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# Protecting the state: Russian repressive tactics in the North Caucasus*

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Since the end of the second Chechen campaign, the North Caucasus counterinsurgency has experienced the shift from military involvement toward prevalence of law enforcement instruments. This paper discusses the composition of repressive tactics that the Russian state developed as a result of the two decades long evolution of a counter strategy designed to eliminate illegal armed groups operating in the North Caucasus. It is focused on the late stages of conflict (2007–2014) when the violence that had spread across the region started in the early 2000s had symbolically culminated in 2007 with the proclamation of the Caucasian Emirate. This paper advances a reconceptualization of the Russian counterinsurgency by devising an analysis of indiscriminate and discriminate repressive tactics. It demonstrates that security agencies incorporated more selective uses of violence into their tactics, thereby reducing the number of indiscriminate violent actions to an insignificant level. Moreover, along with selective violence, security institutions reinforced their effort by conducting preventive work such as the detection of secret caches of weapons, seizures, and arrests. Findings regarding the current composition of repressive tactics are illustrated by means of new disaggregated media-based data that were especially collected and analyzed to form the basis of this research.

**Keywords:** Russia; North Caucasus; counterinsurgency; repressive tactics; indiscriminate violence; discriminate violence

The paper focuses on repressive elements of the Russian counterinsurgency campaign designed to mitigate the activity of illegal armed groups (IAGs) in the North Caucasus, and studies its most recent stage, the period of 2007–2014, which constitutes an example of counterinsurgency conducted in peacetime settings. This paper elucidates the government's view of the conflict which influenced the choice of the terms used, linked either to the Russian Criminal Code or to a special anti-terrorist legislation.

Three considerations justify the choice of 2007 as a starting point. First, it reflects the geographical diffusion of violence from Chechnya to neighboring republics (Bakke, O'Loughlin, and Ward 2009; Kuchins, Malarkey, and Markedonov 2011; O'Loughlin, Holland, and Witmer 2011). Second, the decline in the scale of the campaign became evident by 2007 (Kuchins, Malarkey, and Markedonov 2011; O'Loughlin, Holland, and

*The paper uses the following terms in a value-neutral sense: terrorists and insurgents as synonyms to illegal armed groups and counterterrorism and counterinsurgency as synonyms to Russian counter strategy.

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Witmer 2011; Speckhard and Akhmedova 2006; Zhukov 2012). Third, the Caucasian Emirate, the organization which inherited the separatist cause of the Chechen fighters and used it under Islamist slogans, arguing for separation of the whole North Caucasus from Russia, was created in 2007, symbolically marking the shift from nationalist to Islamist rhetoric (Cornell 2012; O'Loughlin and Witmer 2011; Souleimanov 2015a; Speckhard and Akhmedova 2006; Toft and Zhukov 2015; Vendina, Belozerov, and Gustafson 2007).

The year 2014 is the closing period of the analysis. This choice has two rationales. First, it accounts for the strengthening of "hard" counterterrorism measures due to necessity to ensure security of the Winter Olympic Games, held in Sochi in 2014. Second, 2014 saw the end of the internal dynamic of the conflict, indicating another symbolic boundary before Russian military involvement in Syria in 2015, and increased international rhetoric within the insurgents' cause.

This period constitutes a post-conflict environment. The paper findings should be read with caution, acknowledging for choice of policies suitable for a post-conflict context. Such findings, however, despite restrains of their applicability, can provide interesting insights into the construction of counterinsurgency in a peacetime situation.

The toolkit used during the Chechen wars was not suitable anymore for dispersed and low-numbered insurgency. Thus, tracing the adjustment of counterinsurgency instruments became placed in the center of this paper. It suggests disaggregating counterinsurgency strategy into tactics and examines them from the perspective of indiscriminate and discriminate violence.

Categorization of tactics constitutes a novelty of this paper. It contributes to our understanding of complexity in application of Russian counterterrorism. The paper embraces the range of tactics, including preventive ones such as seizures and detections. Combining them together with "hard" repressive methods (Baev 2005; Lyall 2009, 2010; Zhukov 2012) provides a fuller picture of the extent to which repression in various formats has been applied in the region.

The findings indicate that governmental agencies incorporated more selective uses of violence into their tactics, thereby reducing the number of indiscriminate violent actions to an insignificant level. Moreover, along with selective violence, security institutions reinforce their effort by conducting preventive work such as detection of secret caches of weapons, seizures, and arrests. However, the tendency toward the physical liquidation of suspected insurgents instead of arrest is still observed in the region.

The paper proceeds as follows. The first section provides a brief account of the tactical evolution of the Russian counterinsurgency up to 2007. The second section establishes the perspective enabling to disaggregate the repressive element of Russian counterterrorism. The third section explains the methodology. The fourth establishes geographical and temporal distribution of repressive measures across the region, and provides the reader with summary statistics on casualties. The fifth section proceeds to the application of separate tactics. And finally, the paper considers the composition of repressive tactics employed in the North Caucasus over the studied period.

## Continuing repression? Tactical evolution of Russian counterinsurgency

The North Caucasus played a remarkable role in developing the skills of the military and law enforcement forces of the Russian Federation. The Chechen campaigns and the fight with the diffused insurgency which followed resulted in legally assigning counterinsurgency and counterterrorism as essential duties of military and law enforcement agencies in Russia (FL 3 2011; FL 35 2006; FL 40 1995; President Decree 146 2010; President

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Decree 960 2003). Counter measures applied during the two wars by military forces were gradually transferred to the Federal Security Service and then to federal and regional subdivisions of the Ministry of Interior, thus shifting the strategy from a military solution to a primarily law enforcement one (Baev 2005; International Crisis Group 2012a; Koehler, Gunya, and Alkhazurov 2016; Zhukov 2012). The stakeholders engaged in counterterrorism include, but are not limited to, the National Antiterrorism Committee, the Federal Security Service, the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Defense, and the Ministry of Emergency Situations. For the purpose of this paper, assigning episodes of violence to a specific military or law enforcement actor with respect to its federal, regional, and local subdivisions (Ratelle and Souleimanov 2016; Šmíd and Mareš 2015) will be ignored. Instead, the paper will focus on tactics rather than agencies. This decision emerged from limitations of media as a source of information (Weidmann 2014), especially while reporting politically sensitive aspects such as the institutions which participated in a specific episode of repression.

The first Chechen War was fought as a large-scale conventional campaign by federal forces and had strong elements of a guerrilla war from the rebel's side (Cassidy 2008; Hughes 2007). Russian military personnel often miscalculated the potential behavior of the adversary and lacked reliable intelligence (Oliker 2001). Russian conduct of the first Chechen War came to rely on the application of indiscriminate violence. Facing war with elements of guerrilla warfare and incapable of dealing with it, federal forces resorted to extensive airpower, pursuing collective punishment of the population (Cornell 1999; Hughes 2007, 84–85; Trenin, Malashenko, and Lieven 2004).

In the interwar period, the government intended to isolate the rebellious region and prevent further diffusion of violence (O'Loughlin and Witmer 2011; Zhukov 2012). It worked poorly, permitted hostage taking, kidnappings, and criminal activities that were also perpetrated across administrative borders (Sokirianskaya 2014; Souleimanov 2015; Trenin, Malashenko, and Lieven 2004; Vendina, Belozerov, and Gustafson 2007; Ware and Kisriev 2010). The failure of these measures was indicated by the rebel invasion of Dagestan in 1999 (Zhukov 2012).

The Russian conduct of the second Chechen war resembled a mixture of counterinsurgency and counterterrorism (Hughes 2007; Trenin, Malashenko, and Lieven 2004; Vendina, Belozerov, and Gustafson 2007). Indiscriminate violence, massively employed by means of artillery and aviation, was "simple but effective" (Grodnenskii 2010; Hughes 2007; Lapidus 2012; Speckhard and Akhmedova 2006; Trenin, Malashenko, and Lieven 2004). It greatly damaged infrastructure but decreased military casualties (Oliker 2001). Indiscriminate violence, however, appeared to mishandle the "hit-and-run" attacks of rebels (Grodnenskii 2010; Lyall 2009; Souleimanov 2015b; Trenin, Malashenko, and Lieven 2004). To deal with fighters, governmental institutions incorporated more targeted operations (Hughes 2007, 112–113). This tactic was usually referred to as "zachistki" or "sweeps" (Baev 2005; Grodnenskii 2010; Lyall 2010; Souleimanov and Siroky 2016; Zhukov 2012). Federal positions were significantly advanced by gradual engagement of ex-fighters in counterinsurgency operations (Ratelle and Souleimanov 2016; Šmíd and Mareš 2015; Souleimanov and Aliyev 2014, 23). Involvement of locals contributed to better intelligence which in its turn helped to make repression to the extent selective (Ratelle and Souleimanov 2016). Thus, the second war involved a tactical shift from indiscriminate to the more targeted application of violence (Kalyvas 2006; Ratelle and Souleimanov 2016; Zhukov 2012).

