



## ANALYSIS

# PUTIN'S COUNTERINTELLIGENCE STATE THE FSB'S PENETRATION OF STATE AND SOCIETY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR POST-24 FEBRUARY RUSSIA

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Cover page photo: A security officer blocks a street near the Federal Security Service (FSB) building in Moscow after a shooting incident (Shamil Zhumatov/REUTERS/ Scanpix)

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## INTRODUCTION

Russia's unprovoked and unjustified war against Ukraine has dragged on for over half a year. In the 'special military operation,' which Moscow had hoped to complete in a few weeks, it not only failed to achieve its strategic objectives but also suffered massive manpower and equipment losses. Against the backdrop of this prolonged war, Russia seems to be reverting to Soviet times. Formal media pluralism was rolled back, with some remaining independent media outlets forced to shut down. The Russian government has stepped up crackdowns on anti-war sentiment, tightening surveillance of potential unrest among political, military, and business elites. The Western sanctions regime and the withdrawal of foreign businesses from the invader's market compelled Moscow to reintroduce elements of a command economy.

*Over the past quarter-century, Vladimir Putin has built his ship of state on the keel of the Federal Security Service. After February 2022, a new mission of the FSB is to mobilise society for war*

Over the past quarter-century, Vladimir Putin has built his ship of state on the keel of the Federal Security Service (FSB), one of the successors of the Soviet political police, the Committee for State Security (KGB). The security services have been a formidable instrument for the Russian leader to concentrate power in his hands and exercise pervasive control over all tiers of state and society. After February 2022, a new mission of the FSB is to mobilise society for war. Nevertheless, foreign observers often lump together the armed forces and the

security services under the umbrella term 'siloviki' (power ministries), thus obfuscating the latter's significance. In the USSR and post-Soviet Russia, however, the military and the security services are two distinct actors, with separate hierarchies and institutional cultures. Indeed, Russia is a military power, but it would be a source of confusion to equate it with a state run by military officers, such as Latin American military dictatorships in the 1960s-80s. A more helpful concept to understand contemporary Russia would be a 'counterintelligence state' characterised by its intelligence and security agencies' extensive penetration into public and private sectors, with a broad and permissive concept of 'state security' and a fierce hunt for and elimination of a fifth column – foreign spies – both within and outside the country.<sup>1</sup> The armed forces are a primary target for such penetrations.

Upon the collapse of the Soviet Union, the gigantic KGB was not abolished but was only partitioned into several agencies, each with a specific set of duties: foreign intelligence (the Foreign Intelligence Service, or the SVR), counterintelligence (the Ministry of Security, later reorganised as the Federal Service of Counterintelligence, or the FSK), border guard (the Border Service), guard service (the Federal Protective Service, or the FSO) and signals intelligence (Federal Agency of Government Communications and Information, or FAPSI). In 1995, the FSK was restructured as the Federal Security Service, which restored the investigative directorate that its predecessors had lost following the fall of the USSR.<sup>2</sup> Further, under Putin's presidency, the FSB absorbed the Border Service and a critical part of FAPSI, becoming the most powerful agency in the hierarchy of security and intelligence agencies in Russia. As a result, the SVR, the successor of the prestigious KGB's First Chief Directorate, occupies 'a backseat to the FSB.'<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Michael J. Waller, *Secret Empire: The KGB in Russia Today* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), 13-14; John J. Dziak, *Chekisty: A History of the KGB* (Lexington: Lexington Book, 1988).

<sup>2</sup> Andrei Soldatov and Irina Borogan, *The Red Web: The Struggle Between Russia's Digital Dictators and the New Online Revolutionaries* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2015), 52.

<sup>3</sup> Kimberly Marten, "The 'KGB State' and Russian Political and Foreign Policy Culture," *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 30, no. 2 (3 April 2017): 143-44.

Because of their covert nature, intelligence and security agencies often remain missing dimensions of policy analysis.<sup>4</sup> This paper attempts to fill this gap by providing a historical background of Chekist ideology and penetration practice, and an overview of the formal roles and genuine activities of the FSB's directorates in little-known realms: the fight against Western influence; foreign intelligence, including external counterintelligence and intelligence from the territory; military counterintelligence; economic counterintelligence; and internal security of the organisation. To what extent are Chekists a coherent community or 'stratum' in Russian society? How viable is the FSB as a policy instrument? How will the ongoing war affect the role of the security services?

*'Chekism' rests on the securitisation of society and preoccupation with neutralising adversaries complemented by a world view that these rivals harbour an intention to penetrate and destroy the regime*

## 1. CHEKISM – SECURITISATION OF SOCIETY

In March 1990, the Soviet Union abolished the political monopoly of the Communist Party, which it had exercised since 1917. The KGB, which served as the Party's 'sword and shield,' simply abandoned Leninism, just as it did with Stalinism in the 1950s. However, it did not abandon 'Chekism,' the cult and operational code of the All-Russian Extraordinary Commission, or Cheka, the first political police of the Soviet Union, and its founder Felix Dzerzhinsky. This rests on the securitisation of society and preoccupation with neutralising adversaries, open and hidden, complemented by a world view that these rivals harbour an intention to penetrate and destroy the regime.<sup>5</sup> For the sake of state security, any means are justifiable; Dzerzhinsky made it clear that the Cheka "stands above any law" and that

its mission is "organised terror."<sup>6</sup> Oddly enough, the KGB idolised the Cheka while distancing itself from the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs (NKVD), the KGB's predecessor, which had carried out numerous purges under Stalin.

Even after Dzerzhinsky's statue had been removed from Lubyanka square in 1991, post-Soviet Russian intelligence services continued to venerate the Cheka. FSB officers still call themselves heirs of the Cheka – Chekists.<sup>7</sup> Honouring the 'Day of the Chekist' on 20 December 1999, Vladimir Putin, then prime minister stated, "The group of FSB personnel assigned to work undercover *in the government* has successfully carried out the first step of their mission."<sup>8</sup> A year later, on the same occasion, Putin addressed the FSB officers as acting president, "[...] the mission of bringing power under full control has been completed, I congratulate you on our holiday!"<sup>9</sup> Western experts assumed that Putin was joking.<sup>10</sup> However, if one considers the KGB's zealous attempts to adapt to emerging circumstances during perestroika – economic liberalisation, expanding democracy, and 'glasnost' – and its struggle for institutional survival that started on the eve of the USSR's disintegration, Putin's statements sound like a highly contextualised declaration of triumph.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Waller, *Soviet Empire*, 21.

<sup>7</sup> In 2017, FSB Director Aleksandr Bortnikov stated that the word Chekists is "deeply rooted not only in [security officers'] professional slang but is widely used in the journalistic environment, in society as a whole," and asserted that "denying the word 'Chekist' is like burying the generations of our predecessors in oblivion." ["Александр Бортников: ФСБ России свободна от политического влияния"](#) [Aleksandr Bortnikov: The FSB of Russia Is Free from Political Influence], *Rossiiskaya Gazeta*, 19 December 2017.

<sup>8</sup> Alex Stanovoy, ["Putin 1999"](#), Alex Stanovoy, 10 February 2015, YouTube Video, 0:18.

<sup>9</sup> Aaron Bateman, "The Political Influence of the Russian Security Services," *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 27, no. 3 (2014): 389-90.

<sup>10</sup> Brian Taylor, "From Police State to Police State? Legacies and Law Enforcement in Russia," in *Historical Legacies of Communism in Russia and Eastern Europe*, ed. Mark Beissinger and Kotkin Stephen (Cambridge University Press, 2014), 38.

<sup>11</sup> Sanshiro Hosaka, ["Chekists Penetrate the Transition Economy: The KGB's Self-Reforms during Perestroika,"](#) *Problems of Post-Communism* (17 June 2022): 1-12; Sanshiro Hosaka, ["Perestroika of the KGB: Chekists Penetrate Politics,"](#) *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence* (7 July 2022): 1-30; Catherine Belton, "Children's Toys in Pools of Mud" in *Putin's People: How the KGB Took Back Russia and Then Took on the West* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2020).

<sup>4</sup> Christopher M. Andrew and David Dilks, *The Missing Dimension: Governments and Intelligence Communities in the Twentieth Century* (Macmillan International Higher Education, 1984).

<sup>5</sup> Dziak, *Chekisty: A History of the KGB*; Waller, *Soviet Empire*, 34.

