

# State Militarism and Its Legacies

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## Why Military Reform Has Failed in Russia

Russia's economy and political system have undergone enormous changes since the end of the Soviet era. A burgeoning market system has replaced the Soviet command economy, and open multiparty competition for representation in Russia's political institutions operates in place of the Communist Party that ruled the country exclusively for more than 60 years. In the areas of defense and security, however, radical changes to the organizational and operational system inherited from the Soviet Union have yet to occur. After more than a decade of reform efforts, Russia's armed forces have shrunk to less than two-thirds of their 1992 size of 3.7 million.<sup>1</sup> Russia's military leaders, nevertheless, have been adamant about preserving Soviet-era force structures and strategic plans. Why have Russia's armed forces—nearly alone among the core institutions of the Russian state—resisted efforts to change their structure and character in accordance with institutional arrangements operative in Western liberal democracies?

This question is all the more baffling because Russia's military has been mired in an institutional crisis that predates the 1991 Soviet collapse. Currently, the Russian military is laboring under conditions of acute infrastructure decay and extreme shortages of equipment, a recruitment crisis exacerbated by a dysfunctional conscription system and the exodus of junior officers, a lack of combat-ready forces for deployment to the ongoing conflict in Chechnya, and force structures and strategies that are woefully inadequate to address the country's security threats. As during the Cold War, the military persists in preparing for large-scale war against a formidable enemy (or enemies) while failing to develop its capacity to manage smaller regional conflicts and threats from nonstate actors, even as the conflict in Chechnya enters its eleventh year.

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1. "Vystuplenie Ministr Oborony RF S.B. Ivanova" [Speech of Defense Minister S.B. Ivanov], October 2, 2003, <http://www.mil.ru/AZVSRF-1a.pdf>, p. 6; and Viktor Sokirko, "Yes' u Sokratcheniya Nachalo" [The reduction has a beginning], *Moskovskii Komsomolets*, November 23, 2000, p. 3.

Reform advocates within Russia as well as foreign experts have repeatedly proposed concrete measures to reorganize and modernize Russia's military. Their proposals have emphasized the need for reductions in force size, a gradual decrease in the use of conscripts in favor of volunteer (or "professional") soldiers, the creation of a professional noncommissioned officer (NCO) corps, drastic changes to officer training and education, the restructuring of relations between the ministry of defense and the dozen other "power ministries" that maintain military units, and greater political oversight of military spending.<sup>2</sup> The principal objective behind these reform proposals has been to transform Russia's military into a smaller, more modern armed force better suited to the realities of the country's economic situation and to the post-Soviet strategic environment.

High-ranking Russian military officials, however, have almost uniformly resisted efforts to bring about fundamental structural and operational changes away from the Soviet model.<sup>3</sup> More surprising, Russian government officials have consistently balked at imposing changes on a recalcitrant defense ministry and General Staff, despite rhetoric emphasizing the necessity for reform.<sup>4</sup> Since 1992 the Kremlin has approved several programs intended to reform aspects of the military system—in 1992–93, 1997, 2001, and 2003.<sup>5</sup> None, however, have come close to effecting a transformation of the overall force structure and strategic posture of Russia's armed forces.<sup>6</sup>

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2. Formal proposals containing these measures include the 1992 plan for military reform, as well as the Yurii Baturin (1997), Igor Sergeyev (1997), and Union of Right Forces (SPS) (2003) plans. A few influential nongovernment organizations, such as the Council for Foreign and Defense Politics, have also made similar recommendations, [http://www.svop.ru/live/materials.asp=m\\_id=6974](http://www.svop.ru/live/materials.asp=m_id=6974).

3. Michael Orr, "Reform and the Russian Ground Forces, 1992–2002, in Anne C. Aldis and Richard McDermott, *Russian Military Reform, 1992–2002* (Portland, Ore.: Frank Cass, 2003), pp. 124–127.

