

to discuss counterterrorist contingency planning with each other. In this spirit, some thought should also be given to initiating a trilateral dialogue between the United States, Pakistan and India aimed at reducing mutual suspicions and misplaced assumptions in assessing the actions and reactions that are likely to occur in a nuclear terrorism-related crisis. Such advance work could help reduce the possibility of being provoked into escalating a terrorist-inspired incident into a nuclear confrontation between India and Pakistan.

If actual crisis planning proves to be unfeasible due to national security sensitivities, a less sensitive form of advance preparation could be pursued through joint war gaming of notional nuclear terrorism scenarios. Conducting high level, table-top exercises in contingencies that might threaten the interests of all parties would help enhance preparedness and predictability in decision-making.

Public Outreach

More attention should also be focused on ensuring that U.S. efforts to render assistance to Pakistan are assessed favorably not just by Pakistan's authorities, but by the Pakistani people themselves. There should be greater effort to develop a modicum of popular support in Pakistan for nuclear-related engagement with the United States. This might entail communicating some information concerning the nature of cooperation and its value in terms of Pakistani interests. It is important for Pakistanis to see with their own eyes that such cooperation is natural, and fully consistent with Pakistan's sovereignty interests. Unfortunately, casting a veil of secrecy over nuclear cooperation has the unintentional effect of cultivating destructive conspiracy theories that distort the nature of the shared interests of the United States and Pakistan to cooperate on nuclear-related matters. A minimalist approach to information sharing has encouraged sensationalist, unfounded allegations that the United States has a hidden agenda to control Pakistan's nuclear arsenal. Left unaddressed, such suspicions play into the hands of extremists who seek to stoke anti-Americanism in Pakistan. Some U.S. critics—such as radical Pakistani nuclear scientist Bashiruddin Mahmood,

who met with Usama bin Ladin in Afghanistan before the 9/11 attacks to discuss the al-Qa`ida leader's interest in obtaining nuclear weapons—have made public statements suggesting that insiders in the nuclear establishment should support extremists to ensure that the United States does not one day seize Pakistan's weapons.

The only way to counter such destabilizing powers of suggestion is to establish a greater degree of U.S. credibility with the Pakistani people. This will not happen overnight. A more transparent, open, and straightforward explanation of what the two countries are doing might help reduce the influence of those who stir the pot and incite action in the support of terrorist ambitions to acquire nuclear weapons and materials. Spreading this word in Pakistan would also reinforce a broader U.S. message that sharing nuclear security best practices between states is not unusual, but is happening everywhere.

The United States is redoubling efforts to increase nuclear security collaboration worldwide. As President Barack Obama noted during his April 2009 speech in Prague, global nuclear cooperation is not only desirable, but it is our only hope if the world is to avert nuclear catastrophe. Today's age is one in which a single bomb detonated by a terrorist group in any country will impact us all.

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Beyond the Moscow Bombings: Islamic Militancy in the North Caucasus

By Christopher Swift

THE MARCH 29, 2010 ATTACK on the Moscow metro offers a compelling reminder of Russia's continuing struggle with Islamic militancy. Occurring six years after the last similar incident, the strikes at the Lubyanka and Park Kultury stations killed 40 commuters and wounded more than 100.¹ Within hours, Russian media reported eyewitness accounts describing two female suicide bombers in traditional Muslim dress. By the day's end, Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB) announced that it had seized an unused explosive belt near the site of the second explosion.²

Speaking to reporters at the G8 ministerial on March 30, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov suggested that militants in Pakistan may have organized the bombings.³ Foreign analysts amplified that trope, arguing that the two suicide bombers might have been part of a broader al-Qa`ida plot to destabilize the former Soviet Union.⁴ Like prior terrorist incidents, the resulting speculation drew an implicit link between Russia's internal struggles and a global jihadist conspiracy. As Russian investigators traced the bombers to the North Caucasus, however, it soon became clear that Dagestan, not Pakistan, was the source of the plot.

Since the start of the second Russo-Chechen war in 1999, Russian officials have routinely characterized the North Caucasus insurgency as a front in the

1 In August 2004, a female suicide bomber and her accomplice attacked Moscow's Rizhskaya metro station, killing 10 victims and injuring 50. See Arina Borodina, "Terroristicheskaia Sekta," *Kommersant*, September 2, 2004.

2 "We know that many people there actively plot attacks, not just in Afghanistan, but also in other countries," Lavrov observed. "Sometimes the trail leads to the Caucasus." See "Moscow Subway Bombings Kill 38, Are Condemned Worldwide," RIA Novosti, March 29, 2010.

