REGIONAL CONFLICTS

CIVIL WAR IN CHECHNIA: POLITICAL FAILURE AND STRATEGIC RESPONSE[1]

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Over the last 15 years, Chechnia's history has been a series of political failures. The last two of these failures, which occurred in 2003, have ushered in a civil war and are currently reflected in the shifting tactics of the conflict. For years to come, they will be played out in terms of personal suffering, regional instability, and geostrategic response.

The recent political failure in Chechnia began with the structure of the government that was ratified in the constitutional referendum held in March 2003. The resulting presidential system is incompatible with the chronic fragmentation of Chechen society, particularly along the traditional lines of Chechnia's 160-some *teips*, or clans. An individual executive inevitably will benefit some groups over others. In a political society as deeply and elaborately divided as that of Chechnia this can only exacerbate cleavages and increase political alienation.

Instead of a presidential system, Chechnia needed some variety of consociational institutions, such as those that helped to stabilize the neighboring Republic of Daghestan from 26 July, 1994 until a presidential system was imposed there on 26 July, 2003.[2]

[2] Daghestan adopted constitutional alterations instituting a presidential system of government on 26 July, 2003. The republic is required to elect a president by 2006. It is expected that current State Council representatives will serve out their terms, which are set to expire in that year. It is probable that the current Chairman of the State Council, Magomedali Magomedov, will be elected to the presidency in 2006. For a discussion of consociational democracy in Daghestan, see: R. Ware, E. Kisriev, "Ethnic Parity and Political Stability in Daghestan: A Consociational Approach," *Europe and Asia Studies*, Vol. 53, No. 1, January 2001. For discussions of the recentralization process that has undermined Daghestan's consociational institutions and imposed a presidential system see: R. Ware, E. Kisriev, "Russian Recentralization Arrives in the Republic of Daghestan: Implications for Institutional Integrity and Political Stability", *Eastern European Constitutional Review*, Vol. 10, No. 1, Winter, 2001; R. Ware, E. Kisriev, W. Patzelt, U. Roericht, "Russia and Chechnia from a Daghestani Perspective," *Post-Soviet Affairs*, Vol. 18, No. 4, December 2002; R. Ware, E. Kisriev, "Bending Not Breaking: Daghestan's Presidential Expedient," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 4 (22), 2003.

[1] The article was completed on 15 March, i.e. before the death of president of Chechnia Akhmad Kadyrov.

In some states, consociational systems have assisted societies that are divided along ethnic or religious lines in making their transition to democratic institutions. While consociational systems have varied widely, they have shared some common features. Within a consociational system, political elites from each of the social segments cooperate in what political scientist, Arend Lijphart, describes as a "grand coalition."[3] Political bodies guarantee proportional representation to all social segments, and veto powers permit a single representative from any group to sideline policies or legislation that are viewed as harmful to his group. Finally, consociational systems permit spheres of autonomy to all social segments.

Consociational systems tend to have problems of their own. The brittleness of some has led to their disintegration. They have been most successful in societies undergoing sustained economic development (such as Austria, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Switzerland). In other countries (such as Lebanon and Nigeria) they have collapsed with catastrophic results. Nevertheless, Daghestan's consociational system had demonstrated remarkable resilience, and would probably have provided a better model for the Chechen constitution than the federal institutions, upon which the new Chechen government is based.

Chechnia's traditional social structure suggested numerous possibilities for consociational innovation. For example, Chechnia might have been better served by a bicameral legislature with a lower house representing small single mandate districts determined strictly in terms of equal increments of the total population, along with an upper house that might have been constituted by one member of each *teip* regardless of the group's size.[4] An executive might have been chosen by a plurality of the upper house for a two-year term, with the provision that members of no single *teip* could hold the executive office twice within a period of five years.

Such a system might have been built upon Chechnia's traditional social structures with a view toward transcending the cleavages among them, and binding them within a cohesive political framework. Were such a government successful in providing a stable political foundation for Chechen society, then subsequent economic development might have rendered traditional social cleavages (especially kinship structures) less salient over time, so that a presidential system might have become more appropriate in twenty or thirty years. In the best scenario, consociational institutions might have helped Chechnia to make a transition toward a political system in greater conformity with the Russian federal constitution.