Despite multiple parallels between the KGB and post-Soviet Russian intelligence agencies, what makes today's Chekists different from their Soviet precursors is their close ties with the criminal underworld and rampant corruption. In the 1990s, the Chekists, the mafia, and the bureaucracy merged in St. Petersburg,

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with Putin, then deputy mayor of the city administration, at the helm of this newly emerged 'sistema' (system).<sup>12</sup> The leaders of the ill-famed St. Petersburg-based Tambov-Malyshyev organised crime group apprehended by Spanish authorities in 2008 had close ties with Putin and other FSB officials.<sup>13</sup> As Putin rose through the ranks of FSB Director, Prime Minister, and finally President, the 'sistema' spread throughout Russia.

## 2. PENETRATION – OFFICERS OF THE ACTIVE RESERVE

The system of 'officers of the active reserve' has played a key role in the security services' pervasive penetration of society. The KGB infiltrated its officers into government institutions, news agencies, universities, and enterprises (*Aeroflot*, *Intourist*, etc.) to utilise these entities for counterintelligence and the protection of state secrets. However, this relationship did not mean a legal subordination of these organisations to Lubyanka. The KGB and the top management of a receiving organisation secretly agreed on the posting of active reserve officers, and the officers ostensibly did the same job as ordinary staff. For example, after the return from East Germany in 1990, KGB officer Putin was dispatched to work at Leningrad State University in charge of international affairs to monitor people's deputy and democrat Anatoly Sobchak.<sup>14</sup>

During the Perestroika period, Chekists also infiltrated or covertly founded joint ventures with foreign firms, where they recruited agents to carry out espionage against Western partners.<sup>15</sup> The KGB produced economics specialists and trained young Chekists inside commercial entities. For senior officers, extensive training was conducted on the mechanisms and norms of the market economy. KGB economists worked closely with the Sixth Directorate, which was in charge of economic counterintelligence, including the Soviet shadow economy.

Many intelligence personnel were trained as journalists, attorneys, professors, and engineers, too. On the eve of the Soviet Union's demise, the KGB maintained 87 Doctors of Sciences and 1 779 Candidates of Sciences in its establishment.<sup>16</sup>

On the political front, the KGB encouraged Chekists to run for office in local elections in 1990 and supported their election campaigns. As a result, 2 756 Chekists were elected to the republican, regional, city, and village councils. Another priority task for Chekists was to co-opt new Soviet legislators and undermine purported parliamentary oversight for the security services. For this, the Lubyanka urged top- and middle-level officers to strengthen ties with the newly elected deputies, and "consider this a politically important and responsible task."<sup>17</sup>

After the failed August 1991 coup, Mikhail Gorbachev sacked the main instigator, KGB chairman Vladimir Kryuchkov and embarked on a reform of the political police. But in contrast to the Baltic republics on the path to independence and newly independent states of the former Warsaw Pact, he did not attempt to abolish these services. Instead, he split the gigantic KGB into separate agencies based on their functions, most of which were reintegrated into the FSB later. Active reserve officers remained in the ministries and companies to which they had been assigned. According to one estimate, 80% of joint ventures housed Chekists in 1992.<sup>18</sup> In the USSR, the KGB monopolised sensitive

<sup>12</sup> Belton, *Putin's People: How the KGB Took Back Russia and Then Took on the West*.

<sup>13</sup> Karen Dawisha, *Putin's Kleptocracy: Who Owns Russia?* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2015).

<sup>14</sup> Fiona Hill and Clifford G. Gaddy, *Mr. Putin: Operative in the Kremlin* (Brookings Institution Press, 2013), 161-162.

<sup>15</sup> Hosaka, "Chekists Penetrate the Transition Economy," 5-6.

<sup>16</sup> Hosaka, "Chekists Penetrate the Transition Economy," 5.

<sup>17</sup> Hosaka, "Perestroika of the KGB," 13.

<sup>18</sup> Michael J. Waller and Victor J. Yasmann, "Russia's Great Criminal Revolution: The Role of the Security Services," *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice* 11, no. 4 (1 December, 1995): 288.

information in the economic sphere. With the collapse of the command-administrative system, many 'former' KGB employees were re-employed by 'private' companies as security or legal advisors, peddling their intelligence know-how and connections in 'financial-information struggles' of these entities.<sup>19</sup> This commercialisation process of Chekists blurred the boundary between officers of the active reserve and genuinely former KGB employees (e.g., see the case of Sergei Korolev later in this article).

*Commercialisation process of Chekists blurred the boundary between officers of the active reserve and genuinely former KGB employees*

During the international conference on the KGB legacies, organised by Soviet dissident-democrat Sergei Grigoryants in 1993, a rebellious former KGB colonel Aleksandr Kichikhin warned, "The institute of active reserve officers is being restored in many ministries and departments of Russia." Kichikhin pointed out that the Ministry of Security, the KGB's principal successor, demanded all commercial structures to have its representative within the organisation. The Ministry also formed a tax inspectorate, tax police, and customs authorities from among Chekists.<sup>20</sup> In post-Soviet Russia, 'officers of the active reserve' were simply renamed 'seconded employees,' with the Law on the Organs of the Federal Security Service of 1995 stipulating, "In order to solve the problems of ensuring the security of the Russian Federation, servicemen of federal security service organs may be seconded to state bodies, enterprises, institutions, and organisations, regardless of their form of ownership, with the consent of their leaders in the manner established by the President of the Russian Federation, with their remaining in military service." This

Article 15 does not differ significantly from the corresponding article of the law on the KGB, which gave the committee a free hand in 1991.<sup>21</sup>

Although there are overt Kremlin appointments of FSB/SVR generals, such as the elevation of former FSB deputy director Sergey Ivanov to defence minister (2001-07), former SVR director Vyacheslav Trubnikov to first deputy foreign minister (2000-04), and other FSB/SVR officials to deputy ministers in the early 2000s, the main body of seconded employees is low-and-middle-level personnel, whose names are not announced.<sup>22</sup> While some colleagues in a recipient organisation can guess the genuine affiliation of their new employee, the FSB refuses to acknowledge specific cases, which are deemed to be a state secret.<sup>23</sup>

The dispatching of officers reflects the power dynamics among the multiple groups within the FSB structure. For example, Russian oil company *Rosneft* receives seconded employees affiliated with its president Igor Sechin, known as Putin's right arm since the final years of the USSR. The same goes for RZD (Russian Railways), whose president was Vladimir Yakunin, another prominent Chekist.<sup>24</sup>

*Dispatching of officers reflects the power dynamics among the multiple groups within the FSB structure*

For Chekists, the secondment is not necessarily a one-way ticket to an assigned organisation but can be a steppingstone to higher ranks. For example, Sergei Martynov, an FSB seconded officer who had been in charge of cadres under St. Petersburg Mayor Valentina Matviyenko from 2003, returned to the FSB in 2010 as its director of human resources. In 2014, he was transferred back to a civilian position to lead the Secretariat of the Federal

<sup>19</sup> Joseph L. Albini and Julie Anderson, "Whatever Happened to the KGB?," *International Journal of Intelligence and CounterIntelligence* 11, no. 1 (1 March, 1998): 39; Soldatov and Borogan, *The New Nobility*, 30-31.

<sup>20</sup> Aleksandr Kichikhin, "Привело ли расследование августовского путча к трансформациям в работе КГБ??" [Did the Investigation of the August Putsch Lead to Transformations in the Work of the KGB?], in *КГБ: вчера, сегодня, завтра: сб. докладов* [KGB: yesterday, today, tomorrow: collection of reports], ed. Elena Oznobkina and Liliya Isakova (Moscow: Gendal'f, 1993), 55.

<sup>21</sup> Sanshiro Hosaka, "The KGB and Glasnost: A Contradiction in Terms?," *Demokratizatsiya: The Journal of Post-Soviet Democratization* (8 September 2022): 24-29.

<sup>22</sup> Olga Kryshchanovskaya and Stephen White, "Putin's Militocracy," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 19, no. 4 (2003): 296.

<sup>23</sup> "ФСБ отказалась отвечать на вопрос о кураторе в Институте РАН в Петербурге" [Petersburg: the FSB refused to answer the question about the curator at the Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences], *Sever.Realii*, 4 February 2021.

<sup>24</sup> FSB Dossier Center, "Аппарат прикомандированных сотрудников" [Apparatus of seconded employees], 26 February 2020.

Council, which was chaired by Matviyenko. In 2019, Martynov was elected a member of the Federal Council, which rubberstamped Putin's requests for the deployment of Russian military forces in Ukraine.<sup>25</sup> The Matviyenko-Martynov association is the tip of the iceberg; many pro-regime politicians, oligarchs, and intellectuals, even if they are ostensibly not affiliated with intelligence agencies, often have an FSB 'kurator' (curator), or handler assigned to them.

