



# Domestic Foundations of Russian Security

Policy Perspectives  
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*Cover images:*

Thousands of members of the pro-Kremlin youth organization "Nashi" gather in central Moscow during a rally (AP Photo/Mikhail Metzel/2011).

Russian President Dmitry Medvedev, center, flanked by Interros Investment Company President Vladimir Potanin, left, and Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Kozak, right, visit the Roza Khutor ski resort that is under construction for the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics (AP Photo/RIA Novosti, Mikhail Klimentyev, Presidential Press Service/2011).

A damaged ski lift is seen on one of the slopes of Mt. Elbrus, Kabardino-Balkaria, North Caucasus, Russia. Three Russian tourists headed for the ski area were killed by masked gunmen and a ski lift was heavily damaged in an explosion in the insurgency-plagued region (AP Photo/Russian Reporter, Alexey Maishev/2011).

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# Foreword

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This collection of essays is based on the proceedings of a March 2011 workshop of the Program on New Approaches to Research and Security in Eurasia (PONARS Eurasia), held in collaboration with the Institute of World Economy and International Relations (IMEMO), Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow. PONARS Eurasia is a program that promotes scholarly work and policy engagement on transnational and comparative topics within the Eurasian space, based on the expertise of a global network of social scientists.

The workshop – on Security Challenges in Russia and Eurasia – brought together scholars and experts from the Russian Federation, the United States, and Europe (including Ukraine and Azerbaijan) to propose initiatives for deepening international security cooperation in Eurasia; to consider the implications of changing relationships between Russia, the EU, and countries of post-Soviet Eastern Europe and the Caucasus; and to assess the domestic foundations of Russian security and democratic stability. We are publishing twenty-three essays from the workshop in three collected volumes, of which this is the third.

This volume, *Domestic Foundations of Russian Security*, assesses the prospects for reform in core security, political, and educational institutions in Russia and examines the changing dynamics of insurgency and state response in the North Caucasus. The three essays in **Part I** identify institutional legacies hindering reform of security and political institutions in Russia today. Focusing on the defense industry, *Alla Kassianova* lauds the Russian government for properly identifying key gaps in innovation, quality control, and cost control and its turn toward industry modernization and international cooperation as solutions. Nonetheless, she takes a dim view of the ability of Russia's state-controlled industry to reform itself from the top-down. *Brian Taylor* closely examines the frequent assumption of continuity between Soviet and Russian security organs. While rejecting several alleged legacies as explanations for structures that have roots in Russia's current transition or are common to many developing countries, he concludes that the "status and cultural reputation" of former KGB personnel and an expansive and powerful procuracy (the powers of which are only now beginning to diminish) are legacies of the Soviet era. Finally, *Vladimir Gelman* is discouraged by the prospects for fundamental political reform in Russia, observing that even current elites who recognize the need to change the system have too much to lose to risk doing so. In the absence of an external shock, he forecasts two scenarios for political development in Russia: perpetuation of the institutional status quo and gradual decay, or a return to greater authoritarianism.

**Part II** of the collection considers the roles of nationalism, ideology, and education. *Viatcheslav Morozov* argues that the recent rise of xenophobia in Russia – directed in part to domestic populations – is not unique. However, a lack of political liberalization in Russia has led to the de-legitimization of “top-down” multiculturalism and the prospect that extreme nationalism could emerge as the regime’s only viable democratic challenger. *Ivan Kurilla* notes the concerning development of a bulging but underqualified student population in Russia with high aspirations and low employment prospects. While the government recognizes the need for reform, the path it has charted risks leaving large regions of the country without quality higher education, deterioration in the social sciences, a dwindling of entrants into academic careers, and a rise in insufficiently trained graduate students. Finally, *Georgi Derluguian* views as unlikely any of the most commonly predicted pathways of Russian development, whether technocratic authoritarianism, market liberalism, or nationalism. Instead, he predicts the rise of a hybrid state-building ideology in Russia that combines centralization and popular mobilization; indigeneity and multiculturalism; and local pride and global power – in other words, a kind of non-revolutionary “neo-Leninism.”

Finally, **Part III** focuses on the changing insurgency in the North Caucasus and the state’s response. *Mark Kramer* debunks recent claims that nationalist rather than Islamist motivations are driving suicide attacks by insurgents, observing that it was the turn to such tactics that undermined external support for the nationalist movement in Chechnya. *Sufian Zhemukhov* and *Jean-François Ratelle* distinguish between different types of motivating ideologies in the North Caucasus, Kabardino-Balkaria in particular, where radical Islam competes with moderate and traditional forms of Islam, as well as with a new nationalism. The struggle between these movements has recently become more violent and will shape trends in the republic as much as the relationship between these movements and the state. Finally, *Mikhail Alexseev* assesses the effectiveness of state-led economic development in combating insurgency. He finds that increased assistance is effective in some republics but counterproductive in others. In Dagestan, where the insurgency is related to inter-clan rivalries, greater federal subsidies increase the size of the “pie,” reducing conflict; in Kabardino-Balkaria, where the insurgency is separated from social dynamics, greater federal subsidies mean more – and more lucrative – targets for insurgents in their struggle against the state.

We are sure you’ll find these policy perspectives informative and thought-provoking. Many individuals were instrumental in the production of this volume, as well as the organization of the workshop that generated it. I would like to especially thank our colleague and co-organizer, IMEMO Leading Research Fellow Irina Kobrinskaya; Managing Editor Alexander Schmemmann; Program Assistant Olga Novikova; Graduate Research Assistants Wilder Bullard and Julija Filinovic; IERES Executive Associate Caitlin Katsiaticas; and IERES Director Henry Hale.

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# We Need Wonders at a Reasonable Price

## HOW SOUND IS RUSSIA'S CURRENT DEFENSE-INDUSTRIAL POLICY?

PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 149

Alla Kassianova  
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### **Breakthrough Cure: Spend Trillions**

Russia's defense-industrial policy (OPK) has recently been brought back into focus by the announcement of a new stage of army reform, which has the objective of raising the level of new equipment in Russia's deployed weapons arsenal to as much as 70 percent by 2020. The government has pledged an impressive 19 trillion rubles (approximately \$683 billion) over the next 10 years for the purchase of these armaments. When signed, a newly redrawn Armaments State Program, GPV-2020, will set the content and schedule of deliveries. The program will be backed by a series of issue-specific investment programs that will scoop up another one trillion rubles (about 100 billion rubles a year) for the "technological re-armament" of the industry itself.

This 20-trillion ruble OPK plan fits into a larger scenario of "innovation breakthrough" that is fueled by an upsurge of expenditure, championed by the Ministry of Industry and Trade, and apparently embraced by the Ministry of Defense and the "ruling tandem" of President Dmitry Medvedev and Prime Minister Vladimir Putin. Speaking at the Krasnoyarsk Economic Forum in February 2011, however, Finance Minister Alexei Kudrin voiced strong warnings against a strategy that relies on unbalanced spending; he specifically objected to the newly hiked 20-trillion ruble military expenditure – equal to the addition of an extra 0.5 percent of GDP per year to the budget deficit. Given the magnitude of the plan as well as the magnitude of the economic gamble, it seems appropriate to give the new policy a closer look.

This memo focuses on the public portion of the policy discussion in government that intensified in 2009-2010 when OPK issues were addressed at a series of dedicated government meetings. The memo acknowledges that present OPK policy recognizes the urgency of modernizing Russia's defense industry. However, certain changes being implemented threaten to be undermined by an overreliance on administrative control and are outweighed by the cumulative inefficiency of state policy.

## Diagnosis, Symptoms, and Treatment of the Complex's Complex

Russia's defense-industrial complex struggled through the official neglect of the 1990s and bouts of reorganization in the 2000s. Over the past decade, it has absorbed increasingly heftier budgets, from what now appears a modest 60 billion rubles in 2001 up to an estimated one trillion rubles in 2010 (in current prices). Around 2007, the year-to-year growth of the defense budget began to be complemented by a growth in budget-funded investment for the modernization of the industry. During the crisis of 2008-2009, funding actually increased to include a 175-billion ruble package of anti-crisis measures.

A turnaround in actual deliveries of new weapons came about in 2007-2008, when certain systems were procured in quantities unseen in the post-Soviet period and others were entirely re-introduced (like submarines, warships, and anti-missile systems). Despite continuous growth in expenditures, however, results have fallen short of expectations. In April 2010, Prime Minister Putin pointed out the "the dangerous disproportion between the technological capacity of the defense enterprises and the demands of the armed forces." President Medvedev, in September 2010, noted that "on many levels, the Russian OPK is not yet capable of responding to an increase of orders or financing with an adequate growth of hi-tech output." On the military side, Deputy Defense Minister Vladimir Popovkin, in charge of armaments, laid down a bleak picture of the industry at a roundtable in April 2010, saying that it was still living "the legacy of the 1980s." He said that Russia had fallen behind by an entire generation of weapons in "certain critical areas" and with certain systems was unable to meet the needs of the army in the necessary timeframe.

## Industry Sore Spots

**Innovation** is Medvedev's signature theme as well as the rhetorical trademark of the OPK. On more than one occasion, Medvedev has criticized the industry for living off the research and development (R&D) inventory "of previous years." He has also mused about setting up a dedicated agency for stimulating breakthrough research. For his part, Putin has noted that around forty percent of defense R&D projects were never actually realized. Defense Minister Anatoly Serdyukov blamed such data on an "imperfect" system of information exchange. Another meeting, however, revealed that in any case few new industry patents existed.

In October 2009, Minister of Industry and Trade Victor Khristenko, the civilian counterpart of the minister of defense for armaments planning, acknowledged "a significant number" of **quality control** issues relating to domestic defense orders and "even a certain increase" in claims from foreign customers. He mentioned that only ten percent of defense enterprises had implemented internationally certified quality management systems. From a different angle, Sergey Ivanov, vice prime minister in charge of the OPK, cited statistics on civil and military aircraft accidents caused by the use of counterfeited spare parts. He blamed this "disastrous and intolerable" situation on weak quality control and inadequate information systems.



Concern about controlling **costs** is palpable in Putin's turn of phrase: "Our OPK is capable of working wonders; however, we need not just any wonders but only those that actually make the country's defense stronger and come at a reasonable price." The issue of controlling the price tag has come up as a key problem whenever planning, budgeting, contracting, or executing on contracts are concerned. There is a distinct concern about the "vanishing attractiveness" of Russian arms exports because of growing costs.

As the starting point of the current policy, discussions have identified **technological backwardness** as the key cause of the OPK's malaise. The policy intends to treat it with massive expenditures that would enable a technological re-equipping of the industry by breeding indigenous innovation and by purchasing advanced technologies from abroad. The modernized industry would then be fully equipped to deliver 19-trillion rubles worth of new weapons and become a generator as well as a consumer of innovation along the way.

### **New Treatments**

Talk of the OPK as a locomotive for the technological breakthrough of the Russian economy has been around for the entire post-Soviet period. As well, the previous OPK policy also boosted funding for many years in a row. However, the present policy does have a few novel emphases.

*Modernization:* Traditionally, planning and budgeting have been focused on defense orders and the mechanics of their implementation. For the first time, the present policy puts a principled emphasis on the technological modernization of the industry as a precondition for receiving defense order financing. Surprising as it may be from a commonsense point of view, the thesis of "antecedent technological re-armament" needed to be articulated and stressed as a distinct principle, exemplified by this passage by Putin in December 2010: "It is very important to coordinate the implementation in such a way that the [defense order] money <...> would be coming to those enterprises that are capable of realizing the tasks we put before them. Where re-equipping is needed, it must be done and completed prior to receiving the defense order money." While the defense order remains the principal instrument of OPK policy, so-called federal target programs (FTsP) that channel budget-funded investment have also been elevated to a higher plane of funding. For the 2011-2013 contracting cycle, the military is pressing for at least 100 billion rubles a year, with 60 billion approved so far by the Finance Ministry. The increased prominence of the modernization-focused FTsP and the emphasis on the urgency of technological re-equipping reflect a consensus that deep systemic modernization is the "primary, foundational, and key condition" (in Khristenko's words) of "OPK survival" and the success of army reform.

*International Cooperation:* The second new emphasis in the defense industry policy is best illustrated by the much-discussed presentation by Armaments Chief Vladimir Popovkin in April 2010, in which he conceded that modern defense production is "impossible without an international division of labor." Popovkin cited a list of technologies missed by the Russian defense industry during the 1990s and argued that

catching up on indigenous capacity for the production of a full range of new-generation weapons was an insurmountable task for Russia's economy; thus, "there is no other way than cooperation with the companies of the [technologically] advanced countries" via joint projects that include the transfer of key technologies. Popovkin's concession, however, fell short of a manifesto for "international cooperation in weapons." He insisted that national military planning will continue to rely on the concept of self-sufficiency in areas such as strategic nuclear and defense forces (among others) and that foreign weapons purchases would be exceptional measures undertaken to "cover the gaps" in military needs where the national industry is unable to develop or manufacture required systems. Even with these serious reservations, this position marks an important turning point in relations between Russia's military and its defense industry, exemplified by deals on purchasing Israeli unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) and French Mistral-class warships.

The declaration of an international division of labor in defense production by Russia's top armaments officer underscores a gradual shift in the international dimension of OPK policy. Traditional arms exports remain a priority backed by the full support of the state. At the same time, there is a more decided turn to international cost sharing in high-cost development projects. Russia has progressed the furthest in joint co-development ventures with India, the latest being an HAL-Sukhoi/Rosoboronexport venture on shared-cost design and development of advanced fifth generation fighter aircraft (FGFA). This form of cooperation, in which technology transfer occurs both ways, is still a rare occurrence; India has so far been the only partner with which Russia shares a degree of geopolitical compatibility and has accumulated a long and progressively complex experience of bilateral armaments cooperation.

A relatively newer and expanding form of international activity falls along the lines of "cooperation with companies from advanced countries," whereby Russia takes on the role of a recipient of technology and cooperates mainly with Europe and Israel. Between 2008-2010, Rostekhnologii, the principal state agent for technological cooperation, signed agreements and contracts with Renault, EADS/Airbus, Boeing, Thales, Augusta Westland, Israel Aerospace Industries, and Iveco Defense Vehicles, among others. From this list, Augusta Westland, Israel Aerospace Industries, and Iveco are setting up joint ventures with Rostekhnologii's companies to open assembly lines on Russian territory (for, respectively, civil helicopters, UAVs, and armored vehicles) with prospective "domesticization" of technologies. An important part of the Mistral deal, signed in December 2010 and now negotiated to become a contract, was the assumption that along with the two warships Russia would acquire a set of related technologies, and possibly production lines, for manufacturing two more of the warships at a national shipyard.

### **State-Run Treatment?**

OPK policy is undergoing other changes, in terms of certain improvements in contracting mechanisms and (presumably) greater attention to the quality of goal-

setting and planning (as reflected in the protracted deliberations surrounding the GPV-2020).

Lesser optimism, however, is warranted when considering the underlying reliance of OPK reform on state control. In Russia's OPK, the concentration of defense production, a worldwide trend, has taken a distinctly top-down, administrative-led form. In 2010, about 50 percent of the industry's total output belonged to so-called "integrated structures," conglomerates of companies and subcontractors broken down by production areas, superimposed by a bureaucratic "head structure" representing the entire "holding" in dealings with the state. Concentration has gone in parallel with de-privatization, firmly anchoring the industry under state control, sometimes personified by prominent regime insiders on corporate boards (Igor Sechin, for example, as chairman of the board of directors of the United Shipbuilding Corporation).

