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Executive Summary

Succession, as we can see in the current and all previous examples, remains the Achilles heel of the Russian political system. Putin's "anointment" of Dmitri Medvedev suggests to many observers a regency or adoption, i.e. a medieval concept of the state. And indeed the contemporary Russian model resembles in many ways a feudal society and state and especially the Muscovite model postulated by many Western writers, including the author. Some analysts even see Russia even now as a failing state due to this structural regressiveness.

Succession, for which there is no established legal procedure, duly remains a source of this model's weakness. Every post-Soviet succession has been accompanied by force, electoral fraud on a grand scale, and a steady narrowing of democratic and public political participation. The most recent succession struggle is no different, featuring gross electoral manipulation, arrests and murders of high-ranking officials, etc. These coups, arrests, and murders are also accompanied by large-scale transfers of property to one or another faction, indicating again that the basis of Russian political affiliation remains the faction or "clan," not one of kinship but of political patronage and clientilism which is based, like medieval feudalism, on the principle of *nul homme sans seigneur*.

Such manifestations of infighting are to be expected in the Muscovite model based on the concept of the Tsar's patrimonial power over the economy, and the institution of the boyar service state where all must serve to acquire the rents that they seek from the state that grants them. Of course, in such a state there is no pretense about civil and human rights, nor are there even enforceable property rights.

Hence the elites' struggle for access, power, and property is constant and never-ending, and Tsars and presidents deliberately encourage the division of the elite into rival and competing factions. And each of these intra-elite struggles is a total struggle for the losers lose everything, a fact that explains

their intensity. Moreover, an endless struggle for rent-seeking imperial expansion, though not necessarily territorial, is an indispensable function of the system because it is the only way new rents to accommodate new servitors can be found. Likewise, the inculcation of nativism and hostility to foreign powers is another constant of such a system. Indeed, the greatest threat to it is not American power but American ideals, i.e. democracy. Thus the anti-Western drift of Russian foreign policy is not merely a sign of campaigns to arouse public opinion on behalf of the government; rather it is the inherent logic of the system.

Putin is manipulating the “power vertical” to ensure that he and his appointments hold on to power into the Medvedev period by upholding the threat of investigation and prosecution over all officials and politically interested personages. Similarly, new institutional checks on democratic and even elite competition have been instituted. Among them are groups like the youth group Nashi, which mobilizes public opinion, especially among the youth, on behalf of the regime and against its domestic and foreign critics; similarly media controls have been extended far beyond what they were.

Moreover, the Investigations Committee (SK) has been set up to concentrate the investigative and prosecutorial power in the Presidential Administration, not the regular state, making it a formidable weapon for a purge of the elite, not unlike Ivan the Terrible’s Oprichnina, which could take lives and property with impunity. We may envision the SK as an institution that simultaneously abets and restrains this kind of politics, by creating a pervasive possibility of investigation and conviction among all elites.

As these institutions were being set up, secret police controls and penetration of key institutions were also extended and legislation allowing for the takeover of the country by the power structures – if necessary – was also enacted into law. Thanks to such moves, the mafia-like tendencies of the regime have become entrenched, and corruption and criminality have mushroomed with the growing fusion between organized crime and the government in many centers.

As the Politkovskaya and Litvinenko murders suggest, opponents of the regime are at risk of ever greater violence. Thus, while this regime appears stable, its foundations are decidedly shaky and its propensity towards

domestic violence and external aggrandizement remains inherent in the logic of its construction. This is not, economic trends notwithstanding, an enduring basis upon which to build a politically sound and stable Russia that can cooperate with its partners in safeguarding international security.

Introduction

Vladimir Putin's self-proclaimed mission was to strengthen the Russian state. But as he leaves the presidency, it is an open question if he has strengthened the state or merely a particular regime. Considerable evidence suggests that the Russian state still suffers from profound dysfunctionalities.¹ Indeed, Gordon Hahn's recent study of the Islamic terrorist threat to Russia in the North Caucasus flatly states that, "Despite Putin's efforts to recentralize power, Russia remains a weak state, is becoming a failing state, and risks becoming a failed one."² Neither is he the only analyst to so characterize Russia under Putin, although this remains a decidedly minority opinion.³ Certainly Putin and other analysts thought the state in danger of failing as Putin took power, so there is consensus as to the initial diagnosis of the situation.⁴ Arguably that weakness remains despite economic recovery. The succession struggle, culminating in Dmitri Medvedev's appointment as Putin's successor and Putin's foreseen return as prime minister, suggests, as Nikolai Petrov called it, "regency", not a succession. Other analysts label this succession, like Putin's of Boris Yeltsin, as signifying an "adoption" process, in which the outgoing leader adopts his protégé as successor.⁵ Both

¹ Michael McFaul and Katherine Stoner-Weiss, "The Myth of the Authoritarian Model How Putin's Crackdown Holds Russia Back"

Foreign Affairs, January/February 2008, LXXXVII, No. 1, pp. 68-83; Brian Taylor, *Russia's Power Ministries: Coercion and Commerce*. Institute for National Security and Counterterrorism, Syracuse University; 2007

² Gordon M. Hahn, *Russia's Islamic Threat*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007, p. 1

³ Paul Goble, "Russia as a Failed State: Domestic Difficulties and Foreign Challenges," *Baltic Defense Review*, XII, NO. 2, 2004, pp. 76-83; for the majority view see Andrew Kuchins, Ed., *Alternative Futures for Russia to 2017*, Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2007

⁴ Moscow, *Vek* (Electronic Version), in Russian, November 26, 1999, *Foreign Broadcast Information Service, Central Eurasia*, (Henceforth FBIS SOV), November 29, 1999 for a justification of the Chechen offensive in terms of the domino theory, underscoring Putin's sense of the precariousness of state power in the provinces as for other Russian observers see Vladimir Baranovsky, "Russia and Asia: Challenges and opportunities for National and International Security," Gennady Chufrin Ed., *Russia and Asia: The Emerging Security Agenda*, Oxford: Oxford University Press for the SIPRI Institute, 1999, p. 14; Vladimir Putin, "Russia at the Turn of the Millennium," <http://www.geocities.com/capitolhill/parliament/3005/poutine.html>;

⁵ "Say Hello to Your Diplomatic Future,"

<http://blog.foreignpolicy.com/taxonomy/term/19>; Włodzimierz Marciniak, "From

terms suggest the pre-modern condition and immature development of the Russian state.⁶

The Russian State and the Muscovite Paradigm

Meanwhile, the analogy of a regency corresponds to Vladimir Shlapentokh's recent analysis suggesting that contemporary Russia in many ways is a feudal state or society. Thus,

The core of the monarchic principle of transition from one leader to another is not so much a succession on a kinship basis, but the power of the current leader to appoint an heir and disregard the will of the people and many elites. This circumstance was of the greatest importance for contemporary Russia, where a sort of feudal monarchy emerged, with succession based not on kinship but on the choice of the current leader from a few candidates, a practice that was elaborated in the Roman Empire.⁷

The monarchic aspect of the current succession also underscores how Putin, like his Soviet and Tsarist predecessors, views the state, namely as his "votchina," i.e. patrimony that he can hand out like property to any designated successor. In this respect, too, Shlapentokh sees the feudal analogy between the royal domain, i.e. the king's private property which often feudal kings sought to expand into the state to erase distinctions between their property and the state as a whole.⁸

Simultaneously, this flight into the future further undermined Russia's constitution (not just the document but the actual constitution or composition of the state) and once again underscored the state's fundamental

Retrospection to a Prognosis: On the Difficulties in Prognosticating the Development of the Political Situation in Russia," Wojciech Kononczuk, Ed., *Putin's Empire*, Warsaw: Stefan Batory Foundation, 2007, pp. 34-37

⁶ Vladimir Shlapentokh in Collaboriton with Joshua Woods, *Contemporary Russia as a Feudal Society: A New perspective on the Post-Soviet Era*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007; Shlapentokh, Early Feudalism--The Best Parallel for Contemporary Russia, *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 48 no. 3, 1996, pp. 393-411; Peter Stavrakis, *State-Building in Post-Soviet Russia: The Chicago Boys and the Decline of Administrative Capacity*, Occasional Papers of the Kennan Institute for Advanced Russian Studies, no. 254, 1993; Peter Stavrakis, "The Russian State in the Twenty-First Century," Paper Presented to the VIII Annual Strategy Conference of the U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, Pa., April 22-24, 1997,; Eugene Huskey "The State-legal Administration and the Politics of Redundancy," *Post-Soviet Studies*, XI, No. 2, 1995, pp. 115-143.