3 "Lavrov: Teraktii v Moskve mogli biti sovershenii pri podderzhke iz-za ryubzha," *Vesti.ru*, March 30, 2010.

4 Syed Saleem Shahzad, "Pakistan Roots to Moscow Attack?" *Asia Times Online*, March 31, 2009.

global war on terrorism. Initially, that claim diminished the conflict's indigenous dimensions by mistakenly conflating separatist rebels with al-Qa`ida. Yet during the ensuing decade, the insurgency lost many of its local characteristics. With the movement's secular wing decimated, Islamist factions gained the initiative. With the surviving factions growing weaker and less centralized, the violence spread beyond Chechnya's borders. The result was a shift from a localized nationalist struggle to an increasingly delocalized Salafist jihad.

This article examines that shift in three stages. First, it describes the role of Dagestani militants in the Moscow metro bombings. Second, it discusses the insurgency's renewed emphasis on mass casualty attacks in the Russian heartland. Third, it examines the adoption of Salafi-jihadi doctrine within the self-styled Caucasus Emirate. The article concludes by evaluating the diffusion of forces within the so-called "Caucasian Front" and the likely consequences for regional stability.

Indigenous Perpetrators

Suicide bombing has long been a prominent feature in the North Caucasus insurgency. Since 2000, women associated with that movement have staged numerous high-profile terrorist operations, including eight of the ten suicide bombings in the Russian capital.⁵ In July 2003, for example, two female suicide bombers detonated explosives during an outdoor rock concert at Moscow's Tushino Airfield, killing 15 and injuring 50.⁶ In December 2003, a lone attacker killed six and injured 13 in a bombing near the Kremlin.⁷ In August 2004, two bombers attacked two Russian commercial aircraft after their departure from Domodedovo airport, killing 89 passengers and crew.⁸

5 Robert Pape, Lindsey O'Rourke and Jenn McDermit, "What Makes Chechen Women so Dangerous?" *New York Times*, March 30, 2010.

6 Robert W. Kurz and Charles K. Bartles, "Chechen Suicide Bombers," *Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 20:4 (2007).

7 "Vdova ne prikhodit odna," *Kommersant*, August 10, 2004.

8 "Russian Plane Crashes Caused by Explosives," Associated Press, August 30, 2004.

The Moscow metro bombings perpetuate that pattern. On April 2, the Russian Anti-Terror Committee announced that Dzhanelt Abdullayeva, the Park Kultury bomber, was the widow of a Dagestani insurgent killed by Russian forces in December 2009.⁹ On April 6, investigators confirmed that Maryam Sharipova, the Lubyanka bomber, was the wife of Dagestani militant leader Magomedali Vagabov.¹⁰ The revelations brought swift reprisals. On April 9, officials placed Sharipova's brother on a national wanted list.¹¹ Three days later, the FSB engaged Vagabov's militia in Dagestan's Karabudakhent district.¹²

Female suicide bombing is a multi-causal phenomenon. Radicalized by protracted war, the loss of close family members, or their own suffering at the hands of federal and regional security forces, many of these so-called *shahidki* (also known as "black widows") exhibited a pattern of retaliatory violence.¹³ Others were coerced or kidnapped by Islamist militants.¹⁴ Some appear to be committed militants in their own right, using suicide bombing as "a last resort against foreign military occupation."¹⁵

Other factors may also be at play. Since the September 2004 hostage crisis in Beslan, there have been relatively few suicide attacks on Russian civilians. The Moscow bombings reversed that trend, following a litany of recent threats promising to expand the war into the Russian heartland. The Dagestani angle is also significant. Until recently, the *shahidki* were almost exclusively Chechen. While the tactics and motives underlying prior attacks may be similar, the Moscow metro bombings involved women who were relatively insulated from the trials and

9 Clifford J. Levy and Ellen Barry, "Russia Says Suicide Bomber Was Militant's Widow," *New York Times*, April 2, 2010.

10 Clifford J. Levy, "Second Bomber in Moscow Attacks is Identified," *New York Times*, April 6, 2010.

11 Natalya Kraninova, "Bomber's Brother Sought," *Moscow Times*, April 9, 2010.

12 "FSB Reports Casualties in Operation in Dagestan," Radio Free Europe-Radio Liberty, April 12, 2010.

