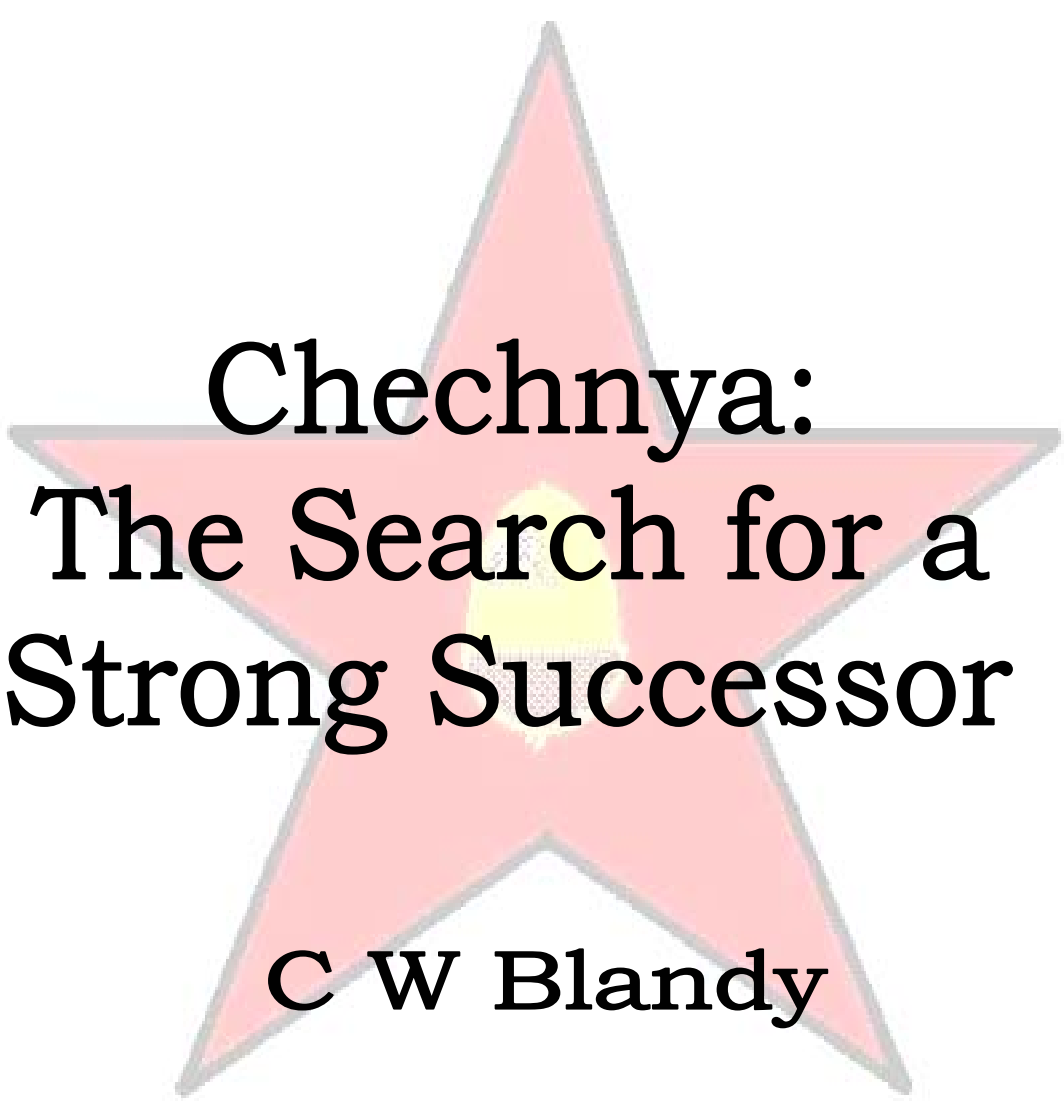


Conflict Studies Research Centre



**Chechnya:
The Search for a
Strong Successor**

C W Blandy

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Key Points

- * A manipulated presidential election on 29 August 2004 is unlikely to bring peace to Chechnya. There is a clear need for a free election amongst a people who have followed this practice within *teip* society for centuries.
- * Moscow's continued support for the Kadyrov clan will tend to exacerbate tension within the republic and unease amongst sections of the federal power structures within Chechnya and the North Caucasus.
- * The delay in supporting Alkhanov could be indicative of some degree of scepticism.
- * Moscow might have been hedging its bets with Movsar Khamidov while publicly supporting Alu Alkhanov. In the event, he was not among the 8 confirmed candidates.
- * With many separatists now inside 'Chechenised' official structures, the degree of 'independence' from Russia is still very much an issue.

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Chechnya: The Search for a Strong Successor

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Introduction

*“Throughout Chechnya they remembered Kadyrov on 10 May – customs permit this. People expressed commiserations: ‘Allah forgive him – and added: if he wishes’. Earlier they wished Kadyrov would be president for life – and it came true. Chechens in general love to give advice to the Almighty”.*¹

Whilst the death of President Akhmad-Khadzhi Kadyrov severely weakened the system created by him, in no way did his death abolish it.

“Although Moscow’s Chechen policy would be reviewed, the question was not about turning away from the course of ‘Chechenisation’. During and after his brief visit to Grozny Vladimir Putin underlined the fact that responsibility for affairs in the republic first and foremost rested on the local authorities. But the accent in all probability would shift.

