

with a variety of journalists, and values contacts with the Russian artistic elite.

At the same time, he does not have good relations with human rights organizations. These activists pose obstacles for Ramzan as do the Russian authorities. In 2009, he forced them to leave Chechnya. The murder of the famous human rights defender Natalia Estemirova in July 2009, hardly helped him, as many of his opponents accused him of being behind it. He did not need this problem. The murder slightly spoiled his image in the eyes of Moscow and even caused irritation. One cannot exclude the possibility that the murder of Estemirova was carried out by Ramzan's enemies.

What Next?

The ending of counter-terrorist operations in Chechnya did not bring stability. Moreover, over the course of the year, it was necessary to restore such operations in some parts of the republic.

The end of the operations allowed Ramzan to feel that he is completely in charge in Chechnya, something that he always wanted. While remaining inside the Russian Federation, Chechnya is becoming more au-

tonomous and quasi-independent. In my view, Ramzan will never support separatism (which some politicians and experts have recently claimed) because he is comfortable to be self-standing within the framework of the Russian Federation.

The end of the counter-terrorist operations took place within the context of the economic crisis, when the federal government had to delegate greater power, rights, and responsibility to the country's regional leaders. Subsidies from the federal budget are shrinking everywhere and in Chechnya as well. In compensation for the diminishing subsidies, Kadyrov won international status for Chechnya's airport, making it a chief source of additional income that is not controlled by the federal government.

The official end of the counter-terrorist operations in Chechnya does not mean the achievement of quiet and stability in the whole region. Chechnya has difficult neighbors – Ingushetia and Dagestan – which are far from stable. The North Caucasus and the Caucasus in general is a system of interconnected units around which at times flow potentially explosive political “fluids.”

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Analysis

Ingushetia: on the Road to Overcoming Social-Political Instability?

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Abstract

Although it is the smallest region in the country, Ingushetia has been in the news thanks to its seemingly unending cycle of violence. The appointment of President Yunus-bek Yevkurov just over a year ago provided some hope for change, but the situation remains unstable. Yevkurov's predecessor violated civil and human rights in his campaign against terrorists, creating a secular and Islamist opposition. Yevkurov has brought a new approach to governing by opening dialogue with the republic's civil society, but his efforts and the attempt on his life demonstrate that one man cannot solve all the problems alone. A comprehensive policy is needed.

A Difficult Situation

The North Caucasus Republic of Ingushetia, located right next door to Chechnya, frequently has been at the center of attention. Only in June 2009, terrorist attacks killed Deputy Chairman of the Supreme Court Aza Gazgireeva and republican vice-premier Bashir Aushev,

the former republican police chief who was in charge of law enforcement agencies. On June 22 there was an attack on Ingushetia President Yunus-bek Yevkurov and on October 25 the famous human rights defender Maksharip Aushev was shot dead in his car. After the August 19 explosion at a Nazran police station killed

more than 20, Moscow imposed a state of emergency under Ministry of Internal Affairs control.

As a result of this spate of attacks on high-profile figures, a number of articles and opinions have appeared on the ethno-political situation in Ingushetia. In this analysis, it is common to find either direct or indirect comparison with the experience of Chechnya. However, the situation in Ingushetia differs from that of its neighboring republic in several ways, and understanding its specific circumstances is important, firstly, for gaining an adequate sense of the current 'Ingush challenge', and secondly, in forming a strategy for overcoming the political turbulence in the region.

The attempted murder of Yevkurov came within a year of his appointment, which was precipitated by President Dmitry Medvedev's decision to remove previous governor Murat Zyazikov from his post on 30 October 2008. The day Medvedev announced his choice of Yevkurov, he was well known among the narrow circles of specialist officers, following a distinguished career in the military, with experience in the North Caucasus and peacekeeping in the Balkans, but in the course of the last year he has come to be known at the national level. In keeping with the emergency situation that prompted the removal of Zyazikov, Yevkurov's candidature was put to the National Assembly (Ingush Parliament) only a day after Medvedev's endorsement, where it received practically full support. With this change in leadership, expectations among both politicians and experts were high that the security situation could be improved.

In the years preceding Yevkurov's appointment, the situation in Ingushetia began increasingly to resemble that of a car without a steering wheel or brakes. The number of terrorist acts increased significantly. According to official data from the procurator in 2007, the number of attacks on law-enforcement officers in Ingushetia increased by 85 percent. In contradiction to the worsening security situation, Ingushetia led the country in the number of votes cast for President Medvedev and United Russia during the 2007–8 national electoral campaign. This gave the appearance that the authorities functioned in their own world detached from the realities of security on the ground, whereby interaction with wider civil-society was considered optional, even a sign of weakness. As a result, there was a growth in radical feelings, even among secular opposition groups who did not seek to challenge Russian sovereignty. Indeed, dissatisfaction with the situation and Zyazikov's leadership caused at least some sections of the Ingush population to call for the return of the first Ingush president, Ruslan Aushev, with a mass meeting of protest held in

January 2008. Therefore, a change of leadership was seen as necessary for a long-time before Medvedev actually replaced Zyazikov.