13 Kim Murphy, "A Cult of Reluctant Killers," *Los Angeles Times*, February 4, 2004.

14 Yulia Yuzik, *Nevestii Allakab. Litsa i sudbii vsekhn zhen-sheyn-shahidok, vzorvavshikhsya v Rossii* (Moscow: Ultra Kultura, 2003).

15 Pape, et al.

tribulations of the Chechen wars. Their motivation appears more ideological than situational. Against that backdrop, the introduction of Dagestani *shahidki* and the resumption of mass casualty attacks indicate a more radicalized and regionalized insurgency.

The Caucasian Front

Statements from insurgent leaders support that conclusion. On March 31, militant commander Doku Umarov claimed personal responsibility for the Moscow metro bombings in a message posted on the Kavkaz Center

"This declaration underscores Umarov's evolution from rebel to jihadist. By identifying his constituency in religious rather than territorial terms, he now conceives a political future that transcends his Chechen roots."

website. Describing the attacks as retaliation for an alleged massacre in Chechnya, Umarov threatened a new wave of terrorist operations on Russian territory. "The war will come to your streets," he promised, "and you will feel it on your own lives and on your own skin."¹⁶

Those statements coincided with a surge of regional violence. On March 31, a second double suicide bombing near the offices of the Russian Interior Ministry and FSB in the Dagestani city of Kizlyar killed 12 people and injured another 29.¹⁷ On April 5, a bomber killed two police officers and injured 13 in a suicide attack on the police station in Karabulak, Ingushetia.¹⁸ On April 10, an improvised explosive device detonated

16 "Statement of the Emir of the Caucasus Emirate Doku Abu Uthman," Kavkaz TV, March 31, 2010.

17 "12 Killed in South Russia Twin Bombings Days after Moscow Attacks," RIA Novosti, March 31, 2010.

18 "At Least Two Police Authorities Die in Suicide Bomber Attack in Southern Russia," RIA Novosti, April 2, 2010.

in Nalchik, the capital of Kabardino-Balkaria, killing the head of the region's Criminal Investigation Unit.¹⁹

These operations follow Umarov's April 2009 decision to reconstitute the infamous Riyadus-Salikhin Reconnaissance and Sabotage Battalion. Organized by Chechen field commander Shamil Basayev in 1999, the unit's use of suicide bombings, hostage seizures, and other terrorist tactics prompted its designation as a foreign terrorist organization by the United States in 2003.²⁰ Its tactics also drove a wedge between the insurgency's nationalist and Islamist factions, with former Chechen President Aslan Maskhadov denouncing, yet unable to deter, Basayev's growing obsession with theatrical violence.

Riyadus-Salikhin's resuscitation marks a return to the Basayev model. "Russians think the war only happens on television, somewhere far away in the Caucasus where it can't reach them," Umarov argued in 2010. "We plan to show them that the war will return to their homes."²¹ It also reveals a pattern of self-justifying reasoning prominent in contemporary Salafi-jihadi thought. "For me there are no civilians in Russia," Umarov explained in a July 2009 interview, "because a genocide of our people is being carried out with their tacit consent."²²

Delocalized Militancy

Umarov's rhetoric reflects a shift in the course and character of the North Caucasus insurgency. Following the conclusion of the first Russo-Chechen war in 1996, the region witnessed two distinct and increasingly divergent strains of Islamic militancy. The ethno-nationalist strain championed an independent and nominally secular state. Centered around Maskhadov and the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria (ChRI), it largely condemned terrorist violence and sought a negotiated peace

with Russia.²³ The Islamist strain pursued broader objectives. Emerging as the brainchild of Basayev and Chechen propagandist Movladi Udugov, it embraced terrorist operations in a bid to undermine Russia's political will and unify the North Caucasus under a system of Shari`a law.

Umarov's movement is now avowedly Salafist. Eschewing Maskhadov's vision, he disavowed the ChRI's ethno-nationalist objectives. Working from Udugov's template, he proclaimed a virtual "Caucasus Emirate" stretching from Dagestan in the east to Stavropol Krai in the West. Borrowing from Basayev's playbook, he presumed popular support for the war, widened the scope of potential targets, and resumed terrorist operations against Russian civilians. This Salafist influence is most evident in Umarov's evolving objectives. Unconstrained by history or geography, his aims now include a campaign to liberate "Astrakhan and the Volga lands that are now under the heel of Russian infidels."²⁴ This declaration underscores Umarov's evolution from rebel to jihadist. By identifying his constituency in religious rather than territorial terms, he now conceives a political future that transcends his Chechen roots.