*Pro-regime politicians, oligarchs, and intellectuals, even if they are not affiliated with intelligence agencies, often have an FSB 'kurator'*

Another illustration of the 'kurator' relationship is former defence minister Anatoly Serdyukov and current FSB first deputy director Sergei Korolev. Korolev is rarely exposed in public, but the publicly available information indicates that in the 1990s, he worked for a private security company that serviced a furniture chain, which was hijacked by Anatoly Serdyukov and Malyshev's mafia group that he was affiliated with. After working for the economic security department of the FSB Saint Petersburg Directorate in the early 2000s, Korolev was seconded to the Federal Tax Service headed then by Serdyukov. When Serdyukov became Minister of Defence in 2007, Korolev took office as his adviser, overseeing the Main Directorate of the General Staff of the Armed Forces, or GRU, possibly as a counterintelligence officer (the relationship between the FSB and the GRU will be touched upon later).<sup>26</sup> In 2008, Gennady Petrov, a leader of the Tambov Mafia with ties to Putin, was arrested in Spain on charges of money laundering and arms smuggling. The phone conversation of Petrov intercepted by Spanish investigators suggests that Petrov and Korolev were so close that they invited each other to a birthday party.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>25</sup> "Совет Федерации меняет аппарат [The Federation Council changes the apparatus]," *Kommersant*, 20 June 2018.

<sup>26</sup> Evgenii Vyshenkov, "Главред арестов Королёв [Editor-in-chief of arrests Korolev]," *Fontanka.ru*, 19 July 2016.

<sup>27</sup> Anastasiya Kirilenko, "День чекиста празднуют все. Прослушки обнаружили связь тамбовской ОПГ с главой СЭБ ФСБ и прокурором Петербурга [Everyone celebrates the Chekist Day. Wiretapping discovered a connection between the Tambov organised crime group and the head of the SES FSB and the prosecutor of St. Petersburg]," *The Insider*, 20 December 2018.

### 3. FIGHT AGAINST THE WESTERN INFLUENCE – THE SECOND SERVICE

Chekism's central tenet is that the adversarial Western special services infiltrated the USSR with their 'agents of influence,' aiming to destabilise the communist regime from the inside (in fact, this is exactly a mirroring of what they did to the West). At the end of the

1960s, against the backdrop of the increasing cultural and intellectual exchanges with the West, KGB chairman Yuri Andropov established the Fifth Directorate, tasking it with maintaining control over intellectuals who were seen as potential sources

of unrest.<sup>28</sup> How the KGB valued this work is reflected in the fact that despite the separation of the Fifth Directorate from the Second Chief Directorate (2CD), the number of fifth-line workers doubled that of second-line (counterintelligence) in some republican KGB.<sup>29</sup> After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Fifth Directorate (renamed the Directorate for the Protection of Constitutional Order in 1989) was supposed to be abolished except for its anti-terrorism service.<sup>30</sup> However, in 1998, under FSB director Putin, the notorious directorate was resurrected as the Service for Protection of the Constitutional System and the Fight against Terrorism, commonly known

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as the Second Service.<sup>31</sup> One might wonder why anti-dissident and anti-terrorism functions are combined in the same Service. For Chekists, anything that smacks of threatening the stability of the regime can be defined as 'extremism.'

<sup>28</sup> Julie Fedor, *Russia and the Cult of State Security: The Chekist Tradition, From Lenin to Putin* (London: Routledge, 2011), 147-48.

<sup>29</sup> Vladimir Tol'ts, "Пятёрка и 'пятёрышники' - 45 лет Пятого управления КГБ (1) ['Five' and 'fives' - 45 years of the Fifth Directorate of the KGB (1)]," *Radio Svoboda*, 14 July 2012.

<sup>30</sup> Yevgenia Albats, *The State Within a State: The KGB and Its Hold on Russia - Past, Present, and Future* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1994), 353; Waller, *Soviet Empire*, 71.

<sup>31</sup> Soldatov and Borogan, *The New Nobility*.

The FSB Second Service, like the KGB Fifth Directorate, has a different mission than that of the Department of Counterintelligence Operations (DKRO). While the DKRO monitors foreign embassies, media, students, and tourists in Russia, the Second Service, as political police, keeps blacklists of labour unions, youth organisations, and religious groups, and monitors any potentially 'harmful' activities.<sup>32</sup>

In summer 2022, a Russian opposition activist affiliated with Alexei Navalny's Anti-Corruption Foundation confessed that he had been a FSB agent for six years, handing over information about the Foundation's investigations and the schedule of anti-government protests to the FSB handlers. The 'former' FSB agent speculates that nearly every organised opposition group has an informer at low or mid-level.<sup>33</sup>

Surveillance targets of the Second Service include academic and cultural organisations that do not handle any state secrets, such as universities, theatres, and ballet academies.<sup>34</sup>

*KGB/FSB has dispatched its officers to major universities and research institutes as vice-rectors or advisers in charge of security or international cooperation*

Chekists believe that intelligentsia and cultural elites have fast access to information that may undermine the regime's legitimacy and that foreign special services may utilise them for anti-Russian propaganda.<sup>35</sup> As a result, the KGB/FSB has dispatched its officers to major universities and research institutes as vice-rectors or advisers in charge of security or international cooperation. In December 2021, the former head of the Belgorod FSB directorate

was appointed vice-rector of Moscow's Higher School of Economics, often regarded as a liberal institute in Russia.<sup>36</sup> A researcher at another scientific institute complained that control from the counterintelligence officer began to increase in the early 2000s, with the paperwork necessary for security clearance reaching an unprecedented level not seen even during the Soviet times.<sup>37</sup> These Chekists keep

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an eye on students' social media posts, censor academic papers, and oversee researchers' foreign business trips. Chekists deploy agents and informers they recruited from among students and university staff to prevent anti-regime activities, and organise student rallies in support of the regime, such as Putin's 'special military operation' in Ukraine.<sup>38</sup> While the police forces use brutal force to crack down on anti-war demonstrators, the FSB officers with their agents press and co-opt them, using a variety of covert Chekist methods including 'profilaktika' (prevention).<sup>39</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Valentin Baryshnikov, "Вторая служба [Second Service]," *Radio Svoboda*, 31 August 2017.

<sup>33</sup> This statement, which has not been verified by other sources, may be an attempt to discredit the entire Russian opposition, hence should be taken with a pinch of salt; Il'ya Davlyachin and Zhanna Ul'yanova, "Бывший соратник Навального признался в блетней работе на спецслужбу [Former colleague of Navalny admitted to working for the special service for 6 years]," *Verstka*, 22 August 2022; Pjotr Sauer, "There Were Hundreds of Us': Navalny Ex-Staffer Tells of Being FSB Informer," *The Guardian*, 26 August 2022.

<sup>34</sup> "«Кураторы» от ФСБ в российских вузах. Как устроена система, унаследованная от СССР [Curators' from the FSB in Russian universities. How the system inherited from the USSR works]," *The Insider*, 20 December 2021.

<sup>35</sup> Baryshnikov, "Second Service."

<sup>36</sup> "Проректором по безопасности ВШЭ назначен бывший глава ФСБ по Белгородской области [Former FSB head for Belgorod region was appointed HSE vice-rector for security]," *The Insider*, 19 December 2021.

<sup>37</sup> "Curators' from the FSB."

<sup>38</sup> Anton Zhelnov and Kogershyun Sagieva, "Кураторы из спецслужб, 'спецкабинеты ФСБ' и травля студентов. Преподаватель МГУ о том, чем занимаются прикомандированные чекисты [Curators from the Special Services, 'Special Offices of the FSB' and Persecution of Students. Lecturer at the Moscow State University on What Seconded Chekists Do]," *Dozhd*, 13 June 2018; "Curators' from the FSB."

<sup>39</sup> Egor Fedorov, "«Это точка невозврата». Как преследуют студентов, выступивших против войны [This is the point of no return. How students who opposed the war are pressed]," *Sibir'.Realii*, 2 March 2022.