4. Sonni Efron, "Boris Yeltsin Defends Chechen Offensive but Cites Failures," *Los Angeles Times*, February 17, 1995, p. 2; "Yeltsin: Military Reform Will Help Troops, Defense" *CNN Interactive*, July 29, 1997, <http://www.cnn.com/WORLD/9707/29/russian.military/>; "Putin Calls for Military Reform," *Monitor*, Vol. 8, No. 77, April 19, 2002, [http://www.jamestown.org/publications\\_details.php?volume\\_id=25&issue\\_id=2242&article\\_id=19327](http://www.jamestown.org/publications_details.php?volume_id=25&issue_id=2242&article_id=19327); and Stephen Blank, "This Time We Really Mean It: Russian Military Reform," *Russian and Eurasia Review*, Vol. 2, No. 1, January 7, 2003, <http://www.cdi.org/russia/239-9.cfm>.

5. Colin Robinson, "Russian Armed Forces Reform: Reaching Fitfully toward a Professional Force" (Washington, D.C.: Center for Defense Information, July 26, 2002), <http://www.cdi.org/mrp/russian-mr.cfm>; and "Chasti Postoyannoi Gotovnosti VS RF Planiryetsya Perevesti na Contractnuyu Osnovu" [Plans to transform part of the permanent combat-ready troops of the Russian Federation into contract units], *Strana.ru*, April 15, 2003.

6. David Betz and Valeriy G. Volkov, "The False Dawn of Russian Military Reform," *Conflict and Security*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (Summer/Fall 2003), pp. 45–51; Aldis and McDermott, *Russian Military Reform, 1992–2002*; Alexei G. Arbatov, "Military Reform in Russia: Dilemmas, Obstacles, and Pros-

Most Russian analysts point to four explanations for the failure of military reform in Russia: (1) a lack of consensus among military and political elites regarding the substance of reform, (2) fear among political elites of military intervention in internal political power struggles, (3) a shortage of financial resources, and (4) the ongoing conflict in Chechnya. We conclude that none of these explanations, either individually or in combination, are satisfactory.

We argue instead that military reform efforts in Russia have failed for reasons traceable to the institutional and ideational legacies of military power that began during the reign of Peter the Great (1705–25). Three interrelated aspects of this militarist legacy are particularly important. First, the Russian people and their leaders have long associated the prestige of their state with the power and prestige of its military. Indeed, the origins of the modern Russian state are traceable to Peter's efforts to build and maintain a massive military force. Even after support of the military ceased to be the singular purpose of the Russian state, this relationship of mutual constitutive reliance endured. Institutional and organizational arrangements that privileged military objectives over other aims were continually reproduced under both the czars and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), albeit in the service of vastly different underlying ideologies.

Second, the Russian military has a level of administrative and operational autonomy unparalleled in the West. Under the imperial regime, the military generally monopolized knowledge over military matters and conducted its affairs with little outside interference. The same was true of the Soviet era. Even today the Russian defense ministry exercises near-total control over the allocation of the military budget as well as military planning and procurement—matters that in Western democracies are routinely overseen by civilian authorities. This high degree of institutional autonomy means that government officials in Russia have little leverage to impose unwanted policies on the armed forces.

Third, centuries of political and structural favoritism have shaped contemporary Russian attitudes toward the military. Russia's brand of militarism has its foundation in serfdom and autocratic rule, which effectively stifled early resistance to the overwhelming demands the system made on Russia's economy

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pects," *International Security*, Vol. 22, No. 4 (Spring 1998), pp. 83–134; and Pavel Felgenhauer, "Russian Military Reform: Ten Years of Failure," proceedings from the "Russian Defense Policy toward the Year 2000" conference, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, California, March 26–27, 1997, <http://www.fas.org/nuke/guide/russia/agency/Felg.htm>.

and society. Over time the relative success of Russia's armies legitimized and reinforced the state's authority to demand great sacrifices in both blood and treasure. In contemporary Russia this attitude continues to underwrite a range of military policies, from universal conscription to state controls over military-industrial enterprises.

