

IFS Info 3/02

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# Russia in 2015

Could the Former Super-Power  
Turn into a Battle-Ground?

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## On the author

Dr. Pavel Baev was born in Vladivostock, USSR in 1957. He graduated from the Geographic Faculty of the Moscow State University with an MA in political geography in 1979, and worked in a military research institute until 1988, when he received his Ph. D. in international relations, and started working at the then newly established Institute of Europe. In 1992 he moved to Norway and started working at the International Peace Research Institute Oslo, PRIO. From 1995 to mid-2001 he combined research at PRIO with editing the quarterly journal *Security Dialogue*, and from 2000 Baev has been the leader of the Foreign and Security Policy programme at PRIO.

Dr. Baev has published widely on issues concerning Russia and the former USSR, ranging from ethnic conflicts to geopolitics and from the Caspian borders to the Kursk tragedy. He has wide international networks and has participated in many international conferences on issues such as Russian military thinking, secessionism in Europe, and the Chechen conflicts, and been a frequent participant in the Norwegian public debate.

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# Russia 2015: Could the former Super-Power Turn into a Battle-Ground?

## Introduction

The tragedy of September 11 and the US response in the form of the global war against terrorism (conceptually problematic as it is) have set in motion some real shifts in regional power balances but much greater alterations in perceptions of the nature and applicability of power in the globalized world. The basic level of uncertainty about the mid-term outlook of the system of international relations has increased dramatically. The middle-of-the-road scenarios have lost much value, while risk analysis has seen a surge in demand from political decision-making. There is obviously a greater need to look into the risks that had been dismissed as negligible in their probability even if grave in scale – and to plan for counter-measures. While the menu of such risks is quite rich, one of their greatest sources for the European security system continues to be Russia.

President Putin has found in the on-going global confusion an opportunity to move Russia a great deal closer to the West, his control over the structures of power across the enormous space of this country appears firm and his popularity remains astonishingly high. On the background of all the crises and recession in the world, Russia appears to be both politically stable and economically dynamic, to much surprise and joy of its own population.<sup>1</sup> This picture, however, may be deceptive, and not only because another economic crisis could hit Russia in the near future

(autumn 2003 is a common point of reference) but primarily because many long-term factors of instability may doom Putin's state-building project to a failure. Russia is often described as a country with an unpredictable past, as well as one that cannot be understood with a common sense; the evidence for both assertions is the fact that it can never arrive at any certainty about its identity and "mission". Putin's recipe of "pragmatic patriotism" may prove to be only a palliative measure with limited mobilizational effect and his new "go-West" course could contribute to its fast expiring.<sup>2</sup>

While it is always too easy to be pessimistic about Russia's future, now it is also necessary to attempt to measure the scale of possible disasters in medium-long perspective, which is the case with this study.<sup>3</sup> On the one hand, dealing with Russia you cannot be that far off-target taking a catastrophic scenario as the basic one. Alexander Pushkin, writing in the 1830s about "the Russian bunt (revolt), senseless and merciless", was perhaps looking not that much 60 years back at the Pugachev uprising as 85 years ahead at the Civil War. On the other hand, the relatively peaceful collapse of the USSR and the relatively stable (even if self-destructive) first decade of post-Soviet life were indeed a chain of miracles, the famous Russian chudo,<sup>4</sup> and it would be a stretch to expect that it would continue for 15 more years.

This study is neither an attempt to warn about a looming catastrophe, nor an exercise

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in “rationalising of chaos”, aimed at developing a post-deterrence version of “thinking about the unthinkable”.<sup>5</sup> It looks into a fairly disastrous scenario of erosion of the centralized political structures by centrifugal forces, which – unfortunately – remains entirely possible and therefore needs being spelled out. While the risk associated with a self-fulfilling prophecy is dismissed by this author as negligible, the limitations of focussing on just one narrow segment of a spectrum are fully recognized. There will be many cross-roads ahead where Russia could suddenly slip down this slope, so the aim is to identify certain crucial points where a concentrated internal effort and/or determined external engagement (intervention) could make a positive difference. The paper starts with marking the road that might lead to a series of complex and violent internal conflicts between 2010 and 2015, then examines the possible elements and parameters of these conflicts, then takes a closer look at several theatres and flash-points, and finally comes to the requirements for possible external (Western) interventions.

## A Road to the Abyss

Several times during the 1990s Russia came to the brink of a violent implosion: starting with the abortive putsch of August 1991; followed by the confrontation between President Yeltsin and the Parliament in October 1993, which escalated to a street riot suppressed by tanks;<sup>6</sup> and finally the financial meltdown of August 1998 that threatened to evolve into a political collapse.<sup>7</sup> At the same time, it should be noted that neither the first nor the second Chechen Wars, with all their humiliating defeats and destructive intensity, produced a significant resonance across the

Federation or even a serious spill-over into the neighbouring regions.<sup>8</sup> The second war was, in fact, used as the launching pad for the project of consolidation and reinvigoration of the Russian state that has become a personal crusade of Russia’s second president, Vladimir Putin.

After two years of implementation of this project, Putin can claim credit for significant achievements. Regional governors and republican presidents dare not disobey his orders, the compliant parliament is ready to rubber-stamp those, the “oligarchs” are either tamed, or crushed (primarily those with media empires). Even the war in Chechnya, which stubbornly refuses to go away while its political usefulness has long since expired, is “virtually” reduced by the means of media control to a habitual and minor local problem.<sup>9</sup> At the same time, doubts in the sustainability of these successes persist.<sup>10</sup>

The problem is not that Putin has shown signs of hesitation and weakness (for instance, in restructuring the all-powerful natural monopolies like GAZPROM or RAO EEC). The real problem is that his project may have a fundamental flaw in the design.<sup>11</sup> Its two key parts – achieving strong economic growth on the basis of market reforms and strengthening the executive “vertical” around the beefed-up “power structures” – could prove to be incompatible.<sup>12</sup> Markets normally react positively to stability but their sustained expansion requires deregulation and decentralization. An indirect proof to this somewhat “theoretical” argument is that by the end of 2001 the economic growth in Russia had visibly slowed down, while many splits and divisions inside the executive had become apparent. While many observers are still worried about the growth of authoritarian trends in Putin’s regime,<sup>13</sup> the most grave risk is not that he will build a rigid vertically-integrated “police” state but that he will fail in this undertaking.

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It has already become evident that the aim of strengthening the state has evolved into a much narrower goal of consolidating the regime, and Putin (starting as a quintessential gosudarstvennik) has become a hostage to his high ratings to a much greater degree than Clinton ever was.<sup>14</sup> The policy-making has evolved into a permanent campaigning, as if the elections are always a few months ahead. That narrows significantly his space for manoeuvring and the very ability to undertake serious (and inevitably painful) reforms; while Putin faces the need to advance simultaneously massive restructuring in the social sector (the pension fund and the communal housing), finances (the tax system), natural monopolies (RAO EEC is the first in line and GAZPROM the close second), judiciary (the court system) and the military, his main focus has already been set on securing the re-election in spring 2004. With the emphasis on PR “technologies”, simulation of activity and apparatus intrigue, he may well succeed in that, but the larger results could be not just disappointing but destabilizing.<sup>15</sup> Instant success may backfire through accumulation of a critical mass of neglected failures.

Dominating so powerfully over Russia's politics, Putin quite possibly will exhaust the expectations, credits and inertia by the end of this decade – much the same way as Yeltsin had exhausted the reserves of his system of control by the late 1990s.<sup>16</sup> One significant corrosive impact here is again Chechnya. Keeping this crisis low profile, both domestically and internationally, Putin can hardly deceive himself about its real costs and pains. Unlike Yeltsin, he does not have political stomach to accept defeat or even a compromise; at the same time, the deadlock may well prove unsustainable. That leaves him with the option of military victory, which would require a significant escalation of hostilities from the current level of slow-moving atrocities.<sup>17</sup> The

resonance of this Stalinist victory (entirely feasible if deadly force is applied consistently)<sup>18</sup> may, however, turn out to be much more destructive than that of the US victory in Afghanistan (providing it does not turn into a failure) and more expensive than is budgeted for by the General Staff.

