



ROSGVARDIYA

A SPECIAL-PURPOSE FORCE

Jolanta Darczewska

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Centre for Eastern Studies

ul. Koszykowa 6a, 00-564 Warsaw, Poland

tel.: (+48) 22 525 80 00, info@osw.waw.pl



www.osw.waw.pl

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INTRODUCTION. OUTLINE OF THE PROBLEM

The creation of the National Guard of the Russian Federation (FSVNG) follows a long tradition of the Russian security services. Periodic reorganisations involving changes of names, structures and leaders to ‘reset’ the service in question have been an important element of this tradition. In contrast to the more radical changes that happened in the past, the creation of the FSVNG, or Rosgvardiya (the short name also appears in official documents) was an evolutionary process¹, announced many years earlier as part of the efforts to modernise the internal troops and improve their efficiency. The provisions of the relevant federal bill and the presidential decrees governing the operations of the new service, as well as the information campaign that accompanied its creation, suggested the reform would be technical. Rosgvardiya’s statutory tasks do not differ much from the tasks of the Internal Troops and the police formations that were incorporated into it.

The aim of this paper is to delve into Rosgvardiya’s contribution to the military organisation and operational machinery of Russia, and to examine its organisational and professional profile to see if it is more of a policing or military organisation. To answer those questions, the paper analyses the legal basis of Rosgvardiya’s functioning, its official documents, reports and statements available on its website, as well as the media coverage of its operations.

The paper consists of three parts. Part I describes the legal and organisational base on which Rosgvardiya’s forces operate, and the changes thereto, which effectively apply to the entire security sector in Russia. Part II offers a review of the different security forces in the Russian Federation, which are not usually taken into account when estimating the

¹ In 2011, the special forces headquarters were established. In May 2014 general Nikolai Rogozhkin, the long-serving commander of the Internal Troops (2004–2014) was replaced by general Viktor Zolotov, who was appointed as the director of Rosgvardiya in April 2016.

size of Russia's internal security forces and their auxiliary structures. Part III attempts to offer an interpretation of the objectives of the reform, as well as Rosgvardiya's place in the Russian Federation's security and defence governance system. The organisation's functions are discussed in the context of the historical experiences of its predecessors.

MAIN POINTS

- The National Guard of the Russian Federation, whose size is officially estimated at 340,000 personnel, is currently the Russian Federation's largest internal security structure and operates to the standards of a military organisation. For comparison, the Ministry for Civil Defence, Emergencies and Elimination of Consequences of Natural Disasters has 288,500 posts and the Federal Security Service has around 200,000. The new service has been assigned independent functions (intervening in the event of public order disturbance and providing security to Russia's critical infrastructure), as well as tasks that involve assisting the other security departments (including participation in border protection, combatting terrorism and extremism, territorial defence). Rosgvardiya performs those functions through its territorially organised structure of regular troops that include intervention units, rapid response forces and units for combatting sabotage and illegal militant groups, and state security forces. Russia's extensive security contractor sector, which Rosgvardiya oversees, is a natural extension of its own structure and serves as a reserve pool of personnel to form non-regular units (self-defence detachments, private companies, Cossack units).
- Unlike the Internal Troops, which existed before 2014 and whose defence readiness was of secondary importance compared to their role as an internal security force, Rosgvardiya (which the Internal Troops have been incorporated into) is represented as one of the state's military instruments. Its place in the military organisation of the Russian state is defined by its territorial defence tasks – in the specific Russian meaning of territorial defence. Russia does not expect an armed attack on its own territory: territorial defence mainly means covering the rear of, and providing auxiliary services to, the Armed Forces, and is delivered by the reserve forces as well as by search and rescue and security formations. Rosgvardiya's tasks of providing security to critical infrastructure, especially to communications infrastructure

and high-risk facilities such as nuclear power plants and gas and oil transmission infrastructure, therefore fits into the definition of territorial defence.

- The changes that Rosgvardiya has implemented (switching to a contracts-based system of recruitment, a military command system, the modernisation of equipment, intensification of drills, and a renewal of the formation's image to rebuild its prestige as an 'internal guard' through references to Russia's historical experiences and Western models) are part of the general trend of the progressing militarisation of the society, the development and expansion of the state's military organisation and the mobilisation of the public.
- The principles of autonomy and self-sufficiency adopted by Rosgvardiya have been conducive to the development of its capacity for rapid reaction and the flexible use of force. The spectrum of Rosgvardiya's operations includes counterterrorism, anti-sabotage operations, the combatting of illegal militant groups and the countering of information threats, i.e. dealing with everything that meets the definition of hybrid threats.
- The ongoing changes have been making Rosgvardiya more multi-functional while expanding the range of intervention measures it can deploy and tightening the system of internal oversight.
- The credibility of the officially declared objectives of the creation of Rosgvardiya (putting the defence contractor business in order, lowering its costs) has been undermined by the four years of the formation's actual functioning. There is no interest in reforming the commercialised state security sector, not in the Kremlin, and certainly not in the Russian institutions of force. The security contracting business, which facilitates the consolidation of the institutions of force and covertly sponsors a personnel reserve for the official Russian security and defence sectors, has blurred the lines between

the state and private security and defence actors, and the distinction between offensive and defensive potential. The ‘camouflage’ of security contractors serves to neutralise political risks (by concealing engagement and casualties), while expanding Russia’s capacity to conduct special operations in peacetime and providing additional support to the Armed Forces during war.

- The large sector of security contractors considerably expands Rosgvardiya’s reach and capacity as an official state infrastructure (compared with the former Internal Troops), an internal service ensuring the stability of the authoritarian regime, and a formation implementing the Kremlin’s political and social projects.

I. IN THE ARMY'S IMAGE

1. Rosgvardiya - a military or policing force?

Created in 2016, Rosgvardiya is a new Russian institution of force that is part of the public order and critical infrastructure security system, spun off from the structures of the Russian Interior Ministry. As an independent, stand-alone service, it was expected to become more efficient in delivering its original internal security tasks, while also strengthening its defence capacity as part of the Russian state's military organisation.

The new service's definition laid down in the bill "On the National Guard troops" adopted on 3 July 2016 emphasises its role in the Russian Federation's security system: "The National Guard is a military organisation created to ensure state and public security and to defend human and civil rights and liberties". The catalogue of Rosgvardiya's statutory tasks, defined in art. 2 of the same bill, includes:

1. Participating, jointly with the bodies of the internal affairs structures, in activities aimed at protecting order, ensuring public security and safeguarding state of emergency regimes;
2. Participating in combatting terrorism and safeguarding the legal regime of anti-terror operations;
3. Participating in combatting extremism;
4. Participating in the territorial defence of the Russian Federation;
5. Providing security to important state facilities and special cargoes prelisted in a catalogue approved by the government of the Russian Federation;
6. Supporting the border guard of the FSB in protecting the Russian Federation's state border;

7. Providing security to members of the governing bodies of the Russian Federation's subjects (as per a regulation by the President of the Russian Federation).

Apart from points 3 and 7 (the latter having been added by a 2018 amendment to the bill), Rosgvardiya's tasks do not differ from the tasks of the former Internal Troops. They are spelt out in more detail in a presidential decree of 30 September 2016 approving the Statute of the FSVNG, which emphasises Rosgvardiya's oversight functions "in the sphere of private security contractors, private detective services and non-government-provided security". The catalogue of Rosgvardiya's statutory tasks as defined in the decree's annexe is wider, but equally general and includes:

1. Developing and implementing the state's policies in its designated spheres of activity;
2. Drafting normative and legal regulations in the designated spheres of activity;
3. Organising the participation of the National Guard troops in the protection of public order and ensuring public security;
4. Organising the participation of the National Guard troops in combatting terrorism and extremism and in safeguarding the legal regime of anti-terror operations;
5. Organising the participation of the National Guard troops in the territorial defence of the Russian Federation;
6. Maintaining the necessary level of readiness of the National Guard troops;
7. Organising the deployment of the National Guard troops in accordance with the laws in force in Russia;

8. Implementing measures to expand and develop the National Guard troops;
9. Implementing federal state oversight of:
 - weapons trade for civilian² and professional use and weapons awarded as rewards, oversight over munitions and the technical condition of weapons for professional use temporarily in the possession of citizens and organisations;
 - the operations of private security contractors and detectives in the Russian Federation;
 - the security of the fuels and energy complex;
 - operations of units in charge of providing the security of legal persons with special statutory tasks, as well as units delivering government-provided security services;
10. Providing social and legal protection to military personnel, persons with police ranks who serve in the National Guard (collaborators), federal civilian state officials, persons discharged from services in the National Guard troops, their family members and other persons entitled to social protection provided by Rosgvardiya in accordance with the laws in force in the Russian Federation.

The statute puts Rosgvardiya on an equal footing with the other Russian intelligence services in the overall system of governance: Rosgvardiya is one of the presidential departments, i.e. a federal executive organ operating under the president and headed by an official with the status of a federal minister. The statute also defines in detail the management prerogatives of Rosgvardiya's leadership and its powers in the field of intervention and defence activities. The latter include: the planning of the use of the armed forces during war and in peacetime, participation in

² In accordance with the federal bill "On weapons" the legal definition of 'weapons trade' is wide and includes possession, transport, use and other activities involving weapons.

the development of military mobilisation plans, participation in information warfare, participation in civilian and territorial defence activities, building up and training a reserve, and field and anti-sabotage reconnaissance in operations theatres. The military character of the service is also reflected in the powers of its director, who is supposed to fully follow the disciplinary statute of the Armed Forces, closely co-operate with the Defence Ministry, propose deployments and redeployments of Rosgvardiya's troops in agreement with the Defence Minister and suggest their composition and structure, establish operational-territorial formations, reorganise them and disband them.

This outline of Rosgvardiya's tasks suggests that the service has a dual mission which includes both a policing and security role (protecting public order, security of critical infrastructure) and military tasks (involvement in countering non-military threats such as sabotage, terrorism, extremism, territorial defence). The dual nature of the service has been emphasised in statements by its official representatives who have repeatedly stressed that the territorial structures and the combat potential of Rosgvardiya are an important element in the military organisation of the Russian Federation, while also defining its mission as 'combat and service'.

A military organisation system for Rosgvardiya's forces has been established by the "Bylaws of operational-territorial formations of the National Guard troops"³, enacted by Vladimir Putin's decree No. 236 of 24 May 2017. An 'operational-territorial formation' or 'district' is defined in point 1 as a "military-administrative unit of the National Guard troops, created to accomplish assigned tasks".

The tasks in question belong in the domains of both security and defence, as evidenced by point 7 of the decree. Subpoint 7(a), which some experts consider to be controversial⁴, provides that "by a decision of the President

³ 'Задачи и функции оперативно-территориальных объединений войск национальной гвардии', Росгвардия, www.rosgvard.ru.

⁴ А. Гольц, 'Росгвардия подминает Генштаб', *The New Times*, no. 19–20, 5 June 2017.

of the Russian Federation, units and tactical unions of the Armed Forces and other military formations and bodies may be put under the operational command of a National Guard district commander in order to perform tasks assigned to the National Guard troops”. While observing the growing political stature of Rosgvardiya, however, the experts overlook the ‘symmetrical’ subpoint 7(b) which provides that “units and tactical unions of the National Guard troops may be put under the operational command of a military district commander of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation in order to perform defence tasks”.

In reality what is emphasised here is the tactical autonomy of Rosgvardiya troops: they perform their mission independently, but in special cases may receive assistance from the Russian Federation’s defence forces. The National Guard troops are also mobile and flexible to deploy. This follows from point 8 in the bylaws under which a district commander of Rosgvardiya troops may decide to put them under the command of another district.

The entire territory of the Russian Federation comprises eight military groupings in Rosgvardiya’s eight territorial districts:

- Central (headquarters in Moscow),
- Northwestern (St Petersburg),
- North Caucasian (Pyatigorsk),
- Southern (Rostov-on-Don),
- Volga (Nizhny Novgorod),
- Ural (Yekaterinburg),
- Siberian (Novosibirsk),
- Eastern (Khabarovsk).

The districts correspond to the federal districts of Russia and are directly subordinated to respective government apparatuses of the federal districts. Within the Rosgvardiya districts there are directorates (at the level of republics, oblasts and unit directorates). The structure overlaps

with the administrative divisions of the Russian Federation. The local presence of Rosgvardiya is strengthened by the territorial units of the non-government-provided security structures. At the level of oblasts and federation subjects, those are subordinated to the directorates, and at the lower levels – to Rosgvardiya units. The field structure of Rosgvardiya is complemented by the headquarters (see Chart 1)⁵.

The combat potential is under the command of the General Staff of the National Guard troops, to which the district staffs and the main communications headquarters are subordinated; the Dzerzhinsky Separate Special Purpose Division stationed in Balashikha (10,000 troops) is also directly under the command of the General Staff⁶.

Observers estimate Rosgvardiya's strength at around 500,000 personnel. According to director Viktor Zolotov, Rosgvardiya has 340,000 official posts, but this number is set to increase by a third by 2020. According to deputy director, General Sergei Lebedev, the security segment accounts for more than half of this number (160,000 service members in the policing formations and 53,000 staff of the Okhrona company). During a briefing summarising the first year of Rosgvardiya's functioning, Lebedev emphasised the formation's policing functions in addition to its security role, saying that 1.7 million people have been detained for misdemeanours, and 46,500 on criminal charges⁷.