*The main question today is the election of a new person responsible for Chechnya. Everyone understands that it will be made in Moscow and legitimised in the presidential elections.”*²

*“Today a person can only become president of Chechnya if he has the support of the Kremlin – and Ramzan Kadyrov.”*³ The referendum on the Chechen Constitution of 23 March 2003 and the Chechen presidential elections on 5 October 2003 had demonstrated that the Kremlin could secure any electoral result it desired in the republic.⁴ However, in the Kremlin’s perception, the question now depends not so much on the person who could win a presidential election, but on the (s)election of a person who has the ability, strength of purpose and other personal attributes to ensure stability in the republic after victory at the polls, a person in the same mould as the late President Kadyrov himself, determined, ruthless and strong: attributes prized and respected by Russians. President Kadyrov displayed uncompromising obduracy, toughness and brutal single-mindedness in striving to achieve those objectives which he believed would bring about the cessation of separatist and extremist activity in his republic. At the same time he was determined to reduce the federal military presence, aiming at ‘Chechenisation’ of the counter-terrorist operation and securing a greater share of the revenue from Chechen oil for the republic.⁵ By all accounts he was unloved by the majority of the Chechen people, although history may come to judge him less harshly, for as a headline text in one weekly newspaper put it, *“Many in Chechnya did not love him. But all the inhabitants of the republic feel the consequences of his death.”*⁶ Kadyrov junior appears to have inherited much of his father’s persona.⁷

The high degree of importance accorded to Ramzan Kadyrov became patently obvious when the young Chechen appeared in the Kremlin a few hours after the

assassination of his father, albeit wearing a sky-blue track suit, following a meeting behind closed doors with President Putin. His Kremlin visit concluded with the announcement the following day that, although too young to become president, he would be appointed first deputy prime minister of the Chechen republic.⁸ According to the ‘rules’ not only must the presidential candidate have the all-important backing of Kadyrov junior, but he must also be adopted by the Kadyrov clan, namely the Benoy *teip*, one of the largest clans in Chechnya: “*Having left their original boundaries, certainly from the 16th Century onwards, it is hard to find a locality in Chechnya where there would not be a member of the Benoy*”.⁹

One can perhaps see the logic behind President Putin’s choice in May 2000 of Kadyrov senior as the Head of Administration of Chechnya following Kadyrov’s disenchantment and subsequent abandonment of Aslan Maskhadov and the Chechen separatist cause on account of the growing influence of Wahhabism, because of the additional benefit of using the Benoy *teip*. “*Over recent years it has strengthened its position both in financial matters and in government power structures.*”¹⁰ For the time being at least, Kadyrov junior is the key to ensuring support for and maintaining momentum in President Putin’s normalisation policy in Chechnya.

Another factor in the Kremlin’s selection process was the need to consider the suitability, experience and personal characteristics of more than one potential candidate. Under the present circumstances there are no candidates who have gained the trust of President Putin to the same extent that Akhmad Kadyrov had, neither is there anyone who can match his experience, and furthermore none of the possible candidates has the qualities which would gain them outright acceptance by the Russian side.

Prudence would also have dictated consideration of ‘second choice’ candidates, bearing in mind the perils of public life in Chechnya and the need to take account of personalities, loyalties and the status of their *teipy*.

Therefore, it is not surprising that deliberations have been drawn out within the Kremlin. The process of selection has doubtless included consultation with the President’s Plenipotentiary Representative (Polpred) in the Southern Federal Okrug (YuFO) Vladimir Yakovlev, and recommendations from the power-wielding structures, such as General Rashid Nurgaliyev, Minister for Internal Affairs. In view of the complexity of the situation in Chechnya it would not be surprising if some of the advice was contradictory.¹¹

Chechen Government Power Structures

It is clear that the federal normalisation policy will depend on Kadyrov junior as First Deputy Prime Minister and the relationship between him and the new president. Between them, they will have a significant force, which surpasses the number of separatists.¹² Therefore before discussing the merits of the various candidates and factors which might disbar them, it is useful to look at the sources of power that Kadyrov junior and the new president will have available to them.

From Table 1 below it will be seen that the majority of the Chechen power structures and forces are directly within the sphere of the Kadyrov clan. As Igrunov noted: “*If by chance conflict between the president and the Kadyrov clan arose, then stability in Chechnya can be forgotten – if not for ever for a long time.*”¹³

Table 1 - Chechen Government Forces: People & Detachments¹⁴

Designation, Structure & Subordination	Leadership & Political Interests	Presence of Former Separatists
Presidential Security Service (PSS), several thousand men. MVD.	Ramzan Kadyrov.	Yes
Oil Regiment (External Protection). Several hundred men. MVD.	Financed by “Grozneftegaz” to protect oil industry installations. From Sept 2003 in sphere of PSS influence.	Possibly
Chechen OMON. Several hundred men. MVD.	Ruslan Alkhanov [not related to Alu Alkhanov], loyal to Kadyrov clan.	None
Battalion “Vostok” (East). Several hundred men. MOD.	Sulim Yamadayev. Relations with Kadyrov clan kept at a defined distance.	Yes
Battalion “Zapad” (West). Several hundred men. MOD.	Said-Magomed Kakiyev [Kokiyev]. Bad relations with Kadyrov clan. Hostile to former fighters.	None

