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Trends. Cognitive Complexity and the Russian Biological Warfare Threat

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Biopreparat is a Russian government-funded organization that has been alleged to have directed the Soviet biological warfare (BW) program. Recent disclosures suggest that Biopreparat may still be involved in BW activities--research, development, production, and even trade and sales--with varying degrees of Russian government complicity.

Political analysts suggest that the interim Putin presidency or an imminent full-term Putin presidency will have to ultimately make a policy decision between supporting supporters of continuing Russian BW program activities or those now or at one time involved in BW activities who wish to apply BW-related knowledge solely to various "peaceful purposes." However, students of political power would point out that there's a third very reasonable choice--and that is to engage in both.

Continuing covert and clandestine BW program activities can contribute to Russian military prowess, the deterrent aspects of military prowess (given that adversaries never can be sure about Russian capabilities), and maintaining the domestic political support (for Mr. Putin) of BW supporters. Concurrently and overtly applying BW-related knowledge for "peaceful purposes" provides additional benefits of facilitating various types of aid from governments, bilateral and multilateral governmental organizations, and nongovernmental organizations--as well significant propaganda benefits that lead to yet other positive consequences.

This third option of deciding between two options by doing both is as old as political history itself--and still too often ignored. (See Beahrs, J.O. (1992). Paradoxical effects in political systems. *Political Psychology*, 13, 755-769; Hart, R.P. (1982). A commentary on popular assumptions about political communication. *Human Communication Research*, 8, 366-389; Miller, J. (January 25, 2000). U.S. aid is diverted to germ warfare, Russian scientists say. *The New York Times*, p. A6; Rustin, M., & Rustin, M. (1994). Coups d'etat and catastrophic change: Shakespeare's Julius Caesar. *British Journal of Psychotherapy*, 11, 242-259; Welles, J. (1981). The sociobiology of self-deception. *Human Ethology Newsletter*, 3, 14-19; Wortham, S., & Locher, M. (1999). Embedded metapragmatics and lying politicians. *Language and Communication*, 19, 109-125.) (Keywords: Biological Warfare, Military Strategy, Russia.)