

Rosgvardiya: National Guard or Internal Police?

Outline of the problem

The National Guard of the Russian Federation (FSVNG RF, Rosgvardiya; hereinafter: Rosgvardiya) is one of the largest internal security structures of the Russian Federation. Already when it was established in April 2016, it was officially estimated at 350,000 jobs and a 30 percent increase in staff was announced. The ministry was assigned a police-intervention function and the function of supervision of the private security sector, also of units of the state security sector with special status, as well as privately owned weapons and ammunition. Additionally, it participates in the enforcement of the provisions on states of emergency, in combating non-military threats, such as sabotage, terrorism, extremism, participation in border protection and territorial defence, protection of the state's critical infrastructure and personal protection of representatives of regional authorities. Formally, these functions are auxiliary to the functions performed by other power ministries, mainly internal affairs and defence, but also by the Federal Security Service. The National Guard of the Russian Federation performs these functions through a territorially organized structure of regular forces, which include: intervention units, rapid reaction force units, units to fight diversion and illegal armed groups as well as licence, control and protection structures previously subordinate to the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The above-mentioned units are part of the former Internal Forces of the Russian Federation.

From the beginning of its existence, Rosgvardiya has evoked extreme judgments: the establishment of new security structures is usually associated with the identification of new areas of threats, and this formation is in fact a functional continuator of the military and civilian structures of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Russian Federation, on the basis of which it was established. Observers are not convinced by the official, propaganda motives justifying its establishment, i.e. defence reasons, including combating new hybrid challenges, cost-saving considerations or fighting terrorism. As a result, for some it is the key to explaining the nature of the authoritarian regime in Russia, and for others – a manifestation of the military way of state management and modernization of its power bloc.

Both sides are right. The militarization of the state is accompanied by the modernization of the internal security forces of the Russian Federation, their rearming and tuning up as part of joint exercises. On the outside, this serves to demonstrate the readiness, mobility and flexibility of the Russian power ministries, while on the inside, consolidation based on the force factor and demonstrating the multifunctionality of the uniformed services:

using the army for crisis management and performing security tasks, and the remaining power ministries for supporting the defence system. In the Russian reality, this leads to the strengthening of the power mechanisms of state management.

For experts, Rosgvardiya is also a theoretical and conceptual problem. Its very institutional status is ambiguous. In Russian legal acts, this structure is defined as an executive authority for the protection of public safety and the legal order, and as part of the state's military organization, and in the literature on the subject as a police service. Indeed, the functional criteria make it possible to conventionally include Rosgvardiya in the institutional framework of the mentioned categories. At the same time, however, it also performs non-standard functions. President Vladimir Putin¹, explaining its goals, emphasized, for example, administrative functions that are unusual for power ministries, such as (...) *bringing order to the security sector and budgetary savings resulting from the reduction of the operating costs of the Russian security services*. Thus, he entrusted Rosgvardiya with specific administrative tasks: carrying out a reform of the Russian security sector.

This is linked to the reform paradox – Rosgvardiya is also the largest provider of commercial security services in Russia. Its monopoly position in this market is ensured by the government's list of facilities subject to Rosgvardiya's protection. It provides a wide range of services both free of charge and for a consideration, based on civil-law contracts. Such contracts are concluded with central government authorities, local authorities (entities of the Russian Federation), State Treasury companies, state corporations, as well as with individual entrepreneurs and private persons.

Contrary to the imposed interpretation patterns, the liquidation of internal troops and the establishment of the Rosgvardiya are difficult to explain as a consequence of changes in the nature of contemporary conflicts and, as a result, a reevaluation of the approach to national security threats. An additional problem is the ambiguous terms, for example, the term *state authority* in Russian literature is often equated with the term *security authority*. The very name “The National Guard of the Russian Federation” is misleading. This should encourage caution in the use of Russian terms. Their contemporary connotations with regard to the reality of the Russian Federation raise serious doubts.

The analyzed issues are shown in several contexts: 1) the legal legitimacy of Rosgvardiya and the theoretical and conceptual aspects, 2) military forms of organization of the Russian state, 3) commercial protective entrepreneurship and 4) tradition. The basic thesis of the study concerns the specificity of the Russian security and defence sector, of which Rosgvardiya and the conceptual apparatus describing it are model examples. The author assumes that understanding the place and role of this structure in the system of state organs requires references that go beyond contemporary experience, to dispense with analogies and comparisons of Russian realities to the realities of the outside world, which are naturally imposed, and their critical reevaluation.

¹ Путин объяснил причину создания Национальной гвардии, Интерфакс, 14 April, 2016, <https://www.interfax.ru/russia/503786>. All translations in the article are done by the author.

Rosgvardiya as a multi-purpose, “hybrid” executive authority

Assessments of the Russian power ministries should be made taking into account the scale of disinformation and manipulation in their Russian interpretation. Elements of disinformation are present both in the literature on the subject and in the used conceptual apparatus. A symptom of this was, for example, the introduction of the name „National Guard”² to the international expert circulation as a synonym of the The National Guard of the Russian Federation. By invoking Western models of civil militias, rooted in societies (the US National Guard, the French National Guard, the Norwegian National Guard), Russian analysts obscure the essence of the service, the origins and functions of which do not subject to analogies with Western realities. Downplaying the motives for the establishment of Rosgvardiya by emphasizing the purely technical nature of the transformation of the internal troops also had a disinformation dimension. Meanwhile, the internal troops (around 180,000 people) were mainly focused on intervention activities. In addition to the intervention dimension, Rosgvardiya has a supervisory and control dimension, as well as a business dimension (commercial, profit-oriented and securing appropriate legislative solutions). There are more of these differences, as shown in the table below.

Table 1. Basic differences between the Internal Troops of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Russian Federation and Rosgvardiya.

Internal Troops of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Russian Federation	Rosgvardiya
Employees: 180,000	Employees: 350,000
Institutional status: unit subordinate to the Ministry of Internal Affairs	independent organizational unit with high institutional status
Triple subordination to the president, Minister of Internal Affairs and the commander of the army	no intermediate rung; commander-in-chief of the National Guard reports directly to the president
Financing from the federal budget; financial dependence on regional authorities	funding from the federal budget; free from the influence of regional authorities, entitled to obtain extra-budgetary funds from commercial security activities
A militarized structure designated for intervention, combat with illegal armed groups, conveying special transports and the protection of strategic state facilities	multifunctionality: military-civil service with control and supervisory powers, trained to be used in wartime and peacetime

Source: Own study.

The conceptual confusion imposed in the literature may be intentional since none of the Russian legal regulations provide legal definitions of the terms *special*

² Even recognized international experts have not resisted this. See, e.g. M. Galeotti, *Putin's hydra: Inside Russia's intelligence services*, 11 May, 2016, https://www.ecfr.eu/page/-/ECFR_169 [access: 15 V 2020].

service, security body and special forces. As Russian authors argue, Rosgvardiya can be included in all these categories³ and at the same time retain its specificity. This is because the term *special service* (Russian: специальная служба, спецслужба), usually used to refer to intelligence and counterintelligence services, does not have clear definition criteria defining the boundaries between the special and police nature of the service. Police functions are performed by all structures that perform tasks for the internal security of the state, as well as counterintelligence functions: they all seek and fight enemies of the system.

Moreover, the term *special services* has not been established in Russia. Until recently it has been used in reference to enemy services (...) *to intelligence, counterintelligence, police, propaganda services and other state agencies of capitalist countries*⁴. Considering the descriptive parameters reproduced in the literature, blurring the essence of services (*defence of vital interests of the individual, society and the state, its very existence, stability of the country's political foundations, guaranteeing its development, increasing the country's potential to defend against internal and external threats*), the distinguishing features of the special services are secret methods used here⁵.

At the same time, the Russian legislator, in reference to the Soviet tradition, uses the euphemistic term “federal executive authorities in the field of ensuring security”, which is replaced with the term *power ministries* by political scientists. These include organs that perform special tasks: the Federal Security Service (FSB), the Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR), the Federal Protective Service (FSO), but also the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the General Prosecutor's Office, the Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation, financial supervision authorities, transport supervision services, etc.

From its inception, Rosgvardiya was characterized as a kind of “hybrid organ”. Some emphasized its functional hybridity (a body to combat hybrid threats⁶), some – structural (a service combining the military, special and law enforcement components). The potential of this formation for non-military (hybrid) influence was noticed, among others, by opinion-forming analyst Aleksandr Bartosz⁷, expert of the League of Military Diplomats, in the years 1995–2001 deputy head of the Russian representative office

³ Т.Н. Ёркина, *Федеральная служба войск национальной гвардии России. Вопросы создания*, „Закон и право” 2019, No.5, <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/federalnaya-sluzhba-voysk-natsionalnoy-gvardii-rossii-voprosy-sozdaniya> [access: 15 V 2020].

⁴ V. Mitrokhin, *KGB Lexicon. The Soviet Intelligence Officers Handbook*, London 2002, p. 381.

⁵ See, e.g. Б. Заякин, *Краткая история спецслужб*, <https://history.wikireading.ru/247280>; https://royallib.com/book/zayakin_boris/kраткая_istoriya_spetsslugb.html [access: 15 V 2020].

⁶ И. Нагорных, „Цветным революциям” *ответят по законам гибридных войн*, „Коммерсант”, 1 March 2016; К.В.Чепрасов, *Создание национальной гвардии как ответ на гибридные вызовы*, „Вопросы безопасности” 2016, No. 2, https://nbpublish.com/library_read_article.php?id=18849 [access: 15 V 2020].

⁷ А. Бартош, *Задачи разведки в гибридной войне*, <https://army-news.ru/2019/09/zadachi-razvedki-v-gibridnoj-vojne> [access: 15 V 2020].

to the North Atlantic Alliance, and currently promoter of the thesis about NATO's hybrid actions against Russia. In his opinion, the fight against this threat requires the maintenance of all available forces and means, in particular, intelligence and special forces in one's own territory. The main role in this area is assigned to the FSB and Rosgvardiya, which conducts intelligence (reconnaissance; Russian: разведка, in the Polish language there is no single equivalent – author's note) in the areas of conducting service and combat tasks. The task of the Rosgvardiya would be to early detect the enemy's preparations for hybrid aggression aimed at devastating Russia's security and stability⁸.

Contrary to most theorists emphasizing the defensive nature of Rosgvardiya, Bartosz unequivocally emphasizes its expeditionary character: training special-purpose forces should include thorough learning of foreign languages, developing intercultural communication habits, the ability to cooperate with radical nationalist and religious organizations, as well as to cooperate with non-governmental structures. Many-sided staff training aimed to quick and decisive response to hybrid conflicts determines, according to this author, also effective territorial defence and effectiveness of rescue and humanitarian operations.

In such a multitasking context, the problem with the name of Rosgvardiya (National Guard) comes down to an erroneous limitation of its functions. Woven into the paradigm of territorial defence, these are "empty" names and do not fulfil the criteria for "national guards", whose distinguishing features are social participation, volunteer formations, self-defence units, etc. The Russian "national guard" is by definition a state guard, and not volunteer. Moreover, in Russian legal acts the term "national guard" is not treated as a proper name: it is consistently written in lowercase. Territorial defence is equally only one of the areas of activity of the military division of Rosgvardiya. However, in its structure two extended segments can be distinguished: the management of the military (organization of its participation) and federal supervision (see Table 2)

Table 2. Organizational and functional segments of Rosgvardiya.

