The Secretification of Russian Politics

- recalibrating the counterintelligence state thesis

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From the Foreign intelligence service SVR's webpage (SVR 2017).

INTÉLLIGENCE, fem.
1. *только ед.* Действие по гл. разведать во 2 знач. - разведывать (воен. и спец.). Отправиться в разведку. Произвести разведку местности, занимаемой противником. Разведка на нефть. Разведка полезных ископаемых. Горная разведка.
2. Высылаемая от войсковой части группа для выяснения местоположения противника (воен.). Пешая разведка. Конная разведка.
3. The general name of bodies responsible for the protection of state security, the fight against espionage and wrecking. In the capitalist world, intelligence agencies are the most hated part of the state apparatus for the broad masses of the working people, because they are guarding the interests of the small group of ruling capitalists; In our country, on the contrary, Soviet intelligence agencies, state security agencies are guarding the interests of the Soviet state and therefore they enjoy the deserved respect, the deserved love of the entire Soviet people.
From Ushakov's dictionary, issued 1935-1940 (dic.acamemic.ru 2017).

The Secretification of Russian Politics

- recalibrating the counterintelligence state thesis

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Abstract: Russia is often thought of as a KGB state. This paper analyses the role of the force structures and the role of force structure thought in Russian domestic politics and the possible implications for foreign policies. It compares theories on the force structures and applies them on two policy papers. It concludes that intelligence *groupthink* still dominates Russian domestic politics and Russian foreign policies. But to fully understand the role of the Russian counterintelligence state and the strategies of Russian foreign politics, lessons from other theories must be drawn, complicating comparative IR studies.

Introduction

> *We know perfectly well what is happening in Russia. Russia has a hard-line authoritarian regime with elements of a dictatorial regime. In the middle of 2000 a bloodless coup happened in Russia and the most repressive institution of the Soviet power – the KGB – came to power.*
>
> *Author, lecturer, journalist and editor Yevgeniya Albats Ekho Moskvy, September 2015 (Albats and Zhuravlyova 2015).*

When the call for papers for this workshop opened, it had recently been rumoured that the federal security service, FSB, the foreign intelligence service, SVR, the prosecutor's office, parts of ministries and semi-military units were to merge in into a new ministry of state security, MGB. This gave rise to speculative news stories, claiming that by establishing such a ministry, the Russian regime would in fact reincarnate the infamous Soviet secret service KGB.
Nearly a year has passed and these rumours have not been confirmed, yet recent events make questions on the role of intelligence and intelligence practices in Russian politics possibly even more relevant: the alleged Russian interference in recent elections in Moldova, Macedonia and in the presidential elections in the United States (Miller et al. 2017).

These allegations too have become source of media speculation about the intelligence capacities and the foreign policies of Vladimir Putin's Russia. Foreign policies and intelligence practices, however, do not exist in a vacuum. If we want to meaningfully assess how espionage affects foreign

policy decisions and outcomes in world affairs, we also need to look at the role of the intelligence agencies in domestic politics and the perception of intelligence as a tool in politics, both foreign and domestic. This paper sets out to analyse the role of intelligence and counterintelligence in Russian domestic politics, or to be more specific: the role of the so-called *force structures* and the role of force structure thought in domestic politics and the possible implications for Russian foreign policies. *Is* Russia a counterintelligence state?

In the first chapter, I present the counterintelligence state theory and review some of the newer claims, models and theories that have been put forward regarding the Russian force structures and agency within these structures. In chapter two, I will compare these theories along four topics, testing their mutual compatibility. In chapter three, I put these theories to the test by analysing two recent policy papers. In short, I will attempt to establish whether the counterintelligence state thesis can meaningfully be applied to study of intelligence and counterintelligence in modern day Russia or if their role is better described using other models.

I conclude that Russia has developed some of the traits associated with the counterintelligence state, extensive secrecy, questionable analytical competences, hidebound corruption and inflexible dogmas and that Soviet-style zero-sum intelligence strategic culture *groupthink* is still very much at the fore. Yet, to fully understand the nature and the role of the Russian counterintelligence state in Russian foreign and domestic politics, and the choice of techniques and strategies of Russian foreign politics., lessons from other theories must be drawn.

Chapter 1: the counterintelligence state thesis

When Vladimir Putin was appointed prime minister in 1999, some analysts saw the rising number of officials with a military or an intelligence service background as a conscious political strategy (Renz 2006, 907). This gave rise to speculations, whether Russia was turning into a KGB state, a “counterintelligence state”.
According to Waller a counterintelligence state is characterized “by the presence of a large, elite force acting as a watchdog of a security defined as broadly that the state must maintain an enormous vigilance and enforcement apparatus (...) This apparatus is not accountable to the public and enjoys immense police powers (...)” Whether the civilian government is able to control the security bodies, Waller adds, is an open question, as “the civilian government is so penetrated by the apparatus that there is no clear distinction between the two” (Waller 1994, 13–15).

Pringle in 2000 described the USSR under Andropov as a counterintelligence state. When Andropov became general secretary, he was 68 and had for 15 years chaired the KGB. He was an ideological workaholic and tried to use the KGB to fight corruption and reinstitute political and social discipline. In Pringle’s view he and his *chekists* (from ChK, the first Soviet secret police) greatly weakened the USSR in doing so. The new hawkish methods damaged the image of the USSR, counterintelligence results were meagre, and in fighting dissent by limiting access to new information technology the country in Pringle’s words “missed the information age” (Pringle 2000, 196, 200).
Several scholars have pointed to similarities between Andropov and Putin. Andropov witnessed the 1956 rising in Hungary, which is said to have left lasting impression on him (Bateman 2016, 37), a trauma which, Skak argues, is comparable to the “Dresden trauma” of Putin (Skak 2016, 332). They both saw the secret services as driver of reform (Pringle 2001, 555) and they both placed close associates and friends in key positions to further their political agendas (Pringle 2001, 551)

Many of Putin’s appointees were in fact *siloviki*, people who had served in the so-called power or force structures (*silovyye struktury*), that is special services, power ministries and the troops or units belonging to them. Taylor defines these as the ministry of interior (MVD), the ministry for civil defence (MChS), the ministry of defence (MO), the federal security service (FSB), the foreign intelligence service (SVR), the federal guard service (FSO), the federal border service (FPS), the federal customs service (FTS), the federal custom service (FSKN) and the procuracy (Taylor 2011, 37).

