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THE NORTHERN CAUCASUS, THE TSARNAEVS, AND US

By Michael A. Reynolds



*Michael A. Reynolds, an FPRI Senior Fellow, is an Associate Professor in Princeton's Department of Near Eastern Studies where he teaches courses on modern Middle Eastern and Eurasian history, comparative empire, military and ethnic conflict, and secularism. He is author of *Shattering Empires: The Clash and Collapse of the Ottoman and Russian Empires, 1908-1918* (Cambridge University Press, 2011), co-winner of the 2011 American Historical Association's George Louis Beer Prize, a Choice outstanding title, and a Financial Times book of the summer. In addition to his historical research on the Ottoman and Russian empires and their successor states, Reynolds works on contemporary issues related to Turkey, the Kurds, Azerbaijan, and the North Caucasus. He holds a Ph.D. in Near Eastern Studies from Princeton, an M.A. in Political Science from Columbia, and a B.A. in Government and Slavic Languages from Harvard.*

The identification of two young Chechen males as the alleged perpetrators of bombing of the Boston Marathon has caused Americans to ask a great many questions about the alleged perpetrators. Those questions range from the ineffable—what could drive the brothers Tamerlan and Dzhokhar Tsarnaev to commit such willful acts of violence?—to the seemingly straightforward—where is Chechnya? For understandable reasons, many commentators have been quick to downplay or disavow altogether any causal link between the brothers' ethnic background and their acts of terrorism. To be sure, the actions of any individual or even group of individuals can never be reduced to identity. Identity most assuredly is not destiny. Moreover, Tamerlan and Dzhokhar Tsarnaev were hardly typical of Chechens, and one might justifiably question whether they can even be properly described as Chechen. Their mother, Zubeidat Tsarnaev, was an ethnic Avar. Both brothers were born outside of Chechnya, Tamerlan in Kyrgyzstan and Dzhokhar in Dagestan, and they grew up outside of Chechnya. Indeed, it is not even clear that either ever spent an appreciable amount of time inside Chechnya.

Nonetheless, we know from the brothers' trails on the Internet that they both identified strongly and self-consciously as Chechens. It is, indeed, a common pattern of members of diasporas to form, and cling to, romanticized visions of their homeland and its traditions. The Tsarnaevs' selection of books, videos, and discussion groups all bore witness to the fact that they understood being Chechen to be a central part of their lives. The sports they chose to excel in, boxing and wrestling, are highly revered in Chechnya and are sources of national pride. When one examines the Tsarnaevs' past and present, one can see how the political, cultural, and religious tensions of the North Caucasus indelibly stamped their lives, shaping their worldview and self-understanding and pointing them in the direction they took.

WHO ARE THE CHECHENS?

The Chechens are an indigenous people who live in the northeast Caucasus Mountains, what is the southern edge of today's Russian Federation. They are wholly unrelated to Slavs, Turks, or Persians (Iranians), the major ethno-linguistic groups who bound the Caucasus, and they have resided on their territory from at least the beginning of recorded history. Chechnya is a heavily forested and mountainous land, and throughout history was remote from

major centers of population and power. Up until the nineteenth century the Chechens lived free of centralized government and outside control. They instead relied on their own codes of customary law and institutions like blood feud to mediate and moderate conflict and to provide order. Like many mountain peoples, the Chechens developed a culture that prized self-reliance, honor, and the martial virtues and that tied individuals tightly to their clans and clans to their members.

The Chechens are Sunni Muslims. Islam reached the North Caucasus in 654 AD when the Arab-Muslim armies of the original Caliphate captured the town of Derbent in neighboring Dagestan. Dagestan eventually became a major center of Arabo-Islamic civilization and learning, but due to the rugged geography of the Caucasus, however, it took several centuries for Islam to spread through Dagestan and then to Chechnya. It is believed that by the sixteenth century, however, most Chechens had adopted Islam. Nonetheless, their knowledge of Islam was basic and their practice of Islam was relatively lax. The Chechens' customary law and traditions, known as *adat* from the Arabic word for custom to distinguish them from the *sharia*, continued to define life.