In short, Moscow might have done better: a) to extend both Daghestan and Chechnia ample doses of political autonomy within a federal framework, at least on an interim basis for one or more decades; b) to tolerate Daghestan's consociational institutions for at least another decade; and c) to use Daghestan consociational system as a model for the establishment of similarly consociational institutions in Chechnia. However, this political strategy was precluded by the Putin administration's focus upon an enforced uniformity of regional governments within a centralized federal structure. Consequently, 2003 became the year that the Kremlin imposed presidential systems on both of these North Caucasian republics.

Of course a consociational system would also have had disadvantages. First, it might have produced a weak government when Chechnia's desperate social circumstances called for a strong government. Secondly, it might have tended to institutionalize rather than eliminate Chechnia's chronic political fragmentation. Moreover, since April 2000 Moscow has raised legitimate concerns about regional constitutions that fail to conform with their federal counterpart.

Nevertheless, Chechnia's constitutional referendum also provided grounds for hope. Though electoral irregularities were evident, the results of the referendum appeared to reflect a broad consensus among the Chechen population that the time had come to move forward within the federal framework. In so far as this consensus ever existed it marked an important milestone, raising hopes that there might be sufficient political will to make the presidential system work.

These were the hopes that were betrayed in September 2003, when the presidential election was blatantly manipulated in order to extend new authority to Akhmad Kadyrov. Kadyrov is a former

[3] See: A. Lijphart, *Democracy in Plural Societies,* Yale University Press, New Haven, CT, 1977.

[4] In practice this would have opened the door to controversy since divisions among teips are not always unequivocal and some sub-groups have claims to membership in more than one *teip*.

Mufti of Chechnia, who had fought against Russian forces in the first Chechen war. However, he grew concerned about the rise of Wahhabism and criminality that took place in Chechnia during its years of *de facto* independence from 1996 to 1999. When the second war began, Kadyrov opposed the militant forces led by Chechen President Aslan Maskhadov. Appointed by Moscow in June 2000 to head the administration of Chechnia, he soon produced a plan for social "stabilization" that was largely realized in last year's referendum and presidential election.

Unfortunately, electoral machinations on behalf of Kadyrov deprived Chechen voters of a legitimate political process through which they might have influenced the terms of their political union. Instead the administration that emerged from this process has dictated those terms in a sometimes brutal and arbitrary manner. What might have been the commencement of a process of political reintegration, was revealed to be a cynical consecration of political repression.

The months since the October presidential election in Chechnia have begun to reveal the consequences of the Kremlin's failure to counterbalance the power of Akhmad Kadyrov. Moscow can still dangle budgetary carrots and brandish military sticks before the Chechen President. Yet because Moscow has failed to cultivate a counterbalance, or even a capable understudy, to Kadyrov, and because the latter has steadily strengthened his own political and paramilitary muscles, Moscow is now nearly as dependent upon Kadyrov as Kadyrov is dependent upon Moscow. The irony in events of recent months is that Moscow weakened its own hand in Chechnia when it countenanced the manipulation of the Chechen presidential election.

In fairness, it is unlikely that any election result would have removed Kadyrov entirely from the administration of Chechnia. With at least three thousand armed men under Kadyrov's command by August 2003, any electoral victor would have had to make a deal with him. At one point, during the summer it appeared that Moscow was interested in opening a door to such a deal when Kremlin officials made a series of ambivalent remarks about Kadyrov, and then listed him among Moscow's United Nations delegation.

Whatever reservations the Kremlin may have had about Kadyrov in July they seem to have been resolved by 3 September, 2003, when a meeting between Khusein Dzhabrailov and Alexander Voloshin was followed by the withdrawal of the former from the Chechen presidential race. The Kremlin enticed Aslambek Aslakhanov from the race with the offer of an executive position, and then stood by as Malik Saidullayev was disqualified on a technicality. Saidullayev was Kadyrov's last, and perhaps most, serious electoral challenger; it is possible that he would have won a fair election.

