

The War on Terrorism in Russian Foreign Policy

The Russian war on 'international' terrorism in Chechnya since the 1990s has affected not only neighbouring Georgia but also become a central theme in Russian foreign policy, especially after 9/11. Relations with the US improved, when Russia supported its declaration of war on terror, the toppling of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan and the establishment of US bases in Central Asia.

However, several European states refused to extradite suspected Chechens to Russia, criticized the Russian war in Chechnya for violating human rights and called for a political solution. Russia rejected this as interference in internal affairs. When the Chechen war then abated, European attention to it weakened, but the authoritarian development in Russia became a bigger problem.

Russia on its side was increasingly concerned that the war on terrorism led to more US influence in the Caucasus and Central Asia, and supported the closure of the US base in Uzbekistan. Russia both worried and gloated over the US failure in pacifying Iraq and Afghanistan, while doing very little to assist. It refused to recognise the Hezbollah and the Hamas as terrorist organisations against Israel and maintained ties with their sponsors Iran and Syria. All this strained the antiterror cooperation with particularly the US.

Russia thus also subordinated the war on terrorism to geopolitical and economic interests in certain regions and its credibility as a reliable partner of Western democracies was undermined.



INGMAR OLDBERG

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Abstract <p>The Russian war on 'international' terrorism in Chechnya since the 1990s has affected not only neighbouring Georgia but also become a central theme in Russian foreign policy, especially after 9/11. Relations with the US improved, when Russia supported its declaration of war on terror, the toppling of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan and the establishment of US bases in Central Asia.</p> <p>However, several European states refused to extradite suspected Chechens to Russia, criticized the Russian war in Chechnya for violating human rights and called for a political solution, which Russia rejected as interference in internal affairs. When the Chechen war then abated, European attention to it weakened, but the authoritarian development in Russia became a bigger problem.</p> <p>Russia on its side was increasingly concerned that the war on terrorism led to more US influence in the Caucasus and Central Asia, and supported the closure of the US base in Uzbekistan. Russia both worried and gloated over the US and its allies' failure in pacifying Iraq and Afghanistan, while doing nothing to assist. It refused to recognise the Hezbollah and the Hamas as terrorist organisations against Israel and maintained ties with their sponsors Iran and Syria. All this strained the antiterror cooperation with particularly the US.</p> <p>Russia thus also subordinated the war on terrorism to geopolitical and economic interests in certain regions and its credibility as a reliable partner of Western democracies was undermined.</p>		
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Sammanfattning <p>Rysslands krig mot "internationell" terrorism in Tjetjenien sedan 1990-talet har påverkat inte bara grannlandet Georgien utan också blivit ett centralt tema i dess utrikespolitik, särskilt efter 9/11. Relationerna med USA förbättrades, då Ryssland stödde dess krigsförklaring mot terror, störtandet av talibanregimen i Afghanistan och lät USA upprätta baser i Centralasien.</p> <p>Flera europeiska stater vägrade emellertid utvisa misstänkta tjetjener till Ryssland, kritiserade kriget i Afghanistan för att kränka mänskliga rättigheter och manade till en politisk lösning, vilket Ryssland avvisade som inblandning i inre angelägenheter. När kriget i Tjetjenien sedan avtog, försvagades Europas intresse, men i stället ökade oron för den auktoritära utvecklingen i Ryssland.</p> <p>Ryssland oroades å sin sida alltmer för att kriget mot terrorismen ledde till ökat amerikanskt inflytande i Kaukasus och Centralasien, och stödde t.ex. att basen i Uzbekistan stängdes. Ryssland både oroades av och glädde sig åt USA:s and dess allierades misslyckande att stabilisera Irak och Afghanistan, och hjälpte dem inte. Man vägrade att erkänna Hizbollah och Hamas som terrororganisationer mot Israel och upprätthöll sina relationer med deras sponsorer Iran och Syrien. Allt detta undergrävde antiterrorssamarbetet särskilt med USA.</p> <p>Ryssland underordnade således kriget mot terrorism under sina egna geopolitiska och ekonomiska intressen och dess trovärdighet som en pålitlig partner till västliga demokratier undergrävdes.</p>		
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Special forces of the Interior Ministry of Dagestan hold a special operation on neutralization of an armed group of guerrillas. Acts of terrorism by Chechen insurgents were prevented.

Cover photo by: Magomed Isaev/Kommersant

Table of Contents

Foreword.....	3
Introduction	5
Chechnya and international terrorism	7
Chechnya and Georgia	13
Fighting terrorism at the global level	15
Chechen terrorism in Russia's relations with Europe	19
The European view of terrorism in Chechnya	23
Russian rapprochement with the United States.....	27
Growing disagreement with the United States.....	33
Terrorism in Yugoslavia, Chechnya and Central Asia	33
Terrorism in the Middle East	36
Summary and conclusions.....	41
Short general conclusions	43
Bibliography	45
Statements and analyses.....	45
News sites and newspapers.....	50
Recent FOI Reports on Russia and Its Neighbours.....	51

Foreword

Terrorism has been a major problem in world politics, especially during the last decade, not least in Russia. This report analyses how the problem is handled in Russian relations with the major countries and organisations in the world and with what results.

The report has been written and scrutinized within the framework of the FOI research group on Russian foreign, defence and security policy, which on a regular basis prepares a broad survey on Russian developments in a ten-year perspective for the Swedish Ministry of Defence. This FOI report on terrorism in Russian foreign policy will be followed by another concerning the war on terrorism in Russian domestic policy.

The report builds on the author's previous research on Russian foreign policy (see bibliography), updating it with new material and analysis. It is also intended to complement previous research by others at this institute dealing more specifically with terrorism as such and ways of fighting it.

Jan Leijonhielm

Ingmar Oldberg

Introduction

The scourge of terrorism has become a major issue in world politics during the last decade, especially since the 11 September 2001 attacks on the United States (henceforth 9/11) which caused President Bush to declare war on terror. However, already in 1999 Russia had declared war on terrorism in Chechnya, and this issue has played an important role in Russian domestic and foreign policy ever since.

Since the war in Chechnya has received much attention both in Russia and the West, this report focuses on the question how this war has formed the Russian view of terrorism and how the war on terrorism has been waged in Russian foreign policy. By analysing how other states have reacted to this Russian policy, its effectiveness is also assessed.

Defining terrorism obviously is difficult, since the concept is used to cover a wide range of actions. In Russia the concept tends to be used in a very loose way as will be shown below. For the purpose of this report terrorism is defined as acts or threats of violence against civilians intended to induce fear among a wider audience, usually for political or religious purposes. Terrorism is most often carried out by small groups as a weapon of the weak against governments, but also states may resort to it.¹ According to the Russian researcher Ekaterina Stepanova a distinction should be made between conflict-related terrorism, which is related to a specific area in conflict, and super-terrorism, which has a global outreach challenging the world order.² Conflict-related terrorism often occurs along with and may be confused with guerrilla warfare, which typically involves armed attacks on military targets.

The report starts with a background analysis of the war in Chechnya and its effects on Russian society in general. Then follows an examination of how the war on terrorism in Chechnya has affected Russia's relations with other countries, starting with Georgia, the neighbouring state that was most directly affected.

After a survey of how the war on terrorism was presented at the global level, most attention is then devoted to the question how the war in Chechnya was

¹ Cp. Wilkinson, Paul, "The future threat of terrorism against the European democracies", in Jervas, Gunnar (ed.) *FOA report on terrorism*, FOA-R—98-00788-170—SE, June 1998, p. 3; Jakobsson, Johan, *Terrorism och extremism som hotbild*, FOI-R—1289—SE, Juni 2004, p. 16.

² Stepanova, Ekaterina, "Russia's approach to the fight against terrorism", in Hedenskog et al, *Russia as a Great Power. Dimensions of Security under Putin*. London and New York, Routledge, pp. 321 f.

presented vis-à-vis the European states and organisations and, secondly, how these reacted.³

The following section addresses the question how Russia and the United States after 9/11 found common interests with regard to terrorism in Asia. The last section analyses the growing disagreements over terrorism between Russia and the United States since 2003, whereupon the conclusions are summarised.

As for sources, this report builds on official statements, news material, analyses and comments by insiders and researchers, both from Russia and Western countries, a good deal of which is available on the Internet.

³ To the extent that the European view overlaps with the American it will be called Western.

Chechnya and international terrorism

Terrorism in Russia is not a new phenomenon. Already in tsarist times terrorist acts were committed against the regime by Socialist Revolutionaries and Bolsheviks. The Communist regime under Lenin and Stalin also committed atrocious and large-scale acts of violence, which can be called state terrorism against perceived enemies in its own population, while often accusing them of terrorism.⁴ Soviet authorities also supported terrorist groups abroad directly or indirectly.⁵ A spectacular example, which in our days probably would be labelled as a terrorist act, was the attempt by a Turkish agent to murder the Pope in 1982.

Since the mid-1990s terrorism in Russia is predominantly associated with Chechnya. In 1994-1996 Russia started a war against the Chechen separatists, who had declared independence in 1991 and threatened Russia's territorial integrity. But as some guerrilla fighters increasingly resorted to hostage-taking outside the republic, Russia began indiscriminately to label the separatists as terrorists and bandits.⁶ When President Dudaev appealed to the Muslim faith of the Chechens and sought support from Muslim states, Russia started to portray the war as a defence against Muslim fundamentalism, something which also threatened the west.

In 1996 Russia was forced to withdraw its troops from Chechnya, which became de facto independent. Islamist laws were adopted and Aslan Maskhadov was elected president but could not maintain control and kidnappings continued.

Russia started the second Chechen war in September 1999 after some Chechen units under Shamil Basaev made a raid into Dagestan to link up with local Wahhabites and a series of apartment bombings occurred in Moscow and elsewhere, which were blamed on the Chechens. Chechens were persecuted all over Russia as potential or actual terrorists. A federal law on fighting terrorism of 1998 made no distinction between terrorism and criminal violence, did not consider political goals and granted the antiterrorist forces free hands.⁷

⁴ For an analysis of Soviet state terror against the population, see Karlsson, Klas-Göran, *Terror och tystnad. Sovjetregimens krig mot den egna befolkningen*, Stockholm, Atlantis, 2005.

⁵ Kochik, Valerii, "I terroristy, i kommunisty", *Nezavisimoe Voennoe Obozrenie* (NVO), no. 29, 2006, p. 7.

⁶ A few bus hijackings for ransom preceded the war. (Trenin, Dmitri, *Russia and antiterrorism*, p. 1, Carnegie Moscow Center, <http://www.carnegie.ru/en/pubs/media/72290.htm>, retrieved 18 Aug. 2006)

⁷ Stepanova, 310 ff. This law was later amended and complemented with similar ones.

From the very start, then-Prime Minister Vladimir Putin presented the war as an “antiterrorist operation” against international terrorism, which wanted to seize Russia’s rich natural resources, and he claimed that the terrorists were trained, financed and dispatched from abroad.⁸ Alluding to developments abroad Putin claimed that Muslim extremists aimed to found a caliphate stretching from the Greater Middle East to the Volga regions, and placed Chechnya in an arc of instability from Fez to the Philippines.⁹ A Palestinian scenario was seen in the increasing number of suicide bombers, who often were women, notably in October 2002, when the audience of a popular Moscow theatre was taken hostage. Much publicity was made about Chechen training camps abroad, Arab terrorists in Chechnya, and money transfers from Arab states.

