

The Chechnya Conflict: Freedom Fighters or Terrorists?

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Abstract: The term *terrorism* is one of the most politicized and contested concepts in the modern era. Russia has consistently framed the conflict in Chechnya as an issue of terrorism and banditry. Western policy has been inconsistent, oscillating between criticism of Russia's excessive application of force and sympathy for Russia, in particular after 9/11 and the start of the war on terror. This article examines the debates over the nature of terrorism and explores whether terrorism is an analytically meaningful and useful concept to explain the conflict in Chechnya. It demonstrates that if we employ the most widely accepted and plausible definition of terrorism—the targeting of noncombatants—then the use of such tactics has been peripheral to the Chechen resistance, although it has gradually becoming more systematic in response to Russia's disproportionate brutality against Chechen civilians.

Keywords: Chechnya, Maskhadov, military, Putin, Russia, terrorism

Armed conflicts remind us that definitions and labels have political consequences and are therefore politicized. Russia's policy toward secessionist Chechnya from the early 1990s onward has consistently framed the conflict against the Chechen resistance in the idiom of a struggle against terrorism. Although Yeltsin periodically engaged in a peace process with the moderate leaders of the Chechen resistance, Putin's policy has been uncompromising. When asked by a journalist in February 2004 about the potential for negotiations in Chechnya, Putin rejected the idea outright: "Russia does not negotiate with terrorists, we destroy them."¹ Given that terrorism is one of the most politicized and contested concepts in the modern era, is it analytically meaningful or useful to apply it to any conflict, let alone the conflict in Chechnya? There is no international consensus as to what actions or principles the term *terrorism* should cover, and the adage "one person's terrorist is another person's freedom fighter" captures succinctly the essential problem of politicized usage inherent in the term in Chechnya and elsewhere.

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What Is Terrorism?

The founding fathers of the United States established the principle, based on the ideas of John Locke, that any group has the right to resort to armed rebellion to remove a tyrannical government, or “governments of force” as Thomas Jefferson put it. The most contentious definitional problem with the term *terrorism*, however, is how it should be distinguished from the legitimate use of violence in rebellion. Nonjudgmental and nonemotive terms such as *insurgency*, *insurrection*, *rebellion*, *guerrilla*, or *partisan war* are often employed to describe armed conflict. These terms are often associated with nationalist or nation-building revolts, revolutionary movements, and resistance to foreign occupation. States, especially colonial powers, have traditionally denied the political motivations and aspirations of nationalist resistance and have employed criminalizing references to denounce them, notably terms such as *gangs*, *bandits*, *thugs*, *monsters*, or *terrorists*. The framing of a conflict as terrorist in nature is a classic device employed by a state to denigrate legitimate resistance. States generally do not employ ordinary criminal procedure to repress such resistance but instead use special legal or security regimes. In managing counterinsurgency, states often adhere to the British colonial principle that sometimes “in order to maintain law and order . . . it is necessary for government itself to break it for a time.”² There are many historical contradictions of how states manipulate resistance and the term *terrorism*. As Chin Peng, the leader of the communist resistance to the British in Malaya stated: “When we worked with the British during the Japanese occupation and killed people—essentially in Britain’s interests—we were neither bandits nor terrorists. Indeed, we were applauded, praised and given awards. Thus, you only became a terrorist when you killed against their interests.”³

Recent state definitions of terrorism are generic and are applied in such a politicized and selective manner as to undermine their credibility. Modern academic definitions of terrorism, in contrast, generally identify the act as illegitimate not because of the ends to which it is applied, but because of what it entails as a means of violence, namely, that it implies violent action against civilians or noncombatants.⁴ States may sometimes interpret the term noncombatant generously to include their military personnel who are off duty or otherwise not actively engaged in conflict. But the international laws and customs of war (notably, the Geneva Conventions) employ “noncombatant” as a synonym for “civilian.”⁵ One of the key elements in the academic definitions is the notion that the immediate target of a terrorist attack is secondary and is a proxy for communicating a threat to a primary target that is elsewhere—the wider political community or government. Thus, the modern conception of terrorism is also identified with the use of violence to manipulate modern mass communication through the media, especially the visual medium of television.

Such definitions do not sufficiently capture the dynamic nature of terrorism as an instrument within a broader repertoire of armed struggle and resistance. A soldier or fighter can be a legitimate killer or a terrorist almost simultaneously, depending on the conditions of combat and the nature of the target. Even in modern warfare the idea of a self-contained battlefield largely limited to combatants has long been surpassed by total war. The nature of armed rebellion and resistance means that there is no battlefield, and the distinction between combatant and noncombatant becomes even more blurred than is the case with conventional warfare.

There is less of a consensus over the rationality and efficacy of terrorism, or whether it can ever be justified. The established terrorism expert approach tends to pathologize terrorism as a form of madness that is driven by fanaticism, delusions, and paranoia.⁶

The empirical evidence for a “terrorist personality” is dubious, although governments and opponents use the notion as part of the armory for demonizing resistance.⁷ Recent academic studies reveal the normality of so-called terrorists, and on the question of motivation conclude that “terrorist psychology is just like that of everyone else . . . in the wrong circumstances most people could either come to support a terrorist group or possibly even consider joining one.”⁸ Studies of suicide bombers, who take part in one of the most radical forms of political violence, demonstrate how ordinary are the perpetrators. The motivation for such attacks is almost always political and strategic.⁹ The question that is almost never posed is what turns law-abiding citizens into terrorists.

For many, a defining characteristic of terrorists is their rejection of all moral constraints in the use of violence. Philosophers tend to agree that terrorism is a form of violence that may be justified under certain emergency conditions. Walzer, for example, accepts that under certain exceptional conditions (what he terms “supreme emergency”) there is a moral case for “overriding the rules,” and thus terrorism may be justified as a last resort, although he is ambivalent as to whether the fear of extinction as a political community is sufficient or whether the existential threat must be physical also.¹⁰

In the period prior to 9/11 states attempted to manage terrorism by criminalizing it. Counterterrorism legislation has tended to undermine the rule of law by eroding judicial power and enhancing executive power. One of the key executive powers is designation: specifying or designating certain organizations or individuals as terrorist. The compilation of lists of illegal activities, organizations, and individuals is central to this approach. The United Kingdom and the United States led the way in this policy in the 1970s. After the end of the Cold War, in the mid-1990s, the State Department began to produce congressionally mandated annual reports titled *Patterns of Global Terrorism* and lists of foreign terrorist organizations (FTOs).¹¹ This is a highly politicized process, as often these lists are manipulated depending on national interests or according to what is perceived to be best for the counterterrorism strategy, thus undermining their credibility. After 9/11 the United States applied intense pressure to important international organizations to achieve an international definition of terrorism. However, UN Security Council Resolution 1373 (2001)—passed in the immediate aftermath of 9/11—made no attempt to define terrorism, although it restated terrorist-type activities that were already banned under international law in the twelve international conventions that are deemed to cover such terrorist-type activity.¹²

It was in the context of the post-9/11 global war on terror, and slightly more than nine years after the violent conflict in Chechnya began, that the United States added three Chechen groups to the FTO list in February 2003.¹³ The three groups claimed responsibility for some of the worst atrocities perpetrated against civilians in Russia. The Special Purpose Islamic Regiment (SPIR), led by Movsar Barayev, carried out the October 2002 Dubrovka Theater attack. Two other groups linked to Shamil Basayev were also added: the Riyadus-Salikhin Reconnaissance and Sabotage Battalion of Chechen Martyrs (founded by Basayev), and the Islamic International Peacekeeping Brigade (IIPB) (under the joint command of Basayev and Khattab, an Arab Islamist sent by Osama bin Laden to assist the jihad in Chechnya). The designations came at the height of U.S. attempts to win Russia’s support in the UN Security Council for the invasion of Iraq. Subsequently, in August 2003, the United States deemed Basayev a threat to national security under the executive orders issued after 9/11. The United States partly justified the inclusion of Chechen groups by linking them to al Qaeda. How-

ever, it gave an immense boost to Putin's attempt to win international credibility for Russia's claim that the war in Chechnya was part of the global war on terrorism, and for his refusal to negotiate with the former Chechen leader Aslan Maskhadov.