Whilst all the subunits in the Chechen MVD are formally subordinated to General Alu Alkhanov on the territory of Chechnya, in truth, his direct influence is restricted to the Chechen OMON, which was created at the beginning of the second Chechen war under the leadership of the late Musa Gazimagomedov, a steadfast enemy of separatists. After the death of Gazimagomedov in a car accident in 2003, rumours abounded about the fact that the *Omontsy* kept their distance from Kadyrov, as they feared subordination to former separatists with whom Ramzan Kadyrov was connected.¹⁵ However, General Alkhanov in his capacity as MVD Minister arranged for Ruslan Alkhanov to take over the post of OMON commander. Ruslan Alkhanov had always been on the federal side, for instance in 1995-1996 he served in the transport militia under General Alkhanov. With this background, he was able to remove tension and potential obstacles, ensuring the loyalty of the OMON to the Chechen president. Furthermore, according to Makarkin, many supporters of Bislan Gantamirov after the resignation of their chief in 2000 continued to serve in law enforcement organs.

Recruitment of Former Separatists & “Chechenisation”

One of the key elements in the “Chechenisation” policy is the recruitment of former *boyeviki* and their leaders to Kadyrov’s subunits, in particular in the Presidential Security Service [PSS]. A significant number of fighters have been amnestied and given official status.

Box 1 - Examples of Former *Boyeviki* Amnestied & Recruited by Kadyrov Junior¹⁶

A former Brigadier General, Artur Akhmadov, now serves as Chief of Staff of the Chechen President’s security service. The Commander of a subunit of the security service in Vedenskiy rayon (one of the most complicated from a military point of view) is Brigadier General Ibragim Khultygov, formerly in charge of Maskhadov’s Department of State Security.

Other employees of Ramzan Kadyrov’s security service are the former deputy procurator of Chechnya Abu Arsanukayev and former Brigadier General Rezvan Kutsuyev. In Gudermes rayon one of the detachments subordinated to Ramzan Kadyrov is commanded by former Brigadier General Shamil’ Khatayev. And Idris Gaipov during the time of Maskhadov commanded the Kurchaloy sector of defence, and last year became the Head of Administration of Kurchaloy rayon.

It is possible in time that the power structures in Chechnya could include Magomed Khanbiyev, former Minister of Defence of Ichkeria.

The federal power structures have tended to treat the re-employment of amnestied *boyeviki* with caution, for in reality the majority have remained faithful to their original views, although they participate in combat operations against their erstwhile colleagues. They might have condemned Wahhabism and terrorism, but “*not the idea of Chechen independence*”.¹⁷ Moreover, the principle of granting an amnesty to those people who had not committed serious crimes has become extremely blurred, as there are more than a few *boyeviki* in the Kadyrovtsy who had participated in criminal acts such as the Budennovsk raid of Shamil’ Basayev in June 1995. In the recent coordinated raid into Ingushetia by *boyeviki* on 20/21 June 2004 some degree of collusion or cooperation with former separatists within the ranks of the Kadyrovtsy cannot be entirely ruled out, on the basis that many Chechens feel that the Checheno-Ingush Republic should be created again. Kadyrov senior had made public his designs on the four Chechen *rayony* which comprise Ingushetia.¹⁸

Although not all the former *boyeviki* are orientated towards Ramzan Kadyrov, they are dependant on him at the present time for it is he who guarantees their future: employment and protection from prosecution. However, if power is transferred to another authority, the personal guarantees of Kadyrov junior become null and void. So, there could well be a myriad of different permutations of loyalty amongst former *boyeviki*, where family and *teip* also have their place.

Yamadayeysy & Kakiyeysy

Makarkin provides additional useful insights into the relationship of the *Yamadayeysy* and *Kakiyeysy* (Kokiyevtsy)¹⁹ (see Table 1 above), making the point that they were the only ones who maintained a distance between themselves and Kadyrov senior. These groups used their contacts through the federal Ministry of Defence system, for both commanders were deputies of the military commandant of Chechnya. The relationship between the Yamadayeysy brothers and the Kadyrov clan has manifested many contradictions in the recent past. Whilst they joined Kadyrov senior on the federal side in the second Chechen war, according to Makarkin the Yamadayeysy brothers were against the nomination of Kadyrov senior as Head of Administration of Chechnya in 2000; they were inclined to support Malik Saidullayev. Normal relations were resumed in 2001 following a division of their spheres of interest. Ruslan (Khalid) Yamadayeysy heads the local branch of the establishment “Yedinaya Rossiya” party, which has maintained a distinct degree of independence in relations with the Chechen president, although it did support Kadyrov senior during the presidential elections in October 2003. Ruslan Yamadayeysy put forward his candidacy for the Chairmanship of the State Council last year against that of Khuseyn Isayev, a protégé of Kadyrov senior, and only lost by a small margin.

A Welter Of Candidates

Press interest concerning potential candidates for the post of Chechen President has been strong. By the end of June speculation embraced some 21 people who at some stage had either announced their intention to run for president on 29 August 2004 or were considered in some degree or other to merit inclusion. Table 2 below provides an outline of these.

