itself up to criticism by the West. And Moscow would be highly sensitive to such criticism. Such reforms could have wider ramifications with positive potential benefits for longer-term cooperation. But such security sector reforms – particularly enacted under the guidance or even just the eyes of external influences (as distinct to the current domestic efforts to reform the MVD, for instance) – would be tantamount to a major change in foreign and security policy direction for Russia.

Finally, and most importantly for the current agenda, for Russia the North Caucasus is the main priority for counter-terrorism, making it predominantly a domestic issue, even though Moscow asserts international traces to terrorism. This emphasises a further confusion about the main roots of terrorism in Russia – is it due to foreign interference, as often stated, or is it more due to internal reasons, such as social disorder, poverty and unemployment and corruption, as noted often by the same senior officials who accuse foreigners of intervening? In any case, the domestic, North Caucasus focus both abbreviates and complicates the potential for cooperation between Russia and NATO. It abbreviates it because root causes such as corruption, unemployment and poor economic conditions in Russia lie outside NATO's core competence. (It may be, therefore, that Russian cooperation with other organisations, such as the UN, EU and Interpol, is better suited to specific issues.)

It complicates it because Russia asserts its own sovereignty and currently rejects outside interference in its domestic affairs, particularly in security, and it is unclear exactly how NATO would be able to cooperate with the main organs dealing with counter-terrorism in Russia, the MVD particularly, on domestic matters. If Russia was prepared to accept outside cooperation (not assistance) in counter-terrorism in its priority area, it would be on Russian terms which, again, some member states might find difficult to accept. Furthermore, if Russia asserts its own sovereignty on such issues, it is less concerned about the sovereignty of other states, and appears ready to conduct hot pursuit operations or assassinations of those it suspects of terrorism abroad which may undermine the willingness of member states to adopt a constructive approach to counter-terrorist activity with Russia.

It may be therefore that NATO-Russia counter terrorism cooperation is not just desirable, but feasible on a specific case-by-case basis, and can be pursued as such, particularly in what might be called “non-primary” areas of interest. At the same time, given both the differences in approach to terrorism and remaining challenges in the broader NATO-Russia relationship, it will be difficult to use this particular theme as a means of re-establishing the NRC on a practical basis.