The term "defense-mindedness" (*oboronnoye soznaniye*) describes this cluster of mutually reinforcing political and cultural attitudes toward military power and authority in Russia. The institutions that brought about the militarization of Russian society were modified and eventually discarded. Nevertheless, the pattern of political and social relations forged by this process conditioned later institutional developments, which in turn have reproduced a hierarchy of social values rooted in militarism.<sup>7</sup> These legacies help to explain why Russia's military elite has not acted forcefully to ensure military restructuring along Western lines. They also help to clarify why social pressure for such reforms has been so weak, despite clear evidence that Russia's armed forces are mired in a crisis that influences every aspect of its operations.<sup>8</sup>

In the first section of this article, we discuss the four standard accounts for why military reform in Russia has failed and demonstrate why they are inadequate. In the second section, we describe the militarist origins of the Russian state. We explain how the structural advantages afforded to Russia's military shaped political and social attitudes toward military institutions and military power under the czars and during the Soviet period. We also demonstrate that

7. Brief interruptions in this pattern have occurred during periods of political crisis or political transition (i.e., from 1860 to 1880, 1905 to 1914, 1925 to 1935, and 1991 to the present). In the first three periods, the move away from militarism proved short-lived and was followed by efforts to rebuild Russia's military capacity and to inculcate its society with militarist ideals.

8. For recent works on the relationship between Russian civil-military relations and militarism, see Brian Taylor, *Politics and the Russian Army: Civil-Military Relations, 1689–2000* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003); William Odum, *The Collapse of the Soviet Military* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1998); Stephen F. Blank, "The Great Exception: Russian Civil-Military Relations," *World Affairs*, Vol. 165 (Fall 2002), pp. 91–105; David J. Betz, *If They Are Ordered "Die of Hunger" They Will Die: Russian Defense Analysts Speak on Civil-Military Relations*, Glasgow Papers (Glasgow, Scotland: University of Glasgow, November 2, 1999); and Dale R. Herspring, *Russian Civil-Military Relations* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996). Also relevant are analyses of Soviet-era and imperial Russian civil-military relations, including David Holloway, "State, Society, and the Military under Gorbachev," *International Security*, Vol. 14, No. 3 (Winter 1989/90), pp. 5–24; Roman A. Kolkowicz and Andrzej Korbonski, *Soldiers, Peasants, and Bureaucrats: Civil-Military Relations in Communist and Modernizing Societies* (Boston: Allen and Unwin, 1982); Timothy C. Colton, *Commissars, Commanders, and Civilian Authority: The Structure of Soviet Military Politics* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981); William C. Fuller, *Strategy and Power in Russia, 1600–1914* (New York: Free Press, 1992); John L.H. Keep, *Soldiers of the Tsar: Army and Society in Russia, 1462–1874* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985); and Harold B. Lasswell, "The Garrison State," *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 46, No. 4 (1941), pp. 455–468.

defense-mindedness is still operative in current Russian attitudes toward the military, despite widespread evidence that its capacities have substantially eroded. In the third section, we apply our analysis to the multiyear military reform initiative announced by the Russian defense ministry in July 2003 to explain why this latest effort is also likely to fail. We also offer a longer-term analysis of the prospects for military reform in Russia.

#### *Four Standard Explanations for Failed Reform Efforts*

Each of the four accounts for the failure of military reform in Russia discussed below appears initially plausible. As we demonstrate, however, each provides only an incomplete explanation that glosses over deeper causal issues and concerns.