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Table 2 - Possible Candidates

	Name	Remarks
Kadyrov Clan	Ramzan Kadyrov	Discounted due to age – 27 years old.
	Taus Dzhabrailov	Loyal comrade of Akhmad Kadyrov. Chairman of Chechen State Council.
	Alu Alkhanov*	Head Chechen MVD (Interior Ministry). Received backing of Kadyrov clan on 10 June.
In Chechnya	Ruslan (Khalid) Yamadayev	Duma Deputy, controls local branch of 'Yedinaya Rossiya'; brother of Sulim Yamadayev.
	Bislan Gantamirov	Former press minister in Kadyrov govt.
	Aslambek Aslakhanov	Special Advisor to President Putin on Chechen matters.
In Moscow	Malik Saidullayev*	Moscow Chechen businessman.
	Dzhabrail Gakayev	A liberal, part of Chechen diaspora in Moscow.
From Power Structures	Maj-Gen Said-Selim Peshkhoyev	Sometime Head of Chechen MVD, now works in Office of Polpred YuFO.
	Oleg Zhidkov	Former mayor of Groznyy and in May 2004 appointed Deputy Polpred YuFO.
	Shakhrudi Dasayev	Deputy Chief of Top-secret Directorate of FSB.
	Col Movsar Khamidov	Colonel FSB.
	Umar-Pasha Khanaliyev	Central Apparatus FSB.
Others	Abdula Bugayev*	Deputy to Doku Zavgayev in latter's government in mid 1990s.
	Vakha Visayev*	Adviser to Chechen president.
	Marat Zaynalabidov	Deputy Chairman Arbitration Union, Rostov oblast'.
	Adam Edilov	Lawyer from Groznyy.
	Sultan Ayskhanov*	Professor Chechen State University.
	Magomed Aydamirov*	Entrepreneur, Tolstoy Yurt.
	Khuseyn Bibulatov	Citizen of Electrogorsk, Moscow oblast'.
	Mariet Gorchkhanova	Urus-Martan rayon administration.
	Zura Magomadova*	Entrepreneur from Moscow.
Mukhukhasan Asakov*		

* Denotes confirmed candidates.²⁰

Whilst Moscow does not have any truck with ex-President Maskhadov, the raid into Ingushetia on 20/21 June 2004 could have been planned to demonstrate that Maskhadov and groups loyal to him were still a force to be taken into consideration.

Candidates From the Kadyrov Camp

Thoughts of a successor to Kadyrov senior immediately after his death focussed on Ramzan Kadyrov, Taus Dzhabrailov and Alu Akhanov. Alkhanov finally put forward his candidacy to the Chechen electoral commission on Thursday 24 June 2004,²¹ having received the covert blessing of the Kremlin.

Ramzan Kadyrov

Kadyrov Junior was deleted from the list because of his age. The procedure to amend the Constitution would have taken at least six months and would have led to a dangerous vacuum in the governance of the republic.²² In no way could the

Kremlin agree to this half-baked proposal, particularly when time, effort and energy had been invested so recently in the production of a new Constitution, and its acceptance in a referendum. This would not have been acceptable to the Chechen people, particularly in view of Ramzan's behaviour and the methods employed by his PSS. Nevertheless, whilst 'officialdom' has restricted his status, he has preserved for himself the post of 'curator' of the republic's power structures.

Taus Dzhabrailov

Dzhabrailov had been a friend of Kadyrov senior for many years.²³ According to Makarkin, Dzhabrailov had specialised in public relations networking amongst political contacts. Particularly noteworthy was his leadership of Kadyrov's election campaign in 2003, when he neutralised the local media opponents of Kadyrov and removed Bislan Gantamirov from his position as Press Minister.²⁴

However, possibly the Kremlin entertained doubts about his suitability to become the leader of Chechnya. Would he be capable of controlling the situation in the republic? They probably reasoned that as president he would only be a 'functionary' of Kadyrov junior. However, Dzhabrailov refused to enter the election process during the official period of mourning, which extended beyond the original date for the closure of the candidates' list. His opposition to candidates from outside Chechnya in all probability reflected the views of many other Chechens: "*Understand, for a person sitting in a warm Moscow apartment or in the evening in an expensive restaurant, it is difficult in actual fact to understand what exactly goes on here and what needs to be done*".²⁵

Alu Alkhanov

According to Makarkin,²⁶ it was at the end of May 2004 when the first signs appeared that the Kremlin was beginning to count on Alkhanov. On 10 June 2004 it became known that a new political party had appeared under the name of "Akhmad Kadyrov's Team" or the "Closest Circle of the Late President Kadyrov".²⁷ The announcement was made in Tsentoroy, the Kadyrov family village, during the wake for Kadyrov senior's elder son Zelimkhan, who had been badly injured in a motor accident and died from a heart attack shortly after the death of his father.