However, the numbers and importance of these facts were wildly exaggerated, and the lack of support from Arab states for Chechnya is striking as will be shown below. Nor could Russia provide convincing evidence that Chechens committed terrorism against the West. For instance, among the “illegal combatants” held captive at US base of Guantanamo Bay, there were eight Russian citizens but no Chechen.¹⁰

Similarly, the terrorist attack on a school at Beslan (North Ossetia) in September 2004, where more than a thousand persons were taken hostage and over 300 were killed, was explained by Putin as total and full-scale war, a direct intervention, by international terrorism on Russia. He also hinted at Western complicity by claiming that some people wanted to cut out a juicy slice of Russia, assisted by others who thought that Russia as one of the most powerful nuclear powers still posed a threat to anyone. He did not even mention Chechnya, even though there were clear links.¹¹ Putin concluded that Russia had showed itself as weak, unprotected from both west and east, and called for a more efficient security system, mobilisation of the nation and more unity.¹² Thus he shifted the blame abroad and used the attack for domestic purposes.

As a way to increase support for the war on terrorism, Putin also compared it to the war against Nazi Germany during the Second World War. This theme was developed in connection with the 60th anniversary of the Great Victory in May 2005. In his speech at the military parade on the Red Square Putin thus explained that “every complicity, indifference and temporizing inevitably leads

⁸ Halbach, Uwe *Gewalt in Tschetschenien* (2004), SWP-Studie, Febr. 2004, Berlin, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, p. 16.

⁹ Trenin, p. 3.

¹⁰ Smith, Hanna (2005) “Chechnya in Russian Foreign Policy”, in Smith, Hanna (ed.) *Russia and Its Foreign Policy*, Aleksanteri Institute, Helsinki, Kikumora Publications; Halbach (2004), 10, 16 ff.

¹¹ For instance the terrorists’ origin and demands, Basaev’s acceptance of responsibility and the subsequent intensification of reprisals in Chechnya.

¹² Putin, Vladimir, “Obrashchenie Prezidenta Rossii Vladimira Putina”, 4 Sept. 2004, Prezident Rossii, www.president.kremlin.ru, retrieved 7 Sept. 2004.

to terrible consequences on a world scale. In front of the real and existing threat of terrorism today we have to honour the memory of our fathers”.¹³

Different from the first Chechen war, the second gained wide popular support in Russia and its seeming success strongly contributed to the FSB head Vladimir Putin being elected President in March 2000. Putin then systematically used the fight against terrorism as a means to strengthen central control, which meant more influence for the security structures.¹⁴ State control of the mass media increased, and the possibilities to criticize the war in Chechnya were severely restricted.

Indeed, Putin seemed to reach his aim. The Russian military forces quickly occupied most of Chechnya, and large-scale fighting all but ceased. In 2000 the military command was passed over to the FSB and in 2003 to the Interior Ministry. Moscow embarked on a policy of ‘normalisation’ by holding elections, instituting widened autonomy, adopting a reconstruction programme and granting amnesty for the resistance fighters. Chechen refugees outside the republic were forced to return. At the same time the conflict was ‘Chechenised’ by handing over power to Akhmad Kadyrov, a former mufti who had fought the Russians in the first war but shifted sides and was elected president of Chechnya. A Moscow-loyal Chechen force (*kadyrovtsy*) was built up, which took over most of the fighting and soon became even more feared than the Russians.¹⁵ The resistance groups were split, some going over to the Russian side. Terrorist attacks on civilian targets after Beslan gave way to attacks on military targets and federal institutions.¹⁶

In 2005 Russian security forces finally succeeded in killing Chechen President Aslan Maskhadov, whom Russia included among the terrorists. In August 2006 the main terrorist leader Basaev was killed, for which the FSB assumed the honour. The Russian government offered a new amnesty to former freedom fighters, and allocated more money for reconstruction, health care and education in Chechnya.¹⁷ According to opinion polls, only a minority of Russians in 2006 felt terrorism was the main threat to Russia.¹⁸

¹³ Putin, “Vystuplenie na voennom parade”, 9 May 2005, Prezident Rossii, www.president.kremlin.ru, retrieved 10 May 2005.

¹⁴ More on this in Baev (2005) Pavel, “Counter-terrorism as a building block for Putin’s regime”, in Hedenskog et al, pp. 323 ff.

¹⁵ Halbach (2004) pp. 20 ff.

¹⁶ Larsson, Robert L. (2006), *Konfliktlösning i Kaukasus: en säkerhetspolitisk lägesuppdatering*, FOI- R- 2108-SE, Stockholm, Defence Research Agency, pp. 79 f.

¹⁷ Jamestown Foundation, “Russian and Chechen officials praise amnesty”, *Chechnya Weekly*, vol. 7, issue 31, 3 Aug. 2006; Putin, “Excerpts from the transcript of the meeting with cabinet ministers, 1 Aug. 2006, President of Russia, www.president.kremlin.ru/eng, retrieved 23 Aug. 2006.

¹⁸ Baev, “Russia is wrapping up its war against terror”, *Eurasia Daily Monitor (EDM)*, August 2006; Halbach (2004), pp. 20 ff; *Europa und Russland im Kaukasus*, SWP-Studie, November 2005, pp. 20 ff; Trenin, p. 5.

In his 2006 speech to the Federal Assembly Putin did not mention Chechnya at all, but he placed terrorism first among global threats as an extremely palpable problem. Realising that terrorism thrives on local conflicts, often with ethnic roots combined with confessional confrontation, he hinted that some people (*koe-kto*) would like Russia to get stuck in such problems, and that in order to meet fight terror and a row of other problems Russia as one of the leading world powers was obliged to modernize its army.¹⁹ Again the threat was seen as coming from outside and was used for mobilisation.

On the whole, however, the two Chechen wars have had enormously baleful effects on Russia. The wars resulted in massive devastation and casualties in the region on a scale totally different from the fight against separatism and terrorism in Northern Ireland or the Basque lands. Human losses were estimated by the Soldiers' Mothers Committee at over 180 000 civilians, at least 27 000 Russian soldiers – more than during the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan – and over 200 000 refugees.²⁰ Most of the reconstruction money disappeared on the way to Chechnya into private pockets. The use of massive firepower, indiscriminate violence against civilians in mopping-up operations (*zachistki*), rapes and disappearances, and impunity for offenders in the interest of the war effort – all this provoked hatred and resistance among the Chechens.²¹ This was perceived as state terrorism and provided a fertile soil for continued terrorism, which spread into the whole region and Russia at large as mentioned above. While fighting has seeped out in Chechnya, most of the adjacent North Caucasian republics are now rent by social unrest, ethnic tension and harsh measures by the federal security forces.²²

Not even Chechnya is really stable. After Akhmad Kadyrov was murdered in 2004, his son Ramzan became Deputy Prime Minister and received Putin's blessing and support. However, he may prove unruly, as he relies on Islam and has raised demands on Moscow, e.g. to withdraw troops, and he has been opposed by other pro-Moscow groups.²³

For Russia as a whole, the conduct of the two wars demanded considerable shares of the federal budget and, in particular, the military budget, and delayed Russian military reform. Participation in the war also brutalised and demoralized hundred of thousands of Russian soldiers. According to a brave Russian analyst,

¹⁹ Putin, "Ezhegodnoe Poslanie Federalnomu Sobraniuu", 10 May 2006, pp. 7 f, retrieved 10 May 2006.

²⁰ The figures are uncertain. According to a Chechen official the total figure of deaths in mid-2005 was 90 000. (Halbach (2005) p.15.

²¹ Trenin, p. 3, Halbach (2004), p. 11 ff, Halbach (2005), pp. 14 ff, Evangelista, Matthew, *The Chechen Wars*. Washington D.C., Brookings, 2002, pp. 144 ff.

²² Larsson (2006) pp. 87 ff; Cornell, Svante, "The North Caucasus: spiraling out of control?", *Terrorism Monitor*, vol. 3, issue 7, 7 April 2005, Jamestown Foundation, www.jamestown.org, retrieved 5 Sept. 2006.

²³ Halbach (2005) p.15; Perovic, Jeronim, "Am Abgrund", *Osteuropa*, 56. Jg, No. 7, 2006, pp. 49 ff; "Richer, bolder – and sliding back" *The Economist*, 15 July 2006, p. 23.

the lack of democracy and of a free press ensured that mistakes would not be corrected and that crimes are not punished. This undermined the effectiveness of the fight against terrorism and damaged Russia's reputation abroad.²⁴ Thus the Russian war in Chechnya was extremely destructive and created conditions, in which new terrorist acts may happen any time, leading to renewed repression. Presenting the war as one against international terrorism obscured the problem and mainly served to centralise power and the security structures.

²⁴ Trenin, p. 3.

Chechnya and Georgia

Russia's war on terrorism in Chechnya most directly affected its relations with Georgia, the only independent state bordering on Chechnya. In the course of the war many Chechens refugees settled in the Georgian Pankisi valley, among them also fighters. Therefore Russia accused Georgia of harbouring international terrorists, Chechens and Arabs, and called for harsh measures against them. The Russian military wanted to carry out mopping up operations, and several air incursions occurred. After Chechen fighters in September 2001 also entered the Kodori Gorge in Abkhazia, a separatist region supported by Russia, maybe in an attempt to alleviate Russian pressure on Chechnya, Russia threatened to send troops to the entire border and called on Georgia to withdraw from the gorge, which was bombed by unmarked aircraft. At the height of the crisis in 2002 Putin issued an ultimatum threatening unilateral military action to neutralize the terrorist threat, unless Georgia did so. This caused a war scare in Georgia, especially since also the USA worried about terrorists in Pankisi.²⁵

However, according to the Georgians, the terrorist presence in Pankisi was greatly exaggerated and the Chechens there were mainly a criminal problem. It could also be argued that Russia itself was unable to seal off the border.²⁶ There were also conflicting views about other issues than terrorism. Georgia sought support from the USA and wanted to become a member of NATO and the EU in order to escape Russian domination. Georgia felt threatened by the presence of Russian military bases in the country and wanted to take control of the separatist regions of South Ossetia, Abkhazia and Ajaria, which Russia bolstered economically and with peacekeepers - at the same time as Chechen separatists were branded as terrorists.

In the end, the crisis was defused with American assistance. The United States decided to send military advisors to help Georgia in the fight against terrorism, which Putin could not oppose, at the same time as Russia was warned against undertaking unilateral military action. Georgian President Shevardnadze agreed with Putin on establishing a hot line between them, on common border patrols and extradition of terrorists to Russia. With American support Georgia took control of the Pankisi valley in 2002 and signed a security agreement with the USA.

²⁵ Nygren, Bertil, "Russia's relations with Georgia under Putin", in Hedenskog et al, pp. 164 ff.

²⁶ Smith, pp. 106 f.

This, of course, angered Russia and the situation worsened at the end of 2003, when Shevardnadze was ousted by a popular uprising (later called the Rose Revolution) and was replaced by the Western-oriented Mikhail Saakashvili. Even if Saakashvili strove to avoid conflict with Russia over Chechnya and again suggested joint border controls, he intensified efforts to regain control of the separatist regions.²⁷

Besides backing these regions, Russia continued to press Georgia by forcing the OSCE to withdraw its monitoring operation from the Georgian-Russian border, claiming that it was inefficient, but more likely because it had confirmed Russian air incursions and provided some protection for Georgia. Russia also went on grumbling about terrorists in Pankisi.²⁸ When the Russian military leadership after Beslan reserved the right to carry out preventive attacks against terrorist bases abroad, this posed a threat especially to Georgia.

