

Margarita Zernova
University of Hull, Kingston upon Hull, United Kingdom

RUSSIAN POLICE AND CITIZEN:
PUBLIC RESPONSES TO THE STATE OF CONTEMPORARY POLICING AND THEIR
UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES

Abstract

This paper will discuss public experiences of policing in contemporary Russia, coping techniques employed by citizens who believe that police can hardly be relied on for protection and the social impact of such adaptations. The author gives historic analyses of development of Russian militia from early 80-s till now. The article is based on the empirical study of everyday survival in post-socialist countries the analysis of adaptation strategies that emerged to compensate for the failure of Russian militia to perform their functions. It also adds to the body of research which examines public attitudes towards militia. Surveys conducted in post-Soviet Russia (Moscow and Oryol) in 2007 and 2009

Key words: militia; corruption; abuses of power; punishment; dysfunctional policing; victimization

Introduction

This paper will discuss public experiences of policing in contemporary Russia, coping techniques employed by citizens who believe that police can hardly be relied on for protection and the social impact of such adaptations. This will be done on the basis of findings derived from an empirical study. The discussion will begin with describing the background of the Russian police and the broader social context within which the institution operates. Then the empirical study which forms the foundation of this paper will be introduced and its findings presented. The paper will proceed to analyze the implications of the findings for the social order that has emerged on the ruins of the communist empire. It will be argued that attitudes and behavioral orientations adopted by ordinary Russians in response to the pathological state of policing inadvertently may help to entrench the unwelcomed social conditions.

Background

Following the collapse of socialism, the Russian police (until recently known as the militia, but on the 1st of March 2011 renamed into the politiya) found itself in a weakened and unstable state [16], [37], [20], [8], [9], [13], [12, chapter 9]. Since the late 1980s a large-scale staff-turnover took place within the institution. Many officers left the force because of the low pay, poor working conditions and the low prestige of the profession of a militia. The high personnel turn-over, combined with underfunding and insufficient training, resulted in a situation where militia officers could not develop a high level of professionalism. The situation was aggravated by a lack of controls over the militia. The strict control exercised by the Communist party was

gone, and new forms of accountability were ineffective [46], [7]. This produced conditions conducive to abuses of power by militsiya officers on a massive scale.

At the time when my empirical research was carried out, the legislative framework within which the militsiya operated was provided in the Law 'On the Militsiya', passed in 1991 (on the 1st of March 2011 it was replaced by the Law 'On the Politsiya'). The Law 'On the Militsiya' gave the institution a wide range of powers. For example, the militsiya issued passports, residence permits, visas, automobile registrations, various certificates ranging from drivers' licences to work permits. Such extensive regulatory powers provided many opportunities for abuse and corruption. The Law 'On the Militsiya' articulated the principles and values guiding actions of its officers, among which were lawfulness, humanism and respect for human rights. However, these principles have not been translated into practice very well. There is abundant evidence of militsiya violations of human rights, corruption and involvement in crime, including organised crime [18], [22], [1], [2], [3], [4], [5], [6], [33], [24].

The post-Soviet crisis in the militsiya occurred against the background of weakening of other governmental institutions and a general retreat of government. To survive in the midst of the post-soviet turmoil people have been challenged to discover ways of compensating for the inability of the state to perform many of its functions. They had to learn self-sufficiency and independence from the state. So, in response to the failure by the state to provide order and security, a new industry has emerged to make up for the failures of the state law enforcement. Vadim Volkov [47] has labeled it 'violent entrepreneurship'. 'Violent entrepreneurs' included organized criminal groups, private security companies and law enforcement officers. They managed the same resource – organized violence – and converted it into money.

Militsiya became one of the 'violent entrepreneurs' in the emerging security market. Since 1992 units within militsiya are allowed to offer 'extra departmental protection' to businesses if the businesses enter into contracts for the provision of security services with Extra-Departmental Protection Directorate of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Such provision of protection is legal, carried out by the commercial police in state uniforms. Militsiya may also provide protection to businesses unofficially, illegally. They may offer a 'roof', which involves providing protection to clients to minimise their business risks on a for-hire basis. In such situations militsiya act as private entrepreneurs, receiving payments from their clients. In addition to offering protection, militsiya became engaged actively in various illegal commercial activities, effectively turning themselves into a business entity which is concerned primarily with making money [15], [48], [25].