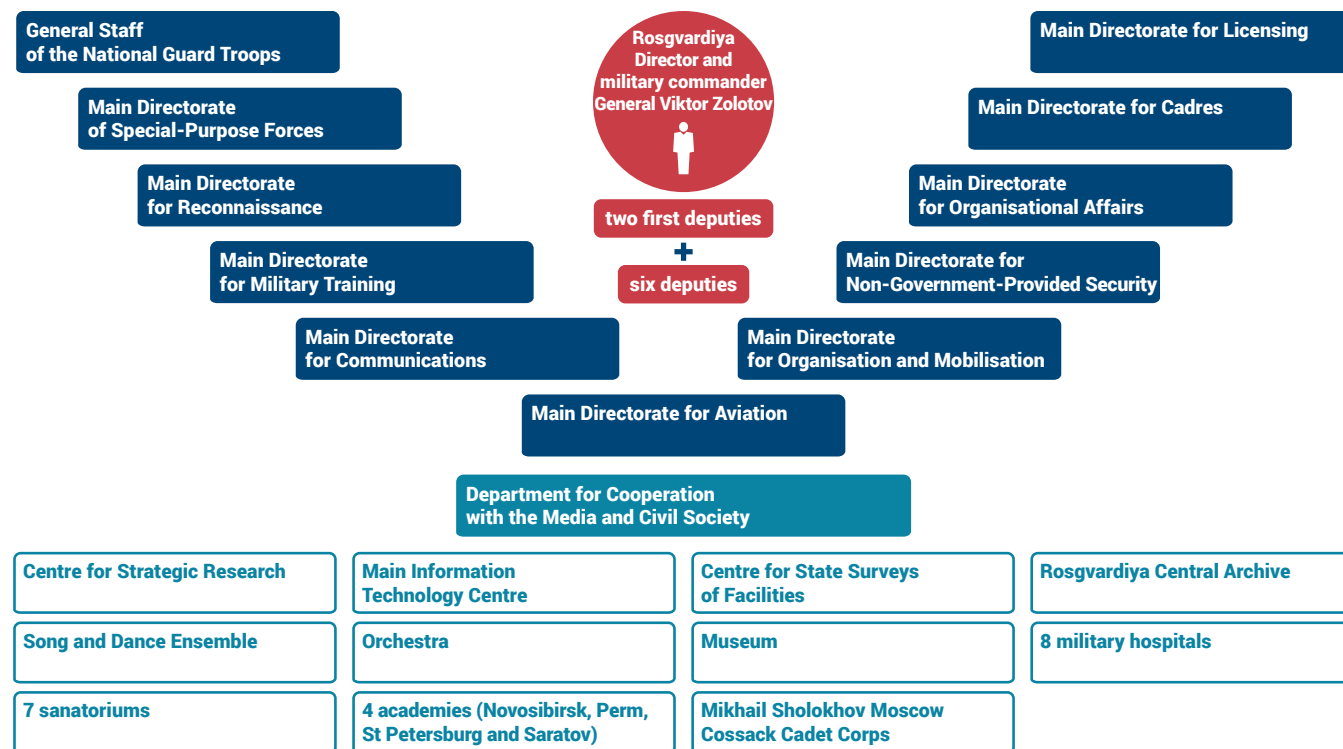
⁵ A full structure of Rosgvardiya's central apparatus has not been officially disclosed. It can be reconstructed on the basis of presidential decrees appointing the heads of individual directorates, as well as media reports. See e.g.: 'Путин назначил руководство Росгвардии', РИА Новости, 13 October 2017, www.ria.ru; 'Разведка Росгвардии будет «вскрывать угрозы для государственного строя в России»', Русский Монитор, 19 December 2016, www.rusmonitor.com, and other sources.

⁶ The division's history dates back to 1921 when the first special purpose unit (OSNAZ) was created on the initiative of Felix Dzerzhinsky. In 1924 it became the core of a three-regiment division and was named after Dzerzhinsky after his death.

⁷ This statement should be interpreted in the context of the harsh criticism previously levelled at the Interior Ministry, which was accused of letting crime increase even as the numbers of functionaries were increasing. See: 'Состоялся брифинг заместителя директора Росгвардии генерал-лейтенанта полиции Сергея Лебедева', Росгвардия, 14 December 2016, www.rosgvard.ru.

Map. Rosgvardiya's territorial districts



Chart 1. Rosgvardiya's central apparatus

Source: own preparation.

2. More than technical changes

As previously mentioned, in addition to the regular Internal Troops, the militarised non-government-provided security units previously controlled by the Interior Ministry have also been incorporated into Rosgvardiya, as have been the bodies in charge of overseeing and licencing security contractors and detectives in Russia, issuing private and professional firearms permits and keeping firearms registers, and the private company Okhrona providing paid security services.

The special-purpose policing units (*spetsnaz*) distributed across the whole of Russia (including Rus, Rosich, Skif, Rys, Ural, Yermak, Nars, Kuzbas, Tarnik, Taifun, Bulat, Zhubr and others) originally differed in terms of training levels, the legal status of the functionaries/soldiers, and assigned tasks. Units in different regions had different uniforms and equipment (police forces have been partly funded from local budgets, which have been covering their equipment expenses). Moreover, the Interior Ministry differentiated the military and policing *spetsnaz*. The policing ones specialised in pacifying demonstrations (160 units of the special police OMON) and combatting organised crime (82 special rapid reaction units, SOBR). The standalone Internal Troops reconnaissance units (ORO) and the OSNAZ special units for combatting illegal militant groups and providing security to strategic state facilities and special convoys were of a military nature. They recruited troops through conscription and under contracts.

The changes implemented with the creation of Rosgvardiya have been in line with a wider tendency towards militarisation and the integration of the state's military organisation and its potential. This has been without prejudice to the autonomous competences of Rosgvardiya, whose important assets include the ability to respond immediately and to use force flexibly, to independently conduct reconnaissance and carry out non-military operations. The range of such operations includes: humanitarian missions in the event of

natural and other disasters, ensuring security at mass public events, dispersing opposition rallies, combatting organised crime groups, counterterrorism, anti-sabotage operations, combatting illegal militant groups and countering information threats, i.e. dealing with everything that falls under the definition of hybrid threats.

According to the initial plans⁸ the forming of Rosgvardiya was expected to be completed by 1 January 2018. While there have been delays, the direction of change is clearly defined by:

1. Moving to a contracts-based recruitment system

The biggest perturbations in this regard concerned the planned transition of OMON and SOBR functionaries to contract service by 1 January 2018. The difficulties (stemming from the fact that initially a standard procedure involving an examination by a military medical commission was applied) were resolved due to a legislative intervention by the president. Under the presidential amendments to the bill “On the forces of the National Guard of the Russian Federation” approved by the Duma in late May 2019, guard members who hold police ranks may be moved to contract service without undergoing a repeat qualification procedure (medical examination, skills, qualifications and fitness testing)⁹. They also keep their original social guarantees and acquire new ones to which members of the military are eligible. Moreover, Rosgvardiya is going to admit persons over forty to contract service. Rosgvardiya reserve forces will also be trained in the contract service system.

⁸ ‘ТАСС: «Сергей Меликов: создание Росгвардии полностью завершится в январе 2018 года», Росгвардия, www.rosgvard.ru.

⁹ ‘Путин подписал закон об упрощенном приеме на службу по контракту в Росгвардию’, ТАСС, 7 June 2019, www.tass.ru.

2. A military command system

Rosgvardiya troops are now under a single command and all operate on the same legal basis. The service members are trained in a military system. The original three levels of subordination (to the president, to the Interior Minister and to the military commander) have been simplified by eliminating the intermediate level in the chain of command.

At this point it is worth noting that the Russian system of command is characterised by a strong tradition of subordination to political power. Rosgvardiya's director is the chief of the General Staff, but the president is the commander-in-chief and the supreme leader. Guard members serving in the *spetsnaz* will be bound by military regulations. Their legal status as military service members offers the commanders additional instruments: e.g. they may decide to move them into barracks. Moreover, the military regulations also ensure better financial conditions of service (a range of additional rebates and allowances, such as a holiday allowance), and better welfare and living conditions (participation in the military mortgage programme).

3. Dual equipment

Rosgvardiya servicemen will have two sets of equipment: combat gear (similar to the equipment of infantry troops) and special equipment for riot police tasks (special vests, helmets with plastic visors, shields, rubber batons, tear gas canisters, gas grenades, water cannons, etc.)¹⁰. The personal Ratnik systems modified to meet Rosgvardiya's needs will enable the troops to adapt to current threats¹¹. The personal equipment of guard members (including the parachute systems) is generally regarded as more modern than the equipment

¹⁰ 'Владислав Шурыгин, Это Росгвардия!', Изборский клуб, 17 July 2017, www.izborsk-club.ru.

¹¹ Т.Д. Намсараев, 'Перевооружение войск национальной гвардии', Академический вестник войск национальной гвардии Российской Федерации, 3 (36), 2017.

of the former police *spetsnaz* units. For instance, observers have noted that Rosgvardiya forces routinely use state-of-the-art reconnaissance and monitoring systems including unmanned aerial vehicles. Such devices are held by the special purpose aviation units (AOSP) which are stationed separately but are part of Rosgvardiya's territorial structures¹².

4. **Organisational changes: autonomy and self-sufficiency**

Rosgvardiya's special forces have undergone the most radical changes. They were already the main focus of the previous Interior Ministry reform. In 2011, regional special-force headquarters were established in Novosibirsk, Nizhny Novgorod, Kazan, Barnaul and Shchyolkovo near Moscow. There was also a Special Aviation Headquarters for Operational Response, a special headquarters for non-government-provided security under the Interior Ministry, and others.

Those forces have been consolidated within Rosgvardiya¹³. In early 2017, the Main Directorate for the Special Forces was established. OMON, ORO, SOBR and other units were put under one command structure. Regional directorates for special forces, as well as for supplies and technical support bases, are going to be established under Rosgvardiya's regional headquarters. The Rosgvardiya's *spetsnaz* units have their own reconnaissance units and their own groups for combatting drones. The aim of the changes has been to make them more effective and to develop their functionality and self-sufficiency. They are supposed to be quickly deployable in any region of the Russian Federation, depending on the needs.

¹² 'Генерал-полковник Сергей Меликов в преддверии Дня авиации Росгвардии вручил награды отличившимся военнослужащим и сотрудникам', Росгвардия, 22.03.2018, www.rosgvard.ru.

¹³ А. Лыков, И. Кордешов, 'Слаживание территориальных органов ФСВНГ как элемент формирования войск', Академический вестник войск национальной гвардии Российской Федерации, 3 (36), 2017.

A pilot regional special forces directorate of Rosgvardiya was established in the Moscow Oblast on the basis of the Dzerzhinsky Division. It has also incorporated SOBR units from Dolgoprudnoye, and OMON units from the towns of Shchyolkovo, Sergiyev Posad and Podolsk near Moscow. It is served by the 70th Special Aviation Regiment stationed in Yermolino (Kaluga Oblast) and the special-purpose squadron stationed in Shchyolkovo in the Moscow Oblast. Another regional directorate for the Caucasus is set to be established in Pyatigorsk.

5. **The principle of strict co-operation with the other Russian institutions of force**

The original subordination to the Interior Ministry has been replaced with a formula of strict co-operation with the Interior Ministry in areas of shared competences. This was particularly emphasised in the early days of Rosgvardiya, when the formation experienced perturbations in connection with its provision of armed backup to the police. The legal documents and information materials available on the Rosgvardiya's website also emphasise close co-operation with other government departments (see Chart 2).

According to Gen. Yuri Babkin, who is in charge of Rosgvardiya's training department, the institution has signed bilateral agreements with the Ministry of Defence, the Interior Ministry, the FSB, the Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR) and the FSO on training and improving the qualifications of guard members¹⁴. The joint drills of the *spetsnaz* units of different ministries contribute to building closer co-operation¹⁵. It is also believed that the unification involves the implementation

¹⁴ 'Росгвардия открывает свой факультет в Институте физкультуры Минобороны', РБК, 18 October 2018, www.rbc.ru.

¹⁵ In addition to the Rosgvardiya *spetsnaz* units there are the Alfa and Vypfel forces of the FSB, the Zaslou of the SVR, the *spetsnaz* units of the Main Directorate of the Armed Forces General Staff, better known as the GRU, the so-called black berets of the FSO, i.e. a commando unit specialising in anti-terror operations, and the *spetsnaz* of the Ministry of Emergency Situations. Along with the Special Operations

of solutions developed by the Special Operations Forces of Russia, which supposedly corroborates the claims that there is a comprehensive plan for the development of a special forces organisation which spans all the militarised government departments in Russia¹⁶.

Chart 2. Rosgvardiya’s co-operation with selected Russian security institutions

	ROSGVARDIYA		
	FSB	Min. of Emerg. Sit.	Min. of Defence
civil defence	✓	coordination	✓
territorial defence	✓	✓	coordination
martial law	✓	✓	coordination
border protection	coordination	✓	✓
combatting terrorism and extremism	coordination	✓	✓
security of facilities	✓	✓	✓
emergency response, search and rescue operations	✓	coordination	✓

Source: own preparation.