Matured on Chechen soil, counterinsurgency strategy has been gradually applied in the other North Caucasian republics which experienced a diffusion of the violence (Human

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Rights Watch 2008; International Crisis Group 2012a). This strategy still heavily relied upon repression (Speckhard and Akhmedova 2006). And law enforcement agencies have been focused on the targeted liquidation of suspected insurgents (International Crisis Group 2012b). And this pattern – the liquidation of those suspected in insurgency involvement rather than anything else – remains one of the main approaches (Toft and Zhukov 2012).

Thus, the evolution of the state's tactical toolkit was stipulated by adaptation to the changing circumstances. The prevalence of subversive techniques employed by IAGs challenged conventional ways of addressing the conflict in the North Caucasus and contributed to the shift from indiscriminate violence to targeted operations. Following the analysis of prior-2007 tactical evolution, the next section establishes the framework of the paper.

## Disaggregating repression

Governments employ repression to prevent a target audience from being involved in undesired collective action including terrorist, insurgent, and criminal activities (or to punish them for such involvement). Discussion about repression falls within a framework of theories of deterrence and coercion. As prerequisite for their reasoning, deterrence and coercion assume a high degree of a target's rationality in order to predict behavior within policy implementation (Dugan and Chenoweth 2012; Kydd and Walter 2002; Mueller 2001). Mechanisms of both approaches work similarly by influencing the target through manipulation of "costs and benefits" (Mueller 2001; Pape 1996). Coercion "involves persuading an opponent to stop an ongoing action or to start a new course of action by changing its calculations of cost and benefits" (Pape 1996). It is a strategy in which "the coercer prefers appearing more attractive than the alternative" (Mueller 2001). Deterrence, in its turn, is changing the actions of a target by increasing the cost where cost is perceived through punishment (Dugan and Chenoweth 2012).

Repression takes an important place among Russian governmental instruments within security provision. Russia heavily relies on repression in counterterrorism practices. The main form of repressive governmental actions is in Russian parlance the "counterterrorism operation" (CTO). In legal terms, CTO is the complex of measures involving usage of military equipment and weapons to prevent or neutralize terrorist attack, or to minimize its consequences (FL 35 2006). CTO embraces almost all types of repressive counter measures in their multiplicity. Hence, the repressive tactics considered below might be either essential or supplementary aspects of CTO. To facilitate analysis, countermeasures are further categorized. Disaggregating policy into tactics helps in considering the scale of each tactic (Kalyvas 2006). For the practical purposes, tactics will be divided into indiscriminate or discriminate.

Indiscriminate tactics are those which impact a broad segment of society and do not target particular individuals. Indiscriminate actions influence the behavior of the population "by collectively sanctioning suspected collaborators and those related to them" (Kalyvas 2006). Targets possess here some collective features and chosen upon them (Dugan and Chenoweth 2012; Toft and Zhukov 2015). Indiscriminate targeting occurs "when selective criteria are rough" (Kalyvas 2006) and the actor lacks required information to sanction someone in particular. The most widespread examples of this type are artillery barrages, cordon-and-search operations, aerial bombardment, mopping-up, and search and destroy (Kalyvas 2006; Toft and Zhukov 2015).

Discriminate (or selective) (Kalyvas 2006) policy, by contrast, is directed on the particular individuals who is known or believed to have relation to the problem which

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causes the policy. Targeting is based on individual features and affiliations (Dugan and Chenoweth 2012; Toft and Zhukov 2015). It requires precise information and "presupposes the ability to collect" it (Kalyvas 2006). Discriminate policy might work better when the population believes that the government is "able to monitor and sanction their behavior with reasonable accuracy" (Kalyvas 2006). "Arrests, targeted killings and kidnappings" can serve as examples of this type (Toft and Zhukov 2015).

Since the paper is focused on tactics employed in the North Caucasus, it distinguishes between repressive discriminate actions including special operation, shooting, arrest, seizure, and detection, while repressive indiscriminate actions incorporate regime of counterterrorist operation, clashes, and shelling. Differentiation between discriminate and indiscriminate is based on two considerations including target choice and policy coverage. Target choice presupposes the extent of available intelligence information required to pursue the operation. For discriminate operations, counterinsurgent possesses enough information for specific targeting, for indiscriminate operations, such precise information is not available. Policy coverage directly follows the degree of accuracy in a target choice: operations involving fine intelligence tend to be small-scale targeted actions; in contrast, operations lacking fine intelligence result in large-scaled actions. The next section explores the data and methodology of the paper.

## Methodology and data

This paper grounds its findings in newly collected data on counterinsurgency in the North Caucasus ("The Database of state repressive response (DSRR)"), focused on types of state repression. Building upon division of policies into discriminate and indiscriminate repressive (Dugan and Chenoweth 2012), the paper tailors this categorization to the region of study, the North Caucasus. Categorization of tactics grounds in frequency and consistency of the tactic application determined during mock data collection (three months). The choice was later supported during the full data collection. DSRR comprises 6114 dated and geocoded episodes, embraces eight years (2007–2014), and seven federal subjects (the Chechen Republic, Dagestan, Ingushetiia, Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachai-Cherkessia, Stavropol Region, and the Northern Ossetiia-Alaniia).

Repressive events were gathered manually from the open media and official sources. Media reports are known to have the risk of disinformation, censorship, underestimation, or overestimation (Baum and Zhukov 2015, 385; Kalyvas 2006, 48–51; Schmid 2004, 56; Silke 2001, 5–7; Weidmann 2014, 2–3). However, lacking a better choice, researchers naturally rely on media. Biases associated with media can be overcome by using disaggregated data (Kalyvas 2006, 51). The reasonable solution to reporting bias is to resort to the inclusion of diverse sources and triangulation (O'Loughlin and Witmer 2011, 197; Weidmann 2014, 19).

Thus, to mitigate the uncertainty in reporting, DSRR incorporates a diversity of sources including Russian national, regional, local news agencies, and governmental institutions – the Ministry of Interior and the National Antiterrorist Committee. It relies on information obtained from NGOs (3%), official reports of the state agencies (11%), and media (86%) including Russian national (25%), regional (59%), and local (2%).[1]

The possibility of reaching the initial source is seen as an essential step in data verification (LaFree 2011, 413). Thus, the dataset recorded up to five unique news articles for each event. Unfortunately, it was not possible to find five news articles for every single event. Thus, DSRR ended up with 58% of events based on a single news article, 17% based on two articles, 13% on three articles, 3% on four articles, and 9% on five articles.

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This paper constitutes the first step in exploration of a new disaggregated dataset. It primarily aims at presenting various repressive tactics employed by the Russian state and illustrates that the counterinsurgency tool in peacetime is skewed toward discriminate repression. The paper, thus, uses descriptive statistics including mean values associated with repression as well as its distribution across the studied region. The next sections demonstrate the analysis of aggregated scale of repressive measures.

## Counterterrorism in action (aggregated scale)

This section examines aggregated repression imposed by the state on IAGs. It accounts for its regional variability and change over time. The section also analyses the "cost" of repressive measures for both the state agencies and IAGs in terms of irrevocable losses.

As shown by Figure 1, where the number of repressions was regressed against itself over time, the application of repressive measures experienced an overall downward trend. The only significant peak was reached in July–August 2011 and was caused by an increase of seizures, provoked by the new wave of the initiative "Weapon" in Kabardino-Balkariia conducted in June–October 2011 (card.sk-news.ru 2011).

It is logical to contrast the temporal change of repressions to attacks. Hence, Figure 2 exhibits two time series including the change over time in the number of attacks and the governmental response. It becomes evident that only after 2011 both insurgent activity and the scale of repressions started to decrease.

It is notable that the application of repressive measures follows the seasonal cycle, indicating the highest intensity of repressive operations occurring in summer. Summer months are traditionally bloodier since the weather allows insurgents to move freely, use forest camps in the difficult-to-reach terrain, conduct attacks against their targets, and then hide quickly. That might not be necessarily the case in winter months with low temperatures and heavy snow. Thus, the more attacks occur, the more repressive measures are witnessed

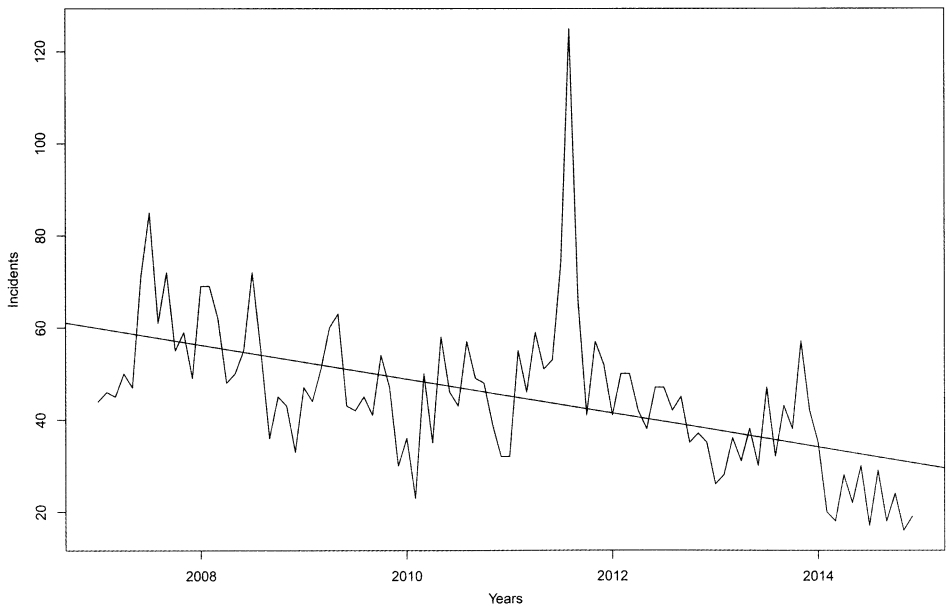



Figure 1. Downward trend in repressive measures in the North Caucasus.