Putin's successor will, therefore, inherit the results of a failed state-rebuilding project; a third president would have to accept that the means of public mobilization around a new “strong Russia” project are non-existent and the levers of administrative control – quite unreliable. Much the same way as Gorbachev was in late perestroika,<sup>19</sup> he may already in the succession phase be betrayed by the state apparatus (particularly the “power structures”), which could defect to other “power centres”. This bureaucratic “chain reaction” of centrifugal drift could easily go along regional lines. Overall, the end result of Putin's statist project could hardly be a reinvigorated and self-assured Russia able to project power (least of all westwards, so the Baltic states are in fact quite safe), but very possibly a dysfunctional state and divided society with massive conflict potential, multiple fault lines and too many detonators.

## Parameters of Disaster

Approaching the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Bolshevik revolution, Russia in many ways might look surprisingly similar to the huge misshaped and overworked state that collapsed in autumn 1917. The main cause of a new implosion may again be a structural economic crisis, this time caused not by a crippling war mobilization but by inconsistent and badly mismanaged reforms, which create an unviable hybrid system. Over the next 15 years

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Russia may experience several short periods of sharp growth (involving mostly export-oriented energy and primary commodities sectors), interspersed by longer periods of depression that would produce an overall picture of prolonged stagnation (in fact, continuing since the late 1980s).<sup>20</sup> A key feature of this pattern of “muddle-down” is sustained under-investment in basic assets, caused by their low attractiveness for foreign investors and unstoppable capital flight.<sup>21</sup>

This paper cannot aim at presenting an elaborate macro-economic forecast, what is relevant for its topic is the trend of fragmentation of Russia’s economic space. A few islands of export-oriented industries (for instance, the aluminium production) are becoming disconnected from the rest of the economy, where regional-size markets are dominated by protected local producers, while Moscow stands apart as an area of arrogant affluence.<sup>22</sup> Oil and gas industries, controlled by a few giant companies, keep investing primarily in their own export capacity, while many elements of basic infrastructure – such as electricity grids – deteriorate beyond repair.<sup>23</sup> Transport networks (including railways) could no longer support cost-efficient economic interactions; in terms of distance “resistance”, Russia is not just becoming even larger than it really is, it is becoming impenetrable, and the area, which is becoming virtually disconnected as well as derelict, is the Far East.<sup>24</sup>

Another important dimension of the multiple crises that might escalate between 2010 and 2015 is demographic. Russian media is currently full of dramatic projections that present the sustained population decline and disturbing health statistics as a “looming humanitarian catastrophe”.<sup>25</sup> More sober analyses show that migration from other post-Soviet states remains a significant reserve against depopulation (except for some areas in the Far North), while life expectancy – despite

appalling health care – tends to increase.<sup>26</sup> What is relevant here, is that with the arrival at the labour market of a new (and numerically smaller) generation born after the USSR, the overall geographic mobility would remain low, making links even between neighbour communities fragile. In parallel with this societal fragmentation, the reserves of tolerance and endurance in the society are running thin, much the same way as most of the basic assets and infrastructure built on technologies of the 1960-70s are coming to the end of their “life cycles”.<sup>27</sup> Soviet (and more ancient) traditions of obedience and hard work are being replaced not by democratic values and entrepreneurial drive but by cynicism, passivity and corruption. Putin may be able to tap into the nostalgic longing for “order” and residual trust in a “good tsar”, but this personification condemns his reign to inevitable bitter disappointment.<sup>28</sup> As an extra corrosive, Chechnya gradually spreads the destructive culture of violence. The atomised and sick society is becoming ripe for a chain of conflicts.

Yet another key parameter of the on-going transformation, which contains seeds of possible conflict, is regionalism. This trend was developing strongly if unevenly during the 1990s,<sup>29</sup> so Putin has started his presidency with a series of measures aimed at restoring the integrity of central control. He may have succeeded superficially in that but structurally the basic factors that drive the growth of regionalism remain in place; the regional elites continue to rely on well-established political structures and to build their own economic foundations of power. There is also a distinctive growth of regional identities caused by the fragmentation of economic space and low geographic mobility, and the respective elites eagerly cultivate this process.<sup>30</sup> One noticeable feature in this patchy picture is growing alienation of “provinces” from

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Moscow, both as the federal center and an arrogantly rich region. It is possible that Putin's plan for creating seven federal districts would not be that effective in curbing the republican quasi-independence. In some cases (first of all, in the North Caucasus) it could even create political structures for larger-scale regional separatism.<sup>31</sup>

Current developments that might most significantly determine the character and intensity of future conflicts involve the Armed Forces and other "power structures". While for the military the overall trend through the 1990s was that of degradation, for most other "armed bureaucracies" (from the Ministry of Interior to the Tax Police) it was strengthening and diversification. The second Chechen War, which was so instrumental in propelling Putin to the summit of power, has proved beyond doubt the urgent need in reforming the Armed Forces – but has also massively complicated this process.<sup>32</sup> Even placing his most trusted "lieutenant" Sergei Ivanov in charge of the Defense Ministry, Putin cannot guarantee the successful advancement of reforms which remain under-financed and seriously affected by the pressure of the war.<sup>33</sup> While the economic realities dictate further numerical reductions of the Armed Forces, they may go through several phases of contraction and expansion in the next 10-15 years (oscillating on the basic level of 1,000,000), since local wars remain manpower-intensive endeavours.<sup>34</sup>

Modernization, in the meanwhile, remains the most problematic part of the current and any future Armed Forces reform project; several crucial elements of military infrastructure will, quite possibly, deteriorate beyond the level of acceptable risk (for Russia's neighbours this level might be significantly lower than for the authorities in Moscow). While the system of control of the strategic missile forces will, perhaps, be kept functional

by targeted investments, some other elements of strategic deterrent (like early warning) may essentially disintegrate. Such logistically vulnerable branches of the Armed Forces as the Long-Range Aviation or the "blue-water" Navy could lose most of their combat effectiveness and retain only symbolic roles as nuclear "assets";<sup>35</sup> at the same time, plenty of Army hardware (such as armour and artillery) may prove to be remarkably durable. In general, the military structures will continue to generate high risks of technological accidents and even catastrophes, which could trigger serious political conflicts.<sup>36</sup>

With all the best intentions about "professionalization", the Armed Forces, as well as several other "power structures", would most probably remain dependent on the draft – and that will have significant societal consequences. One is that a large proportion of young and middle-age men will have basic military training, and perhaps up to 2,500,000 veterans (including a large majority of officers in the Army) could have first-hand combat experience. Another is that the Armed Forces will not be able to improve the internal cohesion and remain prone to spontaneous loss of control.<sup>37</sup> Yet another is that the pattern of locally conducted draft would reinforce the trend towards regionalization of the Army.

This trend fits naturally into the general picture of "Russia of the regions" characterized by the fragmentation of economic space, deterioration of transport infrastructure and consolidation of decentralised political frameworks. A key factor here is the interests of regional elites in "domestication" and even "privatization" of military units based in their respective domains.<sup>38</sup> For the military, reliance on local sources of supply could become the only possible survival strategy, which also provides them with an opportunity to acquire a profile of a usable and useful instrument in



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regional politics. From that perspective, Putin's master-plan to integrate the systems of control over the military and other "power structures" in the seven federal districts does not look promising (even leaving aside the lack of compatibility between various "power districts"), since pure administrative sub-ordination cannot compensate for the "indigenization" which comes natural for the special units under the Ministry of Interior (OMON and SOBR) and, in cases where state borders are subject to trans-regional interactions, the forces of the Border Service.<sup>39</sup>

Overall, the most serious risks of internal conflict in Russia appear to come not from a deep ideological divide (like the "reds" against the "whites") or from a violent clash for power in the center (Putin would most probably be able to orchestrate a smooth transition of power, applying sophisticated "political technologies"), but from instabilities in far-away provinces. Regional authorities gradually acquire significant "power instruments" and would perhaps be more inclined to use them against one another than against the federal center. The latter could find itself with limited capabilities to suppress or control local civil wars.