Management of the military (organization of its participation)	Federal supervision
To protect public order	of the trade in weapons, ammunition and explosives
To secure the legal regime of martial law, state of emergency and anti-terrorist operation	of private security activities in the Russian Federation
In territorial defence	of the security of the facilities of the fuel and energy complex
In support of border protection	of activities of the legal persons with special statutory tasks protection units, as well as ministerial protection units.

Source: Own study.

⁸ Ibidem.

In the document⁹ constituting the National Guard of the Russian Federation, two definitions of this organization were presented and two official abbreviations were established: FSVNG RF and Rosgvardiya, with the latter being clearly preferred. As we read, *Rosgvardiya is the federal body of executive power that performs functions in the field of development and implementation of state policy and normative and legal regulations in the sphere of activities of the National Guard troops of the Russian Federation, in the sphere of arms trading, in the sphere of private protective activities and in the sphere of non-ministerial protection.* It is specified below that the Rosgvardiya is the central authority for the management of the National Guard troops. The following functions are mentioned in the quoted statute of the Rosgvardiya:

1. Development and implementation of state policy in designated areas of activity.
2. Preparation of normative and legal regulations in designated areas of activity.
3. Organization of the participation of the National Guard troops in the protection of public order and ensuring public safety.
4. Organization of the participation of the National Guard troops in the fight against terrorism and extremism and ensuring the legal regime of anti-terrorist operations.
5. Organization of the participation of the National Guard troops in the territorial defence of the Russian Federation.
6. Maintaining the National Guard troops in the necessary readiness.
7. Organization of the use of the National Guard troops in accordance with the legislation of the Russian Federation.
8. Implementation of projects for the expansion and development of the National Guard troops.
9. The implementation of federal state control (supervision) of:
 - trade in weapons¹⁰ in civil and service use, weapons given as prizes, supervision of ammunition and the technical condition of small arms and service weapons being in the temporary use of citizens and organizations;
 - private security and detective activities in the Russian Federation;
 - ensuring the security of the fuel and energy complex;
 - activities of the legal persons with special statutory tasks protection units, as well as ministerial protection units.

⁹ See *Положение о Федеральной службе войск национальной гвардии Российской Федерации. Утверждено Указом Президента Российской Федерации от 30 сентября 2016 г., N 510, „О Федеральной службе войск национальной гвардии Российской Федерации”* (this concerns the decree of the President of the Russian Federation of September 30, 2016, No. 510 on the Federal Service of the National Guard of the Russian Federation, approving the statute of Rosgvardiya), <http://kremlin.ru/acts/bank/41295> [access: 15 V 2020].

¹⁰ In accordance with the federal law *On Weapons (Об оружии от 13/12/1996, N 150-ФЗ*, http://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_12679/) the legal term ‘trade in arms’ has broad connotations: possession of weapons, their transport, usage etc.

10. Providing social and legal protection to military personnel, persons serving in the National Guard troops and having police ranks (associates), federal civilian state officials, citizens discharged from military service in the National Guard troops, members of their families, and other persons subject to social security by Rosgvardia in accordance with the legislation of the Russian Federation.

The statute provides detailed solutions for the management powers of the service management, as well as its powers in the field of intervention, control, protection and defence activities. It also confirms the high political position of Rosgvardiya, equated with the position of other presidential ministries, i.e. federal ministries, services and agencies, whose activities are run by the president. In the decree of January 2020 approving their composition, the formation in question was granted the status of federal service¹¹.

The legal status of Rosgvardiya (a federal organ of executive power exercising control and supervision functions of other organs of executive power and local government in the field entrusted to it¹²) does not differ from that of the Federal Security Service¹³, the Federal Protective Service or the Foreign Intelligence Service. Similarly

¹¹ *Указ Президента РФ от 21.01.2020 N 21 (ред. от 25.03.2020) „О структуре федеральных органов исполнительной власти”*. Presidential ministries (19 units in total) include structures with different institutional status: **ministries** (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, MO, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry for Civil Defence, Emergencies and Elimination of Consequences of Natural Disasters, Ministry of Justice), **federal service** (FSB, SVR, FSO, FSVNG, Federal Courier Service and the Federal Service for Financial Monitoring) and a **federal agency** (e.g. the Federal Service for Technical and Export Control, FSTEC, under the Ministry of Defense, is a technical counterintelligence body combating enemy intelligence, overseeing security issues of dual-use technology items, including communication technologies). Two independent entities also have the status of a federal agency: the Federal Agency for Archives (Rosarchiv) and the Main Directorate of Special Programs of the President of the Russian Federation (GUSP).

¹² *The legal foundations of the internal security system of the Russian Federation were perpetuated by the administrative reform of 2003–2004, sanctioned by the Presidential Decree No. 314 of 9 March, 2004 on The System and Structure of State Authorities (Указ Президента РФ от 9 марта 2004 г. N 314 „О системе и структуре федеральных органов исполнительной власти”*, <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank>). As a result of the reform, subordinated to the principle of state centralization, the prerogatives of the President of the Russian Federation (as the sole administrator and controller of the system) in the field of security and defence were consolidated, as well as the political practice of presidential ministries, i.e. security authorities, federal bodies of executive power (including the control and supervision within the scope of their assigned competences), playing a key role in the implementation of security and defence policy and foreign policy, subordinate to the president. At that time, they gained considerable organizational and competence autonomy, as well as independence in the normative and control-supervisory sphere.

¹³ For example, under the statute approved by the decree *Указ Президента Российской Федерации от 11.08.2003 г. № 960 „Вопросы Федеральной службы безопасности Российской Федерации”* (<http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank>) The FSB is a federal body of executive power which, in accordance with its powers, manages the security of the state, the protection of the state border of the Russian Federation, territorial waters, internal waters, the exclusive zone of the maritime economic interests of the Russian Federation, the continental shelf and the natural

to the above-mentioned services, it also obtained normative powers: it has the right to introduce draft legal acts in the sphere of its responsibility, and participates in the preparation of draft decrees and competence acts regulating its activities.

The multifunctional potential of Rosgvardiya also enables it to adapt smoothly to perform additional tasks, which was emphasized in the point concerning (...) *the possibility of realizing other tasks by Rosgvardiya imposed by the president of the Russian Federation in accordance with constitutional and federal laws*. The competences of the director of Rosgvardiya¹⁴, his considerable independence and personal responsibility only to the president of the Russian Federation are the most important in this context. The competences of the director of this agency, inter alia, include: submitting draft ordinances concerning the service (draft regulations, reorganization projects, changes in the organizational structure of the service and personnel changes, number of posts, budgetary proposals, pay regulations and other forms of remuneration) to the president; deciding to use militarized units of Rosgvardiya and delegating them to the operational command of other power ministries; issuing internal orders regarding the activities and organization of the service, providing personnel proposals for deputies (the director of Rosgvardiya has the right to have seven deputies); organizing the activities of the service, its central and local apparatus (having federal budget funds allocated to the service and funds

resources, manages the protection of the information security of the Russian Federation, and coordinates the counterintelligence activities of all federal executive authorities entitled to it.

¹⁴ General Viktor Zolotov, born in 1954, is the Director of Rosgvardiya. He started his professional career as a locksmith at the Public Joint-Stock Company – Likhachov Plant in Moscow (ZIL). From the mid-1970s he worked in the 9th Management of the KGB (security service), and after the collapse of the USSR (1991) he protected President Boris Yeltsin, then Mayor of Saint Petersburg, Anatoly Sobchak, and finally the prime minister (1999) and President Vladimir Putin (from 2000 r.). In the years 2000-2013, Zolotov was the Deputy Head of the Federal Protective Service (FSO) and the Head of the President's Security Service (the latter formally belongs to the FSO; in fact, it is an autonomous service, responsible for the security of the Head of State and his family, also fulfilling tasks related to the president's logistic service). In 2013, he became the Deputy Commander of the Internal Troops of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, a year later the president appointed him First Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs and Commander of the Internal Troops of the Russian MIA. As Deputy Minister, Zolotov also supervised the state and non-ministerial protection system, as well as special purpose centers of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. On 5 April, 2016, he was appointed Director of the then-established Federal Service of National Guard Troops.

Loyalty and boundless devotion to the president translated into a quick general promotion of Zolotov: in 2006 he became a Colonel General, and since 2015 he has been an Army General. His formal position, however, is lower than that of, for example, the Head of the FSB and the SVR, who are permanent members of the Security Council of the Russian Federation. Zolotov, initially appointed a permanent member of the Security Council (*Указ Президента Российской Федерации от 05.04.2016 № 159 „О внесении изменения в состав Совета Безопасности Российской Федерации”*) became an ordinary member of the Council less than a week later (*Указ Президента Российской Федерации от 11.04.2016 № 170 „Вопросы Совета Безопасности Российской Федерации”*).

obtained in the course of commercial activities, signing and terminating employment contracts, promotion and demotion of officers and soldiers); making decisions on the dislocation of units and field service structures; approval of the catalogue of information and documents to be protected; conducting recruitment for service and determining the mode of their training; disciplinary prerogatives towards soldiers and officers in accordance with the disciplinary regulations of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation and other regulations; issuing permits for foreign trips of soldiers and personnel, etc.

The National Guard troops have a separate, though equally vague legal definition¹⁵. They are (...) *a state military organization dedicated to ensuring state and public security, protection of human and civil rights and freedoms*. Their statutory tasks (Article 2 of the cited Act) include:

1. Participation in the protection of public order and ensuring public safety.
2. Protection of important state facilities, special loads, communication infrastructure facilities, in accordance with the catalog approved by the government of the Russian Federation.
3. Participation in the fight against terrorism and extremism.
4. Participation in securing the legal regime of the state of emergency, martial law and the regime of anti-terrorist operations.
5. Participation in the territorial defence of the Russian Federation.
6. Exercising federal state control (supervision) over compliance with the norms of the law of the Russian Federation in the field of arms trade and private detective and security activities, security of the facilities of the fuel and energy complex, as well as of activities of the legal persons with special statutory tasks protection units, as well as ministerial protection units.
7. Protection of particularly important state facilities and facilities subject to mandatory protection of the National Guard troops in accordance with the catalog approved by the government of the Russian Federation, protection of property of legal and natural persons on the basis of contracts.
8. Support for the FSB border services in protecting the state border of the Russian Federation.
9. Providing, in accordance with the decision of the President of the Russian Federation, the security of high officials of the federal subjects of the Russian Federation (heads of the highest organs of executive power of the federal subjects of the Russian Federation) and other persons.

A comparison of the functions¹⁶ resulting from the statute of Rosgvardiya and the statutory functions¹⁷ of the National Guard troops confirms the thesis that they

¹⁵ *Федеральный закон от 03.07.2016 N 226-ФЗ (ред. от 18.03.2020) „О войсках национальной гвардии Российской Федерации”*, <http://kremlin.ru/acts> [access: 15 V 2020].

¹⁶ *Ibidem*.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*.

are mainly auxiliary¹⁸ in relation to the army. Although it is not difficult to indicate their superior mission (armed containment of internal conflicts and riots), maintaining public order, protecting important state facilities, as well as participating in territorial defence or law enforcement during states of emergency and a state of war, are not exclusive functions. Rosgvardiya shares these functions with other power ministries: the Ministry of Defense, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Federal Security Service, the Ministry for Civil Defence, Emergencies and Elimination of Consequences of Natural Disasters (hereinafter: MChS), The Main Directorate of Special Programs of the President of the Russian Federation (hereinafter: GUSP), The Federal Protective Service (hereinafter: FSO), the Military Prosecutor's Office and the Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation.