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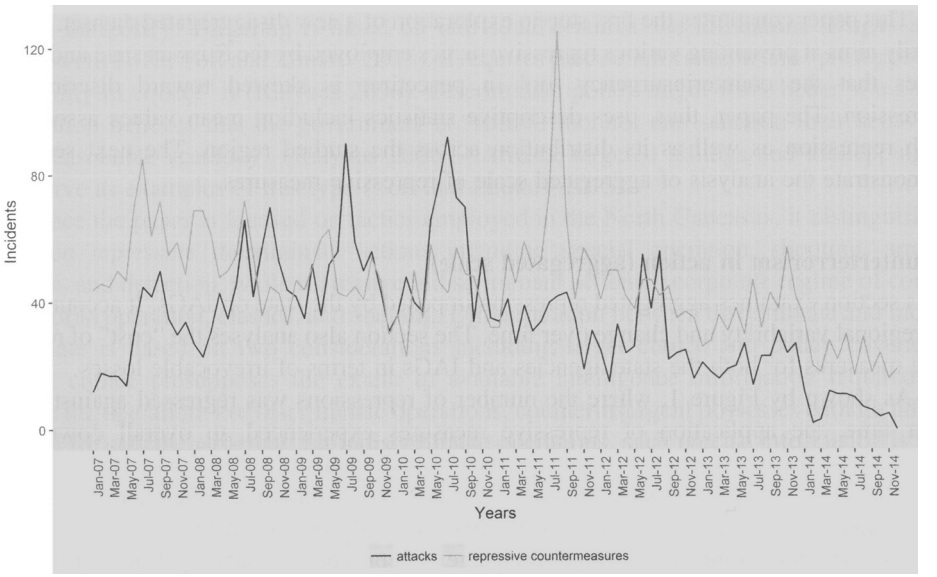



Figure 2. IAG-intiated attacks and repressive conteractions in the North Caucasus.

in the region. Figure 3 shows the change in the mean number of repressive operations happening monthly from January to December over 2007–2014. For example, the mean value of operations conducted in March in 2007–2014 is approximately 45 actions. This seasonal change illustrates the significant rise in the application of repression in the summer months. July–August experiences the highest number of repressive countermeasures.

Repressive operations exhibit variability not only across a year but also within the same month. Figure 3 shows the fluctuations of repressions from January to December. It indicates that the repression rate does not remain constant. For example, the month with the highest average variability is July, having the range of attacks from 10 to 90, with a median value of 50 actions.

Furthermore, application of repression varies across the region. Map 1 illustrates the density of repressive operations which are clearly clustered around central parts of Chechnya, Ingushetiia, and Dagestan, where flat terrain meets mountains. Operations are also clustered around such cities as Nazran, Grozny, Makhachkala, Khasaviurt, and Nalchik. Despite repressive operations being spatially diffused, they are the main intensity spots.

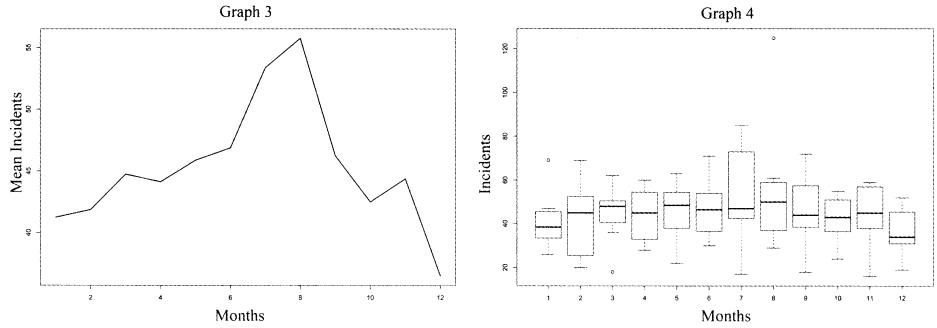


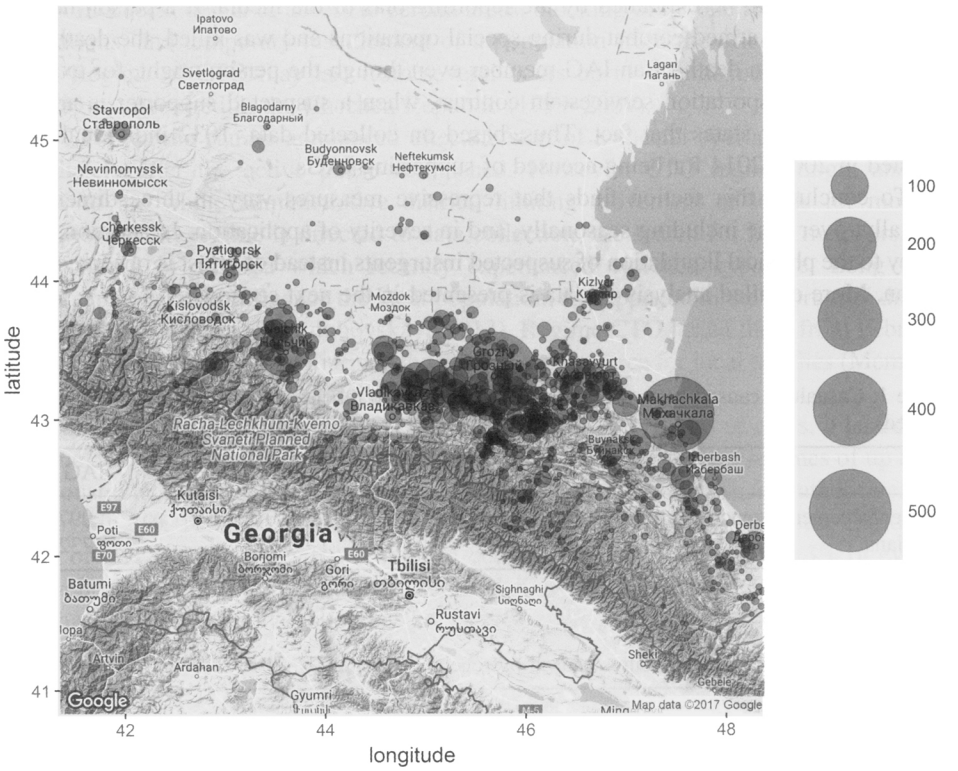

Figure 3. Monthly fluctuations of repressive measures in 2007–2014 (January–December).

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The spatial distribution of the total amount of repressive actions demonstrates that two republics employ repressions the most: Chechnya with 42.6% and Dagestan with 30.7%. The next group of republics differs significantly in terms of quantity of operations, and includes Ingushetiia with 10.3% and Kabardino-Balkaria with 11.3% of cases. The rest of the republics show tiny numbers of actions, led by the Stavropol region with 2.3%, followed by North Ossetia with 1.5% and Karachay-Cherkessia with 1.3% of cases.

However, the low rate does not mean low impact. The number of actions says little regarding their outcome. And the impact can only be seen through the severity and type of measures. The federal subject can employ a large number of preventive actions, like seizures, which impact the general level of criminality. In contrast, it can conduct a few actions directed at physical liquidation of insurgents. Since it is physical liquidation of IAGs' members to challenge the group survival (Byman 2006; Cronin 2009; Hafez and Hatfield 2006), the paper uses the rate of killed insurgents to illustrate the need to account for actions outcome, not just their quantity. The total number of killed insurgents was counted for the whole region, and then the rate for each federal subject was calculated. For instance, the highest rate of killed insurgents, 48%, is observed in Dagestan. Chechnya accounts for 21%. Ingushetiia demonstrates 14% and Kabardino-Balkaria 13%. The rest of federal subjects exhibit equally low rates of killed insurgents.

Notably, majority of federal subjects tend to liquidate suspected insurgents rather than arrest them. For instance, 1085 suspected insurgents were killed in Dagestan but only 330




Map 1. Distribution of countermeasures (2007–2014). Source: author.