⁷ Shlapentokh with Woods, *Contemporary Russia as a Feudal Society*, p. 164.

⁸ *Ibid.* , pp. 85-95.

illegitimacy and weakness. Indeed, the entire succession struggle, complete with arrests and poisonings of high-ranking officials, demonstrated once again that succession remains the regime's Achilles heel.⁹ Every election since 1990 has either been preceded by a coup d'etat and/or political violence. Thus in 1990 and 1991 there were attempts at coups in Baku, Vilnius, and ultimately in Moscow to forestall both reform and the succession of Russia and Yeltsin from the dissolving Soviet Union. Similarly in 1993, Yeltsin's opponents launched a coup when they sought to take control of the Ostankino radio and television tower by force. In 1996, Yeltsin contemplated a coup against his opponents and was only dissuaded from doing so with difficulty. Instead he ran for reelection but also significantly corrupted and compromised the principle of democratic elections. In 1999, not only did Russia experience major political scandals but also the bombings in Moscow and the advent of the Chechen war.¹⁰ In 2003-04, Russia witnessed the arrest of Mikhail Khodorkovskii, and the destruction of Yukos.

Intra-Elite Rivalries in 2007 and the Gosnarkokontrol scandal

In 2007, there were major arrests, including a shootout in Moscow between rival clans. In these arrests and in the subsequent poisoning of officials from the Federal Service for Control over the Trafficking of Narcotics, Gosnarkokontrol, (FSKN), one can observe the continuing propensity to violence and unrestricted political warfare that is inherent in this system and which is reminiscent of those episodes in Tsarist and Soviet Russia where no discernible or legitimate heir was clearly apparent. On October 2, 2007 the FSB arrested Lieutenant General Alexander Bulbov, a department head in Gosnarkokontrol (FSKN) and Uri Geval, the deputy head of the agency's internal security department. These arrests apparently are tied to internecine rivalry between these two different power structures dating back to an

⁹ Uri Ra'anana, Ed., *Flawed Succession: Russia's Power Transfer Crises*, Foreword by Robert Conquest, Lanham, MD: Lexington Books for Rowman and Littlefield, 2006,

¹⁰ See the following articles by the author, Stephen Blank, "The Soviet Army in Civil Disturbances, 1988-1991," Robin Higham and Frederick W. Kagan, Eds., *The Military History of the Soviet Union*, New York: Palgrave, 2002, pp. 275-298; Co-Author with Jacob Kipp, "Yeltsin's Newest Coup," *Demokratizatsiia*, IV, No. 4, Fall, 1996, pp. 474-494.; "The 18th Brumaire of Vladimir Putin," in Uri Ra'anana, Ed., *Flawed Succession: Russia's Power Transfer Crises*, Foreword by Robert Conquest, Lanham, MD: Lexington Books for Rowman and Littlefield, 2006, pp. 133-170

investigation into the smuggling of consumer goods from China to Russia (the case is called *Tri Kita* – three whales). That investigation prompted mass sackings within both the Prosecutor General's office and the FSB. So Bulbov's and Geval's arrests appear to be a form of revenge by the FSB and its attempt to implicate other officials from rival "clans" in corruption charges.¹¹

Bulbov's arrest led Viktor Cherkesov, his boss and head of Gosnarkontrol and a long-standing friend and colleague of Putin (albeit bitter rival of the FSB's head Nikolai Patrushev) to go public in the media, warning that the security services were in danger of becoming embroiled in "an all against all" war for power and influence that could destroy the state. In turn, Cherkesov's going public provoked Putin's ire because the article exposed the inner workings of the regime and was interpreted as a direct strike against the patron of the FSB in Putin's inner circle, his long-time aide Igor Sechin, the reputed head of the Siloviki faction. Indeed, Bulbov was reportedly bugging the offices of the FSB and Ministry of Interior (MVD) leadership.¹² So when this scandal went public, the results were highly embarrassing to all parties. Putin's announcement that he would head the United Russia party, create his own personal movement "for Putin" (*za Putina*), and retain the office of prime minister to head the future government may well be traceable, at least in part, to this scandal that showed that the Siloviki could not restrain their struggle for power and could tear the regime apart.¹³ The last act in this grisly drama occurred in late October 2007, when an officer and former officer of FSKN were found dead (from poisoning) in St. Petersburg. This too was widely interpreted as being connected to the arrests of Bulbov, and the infighting between Sechin, Patrushev, and investigations Committee chief Alexander Bastrykin and Cherkesov and his protectors.¹⁴

In all these cases, there was a trend toward ever more violence, arrests, and

¹¹ Roger McDermott, "Russian General Implicated in Narcotics Sting," *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, October 9, 2007

¹² "Secret Police Struggle Rocks Russia, Analysts and Newspapers Conclude," *Eurasian Security Services Daily Review*, October 11, 2007

¹³ Institute for the Study of Conflict, Ideology and Policy, "Russia: Executive Branch: The Collapse of the Capo Regime," October 18, 2007, www.bu.edu/phobin/news-cms/news/news/?dept=732&id=47211

¹⁴ Jonas Bernstein, "St. Petersburg Poisonings: Part of Silovki Factional Fight,?" *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, November 2, 2007

also an ever greater contraction of the space available for democratic politics. Likewise, each succession is then followed by a new redivision of assets under state control as well as the enhancement of state controls over the economy. This redivision is already occurring as Gazprom, tied to the probable new president-to-be, Dmitry Medvedev, is already angling to take over Tomskneft, the prize subsidiary of Rosneft, the fief of his rival Igor Sechin.¹⁵ Such moves underscore the fragility of the status quo and explain why, despite many Russian and foreign analysts' statements that Russia is back as a great power, Russia remains a risk factor in world affairs on account of its internal realities.¹⁶ Similarly many observers question the durability of the Putin-Medvedev arrangement. Either they fear Medvedev is too weak to assume the real powers of the presidency and discipline the rival factions or that Putin will not let go of the powers he has accrued, especially as there are signs, discussed below, that he is already angling to increase the prime minister's powers at the expense of the president.¹⁷ Thus the state's foundation becomes ever narrower as rival factions, "clans," and bureaucratic patronage networks fight for power. Moreover, absent any authoritative legal mechanism or accountability, ultimately the only way a Tsar can rule,—and this applies to Yeltsin, Putin, and their Tsarist and Soviet predecessors as well—is by constant "checks and balances" among the elite, i.e. a constant balancing act among rival factions. The Tsar checks and balances each group by the other while remaining in some sense above the fray, not least through the mystique of Tsardom and the popular cult of personality as Putin, pace Stalin, has done. Policy thus often emerges out of the strife of these bureaucratic and "courtly" factions.

