

**Conflict Studies Research Centre**



**Chechnya  
After Beslan**

**C W Blandy**

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## Key Points

- \* Strengthening of vertical power structures alone will neither bring peace to Chechnya nor improve the situation in the North Caucasus.
- \* In Chechnya a fundamental change of approach is required. Moscow should:
  - \* Exploit differences between mercenaries and Chechens;
  - \* Campaign for 'hearts and minds', reserving military activity for surgical strikes only;
  - \* Include moderate separatists and unofficial leaders.
- \* But there is little chance of a softer approach by President Putin or talks with separatists.
- \* The horror of Beslan may act against Chechen separatists.
- \* President Alu Alkhanov brings a more friendly face to the position, obscuring the steel of the federal centre's new measures.
- \* But how strong and experienced is Alkhanov?
- \* Risks include separatists and extremists, Ramzan Kadyrov, the need to create a political system not tied to personality, and effective economic and social measures.

# Chechnya After Beslan

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Nobody should have been surprised by the result of the Chechen presidential elections on 29 August 2004, when the Kremlin's chosen candidate Alu Alkhanov won a landslide victory with some 74% of the votes cast.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, electoral manipulation and the imposition of a new Chechen leader exacted a high price in human lives. The Kremlin's electoral victory was overtaken by the crashes of two passenger aircraft and the cold-blooded slaughter of children, parents and teachers at School No 1 in Beslan, North Osetia in the latest act of terrorist violence. Not only was the credibility of President Putin's policy over Chechnya in ruins once again: the stability of the North Caucasus was seen to be under increased threat from terrorist raids and inter-ethnic strife.<sup>2</sup> The spectre of another wave of violence almost became a reality on Sunday 5 September when North Osetians attempted to initiate a *pogrom* against Ingush houses in villages in Prigorodnyy rayon, where the "*authorities succeeded in preventing inter-ethnic clashes, but the situation is being controlled with difficulty*".<sup>3</sup>

The Kremlin's policy of imposing a 'favoured' presidential candidate for a second time, particularly after Kadyrov senior's repressive presidency, runs counter to Chechen society with its own traditional egalitarian system at the local level. This is in contrast to Russian society, which tends to accept the imposition of a leader from above without much question. The 'appointment' of a new president has of course been seized upon not only by the separatist who regards it as a justifiable reason for fighting federal forces on Chechen soil, but it has also served as an opportunity for the extremist leaders, who include Chechen converts to Wahhabism and foreign Muslim mercenaries, to extend their wider campaign of violence, funded by external paymasters. But nothing can excuse the act of taking women and children hostage, let alone the premeditated preparations for their mass murder should the situation turn sour for the hostage takers.

It should not be forgotten that many young Chechens' devoid of hope and traumatised by 10 years of conflict, have become vulnerable to being duped by the promise of a better life in Paradise. Unwittingly they have become entangled within the extremist environment with its attendant purveyors of corrupt teaching and interpretation of the Koran and Islamic doctrine. At the lower end of the employment scale it would appear that youngsters are being lured by 50 roubles to carry explosives and other materials to sites where it is intended to lay a fougasse or mine.<sup>4</sup> In the opinion of Major General Il'ya Shabalkin, spokesman for the Regional Operational Headquarters (ROSh) directing the counter-terrorist in the North Caucasus: "*Foreign emissaries heat up the activeness of boyeviki in Chechnya, in fact sponsor each terrorist act completed in Chechnya and beyond its borders*".<sup>5</sup>

The tragedy of Beslan can hardly be helpful to the new Chechen president scheduled to take office on 5 October 2004, regardless of the method of his election. His task is to normalise the situation in his war-torn republic, entailing the establishment of law and order, rehabilitation of the population, restoration of the infrastructure and regeneration of legitimate economic activity.

The leaders of the Chechen moderate separatist cause also had to recognise that their general military action within Chechnya had perished at the hands of the extremists, and was now buried in the ruins of Beslan School No1, even though this tragedy was not of their making. In fact, Aslan Maskhadov had made a statement on the internet condemning the hostage-taking: "*We do not fight with children*,"<sup>6</sup> as did his representative Akhmed Zakayev in London. However, it needs to be emphasised that the main effort of the separatist cause at the moment is an attempt to curb federal action and also the equally brutal measures adopted by Kadyrov junior's presidential security service. The separatists have long been making requests for talks with the Kremlin, but to date these have been dismissed out of hand. Undoubtedly, there are links between Maskhadov and Shamil' Basayev, but the two leaders differ on the scope, scale, level and location of targeted objectives. However, there are many questions. To what extent is Maskhadov dependant on Basayev for funds? How much influence and freedom of manoeuvre has Maskhadov?<sup>7</sup> Why has Basayev not been captured by federal forces? Having left Maskhadov to wither on the bough during his presidency,<sup>8</sup> do the federal authorities have the view that Basayev's activities damage the image of Maskhadov? At the same time, it is important to stress the divide between the Chechen separatist and the very small extremist minority. One of Maskhadov's concerns when President was that he did not want Chechnya to develop into another Afghanistan.

Perhaps federal policy should concentrate on fostering the divide between separatist and extremist. The divide between the ordinary Chechen and Arab, with the latter's "*ever-present idea of world-worthlessness*" and "*preaching of bareness, renunciation and poverty*"<sup>9</sup> or other Muslim mercenary could also be exploited, for the mercenary cares little for the people of Chechnya, or the North Caucasus for that matter. Given the federal forces' brutal, forceful methods, such as cleansing operations, abduction of people, some of whom disappear without trace, and the formation of intrusive quasi-security services, passive support from ordinary Chechens for those involved in actions against the *federaly* will undoubtedly continue. There is a need to recognise the importance of getting the mainly peaceful population on the side of the authorities. This cannot take place whilst forceful methods are the normal practice. A softer approach, combined with the elimination of just one extremist leader could probably pave the way. The elimination of Emir Khattab (Khabib Abdul Rakhman), admittedly by poison, in March 2002 proves it can be done. The holding of talks with unofficial leaders from amongst the Chechen community before the parliamentary elections scheduled for March 2005 might go some way to achieving a degree of progress in Chechnya. The cessation of sweep and search operations supported by artillery and offensive air support would encourage the local population. The majority of Chechens are war-weary and yearn for a life of greater certainty and peace. However, in a country such as Russia whose population applauds strength, the exercise of powerful methods and determination, but despises anything which could be regarded as weakness in a leader, it is unlikely that President Putin will change his stance.

