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POST-SOVIET RUSSIA**

ANDRÉSEN, Rolf-Inge Vogt

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Director of Research

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8) ABSTRACT <p>This report explores the sources and nature of the terrorism that has afflicted Russia in post-Soviet time. The study focuses on three main contexts where terrorism has been generated: extremism based on ideological or social motives, organised criminal activity, and ethnic and separatist conflicts. As a generator of violence and terrorism, ideologically and socially motivated activism has played a marginal part. The violent acts of political extremists in Russia have been limited in scope, and they have rarely had more than symbolic significance. It would not seem likely that this kind of terrorism should become a greater threat. Organised crime has been the major source of terrorism in Russia. Criminal structures have victimised not only competitors, but also authorities, politicians and other public figures, like journalists, to an extent that makes Russia stand out among countries plagued by organised crime. This terrorism may be abating, as economic and political realities are becoming less conducive to its occurrence. A reduction in organised crime's use of violence is conceivable. However, one may find a sharper divide between central parts of Russia and regions where legitimate authority is less efficiently exercised. The primary source of terrorism in Russia in the years to come will probably be conflicts nurtured by ethnic animosity, coupled with adverse economic interests. Such conflicts are characteristic of the Caucasus region. Any substantial decrease in violence and terrorism there would seem to be conditional upon massive surveillance and control measures. Chechnya may become an equivalent of Northern Ireland. It will almost certainly continue to be the setting for frequent terrorism. As in the past, terrorism as part of the Chechen separatist fight is likely to afflict adjacent regions, and also Russian core areas.</p>		
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TERRORISM AND ORGANISED CRIME IN POST-SOVIET RUSSIA

1 INTRODUCTION

This report is a publication by the *Terrorism and Asymmetric Warfare Project*, which began officially in March 1999 and was concluded by June 2001.¹ The overall aim of the research project is to map out and analyse asymmetric, non-conventional security challenges with a view to assessing their importance for Norwegian national security.² A key research objective is to provide a survey of these threats, based on existing research literature. In the final analysis, assessments of the implications of these threats will be assessed for overall security policy planning in general and long-term defence planning, in particular.

While the conventional focus in security studies during the Cold War was military power and state capabilities, the post-Communist era has witnessed a shift in security studies towards threats associated with the weakness of states, state collapse and violent non-state actors. In this perspective, the dramatic growth in organised crime and violence in post-Communist Russia has attracted considerable attention. However, few scholars have completed thorough empirical studies, which encompass both the political and the economic-criminal dimensions of the violence that has plagued Russia during the 1990s. The present report, therefore, fills an important gap in the research literature by providing an in-depth empirical study, based on a wide range of Russian primary sources, of non-state violence in the Russian Federation. The study focuses on three main contexts where terrorism has been generated: Extremism based on ideological or social motives, organised criminal activity, and ethnic and separatist conflicts. As a generator of violence and terrorism, ideologically and socially motivated activism has played a marginal part compared to organised crime. The latter has been the major source of terrorism in Russia. Criminal structures have victimised not only competitors, but also authorities, politicians and other public figures, to an extent that makes Russia stand out among countries plagued by organised crime. The violence generated by organised crime, as outlined in this report, still remains a major element in the assessment of the future stability of Russia.

1.1 Terrorism in tsarist Russia and the Soviet Union

In Tsarist Russia, the use of terrorism by the radical political opposition became quite widespread in the second half of the 19th century, the most high-profile example being the

¹ I am indebted to my colleague Tor Bukkvoll for valuable comments on previous drafts of this report.

² Other publications by the *Terrorism and Asymmetric Warfare Project*, include the following FFI-Reports: “Why Terrorism Occurs - A Survey of Theories and Hypotheses on the Causes of Terrorism”; “Globalisation and the Future of Terrorism: Patterns and Predictions”; “Terrorism, Political Violence and Organised Crime – Security Policy Implications of Non-State Actors’ Use of Violence – Proceedings from an international seminar”; “Islamist Insurgencies, Diasporic Support Networks and Their Host States: The Case of the Algerian GIA 1993-2000”; “Terrorism and Oil – An Explosive Mixture? A Survey of Terrorist and Rebel Attacks on Petroleum Infrastructure 1968-1999”; and “Terrorism and Peace Enforcement - Does ‘Muscular’ Peacekeeping Impact on Patterns of International Terrorism?”.

murder of Tsar Alexander II in 1881.³ The campaigns continued and escalated during the following couple of decades and reached their peak after the turn of the century.⁴ The use of terrorism as a tool in political campaigns was significantly expanded by the Bolsheviks. Lenin advocated the use of violence and terror not only to eliminate enemies, but as a means to frighten whole groups or social classes into submission.

There were few reported political terrorist incidents carried out in the Soviet Union. This fact cannot serve as a basis for conclusions about the occurrence of terrorism, as the Soviet authorities would suppress any information revealing popular discontent. It seems clear, however, that terrorism was not a major security concern for the Soviet Union. There were rumours and reports from unofficial or foreign sources about cases of unrest, but usually in connection with accidents or lack of food and other essentials. There were also examples of ethnically motivated acts of violence, but the circumstances surrounding these incidents remained obscure. The most notable examples of terrorism in the Soviet era were the activities of the Ukrainian Rebel Army (*Ukrainskaia Povstancheskaia Armiia*⁵/UPA), which applied terrorist tactics in its fight against Soviet rule from the start of the German invasion of the USSR in 1941 till the early 1950s.⁶ The most publicised political terrorist incident in the post-Stalin Soviet Union was probably the bombing of a Moscow subway train on January 8, 1977, in which thirty people were reportedly killed. The government attributed this attack to Armenian nationalists.⁷

On the whole, sub-state actors' use of violence and terror in the Soviet Union seems to have been confined to the spheres of thieves, robbers, black marketeers, and the like. The structures of these criminals proved strong. They survived Stalin's repression and regained strength during the 1950s and '60s. As the Communist elite became increasingly corrupt and dependent on the underworld, the masters of the illegal economy found themselves among the real power holders of the state. The survival and success of criminal structures has had a profound impact on post-Soviet Russia, and the occurrence of terrorism must be viewed with this in mind.

The new states that came into existence after the collapse of the Soviet Union exhibited a number of traits and trends conducive to the emergence of terrorism. During the last years of Mikhail Gorbachev's reign, there had been a rise in the occurrence of organised crime, a

³ There was also an unsuccessful attempt at the life of his successor Alexander III by Aleksandr Ul'ianov, Vladimir Il'ich Lenin's brother. Aleksandr Ul'ianov was sentenced to death for the attempted murder.

⁴ In the years 1902–1907, 5,500 terrorist acts were committed by activists aiming to overthrow the Tsar and his government. These acts included murders of government ministers, Duma deputies, police officers and court officials (See Oleg M. Khlobustov, "Terrorism in Contemporary Russia [in Russian]"). For an analysis of terrorism in Russia in the years leading up to the revolution, see Anna Geifman, *Thou Shalt Kill: Revolutionary Terrorism in Russia, 1894-1917* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993). Geifman examines the years just prior to the turn of the century through 1917, a period when over 17,000 people were killed or wounded by revolutionary extremists.

⁵ The Russian words in this study have been transliterated according to a modified Library of Congress system – see <http://www.history.uiuc.edu/steinb/translit/translit.htm>. However, the established English forms of some Russian names have not been changed (Yeltsin, Chechnya).

⁶ Parallels have been drawn between the UPA and the activities of the Chechen separatists. The point has been made that a campaign against them similar to that which was carried out successfully against the UPA would crush today's Chechen rebels – Nikolay Plotnikov, "The Security Services Are Fighting Terrorism [in Russian]," *Nezavisimoe voennoe obozrenie*, No. 6, 16–22 February 2001, p. 2. The UPA was not the only case of organised armed resistance to Soviet authorities during and after World War II. Similar groups and organisations were active in the Baltic region and in the Caucasus.

⁷ Dennis A. Pluchinsky, "Terrorism in the Former Soviet Union".

development that was to continue dramatically in the Newly Independent States (NIS). Social conditions were such that marginalized groups could be expected to turn to violent protest in frustration and desperation. Post-Soviet Russia also faced sharp political differences and a lack of will to compromise, taken to extremes in the violent showdown between President Yeltsin and the Supreme Soviet in October 1993. In the last years of its existence, the Soviet Union experienced an increase in violence as an element of ethnic conflicts. A number of these took place within the Russian Republic. Some of them would go on and become more serious as Russia became independent, and new conflicts would erupt. The war in Chechnya soon reached a state where the separatists would resort to classical terrorist tactics, both inside the Chechen Republic, in the neighbouring Caucasus area and in Russia proper. It also brought Russia into close contact with religiously motivated transnational terrorism.

These and other political, economic and social developments in post-Soviet Russia made increases in terrorism seem probable.⁸ And terrorism in Russia did become more frequent and more serious during the 1990s. This study will explore some of the aspects of the picture that has emerged. The aim is to identify the main motives and driving forces behind Russia's terrorism, and to give a tentative forecast as to what is likely to generate terrorism in the years ahead.

1.2 Terrorism in Post-Soviet Russia: What is Terrorism?

From the point of view of terrorism research, violence by sub-state actors in post-Soviet Russia has displayed features that make it pertinent to ask what 'terrorism' really is, or what should be considered 'terrorism'. There is no universal consensus on the subject of what constitutes a 'terrorist act'. Views differ as to what motives make an act of violence a case of 'terrorism'. The question of *intention* is generally seen as essential – do the perpetrators just want to eliminate an obstacle or an enemy, or is their act also intended to send a message to people other than those who are physically victimised? Although no single definition of terrorism has gained universal acceptance, most definitions include one or more of the following elements;

- terrorism is a military or political strategy used primarily by non-state actors;
- terrorism involves systematic violence to influence a broader audience, and targets and victims are not overlapping;
- terrorism is used mainly to further political objectives;
- terrorist acts are planned and staged to be perceived as irregular, extraordinary events, and the aim is to exploit the element of surprise and shock that accompanies the act.

The arguably most authoritative definition of 'terrorism' is the one applied by the U.S. State Department:

⁸ The question of what causes terrorism has been discussed at length in Brynjar Lia & Katja H-W Skjølberg, *Why Terrorism Occurs*.

The term 'terrorism' means premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against non-combatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience.⁹

Terrorism is often divided into different categories, even though the boundaries between them can be quite indistinct;

- ethnic-nationalist terrorism;
- ideological terrorism (left-wing or right-wing);
- religious terrorism;
- single-issue terrorism – a group may use terrorist tactics to promote one particular issue.¹⁰

Far from being understood impartially, the term 'terrorism' triggers strong negative emotions. It may be used to brand and dehumanise opponents in order to justify repressive measures or delegitimise insurgent movements. There will often be incentives to have people and deeds associated with terrorism. Whether an act is termed 'terrorist' or not, can depend on the political or ideological point of view of the observer. The well-known phrase that "one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter" captures this emotional aspect of the use of 'terrorism'.

But there are other difficulties in denoting something as 'terrorism' than those arising from the attachment of the observer to the acts in question. A particular problem with relevance to the situation in Russia is the criterion of political or social motivation. It is seldom clear how this criterion should be applied, or how 'political objectives' or analogous terms are to be understood. The problem is of special relevance in relation to the use of violence by organised crime (OC). This violence may have several elements in common with terrorism of the 'traditional' kind, i.e. the kind of violence that would meet the criteria above. To organised crime, violence is an indispensable tool, as it is to terrorists. OC violence is premeditated, it frequently victimises not only adversaries, but also people who are not parties to criminal dealings. OC violence may undermine the structures and institutions that a society is based on.

There is an obvious difference between a criminal organisation killing people in a smuggling operation, and political extremists assassinating political moderates or opponents. The former would qualify as an example of violence in pursuit of material gain – 'economic' terrorism, the latter as violence committed in furtherance of a political aim – 'political' terrorism. But an attempt to draw a line between the 'economic' terrorism of organised crime and the terrorism of political extremists will reveal a number of less clear-cut cases. If a drug lord has a deputy minister of justice assassinated as a warning against a crackdown on the drug trade, the assassination has an obvious political dimension, even though the drug lord's profit motives

⁹ U.S. State Department, *Patterns of Global Terrorism: 1999*, "Introduction". In addition to civilians, 'noncombatant' is interpreted to include military personnel who at the time of the incident are unarmed or not on duty. 'Terrorist attacks' are understood to include attacks on military installations or on armed military personnel "when a state of military hostilities does not exist at the site, such as bombings against U.S. bases in Europe, the Philippines, or elsewhere". *Ibid*

¹⁰ Another common form of categorisation is the dichotomy of terrorism as either 'domestic' or 'international'. The term 'international terrorism' is used to denote terrorism involving citizens or the territory of more than one country. *Ibid*.

are the prime rationale behind the act. Such campaigns of violence are directed at the very heart of the system of government and may, as in the extreme example of Colombia, threaten the existence of a state. Is such violence 'political', or just 'criminal'? Political extremists running terrorist campaigns to further their cause will often, in order to finance their pursuits, resort to some conventional criminal activity, like bank robberies, drug trade, extortion of 'taxes' or kidnappings for ransom, as a result of which innocents may be killed.¹¹ From the point of view of the law, that may be an act of violence for profit. But still it is an output of a political struggle.

In a number of states and regions, such cases of crossovers of political and economic terrorism are the predominant pattern of terrorist activity. The complexity is added to by what some observers see as a growing trend towards cooperation between terrorists and organised crime. Terrorist groups are interacting with transnational organised crime syndicates, especially narcotics cartels – Peruvian Shining Path and Colombian FARC guerrillas have provided mercenary security support for narcotics production and trafficking lines in South America.¹² In return, the Shining Path and FARC have received money to finance their activities. Terrorists may also use smuggling routes that have been established and tested by crime syndicates. In current terrorism research, the debate about interaction between terrorism and organised crime, and the possible convergence of the two, has become a focal point.¹³

The intention of this study is to get a clearer picture of organised sub-state violence in post-Soviet Russia, not to provide an answer to the question of what should or should not be considered terrorism. However, the case of Russia will serve to illustrate some of the ambiguities of the term.