The definition of terrorism in Russia's law "On the Fight against Terrorism" passed in July 1998 was more tightly defined than catchall Western legal definitions introduced under the U.S. Patriot Act of 2001, the British antiterrorism laws passed in 1974, 1989, 2000, and 2006, respectively, and, most generic of all, the European Council's common position on terrorism of December 2001. The 1998 Russian law defined terrorism as:

violence or the threat of violence against individuals or organizations, and also the destruction (damaging) of or threat to destroy (damage) property and other material objects . . . implemented with a view to violating public security, intimidating the population, or influencing the adoption of decisions advantageous to terrorists by governing authorities, or satisfying their unlawful material and (or) other interests. . . .¹⁴

There was one feature of the law, however, that did not replicate Western practice. The 1998 Russian law gave legal protection (immunity) to state officials and military and security personnel engaged in counterterrorism.¹⁵ The new counterterrorism law, passed by the Russian parliament on March 1, 2006, brought the Russian definition in line with the broader definitions in Western legislation. Article 3 states that "Terrorism is the ideology and practice of violence for the influencing of decision-making by government authorities, local authorities, and international organizations, involving the frightening of the population and (or) other forms of illegal violent actions."¹⁶ The Russian lawmakers followed the debates about legal measures in Western democracies closely, particularly the debate over the criminalization of glorifying terrorism, which was included in the 2006 United Kingdom's Terrorism Act. Russian antiterrorism law not only criminalizes all usual forms of activity associated with the preparation and carrying out of terrorist acts, but also "inciting" terrorism and "the propaganda of the idea of terrorism, spreading materials or information promoting terrorist activity or justifying and approving of the necessity for such activity."¹⁷ The hard-line approach was strongly influenced not only by Putin and the *siloviki* but also by politicians representing regions and republics in the North Caucasus, which have borne the brunt of a small number of costly Chechen cross-border attacks over the last decade.¹⁸ Prior to the new law, anyone who sympathetically reported the case for Chechnya was likely to be charged with "inciting racial hatred."¹⁹ Journalist Anna Politkovskaya, a high-profile, persistent critic of Russian policy, on the other hand, was removed from the scene in October 2006 by murder rather than legal process.

Do the explanations and attributes of terrorism in the policy and academic literature justify the conceptualization of the conflict in Chechnya as terrorism? To categorize the conflict in Chechnya as a struggle against terrorism we must demonstrate that the Chechen resistance to Russia is widely recognized as a case of terrorism, or is characterized by systematic and indiscriminate violence against civilians/noncombatants.

Recognition: Are Chechen Resistance Leaders Terrorists?

The question of whether the Chechen resistance is widely recognized as terrorist in nature can be explored by examining three major international cases that involved Russian attempts to extradite leading political figures in the Chechen resistance: Akhmed Zakayev, deputy prime minister of Chechnya and a spokesman for Chechen President Maskhadov;

Ilyas Akhmadov, foreign minister of Chechnya; and Zemlikhan Yandarbiev, the former president of Chechnya and leading ideologist of the Chechen national movement.

Zakayev

Akhmad Zakayev lives in political asylum in the United Kingdom. As deputy prime minister and senior political advisor to former Chechen President Aslan Maskhadov, Russia has long sought his extradition. In the wake of the Dubrovka Theater incident, and on the basis of an Interpol warrant, Russia charged Zakayev—then in exile in Western Europe—with murder and leading an “illegal armed formation.” Russia applied to the Danish Ministry of Justice for Zakayev’s extradition from Denmark when he attended the World Chechen Congress in Copenhagen in October 2002. Denmark rejected the application for lack of evidence and “imprecision” in the Russian case.²⁰ Zakayev then sought refuge in the United Kingdom, and Russia applied to the U.K. courts for his extradition. Zakayev’s case became a cause célèbre in the United Kingdom. Actress Vanessa Redgrave headed his defense campaign and some of the United Kingdom’s leading lawyers defended him. The case was thrown out of court in November 2003. Senior district judge T. Workman, who heard the case, reasoned that the “scale of the conflict” in Chechnya meant it could not be defined as a case of terrorism but “amounted in law to an internal armed conflict” that fell under the Geneva Conventions. Indeed, he argued that many observers would have regarded it as a civil war. Moreover, he judged that the case was “politically motivated,” and that Zakayev was likely to be tortured if returned to Russia.²¹

The reasoning provided by Judge Workman was extremely vague. It seems odd to classify an internal armed conflict on the basis of scale alone. The Protocol to the Geneva Conventions dealing with noninternational armed conflict provides specific conditions under which an armed conflict is deemed to exist, namely, when it takes place “in the territory of a High Contracting Party between its armed forces and dissident armed forces or other organized armed groups which, under responsible command, exercise such control over a part of its territory as to enable them to carry out sustained and concerted military operations and to implement this Protocol.” The Protocol also specifically bans “acts of terrorism” and attacks on civilians.²² These are the conditions that should have been applied to the case of Chechnya. Much then would have hinged on whether the Chechen resistance could be shown to control part of the territory of Chechnya. No such consideration played a role in the judgement.

Akhmadov

Ilyas Akhmadov served as the minister of foreign affairs during Maskhadov’s presidency. In Akhmadov’s case, the United States—the self-declared leader in the global war on terrorism—was the host country. Akhmadov had applied for political asylum in the United States in 2002. Russia applied for his extradition on the grounds that Akhmadov was involved in terrorism and had links to the armed incursion from Chechnya into Dagestan in the autumn of 1999. An immigration court in Boston declared the terrorism charges against Akhmadov “baseless” and granted him asylum in April 2004. The immigration judge pointed out that if Akhmadov were returned to Russia, the Chechen leader would be “shot without being afforded the opportunity to defend himself in a trial, as has happened to other members of the Chechen government.” United States federal judges have historically taken a very lenient view on defending the rights of those engaged in violent

resistance against extradition, so long as it did not materially affect U.S. interests. During the 1970s and 1980s, federal judges often refused to extradite members of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) to Britain (until more stringent legal procedures were introduced under the Reagan administration in 1986). The U.S. Department of Homeland Security challenged the Akhmadov decision on the basis that the Chechen leader was involved in acts of terrorism, but in August 2004—following pressure from Congress, leading figures in the U.S. political establishment (such as former General Alexander Haig and former National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski), and the mass media—it withdrew its objections and confirmed that the charges were “baseless.”²³ U.S. State Department policy on Chechnya began to shift away from the more sympathetic position toward Russia that followed 9/11 during 2002. The policy shift was completed by September 2003 when Ambassador Steven Pifer, deputy assistant secretary of state for European and Eurasian affairs, made a statement before the U.S. Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe in which he declared: “We do not, however, share the Russian Government assessment that equates the separatist movement with terrorism. While we condemn all terrorist acts and the linkages of some separatists to international terrorist groups, we do not believe that Russia can address the conflict in Chechnya simply as a counter-terrorist operation.”²⁴ Thus, although the State Department considered Akhmadov to be a leading figure and intermediary for Maskhadov’s moderate wing of the Chechen resistance, distinct from the terrorists before and during the extradition episode, the Department of Homeland Security persisted with the claim of terrorist links. U.S. critics denounced the Bush administration for being “two-faced” in pursuing Akhmadov.²⁵ Unsurprisingly, Russia saw the refusal of extradition as “a clear display of double standards in the struggle against terrorism.”²⁶ Russian sensibilities on the issue were further trampled when Akhmadov was awarded a Reagan-Fascell Democracy Fellowship by the National Endowment for Democracy, a U.S. political foundation funded by an annual congressional appropriation.