The strengthening of vertical power structures alone will do little to improve the situation in the North Caucasus or in Chechnya.<sup>10</sup> New concepts of power structures are like wonderful, theoretical architectural designs of new buildings; but if your master-builders and masons are not straight and honest, the materials are poor, and relations with the local workforce are strained then the building will not reflect the beautiful edifice envisaged in the architect's mind. In general the federal power ministries possess their own embedded forms of deep malaise which are not only apparent at the top but also amongst senior and middle ranking officers<sup>11</sup> and at grass roots level, as indicated by events in Ingushetia some nine weeks before

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Beslan.<sup>12</sup> Changing power structures is not enough, because basically the problem reverberating throughout the North Caucasus and its hinterland and impinging on the South Caucasus, is the unresolved problem of Chechnya. A fundamental change of approach is required:

*“Putin’s policy has not only not stabilised Chechnya but has brought about a worsening of the situation. If Putin’s policy continues in the same vein, the Caucasus will radicalise even further and I am gravely concerned that more Beslans will be inevitable ... We understand that Russia has its strategic interests in the Caucasus and I am absolutely sure that if there was goodwill it would be possible to achieve a compromise.”<sup>13</sup>*

A more conciliatory policy from the Kremlin is unlikely to strengthen President Putin’s rating in Russia. Yuliya Latynina, writing after the two airliners had crashed and before Beslan, produced a succinct view of how some ordinary Russians regarded the Chechen problem:

*“Chechnya has ceased to be part of Russia. The connection of Russia and Chechnya is manifesting itself in three ways. Russian troops shoot Chechen inhabitants. The Russian treasury shuffles money to Chechnya, which vanishes there. And still Chechens organise terror acts in Russia – using that money which Russia sent to Chechnya... Don’t allow any compromise for the boyeviki, the Kremlin is going on endless compromises with its protégés. Compromises like the memorial board of Kadyrov and the revenue from Chechen oil ... But it is not possible to win the war, not acknowledging that you are conducting it. It is not possible to win the war, calling the successful raid of saboteurs 'a sortie repulsed by troops'. It is not possible to win the war trying to curry favour with puppet masters. The cost of this abuse is human lives.”<sup>14</sup>*

*“The rating of the president is falling, dissatisfaction with the latest reforms is growing, instability is increasing in the south of the country”.*<sup>15</sup> A poll conducted on 27 August 2004 showed that the support for federal policy in Chechnya had dropped from 44% in May 2003 to 41% in May 2004. Table 1 is particularly interesting in the ‘inclined to support’ and ‘inclined to be against’ categories, where support for the Kremlin’s policy reached 34% in May 2003, two months after the constitutional referendum there but dropped to 30% in May 2004.

**Table 1 - Degree of Russian Support for Federal Policy in Chechnya<sup>16</sup>**

<b>Degree of Support (%)</b>	<b>Jul 02</b>	<b>May 03</b>	<b>May 04</b>
Fully supportive	11	10	11
Inclined to support	22	34	30
<b>Total support</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>41</b>
Strongly against	27	29	32
Inclined to be against	21	17	12
<b>Total Against</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>44</b>
Don’t know	19	10	15

Support for President Putin since the Beslan tragedy dropped significantly, from 81% in March 2004 to 66% in September.<sup>17</sup>

## Challenges to Authority of New Chechen President

It is against the background outlined above that Alu Alkhanov will take up office on 5 October 2004, one year exactly after the election of the late Akhmat-Khadzhi Kadyrov to the Presidency of Chechnya. The situation in Chechnya and the North Caucasus is now worse and more unstable than it was then. For the moment, but only for a moment, the election of Alkhanov, the formation of his government and future policy in Chechnya has been overshadowed by the tragedy at Beslan. Whilst the poll result was predictable, there can be little doubt that the election of Alkhanov has in itself created a new situation in Chechnya. The situation could become even more complicated as political intrigue by factions within the Chechen pro-Russian group adds an additional element to the already complicated situation within the republic.<sup>18</sup>

### Alu Alkhanov – The Man

To all outward appearances Alkhanov is in a very different mould to that of Kadyrov senior, and before Kadyrov's assassination very little was known about Alkhanov, even among the Chechen people. This gives rise to four questions.

1. Will Alkhanov become public enemy No 1 as far as the separatist and extremist are concerned?
2. Will Alkhanov possess sufficient independence of thought, ability, strength of purpose and toughness to follow a course that he himself has chosen? He does not give the appearance of being ruthless. Or will he merely act as a member of the Kadyrov clan, under the control of and answerable to Kadyrov junior? Are relations between Alkhanov and Kadyrov junior cordial or strained? What are the chances of a deterioration in their working relationship?<sup>19</sup>
3. Can Alkhanov bring in a system of government which is not dependant on an individual?
4. Does Alkhanov have the necessary skills and background to develop the economy, restore the infrastructure and rehabilitate the Chechen population?

An earlier paper gave a pen-picture of Alkhanov.<sup>20</sup> Subsequently a little more substance has been added; see Box 1 below.