In 2003 Kryshtanovskaya and White compared the composition of the political elite in 1993 and 2002 and documented a sharp rise in the number of people with military and security service background. They claimed that FSB was subject to less civilian control than the KGB (Kryshtanovskaya 2003, 297) and expressed fear that this *militocracy* could turn into a façade democracy like the USSR.
Their term *militocracy* does not imply military dominance as such, but rather resentment towards civilian oversight and control (Kryshtanovskaya 2003, 304). This view echoes the writings of Russian journalist and commentator Alexandr Golts who sees Russian politics being permeated by

militaristic thought, rather than by military men:

> *- The military or the military-industrial complex "are influential only to the degree in which they can offer the Kremlin coherent military explanations to what goes on in the world and possible military answers to existing challenges, but the military establishment (…) does not take part in final decision making." (Golts 2016).*

Both Pringle, Kryshtanovskaya, White and Golts, however, treat the *siloviki* as a unified group. This has been criticised from a number of scholars. Rather than seeing *siloviki* only as a cohort of personnel like Kryshtanovskaya does, Taylor suggests two other approaches. One can analyse the *siloviki* as a clan in Kremlin politics and one can apply a bureaucratic politics approach, by seeing them as a group of state ministries – as corporate actors (Taylor 2011, 37, 57, 66–67).

Among the most persistent critics of Kryshtanovskaya's estimates of elite militarization are Rivera and Rivera (Rivera 2006; D. Rivera and Rivera 2013; D. W. Rivera 2017). While most of their criticisms concern Kryshtanovskaya's methods, they write that "the most pressing gap in the study of *militocracy* lies in the realm of comparative theory testing" and suggest comparing the *militocracy* model with models seeing Russia as a "petrostate", "one-man regime", "dual state" and "patronalistic state".
The term "dual state" was coined by Sakwa, one of the clearest exponents of the view, that Russian politics can be seen as a battle between "real" convictions. He suggest seeing Russian politics as a battle between neo-revisionists and bicontinentallists (Cadier and Light 2015, 65).

Also finding Kryshtanovskaya's conclusions too simplified, van Bladel criticises the approach for not taking into account the many Liberals in the Russian elite. She suggests discerning between outward "ideology" and a less stable operational and organisational "mentality" (Bladel 2008, 39). Building on van Bladel and on strategic culture theory Skak claims that the Russian elite is permeated by a *Chekist* strategic culture, in Russian sometimes dubbed *kto kogo* (who wins over whom). It is this static zero-sum culture that shapes Russian foreign policies, Skak argues, and there was thus an inside-out logic behind Russia's resort to arms in 2014 in that it was domestic concerns and *Chekist* strategic culture that triggered action on Crimea and in Donbass (Skak 2016, 325).

Dawisha sees Russia as a patronalistic state. She places agency within a kleptocracy – a predatory mafia-like structure, that has systematically and deliberately cracked down on free media and undermined democratic institutions under the supervision of Putin (Dawisha 2014).
Ledeneva in her turn places agency within *sistema* – informal networks that have survived the collapse of the USSR and mutated in independent Russia (Ledeneva 2013, 5). Based on personalised loyalty these networks blur the separation of powers, effectively leaving Russian economy and Russian society in a mode of "legal nihilism". The reliance on these networks enables leaders to mobilise and to control, yet it also locks politicians, bureaucrats and businessmen into informal deals, mediated interests and personalised loyalty, inhibiting reform (Ledeneva 2013, 14-15, 221).

The interlinkage within *sistema* between business interests and politics has been vital in a number of regime operations, including obtaining control with internet services and silencing critical media

(Gormsen 2015; Pallin 2015, 22, 25).
The existence and the logics of *sistema* are implicit in Russia (Ledeneva 2013, 211) also so in scholar and commentator Shulman's writings and statements. Like Taylor she suggests seeing *siloviki* as corporate actors. She claims that the power structures make out the main political actors in Russia today and that the political space in Russia is dominated by their internal fights over resources meaning both federal budget and powers (*polnomochiya*). These powers Shulman defines as the possibilities to subject someone to repression, so that she or he will try to buy herself or himself off.
According to Shulman these conflicts are maintained by the Kremlin not allowing any single structure to gain absolute power. The competition between the power structures, is not a repressive campaign (*chistka*), but rather pin-pick repressions where the organisations in turn have the role as "flag ship" - the most powerful organisation. The flag ship right know, Shulman argues, is FSB and the power battle thus being fought primarily within FSB (Gormsen 2017c).

Shulman's views contradict generally held convictions. Looking back over the last 18 years it does seem that the force structures have accumulated an enormous power. The FSB in 2003 took over the border guards, adding about 200.000 personnel to the organization and parts of FAPSI (Bateman 2014, 44) and since 2015 FSB has had the right to open fire on people demonstrations without warning (Makutina and Solopov 2015). In 2016 the 300.000 man strong National Guard was founded and in June 2017 it became clear that the guard have all military units in its command (Decree 236 2017). In 2017 first FSO and then FSB obtained the right to confiscate properties for "state purposes"(Gazeta.ru 2017). But where Kryshtanovskaya and others see an increase in the total size of the force structures (certainly justifying the use of the terms "militocracy" and "militarisation) Shulman sees a competing structure under way, balancing the powers of FSB, SVR, MVD and FSO (Gormsen 2017c), a view also shared by Marten (Marten 2017, 150).

Chapter 2: four cross-sections of the counterintelligence state thesis

Is the counterintelligence state thesis put forward by Pringle in 2000 compatible with the layers of analytical complexity added by the theories, models and claims listed above? *Is* today's Russia a counterintelligence state?

Before returning to either of these two questions, a few deliberations on the clandestine nature of our topic must be made. Due to the interregnum period in the nineties when the secret services lost sway for about a decade and many former agents chose to write their memoirs we know, in fact, surprisingly much about the world views in KGB and in the FSB in the first years of its existence (Marten 2017, 151). We know significantly less about the force structures as of 2017. While leaks and autobiographies occasionally reveal new information, research on current intelligence affairs based on open sources is difficult.

