



Russia's Homegrown Insurgency: Jihad in the North Caucasus

U.S. Army War College

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The United States has had a bitter set of experiences with insurgencies and counterinsurgency operations, but it is by no means alone in having to confront such threats and challenges. Indeed, according to Russian President Dmitry Medvedev, the greatest domestic threat to Russia's security is the ongoing insurgency in the North Caucasus. This insurgency grew out of Russia's wars in Chechnya and has gone on for several years, with no end in sight. Yet it is hardly known in the West and barely covered even by experts. In view of this insurgency's strategic importance and the fact that the U.S. military can and must learn for other contemporary wars, the Strategic Studies Institute (SSI) felt the need to bring this war to our readers' attention and shed more light upon both sides, the Islamist (an nationalist) rebels and Russia, as they wage either an insurgency or counterinsurgency campaign. While the evident and primary cause of this current war is Russian misrule in the North Caucasus in the context of the Chechen wars, it also is true that Russia is now facing a self-proclaimed fundamentalist, Salafi-oriented, Islamist challenge, that openly proclaims its links to al-Qaeda and whose avowed aim is the detachment of the North Caucasus from the Russian Federation. Therefore, we should have a substantial interest in scrutinizing the course of this war both for its real-world strategic implications and for the lessons that we can garner by close analysis of it. The three papers presented here are by well-known experts and were delivered at SSI's third annual conference on Russia that took place at Carlisle, PA, on September 26-27, 2011. This conference, like its predecessors, had as its goal the assemblage of Russian, European, and American experts to engage in a regular, open, and candid dialogue on critical issues in contemporary security; this panel realized that ambition, as Dr. Hahn is American, Dr. Markedonov is Russian, and Dr. Cornell is Swedish.

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