## 4. FSB'S FOREIGN INTELLIGENCE – DEPARTMENT OF OPERATIONAL INFORMATION

In Soviet times, as the Party's 'sword and shield', the mission of preserving the regime proceeded from two premises. The first premise is the overriding importance of counterintelligence. While the West employs counterintelligence to expose the espionage activities of foreign intelligence services at home, Soviet/Russian counterintelligence is preoccupied with the potential enemies, and that activity begins abroad.<sup>40</sup> The second tenet is the reverse of the first: Soviet/Russian foreign (external) intelligence begins domestically – or what Chekists call 'intelligence from the territory.' This blurred boundary between foreign and domestic services is based on Chekists' distinctive and implicitly conspiratorial perception that internal and external threats are invariably merged and that all domestic opportunities, not to say vulnerabilities, should be exploited by external intelligence. This view persists both in practice and in the legislation of modern Russian intelligence.<sup>41</sup>

*Blurred boundary between foreign and domestic services is based on Chekists' distinctive and implicitly conspiratorial perception that all domestic vulnerabilities should be exploited*

Thus, the external intelligence function is not limited to the Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR), which succeeded the KGB's First Chief Directorate (foreign intelligence), and the Chief Intelligence Directorate of the General Staff of the Armed Forces, or military intelligence

commonly known as the GRU.<sup>42</sup> One significant example of the counterintelligence agency's encroachments on foreign intelligence functions appeared in the middle of the 1990s. While the Russian SVR insisted that it adhered to the agreement with other CIS member states not to conduct intelligence operations against each other, Russian president Boris Yeltsin stated in 1994, "The FSK's extensive capacities must be effectively used in the defence of Russians both in this country and abroad."<sup>43</sup> As a result, the FSB, restructured from the FSK, was given intelligence responsibilities under Article 11 of the 1995 Law "On the Bodies of the Federal Security Service in the Russian Federation." Moreover, the law does not place geographical limitations on the FSB's external intelligence activities.<sup>44</sup> Further in 2003, by amending Article 11 of the law, an 'external intelligence organ' was created within the FSB.<sup>45</sup> This organ is considered to be the Department of Operational Information (DOI) of the FSB's Fifth Service. The DOI personnel are actively conducting intelligence activities in Russia's 'near abroad.'<sup>46</sup>

Over the past eight years, along with the presidential directorate in charge of breakaway 'republics' supervised by Vladislav Surkov and the GRU, the DOI to has been reportedly conducting intelligence operations in Ukraine, especially in Russia's puppet 'republics.' According to Christo Grozev of *Bellingcat*, in 2019, the Fifth Service was re-organised by expanding its staff from 30 to over 120 officers to boost its efforts in subversive activities against Ukraine. And it was the Fifth Service that developed the *Blitzkrieg* plan to

<sup>40</sup> James Sherr, "The New Russian Intelligence Empire," *Problems of Post-Communism* 42, no. 6 (1995): 13.

<sup>41</sup> Sanshiro Hosaka, "Repeating History: Soviet Offensive Counterintelligence Active Measures," *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence* 35, no. 3 (3 July, 2022): 447-51.

<sup>42</sup> It is also worth mentioning that some divisions of the Presidential administration engage in intelligence activities, including the Presidential Directorate for Interregional and Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries, which has been headed by SVR generals and conducting influence operations using agents in the countries of the 'near abroad'; Yuri Fedorov, "Hybrid War à La Russe" (Kyiv: Center for Army, Conversion and Disarmament Studies, 2016), 98-101.

<sup>43</sup> Sherr, "The New Russian Intelligence Empire," 13-14.

<sup>44</sup> Mikhail Tsygkin, "Terrorism's Threat to New Democracies: The Case of Russia," in *Reforming Intelligence: Obstacles to Democratic Control and Effectiveness*, ed. Thomas C. Bruneau and Steven C. Boraz (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2007), 277-78.

<sup>45</sup> Soldatov and Borogan, *The New Nobility*, 21.

<sup>46</sup> Andrei Soldatov, "Неизвестная разведка [Unknown intelligence]," *Agentura.ru*, 17 January 2022; Ivo Juvree and Lavly Perling, "Russia's Espionage in Estonia: A Quantitative Analysis of Convictions," *International Centre for Defence and Security*, November 2019).

seize Ukraine with an optimistic prediction that the majority of the Ukrainian people would not resist the puppet regime Moscow planned to install.<sup>47</sup> In March 2022, it was reported that Fifth Service chief Sergei Beseda and DOI head Anatoly Bolyuh, who had been engaged with

*The Fifth Service developed the Blitzkrieg plan to seize Ukraine with an optimistic prediction that the majority of the Ukrainian people would not resist*

Ukraine for past years – both spotted in Kyiv on the eve of Yanukovich's flight in 2014 – were placed under house arrest on suspicion of embezzling funds, as well as misinforming the Russian leadership about the political situation in Ukraine.<sup>48</sup>

## 5. EXTERNAL COUNTERINTELLIGENCE – COUNTER FOREIGN SUBVERSIVE CENTRES

Those who believe that the FSB is a purely domestic agency need to explain why its officers are sent to the Russian embassies around the world.<sup>49</sup> For example, according to an estimate by a former counterintelligence officer of the Japanese Police Agency, the total number of Russian intelligence officers operating in Japan reached about 80, of which 40 were from the SVR, 30 from the GRU, and 10 from the FSB.<sup>50</sup>

FSB officers at Russian embassies are engaged in so-called 'external counterintelligence.' During the Soviet era, the *raison d'être* of external counterintelligence rested upon the Chekist perception that hostile secret services were conducting subversive activities not only in the Soviet Union but also against its

diplomatic missions and citizens abroad. In the mid-1950s, the 15th department of the First Chief Directorate in the Ministry of State Security, later renamed Directorate 'K' in the KGB's First Chief Directorate, was responsible for external counterintelligence, which provided 'counterintelligence support' for Soviet delegations and tourist groups.<sup>51</sup> Although the Directorate 'K' was part of foreign intelligence, it was staffed with officers from the 2CD (counterintelligence) and regional security services.<sup>52</sup>

However, the KGB's external counterintelligence went beyond the protection of Soviet diplomats. While the interception of hostile activities in the USSR was the primary responsibility of domestic counterintelligence, the KGB recognised the vital role of foreign intelligence in this struggle, believing that "all the threads of the enemy's subversive actions [were] drawn from the capitalist countries." This rhetoric is resonant with 'colour revolutions,' which contemporary Chekists believe have foreign sponsors. In this context, counterintelligence services can work "with much greater efficiency" if foreign intelligence provides them with materials revealing the enemy's plans, intents, and specific in time.<sup>53</sup> Thus, 'offensive tactics' conducted by the 2CD sought to penetrate and compromise enemy intelligence services and anti-Soviet emigrant organisations.<sup>54</sup> Oleg Kalugin, a former KGB general who headed the Directorate 'K,' stated that external counterintelligence of the KGB residency in the United States targeted the CIA, the FBI, and the National Security Agency.<sup>55</sup> The Directorate 'K' handled George Blake (KGB's

<sup>47</sup> "“ФСБ и ГРУ конкурировали в Украине”. Как провал спецслужб стоил России 40 000 жизней [“FSB and GRU competed in Ukraine.” How the failure of the special services cost Russia 40,000 lives],” *LIGA*, 25 July 2022.

<sup>48</sup> Andrei Soldatov, “Сегодня распространилась информация, что Путин начал репрессии в отношении 5 службы ФСБ” Facebook, 11 March 2022.

<sup>49</sup> Soldatov, “Unknown intelligence.”

<sup>50</sup> 「日本にロシア人スパイは80人」 捜査のプロが明かす「スパイの見分け方」とは? [“80 Russian Spies in Japan,” a Professional Operative Revealed ‘How to Identify Spies’],” *Daily Shincho*, 22 April 2022.

<sup>51</sup> Vladimir Vladimirov and Yuri Bondarenko, *Политическая разведка с территории СССР* [Political Espionage from USSR Territory] (Moscow: Krasnoznamennyi institut KGB SSSR imeni YU, 1989), 8.

<sup>52</sup> John Barron, *KGB Today: The Hidden Hand* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1984), 446.

<sup>53</sup> *Основные направления и объекты Разведывательной работы за границей* [Fundamental Directions and Targets of Intelligence Work Outside the Country], 1970, 93-94; Aleksei Myagkov, *Inside the KGB* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1945), 175; In 1967, the KGB instructed the counterintelligence services to “take active measures for discovering and foiling enemy schemes, and so on.”

<sup>54</sup> Hosaka, “Repeating History,” 446-47.

<sup>55</sup> Oleg Kalugin, “The KGB Has Not Changed Its Principle,” in *Perils of Perestroika: Viewpoints From the Soviet Press, 1989-1991*, ed. Isaac J. Tarasulo (Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources Incorporated, 1992), 106; Andrew Christopher and Oleg Gordievsky, *KGB: The Inside Story of Its Foreign Operations From Lenin to Gorbachev* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1990), 452.

mole in MI6, arrested in 1961) and Aldrich Ames (KGB double agent in CIA, arrested in 1994), each of whom dealt a heavy blow to MI6 and the CIA by exposing their agents to Moscow.