One way out is the cohort techniques applied by Kryshtanovskaya and White, Rivera and Rivera. However, central to the counterintelligence state thesis is its claim that when secret services ascend to uncontrolled power, they tend to bring not only cadres but also secret service techniques and thought into the state apparatus. To test whether Russian society allegedly dominated by force structures is also dominated by force structure *thought*, we must narrow down topics, documents or groups or persons on which or whom to test the counterintelligence state thesis. In doing so we take a calculated risk as Skak does when singling out, analysing and concluding upon the statements of Patrushev, Primakov and Putin (Skak 2016). Similarly, by singling out documents, groups or persons assumed exponents of typical regime thought – we risk omitting factors or individuals much more central to understanding the regime.

In chapter 3, I will analyse the information security doctrine (Decree 646 2016) and the strategy on economic security (Decree 208 2017). While the two documents ought to contain coherent reflections on recent events and future development with possible foreign policy implications, they remain heavily biased policy papers. In this chapter, I will prepare for that analysis by comparing the theories, models and statements made on Russian politics on topics, that are believed to be typical for the counterintelligence state. Do they dilute, contradict or complement the counterintelligence state thesis?

Across authors there seems to be an understanding that counterintelligence states tend to have strong focus on covert action and - perhaps due to lack of control and lack of political competition and perhaps ideology – often also analytical incompetence and internal corruption.

Of the above I will compare theories on the force structures four topics: covert action, ideology, analytical competence and corruption. This is by no means a full list of "counterintelligence state traits" mentioned by scholars. Marten mentions "fear" (Marten 2017, 145), Soldatov "paranoia" (Soldatov 2017) Bateman sees a kinship between FSBs practise of warnings and Andropov's "chats" and "preventive measures" (*beseda* and *profilatika*) (Bateman 2014, 38) Snegovaya sees similarities between Russian informational tactics and the "active measures" of the KGB. (Snegovaya 2016). It is my claim, however, that such "common traits" are too specific or too vague for comparison and analysis.

“Secretification”

One of the core characteristics of a counterintelligence state is a strong focus on secrecy and covert action. Modern Russia seems to have such a focus and by following Russian media one can piece together an idea of the degree to which Russian politics, and economics are subject to “secretification”.

The perhaps most striking example is the steady rise in the percentage of the state budget that has been classified. In the 2015 budget 67 percent of the money designated for national defence was classified, but also other items of expense were partly classified:

> *national economics: 7%*
> *education: 4,3%*
> *health: 3,6%*
> *culture: 0,1%*

In 2016 the secret expenditures made out 22 percent of the Russian state budget. (Tkachyov and Mogilyevskaya 2016). In the 2017 state budget one fourth was classified (Khachaturov 2016). When correcting the budget in May 2017, even the items of expense had been classified (Tkachyov 2017).
Another example of secrecy is a decree issued in 2015, making it illegal to publish any data on military casualties in peace time. The aim was obviously to obscure actual losses and to further deny all military activity in Donbass (Decree 273 2015; Gregory 2015).

Secrecy extends well beyond the realm of state budget and military losses. According to Schulman the secret services no longer trust polls carried out by VTsIOM and FOM and The Federal Agency of Government Communications and Information (FAPSI) therefore performs its own secret polls as do other government organs (Shulman and Peshchikova 2016; Yudin 2016). According to Russian sociologist Yudin, VTsIOM and FOM polls are not subject to censorship, but due to the economic crisis and years of fighting “foreign agents” the state is not the main buyer of polls. This also leaves it to the state to device the questions of the polls, shaping public opinion, and to withhold inconvenient results (Yudin 2016; Napreenko 2017).

The corruption scandals in FSO and MVD that were unravelled in late 2016 and early 2017 and the FSB officials arrested in the *Humpty Dumpty* (*Shaltay Boltay*) case all share one common trait – they have all been classified (grani.ru 2016; TASS 2016; Alekhina and Rozhdestvenskii 2017; Rosbalt 2017). Since 2016 the FSB can help state officials classify information about real estate of their family members, a point I shall return to in the section “corruption”.

When Kremlin in 2015 ended its cooperation with American PR company Ketchum it primarily seems to have been for economic reasons, but apparently the parts had had their controversies. Russian officials were said to have had a hard time understanding that Ketchum could not buy journalists or a least manipulate them (Karasyuk 2015).

This disdain for the media and for open sources is visible statements made by Putin:

- I do not look at the statements made by our partners for the press. I rely on those statements made by our partners during our personal discussions, Putin told journalists in 2005 (Putin 2005).

According to military analytic Golts the Russian regime is permeated with ”*sekyuritizatsiya*”.

> *- The secret service work experience of both the president himself as of those, who make out his surroundings, defines their attitude towards received information: secret, covert actions they consider more or even the only ones important. Those pieces of information you can find in open access are considered disinformation prepared by enemies” (Golts 2016).*

Also commenting on the elite world view Zharkov in early 2017 writes that the Russian political elite sees politics as:

> *- the sum of technologies mainly hidden from the eyes of the public and quite dirty, where the result can be planned in advance and obtained using certain “instruments” to manipulate the masses in the interests of the predominating minority of the «ordained” possessing the truth and the power. The whole world is, thus, described in terms of conspiracy and a battle of secret forces, where the technologies of “the Arab spring” are being opposed by secret service operations, ballot stuffing, repressions (Zharkov 2017).*

The thought that societal processes might be driven by factors beyond the reach of any secret service seems quite alien to the Russian establishment. According to Golts this overstatement of the importance of secret management methods has led to disdain for transparency all together (Golts 2016). This approach to information is quite visible in the information security doctrine and the economic security strategy which I will analyse later in this paper.

Analytical competence

Soviet leaders often ignored intelligence assessments and followed their own beliefs instead (Pringle 1998, 178; Marten 2017, 145). Much indicates that the FSB was completely unprepared for the election fraud demonstrations of 2011-2012 (Soldatov 2017, 400), yet as for latest developments, it is hard to tell lack of analytical competence in the secret services from unwise use of intelligence by politicians. Or even ignoring of intelligence assessments.