## Troubles "Tous Azimuts"

Geography might be a crucial factor in determining the scale and intensity of, as well as spill-over from, various possible regional conflicts. It is not the distance from Moscow as such that is the key independent geographic variable; it is rather the density of transport networks (Murmansk oblast is in fact as difficult to reach as Primorye, and Kaliningrad is not much easier to keep under control than Sakhalin). It is also foreseeable that the federal authorities could be reluctant to deploy to

distant locations a division from the mighty Moscow Military District, since their key task is to secure stability in the center. This certainly cannot preclude attempts at using military force in political battles inside the Garden Ring (a highway encircling downtown Moscow), but overall it is quite possible that Moscow, with its relatively high level of prosperity and plentiful levers of control, would remain stable and reasonably peaceful, shielding itself from regional troubles.<sup>40</sup> Another important geographic feature of the future conflicts is their predisposition to spread cross-border or interplay with possible instabilities in neighbour-states.

### *Power-play in the South*

Russia is and will continue to be exposed to much violent instability in the areas to the south of its borders; at the moment of this writing, the epicentre of turbulence in Afghanistan appears to be under US control but the situation will continue to remain fluid for months if not years to come. It could be pointed out that Putin shifted strategic attention to Central Asia well in advance of the US retaliatory campaign, perhaps drawing some lessons from the history of the Great Game.<sup>41</sup> The crushing defeat of the Taliban may well play into Russia's hands as far as the aim of consolidating its positions in the region is concerned.<sup>42</sup> However, already in the mid-term the fundamental issue of inadequacy of available instruments and resources for a proactive strategy of a "security guarantor" will inevitable strike back.<sup>43</sup> Conducting a strategic withdrawal from Central Asia, which might start with a retreat from the Tajik-Afghan border, Russia would probably be able to limit the violent spill-over inside its frontier regions. The vast steppes of Kazakhstan make a natural "buffer"; feeling safe behind it, Moscow may even decide to take advantage of the possible collapse of this poorly

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stitched-together state, taking sides with the Russians in the North and North-East in order to seize control over the oil-rich Caspian littoral in the West. But with all the potential cataclysms in the Caspian area, the area where Russia could directly encounter most grave and penetrating security challenges is the Caucasus.

Complete devastation of Chechnya might lead to a broad destabilization of the whole Northern Caucasus. Facing this violent neighbourhood, the Stavropol and Krasnodar kray may form a tight strategic alliance, backed by the Rostov, Volgograd and Astrakhan oblast. The newly-created structures of the Southern administrative district may be used for consolidating this security-driven "Alliance of 5 regions" and turning it into a reasonably unified political unit, able not just to bargain with Moscow but also to make its own policy. Instead of "privatizing" the military assets of the North Caucasus Military District, members of the "Alliance" might be able to keep most of them under unified control, and that will give it a military force of up to 100,000 troops, backed by para-military Cossack formations.

The basic strategic aim of the Southern Alliance may be to fortify and protect the southern borders of Russia "proper", which may be justified through aggressive nationalistic ideology that would assert the need to protect the "real Russians against the "Caucasians". Effectively cutting out Kalmykia and Dagestan, the alliance may also build a military-political partnership with North Ossetia, which would serve as a bridgehead vis-à-vis the unruly mountaineers and a bridge towards the Southern Caucasus. Krasnodar kray, while swallowing Adygeya, may also provide military assistance to Abkhazia, seeking to keep Georgia weak and divided.<sup>44</sup> In case of a major turmoil in Ukraine, the alliance may send "volunteers" across the Kerch Strait

into the Crimea which may become yet another quasi-state with significant military assets but ruined economy.

The southern Russian regions, controlling the major oil pipeline Tengiz-Novorossiisk, as well as the oil terminal in this port, and, possibly, the gas pipeline to Turkey, may develop taste for playing in the "Great Game" around the Caspian Sea, and their reach might extend as far as undercutting the Baku-Cheyhan pipeline. Even if Georgia and Azerbaijan would be able to forge a counter-alliance with some quasi-states of the Northern Caucasus and secure some support from Turkey, their defense capacity would hardly be a match to the power projection capabilities of the alliance.

The whole Caucasian region would then become a theatre for a range of overlapping low-intensity conflicts, fought mostly by irregulars but contained and controlled from the North by a hardened military structure. This "army-without-a-state" could be sustained only if the five Russian regions maintain a reasonably high degree of unity and obtain extra resources from energy exports. While most of the heavy weapons and other hardware available for these forces would be seriously obsolete (by NATO standards), and the organization could resemble more the Soviet Army than a modern Combined Joint Task Force (CJTF), the alliance could be able to dominate militarily its immediate neighbourhood.

#### *Meltdown and Mutiny in the North*

The Kola Peninsula remains one of the most militarized areas in the world – and certainly the one with the heaviest concentration of nuclear weapons, reactors and materiel. During the 1990s, the geo-strategic profile of Russia's North-West changed significantly: on the one hand, the Northern Fleet preserved its strategic role and may even strengthen it if the plans to concentrate all SSBNs here would indeed be implemented during this

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decade.<sup>45</sup> On the other hand, the Leningrad Military District (MD) is no longer perceived as a "frontline" district and this perception of very low external threat would probably continue, even if Finland and the Baltic "trio" would join NATO. As a result, most Army units in this district were either disbanded or reduced to low readiness status (skeleton units); the only full-strength unit is the 76<sup>th</sup> Pskov Airborne Division, located some 1300 km south of Murmansk.

This corresponds to the relatively high level of internal stability in this vast region (currently known as the "presidential region"),<sup>46</sup> but at the same time increases the specific risks related to the nuclear-strategic "overload" of the Kola Peninsula. Indeed, the probability of violent social unrest in the North-Western Russia is reasonably low: Karelia is increasingly involved in cooperative ties with Finland; while the coal-producing Pechora and Vorkuta will continue to lose population, there might also emerge new economic dynamism related to the development of hydro-carbons in the Barents Sea. But as for the Northern Fleet, despite all its strategic importance, during the 1990s it was left to deteriorate to a level involving serious risks of major accidents. It is not just that the combat ships are dismally maintained (the proper logistics for major surface combatants in fact never existed), it is also that the whole logistic support infrastructure is now on the brink of collapse.<sup>47</sup> In this situation, some poorly sustained efforts to increase financing<sup>48</sup> or to finish the construction of a few new combat ships<sup>49</sup> cannot reverse the trend towards disintegration of the Navy. At the same time, the requirements of a 'grand strategy'<sup>50</sup> and the prestige considerations would continue to push the Northern Fleet towards keeping several nuclear submarines and major surface combatants in its combat order, even if not combat ready.

One consequence of this sustained inability to finance and support the complex structures of the Navy is a permanently high risk of technological disasters. While it is the poorly maintained combat systems that are the most prone to accidents,<sup>51</sup> the most grave risks will come from the damage inflicted by these accidents to nuclear weapons and reactors, as well as the accidental destruction of dozens of retired nuclear reactors that will continue to be stored in the close vicinity of the naval bases without proper attention.<sup>52</sup> Another consequence is that the under-financed, understaffed and poorly trained Navy inevitably becomes prone not just to all sorts of "human errors" (which often aggravate technological disasters), but also to erosion of discipline, gross insubordination, and even mutiny.