#### **Box 1 - Additional Insights into Alu Alkhanov<sup>21</sup>**

##### **Boyhood and Early Manhood - 1957 to 1979**

Alu Alkhanov was born on 20 January 1957 in Taldy-Kurganskaya oblast', Kazakhstan, where the Chechens were deported during the Great Patriotic War. He completed Middle School in Urus-Martan. The majority of his teachers were Russian, which is why Alkhanov speaks Russian with hardly any accent. He writes without mistakes. The Alkhanovs lived poorly, schoolboy Alu and his brothers helped their father to earn a little more money – they made sheep pens in Kazakhstan. When the family returned to Chechnya, to Astrakhan oblast', they grew water melons. Alu, working in the militia, went on leave in August in order to harvest the melons. In his childhood Alkhanov read many books, especially on history. He played the trumpet in a religious orchestra. In his youth he learnt Judo, unarmed combat and boxing. Alkhanov went on to serve in the Soviet Army in the Southern Group of Forces (Hungary). In 1979 he settled down into the Interior Ministry (MVD) of Checheno-Ingushetia, began as a driver and rose to become an officer in the militia.

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**Alkhanov The Man - 1995 to 2004**

In 1995-1996 during Doku Zavgayev's government, Alkhanov was chief of the republic's Interior Ministry Directorate for transport. When in August 1996 the *boyeviki* entered Grozny, the subunit commanded by Alkhanov offered stiff resistance to them. As he remembered, "We held the terminus for eight days. The brutal Basayev called on us to surrender, he guaranteed our lives. We broke out with the minimum of casualties."

At the end of 1996, after Maskhadov's rise to power, Alkhanov left Chechnya. In 1997-1998 he was chief of the militia line detachment in the town of Shakhty, Rostov oblast'. It is said that when he commanded this subunit, the number of pickpockets was sharply reduced at the terminus and on the transport. In 1999, after Russian troops entered Chechnya and Kadyrov became head of the republic, Alkhanov once again became chief of the transport militia. In 2003, he became Minister of Internal Affairs of Chechnya. Five attempts have been made on his life. During the terrorist act at the stadium in Grozny when Kadyrov was killed, Alkhanov, who was sitting alongside, was wounded. Alkhanov has higher legal education which he completed at the MVD Academy.

Major General MVD Alkhanov does not often wear uniform, he much prefers civilian clothes which he buys in Moscow.

Perhaps the most favourable endorsement of Alkhanov came from Ramazan Abdulatipov:

*"Moreover, I have said from the very beginning and now I wish to repeat again, that in the person of Alu Alkhanov we have got at the head of Chechnya a very reasonable, capable and loyal man. Unlike many others in Chechnya, this man from the beginning has occupied a clear position".<sup>22</sup>*

**Manipulation, 'Softeners' & 'Protection with a Difference'**

*"These elections in Grozny differed little from all the previous ones – most of the polling booths looked deserted, there were more militiamen than voters. In certain polling booths with the appearance of journalists in the twinkling of an eye crowd scenes were formed. In some, voters were organised with buses: in half hour a stream and after their departure once again a suffocating lull."<sup>23</sup>*

Whatever the personal qualities and achievements of Alu Alkhanov to date, the Kremlin's manipulation of the elections serves to undermine his standing in Chechnya and in the outside world. This is regardless of his suitability as head of the Chechen government. In fact, given the lack of legitimacy of the last four Chechen presidents, the ongoing Chechen problem has been further compounded by the latest presidential elections.<sup>24</sup> Against that policy are not only the separatist and extremist, but also leading people who are not numbered amongst the dissident elements, such as Malik Saydullayev, Bislan Gantamirov, maybe Ruslan (Khalid) Yamadayev, and ordinary Chechens occupying humbler positions with little or no money. Whilst they have to accept that Kremlin policy is a fact of life, they could be forgiven for feeling aggrieved, and maybe could become a part of a more influential pro-Russian opposition, particularly if Kadyrov junior overreaches himself.

Even before the actual elections there was gross manipulation in the list of candidates, as in the case of Malik Saydullayev, the main rival to Alkhanov, who was disqualified by Abdul-Karim Aslakhonov, Chairman of the Chechen Republic's

central election commission, on the grounds that Saydullayev's passport was invalid.

*"The election chairman stated that the birthplace of the candidate was untrue: 'Alkhan-Yurt, Republic of Chechnya'. But it should have been 'Alkhan-Yurt, Checheno-Ingushskaya ASSR' due to the fact that at the moment of Mr Saydullayev's birth the village of Alkhan-Yurt was situated on the territory of the ChIASSR [Checheno-Ingushskaya Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic] ... The piquancy of the clash however, amounted to the fact that Mr Saydullayev himself had not written out the passport, but it was done in Balashikha Interior Ministry Directorate of Moscow Oblast', in an official organ which was authorised to change the old-style passport of the Soviet regime."*<sup>25</sup>

It will be remembered that Saydullayev was also deleted from the list of candidates some time before the 2003 presidential elections. Saydullayev's deletion from the list was left to the Chechen administration rather than done by direct action from Moscow. The Kadyrov clan clearly controlled the nomination process. In particular Taus Dzhabrailov was firmly against any Chechen based in Moscow participating in the campaign, even though Saydullayev belonged to the same *teip* as the late Kadyrov senior.<sup>26</sup>

Dzhabrailov's opposition to candidates from outside Chechnya might have reflected the views of others amongst the Chechen population: *"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"*.<sup>27</sup> In the case of Saydullayev this was probably far from the truth. First, in December 1999 Saydullayev had witnessed goods being removed from some of his relatives' houses in Alkhan-Yurt following the alleged massacre of villagers by federal troops;<sup>28</sup> second, he is well-known for financial assistance in helping to alleviate the situation in Chechnya. Perhaps he was too successful a businessman.

One must not forget Bislan Gantamirov's reasons for not standing as a candidate. First, he was outside the Kadyrov clan, having been removed from the position of Press Minister by Kadyrov senior in September 2003. Furthermore, Gantamirov had already made it quite clear that he was against any form of automatic amnesty being granted to former *boyeviki*, which not only put him at odds with Kadyrov junior but ultimately the Kremlin. He had also stated that the main condition for his participation in the elections was that they should be conducted democratically, with equal opportunities for all the candidates. He would not take part if they were going to be like the ones in October 2003. He did not see himself *"in the category of a clown at the circus"*.<sup>29</sup> Of course, the standing of a would-be president who had a criminal record for embezzlement would not be very high.