In the early 2000s Baev, however, maintained that the security services were often incompetent (Baev 2004, 5). So, does Albats, author of several books on the KGB. She claims that political decisions are often made without consulting experts:

> *- It is absolutely obvious that the decisions being made are not undergoing any expert evaluation what so ever, that when the decision to annex Crimea was made, we know, Putin said it, that he took that decision on his own. You see, in Soviet times such decisions were at least discussed in the Politburo (…) First the decision about annexation of Crimea was made, then The Ministry of Economic Development started calculating how much it would cost. And*

> *that is a huge problem. That is why I say, that kremlin is the main treat for the country (Albats and Bychkova 2014).*

The efficiency of the manual control (*ruchnaya control*) of the Russian president has been subject to much speculation. Putin is said to not to be using the internet but to be presented with three thick leather-bound folders every morning: one compiled by the FSB, another by the SVR and a third by the FSO (Judah 2014). Hill argues that the Russian president's world view has had tremendous impact Russian politics (Cadier and Light 2015, 44). This echoes the often-heard opinion in Russian media that "all decisions are being made depending on who makes the sprint to Putin first" (*kto dobezhít do téla Pútina*) (Albats and Zhuravlyova 2015) (Svanidze and Larina 2013).
Shulman's flag ship metaphor and her claim, that conflicts between the force structures are maintained by the Kremlin also ascribe huge power to the Russian president and his immediate surroundings.

Russian journalist and commentator Frolov points out that the Russian interference in the US elections is the first influence operation in post-soviet Russia and that it strikingly negligent about specialist warnings and the possible diplomatic consequences of the operation (Frolov 2017a). Frolov has also questioned the wisdom of having so many intelligence resources focused on the West, while Russia is experiencing growing numbers of radicalised youth among immigrants from Central Asia (Frolov 2017b; Gormsen 2017a).

Russian Institute for Strategic Studies (RISI) is sometimes described as the main think tank behind major foreign policy initiatives. It was established in 1992 as part of the Foreign intelligence service SVR, but in 2009 became part of the presidential administration. Since then, the analytical capacity has according to a former employee degraded greatly (Nomos 2015). In a report on HIV and AIDS in Moscow RISI scholars argue that the topic is being used as part of an information war against Russia and that it is best fought in corporation with the Russian orthodox church (Guzenkova et al. 2016, 55, 58). The institute is still considered to be very influential (Republic 2017).

Undeniably influential is chief of staff of the Presidential Executive Office and permanent member of the Russian security council Anton Vaino. He has a PhD in economics and is known for his concepts of "capitalisation of the future", the *nooscope* – a device capable of mapping the "collective consciousness of mankind", deciphering the "laws of the market" and predicting economic crises (Vaino et al. 2012, 10, 81–83).

It is a fool's guess whether Vaino rose to power due to his connections, his management skills or due to his superiors sharing his belief in controllable big data. It does, however, seem very likely as Voronkova et al. describe that Russia's clientilistic bureaucracy "has not yet created a formal/rational mechanism for recruiting elite personnel" (Voronkova et al. 2012, 18). Taylor points out another quite probable trait of the Russian power ministries, namely that they are better at carrying out extraordinary tasks than routine ones (Taylor 2011, 107). With wide spread corruption described below and power structures waging wars against each other described above, this is most likely still the case and this might - at times or often - compromise analytical competence of the force structures.

Russian Liberal commentators argue that causal explanations in Russian state economic policy are

primitive to the extent, that it resembles Micronesian cargo cults in its lack of scientific grounding (Latynina 2015; Movchan and Felgengauer 2017) and that "traditional values" propagated by the regime and corruption in the educational system are in fact undermining Russian science (Gazeta.ru 2015; Sokolov 2017).

Corruption

Andropov meant the KBG to be the spearhead in the fight against corruption, yet corruption was widely spread in KGB (Pringle 1998, 180) as was the use of corruption charges as a weapon in internal political conflicts (Pringle 2000, 198).

In modern Russia corruption is rampant, yet according to Ledeneva the nature of corruption has changed. In the USSR *blat* - personal networks - were an economy of favours used to obtain goods and services in short supply, today money is what matters most (Ledeneva 2013, 7–8, 247).

When the Accounts Chamber of the Russian Federation looked into the finances of *Roskosmos*, it found that the Russian space agency could not satisfactorily account for 66 percent of its spending. In its research and development programmes the figure was 89 (Accounts Chamber 2015; Gormsen 2016).

Corruption seems to be omnipresent. The Panama-dossiers showed ties between offshore accounts and people close to Russian president (Anin et al. 2016; Radu 2016; The Guardian 2016; Velikovskiy 2016). FSB, it seems, played a key role in ensuring Russian medals at the 2014 Olympic winter games in Sochi. Besides ensuring Russian medals and boosting Russia's image, there was an economic component in the special operation, apparently athletes had to buy drugs from trainers to stay on the teams and they had also had to send a share up the system, should they win a medal (ARD 2016; Gormsen and Petersen 2016; WADA 2016).

There are many signs of nepotism and favouritism, one example being Shamalov Jr's sudden rise to billionaire-hood after marrying Putin's daughter (Stubbs et al. 2015) and her secret ascend to the chairs two science foundations, overseeing billions of roubles (RBK 2015). The RBK article on Putin's daughters is said to have triggered pressure on the media's owner and firings in the editorial staff (Gormsen 2017b).
Following a series of accusations against prosecutor general Chaika and his sons (FBK 2016), the two latter were anonymised in the Federal Service for State Registration, Cadastre and Cartography, *Rosreestr*, although the law regulating this was passed only this summer
(Koptyubenko et al. 2015; Khimshiashvili et al. 2016; Obukhov 2017).

Rivalry between power structures has been reported widely in Russian media (Kanaev 2017) (Albats and Vorobyova 2016) and this interpretation is supported by several scholars (Marten 2017, 140). As mentioned, Shulman see this rivalry as internal fights over resources meaning both federal budget and powers (*polnomochiya*) (Gormsen 2017c).