The Russian Navy has a rich history of mutinies in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, involving both battleships (*Potemkin*, *Ochakov*, *Pamyat Azova*) and naval bases (Sveaborg, Kronshadt), caused primarily by deteriorating social conditions and humiliating defeat in the war with Japan. This time a mutiny might be triggered by a technological accident leading to panic and loss of control.<sup>53</sup> The mutiny might quickly spread through several naval bases; while the marine brigade of the Northern Fleet might remain reluctant to act against the rebellious garrisons, the command of the Leningrad MD would find it extremely difficult to find reliable combat-ready units and to transport them to Murmansk along the only railway link that can easily be blocked or destroyed. Lacking any organization or ideology, the mutineers can hardly keep any resemblance of order, some may attempt to escape to Norway, but some hard-core groups, seizing control over a few nuclear weapons, can blackmail Moscow and present a broad range of demands, from ransom to resignation of the president.

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### *Chaos in the East*

The vast and sparsely populated Russian Far East contains half a dozen loosely connected regions, which have plenty of common ills but very low sense of unity or common interests. Each region struggles with such problems as industrial decline, urban degradation and depopulation on its own, trying to get attention from Moscow (increasingly complicated by the geo-economic drift, caused by ageing transport infrastructure) and seeking to attract foreign investors by their natural resources. From the point of view of potential violent conflicts, the three weakest links are Kamchatka, Sakhalin and Primorye.

Kamchatka, as a heavily militarized region, faces many of the same problems of collapsing naval infrastructure as the Murmansk oblast, but is even more vulnerable from the point of view of energy supply and does not have such neighbours as Finland and Norway to keep a watchful eye on its troubles. Even if by 2010-2015 all strategic submarines are redeployed from the Pacific to the Northern Fleet, the region cannot be completely denuclearised – but might become even more neglected.<sup>54</sup> A mutiny, therefore, could specifically target nuclear facilities in order to get a security guarantee against possible forceful action directed from Moscow and to receive instant international attention. While Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky (where about a half of the region's population is concentrated) could be engulfed by the mutiny, perhaps triggered by a disastrous accident and possibly instigated by regional elites (who might entertain an idea like "free Kamchatka") the northern part of the region (Koryaksky okrug) may try to split (as it attempted to do in 1991) and politically distance itself from the conflict.

Sakhalin is much less militarised but is currently perceived by experts as one of those regions where high level of economic prob-

lems translates into high level of social tension.<sup>55</sup> At the same time, the island has considerable resources of oil and gas and its government has, after long delays, started to build stable relations with foreign investors, first of all from Japan and South Korea. It is hard to expect that energy projects would generate a spectacular economic boom, but Sakhalin, with its crumbling urban infrastructure, might get irritated that most of the income is "confiscated" by Moscow. This perceived injustice and "exploitation" might lead to the growth of secessionist tendencies, fuelled by expectations of more "oil money" but complicated by increasing migration from Korea. Seeking to secure international support for its independence, Sakhalin might offer Japan to strike a separate deal on the four contested Kuril islands (which formally belong to Kamchatka oblast but are much closer to, and economically more connected with Sakhalin).

Primorsky kray, with its relatively dense population (perhaps, around 2,000,000 by 2015), significant militarization and serious energy supply problems, has been also distinguished since mid-1990s by high level of political tensions, both internal and vis-à-vis Moscow. These tensions are likely to continue since the prospects of rapid economic development stimulated by opening of the "Eastern gate" into Russia will hardly materialize.<sup>56</sup> In this permanently tense situation, a political grouping might try to mobilize public support around the idea of recreating the Far Eastern Republic (which existed briefly in the early 1920s). It could be combined with ethnonationalistic slogans aimed primarily against the illegal Chinese immigration, which might reach such a scale that Russian border regions can feel the threat of being overwhelmed.<sup>57</sup> If the political conflicts in the region turn violent with some of this violence targeting Chinese communities, China might feel ob-

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liged to intervene, or jump at an opportunity to combine limited steps aimed at protecting its citizens with more forceful measures aimed at resolving the border disputes.<sup>58</sup>

### *Neighbours-in-Need in the West*

While Russia's western regions appear relatively stable and are not expected to generate violent conflicts between them or with Moscow, they can be strongly affected by possible destabilization of Belarus and Ukraine. These two countries for most of the 1990s followed remarkably different trajectories: Belarus opted for self-isolation and re-unification with Russia, while the Ukraine sought to cultivate ties with the West; currently, however, both show potential for serious internal conflicts, which may remain latent and escalate suddenly due to some external trigger. In both cases Russia might find it impossible not to intervene, but the aims would inevitably be muddled by the overlapping agendas of regional interests, nationalistic aspirations, restoration of order and relations with the West.

In Belarus the main line of the conflict could be that of implosion of a corrupt semi-authoritarian regime. While the opposition groupings could rely on support from Poland and Lithuania (by that time also a NATO member), Moscow might find itself committed to propping up the regime in Minsk.<sup>59</sup> Deploying troops (for instance, with the mandate to seal off Belarus' western and northern borders) and police forces (for instance, for riot control in Minsk), Russian government could face not only sharp criticism from, and certain counter-actions by the West, but also resistance from its own regions, which might engage into cross-border interactions with key centers in eastern Belarus, strengthening their hand against Minsk.<sup>60</sup> Another dimension of this crisis might involve Kaliningrad: this isolated region might find in this turbulence an opportunity to secede from Russia, parti-

cularly since its economy would be entirely re-oriented towards the EU and its military profile reduced to insignificant features.

In Ukraine, growing frustration with the results of a pro-Western course paves the way for a rapprochement with Russia which, in turn, radicalizes political opposition.<sup>61</sup> A potential crisis at any moment between 2005 and 2015 might take a complex and multi-dimensional character: a violent political confrontation in Kiev, strikes and mass protests in Kharkov and Donbass, an opportunistic break-away drive in the Crimea, and a Europe-oriented nationalistic uprising in Western Ukraine. There is no way that Moscow can take control over the whole of Ukraine or effectively dominate all of these conflicts. Most probably, it will focus its efforts on Kiev, seeking to ensure the victory for a pro-Russian party in the capital and then to help it to restore control over most of the state. At the same time, southern Russian regions may undertake their own interventions, advancing a creeping annexation of Eastern Ukraine or, as described above, supporting the Crimean secessionism. Perhaps the most complicated twist of this conflict may develop in Western Ukraine, which might find its European aspirations enmeshed into particular interests of Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and Romania (which by 2015 would probably all be NATO members). This area would generally remain outside Russia's reach, but it could make a serious impact from its southern flank, where the conflict in Transdnistria may re-ignite (even if the Russian troops are by that time withdrawn).<sup>62</sup>

To summarise, it appears quite possible that violent conflicts of different format and intensity, with various resonance and spillover, could escalate, perhaps even simultaneously, in peripheral Russia's regions and in its immediate neighbourhood. In each case, Moscow's limited ability to project power and

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restore order would raise demands and create imperatives for the Western powers, and first of all for the US, to intervene militarily.

## Battlefield Environment: Unsuitable and Unfriendly

Field Marshal Montgomery allegedly placed the proposition to invade Russia at the very top of the list of military blunders, to be avoided at any costs.<sup>63</sup> This post-WWII conventional wisdom may remain true for years to come, however, the above-described conflicts could produce a number of situations where non-intervention would become an equally serious blunder. It goes without saying that NATO is perfectly capable of committing such a blunder; in fact, every situation where an intervention inside Russia becomes a matter of practical discussions is nearly certain to generate sharp disagreements and agonizing doubts. Back in mid-2001, the options described below would have seemed to be entirely hypothetical; however, the chain of events after 11 September necessitates a different perspective. While it is true that NATO, even evoking for the first time the central Article V of its Charter, has had little if any relevance for the US-led global anti-terrorist war,<sup>64</sup> the Alliance now has to look seriously into its possible functions in the next 'unexpected' crisis, if it wants to prevent further slide towards complete irrelevance. Typically, in such situations time and space would be available in proportions strictly opposite to the desires of operation planners (i.e. too little of the former and too much of the latter); capabilities and intentions of the adversaries could be unclear, but some other parameters of the potential peacekeeping grounds/

battlefields may be outlined with reasonable certainty.