It is also difficult to regard the mission of supervising illegal armed organizations assigned to Rosgvardiya as part of the control of the illegal trade in weapons, ammunition and explosives, or the mission of supervising the security of the facilities of the fuel and energy complex and the activities of the legal persons with special statutory tasks protection units, as well as protection units as an exclusive.

Compared to other federal services, Rosgvardiya is a rather “irregular” service, as it has not been assigned operational, intelligence or procedural powers. However, it has the potential to carry out such activities. The control function allows it to use unrestricted records and information databases, recruit secret collaborators from among its citizens, secretly obtain information and help the soldiers released to the reserve and former service officers employed today in private security companies. Also the methods and means assigned to the territorial defence mission, including fending off hybrid threats, lead to the use of special operating techniques (special operations, active operations, combat operations).

Rosgvardiya, as a kind of functional hybrid, is also the only service to which has been assigned the statutory ability to provide security services for consideration. The repetition of the defence tasks of troops in sections 2 and 7 of the above cited Act should not be interpreted as a result of haste in the works on it. It is a procedure camouflaging the commercial activities conducted, among others, by their special forces¹⁹. Like the conceptual apparatus presented above, such repetitions exacerbate the information noise and, at the same time, legitimise the position of Rosgvardiya in the Russian system of power.

¹⁸ Ibidem.

¹⁹ In the Ministry of Internal Affairs there is a distinction between **police special forces** that specialized in pacifying demonstrations (160 special-purpose militia units, OMON) and fighting organized crime (82 rapid response units, SOBR), and **military special forces**: independent reconnaissance units (ORO) and independent special purpose units (OSNAZ).

Rosgvardiya as a security service and security commercial enterprise

In addition to Rosgvardiya, many entities²⁰ have a protective function in Russia, including the Federal Security Service (hereinafter: FSB), the Ministry of Defence and the FSO. During the USSR, the dominant position in this respect was occupied by the Ministry of Internal Affairs (hereinafter: MVD): part of its apparatus was designated to protect industrial plants, kolkhozes, ministries, etc. The MVD shared the duties of **ministerial protection**²¹ (protection of important state institutions and strategic objects) with the KGB (Russian Комитет государственной безопасности) and with institutions entitled to establish militarized security troops (Russian ведомственная военизированная охраня охраня охраня охраня. such as the Ministry of Defence or the Committee for Emergency Situations of the USSR. The state system of ministerial protection was shaken in 1989, when the USSR Ministry of Internal Affairs launched its commercialization, allowing militia headquarters to provide services to entities outside the ministry for a consideration (non-ministerial protection, Russian: вневедомственная охрана).

The Act on Private Detective and Security Activities in the Russian Federation, adopted in 1992²², granting the Ministry of Internal Affairs licensing powers and supervision of this service sector, strengthened its highest position on the market. In 1999, *the Act on Ministerial Protection* entered into force, extending the term “ministerial protection” and the right by privatized facilities and strategic enterprises to be protected (e.g. the strategic state concern Gazprom). As in the case of private agencies, the licensing powers and supervision of this service sector were entrusted to the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Russian Federation.

The demand for security, which increases with the progress of privatization, has made the Russian security sector very extensive. It consists of many state and private entities, legal and illegal. At present, we no longer encounter reports of security services provided by military garrisons, however there are many indications that also today state security officers offer illegal protection and enforcement of obligations (the infamous institution of “krysha”, Russian крыша – roof)²³. Despite the extensive literature on the Russian security market, the picture remains unclear. This is because it generally concerns private agencies (i.e. about 23,000 companies employing,

²⁰ Russian experts draw attention to the doubling functions of the Russian services; President Vladimir Putin also spoke about it at the Security Council meeting in 2013.

²¹ All bold words in the article come from the author.

²² Федеральный закон РФ от 11.03.1992 N 2487-1 „О частной детективной и охранной деятельности в Российской Федерации”, www.consultant.ru , a także Федеральный закон от 14.04.1999 N 77-ФЗ „О ведомственной охране” (последняя редакция), www.consultant.ru.

²³ See F. Varese, *Mafia rosyjska. Prywatna ochrona w nowej gospodarce rynkowej*, Warsaw 2009, p. 102. This author (like Mark Galeotti and other problem researchers) mentions the mafia as an independent provider of security services among Russian security institutions. The forms of non-legal protection implemented by organized crime organizations are not analyzed in this text.

according to various estimates, from 650,000 to 1.5 million people). Meanwhile, the task of “cleaning up the security market”, formulated by President Putin, mainly concerns its state segment, i.e. ministerial and non-ministerial protection.

Both these terms, as well as the term “state protection”, pose difficulties in terms of interpretation. State protection is often identified, for example, with the FSO, whose tasks are defined by an appropriate Act²⁴. The Federal Protective Service and its subordinate the Presidential Security Service specialize in the physical protection of key government officials (the president, prime minister, chairman of both Houses of Parliament) and the object protection of their headquarters and backup headquarters during the war. While the Special Facilities Service under the President of the Russian Federation, subordinate to the GUSP²⁵, is responsible for the construction and modernization of these so-called bunkers, as well as for keeping them ready for use,

The multiplicity of entities results in the inconsistency of individual segments of the state protection system. During the meeting of the Security Council of the Russian Federation on 5 July 2013, President Putin emphasized, inter alia, (...) *the need to resolve the issue of the protection of strategic state facilities, agreed between the Ministry of Defence, MVD, FSO and FSB*²⁶. The issue of distributed responsibility for this security area, as you might think, has not been resolved to this day. The Ministry of Internal Affairs, after handing over its militarized security forces to Rosgvardiya, retained, inter alia, units for self-protection and diplomatic representations. The Ministry of Defence uses its own forces to protect not only military units, but also some of the critical infrastructure facilities of the Russian Federation, e.g. ammunition yards or research institutions working for the defence industry, located in the so-called cities and closed territories (hereinafter: closed city). In addition, these days closed cities are protected by Rosgvardiya and the Atom-Ochrana company, which is responsible for the security of closed cities, where there are research centers on the use of radioactive elements and where the state-owned Rosatom corporation produces plutonium, uranium and their isotopes for military purposes, as well as nuclear fuel and equipment for nuclear power plants²⁷.

The dominant position of Rosgvardiya in the security sector results from its branched structure and significant human resources. The non-ministerial protection system of this structure consists of:

- at the federal level – the Main Board for Non-ministerial Protection,
- at the county level – special purpose centers of non-ministerial protection,

²⁴ *Федеральный закон „О государственной охране” от 27.05.1996 N 57-ФЗ (последняя редакция), Компания „КонсультантПлюс”, www.consultant.ru [access: 15 V 2020].*

²⁵ <http://www.gusp.gov.ru/pages/gusp/3729/index.shtml>.

²⁶ *О совершенствовании военной организации Российской Федерации до 2020 года*, <http://www.scrf.gov.ru/council/session/2054/> [access: 15 V 2020].

²⁷ <https://www.atomic-energy.ru/ZATO>.

- at the regional level – management boards (branches) of the non-ministerial protection,
- at the district level – branches of management boards and regional offices.

Rosgvardiya estimates the number of its own non-ministerial protection structures²⁸ at around 124,000 people: 80 081 licensed security guards and 43 824 technical employees (including caretakers and security system operators on duty). The structures of this segment include militarized units specialized in the protection of state facilities and special cargo. Before the establishment of Rosgvardiya, they were protected by special rapid response units (SOBR) and special purpose units (OSNAZ).

Such outlined business segment of Rosgvardiya is complemented by the Federal State Unitary Enterprise “Ochрана” subordinate to it, which provides protection services to state, corporate and private clients, including the protection of public utilities. Its offer is varied: it includes the protection of facilities and means of transport, escorting and installing protective systems, detective services, etc. The competitive advantage of “Ochрана” (as it advertises itself) is determined by: availability for the customer (80 branches in the federal subjects of the Russian Federation), personnel with experience of service in the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the FSB and the Ministry of Defence, as well as having specialized units of militarised protection and special purpose centers. The enterprise’s employees use special means and weapons that are part of the equipment of the Rosgvardiya troops. According to observers, however, the unrivalled offer of this company results mainly from the supervision it exercises over the sector, owing to the issuing of permits for security and detective activities and the possession of weapons²⁹.

According to Rosgvardiya’s data, “Ochрана” employs 53,065 employees, 39,425 of whom are licensed security guards; additionally, the company operates 24,458 guards from militarized non-ministerial protection units. It should be noted, however, that the size of the enterprise is changing rapidly: in 2017, for example, competitive structures of ministerial protection of the Ministry of Industry, numbering 18,000 people, were integrated into it, and in 2018 – the company “Swiaz’-Biezopasnost” „of the Ministry of Digital Affairs and Communications (15,600 employees)³⁰.

²⁸ Here and below, the figures are based on the document *Концепция развития вневедомственной охраны на период 2018–2021 годов и далее до 2025 года*, <https://www.rosgvard.ru/ru/page/index/koncepciya-razvitiya-vnevedomstvennoj-ochrany> [access: 15 V 2020].

²⁹ See e.g. <https://pasm.ru/archive/246105/>

³⁰ This is the result of the “clean-up” of the protection sector ordered by the president. Taking advantage of loopholes in legislation, ministerial protection structures (authorized to protect industry enterprises) participated in tenders for state orders. For example, a structure specialized in protecting communications security for many years protected six private (competing) companies in the industry. Moreover, it had won tenders in its portfolio for the protection of 184 facilities from outside the industry. For example, the Ministry of Industry, the Ministry of Communications, the Ministry of Energy, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Transport, etc., as well as seven strategic state-owned companies (Rosatom, Rostech, Roskosmos, Gazprom, Transneft, Rosneft and the company managing the Alrosa diamond mines) have the right to have protection structures.

Initiating conflicts and then resolving them in favor of Rosgvardiya is one of the radical techniques of eliminating competition. One of those routines, however, are the inspections carried out by this formation, resulting in the withdrawal of the license to operate and use weapons. In 2018, Rosgvardiya carried out a total of 51, 333 inspections, including 31,157 scheduled and 20, 176 unscheduled³¹.

In 2019, the pace of Rosgvardiya's inspection activity decreased significantly. The data for the first half of 2019 shows that 4,020 inspections were carried out, including 2,411 inspections in private enterprises, 1,124 inspections in organizations for the protection of legal persons with special statutory tasks, and 485 inspections in ministerial protection organizations³². This is probably the result of the "regulatory guillotine", announced earlier and launched in 2019: Rosgvardiya is one of 21 ministries preparing legal regulations as part of state control and supervision over their implementation. As a result, the Russian security market is, on the one hand, over-regulated³³, and on the other hand, it is governed by informal standards and legal norms. This is the case, for example, in the case of private military companies (see below), which are subject to private protection legislation (i.e. formally are subject to Rosgvardiya) and, due to their functions, are also under the control of the Ministry of Defence and the FSB, which exercises counterintelligence protection over them.

Some ministries, e.g. the Ministry of Culture, have the right to have their own protection structures, but they have not established them and, as a result, use the services of the Federal Unitary State Enterprise "Ochran".