This announcement commenced with the nomination of the head of the Chechen MVD Alu Alkhanov as a candidate for the presidency. The proposal, according to Natal'ya Serova, received almost unanimous support. Kadyrov junior spoke of Alkhanov as: "*a steadfast general, a firm politician and a principal opponent of separatism*"²⁸ and went on to characterise him as a person capable of continuing the work of the late President Kadyrov but emphasised that the Chechen people could not allow experiments for the sake of presidential ambitions, as done in the past by other politicians. Kadyrov junior did not restrict himself to enumerating Alkhanov's virtues, but stated that "*if Alkhanov had respect for the will of the people and put forward his candidacy, then the team of the late president would support him*".²⁹

An administrative machine in support of Alkhanov had already been formed. People belonging to the Chechen political elite expressed their support: Taus Dzhabrailov, Chairman of the State Council; Sergey Abramov, the stand-in president; head of the presidential administration and the Chechen government Ziard Sabsabi; the authorised representative to the Russian President Adlan Magomadov. Alkhanov also received the support of Vladimir Yakovlev, Polpred YuFO, and the leader of the "Yedinaya Rossiya" Duma faction Boris Gryzlov.

Box 2 - Pen-Picture of Alu Alkhanov**General Outline**

“On one hand, he is able to guarantee the continuity of government, since he was actively attached to the close circle of Akhmad Kadyrov. From April 2003 Alkhanov has headed the Chechen MVD and together with Kadyrov has fought for the enlargement of the authority of the Chechen militia. Besides, Alkhanov was one of group on the dais with Kadyrov at the time of the explosion on 9 May and miraculously escaped death. On the other hand, he was a cadre employee even during the time of Soviet MVD, but in the time of Dzhokhar Dudayev went into opposition and always consequently supported the preservation of the republic within the structure of Russia.”³⁰

Factors Favourable for his Candidacy³¹

“**First**, Alu Alkhanov has the rank of general, which irrespective of other arguments guarantees his status in Chechen society where there are few ‘genuine’ generals (but not ‘brigadiers’ of the Ichkerian army who can be any type of field commander). Alkhanov became a general last year, completing all the steps of a militia career which began in soviet times.

“**Second**, Alkhanov is a fellow partner of the Kadyrov families (they maintain that he even took an oath on the Koran; in his turn he received general's shoulder boards from the hands of Kadyrov). His nomination as minister was linked to the serious conflict between Akhmad Kadyrov and the former head of the republic's interior ministry: Said-Selim Peshkhoyev and Ruslan Tsakayev, who decisively opposed the inclusion of former separatists in the MVD structures. Alkhanov adopted the Kadyrov logic wholeheartedly. Immediately after his appointment as MVD minister he stated that “*For those who came with guilt, who had not stained their hands with human blood, the door to the militia is not closed*”. ... In particular, it is no longer necessary ‘to hand over’ one's own – it is sufficient to bring one firearm ... now it is enough if a person is not directly accused of participation in the most odious crimes.

“**Third**, Alkhanov fully supported Kadyrov during last year's election campaign, including using the administrative resources at his disposal. Thus, according to a press-service allegation of Saydullayev, Alkhanov's militia destroyed the campaign material of this candidate. And the commander of the OMON Ruslan Alkhanov participated in the ceremony of presentation of a new minister Taus Dzhabrailov to employees of the ‘Gantamirov’ press-ministry – obviously in order to avoid any surprises from the Gantamirov supporters.

“**Fourth**, Alkhanov was never a supporter of separatism. Even with Dzhokhar Dudayev he leaned towards supporters of the pro-Russian opposition. In the first Chechen war, as already remembered, he fought on the side of federal forces. During the period of Aslan Maskhadov's government, he was obliged to leave Chechnya and serve in Rostov oblast' transport militia. He returned to the republic in 2000 – immediately after the formation of a new Chechen militia. Thus the *federaly* can not suspect him of playing a double game – we remember that many accuse Kadyrov of being a secret separatist.

“**Fifth**, Alkhanov demonstrated his capability as a member of the law enforcement body on 9 May, when he remained on active duty despite being wounded on the dais.”

Nevertheless, there are a number of arguments ranged against his candidacy. The first point of note was the time taken to process the Kremlin's agreement to Alkhanov's candidacy. This is an indicator that the whole range of presidential ‘hopefuls’ might have appeared somewhat lacklustre and perhaps there was not so much to choose between them, but the ability to work with and to control the excesses of Kadyrov junior was probably the deciding factor. Makarkin summarised the relationship as follows: “*In truth in the hierarchical system the president is*

undoubtedly higher than a first deputy premier, and a general to a senior lieutenant (the rank of Kadyrov junior)".³²

The main argument against Alkhanov is the mass of accusations of incompetence and corruption levelled against the Chechen militia. Several thousand militiamen were subordinated directly to Alkhanov who were not part of the power structures, namely members of the GAI (traffic police), transport militia and other subunits. Their efficiency, in fact, had raised substantial doubts not only in the most insecure parts of the republic but also in other more peaceful areas. Nevertheless, Alkhanov has admitted that *"he was not so happy with his own performance,"* and added that *"there could be no cardinal changes without the professional development of the militia to achieve success"*.³³

Perhaps the most important fact which shines through in the professional life of Alu Alkhanov has been his steady service with the Chechen or federal militia and his support for Chechnya remaining within the structure of the Russian Federation. One wonders about his experience and capability in the higher circles of government and dealings at the inter-state level with the Russian Federation and internationally.