A New Beginning

In spite of the expectations heaped on Yevkurov, a year later the crisis in Ingushetia has not been resolved. Since the arrival of Yevkurov, the sense of confusion has not disappeared from either the republican or the federal authorities. At all levels, officials do not know how to address the situation in Ingushetia and what resources to use. In October 2009 a personnel shake-up took place when Yevkurov sacked his entire cabinet. Prime Minister Rashid Gaisanov, who had served as acting president in Yevkurov's absence, was replaced by Aleksei Vorobyev, whose background is in the siloviki and who has no experience in carrying out economic reforms. However, instead of generating greater unity, these changes provoked controversy over whether a person from Moscow would be able to resist the influence of the republic's clans. Yet, in parallel to bringing yet another Muscovite to the region, developments have also suggested a bigger role for local actors. President Yevkurov has hinted at the necessity of creating a Council of *teips*, whose members must come from the Ingush territorial-clan units. In the words of President Yevkurov, "the Council of *teips* must become a real power, for both the leadership and wider society, in imposing order in our homeland". This development has again provoked discussion about the role of "tradition" in the North Caucasus, something with which many influential people in Moscow are not familiar. And finally, the authorities are apparently seeking to use Ingush oligarch Mikhail Gutseriev, the former owner of RussNeft. In August 2007, a Moscow court issued an arrest warrant for him and placed his name on the international wanted list. In October 2009 the warrant was replaced with the more liberal agreement not to leave town. While all the machinations surrounding Gutseriev remain murky, the authorities will likely try to coopt him to bring peace to Ingushetia.

What should be made of these eclectic management tendencies? A year after the change in leadership, the authorities have not found any great support for fundamentally changing the situation. Therefore they try to catch hold of anything they can to address the problem, whether it is *teips*, disgraced oligarchs or federal powers. Therefore, should we conclude the change the leadership has been an ineffective solution to the Ingush problem? Such a response would be premature and too simple.

Two Models of Leadership in Ingushetia

Yevkurov inherited a political legacy of problems that have not been resolved in many years. In the post-Soviet period, two different models of government have been used in Ingushetia by the two presidents that preceded Yevkurov. The charismatic Aushev's (1993–2002) approach was based on maintaining significant autonomy and privileges for the regional Ingush government. These included independent contacts with the separatists in neighboring Chechnya, and acting as arbiter between the separatists seeking an independent "Ichkeria" and the federal center, and setting up an off-shore tax haven. Such an approach, in essence, converted the republic into a state within a state, working in contrast to the rest of Russia and turned in on itself. Yet, in spite of regular charges that the Ingush leader was complicit with separatists, Aushev did not take the Chechen path. He governed in an authoritarian style, banning all other political groups and successfully creating a distinct political-legal and economic structure for Ingushetia. Yet, at the same time, neither Aushev, nor other politicians who aspired to the Ingush presidency, raised the question of secession from the Russian Federation.

Zyazikov introduced the second model of leadership. He was elected on 28 April 2002, with many observers at the time noting that the federal centre had strongly backed his candidacy. Today pundits in the Russian media claim that Zyazikov was an outsider who did not understand Ingush reality. This view is not entirely correct since in 1992–96 he had been the republic's deputy minister of security and the deputy head of the Federal Security Service as well as secretary of the republic's Security Council. From 1996–2002, he was head of the FSB in Astrakhan Oblast and worked in the Federation Council Commission on the North Caucasus. He also worked for a month on the staff of the presidential representative to the Southern Federal District. Accordingly, Zyazikov was not an outsider, but he had a very specific view of the republic. Under Zyazikov's rule, Ingushetia's political opposition to the federal centre disappeared. Moreover, the republic showed overwhelming support for the federal ruling party "United Russia" in elections. At the same time, however, he ended all dialogue with non-governmental structures and human rights organizations. For the six years of his presidency, the Congress of the Ingush Assembly, which in essence is the congress of civil society, did not meet. During Zyazikov's presidency, one of the largest terrorist attacks in Ingushetia during the post-Soviet period took place with a mass armed attack by fighters led by Shamil Basaev on Nazran and Karabulak in June 2004. In the

course of this attack, 97 were killed and 105 were injured, mainly from the police and military. This action, as cynical as it sounds, functioned as a turning point in the public mood in Ingushetia, and served to create a more constructive relationship between officials and opposition at all levels. However, instead of building on this mood for cooperation, the joint anti-terrorist measures between the federal centre and the republic's siloviki resulted in extensive abuses and created a wall of the non-communication between the authorities and Ingush society.

