

# Violent Entrepreneurs: The Use of Force in the Making of Russian Capitalism

By Vadim Volkov

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Entering the shady world of what he calls "violent entrepreneurship," Vadim Volkov explores the economic uses of violence and coercion in Russia in the 1990s. Violence has played, he shows, a crucial role in creating the institutions of a new market economy. The core of his work is competition among so-called violence-managing agencies?criminal groups, private security services, private protection companies, and informal protective agencies associated with the state?which multiplied with the liberal reforms of the early 1990s. This competition provides an unusual window on the dynamics of state formation.

*Violent Entrepreneurs* is remarkable for its research. Volkov conducted numerous interviews with members of criminal groups, heads of protection companies, law enforcement employees, and businesspeople. He bases his findings on journalistic and anecdotal evidence as well as on his own personal observation. Volkov investigates the making of violence-prone groups in sports clubs (particularly martial arts clubs), associations for veterans of the Soviet?Afghan war, ethnic gangs, and regionally based social groups, and he traces the changes in their activities across the decade. Some groups wore state uniforms and others did not, but all of their members spoke and acted essentially the same and were engaged in the same activities: intimidation, protection, information gathering, dispute management, contract enforcement, and taxation. Each group controlled the same resource?organized violence.

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"Volkov supplies the missing link between almost everything else you may read about business in post-Communist Russia and almost everything else you can read about organized crime there. He treats the two activities, business and crime, with equal respect as fields of sociological inquiry, and so arrives at the first satisfying account of how they affect each other."? *New York Review of Books*

"This impressive study by Russian sociologist Vadim Volkov investigates the economic and social evolution of the nascent entrepreneurial class in Russia and accounts for its disturbingly intimate liaison with violence and crime. . . . Volkov considers the implications of the weakened and discredited state against the background of new economic agents who, desperate to secure their property and monopoly rights in various markets, have become accustomed to the use of force."? *Russian Review*

"This is a splendid book, a well-written and well-researched contribution to the field that deserves a wide and appreciative readership. . . . This excellent, literate, and insightful work is both scholarly enough to advance study of Russian criminality and 'violent capitalism' into fruitful new avenues and readable enough that it need not scare off undergraduates?and as such to be welcomed wholeheartedly."? *Slavic Review*

"*Violent Entrepreneurs* offers an engaging glimpse into the darker recesses of Russia's shadow economy. . . . Volkov's work is exceptionally well researched, relying on statistical data as well as surprisingly candid firsthand interviews with members of criminal groups, heads of private protection companies, active and former police employees, experts, and businesspeople to present its case."? *Perspectives on Political Science*

"Vadim Volkov's book moves beyond sensationalist accounts of violence and corruption in Russia to provide a very important analysis of the role of force in the consolidation of Russian capitalism and, particularly, of

the Russian state. It will be essential reading for all students of contemporary Russia as well as those concerned with the constitution of the modern state."?Simon Clarke, University of Warwick

"*Violent Entrepreneurs* is an excellent book that accomplishes a very difficult task. It makes protection interesting without sensationalizing it. It is original, compelling, and well researched."?Timothy Frye, Ohio State University

"*Violent Entrepreneurs* is a seminal study of the origins and evolution of 'organized crime' in the Soviet and Russian economies from 1987 to 2001. With a sophisticated use of economic sociology, Vadim Volkov combines a first-rate theoretical mind with extensive on-site research and an engaging writing style."?George W. Breslauer, University of California, Berkeley

#### About the Author

Vadim Volkov is Vice-Rector for Innovations, Head of the Research Institute for the Rule of Law, and the A. S. Muromtsev Professor of Sociology at the European University at St. Petersburg.

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