Other Candidates From Within Chechnya

Ruslan (Khalid) Yamadayev

Whilst civilian candidates for the post of president may be at a distinct disadvantage due to tension caused by the activities of the *boyeviki*, the candidacy of Ruslan Yamadayev does not quite fit within this grouping, as *"he could lean on the resource of the Vostok Battalion"*³⁴ commanded by his brother Sulim and its relations with the Russian military. Furthermore he is a member of Yedinaya Rossia. Initially the party collected a large number of signatures supporting his candidacy for president in record time, including that of Franz Klintsevich of Yedinaya Rossia, who later supported Alkhanov. However, the power base of both Yamadayev brothers is restricted to Gudermes, Chechnya's second city and the Gudermes district. They have decided not to participate in the elections. They are thus likely to remain in a comfortable relationship with the Kadyrov clan and possibly enjoy greater benefits than if Ruslan Yamadayev ran for president.

Bislan Sayd-Aleyevich Gantamirov

*"The one man whom Moscow trusts unconditionally. But for a long time he has been situated in a conflict situation with the Kadyrov clan, and to be sure he is the one person whom Ramzan would not wish to see in the post of president of Chechnya."*³⁵

There was one event which was greeted with incredulity in the West, during the early stages of the second Russo-Chechen conflict. This was the news that Boris Yel'tsin had pardoned Bislan Gantamirov, releasing him on 29 October 1999 from a six year prison sentence for misappropriating US\$ 6 million which had been set aside for restoration of the Chechen economy. Gantamirov returned to Chechnya to lead the Chechen militia fighting on the federal side.³⁶ Table 3 sets out some key events in the career of Gantamirov between October 1999 and the present day.

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Table 3 - Bislan Gantamirov³⁷

Date	Detail	Remarks
October 1999	Headed Chechen home guard detachments fighting on the side of federal forces.	Then transformed into Chechen militia detachments.
Dec 99 to May 2000	First Deputy Polpred of Russian govt in Chechnya.	
From Jul 2000	First Deputy Head of Administration of Chechnya.	
December 2000	Appointed Mayor of Groznyy.	For 3 rd time.
17 May 2001	Resigned as Mayor.	
11 June 2001	Assumed post of Chief Federal Inspector of Polpred YuFO.	Polpred Viktor Kazantsev. ³⁸
7 February 2002	Appointed Deputy Premier, Minister for Information & Press.	Immediately after appointment announced his support for Kadyrov in forthcoming elections.
22 August 2003	Announced that he would not support Kadyrov at the elections.	His support went to Huseyn Dzhabrailov.
2 September 2003	Post of Press Minister was liquidated.	

He was also involved in the complicated wrangle between the chief of Staropromyslovskiy (Gantamirov's) militia (ROVD) and the head of the ROVD who had arrived from Sverdlovsk at about the time of the ambush of the Sergiyev Posad OMON at the end of February 2000.³⁹

Whilst Gantamirov is perhaps too colourful, energetic and erratic for many in the Kadyrov government, an article covering his resignation as mayor in 2001 provides a telling insight, gilded with faint praise concerning his qualities and inadequacies as mayor. These might have been relevant in his not being selected as 'favourite' by the Kremlin, although it was in all probability the Kadyrov junior factor which precluded him.

Box 3 – Gantamirov's Resignation as Mayor of Groznyy⁴⁰

“On 17 May 2001 Gantamirov announced that he would resign from the post of mayor of Groznyy. Il'yasov called Gantamirov a “*talented leader*”, who must rise. According to Il'yasov he did not know what work exactly to suggest to Gantamirov, “good work, maybe Moscow”. In his turn the Federal Minister for Chechen Affairs Vladimir Yelagin characterised Bislan Gantamirov as a “*very energetic person in conditions of a struggle, in conditions of establishing order*”. In Yelagin's words “*Now in Groznyy painstaking social-economic work, very painstaking is required now*”. As the minister remarked, a working man, a mayor-economic planner, who knows how sewers are started, how to get water into the city, how to provide electricity. Such things that people need now.

“In the administration of Kadyrov, they however gave another explanation: *Bislan completely sees himself in another capacity*, alluding to the initial dissatisfaction of Gantamirov with his government colleagues ... the military were also not happy with Ganatamirov, who often turned to the mayor of Groznyy with a request to give permission on pulling down buildings which could not be restored. The ruins provided suitable positions for the *boyeviki*, ideal for ambushes, firing at columns and blockposts of federal forces.”

In an interview on 3 June 2004, Gantamirov stated that the main condition for his participation in the elections was that they should be conducted democratically, with equal opportunities for all candidates. He would not take part if they were going to be like the ones in October 2003 – he was not prepared to be “*in the category of a clown at the circus*”.⁴¹ It is now clear that he will not take part in the election. When asked whom he saw as potential enemies, Gantamirov replied: “*I don’t wish now to name enemies, I much prefer to consider possible candidates with whom it is possible to discuss things peacefully and rationally*”.⁴² Gantamirov went on to name Said Peshkhoyev, Lema Kasayev (an entrepreneur) and Oleg Zhidkov. It is not surprising that he should name Peshkhoyev and Zhidkov – possibly their views coincide with Gantamirov’s. That Gantamirov is against any form of automatic amnesty being bestowed on the *boyeviki* puts him at odds with Kadyrov junior and ultimately the Kremlin.