##### DEADLOCK OVER IMMEDIATE REFORM OBJECTIVES

Many analysts argue that the inability of Russian military and political leaders to agree on the importance and sequencing of reform objectives has prevented the development of a comprehensive plan for military reform.<sup>9</sup> Disagreements on such issues are certainly rampant, but they mask far deeper conflicts of interest between reformers and the military establishment. Each of Russia's four defense ministers has redefined the reform challenge to address particular problems encountered during his tenure.<sup>10</sup> All four, however, have respected

9. See, for example, Felgenhauer, "Russian Military Reform."

10. Defense Minister Pavel Grachev's (1992–97) main reform goals were to divide Soviet military assets among the fifteen former republics and to withdraw and reorganize units from Eastern Europe and the Baltic states. Pavel Grachev, "Pri Reformirovanii Armii Rossii Nuzhen Tchetkii Rastchet i Zdravii Smisl" [Precision targeting and common sense are needed for army reform], *Krasnaya zvezda*, June 21, 1991, pp. 1–2. His successor, Igor Rodionov (1996–97), sought "to force economics to work for the benefit of defense," to reestablish a sense of "defense-mindedness" among the Russian people that was purportedly lost during the perestroika era, and to bring the troops from the fourteen governmental agencies in Russia that maintain their own military units under defense ministry and General Staff control. Igor Rodionov, "Osnovnye Napravleniya Voennoy Reformy" [The main direction of military reform], *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, April 22, 1996, pp. 1, 3; and Alexander Golts, "Khrushchev Mog Stuchat' Bashmakom v OON Potomu Chto za Nim Byla Voyennaya Mosh'" [Khrushchev was able to pound his shoe in the UN because he had military might behind him], *Itogi*, February 25, 1997, p. 12. Russia's third defense minister, Marshal Igor Sergeev (1997–2001), set out to enhance the resource capacity of the armed forces by reducing the number of servicemen while expanding the military budget to increase the resources expended per soldier. Aleksandr Akulov, "Novyi Chin bez Osobykh Prichin" [Bossing around without grounds], *Itogi*, December 2, 1997, p. 15. Russia's current defense minister, Sergey Ivanov, initially claimed rearmament as his top priority. Alexander Golts, "Ostavshaya Ten" [The shadow left behind], *Yezhenedelnyi Zhurnal*, June 28, 2002, p. 20. More recently, Ivanov has emphasized the transition to volunteer units. Alexander Golts, "Prizyvnoi Sindrom" [Draft syndrome],

the military establishment's desire to preserve the overall structure and character of the Russian military as a force capable of fighting large-scale conventional wars.<sup>11</sup> Policy deliberations over particular reform initiatives have been instead a tool for military elites to neutralize efforts to transform Russia's military into a more modern, specialized, volunteer-based force.

In this struggle the reformers, a handful of liberal-minded analysts who have served in the presidential administrations of Boris Yeltsin and Vladimir Putin,<sup>12</sup> have been pitted against a combination of conservative political forces, military leaders, and the General Staff.<sup>13</sup> Many members of the military elite continue to view the once-privileged position of the armed forces within the Soviet system with great nostalgia and long for its return. To members of this group, acceptable policies involve efforts to preserve as many elements of the previous system as possible under current conditions. In pressing for continued support of a force structure based on large numbers of ground troops, they stress Russia's size and unique geostrategic situation as part of both Europe and Asia, its long borders, and the high incidence of instability along its southern perimeter.

In the political climate immediately following the Soviet collapse, those in favor of preserving the Soviet military model could not declare their views

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*Yezhenedelnyi Zhurnal*, December 11, 2002, pp. 15–18; and Aleksandr Golts, "Minooboronova Pobeda" [The defense ministry's victory], *Yezhenedelnyi Zhurnal*, June 8, 2004, p. 4.

11. Robinson, "Russian Armed Forces Reform."

12. From 1995 to 1998, Yuri Baturin served as Yeltsin's aide on defense and security affairs, and later as secretary of the Defense Council. Another notable reformer, Andrei Kokoshin, served from 1992 to 1997 as the first deputy of the defense minister. In 1997 he was appointed secretary of the Security Council, where he remained until 1998. Defense Minister Sergeyev also falls into the reformer category.