1.3 'Terrorism' in Russia, 'terrorism' in Russian

'Terrorism' in Russia and Russian is subject to various interpretations, and the use of the term may confuse.¹⁴ Different sources – legislators, policy makers, people in public offices, journalists, analysts and others – define 'terrorism' in different ways, and quite often each source uses the term inconsistently. In the West, a tentative distinction is usually made between 'criminal terrorism' – the use of violence by organisations or groups in the fight for property and profit – and politically motivated terrorism. Without any qualifying adjective,

¹¹ Political terrorists have often resorted to plain crime for profit to finance their activities. In pre-revolutionary Russia, Stalin participated in a number of bank robberies to raise funds for the Bolshevik cause. One of the IRA's main sources of income has been cigarette smuggling. The Algerian 'Armed Islamic Group' (GIA) has been linked to a number of armed robberies in France ("Islamic link confirmed in gangster case", *Reuters News Service*, 2 April 1996). The activities of the GIA have been analysed in Brynjar Lia & Åshild Kjøl, *Sanctuary or Enemy Territory?*

¹² See Neal A. Pollard, "Terrorism and Transnational Organized Crime: Implications of Convergence".

¹³ See e.g. Phil Williams, "Terrorism and Organized Crime: Convergence, Nexus, or Transformation?". Williams argues that although there are significant similarities between the two, they should not be confused: "Criminal organizations embrace a form of entrepreneurial capitalism that is antithetical to terrorist organizations, especially those on the left. [...] Cooperation, therefore, is more likely to be fragmentary and temporary than systematic and long-term." – p. 90.

¹⁴ So may the English word 'Russian', which refers to either ethnic or civic identity. This ambiguity is absent in Russian, where the adjective *russskij* (masc.sing.) is used to denote ethnic origin, whereas the adjective *rossijskij* implies bonds to the state that according to its constitution has two official names — *The Russian Federation* or *Russia*. The meaning of 'Russian' in this study is that of *rossijskij*, unless other meanings are explicitly stated or obvious from the context.

'terrorism' as a rule refers to this latter variant, as in the definition of the U.S. State Department.

Russia's experience with the violence of organised crime clearly has had an impact on anti-terrorism legislation. The Federal Law 'On the Fight Against Terrorism' of 1998 defines 'terrorism' as –

violence or the threat of violence against individuals or organizations, and also the destruction (damaging) of or threat to destroy (damage) property and other material objects, such as threaten to cause loss of life, significant damage to property, or other socially dangerous consequences and are implemented with a view to violating public security, intimidating the population, or influencing the adoption of decisions advantageous to terrorists by organs of power, or satisfying their unlawful material and (or) other interests; attempts on the lives of statesmen or public figures perpetrated with a view to ending their state or other political activity or out of revenge for such activity; attacks on representatives of foreign states or staffers of international organizations enjoying international protection, and also on the official premises or vehicles of persons enjoying international protection if these actions are committed with a view to provoking war or complicating international relations; ...¹⁵

In most formal Russian contexts there is no distinction between economically and ideologically motivated terrorism.¹⁶ There may be several reasons for this. It is often difficult to decide what rationale lies behind an act of terror. The reason may also be found in politics. If 'political terrorism' somehow has more legitimacy than 'criminal terrorism', the lack of precision is easily understandable – one wouldn't want violent acts by Chechen separatists to appear more acceptable than those of people killing for profit. Russian analysts and researchers have been using the terms 'criminal' or 'economic' terrorism to denote violence by organised crime, as opposed to ideologically motivated 'classical' or 'political' terrorism.¹⁷ One may also find that terrorism is classified according to how focused or precise the use of violence is. If it is directed at a particular object or objects, the term 'focused'/'directed' (*napravlennyj*) terrorism may be used, whereas violence that victimises randomly is termed 'unfocused' (*rasseiannyj*).¹⁸ In less formal settings, Russians often use the word *razborki* – 'settling of accounts' – to denote terrorist activity that unfolds in clashes between criminal groups. If acts of violence committed as part of a larger struggle for property and profit victimise outsiders and innocents, this is generally called 'terrorism'. But since the word may also imply political motives, again there is no distinction between political and criminal terrorism.

The uses and interpretations of 'terrorism' in Russia may appear unclear or inconsistent. This is not peculiar to Russia, as the term is highly ambiguous in any language, culture or country. Researchers may find that discussions and analyses of the subject in Russia have not reached

¹⁵ The law was passed by the State Duma 3 July 1998, approved by the Federation Council 9 July 1998, and signed by the President 25 July 1998, http://www.fas.org/irp/world/russia/docs/law_980725.htm.

¹⁶ Dennis A. Pluchinsky, "Terrorism in the Former Soviet Union".

¹⁷ Oleg M. Khlobustov, "Terrorism in Contemporary Russia [in Russian]". Khlobustov notes that "although these acts [violent acts by organised crime], because of the absence of 'political motivation', are not considered terrorist, objectively assessed that is what they are. [Criminal terrorism] bears great criminological resemblance to 'classical' political terrorism. Its residual effect is the same – the demoralisation of society, the building-up of fear and insecurity, intimidation, paralysation and suppression of public will, discontent with authorities and law-enforcement agencies, liquidation of society's democratic institutions and hampering of the normal functioning of organs of government."

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

the same level of differentiation or precision as in the West. To a certain extent that is probably correct.¹⁹ Russia was totally unprepared for the upsurge in sub-state violence after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Terrorism, by any established definition, is quite new to Russia, and it is already a more frequent occurrence there than in most other countries. It will take time for Russian politicians, law enforcers and researchers to find good answers as to how terrorism should be understood and handled. But differences in perceptions and approaches between Russia and the West may reflect not so much Russia's relatively short experience with terrorism, as the fact that the settings are different, that an understanding of terrorism based on Western experience would prove insufficient or irrelevant in Russia. E.g., the idea that there is a clear dividing line between terrorism and organised crime is, arguably, culture-bound. It is a notion coloured by the image of the terrorism that proliferated in the West in the 1970s and -80s. If applied in Russia, such a definition would leave out the bulk of organised violence by sub-state actors. From a policy or security point of view, that would make the definition inadequate. To talk of terrorism in Russia without a focus on organised crime has little relevance.

Some of the links between organised crime and terrorism in Russia are similar to that elsewhere. Organised crime has generated terrorism directly because violence is its ultimate way of relating to customers, competitors, crime-fighting agencies and political authorities. And organised crime has a strong potential for generating terrorism indirectly. It plays an implicit part in terrorism because it provides some of terrorists' essentials, like weaponry. Criminal communities in Russia and other former Soviet republics have been organised mainly along ethnic lines. Conflicting interests among criminal communities can therefore easily turn into ethnic unrest. Ethnic animosity is known as a prime motive behind terrorism. The ethnic dimension of organised crime is by no means unique to Russia, but it may be more important there than in most parts of the world, and deserves special attention. However, it should be noted that the dividing lines of ethnicity are far from absolute.²⁰ In the Balkans, where ethnic conflicts have been exceptionally severe over the past decade, there are examples of interethnic cooperation in organised crime; in fact, it is most probably the kind of interethnic cooperation that works best. It has been noted by observers of organised crime in Russia that the significance of ethnicity is overestimated.²¹

But most importantly, organised crime's part in terrorism must be seen as a function of the way it was allowed to grow and occupy centre stage in Russian society. The fight for ex-Soviet property and profit has been the *leitmotif* of the first decade of the new Russia's history. This

¹⁹ An article making terrorism a special offence was introduced into the Russian penal code as late as 1994. See Oleg Khlobustov, "Terrorists are getting younger and more callous [in Russian]".

²⁰ This point was emphasised by Mats Berdal, editor of *Greed & Grievance: Economic Agendas in Civil Wars*, at the DCAF/IISS Workshop 'Managing the Context of Police Reform – Implications for International Assistance', Geneva, 24-25 April 2001.

²¹ One of those observers is Vadim Volkov, professor of sociology at the European University in St-Petersburg and one of the most insightful observers of Russia's criminal environment: "Commonplace assertions about either the territorial or ethnic formation principles of [organized criminal] groups should be treated with caution. One should not infer that the criminal group is tied to the name-giving territory [...] or that it recruits its members on a strictly ethnic basis (e.g. the Chechens), although it is generally true that the name of the group originally refers to a territory or to the type of ties that enabled initial trust between members and established their common identity." (Vadim Volkov, "Organized Violence, Market Building, and State Formation in Post-Communist Russia," pp. 49-50). The idea of the decreasing significance of ethnic bonds has been supported by the researcher Aleksey Mukhin, who has conducted in-depth studies of organised crime in Russia. Author's interview, Moscow, 11 April 2000. See also Aleksey Mukhin, *Russian Organised Crime* [in Russian]

conflict has shaped people's norms of behaviour and ways of thinking; it has motivated the formation of alliances in politics and elsewhere. It has pushed aside 'normal' politics. The fight for property is organised crime's domain, and organised crime's unscrupulous seizure of anything valuable became a standard way of doing business. A significant overlap developed between politics and organised crime. Criminal structures reached into the very heart of political power in Russia. Several Duma deputies have been involved in such structures, and some have even been killed in their *razborki*.²² The manifestations of terrorism in Russia must be seen in relation to these developments.

2 TERRORISM BY ORGANISED CRIME

2.1 What is 'Organised Crime'?

The term 'organised crime' is subject to various interpretations. The question of what constitutes a crime can be hard to answer – the law may be vague, or legislation may be lacking. And when is crime 'organised'? All over the world there are criminal communities that are referred to as 'organised crime'. Among these are the Italian *Cosa Nostra* in the USA, mafia groups in Italy, the Chinese Triads, the Japanese *Yakuza* and the Colombian cocaine cartels. These communities and organisations have emerged out of specific political, social and economic processes in their country or culture of origin. At the same time they display features that are common to all of them. There exists no internationally recognised definition of organised crime. Still the definitions that are used by law enforcement agencies and political authorities in different countries tend to emphasise the same main elements. 'Organised crime' is understood to be an association of individuals or groups who work together to obtain profits irrespective of legality. Criminal organisations are essentially illicit enterprises. In order to expand their activities and protect them from competitors and authorities, they are ready to use coercion, violence, bribery and other illegal means.²³ How criminal organisations came into being, how they are structured, how they make their money and how they co-exist with other economic actors will differ from state to state, and along ethnic and cultural lines.

Soviet society had structures that would qualify as organised crime. However, the existence of organised crime was never officially acknowledged, as it was ideologically impossible that such a phenomenon could be present in a communist society.²⁴ Legislation to deal with it was therefore lacking. This lasted well into the 1990s, when criminal structures were experiencing unprecedented growth and acquiring enormous riches. Efforts to create the judicial tools needed to fight organised crime were hampered by the conflict between the President and the

²² According to Aleksej Mukhin, the Ministry of Internal Affairs estimates that more than 50 Duma deputies on different levels have relations with organised crime. Aleksej Mukhin, *Russian Organised Crime* [in Russian], p. 2.

²³ One of the definitions most often referred to is that of the FBI, which is involved in bi- and multilateral cooperation to fight, among others, Russian organised crime: "Organized Crime is a self-perpetuating, structured and disciplined association of individuals or groups, combined together for the purpose of obtaining monetary or commercial gains or profits, wholly or in part by illegal means, while protecting their activities through a pattern of graft and corruption". CSIS, *Russian Organized Crime*, p. 24.

²⁴ It lasted until 1989 before a representative of the Soviet government, Minister of Internal Affairs Vadim Bakatin, officially acknowledged the existence of "criminal structures, whose basis is the financial potential of the shadow economy, ..." – quoted in Aleksej Mukhin, *Russian Organised Crime* [in Russian], p. 19.

Supreme Soviet, by corruption and a lack of both the resources and the will needed to take on something that was growing into a formidable force.

By the middle of the decade, Russia's Ministry of Internal Affairs (*Ministerstvo Vnutrennikh Del* /MVD) had worked out a definition that described 'organised crime' as "an organised community of criminals ranging in size from 50 to 1,000 persons, which is engaged in systematic criminal business and protects itself from the law with the help of corruption."²⁵

'Mafia', 'mafiya': In many languages, the Italian word 'mafia' is used more frequently than 'organised crime'. The term first appeared in Sicily in the 1860s, where it had a quite specific meaning. Later it entered other languages and was used more broadly to refer to criminal societies and associations which behaved in similar ways and engaged in similar criminal activities – providing 'protection', operating 'vice industries', trafficking in illegal drugs, etc. 'Mafia' was adopted into Russian, too. The use of the word is quite indiscriminate, and its meaning is often very vague. It can be used to refer to entities that would fit established definitions of organised crime. But it may also refer to almost any kind of criminal activity. And since it is a widely shared assumption in Russia that business necessitates violations of laws, any corporation or company may be labelled 'mafia'. As a legacy from the Soviet past, 'mafia' will sometimes be used about any representatives of officialdom with the power and authority to create obstacles for others. The word has numerous and sometimes even contradictory meanings. It would result in misunderstanding to apply a Western interpretation of 'mafia' to Russian circumstances.²⁶ In English (and some other languages) one can find the form 'mafiya'. The /y/ is a result of transliteration from Russian. 'Mafiya' is often used in confusing, misleading or uninformed ways. One can find articles about 'the mafiya' covering various kinds of criminal activity all over Central and Eastern Europe. The most widespread interpretation of the term appears to be the organised crime that has emerged in what was once the Soviet Union, and it often refers to the branches operating outside the ex-Soviet borders.

2.2 Soviet Times

Today's criminal organisations in Russia had predecessors in Soviet and pre-Soviet society. The revolution of 1917 did not wipe out the criminal communities of Tsarist Russia. Nor did Stalin's crackdowns. On the contrary, the labour camps became a breeding ground for the criminal structures of modern times. By the 1930s 'the thieves in the law' (*vory v zakone*) had emerged as the elite.²⁷ They were the successors of pre-revolutionary Russia's criminal societies. In the GULag prison system they were significantly strengthened.²⁸ Their structures were able to withstand Stalin's regime and provided a basis for more sophisticated forms of crime.²⁹ Their authority was challenged after the war, when the numbers of camp and prison

²⁵ Russia's Minister of Internal Affairs Mikhail Egorov in hearings before the American Senate 26 May 1994, quoted in CSIS, *Russian Organized Crime*, p. 24.