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were arrested over the studied period. Ingushetiia and Kabardino-Balkariia also demonstrate the same trend as Dagestan, showing prevalence in liquidation. Counterintuitively, and in opposition to anecdotal evidence, Chechnya had 477 suspected insurgents killed but 771 arrested, being more inclined toward arrests. Of course, it is not possible to make thorough conclusions regarding the nature of response based on these numbers, yet they can serve as an illustration.

Another dimension worth mentioning is the "cost" of repressions. Repressive state response involves significant casualties among law enforcement institutions. Over the studied period, military, security, and police forces lost 422 officers. Such "cost" of counterterrorism is smaller than casualties among law enforcement personnel caused by insurgent attacks. Targeting of military men, security, and police officers conducted by insurgents resulted in 997 deaths. In addition, countermeasures are not free from collateral damage. Thus, 32 individuals, admitted by law enforcement agencies to be civilians, were accidentally killed during special operations. Civilian losses caused by direct rebel attacks constituted 732 people killed, as shown by Table 1.

As mentioned above, the measures taken in the region largely gravitate toward liquidation of insurgents. Table 2 illustrates that countermeasures resulted in the death of a sizeable number of suspected IAGs members, namely, 2255 individuals. In contrast, 1402 suspected insurgents were arrested. Despite the intention of law enforcement officers to end countermeasures by negotiations leading to surrender of suspects, it happens more often that the latter are killed. The intention to liquidate suspected insurgents is supported on the high political level (NAK 2011).

Notably, the number of killed supporters is quite low, comprising 19 individuals, a figure which might be explained by the reporting bias of the media. If a person happens to be involved in armed combat during special operations and was killed, the death tends to be reported as a death of an IAG member even though the person might, for example, provide just transportation services. In contrast, when a suspected supporter is arrested, the media clearly states that fact. Thus, based on collected data, 1032 individuals were arrested in 2007–2014 for being accused of supporting IAGs.

To conclude, this section finds that repressive measures vary in three dimensions: spatially, over time including seasonally, and in severity of application. In addition, a tendency to the physical liquidation of suspected insurgents instead of arrest is observed in the region. More detailed analysis of data is presented in the next section.

Table 1. Casualties caused by countermeasures compared to rebels' actions in 2007–2014 (killed/injured).

| | Countermeasures | IAG attacks |
|---|---|---|
| Law enforcement agencies (military, security, police) | 422/1020 | 997/2082 |
| Civilians | 32/72 | 732/1541 |

Table 2. Results of countermeasures caused by rebels' actions 2007–2014 (killed/arrested).

| | Countermeasures | IAG attacks |
|---|---|---|
| IAG members | 2255/1402 | 200/9 |
| IAG supporters | 19/1032 | 3/0 |

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## Counterterrorism in action (disaggregated scale)

This section examines the variety of tactics embodied in Russian counter-strategy tailored for peacetime settings. It builds on the previous research of bombings (Grodnenskii 2010; Lyall 2009; Souleimanov 2015; Trenin, Malashenko, and Lieven 2004); special operations, or "zachistki" ("sweeps") (Baev 2005; Lyall 2010; Zhukov 2012); ability to identify and neutralize IEDs and mines (Thomas 2005); and group of tactics such as denial, measures restraining physical channels of communication between peaceful and violent zones "through cordoning, roadblocks, and similar quarantine-like measures" (Toft and Zhukov 2012); and measures associated with punitive operations "such as search-and-destroy missions, artillery shelling, air strikes, and raids at sites of recent violence" (Toft and Zhukov 2012). However, the section goes further and analyzes the variety of disaggregated tactics combining both direct and indirect counterterrorist tools.

### *Indiscriminate repressive tactics*

Indiscriminate repressive tactics include a regime of CTO, clash, and shelling and will be discussed in that order.

#### *Regime of counterterrorist operation*

A "regime of counterterrorist operation" (Regime CTO) is a legal regime enabling responsible agencies to apply security measures on a defined territory, in order to prevent or protect society from terrorist attack (FL 35 2006). It includes a wide array of measures such as ID check, denial of access to certain areas, blocking of mobile and electronic communications, and temporary resettlement of a population from the affected areas (FL 35 2006). Regime of CTO may last from several hours up to several months. The longest CTO regime occurred in the Chechen Republic (1999–2009).

A CTO regime can be announced after the start of a special operation and be ended immediately after the active phase is finished. However, CTO regime might also be applied to the whole administrative district, limiting movement of locals for months. Such a long CTO regime is directed to data collection, the search for IAG members, and easier control of an area which recently experienced violence exposure. Long CTO regime can negatively influence the local population, as happened in the Elbrusskii district of Kabardino-Balkariia (Starodubovskaya 2013). Regime CTO lasted there from February to November 2011 damaging tourism, the main income source for local families (Memorial Human Rights Center 2011; Starodubovskaya 2013).

Regime of CTO constitutes 6.04% of recorded events. In 76.2% of cases, it lasted less than one day, meaning that it reached results quickly. Short-term CTO regimes of up to 10 days constitute 17.2% of cases, whereas more long-term CTO regimes are rather rare: 20–100 days in 3%, 100–200 days in 0.3%, and 200–300 days in 1.9% of cases. The distribution of CTO demonstrates that it is most common in Dagestan, with 56.3% of events. It is well presented in Ingushetiia (16.9%) and Kabardino-Balkariia (16.4%). Much less CTO happens in Chechnya, showing only 4.9% cases. The rest of the republics rarely resort to this measure.

#### *Clash*

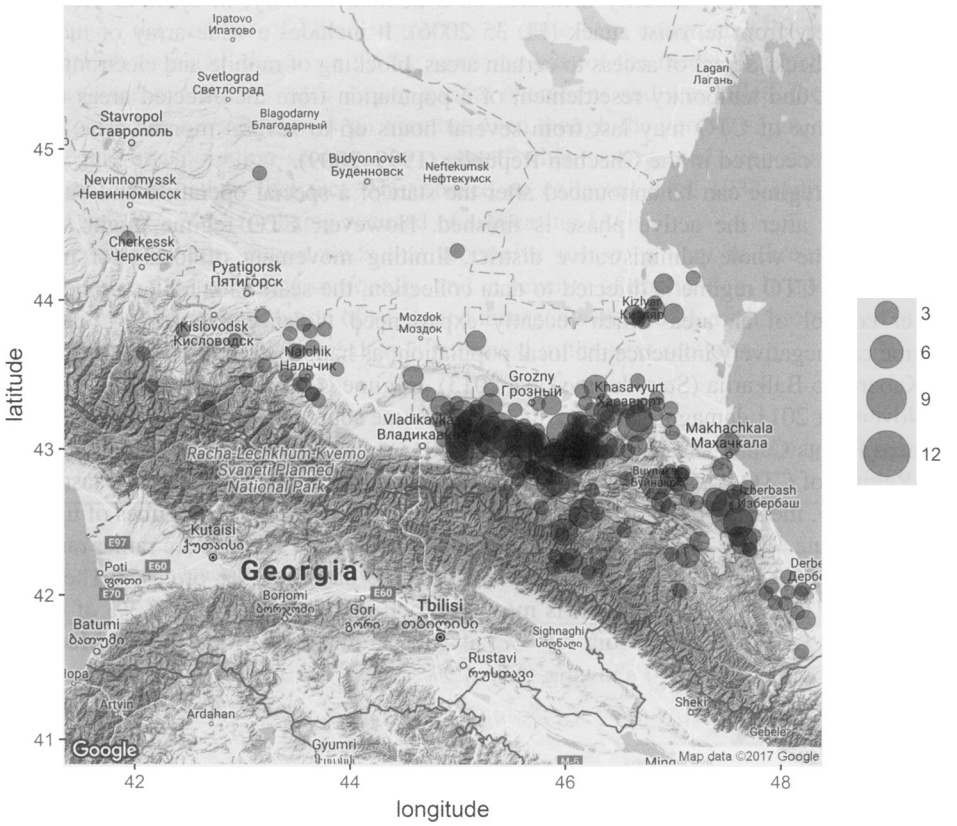
"Clash" is an operation coordinated by target, location, and time, and aimed at the liquidation of the enemy or implementation of other tasks (Plekhov 1988). Clashes often happen as

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a result of preventive searching in forests or mountainous areas when military forces/police/security forces incidentally meet IAGs members. Almost 70% of all clashes occur in forests and mountains, and only 6% in cities or villages. "Clash" is sub-divided into small-scale and large-scale combat. Small-scale clashes involve groups of rebels with less than 10 people at the time of incident. It is the most common type within this category, and comprises 87.6% of events. In contrast, large-scale clashes constitute 12.2% of cases, and describe a situation when law enforcement agencies engage in armed combat with groups of over 10 IAG members. Notably, large-scale combats are grouped in mountains bordering flat terrain in Chechnya.