The Muscovite Paradigm and the Service State

The machinations of the elites, not just the so called Siloviki—alumni of the power organs, most notably Andropov's KGB, the multiple armed forces, and the Russian FSB—but also the more "civilian" members of the elite and their

¹⁵ "Russia: The Oil Major Balance Shifts," *Strafor.com*, December 26, 2007, www2.stratfor.com/analysis/Russia_oil_major_balance-shifts

¹⁶ Andrew Kuchins; Timofei Bordachev, "Russia's Europe Dilemma: Democratic Partner vs. Authoritarian Satellite," Andrew Kuchins and Dmitri Trenin Eds., *Russia's The Next Ten Years, A Collection of Essays to Mark Ten Years of the Carnegie Moscow Center*, Moscow: Carnegie Center, 2004, p. 120

¹⁷ Lilia Shevtsova, "The Power Paralysis," *Moscow Times*, December 24, 2007

rivalries are only explicable in terms of the nature of the Russian state. As many scholars have come to understand, Russia has regressed to what can be called the Muscovite paradigm. What characterizes this paradigm is the government's or the Tsar's control, even ownership of the national economy; the absence of enforceable property rights, as well as public, legal, or Parliamentary controls on the government; the absence of the rule of law, a strong tendency towards emphasizing the military or martial aspects of national security policy over other dimensions, and an accompanying great power and imperial mystique as well as reality that aims to translate these domestic factors into international factors to ensure the security of this inherently insecure and illegitimate (in contemporary European and Western terms) regime.

The state in this paradigm was also, as was the Tsarist and Stalinist state, a service state in which everyone was bound to serve the state and power, while income, especially at the top of society, only came from the rewards of service.

Just as the "Boyars" must serve in order to gain control over the rents coming from the state and are thus a rent-seeking elite, so too the state grants them these rents on condition that they serve the Tsar well (even if corruptly). Hence the state is a rent-granting state. In less stringent times, e.g. after the emancipation of the serfs, the obligation to serve was partially relaxed, but it is clear in Putin's Russia that his topmost elites are state servants exactly as were Tsarist or Soviet officials.¹⁸ Nonetheless, this

¹⁸ Richard Hellie, "The Structure of Russian Imperial History," *History and Theory*, XLIV, NO. 4, December, 2005, pp. 88-112; Peter Baker and Susan Glasser, *Kremlin Rising: Vladimir Putin's Russia and the End of Revolution*, New York: Scribner's, 2005, p. 417, Steven Rosefielde, *Russia in the 21st Century: the Prodigal Superpower*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004; Marshall T. Poe, *The Russian Moment in World History*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003; Stefan Hedlund, *Russian Path Dependence*, London: Routledge, 2005; Emil Pain, "Will Russia Transform Into a Nationalist Empire," *Russia in Global Affairs*, III, No. 2, April-June, 2005, pp. 71-80, Stephen Kotkin, "It's Gogol Again," Paper Presented as part of the project *The Energy Dimension in Russian Global Strategy*, James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy, Rice University, Houston, These are only a few of the authors who now see the vitality of the Tsarist metaphor as a means of explaining Putin's Russia.; Center for Strategic and International Studies, Praeger, 2004, passim; Richard Pipes, *Russia Under the Old Regime*, New York: Scribner's 1975; Stephen Blank, *Rosoboroneksport; Its Place in Russian Defense and Arms Sales Policy* Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, 2007; Harley Balzer, "Confronting the Global Economy After

mediaeval system fuses power and property. And every political figure, as in feudalism, is bound to his patron and is supposed to protect his clients. The feudal principle of *nul homme sans seigneur* still governs the mores of Russian politics. And without a democratic transfer of power, the system's basis of legitimization constantly narrows, making the prospect of systemic crisis ever more grave and likely. Indeed, discerning analysts see in Putin's regime a kind of reversion to aspects of Stalinist personnel practice or policy, whereby police or security services cadre played the role of both the party and the security services under Stalin. Thus already in 2004, Nikolai Petrov wrote that:

The old system of appointment and staff rotation has been reduplicated. Establishing an infrastructure of secret services the local police do not control, the federal center regained the previously lost leverage with the regions. Shifting representation in law enforcement agencies, the president ended up with a "security horizontal" at his service. Along with the executive verticals, it forms a kind of carcass holding the state together. To a certain extent, the authorities have reduplicated the Stalin system when control over regional elites was maintained through (and with encouragement of) a confrontation between party organizations and security structures. In conflicts like that, the federal center is always well-informed on everything. These days, we have a conflict between security structures and regional elites. State officials feel themselves under observation and abstain from what they were free to do only recently.¹⁹

In other words, we see multiple signs of regression to past Soviet and Tsarist practices. And the regularity of succession crises only reinforces that trend. It is not for nothing that Vladimir Furman has observed that "managed democracies are actually a soft variant of the Soviet system."²⁰ The resort to violence and to the "adoption model" not only reinforces Russia's paternalistic and patrimonial tradition, it also enhances the role of the special services and power structures (*Silovye Struktury*, whence the term *Siloviki*) who possess a monopoly over compromising information on the various elite

Communism: Russia and China Compared, "Paper Presented to the Annual Convention of the International Studies Association, Honolulu, Hawaii, March 1-5, 2005;

¹⁹ Nikolay Petrov, "Stalin's System Reduplicated," *Carnegie Moscow Center* April 21, 2004, www.carnegie.ru/en/pubs/media/70274.

²⁰ Dmitry Furman, "A Silent Cold War," *Russia in Global Affairs*, IV, no. 2, April-June, 2006, p. 73.

players, the means of force, and proximity to the center of power.

Although all these groups profess a devotion to the national interest and certainly believe in the immaturity of Russian society and its vulnerability to ideological corruption or infection, (as did their Tsarist and Soviet forebears) their cohesion is limited by virtue of their constant rivalry for power, position, and wealth. While they may profess or even believe that they alone incarnate the genuine national state interest of Russia, in fact as the Bulbov case shows, the driving forces of much state action are much more prosaic and sordid. The drive for power, status, fortune, and position, as well as fear of losing it all are common attributes of these people, but they are a slippery foundation for effective state action.

At the same time, all the elites seek either to become president and/or bind the incoming president to the supposed norms of “collective authority” while the ruler, like Yeltsin in 1999 and Putin now, are determined to rule unfettered as autocrats. Finally, all these succession struggles render Russia a more obstructive and unpredictable partner in world politics due to its internal instability, since ideological mobilization against all enemies—domestic and foreign—is needed to create a political bloc in society and to some degree outside of the bureaucracy for a candidate or for a president.²¹ Thus Vladimir Shlapentokh has shown that an essential component of the Kremlin’s ideological campaign to maintain the Putin regime in power and extend it (albeit under new leadership) past the elections of 2008 is tantamount to anti-Americanism. As he wrote:

The core of the Kremlin’s ideological strategy is to convince the public that any revolution in Russia will be sponsored by the United States. Putin is presented as a bulwark of Russian patriotism, as the single leader able to confront America’s intervention in Russian domestic life and protect what is left of the imperial heritage. This propaganda is addressed mostly to the elites, particularly elites in the military and FSB) who sizzle with hatred and envy of America.²²

²¹ Marciniak, pp. 34-37

²² Vladimir Shlapentokh, “Are Today’s Authoritarian Leaders Doomed to Be Indicted When They Leave Office? The Russian and Other Post-Soviet Cases,” *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, XXXIX, No. 2, Autumn, 2006, pp. 462-463

Zero-Sum Games and the Intensity of Political Infighting

Not surprisingly, the greatest threat to this system is hardly terrorism, but rather democracy. And thus as Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov warned in 2006, the greatest threat to Russian security lay in efforts to transform the “constitution” of any of the CIS members.²³ Likewise, imperial or neo-imperial expansion along with the mobilization of public hostility to “enemies” is the only basis on which rents can be found in a sub-optimal economy with which to bring in the proliferating number of elites and their retainers (Druzhina). Such tactics are a proven way of enhancing presidential popularity.²⁴

Given the nature of inter-elite rivalries, their struggles are almost invariably zero-sum games. Those who lose, lose everything, and vice versa. Thus every succession struggle, even if they become progressively narrower in scope, remains as equally intense for its players. All these struggles, like those in 1999 and those in the 1950s after Stalin, feature violence and/or arrests among the players, if not broader violence as in 1993 and 1999. Other prominent features include the leaking of what is now called *Kompromat*, and attempts to impede any policy of reconciliation with the outside world.²⁵ Thus Putin’s government has long since emancipated itself from any control by or accountability to any kind of social, economic, or political “veto groups” or interest groups. Not surprisingly, every conceivable form of criminality and corruption also permeates the regime.²⁶ Under these circumstances, it is hardly surprising that as the political system narrows, the sanctioned participation of the various army and police organizations in it, and recent successes in rent-seeking, i.e. higher budget and other appropriations, is growing.²⁷ As these “veto groups” have a vested pecuniary interest in hyping the so-called foreign threat to get more appropriations and

²³ Sergei Ivanov, “Russia Must Be Strong,” *Wall Street Journal*, January 11, 2006, p. 14

²⁴ Francesca Mereu, “Putin’s Campaign has Kiev on Edge,” *Moscow Times.com*, October 28, 2004, www.moscowtimes.com/stories/2004/10/28/001.html.