6. Intensification of drills

Following the example of the Armed Forces, Rosgvardiya units are training more intensively. They hold joint drills with troops from the

Forces of the Defence Ministry, they are regarded as the elite units of the Russian Federation’s military organisation.

¹⁶ Many observers believe that Rosgvardiya, like the Army in the case Special Operations Forces, has been copying solutions developed by the FSB. Special attention has been paid to the Alfa and Vypel *spetsnaz* which are part of the Special Purpose Headquarters / Anti-Terror Headquarters of the FSB, which is part of the Service for the Protection of the Constitutional Order and Combatting Terrorism (2nd Service of the FSB). The headquarters was founded in 1998 at the initiative of the then head of the Federal Security Service, Vladimir Putin. See: А. Степанов, ‘Коммандос и не снилось. Спецназ ФСБ назван одним из лучших в мире’, *Российская газета*, no. 80 (7838), 10 April 2019.

other institutions of force, as well as separate exercises. The drills follow different scenarios: supporting the Armed Forces in urban combat and the suppression of protests, anti-sabotage operations, releasing hostages, anti-terror operations and humanitarian operations.

The main theme of the first drill of two Rosgvardiya brigades and the Special Forces Headquarters (4,000 troops in total) concerned countering terrorism, extremism and sabotage, including illegal groups aiming to stoke riots or an armed attack against the Russian Federation's constitutional order. It was conducted in the summer of 2016 in the Volgograd Oblast¹⁷ alongside the commandos of the 56th Airborne Division whose role in the drill scenario was to block some Rosgvardiya units. The drill was commanded by Gen. Andrei Kholzakov, deputy commander of the Airborne Forces of the Russian Federation.

Then Rosgvardiya took part in the Zapad 2017 drill with the search and rescue units of the Ministry of Emergency Situations and the FSB Special Forces Headquarters. When this was completed, its *spetsnaz* units held a drill focused on landings and the provision of logistics and backend support together with Belarusian units. Rosgvardiya troops were mentioned alongside the FSB, Interior Ministry and Ministry of Emergency Situations in press reports about the Vostok 2018 drill involving Chinese and Mongolian troops, in which nearly 300,000 soldiers practised simultaneously in 13 land ranges, 4 air ranges and 4 maritime ranges.

Rosgvardiya itself emphasises that its troops train in difficult terrain. The Russian-Chinese *spetsnaz* drill codenamed Cooperation 2017, which took place in China, involved the Russian Vityaz and Rys *spetsnaz* units performed marching and climbing exercises in desert and mountainous terrain with the Chinese Desert Foxes force. In 2018

¹⁷ 'Росгвардия и ВДВ отрабатывают вопросы взаимодействия на учениях', РИА Новости, 29 July 2016, www.ria.ru.

in the Arctic, Vityaz, Rys, guard members from the Northwestern District and the Chechen Terek *spetsnaz* exercised the pursuit and liquidation of a sabotage group under difficult climate conditions¹⁸. In 2018 Rosgvardiya also took part in the North 2018 exercise with the Interior Ministry, the FSB, the FSO and the Ministry of Emergency Situations.

The drills show that one of the main objectives of the reform has been to harmonise the level of training between different units, to consolidate them and improve their interoperability with the other Russian institutions of force.

7. **A shift in information policy: long memory and Western models**

Unlike the Federal Security Service, the Foreign Intelligence Service or the GRU, which have recently celebrated their centenaries, Rosgvardiya emphasises its imperial lineage and traditions dating back to more than two centuries ago. It claims its history begins in 1811 when, on the eve of the Napoleonic Wars campaign, Tsar Alexander I established the Internal Guard. Government historians emphasise the guard's dual allegiance: to the tsar as a security force, and to the minister of war, as an element of the state's military organisation. As the guardian of the long memory of the intelligence services, Rosgvardiya also considers the experiences of the Soviet-era Cheka-GPU-OGPU-NKVD to be part of its heritage.

In addition to its Russian traditions, Rosgvardiya's experts point to Western models such as the US National Guard or the Italian Carabinieri and – most frequently, the French Gendarmerie and National Guard. The latter evokes the tradition of La Marseillaise and the 'people in arms'. The militarisation in Russia (military organisation of the

¹⁸ It was, simultaneously, an evident political demonstration, as the media had several days earlier reported on an Arctic drill of the Canadian armed forces.

state and society) is intended to mobilise the people in defence of the besieged fortress (this refers to an artificially created threat).

3. Rosgvardiya's place in Russia's new military organisation model

Yuri Baluyevsky, former Chief of General Staff and currently advisor to Rosgvardiya's chief, Viktor Zolotov, openly states that President Putin's decree of 5 April 2016 establishing the force was a logical consequence of the "Defence Plan of the Russian Federation 2016–2020" approved in November 2015. The formation of a new structure of crucial importance for the territorial defence of Russia is, in his opinion, "an answer to the challenges which Russian society has to confront, including the threat of non-violent resistance techniques or, more precisely, a colour revolution"¹⁹.

Colonel Igor Kardash also believes Rosgvardiya to be the foundation of the state-of-the-art, effective territorial defence system that Russia is currently building. Kardash, who heads the Rosgvardiya Centre for Strategic Research, studies the analytic rationale for the deployment of its forces²⁰. Like General Baluyevsky, he believes that it is defined by the nature of contemporary threats. He notes that non-military threats (terrorism, radical social groups spreading extremist ideologies, foreign non-governmental organisations, and citizens who act against the territorial integrity of Russia and destabilise the country) have long been recognised as potential threats to the security of the Russian Federation, which has been reflected in the Russian military doctrines and national security strategies. The threats identified in those documents perfectly

¹⁹ Ю. Балуевский, 'Война не кончается, она – замирает', Независимая газета, 26 May 2017, nvo.ng.ru.

²⁰ К.И. Леонидович, 'Развитие нормативно-правовой базы территориальной обороны Российской Федерации в современных условиях', Военное право России, 5 March 2018, www.millaw.ru; *Idem*, 'Нормативные основы войск национальной гвардии Российской Федерации в территориальной обороне и контртеррористической операции', Военное право России, 14 April 2017, www.millaw.ru.

match the catalogue of Rosgvardiya's tasks in his opinion, defining its role and place in the new military organisation of the Russian state.

In this way, Rosgvardiya analysts are clearly shifting the focus of the public debate about the organisation. It is generally believed that the main reason it was established was the government's concerns about uncontrollable internal developments (in the social, political and economic sphere). As an extraordinary instrument created to respond to a system crisis, Rosgvardiya was seen as expanding the range of methods, forces and means of the apparatus of repression. External threats (i.e. mainly the so-called colour revolutions and foreign sabotage) were a mere pretext for the use of force against the Kremlin's opponents. This line of thinking stems from the old but still entrenched view of internal threats and of the Internal Troops, which have been associated predominantly with combatting anti-Kremlin opposition and using force against protest movements.

Colonel Kardash and other officers from the Rosgvardiya Centre for Strategic Research²¹ are correcting such perceptions in the public debate, emphasising the contemporary dominance of non-regular forms of warfare, i.e. operations below the threshold of conventional war, and the open and covert involvement of (state and non-state) paramilitary formations. They emphasise Rosgvardiya's assets such as its 'territoriality' (i.e. its presence in every region of the Russian Federation) and its capacity to perform different tasks (combat-service, operational, special). Rosgvardiya is also supposed to be an instrument that deters the enemy from undertaking active steps against Russia, such as provocation, sabotage or terrorism. In other words, it is an instrument of effective territorial defence. In the view of the analysts of the Rosgvardiya Centre for Strategic Research, this efficacy is possible thanks to the contemporary

²¹ See e.g. the online *Академический вестник войск национальной гвардии Российской Федерации*, an expert supplement to the Rosgvardiya journal *На боевом посту*. Both periodicals are continuations of analogous titles founded by the Russian Interior Ministry.

legal basis of territorial defence, which enables the build-up of forces and means, and the constant training and upskilling of reserves, establishes a new system of governance for territorial defence and defines the powers and responsibilities of the different actors involved in territorial defence.

In the past, the activities of the Internal Troops were kept secret. Currently, the public is constantly fed information about Rosgvardiya's involvement in territorial defence and its potential and capabilities – as demonstrated e.g. by the publications of official figures on Rosgvardiya. The introduction of internal security topics into public debate should be interpreted as a symptom of the change in the Kremlin's attitude towards information policy. The new approach is best summed up in the statement of the Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu who commented in April 2019 on the plans to create regional centres for the coordination of efforts by the different institutions of force in crisis situations. A pilot agreement on the subject was signed by the Russian Defence Ministry with the Tula Oblast's governor general, Alexei Dyumin²². The agreement provides that the centre will monitor the region's economic and social situation, crisis situations, and infrastructural problems (especially in the field of transport). The information gathered, as well as signals about any changes in the military-political situation in the region, will be transferred to the local executive. According to Minister Shoigu²³, the implementation of the agreement marks “a huge step towards the development of a state and defence governance system”. He continues, “In a crisis situation, the regional authorities will be able to directly co-operate, vertically and horizontally, with the Defence Ministry, the Ministry for

²² Appointed as the governor of Tula Oblast in 2016, Gen. Alexei Dyumin started his professional career in the Federal Protective Service. He served for many years as the deputy head of the Presidential Protection Service and in 2015 was nominated as the Chief of General Staff of the Land Forces. As revealed in the TV RTR Planeta documentary “Crimea. The way home”, in 2014 Dyumin took part in the annexation of Crimea and evacuated the Ukrainian president Viktor Yanukovich.

²³ ‘Шойгу пообещал создать во всех регионах кризисные центры управления’, Бизнес Online, 10 April 2019, www.business-gazeta.ru.

Emergency Situations and Civil Defence, and the government departments in charge of defending the legal order. In peaceful times and in peacetime, the Defence Ministry will obtain in return information about the social situation of military personnel and their families, the number of places available in kindergartens and schools, on the implementation of the conscription plans, etc.”

According to Colonel Viktor Murakhovsky, the editor of the “Arsenal Otechestva” journal, establishing such centres is necessary in view of the new duties of the local governments (governments of the subjects of the Russian Federation), who are now responsible for organising territorial defence²⁴.

In a clear example of the new dynamics in the field of territorial defence, the bill “On the defence of the Russian Federation” amended in 2014 laid down a legal definition of territorial defence²⁵. The definition emphasises three elements: 1) the security of important state facilities, 2) combatting illegal armed groups, enemy landings and sabotage, and 3) the prevention of such threats. The related duties were signalled at that time in the classified “Bylaws of the Territorial Defence of the Russian Federation”. In 2017, Article 22 of the bill was expanded by adding points 4–10, which concern the organisation of inter-ministerial coordination offices. Under the new rules, these offices would be led by the heads of the

²⁴ ‘В регионах появятся антикризисные центры Минобороны’, Век, 10 April 2019, www.wek.ru.

²⁵ The definition is contained in Art. 22 of the bill: “Territorial defence is a system of undertakings performed under martial law in the domains of the security and protection of military facilities, important state facilities and special facilities enabling people’s life activities, the functioning of transport, communication infrastructures and energy facilities, facilities posing increased risks to human life and health and the natural environment, as well as undertakings involving the combatting of sabotage and intelligence formations of foreign states and illegal armed groups, the detection, prevention, interruption, mitigation and/or elimination of the effects of their activities in order to create good conditions for the functioning of the facilities named above and for the use of force by the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, other troops, armed formation and bodies, and special formations created for wartime”.

Russian Federation subjects (republic president, oblast governors, city mayors, etc.), who will be personally responsible for the performance of duties under the territorial defence legislation and the condition of forces and means created for this purpose²⁶.

It should be noted here that Russia does not have an exact equivalent of territorial defence in the Western sense. Russian territorial defence is defined as a system of measures conducted under martial law. Russia does not expect an armed attack on its territory. Territorial defence stands for the service of security and search and rescue formations and the reserve, who are tasked with covering the rear of, and providing wider support to, the Armed Forces. At the same time, the territorial defence structure is a factor that binds together the entire state apparatus. **Scattered across the whole of Russia, Rosgvardiya is treated as one of the instruments to integrate the state's territory. The security and defence apparatus thus partly replaces and controls the official state apparatus, permeates all levels of life and becomes the country's infrastructure.** This is how Minister Shoygu's statement on the 'huge step' in the governance of the state and defence should be interpreted.

The specific Russian concept of territorial defence encompasses the security of the critical state infrastructure (and especially communication infrastructure) provided by Rosgvardiya, as well as the security of

²⁶ Because the federal government has exclusive prerogatives with regards to security and defence and the oversight of the implementation of legislation in those fields, in practice the role of local government structures is limited to performing tasks assigned by the federal authorities. For this reason, the Russian legislation focuses mainly on defining the duties of the local government structures. They are required, *inter alia*, to ensure uninterrupted energy supplies for the Armed Forces, to provide services to the Armed Forces, other troops and special forces, to perform civil defence and territorial defence tasks, and prepare mobilisations, which includes drafting plans to relocated plants and production facilities involved in manufacturing arms. In practice, the list of the local government's tasks has been growing. Also, it cannot be ruled out that Rosgvardiya has some informal (non-statutory) control functions in this respect. Its extensive field structure and formal and informal capabilities (in 2018 Rosgvardiya was assigned a new tasks of providing physical security to local authority members) enable it to enforce local tasks at all levels of the administration, from the lowest to the top.

high-risk facilities such as nuclear power plants and the facilities of the fuels and energy sector. It also encompasses state oversight, performed by Rosgvardiya, of the business of security contractors and civilian firearms. According to Rosgvardiya's own figures, some seven million different firearms are privately held in Russia. Federal oversight of this arsenal involves licencing gun-owners, controlling compliance with the relevant rules, and keeping databases of firearms and of the personnel of private security contractors and some state bodies delivering so-called government-provided security.