Yandarbiev

Zelimkhan Yandarbiev was one of the intellectual founders of the Chechen Revolution in the early 1990s, served as Dudayev’s vice president, and was acting president of Chechnya after Dudayev’s death until the election of Maskhadov in January 1997. In his case, the host country was Qatar, a Muslim state closely allied to the United States. UN Security Council Resolution 1267 (1999) imposed sanctions on a list of persons and organizations that were determined to be members of or associated with the Taliban regime and al Qaeda because it was determined that they constituted “a threat to international peace and security.”²⁷ Basayev and Yandarbiev had been placed on the consolidated UN list of individuals “belonging to or associated with the Al-Qaida organisation” in June 2003.²⁸ The Security Council resolutions that framed the operation of the list obliged all states, among other things, to freeze the assets, and prevent the entry into or the transit through their territories, of the individuals and organizations on the list. Yet Yandarbiev had lived temporarily as a “guest” in Qatar since November 2002. According to the Russian Foreign Ministry, Qatar refused to “fulfill its international obligations, and in practice took Yandarbiev under its guardianship,” providing him with a haven from which he could prepare new acts of terrorism.²⁹ Russian presidential aide Sergei Yastrzhembsky claimed that Russia had requested Yandarbiev’s extradition but that Qatar had not complied.³⁰ In this case, Russia decided to resolve the matter by its own act of “international terrorism.” Yandarbiev was assassinated

by a car bomb, which also killed two bodyguards and mutilated his young son. A Qatari court convicted two Russian SVR agents of the murders, and in December 2004, after Russian intimidation and pressure, Qatar agreed to transfer the agents back to Russia under a bilateral agreement to serve out their sentences.

These cases demonstrate that there was an international reluctance to deal with Chechnya on Russia's terms—that is, as a case of terrorism—even after 9/11. Countries were reluctant to cooperate with Russia on Chechnya despite the fact that Russia increasingly framed its policy on international terrorism along Western lines by compiling lists and focusing on “Islamic” terrorism supposedly related to al Qaeda.³¹ Equally, Russia applied its own concept of national interest in the designation of terrorist groups. This was most clearly illustrated in February and March 2006 following the Hamas victory in the Palestinian elections. Although Hamas has for many years been on the United States' FTO list, Putin invited Hamas leaders to come to Moscow, pointing out that Russia had never regarded Hamas as a terrorist organization. A Hamas delegation was duly received in Moscow in early March and met with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov.³² Russia took a similar position on Hezbollah in Lebanon—which is considered a terrorist organization by the United States—during the Israel-Hezbollah conflict of August 2006. When Russia published its own official list of seventeen terrorist organizations in July 2006, all of the groups included were Islamist—mainly Chechen—but Hamas and Hezbollah were not listed.³³

The Question of “Legitimate Targets”

There is little to guide us on the fundamental question of how we can properly measure systematic and indiscriminate violence by terrorists against civilians/noncombatants and how stringent the tests should be. Does this mean that all the violence, most of the violence, or just some of the violence should be organized as systematic and indiscriminate attacks on civilians/noncombatants for the definition of terrorism to be satisfied? There are two useful ways to test the prevalence of terrorism on the part of the Chechen resistance. First, we can analyze the violence itself and compose a balance sheet of casualties inflicted during the conflict to assess the balance between civilians/noncombatants versus combatants (soldiers, police, and other combatants for the Russian side of the conflict). Second, we can examine whether the intentional targeting of civilians/noncombatants was an essential or peripheral part of the Chechen strategy of resistance against Russia.

The most well-founded, although perhaps still conservative, estimate for total dead in the 1994–96 war is 46,500, of which 11,500 (more than 8,000 Russian) were combatants and as many as 35,000 were civilians.³⁴ The data on casualties for the second war beginning in 1999 and still being fought at present are much less reliable. The respected Moscow-based human rights foundation Memorial estimates that from 5,000–10,000 civilians have died, and its lowest estimates are that 2,000–2,800 civilians have been abducted and have disappeared.³⁵ Estimates of Russian combatant casualties vary immensely. Valentina Melnikova, head of the NGO Soldiers' Mothers of Russia, based on her own group's sources, estimated that as many as 12,000 soldiers, police, and other state forces have been killed so far (by 2004). The Russian Ministry of Defense estimated that fewer than 3,500 soldiers were killed, excluding Ministry of Interior, FSB, and other federal agencies' personnel between the start of the second war in October 1999 and August 2005, while respected journalists estimated the figure to be closer to 8,000, including all branches of

the military and security services.³⁶ None of these figures take into account the thousands of troops on both sides who were mutilated or otherwise disabled. The perception among Chechens is that the human costs of the conflict have been vast, although some have attributed this to an unquestioning acceptance of exaggerated casualty figures provided by Lebed in late 1996.³⁷ On two occasions in recent years, pro-Moscow Chechen officials have claimed that either 150,000–160,000 or up to 300,000 have died.³⁸

When we compare these figures to the casualty figures caused by indiscriminate attacks by Chechen groups on targets that can be clearly defined as civilian/noncombatants, we find that such attacks account for a small proportion of the overall casualties during the conflict. Any calculation of the number of casualties caused by Chechen terrorism between 1993 and 2006 is an order of magnitude, given that the reported numbers of killed and injured are not always reliable, and that some acts of terrorism attributed to the main Chechen resistance groups may have been perpetrated by marginal or criminal groups, or as approved or unapproved covert actions by Russian state forces or pro-Russian Chechen forces. For example, much controversy surrounds who was responsible for the apartment bombings of September 1999, which caused hundreds of deaths and injuries in Moscow, Volgograd, and Biunaksk, and which provided a moral trigger for Russian military action. FSB agents were even caught red-handed staging a similar operation in Riazan'.³⁹ Maskhadov and Basayev denied any responsibility for the bombings and attributed them to an FSB plot to justify war against Chechnya and strengthen popular support for Putin's hard-line approach during the presidential election campaign. Basayev told the BBC, "Again they want to sacrifice our people for the sake of elections."⁴⁰

If we attribute all the disputed attacks to Chechen groups and thus take the highest likely number of civilian casualties, the total is 1,544 killed and 3,463 injured in the period from July 1993 to September 2004.⁴¹ If we accept the conservative estimates of deaths in the wars from 1994 to the present discussed above then the number of deaths from terrorism by Chechen groups is likely to be less than 3 percent of the total number. This is not a conflict in which the Chechen resistance to Russia can be labeled generically as terrorism.

It could also be argued that the high death toll in some of the spectacular incidents—Budenovsk, Kizliar, Dubrovka, and Beslan—was as much a result of the poor tactical response by Russian forces, and their use of excessive and indiscriminate force, as of action by the Chechen groups involved. Indeed, in two of these incidents—Budenovsk and Kizliar—it is questionable whether there was any intention by the Chechen forces to target civilians/noncombatants, although they were certainly reckless and indiscriminate in their subsequent use of violence in these cases.⁴² In the Beslan case, by far the most shocking and costly terrorist incident so far, with 317 hostages killed (including 186 children), Russian and/or local forces used rocket-propelled incendiaries and tank fire, almost certainly contributing to the collapse of the school gymnasium and fire, which caused many of the casualties.⁴³

Reuter's study of Chechen terrorist attacks from June 2000 to June 2004 revealed that most attacks (twenty-three of a total of thirty-six) and most casualties (361 killed and 1,518 injured of a total of 498 killed and 1,923 injured) involved suicide bombings, in what the Chechens term "shahid" (religious martyr) attacks and the Russians call "suicide-shahid" (*smertnits-shakhidok*). The study implausibly conflates attacks on military and civilian targets under the generic heading "terrorist act." Nevertheless, it indirectly provides us with evidence of a strong correlation between an escalation of Russian abuses against civilians

in Chechnya, which surged in 2002 (when there were more than seven hundred civilian killings and more than five hundred disappearances attributed to Russian forces and their local militias), and the trend for suicide bombings (which increased from two incidents in 2002 to twelve in 2003).⁴⁴ Most suicide attacks involved participation by women (fifteen of twenty-three). The sobriquet “black widow” (*chernye vdovy*) was employed in the Russian media to describe the black hijab-wearing women who wore belts of explosives at the Dubrovka Theater siege, and their new prominence was attributed to the foreign influence on the Islamist radicalization of the Chechen resistance.