³¹ Reports on the Rosgvardiya website stress that the violations detected are of a systemic nature: the enterprises employ citizens with a criminal history and having a sentence not expunged, without psychological approval for the use of weapons, physical force and special measures. Ministerial protection companies are also accused of working in facilities outside the industry. Many of the allegations relate to weapons: their magazines do not meet the requirements; there is a lack of documentation of the issued weapons and special measures; actual stock levels are inconsistent with the records, etc. See *Информация о реализации в 2018 году функций Росгвардии по осуществлению федерального государственного контроля (надзора) в установленных сферах деятельности*, www.rosgvard.ru. It should also be remembered that in Russia reporting is treated as a measure of the effectiveness and success of the power ministries. It is also the basis for the promotions of their officers.

³² <https://www.rosgvard.ru/ru/page/index/informaciya-o-realizacii-funkcij-rosgvardii-po-osushhestvleniyu-federalnogo-gosudarstvennogo-kontrolya-nadzora-v-ustanovlennykh-sferax-deyatelnosti> [access: 15 V 2020].

³³ The government of the Russian Federation considered these regulations to inhibit small and medium-sized enterprises. He questioned, inter alia, Rosgvardiya's requirements for privately owned weapons and for the protection of the facilities of the fuel and gas complex energy sector, announcing the launch of a legislative review and a "regulatory guillotine" that will halve the supervision requirements. See *Названы попадающие под «регуляторную гильотину» ведомства*, Lenta.ru, 8 VII 2019). Earlier it was reported that Rosgvardiya (along with 11 other ministries) asked to be removed from the list of control institutions whose powers will be reduced (А. Холявко, О. Адамчук, *Часть ведомств просят вывести их из-под действия регуляторной гильотины*, „Ведомости”, 26 June 2019).

The situation in the security sector leads Russian lawyers to believe that putting it in order will be a major challenge³⁴.

The non-transparent system of financing non-ministerial protection means that only insiders can determine which services of Rosgvardiya are paid for and which are free of charge. Not only is the security business of this formation profitable, the supervision of the security sector also brings significant sums (administrative costs of a license, training required to obtain it, fingerprint examinations, etc.). The extent of Rosgvardiya 's self-financing may be significant, which is hidden from the public. Revenues from protection are deposited in accounts of territorial boards, and after paying taxes and various costs, they are transferred to the central budget. In 2018, they this budget was credited with 14 billion rubles. For comparison: in the same year, 223.2 billion rubles were allocated to the needs of Rosgvardiya in the central budget³⁵.

The “cleanup” of the security sector³⁶, entrusted to the formation in question, did not lead to the distinction between ministerial and non-ministerial protection, i.e. unpaid and commercial. It resulted in even more confusing the situation. The state sector of non-ministerial protection include “legal persons with special status” and the so-called other legal persons. The heterogeneous set of entities with special status includes, among others, the so-called structures affiliated with Rosgvardiya, e.g. structures for the protection of companies in the fuel and energy complex (Gazprom, Rosneft, Transneft) and other strategic companies (Russian Railways, Alrosa), but also companies from the private security sector, e.g. set up by the Cossack troops.

The Cossack Experiment is a Kremlin political and military project that has been implemented for a long time. Officially, its aim is to mobilize the Russian society in the face of the so-called new threats (illegal migration, extremism, terrorism, cultural and spiritual threats, cybercrime, aggression and information diversion of the West). The following social organizations serve similar purposes: local guards (Municipal Guard in Belgorod, Public Order Protection in Togliatti, Security Center in Ufa, Center for the Protection of Public Order in St. Petersburg or Metropolitan Security in Moscow) as well as associations of former officers of secret services, the army and the police that outsource public tasks under the so-called public-private partnership. This trend is strengthened by Rosgvardiya, which is manifested by the Coordination Center of Heads of Security and Detective Formations established at the end of 2016, presenting itself as a social organization associating 104 largest security units out

³⁴ See, e.g. В.Б. Квасов, О.В. Шкеля, *Проблемы правового регулирования государственной охраны объектов*, „Общество и право” 2018, No. 1.

³⁵ «Независимое военное обозрение»: „Росгвардия увеличится на треть». Виктор Золотов рассказал сенаторам о ходе строительства войск, Росгвардия, www.rosgvard.ru [access: 15 V 2020].

³⁶ This purpose of establishing Rosgvardiya (sorting out the protection sector) was presented by President Putin (see footnote 1.) On entities with special status and affiliated structures, see previously cited document: *Концепция развития вневедомственной охраны на период 2018-2021 годов и далее до 2025 года*.

of 64 federal subjects of the Russian Federation, employing about 106,000 people. During the Bodyguard Day event, jointly with representatives of the Rosgvardiya, the association's motto was presented: *Russia has four allies: the army, the navy, the Rosgvardiya and private security*³⁷.

Initially, members of this type of organization and the Cossacks constituted the core of the volunteer mobilization reserve. Today they are the foundation of the contract reserve. The right to possess it and mobilize it (apart from Military Replenishment Councils) was extended to the Foreign Intelligence Service (hereinafter: SVR) and the FSB³⁸ in February 2020. The contract reserve experiment has many goals, in general it creates a platform that allows reservists to be used in areas where defense and security forces are deficient, as well as their training due to current tasks and needs.

The extensive state protection sector is hard to change. Its commercial part continues to grow, and focusing on the support of military retirees³⁹, as an active reserve of security and defence personnel, does not contribute to the implementation of officially declared goals (savings, putting the situation in order), or repairing the criminogenic model. State and private security organizations, operating under Rosgvardiya, expand the operational capabilities of the Russian internal security sector, constitute an important part of the armed forces' base, strengthen tools for active actions in conducted proxy wars, and inside the country – tools for exercising power in Russia.

Rosgvardiya as an element of the military organization of the Russian Federation. State or regime fortification?

Another ambiguous term is “military organization of the state” (Russian: военная организация государства). It can be explained in various ways: 1) as a “military organization”, i.e. the state defence system, formalized in the Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation and federal laws, 2) as a formation organized on a military model, and 3) as a “military organization of state management”, politics and administration.

³⁷ It is a paraphrase of a famous saying of Tsar Alexander III: “Russia has only two allies – the army and the navy”. See <http://kc-ross.ru/novosti/317-u-rossii-est-chetyre-soyuznika-armiya-flot-rosgvardiya-i-chastnaya-okhrana> [access: 15 V 2020].

³⁸ И. Петров, *Кто пойдет в разведку. ФСБ и СВР смогут призывать резервистов на военную службу*, „Российская газета”, 9 February 2020, relevant amendments to the Mobilization Act N 31-ФЗ *О мобилизационной подготовке и мобилизации в Российской Федерации*. See <https://rg.ru/2020/02/10/mobilizacia-dok.html> [access: 15 V 2020].

³⁹ The category of military retirees includes officers of the power ministries with military service. Officially, this category, according to „Парламентская газета” had 2.6 million people in 2018. See www.pnp.ru/economics/v-2019-godu-srednyaya-voennaya-pensiya-sostavit-26-200-rublej.html [access: 15 V 2020].

It is this ambiguity of the term (combining military and political security) that makes it today the leading idea of the political system created under Putin's rule. **Regardless of how this concept is defined, a military organization (hereinafter: MO) is treated as the unlimited possibility of using military means to achieve political goals. Rejecting Russian definitions, it should be assumed that a military organization is a set of forceful means and methods of operation serving the protection and development of Russian statehood, as well as a military organization for state management. In practice, it comes down to protecting the political, economic and military system that forms the foundation of power in Russia.**

The current *Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation* of 2014 defines the term "military organization of the state" in point 8 as (...) *the entirety of state and military administration organs, the Armed Forces, other troops, armed formations and organs and special formations created during the war, constituting its foundation and based on military methods, as well as the country's industrial and defence complex, whose joint activities are aimed at preparing for the armed defence and defence of the Russian Federation.*

This concept first appeared in the *Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation* of 2010 (a minor correction in 2014 was to emphasize the word "organs"). The list of entities within the MO is established in Article 1 of the Federal Law on *Defence*⁴⁰, amended in 2017. *It provides that the tasks in the field of defence of the Russian Federation involve forces with military service: the Armed Forces and other troops (Rosgvardiya – Article 1.5), rescue formations of the federal executive body in the field of civil defence, the Foreign Intelligence Service, organs of the federal security service, organs of state protection, organs of the military prosecutor's office, military investigative organs of the Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation, the federal body for the preparation of mobilization of the state authorities of the Russian Federation, as well as special formations created during the war (Article 1.6).*

Nowadays, the term "the Armed Forces, other troops, military formations and organs"⁴¹ is commonly used in documents regulating the issues of national security of the Russian Federation. In the literature, as already mentioned, these entities are referred to as "power ministries" (Russian: силовые ведомства) or "power structures" (силовые структуры). Their common mission is to ensure the integrity of the Russian

⁴⁰ *Федеральный закон от 31 мая 1996 г. N 61-ФЗ „Об обороне”, kremlin.ru/acts/bank/9446.* Article 1 of the Act also provides that the armed forces, other troops, military formations and organs are covered by the joint defence plan of the Russian Federation and, in preparation for its implementation, participate in joint exercises and operational and mobilization training.

⁴¹ **Other troops** today are Rosgvardiya **military formations** are engineering and technical troops and troops for the construction of roads and bridges (both formations are subordinate to the Federal Agency for Special Construction, which is subordinate to the Ministry of Defence), as well as military rescue formations subordinate to the MChS. The most broad category are **the organs** with military service: SVR, FSB, FSO, organs of the Military Prosecutor's Office, military investigative organs (the military division of the Investigative Committee), and the Main Directorate of Special Programs of the President of the Russian Federation (GUSP).

Federation, the stability of the constitutional order, the stability of state institutions, social peace, the functioning of uniform spaces (legal, information), the prevention of terrorism and extremism, ethnic separatism, extraordinary catastrophes, etc. Documents and literature also mention supporting the building of a democratic society, ensuring a balance between the interests of the individual, society and the state, etc. However, due to the Russian reality, they cannot be included in the objectives of the MO of the state.

Conceptual work on the MO was undertaken at the beginning of the first decade of this century. This is evidenced by an article from 2001 in the “Concepts” section of the military supplement of the daily “Независимое военное обозрение”⁴². Its author, a Doctor of Military Sciences from the Center for Military and Strategic Research of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, regretted that, by the decision of the political leadership of the country, the unified „defence body” in Soviet times (the Ministry of Defence, MVD, KGB) was divided into autonomous fragments: half a dozen services were separated from the KGB, and civil defence organs and troops left the Ministry of Defence. The restoration of the state joint defence under the patronage of the General Staff would, in his opinion⁴³, result in an efficient mechanism for coordinating the cooperation between various ministerial military units and organs, as well as an improvement in the planning of their use.

The prospects for the development of the MO until 2015 were discussed at the meeting of the Security Council of the Russian Federation on 28 June, 2005. In the same year, at the annual meeting of the Academy of Military Sciences of the Russian Federation, then Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov presented its assumptions to the management of the Ministry of Defence and other power ministries, as well as the commanders of the Armed Forces and military experts. The minister emphasized the inter-ministerial nature of the MO and recommended that it be perceived through a broader prism of national security priorities (i.e. not only military security, but also political, economic, social, information, etc.)⁴⁴.