²⁵ Ra’anan, *passim*.

²⁶ Interview With Director General of the Political Technologies Center, Igor Bunin, *Ezhednevnyaya Gazeta*, March 26, 2004, www.fednews.ru; Brian Taylor, *Russia’s Power Ministries: Coercion and Commerce*. Institute for National Security and Counterterrorism, Syracuse University, 2007; Michael McFaul, “Russia Liberalism Is Retreat[ing]” in Kononczuk, Ed., pp. 42-50.

²⁷ Taylor, *passim*; Zoltan Barany, *Democratic Breakdown and the Decline of the Russian Military*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007.

rents, and as their support, along with public support, is vital to any contender, the need to appeal to their interests obliges the regime to intensify hostile propaganda against all enemies and give them more money.

Meanwhile, as succession approaches, political infighting becomes ever more intense, just like what happened with the arrests of members of Russia's Federal anti-narcotics agency and the aforementioned shootouts of 2007. But those incidents were part of a recurrent pattern. The Yukos takeover, the imprisonment of its owner Mikhail Khodorkovskii in 2003-04, the ousting of the remnants of the Yeltsin family at the same time as part of the same process, the scandals, bombings, and war of 1999, Yeltsin's threatened coup, and arrests of rival factions in the Kremlin in 1996, etc., all fall in the same category.²⁸

Institutional Changes Leading To Succession

Recognizing at least some of the dangers inherent in an unprepared succession, Putin and his circle clearly began preparing the current succession in 2004. Indeed, several analysts predicted then what would happen today—even if we cannot be sure that this outcome was planned in detail back then.²⁹ Domestic reforms undertaken in 2004-05, the termination of the election of governors that ended any pretense of federalism, the creation of new party rules that minimized the potential for the emergence of opposition parties, tightening control and repression of critical media and reporters, the increasing mobilization of the country against internal and external enemies, the creation of groups like the Nashi youth group, intensified rivalry with the West (particularly in the CIS) were all part of the process. Similarly the regime then launched both covert and overt efforts to find supposedly legal and constitutional ways of arranging for Putin's continuing tenure, ultimately settling on Medvedev as president and Putin as prime minister.³⁰

²⁸ Stephen Blank, "The 18th Brumaire of Vladimir Putin," in Uri Ra'anana, Ed., *Flawed Succession: Russia's Power Transfer Crises*, Foreword by Robert Conquest, Lanham, MD: Lexington Books for Rowman and Littlefield, 2006, pp. 133-170; Stephen Blank and Jacob Kipp, "Yeltsin's Newest Coup," *Demokratizatsiia*, bol. 4 no. 4, Fall, 1996, pp. 474-494.

²⁹ Caroline McGregor, "Putin Kicks off Re-Election Drive," *Moscow Times*, February 13, 2004.

³⁰ Conversations with Russian and American analysts who must remain anonymous.

These activities reflected, and still reflect, the ruling elite's awareness of its own illegitimacy and the fragile conditionality of its own tenure and access to power, perks, and property. This elite's panic about the succession therefore underscores the Russian state's essential weakness and illegitimacy.

Domestic Struggle, Military Reform, and Extra-Legal Organizations

Equally importantly, and at the same time, military reforms, for which reformers have fought since 1985, increasingly assumed the aspect of preparation for an intensified domestic struggle involving the use of force or the threat thereof. This point is especially pertinent to the ongoing modernization and transformation of the force structure of Russia's multiple militaries, particularly the ground forces and the Ministry of Interior's Internal Forces (Vnutrennye Voiska Ministerstvo Vnutrennykh Del' or VVMVD), and the Federal Security Service (Federalnaya Sluzhba Bezopasnosti or FSB).

These forces underwent and are still undergoing sustained overhaul and transformation in order to become more mobile, more able to project power rapidly throughout Russia's expanse, and more capable of meeting the threat posed by terrorist or other insurgents in the Caucasus and/or Central Asia. Thus those forces are being transformed in ways that could allow politicians in the future to complete the transformation of the forces into primarily domestic counter-insurgency forces along Latin American or more general Third World lines whereby domestic security is the Army's main function.

Since an armed coup, or the threat of the deployment of force, within the Russian Federation's boundaries as a way to influence the 2008 succession was an ever-present possibility, these transformations of force structure, though intended to meet genuine international threats like terrorism and insurgency, could have radically different, but no less profound consequences for Russia, its neighbors and interlocutors. In general, we can discern a trend towards the creation of new, often extra-legal organizations that seek to ensure ideological and political compliance and are backed up either by the resort to extra-legal and even paramilitary uses of force, or the overall extension of police power, including the potential use of one or more of the multiple militaries in a domestic role.

One example is the youth group Nashi. It has already launched riots and demonstrations against Polish, Estonian, and British diplomats for actions that displeased the Kremlin, including ambassadorial meetings with members of the opposition. Nashi has also been used to intimidate the regime's domestic opponents. It enjoys support from the Foreign Ministry, the government, and media for these attacks on diplomats and embassies.³¹ Its members are financed opaquely but clearly from pro-Kremlin oligarchs and probably from the state. Its main function is to conduct ideological indoctrination of a cult of personality for Putin and of fanatical loyalty to his regime and hatred for its opponents, domestic and foreign. This includes systematic anti-Western indoctrination.³² One of its founders, the Kremlin propagandist Sergei Markov, stated that, "we launched Nashi in towns close to Moscow so that activists could arrive overnight on Red Square, if needed. The idea was to create an ideology based on a total devotion to the president and his course."³³ Nashi, a cross between the old Komsomol and the Hitler Jugend, conducts paramilitary training of its members in preparation for challenging the opposition's street demonstrations and to carry out acts of intimidation against them, diplomats, and provincial Russian politicians functioning as a powerful political instrument.³⁴

Control over and Intimidation of the Media

Coercive state monitoring has also extended to the media. This is the case entirely apart from the murder of reporters, most notably, but not only Anna Politkovskaya in 2006.³⁵ In January 2007, President Putin reminded the security services that:

It is important not only to ensure law and order, but also to protect society from attempts to push the ideology of extremism and national and confessional

³¹ Moscow, *www.gazeta.ru*, in Russian, January 17, 2007, FBIS SOV, January 17, 2007; Vladimir Socor, "Russian Authorities, Media, Inflammation Situation in Estonia," *Jamestown Daily Monitor*, May 2, 2007

³² Owen Matthews and Anna Nemtsova, "Putin's Shock Forces," *Newsweek*, May 20, 2007, p. 38

³³ "Young Russia Rises," *Newsweek International Edition*, May 28, 2007, via <http://msnbc.msn.com>, cited in *the ISCIIP Analyst*, XIII, No. 13, June 7, 2007, pp. 4-5, <http://www.bu.edu/iscip/digest/vol13/ed1313.html>

