

Russian Security State

GOVT-5519/IPOL-3519/REES-5519/SEST-6763

Lecture 00

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What is the **Russian Security State?**

Russian security state:

government decision-making and administrative activity in areas of

- military strategy, capabilities and operations
- diplomacy and foreign relations
- intelligence collection and analysis
- crime and law enforcement
- energy and critical infrastructure
- natural resources
- disaster response
- protection of human rights

by the Russian Federation and its predecessor states

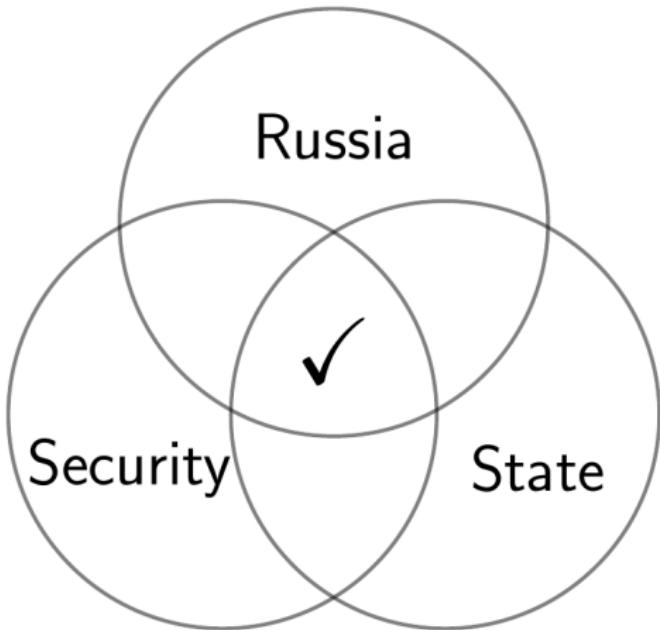


Figure 1: This is us



Figure 2: Map of Russia

This moment in Russian and global history



Figure 3: Alaska summit, August 2025



Figure 4: Tip of the spear



Figure 5: Deep strike

Casualties in the Russian-Ukrainian War (as of August 2025)

Side	Military KIA	Named KIA	KIA+WIA+MIA+POW
Russia	213,000 - 300,000	124,832	1,000,000 - 1,075,160
Ukraine	70,000 - 100,000	73,920	350,000 - 400,000

Convicts in Russian units: 140,000 - 180,000 (50-90% casualties)
Estimated Ukrainian civilian deaths: 14,000+ (lower bound)

Sources: BBC, MediaZona, UK MoD, Ukrainian GenStaff, UALosses

How did Russia get here?

How bad were the “Wild 90s”?

- bad
- worse than US Great Depression
- 50% GDP loss 1989-1993
- poverty rate jumps from <2% to 40-50%
- life expectancy falls 10 yrs for men, 4 yrs for women
- hyperinflation (ruble:USD)
 - .5:1 in 1980s
 - 40:1 in 1991
 - 5000:1 in 1997
 - re-denominated 1/1000
 - 30:1 after 2000
 - now about 100:1
- economic inequality



Figure 6: Boris Yeltsin

Economic trajectory since collapse of USSR

Economic recovery in 2000s

- eightfold rise in GDP
- significant rise in wages, pensions paid on time
- poverty, unemployment down
- foreign investment, trade up (until 2014...)
- inflation down
- consumer spending up
- emergence of a middle class

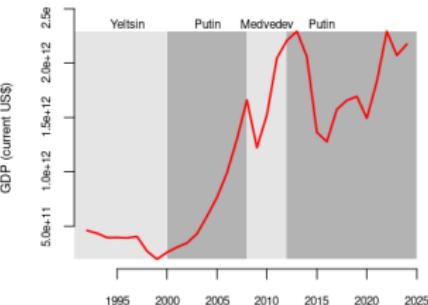


Figure 7: Russia's GDP

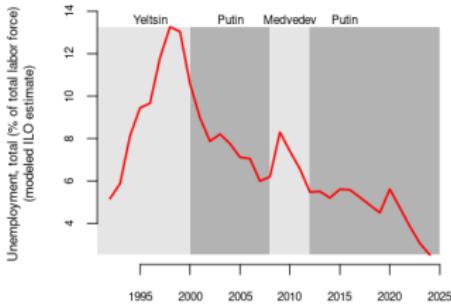


Figure 8: Unemployment

A more connected Russia

- more cell phones than people
- vast majority of Russians have internet access
- Russians traveling more abroad (until 2014...)