From the beginning of the second decade, the conceptual work was visibly more dynamic, as evidenced by the emergence of many specialist literature publications. Wiaczesław Baranienkow⁴⁵, a Professor of The Military University of the Ministry of Defence understands the essence of MO in two ways: as a military organization (defence system) of the state and as military organizations in the strict sense. The latter include the power ministries, as well as (...) *military organizations of ministries with military service is provided*. He also distinguishes: military support organizations

⁴² С. Богданов, *Военная организация государства есть единый организм*, „Независимое военное обозрение”, 17 VIII 2001.

⁴³ Ibidem.

⁴⁴ П.А. Денисенко, И.В. Мелехин, *Сушность и правовые аспекты военно-политического управления в Российской Федерации*, „Право и политика” 2006, No. 12.

⁴⁵ В. В. Бараненков, *Понятие, виды и правовая сущность военных организаций*, „Военное право” 2011, <http://www.voennoepravo.ru/node/5552> [access: 15 V 2020].

(sports organizations, cadet schools, veteran organizations, foundations), as well as front organizations that camouflage the activities of individual organs which can be created in any organizational and legal form⁴⁶.

Alexei Obnorskij and Anatoly Krivinko have a similar understanding of MO. They include to MO the following formations: irregular formations (Cossack troops, mass mobilization) and private military companies, security companies, voluntary teams to protect mass events, etc. *They are set up by the state or on the initiative of private individuals and/or non-state entities, but are ultimately controlled and coordinated by the state through authorized organs*⁴⁷.

In this context, common opinions that private military companies operate in the grey area are unfounded. The Russian ChVK Wagner (Russian: частная военная компания, ЧВК) is compared to the PMC (private military company), although these are not exact equivalents. The excesses of Russian contractors were reported during the Chechen wars, and abroad, their presence was observed during the fighting in the former Yugoslavia, Georgia, the Crimea and Syria. In Sudan, Zimbabwe, Angola, Libya and Madagascar, they currently provide a variety of services – protecting people and facilities, police and troops training, and even participating in election campaigns⁴⁸ – in exchange for the right to extract natural resources. Due to foreign reports the issue of ChVK Wagner also emerged in the Russian media. Attempts to “legalize” them were especially publicised. Journalists suggested that the existence of such entities was prohibited under Russian law. However, their participation is illegal not so much in the militarized protection market as in hostilities that were not controlled by the state⁴⁹, which, in fact, was the Kremlin’s information blockade. Officially, these companies provide services in the field of protection of Russian facilities, including mines, deposits and convoys, outside the Russian Federation and perform training missions (military consulting, army and police forces training) in the countries with which Russia cooperates in this area. They may also be contracted by the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation. According to Dmitry Kisielow⁵⁰, the soldiers of the Wagner Group train the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic under a bilateral agreement between the Defence Ministries of the two countries.

⁴⁶ Ibidem.

⁴⁷ Ф.Ю. Обнорский, А.М. Кривенко, *К вопросу о сущности и структуре военной организации России*, „Вестник Военного университета” 2012, No. 2.

⁴⁸ «Проект»: наемники «ЧВК Вагнера» охраняли на Мадагаскаре связанных с Пригожинским политтехнологов, „Новая Газета”, 13 March 2019.

⁴⁹ Their activities are subject to the Act on Security and Detective Activities; they are treated as economic entities providing security services. At the beginning of 2018, at the initiative of the Just Russia party, a separate regulation intended for them was underway in the Duma but its draft was once again rejected (for the first time in 2011, and then in 2014). The Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the FSB and Rosgvardiya spoke out against. The decision was based on the fact that the act was contrary to the Russian constitution.

⁵⁰ „Вести недели”, TV Россия-1, 29 September 2019.

Generally speaking, ChVK Wagner has little to do with an activity based on an economic calculation. It should be agreed with the statement that (...) *if the Western PMCs are mercenaries disguised as soldiers, then the Russian ChVK are soldiers disguised as mercenaries*⁵¹. *As front organizations, and at the same time as power ministries, they can be used to implement their extra-statutory activities. The state is their service provider, which inevitably generates specific forms of control over them, including control exercised by Rosgvardiya.*

It should be assumed that the reserve commandos employed by the ChVK Wagner also support their home formations: apart from the Spetsnaz Rosgvardiya operators, there are “Alfa”, “Smiercz”, “Caucasus” and “Wympiel” subordinate to the FSB, there is the Spetsnaz „Zasłon” SVR, the so called “black berets” FSO (commando unit specialized in anti-terrorist operations), the Spetsnaz “Lider” MchS or the Spetsnaz of the Main Board of the General Staff of the Russian Federation (GU, former GRU). They are considered the elite units of Russia’s MO.

President Vladimir Putin advocates strengthening the MO. In 2013, at a session of the Security Council, he presented a strategy for improving the Russian Federation’s MO by 2020, (...) adequate (as he emphasized – author’s note) to changes in the international situation of Russia. The Security Council of the Russian Federation then approved the following priorities:

- inclusion of the development of the Armed Forces, other troops and organs in the *2016-2020 Defence Plan*;
- optimization of the composition, structure and dislocation of troops and forces of the MO (development of the territorial defence system (hereinafter: TD), improvement of the service and combat parameters of internal troops and strengthening the potential of the Ministry of Emergency Situations in Siberia and the Far East;
- resolution of the issue of the protection of strategic state facilities agreed between the Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Internal Affairs, the FSO and the FSB;
- improving the effectiveness of activities in the information space;
- technical rearming of the Armed Forces and other troops and formations;
- development of the science and research sector of security and defence;
- making social policy in ministries with military service more coherent⁵².

Putin summarized the implementation of these strategic tasks at the Security Council meeting on 22 November, 2019. In his opinion, the second decade brought (...) *a qualitative strengthening of the power ministries, which was mainly due to: the renewal of the military doctrine and strategic planning documents, which set*

⁵¹ P. Mazur, *Wagnerowcy w Syrii – wykorzystanie PMC przez Rosję w konflikcie syryjskim*, „Annales Universitatis Paedagogicae Cracoviensis. Studia de Securitate” 2018, No. 8, p. 9–23.

⁵² *О совершенствовании военной организации Российской Федерации до 2020 года*, 5 July 2013, <http://www.scrf.gov.ru/council/session/2054/> [access: 5 V 2020].

the main directions of joint activities of the power ministries in ensuring the security of the Russian Federation and the tasks resulting from their participation in the defence of the country. Stressing the improvement of the most important MO's indicators of the Russian Federation, such as: the quality of material technical and protection, mobilization readiness, the effectiveness of the TD system and the training system for military specialists, he identified the continuation of strengthening the military, technical and personnel potential of the country's MO, sustainable development of all its components, improvement of the management and coordination system of the MO, bringing the share of modern weapons and equipment in the Armed Forces and other force structures to 70%, as well as the development of the technical and production potential of the military-industrial complex for serial military and civil production as priority tasks for the third decade (until 2030)⁵³.

According to Putin, the ideal MO of the state (...) is a modern, effectively managed, multifunctional system, with a developed information and analytical potential, modern communication and reconnaissance potential, which enable close cooperation between individual power ministries, as well as close cooperation between the state and military administration on all levels⁵⁴.

Rosgvardiya is a beneficiary of MO: the military command system and the transition to the contracted replenishment system, as well as the double equipment of the guardsmen (combat and police), as well as the intensification of exercises and joint exercises by special units from various ministries undoubtedly improve its combat and image parameters. If the public opinion treated the internal troops as an army for police tasks ("beaters"), then the "guards" are to be associated mainly with the "defenders" of the country. The defence dimension of Rosgvardiya is emphasized by Col. Igor Kardasz, head of the Strategic Research Center of the Federal Service of the National Guard Forces, according to whom it is the basis of an effective system of territorial defence of Russia. Searching for an analytical interpretation of the use of troops⁵⁵, Kardasz derives it from the nature of contemporary non-military threats (terrorism, radical social groups spreading extremist ideologies, foreign non-governmental organizations, citizens acting against territorial integrity). In his opinion, these threats fit perfectly into Rosgvardiya's task catalog and determine its place and role in the state's MO. Kardasz emphasizes its strengths: "territoriality", i.e. presence at every level of the state administrative structure, as well as the ability to perform various tasks (both military and service as well as

⁵³ *О перспективах развития Вооружённых Сил, других войск, воинских формирований и органов, выполняющих задачи в области обороны, на период до 2030 года. Заседание Совета Безопасности Российской Федерации (22 ноября 2019 года), <http://scrf.gov.ru/council/session/2688/>; <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/62096> [access: 15 V 2020].*

⁵⁴ *Ibidem.*

⁵⁵ *И.Л. Кардаш, Развитие нормативно-правовой базы территориальной обороны Российской Федерации в современных условиях; Нормативные основы войск национальной гвардии Российской Федерации в территориальной обороне и контртеррористической операции, www.millaw.ru [access: 15 V 2020].*

special). Rosgvardiya is also supposed to be a deterrent tool, persuading the opponent to give up actions against Russia, i.e. an effective TD⁵⁶.

Here it should be noted that the reality of the Russian and Western TD differ fundamentally. The Russian TD is, by definition, a system of undertakings carried out during the war: a service of protective and rescue formations, as well as a reserve service, whose tasks include protecting the rear and expanding the base of the Armed Forces. The amendment to the above-cited law on *Defence of the Russian Federation*, introduced in 2014, resulted in an increase in the activities in favour of TD. The legal definition of this concept⁵⁷ emphasizes three elements: 1) protection of important state facilities, 2) fight against illegal armed groups, landing and enemy diversion, and 3) prevention of these threats. Another amendment to the Act of 2017 extended Article 22 of the Act on sections 4 to 10 on the organization of inter-ministerial coordination staffs. Under the new regulations, the staffs are managed by the heads of the federal subjects of the Russian Federation (presidents of federal republics, oblast governors, city presidents, etc.) who are personally responsible for the implementation of the obligations arising from the TD regulations and for the state of the forces and resources created for this purpose⁵⁸.

⁵⁶ Ibidem.

⁵⁷ It is contained in Article 22 of the Act: “Territorial defence is a system of undertakings in the field of protection and defence of military facilities, important state and special facilities, ensuring the vital activity of the population, the functioning of transport, and communication lines, energy facilities, facilities posing an increased threat to human life and health and the natural environment, undertakings in the field of combating subversive and intelligence formations of foreign countries and illegal armed groups, undertakings in the field of detection, prevention, interruption, minimization and (or) elimination of the effects of their activities in order to create favorable conditions for the functioning of the above-mentioned facilities and the use of Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, other troops, armed formations and organs, and special formations created during the war. The undertakings in question are carried out during martial law”.

⁵⁸ Due to the exclusive prerogatives of the federal authorities in matters of security and defence, as well as supervision over the implementation of regulations in these areas, the role of local government structures is in practice limited to the implementation of tasks commissioned by the federal center. For this reason, Russian legislation mainly focuses on defining the responsibilities of local government structures. They are obliged, inter alia, to the uninterrupted supply of energy to the Armed Forces, the provision of services for the needs of the Armed Forces, other troops and special formations, the performance of tasks for the TD, mobilization preparations, including the implementation of plans to relocate plants and production for defence purposes. In practice, the list of tasks of local authorities is constantly growing: during the video conference of the president with the governors, broadcast by state television (27 April 2020), they were made responsible for fire and flood prevention, squandering budget subsidies for the reconstruction of strategic roads and bridges in the regions and seriously reprimanded for not being prepared to respond to a crisis in the period of seasonal fires and floods. See <https://iz.ru/1005200/dmitrii-laru-liubov-lezhneva/stikhiinye-posledstviia-putin-proveril-situatciiu-s-pavodkami-i-pozharami>. The Rosgvardiya’s informal control over the local government apparatus cannot be ruled out either. Its extensive field structure and operational capabilities (in 2018 the spectrum of its tasks was expanded to include the physical protection of local authorities) allow for the enforcement of actions by local authorities at all administrative levels – from the lowest to the highest.