³⁴ *Ibid.*; Matthews and Nemtsova, p. 38; Steven Lee Myers, "Youth Groups Created by Kremlin Serve Putin's Cause," *New York Times*, July 8, 2007, www.nytimes.com

³⁵ McFaul and Katherine Stoner-Weiss, pp. 68-83

intolerance into the public-political field. ... This work must be done strictly in line with the law and all of your steps must be based on the Constitution and Russian laws.³⁶

In March 2007, Putin merged the Federal Service for Telecom Supervision (Rosvyznadzor) and the Federal Mass Media and Cultural Heritage Oversight Service (Rosokhrankultura), into a new Federal Service for Supervision of Mass Media, Telecommunications, and for Protection of Cultural Heritage in order to improve the efficiency of the government's activities for cultural heritage protection—and to eliminate the interdepartmental contradictions and administrative barriers en route to an IT advance in Russia and ease the system of their control.³⁷ The consequences of this new organization's establishment are extremely ominous. As reported by *Kommersant*, the new service will be very influential in the media, telecom businesses, and in political issues. In response to some technical and content claims, it may suspend activities related to all types of communications, including the printed and e-media, and broadcasters. Moreover, the service will keep the personal data register of Russia's citizens. So the matter at stake revolves around the creation of a media mega-controller.³⁸

More recently, on June 23, 2007, Putin's former assistant and now Chairman of the Central Election Commission, Vladimir Churov, announced that he would guarantee that all parties have equal access to the media by conducting a "large-scale monitoring program." This monitoring would include all forms of media, both printed and electronic, "including that section of the internet that is registered as mass media."³⁹

These steps taken in tandem with increased governmental backing for hacker attacks, denial of service, and, in general, activities consonant with information warfare against opposition forums of electronic communication

³⁶ Moscow, *Interfax*, in English, January 31, 2007, *Open Source Committee Foreign Broadcast Information Service, Central Eurasia* (Henceforth *FBIS SOV*), January 31, 2007

³⁷ Moscow, *Kommersant.com*, in English, March 13, 2007, *FBIS SOV*, March 13, 2007

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ "Interview with Vladimir Churov," *Ekho Moskvy*, June 23, 2007, Received from BBC Transmission

raise fears of a general totalitarian crackdown on all media, traditional and electronic.⁴⁰

Even before the most recent decrees and anti-media activities, the regime had gone out of its way to silence opposition media. The murders of journalists throughout the country, Anna Politkovskaya being only the most famous among them, has stimulated a climate of fear among journalists, some of whom have personally communicated this sentiment to the author of this paper. But violence is only one weapon in the state's arsenal.

The regime exercises (subtle) power to ensure media orthodoxy. A popular method is to change ownership and to install an owner who complies with the editorial guidelines desired: that is, one that does not criticize the political leadership. Other state methods include the control of (financial) resources, economic pressure, appeals to patriotism, and implicit threats. As an example of using pressure in this manner, Russian regulators in 2006 forced more than 60 radio stations to stop broadcasting news reports produced by Voice of America and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. Officials threatened to cancel the renewal of the offending radio stations' broadcasting licenses – as a consequence, most of the Russian stations stopped broadcasting these news reports.⁴¹

Neither are these actions the end of the potential use of the police power of the state to intimidate citizens, including members of the elite themselves. The regime has borrowed another page from medieval Muscovy and the USSR, which forced citizens to spy on their neighbors.⁴² Specifically, the

⁴⁰ Open Source Committee Analysis, "Russia: Sings of Growing Limits to Opposition Among Internet, Blogs, and Other Media," *FBIS SOV*, June 26, 2007

⁴¹ Nicole Gallina, "Law and Order in Russia: The Well-Arranged Police State", Zurich: ISN Publishing, p. 11.

⁴² Peter Baker and Susan Glasser, *Kremlin Rising: Vladimir Putin's Russia and the End of Revolution*, New York: Scribner's, 2005, p. 417, Steven Rosefielde, *Russia in the 21st Century: the Prodigal Superpower*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004; Marshall T. Poe, *The Russian Moment in World History*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003; Stefan Hedlund, *Russian Path Dependence*, London; Routledge, 2005; Emil Pain, "Will Russia Transform Into a Nationalist Empire," *Russia in Global Affairs*, III, No. 2, April-June, 2005, pp. 71-80, Stephen Kotkin, "It's Gogol Again," Paper Presented as part of the project *The Energy Dimension in Russian Global Strategy*, James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy, Rice University, Houston, These are only a few of the authors who now see the vitality of the Tsarist metaphor as a means of explaining Putin's Russia.; Center for Strategic and International Studies, Praeger,

Federal Tax Service has issued an appeal to citizens to inform on their neighbors who rent apartments or homes without official contracts or who do not pay taxes.⁴³ The Federal Tax Service has also proposed expanding the range of sources that can or must submit information on the population's income to the tax authorities. This would include organizations that pay cash prizes to individuals, information on all sales of movable property, and the sales of means of transport.⁴⁴ Obviously the demand for information and informers will not stop here under the absence of rule of law and the development of a police state buttressed by ever-new mechanisms of repression and investigation.

Security Services and the Armed Forces

This penetration of society by police and other informers has long been the case in the armed forces. Restoring the FSB's Special Departments and ordering them to prevent activity "by individuals aimed at harming Russia's security," and all mutinies and plots against the established constitutional order, Putin, upon taking power, let the FSB recruit informers from within the army "on a confidential basis."⁴⁵ This was not an innovation, since in 1996-97 FSB members publicly bragged about their political surveillance of the officer corps.⁴⁶ Now, the FSB is responsible for preventing any activity aimed at harming Russia's security and monitoring all plans involving mutiny and efforts at a violent overthrow of the existing constitutional order, and has the right to recruit confidential agents. The FSB also now integrates all counter-intelligence units with its "unified, centralized

2004, passim; Richard Pipes, *Russia Under the Old Regime*, New York: Scribner's 1975; Harley Balzer, "Confronting the Global Economy After Communism: Russia and China Compared," Paper Presented to the Annual Convention of the International Studies Association, Honolulu, Hawaii, March 1-5, 2005; Stephen Blank, *Rosoboroneksport: Arms Sales and the Structure of Russian Defense Industry*, Carlisle Barracks, PA, Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, 2007

⁴³ "Sunday Night With Vladimir Solovyev," NTV Mir, June 24, 2007, BBC Transmission

⁴⁴ *Interfax*, July 5, 2007

⁴⁵ Guy Chazan, "Putin Orders Security Agency To Monitor Army's Allegiances", *Wall Street Journal*, February 16 2000, pA21.

⁴⁶ *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, in Russian, April 12 1995, FBIS-SOV-95-076, April 20 1995, p19-28; *Segodnya*, in Russian, February 16 1995, FBIS-SOV-95-033, February 17 1995, p19; Konstantin Preobrazhensky, "FSB-Army Relations a Well-Kept Secret", St Petersburg Times, December 16-20 1996.

system."⁴⁷ In addition, the FSB formally controls the border guards, the counting of votes in the election, and guarantee of general state security.⁴⁸ But the demand for informers to report illicit income suggests a desire to extend this mechanism ever further throughout society, as was the case under Communism.

Recent military moves also suggest a deliberate effort to ensure military loyalty at the expense of any hope of demilitarizing Russian politics and putting the armed forces under truly democratic civilian control. First, Putin extended the tenure of chief of Staff General Yuri Baluyevsky for three years, even though he reached the mandatory retirement age in early 2007. This was widely interpreted as a reward for service and as a signal to the armed forces that no more “destabilizing” reforms would be undertaken in return for its loyalty to whomever Putin chooses.⁴⁹ Likewise, the replacement of Sergei Ivanov, a leading candidate for Putin’s succession, as defense minister by Anatoly Serdyukov and Ivanov’s promotion to the post of deputy prime minister almost certainly were tied to Putin’s efforts to manage the succession up to the last moment, and balance rival clans (since Serdyukov and his father-in law, Prime Minister Viktor Zubkov, are part of Sechin’s Siloviki faction).