In December 2009 President Medvedev launched extensive reforms of the institution. Among the reforms is an anti-corruption programme, the revision of the process of personnel selection, raising the level of professionalism, stripping the militsiya of unnecessary functions, cutting the number of officers by 20%, centralisation of financing, pay rise for militsiya officers by 30% and organizational restructuring. On the 1st of March 2011 the new Law 'On the Politsiya' came into

force. It renamed the militsiya into the politsiya, returning its original, tsarist, and name. This was done in an attempt to remove the institution further from its Soviet past. At the time of writing, the reforms are still at an early stage, yet they have already attracted a lot of criticisms which range from arguments that the reforms are purely cosmetic and essentially retain the same system to accusations that they further widen powers of the politsiya, strengthen the grip of the central executive at the local level, and fail to make the institution more accountable [14], [25], [11], [28].

The empirical study

The empirical study upon which this paper is based adds to the body of research into everyday survival in post-socialist countries [35], [36], [10], [23], [31], [32], [39], [42] the analysis of adaptation strategies that emerged to compensate for the failure of Russian militsiya to perform their functions. It also adds to the body of research which examines public attitudes towards militsiya. Surveys conducted in post-Soviet Russia have consistently demonstrated that public trust towards militsiya is very low [27], [19], [21], [29], [30]. Typically research stops at asking respondents about their attitudes towards militsiya. This paper goes further and examines implications of distrust towards militsiya. The paper asks: how does the low level of trust towards militsiya affect daily lives of ordinary Russians? What coping behaviours does it give rise to? And, whatever responses to the decaying state of Russian policing are employed by citizens, what are their broader social implications and dangers? These questions will be answered in the light of findings derived from my empirical study.

I carried out this study in the summers of 2007 and 2009 in Moscow and Oryol (a city in central Russia). The study aimed at investigating public experiences of policing in today's Russia, public attitudes towards the militsiya resulting from those experiences and implications of those attitudes for people's everyday behaviour. An approach similar to grounded theory was used [17], [43], [44], [45]. In-depth qualitative interviews were employed as the primary research method. Fifty-four members of the public who had encounters with militsiya as crime suspects, victims or witnesses were interviewed. Respondents were selected using purposive sampling: the main criterion for selection was the requirement that they had had direct encounters with militsiya in the post-Soviet period as crime suspects, victims or witnesses. The sample consisted of 22 men and 32 women; 14 respondents were between ages of 18 and 30; 20 respondents – between 31 and 50; 20 were above 51. Additionally, 10 militsiya officers were interviewed. Six of them were senior officers and four were from the lower ranks. Questions for both members of the public and militsiya were open-ended, designed to enable respondents to express views in their own words. Interviews with members of the public were organised around three main themes: experiences of policing, attitudes towards militsiya and impact of those attitudes on everyday behaviour. Militsiya officers were asked to comment on the state of the contemporary militsiya and the relationship between militsiya and members of the public which has emerged in the post-Soviet era.

Findings

When respondents were asked to share their experiences of policing, typically militsiya were described as unhelpful and unwilling to help people. Interviewees provided multiple examples of militsiya failing to perform their functions or performing them incompetently. There was a wide perception that militsiya were concerned primarily with ensuring good statistics and enriching themselves, rather than upholding law and order. Following lengthy discussions of unresolved crimes and miscarriages of justice, respondents often concluded that militsiya offers no protection to the population.

Respondents argued that militsiya were corrupt, with 80 per cent of the sample admitting that they or their family members gave bribes to militsiya, and every respondent knew somebody who had bribed militsiya. Most examples involved traffic militsiya who have the reputation of being most corrupt. Also, bribing militsiya in order to avoid arrest or obtain release from the police custody appears to be a regular practice: half of the sample provided examples involving themselves or people they knew doing so. Militsiya interviewed as part of this study provided additional examples where bribing was common. One such example concerns document-checks exercised by militsiya. When a person does not have documents with him or her, and is in a hurry, she or he may offer a bribe, so as to avoid being taken to the police station for verifying their identity. Other examples of bribery provided by militsiya respondents related to specific groups, such as prostitutes. The militsiya know the places where prostitutes are most likely to be encountered early in the morning, stop them and take a part of their earnings. A similar example involved migrant workers from former Soviet republics, numerous in Moscow, many of whom are easily identifiable by their non-Slavic appearance. They are also frequently stopped and deprived of some of their earnings by militsiya. Or, if the migrant workers cannot pay themselves, their employer is likely to bribe militsiya for their release. Other examples where bribes were given by interviewees or their relatives and friends involved paying militsiya for timely or accelerated processing of various documents (such as passports, or driving licences). Some used bribes to obtain an inspection document on one's car confirming that the car is in a road-worthy condition when it is not. Others gave a bribe to militsiya carrying out checks of businesses and organisations for non-interference. Yet others paid militsiya for taking favourable decisions (such as in applications for licences).