The "state corporation" Rostekhnologii, with its virtual empire of over 400 enterprises and 23 percent of OPK output, is a good illustration of the top-down organizational model. Brought into being by the enormous insider weight of its head Sergei Chemezov, Rostekhnologii uses administrative resources to provide its member enterprises with greater budgetary support, investment, and more contracts. Likewise, in the international field, it uses its special access privileges to bring in big-name foreign investment and international partnerships in advanced technological ventures. By virtue of owning companies like VSMPO-AVISMA, the world's leading titanium producer, Rostekhnologii can build long-term strategic partnerships with global giants like EADS and Boeing and return the state's favor by turning these partnerships into prestige assets.

In the 20-trillion ruble armaments plan, the "integrated structures" are specifically counted on as hubs of "concentrated assets and responsibility" to facilitate technological re-equipping and financial flows. This policy of structuring the industry environment according to a bureaucratic logic of all-encompassing administrative control does place a high stake on the quality of the administration. At the same time, however, it habituates the industry to be budget-dependent and forecloses the possibility of relying on market mechanisms. With the success of the strategy hinging on the sheer volume of state budget expenditures, the affordability of which depends on the course of the global oil market over the next ten years, OPK policy rests on an extremely vulnerable foundation without viable fallback options.

### **An Unfavorable Prognosis**

Indisputably, the defense industry is an economic sector that requires a great degree of state intervention due to the specific nature of its products. However, in the critical situation of Russia's OPK, a heavy bias toward the extension of full state control over the industry must be justified by no less than excellence of state regulation. Apart from snowballing instances of the overall incompetence of the "vertical"-based administrative model, OPK policy provides its own evidence of ineffectiveness. Returning to official perspectives for just one example, it is striking that Sergey Ivanov, the top state official in the OPK since 2005, was clamoring in 2010 against the

“intolerable” use of counterfeited spare parts in military aircraft, a full four years after the arms-export establishment had to swallow the return of fifteen MiG-29s by Algeria for just this reason.

The ineffectiveness of existing policy cannot be reversed by the area-specific changes currently underway. It is easy to notice that official discussion – even informed by a sense of urgency – is lacking in the important capacity of self-reflection. The entire public discourse uncritically relies on faith in the power of big numbers and the belief that setting up a new agency or program will advance innovation or allow new designs to materialize. The self-contained quality of this particular policy discussion and the resulting vulnerability of the unfolding OPK strategy can only be eliminated by a return to political competition and accountability practices in the larger sociopolitical space.

### **Acronyms**

OPK    *Oboronno-Promyshlennyi Komplex* (Defense Industrial Complex)  
GPV    *Gosudarstvennaya Programma Vooruzheniy* (Armaments State Program)  
FTsP    *Federalnaya Tselevaya Programma* (Federal Target Program)

# Historical Legacies and Law Enforcement in Russia

PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 150

Brian D. Taylor  
*Syracuse University*

The Russian militia has been consigned to the dustbin of history, replaced (as of March 2011) by the Russian police. The change to the name “police” is supposed to indicate a new type of force, one with a more professional outlook as well as a new orientation to citizens. In the words of *RosBusinessConsulting*, a Russian news agency, a *militционер* was an “inspector,” whereas a police officer is a “helper.” However, many experts contend that a change in labels, whether from militia to police or KGB to FSB (Committee for State Security to Federal Security Service), cannot eliminate the pathologies of the Soviet past in Russian law enforcement. This position dovetails with a widespread tendency to invoke “legacies” to explain a wide range of social and political phenomena in the post-communist world.

In this memo, I consider to what extent the notion of legacies is helpful in understanding contemporary Russian law enforcement. I argue that attributing existing structures and behavior to legacies is actually more difficult to prove than one might initially think, but that there are a few legacies that seem important. Specifically, the organizational mandate and power of the Russian Procuracy, the status and cultural reputation of “Chekists” (former KGB personnel), and the tendency of law enforcement personnel to act with minimal regard for treating average citizens fairly are definitely important aspects of Russian law enforcement and ones that seem to be, at least in part, legacies from the Soviet past.

## **What is a Legacy?**

The notion of legacy suggests something retained from the past. Legacies in this sense should be present everywhere, yet we most often hear the word legacy in cases such as “post-colonial legacies” and “post-communist legacies.” Thus, it appears that the term applies primarily after major historical breaks. Unlike path dependencies, then, legacies seem to appear after a discontinuous shift, such as after a revolution. These legacies could exist both at the formal level, in terms of laws and organizations, and at the informal level, in terms of culture and everyday practice.

At the most general and ambitious level, the very notion of post-communist legacies implies that former communist societies from Budapest to Bishkek share important commonalities. Given the generally divergent trajectories across the post-communist region, legacy arguments would seem to be hard, although not impossible, to sustain. Turning to Russia, the fact that not just Soviet but also Tsarist legacies are sometimes evoked suggests we may not be talking about legacies at all as much as traditional Russian institutional forms or practices. Finally, one should be cautious about invoking a legacy argument if there is an obvious functional explanation – that is, institutions and practices may not be true post-communist legacies if they are generally common around the world, either in general or in authoritarian/post-authoritarian contexts. To put it differently, in the specific case under consideration here, the Russian police may not behave the way they behave because they are *Russian*, but because they are *police*. With these caveats in mind, let us proceed to examine some of the most obvious candidates for legacy influence in Russian law enforcement.

### **Organizational Legacies in Russian Law Enforcement**

A good starting point in looking for legacies is the formal organizational structure of Russian law enforcement. In this area, clearly the biggest attempt to disrupt previous structures and create a new look for law enforcement was the dismantling of the KGB in 1991 and breaking it into five separate structures. Such a change was justified both on functional grounds, in order to rationalize the responsibilities of the KGB's diverse components, and on political grounds, to reduce its political weight. It clearly made functional sense to separate foreign and domestic intelligence, border security from internal security, and leadership security from law enforcement. The partial reversal of this fragmentation under President Vladimir Putin in 2003, however, is probably more readily explained on political grounds than functional ones – Putin clearly did not fear the secret police the way Yeltsin did, and restoring some of his old agencies' former functions and bureaucratic heft probably appealed to his Chekist identity. At the same time, he resisted the proposals sometimes heard to recreate the structure of the KGB *in toto*, leaving foreign intelligence (SVR, Foreign Intelligence Service) and leadership security (FSO, Federal Guards Service) as separate entities. Leaving the SVR and the FSO independent seems logical on functional grounds alone, and the independence of the FSO has an obvious political rationale also.

The Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD), on the other hand, continued relatively unchanged after 1991. The biggest formal organizational change was the 1998 removal of control over prisons from MVD jurisdiction and their transfer to the Ministry of Justice, a move pushed by the Council of Europe. Several other major changes were rejected. Most importantly, both the MVD and the presidency – under Boris Yeltsin, Putin, and Dmitry Medvedev – have resisted efforts by law enforcement reformers to transfer control over public order policing to the regions. The high degree of centralization of the Russian police may in some respects be considered both a Tsarist and communist legacy, but, on the other hand, such centralization is hardly unique to Russia, even for federal political systems. Finally, the heavy militarization of the MVD

in terms of the 200,000 strong Internal Troops, although potentially a communist legacy, also can be defended at least in part on functionalist grounds, given the long-running internal war in the North Caucasus. The split between “high” (political) and “low” (criminal) police was also maintained, with the persistence of the FSB and the MVD as parallel policing agencies. Such a division has roots both in the Soviet and tsarist periods, but since this division of law enforcement responsibilities is fairly common around the world, it does not appear to be an actual legacy in the sense defined above. Thus, the continuity of the MVD organizational structure may be a partial legacy, with entrenched interests in the current bureaucracy resisting reform proposals, but there are also functional arguments for the current structure.

The other major law enforcement agency is the Procuracy. Continuity was also the order of the day with the Procuracy, which maintained its wide mandate and multiple functions from the Soviet period. These functions included criminal prosecution, criminal investigation for certain crimes (the MVD, the FSB, and several other law enforcement agencies also have criminal investigation responsibilities), general oversight (*nadzor*) over all government agencies to ensure their compliance with the law, and coordination of law enforcement organs. This broad mandate is one of the most extensive in the post-communist world. Russian legal reformers in the early 1990s fought to strip the Procuracy of its general oversight functions and limit its role to criminal investigation and prosecution, but they lost that battle. More recently, from 2007-2011, the criminal investigative functions have been separated from the Procuracy in several stages, with an independent Investigative Committee established. Medvedev has suggested that the possibility of bringing all criminal investigative units, including from the MVD and the FSB, into this new structure is still alive. Such a move would be an important departure from Soviet-era practices.

To summarize, although there are important organizational continuities from the Soviet period in Russian law enforcement, it is hard to identify continuities that are clearly “legacies.” Probably the most consequential organizational legacy was the persistence of a Procuracy with multiple and extensive powers, although the separation of the Investigative Committee in recent years has eroded the Procuracy’s power. Other important organizational continuities – a centralized and militarized MVD, the division between high and low policing – at first glance appear also to be legacies. Given that these organizational forms are not uncommon in many countries, including in liberal democracies, and may have functional explanations, it is hard to demonstrate that they are actually communist legacies.

### **Cultural and Informal Legacies**

Legacies at the level of practice and culture are likely to be both more enduring and harder to observe. Still, there are some generally accepted attributes of law enforcement practice from the Soviet period that might qualify as legacies if they have persisted. These include:

- The primacy of serving the state and political demands in law enforcement activity, as opposed to service to the citizenry.
- Enforcement of Party-defined standards for personal activity among the population.
- An approach to law enforcement that prioritizes Party *diktat* and plan-like targets set from above, combined with weak legal consciousness and training.
- Institutional rivalry between the main law enforcement agencies.
- The elite status of the KGB and its agents, particularly as compared to the militia, with differential status also reflected in the quality of cadres, and in the compensation they receive.

The change in law enforcement practice that seems the most obvious is the end to police enforcement of ideological standards of behavior for the population. Russian citizens clearly have a great deal more freedom in where they go, how they dress, what they read, and so on, than they did in the past. That said, the passport and registration system from the Soviet era has not been dismantled, and the persistence of aspects of this system may be a true legacy.

Institutional rivalry among the different law enforcement agencies has clearly persisted. This in itself is not a legacy, since disputes between bureaucracies with overlapping jurisdiction is a near-universal feature of modern states. However, the specific form of this rivalry intersects with a more important broader and cultural legacy of Soviet rule, the elite “blue blood” status of the Chekists, allegedly loyal and incorruptible servants of the state. This self-conception clearly predominates among Chekists themselves, who refer to themselves as the “new nobility” (Nikolai Patrushev) and assert that only Chekists can save the Russian state from collapse (Viktor Cherkesov). But it also seems to have wider currency among the political elite, and at least partially explains Yeltsin’s choice of Putin as successor. The general spread of former KGB personnel throughout the bureaucracy actually began under Yeltsin, although it accelerated markedly under Putin. During Putin’s presidency, former KGB officials headed not only the FSB itself but also its most obvious institutional rivals, the MVD (Rashid Nurgaliyev) and the Ministry of Defense (Sergei Ivanov). The combination of political power and elite status afforded the secret police is, in comparative terms, relatively unique; in Latin America, Africa, Asia, and the Middle East, the military has been much more likely than the secret police to dominate politics. This feature of Russian politics may well be a post-Soviet legacy; if so, it is a very important one.

At the more mundane level of practice, the low legal consciousness of law enforcement officials and the tendency to be guided by directives from above also seem



to persist. One of the most pernicious manifestations of this problem is the tendency of police officers to doctor statistics about key performance indicators such as “clearance rates.” Manipulating statistics can take many forms, from not registering crimes that are difficult to solve to torture and forced confessions to help meet one’s quotas, but the ultimate result is an approach to policing that privileges false and meaningless statistics over service to the population and fighting actual crime. Russian police call this quota-based monitoring the “stick system” (*palochnaya sistema*).

This tendency to work toward “the plan” rather than toward citizen satisfaction also has elements of a communist legacy. At the same time, it is worth noting that police supervisors everywhere deal with the difficult problem of how to evaluate police performance. The incentive to doctor statistics is hardly a specifically Russian or post-Soviet problem – it is seen among the police in liberal democratic states also. Moreover, the Russian police seem to recognize the need to adopt a broader range of measures of police performance, including citizen surveys, though plans to adopt these broader measures have not been fully implemented to date.

It is also worth noting that the growth of the second economy under Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev, combined with this quota-based approach to policing, had the perverse effect of making it easier for Soviet police officers to spend their time enriching themselves rather than solving crimes. As French scholar Gilles Favarel-Garrigues has demonstrated, the planned approach to police activity not only directed police away from hard economic cases to cases they could easily solve, or at least record as “solved,” it also gave them the flexibility to use work time to enrich themselves. This pattern of police activity not only continued after the Soviet collapse but expanded massively. As one police sergeant told Russian sociologist Boris Gladarev, “First we collect the required number of ‘sticks,’ then we can work for ourselves – anything above the norm – for a living.”

It would be a mistake, however, to see this form of police corruption as primarily a Soviet legacy. Although there are some continuities from the Soviet period, the introduction of private property radically changed the environment for law enforcement and stimulated the rise of what sociologist Vadim Volkov has termed “violent entrepreneurship” within these organs, far beyond the corruption of the late-Soviet period.

The tendency of Russian law enforcement officials (and not just police) to be guided by commercial motives is arguably the most fundamental aspect of their current practice. This behavior has both legacy and unique aspects. It also connects to a different legacy – the neglect of citizen service as a key orientation. In the Soviet period, the demands and interests of the “party-state” took precedence over societal concerns, so law enforcement was predominately a repressive organization. That repressive component of behavior has lessened but persisted, while the predatory (economically self-interested) element has grown but is not entirely new. What remains the case is that protection of citizens is often a secondary or even tertiary concern of law enforcement personnel. This is hardly a post-communist phenomenon alone, but the particular form in which it persists does seem to have legacy aspects.

## **Conclusion**

Many of the deficiencies of the Russian state are often attributed to post-Soviet legacies. In this memo, I have cast a critical eye toward some legacy claims as they apply to Russian law enforcement. Overall, the arguments for informal or cultural legacies seem somewhat stronger than the claims at the formal organizational level. Many of the organizational aspects of Russian law enforcement have both functional and political rationales independent of their Soviet past, although the unique role of the Procuracy is an important, albeit diminishing, legacy. In the realm of culture and practice, the two most important legacies seem to be *a)* the status and political weight of the FSB relative to other law enforcement agencies and *b)* the persistence of behavior that neglects fair and responsive service to average citizens as an important goal of law enforcement work. The latter behavior, however, is hardly unique to post-Soviet countries and is found to varying degrees in many authoritarian and semi-authoritarian states.

Legacy arguments, then, can only get us so far in understanding Russian law enforcement today. As the Russian militia passes into history, the new police may carry certain legacies, but they are also shaped by general pressures faced by police everywhere, as well as by a broader social and institutional environment that is a complicated mix of old and new.