Studies of the Chechen suicide attacker phenomenon have focused on the personal motives and have also genderized the issue in a manner that stresses that women are acting out of despair and are seeking revenge for the loss of male relatives during the conflict. In fact, there is no evidence, and it seems odd to assume, that such attackers assume this role only because of the loss of male relatives given that women have been targets of attacks and experienced humiliations such as rape. Most obviously, why should it be doubted that female fighters may just as readily be ideologically motivated? Any explanation for a suicide bombing that stresses personal motivations oversimplifies the complex mix of the personal, political, and religious elements involved in such acts of resistance.⁴⁵

The latest Russian and comparative research into suicide attacks reveals a wide variety of motives. Mia Bloom sees female involvement in political violence, particularly suicide attacks, as a misconstrued form of “empowerment.”⁴⁶ Yulia Yuzik’s study of Chechen female suicide attackers found that there was no common denominator in motivations. Some were acting from overt political stances, some from personal motives, some from loyalty to husbands, and some from abuse and coercion.⁴⁷ Psychologists suggest that the scale and intensity of the conflict, high casualties, desperation, and a historical context where values of self-sacrifice are prominent are common although not universal denominators.⁴⁸ More recent research stresses altruistic political motivations and the fact that such attacks are an important rational and effective form of “asymmetric warfare” that can bring major gains to the groups that organize them (although usually not strategic victory).⁴⁹

Datasets on Chechen terrorist attacks illustrate some of the inherent difficulties of this form of measurement. It is not only a question of what should count as a terrorist attack. Such datasets record attacks that result in deaths and injuries, and there is generally no systematic record of other attacks that do not result in any deaths or injuries or were preempted. The datasets also tend to record attacks mostly outside Chechnya. Furthermore, the datasets do not record forms of terrorism such as kidnapping or hostage taking. This is a particular flaw, given the systematic use of kidnapping and hostage taking for both criminal and political purposes from the outset of the Chechen independence struggle. After all, Basayev’s November 1991 airline hijacking was a hostage-taking episode that inspired the extension of the method to other kinds of civilian spheres beginning in March 1992 with the hijacking of a bus by armed Chechens in Lermontov, Stavropolsky Krai.⁵⁰

The Question of a Terrorist Strategy

It is almost universally argued by the political class in Russia that terrorism, in the sense of the intentional targeting of civilians/noncombatants, was an inherent part of the Chechen strategy of resistance from an early stage in the conflict and was unrelated to the peaks and valleys of Russian military aggression.⁵¹ Although the former claim may be plausible, the latter is clearly not. We cannot understand an armed conflict or insurgency without recog-

nizing that how the conflict is fought is a major structuring device for its course. The use of excessive or disproportionate violence, and the targeting of civilians, recklessly or as a matter of policy (even covert policy), inevitably radicalizes and intensifies a conflict. Such a lack of constraint affects a key dimension of the conflict—the support of the civilian population for the resistance. Insurgent and counter-insurgent tacticians have long recognized that the “hearts and minds” of the civilian population are key determinants of the outcome; in some cases this translates into policies to secure the support of civilians, in others the policies stress “control” of civilians by coercion. In the most extreme historical cases, counterinsurgency has relied on concentration camps and the walling in of civilian populations.

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Successive Chechen leaders have accepted the use of terrorism as part of the repertoire of armed conflict with Russia. From the beginning of the independence struggle, Dudayev repeatedly made it clear that his policy was to use terrorist methods as a last resort if Russia attacked Chechnya. The consistency of his threats suggests that this was not posturing. Enraged by Yeltsin’s decree for a military intervention in early November 1991, Dudayev threatened to retaliate by using terrorist acts against Russia, even raising the possi-

bility of attacks on Russian nuclear power stations. Interviewed by a Russian journalist in March 1992 he promised: “We will resort to any extreme measures when it comes to the defense of our sovereignty. Any. . . .”⁵² Dudayev predicted that should an armed conflict with Russia erupt, his policy would be to take the war into Russia:

It will be a war without rules. It’s impossible to find the necessary rules. I may say that we are not going to fight in our territory. Three hundred years of bloodshed are quite enough. We have been well taught to transfer those wars to the place they have come from.⁵³

Dudayev’s embrace of terrorism as a tactic in the overall strategic struggle against Russia is most clearly demonstrated in his treatment of Shamil Basayev, who, until his death in an explosion in Ingushetia in July 2006, was wanted by Russia as “terrorist number 1”⁵⁴ and was synonymous with Chechen terrorism. Basayev was politically radicalized by Gorbachev’s liberalization and assisted with the defense of the White House against the putsch in August 1991. On returning to Chechnya, he formed an armed detachment, recruited principally from his native highland village of Vedeno. Basayev’s Vedeno force acted as bodyguards for the Chechen National Congress and worked closely with the nationalist forces under Dudayev and Yandarbiev to crush opposition and consolidate Dudayev’s power in 1991–92.

Basayev initiated Chechen terrorism in the conflict with Russia. In response to the Russian abortive intervention in November 1991, Basayev and two accomplices, seemingly at their own initiative, hijacked a Russian domestic airliner with 178 passengers on board at the airport in Mineral’nye Vody in neighboring Stavropolsky Krai. They took the aircraft to Ankara, Turkey, where they could expect sympathetic treatment given the large Chechen

diaspora there. Negotiations resulted in the release of some Chechen prisoners being held in Russian prisons. Although Turkey was then engaged in its own conflict with Kurdish terrorist separatists, the Chechen hijackers were allowed to take the plane back to Grozny, where the passengers and crew were freed.

The incident was the first clear case of terrorism, even by international law (because it contravened the international convention on hijacking), yet Basayev was treated as a conquering hero by Dudayev, who awarded him the rank of colonel in charge of a regiment of special forces in the newly formed Chechen army. Under Dudayev's government, Basayev became a leading figure in military affairs and, in particular, in the volunteer forces of the Caucasian People's Confederation, which aimed to unite all the Caucasian Muslim peoples under Chechen leadership. At a time when the conflicts in the wider Caucasus region were raging, Basayev led a three-hundred-strong Chechen detachment to fight for Azerbaijan against Armenia in the struggle over Nagorno-Karabakh, and also led the Chechen Abkhazia Battalion in the successful offensive against Georgia in the summer of 1993. His leadership skills and prowess were such that he was even made a deputy defense minister by the Abkhaz government. His force worked closely with special operations and was trained in special operations techniques, equipped and transported by the Russian military and military intelligence, which was supporting Abkhazia against Georgia. Basayev and a core group of followers used Russian military textbooks to train in irregular warfare, recognizing from an early stage that to win independence for Chechnya required a sacrifice "paid in blood."⁵⁵ In Abkhazia his force earned a reputation for battle-hardened aggression and ruthless excess, including the torture and murder of prisoners and other war crimes.