There are also other less obvious ways of dissuading people from participating in an election where their presence on the list of candidates might throw all the carefully prepared plans into disarray, particularly if the person concerned was to all intents and purposes an ally. The presentation to Ruslan (Khalid) Yamadayev of the highest decoration of Russia, the Hero's Star, could possibly be classed in that category. Kadyrov had unsuccessfully put Yamadayev up for the award four times already. *"It is well known that Yamadayev [was] carrying out the duties of leader of the Chechen section of "Yedina Rossii" and [was] responsible for the party cell in the elections on 29 August. It seemed that getting the Hero of Russia award at the fifth attempt was not without help from the party."*<sup>30</sup>



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*Novyye Izvestiya* described the scene on the eve of the elections: “On Sunday last the elections for a President of Chechnya recalled a well-planned military operation. The night before the sound of artillery salvos was heard over the whole republic. As a result Chechen inhabitants voted in a military manner speedily and precisely.”<sup>31</sup>

A system of reliable protection can help influence people, strengthen relationships and moreover form a hold over the beneficiary. Prior to the elections, the Chechen capital had been ‘relocated’ from Grozny to the village of Tsentoroy in Kurchaloy rayon. Practically all the top people of the republic came to vote in Kadyrov’s home town.<sup>32</sup> It was more peaceful in Tsentoroy than in Grozny, for the headquarters of the presidential protection service headed by Ramzan Kadyrov was located there. At the entrance to the village there was a double cordon of the military. As one would expect, every vehicle was carefully examined and searched, but “unlike Grozny the village itself had large new houses and, as a militiaman volunteered, full security”.<sup>33</sup> The polling station in the local school in Tsentoroy was where Sergey Abramov, Ramzan Kadyrov and Alu Alkhanov were scheduled to vote. It had been difficult to find a place for Alkhanov to vote, for he was registered in Rostov oblast’, but it seems that Kadyrov gave Alkhanov a house in Tsentoroy and therefore the situation was resolved.<sup>34</sup>

Adam Muzayev, a former veterinary surgeon turned taxi driver, may have been a typical voter: “[Muzayev] came out of a polling station in Grozny’s School No 15 in an angry mood. In full view of all the election officials I put a big cross on my ballot paper – I voted against all the candidates” he said ... I voted because I didn’t want anyone else to use my ballot paper for me.”<sup>35</sup>

Muzayev had become disenchanted with the endless elections and was “extremely cynical about this one”.<sup>36</sup> Further anecdotal exchanges reported at street and polling station level are contained in Box 2 below.

**Box 2 - Exchanges at Street and Polling Station Level<sup>37</sup>**

Shortly afterwards a busload of visiting journalists drew up and started interviewing the policeman guarding the polling station. At this point around 20 women and children arrived en masse at the school [Grozny School No 15], which had seen just two voters in the previous half hour. “Maybe they were brought by the bus?” one of the journalists asked the policeman. “Yes, they hired a bus with their own money and came,” the policeman said. “They wanted to vote so much.” Overhearing this exchange, Muzayev laughed and said, “These aren’t voters, they are just film extras. They’re relatives of people from the electoral commission waiting for the election observers to arrive.”

One of the electoral officials in Grozny named Movsar revealed that at his polling station 540 voters out of a registered total of 1,120 had voted, and that this number also included Russian federal soldiers. “All the same, we gave a total figure of 980 people, which amounted to 87.5% (of the electoral roll),” he said. Movsar said that his chairman had passed on only slightly inflated figures to the central commission. “At the same time, when the observers got distracted – when we went off for lunch for example – the commission officials stuffed the ballot boxes. And at the end of the day there was mass stuffing.” Chechen political analyst Murad Nashkhoyev believes that Alkhanov will not serve long as president. “Using democratic slogans, Moscow is essentially imposing people on Chechen society who will strictly carry out the Kremlin’s will. As it was in Soviet times: they knew for sure who to vote for and how to vote. But our people are intelligent enough to understand what the Kremlin’s tactics are,” he said.

One comes back to the inevitable point that most Chechens are not happy with the imposition of a new leader. In the election of Kadyrov senior in 2003, there was a need to establish as president the man who had 'ruled' Chechnya as Administrator since May 2000. There was certainly no one else in the position to take on that role after Kadyrov had shown himself so obviously to be a strong man. Chechen society probably felt somewhat denuded without a president to represent them and their republic. The circumstances this time were totally different.

### **Concrete Risks for Alkhanov**

#### ***Risk No 1 - Danger from Separatists and Extremists***

*"The first risk for Alkhanov is the separatists. Since Moscow as usual was set on personality, but not on a system, on PR technology but not on the pithy, political solution of the burdensome Chechen crisis, the figure standing at the head of Chechnya is being turned into a living target. The boyeviki understand very well the worth of inflicting a strike on a person - to pull the whole building down, and Moscow must begin everything from the beginning again. A precise and meticulously planned act of terror, and the [crisis] situation is renewed."*<sup>38</sup>

The referendum on the Constitution and the election of Kadyrov had gone pretty smoothly, and Moscow lowered its guard. However, the death of Kadyrov senior and the raid into Ingushetia on 21/22 June showed that the *boyeviki* were capable of carrying out activities when they wished to do so.

The new president is therefore under an extremely serious threat: the more the political situation in Chechnya is linked to him personally, the more vulnerable he becomes. To avoid this risk, Alkhanov must propose a political model for normalising the Chechen crisis. Personalisation and continuity, even if multiplied by federal PR and other support from the centre, is no substitute. Considerable brainpower will be required to work out a special model for a future Chechen structure, which must include social, communal and economic aspects and take account of the traditions of family-tribal democracy, supported by traditional Islam of the Sufi form and the special legal system of Adat. The essential point of Alkhanov's presidency will rest in his government's ability to produce a system which functions without an emphasis on personality, ie the president. The more Alkhanov becomes replaceable, the greater his security and the more settled the situation in Chechnya will become.