²⁶ For more on the confusion surrounding 'mafia' in Russian, see Nicholas Marsh, "The Russian mafia – how much power beneath the hype?" *Regional Studies* (UK Defence Forum) February 1998, <http://www.ukdf.org.uk>.

²⁷ From *vor* – 'thief', and *zakon* – 'law'.

²⁸ The *vory* developed well-organised structures and a strict code of conduct which, among other things, forbade them (1) to have a legitimate job, (2) to cooperate with law enforcement, (3) to give testimony in court, (4) to have a family, or (5) to serve in the military. For more on the *vory* and the criminal structures of Soviet times, see Patricia Rawlinson, "Russian Organized Crime: A Brief History".

²⁹ The thieves' unwillingness to conform to the Soviet system gave them a heroic status among many ordinary Russians. However, they were not all equally uncompromising. A number of them opted for an easier life by working for the camp guards, even if they risked getting killed. During the Great Patriotic War, as the war with Hitler's Germany is called in Russia, Soviet authorities offered freedom for the thieves who would fight for the Motherland, and some accepted. But those who survived the war were sent back to the camps and had to face the revenge of those who had abided by the code's prohibition against military service. The subsequent war between

inmates swelled, but ‘the thieves’ remained the most powerful unity within the criminal world.³⁰

The realm of the *vory* was a world apart. They had established their own way of life in aggressive opposition to the authorities. But between the *vory* and the communist state there emerged new breeds of criminals. The deficiencies of the Soviet system led to the creation of an extensive black market. What the official economy could supply was constantly outweighed by demand. The imbalance gave rise to the *tsekhoviki* (*tsekh* – ‘workshop’; ‘guild’). They would use collective property to manufacture goods or repair what needed repair for those who were able to offer something sought-after in return. The black market was soon to be dominated by a new class of entrepreneurs – the *teneviki* (*ten* – ‘shadow’) – who would orchestrate the deals between suppliers and customers. The *tsekhoviki* and the *teneviki* came to control a steadily growing part of the economy. The officially unacceptable nature of their trade and the large profits it brought inevitably led to the establishment of links with the *vory*. The Soviet criminal sphere became a continuum of characters from uncompromising outlaws to profit-seeking opportunists. From the cooperation between *vory*, *tsekhoviki* and *teneviki* there emerged powerful criminal clans.³¹

The criminal part of the economy grew, and so did the dependence of the Soviet system on the black market. Bonds of mutual interests arose between the underworld and the political establishment. The criminal elite received protection from patrons among high-ranking members of the Communist Party. This relationship changed both criminals and Party officials. The old *vory* had had a certain idealism in their fight with the authorities, but this was now being replaced by the pragmatic pursuit of profit. And in the political sphere power and prestige replaced commitment to ideology. In this climate the gulf between the legitimate and the illegitimate began to disappear. The emergence of a criminal elite also gave a boost to other, more primitive kinds of crime. The protection from above that the black market entrepreneurs enjoyed was primarily protection from prosecution and did not help much vis-à-vis other criminals. As the *tsekhoviki* and the *teneviki* amassed their fortunes during the 1970s, they became targets for less sophisticated criminal gangs, for whom the *nouveaux riches* represented a growing source of income. These gangs had been employed in traditional vice industries like gambling, prostitution, narcotics and other forms of contraband, and now they had the opportunity to extend their activities and increase their riches. They demanded money from the illegal entrepreneurs, either by direct physical threats or through kidnappings.

When Gorbachev came to power, the criminals were richer and more influential than ever before. They saw the new General Secretary’s policies as an opportunity to further increase their riches. As new forms of economic activity were allowed, organised crime was first in line to take advantage of it. Criminal organisations were the ones with the resources, the business

different fractions in the underworld, the so-called ‘War of the Bitches’ (*Sutsj’ia vojna*), reduced the number of thieves more efficiently than any measures the authorities might have taken on their own.

³⁰ The massive fatalities sustained by the Soviet Union left many young people homeless or orphans. In the absence of any support they often turned to crime to survive. The new inmates had little cause to respect traditional rules and codes. They would establish their own norms based more on self-interest than on the ‘idealism’ of the old guard.

³¹ Some sources say the cooperation between *vory* and *tsekhoviki* was institutionalised at a meeting in 1979, when the latter agreed to pay 10% of their earnings to the *vory*. The agreement marked the criminalisation of a significant part of the Soviet economy. Aleksej Mukhin, *Russian Organised Crime* [in Russian], p. 2.

experience and the connections. In June 1988 the Supreme Soviet passed the ‘Law on Cooperatives’, which legalised private business. The new legislation did not only provide new opportunities to make money, but also to launder ill-gotten gains. This was the start of unprecedented growth of criminal property in the Soviet Union.³²

Perestrojka provided criminal structures with new opportunities. There was also an increase in more traditional kinds of mafia activity, like extortion, ‘protection’, smuggling, drug trade, prostitution and other ‘vice industries’. And as elsewhere, the rise of more sophisticated varieties of crime did not reduce it in its more primitive forms. If people have acquired property in dubious ways, they may become victims of blackmail and extortion. Their need for protection will increase, and some of them will fight back using the same means as their persecutors, including violence. Respect for law and order will crumble. This will affect everybody, not just those who are directly involved in criminal affairs. Society will become more dangerous and unfair, as the example of Russia demonstrates.

2.3 The 1990s

As Yeltsin took over as leader in Russia and the Soviet Union was liquidated, again, no one was in a position to profit more from the coming political and economic changes than the criminal structures. The reforms that allegedly were supposed to change Russia into a Western-style market economy to the benefit of all, brought hardship to most Russians. Organised crime was one of the prime beneficiaries. The privatisation process that enabled criminal structures to get their hands on state property, the artificial pricing that made it possible to make fortunes by buying goods on the domestic market and selling them with huge profits abroad, foreign credits that could easily be brought into the wrong pockets, the monopolies that could be established on profitable trade if you knew the right people – all this and more played into the hands of organised crime. The ways of doing business fell short of the standards of any civilised democracy. It would be incorrect to say that everybody who profited from the Russian reforms belonged to organised crime, but the regime’s policies presented organised crime with unprecedented opportunities, opportunities that few would be better able to capitalise on. And dubious business practices invited crime of a rawer, more explicit nature. Organised crime set its mark on the whole restructuring of the economy and the redistribution of property. Its ugly way of doing business left no one safe.

³² According to official estimates, the *vory* and other criminal leaders invested 20% of their financial assets in cooperative businesses in the years 1988-90 (Aleksij Mukhin, *Russian Organised Crime* [in Russian], p. 19). The capital that went into the new enterprises came from various sources. A significant part of it was siphoned off from state industry, banks and budgets by officials, managers and others who were in a position to do so. A lot of state funds also ended up abroad, on personal bank accounts in countries with laws guaranteeing discretion.

Organised Crime and Russian Reforms: the Story of the Banks. The story of the Russian banking sector says a lot about Russia's economic reforms. To open a bank was relatively easy – you needed three board members and the equivalence of ca USD 80,000 in capital. And so banks mushroomed. They were influenced and controlled by organised crime in various ways, as Timothy M. Burlingame shows in an article on criminal activity in the Russian banking system.³³ In some cases banks and other businesses had criminals in positions to make decisions directly, in others criminals influenced decisions from behind the scenes. And in yet other cases, banks were not just infected with shady elements; they were founded by them for criminal purposes. If a bank was not established with a criminal intent, persons within the bank still might use their positions to facilitate crime. The banks themselves turned out to be both perpetrators and victims. They actively tried to swindle customers, they collaborated willingly or unwillingly with criminals seeking to launder money, they could be the victims of embezzlement by insiders, or outsiders could swindle them. They could also be forced to provide information on customers or to hire gang members. Just an insignificant minority was able to stay 'clean'; those who did not respond positively to indecent proposals, would find that there was a price for saying 'no'. According to figures from the Association of Russian Banks, the first three and a half years of Russian reforms saw 83 armed attempts on the lives of bank presidents and prominent officials, 45 of which resulted in death. In the first six months of 1995 the trend seemed to worsen, with 46 new attempted assassinations. MVD registered 600 successful or attempted contract killings in 1996, with bankers still a favourite target. Towards the end of the decade four out of five private Russian banks would be classified as controlled or influenced by organised crime.³⁴

2.4 The Scope of Organised Crime.

2.4.1 How Many Are Involved?

The problem of acquiring or verifying information on organised crime is considerable. For obvious reasons, those involved aim to keep their schemes and dealings secret. People who are in a position to supply information have better reasons than anybody else to remain silent. The lack of facts feeds speculation. This is a problem with much of what is written on organised crime anywhere.³⁵ In Russia, estimates of how organised crime has grown and how big it is today are often highly confusing or inadequate. Information from one source may be incompatible with information from another. Quite often figures are presented without being substantiated in any satisfactory way. Numbers of criminal 'groups', 'gangs', 'cells', 'societies' or 'structures' are given without any specifications as to what is meant by these terms. And anyone who looks for material on Russian organised crime (ROC) will soon suspect that some figures have become 'truths' by virtue of repetition.³⁶ The problem of establishing the true scope of organised crime has been further aggravated by the fact that the responsibility for monitoring, investigating and prosecuting organised crime has been moved around as federal departments, ministries and directorates have been established, reorganised or shut down incessantly.³⁷

³³ Timothy M. Burlingame, "Criminal Activity in the Russian Banking System".

³⁴ *Ibid*, p. 46.

³⁵ For a discussion of why the problem of source criticism seems to be particularly acute in the case of Russian organised crime, see Lydia S. Rosner "The Sexy Russian Mafia".

³⁶ See Nicholas Marsh, "The Russian Mafia – how much power beneath the hype?" for more on this. Marsh writes that "[f]or example, in 1992, figures ranged from the Ministry of Internal Security's (MVD) estimate that 3,000 'criminal structures' were operating on the territory of Russia, to Security Minister Barannikov's comment that there were more than 6,000 'criminal groups'" *Ibid*, p. 2.

³⁷ Vadim Volkov points out that the spheres of competence and jurisdiction have been ill-defined, different agencies have competed with and duplicated one another, and overall coordination has been weak. E.g., both the FSB and the MVD have directorates in charge of fighting organised crime, as well as directorates concerned with

Still, provided that the MVD and others involved have been consistent in their definitions and methods, their statistics should give an idea of what the rise in organised crime has been like. In 1988, 50 criminal groups had been identified in the Russian republic.³⁸ In 1990 the figure was 785. The next year it had risen to 952. December 1991 saw the collapse of the Soviet Union. The number of identified criminal groups rose to 4,352 in 1992. The rise is obviously too steep to be explained by intensified investigative efforts – the statistics substantiate the impression that observers of Russia had, that organised crime was booming. The number continued to increase sharply, to 5,691 in 1993 and 8,059 in 1994. Then the rise slowed down. In 1997 the number reached 9,000.³⁹ Since then the increase in the number of criminal groups seems to have stopped. There are indications that the scope of organised crime is still growing.⁴⁰ In light of what is known about criminal operations at present, it is possible to conclude that there is a reduced need for manpower as a result of increased technical, organisational and economic sophistication.

If the number of groups at present is close to 9,000, and there are from 50 to 1,000 persons in a group, that means that the number of members of organised crime in Russia could be from 450,000 to 9,000,000.⁴¹ At the 1994 UN Ministerial Conference on Organised Transnational Crime, total ROC membership was placed at three million individuals, comprising some 5,700 gangs.⁴² A 1995 paper from a European conference on organised crime talks of 6,000 ‘criminal cells’ that can rely on approximately 115,000 ‘associates’ and three million ‘supporters’.⁴³ Again, there is the question of definitions. How is ‘member’ to be understood? Is it a full-time employee, or anyone doing occasional work for organised crime? If the latter interpretation is applied, a membership that runs in the millions does not seem unlikely, considering organised crime’s role in the Russian economy.⁴⁴ If ‘member’ is taken to mean a full-time committed, reliable worker, the lower estimates above – ca 100,000 – are probably closer to reality.

2.4.2 Organised Crime in the Russian Economy: What Does ‘Control’ Mean?

Estimates of the presence of organised crime in Russia’s economy make it seem even more prevalent than do Russian crime statistics. According to a 1997 article in *Jane’s Intelligence Review*, 40-50% of Russia’s economy is controlled by organised crime.⁴⁵ In a 1998 report to the British Defence Forum, Nicholas Marsh cited estimates from the Russian government

economic crimes, and all four target the same range of criminal phenomena. Vadim Volkov, “Between Economy and the State,” p. 485.

³⁸ Iakov Gilinskij, *Organised Crime in Russia: Theory and Reality* [in Russian], p. 77.

³⁹ Mukhin Aleksej, *Russian Organised Crime* [in Russian], p. 26. These figures are also cited in *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, 14 June 1997, and in CSIS, *Russian Organised Crime*, p. 25.

⁴⁰ The MVD, *The Status of Law Enforcement in the Russian Federation*, [in Russian], p. 12.

⁴¹ Figures based on these calculations are cited by Nicolas Marsh, “The Russian mafia – how much power beneath the hype?”, p. 2.

⁴² “The World Ministerial Conference on Organized Transnational Crime”, *UN Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Newsletter* No. 26/27, November 1995; p. 27.

⁴³ Brig.- Gen. (Italian *Carabinieri*) Luigi Magliuolo, “Evolution and International Effects of Russian Organised Crime”.

⁴⁴ Luigi Magliuolo in 1995 put the number of people employed by the mafia at 9 million. That figure would have to be based on a very broad definition of mafia affiliation – it would have to include anyone working in an enterprise where organised crime exercises influence. Luigi Magliuolo, “Evolution and International Effects of Russian Organised Crime”.