The specifics of the Russian TD include the following: protection of the state's critical infrastructure (especially communications), protection of facilities carrying an increased risk (nuclear power plants, fuel and energy sector facilities), support for border protection and the fight against terrorism, enforcement of the legal order during the states of emergency, supervision over security activities and arms trade as well as mobilization and training of the reserve.

Rosgvardiya can therefore be treated as a Russian way of solving problems related to the TD. However, the participation of this formation in the TD, which spectacularly introduces this service to public debate, should not obscure the fact that, from the Kremlin's point of view, Rosgvardiya is to be useful in times of war and peace, in the provinces and in the center, where, *nota bene*, the best trained units are concentrated. At the same time, as a multifunctional service, in addition to its statutory tasks, it can perform non-statutory tasks. Thus, it makes a formal and informal contribution to the operational machine of Russia and expands the network of intersecting competences and interconnections between the various power ministries.

Historical and cultural framework of Rosgvardiya

As we read in the introduction to the Rosgvardiya's manual for training purposes⁵⁹, the more than a thousand-year history of the Russian Federation (...) *was characterized by building a strong state, expanding the territory of the country, economic development and a flourishing culture. The development of the state throughout its history was supported by the forces of external defence, as well as internal security forces, organs and troops to protect order.*

Many of the theses from this manual can be found on the official website of Rosgvardiya, where the same comprehensive approach is presented: (...) *Rosgvardiya was not created in an empty place, it uses the centuries-old experience of the functioning of structures that perform the functions of order protection and carry out tasks for the security and defense of the country*⁶⁰.

In the above-cited publications, the Internal Guard, established in 1811, is considered to be the prototype of Rosgvardiya. Tsar Alexander I entrusted the command of it to his trusted adjutant Count Jewgraf Komarowski⁶¹. The units of the Guard, then subordinate to the Ministry of Defence, took part in the war with

⁵⁹ *Войска национальной гвардии Российской Федерации. Исторический очерк*, Москва 2018, <https://rosgvard.ru/uploads/2019/05/istoricheskij-ocherk-razvoroty.pdf> [access: 15 May 2020].

⁶⁰ <https://www.rosgvard.ru/ru/page/index/istoriya> [access: 15 V 2020].

⁶¹ The 250th anniversary of his birth was in 2019. The anniversary was celebrated with a richly illustrated book: *Первый командир Отдельного корпуса внутренней стражи России генерал от инфантерии Е.Ф. Комаровский (к 250-летию со дня рождения), Книга-альбом*, Москва 2019, (<https://rosgvard.ru/uploads/2020/03/kniga-albom-ef-komarovskij2019.pdf> [access: 15 V 2020]).

Napoleon in 1812 (the so-called First Patriotic War, also known as the “Second Polish War”⁶²). Their tasks were continued by the Gendarmerie Corps, established in 1826 and subordinated to the 3rd Division of the Chancellery of His Imperial Majesty, and since 1881 the Tsarist Ochran⁶³.

Ministerial historians⁶⁴ studying the history of the security authorities emphasize the dichotomy in the authorities’ approach to these formations: they have always been treated as law enforcement forces, and at the same time an element of the state defence system. Over time, armed units were established in all the governorate cities of the empire, and their tasks included **the protection of order** (combating armed uprisings and opposition to Tsarism, pursuing and arresting robbers and thieves, dispersing gatherings, pursuing fugitives from prisons, the protection of order in places of worship and during religious rituals, the protection of order at fairs, markets, etc.), **supporting for military activities** in times of war and peace (the protection of borders and communication routes, organizing the recruitment of recruits to the Tsarist army, escorting recruits, deserters and prisoners of war), as well as **supporting administrative activities** (e.g. assistance in the enforcement of court judgments, detection of forbidden goods imported into the territory of the empire, tax enforcement)⁶⁵.

After the Tsarist regime was overthrown in 1917, the Independent Gendarmes Corps was dissolved, and its cadres briefly joined the Military Protection of the Republic, and a year later the troops of the VChK/GPU/OGPU/NKVD. In the USSR, the spectrum of their tasks was expanded to include the personal protection of Lenin and Stalin, the headquarters of the communist party, state bank, state mint and other strategic objects, fighting opponents of the Soviet power, the function of a Red Army policeman (euphemistically referred to as “ensuring the security of the rear of the Armed Forces, combating diversionary and sabotage groups, pursuing spies, counteracting desertion and marauding”) and combating the anti-communist underground (including organizing resettlement of people and pacification actions, including executions on an ad hoc basis). They performed many administrative functions, committing a multitude of robbery and sexual crimes and abuses against the population. They also performed political and ideological functions, which were carried out by the Board of Political Propaganda of the Forces of the People’s Commissariat for Internal Affairs (NKVD). The NKVD period of the “guard of the USSR” troops (1934–1946), brutal and bloody,

⁶² “The First Polish War” in Russian historiography was the campaign of 1806–1807, which resulted in the establishment of the Duchy of Warsaw.

⁶³ *Войска национальной гвардии Российской Федерации. Исторический очерк*, Москва 2018, <https://rosgvard.ru/uploads/2019/05/istoricheskij-ocherk-razvoroty.pdf> [access: 15 May 2020].

⁶⁴ П.А. Колпаков, *Внутренняя стража и Отдельный корпус в 1811–1863*, „Научный диалог” 2016, No. 10.

⁶⁵ *Ibidem*.

but effective, dominated the publications of ministerial historians who wanted to whitewash it in the eyes of the public⁶⁶.

The breakthrough experience of the NKVD troops was the war with Poland in 1939, the winter war with Finland in 1939-1940 and the German attack on the USSR in June 1941. During the war, the NKVD troops, on the one hand, were to counteract marauding and desertion, and on the other hand, fight diversionary and sabotage groups of the enemy, track down spies and criminal gangs, protect communication routes, organize a patrol service, etc. Sometimes the troops of this formation fought on the front line (they participated in the defence of Leningrad and Stalingrad and in the fighting in the Caucasus), but generally followed the front troops, chasing groups of German soldiers and local collaborators. Since 1943, the Main Board for the Protection of the Rear of the Red Army of the NKVD had been supported by the additionally appointed Main Board of Military Counterintelligence (the so-called SMERSH, from Russian Смерть шпионам)⁶⁷.

The protection of the rear of the Red Army is a, nota bene, reason for the special pride of ministerial historiographers: as we read in the quoted tab (...) *it was admired by foreign specialists*⁶⁸. Other reasons for pride are sabotage and diversion of the enemy as well as the organization of a guerrilla resistance movement: (...) *commissioners of the political division were detailed to partisan units* [Russian политические работники, политработники – editor's note]; *they had command functions in these units (...) organized reconnaissance and sabotage units and groups for special operations behind enemy lines*⁶⁹.

The merits of the units in the fight against banditry and the nationalist underground are particularly emphasized: (...) *in the final period of the Great Patriotic War, the fight against banditry was carried out on a huge territory. (...) Cleaning* [Russian: зачистка – editor's note] *the rear of the 1st Ukrainian Front from the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) and SS Galizien (Halychyna) bands, near Rava-Ruska at the end of August to early September 1944, required operations in an area of over 3,600 square kilometers (...) As part of the fight against banditry and nationalist armed formations, the NKVD troops conducted thousands of such Chekist-military (special) operations*⁷⁰.

Chekist-military operations are operations carried out by joint forces of the NKVD civilian and military divisions with the support of the Red Army.

⁶⁶ See e.g. Г.Э. Кучков, А.А. Плеханов, А.М. Плеханов, *Чекисты: История в лицах. Государственное политическое управление НКВД*, Москва 2008; О.Б.Мозохин, *Право на репрессии: внесудебные полномочия органов государственной безопасности (1918–1953)*, Москва 2006.

⁶⁷ For more on this, see e.g. G. Motyka, *Na białych Polaków oblawa. Wojska NKWD w walce z polskim podziemiem 1944–1953*, Warszawa 2014; P. Kołakowski, *Pretorianie Stalina. Sowieckie służby bezpieczeństwa i wywiadu na ziemiach polskich 1939–1945*, Ożarów Mazowiecki 2019.

⁶⁸ <https://www.rosгvard.ru/ru/page/index/istoriya> [access: 15 V 2020].

⁶⁹ <https://www.rosгvard.ru/ru/page/index/istoriya> [access: 15 V 2020].

⁷⁰ Ibidem.

To this day, the effective coordination of their activities in Western Ukraine has been set as an example. In the years 1941–1943, when the People’s Commissariat for State Security (NKGB) was additionally established, the operational command over them was entrusted to the so-called threes, composed of the heads of local NKVD and NKGB divisions and the commander of troops stationed in a given territory. The methods of liquidating the underground were varied: initially, a branched network of agents was created among the local population, which was successively implemented into the UPA formation. If the demoralization of the formation from the inside was unsuccessful, the gangs were liquidated by the so-called destructive battalions (Russian: *истребительные батальоны*). As of the beginning of 1945, there were 292 such battalions in Western Ukraine with a total of about 24,000 people and 2,336 support groups (over 24,000 people). In the second half of 1944 alone, they eliminated over 6,000 UPA fighters, and 12,000 others were taken to prison⁷¹.

Ministerial historians writing on this subject see an analogy between the anti-terrorist actions during the elimination of the UPA and the actions taken during the Second Chechen War. Also according to Oleg Mozokhin (...) the Soviet security organs made a significant contribution to the contemporary fight against terrorism⁷².

At the same, the above-mentioned publications show time how diametrically different Russian memory is from the memory of the annexed nations. In the historical materials on Rosgvardiya, we will not find, for example, information on repressions against the civilian population, mass deportations, arrests of leaders of conquered states and the internment of prisoners of war, or the role of the NKVD troops in the annexation of Ukraine and Western Belarus (1939), north-eastern territories of Finland (1940), Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia (1940) and Bessarabia and northern Bukovina (1940) to the USSR. Moreover, even in publications considered to be objective, these events are treated as (...) *preventive measures that conditioned the victory of the USSR in the Great Patriotic War*⁷³. The historical interpretation of this victory has always been and is subordinate to the current politics and the main ideas that govern Russia.

In an attempt (...) to objectify the image of events created in Ukrainian historiography, the historians Oleg Rosov and Yevgeny Nazarov write, for example: Numerous economic and social problems, as well as the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists, a powerful political force, well organized and secretive, and in addition closely cooperating with the German special services remained in the legacy of

⁷¹ Н. Плотников, *Спецслужбы борются с терроризмом*, „Независимое военное обозрение” of February 16, 2001.

⁷² О.Б. Мозохин, *Борьба советских органов государственной безопасности с терроризмом*, Москва 2019.