From the beginning of the armed conflict in late 1994, Dudayev encouraged suicide attacks. The role of suicide or martyrdom as a tactic in warfare and armed struggle gained global attention because of the suicidal waves of headband-wearing young volunteer soldiers (*basij Mostazafan*, or "mobilization of the oppressed") by the Iranian Revolutionary Guards during the 1980–88 Iran-Iraq War, and by the mujahadeen against Soviet forces in Afghanistan (where Dudayev and Maskhadov had fought for the Soviets). By the 1990s suicide attacks were widely seen as an effective form of asymmetric warfare against conventional armed forces and had become a regular feature of nationalist resistance struggles globally. There were spontaneous instances of "death or glory" suicide attacks by Chechens on Russian tanks and armored vehicles during the brief armed conflict of November 1994. Dudayev warned that suicide battalions (*smertnye batal'ony*) would be formed because, he stated, "we do not have armaments, military vehicles, military equipment, a military-industrial complex. We were left naked, and therefore we have been forced to establish suicide battalions."⁵⁶ These suicide fighters were recognizable by their black headbands—a marker of apocalyptic warriors in the Islamic tradition. The black headband was employed by participants in the Dubrovka and Beslan attacks whereas regular Islamist fighters wore the green headbands of jihad. Just a few months later, at a meeting of the Congress of the Chechen People in the mosque at Shali on March 9–10, 1995, Dudayev chaired sessions that not only discussed a general mobilization of the population against Russia but also approved a list of volunteers for Chechnya's first kamikaze battalion.⁵⁷ The move led to Dudayev being labeled a kamikaze leader.⁵⁸ This was the first time the concept of suicide attacks within an Islamic framework of martyrdom was used in the conflict with Russia, and the Russian and Western response in the early 1990s was to locate the concept within a previous historical experience of religiously inspired nationalistic asymmetric warfare.

Armed conflict radicalized Basayev, and his awareness of and sympathy for the global rise of Islamic jihad is evident from his visits in 1992–94, along with some of his Abkhazia Battalion, to Khost province in Afghanistan to train in mujahadeen camps run by Osama bin Laden.⁵⁹ Equally, his military success against Russian forces, notably the key role played by his fighters in the annihilation of the Russian armored column that entered Grozny in December 1994, greatly enhanced his authority within the resistance. The infamous raids on Budennovsk by Basayev's forces in June 1995 and on Kizliar and Pervomaisk by Raduyev in January 1996 may have been designed as military raids (in the former case, on government and police buildings, and in the latter, on a military airport) to deflect Russian military pressure within Chechnya, but they degenerated into hostage taking and terrorist attacks on civilians.

The Budennovsk raid, in particular, was designed with a strategic purpose. A Russian military offensive in the spring and summer of 1995 had seriously weakened and disrupted Chechen forces. By attacking Budennovsk, deep in Stavropolsky Krai, Basayev delivered a massive psychological blow to Yeltsin's claims of winning the war. The fact that Basayev's force seized a maternity hospital with hundreds of women and children as hostages horrified Russian opinion and confirmed that Russia was engaged in a struggle against Chechen terrorists. The incident produced a positive strategic result for the Chechen resistance—Russian prime minister Viktor Chernomyrdin came to Budennovsk personally to conduct the negotiations with Basayev, and a delegation of political and cultural dignitaries acted as human shields to allow Basayev's forces safe passage back to Chechnya in return for releasing the hostages. Moreover, it stopped the Russian military offensive in Chechnya in its tracks and prepared the way for the military truce agreement of July 30, 1995. Dudayev's forces were able to regroup and disperse across Chechnya. Dudayev's approval of the Budennovsk attack was obvious once Basayev's detachment was awarded the title "Hero of Chechnya" and three of Basayev's men were decorated.⁶⁰

The 1991 airline hijacking and the 1995 Budennovsk raid demonstrate some of the rational criteria under which Basayev operated in the first phase of the armed conflict. These were mass hostage-taking incidents where in return for political concessions (the release of prisoners and Chernomyrdin's "truce") and safe passage back to Chechnya, Basayev released the hostages. Old research (from 1981) indicates that terrorist hostage-takers are rarely suicidal (less than 1 percent of cases) and that the publicity generated for their cause by the event coupled with safe passage is often sufficient to terminate the event.⁶¹ The rise of jihad in the 1990s, however, and the commitment to demonstrative "spectacular" attacks and revenge (see below), as Dubrovka and Beslan indicate, suggest that we must change the calculation of such events.

The strategic use of terrorism continued under Maskhadov's presidency, though, unlike Dudayev, Maskhadov was much more cautious and equivocal in his public statements on the subject. There were several reasons for this. Maskhadov was a democratically elected president, protective of his democratic legitimacy, and keen to maintain the respect of international actors in Europe and the United States. Given the still-tense relations and ongoing negotiations with Russia for final status talks following the Khasaviurt Truce in August 1996, he had to maintain his distance from those, such as Basayev, associated in the minds of Russians with terrorism. Equally, he could not afford to alienate the key commanders in the resistance movement, which, post-Khasaviurt, was on the verge of civil war. Chechen authority was increasingly split between Maskhadov's largely secular nationalist governmen-

tal forces, and the radical Islamist forces under Basayev and other commanders, assisted by a small number of Arab Islamists under Khattab, who were loosely united under the Military Madjlisul'-Shura, and which functioned as a parallel authority.⁶² During the period of peace in Maskhadov's presidency (from January 1997 to Autumn 1999) he was critical of terrorist attacks on Russia, attacks within Chechnya (including at least two attempts on his own life), and especially of the hostage taking, which became an embarrassing and endemic problem that corroded the authority of his presidency at home and abroad.

With the renewal of armed conflict with Russia in late 1999 however, and confronted by Putin's intransigence on negotiations, Maskhadov, like Dudayev, tolerated Basayev's methods and occasionally justified them. Ultimately, Maskhadov could not control Basayev. The shift to a greater use of terrorism was brought about by the renewal of armed conflict and the increasing Islamization of the entire resistance movement. Basayev was appointed deputy commander in chief of Chechnya's armed forces (under Maskhadov) in July 1998 and subsequently became chairman of the military committee. He was only removed from this post after the particularly horrifying Dubrovka Theater attack in September and October 2002. The Dubrovka attack damaged international support for the Maskhadov government immensely. Removing Basayev from his official command could be seen as a clever device by Maskhadov to create political distance from Basayev, who Maskhadov could now claim was operating independently while retaining military and political coordination.⁶³

By May 2003, Basayev's announcement of Operation Boomerang (the nomenclature itself indicating the motivation of revenge) abandoned any pretense that terrorism was not central to his strategy of striking back at Russia. He defended his methods by claiming that Russia was engaged in genocide against the Chechen people, and that he was the anti-terrorist.⁶⁴ Russian forces in Chechnya systematically targeted the family members of resistance figures in reprisals. Russian forces considered the civilians who were caught up in firefights to be legitimate targets.⁶⁵ The increase in suicide attacks in 2003 led the moderate elements of the Maskhadov government to become more critical of Basayev in their public statements. Zakayev, for example, in exile in the United Kingdom, denounced Basayev's methods as "unacceptable," and claimed that there was no political cooperation between Maskhadov and Basayev.⁶⁶ Maskhadov, however, became increasingly ambivalent in public about Basayev's role. Perhaps disillusioned by the failure of the West and international organizations to apply pressure to Russia, Maskhadov provided a taped interview for *Le Monde* in October 2003 in which he strenuously denied any association with al Qaeda, affirming that "We have nothing in common with international terrorism. What is going on here is a national liberation struggle. We do not recognize bin Ladin. He represents nothing for us." He was more circumspect, in contrast, on the issue of Basayev. Asked whether he considered Basayev to be an international terrorist, Maskhadov replied:

Basayev has no links with international terrorism. He has no contact either with al Qaeda or with bin Laden. . . . Basayev is a warrior. He is someone who is taking revenge. He is using the same methods as the enemy, who uses those methods against Chechen civilians. It is an eye for an eye. . . .⁶⁷

Even at this time of increased suicide attacks, Maskhadov stressed how close he was to Basayev, and how "sincere" Basayev was in his belief that "all methods" were legitimate in the struggle against Russia.⁶⁸ The main Web site of the Chechen resistance posted photographs of the two leaders working closely together, possibly taken in late 2004.⁶⁹