# Institutional Trap in Russian Politics

## STILL NO WAY OUT?

PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 151

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In the 2000s, Russia's political structure demonstrated a trajectory of decay across major institutions of state, politics, and governance. Despite the fact that numerous negative assessments of Russia's institutional development have highlighted tendencies of authoritarianism, poor quality of governance, and lack of rule of law, an analysis of the continued downward trajectories of Russian governing institutions remains a neglected part of the research agenda. This memo reconsiders the politics of institutional decay in contemporary Russia. It applies the notion that the self-interest of ruling elites revolves around eliminating domestic challenges to their political dominance through the pursuit and maintenance of inefficient institutional equilibriums. This type of stasis is known as an "institutional trap." As long as the costs to Russia's political elite of institutional decay do not exceed its benefits, this equilibrium could survive over time, at least for the medium-term.\*

### **Russia and the Politics of "Institutional Trap"**

Nobel Prize winner Douglass North once argued: "Institutions are not necessarily or even usually created to be socially efficient; rather they, or at least the formal rules, are created to serve the interests of those with the bargaining power to create new rules." The deliberate creation and maintenance of inefficient institutions in post-Communist societies can thus be perceived as lying within a norm of institution building rather than as an exception. Yet most scholars analyzing the politics of institution building are inclined to focus on a limited number of success stories – stable and efficient institutions – rather than look at institutional failures or mixed and unstable patterns of institutional transformation. The case of Russia (as well as some other countries of post-Soviet Eurasia) serves as a sort of "laboratory" for the study of the deliberate creation of stable yet inefficient institutions – a system designed to maximize the advantage of the ruling elite and help them keep a monopoly on rents and political benefits.

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\* For more on the notion of "institutional trap" applied to Russian political development, see papers by Viktor Polterovich, including: ["Institutional Traps: Is There a Way Out?"](#)

One of the major outcomes of institution building in Russia over the last two decades has been the establishment and subsequent consolidation of three important formal institutions – what may be considered the institutional core – of the Russian political regime:

- 1) A political decision-making monopoly by the de facto federal chief executive and narrow circle of cronies.
- 2) A taboo on open electoral competition among elites.
- 3) The hierarchical subordination of sub-national authorities by the ruling elite (the “power vertical”).

If one examines Russia’s political institutions in terms of how well they fit the “interests of those with the bargaining power to devise new rules,” the results of institution building are imperfect. The main apparent defects include the following. At the federal level of authority, a dual power system has begun to emerge (president and prime minister). In some cases, minor parties at the regional and local level have emerged as genuine opponents to the dominant party (United Russia). Furthermore, the “power vertical” is not all encompassing because it does not include local governments in a fully-fledged way. The three core institutions, moreover, face an inherent and inevitable problem of inefficiency, reflected in extremely high levels of corruption, which also creates incentives for loyalty among all segments of the elite. There are also hidden but nonetheless very fierce battles between various interest groups (the so-called “Kremlin towers”) for access to rents and resources. Finally, the ruling group chooses not to, or is unable to, carry out major policy reforms that could break the current institutional equilibrium, which explains why recent efforts of economic modernization have been inefficient.

Indeed, given the fact that inefficient institutions shorten rather than extend time horizons for all major players, none of them are really interested to launch major institutional changes that could bring about positive effects in the medium- or long-term. It is true that a large part of the Russian elite is deeply dissatisfied with the current state of affairs and seeks possibilities to change the status quo. The prospects for this, however, are unrealistic, not just because actors interested in major changes are weak and deeply fragmented but also because of the existence of major institutional barriers. The existing institutional equilibrium has created a situation in which preserving the status quo at any cost (so-called “regime stability”) has become a goal in and of itself across the ruling elite.

One major problem is that even those who might voluntarily pursue policy change aimed at making governance more efficient would risk worsening their own position by undermining the status quo. This risk outweighs the possible benefits of policy reform. The result is that Russia finds itself in a situation where even if the elite and mass public were to agree on the urgency of key institutional changes, not only are

there no real incentives for political actors to undertake these changes, they would face the impossibility of implementing them “here and now” without considerable loss to themselves. Reminiscent in many ways of the Soviet political scene in the 1970s and early 1980s, this has led to a highly stable but inefficient equilibrium that no significant actors are interested to break. The longer today’s stability patterns continue, the more Russia will find itself trapped in a vicious circle that will be difficult to escape.

### **The Agenda for Tomorrow**

Is there a way for Russia to extricate itself from this institutional trap? If so, how? Can it alter or abandon its current inefficient and authoritarian institutional structure and develop efficient and stable democratic institutions?

The medium- and long-term answers to these questions are unclear. In the short-term, however, the answer is “no.” The problem is not just that the conditions for institutional change are nonexistent in Russia today, with none of the significant actors being able or willing to promote such change, but that the possible pathways out of this trap typically involve a major exogenous shock. Predicting how such an event would influence the behavior of key actors is a fruitless task. Leaving aside such speculation about exogenous shocks, the likelihood of major institutional change looks slim. Accepting this reality, what trajectories of institutional evolution in Russia can we expect?

In the short term, two scenarios seem most likely: (1) **institutional decay**, i.e., a preservation of the status quo, or (2) a **wielding of the iron fist**—a resort to increased authoritarian means to overcome institutional inefficiency and/or eliminate the possibility of challenges to the ruling elite. It is hard to assess the prospects for either scenario at the moment. The outlook will become clearer most likely only after the election cycle of 2011-2012.

### **Institutional Decay Scenario**

Under a scenario of institutional decay, Russia’s political institutions remain unchanged for at least the next decade, with only some minor and insignificant adjustments. This inertia-based scenario is the more likely outcome if the constellation of key actors and their rent-seeking opportunities remains roughly the same. In this case, we can expect institutional efficiency to continue declining as there arise principal-agent problems within the “power vertical,” increasing corruption at all levels, and regular clashes (if largely managed and settled) between different interest groups for access to rents.

At the same time, we could expect to see cosmetic changes designed to boost the importance of second-order institutions. These would be introduced to placate citizen demands at the lowest bureaucratic levels (and thus maintain base levels of public confidence), while maintaining and to some extent consolidating the political regime’s institutional core. Today, such political institutions, like Kremlin-managed satellite parties, are largely façades, but over time it is possible that they could attain a certain degree of autonomy and play a role in the political arena.

Additional rather far-fetched moves in this direction could include adjustments to the distribution of power by, for example, delivering to United Russia relative rather than absolute majorities of seats in regional parliaments, or, say, a majority rather than super-majority of seats in the national parliament. Another would be to expand the power of national and regional parliaments (for example, by requiring their approval of candidates to federal and regional ministerial posts). Cosmetic changes could even go so far as to introduce more or less open electoral competition in local elections (with participation limited to loyal parties and retention of centralized control over local governments through the power vertical).

Such changes would allow the ruling group to co-opt real and potential autonomous actors rather than to coerce them. But all these changes are likely to raise the costs of maintaining institutional equilibrium, by increasing side payments to subordinate actors claiming their share of political rents, rather than to actually make institutions more efficient. As long as these costs do not become prohibitively high, however, this policy could continue.

### **Iron Fist Scenario**

The second possible scenario is that the ruling elite could attempt to make institutions more efficient and/or deal with real or potential challenges to their dominant position by wielding an “iron fist.” In other words, Russia’s rulers could fully or partially replace some of the existing quasi-democratic façade institutions with purely authoritarian mechanisms of government while keeping the institutional core in place. It is hard to predict what specific actions the Kremlin might take in this direction, but they could include:

- further restricting political activity (particularly of political parties, even loyalist ones);
- overhauling legislation to expand the power of law enforcement and security agencies;
- further restricting civil rights and liberties; and
- allowing second-tier institutions to become shell entities at best.

More radical approaches could include further narrowing parliament’s power by having it delegate to the executive branch the power to adopt laws, retaining for itself only the right of subsequent approval. Similarly, regional authorities might be encouraged to transfer many of their powers to the federal center. Finally, a logical consequence of a highly centralized authoritarian institution-building approach would be the adoption of a new constitution, which would eliminate most of the “Rights and Liberties of Man and Citizen” and other such liberal clauses that originated in the “wild” 1990s.

None of the above changes will make Russia's political institutions more efficient. Corruption, battles between Kremlin towers for access to rents, and principal-agent problems will not go away. On the contrary, they will only take on new forms and could dramatically raise the costs of maintaining institutional equilibrium, thanks to the increase of side payments to coercive apparatuses. At the same time, these kinds of institutional changes will not necessarily lead to challenges to the status quo even if the expansion of repressive practices threatens a large section of previously loyal actors or dissenting groups within the ruling elite, so long as leaving the country remains a more viable alternative.

A thorough implementation of either the "institutional decay" or "iron fist" scenario is not very likely. In reality, institutional change in Russia could be based on a combination of both approaches or an inconsistent alternation of their various elements.

But is there an alternative whereby Russia's political institutions take on a genuinely improved quality and gradually move away from authoritarianism? The answer, again, is no, as judging by the experience of Russia's political institutions through the 1990s and across the 2000s. Today these institutions are simply incompatible with democracy, good governance, and the rule of law.

Democratization, when and if it will emerge in Russia, will require not just some changes to the current political institutions but their major dismantling and replacement with new institutions suited to the task of political reform and improved governance mechanisms. At the same time, there is no guarantee that such a complete overhaul will be a success. In fact, during a major reform process, the quality of institutions could even worsen and costs could steeply rise.

## **Conclusion**

After almost two decades, post-communist Russia has ended up in an "institutional trap" dominated by inefficient authoritarian political institutions. These self-perpetuating institutions became embedded in the Russian political system thanks to the efforts of the current political regime, which is now maintained, at least in part, by those same institutions. At the same time, these institutions seriously impede Russia's development. They not only prevent open political competition between elites but also impose barriers to efficient, accountable, open, and transparent governance. Improving Russia's political institutions in their current form is near impossible. It will become clearer over coming years whether the web of dysfunctional political institutions can be dismantled and replaced by peaceful means, or whether they will become incompatible with the continued existence of Russia as a country as such.

# What Happened on Manezh Square?

## IDEOLOGY, INSTITUTIONS, AND MYTHS SURROUNDING THE ANTI-MIGRANT RIOTS OF DECEMBER 2010

PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 152

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The nationalist riots that swept over major Russian cities in mid-December 2010 took nearly everyone by surprise. Anti-migrant sentiment was on the rise, but no one expected the protests to be so massive, well organized, and violent. Another unexpected aspect of the events was the reaction of the police. It had been taken for granted that any unauthorized public manifestations would be perceived by the regime as an immediate threat, so everyone expected the nationalist riots to be put down in the same uncompromising manner as are demonstrations of the liberal opposition. However, the police proved to be extremely inefficient in coping with at least the first major clash on December 11 in Manezh Square in the heart of Moscow. This first bloodshed had an irreversible impact on the entire political situation. The apparent inability of the security forces to prevent or suppress the outbreak of violence gave rise to a wide range of speculation, including theories about the Russian special services, or even the Kremlin itself, secretly encouraging the ultra-nationalists. The fact that Russia was entering an election year gave additional credibility to various conspiratorial exercises.

In this memo, I argue that xenophobic attitudes as such can hardly be described as a unique feature of contemporary Russia. What makes the Russian situation distinct is the way these attitudes play out in an extremely centralized political system. The effective elimination of party politics and free media has led to a situation in which an increasingly wider spectrum of society perceives the official image of Russia as a multicultural community to be a false ideology imposed on the Russian people by the bureaucratic state. At the same time, official promotion of tolerance is often inconsistent and competes with contradictory signals and myths about the “true” agenda of the party of power. This uncertainty, in itself, is a systemic feature of Russian politics. The allegedly omnipotent center is held responsible for everything that happens in the country and thus often prefers to hedge political risks by withholding important decisions and statements. A paradoxical outcome could be that xenophobic nationalism



could consolidate into the only democratic (if anti-liberal) alternative to the current authoritarian regime.

### **Is Russia Unique?**

In Western political thought, there is a long tradition of exoticizing Russia by describing certain aspects of its political culture as exceptional, resulting from either its location between Europe and Asia or its long history of authoritarian statehood, or both. There exists an equally long tradition of presenting the overall development of Russian society as being largely in compliance with certain universal standards. In the latter case, the obvious differences from the West are explained either by Russia's lagging behind or simply as local peculiarities. In this vein, one would follow [Andrei Shleifer and Daniel Treisman's argument](#) that Russia is a "normal country," albeit not necessarily a Western one.

Without attempting to intervene in this debate, I would just limit myself to saying that in terms of xenophobic attitudes, Russia is as normal as any other society in the North. As any large country, it is internally diverse, and as any other industrial nation with a similar combination of demographic decline and economic growth, it has experienced a huge inward migration in recent years. The crisis of multiculturalism as a model of preserving civic unity in an ethnically and religiously diverse society has been experienced nearly everywhere in the developed world, especially in Europe and North America. Voters all over the European Union increasingly sympathize with anti-immigrant political parties, and widespread racist attitudes among football fans are typical for many countries. Immigration policies of EU member states are far more restrictive than in the case of Russia. The issue of Hispanic immigration and the rise of the Tea Party illustrate similar tendencies in the United States. The recurring riots in Paris' *banlieues* and underground terrorist networks in Britain and Germany are all symptomatic of a growing social tension. The rise of nationalist ideologies and movements is an extremely troubling phenomenon, but it would be unfair to say that it presents a more serious challenge in Russia than elsewhere.

Thus, it is not in terms of ideological development that Russia is different. What is particular to the Russian case is that mass violent protests – the riots – were conducted on behalf of the dominant cultural group, ethnic Russians. Unlike isolated hate crimes that regularly happen everywhere, such a massive public outburst appears exceptional and therefore merits special attention.

### **The Institutional Failure and the Rise of Democratic Ultra-Nationalism**

The key reason why in the Russian case these ideological developments led to large-scale violations against public order is rather obvious. In fact, it has been spelled out by the rioters themselves. In established democracies, popular fears of immigration and/or cultural difference can be articulated in a number of institutionalized ways. Most importantly, they can be voiced in the media and expressed during elections, with all parties forced to address these issues in one way or another. These institutional methods, among other things, account for the drift of all democratic governments

toward increasingly restrictive migration policies. However, in an open and institutionalized public space, xenophobic voices have to enter into dialogue with more liberal ones, and their constant discursive confrontation and competition leads to a situation in which some basic rules of political correctness become almost universally recognized. When the debate is open and the state is responsive to people's concerns, the average citizen gravitates toward the middle ground, and only a few remain in the margins. The mainstream can still be deeply oppressive in relation to certain groups, but the system as such can remain stable for a long time.

It is in this institutional respect that the Russian situation is different. There are plenty of reasons to believe that the top leadership of the country understands the danger of rising ethnic tensions and tries to promote civic patriotism and rules of political correctness. The Russian leadership always emphasizes the fact that Russia is multicultural and multiconfessional, and despite their personal attachment to the Russian Orthodox Church, other established religious groups normally get what they want whenever any major decisions are taken. Examples include the 2005 amendments to the Law on Religious Associations, the introduction of religious education in secondary school, and the recent redistribution of historical religious buildings and other valuable artifacts in favor of religious organizations. The Russian Law on Citizenship complies with the strictest European standards, and the rise in hate crimes toward the mid-2000s has been countered by law enforcement cracking down on the racist underground. Even the situation in the North Caucasus is described in mainstream discourse in terms of Russian citizens suffering from bandits and extremists, rather than in terms of cultural or religious opposition.