Findings show that citizens frequently become victims of property-related crime carried out by militsiya. So, many examples were given where militsiya stopped people and stole their money while searching them or checking their documents. Likewise, many examples were offered where militsiya found stolen property, but never returned it to its owners. Examples were also encountered where the militsiya were charged with guarding factories and used their position to steal from them. Some interviewees provided stories of burglaries carried out by militsiya against people whom interviewees knew.

There was a wide perception on the part of interviewees that militsiya are preoccupied not with fighting crime and upholding order, but with pursuing their own private interests. It was a common argument made by both militsiya and ordinary citizens that people joining the militsiya

do so in order to enrich themselves. While respondents viewed militsiya as generally ineffective and unresponsive, they pointed out that a bribe may have a positive effect on the ability of militsiya to resolve criminal cases.

The majority of respondents believed that militsiya were brutal and disrespectful towards rights of citizens. So, multiple examples of violations of citizens' rights during stops, searches, arrests and detentions were reported by interviewees, and thirty-four respondents provided examples of militsiya brutality against themselves, or their relatives, or people they knew. Militsiya brutality was perceived as widespread and systemic. Militsiya brutality appears to be particularly frequent during arrests and in the process of extracting confessions¹. Interviewees stressed that militsiya brutality can lead to false confessions and referred to cases involving acquaintances where suspects admitted crimes which they had not committed (two of which were murders). As far as brutality during arrests is concerned, it emerges from examples offered by interviewees that most likely victims are men who are either drunk or young (or both) – the groups which are less capable to defend themselves either in the physical or legal sense. There was a general feeling among interviewees that the militsiya violence towards these people had a symbolic, rather than instrumental, character: brutality towards such groups formed part of a ritual of subduing the arrestee and demonstrating the power of militsiya.

Importantly, findings of this study indicate that most victims of militsiya brutality do not believe that perpetrators can be held accountable. The general perception was that militsiya are free to violate people's rights without any negative repercussions for themselves, with 44 respondents highlighting their feelings of defencelessness in the face of militsiya abuses. Interviewees pointed out the existence of *'krugovaya poruka'* among militsiya (that is, militsiya covering up each other's misdeeds), making it virtually impossible to prove – and punish wrongdoers for – transgressions. The trust that *Prokuratura* or the judiciary will protect victims of militsiya abuse of power was very low, and examples were provided where interviewees felt that *Prokuratura* and the judiciary sided with militsiya and helped them get away with their wrongdoings.

When citizens found themselves in a situation where abuse of power by militsiya is rampant, yet there are no effective formal avenues for complaints, various strategies aimed at self-protection against wrongdoings by militsiya were generated. Respondents have described numerous tactics they have utilised during stops, searches, arrests and detentions which have helped them to minimise abuse by militsiya. For example, one way of avoiding extortions by militsiya may involve provoking sympathy in militsiya (for example, by appealing to the fact that one is a low income person). Another strategy is to assert that one has powerful connections within or

¹ One explanation of this phenomenon may relate to the system where performance of militsiya is measured by their ability to meet typically unrealistic quotas. This creates a temptation to use violence and tortures to extract confessions. Another explanation may relate to the large-scale staff turnover that occurred in militsiya in the post-Soviet period (which was mentioned earlier). It has led to a lack of experienced professionals capable of acquiring evidence without resorting to illegal methods and an increase in poorly trained staff resorting to unlawful violence to obtain confessions [41].

outside the militsiya (such as with local government) and threaten officers demanding payments with negative repercussions.

One interviewee gave an illustration where an appeal to legal procedures was used successfully to avoid extortions from market traders by militsiya. When militsiya approached her, while she was trading at a market, and demanded a payment under the pretence of checks, she pointed out to them that certain procedural rules required for the checks have not been complied with. The officers looked baffled when confronted with a citizen who knew what her rights were and how to use them, but left her alone. Findings from this study suggest that this case was exceptional. When faced with extortions by militsiya, typically citizens do not attempt to appeal to law: they either pay them or try informal solutions. Likewise, it seems to be rare for people to employ formal complaint procedures following violations by militsiya: I was unable to find any evidence of formal complaints.

There was, however, limited evidence of citizens choosing to follow correct legal procedures as a form of retaliation against wrongdoings by militsiya. When a driver is stopped by militsiya and accused of a violation, typically he or she has a choice between a larger, official fine, or a smaller, unofficial payment made directly to militsiya. Such unofficial payments are called *dan*'. *Dan*' serves as a 'tribute' or an acknowledgement of who rules the street [23, 143-144]. Paying *dan*' (instead of an official fine) is a natural choice of the vast majority of drivers. Since the incident is not documented and no receipt is provided, the money goes directly into the pocket of a militsiya officer. Yet some drivers who were interviewed instead of paying *dan*' asked for a receipt. That choice meant that the amount the driver had to pay was significantly bigger, and the inconvenience of going to the bank and having to queue there was added. It appears from interviews that this choice is most likely when a driver feels that the infringement they are accused of never occurred and is invented by militsiya. Choosing the correct legal procedure in such cases appears to be a form of protest against unfair accusations and is a revenge on militsiya whose expectations of additional earnings are disappointed.