13. The disputes over military reform arose after President Yeltsin signed the hastily assembled Basic Direction of the Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation in November 1993. *Krasnaya zvezda*, November 19, 1993, p. 1. In 1997 a major dispute was sparked between Defense Minister Rodionov and Defense Council Secretary Baturin when each put forward his own concept of military reform. Petr Pavlidi, "Zamyсел Apparata Soveta Oborony: Voennuyu Reformy v Rossii Planiruetsa Zavershit' k 2005 Godu" [The Defense Council's grand plan: Military reform is expected to finish by 2005], *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, January 25, 1997, p. 2. The next dispute emerged in 1998 after Yeltsin approved the Russian Security Council's Basis (Concept) of State Policy on Military Buildup to 2005, which Communist Party deputies in the State Duma and former chair of the Duma's Defense Committee, Gen. Lev Rokhlin, criticized severely for suggesting that Russia faced no foreign threats. Alexander Golts, "Golubinaya Kniga' dlya Rossiiskikh Yastrebov" [A "pigeon's book" for Russian hawks], *Itogi*, August 11, 1998, pp. 24–26. In 2000–01 Russia's military institutions were nearly paralyzed by an unprecedented public row between Defense Minister Sergeyev and the chief of the General Staff, Anatoly Kvashnin, over the future structure and purpose of Russia's armed forces. Alexander Golts, "General-Terminator," *Itogi*, July 2, 2000, p. 14. And in 2003 a dispute arose between General Staff officials and leaders of SPS, who had been appointed by President Putin as members of the State Commission, over whether to attempt a transition from a conscript-based to an all-volunteer service. Golts, "Prizyvnoi Sindrom," pp. 15–18.

openly; to do so would have been interpreted as indirect criticism of President Yeltsin. Instead, they sought to avoid substantive discussion of military reform. The General Staff focused its efforts on identifying in minute detail the conditions necessary for reforms to be carried out. One such precondition was the creation of a comprehensive set of doctrines and concepts to address the principal problems of defense and security for the newly independent Russian Federation. These included a universal concept of national security, a revised concept of foreign policy, and an updated military doctrine. After these doctrines and concepts had been formulated, the military establishment concentrated on finding inadequacies that ostensibly prevented their implementation. For instance, defense ministry officials faulted the Basic Status of Military Doctrine, adopted in November 1993, for failing to specify Russia's potential military adversaries.<sup>14</sup> The generals called for the elaboration of further doctrine to address particular threats to Russia's security, as well as strategies for dealing with specific adversaries, before they would consider changes to force structure and operations.

These delaying tactics mired the government's reformers in disputes over whether Russia should be ready militarily to confront the United States, China, and other global powers.<sup>15</sup> By failing to address such issues, the reformers could be accused of undercutting Russia's strategic position in the service of lesser (economic) goals.<sup>16</sup> Consequently, reformers in the Kremlin had to search for ways to reconcile military reform plans with Russia's claims of being a great power. The approach devised by the reformers was to place renewed emphasis on nuclear deterrence and to sanction first use of nuclear weapons at an early stage in armed conflicts. This approach both preserved Russia's security and status as an advanced military power and allowed (in theory) large reductions in conventional forces.<sup>17</sup> Russia's military leadership has adopted the doctrine of nuclear first use and has unwillingly submitted to force reductions.

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14. Igor Rodionov, "Osnovniye Napravleniya Voennoi Reformy" [Main orientation for military reforms], *Nezavisimoye Gazeta*, April 4, 1996, pp. 1, 3.

15. Alexander Golts, "Igor Rodionov v Poiskakh Vraga" [Igor Rodionov looks for an enemy], *Itogi*, January 14, 1997, p. 10.