This reshuffle also considerably undid Putin’s promotion of the Ministry of Defense over the General Staff in 2004, by restoring the General Staff’s primacy in defense planning in return for its loyalty.⁵⁰ Indeed, when making these moves, Putin announced that the General Staff would recover some of the responsibilities it lost in 2004.⁵¹ Serdyukov’s tasks would mostly concentrate on auditing and controlling (in the Russian sense of *kontrol*) procurement spending and defense spending in general.⁵² Of course, the price paid is a further militarization of Russian politics and regression away from genuine civilian and democratic control over the armed forces.

⁴⁷ Chazan, “Putin Orders Security Agency ...”, p. A21.

⁴⁸ Gallina, “Law and Order in Russia”, p. 9.

⁴⁹ Vladimir Mukhin, “Yuri Baluyevsky Becomes Political Player: He Appears in the Vladimir Putin Successor’s Team List,” Moscow, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, January 11, 2007, *FBIS SOV*, January 11, 2007

⁵⁰ *Ibidem*

⁵¹ “Putin Pledges Greater Role for General Staff,” *RIA Novosti*, February 15, 2007

⁵² Viktor Baranets, “The Minister who Does Not Like the Spotlight,” *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, April 4-5, 2007, Retrieved from Lexis-Nexis

Pavel Felgenhauer, a leading defense analyst, saw this reshuffle as intending to weaken Ivanov's position among the military, enhance the General Staff's power and authority, and create two decision-making centers in the military so that there will not be a unified military organization upon which someone could rely on to challenge the process or results of the upcoming 2008 presidential election. Another approach suggests that both this reshuffle and the dramatic escalation of East-West tensions generated by Putin from his Munich Wehrkunde speech of February 2007 are intended to create a situation where Russia's political development depends on him alone and foreign influence is excluded.⁵³

Other analysts regarded this reshuffle as an attempt to provide balance, and to add to further rivalry, between Ivanov and Medvedev, while at the same time bringing in a new and third deputy prime minister, Lev Naryshkin, to compete with and balance the former two figures. The promotion of Zubkov to the post of prime minister in September 2007 may have been part of the same process. Not surprisingly, Naryshkin soon figured prominently in considerable speculation, encouraged by Putin's aides, e.g. Igor Shuvalov, as a potential "dark horse" or "third candidate."⁵⁴ In the larger context, then, this reshuffle is also seen as Putin's way of maintaining his "checks and balances" to "rein in" any successor's power and opportunities.⁵⁵ The passing of a

⁵³ Aleksandr' Budberg, "Presidential Gambit: Medvedev and Ivanov Approach Finish Line," *Moskovskiy Komsomolets*, in Russian, February 20, 2007, *FBIS SOV*, February 20, 2007

⁵⁴ *Argumenty I Fakty*, in Russian, February 19, 2007, *FBIS SOV*, February 19, 2007; Tatyana Stoyanova, "Cadre Changes in Government and 'Problem-2008'," *Politkom.ru Internet Version*, February 19, 2007, *FBIS SOV*, February 19, 2007; Alexei Makarin, "Minister and Balance," *Yezhenedevnyi Zhurnal Internet Version*, in Russian, February 16, 2007, *FBIS SOV*, February 16, 2007; "OSC Analysis 27 Jun (2007): Putin's Aide Comments Prompt Speculation About 'Third Successor'," *FBIS SOV*, June 27, 2007; Mikhail Rostovsky, "Split Without Personality—Why is Kremlin Multiplying Successors," Moscow, *Moskovskiy Komsomolets*, in Russian, June 18, 2007, *FBIS SOV*, June 18, 2007; Moscow, *ITAR-TASS*, in English, June 22, 2007, *FBIS SOV*, June 22, 2007.

⁵⁵ Stephen Blank, "Russia's Serdyukov and his Generals," *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty, Features*, December 11, 2007; Moscow, *Argumenty I Fakty*, in Russian, February 19, 2007, *FBIS SOV*, February 19, 2007; Tatyana Stoyanova, "Cadre Changes in Government and 'Problem-2008'", Moscow, *Politkom.ru Internet Version*, February 19, 2007, *FBIS SOV*, February 19, 2007; Alexei Makarin, "Minister and Balance," *Yezhenedevnyi Zhurnal Internet Version*, in Russian, February 16, 2007, *FBIS SOV*, February 16, 2007; "OSC Analysis 27 Jun (2007): Putin's Aide Comments Prompt

budget for three years to go through 2010 must be accounted as another effort to restrict any future ruler's room for discretionary economic and political maneuver.

Be that as it may, these moves also show that Putin is consciously retreating from his own administrative reforms of 2004, which were supposed to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the government and its ministries, by reducing parallel power centers. Instead, he is again enlarging the General Staff and the Ministry of Defense, as well as the state machine, by creating new deputy prime ministers. Once again, law cannot restrain the appetites of individuals and short-term political considerations. Russia, as these moves indicate, is not even able to reach the level of "regular government," an ideal of Tsarist reformers in the 18th and 19th centuries, and is devolving again into a congeries of diverse and uncoordinated offices responsible only to the Tsar. As Lilia Shevtsova suggests, the bureaucracy is again consolidating itself, or being consolidated from above, because whoever succeeds Putin will inevitably have no choice but to consolidate his power by forcing Putin's team to step aside and bringing in his own team.⁵⁶ Certainly, the military instrument within Russia itself has already been prepared, if needed, for action during the election of 2008.⁵⁷ In other words, since 2004 Russian politics has been gripped by the issue of what comes after Putin, and the regime has tried in every way possible to ensure its control and ability to determine every step of the process leading to that succession lest it be overwhelmed or torn apart by its own fragility and internal rivalries.

The Icing on the Cake: the Investigations Committee

Finally, one of the most sinister of such new innovations, and clearly a more important one in this context of elite rivalry in a succession, is the creation of a new committee that will take over investigations from the General

Speculation About "Third Successor" *FBIS SOV*, June 27, 2007; Mikhail Rostovsky, "Split Without Personality—Why is Kremlin Multiplying Successors," Moscow, *Moskovskiy Komsomolets*, in Russian, June 18, 2007, *FBIS SOV*, June 18, 2007; Moscow, *ITAR-TASS*, in English, June 22, 2007, *FBIS SOV*, June 22, 2007

⁵⁶ Shevtsova, p. 2

⁵⁷ Gustaf Brunius, "Organizational Evolution Within the Russian Federation Armed Forces," Yuri Fedorov and Bertil Nygren, Eds., *Russian Military Reform and Russia's New Security Environment*, Stockholm: Swedish National Defense College, 2003, pp. 63-

Prosecutor's (Procurator) office, including investigations of candidates for the Duma or for the presidency. This "Investigations Committee" (Sledstvennyi Komitet or SK) was apparently the product of complex maneuverings within the elite. While its creation represented a victory for the Siloviki, Putin apparently picked his own man to head it, his former classmate at Leningrad State University, Aleksandr' Bastrykin.⁵⁸