As a result, by 2007–8 two main streams of protest had emerged. The first was the secular opposition (human rights activists, NGOs). Their protests revolved around the excesses associated with the security structures in Ingushetia, although they continued to act within the framework of Russian laws and appealed to the federal centre to instigate change. Indeed, the secular opposition called attention to the multiple avenues of violence directed against ethnic minorities in Ingushetia, above all the Russian minority. The second source of protest stemmed from radical Islamic underground groups active from the mid-2000s onwards. This activity was connected with terrorism, and led to the assassination attempt on Yevkurov.

Reestablishing Trust

Therefore, on coming to power, each of these opposition challenges demanded significant attention from Yevkurov. However, many of the problems he faces are significant and require strong support from the federal authorities and coordination with other republics. Ingushetia only has limited capacity to enact widespread change and develop. There are only a few large cities and weak development of all types of social infrastructure. Less than a half (42.5%) of the population live in cities. Indeed, the average population of a rural settlement in Ingushetia is 25 times greater than the average in the rest of Russia. Almost three quarters of the population lives on 10 percent of the territory. Ingushetia faces a whole array of problems due to its lack of resources, which this small and relatively poor republic (heavily dependent on subsidies from the federal centre) cannot resolve on its own. A federally coordinated strategy, in conjunction with a regional approach that includes the neighboring republics of Dagestan and Chechnya is needed. This is paramount in the strategy to counter terrorism, whereby a common North-Caucasus counter-terrorist strategy, in which Ingushetia is integrated into a common context with Dagestan, Chechnya and the western part

of the Caucasus, is required and without it any “new approach” adopted internally within the republic will have only limited success.

In spite of these challenging circumstances, Yevkurov has attempted to re-establish the trust of the population in the republican leadership. In general, his behavior is atypical for a North Caucasus “sultan”. As an example, following his inauguration by parliament he chose to forego the usual inauguration ceremony, in order to save money. In the course of the first two months of his presidency he arranged dialogue with public figures and human rights activists, and began preparations for holding a Congress of the Ingush Nation. Even prominent secular opposition activists have spoken about the need for productive dialogue with the authorities, some of them even moving to work in the presidential apparatus. However, it would be inaccurate to claim that the president of Ingushetia is a “human rights activist in epaulets.” As a product of the military, the third Ingush president did not remove the issue of counter-terrorism from the agenda. On the contrary, he regularly calls for an increase in the effectiveness of counter-terrorist measures. To this end, Yevkurov is drawing on his experience of peacekeeping in the Balkans, where only the support of society gives the right to use force legitimately. Hence, a dialogue with the population and civil society is necessary. It is also important to make sure that the use of force is effective and strictly within the limits of the law.

In addition to re-establishing some degree of trust in the authorities among the population, Yevkurov has also succeeded in constructively avoiding an expansion of the Ingush-Ossetian conflict. Following his inauguration he dropped the official Ingush claim to the disputed Prigorodny raion, concentrating instead on the rights of citizens, calling for the return of forced migrants and demanding that their human rights be observed with-

in Ossetia. In return, for the first time since 1990s, the North Ossetian leadership has begun to discuss the possibility of returning forced migrants of Ingush nationality to the disputed territory.

Yevkurov has attempted to lead Ingushetia out of unstable conditions by adopting an approach somewhere between the two previous Ingush models of government: Aushev’s semi-independence with relative stability and Zyazikov’s ultra-loyalty to the federal authorities while sliding into civil conflict. In practise Yevkurov is attempting to alter the perception of a choice between democracy and security in Ingushetia. The extremists attempt to frame this as the choice facing the republic, and resist any form of change in the socio-political reality, because such a change will cause them to lose the basis of their support. It is much more convenient for them to build support in conditions of an ineffective government and a corrupt civil administration, in which corruption by the federal and local elites is swept under the carpet.

However, “the new course” of Yevkurov also demonstrated that simply being open is not sufficient. He needs a team to support him, but this does not exist. Likewise, a coordinated national and regional strategy is required. However, this is not evident in Ingushetia at the current time. Consequently, the situation in the smallest republic of the Russian Caucasus illustrates, firstly, that it is not possible to change the context within a given republic alone; rather it is necessary to take the whole region into account. Secondly, neither a single individual nor a single example is able to alter systemic policy; what is needed is new cadres who can supply the regional leaders with ideas and people. Finally, no fundamental change is possible until the leader can work on the basis of a comprehensive base of academic and practical knowledge about the local situation.

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