⁷³ А.И. Колпакиди, М.Л. Серяков, *Щит и меч. Руководители органов государственной безопасности Московской Руси, Российской Империи, Советского Союза и Российской Федерации*, Москва 2002, p. 405.

the Republic of Poland, which was in ruins under the Wehrmacht attacks⁷⁴. Recalling that the confrontation of the Soviet security authorities with the OUN began long before the Second World War, the authors present the details of the fight against “political banditry” in Western Ukraine (“technology of fighting the opponent’s statehood”, as it is often referred to today⁷⁵), and in fact, they draw the scenario of the “fourth partition of the Republic of Poland”.

The issues discussed above are highlighted in the orders of Lavrenty Beria quoted in the above-mentioned monograph by Rosov and Nazarov. By a Directive of 8 September, 1939, Beria ordered joint exercises of 150 officers from the NKVD headquarters and 50 NKVD officers from Soviet Ukraine, during which five operational-Chekist groups were established. They were supervised by, among others, Vsevolod Merkulov and Ivan Serov⁷⁶. By another Directive of 15 September, 1939, Beria ordered the NKVD troops to seize, on the territory of Western Ukraine, the main communication centers (telegraphy, telephony, radio stations), banks, State Treasury premises, take over state archives, including of Division II of the General Staff (“twos”), arrest representatives of the aristocracy, nobility and capitalists preventively, arrest the “most reactionary” representatives of the local administration, the State Police of the Republic of Poland, the Border Protection Corps, take over prisons, recruit prisoners for political work

⁷⁴ О. Росов, Е. Назаров, *Борьба советских органов государственной безопасности с организацией украинских националистов. 1939–1941 гг.*, <http://istmat.info/node/40609> [access: 15 May 2020].

⁷⁵ In the spirit of conspiracy theories, the “secret technologies of fighting against Russian statehood and Russian civilization” include terrorism, extremism, separatism, etc. See e.g. В. Якунин, В. Багдасарян, С. Сулакшин, *Новые технологии борьбы с российской государственностью*, Москва 2009.

⁷⁶ **Vsevolod Merkulov** – general, long-time political police officer, people’s commissar. In 1938 he was the deputy chief of the NKVD and the head of the 3rd Directorate (counterintelligence). During the aggression against Poland in 1939, he supervised the coordination of the operations of the Chekist operational groups on the territory of the Polish state from Ukraine. He was part of the Special Council, the so-called NKVD troika (Russian: *Особое совещание*). He led the operation of “unloading” POW camps and prisons in April and May 1940. He is responsible for the murder of Polish officers in Katyn.

Ivan Serov – General, he made a rapid career in the state security organs: from 1941 he was a deputy of Merkulov in the NKVD, from 1946 the Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs, later the head of the KGB (1954–1958) and the head of the GRU (1958–1963). On 2 September, 1939 he was appointed head of the NKVD of Soviet Ukraine. From Lviv, he directly directed the operations of the Chekist operational groups in order to join Western Ukraine to the USSR; in 1940 he led a similar operation of annexation of Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina. He is jointly responsible for the murder of Polish officers in Katyn and as “an adviser to the Ministry of Public Security on behalf of the NKVD”- for the death of the Home Army commander Leopold Okulicki, who was arrested along with 15 other leaders of the Underground State deceitfully deported to Moscow (in March 1945). From June 1945, deputy head of the Soviet military administration for civil matters in Germany. He personally led the pacification of the Hungarian uprising in October-November 1956. For more on them, see А.И. Колпакиди, М. Л. Серяков, *Щит и меч. Руководители органов государственной безопасности...*, p. 442–458, 491–501.

among the population and work out the anti-Soviet underground, create networks of informers who were to help identify agents – provocateurs of the gendarmerie, the State Police and branches of Branch II, organize public order protection as well as strategic facilities, energy stations, water supply stations, industrial warehouses, grain and food warehouses, etc. (assigning a total of 16 detailed tasks)⁷⁷.

The Chekist-military operation was quickly carried out: as we read, the local population did not oppose the Soviet occupiers. Lviv welcomed the Red Army with bread and salt. As a result, on 26 October, 1939, the “Assembly of the Western Ukraine People” was convened, which resolved the unification of Western Ukraine with the Ukrainian SSR and entry into the USSR. In November of that year, four NKVD regional boards appeared in Western Ukraine: the fight against “political banditry” was raised to a higher level⁷⁸.

After the war, the troops of the NKVD (and then the Ministry of Internal Affairs) played a fundamental role in “bringing order” to the annexed (“liberated”) territories where they performed the mission of the occupation forces. Inside the USSR, they continued cleaning the areas “infected with banditry and collaboration”, among others, by mass deportations (Balts, Karachayas, Chechens, Ingush, Kalmyks, Crimean Tatars and others). They became well-known for breaking the resistance movement in Ukraine, Belarus and the Baltic states, as well as raids on the Polish anti-communist underground, which continued until 1953⁷⁹.

Meanwhile, ministerial historians focus primarily on the protective function of the internal troops operating within the framework of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the USSR since 1946: on the creation of special commanding units supporting this function, as well as the creation of special units to protect strategic centers and enterprises working on the country’s missile and nuclear shield. As a result, as we read, (...) *in the 1980s, internal troops were on patrol service in the country’s 50 largest cities, protected over 300 strategic facilities, over 1,000 penal and rehabilitation*

⁷⁷ О. Росов, Е. Назаров, *Борьба советских органов государственной безопасности с организацией украинских националистов. 1939–1941 гг.*, <http://istmat.info/node/40609> [access: 15 V 2020].

⁷⁸ The fight against “political banditry” was within the competence of the 2nd (Political) Directorate of the NKVD, which dealt with, inter alia, fighting Trotskyists and other representatives of the right-wing deviation, Ukrainian parties and anti-Soviet organizations, control over Russian, Polish and other anti-Soviet and Zionist organizations, clergymen and members of religious sects, supervision over the provocateurs of the former Tsarist Ochrana, policemen, monarchists, cadets and white Cossacks, the Academy of Sciences, writers, artists, publishing houses, film studios, trade unions, youth organizations, militarized and sports organizations, etc. The departments notorious of fighting banditry were included in the 3rd Management (counterintelligence); the militia dealt with fighting “criminal banditry”. See О. Росов, Е. Назаров, *Борьба советских органов государственной безопасности с организацией украинских националистов. 1939–1941 гг.*, <http://istmat.info/node/40609> [access: 15 V 2020].

⁷⁹ For more on this, see e.g. G. Motyka, *Na białych Polaków oblawa. Wojska NKWD w walce z polskim podziemiem 1944–1953*, Warszawa 2014; P. Kołakowski, *Pretorianie Stalina. Sowieckie służby bezpieczeństwa i wywiadu na ziemiach polskich 1939–1945*, Ożarów Mazowiecki 2019.

colonies, convoyed prisoners to 4,500 industrial facilities, protected communication routes, including the Baikal-Amur Railway, Zabajkalska Railway and the Far East Railway. (...) At the end of the USSR's existence, the internal troops were entrusted with the task of eliminating the consequences of ethnic conflicts in Central Asia, Transcaucasia and Transnistria. This task was performed with honor⁸⁰.

After the collapse of the USSR, the internal troops were taken over by the Russian Federation and survived until 2016. *Their mission at the end of the 20th and early 21st centuries was primarily to counteract the internal threats of the Russian Federation: attempts to overthrow the constitutional system, the activities of illegal armed formations, terrorism, and securing anti-terrorist operations*⁸¹. As a result, their institutional status was raised: (...) in February 1997, the function of the Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs, commander-in-chief of the internal troops, was created, and in 1999 the Main Staff of the Internal Troops of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Russian Federation was established⁸². In 2008, the command system reform was carried out, owing to which the borders of the new districts of internal troops coincided with the borders of the territorial districts of the Russian Federation, previously created as a result of the administrative reform. The decision to establish Rosgvardiya surprised observers, despite the fact that it was an evolutionary change, previously announced.

In May 2014, President Putin appointed General Viktor Zolotov, his trusted adjutant, the former head of the President's Security Service, as First Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs – Commander of the Internal Troops of the Russian MIA. In April 2016, he was appointed Director of the Federal Service of National Guard Troops and Commander of the National Guard Troops. Soon after, the name "Rosgvardiya" was introduced and popularized: it sounds more familiar, although it still remains a dummy of a volunteer formation.

In 2000, a book by Samuel Sztutman was published for the purposes of political training. *On guard of peace and quiet. From the history of Russia's Internal Troops 1811–1917*⁸³. Its title became the new "founding myth" of the internal troops. Attempts were made to perpetuate this new identity in 2011 during the celebration of their 200th anniversary. The jubilee picture album that was then published was entitled: *200 years on guard of silence and peace. A brief illustrated history of Russia's Internal Troops*⁸⁴.

"Peace and quiet" and the long tradition of strengthening Russian statehood remain the propaganda fuel for their successor, i.e. Rosgvardiya. In 2017, the Sztutman's book was reprinted, and in 2019, a picture album devoted to the aforementioned Jewgraf

⁸⁰ <https://www.rosgvard.ru/ru/page/index/istoriya> [access: 15 V 2020].

⁸¹ Ibidem.

⁸² Ibidem.

⁸³ С.М. Штутман, *На страже тишины и спокойствия: из истории внутренних войск России (1811–1917 гг.)*, Москва 2000; ed. 2 (revised) – Москва 2017.

⁸⁴ Н.Г. Сысоев, *200 лет на страже тишины и спокойствия: краткая иллюстрированная история внутренних войск МВД России*, Москва 2011.

Komarowski, the First Commander of the Internal Guard⁸⁵, was published. However, there is a huge disproportion between the literature on the precursors of Rosgvardiya from the times of the Russian Empire and those from the Soviet times. It is hard to resist the impression that contemporary historiographers of the services are closer to the NKVD than to the Internal Guard or the Independent Gendarme Corps. The NKVD lineage of Rosgvardiya is emphasized by its leadership⁸⁶. At the same time, it announces the restoration of the banners and historical names of units from the Second World War, recalls the anniversaries of their memorable battles⁸⁷ and recalls the memory of the Chekist-military operations of the Second World War and the effective fight against “banditry and the nationalist underground” after the war.

Institutional continuity and the continuity of tradition, as well as like the symbolism of memory reflecting them, have a civilization background and are closely related to political culture. The most important goal of “order” is verticalism, a centralized force bloc, and an efficient repressive apparatus. “Order” justifies the measures applied, such as maximum control of society, which also takes the form of “clean-up operations”, constant monitoring of public mood and the pursuit of alleged treason. Analogically, “peace and quiet” means the stability of the system of power, its maintenance and systemic integrity. Rosgvardiya shares its political mission of creating an “atmosphere of social peace”, in the language of Russian propaganda, with other power ministries of the Russian Federation: in the practice of restoring peace and introducing order, the decisive factor is the widely understood argument of force.

Summary

Rosgvardiya follows the centuries-old tradition of the Russian security sector. Since the mid-16th century, i.e. since the time of the oprichnina of Ivan the Terrible⁸⁸, it has been a loyal backbone of power. The ethos of the organs loyal to the ruling elite was perpetuated by its followers, regardless of the camouflaging and deceptive names, such as the Internal Guard, The Department for Protecting the Public Security and

⁸⁵ *Первый командир Отдельного корпуса внутренней стражи России...*

⁸⁶ *Росгвардия вернется к наименованиям времен Великой Отечественной. Ведомство по просьбе ветеранов планирует восстановить почетные наименования*, „Известия” of 30 May 2017.

⁸⁷ <https://rosgvard.ru/ru/page/index/uchastie-vojsk-nkvd-v-geroicheskoy-oborone-stalingrada> [access: 15 V 2020].