As the reality on the ground testifies, the implementation of these policies has never been a great success, mainly because of dysfunctional social institutions. The level of tolerance in Russian society has never been terribly high; this intolerance has made it only easier for corrupt officials to extort money from people belonging to minorities, which, in turn, has contributed to their discrimination and alienation. It has also been the case that in their reaction to unexpected events (as opposed to their pro-active, premeditated policies) the top leadership has sent mixed signals, sometimes initiating discriminatory actions or at least failing to intervene. This happened, *inter alia*, when Georgian citizens were deported *en masse* as illegal immigrants in 2006 and when foreigners were banned from selling food in the markets in 2007.

The events on Manezh Square, however, appeared to indicate that this problem had acquired an entirely new dimension. The rioters presented their action as directed not just against migrants, but also against the corrupt and inefficient state that was, in their view, unable to protect the native population. This was not a trick aimed at concealing some "true" agenda; on the contrary, this was probably the key point that the protesters were trying to make.

Moreover, this self-depiction was to a large extent shared by Russian society at large. According to a poll conducted by the Moscow-based Levada Center in late December, 38 percent of Muscovites agreed with a description of the riots as "protest actions by the Russian population against raging ethnic crime and corruption in law

enforcement agencies,” while only 33 percent characterized them as “ultra-nationalist, fascist rebellion” and 15 percent as “mere hooliganism.” Thus, even though most of those polled in Moscow and across the country were inclined to condemn the actions of the protesters and to approve of how the police acted to restore public order, a significant part of the population evinced at least some understanding of the nationalist cause, if not of the form in which it was defended.

Everyday xenophobia is a large-scale and growing phenomenon in many countries. In Russia, however, it finds no way of being articulated in the public space. It is not just pro-Western liberals and human rights defenders who get censored in the media and who cannot set up political parties – the nationalist opposition is kept down in a similar way. The result is that ultra-nationalists acquire extra legitimacy by seeing and portraying themselves as a *democratic* alternative to the oppressive authoritarian state. In contrast, the principles of liberal civic nationhood as promoted by the authorities are increasingly associated with the anti-democratic, corrupt state machinery, which, in this view, promotes them against the people’s will.

Since moderate xenophobic attitudes are unfortunately much more pronounced in today’s Russia than liberal individualist opinions centered on human rights and freedoms, the nationalists’ claim of democratic legitimacy looks, from *within* Russia, much more credible than that of the relatively marginal pro-Western opposition. If this trend continues, the Russian ideological landscape of the not-so-distant future might be shaped by antagonism between ultranationalist democracy and neo-liberal authoritarianism, with a marginalized liberal opposition squeezed in between. This is the price that society pays for “the vertical of power.”

### **The Mythology of Power and Rule by Indecision**

One more aspect of the current situation has to do with the mythology of power and with uncertainty as an essential element of governance. The myth of the omnipotent Supreme Leader is an extremely important element of the current Russian political system. This had an immediate effect on how the December events were assessed. Since the mythical Center supposedly controls everything, no important political event can occur without being initiated, or at least authorized, by the very top. Hence, the riots were immediately interpreted as having been instigated by the special services, on the Kremlin’s orders. This was also the reason why, according to this theory, the police were so timid in using force against the protesters.

In a situation where institutionalized channels of political communication do not work, the uncertainty created by conflicting myths can constitute an essential element of the system of governance. Contradicting myths abound in the existing interpretations of the nationalist riots. For example, many people suspect the Kremlin’s involvement in the protests themselves, as well as in the event that triggered them – the failure to keep under arrest the people allegedly involved in the killing of football fan Yegor Sviridov. Many liberal critics of the current regime accuse political elites of sympathizing with the extremists, whereas the nationalist opposition never ceases blaming the party in power of conspiring to sell Russia out to the West. Both camps would probably agree that the

ruling clique wants to take advantage of rising ethnic tensions in view of the upcoming elections. The signals sent by the authorities to the public were contradictory: statements condemning extreme nationalism alternated with promises to curb migration, ethnic crime, and escapades against the liberal opposition.

The unwillingness to take sides is a global trend, which comes down to democratic politicians being replaced by managers who follow opinion polls instead of providing true leadership. Even if Russia is no genuine democracy, both Vladimir Putin and Dmitry Medvedev can only feel secure in their top positions so long as their popularity remains sufficiently high. Unambiguously taking a side in the conflict would alienate part of the population and thus could engender further unrest. Another contributing factor specific to Russia is the emphasis on unity and consolidation, so important for the ideology of the regime. Pluralism and partisanship are perceived as threats to stability and order. To legitimate their (real or imagined) role as the embodiment of national unity, the top leaders have to accumulate and channel all politically significant claims, even if they explicitly contradict each other.

On the other hand, the creation of the “vertical of power” has eliminated all independent sources of political authority, making the center responsible for everything that happens in the country, from terrorist acts to the rising price of buckwheat. In such a system, taking sides is also extremely risky since it means taking responsibility for a situation that has a far from certain outcome. Excessive centralization means that society cannot effectively influence and control the state, but it also means that the state is deprived of crucial channels to measure the political temperature of the country. It is thus fully understandable that the official reaction to the unexpected outburst was loud but hardly meaningful. The Kremlin preferred to let other levels of the bureaucratic hierarchy act and to take responsibility for their own words and deeds; however, it seems that this time there were no heroes in the Ministry of Internal Affairs either. This is probably why the riots were allowed to continue far longer than expected.

It took the Kremlin two months to articulate a clear position. On February 11, police were deployed to the center of Moscow ready to meet nationalist protesters (though very few showed up). Meanwhile, Medvedev spoke at a State Council meeting in defense of multiculturalism and against ethnic and religious discrimination. The measures proposed at the meeting, such as revising school curricula, launching state-sponsored media campaigns, and promoting cultural exchanges, all come down to imposing certain standards of tolerance and political correctness on the people of Russia, who are treated as passive objects rather than subjects of a democratic polity. Thus, national civic identity is still promoted by a corrupt state that increasingly alienates itself from its own citizens. With the liberal opposition being consistently repressed, xenophobic nationalism has a chance to present itself as the only credible democratic alternative to the current regime.

# Reforming Russia's Higher Education System

PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 153

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Between December 2010 and February 2011, members of Russian society were engaged in a discussion about a new education law, presented on the Internet on a special website. This was the second instance of an Internet discussion on legislation, following heated debates about proposed police laws on the same government website several weeks before.\* The legal changes were shaped by the need for a new umbrella law to replace an older set of education laws, which have been amended many times in the course of the ongoing reform of Russia's educational system.

There are many problems at both the secondary and higher levels of Russian education. Russian schools are trying to adapt the old Soviet system of "polytechnical" education to the demands of a changing society. The former system was characterized by a deep study of science and math and the virtual absence of options for pupils, while the new situation requires high school graduates to possess social and decision-making skills and a better knowledge of the society in which they live. Incidentally, the state also wants to impose a larger dose of patriotic education, while the Russian Orthodox Church is lobbying to include Orthodox religious education.

The most heated arguments underway, however, concern the future of higher education in Russia, which was acclaimed but is now in decline.

## **The Problems in the Education System**

Almost all experts are unanimous in their verdict: the quality of Russian higher education is deteriorating. Communist politicians may blame reformers for "killing" the Soviet system of education that they call "the world's best." However, demographic decline itself, combined with growth in the absolute and relative number of students in society, leads to a loss in the quality of education and the creation of a large stratum of low-skilled college graduates with high ambitions whose characteristics do not correspond with labor market demands.

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\* <http://zakonoproekt2010.ru>

## Population Pyramid of Russia, 2010



Source: Rosstat (<http://www.gks.ru>)

Russia's population trends (see diagram) demonstrate a dramatic drop in the number of Russian youth of student age (17 to 23). This is after steady growth across the previous two decades, when universities created new programs and opened new teaching positions, and new private universities mushroomed. After the demographic trend reversed, universities did not cut student slots accordingly, so now more students in the relevant age group are enrolled than ever before. This means, among other things, that the median level of student aptitude is today significantly lower.

The level of corruption in the educational system – in the narrow meaning of the term, bribes from students to professors or university administrators – is not, in our view, as high as some government or media report estimates. This is partially due to the overall lowering of quality control systems (i.e., examination requirements) introduced by the heads of Russian universities in order to keep enrollment numbers high. However, in broader terms, corruption is present at the advanced academic degree level; a "black market" appears to be flourishing, with politicians and businessmen "defending" these they do not seem to have read, much less written. Such a trend waters down the "real" academic degrees of contemporary university professors and further destroys the integrity of the Russian educational system.

## **The Ministry of Education and Science at Work**

State entities are trying to fix the situation. They go about this in multiple ways, making it hard to see the entire picture. Looking at the reform path, however, one can reconstruct the state's logic. Unable to reverse the trend toward universal higher education – a college degree for every Russian – the Ministry of Education is at least trying to restructure the field as follows:

- The main goal is to reduce the total number of universities and create a formal hierarchy of higher-education establishments. The creation of universities with special status – Moscow and St. Petersburg State Universities, federal district universities, and research universities – was the most significant recent step. When making these choices, the ministry was led by administrative factors (such as the desire to create a university in every Federal district) and scientific factors (i.e., the quality of scientific research was the key criteria for determining inclusion in the research network).
- To ensure the quality of education, the Ministry chose a bureaucratic path: it multiplied paperwork and report-filing for universities and professors and required comprehensive sample lectures to prove the quality of teachers' work.
- In 2003, the Russian higher education system joined the Bologna process (European standards that resemble the U.S. system). This led to the appearance of Bachelor's and Master's degrees instead of Soviet-type, five-year Specialist degrees. Introduction of these new degrees also appeared to serve the purpose of imposing a higher-level MA program above the masses of BA-receiving students while enabling the ministry to choose which universities could continue to offer graduate-level instruction while others lost that option.
- Finally, the Ministry of Education introduced a system of universal examinations for all high school graduates, the *Edinyi Gosudarstvennyi Examen* (EGE), which has been introduced as the sole basis for deciding university enrollment. The idea behind this innovation was to help fight corruption during entrance examinations.

## **University Administration**

Let us now assess the government reforms from other stakeholders' points of view. By creating different levels of universities – federal, national research, and “other” – reforms can ruin scientific schools, especially in the social sciences and humanities. New research universities, selected for their hard sciences, often possess no qualified sociologists, historians, or linguists. The country's leading school, Moscow State University, has an infamous sociology faculty, which has seen one scandal after another, while second-ranked St. Petersburg State University has problems with its history faculty. On the other hand, some universities with decent humanities or social science departments, but with no big scientific departments, will be placed in the “other” category, perhaps with the possibility, as universities fear, of being shut down.

The reforms being discussed could also leave some regions without the highest levels of education, which may cripple them in the future. This problem is closely connected to the low mobility of faculty and student populations, something that has many causes including high relocation costs and the lack of a tradition in many Russian universities of hiring outsiders to teach.

The EGE, while reducing corruption pressures on university personnel, has also highlighted differences in control over implementation in different regions of Russia (several republics, for example, demonstrated well beyond average or even statistically impossible results). Moreover, the exam has made it more difficult for universities to admit extraordinary students as it does not allow for creativity; the universities have no discretionary powers to take this or other personal achievements into account.

### **Professors**

University professors suffer from underpayment. If the economic crisis and constant budget deficits of the 1990s made low levels of income bearable at that time, in the 2000s, with growing societal and governmental wealth, the level of faculty compensation made it clear to professors that their work is not respected by the state. Just recently, both President Dmitry Medvedev and Prime Minister Vladimir Putin promised a starting salary for lieutenants (the first rank of military and police officers) of 50,000 to 80,000 rubles per month (\$1,800-2,800), while full-tenured professors at the provincial university level receive a salary of about 15,000 rubles (\$500), with teaching assistants receiving only 5,000 rubles (\$160).

This underpayment is the single most important reason for young graduates to not choose academic careers in Russia, and to prefer working in civil service or business, or even to emigrate. No young graduates want to make a career in the sciences or academia at large, since this basically leads to poverty. As a result, the quantity of younger faculty members decreases and the quality of education deteriorates.

Another problem caused by the ongoing reforms is the dramatic increase in paperwork at every level: the government tries to stop the fall of educational standards by increasing its control, which takes the form of additional paper workload. The Bologna reform requires significant changes of curricula that also lead to additional paperwork (and there is no compensation for the extra paperwork time burden).

### **Students and Future Employers**

The reforms taken within the context of the Bologna process put the Russian educational system somewhere in between standards, making it some kind of hybrid that is worse than both variants – Soviet and American/Bologna. The BA level was not changed to include a wider range of options, which would help students choose their profession. A Russian BA curriculum looks like a shortened specialist program.

Thus, a student can enter a law department from the very first year of university, graduate with a BA in law after four years, and, say, continue for another two years to receive a MA in law. According to the current regulations, a pupil can switch to another



program – and get an MA in history without the basic core training that other historians receive during four years of broader undergraduate education. From both student and employer points of view, it makes no sense to offer four and six years of education in the same specialized program – and even less sense to change from four years of a BA program to two years of MA-level work in a very different field.

Moreover, the demographic downturn and rigid link between the number of students and budgetary funds available for universities has led to a virtual ban on student dismissal (or at least introduction of highly complicated procedures for it). This both increases professors' workload and decreases the quality of study.

There are also signs that portions of university students have begun to be viewed by some government bodies – such as the section of the Ministry of Internal Affairs that deals with “extremist” activities – as potentially dangerous (reminiscent of 1968).

### **What Shall be Done?**

The picture looks rather gloomy, but it is also clear that the situation must be changed radically. At least two significant assumptions must influence the reform decisions. First, Medvedev's goal of “modernization” cannot be fulfilled without high quality professional education. Recent attempts (in Skolkovo and the like), while imperfect, demonstrate a will to work in that direction. Second, there is also an understanding that university-educated professionals strive to build civil society networks, which may become a major base for any broader civil society in Russia.

Possible solutions should start with smart decisions that involve input from society. Funding should also be increased; if Russia needs to improve education and the sciences, the structure of the state budget should be changed to dramatically increase the wages of professors. The coming election cycle creates the possibility and incentive for the state to take the initiative.

# Russia at 2020: a Neo-Leninist Hypothesis

PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 154

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Current thinking about Russia's future is dominated by two hypotheses: the official one of technocratic authoritarian modernization and the liberal market modernization advocated by the oppositional elite. I would like to expand the range of possibilities. I would also like to briefly specify the social constraints pointing toward further "de-modernization" by default and suggest the possibility for a renewed national developmentalism based on a broader social alliance. The latter might be called neo-Leninism.

Historically, from the sixteenth until the late twentieth century, Russia remained a great power due to a fortuitous geographic position, formidable armies, and a large state-controlled peasantry. Russia has spectacularly succeeded in three major surges of state power: gunpowder monarchy (Ivan the Terrible), bureaucratic absolutism (Peter the Great), and revolutionary military-industrial transformation (the Bolsheviks). The main measure of Russia's success is that it remained a major player long after fellow non-capitalist empires – China, Spain, Poland-Lithuania, Turkey – had succumbed to subordinate incorporation into the capitalist world-economy.