Clashes tend to occur in the mountain areas of Ingushetiia, Chechnya, and Dagestan, as shown by Map 2. Law enforcement personnel engage more often in direct combat with rebels in Chechnya than their counterparts in other constituencies. Hence, 50.3% of clashes took place in Chechnya. Dagestan uses this type of repressive countermeasures broadly as well, which is illustrated by 32.5% of clashes occurring there. Ingushetiia had 11% of clashes, whereas other republics do not show significant presence of such operations on their territories.

Clashes often involve many casualties. Despite constituting only 7.6% out of all counter actions, they resulted in 212 officers killed and 478 injured. That is half of the total casualty count of law enforcement institutions over the observed period. Approximately 694 supposed members of illegal groups were killed and only 10 were arrested.




Map 2. Distribution of clashes (2007–2014). Source: author.

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*Shelling*

Shelling refers to bombing of the territory where IAGs are believed to hide. This tactic is used in difficult-to-reach areas to cover territory without risking personnel. Shelling is widely discussed in the academic literature, and is treated the same as aerial bombing (Lyall 2009; Pape 1996). In contrast to the Chechen wars and early post-war years (Hughes 2007; Lyall 2009; Souleimanov and Siroky 2016; Trenin, Malashenko, and Lieven 2004), the later stage of the counterinsurgency does not feature this type of indiscriminate violence. Shelling happens in 0.5% of incidents. In 75% of all recorded cases within this category, shelling was a supplementary tool applied during armed combat (clashes) in uninhabited territories. Shelling resulted in 76 IAG members killed, and two arrested. Shelling was mainly used in Chechnya (43.8%), Dagestan (34.4%), and Ingushetiia (21.9%).

***Discriminate repressive tactics***

Discriminate repressive tactics include special operation, shooting, arrest, seizure, and detection and will be discussed in that order.

*Special operation*

"Special operations," in media and official jargon referred to as "zachistki" ("sweeps") (Baev 2005; Lyall 2010; Zhukov 2012), are a type of broader measure known as counter-terrorist operation, but limited by the number of actions implemented in the settled area. It indicates cases when IAG members, or their supporters, are blocked in the building or on the streets (Sokiryanskaya and Orlov 2011).

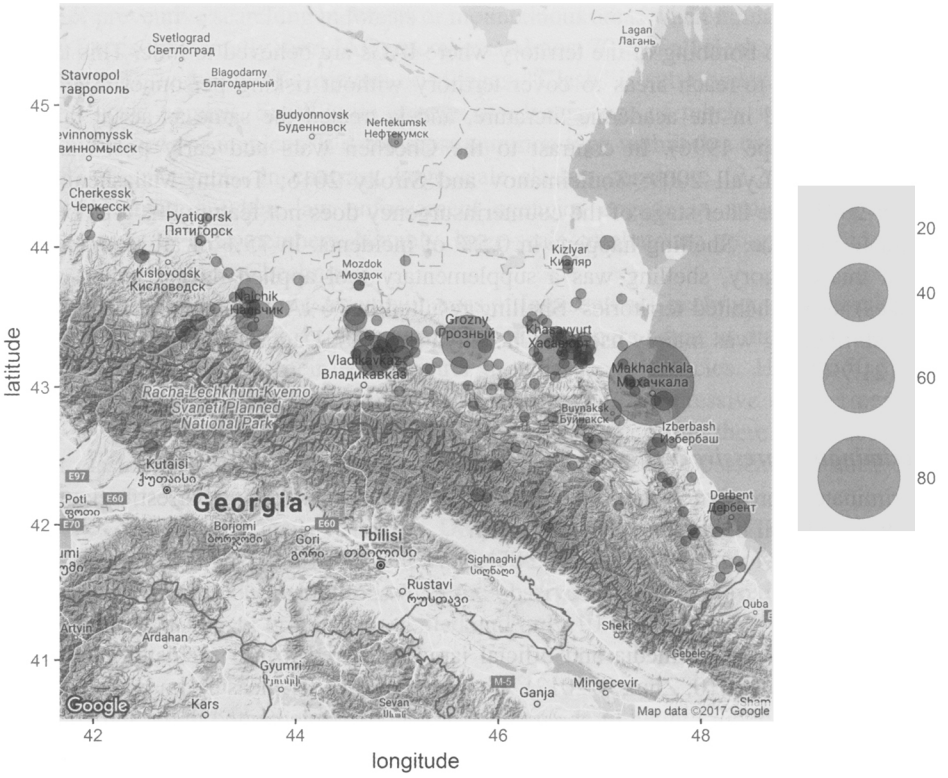
Special operations constitute 7.3% of all counter measures. This relatively modest percentage, however, still resulted in massive deaths of targets: 924 suspects were killed compared to only 130 arrested. The prevalence of death is rather unsurprising since special operation is still a form of armed combat. Despite being given a choice to surrender, once insurgents become involved in armed fighting against law enforcement agencies, the chance for negotiation gets smaller. Thus, brutal force often used by law enforcement institutions tends to lead to the death rather than to the arrest of suspects (International Crisis Group 2012b). Special operations, however, seem to be less costly for law enforcement agencies than clashes in terms of casualties among staff. The observed period showed 102 officers killed and 323 injured.

As shown on Map 3, special operations were mostly used in Dagestan with 54.2% of actions, while fewer took place in Ingushetiia (17.6% cases), Chechnya (13.5%), and Kabardino-Balkariia (11.5%). Other constituencies do not demonstrate significant application of this tactic.

*Shooting*

Shooting involves the use of small arms by law enforcement agencies and perpetrators. The paper distinguishes shooting during ID checks and shooting during arrests. Shooting during ID checks can occur when a suspected IAG perpetrator declines to show ID when asked by law enforcement personnel. Shooting during arrest refers to refusal of a person suspected in IAG activity to follow the request to give him/herself up. Usually, shooting occurs when a suspect demonstrates aggression against the police. Sometimes, law enforcement officers conduct ID checking house by house and only incidentally find

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Map 3. Distribution of special operations (2007–2014). Source: author.

an IAG member. Another occasion is checking ID at checkpoints, when perpetrators refuse to stop their car and exchange fire with police. Shooting occurring during an ID check comprises 78% of cases within this category. The other 22% of cases refer to failed attempts to arrest a target.

Shooting resulted in 611 suspects killed and 36 arrested. This type of countermeasure entailed considerable casualties among law enforcement agencies, involving 86 officers killed and 189 injured. However, it certainly does not eliminate risks to civilians, with 11 bystanders killed and 35 injured.

This type of countermeasure symbolizes enhanced security control in the cities and on roads and constitutes 8% of repressive counter operations. Shooting mostly occurs in Dagestan (43.1%), Kabardino-Balkaria (25.3%), Chechnya (16%), and Ingushetiia (11.5%) as illustrated by Map 4.

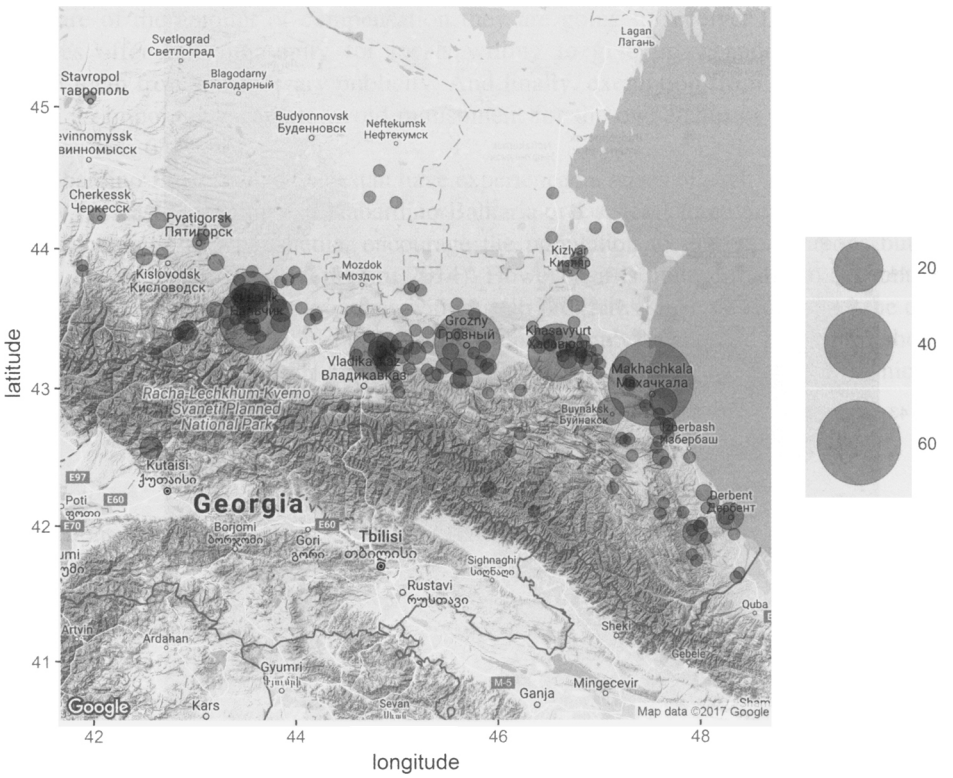
### *Arrest*

Arrest is an action of procedural compulsion implemented by respective law enforcement agency for the period of 48 hours directed to a person suspected in the commission of a crime (FL 174 2001; FL 3 2011). It also includes cases of giving oneself up, as a voluntary notification to the respective law enforcement agency about a crime committed by the notifying person (FL 174 2001). Giving oneself up constitutes 13% of all arrests, where the remaining 87% of cases presume the usual procedure of arrests.