Thus the issue of terrorism was intertwined with other problems in Russian-Georgian relations. The Russian use of the issue to exert pressure on Georgia had the unintended effect of increasing American influence. In the following, this problem will be set into a larger context.

²⁷ Nygren, pp. 168 ff, Smith, 107.

²⁸ Halbach (2005), p. 27.

Fighting terrorism at the global level

The wars in Chechnya and the Russian conception of terrorism not only affected the Caucasian neighbourhood but also Russian foreign policy in general. In the early 2000s Russia made cooperation against terrorism a central topic in relations with practically all states and international organisations, especially within the former Soviet space. In the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), which consist of authoritarian, ex-Communist states, antiterrorism also became a means to fight the political opposition against the governments. Antiterrorist centres were set up in Bishkek and Tashkent, respectively, and common exercises were held aiming at fighting terrorism. Russia also used the fight against terrorism in order to strengthen relations with for example China, India, Turkey, countries which also perceived problems with separatism and terrorism. In 2005 Russia and China held a large-scale military exercise involving submarines and long-range aviation was held with an antiterrorist scenario.²⁹ As will be shown separately below, the terrorism issue contributed substantially to improve relations with the United States after 2001.

A central role in the war on terrorism at the global level was accorded to the United Nations, where Russia is one of the five permanent members of the Security Council (UNSC). Russia became an active member of its Counter-Terrorism Committee created after September 2001, and was elected its chairman in 2004. In the same year Russia brought the issue of the Beslan terrorist attack to the UNSC and got support for a sharp condemnation. In a speech to the General Assembly, which was completely dominated by the terrorism issue, Foreign Minister Lavrov emphasised that honest cooperation without double standards had become a key criterion for ties with all states.³⁰

As a general declaration Putin at the 2005 General Assembly stated that terrorism represented the main danger to the rights and freedoms of mankind, and recommended that the UN and the SC should be the headquarters for coordinating international cooperation in the struggle against terror, helping to

²⁹ *Moscow News*, 24-30 Aug. 2006. Curiously, even a bilateral exercise with Sweden in winter conditions was held with such a scenario in January 2006.

³⁰ Lavrov, Sergei, "Statement", 24 September 2004, Ministerstvo inostrannykh del, www.in.mid.ru, retrieved 9 Nov. 2005.

settle regional conflicts, in which terrorists of all kinds use religious, ethnic and social inequalities.³¹

What initiatives then did Russia take in the UN? Lavrov in 2004 presented a seven-point programme for the fight against terrorism, among them cooperation between the security services, the right of self-defence, examination of terror associations of people seeking asylum, measures against terrorists getting access to weapons of mass destruction, and against drug traffic.³² Some of these were included in SC resolution no. 1566, adopted in October 2004. Russia also initiated an SC resolution and a convention on fighting nuclear terrorism. After the terror attacks in London in July 2005 Russia backed a British-sponsored UN resolution banning not only accomplices and financiers of terror but also instigators. Russia took credit for a new SC resolution of 2005 (no. 1624) which concluded that suspected terrorists should be brought to trial, where they are seized or where they are deported, and that asylum should not be granted to people on whom there is reliable information of involvement in terrorist activities.³³

A key Russian goal was to reach a unified definition of terrorism as a basis for cooperation, which of course was modelled on the Russian experience.³⁴ Hence Lavrov in the General Assembly proposed a “consolidated list” of terrorists and their organisations, whether connected to al-Qaeda or not. He also wanted common criteria on the use of force, when states became targets of terrorist attacks with traces of perpetrators leading to other countries. However, the actions needed to be sanctioned by the SC - that is subject to Russian (and other) veto. Lavrov also called for the right of self-defence against an imminent terrorist threat from abroad.³⁵

Russian officials further expressed sympathy for measures in other countries such as limiting entries and changing deportation procedures for people involved in terrorist activities (Germany, Great Britain) and legalizing the use of the army to fight terrorism in one’s own country (USA, Germany).³⁶

As for the role of the media in fighting terrorism, Russia took a very restrictive view based on its own practice. Putin thus once told the Dutch TV that any media attention, any ambiguous interpretation of the motives and the

³¹ Putin, Vladimir, “The UN belongs to all of us”, *International Affairs*, Vol. 51, No. 6, 2005, pp. 1 f, Simons, Gregory, *The Use of Rhetoric and the Mass Media in Russia’s War on Terror*, Department of Eurasian Studies, Uppsala University, Jan. 2006, p. 17.

³² Lavrov, “Statement”, 24 September 2004.

³³ Lavrov (2005) “Vystuplenie Ministra inostrannykh del Rossii na 60-oi sessii Generalnoi Assamblei OON”, 18 Sept 2005, Ministerstvo inostrannykh del, www.in.mid.ru, retrieved 23 Aug. 2006. The former can be seen as directed against US practices at the Guantanamo base, the second underpinned Russian demands for extradition.

³⁴ Simons, p. 9.

³⁵ Lavrov (2005).

³⁶ Margelov, Vitaly, Krivokhizha, Vassily, “The time of terror and difficult decisions”, *International Affairs*, Vol. 52, No. 2, 2006, pp. 50 ff.

results of their acts was nothing but support for terrorist activity.³⁷ However, doubts were expressed about an allegedly British proposal to deport those who visit Internet sites classified as terrorist, since it was difficult to distinguish between terrorist and radical Islamist sites. A moot question was how to treat the Arab TV Al-Jazeera that gives time to terrorists but also provides useful information for the special services.³⁸ There is reason to return to this interesting exception.

Besides the UN Russia also actively promoted the terrorism issue in the G8 group of the leading industrial countries. In 2003 Russia supported setting up a G8 Counter-Terrorism Action Group. At the summit in 2005 Putin expressed his condolences for Britain concerning the recent terrorist attacks. He was aware that a “clampdown” on terrorists could actually help them to achieve the goal of destroying democracy, but was confident that democratic societies had enough means to fight terrorism and win, if only they worked together.³⁹ When Russia took over the G8 presidency in 2006, polls showed that most Russians wanted their leadership to use it to step up counterterrorist activities in cooperation with the West.⁴⁰

At the summit in St. Petersburg in July the G8 members supported a global initiative to combat nuclear terrorism announced by Russia and the USA, as well as adopted a declaration on counterterrorism together with a statement on strengthening the UN role.⁴¹ Afterwards Russia created a global forum for partnerships between governments and businesses, which formulated a common strategy in November 2006.⁴² However, it deserves to be observed that the fight against international terrorism was not made a priority for the Russian G8 presidency. Priority was instead given to global energy security, combating infectious diseases, and education.⁴³ Even if energy was a good topic for Russia, the low priority for terrorism shows that Russia here met resistance from the others. Thus it is time to analyse how the Russian views on terrorism, Chechen in particular, differed from those in the West. A distinction must be made between European and American policies, even though they overlap to some extent.

³⁷ Putin, “Interview with television channel Nederland 1”, 31 Oct. 2005, p. 2.

³⁸ Margelov, , Krivokhizha, pp. 50 ff

³⁹ Putin, “Meeting with Russian and foreign media”, 8 July 2005, retrieved 8 Sept. 2005.

⁴⁰ Margelov, , Krivokhizha, pp. 50 ff.

⁴¹ Official Website of the G8 presidency of the Russian Federation in 2006, “Chair’s summary”, 17 July, 2006, www.g8russia.ru/docs/25-print.html. retrieved 30 Nov. 2006.

⁴² Lavrov, “Transcript of address by Russian Minister/...” 29 Nov. 2006, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, www.in.mid.ru, retrieved 29 Nov. 2006.

⁴³ Putin, Vladimir, “The upcoming G8 summit in St. Petersburg”, *International Herald Tribune*, 2 March 2006., 22 Sept, www.in.mid.ru, retrieved 18 Oct. 2006. Also in Lavrov’s speech at the UN General Assembly in 2006, the terrorism issue was much less prominent. (Lavrov, Vystuplenie Ministra /.../ na 61-oi sessii, 22 Sept. 2006, www.in.mid.ru, retrieved 18 Oct. 2006)

Chechen terrorism in Russia's relations with Europe

The Russian talk about international terrorism in Chechnya was of course a way to secure support not only at home but also from other states. First among these were the European states, with which Russia had the closest economic ties and which had also been afflicted by terrorist acts. Russia was quick to express sympathy for Spain and Great Britain in 2004 and 2005, and parallels with Chechnya were pointed out. Russia also claimed there were links between Chechen terrorists, al-Qaeda and Muslim terrorism in the Middle East, but the evidence was exaggerated as already noted.⁴⁴

Drawing parallels between the wars against terrorism and Nazism also was a way of promoting international sympathy and cooperation. This was frequently done, for example in the United Nations General Assembly in 2004 and at the victory parade in Moscow in 2005, to which statesmen from the whole world were invited.⁴⁵

Another centuries-old argument in defence of the war was that Russia is a European country and that Europe should be grateful to Russia for combating terrorism, which thereby was stopped from spreading. At the 2002 summit with the EU Putin called Chechnya the first stage in the plans of religious extremists and terrorists to create a global caliphate and cautioned that also the Europeans could be hit. He shocked the press conference with a joke about sending people to Moscow for expert circumcisions.⁴⁶

Suspecting every Chechen abroad to be an actual or potential terrorist, Russia persecuted them in many different ways. As noted above Russia in 2004 followed the American example by sending agents to kill the ex-President of Chechnya, Selikhan Yandarbiev, who lived in exile in Qatar. After the Beslan terror attack in September 2004 the Russian military openly reserved the right to strike preventively at terrorist bases abroad, if they posed a threat, and in 2006 this was codified by law.

Further, Russia called on Western states to extradite Chechens suspected of terrorist activities and accused them of double standards and imposed sanctions on them, when they refused because the evidence was considered too weak. When Denmark refused to extradite the leader of the Chechen exile government Akhmed Zakaev and allowed a Chechen world congress to meet in Copenhagen, Russia stopped trade with Denmark and Putin refused to attend an EU-Russia

⁴⁴ Halbach, *Gewalt in Tschetschenien* (2004), p. 16, Smith, p. 95.

⁴⁵ Simons, pp. 18 f.

⁴⁶ Putin, "Vystuplenie Prezidenta// i otvety na voprosy", 11 Nov 2002, www.president.kremlin.ru, retrieved 29 Nov. 2002. The final passage was edited.

summit there, so that the meeting had to be moved to Brussels.⁴⁷ Russia was also outraged when Zakaev later was granted asylum in Great Britain.⁴⁸

Similarly, Russian authorities scolded the Western press scolded for publishing interviews with suspected “terrorists”. Sweden for example received an official protest because an interview with Basaev in March 2005 had been published. Moscow claimed it had triggered the blow-up of a car outside the Russian embassy in Stockholm, for which a small leftist group had taken responsibility.⁴⁹ The Internet website Kavkaz-Tsentr, which was operated by Chechens in exile, was pursued from one European country to another, and its current presence in Sweden is an irritant in the diplomatic relations with Russia.