⁴⁵ Tom Hunter, “Russia’s Mafias: the New Revolution”.

saying that the mafia controls 40% of private business and 60% of state-owned companies.⁴⁶ The 1997 report on Russian organised crime from Center for Strategic and International Studies refers to MVD sources stating that 40% of private business, 50% of Russian banks and 60% of state-owned companies are controlled by organised crime.⁴⁷ Rensselaer W. Lee III writes in an article on post-Soviet nuclear trafficking that economic assets controlled directly or indirectly by organised crime include 70 per cent of Russia's banks, according to Russian police and security officials.⁴⁸ It is of course extremely difficult to establish the extent of organised crime's part in the economy. But for those who try, it becomes all the more important to substantiate estimates by explaining what the calculations are based on and how relevant terms are interpreted, e.g. 'control'. The estimates from Russian sources that most observers refer to, usually those of the MVD, are seldom accompanied by such information.⁴⁹

2.4.3 Russian Organised Crime Abroad

Russian organised crime has long been an international phenomenon. A tentative survey of ROC activity in different countries was made at the 62nd Session of the Interpol Assembly in Turkey in 1996.⁵⁰ It showed that internationally ROC is involved in financial fraud, prostitution, smuggling of raw materials, weapons, stolen cars, tobacco, alcohol, drugs, antiques, gold and precious metals and stones, in extortion and human trafficking. It is also a major player in the oil and real estate markets. After the fall of the iron curtain, ROC was at first most active in the U.S., Eastern Europe, Turkey and Germany. In Eastern Europe the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Poland were particularly exposed to it.⁵¹ Today ROC is thought to be active in more than 50 countries. Estimates of the number of ROC groups operating in foreign countries vary from 200 to 1,000. They have exported enormous sums from the Russian Federation. Sergej Stepashin, former Head of the Federal Security Service, Minister of Justice, Minister of Internal Affairs and Prime Minister and presently (June 2001) Russia's Auditor-General, stated in 1998 that they had been draining Russia of USD 1.5–2 billion a month.⁵²

The MVD's assessment of organised crime at the turn of the century echoed those of many others – Russian organised crime has reached a level where it constitutes a threat to Russia's national security.⁵³ It is expanding in all spheres of the economy and constantly attempting to

⁴⁶ Nicolas Marsh, "The Russian mafia – how much power beneath the hype?", p. 1.

⁴⁷ CSIS, *Russian Organised Crime*, p. 25.

⁴⁸ Rensselaer W. Lee III, "Post-Soviet Nuclear Trafficking: Myths, Half-Truths, and the Reality".

⁴⁹ But the most frequently cited figures may not be very misleading. One can find comparable estimates of organised crime in other countries. According to a special report from a conference organised by the National Trade Association of Italy in Milan in November 2000, criminal associations control 20 per cent of the country's companies. (See for example "Every Fifth is with the Mafia", *BBC Russian Service*, 14 November 2000, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/russian>). Italy is known as the cradle and stronghold of organised crime in the Western world. Still, it is far from improbable that organised crime should be significantly more powerful in Russia than it is in Italy, as conditions in modern Russia have been exceptionally conducive to crime, and Russia, too, has a strong tradition of organised criminal activity.

⁵⁰ Aleksej Mukhin, *Russian Organised Crime* [in Russian], p. 189.

⁵¹ At one point it was rumoured that ROC had more than 3,000 foot soldiers in Prague. There was little the police could do – all the ROC representatives were officially employees of perfectly legal enterprises. *Ibid*, p. 189.

⁵² *Segodnia*, 10 November 1998. Similar figures can be found elsewhere. In 1997, Louise Shelley at the American University in Washington estimated that ROC money export from Russia after 1991 totalled USD 150 billion (*Izvestiia*, No. 125 1997). But again, it remains unclear what these estimates are based on. Moreover, any estimates of this capital export are bound to be extremely uncertain.

⁵³ The MVD, *The Status of Law Enforcement in the Russian Federation*, [in Russian], p. 7.

establish control over the most profitable spheres of production, trade and finance. Integration of interregional and international criminal structures is gaining momentum. Contacts and links with foreign criminal groups and legal economic companies are being consolidated and expanded. More than a fourth of all criminal groups, and in the economically most developed regions up to a half, have been laundering money through legal commercial structures, including foreign, by purchasing real estate and investing capital in different sorts of legal business. Organised crime has advanced further into the sphere of politics. Power structures are becoming ever more criminalized, as criminal groups are increasing their efforts to penetrate legislative and executive organs of state power. A significant share of the income from illegal activity is spent by criminal structures on bribing state officials.⁵⁴ The fight against organised crime has been made the number one priority by the MVD.⁵⁵

2.4.4 The Overall Crime Picture

Organised crime has been a driving force behind Russia's constantly worsening crime rate. The MVD concluded in its report for 1999 that crime was still on the rise.⁵⁶ The number of crimes registered in 1999 increased by 16,3% compared to 1998. All in all more than three million crimes were registered during 1999. The number of premeditated murders and attempted murders was 31.000, which is 5,4% more than in 1998, and there were 47.700 cases of serious bodily harm (up 5,5% from 1998). The murder rate made Russia one of the world's most violent societies – with 20 persons killed for every 100.000, it was three times that of the U.S. (6,3 per 100,000).⁵⁷ The MVD noted that the aggressiveness and brutality of crimes seemed to have been significantly strengthened. The crime level measured in number of crimes for every 100,000 citizen rose from 1,760 in 1998 to 2,051 in 1999. The growth was noticeably above average in the number of crimes for profit, including crimes for profit with the use of violence. The MVD concludes that the profit motive was becoming ever more important.

2.4.5 The Problem of Information

Again, one should be aware of special problems surrounding information and statistics. Statistics may conceal rather than reveal. What do they really tell us? What are the reasons for changes in the number of registered crimes? Are we talking about changes in the actual number of crimes, or do the statistics reflect changes in the efforts to fight crime? These are questions that would arise from similar statistics in any country. But reading Russian statistics can be puzzling beyond this, and one should approach them with more caution than usual. In Soviet times statistics were not supposed to give an idea of what the world was like. They were there to confirm the correctness of the Party's ideology and prognosis for society's development. This way of thinking has not vanished; one may find that the veracity of statistics is subordinated to various political motives. Or a reader of Russian statistics may be left with the impression that they have been written not to make sense of something, but to satisfy the demands of bureaucracy and superiors. Keeping this in mind, it should be noted that

⁵⁴ Various sources estimate this share to make up ca one half of the total income. See e.g. Johan Bäckman, "Russian organized crime".

⁵⁵ The MVD, *The Status of Law Enforcement in the Russian Federation*, [in Russian], p. 12.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ CNN Special on Russian crime: "Crime (in Norwegian)", *CNN.no Spesial – Russland 2000 – Politikk*, <http://cnn.vg.no/SPECIALER/2000/russland/russia.issues/content/crime.htm>.

official Russian sources on crime on the whole convey the impression that efforts are made to bring out the scope of the problem. If their information fails to convey the true state of affairs, that may be the result of a lack of resources, or the fact that a significant number of crimes are not reported. Crime is probably worse than these figures indicate. It is possible that only a minority of crimes are officially registered, something Russian authorities would not deny. Under the headline ‘Submerged Part of Criminal Iceberg: 7 Million Crimes a Year’, the newspaper *Slovo* (‘Word’) 27-28 January 1999 depicted the magnitude of crime in Russia as far greater than official sources say.⁵⁸ In the article it was claimed that about 10 million crimes are committed in Russia every year; the deputy minister of internal affairs quoted the estimate from a press statement. The gap between the actual number of crimes and what is officially recorded is thought to be widest in the sphere of economic crimes. It is assumed that barely one tenth of all economic crimes committed are detected.

On the other hand, there is also a possibility that the MVD is exaggerating the crime problem. The ministry may have an interest in overstating the criminal threat in order to have its budgets boosted. The estimates of the scope of organised crime in particular have made some observers sceptical. Vadim Volkov suggests that the threat from organised crime may be deliberately magnified as part of a strategy to conceal links and circumstances that the MVD and the FSB would prefer to obscure: “[...] the power of criminal syndicates is largely inflated, not least in order to veil the main agents that actually control the transition to the market, namely, private protection companies created by and linked to the Interior Ministry (MVD) and the Federal Security Service (FSB).”⁵⁹ And of course, organised crime’s penetration of organs of state power raises the question of the MVDs integrity as a source of information.

2.5 Organised Crime’s Use of Violence

It is difficult to get an exact picture of OC violence in Russia, but no observers would doubt its massive scope. Thousands of murders have been attributed to criminal organisations. Only a small minority of these murder cases have actually been solved. Links to OC are often assumed, but can seldom be proved. Assumptions are based on indications. The murder victim may be known as a member of a criminal group, which makes it likely that the murder is an internal OC affair. Or the victim may be known for his or her anti-OC stand, which makes it probable that he or she should be on some hit list. The murder may carry the marks of a professional killer, which points to organised crime. The professionalism of the assassin(s) is an important reason for the low clear-up rate, the other main reason being corruption.

Changes may be taking place in the behaviour of ROC. Russia’s criminal organisations have come to realise that business can be done on other terms than those involving violence, and this is being reflected in their practices. Vadim Volkov at the European University in St-Petersburg has voiced such views:

⁵⁸ Cited in Shobha Gaekwad, “Organised Crime in Russia”.

⁵⁹ Vadim Volkov, “Organized Violence, Market Building, and State Formation in Post Communist Russia,” p. 43.

The use of violence was very extensive in the middle of the 1990s, but since then it has abated, simply because the leaders of OC decided that it cost too much. Negotiations are better and cheaper for them, too. They have found out that capitalism works.⁶⁰

In a historical perspective it might seem reasonable to expect such a development. The struggle for former Soviet property is approaching an end. Most disputes have been settled, at least for now. The settlements involved an unprecedented use of violence, most of it at the hands of criminal organisations. They used violence against each other.⁶¹ They used violence against competitors; they used it to establish control over any profitable enterprise.⁶² They also used it against anybody else who was seen as a threat to their interests, including politicians, public servants and journalists.

It is the use of violence against this latter category of victims that makes organised crime stand out as a source of terrorism in Russia, terrorism characterised by a fusion of politics and economic crime. In “Chronicle of Political Murders in Russia (1992-1998)”, Maksim Balutenko and Vladimir Pribylovskij note that

not all misfortunes that happen to politicians, journalists or public figures are certain to have their causes in politics. It is entirely possible that the majority of terrorist acts in relation to politicians in Russia do not have political, but economic causes (this is particularly relevant in the cases of businessmen playing politics, and politicians who are no strangers to business). Of course, some crimes of this kind can also have purely material motives. But since few of these crimes are solved, we are entitled to assume anything about them: from absurd, pure chance to a conspiracy with the aim of removing a political enemy.⁶³

The edited version of the chronicle⁶⁴ does not include political murders and assassinations in Chechnya, Dagestan and North Ossetiya. It contains 55 entries about murders and assassinations, each involving one or more victims. The victims are public officials, members and representatives of political parties and organisations, and journalists. A significant number of those representing political organisations were also involved in business.⁶⁵

⁶⁰ In a statement to the Norwegian news agency *NTB*, *Aftenposten*, 18 February 2001 (translation by author).

⁶¹ One of the more spectacular examples of intracriminal violence: 11 November 1996 13 people were killed when a bomb exploded at the Kotliakovskoe Cemetery in Moscow during a memorial service for Mikhail Likhodej, the slain leader of the Afghan Veterans Foundation. Police authorities said the killing was linked to a longstanding feud between two rival branches of the charity fund that was set up to help disabled victims of the Afghan war. It was seen as a rich prize, which organised crime battled over, as the foundation had been granted lucrative tax exemptions. The Moscow Prosecutor’s office said the attack was probed as terrorism, and that the hunt for the guilty would be lead by Interior Minister Anatolij Kulikov himself. See Andrej Biriukov, “The Problems of the ‘Afghan’ Fund Were Solved in Accordance with the Experience from the War in Afghanistan [in Russian]”.

⁶² People in top Russian enterprises were among the victims. One of the directors of the computer company VIST, Russia’s biggest producer of computers and a partner of Microsoft, was killed by a contract killer outside his home in November 1999 (See *Lenta.ru*, 28.12.1999, <http://lenta.ru/internet/1999/12/28/vist/>). But the ‘oligarchic’ elite has not become victims of assassins.

⁶³ Maksim Balutenko & Vladimir Pribylovskij, “Chronicle of Political Murders in Russia (1992-1998) [in Russian]”. Translation by author.

⁶⁴ Presented by FreeLance Bureau. For reference, see bibliography.

⁶⁵ A more extensive chronology of killings linked to organised crime in Russia has been compiled by William A. Cook and Gregory Baudin-O’Hayon as part of an on-going project at the University of Pittsburgh. Their list goes back to 1981 and includes both successful and attempted murders. It does not focus on particular groups of victims. The authors note that “the distinction between politician, businessman and criminal continues to blur in Russia and the FSU states.” See William A. Cook & Gregory Baudin-O’Hayon, “A Chronology of Russian Killings”, p. 117.”

The most high-profile example of a murder of a politician in post-Soviet Russia is that of Galina Starovoytova. On 20 November 1998, Starovoytova, a Duma deputy and one of Russia's most prominent liberals, was assassinated at her home in St.-Petersburg by unidentified assailants. Many saw this as a politically motivated contract killing.⁶⁶ But there is good reason to argue that this interpretation of the event clouds the main point – that Starovoytova was assassinated because she was seen as a potential threat to somebody's very material interests. She was known as an honest politician who had taken a firm stand against corruption and other dubious practices of Russian politics. Criminals and corrupt politicians were rumoured to fear that she was about to reveal information, which would expose their crimes and put an end to profitable dealings. There have been numerous cases like this in Russia during the last decade. But most of them have been low-profile murders on local and regional levels. Politicians and public officials have been killed because somebody had very strong economic incentives to have them removed.