An important finding of this study is that the general perception that militsiya are corrupt, brutal, unreliable, professionally inept and unaccountable for their wrongdoings often led interviewees to conclude that they should avoid reporting crimes. Some felt that reporting crimes is useless because militsiya will never find the offender. Others believed that it may be dangerous because militsiya may accuse an innocent person and beat a confession out of him or her. Yet others were reluctant to ask militsiya for help out of fear that militsiya collaborated with criminals, in which case reporting a crime involved the risk of retaliation. The unwillingness to cooperate with militsiya has created a situation where citizens have to be self-reliant in protecting themselves against crime. Interviewees offered abundant evidence illustrating attitudes of self-sufficiency, making it possible for them to survive in circumstances where militsiya cannot be trusted [49]. So, respondent reported becoming more vigilant in the post-Soviet period, trying to avoid potentially dangerous situations where they could become crime victims. Various steps taken by citizens to protect themselves against crime were listed,

ranging from installing heavy locks on doors to acquiring guns. Some interviewees used private security firms to guard their persons and property. Others paid militsiya to protect their businesses. Yet others employed services of organised criminal groups. Organized criminal groups may offer long-term protection or one-off services to individuals and businesses. The examples offered by respondents involved gangsters investigating crime, settling disputes, recovering debts and administering punishments. Some respondents offered examples of people administering punishments with their own hands.

Militsiya respondents also expressed self-reliant attitudes. They argued in interviews that the state had 'abandoned' its employees and failed to guarantee them a decent existence, so they have to look for ways to top up their salaries. Many militsiya officers have second jobs (for example, working as private security guards or transporting valuables), but there is also a variety of more questionable ways to augment income. Examples provided by militsiya in interviews ranged from planting incriminating evidence and then extracting bribes from people who have been falsely accused, to charging citizens for the very services the militsiya are under a duty to perform (such as finding stolen property), to issuing fake documents, selling weapons and secret information to criminals, covering up crimes, falsifying evidence and fabricating criminal cases or closing them for a payment.

When asked at the end of interviews what could be done to resolve the crisis in the militsiya and improve its public image, respondents typically expressed very pessimistic views and declared the situation to be hopeless. Even when possible solutions were suggested (such as raising salaries or better personnel selection), they were quickly dismissed, with interviewees pointing out that resolving the crisis in the militsiya would require fundamental changes at various levels of the Russian society, and to expect such radical social transformations is unrealistic.

Discussion: the unintended consequences

Three main stories arise from my interviews: stories of abuse, pessimism and self-reliance. These stories reveal the complexity of attitudes and behavioural orientations that evolved in order to deal with organisational failures of the militsiya. When they combine, these narratives and behavioural orientations espoused by citizens produce paradoxical social effects. While the behaviours in question emerged as a response to the inability of the state to protect its citizens, they offer virtually no scope for eradicating – indeed they help to entrench – unwanted social conditions.

Take, for example, the stories of abuse. These stories typically involved complaints and grievances about the wrongs which respondents (and other people they knew or heard of) have been subjected to, expressed despair and hopelessness, often contained rhetorical questions, and never attempted to suggest solutions to the situation. Many passages in these stories were similar to laments observed by Nancy Ries in early *perestroika* years which she calls 'litanies' [34]. Such laments may be viewed as a Russian cultural mode of speaking, or a ritual that involves a particular way of expressing people's concerns, fears, anxieties and frustrations about irresolvable problems and contradictions of Russian social life. Importantly, Russian laments are not merely

ways of speaking about the world. They are also a way of acting in the world. They are instrumental, as well as expressive. They reaffirm and reproduce certain dispositions. Far from encouraging people to oppose actively injustice and oppression, the laments enable them to rehearse themselves into stances of passivity and victimisation. The laments may be a strategy of coping with trouble. Yet, inadvertently they may help to cause – or at least allow – toleration of more trouble [34].