It is sufficiently clear that a US/NATO intervention with the goal of protecting Poland or any other Eastern European country (including the three Baltic states) against Russian invasion would hardly ever become a matter of practical consideration;<sup>65</sup> Russia would always find its limited capabilities stretched way too thin to challenge NATO in such a direct way. Much more probable are urgent requests from concerned neighbours, international NGOs, local authorities, and in some cases even from the Russian government, to perform an intervention into some kind of a civil war, most probably of regional scale. There might be multiple parties to such conflicts with different attitudes towards the intervening forces; the violence, termination of which would be the immediate aim of an intervention, would mostly be unstructured and chaotic. While small arms would be widespread, in many cases the warring parties would be able to use also armour and artillery, and in some cases even tactical aviation on a limited scale. There will be practically no modern weapon systems and very few of those build on technologies of the 1990s; the Command-Control-Communication-Intelligence (C<sup>3</sup>I) systems available to the "enemy" would be very primitive and unreliable, but there could be instances where skilled use of sophisticated computer technology could damage the information systems of allied forces.

One key question will inevitably be about the "enemy". In the environment of internal unrest it is never easy to distinguish between friend-and-foe, and there would not necessarily be ethnic, linguistic or cultural features to help with this identification. Overall, the population of the target area would be relatively high educated (albeit, with poor average knowledge of foreign languages), predominantly urban, accustomed to all sorts of

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hardship and possessing skills in exploiting dilapidated equipment that most Western users would consider as scrap. The prevailing cultural patterns as well as the demographic structure of the population make it highly improbable that child soldiers might constitute a considerable portion of fighters. On the other hand, a high proportion of men would have basic military training and even combat experience. Some groups may be highly motivated to fight against "foreign invaders" and may continue resistance against heavy odds.

One of the major problems on the potential theatres would be mobility. It is not the terrain as such that constitutes the problem (no jungles, high mountains or deserts), but rather the need to cover large distances from the "point of entry" with poor transport and communication networks. The "enemy" would have the advantage of familiarity with the terrain and could specifically target lines of communications, for instance with intensive use of land mines. Local sources of supply might be pretty limited, even the quality of drinking water could be significantly sub-standard. While chemical and biological weapons would most probably not be used (however, such use cannot be completely ruled out), in many cases the destruction of industrial facilities may result in dangerous pollution. Nuclear weapons and materials may be present in many potential conflicts, and in some they would constitute the most threatening dimension.

#### *South: Confronting the Southern Alliance*

While NATO could hardly be involved in hostilities in Central Asia, and even the US might find that theatre prohibitively demanding for sustained operations, an intervention in the Caucasus – in response to Georgia's plea for help or aimed at securing the Baku-Cheyhan pipeline – may be requested. Turkey

would be an indispensable partner in conducting this intervention, providing both the ports for US/NATO naval deployment and the land access to the theatre.

While designed basically as a peacekeeping operation with limited enforcement capabilities, it would also be one that may face a relatively well-organized "enemy" represented by the alliance of five of Russia's southern regions. Besides possessing a regular army, this alliance may sponsor a range of paramilitary formations and would with few doubts resort to terrorism. A confrontation with this "enemy" might require rapid reinforcement of the initially deployed force and re-orientation of the whole operation.

A major advantage of the intervening coalition would be the possibility to project power from sea to shore with few impediments, since Russia's Black Sea Fleet would not be able to put up much opposition (whether controlled by Moscow or "privatized" by the Alliance); the deployment of an aircraft carrier group is therefore highly advantageous. The most vulnerable target for blockade is Novorossiisk, since the "enemy" would be highly dependent on oil exports from this port. However, any deployment of troops inside the Caucasus (for instance, along the pipeline) would expose them to risks of partizan warfare. It would also be essential to prevent any undesirable spill-over from the intervention, for instance, an attempt by Azerbaijan (possibly helped by Turkey) to win back Nagorno Karabakh.

#### *North: Securing Nuclear Assets*

An intervention might become necessary for denying the mutinous Northern Fleet the control of strategic and tactical nuclear weapons. Since the conflict might erupt with little-or-no warning and rapidly escalate, time would be of high value, while information can be scarce and sketchy. The possibility to use northern

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Norwegian ports is sine qua non for any intervention.

Since the “enemy” would most probably be unable to organize any serious resistance, the intervention could be of small-to-medium size and involve several special operations aimed at securing nuclear weapons at the 3-4 main naval bases and the deployment of some 3,000 troops to Severomorsk (a city of 50,000 population with perhaps up to 1,000 rebel forces) with the mandate to restore order. For the first phase of the operation, surprise may be the key factor, but for the second non-combat phase the arrival of sufficient personnel trained for handling nuclear material is crucial. Technical solutions and engineering work might prove to be much more complicated than restoring order, particularly since most of the Fleet’s nuclear weapons will be kept well beyond the warrant period. Regional authorities in Murmansk, certainly shaken by the rebellion, could be cooperative and, perhaps, more cooperative than Moscow, which could grant the permission for intervention only reluctantly.

#### *East: Pre-empting China*

The chaotic crisis in Russia’s Far East could necessitate several interventions with different aims and formats. The response to a naval mutiny in Kamchatka could be similar to the operation in the Kola Peninsula, securing nuclear weapons being its prime goal. The scale of the operation may be even smaller (the only place to take control of would be Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky, a city of perhaps 150,000 inhabitants), and the main logistical difficulty would be the lack of any port facilities in the vicinity.

If the secessionist drive in Sakhalin would turn violent, the role of key peace-maker could be left to Japan, perhaps in cooperation with Canada and Australia. But a violent unrest in Primorsky kray might require a

large-scale and high-risk intervention due to at least two factors: one is again the control over nuclear weapons belonging to the Pacific Fleet, another is the possibility of Chinese intervention under the pretext of saving the lives of its citizens.

While it may be short to impossible to prevent China from advancing towards Khabarovsk and Blagoveshensk, taking control over Vladivostok and the area around it up to the border with Korea is generally feasible. Such an operation might involve a rapid deployment (perhaps, up to a Marine division), which will then have to be expanded and sustained; that would require building a considerable coalition force (involving Australia, Canada, Japan, and South Korea, with the US providing the core of the expedition force). The goals of territorial control could be consistently achieved only if cooperation from local authorities is secured, for which the political framework of the Far Eastern Republic may prove useful.

#### *West: Reducing Instability*

Potential crises in Belarus and Ukraine (especially if developing simultaneously) could create instability of such a scale that no Western intervention could realistically aim at restoring a stable order; the goals could be rather to stabilize the areas adjacent to the four East European and the three Baltic states, while preventing these states (all of them NATO members at the time) from acting unilaterally on some nationalistic agendas.

In the case of Belarus, a key consideration would be to avoid direct confrontation with Russia, who – acting on some “union” commitments – might try to prop up an unpopular regime in Minsk. Brest and Grodno could be the initial targets of an intervention, designed in a peacekeeping format; the situation in Kaliningrad should be closely monitored in



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order to prevent any violent unrest in this isolated enclave. A possible serious complication requiring some special operations would be the deployment of Russian nuclear weapons in Belarus and Kaliningrad prior to the crisis, which may be ordered in “response” to NATO enlargement.<sup>66</sup>

In the case of Ukraine, the main area of concern would probably be the Trans-Carpathya, as well as Lviv, Ivano-Frankivsk and Chernovtsy regions. Complicated history, uncertain relations with neighbours and ethnic patchwork make this area potentially volatile and difficult to pacify, with some groupings enthusiastically welcoming an intervention and others – violently opposing it. Romania should be discouraged from acting unilaterally vis-à-vis Moldova, and Turkey – in Crimea, where a secessionist conflict might require a US-led multilateral intervention of several Black Sea states.