16. See, for example, Rodionov, "Osnovniye Napravleniya Voennoi Reformy."

17. Existing military doctrine states that Russia may use nuclear weapons after other attempts to stop aggression have been exhausted. See "Voennaya Doktrina Rossiiskoi Federatsii" [Military doctrine of the Russian Federation], April 21, 2000, <http://www.scrf.gov.ru/Documents/Decree/2000/706-1.html>. For English-language versions of Russian military concepts and doctrines, see Federation of American Scientists, "WMD around the World," <http://fas.org/nuke/guide/russia/doctrine/index.html>. See also Frank Umbach, "Nuclear versus Conventional Forces: Implications for Russia's Future Military Reform," in Aldis and McDermott, *Russian Military Reform, 1992-2002*, pp. 80-81.

Nevertheless, it has not abandoned its reliance on ground forces in strategic planning. Instead, strategic exercises now integrate early limited use of nuclear weapons with large-scale ground force operations.<sup>18</sup>

Only a large threat can justify Russia's maintenance of an armed force that currently numbers 1.1 million and a mobilization reserve of millions more. Thus, since 1991 the Russian defense ministry has concentrated great effort on identifying potential adversaries against whom such capabilities would be appropriate.<sup>19</sup> Separatist groups and nonstate terrorist organizations do not fit this profile. Rather the focus has been on the expansion of outside "military blocs and alliances"—a reference to NATO's eastward enlargement—together with NATO operations such as those in the Balkans during the 1990s to justify the military's continued preparation to fight large-scale wars.<sup>20</sup>

This approach to strategic defense did not change after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks against the United States. Nor did it change following the October 2002 hostage-taking by Chechen militants in a Moscow theater, which ended with government forces killing 50 rebels together with 120 captives. Following the latter incident, President Putin ordered amendments to Russia's national security concept to reorient the armed forces toward the fight against terrorism.<sup>21</sup> Defense Minister Sergey Ivanov, however, made no attempt to hide his skepticism about the need for such a reorientation and has taken few steps in this direction.<sup>22</sup> Indeed, since September 2001 a number of

18. Vladimir Mukhin, "Russian Strategic Exercise Harks Back to 'Soviet Syndrome,'" *Raexpert.ru*, February 14, 2004, [http://www.gateway2russia.com/st/art\\_211474.php](http://www.gateway2russia.com/st/art_211474.php). For a detailed account of Russia's Security-2004 exercises, see Nikolai Sokov, "Military Exercises in Russia: Naval Deterrence Failures Compensated by Strategic Rocket Success" (Monterey, Calif.: Monterey Institute of International Studies, February 24, 2004).

19. Chief of the Navy Staff Adm. Viktor Kravchenko has argued that the main threat to Russia will remain the U.S. Navy's ability to destroy thousands of targets within Russia using conventional weapons. Although Russia's military does not seriously believe that the United States wants to invade their country, retaining it as a possible adversary provides the single best justification for preserving the existing military system. Kravchenko, "Ugrozy s Morskikh i Okeanskikh Napravlenii Rastut" [Growing threats from the direction of the sea and ocean], *Nezavisimoye voennoye obozreniye*, January 31, 2003, p. 4.

20. See "Voennaya Doktrina Rossiiskoi Federatsii."

21. Vladimir Putin, "Vystuplenie na Soveshhanii s Chlenami Pravitel'stva" [Speech at the conference with members of the government], October 28, 2002, [http://www.kremlin.ru/appears/2002/10/28/1355\\_type63378\\_29532.shtml](http://www.kremlin.ru/appears/2002/10/28/1355_type63378_29532.shtml).

22. Ivanov stated, "In my view, it is still premature right now to speak of the specific content of changes to Russia's defense priorities, and to the functions and tasks of its armed forces in connection with the threat posed by international terrorism. . . . No radical revision of the fundamental principles governing the operation of the armed forces is required." Quoted in Vitalii Djibuti, "Ravneniye Napravo" [Alignment on the right], *Rossiskaya gazeta*, January 14, 2003, p. 1. Our analysis suggests that a similar recalibration should be expected following the September 2004 incident in Beslan, North Ossetia in which more than 300 hostages were killed.

prominent figures with Russia's military establishment, including Ivanov, have reacted suspiciously to the preoccupation of the United States and several NATO countries with the international terrorist threat, suggesting that it is a convenient cover for geopolitical expansionism.<sup>23</sup> At the annual session of the Academy of Military Sciences held in Moscow on January 15, 2003, a central theme was the potential for the U.S. desire to control oil-rich regions to become a source of global conflict. The possibility that Russia might confront the United States in such a conflict was not excluded.