The SK clearly emerged out of the ruling elite's internecine struggles and they view it as a weapon against rivals in both regular political environments and during a succession. The SK transfers the right to conduct investigations and prosecutions from the General Prosecutor's office to itself, and appears to many as the pilot project for a grand law-enforcement authority, not unlike the FBI in its heyday, that will unite and oversee all investigations. Thus whoever presides over it will become one of the most powerful people in a government that is not bound by law.⁵⁹ The SK essentially bypasses the General Prosecutor's office and is utterly independent of it with regard to its director's appointment, that of his subordinates, and its finances. All of those will be subordinated directly to the president, removing the whole sphere of investigation and prosecution of political and business figures from the purview of the regular government (although allegedly, the Prosecutor General will review the SK's proceedings for their legality) and placing it under the control of the president and his administration, Russia's real government. This exemplifies the process by which the truly effective but shadowy and unregulated institutions of government (so designated because there is little or no provision for them in the law or the constitution) rather than the ornamental and formally designated organs of government, namely the president's administration, has usurped power in Putin's Russia.⁶⁰ Thus the SK will escape any accountability, even of a purely formal kind, to the Duma. And given Bastrykin's personal loyalty to Putin, it seems clear that Putin is manipulating the "power vertical" to ensure that he and his appointments hold on to power into the Medvedev period by upholding the

⁵⁸ OSC Analysis 28 Jun (2007): *Russia's Putin Puts Protégé at Head of Investigating Body*, FBIS SOV, June 28, 2007

⁵⁹ Andrei Sharov, "Director Found for the Investigation Committee," *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, June 22, 2007, *BBC Transmission*

⁶⁰ Nikolai Petrov, "The Political Design of Contemporary Russia," *Nezavisimaya Gazeta-Politika*, May 24, 2007, *Johnson's Russia List*, May 24, 2007, www.cdi.org/russia/johnson/2007-119-35

threat of investigation and prosecution over all officials and politically interested personages.⁶¹

Undoubtedly, the SK will become a major actor, or at least a potential major actor, in Russian politics and this succession. Some analysts argue that Putin intends to control all investigations personally through his choice of Bastrykin.⁶² But if this was not enough, the SK has the potential to emerge, much as did Andrei Vyshinsky's office of the Procurator-General in the great purges, as a major instrument for the redistribution of political and economic power. It already can become a permanent sword of Damocles over the entire political system and its members. Under the circumstances, this and every succession, as well as the run-up to them, are characterized by an intense no holds barred competition for power and property. We may envision the SK as an institution that simultaneously abets and restrains this kind of politics, by creating a pervasive possibility of investigation and conviction among all elites.

Coming to power, Russia's current leaders sought to convert power into property to acquire those assets and utilized state agencies under their control to deprive owners of energy firms or of mineral deposits of their ownership and control. All these groups, having divided up the spoils, currently enjoy Putin's protection. But as he is leaving, everything they own is now at risk from whomever might win the succession sweepstakes. As a recent analysis observes:

It is now fundamentally important for the Kremlin groupings to preserve their political assets, and they can only be augmented at the expense of rivals in the shadow "vertical axis of power." One of the most viable methods for legitimating less than perfectly clean assets and illicit power is the legalization of the political status of the players – their presence in the Duma, the Federation Council, the government, and the future President's staff.

Correspondingly, virtually the most effective way of fighting your rivals is to prevent them getting into legal politics. Here control of the Investigations Committee, which will begin work on 1 September 2007, will be very handy. Even now membership of United Russia or Just Russia, or even the post of

⁶¹ Ivan Pavlov, "Prosecutor's Office Put in Its Place," *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, June 21, 2007, *BBC Transmission*; Aliya Samigullina and Ilya Azar, "Investigations Conducted by Monitor," *Gazeta.ru Internet Version*, June 21, 2007, *BBC Transmission*

⁶² *FBIS SOV*, June 28, 2007

senator, governor, or mayor, is not a safeguard against criminal prosecution. Given the intensification of the struggle among pro-regime groupings at a time when supreme power in the country is changing hands, it is perfectly logical from the viewpoint of the interests of the current business elites to give the Prosecutor's office a political oversight role. On the one hand, this will make it possible to prevent, for example, a joint opposition candidate from participating in the presidential election, if such a candidate should eventually emerge. On the other, it will provide an opportunity to prevent rivals from other groupings from strengthening their position at the expense of the regions.⁶³

The SK can thus be used to purge enemies from their positions to clear space for members of a victorious grouping, just as occurred in 1937, if not Ivan the Terrible's Oprichnina. As one commentary observed,

Of course, the economic articles of the Criminal Code are not going to disappear from the political struggle. And the process of redistributing assets or raw material resources among the "victors" will continue nevertheless. But the political articles both provide an opportunity to combat the non-establishment opposition (those who are not part of the Kremlin political pool) and also allow some sections of the system to fight others. Economic raids on behalf of the state with the assistance of, again, the Prosecutor's Office have become one of the key elements of the Putin era. It appears that we are now entering an era of political raiding when the owners of dubious assets and people with a weak position in the regime will be emerging from the shadows using legal political institutions and not allowing their rivals to do the same. So the Investigations Committee will still play a role in Russia's political history irrespective of which specific Kremlin groupings are behind its creation and what thrust they impart to this body's work.⁶⁴

Redistribution of Property and State-Crime Connections

Not surprisingly now that Medvedev and Gazprom have triumphed over the Siloviki faction, evidently led by Igor Sechin who heads Rosneft, Gazprom is moving to take over Rosneft's prize subsidiary, Tomskneft.⁶⁵ Similarly, despite Putin's prior statements that he would not seek to weaken the presidency to strengthen his new office of prime minister, in fact his presidential chief of Staff, Sergei Sobyenin, is currently investigating

⁶³ "New-Age Raiding," *Gazeta.ru Internet Version*, June 20, 2007, *BBC Transmission*

⁶⁴ *Ibid*

⁶⁵ "Russia: The Oil Major Balance Shifts,"

precisely how to effect this selfsame operation.⁶⁶ Likewise, the regime is resorting to more open uses of political violence against oppositionists, including the Brezhnev era action of forcible conscription, incarceration in mental institutions, and in cases like those of Anna Politkovskaya and Alexander Litvinenko, political assassinations.⁶⁷

Under the most favorable explanation for recent political violence and these assassinations, alleged “rogue elements” of the FSB are trying to impose one or another political scenario upon Russia and destabilize the Putin regime. If this is true, it hardly furnishes evidence of Russia’s reliability or stability with regard to world politics. And if the state committed those assassinations, then we are dealing with what truly is a criminalized and rogue state. This last charge is not as surprising as it may seem, for Russian and foreign observers have long pointed to the integration of criminal elements with the energy, intelligence, and defense industrial sectors of the economy and as an instrument of Russian foreign policy in Eastern Europe.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Alex Rodriguez, “Putin: Prime Minister Run 'Realistic Proposal' President To Top Ruling Party Lineup”, *Chicago Tribune*, October 2, 2007; “Kremlin Mulling Transfer of Some Prez Powers to Pm: “Report,” *The times of India*, December 21, 2007; “It Ain’t Over ‘Till It’s Over,” *Streetwise Professor*, December 22, 2007, <http://streetwiseprofessor.com>

⁶⁷ “Russia Regresses,” *Chicago Tribune*, August 22, 2007, <http://mentalthopenews.blogspot.com/2007/08/russia-regresses-chicago-tribune.html>; Kim Zigfeld, “A Thorn in Putin’s Side Named Oleg Kozlovsky,” *Pajamasmedia*, December 26, 2007, <http://pajamasmedia.comn2007/12/kozlovsky.php>