EMPIRE, RESISTANCE, AND ISLAMIZATION

The place of Islam in Chechen society underwent a fundamental change in the nineteenth century. In response to the steady encroachment of the Imperial Russian state, Cossacks, and Slavic settlers on the lands of the highlanders, a powerful revivalist Islamic movement emerged among the Dagestanis and Chechens. These highlanders saw their salvation in Islam. One struggle was to impose a stricter, more purely Islamic order on their communities. They therefore strove to eliminate *adat* and to destroy the *munafiqun*, those highlanders whom they judged hypocrites for professing Islam but not properly practicing it. The other struggle was to drive out the infidel Russians.

The Avars, a people living in the highlands of Dagestan, provided the three imams who led this movement. Unlike the Chechens, whose knowledge of Islam was comparatively rudimentary, the Avars had developed a formidable culture of Islamic learning and produced accomplished scholars of Arabic, Islamic law, and the Islamic sciences. To this day, the Avars as a whole take great pride in their tradition of Islamic scholarship and leadership of the highlander resistance. They tend to see themselves as the “top dogs” of not just Dagestan, but of the Caucasus as a whole.

Together, the Avars, other Dagestanis, and the Chechens held off the massive Russian Army for three decades of desperate and cruel warfare. The most famous of the three imams was Shamil, a legendary commander who led the jihad for a quarter century. The highlanders' bravery and valor deeply impressed the Russians, both military officers and authors such as Pushkin, Lermontov, and Bestuzhev. Leo Tolstoy immortalized the Chechens in his novel *Hadji Murat*. The Chechens, by virtue of their numbers and martial skill formed a key part of Shamil's coalition of Muslim mountaineers. They chafed under Shamil's insistence on strict adherence to the Sharia, including bans on drinking, smoking, music and dancing, but the experience of waging an extended jihad against a merciless Russian Army fused the Chechens' religious and national identities. By contrast, the neighboring Ingush, with whom the Chechens share ethno-linguistic ties, only completed their conversion to Islam in the nineteenth century and largely stayed aloof from Shamil's struggle.

Although Shamil surrendered in 1859, the Chechens never reconciled themselves to outside domination. In 1878, they rebelled en masse, albeit unsuccessfully. The *abrek*, formerly a renegade highlander, became a folk hero and symbol of resistance. As one Chechen revolutionary put it, “The authorities terrorized the people, and the abreks terrorized the authorities.”

UNBOWED BEFORE SOVIET POWER

The Russian Revolution of 1917 and the collapse of the Russian empire saw a brief anarchic period of freedom in the North Caucasus, but the Red Army conquered the region in 1919. Bolsheviks initially sought to accommodate Chechen sensitivities by tolerating Islam and reinterpreting the *abrek* as a progressive anti-colonial figure. They also introduced for the first time a fixed territorial entity called Chechnya, creating in 1922 a Chechen Autonomous Oblast (province) inside the Russian Soviet Socialist Federative Republic. Chechnya was not accorded the status of republic for two reasons. One was that unlike the Georgians and Armenians, the Chechens had no extensive written literature in their own language. Arabic, as in Dagestan, was the language of learning and record keeping. Thus, the

Bolsheviks classified the Chechens as a backward nation. And, second, unlike the Azerbaijanis, the Chechens were too few and located on the Russian side of the Caucasus.