This agenda reflects the erosion of local cultural and religious institutions. Since the late 18th century, Sufi orders have dominated fundamentalist revivals and indigenous resistance movements throughout the North Caucasus.²⁵ These *tariqat* played a central role in the Chechen separatist movement following the Soviet Union's collapse. As rebellion devolved into brutal protracted war, however, younger militants gradually abandoned the *tariqat* in favor of a foreign, doctrinally homogenous Salafi-jihadi ideology. This process empowered Islamist factions while transforming the separatist movement's social and political

structure. Once built around the ChRI and its nascent state apparatus, the North Caucasus insurgency now implicates a continuum of loosely affiliated militant groups, or *jama`ats*, operating across the region.

Salafi-jihadi ideology binds these *jama`ats* through a shared identity and historically deterministic doctrine. By advocating a political future grounded in Islam's past, it promises an authentically Islamic alternative to faltering nationalist aspirations. By appealing to a pan-Islamic identity, it transcends ethnic, linguistic, and other parochial divisions. By articulating a worldview grounded in notions of civilizational conflict, it situates local conflicts within a broader global struggle. The results are transformative. Rather than pursuing discrete objectives in their indigenous societies, Umarov and his followers now view themselves as part of a worldwide Islamic awakening.²⁶

Diffuse Challenges

Ideological uniformity does not guarantee operational cohesion, however. Despite sharing a common worldview, Umarov's movement is politically and territorially fragmented. Dagestani Salafists operate through the local Jama`at Shari`at. Insurgents in Ingushetia and Kabardino-Balkaria formed the Ingush Jama`at and Yamuk Jama`at. Militants in North Ossetia created Kataib al-Khoul. Each of these entities operates with a high degree of local autonomy, maintaining their own subgroups and support networks. Despite their nominal fealty to Umarov's front organization, however, clear operational hierarchies are difficult to discern. The resulting movement is decentralized and diffuse. Far from being a virtual state, the Caucasus Emirate is better described as a loose confederation of militant networks sharing the same adversary and ideology.

The emirate also lacks significant manpower. According to a 2009 FSB estimate, its forces number around 480.²⁷ That figure indicates a substantial reduction in the size of the insurgency, particularly when compared with the

19 "Terakt v Kabirdino-Balkarii: v svoei masnine vzorvan nachalnik Upravleniya ugolovnogo roziiski MVD," Newsru.com, April 11, 2010.

20 "OON vclad za SHA vklyuchila v episok terroristicheskikh organizatsii tri chechenskikh gruppipovki," Newsru.com, March 5, 2003.

21 Ibid.

22 "Our Possibilities Are Endless..." *Prague Watchdog*, July 6, 2009.

23 Ilyas Akhmadov, *The Russo-Chechen Tragedy: The Way to Peace and Democracy. Conditional Independence under an International Administration* (Brussels: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Chechen Republic of Ichkeria, 2003).

24 "Caucasus Emirate's Emir Dokka Abu Usman: 'We will liberate the Krasnodar Territory, Astrakhan and the Volga lands...'" Kavkaz Center, March 8, 2010.

25 Alexandre Bennigsen and S. Enders Wimbush, *Mystics and Commissars: Sufism in the Soviet Union* (London: Hurst, 1985).

26 "Interview of the Caucasus Emirate's Emir Dokka Abbu Usman," Kavkaz Center, January 16, 2010.

27 "Medvedev: FSB dolzhna sokhranit control nad Chechneii," Grani.ru, March 27, 2009.

22,000 fighters deployed by the ChRI more than a decade ago.²⁸ Foreign fighters are also in short supply. Since 2003, jihadist syndicates have eschewed the Caucasus in favor of more promising fronts in Afghanistan and Iraq.²⁹ Yet while the aggregate number of militants in the North Caucasus has decreased, the relative intensity and extensity of their operations remains relatively consistent.

This consistency reflects longstanding flaws in Russia's counterinsurgency strategy. Characterized by corrupt regional leaders, a repressive security apparatus, and two decades of protracted civil strife, conditions in the North Caucasus present fertile ground for Umarov's appeals to pan-Islamic solidarity. The operations tempo also reflects emerging recruitment patterns. Although exiled ChRI leaders such as Akhmed Zakayev have openly denounced Umarov's Salafist agenda, the Caucasian Front now attracts a new generation of Islamic militants from across the former Soviet Union.

