

4. RUSSIA AND THE COMBAT AGAINST TERRORISM IN LOCAL REGIONAL CONFLICTS

Ekaterina STEPANOVA

The tragic events resulting from the unprecedented terrorist attack against the USA on 11 September 2001 have pushed the problem of combating international terrorism to the foreground of world politics. In view of the fact that fighting terrorism has for some time occupied an important place in Russia's national security priorities, Russian experience in this field, acquired in recent years, deserves particular attention. Article 3 of the Federal Law "On the Combat Against Terrorism" defines terrorism as "violence or the threat of using it against physical persons or organizations as well as the destruction (damaging) of material objects, that create danger to human life, cause considerable damage to property or have other dangerous public consequences, carried out in order to violate public security, terrorize the population or influence the decisions taken by the authorities to the advantage of terrorists or meeting their interests".¹ It should be noted that "countering terrorism" is not limited to combating it (to direct suppression of planned or accomplished terrorist acts), but implies a whole complex of legal, ideological, information, organizational, administrative, and other measures designed to counteract terrorist activities, especially those carried out by terrorist groups and organizations.

In accordance with the Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation "the illegal activities of extremist, nationalist, religious, separatist and terrorist organizations and bodies", directed at the violation of the unity and territorial integrity of the Russian Federation, the destabilization of the domestic political situation in the country", are second on the list of internal threats, while "organized crime, terrorism, smuggling and other illegal activities on a scale threatening the military security of the Russian Federation" occupy the fourth place². "International terrorism" comes last on the list of external threats to the Russian security, formulated in the Military Doctrine. Until recently, this hierarchy fully corresponded to the situation in the rest of the world where, in the last decade of the 20th century, "internal terrorism" was more widespread than "international terrorism". As a result of the end of the Cold War and the improvement of the international situation, in the last decade of the 20th century, the number of international terrorist acts has decreased in the world as a whole (!): starting from 1987, when 665 terrorist acts were committed, their number decreased, reaching its lowest figure in 1996 (300 terrorist acts). Although from 1996 on, the yearly

number of international terrorist acts began to grow slowly (in 2000, for instance, 423 international terrorist acts were carried out, in comparison with 392 in 1999), it remained, nevertheless, substantially lower than in the 1980s³. It is important, however, to note that while the number of international terrorist acts and total number of victims decreased in the 1990s⁴, the death toll caused by terrorist acts was steadily rising: in 2000, 405 people were killed and 791 injured as a result of international terrorist acts (compared to 23 killed and 706 injured in 1999). A typical terrorist act of the last decade of the 20th century was no longer, as in the 1980s, the seizing of a group of hostages, but rather the blowing up of buildings, resulting in the death of tens, if not hundreds, of people.

At the start of the new century and millenium, the synchronized terrorist attacks of September 2001, in which several thousand people in New York and Washington lost their lives in one blow, became the culminating moment of this dangerous tendency.

One of the main sources of terrorism in general and “international terrorism” in particular are the numerous local and regional conflicts, where terrorism is used as the confrontational tactics, in combination with other forms of violence. In this context, the link between terrorism and inter-ethnic tensions, religious extremism and separatism acquires particular importance. For Russia, the zone extending along the Southern borders of Russia itself and its Southern neighbors, member states of the CIS, remains the main hotbed of terrorism linked to separatism and religious extremism.

Combating terrorism in the North Caucasus

The main source of terrorism on the territory of the Russian Federation during the 1990s was the conflict in the Chechen Republic and the situation in the North Caucasus, as a whole. The fight against terrorism became the most important goal of the second campaign of the Federal forces in Chechnya, conducted since 1999, and officially known as the “counter-terrorist” campaign. According to data supplied by the Directorate for the implementation of laws by the agencies of the Ministry of the Interior, the Federal Security Service and the Main Directorate of the Prosecutor General’s Office in the North Caucasus, in 2000 alone, 191 terrorist acts were registered (with 162 of them committed in Chechnya), the largest of which were the explosions in Pyatigorsk and Nevinnomyssk (6 October), in the Pyatigorsk market (8 December), and in the settlement of Alkhan-Yurt, in the Urus-Martan district in Chechnya (9 December). On the territory of Chechnya itself, the militants continued to hold 875 hostages in 2000⁵. A significant number of criminal cases were filed on

charges of terrorism. In the first 6 months of 2001 alone, 136 terrorist acts were carried out with the use of explosives on Chechnya territory.

One of the principal specifics of the combat against terrorism in Chechnya in 2000 was that it was conducted in the course of continuing armed confrontation. As the large bands were being routed, the separatists increasingly resorted to guerrilla warfare. The main methods were mining operations against the Federal forces, diversions and individual acts of terrorism, mainly against officials of the Republic, loyal to the Federal government (in 2000 alone, 35 leading officials and employees of the republican and district administrations of the Republic of Chechnya and members of their families were killed or injured). Every day attacks were carried out on the rear and communications of the Federal forces, checkpoints and the interim authorities were fired upon, and main roads and railways were mined. As the militants turned to subversive and terrorist activities, the Federal forces too changed their tactics: starting from 2000, the main emphasis in the operations of the Federal forces was put on complex, special operations aimed at exterminating the bands and their leaders.