Nowadays, although external counterintelligence formally falls under the purview of the SVR that succeeded the 1CD with its Directorate 'K,' renaming the latter to the External Counterintelligence Directorate, the crucial role in external counterintelligence is perhaps still attributable to the counterintelligence service, i.e., the FSB, as it was so in the KGB. According to the Law on the FSB, one of the organisation's duties is "to carry out [...] measures to ensure the security of institutions and citizens of the Russian Federation outside its borders" (Article 12, paragraph 'л'). Furthermore, the FSB is authorised to "infiltrate special services and organisations of foreign states" (Article 13, paragraph 'б'); such a function is not envisaged in the Law on Foreign Intelligence, which governs the activities of the SVR.<sup>56</sup>

In 2021, a young Russian man, reportedly recruited by the FSB to infiltrate into Russian emigre community in Georgia, confessed to *Meduza* that his handler told him, "There is nothing interesting in Russia anymore; and all the interest now is in emigration, in Georgia."<sup>57</sup> Another similar report about an FSB-recruited Russian oppositionist indicates that he was sent to Georgia not only to monitor the activities of Russian oppositions in exile but also to establish contact with the Georgian intelligence service. According to the source, the FSB handlers presumed that the Georgian special service would approach

CIA.<sup>58</sup> With many Russians fleeing abroad after the February 2024 invasion, the role of FSB's external counterintelligence in countering 'foreign subversive centres' and the affiliated Western special services is expected to grow.

## 6. INTELLIGENCE FROM THE TERRITORY

During the Cold War, the KGB was not allowed to expand 'legal' residencies abroad due to the limited quotas for Soviet diplomats established by the host countries. Furthermore, the Western countries considerably boosted counterintelligence capabilities against Soviet intelligence by deploying advanced surveillance tools. Challenged by these circumstances, in 1970 the KGB leadership instructed the territorial services to increase intelligence activities "from the territory of the Soviet Union."<sup>59</sup> If the territorial services achieved some results (e.g., acquiring of useful confidential contacts among foreign visitors), further work abroad was carried out by the 'legal' residency. But sometimes even in these cases, an operative or agent of the counterintelligence unit was sent to a capitalist country to develop and recruit foreigners with whom they successfully developed contacts in the USSR. These operations required close coordination between counterintelligence and intelligence subdivisions, the absence of which, due to distrust and rivalry between them, or '*mestnichestvo*,' led to the disruption of operations, exposing KGB agents.<sup>60</sup>

The Directorate 'RT' ('*razvedka s territorii*'), responsible for the intelligence from the territory, sought to recruit foreign diplomats, military attachés, businesspersons, and journalists staying for a relatively long period in the USSR, although short-term visitors through scientific, economic, and cultural exchanges also caught the attention of the KGB as a 'quantitatively more significant' group. Many such foreigners later occupied

*With many Russians fleeing abroad after the February 2024 invasion, the role of FSB's external counterintelligence is expected to grow*

Russian emigres to offer them work for it to incite a revolution in Russia together with the

<sup>56</sup> Hosaka Sanshiro, "Cold War Active Measures," in *Routledge Handbook of Disinformation and National Security*, ed. Rubén Arcos, Irena Chiru, and Cristina Ivan (Taylor and Francis Group, Forthcoming).

<sup>57</sup> Kristina Safonova, "'Пускай все знают, что я — агент' 'Медуза' рассказывает историю Всеволода Осипова — либертарианца, которого завербовали эшники. А потом отправили в Грузию следить за эмигрантами из России ["Let everyone know that I am an agent"], *Meduza*, 11 July 2022.

<sup>58</sup> Davlyachin and Ul'yanova, "Former colleague of Navalny."

<sup>59</sup> Vladimirov and Bondarenko, *Political Espionage*, 9-10.

<sup>60</sup> "Использование делегаций и туризма в разведывательных целях [Use of Delegations and Tourism for Intelligence Purposes]," *KGB Training Manuals*, no. 6/9 (1971): 60-61.

prominent positions in their home countries with a direct link to the targets of Soviet intelligence penetration, possessing information of interest to Chekists or “the ability to exert a certain influence on the formation of the domestic and foreign policy of their governments” as agents of influence.<sup>61</sup>

Although the Directorate ‘RT’ was part of the KGB’s 1CD (foreign intelligence),<sup>62</sup> in post-Soviet Russia, intelligence from the territory was reinstated as a prerogative of the FSB through the 2003 revision of the Law on the FSB (Article 13, paragraph ‘B1’).<sup>63</sup> For this work, FSB regional directorates took over the KGB regional directorates’ first departments, which had been tasked with recruiting foreign travellers to the USSR.<sup>64</sup>

*A corollary of the Western governments’ expulsion of Russian ‘diplomats’ will be for the SVR to increase its use of ‘illegals’ and for the FSB to strengthen foreign intelligence operations from the territory of the Russian Federation*

After February 2022, a corollary of the Western governments’ expulsion of a number of Russian ‘diplomats’ – many of whom are intelligence officers under ‘legal’ diplomatic cover – will be for the SVR to increase its use of ‘illegals’ (officers operating under false identities with no overt connection with the Russian government), and for the FSB to strengthen foreign intelligence operations from the territory of the Russian Federation.

## 7. SPECIAL DEPARTMENT – MILITARY COUNTERINTELLIGENCE DEPARTMENT

From 1917 onwards, ‘divide and rule’ has been an important principle of governance of the armed forces. The principle of ‘edinonachalie’ (unity of command) was institutionalised and, at times, undermined by the Party

organisations. ‘Kommissars’, or political officers from the Main Political Directorate (GlavPUR), provided an element of Party oversight in units and formations and were responsible for the political education of service personnel. Yet a third channel of supervision and activity was performed by the KGB in the form of ‘Special Departments’ of the Third Chief Directorate (3CD) responsible for military counterintelligence.

The special department placed officers into military command echelons, bases, and even nuclear submarines. Not only was the Special Department authorised to arrest military personnel, but also to execute them under martial law.<sup>65</sup> After World War II, the prerogatives of the special department were curtailed. Nevertheless, while the military procuracy required permission from the military commander to conduct an arrest, the KGB’s Special Department did not.<sup>66</sup> Military Chekists – ‘osobisty’, the chekists from ‘osobyi otel’ (special department) – were often handpicked from among officers of the armed forces, and they wore a uniform indistinguishable from that of military officers.<sup>67</sup> As the Regulations on the Departments of the FSB in the Armed Forces approved by then acting president Putin in 2000 shows, the FSB departments in the military units are staffed in a similar manner; some officers – ‘osobisty’ – are recruited among active military officers (see Section 10 of the Regulations).<sup>68</sup> Further, ‘osobisty’ recruit agents and informants amongst all military ranks, as well as civilian employees; they monitored signs of disturbances and violations

<sup>65</sup> Amy Knight, *The KGB: Police and Politics in the Soviet Union* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1990), 252.

<sup>66</sup> Knight, *The KGB: Police and Politics*, 263–64.

<sup>67</sup> Myagkov, *Inside the KGB*, 24, 61, 89–90.

<sup>68</sup> Russian Federation, President of Russia, [Указ Президента Российской Федерации от 07.02.2000 г. № 318 Об утверждении Положения об управлениях \(отделах\) Федеральной службы безопасности Российской Федерации в Вооруженных Силах Российской Федерации, других войсках, воинских формированиях и органах \(органах безопасности в войсках\)](#) [Decree of the President of the Russian Federation of February 7, 2000 N 318 ‘On Approval of the Regulations on the Directorates (Departments) of the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation in the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, Other Troops, Military Formations and Bodies (Security Organs in the Troops)’] (Moscow: President of Russia, 7 February 2000).

<sup>61</sup> Vladimirov and Bondarenko, *Political Espionage*, 44.

<sup>62</sup> Vladimirov and Bondarenko, *Political Espionage*, 93.

<sup>63</sup> Sanshiro, “Cold War Active Measures.”