Its powers to oversee firearms and security contractors enable Rosgvardiya not only to oversee the lucrative market of commercial security services, but also to rely on the support of private and para-state forces and – where necessary – to create and assign tasks to such forces. In this sense, the so-called Kadyrov's Army and the Cossack troops are an extension of Rosgvardiya.

The establishment of Rosgvardiya and the new duties of local governments in Russia may be seen as the Russian way of dealing with the territorial defence issue. In keeping with the Russian strategic culture, the military organisation of society, which the concept calls for, does not foresee any space for bottom-up initiatives. It is managed top-down and strictly controlled by the institutions of force.

The involvement of Rosgvardiya in territorial defence, which spectacularly introduced the service into public debate, should not obscure the fact that, from the Kremlin's point of view, Rosgvardiya has to be useful 'here and now', i.e. during war and in peacetime, in the provinces and in the centre where, incidentally, the best-trained units have been concentrated. It is a multi-functional and multi-task service which, in addition to its statutory tasks, may perform non-statutory tasks and provide cover and camouflage for the activities of other services if so instructed by the Kremlin.

II. HIDDEN POTENTIAL UNDER ROSGVARDIYA'S SPECIAL SUPERVISION

1. The crowded sector of security contractors: general characteristics

Under the bill “On the National Guard troops” Rosgvardiya is a state executive organ in charge of all matters related to the implementation of the state policy in the field of security contracting. Rosgvardiya oversees companies that offer security services as well as the resources needed for this kind of businesses (i.e. firearms and means of coercion) and issues licences to use them. This dimension of its activities has been emphasised by President Putin²⁷ who explained that one of the official objectives of the establishment of Rosgvardiya had been to put the security contracting business in order and to generate savings for the budget by lowering the costs of the security services in Russia.

The reform involves a certain paradox, as Rosgvardiya itself is also Russia's largest provider of commercial security services. It holds a monopoly position in this market because its services are available everywhere in Russia and it has effectively no competitors when it comes to protecting facilities that are important for state security. It provides a wide range of services free of charge (protecting strategic facilities from a list compiled by the Presidential Administration and the so-called ‘important federal facilities under FSVNG protection’), while also providing paid security services under civil contracts. It has concluded such contracts with the central executive bodies, local authorities (subjects of the Russian Federation), state-owned companies and corporations, and individual entrepreneurs and private persons.

Unlike the decision to subordinate the Interior Ministry's Internal Troops and the special police forces to Rosgvardiya, putting it in charge

²⁷ ‘Путин объяснил причину создания Национальной гвардии’, Interfax, 14 April 2016, www.interfax.ru.

of inspecting the security contracts sector has raised some doubts among observers. Since Soviet times, overseeing this business has been the role of the Interior Ministry, part of whose apparatus was dedicated to the protection of industrial plants, kolkhozes, ministries, etc. The Interior Ministry shared the responsibility for **government-provided state security** with the KGB (which protected important state institutions and strategic facilities) and institutions authorised to establish militarised security units (Russian: *ведомственная военизированная охрана*). The state system of government-provided security was shaken in 1989 when the Soviet Interior Ministry began to commercialise it by allowing police stations to provide paid services to entities outside the government (**so-called non-government-provided security**). The Russian Interior Ministry's dominant position in the security services market was strengthened in 1992 by the bill "On private detective and security services in the Russian Federation", which granted the ministry the authority to issue licences and oversee the sector. In 1999, the bill "On government-provided security" entered into force. This expanded the notion of government-provided security to include privatised facilities and strategic enterprises, and extended the right to such protection to institutions which are not federal executive organs (such as Gazprom). As in the case of private security contractors, the Interior Ministry was put in charge of licencing and supervising the government-provided security structures, although additional oversight was also performed by the president and the federal government.

Because of the growing demand for security services induced by the privatisation process, the security contracts sector in Russia has grown very large and today comprises many state and private actors, both legal and illegal. Today there is no longer talk of security services provided by military garrisons, but there are many indications that functionaries of the state security services continue to offer illegal protection and the execution of liabilities (the infamous institution of *krysha*)²⁸. While there

²⁸ See: F. Varese, *Mafia rosyjska. Prywatna ochrona w nowej gospodarce rynkowej*, Warszawa 2009, p. 102. Varese, like Mark Galeotti and other authors studying the

are many articles on the Russian security services business, the picture of the situation is still far from clear. That is because the media reports often concern private contractors, while President Putin's call to put the sector in order mainly concerned the state segment, i.e. government-provided and non-government-provided security.

Both terms, like the notion of state security, cause some interpretive difficulty today. State security is often identified with the Federal Protective Service (FSO) whose tasks are defined in the relevant bill²⁹. The FSO specialises in the physical protection of the top state officials (president, prime minister, speakers of both chambers of parliament) and protecting their seats and backup seats for use during wartime. However, the construction of new buildings, upgrades of existing ones and their maintenance is the responsibility of the presidential Special Facilities Service subordinated to the presidential Main Directorate for Special Programmes. In reality, many other segments of the state apparatus are involved in state protection, including the Interior Ministry which has transferred its security forces to Rosgvardiya but keeps some units that provide security to the ministry itself and to diplomatic missions. Government-provided security services are performed by all the institutions in the security sector of Russia. The Ministry of Defence has its own forces for the protection of military units and some critical infrastructure facilities such as ammunition depots or research institutions working for the arms industry and located in the so-called closed cities and territories (ZATO).

As a result of this multiplicity of actors, there is no coherence between the different elements of the system, and responsibilities are scattered. For instance, ZATO today are protected by Rosgvardiya and the Ministry

problem, names the Russian mafia as an independent provider of security services among the other Russian security institutions. Illegal forms of protection by organised crime actors are outside the scope of this analysis.

²⁹ [Федеральный закон «О государственной охране» от 27.05.1996 N 57-ФЗ \(последняя редакция\)](#), Компания "КонсультантПлюс", www.consultant.ru.

of Defence. Furthermore, the Atom–Okhrana company is in charge of the security of closed cities where the state-owned corporation Rosatom produces plutonium, uranium and their isotopes for military purposes and nuclear fuel and equipment for nuclear power plants, and researches civilian applications of nuclear technologies.

It is difficult to distinguish the competences of the different actors and critically analyse their practical operation because the legal basis is also dispersed. Security services are governed, among other acts, by the federal bill “On private security and detective services in the Russian Federation” of 11 March 1992, the bill “On state security” of 27 May 1996, “On government-provided security” of 14 April 1999, “On weapons” of 13 December 1996, and the previously mentioned competence bill “On the National Guard troops” of 3 July 2016. The services are also regulated by a set of sectoral competence bills governing the functioning of individual corporations, such as the bill “On the state corporation Rostekhnologii” which established the RT-Okhrana company, or the bill “On the Central Bank” which regulates the operations of the Rosinkas company³⁰. Regulations applicable to the sector are also laid down in presidential decrees concerning strategic enterprises, joint stock companies and state-owned corporations, whose lists are constantly updated (in 2017 Rosgvardiya’s Okhrana company was also put on the list). Government-provided security is the object of constant regulatory efforts by the government, which approves the statutes and bylaws of individual entities and the lists of facilities they protect.

³⁰ All the legal documents mentioned in the text are available from the КонсультантПлюс database (www.consultant.ru). See: Закон РФ «О частной детективной и охранной деятельности в Российской Федерации» от 11.03.1992 N 2487-1 (последняя редакция); Федеральный закон «О государственной охране» от 27.05.1996 N 57-ФЗ (последняя редакция); Федеральный закон «О ведомственной охране» от 14.04.1999 N 77-ФЗ (последняя редакция); Федеральный закон от 03.07.2016 N 226-ФЗ (ред. от 02.12.2019) «О войсках национальной гвардии Российской Федерации»; Федеральный закон «Об оружии» от 13.12.1996 N 150-ФЗ (последняя редакция).

Understandably, many of those measures are subject to state secrecy provisions. For this reason, it is not possible to fully estimate the number of security agents in Russia; the data that is available is fragmentary and covers individual segments only. Based on this data, which comes from official and unofficial communications, it is possible to conclude that a quasi-army of government-provided security operatives exists, which is not included in the estimates of Russia's (para)military potential. In 2010 police general Leonid Vedenov, who oversaw security contractors at the Interior Ministry, estimated the size of this group at around 350,000 persons, i.e. 36% of the Russian security services market³¹. In this context, introducing 'order' to the state security sector may also mean integrating Russia's dispersed system of critical infrastructure security.

Finally, it is also worth noting that Rosgvardiya is one of the 21 institutions that draft legal regulations as part of their official oversight tasks. As a result, the Russian security market is on the one hand overregulated³², and on the other governed by informal standards and legal norms. This is the case of the private military companies, which fall under the security services legislation (i.e. are formally supervised by Rosgvardiya), but because of their functions, are controlled by the Defence Ministry and the FSB which provides counter-intelligence protection for them.

³¹ See: 'Выступление Леонида Веденова 18 ноября 2010 года' on the Yaguar security firm's website. In the same year, experts of the European University in St Petersburg estimated the number of non-government-provided security functionaries within the Interior Ministry alone at 210,000, corresponding to 19.1% of all persons employed at the ministry, see: *Реформирование управления вневедомственной охраны в контексте развития рынка охранных услуг*, Петербург 2010.

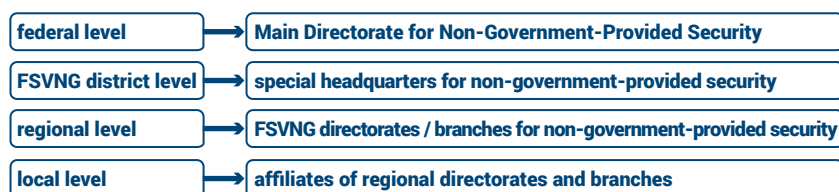
³² The Russian government found those regulations to impede small and medium-sized business. Among other issues, it called into question Rosgvardiya's requirements concerning privately held weapons and the protection of the facilities of the fuels and energy complex, and announced a review of the legislation and a 'regulatory guillotine' that would halve the oversight requirements (see: 'Названы попадающие под «регуляторную гильотину» ведомства', Lenta.Ru, 8 July 2019). Previously it was reported that Rosgvardiya (along with 11 other government departments) had applied to be deleted from the list of audit institutions whose prerogatives would be reduced (Анна Холявко, Ольга Адамчук, 'Часть ведомств просят вывести их из-под действия регуляторной гильотины', Ведомости, 26 June 2019, www.vedomosti.ru).

The current legal situation is defined by: the absence of a framework law that would lay down legal definitions of the basic terms; chaotic regulations governing the procedures and rules for the establishment of security organisations in Russia; the vagueness of legislation; and, most importantly, by the absence of a clear distinction between government-provided security (free of charge state security services) and non-government-provided security (paid, commercial security services). This situation, and especially the sector's practical realities, have led Russian lawyers to conclude that putting the sector in order will be a major challenge³³. So much is clear in view of the practice of Rosgvardiya's operations and the definitional confusion it has created – as Rosgvardiya consistently refers to its own activities as non-government-provided security and clearly avoids using the notion of 'state security'. This approach has also been reflected in the "Concept paper on the development of non-government-provided security for the years 2018–2021 and to 2025"³⁴.

2. Rosgvardiya's monopoly position in the Russian security sector

Because of its potential and competences, Rosgvardiya is a dominant actor in the Russian market for security services.

Chart 3. The non-government-provided security system of Rosgvardiya



Source: Rosgvardiya's website (www.rosgvard.ru).

³³ See for example: В.Б. Квасов, О.В. Шкеля, 'Проблемы правового регулирования государственной охраны объектов', *Общество и право*, no. 1(63) 2018.

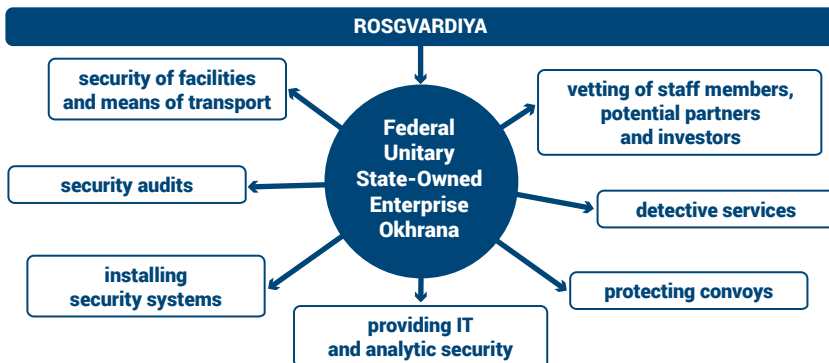
³⁴ *Концепция развития вневедомственной охраны на период 2018–2021 годов и далее до 2025 года*, Росгвардия, www.rosgvard.ru.