## Conclusions

This paper deliberately avoids the fundamental issue of whether the West in general and NATO in particular would be politically willing to perform any of the described interventions. Neither does it discuss the crucial issue of NATO-Russia relations, which could hardly have much impact on regional developments inside Russia but might significantly influence the attitude of the central Russian government towards the spectre of foreign intervention. The scenario of a full-scale confrontation between NATO and Russia is left outside the scope of this paper not only due to its high complexity (would require much extra space and additional research) but also because of the assumption that Moscow would do every-

thing possible to avoid such a confrontation. Facing the threat of losing control over parts of the periphery, the Russian government, most probably, would be reluctant to ask for a NATO intervention but quite possibly would stop short of opposing one. That creates a “grey area” of potential crises where some Russian military units are turning their arms against “invaders”, while other remain ‘neutral’ or even turn supportive.

It is exactly this “grey area” that is targeted by the above analysis, while all the complicated foreign policy intrigues are left to a separate investigation.<sup>67</sup> The only observation in this regard is that the US under no circumstances would be able to conduct them unilaterally and would find itself seriously dependent on the support of key allies. Even if NATO mechanisms would prove unsuitable or inefficient,<sup>68</sup> the very possibility of constructing an ad hoc “coalition of the willing” would depend upon expensive and sustained efforts of European states (whether in the framework of the European Security and Defence Policy or not) in building up their own power projection capabilities.

Russia, despite its present-day semblance of stability, may see a chain of violent conflicts engulfing the most vulnerable parts of its vast periphery – and some of those may pose such risks to international peace and security that external interventions might seem the only solution. Neither the Gulf War, nor the air war against Yugoslavia offers a useful model for these interventions, but the KFOR deployment (with all its complications) can perhaps provide some lessons on taking control over a highly unstable area. These lessons could be compared with the historical records of interventions in Murmansk/Arkhangelsk and in the Far East during the Civil War of 1918-1922; while highly controversial, these experiences are definitely worth revisiting. In most cases, it would be not an

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organized military force equipped with old Soviet weaponry that would constitute the "enemy" for the intervening forces, but a plethora of para-military forces, spreading violent chaos. The operations, therefore, might not be that demanding regarding high-technology weapon systems, but could be manpower-

intensive, requiring the deployment of considerable forces for many months. Securing control over nuclear weapons, building elementary safety systems for various nuclear facilities and dealing with nuclear contamination could be the most serious risks in conducting the interventions.

## Notes and References

<sup>1</sup> Summing up the achievements of 2001, most experts pronounced it the most successful year in Russia's post-Soviet history, both for internal consolidation and foreign policy. See, for instance, Sergei Karaganov, "Europe Should Not Be Jealous of Us", *Moskovskie Novosti*, no. 52, December 2001. However, some economists warned about the price of missed opportunities. See Mikhail Delyagin, "What a Waste of a Year", *The Moscow Times*, 10 January 2002.

<sup>2</sup> For sharp analysis of the contradictions of this "pragmatic patriotism", see Stephen E. Hanson, "The Dilemmas of Russia's Anti-Revolutionary Revolution", *Current History*, October 2001, pp. 330-335.

<sup>3</sup> This publication is based on the paper prepared for a Strategic Studies Institute workshop (Washington, DC, 10-11 July, 2001) of the Future Landpower Project (FLEP), which was a part of the US Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA) study *All Our Tomorrows: A Long-Range Forecast of Global Trends Affecting Arms Control Technology*.

<sup>4</sup> Yergin and Gustafson in their celebrated work used the term *chudo* for a scenario of rapid and sustained economic growth, but that now looks as asking for too much. See Daniel Yergin & Thane Gustafson, *Russia 2010: And What It Means for the World*. New York: Random House, 1993.

<sup>5</sup> As Stephen Cohen has recently noted: "For the first time in history, a fully nuclearized nation is in the process of collapse. The result is potentially catastrophic". See Stephen F. Cohen, "Russian Nuclear Roulette", *The Nation*, 25 June 2001. This paper, while looking into a number of worst-case scenarios, will stop short of addressing such extreme options as full-blown thermo-nuclear catastrophe inside Russia or strategic nuclear "exchanges" between Russia and the USA.

<sup>6</sup> The most detailed account of this crisis is *Moskva. Osen-93: Khronika Protivostoyaniya* (Moscow. Autumn 1993: A Chronicle of Confrontation). Moscow: Respublika, 1994. Useful analysis can be found in Brian Taylor, "Russian Civil-Military Relations after the October Uprising", *Survival*, Spring 1994, pp. 3-29. I have looked into a version of a "Kremlin plot gone wrong" in chapter 3 of my book *The Russian Army in a Time of Troubles* (London: SAGE, 1996).

<sup>7</sup> That was the momentarily diagnosis of many Western experts. See, for instance, Paul Goble, "Moscow's Crisis and Russia's Regions", Endnote, *RFE/RL Newline*, 10 September 1998. Jacob Heilbrunn has started his article in *The New Republic* (28 September 1998) with this punch-line: "Russia is not in crisis. It is in dissolution". For a more balanced view,

see Graeme P. Herd, "Russia: Systemic Transformation or Federal Collapse?", *Journal of Peace Research*, May 1999, pp. 259-269.

<sup>8</sup> Anatol Lieven's book *Chechnya: The Tombstone of Russia's Power* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1998) stands apart in the vast bibliography on that war due to its unique combination of field experience and intellectual sophistication.

<sup>9</sup> Speaking with US journalists after the meeting with President Bush in Lubljana, Putin complained that he was 'bored' to explain Russia's aims and intentions in Chechnya. He well may be sick and tired of this war, but still cannot explain it away; however, the need to do it has all but evaporated when the US-led war against terrorism has started in earnest. For the full text of the interview, see *Johnson's Russia List*, no. 5312, 20 June 2001; for an analysis of the unsustainability of the current deadlock, see Pavel Felgengauer, "Ruthlessness Is No Solution", *Moscow Times*, 10 January 2002; for a sharp argument against the Western complacency about Chechnya, see "More Carnage in Chechnya", *Washington Post*, 9 January 2002.

<sup>10</sup> Vitaly Tretyakov, former editor of *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, wrote that after the first year Putin had stepped out of the image of a dynamic and determined leader and appeared lost without a clear sense of direction. See "A Bad Week", *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 23 January 2001. One year later many commentators confirmed that impression, making an exception for his decisive choice of pro-Western orientation. See Andrei Ryabov, "Running Around in Circles", *Vek*, 11 January 2002.

<sup>11</sup> See on that Stephen E. Hanson, "Can Putin Rebuild the Russian State?", *Security Dialogue*, June 2001, pp. 263-266.

<sup>12</sup> Putin trusts his *siloviki* much more than his liberal economic advisers, and the whole ideology of *gosudarstvennost* goes directly against reducing state's involvement in the economy. On the cult of the state, see Evgeny Ikhlov, "Strong Rights – Strong State", *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 10 June 2001.

<sup>13</sup> On Putin's corrosive role in terms of democratic consolidation, see Michael McFaul, "Russia Under Putin: One Step Forward, Two Steps Backward", *Journal of Democracy*, July 2000, pp. 19-33. Colton and McFaul have argued recently that shifts in Russia's political system towards illiberal democracy "are not caused by, or for that matter consistently reinforced by, popular attitudes towards democracy". Timothy J. Colton & McFaul. *Are Russian Undemocratic?* Carnegie Endowment Working Papers, no. 20, June 2001, p. 2.

<sup>14</sup> For an insightful view on this dependency see Yuri Levada, "Spring 2001: Deeds and Symbols", *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 16 May 2001.

<sup>15</sup> Stephen Holmes, emphasising problems with creating an authoritarian regime in Russia “because the underlying situation remains forbiddingly difficult”, warned that Putin is “fabricating an illusion of power” which brings only “a simulacrum of societal order”. See Stephen Holmes, “Simulations of Power in Putin’s Russia”, *Current History*, October 2001, pp. 307-312.

<sup>16</sup> Lilia Shevtsova, one of the sharpest analysts of Yeltsin’s Russia (see her book with this title published by Carnegie Endowment in 1999), has argued recently that Putin has shown more flexibility than many expected and thus created a sustainable system of control – but only in the environment of “stagnant stability”. See *Johnson’s Russia List*, no. 5249, 12 June 2001.