While at the beginning of the stories of abuse told by members of the public militsiya were presented as the agent of abuse, as stories evolved, other villains – the powerful and the wealthy – were added and blamed for the suffering of ordinary people. Stories of individual victimisations by militsiya were combined with stories of collective victimisations experienced by ordinary Russian people both today and throughout history. Such stories created a sense of identification and belonging of the speaker to a timeless moral community of the long-suffering Russian people and led them to view their individual suffering as a drop in the ocean of collective pain. Somehow these stories made suffering appear natural and inescapable, an inalienable part of the existence of the historically abused and enslaved Russian people. Such narratives may serve to affirm the sense of inevitability of both individual and collective powerlessness and reinforce modes of thinking characterised by passivity and fatalism.

Respondents in this study were reluctant to discuss possibilities of resolving the crisis in the militsiya. The pessimistic stance adopted by them made them see attempts to change the current situation for the better as naive and unrealistic. The awareness of dishonesty and ulterior motivations of militsiya and other powerful actors led respondents to accept deceit by the powerful as the only conceivable reality and resulted in the entrenchment of the sense of hopelessness. When such fatalist narratives are provided and people recognize events as unavoidable, they abandon attempts to imagine alternative possibilities of how events could develop. In the process social conditions which otherwise could be questioned become normalised and the scope of what aggravations are acceptable is widened [39].

This study has found very little evidence of active challenges or explicit contestations to abuses of power by militsiya. Perhaps some rare examples provided by the interviewees who refused to pay *dan*' could count as resistance to predatory behaviour by militsiya. Such examples illustrate that attempts to resist militsiya's abuse of their position happen. However, they tend to take the form of isolated actions against individual militsiya officers in specific cases of injustices, and they do not directly engage broader social relations that keep producing individual injustices. Due to their atomised nature, they cannot attend to the roots of the oppressive social conditions and thus cannot affect general relational tendencies. To transform the broader relational matrixes that breed individual injustices, collective political action by their actual and potential victims would be required. Unfortunately, no evidence of such concerted action was found in this study.

A somewhat similar argument can be made regarding the stories of self-reliance shared by respondents. Empowerment and a sense of moral worth was expressed by those respondents who took charge of their own safety. Likewise, some militsiya may feel empowered through inventing ways of topping up their official salaries. Attitudes of self-reliance of militsiya and ordinary citizens could have undesirable effects which stem from the individualised character of the behavioural orientations which they entailed. These behaviours effectively translated collective conundrums into problems that could be resolved at an individual level. Yet, dealing with each case on an individual basis addresses only one dimension of complex social and political relations that nurture such cases. Changing conditions which generate victimisations would necessitate determined collective actions directed at various facets of the relations at hand. The attitudes of autonomous, self-reliant individuals which respondents cultivated not only failed to ameliorate the undesirable social conditions, but also helped to reproduce them. By creating an impression that problems could be effectively resolved on a case-by-case basis, tensions were dispersed and attention diverted away from the social breadth and political complexities of these problems.

Some other findings point to conclusion that behavioural orientations of Russian members of the public may help to reproduce the dysfunctional system of policing. One such finding concerns the willingness by citizens to support corrupt practices by militsiya, while simultaneously resenting militsiya venality. So, a number of interviewees provided examples where they used bribery and informal connections within militsiya where it appeared to be a useful and effective way of resolving problems. Some bribed militsiya to obtain a release from custody or to have criminal charges dropped, others used bribes to obtain a fake document which militsiya issue, such as a driving license, a residence permit, or a vehicle registration certificate. Stories told by respondents confirm that such practices are considered as acceptable and 'normal', they have practically acquired the status of a system of relationships between militsiya and the public. These practices present a formidable barrier to creating a transparent and lawful system of policing. Inadvertently citizens help to preserve the system they resent by participating in them on a daily basis.

Similar results are produced by another tendency: the unwillingness to turn to law in an attempt to hold militsiya to account for wrongdoings. As has been pointed out above, respondents in this study expressed low trust in the ability of *Prokuratura* and the judiciary to protect them, citing examples of arbitrariness of *Prokuratura* and unfair judicial decisions. It was clear from interviews that when citizens experience abuse by militsiya, normally they do nothing to try and bring wrongdoers to justice. If people take steps to minimise the impact of militsiya abuse (for example, to release a person falsely detained by militsiya), typically their recourse is not to courts which they distrust, but to informal mechanisms. With the help of side payments and informal pressures they may resolve their predicaments in a case at hand. Yet in the process they allow toleration of more abuse of power by militsiya who go unpunished for their wrongdoings. The underlying power relations that have generated abuse in the first place remain unopposed and allowed to perpetuate.

Equally problematic is the finding that it is not uncommon for citizens searching solutions to their problems to turn to criminal networks. Such private methods used by citizens to compensate for dysfunctional policing challenge the rule of law and present threats to human rights. When people rely on self-help, another important implication is the inequality in protection across various sections of the population, with some being in a better position to protect themselves due to their higher income, status and network connections.