Moreover, ROC has been exceptionally prone to see violence as an option. It is often argued that organised crime is market-oriented, not victim-directed.⁶⁷ Criminal organisations generally prefer to use corruption and co-option rather than violence, and to establish symbiotic or collusive relationships rather than confrontation.⁶⁸ ROC certainly has made use of these non-confrontational approaches. But it has also been less hesitant to use violence than most of its colleagues elsewhere. The potential profits have been so huge, and, most importantly, the risk of being caught so small. This has lowered the terror threshold. There have been several non-criminal targets for Russia's criminal organisations – crusading journalists,⁶⁹ officials who have been investigating organised crime, recalcitrant bankers and businessmen, and state institutions and personnel. And there are so far few indications that they will be less victimised in the future.⁷⁰ It wouldn't seem unreasonable to expect a change in the behaviour of organised crime now that the spoils of the Soviet state have been divided and new ways of doing business may be established. But it is too early to say whether changes will lead to a lower level of violence.

2.6 Less Grey, More Black and White?

If crime is a product of motive and opportunity, then conditions in Russia and the FSU have been such stuff as crime is made on. It would be hard to find other examples of states where circumstances have been more favourable for criminal activity. The Soviet system and the shortages resulting from its policies led to the establishment of criminal structures that were better able than anyone else to capitalise on *perestrojka* and the reforms of the Yeltsin years.

⁶⁶ U.S. State Department: *Patterns of Global Terrorism: 1998*, "Eurasia Overview".

⁶⁷ See e.g. Petrus C. Van Duyne, "Implications of Cross-Border Crime Risks in an Open Europe".

⁶⁸ See e.g. Phil Williams, "Terrorism and Organized Crime: Convergence, Nexus, or Transformation?".

⁶⁹ From the collapse of the Soviet Union till mid-year 2000, 120 Russian journalists were killed for doing their job, according to information from Russia's Union of Journalists. Most of these murders were thought to be the works of criminal organisations in tandem with corrupt officials and politicians with something to hide. See *CNNNorge*, 31 July 2000.

⁷⁰ A recent high-profile case: 28 February 2001 the President of Russia's Federal Notarial Chamber Anatolij Tikhen'ko was assassinated by an unknown assailant. Investigators told the radio channel *Ekho Moskvy* that "Tikhen'ko had tried to bring transparency and accountability to the corruption-ridden notary business, and likely became a victim of those who profited from that same corruption". See "*Russia's Most Authoritative Notarius Has Been Killed*," *Nezavisimaja gazeta* 2 March 2001, http://www.ng.ru/events/2001-03-02/2_notary.html; and *Russia Reform Monitor*, No. 824, 2 March, 2001.

Compared to other countries, it is possible that ROC has achieved unique strength vis-à-vis national authorities.

However, when making assessments or predictions about ROC, one has to keep in mind the unique nature of the opportunities for enrichment, be it downright criminal or just questionable, that Russia has offered. It is a fact that traditional mafia enterprise – extortion, racketeering, smuggling, prostitution and the like – is more developed in Russia than in most other countries. Still, ROC has amassed most of its fortune and built its strength by exploiting the same sources of income as all the prominent players in the Russian economy, including the so-called oligarchs. The bulk of their assets stems from rigged privatisation auctions, embezzlement of government funds and foreign aid, tax fraud and illegal export of raw materials. But the economic conditions and policies that brought crime in Russia to its heights have changed. OC's main sources of income are drying up. Privatisation is close to completion, foreign credits are becoming increasingly hard for Russia to obtain, tax authorities have become more resolute, and the new leadership in the Kremlin appears to be tough on crime in more than words. Russia's profit makers will have to adjust to this. The adjustments they make will shed light on the nature of Russian crime. Technically speaking, any Russian company might qualify as a criminal organisation. It would be impossible to draw a line between licit and illicit enterprise in any country. What we have is a continuum with the most law-abiding at one end and the least law-abiding at the other. Russia may tilt towards the negative pole more than many countries. But to follow an opportunistic strategy of grabbing what's worth grabbing when legislation is vague or absent and law enforcement weak, is one thing, to engage "in systematic criminal business" is another matter.⁷¹ Some of Russia's criminals and dubious characters will probably accept that the heydays of easy stealing are over and find more tolerable trades; others will make most of their money in the criminal spheres. There is reason to believe that there will be a more discernible divide between opportunists and casual thieves on the one hand and true, consistently criminal organisations on the other, between soft and hard criminals. So far that divide has been more blurred than in more developed democracies.

3 BOLSHEVIKS, NATIONALISTS AND MAD PENSIONERS

Besides growing crime, post-Soviet Russia exhibited several traits and trends conducive to the emergence of terrorism. The demise of the Soviet system was followed by a number of developments that could have been expected to spark violent protest and a more traditional, political kind of terrorism than that carried out by criminal organisations.

Russia had been the heart of a super power. In the course of a few years, the super power status was gone. Russia was completely unable to maintain the position of the Soviet Union. The loss of prestige and influence was enormous. The rest of the world looked at with a combination of worry and pity. To a nation exceptionally concerned with its own standing and special mission in the world, this loss was devastating to self-esteem. To regain Russian greatness would seem a plausible motive for violent protest on the part of Russian nationalists against those they

⁷¹ From the MVD's definition of Organised Crime.

considered responsible for the downfall – the new political leadership, profiteers, foreigners, Jews and other minorities.

The Soviet system had proved bankrupt in every way, but there was no agreement as to what should replace it. The enthusiasm and consensus that seemed to prevail in the days after the failed coup in August 1991 did not last long and was soon followed by disagreement and bitter conflict, culminating in the violent events of October 1993. Russia was marred by confrontational politics and a lack of consensus. It was feared that Yeltsin's course of action in 1993 would open up a new front. Hard-line opponents could resort to terrorism, and they would feel justified in doing so by the president's use of force.

Not only were the reforms of the Yeltsin regime the object of intense controversy. They also produced some very invidious results. Or they were sabotaged or ignored, which left the field open to criminals and others who had nothing but personal enrichment in mind. The unfairness of the privatisation deprived most Russian citizens of what was supposed to be their rightful inheritance. Unemployment would hit many, and many more would experience months without wages or pensions being paid. Monetary reforms would wipe out bank savings of a lifetime. For those who were unable to get by on their own, social security was all but absent. And formal structures and procedures for voicing opposition, protests or complaints did not work.⁷²

Be it longing for bygone national greatness, for the social and personal security that the Soviet system had provided,⁷³ plain xenophobia, a deeply felt resentment towards Russia's dirty capitalism and the hideous injustices it produced, desperation caused by hopeless living conditions – many would seem to have incentives to try and change the country's course through drastic measures. It seemed likely that terrorism, as 'politically motivated violence' could become a serious problem in Russia. And Russia did see examples of opposition, frustration and desperation being expressed through acts of violence.

3.1 The Left

Russia has had several fringe parties, organisations and associations that have propagated revolutionary, extremist and nationalist policies. Judging by their rhetoric, some of them could have been expected to carry out acts of a terrorist nature, and some have. However, it should be noted that rhetoric is a poor indicator. Otherwise moderate Russian politicians can make statements with a nationalist or chauvinist content that would have ruined the career of a politician in a Western country. Rhetoric may inspire terrorism, and that may be a criminal offence. But there may also be a long way from words to deed, or no link at all, or the deeds may not seem to match the words. All this often appears to be the case in Russia.

⁷² An opinion poll conducted by the All-Russian Centre for the Study of Public Opinion (*Vse-rossijskij Tsentr Izscheniia Obshchestvennogo Mneniia/VTsIOM*) showed that the percentage of Russian citizens who wanted to live as they did before 1985 grew from 45 at the start of 1993 to 58 two years later. Cited in E. Starikov, "The New Trade Unions Facing Temptation of Fascism [in Russian]".

⁷³ Few Russians feel that they can rely on the police to provide adequate protection. A poll presented by the research institute ROMIR (Russian Public Opinion & Market Research - *Rossiiskoe Obshchestvennoe Mnenie i Issledovanie Rynka*) in June 2000 showed that more than 60 % of the population had limited or no confidence in the police in this matter. See *Agentstvo Politicheskikh Novostej*, 5 June 2000, <http://www.apn.ru/lenta/2000/06/05/20000605192525.html>.

The climax of political confrontation in post-Soviet Russia came with the violent showdown between the President and the Supreme Soviet in October 1993. Several opposition movements on the radical left were involved on the losing side. Among them was the Bolshevik ‘Working Russia’ (*Trudovaia Rossiia*) of Viktor Ivanovich Anpilov. Some considered ‘Working Russia’ a potential instigator of terrorism. As part of what has been referred to as ‘the uncompromising opposition’ (*neprimirimaia oppozitsiia*), ‘Working Russia’ has been consistently opposed to the post-Soviet reforms. But fears of terrorism have been unjustified. As for the participation of ‘Working Russia’ in the events of 1993, that chapter was closed when most of those arrested and accused were pardoned in an amnesty declared by the First State Duma in February 1994.⁷⁴

Further out on Russia’s extreme left, several smaller groups have committed terrorist acts. An anarchist group calling itself the ‘New Revolutionary Initiative’ (*Novaia revoliutsionnaia initsiativa*) was behind an explosion at the Military Commissariat in Moscow’s Northeastern district⁷⁵ 9 October 1996. 22 December the same year they set off an explosion near a diplomatic facility in Moscow, and 6 March 1997 they blew up a truck in a Moscow alley in a failed attempt to set fire to a store. In each case the ‘New Revolutionary Initiative’ claimed responsibility, which is unusual for terrorists in Russia, and the mass media received written statements explaining the aims of the perpetrators.⁷⁶ The New Revolutionary Initiative has claimed responsibility for several terrorist acts since then. Two young women from the group were arrested in connection with two explosions at the entrance of FSB premises 13 August 1998 and 4 April 1999.⁷⁷

A slightly more unconventional example is that of a group calling itself ‘the Revolutionary Communist Union of Youth and Bolsheviks’ (*Revoliutsionnyj kommunisticheskij soiuz molodězhi i bolshevikov*), which caught public attention in 1997.⁷⁸ Along with affiliated groups it destroyed or made preparations to destroy symbols of the Tsarist past. 1 April 1997 they blew up a monument to Tsar Nicholas II in the Tajninskij district outside Moscow. Three months later they did the same with the monument on the grave of the Imperial family on the Vagan’kovskoye cemetery in Moscow. On the night of 6 July the same year they placed explosives inside the monument that was being built to Tsar Peter I in Moscow.⁷⁹ These acts received considerable attention, but caused relatively little damage, and it appeared that they were not intended to injure anybody. With names such as ‘The Revolutionary Military Council’, ‘The Workers’ and Farmers’ Red Army’ and ‘The People’s Commissariat for Internal Affairs of the USSR’, the groups claiming responsibility obviously represent nostalgia for the Soviet days. But as terrorism this did not represent much of a challenge. It was difficult to see the campaign as a severe threat to the state’s security. Blowing up symbols of the long

⁷⁴ The amnesty also included those accused in connection with the putsch in August 1991.

⁷⁵ In this study, Russian administrative units are rendered in English as follows: *rajon* – district (part of town or city), *okrug* – area, *kraj* – territory, *oblast’* – province.

⁷⁶ Sergej Borodin, “The Blowing-Up of the Monument to Nicholas II.” Borodin wrote in 1997 that the ‘New Revolutionary Initiative’ was the only organisation in Russia that had declared itself ‘terrorist’.

⁷⁷ *Lenta.ru: v Rossii*, 25 February 2000, <http://www.lenta.ru/russia/2000/02/25/terrorism/index.htm> Printed.htm.

⁷⁸ The organisation’s home page can be found at <http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/Lobby/8317/ryclrus.html>.

⁷⁹ The activists were ready to blow the monument up, but allegedly decided to call the act off to spare passers-by. See *Natsional’naia sluzhba novostej*, 25 July 1997, <http://www.nns.ru/archive/chronicle/1997/07/25.html>; *LENTA.RU*, 15 March 2001, <http://lenta.ru>, “The FSB Suspect Young Communists of Organising the Blowing-Up of the Monuments to Peter I and Nicholas II”, *Natsional’naia sluzhba novostej*, 1997, <http://www.nns.ru/chronicle/article/terr2.html>.

gone monarchy, the people behind the acts gave an awkward rather than threatening impression.⁸⁰ However, some of the same groups were also thought to be involved in acts with potentially more devastating effects. An attempt was made to blow up a gas pipeline in the Ljubereckij district of Moscow in November 1997. And one of the suspects in that act fled Russia for Czechia on a false passport in September 1999, shortly after an explosion in a shopping centre in Moscow.⁸¹

3.2 The Right

In terms of membership and organisational discipline, the leading right-wing association in Russia is ‘Russian National Unity’ (*Russkoe Natsional’noe Edinstvo*). Russian National Unity (RNU) is a paramilitary organisation of undisguised fascist orientation.⁸² It was founded in August 1990 by Aleksandr Barkashov, a former council member of the patriotic movement ‘Memory’ (*Pamiat*).⁸³ RNU supported the putsch in 1991, and it was actively involved on the side of the President’s enemies in the autumn of 1993. For this, Barkashov and several others were arrested, and local RNU units were disbanded. However, after the amnesty in February 1994, the organisation was quickly re-established.⁸⁴ Officially it had about 5,000 members in 1994. The organisation’s own figures were higher – in March 1995 it declared that its membership ran in the tens of thousands. It also claimed to have subsections in more than 300 cities. The RNU newspaper *Russkij poriadok* (‘Russian Order’) was reported to have a circulation of 150,000 – 200,000.⁸⁵ Officially, RNE now has local organisations in more than fifty of Russia’s 89 administrative units (*sub’ekty*).⁸⁶ Towards the end of the 1990s, journalists’ and other observers’ estimates of membership ranged from 10,000 to 100,000. While there is reason to believe that the lower figure is the more accurate, at least for active members, RNU did grow during the decade.⁸⁷

RNU has made great efforts to form ties with organisations and institutions that exercise power and authority. The organisation has hoped to gain influence and support by being perceived as a strong, reliable ally of ordinary people, who want to be protected from injustice, poverty and crime. It has been particularly eager to establish contacts with military and law enforcement

⁸⁰ The blowing-up of the monument in the Tajninskij district was not investigated as terrorism. The penal code’s articles on ‘vandalism’ and ‘hooliganism’ were applied. In a claim of responsibility, ‘the Workers’ and Farmers’ Red Army’ and ‘the People’s Commissariat for Internal Affairs of the USSR’ stated that the act was a warning not to move Lenin’s body out of the mausoleum. See Sergej Borodin, ‘The Blowing-Up of the Monument to Nicholas II’; and Sergej Borodin, ‘The Terrorists Carried out a ‘Suspended Destruction’’.