These nominal concessions notwithstanding, the Bolsheviks retained deep suspicions of the Chechens as an unreliable population and in any event were intent on transforming their culture into a Soviet Socialist one. Communist oppression quickly proved as severe in Chechnya as it was elsewhere in the Soviet Union. That oppression peaked in February 1944 when Stalin ordered the mass deportation of the entire nation of roughly 400,000 Chechens to Central Asia and Siberia. Loaded onto cattle cars and dumped on the steppe in the winter, an estimated one-third of the population perished. The official pretext for the deportations was Chechen collaboration with the Nazis. Yet the Nazis had never reached Chechnya, and by 1944 were no longer in a position to threaten the Caucasus. The more likely reason was that Stalin was preparing for a potential war with Turkey and sought to clear his southern border of troublesome and potentially disloyal nations. Already in January 1944, the Kremlin had begun reviewing the possibility of altering the border with Turkey, and the following year Stalin made territorial and other demands on Turkey. Chechens in 1918, 1878, and earlier had posed threats to Russia during wars with the Turks.

Even the inhumanity of Stalin, however, could not break the Chechens, whose exceptional character made a lasting impression on yet another famous Russian author, the Nobel laureate Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn. Solzhenitsyn encountered the Chechens when he was a political prisoner, or *zek*, in the Soviet state concentration camps. Solzhenitsyn's words are routinely recited in discussions of the Chechens, and for good reason. His words vividly convey the extraordinary strength of the Chechens:

There was one nation that would not give in, would not acquire the mental habits of submission—and not just individual rebels among them, but the whole nation to a man. These were the Chechens.

I would say that of all the special settlers, the Chechens alone showed themselves *zeks* in spirit. They had been treacherously snatched from their home, and from that day they believed in nothing...

The Chechens never sought to please, to ingratiate themselves with the bosses; their attitude was always haughty and even openly hostile. They treated the laws on universal education and the state curriculum with contempt, and to preserve them from being corrupted would not send their little girls to school nor indeed all their boys. They didn't send their women to the kolkhoz. And they themselves did not toil in the fields

During the 1990s, when the Chechens were again waging a desperate and seemingly hopeless war against Russia, Western commentators were fond of citing Solzhenitsyn's foregoing words, but typically left out the less flattering aspect of his quote:

They tried whenever possible to find themselves jobs as drivers: looking after an engine was not degrading, their passion for rough riding found an outlet in the constant movement of a motor vehicle, and their passion for thieving in the opportunities drivers enjoy. This last passion, however, they also gratified directly. 'We've been robbed,' 'we've been cleaned out' were concepts that they introduced to peaceful, honest, sleepy Kazakhstan. They were capable of rustling cattle, robbing a house, or sometimes taking what they wanted to by force. As far as they were concerned, the local inhabitants, and those exiles who submitted so readily, belonged more or less to the same breed as the bosses. They respected only rebels.

And here is an extraordinary thing—everyone was afraid of them. No one could stop them from living as they did. The regime that had ruled the land for thirty years could not force them to respect its laws.

As Solzhenitsyn testifies, not even the world's most sophisticated totalitarian regime could compel the Chechens to submit, and by this the Chechens distinguished themselves from the other nations of the Soviet Union. Thirteen years after the deportation, the Chechens won the right to return to their homeland. Not surprisingly, the Communist Party never had much success in penetrating Chechen society, and when the Soviet Union collapsed in

1991, the Communist Party effectively evaporated instantly in Chechnya.

THE END OF COMMUNISM AND THE EMERGENCE OF AN INDEPENDENT CHECHNYA

The years from 1991 to 1994 marked another period of anarchy in Chechen history. Chechnya, joined together with neighboring Ingushetia, constituted a territorial-administrative entity inside the Russian Federation. The recently formed populist National Congress of the Chechen People displaced the Communist functionaries during the August 1991 attempted coup in Moscow and declared Chechnya's separation from Ingushetia and its independence from Russia. The nationalists coalesced around a former Soviet Air Force General Dzhokhar Dudaev and chose him as Chechnya's president. Dudaev's military background won him respect while the fact that he came from a small clan assuaged concerns about the centralization of power.