In a local conflict, the main problem in the fight against terrorism is that anti-terrorist activities are closely linked to the tasks of establishing and maintaining public order and security, and of creating a relatively safe environment for the local authorities and population in the conflict zone. It is extremely difficult to implement these tasks even in the intermediate stage between the cessation of hostilities in a conflict zone and the complete normalization of the situation (the restoration of authority, law and order), let alone at the stage of full-scale armed confrontation. From the point of effectiveness of counter-terrorist activities, the moods predominant among the local population become a key factor. This can be fully demonstrated by comparing the situation in Dagestan, after the aggression by Chechen bands in August 1999, where it was the active support on the part of the local population which enabled the Federal forces to resolve, in a relatively short time, the problem of repulsing the terrorists, with the guerrilla war in Chechnya, where the degree of mutual mistrust between the Federal forces and the local population remained considerable in 2000–2001.

This situation is frequently linked by observers to the problem of human rights in Chechnya. If terrorism denies the fundamental human rights, in principle, a number of counter-terrorist measures that include the use of force are inevitably accompanied by restriction and, at times, direct violation of human rights, especially in the course of an ethno-political conflict. Among such violations in the course of the Chechen conflict, in January 2000, the Special Commission of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) has noted the following: the use of heavy

arms in densely populated districts; arbitrary arrests and detentions among the civilian population; crimes committed by representatives of the Federal forces in respect of civilians, etc⁶. The difficulty of solving this problem is clearly demonstrated by the example of one of the main types of counter-terrorist activities in Chechnya—the so-called “zachistka” (cordon and search) operations, i.e. special operations to carry out total passport control (identity check) in a given populated area, after it has been completely blocked by internal troops and/or army units. On the one hand, “zachistka” has become almost the main prophylactic police measure used in Chechnya to detect terrorists and to forestall their operations. Even lacking solid operational intelligence: cordoning off an area in advance by troops that can be reinforced, if necessary, prevents the militants, in case they are discovered, from escaping without fighting. On the other hand, “zachistka” operations could have serious political repercussions, especially in the sphere of human rights (among recent examples, highlighted by the mass media, were “zachistka” actions in the course of special operations in Sernovodsk, Assinovskaya and Kurchaloi in July 2001).

It should be noted in this regard, that the crime level in the group of Federal troops in the North Caucasus, at least according to official statistics, was twice lower than the average level on Russian territory. (By August 2001, the Prosecutor General’s Office filed 293 criminal cases in connection with crimes committed against the civilian population in the course of anti-terrorist operation in the Chechen Republic for the period between 1999 and 2001. 82 criminal cases were filed in connection with crimes committed by the military, including 30 for murder and more than 50 for crimes committed by the Ministry of the Interior employees)⁷.

Measures taken by the Federal bodies to improve the human rights situation in the course of counter-terrorist operation included:

— the revocation, as a result of strong criticism from both inside and outside Russia, of restrictions, imposed by the Joint Group of Federal Forces on the crossing of the Chechen–Ingush administrative border by all men aged from 10 to 60;

— the extension up to 15 May 2000 of the Amnesty for “persons who have committed socially dangerous acts” during the conflict in the North Caucasus;

— improvement of the custody conditions for members of illegal armed formations in the Chernokozovo detention facility;

— creation of the post of Special Representative of the President of the Russian Federation for observance of human and civil rights and freedoms in the Chechen Republic;

— return of the Group for Good Offices of the OSCE to Chechnya in June 15, 2001 (the Group had to leave the Republic in December 1998 for security considerations), etc.

The erosion of the boundary between military and security/police functions, as the number of armed groups' members was constantly changing, with many of them kept in reserve for large-scale operations, presented a serious obstacle in the fight against terrorism in Chechnya in 2000–2001. That is why, even after the military (the so-called “troop”) stage of the operation was declared to be completed, the tasks of searching and destroying terrorists could not be implemented by special services and law-enforcement agencies alone and required the involvement of internal troops and the Armed Forces. That is why the deployment of the 42nd mechanized rifle division, with a total strength of more than 15000 men and the internal troops 46th brigade for permanent stationing in Chechnya became a factor of great importance. Although, as compared with the first Chechen campaign (1994–1996), certain progress has been made in dividing responsibilities between the various force structures, the problem of lack of coordination within the security bloc remained unsolved, thus making anti-terrorist measures less effective. Given the internal character of the counter-terrorist operation in Chechnya, the search for the optimal balance between the various security components has acquired critical importance (with use of the Armed Forces and the internal troops limited only to cases of extreme necessity). This was, for instance, demonstrated by the transfer of the chief operational command and responsibility for the counter-terrorist operation in Chechnya from the Ministry of Defense to the Federal Security Service, in accordance with Presidential Decree no.61 of 22 January 2001 “On measures to combat terrorism in the North–Caucasian region of the Russian Federation”, as well as by the reduction of the strength of the Joint Group of Forces since March 2001.