Implications of Chechnia's current situation may be elucidated by consideration of the consequences that might have followed from Saidullayev's victory. Suppose, for a moment, that the presidential election had been fair, and that Saidullayev had won. Even with an electoral mandate of sixty or seventy percent, Saidullayev would have lacked the strength to rule, in no small part because he lacks paramilitary muscle. Even with popular support he therefore would have lacked leverage with Chechnia's numerous armed groups.

Hence, such a president-elect would have had little alternative but to yield to the necessity of a power sharing arrangement with Kadyrov. Kadyrov might have served, for example, as a prime minister or a minister of the interior. Yet regardless of his title, Kadyrov would have retained more raw power than the new president would have been likely to acquire during his first years in office. In such a situation, Kadyrov might have remained effectively head of the government, though perhaps on a nominally "transitional" or "emergency" basis. Hence, a hypothetical electoral victor, such as Saidullayev, might have amounted to little more than a minister of finance, or a ceremonial head of state, at least during the first years of his administration.

Yet any such arrangement would have been preferable to a brutal monopoly of power, and would have been preferable not only from the standpoint of many Chechens, but also, ironically, from Moscow's perspective. Chechnia needs someone with the entrepreneurial instincts of a Saidullayev to focus on economic and civic development. Yet Saidullayev, or anyone like him, would have needed someone not so dis-similar from Kadyrov to handle security. Nevertheless, a second locus of Chechen administrative power, however much weaker than Kadyrov's, would have served to limit Kadyrov's scope. Two leaders with differing claims to power might have checked one another's excesses.

Evidently, the Kremlin has shelved Aslakhanov in a nominal executive position against such contingencies. Yet if Kadyrov were replaced by Aslakhanov, the latter would have little more power than federal forces could deliver to him, and therefore little capacity to govern. Moreover, the elimination of Kadyrov would mean that Moscow would likely face Kadyrov's armed supporters, now more than 4,000 strong, as a source of potentially greater hostilities than those which are currently being mounted by militant commanders. For these reasons, Moscow cannot readily do without Kadyrov, and each month has seen an increase in Kadyrov's powers. Kadyrov is likely to perceive himself as less than entirely dependent upon Moscow, and as bearing some influence with regard to the latter. What are Kremlin officials going to do when Kadyrov realizes that Moscow needs Kadyrov at least as much as Kadyrov needs Moscow?

There are currently tensions between Moscow and the Kadyrov administration, and these are likely to increase. As the militants grow weaker, their resistance will provide less of a unifying force for the administrations in Moscow and Grozny, which are therefore likely to view each other in terms that are increasingly ambivalent and even adversarial. Coordination between federal forces and the forces of Kadyrov is currently ineffective, and is prone to further deterioration. It is likely that an atmosphere of disappointment, frustration, mistrust, and muffled hostility will develop between these groups.

Shifting Tactics

Within Chechnia, Kadyrov's power is limited only by chaotic socioeconomic conditions, and by the militants. Because they lack popular support, and because they increasingly lack funding, the militants have no hope of victory. The desperate and disorganized gambit on the part of some of Ruslan Gelayev's men to move from Chechnia to Georgia by way of Daghestan in December 2003, the isolated ignobility of Gelayev's death just six weeks later, and the growing reliance upon female suicide bombers, are all emblematic of the militants' operational weakness. The same period saw the capture of Magomed Khambiev, the former Chechen defense minister, and the death of other Chechen field commanders, such as Akhmed Basnukayev. The modest success of Kadyrov's mission to Saudi Arabia and the assassination of Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev, the former Chechen president turned Persian Gulf fund-raiser, are indicative of the militants' decreasing financial capacity. The only goal that they are now capable of achieving is the stubborn perpetuation of conflict and instability. Hence, they will strive to perpetuate social disarray with the aim of thereby restricting Kadyrov's power.

Moscow, Grozny, and multiple militant factions are now competing to support their respective claims of political legitimacy under circumstances in which each lacks popular support. The result has been a shift away from large-scale mobilization toward tactics that allow for operations that are more effectively targeted and punctuated.