Under Dudaev, the Chechens had no real success in forming a functioning state. They had few experienced civil servants, and, being a fiercely egalitarian people, they had little inclination to listen to Dudaev or anyone else. "Every Chechen is his own president," lamented one Chechen politician in 1993. Dudaev recognized the right to bear arms to be an inviolable part of the patrimony of every Chechen male. It was a popular measure, but one hardly conducive to building a state. Chechnya, moreover, became a favored place for stolen car rings and smuggling of all sorts of goods ranging from heroin through consumer goods to arms. International flights flew into and out of Chechnya at will. Russian President Boris Yeltsin made a number of ham-handed, semi-covert attempts to rein in or overthrow Dudaev, but succeeded only giving a volatile Dudaev fodder to publicly humiliate him.

THE FIRST CHECHEN WAR AND THE ARRIVAL OF INTERNATIONAL JIHADISTS

Finally, in December 1994, a frustrated Yeltsin, having listened to his defense minister's boastful promise to subdue the Chechens in a matter of hours, ordered Russian tanks to take Grozny and to restore "constitutional rule" in Chechnya. It was a disastrous decision. Although the Chechens themselves had grown weary of Dudaev's administrative incompetence and the disorder, Yeltsin's bid at intimidation could guaranty only war from a people who prided themselves as warriors and rebels and who possessed living memories of Stalin's deportations.

The sight of the outgunned and outnumbered Chechens fighting to defend their homes and families generated tremendous sympathy around the world. It also sparked immediate interest among jihadists. From the battlefields of Afghanistan and the former Yugoslavia, they began making their way to the North Caucasus. The most famous of these was a young Saudi known as Amir al-Khattab. Along with their arms, the jihadists brought to the Caucasus a rigorous and austere interpretation of Islam known as Salafism.

Chechnya would seem to be an unpromising terrain for Salafism. Among other things, Salafis vigorously condemn Sufism, a mystical form of Islam that formed the basis of popular Chechen religion. Salafis despise in particular Sufi prayer rituals, including the signature communal circle prayer dance of the Chechens that Lev Tolstoy described in *Hadji Murat*.

Seven decades of Communist suppression of religious practice, however, had left the vast majority of Chechens ignorant about the practice and doctrines of their faith but eager to learn more. The jihadists' knowledge of Arabic and ability to cite in the original the sources of Islam such as the Quran and hadiths coupled with their willingness to put their own lives on the line in jihad proved persuasive to many young Chechens at war. Among those swayed was Shamil Basaev, namesake of the Imam and the most capable and famous of the Chechens' field commanders. These commanders saw in the idea of holy war a means to make sense of their personal experience and the Chechens' struggle. Basaev steadily adopted more strident religious rhetoric and poses and began to collaborate with Khattab. Others, such as Zelimkhan Yandarbiev, a poet who succeeded Dudaev as president when the latter was killed by a missile in April 1996, saw in Salafi Islam a way to overcome the clan loyalties that had hampered Chechens' efforts to build a state under Dudaev.

The Chechens fought the Russian Federation to a standstill and in the summer of 1996 the two sides signed a peace agreement. The agreement's ambiguity on whether or not Chechnya was part of the Russian Federation or not served both sides, and the Russian Federal forces withdrew. Chechnya was now, *de facto* at least, independent.

The Chechens' stunning victory proved a major boon to the cause of jihad. Coming on the heels of the Soviet

withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989 and the American pull out from Somalia, the Chechens had provided an even more vivid demonstration of the promise of violent jihad, of how even small groups of Muslims could, with enough courage and faith, defeat a major world power. Militants from around the world flocked to Chechnya and began to talk of liberating Muslims elsewhere in the Caucasus, along the Volga River, and beyond. Among those attracted to Chechnya was Ayman al-Zawahiri, a founder and now leader of al-Qaeda. Al-Zawahiri was detained in Dagestan in December 1996 before he could enter Chechnya. Uncertain as to whom they were holding, Russian authorities released him six months later.