It would not be surprising if some form of attempt was made on Alkhanov at the inauguration ceremony on 5 October or at some opportune moment in the near future. One wonders, however, given the terrible images from the Beslan siege, whether for the time being the separatist will stay his hand in view of the risk of adverse publicity further damaging the separatist cause. The extremist Shamil' Basayev, who also claimed responsibility for the assassination of Kadyrov senior, having no such considerations, is more likely to strike whilst people are still trying to recover from the recent shocks.

#### ***Risk No 2 - Relations with Ramzan Kadyrov***

Kadyrov junior supported Alkhanov because he was confident that this would be the best way to continue the direction established by his father before his death. The pre-eminence of the Benoy *teip* would be guaranteed, as would his own personal interests. However, if Alkhanov creates a structure in which the Ramzan

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“Presidential Security Service” and the Benoy *teip* are reduced, this would lead inevitably to tension, the first signs of which analysts have observed. This in turn makes Alkhanov very vulnerable.

In mid-August<sup>39</sup> rumours of disagreements began to surface after the Chechen deputy prime minister Kadyrov had appeared to support Vakha Visayev's candidacy for president by displaying placards to that effect. This was followed by an unexpected visit by President Putin to Grozny and then by helicopter to Tsentoroy, the home town of the Kadyrov family. The Russian President, Alu Alkhanov and Ramzan Kadyrov laid flowers on the grave of Akhmad-Khadzhi Kadyrov.<sup>40</sup> In this gesture of respect Putin deviated from Muslim traditions, but “*there is nothing reprehensible in this*”.<sup>41</sup>

The point to note here of course was the immediate, decisive action by Putin to resolve the problem and liquidate any arguments which might exist within the Kadyrov team. Undoubtedly, on this occasion he had actually received accurate and truthful reports concerning the situation, unlike after the coordinated raids in Ingushetia on 21/22 June 2004, which resulted in the dismissal of not a few senior and middle ranking officers. For the Russian President the need for continuity in the Chechen succession was and is such a vital factor in his Chechen policy that it now probably requires him to be constantly briefed by the presidential administration, other departments and agencies. Whilst many disagree with Putin's policy with regard to Chechen normalisation, the issue lies at his door as president. It is difficult not to compare the hands-on, direct approach of Vladimir Putin with that of Boris Yel'tsin when he was president in the 90s: had Yel'tsin met Dzhokhar Dudayev in 1994 or even earlier perhaps the devastation of the last 10 years could have been avoided. Of course, this brings the problem full circle again, with the question, why not initiate talks at a lower level with moderate separatists, even if it means using a long spoon?

Dmitriy Kozak, the new Presidential Plenipotentiary Representative in the Southern Federal District, paid his first visit to Grozny during the week starting 20 September 2004, in his capacity also as director of the new, potentially high-powered Federal Commission on the North Caucasus. Kozak's main priorities will be to overcome the rivalries within the Chechen government, to facilitate the concentration of power in the hands of the new president, improve the coordination of the Chechen government's organs,<sup>42</sup> and to enhance links with the federal centre as part of the Kremlin's policy of strengthening the vertical structures.

Kozak had two meetings whilst he was in Grozny. The first was devoted to the economy and social questions. He emphasised the importance of creating the conditions to improve life for people in Chechnya, with the added spur that “*If we do not do this today then nothing will change for a hundred years*”.<sup>43</sup> The second meeting was with representatives of the power structures. At this meeting, Kozak focused attention on the need for greater coordination in their work.

*“This was a highly token observation in the light of the gradual weakening of the imperial base of Ramzan Kadyrov, a [first] deputy prime minister of the Chechen government. Symptomatically Kadyrov did not attend Kozak's meeting, which furthermore indirectly underlined the version concerning his definable separation from controlling the power departments.”*<sup>44</sup>

It will be remembered that at the end of June 2004 the mass media received information that the presidential security service (PSS) which had previously been

controlled by Kadyrov junior was to be re-roled to become a conventional regiment concerned with patrolling and guard duties under the aegis of the Chechen Interior Ministry, thus allowing Kadyrov junior to become fully orientated to politics and government in his role as first deputy prime minister. Some time earlier, Kadyrov junior had made an extremely radical declaration: *“In particular he announced that he was ready to go against Russia, if the population of Chechnya wanted [that]”*.<sup>45</sup> He also showed himself to be concerned about the possible pardon for Colonel Yuriy Budanov who had received a sentence of 10 years imprisonment for the death of El'za Khungayeva at Tangi-Chu on 26/27 March 2002.<sup>46</sup> Kadyrov had said that he would not be able to explain to his people the reasons for pardoning Budanov, if the pardon was granted.

At least one analyst believes that these statements show the direction of Kadyrov's substantial political ambitions, and demonstrate his willingness to enter into dialogue with the federal centre.<sup>47</sup> One of the key figures in the government elite, Kadyrov has lost his official power base, the PSS, was not invited to Kazak's meeting with representatives of the power structures, but as first deputy prime minister is still exercising control over armed detachments in which former *boyeviki* are included. The old Kadyrov team has been effectively stratified. The majority are being organised into a new system of relations in which Alkhanov will play the key role. But Kadyrov is likely to become more radicalised, and his periodic outbursts will hardly find favour with the Kremlin.