Targeted abductions and murders are now a tactical preference of all sides, including federal forces, Kadyrov's forces, militants, criminals, and anyone with a serious grudge. By most accounts, federal forces are gradually doing less of this, while Kadyrov's forces are doing more. These methods may be somehow darkly preferable to the cleansing operations that stained federal tactics for three preceding years, but only because they substitute retail for wholesale brutality. Moreover, these methods are inevitably imperfect in their targeting, and are inevitably exploited for personal objectives. Apart from personal injustice, such errors are also politically corrosive and conducive to the inspiration of further militancy.

At the same time that federal forces have shifted tactics, so have Islamist leaders, such as Shamil Basayev, Dokku Umarov, Abdul-Malik Mezhidov, and Abu Walid. As they increasingly are finding themselves without the local and international support required to sustain guerrilla warfare, they are also reverting to more highly targeted techniques, involving abductions, and suicide bombers. The profiles of these martyrs seem to run a gamut from those of committed, and perhaps embittered, combatants[5] to women

[5] Such as the woman who essentially fought her way into the doorway of a military bus near Mozdok on 5 June, 2003.

who are victims of manipulation.[6] Such attacks are emblematic of deep despair on the part of the Chechen population.

It appears that both tactical and strategic objectives are behind the shift to suicide attacks. First, it is a tactic accessible to weakened militant forces, and is therefore likely to remain a feature of their struggle for some time to come. Second, as explicated separately by Shamil Basayev and Abu Walid, it is a tactic that enables the militants to exact retribution against the Russian population in their home territory for their tacit support of the current Chechen war.

However, this tactic amounts to a tacit acceptance of defeat on the part of the militants. Militant leaders have openly embraced terrorism despite its propensity to consolidate popular support for the Putin administration and diminish international support for their cause.[7]

Yet suicide tactics also have a strategic objective. The militants hope that terror will sway Russian public opinion against the war and force a negotiated settlement. Here ends and means are patently inconsistent since, in the past, terrorist attacks have hardened public opinion against Chechen militants, and since Russian officials have steadfastly refused to negotiate with terrorists at all times since September 1999.[8] This inconsistency can be explained only in terms of the growing desperation of the militants, their desire for retribution, and their zealotry, which has previously presented itself in the acts of self-destructive irrationality. Yet even if the Kremlin wished to end the conflict it is unlikely that it could force the Kadyrov administration to do so.

Civil War in Chechnia

Chechnia is now engulfed in a civil war, in which federal forces are fighting against one side. It is a civil war that has been brewing since the collapse of the Soviet Union, an internecine conflict that had already broken out prior to the first Russian invasion in 1994. In 1999, the invasion of Daghestan was, at least in part, an expression of the rivalry and competition among Chechen groups, whereby Islamists and other radical elements sought to seize the initiative from secularist and moderate elements in order to attract followers and international funding to their cause. Indeed, both of the Russo-Chechen wars that have occurred in the past decade have served to evade, and to postpone, civil war within Chechnia by uniting antagonistic Chechen forces against a common enemy.

Now that Chechnia is engulfed in a civil war, it is, much as it always would have been, a multifaceted conflict. All sides in the conflict are amalgamations of sometimes-contentious sub-groups. There are rivalries, competitions, and fluctuating antagonisms among groups constituting the federal forces. For their part, the militants have always fielded a highly fragmented force, which has augmented their resilience during periods of pressure by federal forces without greatly undermining their offensive capacity. Militant forces are arrayed along a motivational continuum with implacable ideologues such as Shamil Basayev and Abu Walid at one end, and, at the other end people who are fighting on a mercenary basis or because fighting enhances opportunities for criminal enterprise. In between are fighters whose motives are essentially nationalist, and those whose military interests are primarily personal or retributive. This militant motivational continuum is highly fluid, with most fighters experiencing interests that overlap and fluctuate over time, and which lead some fighters into, and back out of, militant circles. This motivational fluidity may also apply to some prominent militant leaders, such as Aslan Maskhadov and Ruslan Gelayev who appear to have fought for reasons that are more or less Islamist and more or less nationalist at

[6] Such as Zarema Muzhakhoeva who deliberately sabotaged her own mission to blow up a Tverskaya café on 9 July, 2003.