By 1945, traditional sources of Russian power were exhausted, as marked by the rapid disappearance of peasants (a worldwide phenomenon) and the pacification of core geopolitics. What remained, however, was still an exceptionally large and tightly centralized state with a major army, first-class science and education, a completed primary industrialization, and a huge endowment of natural resources. The next logical step in the trajectory of Soviet developmentalism suggested using these assets to negotiate admission into the world-system's core.

The main political problem of mature Soviet society derived from its own success. Now, instead of the peasantry, the rulers had to deal with strategically concentrated and mobile masses of skilled workers and the new intelligentsia. How were they to continue with an authoritarian developmentalist model minus Stalinist terror, but without allowing the new middle classes to restructure the political and economic structures in accordance with their aspirations and centrality in production? No positive solution was ever found. In the meantime, the contradiction peaked in 1968

and again, far more dangerously, in 1989.

The uncoordinated series of *nomenklatura* counter-rebellions in 1990-92 delivered a disastrously Pyrrhic victory in this class struggle. The Soviet Union's sudden collapse left the intelligentsia and workers demoralized, insecure, and impoverished. The former *nomenklatura* largely preserved their control over sources of wealth and political power. But the collapse scattered and undid vast Soviet assets on the strength of which one might have hoped for a better position in the world-system. Instead of a place like Europe or North America, post-Soviets found themselves somewhere more or less resembling the Third World.

A pessimistic scenario would suggest that from here the likely movement for Russia is to go further down into the world periphery. Such a negative spiral is driven by the erosion of state structures, the fragmentation of the ruling class into rival oligarchies and provincial bailiwicks who cannot support institutions, and social groups that have embodied the core-like features of Soviet developmentalism. Fortunately, there is a certain "stickiness" to past success, which moderates pessimism regarding Russia. Specifically, this might mean two political possibilities emerging in the coming decade.

The first is the recovery of state power from above. Russia arguably has a long tradition of such recoveries. Its embodiment consists of the fractions of the ruling class directly associated with erstwhile superpower status. In 1995, Immanuel Wallerstein and I predicted that the next Russian president would have to be a military general or, as it happens, a KGB colonel.\* Vladimir Putin achieved primarily two things. He brought to heel the so-called oligarchs and provincial governors. And he defied the West time and time again. Can this regime move further? That depends on its ability to discipline the state apparatus. The usual talk of corruption in Russia misses the key point. Putin curbed non-state activities that used coercion for private financial accumulation. Yet he had to "pay" his subordinates by granting them license to collect rents from their position. Sanctioned venality resembles the erstwhile absolutist monarchies. But this is a "blind" and wasteful kind of governance fraught with social resentments. Recall the French revolution.

This regime is not a "sovereign democracy" but rather a "sovereign bureaucracy." It did indeed become sovereign from foreign dictate or any domestic elite. But can it really act on this autonomy? Bureaucracies tend to become "sovereign" from their own superiors by insulating themselves from supervision, especially when private gain becomes the main preoccupation. Such situations commonly create periods of stagnation because the superiors prefer to go along and personally profit from the game. But once the ruler attempts to rule, this provokes resistance through foot-dragging or even a coup. Overcoming such resistance calls for some kind of purge. Yet a purge always goes with an intense ideological campaign both for propagandistic justification and for the purposes of targeting opponents and promoting loyalists. At present, Vladimir Putin's regime has no such ideology and political framework, but

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\* Georgi Derluguian, "Interview with Immanuel Wallerstein," *Медведь* ("Bear"), No. 4, pp. 22-24, 1995

hypothetically this could change in the future.

Alternatively, a push to discipline the venal state might emerge from below. Egypt is but the most recent example of how unexpectedly this can happen. Such events are notoriously impossible to predict; however, their structural parameters are calculable. For all the changes or talk of change since 1991, the social structure of Russia remains basically similar to what emerged in the 1960s.

On one side is a sort of *nomenklatura*, now recruited, promoted, and held together by personal patronage and cronyism instead of by the Party. The neo-*nomenklatura* possess infinitely less cohesion and *esprit de corps* than their predecessors, let alone a serious ideology. Their ritual invocations of state patriotism, meshed with imitative rituals of democracy, look unconvincing because their actual practices and dispositions are too hard to disguise. This certainly makes the rulers more vulnerable to popular contestation.

On the other side are workers who no longer enjoy job security, the intelligentsia who lost most of their institutions and group ideology, and now also a motley strata of sub-proletarians, mainly young urbanites with no stable employment, who can be ferocious street fighters but on their own hardly anything else.

The hopes often vested in the new middle class of businessmen seem to be largely false ones. This class, by the nature of their occupation, is too prone to strike personal deals with people in power. Some could join or even sponsor protests, but they are as likely to defect once it becomes too dangerous or their individual ambitions are met.

Although a ubiquitous and vocal presence in the capitals of all countries, liberal westernizers frustrated by their semiperipheral status sound ever esoteric to the majority, especially outside capital cities. Social democracy is not a suitable import either. This regime type occurs only in stable times and in wealthy countries. Social democracy, in short, is a core luxury.

Nationalism, then, seems the likeliest sentiment to hold together enough people in an uprising. After all, nationalism played a major unifying role in the 1989 rebellions across Eastern Europe or now in the Arab countries. But in an imperial country with large ethnic and immigrant minorities, nationalism is an extremely tricky proposition.

What remains? In another joint prediction alongside Immanuel Wallerstein, we must say the unutterable: Leninism. Today Lenin is forgotten despite his lingering monuments. This works to his benefit. Leninism is bound for a resurrection because there seem to be few acceptable alternatives. It would also bring four political advantages. First, Lenin was an improbably successful state builder who wrestled the remnants of the Russian empire from defeat, foreign interventions, and local separatism. Second, Lenin was an inspired modernizer dreaming of electricity (the part of the slogan referring to communism will be creatively forgotten). Third, Lenin was the first in the world to resolve by deed the Westernizers-vs.-nativists debate by being simultaneously both. He showed how a non-Western country could regain dignity and at the same time adopt Western technology. In the face of a growing China, Russians should take pleasure in reminding their neighbors who inspired their own modern

founders. Four, national heroes must be decisive and far-sighted leaders. Lenin took whatever train could transport him to Petrograd. He brought organization into chaos when power was “lying in the streets” and everyone else was defeated. He knew when to shift gears suddenly and decisively by accepting peasant demands for land, the cultural aspirations of nationalities, and the NEP (New Economic Plan). Finally, did he not warn about Stalin?

Lenin might turn in his sarcophagus from such essentially patriotic praise, but that will not matter. Nobody except a few pedants will worry what Lenin really thought about himself. What will matter is that Lenin was a world figure, a resolute and astutely inventive state-builder, a national unifier, and a modernizer, all without ever succumbing to Russian chauvinism. The political force capable of grasping the real potential of Leninism might yet be able to re-unify and re-industrialize Russia.

Will this mean socialism? Who knows today what is socialism? History is full of ironies. Lenin believed he was in the vanguard of world revolution while in fact he continued the reforms of the early twentieth century Sergei Witte by launching Russia into another upswing of power and prestige in the capitalist world-system. Today Russia is at another historical nadir. Her fortunes look uncertain. Another upswing might never come in our lifetime. Yet if it does, it will have to be, as always in the semiperiphery, through the restoration of state power, perhaps by traditional authoritarian means or perhaps through the resumption of democratization along the vector which began in the 1960s and peaked in the 1980s. The coming decade might prove crucial because the inherited, core-like assets could be wasted beyond repair. We can also securely predict that in any scenario much in the fortunes of Russia will be affected by global events and processes. What these shifts might be, however, defies prediction. The central condition will be the weakening of American hegemony and the rise of other centers in world politics and markets. In this situation, Russia might yet obtain the means and opportunities to do what Soviet *perestroika* failed to do. Russians will have to stay alert, open-minded, and determined – just like Lenin.

# Understanding Suicide Terrorist Bombings in Russia

PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 155

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Suicide terrorist bombings have been a frequent phenomenon in Russia over the past decade. The large majority of these attacks have occurred in the North Caucasus – particularly Chechnya, Dagestan, and Ingushetia – but many such bombings have also been perpetrated in Moscow, including the powerful explosion inside the international arrivals hall of Domodedovo Airport in January 2011 that killed 37 people and wounded some 180. What lies behind these attacks?

Generalizations about the motives of a large group of people are always hazardous, no more so than in this case. Except in the relatively few instances when attempted suicide bombings have been unsuccessful and the would-be attackers have not been killed by security forces, the perpetrators of suicide bombings are not around to reveal why they acted as they did. Some, but not all, of the suicide terrorists in Russia leave video recordings or notes that explain why they took such drastic action. But even when attackers' posthumous testimony is available, it is often incomplete, deceptive, or obfuscatory. The testimony can be valuable, but in many cases it gives no more than a rough idea of why the attackers wanted to kill and die for their cause.

Despite the difficulties of assessing the motives of suicide terrorists in Russia, a few points can be stated with certainty. First, nearly all of the attackers have been of North Caucasus origin or working with terrorist groups based in the North Caucasus. Second, since late 2007 the majority of suicide bombers have been from Dagestan and Ingushetia, although a considerable number of such attacks have still been perpetrated by Chechens. Third, in April 2009 the Chechen commander of the "Caucasus Emirate" (*Imarat Kavkaz*, set up in late October 2007), Dokka (Doku) Umarov, proclaimed the revival of the Riyad-us-Saliheen Martyrs' Brigade (RSMB), a unit originally established in October 1999 by the notorious Chechen terrorist Shamil Basaev, who was killed in July 2006. The RSMB was largely in abeyance after 2004, but Umarov's announcement of its revival came amid a spate of suicide bombings in the North Caucasus – 16 in 2009 and 14 in 2010. The brigade has been linked to several high-profile suicide attacks in Russia over the past year that cumulatively have killed roughly 150 people, wounded

nearly 1,000, and caused great disruption. Although Umarov often has made unverifiable (and evidently inaccurate) claims of responsibility for various attacks in Russia, video recordings and other evidence have confirmed the RSMB's role in these recent attacks. The RSMB's stepped-up activity is significant because its primary goal has been to establish an Islamic caliphate in the Caucasus and other "Muslim lands" in Russia.

### **Unidimensional Explanations and Their Perils**

Over the past decade, suicide terrorism has come under extensive scrutiny in the academic community and has also been studied in great detail by experts in government agencies, military academies, and think tanks. Much of the literature has focused on Iraq, Afghanistan, and Israel as well as the September 2001 attacks in the United States, but analysts have also looked at other countries in which suicide terrorism has been common, notably Sri Lanka and Russia.

Arguably, the studies that have had the greatest impact in the public-policy community and mass media are those produced by Robert Pape, a political scientist at the University of Chicago. In two recent books – *Cutting the Fuse* and *Dying to Win* – and an earlier article, Pape has described the "causal logic of suicide terrorism."<sup>\*</sup> Distinguishing suicide terrorism from other forms of terrorism, he contends that "what nearly all suicide terrorist attacks have in common is a specific secular and strategic goal: to compel modern democracies to withdraw military forces from territory that the terrorists consider to be their homeland." Each part of Pape's assertion here is important: Suicide terrorism, as he sees it, is exclusively "secular" in its aims; it is directed against "modern democracies"; and it is designed to compel the withdrawal of "military forces from territory that the terrorists consider to be their homeland." This argument is derived in part from an analysis of incidents listed in what Pape claims is a "database of every suicide bombing and attack around the globe" from the 1980s to the present.

Pape's work is wide-ranging and often illuminating, but his arguments run into grave problems when he tries to apply them to suicide terrorism in Russia. Some scholars have challenged Pape's underlying methodology, particularly his failure to look at instances in which groups living under occupation do not resort to suicide terrorism. These methodological issues are important, but my focus here is solely on the empirical validity of his main propositions as they pertain to Russia, a case he has specifically addressed, claiming that suicide terrorist attacks in Russia fully conform to his thesis.

In *Cutting the Fuse*, Pape includes a chapter that discusses attacks in Russia, and he also deals with this issue in an op-ed article coauthored with two of his students in *The New York Times* on March 31, 2010, two days after suicide bombers attacked the

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<sup>\*</sup> Robert A. Pape and James K. Feldman, *Cutting the Fuse: The Explosion of Global Suicide Terrorism and How to Stop It* (University of Chicago Press, 2010); Robert A. Pape, *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism* (Random House, 2005); and Robert A. Pape, "The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism," *American Political Science Review* (August 2003).

Moscow subway.\* The chapter in *Cutting the Fuse* is more nuanced and qualified than the op-ed piece, but both items were intended to reveal “the facts about who becomes a Chechen suicide attacker” and “what drives [these] young women and men to strap explosives on their bodies and deliberately kill themselves.” Although Pape and his students say they “have analyzed every Chechen suicide attack,” their database is actually incomplete. They used only English-language sources when compiling it and thus omitted some smaller attacks in the North Caucasus and even a few larger attacks. Their database also contains very little about the attackers themselves. The use of Russian-language sources (newspapers, periodicals, books, and interviews) would have yielded more information about the attackers.

In the op-ed article, Pape and his students insist that Islamist extremism has played no role in suicide terrorism in Russia and that all suicide attackers in the country have been motivated solely by a desire to gain Chechen independence and to resist the Russian “occupation” of their homeland:

As we have discovered in our research on Lebanon, the West Bank, Iraq, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, and elsewhere, suicide terrorist campaigns are almost always a last resort against foreign military occupation. Chechnya is a powerful demonstration of this phenomenon at work.

The chapter in *Cutting the Fuse* is somewhat more guarded, acknowledging that Wahhabist radical Islam “may have influenced particular leaders and institutions in Chechnya” and that suicide “bombers aired videos filled with Islamic rhetoric and were undoubtedly influenced by the interim emergence of Wahhabism.” Also, the chapter, unlike the op-ed article, concedes that over the past decade Wahhabist radicalism has been a “factor in the suicide terrorist campaign” in Russia. But unfortunately the book does not attempt to weigh how much of a “factor” radical Islam has been or to determine whether the growing salience of Wahhabism has changed the goals sought by today’s Caucasus Emirate. Instead, without any further analysis or evidence, the book simply dismisses Wahhabism as “ultimately only a secondary factor” and claims that suicide attackers in Russia have “clearly retained the original and secular goals of the resistance: political freedom and independence from foreign occupation.”

Pape’s argument implies that suicide terrorism in Russia is carried out solely by Chechens, the only ethnic group in the country that has had an explicitly separatist guerrilla movement. In both the book and especially the op-ed article, Pape refers to all suicide attackers in Russia as “Chechens.” But in fact most of the recent suicide bombings in Russia, including the attacks perpetrated in Moscow in March 2010 and January 2011, have *not* been carried out by Chechens. Pape tends to depict the North Caucasus as a single unit, even though it is actually a heterogeneous region, of which Chechnya is only a small part. Most of the recent suicide bombings in Russia have been

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\* Robert A. Pape, Lindsey O’Rourke, and Jenna McDermit, “What Makes Chechen Women So Dangerous?” *The New York Times*, March 31, 2010.



carried out by Ingush and Dagestanis. It is difficult to see why Dagestanis or Ingush are blowing themselves up if their only objective is to attain independence for Chechnya.