The life and death of Said Buryatsky is a case in point. Born Aleksandr Tikhomirov in the western Siberian city of Ulan-Ude, the ethnic Buryat abandoned his region's Buddhist heritage and converted to Islam at age 15. In 2008, he joined the Caucasian Front, using videos, blogs, and other social networking media to document his experiences as a guerrilla.³⁰ In 2009, he helped reconstitute Riyadus-Salikhin, launching a series of suicide operations targeting Ingush President Yunus-Bek Yevkurov. By the time of his death in 2010, Buryatsky had gained international prominence as an impassioned advocate of jihad, with a following among self-identified "internet mujahidin" in Afghanistan,

28 "Federalniim cilam v. Chechne protivostoyat 22 tiic. boevikov," Cyr.ru, November 4, 1999.

29 Despite the presence of foreign fighters in the North Caucasus during the first and second Russo-Chechen wars, geographic isolation, linguistic barriers, and strong border controls limited substantial Arab infiltration. See Cerwyn Moore and Paul Tumelty, "Foreign Fighters and the Case of Chechnya: A Critical Assessment," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 31:5 (2008).

30 Kevin Daniel Leahy, "Sheikh Said Buryatski and the Fresh Cult of the Suicide Bombing in the North Caucasus," *Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst*, September 16, 2009.

Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and even the West.³¹

These developments pose complex challenges for Russian officials. A diffuse insurgency is more difficult to defeat using conventional military means. A delocalized insurgency, in turn, is more likely to attract disaffected Muslims from other regions. In this sense, the decade-long devolution from *tariqat* to *jama`at* produced a movement that is more ethical than political—one preoccupied with idealized notions of violence rather than the creation of social and political institutions.

These attributes indicate chronic weakness. The Caucasian Front cannot seize and hold territory. It cannot mobilize sustained indigenous support. It cannot even articulate a coherent vision of the political future. Reduced to a self-styled virtual emirate, it lacks the attributes associated with successful insurgencies. This weakness will not translate into a more passive or quiescent adversary, however. By engaging in provocative terror, Umarov actively courts violent reprisal. The more repressive the Russian response, the more radicalized the Caucasus will become. Against this backdrop, the Moscow metro bombings suggest the same kind of "vexation and exhaustion" strategies adopted in other theaters along the *umma's* cultural and geographic periphery.³² Unable to use force to achieve political ends, Umarov has embraced force as an end unto itself.

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31 Paul Quinn-Judge, "Russia's Terror Goes Viral," *Foreign Policy*, March 29, 2010.

32 Abu Bakr Naji, *The Management of Savagery*, translated by William McCants, Combating Terrorism Center, West Point.

After Pune, Details Emerge on the Karachi Project and its Threat to India

By Animesh Roul

THE 14 MONTHS of calm after the November 2008 Mumbai terrorist attacks were shattered when militants bombed the Indian city of Pune on February 13, 2010. The attack targeted a popular German bakery located in the Koregaon Park area. The bakery is situated near a Hindu spiritual center (Osho Rajneesh) and a Jewish cultural center (the Chabbad House) that are frequented by foreigners and affluent Pune-kars. Seventeen people were killed in the bombing, including five foreign nationals.¹ Among the injured were Iranian, Sudanese, Taiwanese, German, Yemeni and Nepalese citizens. Forensic investigations into the incident suggest that the militants used a remotely-detonated improvised explosive device comprising a mixture of ammonium nitrate, RDX explosives and petroleum hydrocarbon oil.²

The bakery was likely targeted because it is located in a crowded area and more vulnerable to attack. It was a popular meeting place, and the timing of the blast coincided with the peak evening hours when foreigners and Indian visitors frequent the area. It is likely that the militants selected the bakery either due to heightened security measures at the respective spiritual and cultural centers nearby, or as a last minute change in strategy based on the size of the crowd at the restaurant.

After the attack, a flurry of conflicting reports surfaced about the terrorist groups responsible for the blast as multiple unknown groups claimed credit for the operation. Suspicion, however, remains on Pakistan-based Lashkar-i-Tayyiba (LT) and its Indian homegrown affiliate, the Indian Mujahidin (IM). Details continue to emerge suggesting that the plot may have been part of the LT's so-called "Karachi Project." The

1 "Pune Blast: Toll Rises to 17," *Outlook India*, February 17, 2010.

2 Vishwas Kothari and Asseem Shaikh, "Terror Formula: RDX, Ammonium Nitrate, Oil," *Times News Network*, February 17, 2010.