In January 1997, the Chechens held elections and selected as their new leader Aslan Maskhadov, another former Soviet military man and the architect of their victory, in 1996. Undermined by clan rifts and boxed in by a new class of young, truculent, and unruly warlords, however, Maskhadov found himself unable to create order. Chechnya quickly slipped into disarray. Gangs of kidnappers and criminals roamed the land and across borders in search of victims. Often these gangs worked in tandem with the jihadists. In exchange for financial support, jihadists sanctioned in the name of God crimes against infidels and so-called apostates, i.e. Muslims who made lucrative targets. It was a variation of a principle formulated by Lenin, "The worse, the better." The more chaos in and around Chechnya the greater the popular desire for some order, even that of a crudely applied sharia. Chechen warlords, bored in peacetime, found the jihadist message appealing. Seeking to recover his authority by bolstering his credentials, the once secular leaning Maskhadov declared *sharia* the law of the land, but he had already lost control.

It is important to note that the experience of Chechnya in the 1990s did not demonstrate the immutable character of Chechen culture. Sovietization, the deportations, urbanization, and the war itself all profoundly affected Chechen cultural norms. For example, the cult of the elders, by which Chechens, like most North Caucasians, would routinely accept the opinions of the older males as law, declined precipitously. The new class of young, sometimes glamorous, warlords felt little obligation to pay heed to the old who had not fought. In this the jihadists encouraged them, teaching that what should merit public respect was one's beliefs, not one's birth. The masculine ideal of the Chechen as an irrepressible warrior remained, but much of the culture that had nourished that ideal and bounded it with obligations to others had withered away.

THE SECOND CHECHEN WAR AND THE CONTAINMENT OF JIHADISM

In August 1999, in an attempt to deliver on their promise to spread jihad, Basaev and Khattab invaded the neighboring Republic of Dagestan. Basaev brought with him as his deputy the famed Dagestani Avar poet, sixty-seven year old Adallo Aliev in a bid to rally the Avars to his cause and rekindle the alliance that had worked so well under Shamil. Whereas the Dagestanis in the first war had sympathized strongly with their fellow Muslim highlanders in Chechnya, the wave of kidnappings originating from Chechen territory had so thoroughly alienated them that Dagestani volunteers now massed with their own arms in readiness to repulse the invasion. Basaev and Khattab's failed attack, followed shortly by bombings of apartment buildings in Buinaksk, Moscow, and Volgograd, touched off the second Chechen War and the rise to prominence of Vladimir Putin, then a relatively unknown intelligence officer.

The invasion triggered a split within Chechnya. Akhmat Kadyrov, the mufti of Chechnya, went over to the Russian side. Kadyrov was no Russian-stooge or opportunist. Under Dudaev he had declared jihad against the Russians and he had been one of three Chechen negotiators at the 1996 peace talks. Kadyrov in the post-war years he had grown increasingly alarmed by the crude theology, bellicose rhetoric, and aggressive behavior of those whom he termed "Wahhabis" to better underscore the foreign, Gulf Arab origins of their theology and financing. He came to see the foreign fighters as the greatest threat to the Chechens' culture and well-being.

Kadyrov's switch was a momentous development, as it made it vastly easier now for self-respecting Chechens to do the formerly unthinkable and side with the Russians. Wisely, Putin embraced the former rebel, put him in control of Chechnya, and funded him generously. Faced with the choice either to join an increasingly extreme and desperate band of Islamists to fight a rejuvenated, resolute, and even more ruthless Russian Army, Chechen rebels slowly but steadily began to align themselves with Kadyrov. Whereas outside observers directed relentless—and often justified—criticism of the needless cruelty of the Russian forces, they overlooked Putin's steady and effective pursuit of a policy of "Chechenization." The jihadists grew steadily weaker, and even multiple acts of terror, the seizures of a Moscow theater in 2002 and a school in Beslan, North Ossetia in 2004 being the most spectacularly

horrid, failed to change the course of the conflict. Khattab was killed in 2002, and Basaev fell in 2006. In 2009, Moscow declared its “counter-terror” mission fulfilled and withdrew its troops, leaving local Chechen forces to maintain order.