In Russia disagreements over doctrine, reform prerequisites, and intermediate reform proposals are in large measure calculated to deflate political pressures for more comprehensive reforms. The military's diversionary tactics have been effective in part because the attention of government officials has been pulled in so many directions. Nevertheless, this does not begin to explain why national political leaders have approached military reform with far less urgency than other reforms in other policy areas.

#### FEAR OF MILITARY INTERVENTION IN DOMESTIC POLITICAL DISPUTES

A second explanation for the failure of military reform in Russia is concern among Kremlin officials that too much pressure in this direction could prompt the country's military leaders to take actions in support of the government's political opponents. Without disputing that officials in the Kremlin have lacked resoluteness in pressing for military reform, we argue that the possibility of overt military intervention in Russia's domestic political affairs has been extremely remote throughout the period of post-Soviet reform efforts.<sup>24</sup> On the rare occasions when political actors have attempted to use the military to tip the balance in domestic power struggles, they have encountered strong resistance, and even insubordination, from high military officials.

The Russian military's reticence toward involvement in domestic political struggles can be explained both by the Soviet-era socialization of military elites and by the response of those elites to a series of perceived betrayals by the country's political leaders in the late 1980s and early 1990s.<sup>25</sup> Under the Soviet

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23. Gen. Makhmut Gareyev, "Kakie Vooruzhennye Sily Nuzhny Rossii?" [What kind of armed forces does Russia need?], *Otechestvennye Zapiski*, August 2002, [http://magazines.russ.ru/oz/2002/8/2002\\_08\\_11.html](http://magazines.russ.ru/oz/2002/8/2002_08_11.html).

24. See Deborah Yarsike Ball, "The Pending Crisis in Russian Civil-Military Relations," PONARS Policy Memo No. 4 (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, October 1997), p. 2.

25. In *Politics and the Russian Army*, Brian Taylor describes Russian civil-military relations over three centuries. He argues that intervention against the country's political leadership is fundamentally illegitimate in Russian military culture.

system, the military had little political influence outside the national security realm. Military elites were formally members of the entire range of Communist Party bodies—from the low-level bureaus of the regional CPSU Committee up to the Politburo. In practice, however, the party suppressed political initiative on the part of military officers from all sides.<sup>26</sup> Despite strict measures of control, there were no serious tensions between top state authorities and the military elite.<sup>27</sup> Each was a close ally of the other in building and projecting the power and prestige of the Soviet state. Soviet leaders readily provided the financial and material resources needed to counter all threats from external adversaries and, equally important, they took political responsibility for any use of military force. Consequently, the Soviet military acted unhesitatingly whenever called upon by the party leadership, as it proved throughout the disastrous 1979–89 war in Afghanistan.

In the late 1980s, this cooperative relationship began to deteriorate after Kremlin officials avoided taking political responsibility for using the army to suppress nationalist movements. In April 1989 in Tbilisi, Georgia, tens of thousands demonstrated to bring about greater autonomy in this and other Soviet republics. Soviet interior ministry troops clashed with unarmed demonstrators, killing eighteen, including sixteen women and children. Public outrage at these actions prompted the First Congress of People's Deputies to create an investigatory commission, which concluded that the commander of the North Caucasus Military District, Igor Rodionov, had authorized the deployment on his own initiative.<sup>28</sup> Neither the defense minister nor the CPSU leadership moved to challenge this conclusion or to counter media portrayals of Soviet generals as “murderers and butchers,” although the evidence points strongly