Rosgvardiya estimates the size of its in-house structures dealing with non-government-provided security³⁵ at 124,000 persons (80,081 licenced security operatives and 43,824 technical staff including janitors and on-duty security systems operators).

Those structures also include units specialising in the protection of important state facilities and special cargoes. Before Rosgvardiya was established, those functions were traditionally performed by the special rapid-response units (SOBR) and special purpose units (OSNAZ), i.e. the basic units of militarised government-provided security. The units are 24,458-strong according to Rosgvardiya.

The last element in Rosgvardiya's business segment is the Federal Unitary State-Owned Enterprise Okhrana, which provides services to state, corporate and private clients, including protection services for public buildings and buildings that are part of the state's critical infrastructure. Chart below shows the offer of this company.

Chart 4. Services provided by the Federal Unitary State-Owned Enterprise Okhrana



Source: own preparation.

³⁵ Here and below, the figures are quoted after the Концепция развития вневедомственной охраны, document quoted above.

Okhrana's competitive advantage, according to its own advertisements, stems from: its accessibility (80 branches in different subjects of the Russian Federation); its personnel with experience of service in the Interior Ministry, the FSB and the Defence Ministry; specialised units for militarised protection and special forces. Okhrana's employees use the special means and weapons with which Rosgvardiya troops are equipped.

According to most observers, what makes Rosgvardiya's offer unbeatable is the oversight it performs over the sector by licencing security companies and issuing weapons permits. It supervises its private competitors in this way, as well as some competitors in the state sector.

According to Rosgvardiya's figures, the company has a staff of 53,065, of which 39,425 are licenced security operatives; it also uses the services of 24,458 guard members from the militarised units for non-government-provided security. However, it should be noted that the figures change frequently: in January 2017 the government-provided structures of the Ministry (18,000 personnel) were incorporated into Okhrana, and in October 2018 the same happened with the Svyaz-Bezopasnost company of the Ministry of Digital Development, Communications and Mass Media (15,600 personnel).

According to Gen. Viktor Zolotov, the range of Rosgvardiya's services is being constantly expanded³⁶. Its troops are currently strengthening the protection in the Arctic zone, in the ports of the Northern Sea Route served by the atomic icebreakers, protecting the floating nuclear power plant in Chukotka, the coastal facilities of the energy bridge connecting Krasnodar Krai and Crimea, as well as the sanatoriums and resorts in Crimea (including Artek). The latter has necessitated the creation of maritime Rosgvardiya units in the Northern and Southern districts.

³⁶ 'Генерал армии Виктор Золотов провел расширенное заседание итоговой коллегии Росгвардии', Росгвардия, 5 December 2018, www.rosgvard.ru.

Because of the opaqueness of the system of non-government-provided security and the non-transparent financing of this category of services (which may be paid for from the federal budget, local budgets, and corporate and private funds) only people with direct access are able to tell which Rosgvardiya services are free and which have to be paid for. The security business is not the only revenue source for Rosgvardiya, as it also earns considerable amounts of money from its supervision of the security services sector. A category six security operative licence (which authorises the use of firearms) costs around RUB 2,000, but before obtaining it, candidates also have to undergo mandatory training that costs RUB 9,000, as well as dactyloscopy tests costing RUB 2,000, obtaining several medical certificates (from a drugs specialists, psychiatrist and general practitioner), and covering the administrative cost of applying for a certificate attesting a clean criminal record. The total cost is more than RUB 20,000, i.e. more than US\$ 300.

According to official reports, Rosgvardiya's security business does not generate major profits. The proceeds from security services are deposited in the accounts of the territorial directorates and transferred to the central budget after covering taxes and all other costs. In 2018, they contributed RUB 14 billion to the central budget. For comparison, RUB 223.3 billion was earmarked for Rosgvardiya operations in the central budget³⁷.

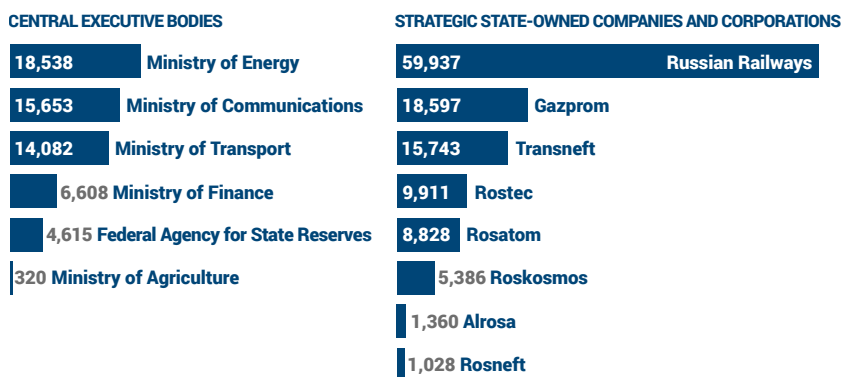
3. Rosgvardiya's competitors?

As previously mentioned, a number of federal executive authorities (ministries, government agencies) have their own structures that deliver state, government-provided security. Data on the size of the security forces of some government departments, such as the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Emergencies, is not public. Some ministries (e.g. the Ministry

³⁷ '«Независимое военное обозрение»: «Росгвардия увеличится на треть». Виктор Золотов рассказал сенаторам о ходе строительства войск', Росгвардия, www.rosgvard.ru.

of Culture) have the right to establish their own security structures but they have not done so and use the paid services of Rosgvardiya's Okhrana company. The energy companies have been put in a privileged position by, among others, Article 9 of the bill "On the security of the facilities of the fuels and energy complex" which directly provides that those companies have the right to create structures to deliver government-provided security³⁸, as well as the 2008 amendment of the bill "On weapons" which gave the foreign security structures of Transneft, Rosneft and Gazprom the right to use weapons to ensure the security of the companies' facilities abroad. The compiled numbers of government-provided security employees in individual entities are presented in Chart 5.

Chart 5. Number of staff working on government-provided security



Source: Rosgvardiya's website (www.rosgvard.ru).

The security structures established by the different entities listed above differ in term of their organisation and legal status. In part, this is the effect of previous attempts to make the sector more 'orderly', and in part is a consequence of their relations with the Kremlin. The government-

³⁸ The 2016 amendment to the bill "On the security of the facilities of the fuels and energy complex" (see: [Федеральный закон «О безопасности объектов топливно-энергетического комплекса» от 21.07.2011 N 256-ФЗ](#)) expanded this list to include Transnefteprodukt and the Unified Gas Supply System of Russia. Under the amended rules, energy infrastructure facilities may be protected, depending on their category, by state units dealing with non-government-provided security.

-provided security organisations include structures within ministries (Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Emergencies, Ministry of Transport); federal state-owned companies including unitary companies that are not subject to privatisation (Atom-Okhrana, Science and Technology Centre of the Federal Space Agency); legal persons including those with special status (security companies established by the so-called Cossack troops); joint stock companies, including closed ones as in the case of Rostec (ZAO RT-Okhrana). Special-status companies also have the status of strategic enterprises.

After Rosgvardiya was established and assigned the task of protecting important state facilities, the legal status of some of those structures changed. Rosgvardiya's prerogative was laid down in its statute, but no criteria have been set to identify which facilities are 'important', and the selection is apparently carried out arbitrarily. This is reflected in the previously mentioned "Concept paper on the development of non-government-provided security for the years 2018–2021 and to 2025" which identifies a wide category of 'legal persons with special statutory tasks'. The category comprises diverse actors, some of whom (Gazprom, Rosneft, Russian Railways, Alrosa, Transneft) benefit from dual protection provided by their own in-house structures and by Rosgvardiya (apparently acting in its capacity as the provider of security to important facilities). The in-house security structures of the above actors have the status of 'affiliates'. The private security organisations established by the Cossack associations (so-called troops) have a similar status. The remaining ones are so-called other legal persons whose statutory tasks include tasks that involve using firearms, and who engage in sectoral security services, including the Central Bank of Russia, Sberbank, the Federal Office of the Special Communications Service of Russia, the Federal State Office of the Russian Post, the Interior Ministry, territorial branches of the Roshydromet hydrometeorological service, territorial branches of the forest guard, transport security units, hunting and fisheries oversight bodies, and bodies in charge of the geological exploration of mining resources, precious stones, metals, etc.

The typology of entities proposed in the Concept Paper is imprecise. For example, the list of ‘affiliates’ does not include the structures of the Central Bank, while it is a known fact that some selected bank facilities are protected by Rosgvardiya, and others by its in-house Rosinkas organisation. Moreover, the Concept Paper preserves the *status quo* by blurring the line between the commercial and non-commercial segments of state security.

The structures listed above perform their tasks in accord with Rosgvardiya, which also supervises them. However, it does not supervise the elaborate security system of the Russian Federation, from the Federal Security Service to the Federal Penitentiary Service. Those institutions are not required to agree the lists of the facilities they protect or to report the firearms they hold to Rosgvardiya’s registers. This also applies to the Ministry of Defence, but not to the Ministry of Emergencies whose security structures are overseen by Rosgvardiya and which features in Rosgvardiya’s inspection schedules.

4. The private security sector

Compared with the security organisations established by the state agencies and strategic state-owned companies, the private security business does not pose a major problem today. The Kremlin has no intention of dismantling the 22,800 security companies which, according to public sources, employ between 650,000 and 1.5 million people³⁹. Most of this workforce are functionaries and military personnel moved to the reserve, for whom this is an additional source of income. This situation is being perpetuated by the high qualifications required of people seeking jobs at security contractors, including prohibitive specialist exams that former police functionaries and military personnel are capable of passing.

³⁹ This number of private security contractors has been officially stated by Rosgvardiya. It matches the information disclosed back in 2013 by the Interior Ministry, which estimated the size of this workforce at 650,000. The discrepancies between official statistics and unofficial numbers probably stem from differences in methodology, as the governmental estimates only cover licenced security operatives.

Outsourcing security tasks to private contractors is seen as a way for the state to fulfil some of its public functions and to sponsor companies that perform special tasks within the framework of the so-called state-private partnership. The state has informal instruments to inspect such companies independently of Rosgvardiya's structures. Their managers are typically high-ranking functionaries of the institutions of force, including officers of the so-called active reserve of the FSB. They are state agents who enter the structures of business, the media and social organisations. It is difficult to establish the number of these officers working in active reserve, but Russian commentators estimate that there are thousands of them⁴⁰.

Seen as notoriously corrupt and criminogenic, the private security business had already been put under rigorous regulation. Comprehensive corrective measures were undertaken in 2010 when security contractors were forced to go through repeat registration procedures. This was done under the pretext of renaming the category of the entities from private security 'companies' to private security 'organisations', which was also reflected in the language used when speaking about them: the infamous 'chops' (Russian: *частные охранные предприятия*) started to be referred to as 'choo' (*частные охранные организации*)⁴¹. According to the Interior Ministry, the number of licenced security operatives decreased by 8% at that time, from 718,700 to 662,500. The security organisations were obliged to submit dactyloscopy records of their personnel and stripped of the right to own firearms for professional use – they had to hand their firearms over to the police without compensation (currently they can only lease their weapons). The move made the security business fully dependent on the local police authorities, which had the right to confiscate weapons, putting the contractors at risk of losing contracts and

⁴⁰ For more information see: A. Soldatov, I. Borogan, *KGB/FSB. Władcy Rosji*, Warszawa 2015, pp. 48–55.

⁴¹ М. Фалалеев, 'Чоп и чип. 700 тысяч частных охранников сдадут электронные отпечатки пальцев, оружие и спецэкзамены', Российская газета, 25 March 2010, www.rg.ru.

going bankrupt. Those powers have now been taken over by Rosgvardiya, which exercises them in relation to both private security contractors and actors in the state (government-provided) security sector.

The problems related to the private security business which Rosgvardiya has been highlighting⁴² do not so much concern licenced security operatives, who mostly hail from the state institutions of force, as representatives of the SAVOK segment, which is a colloquial term used by the ‘professionals’ to describe janitors, administrators, lift operators, on-duty security and notification system operators and all types of inspectors. According to Rosgvardiya, such staff members often perform tasks that should be fulfilled by licenced operatives but are paid drastically low salaries. This, according to Rosgvardiya, explains why the private companies offer inferior quality services and dumping prices. To remedy the problem, Rosgvardiya has proposed draft amendments to the bill on private security contractors and the Administrative Code, under which fines for providing private security services in breach of the laws in force would be double the current levels.