<sup>17</sup> My more elaborate analysis of this option can be found in Pavel Baev, “Will Russia Go for a Military Victory in Chechnya?”, *Research Paper 74*, Conflict Studies Research Centre, Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, January 2000.

<sup>18</sup> The reference point here is Stalin’s elimination of his “Chechen problem” by cruel deportations completed in a matter of a few weeks. See on that Chapter 2 (“Soviet Genocide”) in John B. Dunlop, *Russia Confronts Chechnya: Roots of a Separatist Conflict*. Cambridge: CUP, 1998.

<sup>19</sup> Georgi Derluguan examined that phenomenon in “The Process and the Prospects of Soviet Collapse”, pp. 203-225 in Georgi M. Derluguan & Scott L. Greer (eds), *Questioning Geopolitics*. Westport, CT: Praeger, 2000.

<sup>20</sup> For a sober economic analysis, see James R. Millar, “The Russian Economy: Putin’s Pause”, *Current History*, October 2001, pp. 336-442.

<sup>21</sup> Conservative estimates of capital flights from Russia during the 1990s give the figure of \$150 billion. With Putin’s arrival to power, capital flight first dipped sharply but since late spring 2000 has resumed to around 2 billion dollars a month. See “Boom and Gloom”, *The Economist*, 25 November – 1 December 2000, p. 125. Some Russian economists, including presidential adviser Andrei Illarionov, seek to make a virtue out of a vice and present the outflow of capital as helpful for preventing the undesirable strengthening of the rouble. See Boris Grozovsky, “A New Medicine for the Economy: Export of Capital”, *Polit.Ru*, 18 April 2001.

<sup>22</sup> On the phenomenon of Moscow’s hyper-charged drive, see Leonid Vardomsky, “Moscow: Administrative Moloch or Getaway for Globalization?”, pp. 138-149 in Klaus Segbers (ed.), *Explaining Post-Soviet Patchworks*. Volume 3: *The Political Economy of Regions, Regimes and Republics*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001.

<sup>23</sup> The Energy Strategy, approved by the government in November 2000, estimated the necessary size of investment at \$35 billion a year, with the impressive figure of \$700 billion for the next 20 years. Only about 10% of these resources are indeed invested and the controversial plans for reforming the RAO EEC are unlikely to generate the required \$50 billion in the next 10 years. See Michael Lelyveld, “Russia: Government Plans Reform for Electricity Monopoly”, *RFE/RL Newslines*, 22 May 2001.

<sup>24</sup> On the state of Russia’s Far East see chapter 5 of Dmitri Trenin, *The End of Eurasia*. Moscow: Carnegie Center, 2001.

<sup>25</sup> The point of departure for this wave of publications was Putin’s first address to the Federal Assembly in July 2000, where he emphasised that the “survivability of the nation” is under threat and provided an estimate that in 15 years Russia could have a population loss of 22 million. Characteristically, in his second address (July 2001), Putin did not mention this problem at all. Both documents can be found on the president’s website (<http://president.kremlin.ru>).

<sup>26</sup> See, for instance, Galina Vitkovskaya & Sergei Panarin (eds), *Migration and Security in Russia*. Moscow: Carnegie Center, 2000; Vladimir Shkolnikov et al (eds), *Inequality and Death Rate in Russia*. Moscow: Carnegie Center, 2000.

<sup>27</sup> For a sharp analysis of this psychological phenomenon, see Boris Kagarlitsky, “Iznos” (The Wear-Out), *Novaya Gazeta*, 21 February 2000.

<sup>28</sup> Dmitri Furman explains Putin’s popularity as a defensive reaction of Russian society against repeated humiliations by the political elite. This psychological denial, however, cannot last forever. See Dmitri Furman, “The Formula of Love to the President”, *Obshaya Gazeta*, 7 June 2001.

<sup>29</sup> Nikolai Petrov, one of the sharpest analysts of this trend, described it as a “swinging pendulum”, while in my understanding it was more of an ascending spiral. See Nikolai Petrov (ed.), *Russia’s Regions in 1998*. Moscow: Carnegie Center, 1999, pp. 58-60.

<sup>30</sup> On regional symbolism, see Yuri Perfilyev’s chapter, and on regional brands of vodka, the chapter of Petrov, both in Nikolai Petrov (ed.), *Russia’s Regions in 1999*. Moscow: Carnegie Center, 2001.

<sup>31</sup> See Nikolai Petrov, “Seven Faces of Putin’s Russia: Federal Districts as a New Level of State-Territorial Composition”, *Security Dialogue*, vol. 33, no. 1, March 2000, pp. 73-91.

<sup>32</sup> I have attempted a more elaborate analysis of this impact in Pavel Baev, “The Russian Army and Chechnya: Victory Instead of Reform?”, pp. 75-96 in Stephen Cimbala (ed.), *The Russian Military Into*

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*the Twenty-First Century*. London & Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 2001.

<sup>33</sup> As *The Economist* observed recently: "In charge of this shambles is one of Mr. Putin's closest pals, the new defense minister, Sergei Ivanov. An urbane, polyglot ex-spy, he is trying to speed up reform and improve the forces' abysmal public image." See "Come On, Look Like Soldiers", *The Economist*, 14-20 July 2001.

<sup>34</sup> See on that Alexei Arbatov & Petr Romashkin, "The State Has to Define Rational Guidelines for Military Reform", *Nezavisimoe Voennoe Obozrenie (NVO)*, no. 8, 3 March 2000; Alexei Arbatov & Petr Romashkin, "What Kind of Wars Can Russia Afford?", *NVO*, no. 15, 27 April 2000.

<sup>35</sup> For my more elaborate analysis of the degradation of the Navy, see Pavel Baev, "The Russian Navy After the Kursk: Still Proud but with Poor Navigation", *PONARS Report 215*, Washington: CSIS.

<sup>36</sup> While the *Kursk* remains the most dramatic illustration of this trend, the devastating fire at a space control center in Kaluzhskaya *oblast* in May 2001 and the explosion at an air defense unit in Moscow *oblast* in June 2001 confirm the assumption about the near-inevitability of large-scale accidents.

<sup>37</sup> One symptom here is the scale of desertion: according to recent official statistics, 5,000 soldiers attempt every year to desert from the Army, 86% of those are new recruits. See Leonid Bukatin & Pavel Voloshin, "Five Regiments of Deserters", *Novaya Gazeta*, 9-11 July 2001.

<sup>38</sup> I have looked more closely on these developments in Pavel Baev, "The Russian Armed Forces: Failed Reform Attempts and Creeping Regionalization", pp. 23-42 in David Betz & John Löwenhardt (eds), *Army and State in Postcommunist Europe*, London: Frank Cass, 2001.

<sup>39</sup> See Andrei Korbut & Dmitri Nikolaev, "The Kremlin Unites Power-men in the Regions", *NVO*, 19 May 2000. I had an opportunity to discuss these questions at the PONARS academic conference in Nizhny Novgorod (May 2001) with Brian Taylor. He has launched a promising research project in this direction, based on his earlier work; see, for instance, Brian D. Taylor, "A New Role for the Russian Interior Ministry Troops?", *Analysis of Current Events*, January-February 1999.

<sup>40</sup> This picture of rich and self-indulged Moscow is reflected upon in Aleksandr Kabakov's novel *The Last Hero* (1995); it could be worth mentioning that his earlier novel *Nevozvrasheniets* (1990), with its images of tanks on Moscow's streets, impressed many readers as a foresight of the August 1991 coup.

<sup>41</sup> I have argued about this shift of priorities in Pavel Baev "Russia's Policies in the Southern Caucasus

and the Caspian Area", *Europeans Security*, summer 2001, pp. 95-110. My reflections on the relevance of historical experiences can be found in Pavel Baev, "How Does History Inform Russia's Policy in the Great Anti-Terrorist Game?", *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, 2002, no 1, pp. 14-17.