[7] Ironically, critics have argued that Russian security services had a motive to commit terrorist acts against the Russian population in September of 1999 in order to generate popular support for the current conflict. On the other hand, I have argued that the apartment block blasts of September 1999 may have been retribution for federal attacks upon the Wahhabi enclave in the Daghestani villages of Karamakhi, Chabanmakhi, and Kadar that were taking place concurrently. The present Islamist tactic of terrorist retribution against a civilian population appears to be consistent with that argument.

[8] Federal forces evidently learned this lesson after disastrous negotiations during the hostage incidents at Budennovsk in June 1995 and Kizliar in January 1996.

different stages in the conflict. On the whole, however, it appears that militant motives are moving toward the extremes of this continuum, with greater proportions of militants who are fighting for radical Islamist objectives, on the one hand, and for personal or pecuniary objectives, on the other.

Chechens opposed to the militants are being recruited and organized by Kadyrov loyalists, who are able to offer social, political, economic, and security incentives in exchange for their support. As these groups continue to expand they will become increasingly prone to internal fragmentation, rivalry, and antagonism. Those groups nominally within Kadyrov's organization are collaborating, competing and sometimes conflicting with other groups that are regularly aligned with neither Kadyrov nor the militants, and which are sometimes opposed to both. These groups include structures organized around either kinship or criminal interests, or both. Some individuals have affiliations with multiple groups.

Relations among all of these groups are chronically fluid, and are subject to shifting opportunities for conflict and collaboration. At the field level, there are opportunities for collaborations of an informal economic nature among even those groups that seem most implacably opposed, such as federal forces and militants.

The civil war in Chechnia is a maelstrom of all of these shifting interests and forces, in which no side is more than an aggregation of factions that sometimes work at cross-purposes to each other. Caught in the storm are many people who are, to varying degrees, alienated from, and exhausted with, all of these groups, and who are primarily interested in efforts to stabilize their private lives.

This mix provides no immediate opportunities for a negotiated end to the conflict. Because the conflict is multifaceted, and because many of those facets are fluid and shifting, there is no one who controls forces sufficient to guarantee its resolution on any terms. Neither the administration in Moscow, nor that in Grozny, nor any militant leader is currently in a position to end the conflict regardless of concessions that might emerge from the other sides.

Ironically, one of the weaknesses that the current militant strategy of terrorism shares with pressures being applied upon the Putin administration by international groups is that the Kremlin is no longer in a position to end the conflict even if it wished to do so. The perpetuation of the conflict is not in President Putin's political interest. He is no longer popular because of the war in Chechnia, but rather in spite of it. The war is a substantial drain on the limited resources of his government, and the unpredictability of terrorist attacks is a political liability. President Putin cannot afford capitulation, but he appears to be deriving little benefit from the conflict, and there are periodic indications that it provides him with considerable frustration.

It appears that the second Putin administration will attempt gradually to distance itself from the conflict by portraying Chechnia as Kadyrov's problem and Kadyrov as Chechnia's problem. If this is the Kremlin's ambition, then Kadyrov would have appeared by far the most attractive candidate in last year's presidential election in that he was the only one who clearly could have borne the load. An electoral victory of Saidullayev and Aslakhanov would have somewhat undermined Kadyrov's capacity to bear it without offering a suitable alternative for shifting the burden.

Strategies for Improvement

Given the Kremlin's evident indifference toward the active improvement of conditions in Chechnia, what can be done? There is little point in calling for a negotiated settlement of the conflict, since no one is in a position either to seriously negotiate or to guarantee such a settlement.

Recent calls by Ilyas Akhmadov, Zbigniew Brzezinski, Ruslan Khasbulatov, and others for an international peacekeeping force are also non-starters. The situation in Chechnia is so dangerous, deceptive, and difficult that no international peacekeeping force, regardless of its composition, could possibly prove effective. Moreover, international forces would quickly become targets for hostage taking. The introduction of an international force would be as likely to increase, as to decrease, conflict and suffering.