<sup>64</sup> Soldatov, “Unknown intelligence.”

of discipline and imposed preventive and punitive measures where necessary.<sup>69</sup>

Therefore, it is fundamentally wrong to link military counterintelligence with the GRU, military intelligence. On the contrary, the GRU, which had the most regular contacts with Western counterparts, seeking scientific-technological intelligence in the West, was placed under particular surveillance by the Special Department, the 3CD. It was the 3CD that arrested Colonel Oleg Penkovsky in 1962 and other GRU officers on suspicion of espionage.<sup>70</sup>

*GRU, which had the most regular contacts with Western counterparts, was placed under particular surveillance by the Special Department*

Whereas party oversight of the armed forces ceased to exist when Gorbachev abolished GlavPUR,<sup>71</sup> the Special Department remains as a service of the counterintelligence agency. The FSB took over the huge 3CD, which consisted of over 600 components, and continued to monitor the military from within.<sup>72</sup> For example, it was the FSB Military Counterintelligence Department (DVKR) that investigated the case of former GRU colonel Sergei Skripal, who was convicted for acting as a double agent for MI6 and targeted by GRU assassins who attempted to kill him with the 'Novichok' nerve agent in the UK in 2018.<sup>73</sup>

Notably, the tasks of the Special Department extended beyond routine counterintelligence activities. Western experts believe that it was responsible for the management and transportation of nuclear warheads until the 1960s. Later, the KGB appears to have relinquished its physical control over the

warheads, but military nuclear installations remained under the watchful eye of the Special Department, which presumably could exercise (party) control over the use of nuclear weapons with a separate chain of command from the military.<sup>74</sup> It is quite likely that FSB retains a similar function; at least, the Regulations on the FSB Departments in the Armed Forces stipulates that military counterintelligence informs relevant state bodies of violations of nuclear safety in the armed forces.<sup>75</sup>

In the early 2000s, the FSB managed to enhance the official status of its counterintelligence officers assigned to military units. Thus, the aforementioned regulations broadly defined the functions of the military counterintelligence including even "intelligence activities to obtain, process and implement information about threats to the security of the

Russian Federation," as well as "penetration into special services and organisations of foreign states" (Section 4). It also authorised military counterintelligence to undertake inquiries and preliminary investigations into cases that fall under the FSB jurisdiction (Section 4) and granted FSB officers the right to attend meetings held by the military command and give proposals (Section 20).<sup>76</sup>

In an interview with the FSB public relations magazine in 2013, a former head of military counterintelligence said that even after the collapse of the Soviet Union, foreign spies continued to conduct espionage against the Russian military, using international NGOs operating in Russia (e.g., environmental NGO monitoring the pollution by the Russian navy). The former 'osobist' also suspected that foreign capital and foreign special services were behind the illicit acquisition and bankruptcy of strategically vital military-industrial enterprises.<sup>77</sup>

<sup>69</sup> According to one Western estimate, the percentage of informants in the military peaked during WW II with 12 percent cooperating with special departments. After the war, for instance, informants made up three percent of the contingent of sniper companies. Tank, missile, air defence, and airborne units had higher numbers with the air force having the highest; Knight, *The KGB: Police and Politics*, 265-66.

<sup>70</sup> Knight, *The KGB: Police and Politics*, 266-67.

<sup>71</sup> In July 2018, Putin reincarnated the GlavPUR as the Main Military-Political Directorate of the Russian Armed Forces; Vladimir Shcherbakov, "Возвращение ГлавПУРа [The Return of GlavPUR]," *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 30 July 2018.

<sup>72</sup> Albats, *The State Within a State*, 352.

<sup>73</sup> Nikolay Abin, "Крот в 'Аквариуме' [A 'Mole' in the 'Aquarium']," *FSB Za i Protiv*, no. 6(28) (2013): 24-30.

<sup>74</sup> Knight, *The KGB*, 262-63.

<sup>75</sup> Russian Federation, President of Russia, *Decree of the President of the Russian Federation of February 7, 2000 N 318*.

<sup>76</sup> Russian Federation, President of Russia, *Decree of the President of the Russian Federation of February 7, 2000 N 318*.

<sup>77</sup> Sergei Yurgin, "Владимир Петрищев: 'Военная контрразведка обладает особым характером' [Vladimir Petrishchev: 'Military counterintelligence has a unique character']," *FSB Za i Protiv*, no. 6(28) (2013): 8-14.

In recent years, the FSB's military counter-intelligence has stressed its role in combating corruption in the army and navy, which dispose of huge material resources, technical potential, and real estate. In the aforementioned FSB magazine, the military counterintelligence chief boasted that in five years, 2 200 individuals, including 32 senior military officers, had been convicted of committing corruption-related crimes based on military counterintelligence investigation materials.<sup>78</sup>

In fact, 'osobisty' use criminal materials selectively. In 2012, Presidential Administration Chief Sergei Ivanov, Putin's old mate both at Leningrad State University and at the KGB Institute of the Red Banner, allegedly instigated the investigation of his successor and defence minister Anatoly Serdyukov. Thus, the Military Counterintelligence Department, together with the Interior Ministry's Main Directorate for Economic Security and Anti-Corruption headed by general Denis Sugrobov, opened the embezzlement cases against defence ministry officials and affiliated companies. These revelations forced Serdyukov to step down. It was even rumoured that the Military Counterintelligence Department reported the progress of the investigation directly to Ivanov to circumvent the FSB Internal Security Directorate, which was then headed by Sergei Korolev, a Chekist known for its close relationship with Serdyukov.<sup>79</sup>

## 8. CONTROL OF ECONOMY – FOURTH SERVICE

The control of the country's economy has been a core function of Chekists since the early years of Soviet intelligence. In the 1920s, the successor of the Cheka (the GPU/OGPU) prosecuted 'NEPmen' – private traders under Lenin's New Economic Policy – and 'economic counterrevolution'.<sup>80</sup> As mentioned earlier, during Perestroika, given

the economic liberalisation and an increase in international trade, the KGB's Sixth Directorate (counterintelligence support of the economy) and other divisions infiltrated officers of the active reserve into freshly-minted Soviet enterprises and joint ventures. Chekists were expected to protect the economy and business from what they saw as 'economic subversion' allegedly plotted by the Western intelligence agencies against the USSR with trade connections as smokescreens to conceal their true intentions. The scope of responsibilities of the Sixth Directorate was far beyond counterespionage activities; it not only sought to protect state (and commercial) secrets but to engage in what was supposed to be done by economic authorities – the supervision of large contracts.<sup>81</sup>

The purview of the FSB's Economic Security Service (the Fourth Service) – the successor of the KGB's Sixth Directorate and Fourth Directorate (another economic service in charge of transports) – is also so broad that it allows its officers to systematically intervene in the country's economic processes. Thus, the Fourth Service has been often at the highest echelon of the corruption schemes, providing 'counterintelligence support', or a protective 'roof' for industrial enterprises (Directorate 'P'); transport and communications (Directorate 'T'); the credit and financial system (Directorate 'K').<sup>82</sup> For example, the Directorate 'P' alone has nine departments with officers supervising *Rostek*, *Rosnano*, and *Roskosmos*, companies and plants related to natural resources and defence, and nuclear power plants. In the early 2000s, the functions of the Fourth Service included combating smuggling and drug business (Directorate 'N', which was later disbanded); and counterintelligence support for the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Emergency Situations, Ministry of Justice (Directorate 'M', which is now said to have been directly subordinated to the FSB director).<sup>83</sup>

As any other community, the Chekist brotherhood is not free from frictions among its members, occasionally leading to interagency

<sup>78</sup> According to the former chief of the FSB's military counterintelligence, it uncovered 12 foreign intelligence officers, 106 agents and 8 Russian collaborators between 2010 and 2013; Yurgin, "Vladimir Petrishchev."

<sup>79</sup> Roman Shleinov and Aleksei Nikol'skii, "Кто такие люди Анатолия Сердюкова" [Who Are the People of Anatoly Serdyukov], *Vedomosti*, 3 December 2012.

<sup>80</sup> Knight, *The KGB*, 17.

<sup>81</sup> Hosaka, "Chekists Penetrate the Transition Economy."

<sup>82</sup> This FSB's Directorate 'K' should not be mixed up with the KGB's Directorate 'K'. As mentioned earlier, the latter was in charge of external counterintelligence.

<sup>83</sup> FSB Dossier Center, "Служба экономической безопасности (Четвертая служба) [Economic Security Service (Fourth Service)]," 17 February 2020.

conflicts. In the mid-2000s, the FSB's Directorate 'N' was in fierce competition with the newly established Federal Drug Control Service (FSKN) led by Viktor Cherkesov to protect their turf.<sup>84</sup> The FSKN prosecuted FSB operatives for partnering with drug dealers.