5. A new order?

Reports about Rosgvardiya’s oversight activities suggest that they have been focused on the in-house security organisations established within state institutions. Such structures are a relic of the 1990s and the early days of the market economy in Russia when the bureaucratic system started developing functions and acquiring assets unrelated to its core mission. The situation was exacerbated after 2010 in connection with the 20% cut in the Interior Ministry’s staff imposed as part of its reform. It was achieved mainly by disbanding the units in charge of non-government-provided security, in a move of which the other ministries and federal agencies took advantage by expanding their own internal

⁴² ‘Нелицензионные охранники могут поплатиться большими штрафами’, Парламентская газета, 4 February 2019, www.pnp.ru.

government-provided security assets. As some of the scandals which reached the media suggest, Svyaz-Bezopasnost and Spetssvyaz (agencies of the Ministry of Communications), Rosinkas (agency of the Central Bank of Russia) and the federal entity Vedomstvennaya Okhrana Promyshlennosti RF (Government-Provided Security of the Industry of the Russian Federation, i.e. a security undertaking of the Ministry of Industry) took advantage of legal loopholes and participated in tenders for public security contracts. For example, a state structure specialising in communications security for many years protected six private companies in that sector (its competitors) and had won tenders for the provision of security services to 184 facilities from outside its sector, including the Supreme Court of Tatarstan⁴³.

In November 2018, Svyaz-Bezopasnost was incorporated into Rosgvardiya's Okhrana company, and Spetssvyaz was punished by the confiscation of weapons for illegally conveying cash for commercial banks. The conflict, which became a major, widely discussed scandal, was ultimately resolved by an interdepartmental commission established by the Ministry of Communications, which ruled that facilities not connected with the communications sector, as well as convoys carrying products of the defence industry, would be secured jointly by Spetssvyaz and Rosgvardiya.

The mergers described above have broken out of old patterns in the state segment of the security business. While they do not yet seem to follow a coherent concept for the integration of the security system of the state's strategic facilities, they already integrate the offer of the state security institutions. The creation of the Centre for the Security of Industrial Facilities (which is taking over the security structures of the Ministry of Industry) as an affiliate of Okhrana, is a good illustration of this tendency to consolidate state security entities⁴⁴. The centre has

⁴³ И. Петров, 'Сторожевые пашни: реформа ведомственной охраны вылилась в скандал', *Известия*, 3 July 2019, www.iz.ru.

⁴⁴ See: *Centre for the Security of Industrial Facilities' website*, www.rosprom-security.ru.

the status of an affiliate. According to V. Kvasov and O. Shkelya (cited above), that means it has the same status as Rosgvardiya's Okhrana, i.e. is authorised to provide security to facilities from any category, owned by anyone, including facilities outside the industry sector⁴⁵. However, some interpretational difficulty in this case is caused by Article 8 of the bill "On government-provided security", which lays down a subordination requirement under which security undertakings to which the bill applies may only protect facilities managed by the ministry which established them. This may mean that an evident conflict of interest has been transformed into discreet cooperation.

Another piece of evidence suggesting that this kind of move from conflict to cooperation is possible comes from the fuels sector where 'affiliated' structures of Rosneft and Gazprom face no problems providing security services to the companies' own installation, while Rosgvardiya has stripped private energy concerns of the right to select their security providers. That move has already been challenged by the chiefs of Lukoil, Tatneft and Sibur who have filed a complaint with the Secretary of the Security Council Nikolai Patrushev⁴⁶. They have emphasised a drastic increase in the cost of security – the prices charged by Rosgvardiya's Okhrana are double those offered by private agencies. This marks another Russian paradox: the costs of state-provided security services are higher than the costs of private providers. Back in 2018, the Moscow-based Main Centre for Special Communications (FGUP GCSS), a company dealing with the protection of the courier service, also complained about Rosgvardiya's excessive prices, after Rosgvardiya had stripped it of the right to use weapons and made it unable to protect convoys. The company ultimately selected the offer of the Communications Ministry's Svyaz-Bezopasnost, ostentatiously rejecting Rosgvardiya's offer.

⁴⁵ В.Б. Квасов, О.В. Шкеля, 'Проблемы правового регулирования...', *op. cit.*

⁴⁶ '«Коммерсантъ» узнал о жалобе нефтяных компаний на Росгвацию', Ведомости, 18 January 2019, www.vedomosti.ru.

Triggering conflicts in order to resolve them in Rosgvardiya's favour is a radical technique for eliminating competitors. The routine method is for Rosgvardiya to conduct audits and revoke licences and authorisations to use weapons. Information on the subject is available on Rosgvardiya's website and in media reports about their planned and implemented audits. In 2018 Rosgvardiya conducted a total of 51,333 audits, including 31,157 planned ones and 20,176 unannounced ones⁴⁷. It has emphasised the systemic nature of detected irregularities – the security companies employ persons with criminal records and non-expunged convictions and without the psychological certificates required of people using weapons, physical force and coercive measures. Gaps in the dactyloscopy registers of staff have also been detected, as well as missing periodic medical examinations and certificates of completion of professional training. Companies dealing with government-provided security have been accused of working at facilities outside their respective sectors. Finally, there have been multiple irregularities involving the handling of weapons, including depots that do not meet the requirements, missing documentation on distributed weapons and other special equipment, and discrepancies between actual inventories and registers, etc.

A separate section on the website deals with audits in the fuels and energy sector where 3,475 were conducted in 2018, which found cases of technical security, alarm and CCTV monitoring systems not meeting Russian standards, the lack of appropriate lighting, and cases of non-compliance with the rules on anti-terror preventative measures. The brief report on audits in the fuels sector contains an interesting detail: 837 fines have been imposed on the security firms of the fuels sector, including one of more than RUB 16 million, of which RUB 13,256,000 has been paid. For comparison, in the aftermath of 190 audits at critical infrastructure facilities, fines totalling RUB 7 million have been paid to the state budget.

⁴⁷ See: 'Информация о реализации в 2018 году функций Росгвардии по осуществлению федерального государственного контроля (надзора) в установленных сферах деятельности', Росгвардия, www.rosgvard.ru.

The above-mentioned “Concept paper on the development of non-government-provided security in the years 2018–2021 and to 2025” sheds light on the objectives of Rosgvardiya’s oversight activities. It consolidates its monopoly position, expanding its oversight powers to: technology policies in the security sector (technical security systems and the research and development of such systems, for which the Okhrana Research and Development Centre has been established); the strict categorisation of state facilities under Rosgvardiya’s protection and the issuance of ‘passes’ to such facilities, as well as the mandatory inclusion of anti-terror security regulations into the procedures.

Rosgvardiya’s audits have created significant tension in the crowded security market. Conflicts of interest between Rosgvardiya and the companies it controls have been routinely resolved in Rosgvardiya’s favour by the Anti-Monopoly Office and the courts. The defeated competitors have tried to take revenge on Rosgvardiya by releasing compromising materials, leaking confidential information and sensitive data. Indirectly, the state administration and the intelligence services are also involved in the public conflicts. For example, the post-audit investigation at the Government-Provided Security of Industrial Facilities company ended with the arrest of the company’s managers, FSB colonel Andrei Polishchikov and two FSB generals: Sergei Gorbunov (military counterintelligence) and Vladimir Podolsky (former commander of the Vypel *spetsnaz* and deputy chief of the FSB Special Headquarters). They were initially accused of embezzlement and of employing family members and so-called ‘dead souls’, and were fined. After the criminal trial was resumed, they were additionally charged with obstruction of justice and of plotting an assassination of one of the investigators. Similar examples abound.

Rosgvardiya’s opponents track its illegal practices and systematically document its abuses, cases of corruption⁴⁸, and overpriced purchases.

⁴⁸ ‘Экс-командира отряда ФГУП «Охрана» Росгвардии обвиняют в получении взятки в 2,5 млн рублей’, Ведомости, 7 December 2018, www.vedomosti.ru.

In 2017, a shooting in the car park of the Moscow-City mall attracted a lot of attention – it was described as a violent showdown between a Rosgvardiya unit protecting the mafia boss Dmitry Pavlov (Pavlik) and the bodyguards of Gavril Yushvaev (Garik).

Rosgvardiya has also been criticised by the state recipients of the security services. In one example, the Ministry of Culture accused Rosgvardiya's Okhrana of serious shortcomings after auditing its security services in the aftermath of a series of incidents in its museums, including the theft of a valuable painting from the Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow and the destruction of a painting from the Hermitage collection in St Petersburg⁴⁹. Accusations that Rosgvardiya destroys its competitors in the security services market have also been increasingly frequent. Private security agencies, which compete with Rosgvardiya on prices and their offer, have been levelling increasing criticism at the company. They have demonstrated that Rosgvardiya charges higher prices for its services despite having lower costs as it can use the weapons, equipment and vehicles of the Rosgvardiya troops free of charge, and does not face any restrictions on the use of weapons or consequences for failing to follow procedures as Rosgvardiya's Okhrana is overseen by Rosgvardiya itself.

Thus, Rosgvardiya's efforts, officially represented as corrective measures, have given rise to public conflicts. It is evident that the underlying causes of the conflicts are systemic. The old model of state security provision is being dismantled inconsistently and chaotically. State-owned assets are still protected by sectoral security organisations, even as some facilities have been put in the charge of Rosgvardiya which delivers (non-government-provided) security services to them. Conflicts are also generated by the arbitrary nature of the decisions of the government and the president, who approve the lists of facilities that are not allowed

⁴⁹ 'Минкультуры установило, что Росгвардия охраняет музеи с «недоработками»', Первое антикоррупционное, 28 February 2019, www.pasmi.ru.

to use private security services or which are mandatorily protected by Rosgvardiya, as well as the tariffs for the state security services.

The wide and criminogenic security business has proven very difficult to reform. Its commercial segment continues to expand while its implicit objective, which is to support the reserve security and defence personnel, has not been helpful either in attaining the officially declared objectives of generating savings and putting the sector in order, or in fixing its criminogenic model.

6. An omnipotent supervisor?

The Kremlin has always treated security contractors as not only a way to assist the police and military personnel moved to the reserve, but also as its own mobilisation reserve enabling the formation of special units at times of war. The planning of territorial defence as part of the state military systems is the task of the Defence Ministry. The ministry also supervises the retraining of reserve personnel, which is also obligatory for the Federal Security Service, the Foreign Intelligence Service, the Federal Protective Service and Rosgvardiya⁵⁰.

At least for this reason, Rosgvardiya is not an omnipotent supervisor. This applies both to the system for the protection of the state's critical infrastructure, which also involves the Ministry of Defence, the Interior Ministry, the Federal Security Service and the Federal Protective Service (over which Rosgvardiya has no influence) and the supervision of security contractors. Rosgvardiya's involvement in territorial defence is supposed to be furthered by the development of closer cooperation between itself and the Cossacks⁵¹. This cooperation materialises as the

⁵⁰ Ю. Гаврилов, 'Запасной полк', Российская газета, 24 February 2019; [content of a presidential decree appointing reserve forces](http://www.rg.ru) available at www.rg.ru.

⁵¹ 'Первая в России казачья рота Росгвардии укомплектована в Краснодарском крае', TASS, 20 February 2018. Nikolai Doluda, the Kuban Host ataman quoted by the agency, also spoke of plans to create Cossack cyberteams and new Cossack units.

nominally ‘Cossack’ security organisations, officially treated as a kind of state sponsoring of Cossack associations (troops). In reality, the Russian Cossacks are the subject of the Kremlin’s special attention, intermediated by the Council for Cossack Affairs appointed by the President of the Russian Federation. Rosgvardiya has expressed interest in expanding the scope of the Cossack security service because of the vastness of the Russian territory and the existence of numerous strategic facilities in sparsely populated areas, especially in Siberia and the Far East. The growth of Cossack security services is also visible in numerous incidents involving these formations, including cases of security contracts signed without proper tender procedures and the growing number of Cossack attacks on the Kremlin’s political opponents, including several beatings of Alexei Navalny and the breaking up of Hare Krishna gatherings, LGBT demonstrations, etc.⁵² The expansion of Rosgvardiya’s activities is also visible in the fact that Cossack organisations have been included in the list of Okhrana affiliates. It is worth noting here that prior to the creation of Rosgvardiya, the conditions for Cossack security activities were not prohibitive; for instance, it was enough to complete a course for ‘assistant community police officers’ to be able to join the patrol service. However, the Cossack experiment is a new phenomenon in the security domain and may be regarded as a political and military project of the Kremlin’s. Its objectives include mobilising the Russian public in the face of the so-called new threats (illegal migration, extremism, terrorism, cultural and spiritual threats, cybercrime, Western information warfare). The Cossack troops list the countering of such threats in their statutes⁵³.

Other similar new political-military projects include the so-called social defence organisations (associations of the former intelligence service, military and police officers, local guards, etc.) which perform outsourced

⁵² For more information, see: J. Darczewska, *Putin’s Cossacks. Folklore, Business or Politics?*, OSW, Warszawa 2017, www.osw.waw.pl.

⁵³ Their framework statute was approved by Vladimir Putin’s decree no. 543 of 4 November 2019 “О Всероссийском казачьем обществе”, www.kremlin.ru.

public tasks as part of the so-called public-private partnership. Some of those structures are organisations with openly stated objectives, such as security structures created by local authorities including: the Municipal Guard (Belgorod), Public Order Protection (Togliatti), the Security Centre (Ufa), the Centre for the Protection of Public Order (St Petersburg). Some, such as the Capital City Security company established by the government of Moscow, have the status of private security contractors and – additionally – the status of a strategic company. Most of them were established in the early 2010s. A new tendency can be observed where the local authorities build closer co-operation with volunteer security operatives joining the government-inspired volunteer teams for the protection of order and the so-called social self-defence teams. Those formations have made their presence known, for example by breaking up gatherings of people protesting against development in forest and park areas.