If Shulman is right that FSB is currently the most powerful player and the power battle is now being fought within FSB, between The Economic Security Department and the Internal Security Directorate (Gormsen 2017c) one must be cautious when reading statistics about the number of crimes brought to the light by the FSB has tripled in the years 2010-2016 (Petrov and Rogov 2016) and the number of espionage cases reached a ten year high (Soldatov 2017, 400). These figures might very well reflect FSB's fight against other force structures, the FSO, the procuracy and MVDs office for economic security. The latter was officially dismantled in early 2017 after a scandal involving the finding of one ton of foreign currency in cash in an apartment belonging to an MVD employee (RIAN 2017).

In early 2017, Russian internet journal Republic wrote about FSB's influence on politics and business in the Russian regions:

> - *Over the last 20 years leaders of Russian subjects and important figures on the federal political scene have transformed into technical re-distributors of budget funding and curators of small and medium business, for whom the head of the regional FSB constitutes the main danger (…) One of Republics sources points out that one has to count in not only the local siloviki but also people from region, who have left to pursue a career in Moscow: they keep in contact with the local business and support it.*
> - *You are bound to step on someone's interests, warns Republic's source.*
> - *They let any governor work one and a half year, then they start flattening him. If you are working without the support of the president or the president administration it is a matter of time before they eat you (Yakoreva and Potapova 2017)"* .

In other words, Russian regional politics is about pleasing the centre and the regional FSB representative. This has a number of implications. Among those of relevance for this paper is the effacement of dividing lines between politics, secret services, business and law inforcement. If secret services are busy doing business, it seems quite plausible that this must have consequences for the quality of their work related to their intelligence or counterintelligence related functions.

Ideology

While the KGB clearly was an ideological service (Pringle 1998, 176), the notion of any ideological underpinning of the Russian force structures seems absurd in light of corruption described above. While the values of the Russian regime might at times be at odds with those of the West there seems to be no coherent ideology opposing liberal democracy and Western market economy the way Soviet Marxism did.

In fact, some authors downplay the ideological component. Bateman concludes that the primary objective of FSB is to ensure the current regime's survival at all times using extrajudicial means. (Bateman 2014, 46). Former economic advisor to president Putin, Andrey Illiarionov speaks of *omerta* – the moral code of the Sicilian mafia (Dawisha 2014, 335). Soldatov and Borogan in their turn compare FSB to the *mukhaharat*, a secret police operating in some Arab contries and:

> *devoted to protecting the regime, answering only to those in power, and impenetrable, corrupt and brutal in dealing with individuals and groups suspected of terrorism and dissent (Soldatov 2010).*

As is being pointed out by several authors, the regime has done little to distance itself from the crimes committed by the Soviet intelligence services. Exactly as there was no public denunciation of the NKVD's role in the great terror in the nineteen sixties (Bateman 2014, 35), there was none in the nineties (Bateman 2016, 23). The regime in fact sometimes glorifies the past, a fresh example being that the National Guard might reintroduce a Dzerzhinsky medal (Ramm et al. 2017). Statements and decisions made around National Guard boss Zolotov indicate that it will be have its own intelligence capacities and that it is intended to become a political secret service (Stanovaya 2017).

Not an expression of ideology per se either, but certainly a sign of the prestige ascribed to Russian intelligence, is the way in which Russia greets Russian citizens, that have been accused of espionage abroad. When the US extradited 10 Russians in 2010, they met with president Putin and the today most famous of them, Anna Chaplin, became adviser in a state bank and member of the youth organisation of dominant party United Russia (Dmitrienko 2010; RIAN 2010; Solyanskaya and Bolotova 2010).
Perhaps also a tribute to his diplomatic career or a token of gratitude for more clandestine services, Former Russian ambassador to the US, Kislyak, infamous for his many meetings with advisors from the Trump administration, will be given a seat in the upper chamber of the Russian parliament (Bocharova et al. 2017).

Several scholars mentioned in this paper do, however, speak of ideology. Kryshtanovskaya and White speak of "siloviki ideology" (Kryshtanovskaya 2003). Skak, in her turn, speaks of *chekist* group-think shaping foreign policies (Skak 2016). Typical for official Russian foreign policy rhetoric are strong metaphors, that portray foreign influence, particularly Western, as threats (Etkind 2014, 154) or even viruses (Morozov 2015, 145). An exponent of these views is presidential advisor Glazyev, who sees the EU as a US vassal that by expansion and association is seeking to colonise all of Europe (Glazyev 2015, 160). This in many ways echo Dugin who considers Russia as a righteous *Eurasianist* empire standing up against totalitarian-Liberal *Atlanticists (Dugin 2016)*.

It can also be argued, that there has been a dominant narrative of Russia being disenfranchised in the new world order at least since Putin's infamous Munich speech in 2007. In this narrative, Morozov argues, Russia propagates order between states and democracy among them, unlike the West, who propagates democracy (and their right to install democracy) within states and order among them (Morozov 2015, 58).

In 2015 Russian internet ombudsman Marinichev said, that there is no such thing as a free global market, only American dominance and that is was an unpatriotic act to educate programmers as they would all move abroad anyway. According to the businessman the only way to get access to markets is by military presence (Chernykh 2015). Marinichev owns some of Russia' biggest data centres and is said to have lobbied and benefited greatly by new protectionist legislation (Navalniy 2015).

According to Ledeneva doublespeak and doubledeed are intrinsic to *sistema* (Ledeneva 2013, 197) and van Bladel speaks of a marriage of convenience between siloviki and liberals, allowing mutually inconsistent principles to coexist, an outward ideology and and inward operational, situational mentality. Marinichev's statements are thus not necessarily genuine beliefs, but could be rhetoric assumed to be awarded by the regime.

At times, however, normative statements made by representatives of the force structures strongly resemble conspiracy theories or pseudo-science. In May, the online media Meduza reported of a FSB supported programming classes in schools. Here Oleg Krzhazhanovsky from the FSB museum among other things told the children that there would be no wars if the 30 most influential Jews in the world would be isolated and that most processes in global politics are controlled by corporations such as General Motors, Shell, Coca-Cola and McDonald's (Turovskii 2017). This echoes the conspiracy theories of the KGB (Pringle 1998, 177).