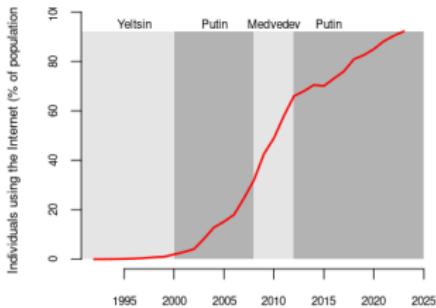


Figure 9: Internet Usage

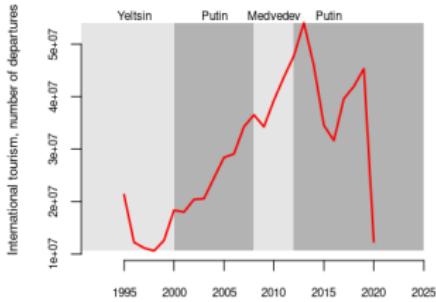


Figure 10: Tourism Departures

Demographic trends since collapse of USSR

Demographic rollercoaster

- population decline in 1990s
- population started growing again in 2000s
 - fertility up
 - mortality down
 - life expectancy up
- trade-off: female participation in labor force went down
- population now falling again

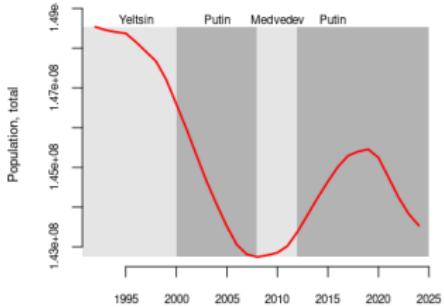


Figure 11: Population

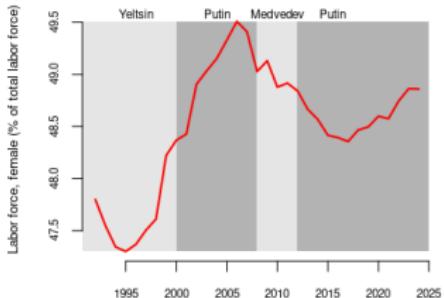


Figure 12: Women Labor Force

Oil and gas

How important are commodity prices? (oil, natural gas)

- very
- but Russia becoming less dependent on resource rents
- and has a cushion against oil price shocks

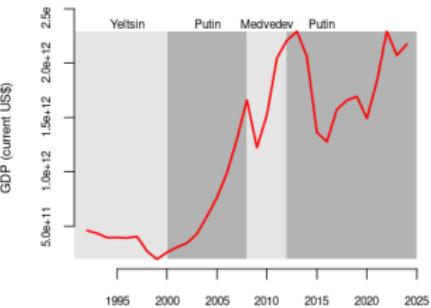


Figure 13: Russia's GDP

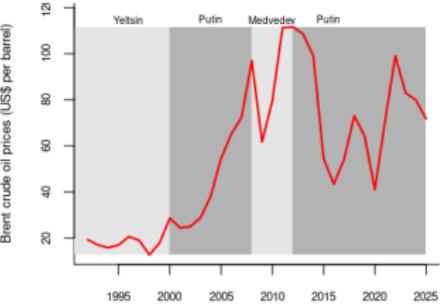


Figure 14: Crude Oil Prices

Foreign and security policy

Military modernization

- huge reduction in troop numbers after Soviet collapse
(interrupted by Chechnya Wars of 1994-1995, 1999-2009)
- rise in military spending in 2000s
- major reforms started in 2008
(shift away from Soviet-style mass mobilization model)
- but reforms never completed
- now mismatch between military capabilities, political objectives

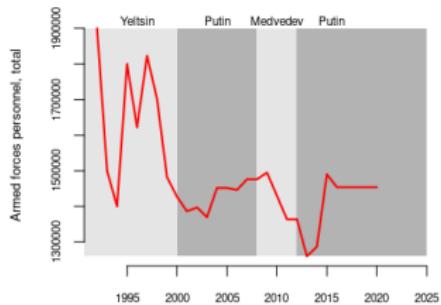


Figure 15: Military Personnel

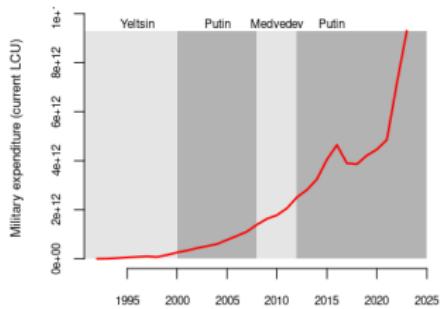


Figure 16: Military Spending

Democracy and civil liberties

Democracy and civil liberties

Putin's first 8 years

- close independent TV media
- raise barriers in elections
(5% → 7% threshold in Duma)
- direct appointment of (most) governors and mayors
- remove “against all” option on election ballots
- ban “distortion of Soviet role in World War II”