On some occasions, the West was not only accused of condoning Chechen terrorists but also of supporting them. As mentioned above Putin after the Beslan attack in 2004 stated that some people wanted to cut out a juicy slice of Russia, assisted by others who thought that Russia as one of the most powerful nuclear powers still posed a threat to anyone. Others meant the West used the Chechens and the Taliban to undermine Russia’s geopolitical positions in the oil-rich Caspian region. Russia even accused Turkey, which had its own problems with Kurdish separatists and terrorists, of harbouring Chechen terrorists.⁵⁰ On other occasions Ukrainians and Balts were said to be involved in the war.⁵¹ Absurdly, when journalist Anna Politkovskaya, well-known for her critique of Putin and the war, was murdered in October 2006, Putin excluded that Kadyrov lay behind it and instead supposed she was “sacrificed” to create anti-Russian sentiment internationally.⁵²

Furthermore, at the same time as the war on terrorism in Chechnya was called international, Russia was very reluctant to admit Western observers and rejected accusations of committing war crimes and violating human rights as interference in internal affairs. True, during the first war Yeltsin did admit Western (and Russian) journalists and organisations into Chechnya, and the OSCE was allowed to establish a mission in Grozny, albeit with some restrictions. Foreign Minister Kozyrev once even declared that “human rights is not an internal affair”. The mission helped to achieve a cessation of hostilities and monitored the elections in Chechnya after the war in 1997, declaring them free and fair.⁵³

⁴⁷ BBC Monitoring Global Newswire, Former Soviet Union, political file, Russia, 11, 12 Nov. 2002; Larsson, *Sweden and the NEGP: A Pilot Study of the North European Gas Pipeline and Sweden’s Dependence on Russian Energy*, FOI-R—1984—SE, June 2006, pp. 58 f.

⁴⁸ Lukov, Vadim, “Russia in G8: Looking back as it assumes presidency”, *International Affairs*, Vol. 52, No. 2, 2006, pp. 34 f, Simons, pp. 12 f.

⁴⁹ *The Moscow Times*, *Stockholm City (TT)*, 24 March 2005; Larsson, *Sweden and the NEGP* p. 60.

⁵⁰ Trenin, p. 3.

⁵¹ Larsson, *Konfliktlösning i Kaukasus*, pp. 86 f.

⁵² Felgenhauer, Pavel, “Kremlin suggests exiled oligarchs killed Politkovskaya”, EDM, 11 Oct. 2006, No. 187, 2006.

⁵³ Smith, pp. 97 f.

During the second war Putin first allowed the Council of Europe and the OSCE to set up missions in Chechnya in April 2000 and June 2001, respectively.

However, in general Putin was much more hostile to international monitoring than Yeltsin, and the media were stopped from visiting Chechnya on their own. Russia insisted on restricting the mandate of the OSCE Chechnya mission to purely humanitarian assistance and soon closed the mission (end of 2002). Instead the OSCE was offered to help organise elections and contribute to economic reconstruction, including the return of refugees. Russia sharply rejected the Council of Europe's proposal of an international war tribunal, denied that crimes went unpunished, and threatened to cut the Russian annual financial contribution to the Council.⁵⁴ Former Prime Minister Chernomyrdin considered the war a humanitarian act, intended to protect the local population from the terror of warlords and Wahhabites.⁵⁵

Putin refused to discuss Chechnya at the summit with the EU in 2003, unless the situation of the Russians in the Baltic states also was taken up – as if the latter was commensurable. Visiting Germany in December 2004 Putin refused to talk about a war altogether, saying that there had not been any for years and advised people to go home and celebrate Christmas.⁵⁶

In his speech to the Federal Assembly Putin in 2005 claimed that human and democratic rights were advancing in Russia and that Russia in some respects was better than European standards.⁵⁷ True, at a meeting with Western journalists after Beslan in 2004 Putin admitted that serious crimes had been committed against the Chechens in Soviet times and that “ugly phenomena” had taken place in the present. However, he assured that this had been due to “circumstances” and that the perpetrators had been punished.⁵⁸ But this has to date only happened in the case of Colonel Budanov, who had raped and murdered an 18 year-old girl. Before the trial Budanov had received support from the defence minister and Russian public opinion.⁵⁹

Russia under Putin further rejected all Western proposals of negotiating a political solution with Maskhadov, the elected Chechen president who officially rejected terrorism, even though some contacts with him may have been done at the beginning.⁶⁰ Especially after Maskhadov had concluded an alliance with Basaev, he was seen as condoning and cooperating with terrorists.⁶¹ Thus, at a

⁵⁴ Smith, pp. 98 ff.

⁵⁵ Halbach (2004) p. 15.

⁵⁶ Halbach (2005) p. 14.

⁵⁷ Putin, “Poslanie Federalnomu sobraniuu”, 25 April 2005, Prezident Rossii, retrieved 2 May 2005.

⁵⁸ *The Independent*, *The Guardian*, 7 Sept. 2004.

⁵⁹ Evangelista, pp. 152 f.

⁶⁰ Kipp, Jacob W. (2003) “Putin and Russia's Wars in Chechnya”, in Herspring, Dale R., *Putin's Russia- Past Imperfect, Future uncertain*, Lanham-Boulder-New York-Oxford, Rowman & Littlefield, , p. 178, 194. Cp Evangelista, pp. 179 ff..

⁶¹ Halbach (2004) p. 14.

meeting with Western journalists after Beslan Putin discarded all talks with children murderers, comparing this with the USA or NATO having negotiations with Usama bin Laden.⁶² On another occasion he complained that the tradition of appeasing any aggressors and extremists had become firmly rooted in European thought and exemplified this with the Munich agreement with Hitler in 1938, which in turn had forced Russia to conclude the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact.⁶³

When Maskhadov was killed in 2005, Moscow portrayed this as a breakthrough for cooperation with the EU on the reconstruction of Chechnya. Moscow even proposed to send Kadyrov to the Hannover Fair to plead for reconstruction projects.⁶⁴ Still worse, when the post of ombudsman for human rights in Chechnya was abolished in early 2004 the defiant motivation was that Kadyrov now fulfilled this function.⁶⁵

Thus the Russian leadership under Putin first mounted a powerful propaganda campaign in the West, explaining its actions in Chechnya as a war on international terrorism. Especially after 9/11 and subsequent terrorist attacks in Spain and Great Britain, it counted on support or at least understanding in Europe. However, when Russia instead met some criticism as will be shown below, the war was instead declared to be an internal affair, foreign observers were shut out, and Western states were even accused of supporting the so-called terrorists. Thereafter, when fighting in Chechnya receded, Russia considered the issue less urgent and played it down in relations with the EU states. In an article for the European press on the eve of the EU-Russian summit in November 2006, Putin did not even mention terrorism as a common problem, nor what is a topic at the summit.⁶⁶

⁶² *The Independent, The Guardian*, 7 Sept. 2004.

⁶³ Putin, "Interview with television channel Nederland 1", 31 Oct. 2005, President of Russia, www.president.kremlin.ru.

⁶⁴ Halbach (2005) p. 33.

⁶⁵ Halbach (2004) p. 34. Later Kadyrov was made honorary member of the Russian Academy of Natural Sciences and honorary professor at the Academy of Modern Humanities. (*Newsweek*, 25 Sept. 2006)

⁶⁶ *Dagens Nyheter*, 22 Nov. 2006; European Commission, Finland's EU Presidency, "Summit deepens cooperation between the EU and Russia", 24 Nov. 2006, retrieved 6 Dec. 2006. http://www.eu2006.fi/news_and_documents/press_releases/vko47/en_GB/175543/

The European view of terrorism in Chechnya

Turning now to the European view of terrorism and Chechnya, the mass media and humanitarian organisations already during the first war reported about Russian war crimes and large-scale destruction, and some governments, especially in small states, protested.⁶⁷ The Council of Europe postponed Russia's application for membership in 1995. The EU made the signing of a trade agreement with Russia dependent on conditions related to Chechnya and the 1994 Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) with Russia went into force only in 1997.

However, the fact is that the reaction to the first Chechen war was quite cautious. Many governments indicated that they saw the war as an internal affair. The Council of Europe in January 1996 admitted Russia as a member on condition that it concluded peace, despite intensified fighting. The EU states continued to ratify the PCA even though the conditions on Chechnya were not met, and the delay of its enforcement can also be accounted for by other factors.⁶⁸

One reason for restraint was that the Western states needed Russia's cooperation with regard to a number of problems like arms control and crisis management in the Balkans. They also wanted Russia to continue its reform policy and were loath to weaken President Yeltsin, whose position was threatened by Communist and nationalist opposition. Moreover, also the Western states were appalled by spectacular terrorist attacks of Chechen field commanders, especially when hospitals were taken hostage in June 1995 and January 1996.

The second war in Chechnya elicited tougher rebukes, especially from European human rights organisations. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) pointed out massive violations of human rights and the obligations that Russia as a member should have observed. It demanded a dialogue on cease-fire with the Chechens and unhampered access for international aid organisations and observers. When Russia did not comply, it was deprived of its voting rights. Without changing their views on Chechnya after the 9/11 terror attacks in the USA, the Council of Europe recommended Russia to negotiate with Chechnya's elected President Maskhadov. PACE officials criticized the Russian constitution referendum in Chechnya in 2001 and

⁶⁷ Evangelista, p. 227. Estonian parliamentarians voted unanimously for recognising Chechnya as independent, but the government did not agree.

⁶⁸ Faurby, Ib (1999) "The failure of conflict prevention and management. The case of Chechnya." Part II, in Trier, Tom & Funk Hansen, Lars (eds.) *Conflict and Forced Displacement in the Caucasus*, Copenhagen, Danish Refugee Council, pp. 74 ff; Smith, p. 102.

the German PACE Vice President Rudolf Bindig even proposed an international tribunal on war crimes on the models of Rwanda and Yugoslavia, arguing that the most likely reason for continuing abuses was that Russian and Chechen fighters were seldom punished. As mentioned above Denmark and Great Britain refused to extradite Chechen leaders, because Russia could not provide sufficient evidence of terrorist involvement.⁶⁹

Also the EU came out with strong criticism, pointing out that the fight against terrorism did not justify such massive military measures against a whole population and that Russia violated international obligations and the common values it had agreed upon with the EU. The EU threatened to reconsider the Common Strategy of cooperation and parts of the PCA, and in January 2000 sanctions were imposed, mainly concerning technical assistance (TACIS). At the EU-Russia summit in November 2002 the Commissioner for Foreign Relations Chris Patten talked about the “very, very difficult situation” in Chechnya, emphasising that an important strategic alliance with another state never should prevent bringing up sensitive questions.⁷⁰ When Putin after Beslan strengthened central control in order to fight terrorism, Patten explained that the Chechnya problem required a long-term, human and resolute policy rather than restrictions of democracy. The Russian leadership went furious, when Dutch Foreign Minister Bernard Bot at the time representing the EU presidency asked how the Beslan terrorist attack could result in so many deaths, thereby alluding to the fact that the Russian forces also killed many people.