The influential Russian security council secretary Patrushev has claimed that the 2014 *Maidan* was a plot aimed at weakening Russia and that forces in the United States – namely former secretary Albright – do not see Siberia and the Far East as rightfully belonging to Russia (Chernenko 2015). Albright has, however, never publicly said so. The claim that she has seems to stem from an interview with General Ratnikov in the Russian government daily newspaper of record *Rossiyskaya Gazeta* in 2006. Here he claims to have entered Albrights mind using old Shamanist techniques, registering there a "pathological hatred to Slavs" and the opinion that Siberia and the Russian Far East ought to be taken over by and run by the world community (Ptichkin 2006).

If the views expressed in such statements are to be taken seriously, they must be taken into consideration when discussing the analytical competence of the force structures and the state apparatus in general.

Chapter 3: putting the counterintelligence state thesis to the test

The four cross sections performed above indicate, that Russia has developed several traits associated with the andropovite counterintelligence state, extensive secrecy, questionable analytical competences, hidebound corruption and inflexible dogmas. The nature the extent of corruption in modern day Russia, however, seems to differ significantly from the corruption characteristic to Andropov’s short reign. Coherent regime thinking is not easily detected, yet traces of zero-sum Chekist thinking, strategic culture and ideology are found.
The models and claims made by especially van Bladel, Skak, Ledeneva and Shulman thus seem to complement the counterintelligence state theory, yet the question remains, does Russian regime rhetoric display counterintelligence state thought? And if yes, does this have implications for Russia’s foreign policies?

For this aim, I will analyse the information security doctrine (Decree 646 2016) and the strategy on economic security (Decree 208 2017). These two policy papers have been chosen for three reasons:

> - First, their topics are ideal for the purposes of this analysis. The doctrine ought to reflect recent thoughts on information and knowledge central to the counterintelligence state thesis. While liberal thought has been pushed back almost everywhere, it is still heard in the economic and financial sphere. The strategy on economic security is therefore less likely to contain much counterintelligence state thought.
>
> - Secondly, both documents claim to reflect official views of the Russian Federation and as such might give an impression of the analytical competence and the ideological bias of the political apparatus.
>
> - And of course, thirdly, being quite new (signed in December 2016 and May 2017 respectively) they contain views on recent developments in Russian society and international politics.

Doctrine on information security

The doctrine on informational security is described as: “a system of official views on the national security of the Russian Federation in the sphere of information” and the doctrine claims to be a “document of strategic planning, developed for the realisation of the strategic priorities of the Strategy on national security of the Russian Federation” (Decree 646 2016).

Following a list of definitions and terms, the doctrine starts out by mentioning the beneficial technological, economic and even civilizational implications that a successful implementation of informational technology can have, stating that “*information technologies have acquired a global transboundary character and become an integrated part of all activity spheres of the individual,*

society and the state" and that their *"effective application is a factor in accelerating the economic development of the state and the formation of the information society"*.

Immediately hereafter the document lists five national interests of the Russian Federation:

a) *"providing and defending constitutional rights and freedoms" … "providing informational support for democratic institutions, mechanisms for interaction between the state and civil society and also the application of information technologies in the interests of preserving the cultural, historical and spiritual and moral values of the multinational people of the Russian Federation"*

b) *"ensuring stable and uninterrupted operation of (…) critical information infrastructure (…) in peacetime, during the immediate threat of aggression and in wartime" (…);*

c) *"development of the information technology and electronics industry in Russia"*

d) *"Bringing reliable information about the state policy of the Russian Federation to the Russian and international public";*

e) *"Assistance in the formation of an international information security system (…) strengthening an equal strategic partnership in the field (…) and protecting the sovereignty of the Russian Federation (…)*

The mentioning of an "international information security system" is quite interesting, in that it strongly resembles the Russo-American cyber security unit that was – at least for a couple of hours on 9th of July - official American policy (NBC 2017; Trump 2017b; Trump 2017a).
Interesting is also that information and information technology are not perceived as resources or opportunities, but rather as threats, requiring constant vigilance. According to the doctrine these threats emanate from both state actors and non-state actors:

- *Opportunities for cross-border circulation of information are increasingly being used to achieve geopolitical, military-political, as well as terrorist, extremist, criminal and other unlawful goals, contrary to international law.*

- *Information security in the sphere of strategic stability and equitable strategic partnership is characterised by the desire of individual states to use their technological superiority to dominate the information space.*

- *"a number of foreign countries are building up their information technology capacities to influence the information infrastructure in pursuing military purposes.*

The doctrine contains calls for modernisation and reform, apparently an awareness of the dynamic and disruptive forces in IT, but also calls for statics: strategic stability, Russian sovereignty, self-sufficiency, the two latter quite compatible with the "import substitution" (*importozameshchenie*) paradigm that has been propagated since the introduction of the Western sanctions.

The document contains two passages about the importance of creating a culture of personal information security, but the main emphasis is on state control. The doctrine has the following not exactly idiomatic definition of ”safeguarding information security”:

- *mutually interconnected juridical, organisational, operational-investigational, reconnaissance, counterintelligence, scientific-technological, informational-analytical, personnel, economic and other steps taken for the forecast, detection, containment, prevention, and rebuffing of informational threats and the eliminations of the consequences of their manifestation (Information security doctrine 2016).*

One notes the emphasis on *investigation, reconnaissance, counterintelligence* and the intentions to *forecast, detect, contain, prevent, rebuff and eliminate* threats, clearly representing force structure preferences. There is no mentioning of education, of enforcement of anti-monopoly laws. Information security must be ensured top-down by state organs only.

The doctrine frequently speaks of “certain states”, “some countries”, “a number of foreign countries”. This clearly reflects the zero-sum thinking of *kto kogo* described by Skak (Skak 2016**)**. In fact, when reading the document another Russian proverb comes to mind: *(sdélal tot) komú výgodno* (from latin "is fecit cui prodest") which means, that “he who benefits did it”. This saying, often ascribed to Lenin, reflects the simplified and ultimately pseudo-scientific view, that if it is not in our interests, it must be in somebody else’s. This thought, that societal processes are shaped by intent and consistent patterns, seems typical for both the doctrine on information security and the strategy on economic security and at times resembles the paranoia mentioned by Soldatov (Soldatov 2017).