Figure 17: The Democrat

Democracy and civil liberties

From 2012 to 2021

- new restrictions on protests
- restrictions on online media
- criminalize actions that “offend religious feelings”
- criminalize “propaganda of homosexuality to minors”
- ban swearing in the arts
- campaign vs “national traitors”
- domestic violence decriminalized
- presidential term limits nullified
- human rights NGOs shut down
- VPNs banned
- repression of liberal opposition



Figure 18: The Czar

Democracy and civil liberties

Since 2022

- last independent media shut down (Rain, Echo of Moscow)
- media required to stick to info in MoD press releases
- up to 100K ruble fine for publicly “discrediting” army
- 15-year sentence for “knowingly false information” about war
- FB, Twitter, Insta blocked
- new military-patriotic education programs in schools
- culture of denunciation is back (parents report on children, students report on teachers)



Figure 19: Dangerous People

A new Russia

An emerging state ideology

- rejection of liberal democracy
- militarism
- cult of personality
- cult of victimhood
- defense of “traditional” values
- neo-imperial expansionism
- view of newly independent states (esp. Ukraine) as illegitimate, incapable of self-government
- genocidal rhetoric



Figure 20: Future Soldiers

Russia's Full-Scale Invasion of Ukraine, 2022-

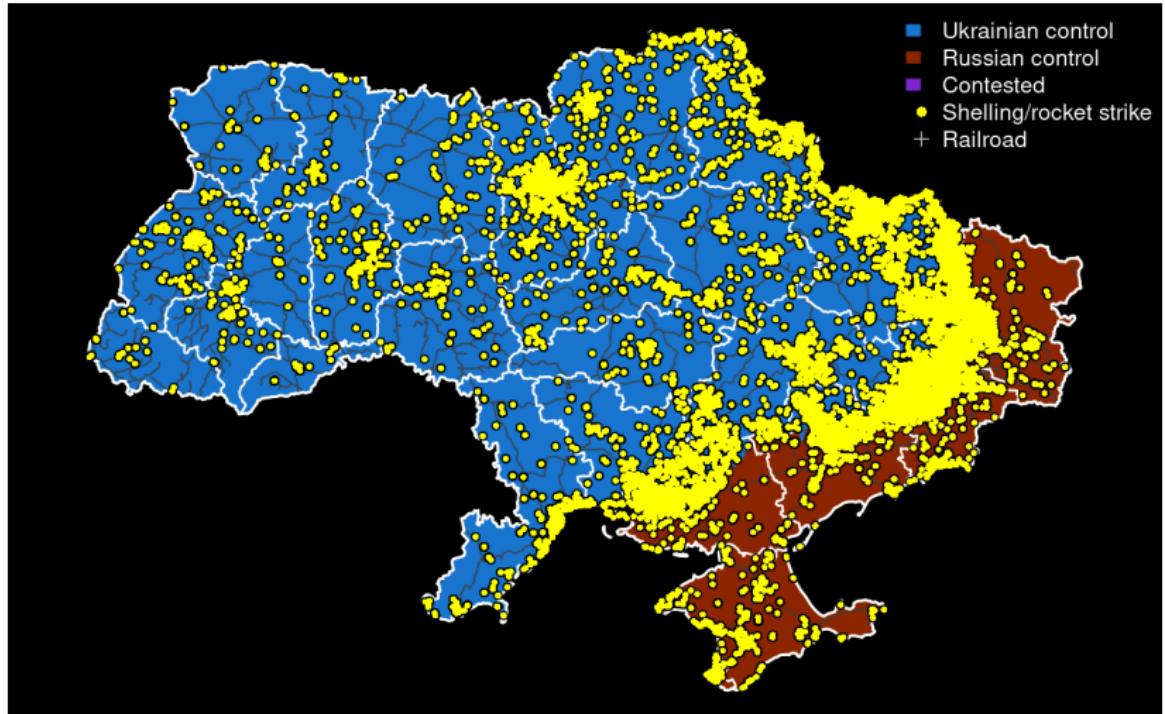


Figure 21: Violence and Territorial Control (as of August 28, 2025)



Figure 22: Bakhmut, Ukraine (May 2023)



Figure 23: PMC Wagner mutiny (June 2023)



Figure 24: Ukrainian FPV drone



Figure 25: Ukrainian FPV drone aviator

Welcome to the Russian Security State!