Although the jihadist movement, which now refers to itself grandly as the “Caucasus Emirate,” is incapable of overthrowing the Chechen government, there is no reason to expect it to fade away entirely any time soon. After Akhmat Kadyrov was assassinated in 2004, Moscow backed his son Ramzan, eventually installing him as the ruler of Chechnya. The son distinguished himself with a resolve and barbarity that match those of the jihadists. He has coopted Islam, even going so far as to perversely cite the figure of Kunta Hajji, a Chechen Sufi sheikh from the 19th century, who preached an introspective mystical Islam, as a spiritual mentor instructing him to wipe out his opponents. On the streets of Chechen cities Kadyrov’s supporters enforce their own eclectic form of Islamic order through coercion and intimidation.

This sort of cooptation of Islam, however, has not defused Islamic radicalism so much as it has redrawn the lines of conflict. Intense desire for revenge born of personal reasons motivates some Chechens to take up arms against Kadyrov. Other fighters inspired more purely by the cause of Sunni radicalism have arrived from lands as far away as Buryatia and Canada, not to mention the Middle East. Next door to Chechnya in Dagestan, where the Tsarnaevs have roots and family, a highly complex insurgency has been simmering for a decade and a half. The breakdown of the economy, the near collapse of the Russian state, and the ensuing struggle for resources in the 1990s reinvigorated the role of clan and ethnic ties. Indeed, the need for protection from and the desire for revenge against poorly trained, corrupt, and occasionally sadistic police breathed new life into institutions like vendetta.

Much of the violence in Dagestan thus lacks real ideological content.

Yet not unlike earlier in Chechnya where some saw a unitary Islamic law as the best remedy to the endemic conflicts of a polity divided along clan lines, in the ethnic mosaic of Dagestan one finds jihadists and their supporters who point to the austere Islam of the Salafis as the solution to their society’s multiple challenges. For many, Salafi Islam’s chief appeal lies in its promise of a black and white standard of justice and a mechanism, Islamic law, by which to achieve it. Among this group is a subset of Islamists who find the linkage that Salafi Islam draws between theology and politics compelling, and these join an explicitly religious war. As a result, layered over the quotidian violence of gangs and reprisals, one finds a campaign waged against Sufi Islam and its practitioners. Indeed, assassinations of religious figures known for their opposition to Salafism have become routine in Dagestan. Meanwhile, Salafi preachers on YouTube and elsewhere rail against Sufism in the Caucasus as a repugnant and contemptible distorting innovation in Islam.

One of those preachers, Sheikh Abu Malik Abdulhamid al-Juhani, is a favorite of Salafis in Dagestan, and was a favorite of Tamerlan Tsarnaev in particular. In his sermons on YouTube, the Saudi preacher categorically rejects Sufism as a polytheistic corruption. He also denounces those who follow Caucasian traditions of Islam, warning that the Quran condemns those who imitate the non-Islamic practices of one’s fathers. Other burning concerns of al-Juhani’s followers and of other Salafis in the Caucasus is the internet’s ability to facilitate immoral relations between young males and females and the lascivious nature of pop music in Dagestan. According to some reports, worry over what she perceived as her son Tamerlan’s dissolute lifestyle was what provoked Zubeidat Tsarnaeva to embrace a more rigorous practice of Islam and to pressure her son to follow. This is a story as old as religion itself. But the path that led the Tsarnaevs to militant Islam passed through the North Caucasus.

The sources of violence in the North Caucasus are thus complex, inter-related, and mutually reinforcing. A theme of radical Islam worth highlighting is that of uncompromising resistance to injustice. Jihadist rhetoric and imagery in the North Caucasus celebrates bold defiance of iniquitous authority. This theme, a romantic one in its essence, is powerfully seductive to North Caucasian males who are socialized to revere courage and men who assert themselves fearlessly. For frustrated young men facing lives of circumscribed options, jihad offers a chance to demonstrate their manhood and even possibly attain glory.