Basayev's concept of total war against Russia was fully elaborated by the Beslan attack. He thought that to "stop the genocide," "the more brutal I could make it, the quicker they'd get the message."⁷⁰ Yet the Beslan tragedy appears to have shocked even Basayev by its brutality, as he was not expecting such a bloody outcome. Maskhadov called it a "terrorist act," but contextualized it, noting: "such acts are a consequence of and reaction to the genocidal war of the Russian government against the Chechen nation, during which the Russian army has killed 250,000 people, including 42,000 children."⁷¹ In what was to be in effect a last testament, Maskhadov wrote to Javier Solana, the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security, in February 2005. Maskhadov reiterated his support for the Akhmadov peace plan (which talked of conditional independence) and pleaded for a more proactive EU policy on Chechnya, but also observed on the issue of terrorism:

It is the action of desperate people, most of whom have lost loved ones in atrocious circumstances, and believe they can respond to the aggressor and the occupier by using the same methods. This is not my point of view, nor will it ever be. In fact, I have been doing everything within my power to keep actions of the Chechen resistance within the internationally recognized rules of war.⁷²

There was a period of reflection and a consensus among all sections of the Chechen resistance, including Basayev, to support Maskhadov's call for a ceasefire and negotiations in January 2005, which Putin rejected. Maskhadov's murder in March 2005 removed the only authoritative voice preventing the Basayev strategy from becoming a more pronounced philosophy of the Chechen resistance, reflecting the new dominance of the Islamists over the national movement. In interviews with Western journalists conducted in February and July 2005, however, Basayev promised more attacks "like Beslan," declaring that his legitimate target options included *all* Russian citizens because rather than seeing them as "blameless," he considered them to be "accomplices" (*posobniki*) in Putin's war against Chechnya. The media presented this as a startling new development.⁷³ In fact, Basayev had told a Russian journalist as early as November 1995, in response to a question about the suffering of innocents at Budennovsk, that "there are no innocent Russians."⁷⁴ It was a state of mind that made for an easy accommodation of Basayev within bin Laden's jihad, for one of the core ideas in the development of al Qaeda was the elimination of any distinction between combatants and noncombatants.

Conclusion: Terrorists or Freedom Fighters?

The attempt to define terrorism suffers from inherent flaws that can be demonstrated by examining the conflict in Chechnya. The use of the term is not only highly politicized but is, in practice, suffused with ambiguity over what a noncombatant is. Setting out the moral case that would satisfy Walzer's last resort hypothesis is as contentious and problematic as defining the term "terrorism" itself. At what point is the existence of a political community threatened with extinction? Is terrorism legitimate to preempt genocide? Certainly, the Chechens had historical grounds to fear a threat of physical genocide from Russia, given the genocidal deportation of 1944 and the terror bombings of Grozny in late 1994, early 1995, and late 1999. There was also a potent and more direct threat to destroy their existence as a political community in a nascent nation-state. In theory such threats would justify the use of terrorism as a last resort.

Perhaps the single most important flaw in the conventional wisdom about the nature of terrorism, however, lies at the core of the generally accepted definition—that is, the claims that terrorism is the systematic targeting of civilians and that its motivations and goals are to spread terror in a wider community to extract government policy changes. Terrorist attacks during the conflict in Chechnya have not been systematic on the part of the Chechen resistance. Such attacks on civilians/noncombatants have been peripheral to its main use of political violence, which is directed against the Russian state's military, security, political, and economic assets. Civilians and noncombatants are more often killed by reckless disregard, akin to the collateral damage caused and tolerated by conventional military forces. Within the broadly accepted canon of contemporary philosophy on the ethics of political violence, and despite the ambiguities of that philosophy, there is even a case to be considered for the legitimacy of those terrorist acts that have been carried out by the Chechen resistance under the last resort thesis—assuming we accept that this thesis is valid. It is clear from the perceptions of Chechen leaders, publicly expressed over time, that they consider Russian actions in Chechnya as tantamount to a policy of genocide. By any balanced reckoning, Russia's reckless and disproportionate use of force against civilians in Chechnya at times has been genocidal, in particular its reliance on indiscriminate bombardment of civilian areas and the well-documented cases of massacres. If we apply the test of systematic indiscriminate attacks on noncombatants to the conflict in Chechnya we find that it is Russia that is the guiltiest party. The use of terrorism by some elements of the Chechen resistance, however terrible, is peripheral to the national resistance as a whole, and has been reactive mainly to Russia's strategy of excesses, whether to deter it, or to exact revenge.

NOTES

1. Vladimir Putin, press conference at the Kremlin, February 6, 2004, http://www.kremlin.ru/?appears/2004/02/06/1949_type63380_60388.shtml (accessed June 7, 2007).
2. A statement by Sir Henry Gurney, High Commissioner of Malaya, in 1949, cited in T. N. Harper, *The End of Empire and the Making of Malaya* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 152.
3. Chin Peng, *My Side of History*, as told to Ian Ward and Norma Mirafior (Singapore: Media Masters, 2003), 105.
4. See Paul Wilkinson, *Terrorism and the Liberal State* (London: Macmillan, 1977), 48–49.
5. See United Nations, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, *Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War* (1950) (Geneva: United Nations 1997–2002), <http://www.unhchr.ch/html/intlinst.htm> (accessed June 7, 2007).
6. See, for example, the approach of one of the most established terrorism experts: Walter Laqueur, *The New Terrorism: Fanaticism and the Arms of Mass Destruction* (London: Phoenix Press, 2001), 81–97.
7. For critiques of attempts to pathologize terrorists see John Horgan, “The Search for the Terrorist Personality,” in *Terrorists, Victims, and Society: Psychological Perspectives on Terrorism and Its Consequences*, ed. Andrew Silke, 3–28 (Chichester: Wiley, 2003). For a comprehensive analysis of the debates on what makes a terrorist see John Horgan, *The Psychology of Terrorism* (London: Routledge, 2005).
8. Andrew Silke, “Becoming a Terrorist,” 51.
9. See Robert A. Pape, *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism* (New York: Random House, 2005); Ami Pedazhur, *Suicide Terrorism* (Cambridge: Polity, 2005).
10. In his early work Walzer argued that the threat must be “enslavement or extermination,” (my emphasis); see Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations* (New York: Basic Books, 1977), 254. In his later work, the justification had changed to

“political *and* physical extinction,” (my emphasis); see Michael Walzer, *Arguing about War* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004), 54.

11. This publication is now updated annually by the Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism within the Department of State. The entire collection of U.S. Patterns of Global Terrorism (POGT) reports from 1976 to the present is digitized and available at <http://www.mipt.org/Patterns-of-Global-Terrorism.asp>, and those from 1995 at <http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/pgtrpt/>. U.S. domestic terrorism is covered by the FBI, and its reports are available at <http://www.fbi.gov/publications.htm>.

12. For resolution 1373 see <http://www.un.org/Docs/scres/2001/sc2001.htm>. The Declaration on Measures to Eliminate International Terrorism (1994) is at <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/49/a49r060.htm>. The International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings (1997) and International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism (1999) are at <http://untreaty.un.org/?English/Terrorism.asp>.

13. POGT Report 2003, <http://www.terrorisminfo.mipt.org/Patterns-of-Global-Terrorism.asp> (accessed June 7, 2007).

14. “O bor’be s terrorizmom,” [On the Fight Against Terrorism], Russian Federation Federal Law No. 130-FZ, July 25, 1998, quoted in *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, August 4, 1998. For the U.K. definition in the Terrorism Act (2000), see <http://www.legislation.hmso.gov.uk/acts/acts2000/20000011.htm>. For the U.S. definition in the Patriot Act (2001), see <http://files.findlaw.com/news.findlaw.com/cnn/docs/terrorism/hr3162.pdf>. For the European Council definition, see Council Common Position of December 27, 2001, “On the Application of Specific Measures to Combat Terrorism,” OJ L 344, 28.12.2001, 93.