There is more merit in recognizing the political failures of 2003, and in using the growing clarity of those errors as a basis for advocating a legitimate and positive political process for the reintegration of the

Chechen population into the Russian Federation. Yet while this is the only real solution to the problems of Chechnia, it does not appear likely to occur in the next few years, and perhaps not for many years to come. Are there any strategies by which conditions in Chechnia might be improved?

Multiple Local Negotiators

It is not currently possible to negotiate an end to the conflict in Chechnia, but it might be possible to negotiate terms by which some of the parties to the conflict are able to disengage. Some militant leaders might be increasingly open to this approach in coming months as their prospects grow increasingly desperate. The isolated and pointless nature of Ruslan Gelayev's death may provide some incentive in this regard.

Without *formal* Kremlin approval, is it possible that intermediaries might make contact with selected militant leaders in Chechnia to discuss terms of disengagement? Clearly, this approach would not be feasible in the case of militants who have been implicated in terrorist acts. Yet other leaders, whose roles have been more consistent with principles of moderation and traditions of military leadership, might be quietly approached. Potential intermediaries might be identified among the leaders of the North Caucasian republics.

Russian Islamic Leaders

Akhmad Kadyrov has depended upon Russia's traditionalist Islamic leaders, including those from neighboring North Caucasian republics, for two purposes. First, their recognition has provided his only real source of legitimation. Second, some have helped him explain why the Muslim world should stop funding Islamist militants who are fighting against his administration in Chechnia.[9] Given Kadyrov's past dependence upon these leaders, is it possible that some of them might influence him toward the improvement of the human rights record of his administration?

Foreign Islamic Leaders

Akhmad Kadyrov has sought support from Islamic leaders in Egypt and the Persian Gulf to recognize his administration, to cut funding for Chechen militants, and to subsidize the reconstruction of Chechnia. These leaders should ensure that Kadyrov earns their endorsement. If Kadyrov wishes to be recognized as Chechnia's legitimate leader, and as the appropriate channel for financial assistance for the Chechen people, then he should demonstrate his ability to aid the people of Chechnia by tangibly improving the human rights record of his administration. Influential Western governments might encourage leaders in Egypt, the Persian Gulf, and elsewhere in other Islamic regions, to recognize their responsibilities in this regard.

Russian Leaders

In principle, Russian leaders are in the best position to diminish human rights abuses by federal forces in Chechnia, and to influence the Kadyrov administration toward similar goals. In practice, Russian lead-

[9] In both cases, their actions may have less to do with their regard for Kadyrov and more to do with their common Islamist enemies. Yet some of Russia's moderate Islamic leaders admire Kadyrov for his political ascendance, and aspire toward similar recognition.

ers have shown little sustained interest in improving Chechnia's human rights situation. Russian indifference has not been diminished by Western criticism, which sometimes has been insufficiently balanced and informed, and which therefore has been easily dismissed. Yet in recent years, American recognition that international Islamist elements have penetrated Chechnia has confirmed Russian claims that the conflict in Chechnia should be regarded as part of the global war against Islamist extremism and terrorism. Perhaps Russian leaders could be shaken from their indifference about human rights violations in Chechnia if this claim were taken seriously.

All of the governments that have played a role in the prosecution of this global struggle have faced some of the same complexities and ambiguities. Whether in Afghanistan, Algeria, Chechnia, Indonesia, Iraq, Pakistan, the Philippines, or Uzbekistan Islamist and nationalist militants have tended to constitute irregular fighting forces that seek to conceal themselves among civilian populations. Regular military forces are then placed in the difficult position of sifting militants from civilians without violating the rights of the latter, or, as often happens, with chronic violation of their rights. Indeed violations have occurred to varying degrees during the conflicts in each of these countries. In all cases, more human rights violations are likely to occur, in part because of the genuine ambiguities and complexities that are inseparable from this sort of asymmetric warfare.