In 2010 members of such groups and the Cossacks constituted the core of the volunteer mobilisation reserve. Today, they constitute the core of the contract service reserve⁵⁴. This social experiment was triggered on the basis of the 2012 bill No. 288 which amended a range of legislative acts concerning defence, including the bill on compulsory military service. The experiment has many objectives; for instance it creates an imitation of the involvement of citizens and offers a platform to use reservists in areas where the existing security and defence forces are insufficient, and to train them to meet current tasks and needs.

Reservists may be trained at ‘specialised vocational institutions’, which include private military companies (Russian: *частная военная компания*, ChVK). They are sometimes compared to with the Western PMC (private military companies), although the two are not equivalent. There have

⁵⁴ Initial contracts with reservists are signed for three years, and subsequently for five years. Soldiers sign contracts which terminate when they turn 42. For junior officers they terminate when they turn 47. For officers they terminate at 52. For senior officers, at 57. Reservists are paid a soldier's salary for taking part in a 30-day training course in addition to the average salary at their employer.

been descriptions of excesses by Russian contractors during the Chechen wars; abroad they have been seen during the fighting in the former Yugoslavia, in Georgia, in Crimea and in Syria. In Sudan, Zimbabwe, Angola, Libya and Madagascar they provide different services including personal protection, facility security, police and military training and even the organisation of election campaigns in return for the right to mine natural resources⁵⁵.

Because of reports in the foreign media, the topic of ChVK has also emerged in the media in Russia, which paid special attention to attempts at legalising these companies. Journalists usually suggested that the existence of such companies was illegal under Russian law. However, it is not so much their involvement in the militarised security market which is illegal, as their participation in war operations⁵⁶. This, incidentally, has been subject to the Kremlin's information blockade. Officially, the companies provide security services, protecting Russian facilities outside the Russian Federation, including mines, oil fields and convoys, and perform training missions (military advice, the training of troops and police forces) in countries with which Russia cooperates in those domains. They may also have contracts with the Russian Defence Ministry. As disclosed by Dmitry Kiselyov, members of the Wagner Group have been training the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic under a bilateral agreement between the Defence Ministries of the two countries⁵⁷. The resistance against calls to legalise them is understandable because that would lead to undesirable consequences, including the need to make

⁵⁵ '«Проект»: наемники «ЧВК Вагнера» охраняли на Мадагаскаре связанных с Пригожиным политтехнологов', Новая Газета, 13 March 2019, www.novaya-gazeta.ru.

⁵⁶ In Russia, their activities are governed by the law "On security and detective services": they are treated as economic operators providing security services. In early 2018, legislative works were undertaken on the initiative of the Just Russia party on a separate, dedicated regulation, but the draft was rejected (having been rejected twice before, in 2011 and in 2014). The Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the FSB and Rosgvardiya objected to the new regulation, arguing that it would contravene the Russian constitution.

⁵⁷ "Вести недели", TV Россия-1, 29 September 2019.

their statutory tasks more transparent, to impose legal accountability for violations of the law, etc.

It is worth noting that the emergence of the topic of ChVKs in the public debate has led to a change of the public's view and the government's attitude. Back in 2013, the commanders of the Slavic Corps ChVK were arrested in front of cameras at the Domodedovo airport on their return from Syria, and condemned for recruiting mercenaries⁵⁸. In 2018, the Russian media quoted the ChVK Wagner commanders as saying that they are "fighting for Russia and its geopolitical interests"⁵⁹. This change has in large part been due to an information and PR campaign which the military have been conducting for the last several years. This campaign has been conducted in various fields. For example, Gen. Leonid Ivashov has emphasised that the providers of commercial military security services are high-class specialists in military intelligence, military lawyers and members of the Special Operations Forces, while the army's lawyers have argued that outsourcing in the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation and other military forces was necessary⁶⁰.

Russian ChVKs differ from the Western model. PMCs are private businesses providing military services, while ChVKs do not fit into that category. They are established and trained using the resources of the Russian

⁵⁸ Slavonic Corps Limited, a company registered in Hong Kong, took part in the fighting in Syria. The arrested commanders defended themselves by claiming that they had been hired by the Syrian Ministry of Energy and the Energia company. Their arrest should be interpreted as a cost that Russia had to pay to maintain the appearance of neutrality in the Syrian conflict (at that time the Kremlin officially denied that Russia was involved even as the global media reported on the deaths of Russian fighters, providing their personal information on the basis of Russian documents found).

⁵⁹ 'Командиры рассказали о внутренней политике ЧВК Вагнера и жизни наемников', Lenta.Ru, 7 March 2018.

⁶⁰ 'Легализация ЧВК: аргумент «их там нет» больше не работает', Новые Известия, 24 July 2018, www.newizv.ru. See also: А.В. Сорокин, 'Целесообразность научного исследования теории и практики использования аутсорсинговых отношений в сфере хозяйственно-экономической деятельности военных организаций', *Вестник военного права*, 4/2017.

military forces and other institutions of force, and use the bases and medical facilities of the official army and other institutions. As documented by numerous reports in the global media, ChVK Wagner prepared to fight in Syria at the Molkino base⁶¹, using the range of the 10th Spetsnaz Brigade of the Main Directorate of the General Staff of the Russian Federation.

In this sense, ChVKs are (albeit informally) part of the Russian military structures. They have little to do with commercial activities based on economic calculation. There is truth in the statement that while Western PMCs are mercenaries dressed up as soldiers, Russian ChVKs are soldiers dressed up as mercenaries⁶². As companies providing cover, and extensions of the Russian institutions of force, they can contribute to the accomplishment of those institutions' non-statutory tasks. They provide services to the state. There are not there to achieve economic efficiency, but to support the state's internal and foreign policy. They operate under the state's close supervision. This supervision also needs to be extended to state-owned and private security contractors, as each form of unsupervised entity poses a threat as it may potentially undermine the existing order, while the entire philosophy of governance of the Russian state is focused on ensuring 'peace and quiet', i.e. protecting the existing order.

In Russia, the distinction between state and non-state security providers ceases to be relevant. The demand for security services is met, for a fee, by whole segments of the state apparatus, including the institutions of force. And conversely, ChVKs or Cossack security companies should not be regarded as private actors. Many of such private companies provide services to the state and do not operate according to the logic of economic efficiency. Their mission is to soften or neutralise political risk (e.g. by concealing military involvement or covering up information about casualties) and in

⁶¹ 'Появились фотографии базы ЧВК на Кубани', Lenta.Ru, 5 March 2018.

⁶² P. Mazur, 'Wagnerowcy w Syrii - wykorzystanie PMC przez Rosję w konflikcie syryjskim', *Annales Universitatis Paedagogicae Cracoviensis. Studia de Securitate*, 8 (2018), folia 257.

this way to support Russia's internal and foreign policy. Hidden behind their official identity as security contractors, such entities can rely on the material and technical support of the Armed Forces, implement various military and non-military tasks in peacetime as well as during and after conflicts, and provide a trained operational reserve for the purposes of territorial and civil defence.

CONCLUSION: ROSGVARDIYA AS THE ICONIC 'GUARD OF PEACE AND ORDER'

Assessments of the Russian intelligence services should be formulated bearing in mind the scale of disinformation and manipulation. Such distortions are present even in the official statements by Rosgvardiya's chief and reports posted on the service's website and they have dominated the information campaign accompanying its establishment. For instance, President Putin emphasised the need to establish firearms inspections and to put the security services business in order, while also raising the savings argument, according to which the concentration of the security structures dispersed in different government departments in one service would lower their costs. Others traditionally highlighted the threats of terrorism and extremism, which Rosgvardiya would help counter. Finally, an analysis of the Rosgvardiya's own Centre for Strategic Research argued that its primary task would concern territorial defence, which needed to be strengthened in response to the hostile, anti-Russian actions by Western states (colour revolutions, Western information and ideological warfare).

The opposition added to the confusion by focusing on corruption, the 'moral' exhaustion and decay of Rosgvardiya's predecessor, i.e. the Internal Troops and the Interior Ministry in charge of them (which was allegedly excessively involved in the security business while neglecting its primary role of combatting crime). Moreover, the opposition traditionally put the new service in the context of the rivalry between services (claiming that Putin had "lost trust in the FSB") and the Kremlin's fears of uncontrollable internal developments, of which the clichés of a 'Pretorian guard' and 'new *oprichnina*' may serve as an illustration.

This interpretive chaos continues today, even though after almost four years of Rosgvardiya's functioning it is easier to pinpoint the actual character of the service. For example, it is notable that the task assigned to Rosgvardiya of putting the security sector in order has not been accom-

plished: the commercial and criminogenic segment has continued to grow. The half-measures implemented have blurred Rosgvardiya's character as a state service. Its functioning has not been transparent. The size of the commercial segment, whose workforce currently accounts for more than half of Rosgvardiya's total personnel, shows what the service's systemic 'original sin' is about – Rosgvardiya is involved in the security business as a service provider while at the same time overseeing its competitors in the state and private security contractor market.

There are more paradoxes of this kind. To promote Rosgvardiya's security services, its two mutually contradictory dimensions are constantly highlighted: the service is simultaneously represented as a military organisation (orderly, hierarchical, based on rules and bylaws), and as a business providing security services (commercial, profit-oriented and lobbying for favourable legal regulations). By providing selective state security under contracts (i.e. protecting businesses and citizens who are prepared to pay for security) the very existence of the service demonstrates that the Russian state is failing to ensure security to its citizens.

The arguments used in the public debate also fail to answer the question about Rosgvardiya's original contribution to the operational machine of the Russian state. The competence bill "On the National Guard troops", which defines the service's tasks and powers, does not identify new operational areas for Rosgvardiya. The service is defined as an auxiliary military organisation established to support other government institutions of force in the areas of territorial and civil defence, border protection, and the countering of terrorism and extremism. At the same time, it is a policing and intervention force supporting the Interior Ministry. Its specific tasks are only enumerated in the Rosgvardiya bylaws. They include "federal oversight of the trade in firearms for civilian and professional use", "oversight of private security and detective service providers" as well as selected state "units for government-provided security" and "units with special statutory tasks". This list of tasks does not in any way justify maintaining a 350,000-strong internal army or the mission

assigned to the Rosgvardiya leadership to keep it in constant combat readiness and to develop and expand its structures. Moreover, contrary to how Rosgvardiya is represented, its military and combat competences do not make it a regular, full-fledged special troop formation – it remains an army with policing tasks.

Nor is Rosgvardiya a full-fledged intelligence service. Unlike the other intelligence services of the Russian Federation and the Interior Ministry, it has no operational and investigative powers or powers to prosecute and indict. It does, though, have the potential to engage in such activities – its oversight function gives it unlimited access to registers and databases, allows it to recruit secret collaborators, covertly obtain data, tap phone calls and put people under observation. Rosgvardiya is certainly making use of this potential, and the oversight it performs of the trade in firearms and the activities of security contractors enables it to infiltrate the groups in possession of firearms, check them, and collect evidence of dealings that might pose a threat to the security of the Russian Federation, etc.

Assuming that the dominant narrative about Rosgvardiya is there to justify and legitimise its institutional position in the Russian system of power, it is worth looking beyond that narrative and considering it in a wider and longer context. Below is a list of several tendencies that are omitted from the official narrative.

Firstly, Rosgvardiya was established to expand and consolidate the community of the institutions of force to better support Russia's authoritarian system.

An important element of the transformation of the system of government after the breakup of the Soviet Union concerned a deep transformation of the institutions of force. It involved dismantling the former KGB and the emergence of weaker and mutually counterbalancing Ministries of Defence and of the Interior, and the autonomous services for intelligence

(Foreign Intelligence Service), counterintelligence (Federal Security Service), security (Federal Protective Service), border protection (Federal Border Service), communications security (Federal Agency of Government Communications and Information, FAPSI).

Another significant aspect of the transformation concerned the establishment of numerous private security contractors working for the new Russian business sector. As the former nomenklatura of the institutions of force entered the field of business, many people formerly working in the army and the intelligence services started moving into politics and the economy. Vladimir Putin's rise to power was marked by an expansion of the political influence of these people, but also reinforced the previous tendencies. The political narrative employed at that time (about "restoring order and strong government") emphasised the need to introduce some order into the economy while preserving democratic freedoms (as far as possible in Russian conditions, whose limitations came to be reflected in the term 'managed democracy'). 'Order' in the economy gave rise to state capitalism with its limitations on private ownership. The inevitable consequence of that involved the build-up of new security institutions to protect the state-owned business assets, i.e. the expansion of the sectors of government-provided and non-government-provided security. The expansion of the state security sector was also intended to curb the private security sector: efforts were made to reverse Russia's strong tendency towards the privatisation of business security by nationalising it; the official justification pointed to the need to restore the state's monopoly on the use of force.