The fight against terrorism in Chechnya and in the North Caucasus is also considerably complicated by the link between the latter and religious extremism. Despite the almost interchangeable use of the notions of “international terrorism” and “Islamic extremism” (in the form of “North Caucasian Wahhabism”) in the Russian political lexicon⁸, the connection between the spread of Wahhabism⁹ and the growth of terrorist activities in the North Caucasus is much more complicated than causal. The spread of Wahhabism in the North Caucasus in the 1990s was most evident in the Eastern part of the region (in Chechnya, Ingushetia and Dagestan), which was also the area of the most acute social-economic, political and inter-ethnic crisis on the territory of the Russian Federation. The spread of North Caucasian Wahhabism, especially among the young people, was not only the result of well-organized propaganda and financial assistance for the Wahhabi communities from abroad, but also a

form of social and religious protest. In an environment marked by social-economic hardships, unprecedented corruption and incompetence on the part of the local authorities, the social doctrine of Wahhabism, propagating patriarchal equality and the erosion of the social hierarchy, became particularly attractive.

North Caucasian Wahhabism can be divided into moderate and radical wings. If moderate Wahhabists try to avoid open conflict with the authorities and the traditional Muslim bodies¹⁰, there are no doubts about the participation of the North Caucasian Wahhabi radicals and their leaders (for instance, Emir Abdurrahman) in terrorist activities, particularly in kidnapping, declared by them to be a form of “jihad”¹¹. In the course of the conflict in Chechnya, radical Wahhabism has in fact become a political instrument in the hands of various extremist forces (nationalists, criminal elements and others), having little in common with Islam.

In 2000–2001, terrorism in Chechnya and the North Caucasus was increasingly seen by the Russian leadership as “a clearly orchestrated game, imposed by international extremist forces”¹², receiving considerable financial and organizational support from abroad. The first foreign mercenaries had already appeared in the North Caucasus in the spring of 1995 when the “Jamaat Islami” group, led by the Jordanian Khattab, was formed; among the group’s members were subsequently well-known rebel leaders, such as Yakub al-Gamidi and Jafar al-Yemeni. The total number of foreign mercenaries in Chechnya has not, however, exceeded a few hundred and could not decisively affect the outcome of the armed confrontation with the Federal forces neither in the first nor in the second Chechen campaign. (According to information, presented by the Chief of the Directorate of internal affairs of the Russian Ministry of the Interior, major-general S. Arenin, at an operational meeting of the heads of criminal militia departments and departments combating organized crime, held in Vladikavkaz on 5 July 2001, the total number of foreign mercenaries in Chechnya amounted to about 300 men). Among the foreign organizations and foundations, accused of financing, training and transporting foreign mercenaries to Chechnya, are the Islamic Foundation of the Two Holy Places (“Al-Kharamain”), “Tablighi Jamaat”, “the Muslim Brothers”, “Jamaat-i-Islami”, etc.; the Chechen Diaspora also plays an important role in these activities. Special operations to cut off these financial flows have become the most effective of the Russian special services’ activities, allowing Director of the Federal Security Service Nikolai Patrushev, to state in May 2001 “that the financial flows from abroad have been cut down”¹³.

Even successful counter-terrorist measures, including special operations to detain and exterminate the leaders of the militants¹⁴ cannot,

however, provide an effective solution to the problem of combating terrorism in Chechnya and the North Caucasus as long as its social and ideological foundations have not been undermined. An important step in this direction have been measures to create normal living conditions for the population of Chechnya and to rebuild the state structures in the Republic: in June 2000, the Chechen Administration headed by mufti Akhmad Kadyrov was formed. The Commission for social-economic and political stabilization in the Republic of Chechnya, set up by the Russian Government, developed a program of measures designed to provide for a normal functioning of the economy and social life in Chechnya. In 2000, top priority measures were launched to rebuild the oil industry and the gas supply system, the work continued to rebuild the healthcare system and, as from 1 September 2000, the education system started to function again. It was at solving the top priority social and economic tasks that the new stage in the counter-terrorist operation was directed; apart from carrying out special operations, the emphasis was put on measures to stabilize the political and social-economic situation in Chechnya and in the North Caucasus as a whole. This was, for instance, reflected in establishing the Government of the Chechen Republic in February 2001 and moving it from Gudermes to Grozny at the end of April, as well as in continuing the formation of local self-government structures. Despite some positive results (in 2001, good grain-crops were raised in the republic; the electrification process has entered its final stage, etc.), the overall implementation of the 2001 special Federal Economic Reconstruction Program for Chechnya, however, “was going badly”, as stated by the Minister for coordination of the activities of the Federal authorities in Chechnya V. Yelagin¹⁵. Rebuilding industrial production, housing and municipal services proved to be particularly problematic. The difficult social-economic situation in Chechnya, persisting as a result of a number of objective and subjective factors: the prolonged decade-long social-economic and political crisis, availability of only part of funds allocated for reconstruction programs, the waste of the available funds, the ineffectiveness of inter-agency coordination, the weakness of the local authorities, etc. did not contribute to eroding the social conditions for banditry and terrorism, especially in the central and southern regions of the Republic, including Grozny itself.

