

Russia's Islamic Threat by Gordon M. Hahn. Yale University Press 2007.

The Russian attempt to eradicate Chechnya and destroy its people's will is one of the international scandals of the last 2 decades. Unfortunately for the Chechens, since 2001 Vladimir Putin has been able to present his assault on Chechnya as another part of the 'War on Terror' launched by George Bush, and in this guise many terrible acts have been ignored or forgiven.

Gordon Hahn's book is a meticulously researched analysis of the state of the Islamic entities within Russia and Russia's sphere of influence, especially through the Caucasus. He considers the challenge to Russia's territorial integrity posed by the rise of a jihadi network in its Muslim republics, the motor for which has been the brutal repression in Chechnya and the way that the Chechen experience has catalysed both a sense of Muslim grievance and the strengthening of an Islamist agenda, with adherents and supporters far beyond Russia's borders.

Overall, Hahn's prognosis is a deeply gloomy one, and in his final chapter, Conclusions and Security Implications, he sets out a range of scenarios that would chill the blood of the most sanguine reader. The only ray of hope lies in Tatarstan, wherein may be found a modernizing Islamic tendency called *jadidism* that was founded in the 19th century. Hahn's explanation of this philosophy portrays it as a powerful counterbalance to the Wahhabism and Salafism that have done so much damage to western relations with the Islamic world and pose such an international threat as the ideological engines of Islamist terrorism. Hahn leaves the reader in no doubt that the *jadidi* trend needs to receive powerful support and encouragement from within Russia and outside if a possible cataclysm is to be averted.

Sadly, it is hard to conclude the book with a sense of optimism about the future. Putin's cynical misuse of Chechnya as a means of bolstering his own authority, coupled with the stupidity of Bush's approach to Islam, leads to the inevitable conclusion that brute force and short-termism will continue to motivate eastern and western policy makers - and the potential outcome of their myopia is too horrible to contemplate.

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