### **Risk No 3 - The Social-Economic Sphere**

After the flower-laying ceremony in Tsentoroy, Putin returned to Sochi by air with Alkhanov and Kadyrov junior on board his aircraft. During a meeting in the presidential residence, Putin approved practically all the proposals put forward by Alkhanov in his pre-election campaign. The main proposal was the idea of directing finance from the sale of Chechen oil to the restoration of the republic. Putin said that *“he thought this proposal is reasonable and will be understood by everyone”*.<sup>48</sup> Putin's response was perhaps hardly surprising in view of Alkhanov's opening statement: *“You as no other [person] know about the complicated economic situation in the republic ... We have long thought about how to get out of this position.”*<sup>49</sup>

Using Chechen oil revenues for the rehabilitation of Chechnya is a continuation of Kadyrov senior's policy. It might reduce criticism from ordinary Russians that money from the Russian treasury was being used by Chechens to set up terror acts in Russia itself.

Before the elections Alkhanov talked about the establishment of a free economic zone in Chechnya at a meeting with the Chechen diaspora. On 18 August 2004 Alkhanov invited the Chechen intelligentsia to return to the republic. He noted that the Chechen Republic had lost talented teachers, instructors and specialists belonging to different professional spheres, but emphasised that: *“The Chechen Republic needs your talent, your liking for industry and hard work. Each one of us can find himself a place in a team of like-minded people created by the former president of the Chechen Republic Akhmad-Khadzhi Kadyrov.”*<sup>50</sup>

At his meeting with representatives of the Chechen community, Alkhanov presented the main tenets of his programme for the restoration of the republic. Beginning in autumn of 2004, measures would be implemented on the creation of work places with the aim of bringing new industrial concerns into operation. Over five years this would create more than 150,000 jobs, he said. The number of unemployed would

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be reduced by five times. Alkhanov emphasised that *“in 2005-2006 it is planned to find employment for the main mass of employable people in the population”*.<sup>51</sup>

The question of housing was one of the most serious and troubling problems in the republic, he noted. He intended to introduce a special development programme which will achieve real results and would solve the problem of housing. *“Each family, each one in need will receive a real possibility to establish or build his home, to obtain or buy an apartment.”*<sup>52</sup> Alkhanov reiterated that oil revenues would realise concrete benefits: *“Today our oil industry workers have achieved a volume of oil of 2 million tonnes per year. On account of investment it is possible to increase the volume of oil to 5 million tonnes a year, that will allow an increase in the annual budget of up to 3 milliard roubles ... the revenue from oil will become one of the sources of raising the well-being of citizens.”*<sup>53</sup> It was also envisaged to speed up the introduction, modernisation and development of enterprises associated with the oil industry which in turn would bring another million tonnes per year.

Alkhanov noted that there was also a programme of agricultural restoration which would bring into operation more than 70 enterprises.

There are a number of points to note, however. First, regarding these policies, when Ingushetia introduced its own brand of economic zone not everyone benefited: the rich became richer. Second, housing is perhaps the crux for enabling the population to settle down. However, one needs to question whether the money from oil will reach all the people that are in need: it behoves one to remember that Tsentroy, the home of the Kadyrovs, has many large new houses! And, whilst Chechen oil is extremely high grade, suitable for aircraft engines, it would be unwise to rely on its considerable revenue as the sole source of income. Finally, it must be remembered that in Chechnya today all the worst aspects of Russian society have made their appearance: ultra-corruption, the economic monopoly of narrow clans, the breakdown of morale in a significant sector of people in the power structures and the moral apathy of the population.

## Conclusions

After many years of clamour for greater federal interest and participation in righting the situation in the North Caucasus, as a result of Beslan the federal centre has now implemented a radical revision and strengthening of the vertical power structures. In the short term, the first test for the revised structures will be Alkhanov's inauguration on 5 October. The second will come on 13 October, the end of the period of mourning in North Osetia for the dead of Beslan, when serious and large scale pogroms have been threatened by members of the North Osetian population against the Ingush in Prigorodnyy rayon in North Osetia.

The strengthening of vertical power structures alone will neither bring peace to Chechnya nor improve the situation in the North Caucasus. The basic problem reverberating throughout the North Caucasus, its hinterland and to a certain extent impinging on the South Caucasus is the unresolved problem of Chechnya.

In Chechnya, a fundamental change of approach is required which not only concentrates on fostering the divide between separatist and extremist, but also one which exploits the differences between the ordinary Chechen and Arab or other Muslim mercenary.

There is a need for the federal centre to recognise the importance of getting the mainly peaceful population in Chechnya on the side of the authorities. This cannot take place whilst wholesale, forceful methods of terrorist hunting continue to be the normal practice. The use of a softer approach than hitherto, orientated to 'hearts and minds' in Chechnya, reserving military activity for surgical strikes, capture or liquidation of hardened extremist leaders based on firm, well collated intelligence is also more likely to gain success.

The holding of talks with moderate separatists, unofficial leaders from amongst the Chechen community, and possibly an acceleration of the date for the parliamentary elections presently scheduled for March 2005 might go some way to achieving a degree of progress towards normalisation. However, a softer approach or talks with separatists are not likely, when the Russian population applauds strength.

The sheer horror of Beslan may force the moderate Chechen separatist to publicly distance himself from the extremist. They may even come to realise that whilst they are doing a 'steady job' in depleting the ranks of federal servicemen, their campaign is detrimental to the interests of Chechen society as a whole.

Certainly, Alu Alkhanov brings a much more friendly face to the office of the President of Chechnya. Alkhanov does not appear to have any problem with speaking in public or in talks with the President of Russia. However, Alkhanov's softness could well hide the steel of the Kremlin's Dmitriy Kozak, the federal centre's 'keeper' of Chechnya and the North Caucasus. One wonders whether Alkhanov is tough enough to control the person who is never far from his side – Ramzan Kadyrov, the first deputy prime minister and former head of the presidential security service. It is vital that Kadyrov remains loyal to the new president. It is also essential that unity of purpose for the good of Chechnya is maintained and that Kadyrov junior does not overreach himself verbally in outspoken criticism of the Kremlin or physically become involved in action outside Chechnya, such as military assistance to South Osetia, which he has offered.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> <http://globalrus.ru/nes/137947>, Gobarus.ru: Novosti, 31 August 2004. "Alu Alkhanov – novyy prezident Chechni". "In second place Movsur Khamidov - 8.5%; third place Abdula Bugayev - 4.6%; fourth Vakha Visayev – 4.1%; Umar Abuyev – 3.2%; Mukhmud-Khasan Asanov – 3.2%; Magomed Aydamirov – 0.7%."