So far it has been argued that Russian citizens, by virtue of their attitudes and behaviours, have passed up the chance to challenge the very social conditions they bemoan. However, it would be inaccurate to claim that their attitudes and actions completely prevented social change from taking place in post-Soviet Russia. Predatory behaviour of militsiya² and their lack of commitment to protecting citizens has generated a persistent lack of trust among ordinary people, as this empirical study has demonstrated. The lack of trust in turn has led to the adaptive and self-sufficient behaviours on the part of ordinary people some which have been uncovered in this empirical study and described above. The multitude of such everyday private actions by citizens seeking to compensate for the inability and unwillingness of militsiya to protect them have shaped the emerging post-socialist order. Each of those actions may be aimed merely at resolving a problem in an individual case, yet, combined, such actions transform the society from within, with new social networks being created and a new infrastructure being generated to make up for the failure of the militsiya to fulfill its functions.

Importantly, while change has taken place, this is not the sort of change that has a potential to transform radically the social and political relations that keep producing undesired circumstances. The new infrastructure created by 'violent entrepreneurs' (mentioned earlier in this paper) and the multitude of everyday survival techniques employed by ordinary citizens to compensate for the ineptitude and the lack of integrity on the part of militsiya enable people to survive and function amid problematic social conditions, reducing the need to oppose and change them. By offering remedies in individual cases, various forms of adaptation help to reproduce the very circumstances they were designed to amend and discourage people who have suffered though those circumstances from seeking ways to transform them and prevent future occurrences of suffering.

² Gerber and Mendelson [15] define the model of policing dominant in post-Soviet Russia as 'predatory'. The model of 'predatory policing' is characterized by police activities which are mainly devoted to personal enrichment and self-preservation of the police themselves. This model is distinguished from the 'functionalist' model (typical in most developed democracies where the police enforce law and preserve order, upholding general social interests) and the 'divided society' model (typical in authoritarian societies and societies with polarized social structures, where the police protect primarily interests of dominant groups and suppress subordinate groups or political opposition). While numerous examples of militsiya being used to suppress state opponents in contemporary Russia suggest that Russian model of policing may confirm to the 'divided society' model, Gerber and Mendelson argue that Russian policing corresponds more closely to the model of 'predatory policing'.

Similarly, private business activities developed and institutionalized by militsiya to compensate for the inability of the state to compensate them properly enabled militsiya to survive, despite their relatively low official pay. The substantial degree of financial independence from the state acquired by militsiya through their private business activities reduced the need to demand from the state that it meets its obligations towards its employees³.

Conclusion: vicious circle

This paper has argued that attitudes and behavioural orientations adopted by citizens in response to the failure by the militsiya – and the state broadly speaking – to protect them, stifle possibilities of unwelcome social conditions being challenged and changed. By developing attitudes and behavioural orientations characterised by self-reliance, people learn to survive in unwanted social conditions, instead of attempting to dismantle them. Similarly, as a result of finding ways to augment their official wages, militsiya manage to function in circumstances where the state fails to reward its workers properly, instead of demanding from the state that it meets its obligations towards its employees. The self-sufficient attitudes and behaviours on the part of both ordinary citizens and militsiya create an illusion that what are essentially problems of collective nature could be handled and resolved effectively on an individual basis. This generates remedial measures which do not correspond with the scale and form of the power relations at hand. Furthermore, people's pessimistic and fatalistic attitudes help to affirm profound individual and collective powerlessness. This makes the situation where the state fails to protect its citizens – indeed where its officials present danger to citizens – look acceptable and unavoidable, as well as limiting the range of options for action that could be imagined. The very social conditions which people decry are reproduced and entrenched.

Twenty years after the collapse of the Soviet empire it is clear that the transition to a democratic, pro-Western society is not going to happen in the foreseeable future. Of course, obstacles to the Russian transition are multiple, and complex historical, economic and political factors account for the lack of progress [26], [40], [38]. However, findings of this study suggest that one of the barriers may be presented unintentionally by ordinary citizens themselves: through their attitudes and everyday practices they may contribute inadvertently to the perpetuation of the social conditions which they regret. The atomised nature of their actions, combined with fatalistic attitudes, fail to produce effective engagements with political forces that breed individual and collective victimisations. The result is clinging to – instead of transforming – the very social conditions that generate those victimisations in the first place. Russia remains trapped in a vicious circle where dysfunctional policing generates public distrust towards militsiya, and public distrust in turn produces responses on the part of citizens which fail to challenge the pathological nature of policing, indeed help to cement it.