15. See “O bor’be s terrorizmom” (1998), Article 19.

16. For the 2006 law “O protivodeistvii terrorizmu” (On Countering Terrorism), see Federal’nye zakony no. 035, March 6, 2006.

17. *Ibid.*, Article 3.

18. “O protivodeistvii terrorizmu, Federal’nye zakony,” *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, February 14, 2006, 2.

19. This was the charge leveled against the head of the Russian-Chechen Friendship Society, Stanislav Dimitrievsky, who was sentenced to two years imprisonment in February 2006.

20. For the text of the decision of the Danish Ministry of Justice see <http://www.tjetjenien.dk/?congress/extradition.html>.

21. Two leading U.K. law firms, Doughty Street Chambers and Matrix Chambers (the latter being the law firm of Cherie Booth Q.C., U.K. Prime Minister Tony Blair’s wife) defended Zakayev. The full text of the judgment is available at <http://Zakayev.ru/?turnover/?papers/?50592.html>.

22. Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of August 12, 1949, and Relating to the Protection of Victims of Non-International Armed Conflicts (Protocol II) (1978), Articles 1, 4, and 13, <http://www.unhcr.ch/html/menu3/b/94.htm> (accessed June 7, 2007).

23. Anne Applebaum, “Two-Faced Chechnya Policy,” *Washington Post*, June 30, 2004, 21; and the editorial, “A Good Decision,” *Washington Post*, August 10, 2004, 18.

24. Ambassador Steven Pifer, deputy assistant secretary for European and Eurasian affairs, testimony before the U.S. Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, Washington, DC, September 16, 2003 (transcript available at <http://www.csce.gov>). See also an earlier statement to the Commission of May 9, 2002, <http://www.state.gov/p/eur/rls/rm/2002/10034.htm>.

25. Anne Applebaum, “Two-Faced Chechnya Policy,” 21.

26. “O predostavlenii politicheskogo ubezhishcha vlastiami SSHa I. Akhmadovy,” Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs press release, August 6, 2004, http://www.in.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/sp/3766DA652AA1E753C3256EE800421EDA (accessed June 7, 2007).

27. For the text of Security Council Resolution 1267 (1999) see <http://www.un.org/sc/committees/1267/resolutions.shtml> (accessed June 7, 2007).

28. For the UN’s consolidated list see <http://www.un.org/sc/committees/1267/consolist.shtml> and <http://www.unis.unvienna.org/?unis/pressrels/2003/sc7809.html> (accessed June 7, 2007).

29. Yuliya Petrovskaya and Vladimir Ivanov, “Ivanov priznalsya. Vstupivshis’ za arestovannykh v Katare agentov, MVD Rossii zatem priznal, shto u Moskvyy byli motivy ustranit’ Yandarbieva,” *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, February 27, 2004, 1.

30. “3 Russians arrested in Qatar on Chechen emissary murder suspicion: Putin’s aide comments,” RIA-Novosti, February 26, 2004.

31. The deputy chief of the Russian Interior Ministry’s Department for the Struggle against Organized Crime and Terrorism, Nikolai Ovchinnikov, told an international seminar on the prevention of terrorism held in Moscow in June 2005 that there were about five hundred “terrorist and extremist” organizations operating worldwide. ITAR-TASS, June 27, 2005.

32. “Tri dnya khamasa,” *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, March 4, 2006, 1. See Putin’s comments on Hamas made at a press conference following his talks with the Spanish Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, Madrid, February 9, 2006, http://www.kremlin.ru/appears/2006/02/09/0039_type63374type63377type63380_101410.shtml (accessed July 7, 2007).

33. Timofei Borisov, “17 osobo opasnykh,” *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, July 28, 2006.

34. John G. Dunlop, “How Many Soldiers and Civilians Died During the Russo-Chechen War of 1994–96,” *Central Asian Survey* 19, nos. 3–4 (2000): 339.

35. Memorial bulletin, “Ostorozhno: Dvery zakryvayutsya,” no. 28 (2004), <http://www.memo.ru/about/bull/b28/> (accessed June 7, 2007); Memorial, “Chechnya, 2004 god. Pokhishchenia i Ischeznoveniia lyudei,” February 7, 2005, <http://www.memo.ru/hr/hotpoints/caucas1/index.htm> (accessed June 7, 2007).

36. “Russian News Agency Reports High Casualties in Chechnya, Then Retracts Report,” Associated Press, February 17, 2003; “Mothers of Russian Soldiers Appeal to Chechen Rebels to Begin Peace Talks,” Associated Press, October 13, 2004 (accessed on LexisNexis June 7, 2007). The Russian Ministry of Defense figures are also reported in “Skorbnaya statistika,” *Krasnaya zvezda*, August 12, 2005, and are challenged by Vyacheslav Izmai’lov, “Bez vesti propavshie tsifry,” *Novaya gazeta*, August 15, 2005, 10.

37. Valery A. Tishkov, “Ethnic Conflicts in the Former U.S.S.R.: The Use and Misuse of Typologies and Data,” *Journal of Peace Research* 36, no. 5 (1999): 581–82.

38. The lower figure was cited by Taus Djabrailov, the head of Chechnya’s pro-Moscow interim parliament and reported in Sergei’ Migalin, “Taus Dzhabrailov: ‘Unichtozhat’ vsemi sredstvami.’ Predsedatel’ Gossoveta Chechni obeshchal k vyboram pokonchit’ s boevikami,” *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, August 16, 2005, 4. He claimed that 30,000–40,000 Chechens had been killed, but the bulk were ethnic Russians and others killed in the bombardment of Grozny in January 2005. The higher figure was stated by Dukvakha Abdurakhmanov, a deputy prime minister in the Kremlin-controlled Chechen civilian administration, BBC Monitoring International Reports, June 26, 2005.

39. FSB defector Aleksandr Litvinenko (murdered in London in November 2006), together with oligarch Boris Berezovsky, after being given political asylum in the United Kingdom, campaigned to demonstrate FSB involvement in the bombings. See Aleksandr Litvinenko and Yuri Fel’stinsky, *FSB vsryvaet rossiiu: Federal’naia sluzhba bezopasnosti—organizator terroristicheskikh actov, pokhishchenii i ubiistv*, 2nd ed. (New York: Liberty Publishing House, 2004).

40. See Maskhadov’s letter on the bombings, February 11, 2002, reproduced verbatim in Litvinenko and Fel’stinsky, 253–54. Interview with Basayev by BBC Russia Service, cited verbatim in *Johnson’s Russia List*, no. 3544, October 5, 1999, <http://www.cdi.org/russia/johnson/3544.html##4> (accessed June 7, 2007).

41. The data on attacks were extracted from a quasi-official Russian Web site on terrorism designed by the Foundation for Effective Politics, a group close to the Kremlin; see http://www.antiterror.ru/in_russia/81051648 (accessed June 7, 2007). We can reasonably assume that this maximizes the number of incidents. I have excluded attacks listed on the site if they can be attributed to criminal gang wars or other non-Chechen groups, and from Memorial bulletin, no. 28 (2004), <http://www.memo.ru/about/bull/b28/> (accessed June 7, 2007).

42. For the events at Budennovsk and Kizliar see Carlotta Gall and Thomas de Waal, *Chechnya: A Small Victorious War* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 256–75.

43. The thirty-page report by the North Ossetian Parliamentary Commission into the Beslan events presented by deputy parliament speaker Stanislav Kesayev on November 29, 2005, contradicted some aspects of the official account of events given by federal authorities. The report blamed “shortcomings in the activities of the forces,” (FSB, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry for Emergency Situations), <http://www.pravdabeslana.ru/?dokl.htm> (accessed June 7, 2007).