<sup>2</sup> Since April 2004 there has been a steady build-up of the campaign of violence against targets outside Chechnya. It is illustrated by: attempted sabotage of pipelines at Manas (2 April), the assassination attempt on Murat Zyazikov (6 April), the assassination of Kadyrov (9 May), the nocturnal battles around Nazran' (20/21 June), the separatist raid on Avtury (12/13 July), the sortie by the so-called Nogay battalion at Kizlyar (30 July), the raid on Groznyy (21 August), the destruction of two airliners in mid-air from Domodedovo (24 August), Moscow Metro bombing at Rizhskaya station (31 August). This latest upsurge has largely demolished the statements from Moscow advancing the view that all the conditions have been met for a peaceful life in the North Caucasus region.

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.gazeta.ru/2004/09/06/oa\\_132426.shtml](http://www.gazeta.ru/2004/09/06/oa_132426.shtml), "Severnaya Osetia na grani massovykh pogromov" by Ruslan Pliyev and Yelena Rudneva. For background see, CW Blandy, "Prigorodnyy Rayon: The Continuing Dispute (the Triangular Relationship of North Osetia, Ingushetia and Russia)", P26, CSRC, September 1997.

<sup>4</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, No 192, 8 September 2004, p4, "Boyeviki prodalzhayut fugasnuyu voynu" by Vladimir Mukhin.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

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<sup>6</sup> <http://2004.novayagazeta.ru/nomer/2004/65n/n65n-s01.shtml>, *Novaya Gazeta*, No 65, 6 September 2004, “*My poteryali poltora dnya*” by Dmitriy Muratov.

<sup>7</sup> In August 1999, there were rumours that Maskhadov was under a form of house arrest when Basayev launched his ‘invasion’ into Dagestan with Khattab: is Maskhadov merely a convenient figurehead to give greater legitimacy Basayev’s actions?

<sup>8</sup> See C W Blandy, “*Chechnya: Two Federal Interventions – An Interim Comparison and Assessment*”, P29, CSRC, January 2000, pp26-28.

<sup>9</sup> T E Lawrence, “*Seven Pillars of Wisdom – a Triumph*”, Jonathan Cape, London, First Edition, 1935, p39.

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.izvestia.ru/politic/article376513>, *Izvestiya*, 13 September 2004, “*Novaya Vertikal*” by Yekaterina Grigor’yeva. “13 September is the date of the start of three widescale reforms, which promise to be the most prominent in the presidency of Vladimir Putin ... First, the principles of the formation of regional organs of government are to be changed (having formally preserved appointment by election regional heads will in essence be nominated). Second, the system of security is to be changed, which judging as a whole, implies the appearance of a certain power super-authority. Third, in the country a certain new structure of public chamber, which according to the idea must guarantee the required level of support for all planned measures.”

<sup>11</sup> *Kommersant Vlast*, 26 July 2004, “*Nikogda, my ne ladili s mentami, ponimayesh?*” by Ol’ga Allenova. “One of the reasons for the mass dismissal of the highest officers was the bad coordination of actions of troops in Chechnya, but more accurately, the absence of these actions.” In Defence Minister Sergey Ivanov’s words, “The matter is not about generals, but about colonels and lieutenant colonels, who have the experience of commanding smallish collectives and are able to make a decision and to start to act in the course of 10-15 minutes in an emergency situation as it was in Ingushetia”.

<sup>12</sup> *Nezavisimoye Voyennoye Obozreniye*, No 23, 25 June 2004, “*Severnyy Kavkaz: retsidiv 22 Iyunya 1941 goda*” by Vadim Solov’yev. “At the same time as *desantniki* were destroying imaginary terrorists in the Far East training areas, real *boyeviki* were carrying out their combat operations on the territory of Dagestan and Ingushetia. The paradox of the situation is the fact that crack regular subunits of the Armed Forces courageously routed certain mythical ‘brown’ bandits (in the scenario, the mythical enemy) – but in Ingushetia local bandit formations were dealing with representatives of federal power structures.”

<sup>13</sup> *Financial Times*, 15 September 2004, “*Chechen envoy urges Putin to hold peace talks*”, Akhmed Zakayev interviewed by Stefan Wagstyl.

<sup>14</sup> <http://2004.novayagazeta.ru/nomer/2004/62n/n62n-00.shtml>, *Novaya Gazeta*, No 62, 26 August 2004, “*Politika zakrytykh glaza*” by Yuliya Latynina.

<sup>15</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, No 179, 24 August 2004, “*Georgiy Saratov: Oppozitsii net, no sil’no nedovol’stvo*” by Aleksandra Samarina.

<sup>16</sup> <http://lenta.ru/vojna/2004/08/27/poll>; table based on flow graphs on 27 August 2004.

<sup>17</sup> See Dr mark A Smith, “*Beslan – The Political Fallout*”, CSRC, Russian Series, 04/28, September 2004.

<sup>18</sup> See C W Blandy, “*Chechnya: Centre of Unabated Instability and Conflict*”, CSRC, Caucasus Series, 04/11, May 2004.

<sup>19</sup> “*If by chance conflict between the president and the Kadyrov clan arose, then stability in Chechnya can be forgotten – if not forever for a long time*” [http://www.ng.ru/politics/2004-06-02/2\\_chechnia.html](http://www.ng.ru/politics/2004-06-02/2_chechnia.html), *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, No 110, 2 June 2004, “*Vo glave Chechni ustanet kollektivnyy Kadyrov*” by Vyacheslav Vladimirovich Igrunov.

<sup>20</sup> C W Blandy, “*Chechnya: The Search for a Strong Successor*”, CSRC, Caucasus Series, 04/19, July 2004.