<sup>42</sup> For a thoughtful argument on this see Douglas W. Blum, "Political Implications of the US Military Intervention for the Transcaspian", *PONARS Memo 211*, Washington, DC: CSIS.

<sup>43</sup> See Roland Dannreuther, "Can Russia Sustain Its Dominance in Central Asia?", *Security Dialogue*, June 2001, pp. 245-258.

<sup>44</sup> The highly confusing and obviously dangerous clashes in Abkhazia in October-November 2001 could be replayed again and again. On the balance of forces, see Vladimir Mukhin, "Sukhumi Is Ready to Everything", *Nezavisimoe Voennoe Obozrenie*, 19 October 2001.

<sup>45</sup> See on this Nikolai Sokov, *Russian Strategic Modernization* (Lanham, MA: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000), chapter 4, particularly pp. 135-140; Alexei Arbatov, *Bezopasnost: Rossiiskiy Vybor* (Security: Russia's Choice). Moscow: Epicenter, 1999, pp. 335-360, 380-393.

<sup>46</sup> For an overview, see Boris Pitersky, "Presidential Region", *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 19 June 2001.

<sup>47</sup> See Mikhail Khodarenok, "Black Year of the Russian Navy", *NVO*, 23 February 2001. My recent analysis can be found in Pavel Baev, "The Russian Navy After the *Kursk*: Still Proud but with Poor Navigation", *PONARS Report 215*, Washington: CSIS, January 2002.

<sup>48</sup> See Sergei Kozyrev, "What Is the Financing - Such Is the Navy", *NVO*, 15 June 2001.

<sup>49</sup> A peculiar illustration can be found in the recent novel *Generation P* (1999) by a famous Russian post-modernist author Viktor Pelevin: "Soon, very soon the nuclear-missile cruiser *Idiot*, whose keel was laid in commemoration of Dostoevsky's 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary, will come of the stocks in Murmansk." (My translation, for the original, see <http://lib.ru/PELEWIN/pokolenie.txt>).

<sup>50</sup> An ambitious draft of Naval Strategy was presented to President Putin on the very eve of the *Kursk* disaster – and approved with only minor changes in July 2001. See Vladimir Kuroedov, "A New Naval Strategy for Russia Is Born", *NVO*, 28 July 2000.

<sup>51</sup> Besides the *Kursk*, it is worth mentioning the massive explosion in ammunition depot just outside Severomorsk back in May 1984, which destroyed about a half of missiles of the Northern Fleet. See Vladimir Ermolin, "According to the Pompeii Scenario", *Grani.Ru*, 9 June 2001.

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<sup>52</sup> MINATOM is capable of unloading and removing nuclear reactors from 10-15 submarines a year, while the current "waiting list" is 113 and at least 15 submarines will have to be added to it during this decade. The most detailed source of information is the *Bellona* Foundation ([www.bellona.no](http://www.bellona.no)), its third report *The Arctic Nuclear Challenge* appeared in June 2001; see also Vladimir Temny, "Black Penants of Chernobyl", *Grani.Ru*, 13 June 2001.

<sup>53</sup> I have first made this argument in the paper "Russia in the Nordic-Baltic Region", presented at the conference *The New World Order – Russia Between East and West* at the Tel Aviv University in early April 2000 (i.e. some four month before the *Kursk* catastrophe).

<sup>54</sup> See on that Viktor N. Pavliatenko, "Russian Security in the Asia-Pacific Region: The Dangers of Isolation", pp. 13-44 in Gilbert Rozman, Mikhail G. Nosov & Koji Watanabe (eds), *Russia and East Asia*. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1999.

<sup>55</sup> See Roman Popov & Andrei Susarov, "Social Tensions and Social Problems", pp. 82-112 in *Russia's Regions in 1999*, on p. 104.

<sup>56</sup> See Viktor B. Supian & Mikhail G. Nosov, "Re-integration of an Abandoned Fortress: Economic Security of the Russian Far East", pp. 69-100 in *Russia and East Asia*.

<sup>57</sup> Conservative current estimates give the figure of 2,000,000 of illegal Chinese migrants in the Far Eastern region. For a solid analysis see *Perspektivy Dalnevostochnogo Regiona: Kitaisky Faktor* (The Far Eastern Region Prospect: The Chinese Factor). Moscow: Carnegie Center, 1999.

<sup>58</sup> For a sober analysis of these disputes see Dmitri Trenin, *The End of Eurasia*. Moscow: Carnegie Center, 2001, particularly chapter 5.

<sup>59</sup> For an informed discussion of Russia's aims and aspirations see Arkady Moshes, "The Slav Triangle: Ukraine and Belarus in Russia's Foreign Policy of the 1990s", *Pro et Contra*, vol. 6, Winter-Spring 2001 (<http://pubs.carnegie.ru/p&c>).

<sup>60</sup> In fact, it is Belarus President Lukashenko who has invested much energy in building ties with Russia's regions; these ties, however, might turn to work against him. See Sergei Golubev, "Lukashenko and Russian Regions", pp. 317-324 in *Russia's Regions in 1999*.

<sup>61</sup> Arkady Moshes offers an insightful explanation of this development in "Russian-Ukrainian Rapprochement of 2001: How Viable?", *Security Dialogue*, June 2002 (forthcoming).

<sup>62</sup> Transnistria might try to make a case for joining the Russian Federation according to the law approved by the State Duma in late June 2001. See Mikhail Vignansky, "Russian 'Imperialism' Threatens", Institute for War and Peace Reporting, 17 July 2001, in *Johnson's Russia List* no 5352.

<sup>63</sup> One specific formulation of this dictum is: "Rule 1, on page 1 of the book of war, is: 'Do not march on Moscow.'" See *Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*, Oxford: OUP, 1996, p. 481.

<sup>64</sup> On the "death of old NATO" and its evolution into a "security and defense services institution" see Francois Heisbourg, "Europe and the Transformation of the World Order", *Survival*, vol. 43, no. 4, Winter 2001, pp. 143-148.

<sup>65</sup> One such scenario (for the year 2006) can be found in part 4 of Caspar Weinberger & Peter Schweizer, *The Next War*. Washington DC: Regnery, 1996.

<sup>66</sup> While the media reports about shipments of nuclear warheads to Kaliningrad in early 2001 were disproved, the technical capability for such deployment is certainly available. For competent analysis see the report of the Monterey Center of Non-Proliferation Studies, Nikolai Sokov, "The 'Tactical Nuclear Weapons Scare' of 2001". Available at (<http://cns.miis.edu/pubs/reports/tnw.htm>).

<sup>67</sup> This author plans to look into those in his contribution to the project "Alternative Futures for Europe and Eurasia" organized by the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), Washington, with the final report scheduled for the end of 2002.

<sup>68</sup> Anatol Lieven has recently argued that it is likely that NATO, which has shown itself "completely worthless" for the campaign in Afghanistan, is likely to "become visibly moribund". See "The End of NATO", *Prospect*, December 2001 (available at [www.ceip.org/files/Publications/Lieven](http://www.ceip.org/files/Publications/Lieven)). For a thoughtful argument on NATO's uncertain future see Peter van Ham, "Security and Culture, or, Why NATO Won't Last", *Security Dialogue*, December 2001, pp. 393-406.



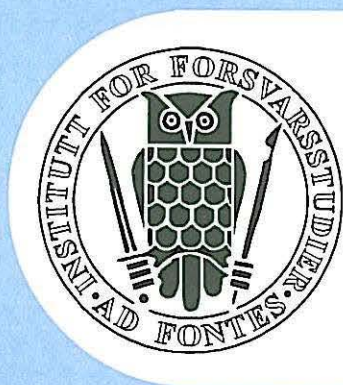


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# Russia in 2015

Could the Former Super-Power  
Turn into a Battle-Ground?



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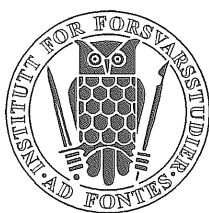
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