At the following summit with Russia Bot emphasized that certain values and norms must be observed and that “we shall never resort to the terrorists’ tactics and methods”. The EU Commission advocated a political solution that would respect both Russia’s territorial integrity and safeguard human rights.⁷¹ Russia was again asked to negotiate with Maskhadov. In March 2005 the Council of Europe (CoE) organised a roundtable in Strasbourg with both official and independent representatives of Russia and Chechnya in order to start a new dialogue.⁷²

On the other hand, no Western state questioned Russia’s territorial integrity or recognized Chechnya as independent. As before both the CoE and the OSCE wanted to maintain relations with Russia and keep it as a member in order to influence it better. After a year the PACE restored Russia’s voting rights. They recognised that the Chechens committed terrorist acts and expressed support for Russia’s fight against terrorism, for instance after Beslan. In 2005 the CoE

⁶⁹ Halbach (2004), pp. 32 ff.

⁷⁰ European Commission, External relations, Relations with Russia, “Declarations as regards the EU-Russia summit and the situation in Chechnya”, 12 Nov. 2004, europa.eu.int/external_relations/Russia, retrieved 14 Nov. 2002.

⁷¹ European Commission, Relations with Russia, “EU/Russia. The four ”common spaces””, 25 Nov. 2004, retrieved 25 Nov. 2004.

⁷² Halbach (2005), p. 33.

adopted a convention on the suppression of terrorism, which was acclaimed by Russia as opening an important front of international cooperation.⁷³

One argument in favour of keeping Russia as a CoE member is that Chechens are able to appeal to the European Court of Human Rights. An increasing number did so, and in mid 2006 almost 200 cases concerning disappeared family members had been lodged. In 2006 the Court for the first time found Russian authorities guilty in one case. Russia accepted the verdict, but the implementation may prove a problem.⁷⁴

Also the EU dampened its criticism of Russia. One explanation already mentioned was that like the other organisation, the EU wanted to develop partnership relations with Russia, another that the terrorist elements in Chechnya strengthened, while Maskhadov's position was weakened as shown above. The EU-Russia summit in 2002, which was held after Chechen terrorists had taken a theatre audience hostage in Moscow, signed a common declaration condemning terrorism in all its forms, irrespective of motives, and even talked about partnership on this topic.⁷⁵

Similarly, despite intensified fighting in Chechnya, the EU-Russia summit in May 2003 talked about a common response to the threats of drugs and terrorism expressing the hope that the political process and economic and social reconstruction in Chechnya would lead to reconciliation. The parties agreed that international organisations could make a major contribution in close cooperation with Russian authorities. In fact, the EU became the biggest contributor to help war victims and refugees in and around Chechnya, even though there were great problems with the implementation on the Russian side. The offer to help with reconstruction was then repeated, and in 2005 a delegation was dispatched to investigate the possibilities of cooperation in and around Chechnya.⁷⁶

Russia of course welcomed this European support for its normalisation. In the spring of 2005 Russia announced that Chechnya had ceased to be a bone of contention between Russia and the EU.⁷⁷ When Maskhadov was killed in that year, the EU proposal of negotiations with the Chechen resistance lost credibility.

Russia could also exploit the growing differentiation among the EU member states concerning Chechnya. While some smaller states like Belgium, the Nordic and the Central European ones took a more critical position, a few bigger states like Italy, France and Germany were more understanding and bent on quiet

⁷³ Simons, p. 16.

⁷⁴ Halbach (2004) pp. 32 ff; Parsons, Robert, "Court condemns Russia for Chechen's disappearance", *The Baltic Times*, 3-9 Aug. 2006. Statement by PACE representative Andreas Gross at conference in Oslo 13 October 2006.

⁷⁵ European Commission, Relations with Russia, "Declarations as regards the EU-Russia summit and the situation in Chechnya", 12 Nov. 2004, retrieved 14 Nov. 2002.

⁷⁶ Halbach (2004), pp. 30 f, Halbach (2005) pp. 32 f.

⁷⁷ Halbach (2005), p. 32.

dialogue with Russia. While France in the beginning of the war belonged to the sharpest critics, in 2003 this was not permitted to disturb the common front with Russia and Germany against the American war in Iraq. When Italy held the EU presidency later in the year, Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi defended Putin and the Russian military campaign in Chechnya as a fight against terrorism, which he said was distorted in the Western press. The Commission took the unique step to reject that statement by the presidency.

The German Bundestag expressed deep concern over severe violation of human rights in Chechnya and wanted a political solution including real Chechen representatives. Chancellor Schröder, by contrast, spoke about the parliamentary elections in Chechnya as signs that Russia wanted a political solution, emphasised the common interest in the fight against terrorism, and called Putin an immaculate democrat. At a meeting with Putin in December 2004 Schröder suggested the EU should actively participate in the solution of the conflict, and Putin replied he would seriously consider the idea. However, nothing seems to have come out of this.⁷⁸

Thus the European and Western concern over how Russia handled Chechnya slackened for several reasons. Firstly, the terrorist element in Chechnya strengthened and upset also people in the West. American abuses in fighting terrorism also served to divert attention from Russia and could be used by Russia as excuses.

Further, Russia did not heed criticism over its war in Chechnya, kept foreign observers out and restricted the information flow. It managed to establish facts on the ground like building up a loyal though brutal Chechen administration, while eliminating the political alternatives.

A few leading EU states gave priority to cooperation with Russia on a bilateral and multilateral level. Partly this may be explained by their dependence on energy imports from Russia, which promised stable supplies, whereas the Middle East seemed more unreliable.

Still, most EU states remained critical of the Russian way of fighting terrorism and did not accept it as a model for themselves. Moreover, they were increasingly worried by the general trend in Putin's Russia towards authoritarianism, nationalism and xenophobia, which clashed with the values and norms of democracy and human rights that the EU tried to implement and propagate. The Russian war on terrorism in Chechnya was at the root of this trend and the Chechen problem was not solved, only suppressed and spread.

⁷⁸ Halbach (2004) pp. 30 f; Oldberg, *Aktuell tysk utrikes- och säkerhetspolitik*, FOI-R-1976-SE, June 2006, p. 51.

Russian rapprochement with the United States

Beyond the European scene, the fight against terrorism has played an important though varying role in Russia's relations with the United States, the leading Western power. Concerning the first Chechen war, the US government just like the European states reacted rather late and cautiously. President Bill Clinton noted the legitimate international concern over the human losses and called for a peaceful settlement, but he recognized that Chechnya was part of Russia and even compared Yeltsin with Abraham Lincoln during the Civil War. Former US ambassador to Moscow Jack Matlock elaborated that the Russian government had a right to suppress an armed rebellion. Even though he conceded that Russia's methods violated their commitments according to the Helsinki accords, he stressed that these did not have the force of laws or treaties, thus ignoring the fact that Russia violated the Geneva Conventions, which do apply in Chechnya and which Russia is bound to. Matlock found it equally atrocious to kill innocent civilians by terrorist acts as to bomb defenceless cities. He recommended the US to conduct quiet diplomacy and private dialogue rather than economic pressure. Consequently, the Clinton administration did not link its economic assistance to Russia to stopping the war; instead the aid was increased.⁷⁹

Like the European states, the USA reacted more strongly to the second Chechen war. Clinton condemned as totally unacceptable Putin's ultimatum in January 2000 that if the rebels in Grozny did not surrender, all would be killed.⁸⁰ During his presidential election campaign in 2000 George W. Bush vowed to withdraw credits to Russia, if it tried to solve the Chechen conflict with bombs on women and children. America also refused to extradite a member of the Chechen government-in-exile and officials held talks with him. In July 2001 the US Congress concluded that the Chechen war was more destructive than Serbia's war in Kosovo (more on this below).⁸¹

However, a chain of events gradually made official Russian and American views on terrorism converge. Both countries were concerned about the Muslim fundamentalist Taliban taking control of most of Afghanistan in 1996 and its international impact. Russia was outraged because the Taliban officially recognised and supported Chechnya's independence and the spreading of radical Islam into Central Asia and southern Russia. Already in 1992-1997 Russia had

⁷⁹ Evangelista, pp. 141 ff, with an interesting discussion of means and ends in Russian and American wars.

⁸⁰ Evangelista, p. 149

⁸¹ Halbach (2004) pp. 28f.

supported the Tajik government in its civil war with Islamist forces and maintained troops at the Afghan border since then.

In 1999 Islamist forces made incursions from Tajikistan into Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. Russia branded them as international terrorists and tried to support the concerned governments to stop the Islamist advance. However, this did not succeed and Uzbekistan seemed to begin coming to terms with the Taliban in Afghanistan. Simultaneously, Russia tried to help the Northern Alliance in Afghanistan, consisting of Mujaheddin who had earlier fought against the Soviet-installed regime, in their resistance against the Taliban government. In 2000 Russia threatened Kabul with air attacks against Islamist training camps.⁸²

In a parallel development, the United States turned against the Taliban, who allowed al-Qaeda to operate in Afghanistan. After terrorist attacks on American embassies in Africa and on US warships, the USA carried out air strikes at al-Qaeda camps in Afghanistan. In 2000 the United States and Russia formed a working group to coordinate activities in Afghanistan. The personal relations between the presidents also improved as a result of a meeting in Lyublyana in June 2001.⁸³

As everybody knows, the terrorist attacks on 9/11 brought a dramatic improvement of Russian-American relations. Putin immediately and unreservedly supported Bush's declaration of war on terrorism and the formation of an international coalition – against the advice of many experts who wanted to make Russian participation conditional on concessions concerning NATO enlargement.⁸⁴

Russia thereafter assisted the American attack on the Taliban regime and the Al-Qaeda by intensifying its military aid to the Northern alliance, which quickly marched into Kabul, and through intelligence cooperation and overflight permits.⁸⁵ When the Americans also wanted to establish military bases in Central Asia in order to support the troops in Afghanistan, Putin accepted that as well, despite opposition from the Russian military. Putin hailed the fall of the Taliban regime, and his associates claimed that Russia had proved a more useful ally of the USA than its European allies. The American bases in Central Asia also served to stabilize the situation there with regard to insurgents, which was duly appreciated by Putin. Likewise Russia accepted the American decision in 2002 to send military advisers to help Georgia to fight terrorism as shown above.

In exchange for all this, the United States became more understanding concerning Chechnya. Foreign Minister Powell in 2002 expressed no doubts that Russia fought against terrorists in Chechnya. After the hostage drama in

⁸² Jonson, Lena, *Vladimir Putin and Central Asia. The Shaping of Russian Foreign Policy*, London-New York, 2004, pp. 50 ff.

⁸³ Jonson, 78 f, Trenin, p. 3; Kipp, p. 195.

⁸⁴ Kipp, pp. 195 ff, Evangelista, p. 182.

⁸⁵ Jonson, p. 88.

Moscow in October 2002, when over hundred persons by mistake died from gas as the security forces attacked, Bush defended his “good friend Vladimir” saying that the terrorists were to be blamed. At a summit a year later Bush announced that Russia and the USA were allies in the war on terror. Terrorists had to be stopped, also in Chechnya, he said. The US included some Chechen organisations on its terrorist list, notably Basaev and his followers, and when Basaev was killed, Bush said he deserved it.⁸⁶ A US deputy foreign minister declared that it was hard to criticize preventive Russian strikes against terrorists in Georgia, if the USA also believed in such.⁸⁷ After the Beslan massacre in September 2004 President Bush personally made his condolences at the Russian embassy, calling Putin a man he admired and pleading for confronting the threat together more actively. Concerning Maskhadov, the US Moscow ambassador clarified that the USA did not admonish Russia to negotiate with terrorists.