⁸¹ *LENTA.RU*, 15 March 2001. The suspect applied for political asylum in Czechia, but received a refusal from the Czech authorities.

⁸² Russian National Unity presents itself at <http://www.rne.org/vopd/index3.shtml>.

⁸³ Aleksandr Barkashov was the organisation’s supreme leader, and his followers have often been referred to as ‘Barkashov’s men’ (*barkashovtsy*). His writings have formed the basis of political education. The strong position of the leader and the rigid structure of the organisation are among RNU’s fascist traits. Members wear uniforms and use a fascist-style salute. RNU’s programme contains substantial elements of fascism and racism: Russia should be a unitary state based on ‘Russian order’. Ethnic Russians (‘Great Russians’, White Russians and Ukrainians) should make up 85%, and the rest consist of non-Slav peoples indigenous to Russia, which they should consider their only motherland. See ‘The Main Provisions of the Programme of the Movement ‘Russian National Unity’, <http://www.rne.org/vopd/abc/osnova.shtml>.

⁸⁴ Sasha Sherman, ‘RNU and Barkashov’.

⁸⁵ ‘Russian National Unity [in Russian]’, *Natsional’naia sluzhba novostej*, 1996, <http://www.nns.ru/parties/rne.html>.

⁸⁶ Sherman, Sasha, ‘RNU and Barkashov’.

⁸⁷ *Moscow News*, 9-15 July, 1998, p. 5; cited in William D. Jackson, ‘Fascism, Vigilantism, and the State,’ p. 35.

personnel, and also with trade unions.⁸⁸ For the most part, these efforts have met with little success. RNU's fascist attributes and militant ways seem to have scared off what might have been considered potential partners. But there hasn't been a united front against RNU among Russia's more respectable organisations and official institutions.⁸⁹ Some local and regional authorities have cooperated with it. There have been cases of military units supporting RNU programmes.⁹⁰ There have also been examples of RNU units gaining semi-official status as voluntary militia (*druzhniki*) authorised to conduct patrols and maintain local order. RNU detachments have also functioned as police auxiliaries.⁹¹ These arrangements are of great importance to the RNU – they increase the organisation's opportunity to exercise influence, and they fit in nicely with its efforts to be viewed as an upholder of order and defender of the Russian people. Not surprisingly, a pattern of harassment of ethnic minorities has accompanied these arrangements.

The RNU has repeatedly demonstrated its willingness to use violence, and not only against non-Slavs, but also against political opponents or economic actors, public officials and politicians who are deemed to be depriving ordinary citizens of what is rightfully theirs, e.g. constitutional rights or wages.⁹² As part of a broader strategy to gain support and sympathy from ethnic Russians, this use of violence is that of vigilantes rather than terrorists.⁹³ So far the RNU has been biding its time. The organisation tries to build confidence among ordinary people, hoping that misrule and chaos eventually will make an RNU take-over of power seem necessary to save Russia (parallels have been drawn to the advent of the Nazis in Germany).⁹⁴ In such a scheme, terrorist tactics would play a secondary part. Other, smaller fascist and racist organisations may pose more of an immediate terrorist threat than the RNU. Some of them

⁸⁸ In March 1994, an agreement was signed between RNU and 'the Confederation of Free Trade Unions of Russia' (*Konfederatsiia svobodnykh profsoiuzov Rossii*) about joint efforts to form a 'national-social movement'. At the time the Confederation of Free Trade Unions (later renamed 'National Association of Russian Trade Unions') had more than 100,000 members, and it grew to become Russia's third largest. RNU clearly hoped that discontent among workers would take a militant turn. However, this strategy proved unsuccessful. See E. Starikov, "The New Trade Unions Facing Temptation of Fascism [in Russian]"; and William D. Jackson, "Fascism, Vigilantism, and the State".

⁸⁹ RNU has presented itself as a defender of the Russian Orthodox religion and culture. Some local RNU organisations have developed working relations with, and received some support from, Orthodox church officials. See William D. Jackson, "Fascism, Vigilantism, and the State".

⁹⁰ RNU seems to have been most successful in southern Russia, where it has established a training centre in the Stavropol'skij territory. The military component in RNU activity has been important from the beginning. In 1992 the organisation was reported to have hundreds of 'fighters' (*boeviki*) who were using the training facilities of the former 'Voluntary Association for Assisting the Army, Air Force and Navy' (*Dobrovol'noe obshchestvo sodejstviiia armii, aviatsii i flotu / DOSAAF*), a Soviet mass organisation where civilians received training in different military disciplines. See "Russian National Unity [in Russian]," *Natsional'naya sluzhba novostej*, 1996, <http://www.nns.ru/parties/rne.html>.

⁹¹ In the South-Eastern District of Moscow, the RNU was reported to enjoy a special relationship with the prefect. An agreement with the district authorities granted the RNU the right to uphold law and order in a local park, where they set up their Moscow headquarters. However, a verdict by the Butyrskij Municipal Court in Moscow in April 1999 disbanded RNU's Moscow branch on the grounds of a number of offenses. See Sasha Sherman, "RNU and Barkashov".

⁹² See e.g. E. Starikov, "The New Trade Unions Facing Temptation of Fascism [in Russian]".

⁹³ *Vigilante* – "a person who tries in an unofficial way to prevent crime, or to catch and punish someone who has committed a crime, esp. because they do not think that official organizations, such as the police, are controlling crime effectively. Vigilantes usually join together to form groups." See *The Cambridge International Dictionary of English* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

⁹⁴ William D. Jackson, "Fascism, Vigilantism, and the State," p. 37. Frustration with the failure of this strategy led a closed plenum of the RNU in September 2000 to expel Barkashov from the organisation, on the grounds that he was responsible for its crisis. 26 of RNU's 55 regional branches were said to support the decision. See *Lenta.Ru: V Rossii*, 22 September 2000, <http://lenta.ru/russia/2000/09/22/rne/>.

have been formed and are headed by people who have been or are close to the RNU. There is on the whole a considerable overlap between organisations on the right fringe. Many activists seem to be involved in several organisations and have multiple memberships.⁹⁵ One local leader of ‘the Russian Party’ (*Russkaia partiia*), who had also been active in the RNU, was arrested by the FSB during the ‘Whirlwind’ anti-terror operation (*Vikhr’-Antiterror*). Weapons were found during a search of his home, and he was charged with illegal acquisition and storage of weapons.⁹⁶ In June 1998 the same person had been found guilty of stirring up ethnic enmity, of degrading the national dignity of Jews and people from the Caucasus, and of organising illegal associations (a local cell of the Russian Party).⁹⁷ The leader of the ‘People’s National Party’ (*Narodnaia natsional’naia partiia*) has received a prison sentence for similar offences. To create conflict between ethnic groups (*razzhiganie mezhnatsional’noj rozni*) is a violation of the Russian penal code’s article 282. This article has been used several times against activists on the right wing.⁹⁸

A special section of the MVD has been set up to monitor racist juvenile groups. It is estimated that there are at least 8,000 right-wing skinheads in Moscow. As in the West, there are a number of organisations, which seem to blend into each other. To an outsider they make up a floating picture of groups with the same aims. Their names remind one of those of their Western counterparts – ‘Moscow Skin Legion’ (*Moskovskij skin-legion*), ‘Russian National Union’ (*Russkij Natsional’nyj Soiuz*), ‘Bulldogs’ (*Bul’dogi*), ‘United Brigade 88’ (*Ob’edinennaia brigada 88/OB 88*), ‘New Order’ (*Novyj poriadok*). The international racist organisation ‘Blood and Honour’ is also present in Russia (*Krov’ i chest*). ‘New Order’ allegedly has close ties to larger right-wing parties and organisations like RNU. There are also said to be ties between the right-wingers and criminal organisations.⁹⁹

3.3 The Desperate

Patterns of harassment, persecution and violence by Russian right-wing extremists seem to resemble those found in other countries. A kind of terrorism that appears to be more unique to Russia and some of the other ex-communist states is that exercised by people in reaction to the problems they experience in their daily lives, problems that are often the result of political and economic mismanagement or crime. Widespread illegal protests involving the use of violence for a while looked like a plausible scenario in Russia, when millions of employees, pensioners and people depending on social security had to live for months without the wages and payments they were entitled to. As the problem of payment arrears grew, so did the number of strikes. They increased by 900% from 1993 to 1994. There was a similar rise in the number of labour disputes in general. This trend continued well into 1995.¹⁰⁰ While the number of strikes would decrease towards the end of the 1990s, there were cases of protest approaching

⁹⁵ This makes it hard to assess the true extent of right-wing extremism. In 1996 Russia’s Presidential Commission on Human Rights reported that more than ninety radical right-wing groups were active in the Russian Federation, and together they published some 150 periodicals. Some of these groups are very small, and it is the same individuals who make up the core members in many of them. William D Jackson, “Fascism, Vigilantism, and the State”.

⁹⁶ Liudmila Butuzova, “We Say ‘Party’, but Imply ‘Gang’ [in Russian]”.

⁹⁷ Zhdakaev, “Weapons for the Dictatorship of the Nazis [in Russian]”.

⁹⁸ See e.g. Iurij Vasil’ev, “The Good Person from the Ultra Right [in Russian]”.

⁹⁹ Vadim Lebedev, “Skinhead [in Russian]”.

¹⁰⁰ See E. Starikov, “The New Trade Unions Facing Temptation of Fascism [in Russian]”.

terrorism, when factory managers and mayors in provincial towns were taken hostages by desperate people, who would call this ‘legal violence’ (*legal’noe nasilie*), as more moderate means had been tried, but yielded no results.¹⁰¹ However, the number of such incidents was limited.

In a few cases that got a lot of attention, difficult living conditions made unstable individuals commit acts of terrorism. The most spectacular of these was the hijacking in December 1997 of a passenger plane under way from Magadan to Moscow by a pensioner who demanded USD 10 million and free passage to Switzerland. The amateur hijacker was arrested soon after arrival in Moscow. The lives of the passengers were not in danger at any time; most of them were unaware what was going on. The hijacker was later described as mentally unstable, and the hijacking as a desperate attempt to escape from a miserable existence in a provincial village.¹⁰² In another incident that reached the front pages in the beginning of November 1998, a car exploded outside the Kremlin. The owner, another desperate pensioner, was protesting the notorious pensions arrears. Two Kremlin guards and a soldier from the Presidential regiment were injured. Doctors concluded that the perpetrator showed signs of schizophrenia.¹⁰³

3.4 Why Has ‘Classical’ Terrorism Been So Limited?

Relative to the scope of violence by groups and organisations in Russia after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the ideologically and socially motivated terrorism discussed in this chapter has been limited. The pessimist scenarios from the first post-Soviet years did not materialise. Compared to some Western democracies, right- and left-wing extremism in Russia has not been particularly violent. The material conditions that sparked strikes, unrest and some acts of terrorism were such that one might have expected far more serious consequences – Russian citizens facing unendurable shortages, injustice and infringement of their rights did not resort to violence easily. The question has been asked how Russia got through its first decade without *more* terrorism from ideological extremists and those who lost out not only in the battle for former Soviet property, but also for the bare essentials of human existence.

During Soviet times, violence was no option for those with grievances or alternative ideological agendas, and the absence of a tradition of violent protest may help explain why terrorism of a classical kind did not become more widespread in post-Soviet Russia.

Some observers have emphasised the point that both extreme leftism as well as right-wing radicalism have been particularly discredited in Russia – the former by the failure of the Soviet system, the latter by the Soviet people’s experiences during the Second World War. This could make extremists cautious and hesitant to use terrorist tactics. Such violence might provoke devastating responses against the perpetrators from a population largely hostile to left- and right-wing radicalism alike. It has been pointed out that in such a perspective, extremists may increase their following with the dwindling of the generations that experienced the Second

¹⁰¹ K.V. Zharinov, “Russian: the Road to Terror 1990–1998 [in Russian]”

¹⁰² *Natsional’naya sluzhba novostej* (‘National News Service’), 10 December 1997, <http://www.nns.ru/archive/chronicle/1997/12/10.html>.

¹⁰³ *Rossiia-On-Lajn* (‘Russia-On-line’), 5 November 1998, http://novosti.online.ru/misc/news/98/11/05_028.htm.

World War and the Soviet system.¹⁰⁴ In today's Russia, however, ideological extremism involving the use of violence does not appear as a more pronounced threat than in many of the world's most stable democracies. In proportion to the size of the population, there are by all probability more Neo-Nazis in some states in Central and Western Europe than in Russia.

The Soviet system had numerous control mechanisms to prevent, expose or curb deviant behaviour. It has been argued that some of these are still operating, or rather, that people behave as if such mechanisms were still in place. And so, it follows, there is a general reluctance to engage in any activity that might attract attention or arouse suspicion from authorities as well as neighbours. Obviously, anything that might be seen as part of a terrorist scheme would qualify as such an activity. Like the argument about right- and left-wing extremism being discredited in Russia, this presumption about the importance of the Soviet control mechanisms will lose its relevance with the passing of time, as the number of people with the totalitarian experience decreases. Moreover, this argument is hard to reconcile with the increase in crime, including violent crime, which followed the collapse of the Soviet regime.¹⁰⁵

4 ETHNIC SEPARATISM, RELIGIOUS STRIFE, BLOOD FEUDS. THE CASE OF CHECHNYA.

4.1 The Caucasus

Violence in a context of ethnic separatism, religious strife and blood feuds has become the focus in the discourse on terrorism in Russia. Geographically, the Caucasus region is the centre of attention.