Combating terrorism in Central Asia and the situation in Afghanistan

In 2000, the situation in the Central Asian region remained unstable. For the second year running, the territories of several Central Asian states have been the object of incursions by extremist groups. In late July–early August, militants of the Islamic movement of Uzbekistan

(IMU) moved into the mountainous part of the Surkhandarya region of Uzbekistan from Tajik territory. In August–September, several armed bands, based in the mountainous areas of Tajikistan since the times of the civil war in that country, repeatedly intruded into Kyrgyzstan in a number of separate incursions. At the August meeting of the leaders of the Central Asian states in Bishkek, Secretary of the Russian Security Council Sergey Ivanov stated that “the activities of armed bands are acquiring a chronic character”.

In this context, Russian and Central Asian governments were particularly concerned with the situation in Afghanistan, dominated by the Taliban movement, accused by the international community, including Russia and the US, of supporting and exporting terrorism to other countries and regions, including the CIS Central Asian republics. As early as in April 2000, speaking in Dushanbe at the working meeting of the Heads of Security Councils of the Tashkent Collective Security Treaty member states, Sergey Ivanov, while answering a question about the possibility of preemptive strikes against international terrorist bases in Afghanistan, did not exclude such a possibility “in theory”, if the situation in the region “became threatening and if aggressive incursions acquired a large-scale character”¹⁶. Among the practical measures, taken by the Russian government against the Taliban regime, Presidential Decree no.786 “On sanctions against the Taliban movement, or the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA)”, effective as of 11 May, should be noted. The Decree ordered all organizations within Russian jurisdiction to fully implement the demands of UN SCR no.1267 of 15 October 1999, banning anyone from giving permission to take off or land to the Taliban-owned aircraft and freezing all accounts of the “IEA”, including real estate and other financial resources.

The series of military victories of the Taliban in August–September 2000, which brought them to the border with Tajikistan, guarded by Russian border troops, again raised the questions of whether the Taliban posed a threat to the neighboring countries, including Central Asian states, how great the movement’s expansionist potential was and to what extent it threatened Russia. It should be noted that throughout the recent decade, the radical Islamic group of the Taliban, set up in early 1990s with support from Pakistan and the US, has turned to a combination of Sunni fundamentalism and Pashtun nationalism. Since the mid–90s, the military victories of the Taliban could be largely explained by the fact that many ethnic Pashtuns, making up 60% of the country’s population and up to 80–85% of the personnel of the former Afghan armed forces, fought on the Taliban’s side. It is the predominantly Pashtun character of the Taliban movement that has enabled it, to a large extent, to get control over most of the country’s territory. At the same time, it was the ethnically Pashtun

character of the movement that set objective limits to the Taliban's advance. As soon as Taliban forces would move to territories populated by ethnic Tajiks and Uzbeks, the Pashtun factor would start to work against them. From this perspective, a far more realistic threat to regional security is posed by the potential re-ignition of the so-called Pashtun problem. At the root of this problem lies the dispute between Afghanistan and Pakistan about who controls the territory between the Afghan–Pakistani border and the river Indus, populated mainly by Pashtuns.¹⁷ In this context, the Taliban were more interested in strengthening rather than undermining Afghanistan's borders with Central Asian states.

For Russia, vitally interested in maintaining the secular character of the Central Asian regimes, the greatest challenge, however, was not an unlikely cross-border military attack by the Taliban against the southern CIS republics. Rather, it was the potential of Taliban domination of Afghanistan to stimulate the rise of radical Islam in Central Asia, thus aiding such radical movements as the Islamic movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) and the Islamic Liberation Party (Hizb-ut-Tahrir) in challenging local regimes. According to statements made by senior Russian officials, the events in Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, in the North Caucasus and elsewhere are “links in one chain, linked in place and time, coordinated and directed from one or few centers, that are united by one ideology and financed from the same sources”. Long before the September attacks in the US, leaders of Russia and some Central Asian states saw the Taliban-dominated part of Afghanistan as one of the hotbeds of terrorism, accusing the Saudi millionaire Osama bin Laden, who was granted asylum by the Taliban, and his organization “Al-Qaeda” of coordinating terrorist activities and giving assistance to terrorists both in the Caucasus and in Central Asia. These fears were confirmed by the infiltration of IMU groups into Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan in the summer–autumn of 2000 that fully demonstrated the pertinence of the creeping-aggression scenario for the Central Asian states, as well as by granting political asylum to the IMU leader Jumah Namangani by the Taliban¹⁸, etc.