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Arrest includes detention of IAG members and supporters as they are defined by the Russian law. The former refers to those suspected of being actively involved in IAG operations (FL 63 1996). The latter are believed to supply groups with necessary means to maintain their activities (FL 63 1996). Thus, supporters participate in insurgency by providing accommodation, transfer, food, medicines, money, or serving as intermediaries in the acquisition of supplies. Over the studied period, 1195 citizens suspected of being members of IAGs, and 1020 suspected of support to IAGs, were arrested. This category does not account for any casualties, indicating successful cases of arrests which did not have violent outcomes. Majority of arrested people are claimed to be regular members of groups, and only 1.2% of arrested members are group leaders.

It is also possible to differentiate further among arrested residents with relation to the period of their suspected involvement. Such information comes from the news articles and official reports, citing law enforcement assessments. Given that, 62% of arrested citizens were claimed to be actively involved in insurgency at the time of arrest, whereas 38% participated at some time in the past. If "current" involvement would include two years preceding the arrest, the numbers would look a little different in favor of "current" involvement, namely, 71% "current" and 29% "former." Data demonstrate that 6% of those arrested were engaged with the insurgency during the First Chechen War (1994–1996); 3% during the interwar period (1997–1998); 11% during the Second War (1999–2001); and 11% during the post-war years, up to 2006. That gives us 31% of individuals arrested for actions committed during the Chechen wars and the earlier post-war years.




Map 4. Distribution of shooting incidents (2007–2014). Source: author.

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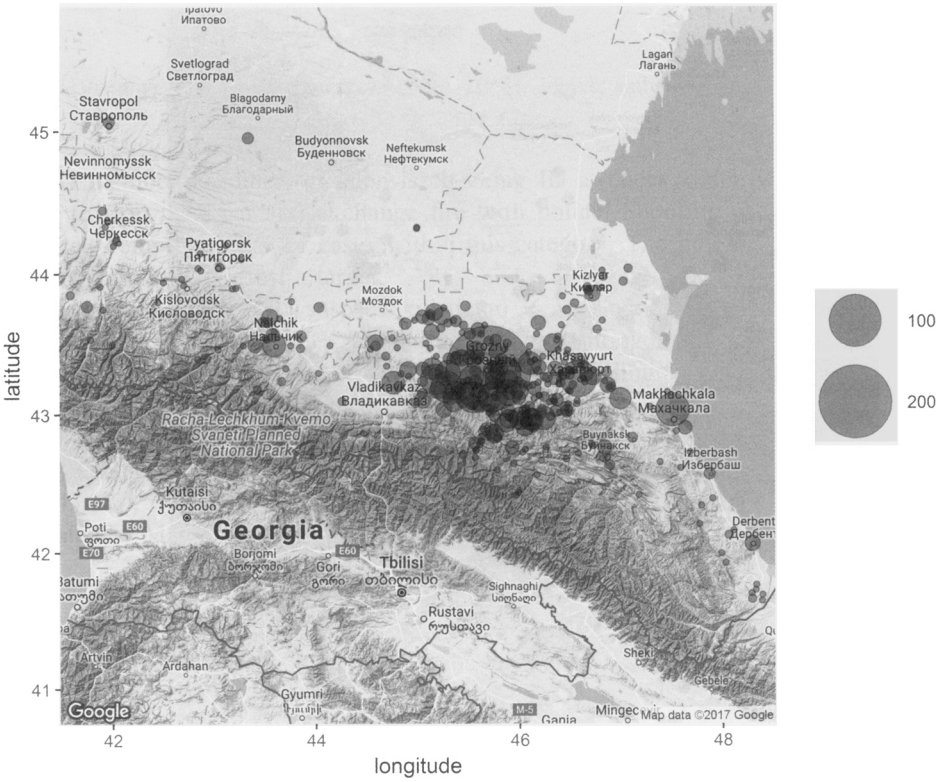
On the one hand, numbers indicating arrests of ex-fighters and supporters emphasize efforts of law enforcement agencies in their fight against terrorism, and demonstrate that involvement in IAGs will be punished even years later. Besides, ex-members might provide some information. On the other hand, a third of arrested people might no longer be involved with the insurgency but are still affected.

Arrests were physically clustered mainly in the Chechen Republic, diffusing more over time. Chechnya hosted 73.7% of arrests on its territory. Other republics showed more modest figures, including Dagestan (15%), Kabardino-Balkaria (4.6%), and Ingushetiia (4.3%) as illustrated by Map 5.

*Seizure*

"Seizure" is the confiscation of illegally owned items. It includes two sub-types of activity: weapons seizure and surrender of weapons. Weapon seizure is an important dimension of operational activity related to counter terrorism (NAK 2011). Trafficking of weapons, ammunition and explosives is placed among those factors influencing the spread of terrorism in Russia, which is why seizure is included in the dataset (Concept of Counterterrorism 2009).

Seizure is not directly related to counterinsurgency or counterterrorism measures but it is essential. The government intends to deprive the population, especially, those groups involved in insurgency, from possessing the means to attack the state. That is why broad actions dedicated to eliminating trade in illegal weapons play an important role. Seizure constitutes 14% of all counter measures and an additional 12% occur combined with other measures.




Map 5. Distribution of arrests (2007–2014). Source: author.

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Seizure, recorded by the dataset as a single action, which is not combined with other measures, accounts for 53.8% of actions. It includes episodes when citizens, their vehicles, and houses are searched to find illegally owned weapons. Many examples indicate that, along with manufactured weapons, residents possess home-made firearms and explosive devices. Home-made items are usually represented by handguns (with traumatic bullets) transferred into combat ones. Generally, what the police seize are in 14% of cases explosives, 40.4% firearms, and 44.4% multivariate types of weapon.

Seizure as a single action does not involve any casualties, neither from the side of law enforcement nor from the population. In 76.3% of cases, police seized weapons and explosives forcibly. It happens that along with weapons and explosives, police officers find extremist literature, manuals on bomb production, and other documents used by insurgents. In 23.2% of cases, residents gave up weapons voluntarily.

To enhance governmental efforts aimed at decreasing the number of illegal weapons owned by residents, some federal subjects employed special programs aimed at stimulating the population to voluntarily give up firearms, ammunition, explosives, explosive devices, and other items of this kind. Disarmament of the civil population is not a unique idea and was actively used during Soviet times (Zhirnov 2010) and later by the Russian Federation, especially after the Chechen Wars in the North Caucasus. Such programs have been actively applied in the region under different names. The most common one is "Weapon." These initiatives are based on three principles: monetary compensation, anonymity, and exemption from criminal liability (KBR Government Statement 50 2008). Monetary compensation for different types of weapon varies depending on the program and is fixed before the program starts. Thus, residents can be aware of the amount of compensation they are going to receive. Law enforcement agencies offer full anonymity for locals willing to give up weapons, which might protect them from unnecessary publicity. And finally, exemption from criminal liability is also an important means to avoid punishment for the ownership of otherwise illegal weapons (FL 63 1996).