On the Russian side, Putin in 2003 labelled the relationship with the USA as unshakeable and as contributing to unite the world community against new threats. In the fight against terror the USA was more an ally than simply a partner.⁸⁸ After a meeting with his American colleague Defence Minister Sergei Ivanov found that Russia and the United States stood closer to each other than either of them to Europe with regard to the terrorism issue.⁸⁹ In January 2005 Foreign Minister Lavrov asserted that Russia and the USA were the leaders of the anti-terror coalition, praising their common drafting of a UN resolution (no. 1540), which e.g. aimed to prevent the spread of weapons of mass destruction to terrorists.⁹⁰

On top of this, several similarities regarding views and methods can be observed. Both presidents talked about a war on terrorism and stressed that those who did not support them were enemies. Both reserved for themselves the right of preventive action against terrorists abroad and forming coalitions of the willing. The Russian State Duma took the initiative to work out a uniform model law on antiterrorism in cooperation with the US Congress and interest was shown in reforming the Russian Security Council so as to give it similar functions as the new American Department of Homeland Security.⁹¹ During the US presidential election campaign in 2004, Putin openly favoured Bush by stating that international terrorists wished him to be defeated, and afterwards he

⁸⁶ Halbach (2004), pp. 12, 28 f; *Moscow News*, No. 26, 2006, p. 2.

⁸⁷ BBC Monitoring Global Newslines, Former Soviet Union Political File, chapter Georgia, 24 January 2003. Also analysts like Anatol Lieven ridiculed Western double standards and excused Russian war crimes with US abuses. (Evangelista, p. 168)

⁸⁸ BBC, 2 June 2003, Russia TV, 1 June 2003.

⁸⁹ Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, *RFE/RL Newslines*, No. 174, part 1. 13 Sept. 2004.

⁹⁰ Lavrov, “Press conference with Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov”, 19 Jan. 2005. Johnson’s Russia List, www.cdi.org/russia/johnson/9028-2.cfm, retrieved 15 Aug. 2006.

⁹¹ Stepanova, p. 319.

greeted Bush's victory by the conclusion that the American people was not intimidated by the terrorists.

The war on terrorism also helped improve Russia's relations with NATO, where the USA is the most important member. On American prompting, NATO decided to form a new council for cooperation with Russia, the NATO-Council (NRC), in which Russia had equal rights with the other (then nineteen) members. Fighting terrorism and assessing threats was the first topic on the agenda. Thus after the hostage drama in October 2002 Putin found reason to thank NATO for its support and lauded the NRC for pooling the resources in the fight for peace and stability. The formation of the NRC certainly made it easier for Russia to accept the subsequent big NATO enlargement, which included the Baltic states.

Defence Minister Ivanov was so enthusiastic about this cooperation against terrorism that he suggested re-interpreting NATO's name as New Antiterrorist Organisation, whereby a researcher added that "Russia is the key country in all antiterrorist efforts".⁹² The fight against terrorism then became a common theme in Russian military exercises together with NATO forces. In late 2004 a NATO-Russia Action Plan on Terrorism was adopted, and Russia agreed to participate in NATO's Active Endeavour operations, which aimed to detect terror-related activities in the Mediterranean.⁹³

The Russian support for fighting terrorism further contributed to improving relations with Israel, the main partner of the USA in the Middle East. In 2001 Russia was invited to be a member of the Quartet of mediators – along with the USA, the UN and the EU - to achieve peace between Israel and the Palestinian Authority, and Israel did not oppose this, apparently thinking it was better to have Russia inside than outside. Russia also supported the Road Map to peace, which called for an end to terrorism.⁹⁴ Then-Prime Minister Ariel Sharon strongly defended Putin's war in Chechnya.⁹⁵ In September 2004 a protocol on security cooperation, including the fight against terrorism, was signed. On this occasion Foreign Minister Lavrov characterized international terrorism as the main enemy, the enemy of all countries and peoples.⁹⁶ The Security Committee of the Duma talked about studying Israeli methods of fighting terrorists such as punishing their relatives and destroying their homes – as if Russia did not apply

⁹² Kuznetsova, Ekaterina, "NATO: New anti-terrorist organisation", *International Affairs*, No. 3, 2004, p. 26.

⁹³ NATO website, "NATO-Russia Action Plan on Terrorism", 9 Dec. 2004, <http://www.nato.int/docu/comm/2004/12-natohq/041209-natohq.htm>, retrieved 15 Aug. 2006; Vendil Pallin, Carolina, *NATO-operationen Active Endeavour*. FOI Memo 1626, Januari 2006, pp. 29 ff.

⁹⁴ *The Jerusalem Post*, 29 April 2005.

⁹⁵ Katz, Mark, "Exploiting rivalries for prestige and profit", *Problems of Post-Communism*, May/June 2005, p. 33.

⁹⁶ Lavrov, Sergei, "Stenogramma vystupleniia i otvetov", 7 Sept. 2004, "Stenogramma intervju telekanalu Al-Djazira, 10 Sept. 2004, www.ln.mid.ru.

them already in Chechnya.⁹⁷ In April 2005 Putin as the first Russian president visited Israel.⁹⁸ Some Russian analysts even went so far as to label Hamas a terrorist organisation and to speak out against the Israeli withdrawals from the Gaza strip in 2005, thereby criticising Western states for trying to appease the Islamists and accusing also Russia of applying double standards (more on this below).⁹⁹

Thus the Russian support for the American war on terrorism after 9/11 served to improve relations with the United States and its closest allies and to secure Russia's position as a great power in world politics.¹⁰⁰ Russian leaders appreciated that the Western critique of the war in Chechnya abated, and that defeat of the Taliban in Afghanistan also increased Russian security.

Finishing off the picture, it deserves to be mentioned that Russia's war on terrorism in Chechnya did not much disturb its relations with Muslim states. True, many people in the Muslim world sympathised with their Chechen brethren and the Organisation of Islamic States (OIS), in 1999 rebuked Russia for disproportionate violence, which threatened long-term peace and stability, the organisation considered the matter a domestic problem.¹⁰¹

However, the Muslim governments in general kept quiet over Chechnya, since they were more concerned about their own stability and the principle of territorial integrity than about religion. Besides, Russia was often seen as an ally against the United States. Thus when Russia on account of its Muslim minorities applied for associate status in the OIS in 2003 this was granted. In the following year Moscow sent its loyal Chechen leader Kadyrov to Saudi Arabia to ask for support for reconstruction, and he was received as a statesman.¹⁰² This would hardly have happened in Europe or in the United States.

⁹⁷ Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, *RFE/RL Newslines*, No. 174, part 1, 13 September 2004.

⁹⁸ Putin, "Zaiavlenie dlia pressy i otvety", 28 April 2005, Prezident Rossii www.president.kremlin.ru, retrieved 2 May 2005.

⁹⁹ Satanovskii, Evgenii, "International terrorism: a very long fight", *International Affairs*, No. 1, 2006, pp. 41.

¹⁰⁰ Baev (2005), pp 326, 336.

¹⁰¹ Halbach (2004), p. 18.

¹⁰² Smith, pp. 103 ff.

Growing disagreement with the United States

Terrorism in Yugoslavia, Chechnya and Central Asia

Even if Russian support for the United States after September 2001 resulted in closer cooperation in the war on terrorism in Asia as shown, this trend gradually became overshadowed by other developments.

In fact, already in the 1990s the Russian view of conflicts in ex-Yugoslavia marred its relations with the United States and the NATO/EU states. In line with its own experience in Chechnya, Russia defended the principle of territorial integrity above all. In 1999 it therefore opposed NATO's humanitarian intervention to prevent the Serbian ethnic cleansing in the Muslim republic of Kosova, and the Kosovar independence fighters were branded as terrorists.¹⁰³ Also the Albanian independence fighters, who in 2001 took up arms against the government in Macedonia were labelled terrorists.¹⁰⁴

In the end Russia helped persuade Yugoslav President Milosevic to give up and even participated in the NATO peacekeeping operation in Kosovo. When the Western states imposed a compromise in Macedonia, including minority rights and preserving territorial integrity, Russia happily accepted that and started to use it as a model. However, Russia soon withdrew its peacekeepers from Kosovo, and in 2006 withstood Western plans to grant the region independence with the argument that in such a case also regions like Abkhazia and South Ossetia in Georgia and Transnistria in Moldova should become independent.

On a general political level, not only the European states but also the United States was increasingly worried by Putin's concentration of power, the restrictions on press freedom and political opposition, which partly were motivated by the fight against terrorism. After Beslan in 2004, when Putin restricted parliamentary and regional elections, President Bush expressed concern that the concentration of power could undermine democracy, adding that when governments fight the enemies of democracy, they must uphold the principles of democracy. Foreign Minister Lavrov bluntly rejected this view as interference in internal affairs.¹⁰⁵ At a meeting with Putin in February 2005 Bush praised his leadership of Russia at a hard time, but he had misgivings about Russia's devotion for democracy, underlining that only democracy and

¹⁰³ Oldberg, "Kosovo and Russian Foreign Policy" in Bo Ljung (ed) *Aspects of the Kosovo Operation March-June 1999*, FOI-R—0071—SE, May 2001, pp. 59 ff.

¹⁰⁴ Kipp, p. 194.

¹⁰⁵ *The Washington Times*, 16 Sept. 2004, *International Herald Tribune*, 15 Sept. 2004.

freedom can give security and welfare. Putin responded by saying that Russia adhered to the general principles of democracy which, however, had to be adapted to the present level and traditions of Russian society.¹⁰⁶

Criticism of Russia's Chechnya policy also appeared in the American press and in Congress, for instance during the 2004 presidential election campaign. A critical State Department report on human rights including Russia was published, which caused the Russian MID to advise the USA to attend to its own domestic problems, primarily the issue of capital punishment.¹⁰⁷ Putin commented that there are retarded persons in every family and was also upset that US officials had met with "bastards" like Yandarbiev, even though he was on the UN and US terrorist list.¹⁰⁸ Also the United States refused to extradite wanted Chechens, which caused demonstrations in Moscow, and it did not agree with the Russian proposals on a model law regarding terrorism.¹⁰⁹

Further, the Russian leadership was increasingly upset by signs that the United States exploited the terrorism and democracy issues to further its own geopolitical interests in the post-Soviet sphere at the expense of Russia. The US thus not only sent military advisers to help Georgia fight terrorism but also supported the Rose Revolution of Mikhail Saakashvili in late 2003, who after taking power strongly pleaded for NATO membership. One year later the Orange Revolution occurred in Ukraine, which in Russia was seen as a major setback.

Concerning cooperation with NATO against terrorism, Russia complained for example that NATO was not interested in pooling efforts with the Collective Security Treaty Organisation, which allegedly had significant experience. Russia also opposed extending NATO's naval operation Active Endeavour in the Mediterranean, to the Black Sea, claiming that this was already taken care of by the Black Sea countries (though NATO members Romania and Bulgaria wanted it).¹¹⁰

With respect to Central Asia, Russia was more and more frustrated by the continued presence of American and NATO air bases in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, which had been set up as a back-up for operations in Afghanistan but also served to undermine the states' dependence on Russia in security matters.¹¹¹ Thus when the authoritarian Karimov regime in Uzbekistan suppressed a riot at Andijan with a bloodbath in May 2005 and the West, including the USA, protested, called for an international investigation and helped refugees, this gave Russia a chance to reassert itself. It supported

¹⁰⁶ Putin, "Zaiavlenie dlia pressy I oveti na voprosy", 24 Febr. 2005.