Under these circumstances, Russia had to pursue its own policy of countering extremism and terrorism in the region in several directions at once. A question was raised on the need to put forward the CIS-wide set of measures aimed at combating terrorism and to coordinate the efforts of the CIS member states in this field. On 25 January 2000, the Council of the Heads of CIS states had already decided to work out an inter-state Program for the fight against international terrorism and other manifestations of extremism for the period up to 2003, and to set up a joint Anti-Terrorist Center (ATC)¹⁹. Participation in joint counter-terrorist operations was also envisaged as one of the main missions of the CIS

collective security forces (an agreement on the status of these forces was signed in Bishkek on 11 October 2000). “Southern Shield—Commonwealth–2000”, joint command and staff anti-terrorist exercises were conducted in the Ferghana valley in April 2000, with participation of 10 000 troops from Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan as well as of the 201st Russian division and units of the 10000–strong group of Russian Border Troops in Tajikistan. The presence of these forces in Tajikistan continues to play an important stabilizing role from the point of security of the entire region. Ensuring better cooperation between anti-terrorist units of the CIS countries was the goal of other special exercises, held in Kyrgyzstan in April 2001.

The second important direction of Russia’s policy has been providing assistance not only to the Central Asian states, but to the leaders of the anti-Taliban coalition in Afghanistan itself, in view of the negative effect which the defeat of the Northern Alliance, made up mainly of Tajiks and Uzbeks, could have had on the security of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, including potential influx of refugees. These issues were, for instance, discussed at the Dushanbe meeting between the Russian Minister of Defense Igor Sergeev and the leader of the Northern Alliance Ahmad Shah Massoud in October 2000. Although the latter’s death in a terrorist attack in September 2001 has somewhat complicated the situation for the Northern Alliance, it was far from hopeless, especially in view of the preparation and implementation of a massive anti-Taliban military campaign by the US in response to the September terrorist attacks.

As the tensions along Russia’s southern borders intensified as a result of the US retaliation for the terrorist attacks, the Russian government had to consider at least two circumstances. First, the task of combating terrorism, especially international terrorism, is complicated by its fragmented character, vagueness, its often non-state nature, its frequent use in concert with other forms of extremism, the predominance of horizontal networks over vertical-hierarchical structures, etc. Against this background, the easiest way of “fighting” the new world evil is to search for a single mastermind, an international center for the coordination of terrorist activities. For the time being, this role has been effectively played by the “Al-Qaeda” terrorist network, headed by Osama bin Laden. While presenting the problem in such a simplified way could be justified from both political and propagandistic point of view, it cannot make up for the lack of a comprehensive international approach to the fight against terrorism in local and regional conflicts, well exceeding the limits of special operations or even large-scale military actions.

Secondly, it should be realized that, apart from the apparent effect of the Taliban military advances, an upsurge of activity on the part of radical Islamic groups in the Central Asian states is generated at least as

much by internal factors as by outside influences. Extremism, which mainly takes a religious form, finds fertile soil in social discontent arising out of disastrous economic conditions, impoverishment, the semifeudal nature and repressive policies of local regimes. That is why the counter-terrorist focus of Russia's policy aimed at building a security system along its southern borders, will hardly produce the desired effect, if the internal sources and causes of instability in the CIS Central Asian republics are not fully taken into account.

Russia's position on the fight against terrorism in the Balkans and in the Middle East

Russia has also consistently maintained its firm stand against terrorism, including international terrorism, in managing local and regional conflicts beyond the borders of the CIS states. In this context, the conflicts in the Balkans (in Kosovo, in the Southern provinces of Serbia, and in Macedonia) and in the Middle East (the Palestinian–Israeli confrontation) deserve particular attention. In view of its special responsibility for the maintenance of international stability, Russia, as a permanent member of the UN Security Council, takes an active part in the process of settling both conflicts, being directly involved in the NATO and UN operations in Kosovo and acting as a co-sponsor of the Middle East peace process.

In the process of the NATO Kosovo force (KFOR) deployment, the KFOR command and the UN interim administration were confronted with the task of exercising all administrative functions, in fact, it amounts to establishing an international protectorate in the province. Officially, KFOR's chief mission was to create the basic security environment in the province; in the UN SCR no.1244, NATO forces in Kosovo were designated as "international security forces"²². Apart from the withdrawal of the Yugoslav army and the Serbian police forces from Kosovo, SCR no.1244 called for disarmament of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) and other Albanian armed groups²³. As long as the KLA controlled the situation in Kosovo to a large extent, it was unrealistic to expect it to surrender its arms voluntarily while disarming it by force could lead to confrontation with the Albanian extremists and losses by the NATO forces. That is why KFOR and the UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) adopted a non-confrontational approach to the KLA and legalized parts of the illegal armed formations by turning them into the so-called Kosovo Defence Corps which in fact has never become a civilian agency for emergency situations, but continued as a paramilitary extremist organization.