The document assures that information security activities of government bodies is based on:

- *(…) the legality of public relations in information sphere and the legal equality of all participants of such relations arising from the constitutional right of citizens freely to seek, receive, transmit, produce and disseminate information in any legal manner”*

and on:

- *maintaining a balance between citizens' demand for the free exchange of information and restrictions related to national security, including in information sphere;*

The document, however, also hints at how this balance is to be understood:

- *intelligence services of certain states are increasingly using information and psychological tools with a view to destabilising the internal political and social situation in various regions across the world, undermining sovereignty and violating the territorial integrity of other states. Religious, ethnic, human rights organisations and other organisations, as well as separate groups of people, are involved in these activities and information technologies are extensively used towards this end.*

With this view on NGO's and the stress on "providing reliable information on the state policy" it seems unlikely, that the doctrine will change the way in which the authorities deal with human rights organisations and media. In the past years media have increasingly been controlled by exercising control through ownership and through *sistema*, silencing sites and media critical of the regime by firing editors or blocking access to them (Gormsen 2015; Pallin 2015; Gormsen 2017b). Another key trait of Russia's information security enforcement has been random law enforcement, incarcerating some for a retweet or a like, and letting other blogs creating an atmosphere ever present uncertainty (Pallin 2015, 27).
According to Ledeneva the exercise of arbitrariness is key to survival in *sistema (Ledeneva 2013, 242)*. It might in fact help the Russian regime to maintain control at a minimum cost (Guriev and Treisman 2017). On the other it puts a damper on private initiative, spurring young Russian professionals to leave Russia.

It might also damage the investment climate. 2014 a law was passed that obliges companies to store all personal data about Russian citizens on servers in Russia (Pallin 2015, 27). In November 2016 Federal Service for Supervision of Communications, Information Technology and Mass Media, *Roskomnadzor*, obliged operators to block LinkedIn, as the company had not complied with the law (Meduza 2016).

Strategy on economic security

"Strategy on the economic security of the Russian Federation for the period until 2030" replaces a strategy dating back to 1996. The strategy points out that the raw material export model of economic development is endangered (threat 9) as the energy demand is changing towards green technologies (threat 6). The document also points out the limited size of Russian non-resource based export and it economy's poor embeddedness in the global added value chain (threat 14). Nonetheless, the depletion of gas and oil fields deemed to play a smaller role in the future is also mentioned as threat 13 (Decree 208 2017).

The document points to insufficient investment volumes, "caused by unfavourable investment climate, administrative barriers and ineffective private property right" (threat 11). It warns of lack of innovation and only little implementation of modern technology in the Russian industry (12).
The document goes as far as to name ineffective state bureaucracy (17), corruption in economic sphere (18), the considerable share of grey economy in the total economy (19), income inequality (20) uneven development of the country (24) as threats. It also warns that human potential is threatened by declining quality and accessibility of education and medical care (21). In the strategic part of the document it even says that *reidy* (raids - arrest and prolonged imprisonment of company owners, during which all assets are confiscated and taken over by a multitude of competitors) including the ones with "involvement with representatives of the law enforcement, state supervisory organs" must be fought.

Commentators have jokingly said that the strategy is a "Frankenstein's monster" and that it seems to have been through the hands of "pragmatics and technocrats, Eurasians and Cosmopolitans, righties

and lefties". (Aleksashenko 2017; Khrulyova 2017). One certainly can find undercurrents of liberal economic thought several places in the text, which at least partially, supports Sakwa's dual-state model.
As can be deducted from the threat priority, however, the main emphasis in the doctrine is on external threats to the Russian economy: other countries trying to use their dominance in high-tech as an instrument in global competition (1); discriminations towards Russia in finance (3); economic cooperation without participation of Russia (7); speculation against Russian financial markets (8), where the document sees a growing gap between real assets and derivative securities (2), leading to conjuncture instability (5).
Regarding threat (3) new Russian legislation now bans foreign credit rating agencies such as Standard & Poor's, Fitch and Moody's from Russia (Titova and Bozhko 2017). This world view in some ways echo the statements by internet ombudsman Marinichev (see above).

The strategy lists 40 (*forty*) statistical indicators of economic security, somewhat compromising the term strategy. As is the case with the doctrine on information security, this strategy on economic security displays a nearly mercantilist understanding of world economy, seeing Russia as a unitary economic unit in the global economy. The overall emphasis is on state control, on the competitive position of the Russian Federation, and on the lack of Russian non-raw-material extraction companies among biggest world companies (10) - not on human potential, not on (small and medium-sized) Russian companies as independent actors.

While the doctrine expresses concern over income inequality (20) uneven development of the country (24), the nature of this concern is not clear. Concern might even differ among the authors. The mere existence of a "doctrine on economic security" might indicate concern in the siloviki camp that poverty can lead to more economic protests[1], which might one day grow into a political protest (Albats and Felgengauer 2017).

The problem of corruption is mentioned, yet the task with fighting corruption is entrusted to the state and the force structures, known to be deeply involved corruption schemes.

The doctrine omits the topic of HIV and AIDS. Currently 1,1 million Russians are officially registered as HIV positive, making it in WHO terms a "generalised epidemic" the spread of which has yet to be stopped. In 20 Russian regions one percent of all pregnant women have HIV, showing the degree to which the decease has spread among heterosexual Russians in the reproductive and economically active age (Milman 2016; Watson et al. 2017).
The doctrine also omits an economically possibly even more vital topic – tax evasion. As oil prices remain low, the regime becomes increasingly dependent on income tax. The grey economy, however, is sizeable. It is estimated that between 15 and 25 million Russians do not pay taxes. In 2013 deputy prime minister Olga Golodets even mentioned the number 36 million out of an estimated work force of then 86 million (Tovkaylo 2013; Bovt 2016).