However, the nationalisation of the security sector (based on weak legal regulations) did not reverse the growth of crime within the institutions of force. The dismantling of the most crime-ridden services (i.e. FAPSI in 2003, and FSKN in 2016) and the transfer of the commercial security structures from the Interior Ministry to Rosgvardiya (in 2016) may be interpreted as *ad hoc* steps taken to combat the most striking manifestations of the crime problem. Nevertheless, crime has continued to grow,

as demonstrated by the statistics on crime within Rosgvardiya itself⁶³. The underlying causes of the security sector's criminogenic nature (which also involves the extortion of public contracts and tax breaks) are mainly systemic. Of particular importance here is the professional profile of the former security functionaries working in the sector, who have connections in the state institutions and know how to use operational methods, including ways to exploit compromising materials. At the same time, officers with experience in the institutions of force, who are part of an army of persons holding weapons, are an asset for the Kremlin as its social backing. In this context, **the political meaning of the establishment of Rosgvardiya may be interpreted as follows: its oversight of the security contractors is a warning to undisciplined representatives of the security business and a call for self-restraint. The Kremlin has chosen not to use drastic means that could trigger a 'civil war', and instead decided to appeal to the sense of community among those authorised to use force and their sense of responsibility for the internal situation in Russia, while promising to keep the existing order. For the same reason any organisational changes in the Russian institutions of force have recently been cautious, technical and insular. A 'thorough clean-up' is not an option also for more fundamental reasons: disorder is the sector's normal state as it expands the services' spectrum of capabilities.**

Secondly, in the longer term perspective, Rosgvardiya should be considered in the context of the modernisation of Russia's internal security forces. This process has involved: the reforms in the Interior Ministry implemented gradually since 2010; the civil defence force reform undertaken in 2011 (whereby units of the Ministry for Civil Defence and Emergencies were transformed into military search and rescue formations); and the reform of territorial defence. **The universal justification for those modernisation efforts has concerned the**

⁶³ See e.g.: *‘Число преступлений силовиков растет. Сильнее всего – у Росгвардии’*, The Village, 7 August 2019, www.the-village.ru.

involvement of all the institutions of force in territorial defence and civil defence, which requires them to improve co-operation and interoperability. Joint drills, including unannounced readiness tests, as well as unified equipment and arms standards, the introduction of military bylaws, etc., all contribute to the ‘militarisation’ and alignment of the internal security forces. The distinction between peacetime and wartime tasks, which is being successively introduced into the bylaws of the ministries and services – and which is also reflected in Rosgvardiya’s bylaws – also serves the same purpose.

It would be difficult to overestimate the role of Rosgvardiya in safeguarding state of emergency and martial law regimes and deploying units for wartime, not least because of its human resource potential. Obligated to train and retrain its own mobilisation reserve, it can accomplish this task more easily as it is also authorised to oversee the ‘hidden’ reserve potential, i.e. people holding arms. The practice in Russia is for wartime civil defence and territorial defence tasks to be performed by security and rescue services, as well as the reserve of the security and defence forces. The latter has recently received a new financial stimulus in the form of a soldier’s salary offered to contract service reservists.

Modernisation is not only about replacing weapons and equipment with newer generations. It is also about restarting and restructuring the system, improving its operational capacity and efficacy, intensive training and doctrine adjustment. Until recently, efforts in those fields have been focused on the armed forces, which have been the main justification for Russia’s imperial aspirations and ambitions. Modernisation of the internal security sector may serve to tighten control of society in Russia and enforce obedience, but it may also be a sign of preparations for wartime.

The stated aim of modernisation today is to strengthen the state’s military organisation. This is a notion that refers to many aspects, spans all the institutions of force, the defence industry and infrastructure, as well as state governance bodies and state and social institutions working to

enhance the country's defence potential. In the Russian legal and political culture, the military organisation of the state offers no space for bottom-up initiatives: measures to enhance defence are initiated top-down and implemented in a controlled way. **The military organisation of society (which is called for as part the efforts to strengthen the military defence structures) is represented as opening the state's military system to civil society initiatives and a way to build closer relations with society. In reality, it is about strengthening the force-based mechanisms of governance for the Russian state, its security and society under the pretext of preparations for emergency situations.**

It is inappropriate in this context to invoke the experiences of other countries, and especially the French Gendarmerie and the tradition of the National Guard to which it refers. The French territorial defence was founded on the idea of the 'people in arms', i.e. a civil society capable of self-organising. In Russia there is no space for such an idea as it has no civil society. Out of necessity, the Russian model relies on various organisational substitutes of civil society (the Cossacks, ChVKs). The 'people in arms' are subject to strict licencing procedures. By supervising them and keeping registers of them Rosgvardiya supervises a 'hidden' potential and a mobilisation reserve – and especially its most active segments.

Unlike in the Western model of territorial defence, where reserve forces are used predominantly to defend the country's territory, the Russian model clearly assumes that those forces will perform multiple functions. They can be used for internal security as well external, expeditionary operations. The 'people in arms' (5 million persons holding 7 million weapons according to Rosgvardiya's estimates) are simultaneously a reserve pool of personnel for the armed forces during wartime, operatives to perform non-statutory operations in peacetime, and an extension of the state apparatus in their capacity of the 'special' infrastructure of governance.

Thirdly, it is worth noting the symbolic dimension of the service. The establishment of Rosgvardiya marked the return of the category of ‘internal threats’ to the political discourse in Russia. Any question about Rosgvardiya is simultaneously a question about the Kremlin’s understanding of these threats. This dimension reveals a change in the Kremlin’s information policy in the field of security. Previously, that policy was limited to blocking information about threats and making it a taboo subject. Currently, there is an oversupply of information, aimed at artificially publicising internal threats. Introducing this topic into public discourse serves various purposes. Internally, it highlights the military might and the ‘extraordinary’ potential of the security forces, concealed under different kinds of camouflage. Externally, it projects an image of the determination, combat readiness and the mobility of all the Russian institutions of force.

This change in the model of communication does not mean that the Kremlin has given up disinformation and propaganda as important instruments in governing the state and the society. Tools of this kind enable it to use ready-made clichés to strengthen the picture or reality it creates. This picture includes elements such as the ‘morally corrupt West’, the declining civilisation’s helplessness and inability to make decisions, the activity of foreign agents, extremists and saboteurs, as opposed to the Russian internal order which protects peace and traditional values.

Internal threats represented as an external menace that highlights the image of the West as the eternal enemy, an antagonist of Russia and inciter of colour revolutions, all serve to justify Russia’s aggressive policies and the Kremlin’s turn towards a progressing militarisation of power in Russia (from the lowest to the highest levels) and the mobilisation of the society. This manipulation enables the Russian leadership to use, in their internal communications, social didactic codes that are easy to understand for the Russian public as they refer to necessary self-defence, the spirit of victory, and many centuries of historical experience. The official

justification of the turn towards mobilisation (the perceived threat of 'hybrid' Western aggression against Russia) has been drip-fed into the Russian security doctrines and strategies since 2000. The 'defence' of Russia against Western aggression (even though no-one doubts that the Russian strategic documents mean attack, not defence) encompasses not only military objectives, but – most importantly – society. Rosgvardiya embodies the ideas underlying this 'defence': it guarantees order, peace and quiet, and preserves the continuity of tradition as the successor of the Internal Guard, the NKVD and the Internal Troops (see Appendix 2).

As explained by contemporary scholars of the history of Russian special services, the idea of a guard protecting those values has always been strongly present in Russia, irrespective of the changing historical circumstances and systems of government (tsarist Russia, Soviet Union, Russian Federation). It has also always served to foster stability and the Russian modernisation projects (including in the Stalinist era of raging state terror).

In this context, Rosgvardiya is a new embodiment of the Russian practice of regime stabilisation that involves reinforcing its pillars and backup forces, which are treated as instruments to implement the Kremlin's projects. Over time, reforms of the special services have been variously justified, but they always aimed at ensuring the stability of government and the integrity of its apparatus. This is also why every historical period has seen the Russian militarised security services combine their security role with extensive oversight and policing functions (see Appendix 1).

It should also be remembered that the continuity of this phenomenon, and the symbolism of memory that reflects it, has a civilisational context and is closely intertwined with the Russian political culture. The deep meaning of 'order' is a vertical, centralised state apparatus and an efficient system of repression. Order in this sense justifies the means employed to secure it, including maximum control of society, which sometimes takes the form of purges, the elimination of opponents (dissidents, saboteurs,

foreign agents, the fifth column, corrupt officials), as well as the constant monitoring of public sentiment to identify and prosecute any manifestations of treason. By analogy, 'peace and quiet' stands for system stability, its perpetuation, system integrity and unity. The institutions of force are the pillars of this system: obedient, loyal, enjoying a privileged position in the system, mobilising the government's helpers, and demobilising its opponents. By using their potential and managing fear, the Kremlin is able to exercise 'federal oversight' of society.

JOLANTA DARCZEWSKA

APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Rosgvardiya's long memory: "guarding peace and quiet for more than 200 years"

According to the official interpretation, Rosgvardiya's traditions date back to 1811, when the Internal Guard was established. Tsar Alexander I appointed his trusted aide-de-camp, Count J. Komarovsky as the guard's commander. Governmental historians studying the history of the Russian services⁶⁴ emphasise the antinomy in the way the guard was viewed, as it was treated from the beginning as both a security force and an element in the state's military organisation. Armed battalions of the guard were established in all the governorates' capital cities, and their tasks included: helping in the execution of court convictions, pursuing and arresting robbers and thieves, breaking up gatherings, eliminating rebels, searching for fugitives and deserters, detecting forbidden merchandise imported into the Empire, supporting the collection of taxes, protecting order during religious ceremonies and in marketplaces and fairs, organising the conscription of recruits to the tsar's army, convoying recruits, detainees and prisoners of war, and providing fire and flood response (in addition to military tasks).

When the tsar was toppled in 1917, the Internal Guard was briefly renamed VOKhR (Military Security of the Republic), and then as the Cheka/GPU/OGPU/NKVD. In the Soviet Union it was assigned additional tasks related to protecting the strategic facilities of the administrative, industrial and communications infrastructure, and established specialised internal, border and convoy units.

The war with Poland in 1939 and the German strike on the Soviet Union in June 1941 became a turning point for the NKVD (People's Commissariat

⁶⁴ П.А. Колпаков, 'Внутренняя стража и Отдельный корпус внутренней стражи в 1811-1863 гг.', *Научный диалог*, 10 (58)/2016.

for Internal Affairs). During the war, the task of NKVD forces was to prevent desertions and marauding and to protect the Red Army's rear by combatting enemy sabotage groups, tracing spies and criminal gangs, protecting transport routes, and organising patrol services, etc. In some cases, NKVD troops could be moved to the frontline (they participated in the defence of Leningrad and Stalingrad and took part in the fighting in the Caucasus). Generally, however, they followed the frontline units, pursuing groups of German soldiers and local collaborators. In 1943 the Main Directorate for Military Counterintelligence Smersh (*Smert shpionam*) was established and NKVD forces subsequently also executed its orders.

In areas liberated from the German occupation, the NKVD acted as an occupying force and, inside the Soviet Union, it dealt with cleansing the areas 'infected with banditry and collaboration', including through mass deportations of the Karachays, Chechens, Ingush, Kalmyks, Crimean Tatars and other nations. In the years 1943–1953, the NKVD became infamous for breaking the resistance movement in Ukraine, Belarus and the Baltic states, and for its raids against the Polish anti-Communist underground⁶⁵.

Towards the end of the Soviet period, the Internal Troops were created. Taken over by the Russian Federation, they lasted until 2016. A defining element in the founding myth of the Internal Troops had been its mission to maintain 'peace and quiet in the state'. For example, an anniversary edition of the formation's commemorative album in 2011 was titled "Guarding peace and quiet for 200 years. A short illustrated history of the Internal Troops". 'Peace and quiet' remains the propaganda fuel of the successor to the Internal Troops, Rosgvardiya.

⁶⁵ For more information, see e.g.: G. Motyka, *Na białych Polaków oblawa. Wojska NKWD w walce z polskim podziemiem 1944–1953*, Warszawa 2014; P. Kołakowski, *Pretorianie Stalina*, Ożarów Mazowiecki 2019.

Appendix 2. Functions of Rosgvardiya and its predecessors

The Russian Empire: The Internal Guard protecting ‘peace and quiet’

1. Combatting and eliminating armed insurgencies and opposition to the tsar’s rule
2. Protecting borders and transport routes
3. Protecting order at religious sites, marketplaces, fairs, etc.
4. Convoying prisoners and deportees
5. Pursuing and arresting highwaymen and thieves
6. Pursuing fugitives and deserters

The Soviet Empire: The Cheka-GPU-NKVD-KGB forces ‘guarding peace and the revolution’

1. Personal protection of Lenin and Stalin, the seats of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, the state bank, the state mint and other strategic facilities
2. Combatting opponents of Soviet rule
3. Ensuring the security of the Red Army’s rear
4. Combatting sabotage groups
5. Pursuing spies, preventing desertion and marauding
6. Combatting the anti-Communist underground units
7. Organising mass resettlements
8. Pacifications and *zachistka*, i.e. extrajudicial executions

Russian Federation: The Internal Troops, Rosgvardiya ‘protecting order, peace and quiet’

1. Protecting the public and during mass events
2. Protecting critical infrastructure, i.e. strategic facilities and transport routes
3. Overseeing people holding firearms
4. Safeguarding state of emergency regimes
5. Participating in the fight against terrorism and extremism
6. Participation in territorial and civil defence
7. Pacification missions in Chechnya, Ingushetia, North Ossetia, Dagestan, etc.
8. Pursuing and eliminating armed groups and sabotage groups