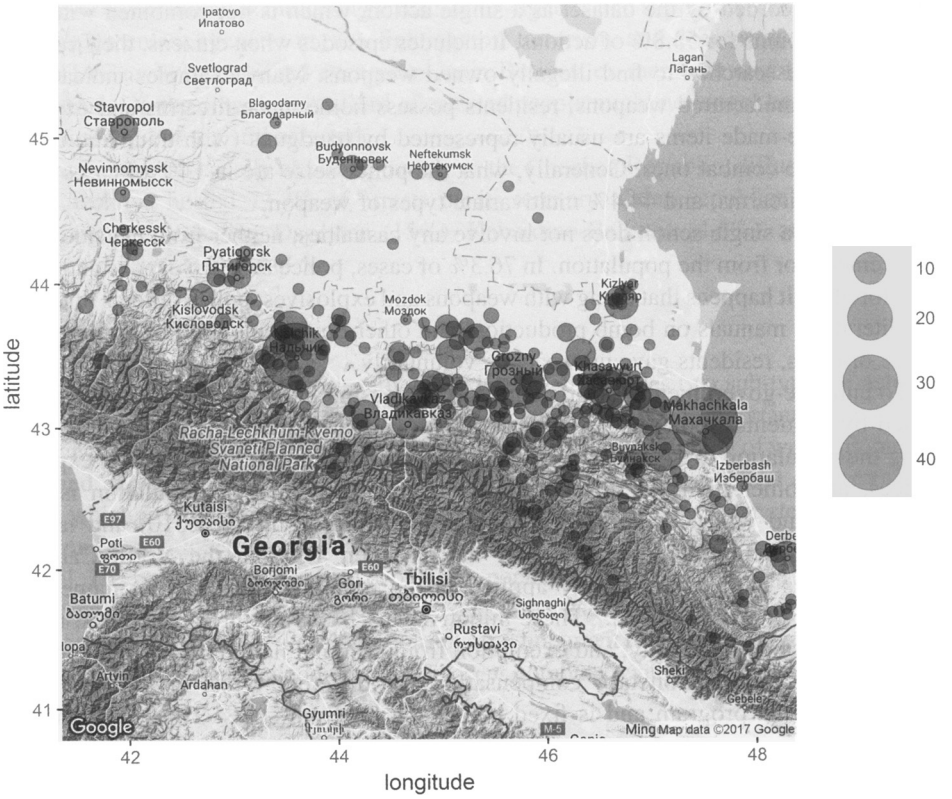
Kabardino-Balkaria and Dagestan have experienced a series of such official initiatives, namely, at least eight times in Kabardino-Balkaria and at least three times in Dagestan.[2] Other republics, like Ingushetiia, encourage the population to give up weapons but do not set up particular dates (06.mvd.ru 2014). However, it is quite difficult to account for cases when civilians give up weapons within such programs since police respect the confidentiality of participation, thus, usually disseminating only aggregated results. As shown on Map 6, seizure, along with detection, is the most spatially dispersed measure which is unlikely surprising since it relates to general anti-criminal procedures.

### *Detection*

"Detection" refers to the discovery of illegally stored items, dangerous objects, or illegal fortifications, by law enforcement agencies. It includes three sub-types: detection of caches (illegal, hidden storages of weapons and supplies belonging to IAGs); forest camps; or explosive devices. Such law enforcement work is believed by the government to be crucial for counterterrorism (NAK 2011).

Detection comprises 31% of counteractions. It is a spatially distributed category, as illustrated by Map 7. Detection is a single outcome of counteractions in almost 90% of cases. However, sometimes, it is a result of special operations, shootings, and arrests. Within this category, law enforcement officers managed to reveal caches in 57.5% of cases, camps in 10.6% of cases, and planted but not activated explosive devices in 32%.

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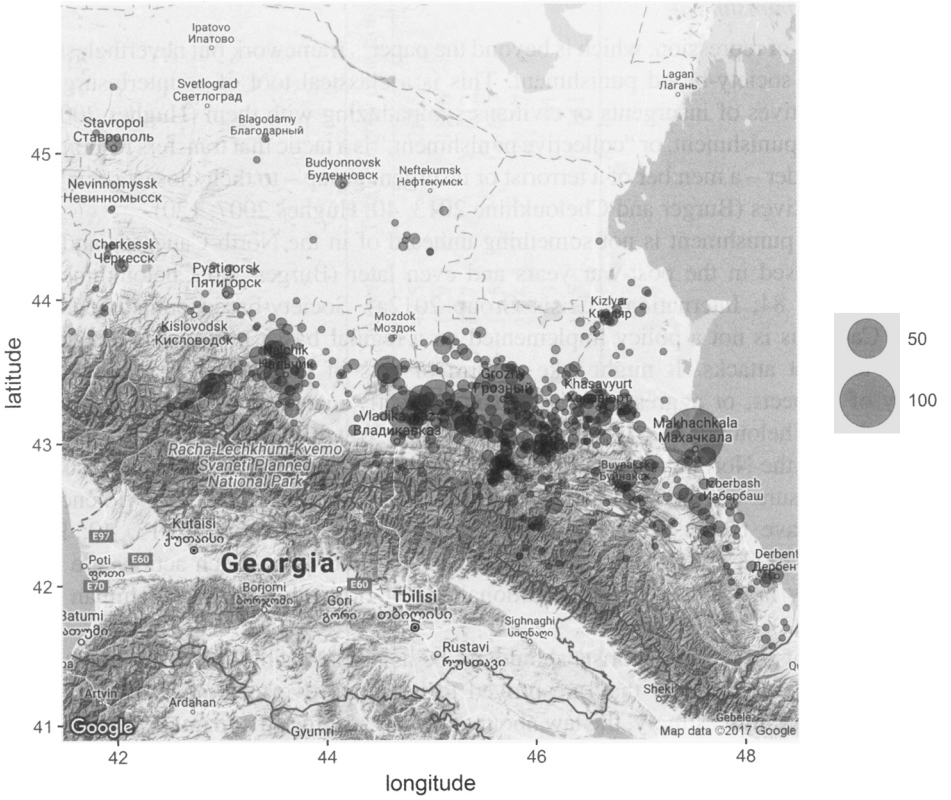



Map 6. Distribution of seizure (2007–2014). Source: author.

Caches are widely targeted by law enforcement agencies. Discovered caches tend to contain explosives as raw materials, already produced improvised bombs, grenades, shells, grenade cup discharges, sub-machine guns, guns, ammunition, food, medicines, and everyday items required to maintain life in the forest. It becomes critical to search and find these stores as one of the ways to deprive illegal groups of easy access to weapons and explosives, along with their ability to hide in the mountains without risking going into the city. Caches broadly vary in terms of amounts stored: from one sub-machine gun to thousands of cartridges, hundreds of rifles and guns, and hundreds of kilograms of explosives; in other words, weaponry sufficient to equip a small army. Insurgents make caches in both mountain and forest areas where they are more protected from being revealed, but also in areas surrounding cities and villages. It is not unheard of to find caches in private houses. Detection of caches mainly occurred in Chechnya (54.5%) and Dagestan (18%), and less in Kabardino-Balkaria (13.2%) and Ingushetiia (8.6%).

Detection of camps is another essential indirect tool of countermeasures, depriving insurgents of operational bases and safe havens. Camps are places where members of IAGs can safely rest and prepare attacks without the awareness of police or locals. These places usually contain sleeping bags, ovens, gas balloons, food, medicines, clothes, and even weapons. Such safe havens can be organized in forested or mountainous terrain and be fortifications under the ground, or just normal tents, or they can be arranged

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Map 7. Distribution of detection (2007–2014). Source: author.

in the cities in hidden sub-basements belonging to residents sympathetic to the insurgency. Often, such urban shelters are also used as laboratories to produce explosive devices. The majority of revealed camps were constructed in the forest or mountains, namely, 66.8%, whereas 7% of camps were organized in the cities or villages. Despite a general trend of insurgency becoming more urban (O'Loughlin, Holland, and Witmer 2011), the presence of forest camps in the late stages of the conflict points to the fact that having shelter in unreachable places to rest, to hide, and to train has not yet completely lost its importance in rebels' thinking. The distribution of found camps among republics varies: Chechnya (25.1%), Dagestan (47.7%), Kabardino-Balkaria (17.6%), and Ingushetiia (8%).

Detection of planted explosive devices is a direct prevention of planned attacks. It is difficult to overestimate the importance of detecting planted explosive devices. Thus, such efforts became one of the most essential countermeasures (International Crisis Group 2012b). During the studied period, 988 planted bombs exploded, 591 were revealed and neutralized, meaning that almost 60% of planned attacks have been prevented. Bombs are detected in public spaces in 54.8% of cases, nearby targeted private residences in 14.4%, by the roads in 13% or railways in 3.2%, as well as in the forest or mountains in 3.1%.

Explosive devices have been discovered unequally across the North Caucasus: Chechnya only accounts for 18.4%, while Dagestan accounts for the most (40.1%), Ingushetiia (24.2%), and Kabardino-Balkaria (12.9%).

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*Society-based punishment*

One more type of repression, which is beyond the paper's framework but nevertheless worth mentioning is society-based punishment. This is a classical tool of counterinsurgency – punishing relatives of insurgents or civilians sympathizing with them (Hughes 2007, 84). Society-based punishment, or "collective punishment," is a tactic that transfers responsibility from the offender – a member of a terrorist or insurgent group – to their closest social circle, usually to relatives (Burger and Cheloukhine 2013, 40; Hughes 2007, 120).

Collective punishment is not something unheard of in the North Caucasus and it was occasionally used in the post-war years and even later (Burger and Cheloukhine 2013; Hughes 2007, 84; International Crisis Group 2012a). Society-based punishment in the North Caucasus is not a policy implemented on a regular basis; rather, it is a reaction to severe terrorist attacks. It might take a form of acts of public aggression toward the family of suspects, or aggression directly or indirectly managed by local administration (Burger and Cheloukhine 2013, 40; Human Rights Watch 2009, 20–22). Society-based punishment in the North Caucasus includes demolition or burning of homes of insurgent's relatives, pressure on the insurgent's families, interrogations, threats of violence, and pressure to leave the respective republic (Burger and Cheloukhine 2013, 40; Human Rights Watch 2009, 19; Speckhard and Akhmedova 2006, 146). Such actions are illegal. Logically, they have never been institutionalized or officially approved (Human Rights Watch 2009, 22).