³ As has been pointed out above, as part of the recent police reforms launched by President Medvedev which have been mentioned at the beginning of this paper, salaries of militsiya's successor, politsiya, have been raised by 30%. However, it is far from obvious whether the increase in salaries will lead to the reduction in illegal ways of supplementing income. A number of interviewees in this study argued that even if salaries were raised significantly, as long as the amount of money which an officer can make using illegal means is much higher than the salary which the state can offer him or her, the temptations offered by illegal activities will remain.

References

1. Amnesty International. 2002. *Russian Federation: Denial of Justice*. [online] Available from: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR46/027/2002> [Accessed 21 September 2010].
2. Amnesty International. 2003. *Dokumenty!: Discrimination on Grounds of Race in Russian Federation*. [online] <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR46/001/2003> [Accessed 29 April 2010].
3. Amnesty International. 2006a. *Russian Federation: Preliminary Briefing to the UN Committee against Torture*. <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR46/014/2006/en> [Accessed 8 September 2010].
4. Amnesty International. 2006b. *Russian Federation: torture and forced 'confessions' in detention*. <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR46/056/2006> [Accessed 8 September 2010].
5. Amnesty International. 2007. *Russia – Amnesty International Report 2007. Human Rights in Russian Federation*. <http://www.amnesty.org/en/region/russia/report-2007> [Accessed 8 September 2010].
6. Amnesty International. 2008. *Russian Federation – Amnesty International Report 2008. Human Rights in Russian Federation*. [online] Available from: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/region/russia/report-2008> [Accessed 8 September 2010].
7. Beck A., Robertson A. 2005. Policing in Post-Soviet Russia. In: Pridemore, W.A., ed. *Ruling Russia. Law, Crime, and Justice in a Changing Society*. Lanham, Maryland: Rowan and Littlefield Publishers.
8. Beck A., Robertson A. 2009a. Policing the 'new' Russia. In Hinton, M.S. and Newburn, T., eds. *Policing Developing Democracies*. Oxon: Routledge.
9. Beck A., Robertson A. 2009b. The challenges to developing democratic policing in post-Soviet societies: the Russian experience. *Police Practice and Research*. 10, 285-293.
10. Burawoy M. 2000. Involution and destitution in capitalist Russia. *Ethnography*, 1:43-65.
11. De Vogel S. 2012. Reforming the Police. *Institute of Modern Russia*, 16 December 2012 [online] Available from <http://imrussia.org/index.php> [Accessed 24 December 2012].
12. Favarel-Garrigues G. 2011. *Policing Economic Crime in Russia. From Soviet Planned Economy to Privatisation*. London: C. Hurst and Co. Publishers.
13. Galeotti M. 2010a. Terrorism, Crime and the Security Forces. In: Galeotti, M., ed. *The Politics of Security in Modern Russia*. Farnham: Ashgate.
14. Galeotti M. 2010b. Medvedev's Police Reform is more about Control Than Reform. *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*. 7 January 2012. [online] Available from www.rferl.org/content/Medvedevs_Police_Reform_Is_More_About_Control_Than_Reform/1923207.html [Accessed 26 December 2012].
15. Gerber T.P., Mendelson S. E. 2008. Public Experiences of Police Violence and Corruption in Contemporary Russia: A Case of Predatory Policing? *Law and Society Review*, 42, 1-44.