¹⁰⁷ Evangelista, p. 181.

¹⁰⁸ Interview with Putin in *The Washington Post*, 26 Sept. 2003.

¹⁰⁹ RFE/RL Newslines, no. 174, part 1, 13 Sept. 2004; Margelov, Mikhail, "Russia and the U.S.: Priorities, real and artificial", *International Affairs*, Vol 52, No. 1, 2006, p. 26.

¹¹⁰ *RIA Novosti*, 15 Nov. 2005.

¹¹¹ Jonson, pp. 88 ff.

Karimov's measures and his talk about terrorists and support from the Taliban in Afghanistan. Karimov even claimed Western media had had advance knowledge, and others alleged the riots were financed by Americans.¹¹² Putin later told the Western press that "we know better than you what happened at Andijan" and promised to act very resolutely to avoid another Afghanistan.¹¹³

Paradoxically, Russia together with China, which also was concerned about the US presence in Central Asia, then pushed through a resolution in the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation asking the coalition forces for a deadline for their military presence, explaining that the active military phase of the Afghanistan operation was nearing completion, thus discarding any threat from the south.¹¹⁴ To Russia's pleasure, Karimov asked the Americans to evacuate their base in Uzbekistan, which they soon did, and intensified military relations with Russia, which had no objections to Karimov's authoritarian regime and his way of fighting terrorism.¹¹⁵ Thus Russia took over some responsibility for fighting terrorism in Central Asia from the Americans.

Concerning Afghanistan Russia continued to talk about common interests with the USA in stabilizing the situation, but when the Taliban resistance then intensified, Russian officials including the defence minister blamed the USA and NATO for being inefficient in suppressing the Taliban as well as in stopping the fast-growing export of heroin, which helped finance terrorism and also threatened Russia.¹¹⁶ 75 % of opiates in the world were said to be produced in Afghanistan. A Russian observer claimed that Afghanistan was under the full control of the field commanders, who tolerated the NATO troops only because they did not interfere with the drug production. European NATO members were unable to contribute enough troops and the troops that were sent mainly sought to avoid battle, he wrote.¹¹⁷ Defence Minister Ivanov noted that the Soviet Union had not even been able to control Afghanistan with 110 000 elite soldiers in the 1980s and was convinced that the Afghan border on Pakistan had to be

¹¹² Halbach (2006) *Usbekistan als Herausforderung für westliche Zentralasienpolitik*, SWP-Studie, Sept. 2006, p. 25; Blagov, Sergei, "Karimov travels to Moscow", EDM, 30 June 2005; *Kommersant*, 28 Sept. 2005.

¹¹³ Putin, "Stenogramma press-konferentsii", 31 Jan. 2006, retrieved 9 Febr. 2006.

¹¹⁴ Tarzi, Amin, "Inconsistencies in the state of the war on terrorism", *RFE/RL Afghanistan Report*, 25 July 2005, Vol. 4, No. 21.

¹¹⁵ McDermott, Roger, "Russia blames Taliban for uprising in Uzbekistan", EDM, 17 May 2005; Socor, Vladimir, Uzbekistan asks U.S. to close air base, EDM, No. 150, 2 Aug. 2005.

¹¹⁶ Socor, Vladimir, "The unfolding of the U.S.-Uzbek crisis", in Daly, John C.K. et al., *Anatomy of a Crisis: U.S.-Uzbekistan relations, 2001-2005*, Washington D.C., The Jamestown Foundation, Silk Road Paper, Febr. 2006, p. 51.

¹¹⁷ Khramchikhin, Aleksandr "Antiterroristicheskii soiuz terpit fiasko", *NVO*, No. 32, 2006; Akhmedkhanov, Bakhtiyar, Khrupov, Dmitry, "Inside Afghanistan's poppy trade", *Moscow News*, No. 36, 2006, pp. 1, 6-7.

strictly sealed off.¹¹⁸ Other Russian officials recalled that the United States had supported the Taliban in Pakistan against the Soviet troops, including the creation of the al-Qaeda, and “bankrolled” them as late as 1999 via its aid to Pakistan.¹¹⁹ Even if one may excuse Russia for not contributing troops because of the failed Soviet occupation in the 1980s, Russia did little to help in other ways and must at least share the blame for not being able to guard the Tajik border on Afghanistan and stop the drug traffic through Central Asia and Russia to the West.

Terrorism in the Middle East

Further south, Russian-US cooperation in the war on terrorism had already in 2003 been greatly disturbed by the US-led war in Iraq and Russia’s opposition to it. Russia, which previously had maintained good relations with Saddam Hussein, doubted the American claim that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction and supported al-Qaeda. Russia therefore refused to sanction the war in the UN Security Council together with France and China, and intensified cooperation with France and Germany, which also served to split NATO. Russia was proven right, when the USA later could not provide evidence for its claims, and it rightly pointed out that the war and the following occupation in fact boosted terrorism in Iraq and in the whole region, which could be a problem also to Russia.

On the other hand, the growth of anti-Americanism and terrorism in the Middle East gave Russia an opportunity to win prestige and improve its own positions. Russia refused to help the Americans with troops to restore order in Iraq and called on them to turn over power to the Iraqis and withdraw. Considerable attention was paid to revelations of US war crimes and the treatment of prisoners at Guantanamo and in Iraq.¹²⁰ At a meeting with Jordan’s King Abdullah in 2005 Putin called for a timetable for the pullout of foreign troops and for an international conference on Iraq.¹²¹

When four Russian diplomats were abducted and killed in Iraq in mid-2006, Russia blamed it on terrorism as well as on the Iraqi government and the

¹¹⁸ Ivanov, Sergei, “Ein Staat, der sich selbst genügt” (interview) *Der Spiegel*, No. 48, 2006, s. 136.

¹¹⁹ Adamishin, Anatoly, “Learning to fight international terrorism”, *Russia in Global Affairs*, no. 4, 2004, [www.http://eng.globalaffairs.ru/printver/702.html](http://eng.globalaffairs.ru/printver/702.html), retrieved 15 Aug. 2006. p. 3; Lukin, Aleksandr, “Shanghai Cooperation Organization: Problems and Prospects”, *International Affairs*, No. 3, 2004, p. 35; Baev, Pavel, “Russia ignores the Riga summit and expects NATO to fail in Afghanistan”, EDM, 4 Dec. 2006, issue 223, 2006.

¹²⁰ For example see interview with Putin in *The Washington Post*, 26 Sept. 2003.

¹²¹ Bigg, Claire, “Russia: Putin calls for withdrawal timetable for Iraq”, RFE/RL Features, 19 Aug. 2005, www.rferl.org/featuresarticleprint, retrieved 15 Nov. 2006.

occupation forces that were unable to prevent it.¹²² Besides terrorism, Iraq was seen as being rent by resistance against foreign occupation and a civil war between religious and ethnic groups. A military observer recently called it a tragedy that the USA is stuck and cannot leave Iraq and that the only advantage was the lesson the war taught President Bush to refrain from further crusades against dictators and ayatollahs.¹²³ Even if Putin verbally approved of the American plan of making Iraq a model of democracy and freedom for the Greater Middle East, he emphasised that this could not be imposed with force from outside but must grow internally.¹²⁴

Nor did the issue of terrorism impede Russia from intensifying its relations with other Arab and Muslim states in order to promote its economic relations. When Russian officials visited Israel, they generally also came to these countries. Despite the fact that Saudi Arabians had promoted the spread of Wahhabism and that many terrorists (like Usama bin Laden) came and/or received funding from there, Russia started to cooperate with that country concerning oil production. Thus priority was given to vital economic interests, moreover, the strong US influence on Saudi Arabia was challenged.¹²⁵ The lenient Russian view of the pan-Arab TV station al-Jazeera noted earlier may be seen in this context.

More importantly, Russia maintained its relations with Iran and its old ally Syria, states which both supported and provided weapons to Hamas in Palestine and Hezbollah in Lebanon. While the USA and the EU considered these as terrorist organisations with regard to Israel, Russia refused to do so arguing that they did not pose a threat to Russia. Not even the Iraqi group, which was linked to al-Qaeda, which had demanded Russian withdrawal from Chechnya and taken responsibility for killing Russian diplomats, was put on Russia's terrorism list.¹²⁶ (More on Hezbollah and Hamas below.)

True, Russia agreed with the Western powers in condemning the new Iranian President Akhmadinejad's rejection of Israel's right of existence. Also Russia held that Iran must not acquire nuclear weapons and reacted sharply when Iran resumed research on uranium enrichment in March 2006 (One reason for this reaction was that Russia previously had offered to take care of the enrichment, thus securing international control and earning money at the same time.)

¹²² Bridge, Robert, "Russia wants justice for killed diplomats", *Moscow News*, 24, 2006, p. 4.

¹²³ Miasnikov, Viktor, "Tri vojny v odnoi otdelno vziatoi strane", *NVO*, No. 33, 2006.

¹²⁴ Prezident Rossii, "Otvety na voprosy zhurnalistov", 11 June 2004, www.president.kremlin.ru, retrieved 8 Sept. 2006; Khranchikhin, *NVO*, No. 32, 2006.

¹²⁵ Martin, Lionel, "Moscow and Riyad: Do oil, religion and antiterrorism mix?", *EDM*, No. 114, 27 Oct. 2004; Evtushenkov, Vladimir, "After the lull: Russia and the Arab world at a new stage", *Russia in Global Affairs*, No. 3, 2006, p.6.

¹²⁶ Smirnov, Andrei, "Russian authorities put virtual organizations on the terror list but ignore Hamas and Hezbollah", *EDM*, , 4 Aug. 2006, No. 151; Baev, Pavel, "What 'holy alliance' does Putin want to avoid?", *EDM*, 3 July 2006, No. 128.

On the other hand, Russia deemed Iran to be a strategic partner and had for a number of years exported both weapons and nuclear technology to it. It doubted that Iran intended to acquire nuclear weapons, opposed American proposals to apply sanctions and American threats of military measures, and instead opted for dialogue and a combination of sticks and carrots.¹²⁷

Similarly, Syria was considered one of Russia's most important partners in the Middle East. Russia discussed construction of a nuclear power plant also in this country and increased arms exports, including a deal on selling anti-aircraft missiles in 2005, assuring that the weapons were defensive and the deal in accordance with international commitments.¹²⁸ At the G8 summit in 2006, which occurred at the height of war in Lebanon (below), Russia also acted to delete any reference to Syria's role in the common statement. Putin said that if Syria and Iran were branded as state sponsors of terrorism, then also Great Britain should be designated as such, since it refused to extradite Chechen envoy Zakaev to Russia – as if the problems were equivalent.

Concerning the war between Israel and Lebanon, which broke out in July 2006 after Hezbollah had killed seven Israeli soldiers, abducted two and later showered northern Israel with missiles, Putin also agreed with Israeli concerns and called Hezbollah's actions provocative.