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.kp.ru/daily/23349/31628>, *Komsomol’skaya Pravda*, 31 August 2004, “*Alu Alkhanov: Pust’ gibnut te, kto neset smert’ narodu*” by Aleksandr Gamov.

<sup>22</sup> [http://www.newizv.ru/news/?id\\_news=10413&date=2004-08-31](http://www.newizv.ru/news/?id_news=10413&date=2004-08-31), *Noviye Izvestiya*, 31 August 2004, “*Govorit’ o demokratii poka rano*” by Vladen Maksimov & Shagen Ogandzhanyan.

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.smi.ru/04/08/30/2749523.html>, “*V Chechne vybrali prezidenta*”.

<sup>24</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, No 118, 11 June 2004, p11, “*Yeshche odnogo farsa Chechnya ne vyderzhit*” by Valeriy Koloskov. “None of the leaders whom we have in mind came to



power legitimately, that is by way of nation-wide, honest, democratic, in accordance with 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.”

<sup>25</sup> <http://2004.novayagazeta.ru/nomer/2004/53n/n53n-s00.shtml>, *Novaya Gazeta*, No 53, 26 July 2004, “*Malik Saydullayev snyat s Zabega v prezidenty Chechni za ‘Nedeystvitel’nyy pasport’*” by Anna Politkovskaya.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, No 93, 13 May 2004, p4.

<sup>28</sup> See C W Blandy, “*Chechnya: Federal Retribution “Encirclement, Forceful Intervention and Isolation”* P34, CSRC, March 2001, p125, Appendix 1 “Events at Alkhan-Yurt 1 December 1999”; Blandy “*Chechnya: Dynamics of War – Brutality and Stress*” P35, CSRC, July 2001, pp10-19.

<sup>29</sup> <http://www.vremya.ru/2004/95/4/99778.html>, *Vremya Novostey*, No 95, 3 June 2004, “*Bislan Gantamirov: Vremyya Kadyrova zakanchivalos*” by Ivan Sukhov. See Blandy “*Chechnya: The Search for a Strong Successor*” CSRC, Caucasus Series, 04/19, July 2004, pp8-10 for further details on Gantamirov.

<sup>30</sup> [http://www.gazeta.ru/2004/08/04/oa\\_129048.shtml](http://www.gazeta.ru/2004/08/04/oa_129048.shtml), “*Polevoy geroy Rossii*” by Yelena Rudneva. “Path of a hero. Ruslan Yamadayev, Deputy of State Duma IV convocation, chairman executive committee of the Chechen organisation of ‘Yedinaya Rossiya’. Born 10 December 1961 in the town of Gudermes in the Checheno-Ingush ASSR. He is a member of the Benoy *teip* to which Akhmad Kadyrov also belonged. Brothers are Sulim [commander of Vostok battalion], Dzhabrail [killed 2003], Isa and Badrudin.”

<sup>31</sup> [http://www.newizv.ru/news/id\\_news=10330&date=2004-08-30](http://www.newizv.ru/news/id_news=10330&date=2004-08-30), *Novyye Izvestiya*, 30 August 2004, “*Vse idut i idut golosovat*” by Vladlen Maksimov & Said Bitsoyev.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> <http://www.izvestia.ru/politic/article328531>, *Izvestiya*, 30 August 2004, “*V Chechnye izbrali prezidenta*” by Ol’ga Tropkina.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> IWPR’s Caucasus Reporting Service, No 249, 2 September 2004, p5, “*Alkhanov wins derided Chechen pole – The favourite wins Chechnya’s presidential elections, as expected - but few voters are in evidence*” by Murad Magomadov. Magomadov is a correspondent with *Chechenskoye Obshchestvo* newspaper.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> <http://www.politcom.ru/2004/pvz494.php>, 25 August 2004, “*Ugrozy Alu Alkhanovu: Chechenskaya sistema pod voprosom*” by Aleksandr Dugin. What follows is a summary of Dugin’s argument.

<sup>39</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, No 178, 23 August 2004, “*Putin mirit Alkhanova i Kadyrova*” by Andrey Riskin.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> <http://www.smi.ru/04/08/23/2727740.html>, SMI, 23 August 2003, “*Predvbornoye peremiriye pod zvuki vystrellov*” by Vsevolod Vosledov.

<sup>42</sup> See Blandy, “*Chechnya: The Search for a Strong Successor*”, p3, Table 1.

<sup>43</sup> [http://www.politcom.ru/2004/zloba4743.php\\_politcom.Ru](http://www.politcom.ru/2004/zloba4743.php_politcom.Ru), 28 September 2004, “*Kozak une konkurentsii*” by Tat’yana Stanovaya.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Op cit, [http://www.politcom.ru/2004/zloba4743.php\\_politcom.Ru](http://www.politcom.ru/2004/zloba4743.php_politcom.Ru), 28 September 2004.

<sup>46</sup> See C W Blandy, “*Chechnya: Dynamics of War – Brutality and Stress*”, P35, CSRC, July 2001, pp20-26.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, No 178, 23 August 2004, p1.

<sup>49</sup> <http://www.smi.ru/04/08/23/2727740.html>, 23 August 2003.

<sup>50</sup> Op cit, <http://www.vesti.ru/news.html?id=59922>, 18 August 2004, “*Alkhanov vyskazalsya za sozdaniye v Chechne svobodnoy ekonomicheskoy zony*”.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.



53 Ibid.

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C W Blandy, "*Chechnya: The Search for a Strong Successor*", Conflict Studies Research Centre, Caucasus Series, 04/19, July 2004, <http://www.da.mod.uk>

C W Blandy, "*North Caucasus: Escalation of Terrorism into Ingushetia*", Conflict Studies Research Centre, Caucasus Series, 04/17, June 2004, <http://www.da.mod.uk>

Dr Mark A Smith, "*Beslan – The Political Fallout*", Conflict Studies Research Centre, Russian Series, 04/28, September 2004, <http://www.da.mod.uk>

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