Box 4 - Gantamirov’s Views on Amnesty to *Boyeviki*⁴³

“For example, amongst the former people who have been amnestied by the President of Chechnya Akhmat Kadyrov there is one such person, Abu Arsanukayev former chief of Dudayev’s security detachment. To the shame of this person is the blood of my militiamen. As long ago as 1993 he commanded the shooting at Grozny town meeting. And if someone calculates that by way of handing him the indulgence of the procurator, the FSB or other structure which will preserve the life of this man I will be disappointed. This man meanwhile will live until the time people whom he shot and their relatives get him. Such people as him must not carry weapons and wear military uniform, and in any case must be imprisoned. I will not hide my aims nor my intentions. It is necessary to detach terrorists from the population. If we are talking about terrorists, the struggle must be uncompromising. If we talk about the population, then we must remember that it is our population.”

Aslambek Aslakhanov

Some speculation centred on the prospect of Aslambek Aslakhanov putting himself forward as a candidate. It will be remembered that in the 2003 presidential elections he withdrew his candidacy following pressure from Moscow, and accepted an invitation to become an adviser to the Russian President on Chechen affairs, where his main task is staffing papers on the North Caucasus. This former Chechen deputy to the Russian Duma was not exactly forward and robust in criticising abuses perpetrated against the Chechen population by federal power structures. He never had any intention of running in this election.

Candidates From Chechen Diaspora in Moscow

Malik Saydullayev

One of the names mentioned most frequently in the context of the forthcoming election is that of Malik Saydullayev, who came to prominence during the second Russo-Chechen conflict.⁴⁴ He is an entrepreneur living in Moscow. His wealth is derived from the Milan Group business empire that he built up after leaving Grozny in 1991. “*His popularity is derived largely from his charity. Over the last four years he says he has spent between US\$ 15 million (£8.2 million) and US\$ 17 million on humanitarian work in Chechnya.*”⁴⁵

Box 5 - Background of Malik Saydullayev⁴⁶

“This personage travels between London and Moscow, is known in the community as a successful businessman. Malik Saydullayev owns the multi-profile firm ‘Milan’, its best known project is the lottery ‘Russkoye Loto’.

“Malik Saydullayev was born in Chechnya in a family where there were 19 children. He worked on building construction, was a painter in a meat-packing plant. He studied at Grozny University, later he went to Stavropol’, where he worked as a shepherd. And then fate smiled on him, he was a companion and chief of security of Herman Sterligov, who founded one of the first exchanges – ‘Alisa’.

“Now Saydullayev is mentioned in the first ten of Moscow’s Chechen businessmen, he has property in London, to where he transports his family. He made his first attempt to enter into the role of politician two years ago; his entry into the republic was preceded by a not so large advertisement campaign. In Grozny the straightforward manner of a Muscovite businessman was immediately revealed, and President Aslan Maskhadov in one of his public speeches spoke scornfully about him.”

It will be remembered that in early October 1999 Saydullayev managed to secure the position of Head of the Chechen government in exile, but with somewhat negative consequences.

“According to Oleg Stulov, Saydullayev probably owed his election to the support provided by Ali Alavdinov, a former speaker of the legislative chamber of the Chechen Parliament. Doubtless the key factor was the fact that Saydullayev belonged to the powerful Benoy teip. His election was received rather coolly not only in Chechnya but also in Moscow, where one of the two Chechen Deputies of the Federal State Duma, Major General Ibragim Suleymenov, vented his feelings by saying ‘Boys have stepped in front of the engine - no one has been authorised to create an executive organ of government in exile. It is the independent action of a few people’.⁴⁷ Moscow did not hurry to recognise Malik Saydullayev in his new position. One is left with feeling that the choice of Saydullayev, ‘the shady premier’⁴⁸ as Head of the Chechen government in exile was a retrograde step.”⁴⁹

Despite the fact that Saydullayev belongs to the Benoy teip, there has been and there remains considerable opposition to a person from Moscow being elected president:

“What about Malik Saydullayev and other possible candidates from Moscow, they have, according to the words of the head of presidential administration and government Ziyad Sabsabi, no chance of being elected, on account of the fact “they do not live in Chechnya, do not know the real situation and have lost touch with the republic long ago”.⁵⁰

In the run-up to the 2003 presidential elections, Saydullayev was disqualified on technical grounds. Nevertheless, Saydullayev remains a person well-known to people in Chechnya, who could possibly use his wealth to better effect for the benefit of the people if he occupied the position of president.

Dzhabrail Gakayev

Professor Dzhabrail Gakayev is highly respected amongst the intelligentsia in the Chechen community in Moscow.⁵¹ Gakayev occupied a post in Khadzhiyev's government between April and November 1995. He had commented that *“there were more than a few occupying posts in Khadzhiyev's government who belonged to the Kunta Khadzhi Qadiriya”*, who perceived it was more beneficial to have an accommodation with Moscow than a fruitless, debilitating struggle they could not win.⁵² He is also noted for his negative views on Wahhabism:

*“The Wahhabi movement takes on a special danger, having received in recent times a wide spread in Chechnya and Dagestan. Wahhabis do not recognise nations, they reject the traditional Muslim forms and norms of the Islam of the peoples of the North Caucasus, they sow the seeds of discord, intolerance and enmity amongst believers, they attempt to counter the generations of fathers and children, to undermine traditional foundations of life and cultures of the mountain peoples. On this soil intra-Muslim and inter-confessional confrontations flare up. Wahhabism has become an instrument of the political struggle, an ideology of national-radicalism, separatism.”*⁵³

Gakayev can probably achieve far more for his country living in Moscow and through contact with the foreign media than in the isolation of Chechnya. Gakayev makes a strong point that

*“In Chechnya it is necessary to terminate the ‘grey’ economy, which feeds the war and those, who are interested in it. ... I see in the following the reason for this tragic situation. None of the leaders whom we have in mind came to power legitimately, that is by way of nation-wide, honest, democratic, according to the reliability of alternative elections. Therefore not one of the last four Chechen presidents can be considered legitimate in the general concept of this word – a significant part of the population did not vote for them. For this reason not one of them was able to unite the schisms in the opposing groups of the nation and consolidate Chechen society.”*⁵⁴

This message is quite simple. A manipulated presidential election will not solve any of the difficulties in Chechnya – it will only prolong the state of lawlessness. It is clear too that Chechen separatism is now losing momentum in the armed struggle against the forces of Moscow. However, the question remains: without continuing to use forceful methods, how can the views of Chechen society be best represented, if the elections and candidates are subject to manipulation by the Kremlin?

Candidates From the Power Structures

Movsar Khamidov

The “Ingush Variant” is so called after the selection by the Kremlin and the election of Murat Zyazikov to the presidency of Ingushetia in 2002, when only a few of the Ingush population had heard of Zyazikov even six months before the election. An “Ingush Variant” was considered unlikely until the news that Colonel Movsar Khamidov, an FSB Colonel and deputy chairman of the Chechen government, had entered the lists, which could herald another candidate approved by the Kremlin.

Chechnya: The Search for a Strong Successor

The election campaign in Chechnya thereby acquired a definite element of intrigue. Vladimir Putin had decided that the 'favourite candidate' would be the head of the Chechen MVD Alu Alkhanov, also chosen by the Kadyrov clan. Now Colonel Khamidov had entered his name in competition. *"Such a decision could hardly be taken without the agreement on the part of the federal power structures."*⁵⁵ There is clearly an element in the power structures which does not agree with the wholesale support of the Kadyrov clan, although Khamidov gave his reason to participate as a recent request from a group of fellow countrymen who had migrated from Chechnya. The approach came from the deputy chief of the Russian National Audit Office Inspectorate Badrudin Dzhambalkhanov, an active pro-Russian public figure in Chechnya who lost his position in the republic after the accession to power of Akhmad Kadyrov.

Stanovaya produces three trump cards in Khamidov's favour.⁵⁶ First, Khamidov is connected to the federal power structures, in which contradictory views are held towards Alkhanov. These views are also reflected within the Russian President's circle, as demonstrated by the time taken to support Alkhanov as Putin's choice. Second, there is a series of general officers capable of being anti-Kadyrov candidates, including Said-Selim Peshkhoyev. The third factor is the campaign against corruption. Khamidov has not only supervised the work of the power departments, but has also headed the commission on checking the course of compensation payments for destroyed living accommodation and lost property. The commission found a considerable number of shortcomings and violations in the work of the Chechen government structures. It will be remembered that the recently appointed Polpred YuFO, Vladimir Yakovlev, at a meeting in Grozny in April 2004 *"sharply criticised the sluggish pace of restoring the social economic infrastructure of the republic. The performance of the Chechen government has left much to be desired, particularly on the question of compensation payments."*⁵⁷

Stanovaya unearths another very interesting fact: *"not by accident Alkhanov is already taking measures for the prevention of corruption charges being directed at the Kadyrov clan"*.⁵⁸ One wonders, too, about the recent assassination in Moscow of Yakov Sergunin, a former deputy prime minister in the Chechen government and accountant *"through whose hands serious financial documents passed"*⁵⁹ in Akhmad Kadyrov's team.

The significant point about the candidacy of Khamidov is that part of the federal power structure is not happy with the position of the Kadyrov clan in the republic. Nevertheless, President Putin's support for Alkhanov will put considerable doubt on Khamidov's chances of winning the election. Nevertheless, Khamidov is not included in the list of candidates published on 14 July 2004. He has withdrawn in favour of Alkhanov, the Kremlin's favourite.

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- ⁸ Prime Minister Sergey Abramov is acting Chechen president.
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- ¹⁵ *Ibid*.
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- ¹⁸ See Blandy, “*Chechnya: Centre of Unabated Instability and Conflict*”, CSRC, Caucasus Series 04/11, May 2004, p8.
- ¹⁹ See *ibid*, p6, Box 3.
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- ²¹ Excerpt from *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 30 June 2004, “*Lessons of the Ingushetia Disaster*” by Andrei Pilipchuk, Vladimir Mokhov, translated by Andrei Ryabochkin, in *Defence and Security* N73, 2 July 2004, pp17/18, “Chechen Electoral Commission is accepting applications from would-be candidates until July 14.”
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- ²⁸ *Ibid*.
- ²⁹ *Ibid*.
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- 37 <http://www.nns.ru/Person/gantamirov/>.
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Want to Know More ...?

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