For the purpose of maintaining public order, the NATO forces cordoned off certain areas, established checkpoints, conducted regular patrols and guarded particularly important facilities. These measures remained fairly ineffective: although the total number of murders declined²⁴, the continuing kidnapping of people in the province²⁵ directly contradicted the statement made by the Head of the UN Mission in Kosovo Bernard Kuchner in March 2000 that this form of crime had been rooted out²⁶. While a functioning judicial system developed very slowly, KFOR mainly resorted to the temporary detention of the armed gangsters, which, at least, should have “reduced the number of people with guns freely walking the streets of Kosovo”²⁷. Similarly, “demonstrative” measures to protect ethnic minorities²⁸ were clearly insufficient and did not stop the Serb and other-non-Albanian populations from fleeing the region. According to some assessments, by the beginning of 2001, i.e. a year and a half after the KFOR operation was launched, the number of Serbs in Prishtina, that amounted to 30 000 in June 1999, did not exceed 50–100 people. Overall, during the first year of the KFOR operation, about 20 000 Serbs, Gypsies and representatives of other national and ethnic minorities fled Kosovo.

One of the main tasks of NATO forces in Kosovo should have been preventing the renewal of armed confrontation, the escalation of violence and, especially, its spread beyond the province. At first, the KFOR Command and the UNMIK leadership considered “the subversive activities” of the Serbian special services and illegal armed bands as the most likely potential source of escalation of violence in Kosovo and in the neighboring areas; these actors were declared responsible for the destabilization of the situation in Kosovska–Mitrovica, where a fairly compact Serb minority continued to live. The deteriorating situation in the Southern regions of Serbia, bordering Kosovo (Preshevo, Medvedja, Bujanovac), was also initially explained by the “harassment of the Albanian population of these districts”, forcing KFOR to come to their defence²⁹. Gradually, however, the emphasis shifted: a year after the operation began, the KFOR Command already accused the extremist Liberation Army of Preshevo, Medvedja and Bujanovac of escalating tension in the “security zone” between Kosovo and the Southern regions of Serbia.

The Command of the NATO forces in Kosovo insisted that it did not support the activities of the Albanian extremists and was ready to take steps to prevent violations of the border regime and Kosovo from becoming a source of violence for the neighboring areas³⁰.

The measures taken by the KFOR, including mobilization of public support for those political forces in Kosovo, that could exert a moderating influence on the extremists, and the establishment of closer

contacts with the local Serb police in the districts of Preshevo, Medvedja and Bujanovac have not led to a weakening of tension in the south of Serbia where the situation continued to deteriorate. At the same time, the October 20 municipal elections in Kosovo, in which only the Albanian population took part, provoked an intensification of the struggle for power between the various Albanian groups and led to a renewed outburst of violence in the province. UNMIK's and KFOR's policy of supporting moderate political forces and trying to improve the security situation in Kosovo without openly confronting Albanian extremists, has in fact led to the expulsion of a considerable part of them from Kosovo and to an outburst of Albanian extremism not only in southern parts of Serbia, but also in the northern regions of Macedonia, which, in 2001, became the arena of another inter-ethnic conflict in the Balkans. In order to somewhat stabilize the situation, NATO had to agree to the return of units of the Yugoslav army to the buffer zone on the administrative border between Kosovo and Serbia and on the Kosovo stretch of the Macedonian–Yugoslav border, as well as to prepare for yet another operation in the Balkans, this time in Macedonia.

On the international arena, it was Russia that came out as the principal advocate of intensifying the fight against terrorism and extremism in Kosovo and around it, including suppressing the “illegal activities” in the security zone on the administrative border between Kosovo and Serbia. At the meetings of the UN Security Council, Russia repeatedly drew attention to the need for the consistent and full implementation of SCR no.1244 and stressed that any decisions on Kosovo, taken behind the back of the Security Council and the Yugoslav authorities, could not be tolerated³¹. Russia has also demonstrated its commitment to fight terrorism and extremism in Kosovo in practice. For instance, in the part of the US sector “East”, controlled by the 31st tactical group of Russian peacekeepers, not a single case of massive incursion by Albanian extremists in the direction of Serbia has occurred³². However, with the Western states dominating in the Kosovo peace process (and now in the Macedonian one as well), all efforts undertaken by Russia, which has remained virtually the only great power consistently stressing the need to implement SCR no.1244, could not lead to a decisive break-through in the situation around Kosovo. Overall, the international presence in Kosovo has turned out to present a case of an extremely ineffective way of combating terrorism and extremism, as well as of the lack of either political will or interest in tackling these tasks on the part of the NATO forces. Incapable of either providing security for the non-Albanian population of Kosovo or stop the spread of violence beyond the borders of the province, KFOR bore the primary responsibility for the fact that the international protectorate of Kosovo could with full justification be called

“a hotbed of terrorism and extremism”. However, there are grounds to assume that after the September terrorist attacks, the US and its NATO allies will take a more firm stand against Albanian extremism and terrorism.