The United States and its closest allies are making efforts to sort their way through these complexities in order to establish defensible procedures and rules of engagement. In the course of these efforts controversy and criticism are not only inevitable, but can be genuinely useful. Other allies—such as Russia, Uzbekistan, Pakistan, and Indonesia—have been less attuned to the subtleties of human rights, in part because of the geographical proximity of their homelands to these conflicts, and in part because of their relative conditions of military weakness.

However, the United States might contribute to a reduction of human rights violations in places like Chechnia if it were to insist that all of its allies should uphold the same procedures and rules of engagement for sifting militants from civilians in such conflicts.

In short, the United States should take Russia seriously in its long-standing claim that its forces in Chechnia are fighting alongside the United States in its war against global terrorist forces, and then insist that Russia conform to established international standards of conduct. The United States has a clear interest in seeing that such standards are upheld since human rights violations by regular military forces clearly help to breed new recruits for their irregular adversaries. Thus if Russia wishes to portray itself as participating with the United States in an international struggle then there is a clear American interest in guaranteeing that Russia upholds the same international standards to which the United States endeavors to conform. This would put useful pressure on Russian officials who might have to choose between a similar program of human rights improvements, or a tacit admission of their relative backwardness and deficiency.

A further difficulty is that international standards and rules of engagement for asymmetric warfare of this type have not been clearly defined. Perhaps Western governments might take the initiative by calling upon international bodies to establish clear and realistic standards. Alternatively, the United States might convene an international conference to discuss difficulties in the clarification and implementation of such standards. The United States might thereby achieve greater leverage for influencing the human rights situation in Chechnia, as well as in other parts of the world.

During the past year, American officials have resumed lengthier statements that focus upon problems in Chechnia. Generally, these have been helpfully balanced in that they have begun with a recognition of genuine difficulties that Moscow faces regarding international Islamism and terrorism in the region, and have then moved to a review of human rights violations in Chechnia. Most recently, these statements have been especially helpful in that they have called for a political process defined not so much in terms of negotiations as in terms of legitimate, democratic decision-making on the part of the Chechen people.

However, there is more that these statements might do, particularly with regard to Chechen IDPs. With remarkably unfortunate timing, Russian officials closed Chechen IDP camps in Ingushetia in the early days of December 2002 and again at the same time of year in 2003. In both cases, people were stranded

without heating, and in some cases, without shelter. Russian officials have outlined a program of further camp closures beginning in March, and appear to be placing pressure on residents with artificial shortages of water, gas, and other necessities.

Even under the best of circumstances, Ingushetia's IDP camps are not comfortable places. If people wish to remain in them, then it is generally because they have no better place to go. They have no place better to go because Chechnia is now engulfed in a vicious civil war that is likely to continue for the foreseeable future. The conflict has featured brutal tactics of terrorism and abduction that have resulted in the arbitrary victimization of the Chechen population, and that are also likely to continue. It is understandable that people would wish to seek refuge from these conditions. And if the Russian Federation wishes to claim these people as its citizens then it has an obligation to offer them appropriate care at a safe distance from the conflict in Chechnia. Western governments should continue to hold the Russian Federation accountable for its satisfaction of that obligation.

Russian officials have a further obligation to defer eviction of Chechen IDPs until they are able to guarantee receipt of compensation that would allow IDPs at least a minimal opportunity to reestablish themselves in Chechnia. Promised compensations are not received by many returning Chechens. In some cases, compensations have been received only after payment of bribes up to 50 percent of the compensatory payment. In some cases, Chechens receiving compensatory payments have become targets for assault, murder, and theft. Most of the leaks in this compensatory pipeline are at the Chechen end, but Kadyrov is unlikely to take the lead in their elimination. Therefore it is important that Moscow provide stronger oversight.

Just a few kilometers across the border, in Western Daghestan, there is a useful model for a relatively successful distribution of funds for housing compensation. Federal funds underwrote the reconstruction of Daghestani villages that were destroyed during the incursions of August and September 1999. Some of the reconstruction was completed within a period of one year, and nearly all of it was completed within three years. Many of the misappropriations that occurred at the local level were addressed through judicial processes.

Peace and stability will evade the Northern Caucasus until Chechnia has an authoritative political structure capable of providing viable solutions to the problems of its people.