Pape and his students dispute what they claim is the Russian government's argument that suicide bombers in Russia are intent on "making Islam the world's dominant religion." To be sure, the Russian authorities have often portrayed events in Chechnya in a simplistic and misleading way and have glossed over the radicalizing impact of Russia's brutal counterinsurgency operations. Yet, Pape's own tendency to depict suicide bombers in Russia as acting solely to achieve independence for Chechnya and not at all for other reasons is equally unidimensional. The attackers' motives have in fact been mixed, not driven by just one thing. Characterizations based on an either-or dichotomy – *either* radical Islam *or* "resistance to foreign occupation," but never both – do not adequately convey the dynamics of recent suicide terrorism in Russia.

The situation in Russia also does not conform to another key part of Pape's thesis, namely that suicide terrorism is directed against occupation by a democratic government (whose citizens will fear the prospect of suicide terrorism) rather than an authoritarian government. During the 1994-1996 war with Chechnya, Russia was at least partly democratic, with a free press, lively political competition, a meaningful parliament, and ample leeway for non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Yet during that war the Chechens carried out no suicide terrorist attacks. By contrast, the second war in Chechnya coincided with Russia's reversion under Vladimir Putin to a much more authoritarian system. All national television has been brought back under state control, political competition has been stifled, the legislature has been neutered, elections are no longer meaningful or fair, a crackdown has occurred on pro-democracy and human rights NGOs, and political opponents of the regime have been harassed, arrested, and, in some cases, assassinated. In *Cutting the Fuse*, Pape acknowledges the authoritarian backlash under Putin but insists, unconvincingly, that Russia is still a "borderline democracy" – a description presumably intended to avoid raising doubts about the supposedly universal applicability of Pape's theory of suicide terrorism.

### **Shift of Orientation and Motives**

Understanding the recent spate of suicide terrorism in Russia necessitates a careful tracing of the chronology of what has gone on in the North Caucasus and elsewhere. In the first Russian-Chechen war, from December 1994 to August 1996, independence was the dominant motive for the Chechen guerrillas. No suicide terrorist bombings occurred during that war, even though Russia at the time still had a partly democratic polity.

The August 1996 Khasavyurt accords that ended the war led to the swift withdrawal of all Russian federal forces from Chechnya. In the three years after Russian federal troops pulled out, from August 1996 to August 1999, Chechnya enjoyed *de facto* independence. Yet it was precisely during this period that foreign (mostly Arab) fighters came to Chechnya and persuaded some of the leading Chechen guerrillas to take on a radical Islamist agenda. The charismatic Chechen commander Shamil Basaev, who had gained renown for his exploits during the first war, was among those who increasingly embraced Islamist extremism. The former foreign minister of separatist

Chechnya, Shamil Beno, who was a close friend of Basaev in the 1990s, later commented on the change that had occurred in Basaev's behavior and outlook during the 1996-1999 interregnum: "He started moving from freedom for Chechnya to freedom for the whole Arab world. He changed from a Chechen patriot into an Islamic globalist."\* Another former close friend of Basaev, Ilyas Akhmadov, who was one of Beno's successors as foreign minister in the separatist Chechen government, recalled in early 2005 that Basaev in the latter half of the 1990s had "started reading all these religious texts. In council debates, Basaev started quoting the Koran, becoming very dogmatic."†

Among other things, Basaev pressured the elected Chechen president, Aslan Maskhadov, to impose Sharia law in Chechnya in early 1999, a step that was widely unpopular. Moreover, in August 1999, Basaev joined with a guerrilla of Saudi origin, Ibn al-Hattab, in leading armed raids into Dagestan for the proclaimed goal of establishing an "Islamic caliphate in the Caucasus." This fateful step triggered events that provoked the second Russian-Chechen war.

During the second war, independence was still a key issue, but so was radical Islam. Emphasizing one of these strands to the total exclusion of the other gives an inaccurate sense of the war's origins and course. Over time, radical Islam has arguably become the main issue for suicide terrorists in Russia, as reflected in the surge of attacks by the RSMB, a group firmly intent on establishing an Islamic caliphate in the Caucasus.

Referring to Dokka Umarov, Pape claims in his op-ed article that Umarov has "made clear that his campaign [is] not about restoring any Islamic caliphate, but about Chechen independence." This assertion is at odds with reality. Umarov in fact has repeatedly declared that he aspires to set up an Islamic caliphate in both the North Caucasus and the South Caucasus. His pursuit of this goal is why he reorganized the guerrilla command structure, formed the Islamic Caucasus Emirate in 2007, and revived the RSMB in April 2009. Regional units of mujahidin aligned with Umarov in the Caucasus Emirate have vowed to "wage Jihad until Judgment Day" and to "establish [Allah's] Laws over the entire earth."‡ These groups claim they will "not even consider anything other than rule by Muslims on the entire earth."

In a video posted on a Caucasus guerrilla website, Kavkaz-Center, shortly after the January 2011 suicide bombing at Domodedovo airport, Umarov and the RSMB commander, Amir Hamzat (who was subsequently killed in a raid by Russian federal forces), are shown meeting with the 20-year-old Ingush man who perpetrated the bombing at the airport, Magomed Evloev. Umarov explains the purpose of the attack:

We, the mujahidin of the Caucasus, are waging jihad today only for Allah, only in the name of Allah, and only in order to have the word of Allah in

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\* Quoted in Matthew Brzezinski, "Surrealpolitik: How a Chechen Terror Suspect Wound up Living on Taxpayers' Dollars Near the National Zoo," *The Washington Post Sunday Magazine* (March 20, 2005).

† Ibid.

‡ "Zayavlenie o granitsakh vilaiyata Idel'-Ural," KavkazCenter.com, posted January 26, 2011.

the Caucasus....There will be hundreds of suicide bombers ready to sacrifice themselves for the establishment of Allah's word.\*

Hamzat likewise declares that the imminent attack will "raise Allah's word above all others." The young Ingush man who is about to blow himself up speaks toward the end of the video, saying that he is a "mujahid of Riyad-us-Saliheen" who is acting "for Allah's sake" and wants, through his sacrifice, to "raise Allah's word above all others."

None of this means that resistance to "occupation" is not an aim of Umarov's Caucasus Emirate. But Pape's insistence that Umarov's "campaign [is] not about restoring any Islamic caliphate" flies in the face of overwhelming evidence. Both of these objectives – ending Russia's occupation and restoring an Islamic caliphate – have to be taken into account when analyzing the motives of suicide attackers in Russia. Umarov himself made this very point in two recent videos posted on Kavkaz-Center. In the videos he declares that the two goals are inextricably linked and that the "occupation" encompasses not only the whole of the Caucasus but also "all of the territories of Muslim lands occupied by Rusnya<sup>†</sup> – Idel-Ural<sup>‡</sup>, Tatarstan, Bashkortostan, and everywhere else in Russia where Muslims live." He calls on Muslims all over Russia to embark on their own suicide terrorist campaigns:

If today a Jihad is under way here in the Caucasus against an enemy that wants to destroy Islam, then for you, too, this becomes a Jihad, for you, too, it becomes a *fard al-ayn* [obligation for all Muslims]. I exhort you to destroy the enemies of Allah wherever they are. I exhort you to destroy the enemies wherever your hands can reach and to open new fronts of the Jihad.<sup>§</sup>

Addressing Muslims who might worry about killing themselves along with the enemy, Umarov reassures them that the earlier "martyrs" (perpetrators of suicide terrorist attacks) "have not perished, they are alive and are receiving their due reward from their Lord. We know they are awaiting our own ascension to Heaven, Allah be willing."

These statements and countless others by Umarov undermine the notion that his reliance on suicide terrorism is intended solely to resist occupation and not at all to promote the restoration of an Islamic caliphate. Pape's explanation of suicide terrorism might illuminate certain conflicts in other parts of the world, but his thesis does not hold up when he tries to apply it to the recent string of attacks in Russia.

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\* "Video: Amir Imarata Kavkaz Dokku Abu Usman posetil bazu Brigady Shakhidov Riyadus Salikhiin i sdela zayavlenie," KavkazCenter.com website, posted February 4, 2011.

† "Rusnya," a disparaging term for Russia, is used frequently in Chechen terrorist videos posted on the KavkazCenter.com website.

‡ "Idel-Ural" is a Turkish phrase for a proposed Islamic state in the huge region known in Russian as Volga-Ural.

§ "Obrashchenie Amira IK Dokku Abu Usmana k musul'manam Kavkaza i Rossii: 'Srazhaites's vragami vezde, gde dostanet vasha ruka!" Kavkaz-Center (www.kavkazcenter.com), posted March 3, 2011.

### **Consequences of the Resort to Suicide Terrorism**

In his work, Pape has emphasized that suicide bombings have often enabled terrorists to achieve limited or modest goals, but not more ambitious objectives. In Russia, suicide terrorism has not attained even very limited goals. On the contrary, the resort to suicide terrorism has achieved nothing and was a disastrous strategic mistake by the separatist guerrillas in Chechnya, who enjoyed considerable sympathy and support both at home and abroad during the first war. The shift to radical jihadist Islam before the second war made it much harder to market their cause in many parts of the world (even if it had greater resonance in some Islamic countries and with al Qaeda). Although the Chechen guerrillas still enjoyed some international backing during the second war, such support was notably weaker than during the first war. Basaev's decision to perpetrate terrorist attacks, including suicide bombings, further attenuated the Chechens' support. If the Chechen rebels had stuck with a strictly separatist agenda and had eschewed terrorist attacks against civilians, they probably would have gained wider international support, which in turn might have made it much harder for the Russian government to clamp down as brutally as it did and to rule out any further consideration of the future status of Chechnya.

The Chechen guerrillas' embrace of an Islamist agenda in the late 1990s, and the accompanying shift to suicide terrorism, thus had fateful consequences. As late as the spring of 1999, some influential Russian politicians, notably Yuri Luzhkov (who was then the frontrunner in the March 2000 presidential election), were seriously talking about independence for Chechnya. Conceivably, if the Chechens had focused only on separatism and had seriously pursued negotiations as envisaged under the August 1996 accord, Russian officials might have been willing to contemplate a mutually acceptable settlement. The strategic decision by Basaev and other guerrilla leaders to shift to a radical Islamist agenda and to rely on suicide terrorism not only alienated many Chechens but also ensured that most foreign leaders would be as leery as the Russian government of what an independent Chechnya might mean. One of the main casualties of suicide terrorism in Russia is the prospect that Chechnya will ever be independent.

# A Case Study of the Kabardino-Balkaria Insurgency

## A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF IDEOLOGICAL TRENDS IN THE NORTH CAUCASUS

PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 156

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In recent years, the North Caucasus has experienced an upsurge of violence and terrorist acts. After the Beslan hostage crisis and its backlash on the Chechen movement's international legitimacy, there was a decrease in terrorist acts and indiscriminate violence between 2004 and 2008. Insurgency strategies in the North Caucasus changed after the establishment of the Caucasus Emirate (CE) in 2007. After Moscow's announcement of the end of counterterrorist operations in Chechnya in 2009, the situation rapidly deteriorated, leading to an increase of suicide bombings and attacks against *siloviki* (power ministry) targets in Ingushetia, Dagestan, and Chechnya. In 2010, while Ingushetia and Chechnya experienced a significant decrease in the number of violent incidents, the level of violence reached new levels in Kabardino-Balkaria and Dagestan.

An important change in insurgent ideology can partially explain the upsurge in violence and terrorist attacks across Russia. During the First Chechen War, the insurgents fought against the Russian state mainly for political and nationalist reasons. The establishment of the CE crystallized and made official a radical religious trend among insurgents that existed since the end of the first Chechen war. In fact, we can identify four competing ideologies in the North Caucasus – a nationalist trend, as well as traditional, moderate, and radical forms of Islam. Our memo first presents a genealogy of CE and its new ideology. Then we describe these four different ideologies and assess how they interact and influence the religious and political situation in Kabardino-Balkaria. Finally, we focus on the main problems that should be addressed to deal with the upsurge of violence in the republic.

### **A Genealogy of the Caucasus Emirate and its New Ideology**

During the Second Chechen War, insurgency leaders sought support from religious groups outside Chechnya to expand the insurgency across the North Caucasus. While cooperation started between *jamaats* (Islamic councils or assemblies) in Kabardino-

Balkaria and the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria (ChRI), no formal structure existed. The idea of uniting all the anti-Russian separatist and religious groups in the Caucasus belonged to Anzor Astemirov, the leader of the Kabarda-Balkaria jamaat. In 2005, Astemirov and Ingush *jamaat* leader Ilyas Gorchkhanov approached Shamil Basaev with a suggestion to unite with the Chechen jamaat to form a Caucasus-wide coalition. Basaev did not agree and suggested they subordinate themselves under the rule of the president of the ChRI, Abdul-Khalim Sadullayev. In exchange, Basaev helped insurgents in Kabardino-Balkaria organize a massive military attack on security forces in the regional capital of Nalchik in October 2005, which made Astemirov one of the most influential leaders in the Caucasus.

After the deaths of Basaev and Sadullayev in the summer of 2006, Astemirov proposed the creation of a Caucasian Emirate to Doku Umarov, the new president of the ChRI.\* The new structure absorbed the ChRI and included it as one of its regions. The CE was divided into six *vilayats* (administrative divisions). The new ideology was established at the foundation of the CE in October 2007. The establishment of the Emirate led to a clash between religious and nationalist branches inside the insurgency. A group of insurgents denounced the transformation of ChRI into CE and elected a new president of ChRI, Ahmed Zakayev. This election did not prevent the creation of the CE. Umarov became Emir and Astemirov became Kadi (ideological and judicial leader) of the Supreme Sharia Court. The Emirate had two main goals: to change the ideology from separatism/nationalism to religious extremism and to establish an Islamic state in the North Caucasus – though they see themselves as fundamentalists and claim they are fighting for jihad (holy war) against terror perpetrated by the state.

During the summer of 2010, the ideological split among the insurgency leaders continued when Chechen warlords Hussein Gakaev and Aslanbek Vadalov withdrew their oath to the Emir but did not renounce their loyalty to the CE. Many analysts and politicians claimed that the split was mainly a clash between nationalist and religious factions inside the CE. Others believed that the split was most likely about the leadership and power struggles within the movement. Recently, a change in the strategies of other *vilayats* could be observed. The Ingush *jamaat* announced its intention to stop targeting police officers to focus exclusively on nationalist issues, while the Kabarda-Balkaria-Karachai (KBK) *vilayat* announced its intention to intensify its attacks and target not only *siloviki* structures but also “hypocrites, idolators, and necromancers.”

#### **Four Main Ideological Trends in the North Caucasus**

We can identify four major ideological trends in the North Caucasus: a nationalist trend, as well as a traditional, a moderate, and a radical form of Islam. Without delving into the theological nuances, let us point out the main differences and antagonisms between these ideologies.

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\* The Chechen republic of Ichkeria (ChRI) was the name of the unrecognized independent Chechen state between 1991 and 2000. After the beginning of the second Chechen war, the Chechen government in exile and the resistance kept the name ChRI until the establishment of the Caucasus Emirate even if Akhmad Kadyrov was elected as the new president of Chechnya in 2003.