In 2000–2001, the problem of terrorism has again become the focus of yet another conflict—the Palestinian–Israeli confrontation. In September 2000 it seemed that the leaders of both sides were closer to a compromise than ever before. However, with public opinion in both Israel and the Palestinian Authority, as well as influential forces in the Arab–Islamic world, not ready to accept such a compromise, the artificial intensification of the negotiation process, forced by the Clinton Administration on the eve of the November presidential elections in the US, resulted in its collapse. The visit by the leader of the Israeli right, Ariel Sharon, to the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, following the refusal of the Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat to approve the compromise on the status of Jerusalem, provided a pretext for a new spiral of confrontation. As part of the resumed Intifada, resulting in the deaths of about 300 Palestinians and 60 Israelis in the last three months of 2000, radical Palestinian groups have actively used terrorist methods, such as explosions in public places carried out by suicide bombers, attacks on Israel settlements, etc. These numerous terrorist attacks served the goal of destabilizing the situation in Israel itself and gradually forcing out the illegal Israeli settlements from Palestinian territory. Despite the extremely tough counter-terrorist measures (blocking up the territories of the Palestinian autonomy, the physical extermination of the leaders of several terrorist groups, the inevitable “retaliation” in response to each terrorist attack, preemptive strikes against terrorist bases), the Israeli security forces have not succeeded in reducing the wave of terrorist acts, with their numbers steadily growing throughout 2001. The impact of the terrorist attacks in the US and their consequences on the Palestinian–Israeli conflict might be ambiguous: on the one hand, the threat of a full-scale war in the region have forced the leaders of both sides to announce the temporary halting of the armed confrontation, on the other hand, in case of massive US strikes against states of the region, Israel becomes one of the primary targets for retaliation acts by various radical Islamic groups.

Speaking on the new round of the Palestinian–Israeli conflict, President Putin had already stated in October 2000 that Russia was ready to contribute to crisis management efforts, “but only in case such an involvement is welcome by both sides”³³. At the same time, Russia’s absence from the US–mediated October 2000 negotiations in Sharm-ash-Sheikh, that failed, demonstrated Moscow’s unwillingness to play the role of an extra in the Middle East peace process.

Attempts by the Israelis to emphasize the anti-terrorist aspects of cooperation with Moscow and draw a parallel between the Israeli fight against Palestinian terrorism and the Russian counter-terrorist operation in Chechnya were not welcomed by the Russian government. Such parallels can not be justified, as the differences in the nature and type of both conflicts are fundamental. In contrast to the internal conflict in Chechnya, the conflict in the Middle East is an international conflict about the right of the Palestinian people to have its own state with a capital in Jerusalem as envisaged by the UN resolutions³⁴. While strongly condemning terrorist acts by Palestinian extremists³⁵, Russia, at the same time, insists on full implementation by Israel of the UN resolutions.

* * *

The task of combating domestic and international terrorism has become an important component of Russia's policy on local and regional conflict management long before the recent outburst of international terrorism in the form of the September 2001 attacks in the US. These terrorist attacks mark the beginning of a qualitatively new stage in world politics in general and in the fight against terrorism, in particular: from now on, the problem lies not just in the spread of international terrorism, but in its "globalization".

As a brief survey of the anti-terrorist aspects of Russian policy on local and regional conflict management shows, an effective combat against terrorism, that requires the implementation of a comprehensive long-term strategy, with adequate funding, technical and legal support, is not possible if those social-economic and political problems that provoke violent reaction in the form of terrorism remain unsolved. That is why the task of fighting terrorism cannot be confined to countering certain tactics of the armed resistance. The strategy of combating terrorism should be directed at solving its underlying causes.

¹ "On the Combat against Terrorism", Federal Law "no.130 of 25 July 1998. See also art. 205 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation, which defines terrorism as "explosions, arson or other acts that create danger to human life, cause considerable damage to property or have other dangerous public consequences, if these acts are carried out in order to violate public security, terrorize the population or influence the taking of decisions by the authorities, as well as threats to commit such acts for the same purposes".

² The Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation, confirmed by a Decree of the President of the Russian Federation of 21 April 2000, in *Rossiiskaya Gazeta*, 25 April 2000.

³ For more detail see: Patterns of Global Terrorism—2000, Department of State Publication, Office of the Secretary of State, Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism. Wash., April 2000.

⁴ In contrast to the 1980s, when the number of victims of international terrorist acts amounted to about 5000 people, in the 1990s, this number decreased almost twofold.

⁵ On the situation in Chechnya. Arguments of our parliamentarians in reply to the demands of the Council of Europe, in *Rossiiskaya Gazeta*, 4 April 2000.

⁶ On the conflict in Chechnya. Recommendation no.1444 of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, 27 January 2000.