*Chekist brotherhood is not free from frictions among its members, occasionally leading to interagency conflicts*

In retaliation, FSB's Economic Security Service – then headed by Aleksandr Bortnikov, current FSB director – initiated the arrest of FSKN general Alexander Bulbov, charging him with illegal wiretapping.<sup>85</sup> After Bulbov's arrest, Cherkesov, an experienced Chekist who rose from the Leningrad KGB to become the first deputy to FSB director Putin, complained about the 'war of groups' between the special services.<sup>86</sup>

## 9. MONITORING LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES – DIRECTORATE 'M'

The FSB's penetration into 'siloviki' is not limited to military counterintelligence. The FSB runs the Directorate 'M,' which prosecutes 'siloviki' officers. The Directorate was part of the Economic Security Service (other sources say it was part of the Internal Security Directorate), infiltrating seconded officers into other law enforcement agencies, such as the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Emergency Situations, the Ministry of Justice, and the Prosecutor's Office, as well as the judicial

system. Chekists occupying senior positions in other agencies have the power to influence cadre appointments.<sup>87</sup>

Political police infiltration into law enforcement agencies is not a new phenomenon. During Soviet times, the KGB's investigation procedure (house search, arrest, etc.) had to be confirmed by an employee of the procuracy office, who reported to the procurator on the initiation of a criminal case. However, this formal supervision by procuracy was undermined by various methods, in particular by penetrating officers of the active reserve into the procuracy office. According to former KGB officer Viktor Orekhov, during the late Soviet times, an assistant to the Moscow city procurator was an officer of the KGB Moscow Directorate, enabling the KGB to complete its investigation by itself, with virtually no supervision by the procurator.<sup>88</sup>

Yuri Andropov, who ascended from the KGB chairman to General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, appointed former KGB chairman Vitaly Fedorchuk to the position of Interior Minister and dispatched 150 Chekists to the Ministry to dismantle the local police factions formed during Brezhnev's stagnation era.<sup>89</sup> The Putin regime inherited Andropov's method by appointing Rashid Nurgaliev, who used to work for the Ministry of Security (a predecessor of the FSB) of the Karelia Republic under Nikolai Patrushev in the early 1990s, to First Deputy Interior Minister in 2002, and promoting him to Interior Minister in 2004. Nurgaliev occupied the position until 2012 with FSB-seconded officers assisting him within the ministry.<sup>90</sup>

<sup>84</sup> FSB Dossier Center, "[Противостояние между ФСБ и ФСКН](#)" [Confrontation between the FSB and the FSKN], 22 March 2020.

<sup>85</sup> FSB Dossier Center, "[Дело 'Трёх Китов'](#)" [The Case of the 'Three Whales'], 10 February 2020; Egor Ivanov, "[ФСБ может околдовать Госнаркоконтроль](#)" [FSB can bewitch the State Drug Control Agency], Fontanka.ru, 9 June 2008; Another report says that while being in jail, general Bulbov accused not the Economic Security Service, but the Sixth Service headed by general Feoktsov of plotting against him; Sergei Kanev, "[WikiLubyanka](#)," *Novaya Gazeta*, 26 September 2011.

<sup>86</sup> "[Нельзя допустить, чтобы воины превратились в торговцев](#)" Виктор Черкесов – о 'войне групп' внутри спецслужб ["We must not allow warriors to become merchants"], *Kommersant*, 9 October 2007.

<sup>87</sup> FSB Dossier Center, "[Управление 'М'](#)" [Directorate 'M'], 17 February 2020.

<sup>88</sup> Viktor Orekhov, "О Контроле За Деятельностью Органов КГБ [On the Control over the Activities of the KGB]," in *КГБ: вчера, сегодня, завтра: сб. докладов* [KGB: yesterday, today, tomorrow: collection of reports], ed. Elena Oznobkina and Liliya Isakova (Moscow: Gendal'f, 1993), 163.

<sup>89</sup> Gilles Favarel-Garrigues, *Policing Economic Crime in Russia: From Soviet Planned Economy to Privatisation*, trans. Roger Leverdier (London: C. Hurst & Co. Publishers, 2011), 96.

<sup>90</sup> Favarel-Garrigues, *Policing Economic Crime in Russia*, 258.

## 10. FEROCIOUS INFIGHTING FOR POWER – NINTH DIRECTORATE

The FSB Internal Security Directorate, or the Ninth Directorate, known as ‘the FSB within the FSB,’ carries out counterintelligence activities for its central apparatus (the first service), other subordinate divisions (the second service), local divisions (the third service), and the staff seconded to other agencies (the fourth service). In 2011, an anonymous insider’s revelation accused the Ninth Directorate of being “the top of the corruption pyramid in the Russian power structures.” According to the same source, after Putin’s ascendancy to power, the Directorate was entrusted with additional functions: to prosecute criminal cases such as banking fraud and money laundering.<sup>91</sup>

The insider perhaps had in mind the notorious Sixth Service. In 2003, Igor Sechin, deputy head of the Presidential Administration responsible for ‘siloviki’ structures, instructed FSB General Oleg Feoktistov to recruit personnel for a new division that would be established in the FSB’s Internal Security Directorate. The Sixth Service, nicknamed ‘Sechin’s special forces,’ is a highly autonomous unit with its initial chief, Feoktistov, even bypassing FSB director Nikolai Patrushev to report to Sechin. Later, Feoktistov supposedly had access to President Putin with the attendance of FSB director Aleksandr Bortnikov.<sup>92</sup> In 2016, the Sixth Service under the direction of Ivan Tkachev, together with Feoktistov, who was dispatched to Sechin’s Rosneft, oversaw the arrest of Minister of Economic Development Alexei Ulyukhaev by launching a bribery accusation.<sup>93</sup>

From 2012 to 2016, the Internal Security Directorate led by Sergei Korolev, current FSB’s first deputy director, arrested, apparently with Putin’s prior consent, ‘siloviki’ rivals, such as Interior Ministry general Denis Sugrobov, who investigated embezzlement cases connected to Korolev’s associate Anatoly Serdyukov, and multiple regional governors including Komi

Republic head Vyacheslav Gaiser and Sakhalin Governor Alexander Khoroshavin.<sup>94</sup> Some observers see Vyacheslav Sizov, a high-ranking prosecutor in charge of monitoring the legality of the FSB, who is reported to have committed suicide in 2011, as a victim of the war waged by the Sixth Service head general Feoktistov against the Prosecutor General Office.<sup>95</sup> In terms of SIGINT and HUMINT capabilities, the Sixth Service has the upper hand over other investigative agencies. For example, the office

*In terms of SIGINT and HUMINT capabilities, the Sixth Service has the upper hand over other investigative agencies*

of arrested Interior Ministry general Sugrobov was bugged by the Sixth Service from 2010, though the general knew that.<sup>96</sup> Furthermore, several police officers of Sugrobov’s directorate secretly cooperated with the FSB’s Directorate ‘M’ operatives, whose official function is overseeing ‘siloviki’ agencies. But, as it turned out, the ‘M’ operatives were implementing a secret assignment given by the Sixth Service. Sugrobov’s subordinate, discussing a conspiracy against FSB officials, was secretly recorded, and this intrigue was reported by the Sixth Service to FSB director Bortnikov and then the Security Council, which gave a green light to the cultivation of high-ranking police officials. Further, FSB agents recruited in Sugrobov’s directorate entrapped the high-ranking police officials in a sting operation set up by the Sixth Service.<sup>97</sup>

Membership in the Chekist community does not always exempt one from arbitrary prosecutions. Thus, the Internal Security Directorate targets other state agencies led by prominent Chekists. In July 2016, operatives of the Sixth Service conducted a house search of the head of the Federal Customs Service, Andrey Belyaninov.<sup>98</sup> During the Soviet times, Belyaninov, as a foreign intelligence officer, worked in the Soviet Embassy in East Germany, where he supposedly became acquainted with

<sup>91</sup> Kanev, “WikiLubyanka.”

<sup>92</sup> Sergei Kanev, “Генерал печальной карьеры [Sad Career General],” *TsURrealizm*, 7 September 2017.

<sup>93</sup> Sergei Kanev, “Последний спецназовец Сечина [Sechin’s Last Commando],” *TsURrealizm*, 15 May 2018.

<sup>94</sup> Vyshenkov, “Editor-in-chief of arrests Korolev.”

<sup>95</sup> Kanev, “WikiLubyanka.”

<sup>96</sup> Andrei Sukhotyn, “Спецоперация ‘Буря в мундирах’ [Special Operation ‘Uniform Storm’],” *Novaya Gazeta*, 24 March 2017.

<sup>97</sup> Sukhotyn, “Special Operation ‘Uniform Storm’.”

<sup>98</sup> Kanev, “Sad Career General.”