1Surveys show that Russians participating in demonstrations do not necessarily see that as a political act (Kolesnikov 2017). An example of "economic protest" is the long-haul truckers' protests against the are the road toll system PLATON:
- We are not the fifth column. I love my country and hate America. Many of us took part in the anti-maidan demonstrations, but now we fight four our rights and for the rights of all Russians, RBK quoted spokesman Voloshchuk in November 2015 (Antonova et al. 2015).

Chapter 4: the counterintelligence state thesis recalibrated - conclusions and reflections

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- [t]here is no state, there is a corporation, a gang running a protection racket on their territory as it pleases. And all the so-called state instruments, symbols of state – the parliament, the free press, the courts, the Civic Chamber and so on – that is all just hair-wax.
Writer and journalist Viktor Shenderovich on Ekho Moskvy, July 2017.
(Shenderovich and Plushchev 2017).

The ambition of this paper was to shed light onto the role of the force structures and of force structure thought in domestic politics and the possible implications for Russian foreign policies.
The first analysis showed similarities between the andropovite counterintelligence state and modern Russia and general compatibility between the counterintelligence state thesis and a number of more recent models, theories and claims put forward about the force structures and their role in Russian politics.
The second analysis showed distinct fingerprints of liberal thought indicating responsiveness to the challenges of modernity. The remedies prescribed, however, display a nearly mercantilist understanding of world with strong emphasis on state control, resonating with Chekist thinking: investigation, reconnaissance, counterintelligence, forecast, detection, containment and prevention indicating the continued prevalence of the Soviet zero-sum *kto kogó* and *komú výgodno* mentality. More so, the two policy documents seem dominated by a firm belief that societal processes are shaped by intent and not randomness. Passages in the information security doctrine on subversive informational attacks carried out by NGOs, bear resemblances to the andropovite KGB's fight with dissent.

However, one must be wary to ascribe the *secretifiction* and the corruption of Russian politics to counterintelligence thought only. All force structures have an interest in preserving their budgets and everyone in *sistema* has an interest in keeping contacts loyal. In fact, the degree to which the dividing lines between branches of power have been sponged out in Russia also makes it possible to speak of the country as a patronalistic or a clientilistic state, a kleptocracy, a petro-state or a one-man regime.

Yet as Gustafson points out in his book on the role of the oil industry in Russian politics:

> *While post-soviet Russia is increasingly taking on the characteristics of [a petro-state], its "petro-statism" is due not to oil per se but rather to three deeper causes (…) the Soviet legacy in all its facets, the cycle of collapse and rebirth of the central state, and the impact of Russia's exposure to an increasingly unstable global economy (Gustafson, 2012, 482).*

Similarly, one can argue that *the characteristics of a counterintelligence state* I have listed in this paper - secrecy, clientilistic bureaucracy, kleptocracy, nepotism, corruption, hybrid authoritarianism - are not the results of Russia being a counterintelligence state, but rather the results of Russia being a weakly institutionalised state dominated by counterintelligence thought. The results of the collapse of the Soviet and the failure to reinstate formal, institutional power in Russia.

Marten finds that the specifics of Russian history make conclusions about counterintelligence state thought permeating domestic and foreign policies inapplicable for generalisations and for comparative IR studies:

> *[w]hile it is possible to build a convincing story about the KGB taking over Russia, there is little in this story that would allow generalisations to other cases (Marten 2017, 150).*

The counterintelligence state thesis does, however, make out descriptive analytical framework for understanding *this case*, the role of force structures in Russian politics, the role of force structure thinking in Russian domestic and foreign policies.

The KGB fought dissent by limiting access to new information technology and this, in Pringle's words, made the USSR miss the information age. In today's Russia, however, this rhetoric does not bereave Russians from high-tech, but rather from the possibilities to *apply* IT and to freely exchange and contest views and information in society science and business. This, however, is problematic enough in itself, since Russia has alarmingly little processing industry and the Russian economy is still dependent on exports raw materials with little added value.

While Putin's counterintelligence state in some ways has proven surprisingly effective, the lack of transparency, rule of law and political competition typical to *sistema* in Ledeneva's words make out a 'modernisation trap of informality' inhibiting institutional reform and development (Ledeneva 2013). The hollow principles and static dogmas of the counterintelligence state is weighing the economy down, making it even more difficult to navigate the disruptive processes of technological progress and to avoid falling astern in global competition (Lo 2015, 208). The unlimited power of the secret services is arguably also an impediment to democratisation (Walther 2014, 682). And seeing soft power "as a complex of potentially subversive measures" (Rutland and Kazantsev 2016, 397–398) the regime is also poorly equipped to make use of the soft power potential of Russia.

And these are just the top-down consequences. Travelling in Russia since 1998 it is my impression that the "legal nihilism" mentioned by Ledeneva and the lack of transparency and the uncertainty mentioned by Pallin might also have bottom-up consequences. It induces a sense of constant randomness, fuels conspiracies and leaves people flailing in factual relativity, inclining them to passiveness and resignation rather than to action and protest.
Fifty percent of Russian parents would like their children to pursue a career in the force structures (Vedomosti 2016) and young Russians are in fact far more critical towards private entrepreneurship than their American contemporaries (Potapova 2017). This might be due to the fact that blurred lines between politics, jurisdiction and business or the anti-liberal rhetoric of the regime taint the image of private entrepreneurship. If young Russians have use their creativity to stay out of trouble, to avoid blackmail rather than to develop business ideas or scientific ideas, that will - *ceteris*

paribus - make it all the harder for Russia to adapt to global economy, further confining Russia's already limited room for manoeuvre both domestically and internationally.

The dominance of the *kto kogo* and *komu vygodno* mindset, societal and economical processes explained mainly by foreign disruptive *tekhnologii* and *strategii* remedied only with basically Soviet *tekhnologii* and *strategii* seems self-perpetuating and limits the regime to confrontational and isolationistic rhetoric and tactics both economically and ideationally at home and abroad. Whether founded in genuine beliefs or in economic self-interest of *sistema*, these rhetoric and tactics tie elites to the spot, making it harder to pass the reforms needed to equip Russia with the institutions needed for its post-petrol future. Rather than taking on the tasks necessary for reform, elites remain entirely focused on control. Time will show when the Russian regime will face change on the road it so feverishly follows to avoid it.

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