⁸⁸ Oprichnina – the bodyguard of Tsar Ivan IV the Terrible and the system of government in the Moscow State in 1565–1572. The oprichnina corps was an armed implementer of the tsar’s reforms, tracking down all conspiracies against Ivan, sowing terror and fear among his opponents. Over time, the oprichnina became synonymous with the first political police in Russia. Contrary to the opposition assigning to Rosgvardiya the role of “Putin’s praetorian guard”, this formation does not emphasize the importance of its forerunner.

Order (Okhrana) or the troops of the State Political Administration (Russian: Главное политическое управление, GPU). The internal security forces that emerged after the dissolution of the USSR and the structural transformation of the KGB also alluded to this ethos. *Rosgvardiya* also refers to it. The structural transformation of the security sector of the Russian Federation after the dissolution of the KGB has not brought functional changes. The successors of the state security authorities managed by the Committee have inherited the special purpose forces, which significantly expands the catalogue of their activities compared to Western security structures.

The consolidation of the “siloviki” around the president from the former KGB has resulted not only in the popularity of the collective term *power ministries*, but also, above all, in projects to rebuild a strong state based on the “force factor” linking security and defence forces. In such a context, *Rosgvardiya* represents the next stage of the stabilization of the authoritarian regime, i.e. strengthening its foundation and facilities. Throughout history, security sector reforms have been variously justified, but their aim has always been to improve the stability of power and the integrity of its apparatus. Such a goal is also imposed by the strategy for the development of the multifunctional military organization of the state and the cooperation of civil and military administrations, which has been pushed for years.

Multifunctionality is a feature of the “genetic code” of Russia’s strategic culture. It is based on a comprehensive approach to the security and defence forces, which is the basis of the concept of a military organization of the state. It enables integrated planning of their use in times of peace, crisis and war, their modernisation and training, and consequently cooperation on various levels and in various configurations (fight against terrorism, crisis management, mobilization preparations, protection of critical infrastructure facilities, territorial defence). If necessary, it facilitates their substitution⁸⁹. It also creates a platform for periodic restructuring of the security sector, transfer of staff and entire divisions from one structure to another, eliminating structures that do not meet the needs and appointing new ones.

On the other hand, the hypothesis that the military paradigm of the organization of the state is a counterbalance to its bureaucratic paradigm cannot be rejected. Militarization makes it easier to hide problems that undermine the image of the state and its authorities in the Kremlin (inter-ministerial rivalry, corruption and nepotism, hidden sponsorship of an active reserve of power ministries, as well as military retirees, the use of non-legal methods of influence, departmental crime). Image purposes are also served by non-standard concept schemes that obscure the essence of the security

⁸⁹ The Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation, for example, was more active in combating the pandemic, which was included in the competence of the MChS in Russia. It conducted tests of readiness to fight infection as part of exercises in the field of bacteriological protection with the participation of the Troops of Radiological, Chemical and Biological Defence, conducted under the patronage of this ministry. Units of *Rosgvardiya* and other ministries also participated in the exercises. It also built 16 modular infectious diseases hospitals in vulnerable regions of Russia, and also led an active foreign policy, organizing humanitarian aid for Serbia and Italy.

organs and troops, which are “Russian specialties”. The very concept of internal security is ideological here and officially it is mainly associated with fighting threats and opponents of the system inspired from outside (external ideological subversion, secret technologies of fighting the Russian statehood and Russian civilization, etc.).

A model example of a multifunctional ministry is Rosgvardiya. As the main mechanism for neutralizing conflicts and systemic crises, it expanded the range of pressure methods and restructured the petrified internal security system. The official interpretation repeated by departmental analysts, which emphasizes its role as a tool of territorial defence and hybrid threats defence, is unconvincing. In this area (similarly to the area of crisis management, combating terrorism or border protection) the above mentioned structure performs auxiliary functions (towards the Ministry of Defence, the Federal Security Service (FSB), the Federal Protective Service (FSO) and others). This does not mean that the new formation has not brought anything new to the Russian operational machine. Its management functions (organization of the use of troops) and supervision over the activities of the security sector result in non-standard forms of control and extra-statutory activities. From this point of view, the operational supervision of power entrepreneurship, the modernization of the special-purpose forces, the strengthening of the state’s military organization, including the supervision of the reserve potential as well as the sponsorship of front groups, in particular deserve attention.

Operational supervision of power entrepreneurship

Officers with experience in work in the power ministries employed in security organizations undoubtedly require special forms of control. At the same time, they are treated as the social base of the power elite. Rosgvardiya’s supervision of criminogenic power entrepreneurship⁹⁰ is, on the one hand, a warning to undisciplined representatives of business security, and, on the other, an appeal to them for self-control. The Kremlin has not decided to apply drastic measures that threaten a “civil war” – it refers to the sense of a community of power and its responsibility for the internal situation in the country, promising to maintain the existing order. For the same reason, changes in the power sector of the Russian Federation are cautious and evolutionary. “Thorough cleanup” is not at stake either for fundamental reasons – the normal state here is “a mess” expanding the spectrum of possibilities of power ministries.

⁹⁰ This also applies to the company “Ochrana” of Rosgvardiya. See e.g. *Экс-командира отряда ФГУП «Охрана» Росгвардии обвиняют в получении взятки в 2,5 млн рублей*, Ведомости, 7 December, 2018, www.vedomosti.ru.

Modernization of the special-purpose forces of the Russian Federation

It is part of changes in the Ministry of Internal Affairs implemented successively since 2010, the reform of the civil defence troops (units subordinate to the Ministry of Civil Defense and Emergencies were transformed into military rescue formations; the bureaucratic administrative apparatus of the Ministry was reduced) carried out in 2011, and territorial defence reform. **The universal justification for the modernization of special security forces is their participation in territorial and civil defence. It is related to the need to improve their cooperation and interoperability.** Joint exercises of special forces of various ministries (including unannounced readiness tests), standardization of equipment and armaments, as well as introducing the division of tasks into those related to peacetime and those related to wartime into their military rules and regulations, which is also reflected in the statute of Rosgvardiya, serve to make them more coherent and aligned. So far, the modernization effort has focused on the armed forces being the foundation of Russia's imperial aspirations and ambitions. The modernization of the Rosgvardiya's special forces and other power ministries may serve to tighten control over its own society and enforce its obedience, but it may also mean preparing it for war.

Strengthening the military organization of the state

Strengthening the military organization of the state concerns many issues, it includes all power ministries, industry and defence infrastructure, but also state governance organs as well as state and social institutions working for the security and defence of the country. When extended to society, it is expected to lead to internal consolidation. According to the Russian strategic culture, the MO is treated as an extension of the possibility of using military and non-military means to achieve political goals. In order to protect and develop Russian statehood, it ultimately comes down to protecting the political, economic and military system that forms the foundation of power in Russia. Authoritarianism, by its very nature, creates a constant demand for new forms of protection of the status quo. Moreover, the MO introduces a military drill into the bureaucratic state machine of Russia.

Supervision of the reserve potential

The mobilization reserve (especially the contractual reserve) has the potential to be used in areas where the security and defence forces are deficient. In this respect, the role of Rosgvardiya would be difficult to overstate. Being committed to mobilizing and retraining the reserve, its task is easier: according to her own estimates, it oversees

a multimillion army of people under arms⁹¹. The right to mobilize the reserve without Military Replenishment Councils, was also extended to the FSB and the SVR in February 2020, which prompts the conclusion that the methods of influence are diversified. It should be assumed that the principle of multifunctionality also applies to reserve forces: they are used both for internal protection and for external, expeditionary operations.

Sponsorship of front groups

Widespread involvement of the society in activities in the field of state defence in Russia faces serious barriers, not least because of the culture of pervasive suspicions of treason (espionage). Moreover, there is no civil society here. The Russian model of public participation in security and defence necessarily reaches different front groups (Cossacks, ChVK). At the same time, “people under arms” are subject to records and restrictive licensing procedures. In this context, the supervision of companies with special status, exercised by Rosgvardiya, should be regarded as a form of institutional sponsorship. Financial rewards influence the relations between Rosgvardiya and a multitude of military retirees employed in security companies controlled by this formation as well.

In this context, it is worth emphasizing once again the scale of disinformation on Rosgvardiya. This particularly highlights its historical and cultural dimension, including non-standard conceptual schemes, which are a Russian specialty, consisting, inter alia, in the constant reference, and thus apparent adaptation, to Western terms and concepts, which distracts researchers and prompts them to find analogies between the Western and Russian realities of national security systems.

Meanwhile, the question about Rosgvardiya is, above all, a question about the Kremlin’s vision of internal threats. These threats, presented as external, highlight the image of the West as the unchanging enemy, an antagonist of Russia and the instigator of color revolutions, and justify Moscow’s aggressive policy towards its surroundings. In internal communication, they facilitate the application of the code of social didactics (referring to self-defence, the spirit of victory, centuries-old historical experience, etc.) understandable to the society of the Russian Federation.

Such manipulation should not obscure the nature of Russia’s internal threats, the structure of which has remained unchanged for centuries. In a multiethnic and multifaith Russia, the greatest threats have always been the attempts to overthrow the state system by force by radical, separatist, national and religious movements that set up illegal armed organizations to fight for the right to sovereignty using terrorist

⁹¹ According to Gen. Zolotov’s information for the government newspaper “Российская газета” Rosgvardiya oversees an army of 4 million gun owners. See <https://rg.ru/2018/12/05/rosgvardiia-otchitalas-o-nahodiashchihsia-na-uchete-4-mln-vladelcev-oruzhiia.html>.

methods, thus aimed at violating Russia's territorial unity. In theory and doctrine, this is reflected in euphemistic conceptualizations concerning "defence of the state interest of Russia in the economic, political, military, information and social spheres", "defence of the multiethnic nation's unity, its memory of its ancestors and national history", "human and civil rights and freedoms", as well as "social consent and peace" guaranteeing "separate spiritual development" (civilizational) of Russians, and in practice, such above mentioned internal tasks are solved, inter alia, by Rosgvardiya.

Abstract

The National Guard of the Russian Federation (Rosgvardiya) is a model example of a non-standard approach to the national guard and federal services: it does not meet their formal or functional criteria. Its primary task is to neutralize internal conflicts and restore public order in the country; it is also equipped with many auxiliary functions. It performs them together with other power ministries: the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry for Civil Defence, Emergencies and Elimination of Consequences of Natural Disasters, the Federal Security Service, the Federal Protective Service, the Foreign Intelligence Service, the General Prosecutor's Office, the Investigative Committee and others. The above mentioned ministries are a "shield and sword" in the fight against all manifestations of anti-system, military and non-military (so-called hybrid) activities. Thus, they act in the interest of Russia's political elite.

The need for cooperation between security and defence structures on various levels and in various configurations (fight against terrorism, border protection, crisis management, territorial defence, protection of critical infrastructure facilities, etc.) results from the military strategy of the state organization promoted by the Kremlin. Such a comprehensive approach is related to the culture of governance and the resulting strategic culture. A permanent element of this culture is, among others, manipulation of the conceptual apparatus, prompting researchers of this subject to draw conclusions about the realities of the Russian national security system by analogy to the Western one.

Keywords: Rosgvardiya, The National Guard of the Russian Federation, power ministry, internal security, military organization, ministerial protection, non-ministerial protection.