⁶⁸ Vitaly Shlykov, “The Economics of Defense in Russia and the Legacy of Structural Militarization,” in Steven E. Miller and Dmitri Trenin Eds., *The Russian Military: Power and Purpose*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004., pp. 160-182, p. 160; Vitaly Shlykov, “The Anti-Oligarchy Campaign and its Implications for Russia’s Security,” *European Security*, XVII, No. 2, 2004, pp. 11-128; Leonid Kosals, “Criminal Influence/Criminal Control Over the Russian Military-Industrial Complex in the Context of Global Security,” *NATO Defense College Research Paper*, No. 1, March, 2004, pp. 6-8; “Moscow, *Ekho Moskvy in Russian*, June 4, 2004, *FBIS SOV*, June 4, 2004, *Moscow, ITAR-TASS*, April 14, 2005, *FBIS SOV April 14, 2005*; *Moscow Center TV in Russian*, September 30, 2003; *FBIS SOV*, October 1, 2003; *Moscow, Moskovskaya Pravda, in Russian*, April 17, 2003, *FBIS SOV*, April 17, 2003; *Moscow*, “Interview With OAO Giprommez General director Vitaly Rogozhin, *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, in Russian, July 13, 2005, *FBIS SOV*, July 13, 2005; Janusz Bugajski, *Cold Peace: Russia’s New Imperialism*, Washington, D.C. and Westport CT.: Praeger Publishers, 2005; Richard J. Krickus, “The Presidential Crisis in Lithuania: Its Roots and the Russian Factor,” Remarks at the Woodrow Wilson Center, Washington, D.C., January 28, 2004, provided by the kind consent of Dr. Krickus; Richard Krickus, *Iron Troikas*, Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, 2006; Keith C. Smith, *Russian Energy Politics in the Baltics, Poland, and the Ukraine: A New Stealth Imperialism?*,

Accordingly, summarizing a great deal of evidence, Janusz Bugajski observes that such criminal penetration of Central and Eastern Europe, including the members of the CIS, is a major security concern to those governments because these criminal networks both destabilize their host countries and render services to political interests in Moscow.

The Russian *Mafiya* greatly expanded its activities throughout the region during the 1990s and established regional networks in such illicit endeavors as drug smuggling, money laundering, international prostitution, and migrant trafficking. In some countries, Russian syndicates have been in competition with local gangs, while in others they have collaborated and complemented each other. Analysts in the region contended that Russian intelligence services coordinated several criminal groups abroad and directed a proportion of their resources to exert economic and political influence in parts of Eastern Europe.⁶⁹

Russia's April, 2003 gas deal with Turkmenistan, a pivotal move in Putin's grand design to secure for Russia a leading place in what would be an analogue of OPEC's cartel for natural gas, exemplifies the process as it pertains as well to Central Asia. The firm chosen to move gas from Turkmenistan to Russia and Ukraine is Eural Trans Gas, a firm chartered in a Hungarian village named Csadba and headed, through an intricate maze of shell companies, by one of Russia's most notorious organized crime lords, Semyon Mogilevich.⁷⁰ Eural Trans Gas stood to make from \$320 million to \$1 billion on this deal, which clearly raises the most disturbing implications.

Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2004; Tor Bukevold, "Putin's Strategic Partnership With the West: the Domestic Politics of Russian Foreign Policy," *Comparative Strategy*, vol. 22 no. 3, 2003, pp. 231-233; Stefan Pavlov, "Bulgaria in a Vise," *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, January-February, 1998, p. 30, Robert D. Kaplan, "Hoods Against Democrats," *Atlantic Monthly*, December, 1998, pp. 32-36 As Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov said "Fuel and energy industries in the Balkans are totally dependent on Russia. They have no alternative." "Ivanov on Foreign Policy's Evolution, Goals," *Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press* (Henceforth CDPP), vol. 50 no. 43, November 25, 1998, p. 13, U.S.-Slovakia Action Commission: Security and Foreign Policy Working Group: Center for Strategic and International Studies, and Slovak Foreign Policy Association, *Slovakia's Security and Foreign Policy Strategy*, 2001, Czech Security Information Service, Annual Report 2000,

⁶⁹ Janusz Bugajski, *Back to the Front: Russian Interests in the New Eastern Europe*, Donald Treadgold Papers, NO. 41, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004, p. 25

⁷⁰ "Ukraine's Financial Woes," *Jane's Intelligence Digest*, 31 January 2003; Catherine Belton, "Mobster Casts Shadow on Gazprom Partner", *St. Petersburg Times*, 2 December 2003; "Armed Police Arrest Mogilevich", *St. Petersburg Times*, 29 January 2008.

First, it displays the commingling of government, major energy corporations, and criminal enterprises in Russia and their mutual enrichment at the expense of the citizens of the CIS, not just Russia. As these firms were already contributing significant sums to President Putin's reelection, he and his colleagues cannot pretend ignorance of Eural Trans Gas' background. Thus we see graphic evidence of the criminalization of Russian energy policy – the most vital sector of the economy and one controlled by the state, the state, and the special services.⁷¹ The similar events in Ukraine and the attempts to use a subsequent company *Rosukrenerogo*, as the main player in transferring Russian gas to Ukraine when it was controlled by suspicious elements, is also well known.⁷²

Conclusions

Obviously, several intersecting processes are occurring. Regime elites simultaneously are jockeying for position and power, including rents that they will be able to retain at the expense of their rivals in the upcoming succession. Some of them are trying to restructure the system so that Putin can function as the grey eminence even if someone else is formally in charge, and Putin is trying to ensure that his legacy and policies, if not his power, are maintained after he leaves office. As a result, Putin, who remains the last authoritative actor in the system, refuses to truly commit to any successor and seeks to exploit these rivalries to maintain his discretion e.g. by appointing his man, Bastrykin, to head the SK and to divide up the armed forces so they can oppose but not mount a challenge to him. Similarly his efforts to ensure control over state spending and the budget reflect his ambition to place a whole series of “continuity mechanisms” or checks and balances over the entire political system at the same time as he is fashioning

⁷¹ Gazprom Will Buy All Gas From Turkmenneftgaz,” *Kommersant*, April 2, 2003, retrieved from Lexis-Nexis; Yulia Latynina, “Redistribution in Russia Means Elections Are Coming Up,” *Novaya Gazeta*, May, 2003, Retrieved from Lexis-Nexis; Yulia Latynina, “Swapping Turkmen Gas for Citizens,” *the Moscow times*, MAY 7, 2003, retrieved from Lexis-Nexis; “Kremlin Cash Cow Swaps Citizens for New Gas Deal,” *St. Petersburg Times*, MAY 13, 2003, Retrieved from Lexis Nexis.

⁷² Global Witness, *It's a Gas: Funny Business in the Turkmen-Ukraine Gas Trade*, April 2006;

a future domestic policy that will undoubtedly increase state controls in the economy and over state spending.⁷³

But in doing so, he has strengthened the tendencies toward despotism and a police state, most notably through institutions like the SK. The ongoing nationalization of key economic sectors, the intensification of the struggle for the CIS and against the West, and the growing resort to police intimidation and violence against critics like Politkovskaya and Litvinenko also find their analogue in this future domestic policy. In other words, authoritarian rule, nationalist mobilization against domestic and foreign enemies, and a police state cannot easily be confined to one sphere. Instead these forces have engulfed the entire system and will continue to do so, until they break down or meet superior force. It is unlikely that the authoritarian regime consolidated by Putin can stay where it is or retreat to democracy unaided or unless it is compelled to do so by external forces stronger than it. But, as we have suggested, it is all too possible for it to become steadily more authoritarian and corrupt while remaining within the Muscovite paradigm (with Soviet admixtures) alluded to above.

Succession struggles remain the Achilles heel of the system because they force an ever-clearer exposure of its fault lines and inherent fragilities for all of Putin's undoubted successes. Close examination of these fault lines reveals the growing pathology of the regime's politics even as it advances economically and fiscally. But unfortunately, for those who think that in Russia the economy will triumph over the state, we should remember that this economy is largely a creation of that same pathological state and is excessively tied to rents from energy. The scale of corruption, violence, and misrule has its own logic as well as its own timetable, which we cannot know in advance. But especially as this system reproduces the paradigm of past Russian experiments in state building, we can predict the destination with reasonable accuracy, especially as Russia has tragically been there before.

⁷³ Dmitri Badovskiy, "One Step to the Right, One Step to the Left," Moscow, *Gazeta.ru Internet Version*, in Russian, February 15, 2007, *FBIS SOV*, February 15, 2007; Stanovaya, *FBIS SOV*, February 19, 2007