16. Gilinskiy Y. 2000. Challenges of Policing Democracies: The Russian Experience. In Das, D. K. and Marenin O., eds. *Challenges of Policing Democracies. A World Perspective*. Amsterdam: Gordon and Breach Publishers.
17. Glaser B., Strauss A.L. 1967. *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*. Chicago: Aldine.
18. Glikin M. 1998. *Militsiya i Bespredel*. Moskva: Tsentrpoligraph.
19. Gryaznova O. 2005. Mesto pravookhranitel'nykh organov v strukture sotsial'nykh otnoshenii'. In Fond 'Obschestvennyi Verdikt', eds, *Indeks proizvola pravookhranitel'nykh organov' otsenki sociologov i kommentarii pravozaschitnikov*. Moskva: Fond 'Obschestvennyi Verdikt'.
20. Gudkov L., Dubin B., Leonova A. 2004. Militseiskoe nasilie i problema 'politseiskogo gosudarstva'. *Vestnik obschestvennogo mnenia*. 4, 31-47.
21. Gudkov L., Dubin B. 2006. Privatizatsia politsii' in Fond 'Obschestvennyi Verdikt', eds., *Indeks Proizvola pravookhranitel'nykh organov'. Otsenki sociologov i kommentarii pravozaschitnikov*. Moskva: Fond 'Obschestvennyi Verdikt'.
22. Human Rights Watch. 1999. *Confessions at any cost. Police Torture in Russia*. [online] Available from: <http://www.hrw.org/legacy/reports/1000/russia> [Accessed 29 April 2010].
23. Humphrey C. 2002. *The Unmaking of Soviet Life. Everyday Economies after Socialism*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press.
24. Khinstein, A. 2005. *Okhota na Oborotnei*. Moskva: Detektivpress.
25. Kosals L. 2010. Police in Russia: Reform or Business Restructuring. *Russian Analytical Digest*. 84: 2-5.
26. McFaul M., Trayger E. 2004. Civil Society. In: McFaul, *et al*, eds.. *Between Dictatorship and Democracy. Russian Post-Communist Political Reform*. Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.
27. Mel'nik E.A. 2001. *Obschestvennoe mnenie o militsii*. Moskva: VNII MVD Rossii.
28. Mishina E. 2012. Is Russian Police Reform Doomed? Lessons from Estonia and Georgia. *Institute of Modern Russia*, 16 December 2012 [online] Available from <http://imrussia.org/index.php> [Accessed 24 December 2012].
29. Nevirko D.D., Shinkevich V.E., Gorbach N.A. 2006. Deyatel'nost' militsii v zerkale obschestvennogo mneniya. *Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniya*. 2, 76-84.
30. Obschestvennyi Verdikt. 2009. *Otnoshenie naseleniya k reforme militsii*. Moskva: Levada Centr.
31. Polese A. 2006. Border-Crossing as a Strategy of Daily Survival: The Odessa-Chisinau Elektrichka. *The Anthropology of Eastern Europe Review*, 24, 28-37.
32. Polese A. 2009. Ukraine 2004: Informal Networks, Transformation of Social Capital and Coloured Revolutions. *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*. 25, 255-277.
33. Pustintsev B. 2000. Police Reform in Russia: Obstacles and Opportunities. *Policing and Society*. 10, 79-90.
34. Ries, N. 1997. *Russian Talk. Culture and Conversation during Perestroika*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press.

35. Rose R. 1999. How Russians Cope: Living in an Antimodern Society. *East European Constitutional Review*. 8, 68-75.
36. Rose R. 2001. When Government Fails: Social Capital in an Antimodern Russia. In B. Edwards, M. W. Foley and Diani, M., eds. *Beyond Tocqueville: Civil Society and Social Capital in Comparative Perspective*. Hanover, NH: University Press of New England.
37. Safronov A. D. 2003. *Prestupnost' v Rossi ii kriminal'naya bezopasnost' organov vnutrennikh del*. Moskva: Yuniti-Dana, Zakon i pravo.
38. Sakwa R. 2011. *The Crisis of Russian Democracy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
39. Shevchenko O. 2009. *Crisis and the Everyday in Postsocialist Moscow*. Indiana University Press: Bloomington and Indianapolis.
40. Shevtsova L. 2008. *Russia – Lost in Transition. The Yeltsin and Putin Legacies*. Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.
41. Skoibeda U., Kots, A. 2005. Pochemu menty pytayut i berut vzyatki. *Komsomol'skaya Pravda*, 6, 7, 10 June 2005 [online] Available from <http://www.kp.ru/daily/23523/40658/> [Accessed 16 April 2013].
42. Stenning A., Smith A., Rochovska A. and Swiatek D. 2010. *Domesticating Neo-Liberalism. Spaces of Economic Practice and Social Reproduction in Post-Socialist Cities*. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell.
43. Strauss A., Corbin J. 1990. *Basics of Qualitative Research. Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques*. Newbury Park - London – New Delhi: Sage Publications.
44. Strauss A., Corbin, J. 1998a. Grounded Theory Methodology: An Overview. In Denzin, N. K. and Lincoln, Y.S., eds. *Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry*. Thousand Oaks - London - New Delhi: Sage Publications.
45. Strauss A., Corbin, J. 1998b. *Basics of Qualitative Research. Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*. Thousand Oaks – London – New Delhi: Sage Publications.
46. Uildriks N., Van Reenen, P. 2003. *Policing Post-Communist Societies. Police-Public Violence, Democratic Policing and Human Rights*. Antwerp-Oxford-New York: Intersentia.
47. Volkov V. 2002. *Violent Entrepreneurs. The Use of Force in the Making of Russian Capitalism*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press.
48. Wilson D., Kolennikova O., Kosals L., Ryvkina R., Simagin, Y. 2008. The 'economic' activities of Russian Police. *International Journal of Police Science and Management*. 10: 65-75.
49. Zernova M. 2012. Coping with the failure of the police in post-Soviet Russia: findings from one empirical study. *Police Practice and Research*. 13, 474-486.