By **radical Islam**, we mean an ideology that suggests that the law and spirit of Islam should reach all spheres of society. This ideology is rather strict and judgmental of those who do not develop themselves according to the Five Pillars of Islam. The followers of radical Islam are not inherently extremist, but within this ideology they might develop what we call an insurgency ideology. Such an insurgent ideology is characterized by terrorism and extremist behaviors such as the perception of security forces as a direct enemy, hostility towards Muslim leaders and scholars with differing beliefs and regarding them as “hypocrites” promoting anti-Islamic ideologies, and the exclusion of those who are not strict Muslims. The CE’s first leaders had a common ideological ground and agreed with each other on terrorist measures against *siloviki* and moderate Islamic leaders who “betrayed” their religion by working with the state against the CE. As *kadi* of the CE, Astemirov was responsible for judgment against “traitorous Imams.” Umarov organized actions against *siloviki* and “infidels.” However, they did not agree with respect to traditional Islam.

The religious leaders of **moderate Islam** usually oppose radical Islam and regard its followers as heretics. They openly support and are supported by state authorities. Indeed, the latter regard the development of moderate Islam as one measure against Islamic radicalization and insurgent recruitment. As regional leaders publicly declare their support for moderate Islam and Imams, the insurgents react by labelling these moderates as “traitorous imams.” Moderate Islam expands its number of followers to include all who identify themselves as Muslims whether or not they practice the Five Pillars of Islam. In an interview, Anas Pshikhachev, the leader of the moderate Islamists in Kabardino-Balkaria, stated, “Everyone who acknowledges Allah, Koran, Sunna, and the Prophet is a Muslim even if he does not observe any practices” (Kabardino-Balkarskaia Pravda, February 11, 2006). By this interpretation, Islam is not a question of active faith but passive acknowledgment. The clash between insurgency ideology and moderate Islam culminated on December 2010 with the murder of Pshikhachev.

Another trend is represented by many local scholars and intellectuals who understand **traditional Islam** as an ideology of local traditions mixed with Islam. This ideology takes its historical roots in the strong moral codex of Adyge Khabze, which was established in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and based on the philosophy of Jabag Kazanoko. The first debates between radical and traditional Muslims took place at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The prominent Circassian scholar Sultan Khan-Girei wrote in 1835 in his “Notes about Circassia” that Islamic laws were supposed to give preferences to local customs but that the new generation of religious leaders “often performs judgment by Islamic laws thus breaking the old customs.”\*

Initially, CE leaders did not share a common opinion toward traditional Islam. Some advocated radical methods including violence against civilians, which proved effective in the past, while others supported a policy of targeted assassination against adherents to moderate Islam. The ideologist of the latter, Astemirov, could be seen more as a politician than a military commander. Indeed, the upsurge of violence in

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\* S. Zhemukhov, “Mirovozzrenie Khan-Gireia,” Nalchik, P. 44, 1997 (<http://lib.kbsu.ru/Elib/books/3/8/new/9/index.htm>)

Kabardino-Balkaria coincided with his death in March 2010. Astemirov rejected the unnecessary use of violence against Muslim civilians; he sought the support of the local population and put forward a proselytizing strategy to convert moderate Muslims to radical Islam. Opposing such a policy, Umarov claimed that it was wrong to regard as the enemy only those who attacked insurgents directly.

In April 2010, Asker Jappuyev was appointed as the new leader of insurgents in Kabardino-Balkaria. The explosion of the Baksan hydroelectric power plant in July 2010, the murder of prominent Kabardian folklorist scholar Aslan Tsipinov in December 2010, attacks aiming to interfere with the local tourist industry in February 2011, and other terrorist acts against civilians have demonstrated the ideological turn among the insurgents in Kabardino-Balkaria. There was a disagreement among insurgents regarding the killing of Tsipinov, who was well known for his public activities and academic works in promoting ethnic values before Muslim ones. This is an indication that the insurgents have not yet overcome their internal disputes about the strategy to adopt against traditional Islam in Kabardino-Balkaria. Those discussions came to the public's attention when one of the insurgents stated that many Muslims could not comprehend why they should have killed Tsipinov and how his death would benefit Islam. Tsipinov's murder took place right after the killing of Pshikhachev and was conducted in the same way. While Pshikhachev was executed as a "traitorous imam," Tsipinov was blamed for heading a group of "pagans and idolators," working to revive "ancient pagan festivals," and because he "openly and overtly opposed Islam and Muslims."

The fourth ideological trend in the North Caucasus is **nationalist ideology**. While in Chechnya and Dagestan, many insurgency leaders evolved from nationalism into radical Islam, in Kabardino-Balkaria these two trends almost never interact and even confront each other. None of the Kabardian nationalist leaders in the 1990s ever tried to present themselves as devoted Muslims. On a larger scale, this can also be demonstrated by the fact that none of the thousands of Kabardian volunteers who participated in the Georgian-Abkhaz war were ever identified as supporting religious extremism or joining religious movements in Kabardino-Balkaria. At the same time, the Kabardian volunteers managed to form a political movement by establishing a non-governmental organization, the Union of Abkhaz Volunteers in Nalchik, with a rather nationalist program. Meanwhile most of the Chechen volunteers who participated in the Georgian-Abkhaz war are generally understood to have become Islamic extremists, including Shamil Basaev, their leader.

The gap between radical Islamic and nationalist ideology widened after the establishment of the CE, although its leaders did not have a common view on nationalism. While the main trend of the new CE ideology became anti-nationalist, Astemirov made several statements aiming to expand his supporters by reaching out to nationalists. On March 2009, he claimed that Sultan Sosnaliev, a Kabardian commander of the Abkhazian army during the Georgian-Abkhaz war and later a defense minister of Abkhazia, was on the side of the CE. The leader of the Union of Abkhaz Volunteers, Alexei Bekshokov, responded that Astemirov's statement was false and that the late



Sosnaliev was never connected to religious extremists. In spite of the differences in ideologies, the insurgents in Kabardino-Balkaria never regarded nationalists as their targets.

## **Conclusion**

The creation of the CE increased the coordination of insurgency groups in different regions of the North Caucasus and intensified discussions about ideology and terrorist methods. The insurgents' actions have expanded rapidly from the fight against the *siloviki* to targeting civilians for ideological motives. They are also getting more involved in the political and economic struggle between local politicians and business elites.

The new wave of terrorist attacks in Kabardino-Balkaria in the second half of 2010 and the beginning of 2011 demonstrated that the younger generation of insurgents has reconsidered their ideological positions. In the past, violence was mainly targeted against security forces as insurgents avoided terrorist acts against civilians. Now, new insurgency leaders seem to follow a different ideological path by targeting civilians including ideologists such as Tsipinov and Pshikhachev, as well as orchestrating attacks against economic targets such as the Baksan hydroelectric power plant and Elbrus tourist infrastructure. Arsen Kanokov, president of Kabardino-Balkaria, explained (without any specification) that the rise in terrorist activity could be attributed to the fact that some political groups were sponsoring insurgents to influence his reappointment. If the insurgency developed tactics of interfering with political events and even siding with political groups in Kabardino-Balkaria, it could mean that terrorist acts might increase during the upcoming national parliamentary (December 2011) and presidential (March 2012) elections.

Much depends on the position of state authorities in the near future. While officially supporting the ideologies of moderate and traditional Islam against radical Islam, the government continues to interfere with nationalist ideology, which could effectively take part in the battle to win the hearts and minds of the young people and limit the influence of radical Islam on them. Nationalist ideology in the North Caucasus has been emerging in the last two years in connection with the upcoming 2014 Sochi Olympics, which coincides with the 150th anniversary of the Circassian exile in 1864. Neither the state nor the insurgents have paid much attention to the issue of the Circassian genocide, which took place in Sochi, the last capital of independent Circassia. State authorities denounce the very existence of the Circassian question, which makes followers of the nationalist ideology more passive in their support for state policies against the insurgency. Meanwhile, analysts warn that insurgents may use the Circassian genocide issue if it is not resolved before the Olympics.

In May 2011, federal forces killed several insurgents including the KBK vilayat leader. The choice of the new leader will probably have an immediate impact on the situation and on the insurgent's tactics. However, recent history also shows that it does not necessarily mean a decrease in the level of violence.

It seems Kabardino-Balkaria is now at an important crossroads. Violence in the republic might reach unprecedented levels this summer, as the season is usually more suitable for an upsurge of terrorist attacks. As we demonstrated, the insurgents have already expanded their guerrilla activities and their recruitment propaganda aimed at young people in the republic. In February 2011, insurgency leaders called for mobilization of all their forces in response to the announcement of the counter-terrorist operation in Kabardino-Balkaria. Uncontrolled repression of the followers of radical Islam by *siloviki*, as in 2005, might feed insurgency, ideology, and recruitment, furthering a spiral of violence.

Recent violent events against insurgents' relatives also reflect the growing tensions between insurgency and local populations. As an inadequate response to the terrorist actions, the Parliament of the KBR released a new initiative to place charges against insurgents' families. Also, an unknown group identifying themselves as an anti-wahhabi militia named the "Black Hawks" has threatened (and committed) violence against insurgents' relatives.

Instead of putting forward repressive policies, state authorities should engage in various programs to promote political participation and social integration among young people. They also have to create a channel for political opposition that offers a non-violent alternative to voice political and religious grievances.

The case of Kabardino-Balkaria suggests that if no political solution is put forward to counter insurgents' propaganda and recruitment, further destabilization of the republic could result and insurgency ideology could spill over to relatively non-radicalized republics like Adygea and Karachaevo-Cherkessia.

# Rubles Against the Insurgency

## PARADOXES FROM THE NORTH CAUCASUS COUNTIES

PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 157

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As part of its counter-insurgency strategy in the volatile North Caucasus region, the Russian government has stressed economic development and invested considerable resources into the region. Prime Minister Vladimir Putin himself has noted that a lack of gainful employment (*nesostoyatel'nost*) has increased the pool of young people in the North Caucasus willing to join the predominantly jihadist insurgency. In mid-2010, Putin promised that Russia's government would underwrite economic investment in the North Caucasus to increase gross regional product by 10 percent every year. In early 2011, Putin announced plans to invest 400 billion rubles (\$13.4 billion) in 37 major new projects in energy, construction, and tourism aimed at creating 400,000 jobs over the next decade.

These plans continue the existing strategy. The Russian government allocated approximately \$30 billion to the North Caucasus from 2000 to 2010 – a non-trivial amount for a population of about 9 million people. Federal funding has increased tenfold from about \$0.6 billion at the start of 2000 to \$6 billion at the start of 2010. By 2010, Russian federal subsidies reached over \$1,000 per capita in the North Caucasus ethnic republics – about six times more than Russia's average. Most of it came in the form of grants to local governments. Hospitals, roads, schools, housing complexes, airports, and recreational facilities have been built anew or repaired. Unemployment, while still the highest in Russia, has been reduced. In Grozny – devastated in the major military operations of the 1990s and early 2000s – new high-rise residential complexes sprang up, main avenues were repaved, trees were planted, Internet cafes appeared, marble fountains sprouted, a refurbished airport opened, and Europe's largest mosque rose in the city center.

And yet, a decade after two wars over Chechnya's independence, a significant violent insurgency in the region has persisted. Attacks on Russian government forces and civilians and counter-insurgency operations have continued at a rate common to low-level civil wars. Systemic violence has spread from Chechnya and Ingushetia to

Dagestan and Kabardino-Balkaria (KBR). From mid-2008 through mid-2010, violence in these four republics claimed approximately 1,500 people.\*

To what extent and under what conditions does economic development aid help mitigate insurgency-related violence, particularly of the kind galvanized predominantly by militant Islamists? Is it also possible that under certain conditions federal funding for economic projects might contribute to more violence?

### Provincial Puzzles

It is possible to make an argument that federal subsidies to the governments of the four most turbulent republics in the North Caucasus have helped reduce violence. In Ingushetia and Chechnya, where federal subsidies to republic budgets increased the most among the four most volatile republics (by 103% and 112%, respectively) from 2006 to 2008, the number of violent incidents and their casualties from 2009 to 2010 decreased. In Dagestan and KBR, where federal subsidies increased the least from 2006 to 2008 (by 84% and 70%, respectively), the number of violent incidents and casualties from 2009 to 2010 increased.

On the other hand, if federal aid produced monotonically beneficent effects, one would expect violence to decline not only in Ingushetia and Chechnya, but also in Dagestan and KBR, albeit at a lesser pace, in both 2009 and 2010. Instead, based on media analysis by the Washington, DC-based Center for Strategic and International Studies, in 2009 violence increased in all four republics year-on-year – from about 350 to 420 incidents in Ingushetia, 210 to 285 in Chechnya, 150 to 375 in Dagestan, and 45 to 50 in KBR. The number of fatalities in these incidents increased from fewer than 600 in 2008 to more than 900 in 2009.† Replicating this count from the same media sources, we find that in 2010, the number of violent incidents dropped in Ingushetia to 235 and in Chechnya to 151, but that it went up in Dagestan to 477 and in KBR to 173. The total number of casualties in these incidents increased year-on-year, reaching over 1,050. These vicissitudes and geographic shifts in violence are inconsistent with the uniform increases in federal funding for the North Caucasus republics in previous years.‡

To shed light on these puzzles this study investigates the relationship between the allocation of budgetary resources in specific sectors and insurgent violence at a lower level of aggregation than a state or province. Specifically, I analyze the newly available socioeconomic and violence data aggregated by *raion* (counties) and major cities in two republics where violence increased the most in 2009 and 2010 – KBR to the west and Dagestan to the east of the insurgency's original territorial core of Chechnya

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\* Center for Strategic and International Studies, *Violence in the North Caucasus: Spring 2010: On the Rise, Again?* (Washington, DC, 2010) (<http://www.csis.org/hrs>).

† The study defined violent incidents as “abductions of military personnel and civilians, bombings, assassinations of key civilian and military leaders, rebel attacks, police, or military operations against suspected militants, destruction of property by militants, and the discovery of weapons.” Those incidents were tracked in the North Caucasus republics of Chechnya, Ingushetia, Kabardino-Balkaria, North Ossetia, and Dagestan. Center for Strategic and International Studies, *Violence in the North Caucasus 2009: A Bloody Year* (Washington, DC, 2010) (<http://www.csis.org/hrs>). Estimate of the number of events by republic is approximate, based on the charts.

‡ While 2008 was the last year for which the republic and county-level data was available to us, press reports on new federal programs suggest that it stayed at least on the same level in 2009 and most likely increased in 2010.

and Ingushetia.\*

### **A Tale of Two Insurgencies: Money Cuts Both Ways**

The statistical probe shows that allocation of federal rubles in Dagestan and KBR related differently to insurgency-driven violence. In Dagestan, on average, counties (*raions*) and cities that received more federal money per capita in the form of unconditional grants (*dotatsii*), grants-in-aid (*subsidii*), and sector-specific subventions (*subventsii*) in 2006-2008 saw less violence in 2009-2010. But in KBR, on average, counties and cities that received more disbursements from the federal budget in 2008 saw more violence in 2009-2010 (Figures 1 and 2).<sup>†</sup> According to the regression analysis, the amount of federal contributions explained about 27% of variation in insurgency-related violence by county/city in Dagestan and about 23% in KBR.<sup>‡</sup>

This relationship is particularly plausible in Dagestan's 43 counties and cities (Figure 1 (a) and (b)). Entities that received more than the average amount of federal money per capita (22,000 rubles) from 2006 to 2008 had no more than one violent incident related to the insurgency from January 2009 to June 2010. This is about half the average violence rate. Meanwhile, cities and counties that received less than the average amount of federal money per capita saw more than the average number of insurgency-driven violent events. Dagestan's 12 counties/cities that received less than the average amount of federal rubles per capita in 2008 experienced at least twice the average number of violent incidents.