Putin. After the investigators found his 'hidden' cash and valuables reportedly amounting to 100 million roubles, Belyaninov resigned from the head of the Customs Service, a post he had held for over ten years. However, he was not convicted; the confiscated assets were returned, and he was offered a new position, chairman of the Eurasian Development Bank.<sup>99</sup>

Here is another example: in 2016, the Internal Security Directorate arrested billionaire Dmitry Mikhilchenko on the charge of alcohol smuggling and fraud in state procurement works. Mikhilchenko was a close associate of Evgeny Murov, a high-ranking Chekist and the head of the Federal Protective Service (FSO) since 2000. Soon after the initiation of the Mikhilchenko case, Murov resigned from the FSO director with Putin's consent, on the same day, however, taking up the position of chairman of the board of directors of Zarubezhneft, a Russian state-controlled oil company.<sup>100</sup>

*To the extent that the supremacy of the FSB over other agencies became unshakable, conflicts started to gain intra-agency nature*

To the extent that the supremacy of the FSB over other agencies became unshakable, conflicts started to gain intra-agency nature. Similar to the Economic Security Service, the Sixth Service of the Internal Security Directorate is running a protection racket for businesses and bankers. This further testifies to the level of antagonism between these directorates. In 2016, the Internal Security Directorate conducted large-scale anti-corruption checks in the Economic Security Service. As a result, the head of the Directorate 'K' of the Economic Security Service Viktor Voronin, suspected of involvement in the Mikhilchenko case, lost his position, together with his supervisor, Economic Security Service head Yuri Yakovlev. The main outcome of the purges was the expansion of the personal influence of Sergei Korolev, then Internal Security Directorate chief, who soon headed the Economic Security

Service. The Internal Security Directorate chief was taken over by his protégé Alexei Komkov.<sup>101</sup> Together with Korolev, Sixth Service head, Ivan Tkachev moved to the Directorate 'K' of the Economic Security Service, while Feoktistov, who collected '*kompromat*' on the staff of the Economic Security Directorate, apparently because of his difficult relationship with Korolev, did not return to the FSB, remaining in Rosneft.<sup>102</sup>

In February 2021, Korolev was promoted to FSB's first deputy director after supervising both the Internal Security Directorate and the Economic Security Service. These two powerful directorates seem to be a springboard to high-ranking positions. Nikolai Patrushev (currently Secretary of the Security Council) oversaw the Internal Security Directorate (1995-98) and the Economic Security Department (1998-99) before he was appointed to succeed Putin as FSB director.<sup>103</sup> Bortnikov was the director of the Economic Security Service (2004-08) before ascending to the FSB chief.

## CONCLUSION

Russian politics, like many others, encompasses formidable battles for supremacy. It has, however, institutionalised something that is absent in liberal democracies: the wholesale penetration of state and society by security officers and their agents. The counterintelligence state survived the disintegration of the USSR, but throughout post-Soviet Russia, it further evolved by incorporating criminal elements and rampant corruption. In recent years, the FSB's predominance over other agencies has become increasingly evident. Most of the mutual charges amongst 'siloviki' ended in favour of the FSB.

As we have demonstrated, the persistence of Chekism does not imply that contemporary Chekists constitute a well-disciplined,

<sup>99</sup> Nikolai Sergeev, "[В отношении Андрея Бельянинова 'не было дела'](#)" [With regard to Andrey Belyaninov 'there was no case'], *Kommersant*, 23 December 2016.

<sup>100</sup> Anastasiya Mikhaylova, Vyacheslav Kozlov, Mikhail Rubin, Ilya Rozhdestvenskiy, and Mariya Makutina, "[Схема 'Трёх китов'](#)" [Scheme 'Three Whales'], *RBK*, 26 July 2016.

<sup>101</sup> Ilya Rozhdestvenskii, "[Новые Лубянские](#)" [New Lubyankas], *The New Times*, 9 November 2017.

<sup>102</sup> Tatyana Stanovaya, "[Чекисты-разбойники: как ФСБ погрязла во внутренних конфликтах](#)" [Chekists-robbers: how the FSB got mired in internal conflicts], *Riddle Russia*, 25 July 2019.

<sup>103</sup> FSB Dossier Center, "[Управление собственной безопасности \(Девятое управление\)](#)" [Directorate of Internal Security (Ninth Directorate)], 4 April 2020.

monolithic community. There are vicious rivalries for power and resources, particularly, at the highest echelon; Chekists are fighting against Chekists. At the same time, what these battles have in common is that only low- and middle-ranking officers, along with non-Chekist businesspersons, are punished, while those who are powerful enough (or, synonymously, sufficiently close to Putin) can act with impunity. Cherkesov, Belyaninov, and Murov not only escaped accusations of fraud and corruption but were rewarded with honorary posts in state-owned companies after retirement. Although Chekists charge ‘siloviki’ of other agencies with corruption and abuse of power, the accusers are usually corrupt themselves. Cronyism and corruption are in full swing among contemporary Chekists. The massive corruption in the Russian armed forces revealed during the war against Ukraine suggests not only the ineffective work of the FSB’s military counterintelligence, but also the latter’s involvement in the military corruption scheme.

Disgruntled officers of the military and law enforcement agencies other than the FSB have little opportunity to challenge the powers-that-be. Putin controls the armed forces and other combat-ready troops not only as Supreme Commander-in-Chief but also through the FSB’s Special Department and the Directorate ‘M.’ Furthermore, in 2016, Putin entrusted the newly-established ‘Rosgvardiya’ (National Guard) with 340 000 personnel to Viktor Zolotov, a Chekist from the Ninth Directorate (the guard of the Communist Party leadership) and Putin’s henchman.<sup>104</sup> Even if the Russian president makes a reckless decision, as exemplified by the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, for which Russia has to pay significant military and economic costs, FSB control virtually rules out active opposition by other ‘siloviki’ officers.<sup>105</sup>

What then are the chances that FSB officers dissatisfied with the war’s consequences will

turn on Putin? It is difficult to see how this would come about. Russian leaders have been extraordinarily vigilant in their dealings with their aides. When Leonid Brezhnev, the leader of the Soviet Union, named his most trusted aide, Yuri Andropov, as KGB chair, he ensured that two KGB deputy chairmen would separately report on Andropov’s behaviour.<sup>106</sup> According to a report of the Dossier Center, Putin maintains two-channel communication with the FSB, engaging not only with FSB director Bortnikov but also with individual directorate chiefs. Such a management style is designed to encourage Chekists to compete for the president’s personal blessing, resulting in fierce contests and ploys against one another.<sup>107</sup>

*Putin’s management style is designed to encourage Chekists to compete for the president’s personal blessing, resulting in fierce contests and ploys*

It is far from inevitable that the historical defeat of the Russian military per se will weaken the core of the counterintelligence state. In contrast to more than eight military generals who were fired or side-lined since the start of the invasion, there have been no reports that any of the FSB generals has been held accountable for the setbacks of the Blitzkrieg operation. Earlier reports that the Fifth Service leadership was purged were rebutted with general Beseda put back into service.<sup>108</sup> Recruiting Russia’s collaborators, launching the occupation administration and organizing sham ‘referendums’ in the newly occupied regions would fall to the FSB, not the GRU. In the domestic context, the growing militarisation and securitisation of Russian society will bring the FSB to the forefront as a primary instrument of maintaining subservience and order. Nevertheless, cutting Russia off from the global economy probably

<sup>104</sup> Formally, the National Guard troops are also put under surveillance of the FSB Military Counterintelligence Department (the 2016 revision to the Law on the FSB, Article 13, paragraph ‘ж’).

<sup>105</sup> Andrei Soldatov and Irina Borogan, “[Could the Siloviki Challenge Putin?](#),” *Foreign Affairs*, 23 June 2022; Adam E. Casey, “[Putin Has Coup-Proofed His Regime](#),” *Foreign Policy*, 23 March 2022.

<sup>106</sup> Leonid Mlechin, “[Из чекистов в неоярване](#) [From Chekists to neo-nobles],” *Kommersant*, 4 December 2017.

<sup>107</sup> FSB Dossier Center, “[Лубянская Федерация Как ФСБ определяет политику и экономику России](#) [Lubyanka Federation How the FSB determines Russia’s politics and economy],” accessed on 11 March 2022.

<sup>108</sup> Mary Ilyushina and Natalia Abbakumova, “[Kremlin, Shifting Blame for War Failures, Axes Military Commanders](#),” *The Washington Post*, 8 October 2022; Irina Borogan and Andrei Soldatov, “[The Shadow War: Putin Strips Spies of Ukraine Role](#),” *CEPA*, 9 May 2022; Greg Miller and Catherine Belton, “[Russia’s spies misread Ukraine and misled Kremlin as war loomed](#),” *The Washington Post*, 19 August 2022.

might deal a significant blow to the shadow financial structures under FSB patronage, alongside the affiliated criminal networks. This is likely to exacerbate an already tense internal struggle for the remaining pie: foreign businesses able to evade global sanctions against Russia.

At some point, Putin's rule will come to an end. The arrival of a new Russian leader may be welcomed by the West as marking the end of the nightmare it saw in the face of Putin and as an opportunity to repair relations with Moscow. However, as the post-Soviet developments in the 1990s suggest, as long as the security services continue to operate with the same personnel, principles and methods, such an expectation may well turn out to be wishful thinking.

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