¹⁰⁴ This generation-related approach to assessing extremist following in Russia has been frequently applied in some magazines and newspapers, among them *Moskovskie novosti*. The paper's issue of 24-30 April 2001 has a front page with a picture of two teenagers making the Nazi salute, below the headline "The Next Generation".

¹⁰⁵ Among Russian observers in particular, one may also come across quasi-scientific explanations that verge on a kind of racism. The relative absence of violence is seen in relation to certain 'characteristics' of 'the Russian psyche', and it will often appear, though this is rarely explicitly stated, that the causes for behavioural patterns are to be found in people's genes. Such ideas are surprisingly widespread even among highly educated circles of the population. The late professor Alf Grannes observed that "the 'fact' that Caucasians are 'savage warriors' is explained in pseudo-scientific terms as a genetically determined phenomenon. Patterns of behaviour are not determined by circumstantial or cultural factors, but are directly related to inherent qualities: 'it's in their genes'. When the genetic material is perceived as the key to human behaviour, it is all the more important to watch out for gene pools of bad quality, such as those which 'predispose Chechens for crime'. The nation's gene pool must be protected against such bad influences. This really brings us back to the 'biological racism' of the 1920s and 30s that was widespread in Norway and Western Europe. [...] What is particularly striking in Russia today, is the extent to which such stereotypes are being embraced far outside the ranks of organised racists and nationalist extremists [...] even among the liberal-democratic urban intelligentsia and leading politicians." See his article "Caucasian 'Niggers' – Russia's New 'Jews' (in Norwegian)", *Aftenposten* 10 December 1996.



Interethnic conflicts flared up in the Caucasus region as soon as Moscow started to lose control over the Soviet empire and the country began falling apart. Differences in religion, culture, traditional political loyalties, grievances from a distant past and antagonisms resulting from Soviet rule have fuelled conflicts and made the area one of the world's most unstable. Armenia and Azerbaijan have been fighting over the enclave Nagorno-Karabakh. Abkhazians have mounted a successful breakaway from Georgia. The first serious conflict to erupt within Russia was the one between Ossetians and Ingush, which almost ended in full-scale war between the republics of North Ossetiya and Ingushetia. The most serious conflict by far is the one that has been going on almost throughout the post-Soviet period between federal Russian authorities and Chechens.

In addition to ethnic and political antagonisms, the Caucasus peoples have strong criminal structures that are intrinsically linked to political authorities, and this must be seen as one of the reasons why the Caucasus is an exceptionally violent environment, victims of outright war not included. Terrorism is a comparatively frequent occurrence. The intertwining of crime and politics makes it difficult to classify a terrorist attack as criminal or political. Still, if 'political terrorism' is understood to include terrorist acts inspired by ethnic animosity or separatism, then there can be little doubt that the majority of political terrorist activity in the Russian Federation has taken place in the Caucasus area, more specifically the republics of Dagestan, Chechnya, Ingushetia and North Ossetiya. Such terrorism has also been a frequent occurrence in the independent states of the Caucasus. The people behind this terrorism are typically unknown, to make the problem of understanding motives and aims behind terrorism even greater. Origins and motives of terrorist groups in the FSU tend to be obscure. As a rule no one claims responsibility for terrorist acts. This mistiness made the American researcher Dennis A. Pluchinsky conclude that "those academics and journalists who have propagated the

idea of a new faceless terrorism haunting the world would find support for their theory in the former Soviet Union.”¹⁰⁶

In addition to being burdened by criminal and political terrorism, the Caucasus is also afflicted by a third form of terrorism that makes the terrorist landscape of the region appear even more intricate. Pluchinsky calls it ‘blood-feud terrorism’ and defines it as ”retaliatory acts of violence against an individual or facility solely to satisfy the vengeance code of a blood feud or clan vendetta.”¹⁰⁷ In the clan-based social structures of the Caucasus region, the blood feud is significant. It was revived after the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the following upsurge in violence. Authorities in the area have made little efforts to hinder its practice. Quite the contrary, the Ingush president Ruslan Aushev has proposed legalising blood feuds, arguing that such vendettas are ”a fact of life” in the Caucasus.¹⁰⁸ Vendettas can also be waged against adversaries across cultural boundaries. The traditions of Chechen blood feud involve the possibility that Chechens who claim the right of blood revenge have carried out or will carry out violent actions against Russians. Pluchinsky notes that this would be considered a personal settlement, so there wouldn’t be any need for public claims of responsibility.¹⁰⁹ There are differing views as to whether blood feuds should be considered a form of terrorism. However, there is no doubt that they generate a substantial part of the violence in the Caucasus. Violence of this kind could become a growing part of the terrorist landscape not only in the Russian Caucasus area; it could also have an impact on the security environment in Russia proper, if avengers decide to attack there.

The anonymity of the terrorism in the Caucasus has attracted the attention of observers. Theories have emerged that there are unknown actors with a hidden agenda for the region. There have been references in the Moscow and Caucasian press to a ‘third force’ that is reportedly responsible for many of the terrorist incidents in the region. The objective of the ‘third force’ would be the continued destabilisation and volatility in the Caucasus area. This force could be criminal elements that find ethnic tensions and military hostilities to be conducive to criminal activities.¹¹⁰ There have also been allegations to the effect that much of the terrorism in Russia’s Caucasus region is orchestrated from abroad by the agents of hostile governments. Whoever may be behind terrorism in the Caucasus, the level of terrorist activity has led some, like Pluchinsky, to conclude that these regions may become the primary generator of international terrorism.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁶ Dennis A. Pluchinsky, “Terrorism in the Former Soviet Union”. Pluchinsky also points to other aspects that he considers to be characteristic of the political terrorist threat in the FSU: Its basis is primarily ethno-nationalist. It is domestic in its origins and in its targeting. The most frequent targets have been public transportation, military, and police personnel. There has been little international terrorist activity taking place in the region.

¹⁰⁷ Dennis A. Pluchinsky, “Terrorism in the Former Soviet Union”.

¹⁰⁸ *RFE/RL Newslines – Russia* 11 June 1997; <http://www.rferl.org/newsline/1997/06/1-rus/rus-110697.html>. Blood feuds may also be a reason why the demographic situation is such that Aushev 20 July 1999 issued a decree permitting male residents of the Republic of Ingushetia to have up to four wives. *RFE/RL Newslines – Russia* 21 July 1999; <http://www.rferl.org/newsline/1999/07/1-rus/rus-210799.html>.

¹⁰⁹ However, the notion of personal versus communal or public is problematic in tribal societies. The idea of co-liability, i.e. that clans assume responsibility for individual members’ conduct and safety, implies that the clans will both exact revenge for attacks on individual members and pay reparations if a member has offended or injured members of other clans.

¹¹⁰ “The Terrorist Act in Vladikavkaz: There are Various Versions [in Russian]”, *Nezavisimaya gazeta* 11 July 2000, p. 2.

¹¹¹ Pluchinsky, Dennis A., “Terrorism in the Former Soviet Union”.

4.2 The Case of Chechnya

Chechnya has become the focal point in studies of terrorism in the Russian Federation.¹¹² The breakaway republic seems to offer the ultimate examples of all the kinds of terrorism mentioned. However, the history of Chechnya and the events leading up to the present situation are quite exceptional, and one should be careful not to use the Chechen example to generalise. Indeed, Chechnya so far appears to be a unique case. But by its extremes it does offer a multi-faceted illustration of what may cause and amplify terrorism.

4.2.1 Historical Background

Today's conflict between Chechen separatists and Russian authorities can be viewed as a continuation of a fight that started centuries ago. No people in the Tsar's empire fought more vigorously than the Chechens to remain independent.¹¹³ Soviet rule brought more hardship to the Chechens than to any other people in the country. Stalin accused them of collaboration with the Germans during World War II, and they were collectively sentenced to exile. Almost half a million were deported to Kazakhstan, and thousands perished from hunger, frost and disease on the way. Most of those who survived returned as the political situation after Stalin's death made it possible, but they were not all allowed to return to their home regions; some parts of Chechnya remained closed to them. After the fall of the Soviet Union, the Chechen-Ingush republic was dissolved, and two republics took its place, one Ingush and one Chechen. In November 1990 the Supreme Soviet of the Chechen republic passed a declaration of sovereignty, and a year later the republic was declared an independent state. The federal authorities did not accept this, but little was done to deal with the situation. Moscow pretended Chechnya was still a subject of the Federation, and the Chechens demonstrated on every occasion and in every way that this was not so.

But more important than formalities was the fact that Chechnya had huge arsenals of Soviet weaponry on its territory. This made it possible for the Chechens to launch effective resistance when Moscow, after three years of *de facto* Chechen independence, decided to intervene militarily in December 1994, on the grounds that the situation was constitutionally unacceptable – the breakaway was incompatible with the Constitution's provisions on the integrity of the Russian state. The Russian attempt to bring Chechnya back into the fold ended in humiliation and defeat. In September 1996, the secretary of the Russian security council Aleksandr Lebed' and the leader of the Chechen resistance Aslan Maskhadov negotiated a settlement – the Khasaviurt accords – that granted Chechnya independence in everything but name. The question of formal independence was too difficult to handle; in vague wordings it was pushed five years into the future. The federal authorities insisted Chechen secession was out of the question; the Chechens made it clear that anything but full independence was unacceptable. Elections were held, and Maskhadov became president.¹¹⁴

¹¹² The Chechen name of the republic, transliterated through Russian, is *Ichkeriia*.

¹¹³ The qualities of Chechen fighters acquired mythical proportions, not least among Russian writers, who created images that are still very vivid in Russian perceptions of the Chechens.

¹¹⁴ The elections were generally considered to have been fair (observers from the OSCE had been present), which made Maskhadov's legitimacy as president greater than that of his predecessor Dzhokhar Dudaev, Chechnya's first president, who had been killed by a Russian rocket in May 1996. Dudaev had dissolved the Chechen Popular

4.2.2 Terrorism Escalating

With the invasion by federal Russian forces into Chechnya in October 1999, the setting changed. The Khasaviurt accords were declared void by Moscow, and a warrant was issued for Maskhadov's arrest. He was no longer considered a legitimate leader of a people. Now Russian authorities regarded him as the head of a terrorist regime, and Russian policy was not to negotiate with terrorists, but to bring them to justice. Since the start of the second invasion, Moscow has been consistent in speaking of the Chechen separatists as terrorists, and it underscores links between the Maskhadov regime and foreign Muslim fundamentalists and terrorists. Moscow has insisted that its handling of the Chechen problem is as legitimate as any other country's fight against terrorism.

There is little doubt that Chechnya had become the generator of much terrorism in the Caucasus. From the very start in 1994 the conflict with federal authorities produced terrorism not only in Chechnya itself, but also in Ingushetia, Dagestan, North Ossetiya and Russia proper. In 1995 the Chechens took their struggle deep into Russia. Led by the field commander Shamil' Basaev they took hundreds of civilians hostage in the Russian town of Budënnovsk.¹¹⁵ The conflict also generated terrorist attacks on Russian targets in Turkey, where there is a sizable Chechen diaspora. There were even threats from Chechen rebels to attack Russian cities with the use of nuclear and radiological materials.¹¹⁶ Inside Chechnya the security environment deteriorated further after the settlement in 1996. President Maskhadov lost all authority, and there were several attempts at his life by anonymous adversaries. Kidnappings and abductions became a major industry for criminal groups and militias. Abductions occurred all over the North Caucasus region. Most involved ransom demands, but there were also kidnappings that looked politically motivated, as in the case of Valentin Vlasov, President Yeltsin's representative to Chechnya. He was kidnapped by unknown assailants 1 May 1998 and released 13 November.¹¹⁷

During the first war 1994–1996, official Russian sources frequently called attention to the presence of foreign mercenaries and particularly Muslim fighters on the Chechen separatists' side. The latter did not leave when the fighting seized. Among these foreigners were people whom Russian authorities would not be alone in labelling terrorists. Russia claimed that Chechnya represented a case of violent transnational Islam. The significance of this aspect in the conflict is difficult to assess. However, there is no doubt that *Mujahidin* with links to Middle Eastern and Southwest Asian terrorists have aided Chechen insurgents with equipment

Assembly by force in 1992 and introduced direct presidential rule. Chechnya was rife with internal conflict prior to the Russian invasion in 1994.

¹¹⁵ Budënnovsk became the scene for a series of terrorist acts or attempted terrorist acts in the autumn of 2000. See *Novosti.ru*: 9 September 2000 – “Chechen Fighters Prepared New Explosions in Budënnovsk”; 13 September 2000 – “Terrorist Act Prevented in Budënnovsk”; 10 October 2000 – “In a Budënnovsk Hotel a Bomb Was Found”; 30 October 2000 – “In the Centre of Budënnovsk a Car Was Blown Up”; and 24 November 2000 – “In the Centre of Budënnovsk on a Bus Stop an Explosive Went off”, <http://www.pyat.ru/111.phtml?id=20001124101858>.

¹¹⁶ According to Russian sources, weapons of mass destruction have been used by separatists on the battle field. Just after New Year 2000, the Russian High Command declared that it had halted the federal offensive because the separatists defending Groznyj were fighting back with chemical weapons. See *Aftenposten*, 2 January 2000.