Whether or not Tamerlan Tsarnaev ever had direct contact with the North Caucasian jihadist underground is unclear, although Russian sources report that in 2012 he was known to have met multiple times with a Salafi who maintained active ties to that underground. But it is clear that he and Dzhokhar identified closely with Chechnya and that the violence and ideological struggles ongoing in the North Caucasus exerted a profound impact on their

worldviews.

CONCLUSION

The Tsarnaevs' North Caucasian roots, of course, did not cause them to attack the population of the United States. But their choice to embrace a radical and militant interpretation of Islam and to carry out bombings and attack the police becomes more comprehensible when placed into the historical and cultural context that helped form them. The peculiar historical legacy and the current state of the North Caucasus render it especially vulnerable to jihadism. It is not a coincidence that, alone in the post-Soviet space, this region has been a site of chronic jihadist insurgencies. The highlanders' distinctive culture of defiance and the formative struggle they waged in the name of Islam against the Russian empire coupled with the suppression of traditional religious authorities in the Soviet era, the devolution of the region's economic and political institutions, and a system of governance that stifles constructive initiative provide favorable conditions favorable to militant Islam. Current conditions give young men in the North Caucasus, of whom there are many, limited prospects. These conditions will persist for another generation, perhaps longer. Today, rebellion in the name of Islam offers these men a simulacrum of highlander tradition, a reassuring reaffirmation of roots at a time when so much of that tradition has evaporated, while also holding out the possibility of glory. The North Caucasus will, therefore, likely remain an incubator of jihadism for some time to come.

This is a grim picture. The one piece of good news, and it is not an insignificant one, is that the bulk of the people of the North Caucasus has rejected, and continues to reject, the jihadi program. When Salafi jihadists finally delivered on their promise to kill the eminent Sufi sheikh Said Afandi in August 2012, over one hundred thousand Dagestanis, an astounding number, came to his funeral in a popular rebuke to the jihadis. Thus, although it is highly likely that jihadism will continue to simmer in the North Caucasus for some time, it is unlikely to boil over.

There is relatively little the United States can do directly to improve the situation in the North Caucasus. Suspicion in Russian security circles is strong that the United States, acting through partners such as Saudi Arabia and Georgia, has at various times obliquely supported the jihadists in order to weaken Russia and undermine its control of energy supplies in the region. Similarly, the United States has few potential local allies. The peoples of the North Caucasus have little trust or sympathy for the United States. Trapped in the crossfire between implacably self-righteous, violent, and cruel jihadists and ineffective, corrupt, and often brutal government institutions, they are profoundly skeptical of the intentions of any outside actor.

There are three steps that the United States might consider taking to reduce threats emanating from the North Caucasus. The most obvious would be to pay greater attention to the various North Caucasian diasporas. Those diasporas are not especially large, although intelligence, security, and immigration professionals will have to make judgments regarding how many, if any, more resources should be devoted to such tasks.

A second and related step would be to expand cooperation and information sharing with Russian intelligence and police services. Needless to say, Russia has far more experience and far more at stake in the North Caucasus. Whereas many Westerners have focused on the perceived failings of the Russians in Chechnya and the North Caucasus, American analysts might benefit from closely studying also what the Russians and their local allies have done right. Needless to say, any expanded cooperation with Russia should be pursued only with the utmost diligence.

Finally, the United States might consider what, if anything, it might do to support investment in the region. Although an improving economy will not necessarily undercut jihadists, it would certainly give their opponents more resources and a greater stake in defeating them. Such investment need not come only from Russia. In recent years, Azerbaijani businessmen have been making increasing investments in neighboring Dagestan. Any steps the United States can take to enhance productive economic activity in the region would be helpful.

FPRI, 1528 Walnut Street, Suite 610, Philadelphia, PA 19102-3684

For more information, contact Eli Gilman at 215-732-3774, ext. 255, email fpri@fpri.org, or visit us at www.fpri.org.