⁷ The situation in the Chechen Republic. Communiqué of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 29 August 2001.

⁸ As demonstrated, for instance, by an opinion poll held among representatives of the Russian elite by ROMIR in November 2000, “international terrorism” and “Islamic terrorism” were seen as serious threats to the security of the Russian Federation (only corruption, economic problems, the unstable political situation and NATO policies were cited as more serious threats). See: ROMIR’s Recent Studies: Russia’s elite on the principal threats to the Russian security. RIA-OREANDA, 5 December 2000.

⁹ Wahhabism—a movement of the followers of Muhammad ibn Abd-al-Wahhab (18th century), an extreme version of the radical Hanbalite mazkhab (school-of-thought) in Sunni Islam. One of the varieties of Islamic fundamentalism or “salafism” (literally, “following the example of the first generations of Muslims”). The adherents of Wahhabism are known for their strict observance of the principle of monotheism, ban on worshipping Muslim Saints and Holy Places, extreme fanaticism and extremism in religious and social matters, especially in the fight against opponents, and commitment to the idea of “jihad” both against non-believers and apostate Muslims. The strictness of organizational principles often turns Wahhabi communities into militarized religious-political organizations.

¹⁰ In Chechnya, Ingushetia and Dagestan, the so-called traditional Islam is mainly represented by the Sufi orders of Nakshbandiya and Kadiriya.

¹¹ For more detailed information on the “North Caucasian Wahhabism” see V.K. Akayev, “North Caucasian Wahhabism as a form of Islamic radicalism”, in “Research on the Caucasus: problems and prospects”—Rostov-na-Donu, 2000, pp. 71–76; I. Dobayev, “The North Caucasus”: traditionalism and radicalism in contemporary Islam”, in “Mirovaya Ekonomika i Mezhdunarodnye Otnosheniya”, 2001, no. 6, pp. 21–30; D. Makarov, “Radical Islam in the North Caucasus; Dagestan and Chechnya”, in “Conflict–Dialogue–Cooperation (the ethno-political situation in the North Caucasus)”, 1999, no. 1, pp.42–58.

¹² From the statement of the Russian Minister of the Interior V. Rushailo, cited by TV-6 Novosti, 21 April 2000.

¹³ From a statement at a meeting with representatives of the mass media on 15 May 2001; cited by “*Nezavisimaya Gazeta*”, 17 May 2001.

¹⁴ Among the field commanders, killed or arrested in the course of the counter-terrorist operation were K. Israpilov, A. Ismailov, L. Dudayev, A. Barayev, A. Bakuyev, Abu Umar, S. Raduyev. T.A. Atgeriyev, a.o. All efforts to apprehend or kill the chief leaders of the extremists, Basayev and Khattab, have failed so far.

¹⁵ cited by Prime-Tass, 24 August 2001.

¹⁶ cited by *Nezavisimoye Voyennoye Obozreniye*, 19 May 2000.

¹⁷ No Afghan government, including the Taliban, has ever recognized the present Afghan–Pakistani border, drawn along the so-called Durand line.

¹⁸ RIA-Novosti, 3 February 2000.

¹⁹ Confirmed by the decision of the CIS Heads of State on 21 June 2001. Although initially, only information and analysis tasks were assigned to the ATC, it was expected to become a permanently functioning specialized agency of the CIS, designed to coordinate and initiate joint action of the competent agencies of the CIS member states in combating international terrorism and other manifestations of extremism. (The final decision on launching the ATC and on its funding was taken at the CIS Minsk summit on 1 December 2000, with Russia initially agreeing to provide most of the funding for the Center).

²² UN Doc. S/RES/1244 (10 June 1999).

²³ *Ibid.*, Par. 9b. 15.

²⁴ KFOR/UNMIK Press Briefing, 23 March; 12 June 2000, etc.

²⁵ See, for instance, KFOR Daily Press Release, 25 Sept. 2000.

²⁶ KFOR/UNMIK Press Briefing, 23 March 2000.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 21 March 2000.

²⁸ For instance, deploying 100 British army personnel to stay with Serb families in Prishtina in the spring of 2000.

²⁹ See, for instance, KFOR/UNMIK Press Briefing, 23 March 2000.

³⁰ KFOR Daily Press Release, 2 Aug., 22 Nov 2000, etc.

³¹ For instance, on 19 December 2000 the UN Security Council received an official statement of the President of the Council, who, at that time, was the Russian representative to the UN Sergey Lavrov, strongly condemning the acts of violence on the part of Albanian extremist groups in the southern regions of Serbia.

³² See *Nezavisimoye Voyennoye Obozreniye*, 1 December 2000.

³³ Address by Vladimir Putin, cited by Russian State TV (RTR) “Vesti”, 16 October 2000.

³⁴ In particular, with SCR no.242 and no.238.

³⁵ As President Putin stressed at his talks with A. Sharon in Moscow on 4 September 2001, “nothing can justify terrorist attacks against the civilian population”.