In KBR, the reverse pattern emerged. More violence happened in counties and cities that received more federal budget allocations. However, a significant portion of the correlation is explained by Elbrus County and its main town of Tyrnyauz, if the data for the two is merged (Figure 1 (b): see bubble in top right-hand corner). Elsewhere, the relationship is weaker than in Dagestan.

This dichotomous pattern cuts across specific budget sectors. Spending on education, culture, and health care/sports correlated most strongly with violence in both republics in the same way overall federal budget funding correlated with violence there. The more money spent in these sectors in 2008, the less likely one was to see violence in any given county in Dagestan in 2009-2010, but the more likely one was to see violence in KBR. In particular, spending on education by county/city explained approximately 30% variation in insurgency-related violence in Dagestan, and spending on culture explained 28% variation in insurgency-related violence in KBR (Figure 2 (a) and (b)).

### **Strategic Implications**

These are preliminary findings, but they suggest non-trivial and counterintuitive policy implications. They show that economic development funding can be counterproductive,

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\* Municipal-level data is from Rosstat, "Baza dannykh pokazatelei munitsipal'nykh obrazovaniy" [Database of municipal entities' indicators] (<http://www.gks.ru/dbscripts/munst/munst83/DBInet.cgi#1>)

<sup>†</sup> Data for 2006 and 2007 was available only partially for KBR, thus only 2008 data was used.

<sup>‡</sup> Because in reality a perfect linear relationship is unlikely, correlation coefficients are not necessarily informative substantively.

at least in the short run. Government investment in economic development in turbulent regions may contribute to reducing but also to increasing violence. The comparison of Dagestan and KBR is particularly informative because it suggests that the success of economic development in fighting the insurgency depends not necessarily on how much money is handed down to a region or in what sectors, but on the insurgency type in a specific local context.

In areas such as Dagestan, where due to social makeup and traditions the insurgency has strong and widespread roots in political and economic competition within local communities, the availability of funding at the county level reduces scarcity – and, hence, the intensity of competition that is ultimately about power and resources. Because the insurgents have stakes in the outcome of these competitions, the availability of funds helps appease or buy off the conflicting parties and thus reduces the intensity of the struggle.

In areas such as KBR, however, where the insurgency's key actors have lesser stakes in the outcomes of local competition for power and resources, the money extorted or otherwise seized by the insurgents is more likely to go toward funding their anti-government operations in pursuit of larger, universalist symbolic goals than toward appeasing feuding clans or other local groups. In this type of insurgency, symbolic goals matter – as evidenced by the brutal attacks on Moscow tourists and the blowing up of a ski lift at KBR's Mt. Elbrus, Europe's tallest mountain, in February 2011 (both plausible sources of revenue "taxable" by the insurgents).

Social theory suggests that economic development in such areas needs to be accompanied by measures that will maximize the cost of access to government funds by insurgents and minimize the costs to the government of monitoring and enforcement. This means greater reliance on civic engagement of the general population and clearer, simpler, and more transparent rules for governing the implementation of economic development projects funded by the federal government.

Figure(s) 1

Figure 1 (a)

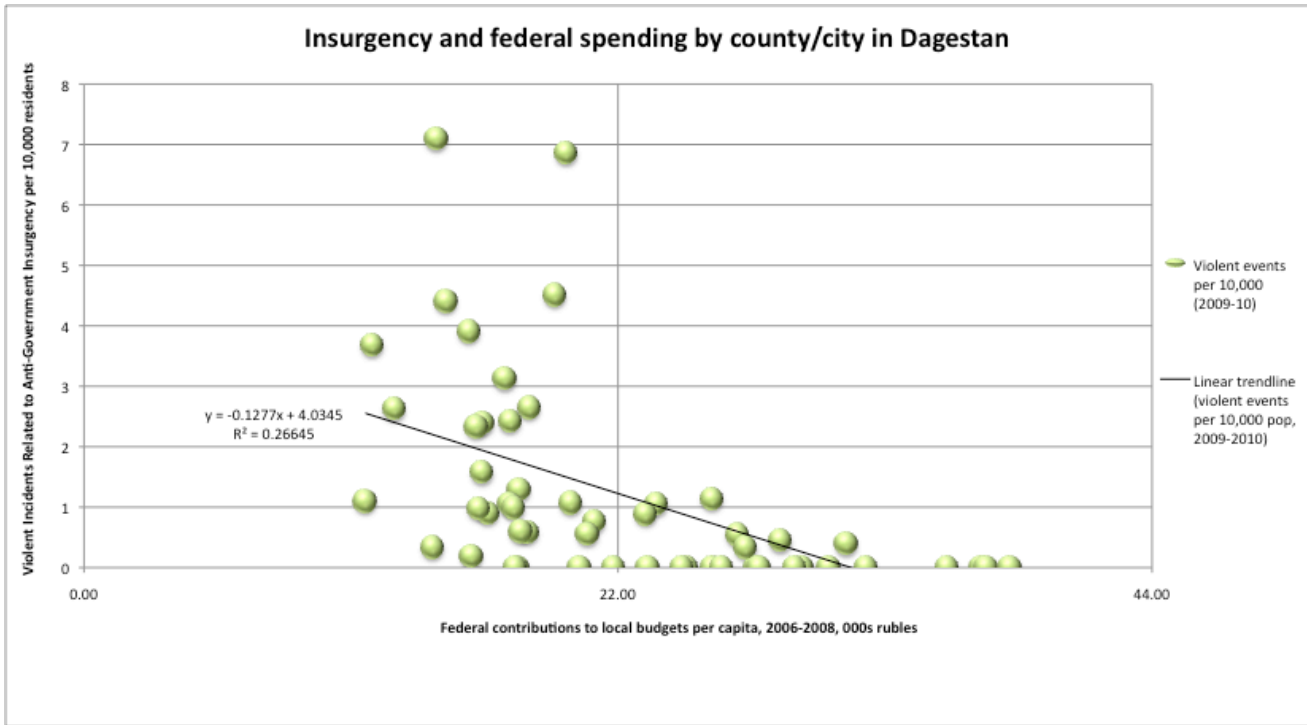
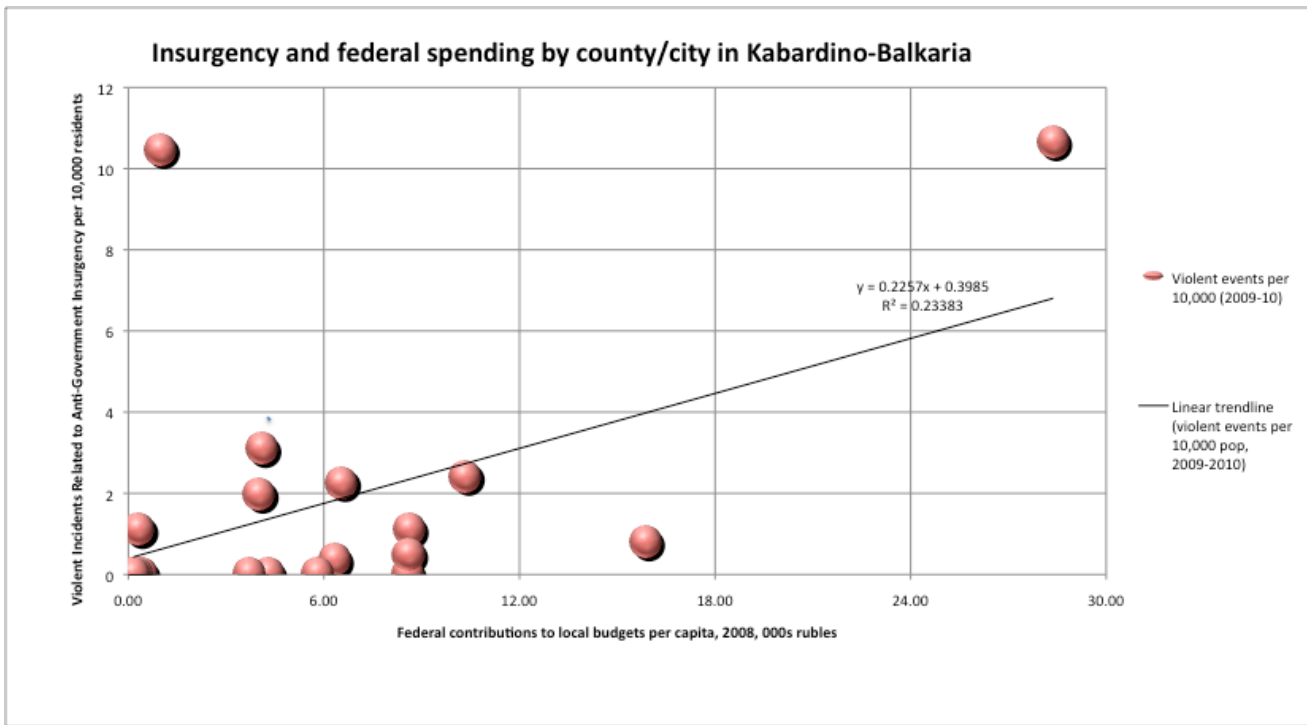


Figure 1 (b)



Figure(s) 2

Figure 2 (a)

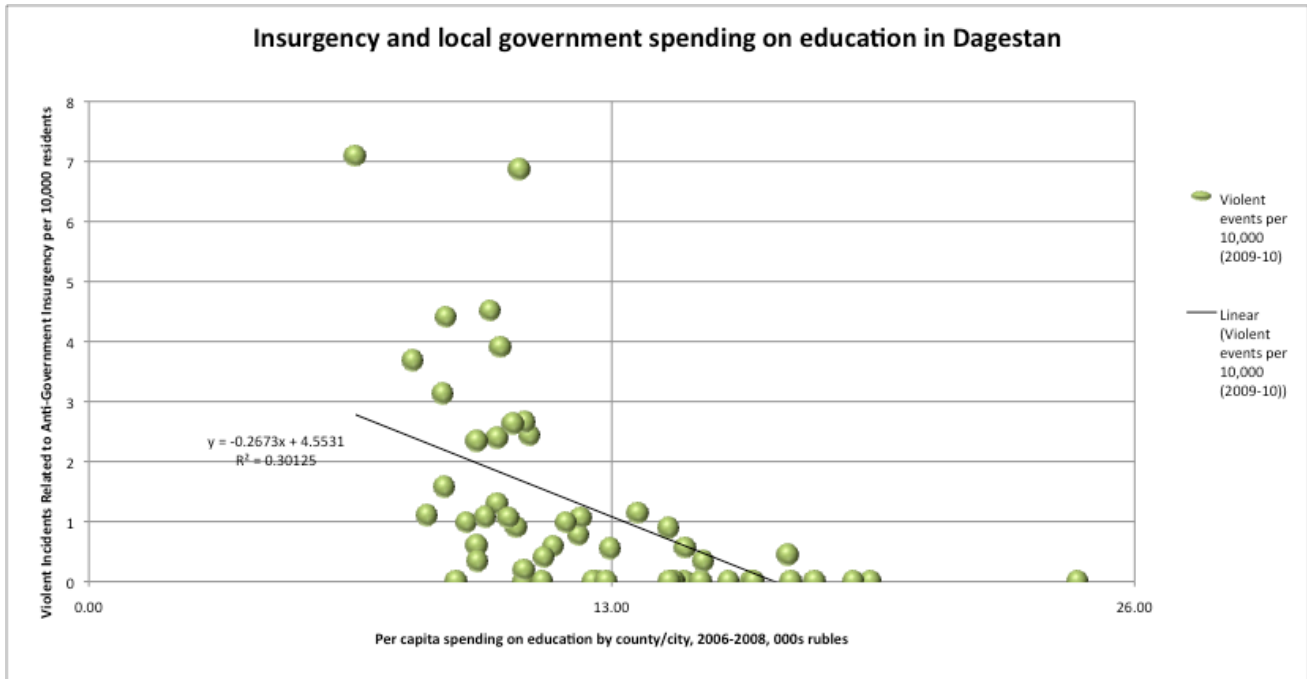
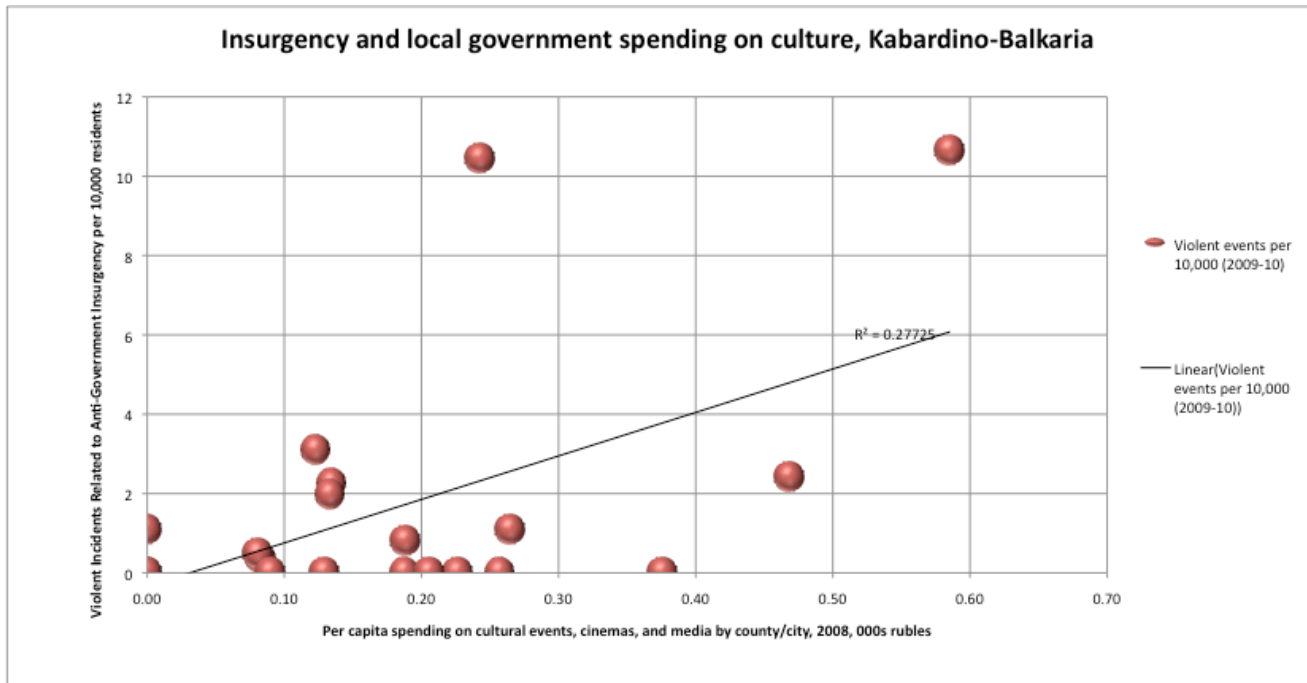


Figure 2 (b)







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