

Personnel numbers and funding of law enforcement agencies Comparative statistical analysis of post-socialist states

by Kirill Titaev and Andrey Shcherbak

The year 2009 opened with a discussion on the possible reform of law enforcement agencies in Russia. A standard recipe of such a reform, usually recommended by international organizations, is a sharp decrease in the numbers of law enforcement personnel coupled with pay rises, increases of expenditures on equipment and on strengthening of control over security offices (which also entails expenses). Statistical data indicates that, globally, these measures indeed lead to success most of the time. Is it, however, suitable for Russia? In this piece we analyze in what ways the scale of funding as well as the number of personnel influence the productivity of police forces in the post-socialist countries: the republics of the former USSR and Eastern European countries.

The Institute for the Rule of Law has conducted a comparative study of the parameters of personnel numbers and the scale of funding of security structures in 15 post-socialist countries, including both members of the CIS and the EU, from 2006 to 2008. The analysis has shown that changes in the number of personnel and the volumes of funding of security structures significantly influence the quality of their work. The latter was measured through the quality of business environment, the level of the supremacy of law, as well as through the evaluation of the political regime.

As we have managed to establish, the standard recipe is only suitable for those countries from the above mentioned group in which the budget is not dependent on income derived from export of natural resources. Those countries that, like Russia, are able to finance the expenditures related to the security structures through hydrocarbons exports, differ from the general pattern.

A Decrease in the number of security structures employees is as important as for other countries. However, the situation is different when it concerns an increase in the salaries for the employees. The analysis has shown that an increase of security forces-related expenditures in natural resource-dependent countries leads to a worsening of the political regime and does not lead to improvements in the business sphere or to the supremacy of law.

In order to improve the quality of work of the security forces in countries dependent on oil exports, it is necessary first of all to decrease the number of employees without raising the funding levels. In those countries where the funding of security structures depends on oil revenues, law enforcement officials tend to squander the resources. Therefore, extra resources do not represent a stimulus for improvement of the quality of work. Pay rises and growth of other related expenditures will not bring about a radical change in the activities of the law enforcement organs, but may only deepen the existing problems.