Relatives of suspected terrorists should not be held responsible for unlawful actions of their family member unless they are proved to be supportive to the cause or somehow involved as well. Interestingly, the law about terrorism specifies that damage caused by terrorist attacks can be covered by means of the property of the person who committed this crime or of the family of this person, if proved that the property they possess was earned by terrorist activities (FL 35 2006, Article 18). However, the origin of this property in a terrorist action must be proven. Thus, nothing else can legally justify the punishment of suspect's families.

This section analyzed application of separate tactics in the region, which prepares the ground for the next section to develop the composition of tactics adopted in federal subjects.

## *Composition of repressive tactics*

This section summarizes the differences in tactic distribution across the region and derives the composition of tactics for each federal subject. Regional approaches to counterinsurgency accommodated within Russian strategy vary. Since regional subdivisions of law enforcement institutions (of course, still managed by central authority) conduct counterinsurgency on the front line, slight fluctuations in the distribution of tactics is stipulated by previous local experience in addressing insurgency-related violence.

Some tactics have been applied by law enforcement agencies consistently, while others lose their appropriateness and, thus, frequency of implementation. For example, as shown by Table 3 calculated for this paper based on DSRR, detection is presented among all constituencies ranging between 20% and 40% actions. That demonstrates the presence of additional indirect tools of counterterrorism if numbers published in official reports are to be trusted. In contrast, shelling is rarely used, showing a tiny percentage. It is no longer possible to apply massive bombings in peace time; thus, its careful and rare application is typical for the studied period.

Other tactics display fluctuations among constituencies, for instance, those involving armed combat. Special operation is employed on a bigger scale in Dagestan and Ingushetiia,

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Table 3. Composition of repressive tactics, %[a].

| | Regime CTO | Special operation | Clash | Shelling | Shooting | Detection | Seizure | Arrest | Total number of actions |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Chechnya | 0.7 | 2.3 | 9 | 0.1 | 3 | 24.1 | 11 | 49.5 | 2585 |
| Dagestan | 10.6 | 12.8 | 8.1 | 0.1 | 11.2 | 26.7 | 15.5 | 13.9 | 1856 |
| Ingushetia | 9.7 | 12.2 | 8.4 | 0.2 | 8.9 | 38.8 | 7.1 | 11.7 | 612 |
| Kabardino-Balkaria | 8.7 | 7.3 | 2.9 | 0.2 | 17.9 | 34.5 | 17 | 11.5 | 687 |
| Karachay-Cherkessia | 7.8 | 7.8 | 3.9 | 0.2 | 9.1 | 22.1 | 20.8 | 28.6 | 77 |
| North Ossetia | 11.8 | 3.2 | 1.1 | 0.2 | 1.1 | 30.1 | 46.2 | 4.3 | 91 |
| Stavropol | 2.1 | 3.5 | 2.1 | 0 | 8.5 | 31.2 | 39 | 13.5 | 141 |

[a]Total number of actions is 6049 excluding 65 events lacking exact geographical location.

Table 4. Outcomes of countermeasures involving armed combat in 2007–2014 (mean value of people per event).

| | IAG members | | Law enforcement officers | | Civilians | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | killed | arrested | killed | injured | killed | injured |
| Shelling | 2.375 | 0.063 | 0.781 | 1.188 | 0.037 | 0.063 |
| Clash | 1.486 | 0.214 | 0.454 | 1.024 | 0.019 | 0.021 |
| Special operation | 2.086 | 0.293 | 0.23 | 0.729 | 0.025 | 0.051 |
| Shooting | 1.252 | 0.074 | 0.176 | 0.422 | 0.025 | 0.078 |

and less in Kabardino-Balkaria and Karachai-Cherkessia. Clash is better presented in Chechnya, Dagestan, and Ingushetiia than the rest of republics. In its turn, shooting occurs more in Kabardino-Balkaria, Dagestan, Ingushetiia and Karachay-Cherkessia. Two tactics indicating very wide fluctuations in their application concern seizures and arrests. Interestingly, seizures happen to be applied on the bigger scale in republics less influenced by violence, such as Karachai-Cherkessia, North Ossetiia, and Stavropol region. The absolute leader in arrests is Chechnya, with almost half of all actions being of this type. The rest of the republics do not come even close to Chechnya in this regard.

Outcomes of repressive operations in terms of casualties differ depending on the type of action. Operations involving armed combat logically entail casualties. As indicated by Table 4 calculated for this paper using DSRR, shelling and special operations impose the highest death rates on rebels.

Thus, the section finds a distinct composition of applied tactics. Chechnya suffered from no massive violence. That became reflected in the composition of repressive measures applied in the republic, skewed toward rather preventive work. That is why almost half of counter actions in the republic are arrests of locals suspected in current or previous involvement in insurgency. However, violent events still take place and that is expressed by the presence of large-scale clashes. In contrast, Dagestan, Ingushetiia, and Kabardino-Balkaria had to react to violence presented on their territories by means of employing armed combat including special operations, clashes, and shooting. Republics suffering from violence considerably less than others tend to emphasize preventive measures such as detection and seizures to make sure that their territory is not used for storing weapons or serving as safe havens for insurgents from neighboring regions.

## Conclusion

This paper presented new data on Russian repressive counterterrorism applied in a peacetime environment. It complemented the studies of separate tactics (Baev 2005; Grodnenskii 2010; Lyall 2009; Souleimanov 2015; Toft and Zhukov 2012; Trenin, Malashenko, and Lieven 2004; Zhukov 2012) by combining a variety of measures of direct and indirect counterterrorism in a single framework.

The paper demonstrated that the state incorporated more selective uses of violence, thereby reducing the number of indiscriminate violent actions to an insignificant level. Moreover, along with selective violence, security institutions reinforce preventive work such as detection of secret caches, seizures, and arrests. However, the trend to prefer the physical liquidation of suspected insurgents instead of arrest was still observed in the region, which continued the tendency presented by Toft and Zhukov (2012).

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Application of repressive countermeasures was found to fluctuate across the region. Each federal subject shaped the composition of repressive tactics in its own way. It was stipulated by two factors: by the level of the threat republics faced as well as by previous experience in fighting asymmetric actors. Preventive law enforcement (detection and seizures) was the most spatially distributed type. That was a logical observation due to the need to conduct "background" work of indirect counterterrorism. Unlike seizure and detection, arrest – the other type of preventive law enforcement – was clearly clustered in Chechnya. It changes the dynamic, observed by O'Loughlin and Witmer for 1999–2007, where arrest exhibited the biggest geographical distribution compared to other types of events (O'Loughlin and Witmer 2011, 191–192). In contrast, armed combat tended to cluster in the federal subjects suffering from the highest levels of insurgency-initiated violence. Thus, the majority of clashes occurred in the mountain areas of Ingushetiia, Chechnya, and Dagestan. Special operations and shootings were mostly used in Dagestan, Ingushetiia, Chechnya, and KBR. The only tactic rarely applied in the region was shelling.

While drawing the composition of repressive tactics as the first exploratory step, the study of Russian counterterrorism requires examination of its effectiveness. Explanation of tactic's efficiency situated within temporal, spatial, socioeconomic and political contexts will be addressed in a follow-up project.

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## Notes

1. Sources: NGOs including Human Rights Centre Memorial, Anti-war movement; official reports of the state agencies including the Ministry of Interior, the National Antiterrorist Committee, Russian government newspaper; and media including Russian national such as Gazeta, Novaya Gazeta, Interfax, Vzglyad, Komsomolskaya Pravda, Trud, Lenta, Vesti, NTV, AIF, Regnum, Izvestiya, RIA, Echo Moskvy, Rosbalt, Baltinfo, Novye Izvestia, Newsru; regional such as Caucasian Spot, Caucasus News; local such as Groznyy-Inform.
2. KBR "Weapon" 2007–2014: 2007: 15 of August-15 of September (kavkaz-uzel.ru 2007); 2008: 1 of April-1 of May (KBR Government Statement 50 2008); 2008: 17 of October-15 of November (card.sk-news.ru 2008); 2009: 10 of March-15 of April (kavkaz-uzel.ru 2009); 2009: 20 April-20 of November (KBR Government Statement 63 2009); 2010: 15 of April-15 of October (KBR Government Statement 49 2010); 2011: 10 of June-10 of October (card.sk-news.ru 2011); 2013: 1 of July-1 of November (07.mvd.ru 2013). Dagestan "Weapon", "Weapon-Redemption" 2007–2014: 2007: 25 of October-25 of December (news.bbc.co.uk 2007); 2008: 21 of March-1 of October (regnum.ru 2008); 2014: 10 of June-31 of December (clrr-rd.ru 2014).

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