¹¹⁷ U.S. State Department: *Patterns of Global Terrorism: 1998*, “Eurasia Overview”.

and training.¹¹⁸ Habib Abdul Rahman, alias Ibn-al-Khattab, an Arab *Mujahidin* commander who is said to have links to Usama Bin Ladin, has reportedly played a leading role.¹¹⁹

To Russian authorities these connections served as an important part of the justification for the second invasion by federal forces into Chechnya in October 1999. In the autumn of 1999, a series of bombings in Russian cities claimed hundreds of victims. On 4 September, a truck bomb exploded in front of an apartment complex at a Russian military base in Bujnask, Dagestan, killing 62 persons and wounding 174. On 8 and 13 September, powerful explosions demolished two Moscow apartment buildings, killing more than 200 persons and wounding 200 others. The string of bomb attacks continued when a car bomb exploded in the southern Russian city of Volgodonsk on 16 September, killing 17 persons and wounding more than 500. A caller to Russian authorities claimed responsibility for the Moscow bombings on behalf of the previously unknown 'Dagestan Liberation Army', but no claims were made for the incidents in Bujnask and Volgodonsk. Russian police suspected insurgent groups from Chechnya and Dagestan conducted the bombings at the request of Shamil' Basaev and Ibn-al-Khattab, but conclusive evidence of this has not been presented.¹²⁰ In response to the apartment building bombings and to the armed incursion by Basaev and Khattab into Dagestan from Chechnya, Russian troops entered Chechnya in October.¹²¹ The forces fighting the Russian army were mostly ethnic Chechens and supporters from other regions of Russia, but it is clear that they also received some support from foreign *mujahidin*.¹²²

Russian Casualties in Chechnya: According to a report by the Russian information agency Interfax from 8 June 2000, since the start of the 'anti-terrorist operation in the Northern Caucasus' 2 August 1999, 2,357 Russian soldiers and policemen had been killed and 6,888 wounded. 278 of these were killed between 2 August and 30 September, before the main offensive in Chechnya itself. From 1 October 1999 to 8 June 2000, 2079 were killed and 5,904 wounded. The ratio of killed to wounded servicemen is 1:3. Compared to similar conflicts around the world, that is a very high death rate.¹²³

The massive force used by the federal authorities seems to have crushed the separatists' capability to conduct military operations. The Russian forces captured the last separatist stronghold in the Argun Gorge in February 2000. A year later some sources estimated the separatist resistance to consist of approximately 6,000 men, of whom one sixth were considered to be wholly dedicated fighters for Islam and Chechen independence.¹²⁴

The loss of military capability may have made the separatists focus more on terrorist activities as their main *modus operandi*.¹²⁵ In terms of terrorism, the conflict reached a new phase when

¹¹⁸ A *mujahidin* is a person who is engaged in *jihad*, which is interpreted in various ways. It may be taken to mean an effort to further the cause of God, i.e., the cause of good against evil. A more specific interpretation of *jihad* is that of armed struggle for the triumph of Islam. This latter meaning has become the dominating interpretation of *jihad*, but the word implies much more than 'holy war'. The word *mujahidin* is generally used as a synonym of '(Muslim) freedom fighter'.

¹¹⁹ U.S. State Department: *Patterns of Global Terrorism: 1998*, "Eurasia Overview".

¹²⁰ It was reported that Russian authorities detained more than 11,000 people in the massive security sweep that followed the bombings in September 1999 (*Scout Report*, 17 September 1999, <http://scout7.cs.wisc.edu/page/00011126.html>).

¹²¹ The incursion into Dagestan by Basaev and Khattab was evidence of powerful military capability. It involved 2,000 men.

¹²² U.S. State Department: *Patterns of Global Terrorism: 1999*, "Eurasia Overview".

¹²³ Reuven Paz, "Suicide Terrorist Operations in Chechnya".

¹²⁴ *Parlamentskaia gazeta*, 17 February 2001, p. 2. The remaining 5,000 men were presumed to have joined the struggle because they feared reprisals against their families or themselves if they did otherwise.

¹²⁵ "Chechen Rebels Turning to Terrorism", *STRATFOR.com*, 9 January 2001, <http://www.stratfor.com>.

Islamists launched suicide operations.¹²⁶ On 7 June 2000, two suicide bombers blew up a truck loaded with explosives at a checkpoint on the grounds of an OMON unit at Alkhan-Iurt in Chechnya.¹²⁷ Two policemen were killed and five wounded. 11 June 2000, a former Russian soldier who had converted to Islam and joined the Islamist rebels carried out another suicide operation at a checkpoint in Khankala. The checkpoint was destroyed and two OMON senior sergeants were killed. The suicide operations were probably one of the reasons why Russian officials from mid-year 2000 seemed to place even more significance on the activity of the Islamist rebels. On 15 June in Berlin, President Putin declared that an ‘International of terrorists’, financed from abroad, was using Chechnya as a bridgehead to attack Russia.¹²⁸ Several campaigns have been or are being carried out to quench terrorism in the Caucasus region.¹²⁹ In February 2001, operation *Modzhakhed* was launched, with the aim of fighting “international terrorism in the Caucasus”.¹³⁰ Efforts have been made to cut supply lines for arms, ammunition and money. Anti-terror measures in Chechnya have pushed Chechen fighters into the neighbouring Russian republics, and also into the independent states of the Caucasus.¹³¹

4.3 Russian Security Policy and the Fight against Islamist Terrorism

Russia’s policy vis-à-vis Chechnya is indicative of a growing emphasis in Russian security and foreign policy on counter-terrorism, in particular on the fight against Islamist terrorism originating or receiving support from outside the Former Soviet Union.

From the middle of the 1990s, Russia has been emphasising security cooperation in its relations with the states of the Caucasus and Central Asia, both in the form of institutions and practical measures. In 1996, the ‘Shanghai Five’ was launched, a security forum comprising Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Its initial agenda centred on border-related confidence-building measures. The agenda was expanded at a 1999 summit to cover a wider range of security-related and economic issues. The broadened agenda includes developing cooperative measures to address issues such as international terrorism, drug trafficking and arms smuggling.¹³² At a summit in June 2001, it was announced that

¹²⁶ Reuven Paz, “Suicide Terrorist Operations in Chechnya”.

¹²⁷ OMON = *Otriady Militsii Osobogo Naznachenii* – ‘police units for special missions’.

¹²⁸ Cited by Reuven Paz, “Suicide Terrorist Operations in Chechnya”.

¹²⁹ The beforementioned ‘Whirlwind-Antiterror’, and also ‘Shield’ (*Shchit*) and ‘Dynamite’ (*Dinamit*). The crime level in the Northern Caucasus remains high. The occurrence of hostage-takings has decreased in Chechnya’s neighbouring republics, but not inside Chechnya. See *Trud*, 31 January 2001.

¹³⁰ *Segodnia*, 8 February 2001. One element in the *Modzhakhed* operation is the formation of ‘support groups’ among the local population, a kind of people’s militia.

¹³¹ Notably Georgia, for which the influx of Chechen fighters and civilians has become a major problem, and a sore point in its relations with Russia. The central government in Tbilisi has never had the authority needed to rule the country effectively, particularly not after the defeat in the war against the secessionist Abkhazians. The problems caused by the war in Chechnya have made a weak Georgian government even weaker. Russian authorities claim that Chechens have established a terrorist base on Georgian territory (in the Pankisi gorge (*Pankisskoe ushel’e*)), a base where not only Chechen, but also Arab terrorists are said to have taken refuge. Georgian authorities deny that this is the case, but admit that gangs of Chechen bandits are a problem. It is reported that Chechen field commanders are in complete control in the district of Akhmetskij (*Akhmetskij rajon*), which is called “an Ichkeriia in miniature”, and Georgian authorities are totally unable to handle the situation. Russia has demanded that action be taken by the Georgian government to crush the Islamists, and so have Georgian parliamentarians. See *Kommersant*’, 11 January 2001; *Versty*, 30 January 2001; and *Interfaks*, RIA “Novosti”, *Granitsa Rossii*, No. 3, January 2001, p. 2.

¹³² *The Times Of India Online*, 4 January 2001, <http://www.timesofindia.com/040101/04worl3.htm>.

Uzbekistan would be joining the group as a full member, and the reformed alliance would be renamed ‘the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation’ (SCO).¹³³ President Putin said about the goals of the new organisation “Russia’s withdrawal from Central Asia after the fall of the Soviet Union created a vacuum in this region, which religious extremists and terrorist organizations are trying to fill.”¹³⁴ As a result, the countries in the region require assistance “to fight organized crime, terrorism, and trafficking in drugs and weapons,” Putin insisted.¹³⁵ The participants at the summit agreed to a convention designed to combat terrorism, separatism and extremism and legally defining them as punishable crimes; as well as to the establishment of a joint anti-terrorist centre to be based in the Kyrgyz capital of Bishkek.¹³⁶

Another framework for Russian security policy is the Commonwealth of Independent States, and Russia has been pushing the same agenda there. At a CIS summit 25 January 2000, then acting President Putin opened the forum with a discussion of “the fight against terrorism”.¹³⁷ He emphasised the need to stand together against international enemies who might exploit “weak points in the post-Soviet space”.¹³⁸ It also appears that what is perceived as a security threat from violent Islamists has reinforced Russia’s dominance in the CIS. At the same summit, the leaders of Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan declared in meetings with President Putin that their “number one” concern was fighting terrorists and extremists, and they said the solution lies with Russia.¹³⁹

There is sufficient evidence of Islamist insurgent and terrorist activity in Central Asia and the Caucasus. It is clear that these activities are aided and to some extent initiated from outside, notably Afghanistan. However, it would seem obvious that Russia’s policy is not merely a matter of fighting terrorism. Russia is accused of using counter-terrorism in relation to Chechnya as part of a strategy to make the whole of the Caucasus an exclusive sphere of Russian influence, and to cover the independent states of the region into submission. Similarly, it is a widely shared assessment that the Russian leadership is using the fear of terrorism as an issue to bond the Central Asian region and have Moscow re-emerge as the dominant force there. Moscow may be able to reassert its position. Russia can provide guarantees that other states cannot give, or rather, will be very reluctant to offer. Moreover, for all the awfulness that Islamist and separatist terrorism has brought to Russia, the legitimate right to combat terrorism has become a useful instrument for the Russian government, many would argue. It has been exploited to fend off criticism against Russian policies that can hardly be characterised as relevant to or justified by the need to fight terrorism, or, if they are provoked by terrorist acts, are totally out of proportion to them.

¹³³ *Russian Reform Monitor*, 15 June 2001, <http://www.afpc.org>.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ *Central Asia & Caucasus Analyst*, Biweekly Briefing, 2 February 2000, http://www.cacianalyst.org/Feb_2_2000/RUSSIA_and_SOUTH-CAUCASUS.htm.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ *RFE/RL*, 26 January 2000, <http://www.rferl.org/nca/features/2000/01/F.RU.000126152721.htm>.

5 CONCLUDING REMARKS

During the last ten years, Russia has been afflicted by terrorism in most of its aspects. This study has focused on three main contexts where terrorism has been generated: extremism based on ideological or social motives, organised criminal activity, and ethnic and separatist conflicts. There may be changes taking place as to the relative significance of the two latter spheres as sources of terrorism, with a possible shift towards more terrorism generated by ethnic and separatist conflicts.¹⁴⁰

As a generator of violence and terrorism in post-Soviet Russia, ideologically and socially motivated activism has played a marginal part, contrary to what many expected in the early 1990s. The violent acts of political extremists in Russia have been limited in scope, and they have often had little more than symbolic significance. It would not seem likely that this kind of terrorism should become a greater threat, as the social and economic conditions that are seen as conducive to such violence appear less unbearable now than they were during the 1990s.

If terrorism becomes the most important mode of fighting for the Chechen separatists, then the Caucasus may produce an even larger part of terrorism in Russia in the years to come than it has done up until the present (June 2001). Any substantial decrease in violence and terrorism in Southern Russia and the Caucasus would seem to be conditional upon massive surveillance and control measures, more massive than what appears practically and economically possible. Chechnya may become an equivalent of Northern Ireland, albeit worse. There is no solution in sight. Terrorism will almost certainly continue to be a frequent occurrence in Chechnya itself, and terrorist acts will probably also be carried out in Russian core areas, such as the big cities. And counter-terrorism will be Russian authorities' main approach to neutralising the separatists, as the FSB, Russia's most efficient anti-terror organ, has taken over operating command in Chechnya.

Russia's criminal structures have used violence not only against competitors in both legal and illegal markets, but also against innocent outsiders, legitimate authorities and anyone who could be seen as a threat or obstacle to business. This violence makes organised crime stand out as the prime focus of attention in explorations into the causes and sources of terrorism in Russia. The enormous scope of violence by organised crime is indicative of the economic upheavals that have taken place in Russia, and of how some of the most valuable property and profitable businesses have been distributed.

Organised crime's part in terrorism in Russia may also serve to illustrate what seems to be a trend in some parts of the world: Traditional mafia enterprise is ready to use violence in ways that are similar to those of political terrorist and insurgent organisations, the Colombian cocaine cartels being the prime example. And some terrorist and insurgent organisations seem to put greater emphasis on the trade and transactions that finance their activities than on

¹⁴⁰ According to the MVD, the number of crimes involving explosives, a favourite terrorist weapon, has decreased, from 1167 in 1997 to 634 in 2000. Most of these crimes have been committed in Chechnya, Dagestan and the Stavropol'skij territory. But the number of casualties has increased. In 1997, there were 579 casualties, 189 of whom died, whereas the corresponding figures for 2000 were 1418 and 277. It is further noted that the MVD is particularly worried by the sharp increase in the number of 'terrorist' crimes, from 20 in 1999 to 135 in 2000. 'Terrorist' in this case must be taken to mean acts of violence that have motives of a non-material character, most probably separatist. See *Vremia MN*, 7 February 2001, p. 2.

political objectives; business may become their ultimate *raison d'être*. Hence, the boundaries between organised crime and terrorist and insurgent movements may become blurred or irrelevant. In parts of Russia, notably the Caucasus region, one may find this exemplified, and perhaps to a larger extent in other former Soviet republics (Central Asia).

But the bulk of organised violence and killings in Russia should be seen as an output of the unique combination of treasures to be won and a minimal risk of being caught for any crime, including murder. Russia's criminal organisations will hardly become less resourceful or more modest. But they may change their strategy and reduce their use of violence and terror, partly because it costs too much, partly because authorities under Putin are expected to be less tolerant vis-à-vis organised crime and will have more efficient means to implement anti-crime policies. OC will adjust to new realities. Some observers anticipate geographical divides. In central parts of Russia there is reason to expect that economically motivated terrorism will decrease. However, in those Russian regions where criminal structures are particularly strong in relation to legitimate authorities, or may indeed overlap those authorities to a considerable extent, such a decrease would seem less likely.

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