On the other hand, when Israel responded by bombing infrastructure all over Lebanon, causing wide-spread destruction, and occupying the southern part of the country, Russian leaders like most European ones but unlike the Americans, found the actions excessive and disproportionate, menacing to trigger a wide-scale war. Russia called for respect for Lebanon's sovereignty, for an immediate cease-fire and the sending of UN troops to replace the Israelis, and to that effect it backed the UN Security Council resolution in August.¹²⁹ Russia was embarrassed, when Israel produced evidence that Hezbollah had used missiles of Russian origin, and excused itself by saying that transfers to third parties were forbidden by strict Russian laws.¹³⁰ After some deliberation Russia decided not to contribute any troops to the UN peacekeeping force, and instead chose to send

¹²⁷ Putin, "Press conference", 11 June 2004, Prezident Rossii; , Adomeit, Hannes, *Russische Iranpolitik*, SWP-Aktuell, Febr. 2006, pp. 1 ff.

¹²⁸ Lavrov, "Press conference with Foreign Minister" 19 Jan. 2005, Johnson's Russia List, no. 9028, retrieved 15 Aug. 2005; Katz, p. 33.

¹²⁹ Putin, "Press conference following talks with US President", 15 July 2006, retrieved 23 July 2006; RIA Novosti, 17 July, 12, 14 August 2006, www.en.rian/russia, retrieved 15 Aug. 2006; Kleszewski, Adam, "Russia criticises Israeli incursion in Lebanon", *Moscow News*, 14-20 July 2006, p. 2; Blank, Stephen, "Putin embraces double standard in Mid-East crisis", EDM, No. 140, 20 July 2006; Baev, Pavel, "Moscow quietly raises its game in the Middle East", EDM, No. 147, 31 July 2006.

¹³⁰ Lavrov, "Transcript of remarks and replies to media", 8 Sept. 2006, www.ln.mid.ru, retrieved 18 Sept. 2006; *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, 21 August 2006.

an engineering battalion under its own flag, even though this was more expensive.¹³¹

Finally, Russia increasingly was at odds with the United States concerning the key conflict in the Middle East, namely the one between Israel and the Palestinians. Despite continuing terror attacks on Israel, Russia was more negative to Israeli settlement on the West Bank and the construction of a high wall around it than the Americans. Instead Russia favoured peace negotiations with the Palestinian Authority and suggested holding an international conference in Moscow, an idea which Israel and the USA rejected.¹³² This can be seen as an attempt by Russia to assert itself outside the Mediation Quartet.

Further, since Russia did not view Hamas as a terror organisation, it did not break off assistance to the PA, when Hamas won the parliamentary elections in January 2006. Instead, Putin greeted the result as a blow to the US Middle East policy and invited Hamas to visit Moscow, though adding that it should recognise Israel and refrain from radical statements.¹³³ This was later presented as the aim of the invitation. Russia also promised quickly to give assistance to the PA, which suffered from the Western sanctions.¹³⁴ (Later also the EU found ways to help the Palestinian people.) However, at the time of writing Hamas has not yet yielded from its positions.

The conclusion of the above is that Russia conducted quite a contradictory policy concerning terrorism in the Middle East. The refusal to consider Hamas and Hezbollah as terrorist groups and maintaining relations with them can be seen as applying double standards, which the West was accused of doing, alternatively as a way of pressing the West to recognise more Chechen organisations as terrorists. In the Middle East Russia thus took a position of neutrality or mediation, whereas the same had been condemned in relation to Chechnya. Terrorism did not hinder Russia from furthering its economic interests and strengthening ties with old and new partners in the region, which increasingly strained relations particularly with the USA.

On a general level Russia was not willing to condemn Islam and Muslims as such, and advocated a dialogue between the civilisations and the necessity of doing away with the main social reasons such as poverty, inequality and

¹³¹ Plugatarev, Igor, "Prishtinskii brodok v Livan", NVO, No. 33, p. 1 f.

¹³² Lavrov, "Transcript of remarks and replies to media questions", 9 Sept. 2006, *The Jerusalem Post*, 29 April 2005. A Foreign Ministry director boasted that Russia's most valuable contribution besides practical experience was its lesson that allowing extremist ideas threatened the existing regimes, and he then recommended a balanced solution, where terrorism was not mentioned.(NVO, No. 35)

¹³³ Putin, "Stenogramma press-konferentsii dlia rossiiskikh i inostrannykh zhurnalistov", 31 Jan. 2006, retrieved 9 Febr. 2006; Baev, Pavel, "Moscow's initiative: Your terrorist is our dear guest", EDM, No. 30, 13 Febr. 2006,

¹³⁴ *Svenska Dagbladet* (TT/AFP), 16 April 2006.

illiteracy.¹³⁵ Alternatively, as stated by Foreign Minister Lavrov, Russia did not wish to take sides in the global conflict between civilisations and wanted to play an active role as a bridge between them.¹³⁶ A sign of this was Russia's above-mentioned association with the Organisation of Islamic States.

¹³⁵ Putin, "Otvety na voprosy", 11 June 2004, retrieved 8 Sept. 2004; "Speech at meeting with the ambassadors, 27 June 2006, retrieved 15 Aug. 2006; Lavrov, "Vystuplenie ministra inostrannykh del Rossii", 18 Sept. 2005, retrieved 23 Aug. 2005.

¹³⁶ Lavrov, "Russia in global affairs", *Moscow News*, No. 8, 2006, p. 6.

Summary and conclusions

The Russian wars in Chechnya since the 1990s have affected not only relations with the most direct neighbour Georgia but also Russian foreign policy in general, especially since Putin came to power. Putin in 1999 declared the second war against the Chechen separatists to be aimed against international terrorism with links to Muslim fundamentalism abroad. Terrorism was seen as the main threat to Russian security and all countries. This became a central theme in Russia's foreign policy at all levels – in the UN, the G8, in relations with NATO and the EU, in its own sphere of influence in the CIS and in bilateral relations with important powers and neighbours such as China, India and Turkey. Russian leaders expected to be supported with regard to Chechnya in exchange for their support to other states afflicted by terrorism. Parallels with the common fight against Nazism were drawn. Thus Russia acted to persecute suspected Chechen terrorists abroad with all means, and called for their extradition to Russia.

However, Western states, especially some European ones, refused to do so and criticised the Russian methods, which different from those in Europe led to wide-scale destruction and huge human losses in Chechnya. Russia indignantly rejected such criticism and advice as interference in its internal affairs. The Western states were accused of applying double standards and even supporting terrorists. Western observers were shut out of Chechnya. Russia also rejected proposals of a political solution through negotiations with the Chechen resistance, and succeeded in killing leading terrorist leaders and split the resistance movement. Instead Russia called on the EU to assist in its own normalisation process in Chechnya.

On the other hand, the European criticism of Russia's war on terrorism was blunted by the need to maintain relations for other reasons. No state questioned Russia's territorial integrity; moreover, also Europeans were appalled by some undeniably gruesome terrorist acts by Chechens. The EU states were also split with regard to criticising Russia, some important ones being more interested in economic cooperation. In the end, the EU agreed to support reconstruction and reconciliation in Chechnya, largely on Russian terms.

A major factor favouring cooperation between Russia and the West concerning terrorism obviously was the rising wave of terrorism associated with Muslim fundamentalism in the Middle East, especially the 9/11 attacks on the United States in 2001. Russia's support for the American declaration of war on terror and its subsequent occupation of Afghanistan and Russia's acceptance of US bases in Central Asia as backup for that operation dramatically improved relations with the United States. This also established Russia as a leading partner

of the USA in the war on terrorism and underpinned its claim to be one of the great powers in the world. The USA tuned down its criticism of the war in Chechnya more than the Europeans and provided some models for Russia in the fight against terrorism. Russia and NATO formed a common council, in which the issue of terrorism was a priority. Russia even found common interests with Israel in the war on terrorism.

Gradually, however, the Russian antiterrorist campaign lost credibility and momentum. The Western democracies started to worry about Putin's regime, which became increasingly authoritarian, to a great extent as a result of the Chechen war. Not even the United States was prepared to accept the brutal and indiscriminate Russian methods of fighting terrorism as universal standard in the UN.

Further, Russia was increasingly upset by the fact that the United States in the war on terrorism also increased its influence in the traditionally Russian sphere of influence by supporting Western-oriented regimes like Georgia and establishing military bases, e.g. in Central Asia. Reinvigorated by its growing economic power as a leading energy exporter, Russia therefore started to reclaim its positions by using the opportunities that soon appeared in Asia. Thus, when the authoritarian regime in Uzbekistan crushed an allegedly terrorist-sponsored riot in 2005 and the United States called for an independent investigation, Russia supported the Uzbek authorities. As a result Uzbekistan made the Americans close their military base and instead boosted military cooperation with Russia. Simultaneously, Russia started to criticise the US/NATO occupation of Afghanistan for being ineffective in crushing the Taliban resistance and stopping the growing drug production, factors which also threatened Russia. However, Russia did not much help the West here.

Already before this, Russian-US cooperation in the war on terrorism had been severely disturbed by the US-led war in Iraq in 2003, a country which supposedly had terrorist links and possessed weapons of mass destruction. Russia opposed the war on these grounds, as it turned out correctly, and refused to support the occupation, arguing that it actually promoted the growth of terrorism. As the situation worsened in Iraq and anti-Americanism grew in the Middle East, Russia did not hesitate to use this to improve its position in the region and promote its economic interests.

While the USA and the EU worried about Iran and Syria and their support for Hamas in Palestine and Hezbollah in Lebanon, which were deemed as terrorist organisations, Russia refused to do so. Instead it developed economic and military ties with these states and resisted sanctions against them. When Hamas won the parliamentary elections in Palestine in early 2006, Russia did not follow the US and the EU in breaking off relations with the Palestinian government but greeted the election result as a blow to US policy and invited Hamas leaders to Moscow.

Hence also Russia applied double standards vis-à-vis terrorist organisations, and the goal of fighting terrorism was modified or overridden by geopolitical and economic concerns in certain regions. This selective, “pragmatic” Russian policy could not fail to undermine the common front against terrorism with the United States and the NATO states. Consequently the war on terrorism as a tool in Russian foreign policy has lost most of its force, and seems to give way to energy cooperation as the first priority. It can also be argued that Russia does not see any need for Western acceptance of its ways of fighting terrorism, since the Chechen war is considered to be over.

However, since the breeding ground for terrorism in Russia has not vanished but rather grown, fresh attacks are quite likely to take place. Russia may then again make antiterrorism a priority and respond with more force and repression, while calling for Western assistance or accusing the West of complicity. New terrorist attacks in the West may likewise give Russia opportunities to offer advice and assistance. These will surely be line with Russia’s own way of fighting terrorism – that is in the direction of suppressing resistance with military means, restricting insight and increasing central control, which in turn mean restrictions on democracy and human rights.

Short general conclusions

- The Russian view of terrorism and how to fight it is mainly formed by Chechen wars.
- The Russian concept of terrorism is very wide and arbitrary.
- The Russian way of fighting terrorism allows for much state influence and violence, while democratic control is minimized.
- The war on terrorism has been a central theme in Russian foreign policy since about 2000, especially in the United Nations, in relations with the United States, and countries in the formerly Soviet space.
- The Russian view of terrorism has met resistance mainly from the European states, where democracy and human rights are overriding concerns.
- Russian antiterrorist cooperation with the United States has in recent years been undermined by colliding geopolitical concerns and ambitions in the post-Soviet space and the Middle East.
- The wide Russian definition of terrorism in for example Chechnya clashes with the refusal to recognize Hamas and Hezbollah as terrorist.
- The Russian war on terrorism as a means in foreign policy has lost appeal and momentum, but it may resurge as a result of new attacks.

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