Why this course? Why now?

Why we are offering this class

- Russia is back at center of U.S. foreign/defense policy
- Russia has started the largest, most destructive war in Europe since WWII
- regional expertise has atrophied since 1990s
- there is a lot we don't know
- time for fundamental rethink?

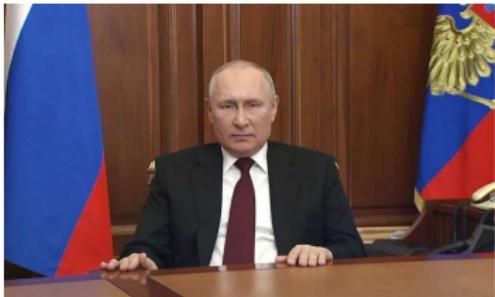


Figure 26: Vladimir Putin

Who is this course for?

Who should take this class

1. those with background in national security, who want to learn more about Russia
2. those with background in Russia, who want to learn more about national security
3. those with no background on Russia or national security, who want a crash course
4. those with background in both, who want a deeper dive



Figure 27: Prospective Student

Who am I?

Yuri M. Zhukov

Associate Professor
School of Foreign Service
Department of Government
Georgetown University



Figure 28: She looks how I feel

Tell us about yourself!

- please fill out this introductory survey (even if you're just shopping)
- tinyurl.com/gu-rss-01



Figure 29: Survey QR Code

What are we going to do here?

What are our learning goals?

1. equip you with the *background* needed to follow policy debates on Russia
 - political-economic history of Russia/USSR
 - policy and academic literature on Russia/USSR
2. develop *analytical toolkit* to contribute to these debates
 - how to locate data, primary sources
 - how to do basic program evaluation, military analysis



Figure 30: Bullseye!

What topics will we cover?

1. economic foundations of Russian national security
 - causes and legacy of serfdom
 - collectivization and forced labor
2. internal security
 - (counter-)insurgency
 - security services, repression
3. foreign and defense policy
 - WWII
 - Cold War 1.0
 - post-Soviet defense policy
 - invasion of Ukraine



Figure 31: Serfs



Figure 32: Gulag inmates

How will we learn?

- lectures
- class discussions
- surveys
- group activities
 - mock show trials
 - crisis simulation
- individual projects
 - collect new dataset, or...
 - academic research paper



Figure 33: Do your reading



Figure 34: Be ready to talk

What about grades?

1. attendance (20%)
2. participation (10%)
3. group activities (15% + 15%)
4. final project (40%)

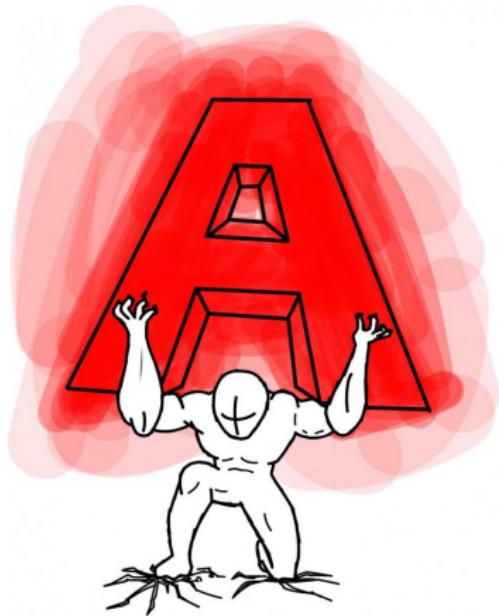


Figure 35: Work hard, get A

END OF FREE PREVIEW

To continue learning, come back in 1 week!

More info

1. check out syllabus on Canvas
 - georgetown.instructure.com/courses/215121
2. send me any course-related questions by email
 - ymz2@georgetown.edu
3. sign up for my virtual office hours
 - calendly.com/ymz2-georgetown
4. location and time
 - ICC 101, TuTh 14:00-15:15