The Federal Parliamentary Commission under Alexander Torshin, a Federation Council deputy speaker, in its preliminary report of December 28, 2005, rejected attempts to blame federal forces for the incident and shifted blame to the lack of vigilance of the local authorities, <http://www.pravdabeslana.ru/?torshintez.htm> (accessed June 7, 2007). For thorough analyses of these two incidents, see the reports by John B. Dunlop, "The October 2002 Moscow Hostage-Taking Incident," Parts 1–3, *RFE/RL Organized Crime and Terrorism Watch*, December 18, 2003, January 8, 2004, and January 15, 2004; and "Beslan: Russia's 9/11?" American Committee for Peace in Chechnya and Jamestown Foundation, October 2005, <http://www.peaceinchechnya.org/reports/Beslan.pdf> (accessed February 20, 2006).

44. See John Reuter, "Chechnya's Suicide Bombers: Desperate, Devout or Deceived," American Committee for Peace in Chechnya (September 16, 2004), 1–33, <http://www.peaceinchechnya.org/?reports/SuicideReport/?SuicideReport.pdf> (accessed February 20, 2006).

45. Personalistic motives are stressed in John Reuter, "The Calculus of Chechnya's Suicide Bombers," *Chechnya Weekly*, January 13, 2005, http://www.jamestown.org/?publications_details.php?volume_id=409&issue_id=3195&article_id=2369088 (accessed June 7, 2007), and Cerwyn Moore, "Post-Modern War, Genocide and Chechnya: The Case of Female Suicide Attacks as a Problem for International Law and International Relations Theory," *International Criminal Law Review* 5, no. 3 (2005): 485–500.

46. Mia Bloom, "Mother. Daughter. Sister. Bomber," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 61, no. 6 (2005): 54–62. See also her book-length study *Dying to Kill: The Allure of Suicide Terror* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005).

47. See Yulia Yuzik, *Nevesty Allakha. Litsa i sud'by vseh zhenshchikhin-shakhidok vsorvavshisya v rossii* (Moscow: Ultra kul'tura, 2003).

48. Silke, "The Psychology of Suicidal Terrorism," in Silke, *Terrorists, Victims, and Society*, 105.

49. Pape, *Dying to Win*, 64–76; Pedahzur, *Suicide Terrorism* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005), 125–51. Pape and Pedahzur provide rigorous and balanced analyses of suicide attacks over time.

50. Whereas Dudayev applauded Basayev's heroism, he regarded the bus hijackers as criminals.

51. For an academic analysis that is sympathetic to the Russian position see Irina Mukhina, "Islamic Terrorism and the Question of National Liberation, or Problems of Contemporary Chechen Terrorism," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 28, no. 6 (2005): 515–32.

52. Lyudmila Leont'eva, Interview with Dzhokhar Dudaev, *Moskovskie novosti*, March 29, 1992.

53. Interview with Dudayev, Official Kremlin International News Broadcast, August 12, 1992.

54. "Russia's No. 1 Terrorist Basayev Killed in S. Russia—FSB Chief," RIA-Novosti, July 10, 2006, <http://en.rian.ru/russia/20060710/51130794.html> (accessed June 7, 2007).

55. Interview with Basayev, *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, March 12, 1996.

56. Aleksandr Sargin and Valery Batuev, "Dzhokhar Dudayev: 'brat' siloi chechentzev—zaniatie bessmyslennoe," *Argumenty i fakty*, December 7, 1994, 1.

57. A broadcast of Ekho Moskvyy reported in BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, March 11, 1995.

58. Andrew Higgins, "Ruined City of the Dazed, the Desperate and the Dead," *The Independent* (London), March 26, 1995, 13.

59. Interview with Basayev, *Izvestiya*, April 25, 1996.

60. Interview with Basayev, *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, March 12, 1996.

61. See Margaret Wilson, "The Psychology of Hostage-Taking," in Silke, *Terrorists, Victims, and Society*, 55–76.

62. Interview of President Abdul-Khalim Sadulaev for *Gazeta Wyborcza*, September 14, 2005, <http://www.chechenpress.co.uk/english/news/2005/09/14/01.shtml> (accessed March 2, 2006).

63. Interview with Maskhadov, *Novaya gazeta*, October 2, 2003.

64. Interview with Basayev, "Jihad Is Only Starting to Flare up in Ichkeria," *Kavkaz Center*, June 9, 2003.

65. As General Shamanov told Politkovskaya, civilians caught up in firefights were assumed "to be people connected in one way or another with the bandits." Anna Politkovskaya, *Dirty War: A Russian Reporter in Chechnya* (London: Harvill Press, 2001), 182.

66. Interview with Zakayev, Grani.ru, June 15, 2003, <http://www.zakayev.ru/turnover/comment/35505.html> (accessed June 7, 2007).

67. Sophie Shihab, "Tchetchenie: l'appel d' Aslan Maskhadov pour mettre fin a la guerre," *Le Monde*, October 4, 2003 (accessed on LexisNexis on June 7, 2007).

68. Interview with Maskhadov, *Novaya gazeta*, October 2, 2003.

69. See <http://www.kavkaz.org.uk/russ/content/2004/08/14/24674.shtml> (accessed June 7, 2007) and <http://www.kavkaz.org.uk/russ/content/2005/01/01/28350.shtml> (accessed June 7, 2007).

70. Interview with Basayev, by Andrei Babitskii, shown on ABC television (U.S.A.), July 28, 2005; extracts posted at Chechenpress.info, August 8, 2005, <http://www.chechenpress.co.uk/english/news/2005/08/08/01.shtml> (accessed February 28, 2006).

71. Statement by President Maskhadov on Beslan, September 23, 2004, http://www.chechnya-mfa.info/print_news.php?func=detail&par=123 (accessed June 7, 2007).

72. Last letter of President Aslan Maskhadov, February 25, 2005, http://www.chechnya-mfa.info/print_news.php?func=detail&par=131 (accessed June 7, 2007).

73. Author's notes of an interview with Basayev, broadcast on Channel 4 Television (U.K.), February 3, 2005. Basayev appeared on film wearing a black T-shirt with the logo "anti-terrorist" in Russian. A summary is accessible at <http://www.kavkaz.org.uk/eng/content/2005/02/03/3494.shtml> (accessed 7 June 2007); interview of Basayev, by Andrei Babitsky, shown on ABC television (U.S.A.), July 28, 2005; extracts posted August 8, 2005, <http://www.chechenpress.co.uk/?english/news/2005/08/08/01.shtml> (accessed February 28, 2006).

74. Igor Rotar, "Chechnya: po obe storony fronta," *Izvestiya*, November 24, 1995.

Where freedom fighters and terrorists differ is that a freedom fighter targets soldiers, bases, military assets and other agents of the government. Terrorists specifically and purposefully target civilian non-combatants and centers such as restaurants, stores, schools and hospitals. In Iraq and Afghanistan you can see terrorist activities in the regular threatening of civilian populations, beatings, kidnapping, murder and political assassinations that took place.

1. Hughes, J. (2007) The Chechnya conflict: Freedom fighters or terrorists? *Demokratizatsiya*, 15(3), p. 293.
2. Gross, M.I. (2010) *Moral Dilemmas of Modern War: Torture, Assassination, and Blackmail in an Age of Asymmetric Conflict* (New York: Cambridge University Press), p. 12.
3. Janeczko, M. (2014) "Face with death, even a mouse bites": Social and religious motivations behind terrorism in Chechnya. *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, 25(2), p. 433.
4. Mestrovic, S.G. (1999) Series Editor's statement. In: S. Knezys and R. Sedlickas, (Eds) *The War in Chechnya* (USA: Texas A&M University Press), p. xi

In making a judgment on freedom fighters versus terrorists, there is more at work than a "perception." I am convinced that there is a metaphysical difference, not just a perceptual one, between these two descriptors. It is helpful to get at the difference with an analogy, a consideration of the important difference between two of the seven deadly sins: greed and envy. Though often lumped together and seen simply as the desire of one person or group to possess what another owns, greed and envy are not identical. Greed has to do with acquisition; we desperately want what another has. T