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26. Only twice during the Soviet era did the military play a decisive role in a domestic political crisis. Both cases are connected with Marshal Georgyi Zhukov. In 1953, Zhukov and officers from the Staff of the Moscow Air Defense District arrested Lavrentiy Beria, former supervisor of the Soviet secret police and intelligence service under Joseph Stalin, after he attempted a power grab following Stalin's death. Three years later, Zhukov supplied Nikita Khrushchev with military aircraft to transport the entire membership of the CPSU Central Committee to Moscow, thereby foiling an attempt by Stalin's former lieutenants to return to power. The ability of the defense minister to wield such enormous influence in a domestic political struggle frightened Khrushchev, and he removed Zhukov from his post.

27. See Colton, *Commissars, Commanders, and Civilian Authority*, p. 249. Political deputies inside the military establishment regularly reported to the Department of Administrative Bodies at the CPSU Central Committee on the attitudes and actions of high-level officers. The main political department of the Soviet army and fleet (GlavPur) was in charge of all aspects of state security and also played a role in monitoring the behavior of military personnel. Serious cases of political insubordination were typically referred to special KGB departments within the armed forces.

28. Donald Murray, *A Democracy of Despots* (Boulder Colo.: Westview, 1995), pp. 49, 64–65. Following the April 1989 events in Tbilisi, military commanders obeyed orders to use force only when issued directly from members of the Politburo.

to Politburo involvement in the decision to send in troops to suppress the demonstration.<sup>29</sup> In later episodes of a similar nature in Azerbaijan (1990) and the Baltic republics (1991), the military dutifully carried out the orders of Soviet leaders. Military officers took care, however, to avoid again becoming the political scapegoats of a Politburo divided over support for the liberalizing policies of perestroika (restructuring) and glasnost (openness), and the apparent threat these policies posed to the continued integrity of the Soviet Union.<sup>30</sup>

In August 1991 a group of high Soviet officials, including the defense minister, attempted a coup against the government of Mikhail Gorbachev in an effort to prevent the signing of a treaty among the Soviet republics that was widely expected to lead to the dissolution of the USSR. For several days it was unclear which side had legitimate authority. Despite the deployment of troops deployed to Moscow as ordered by the coup organizers, military commanders refused to order those troops to storm the Russian Supreme Soviet building—the focal point of the nonviolent resistance to the announced takeover led by Boris Yeltsin. Soon thereafter the coup collapsed. The military's actions were arguably overdetermined. Both the military's deep antipathy toward the use of force internally and its distrust of civilian officials engaged in high-stakes political games pointed to a minimal response aimed at preventing the outbreak of civil violence.

In late September 1993, another standoff occurred after President Yeltsin issued a decree dissolving the Congress of People's Deputies and the Supreme Soviet. In response, hard-line members of the Supreme Soviet blockaded themselves inside the parliament building, and anti-Yeltsin demonstrators gathered at the site in support. The military proclaimed its neutrality in what was clearly a political dispute. The security situation deteriorated on October 3 when demonstrators seized the Moscow mayor's office and tried to take control of the government-owned Ostankino television station, causing violence to erupt in the streets of Moscow. Only after the disorder appeared likely to spread did Defense Minister Pavel Grachev agree to President Yeltsin's written orders and in-person demands to send tanks and paratroopers to quash the revolt.<sup>31</sup>

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29. *Ibid.*, p. 259.

30. Taylor, *Politics and the Russian Army*, p. 223; and Odom, *The Collapse of the Soviet Military*, pp. 266–269.

31. Boris Yeltsin, *Zapiski Prezidenta* (Moscow: Ogonek, 1994), pp. 140–141; James Brusstar and Ellen Jones, "The Russian Military's Role in Politics," McNair Paper No. 34 (Washington, D.C.: Institute for Strategic Studies, National Defense University, January 1995), <http://www.ndu.edu/inss/McNair/mcnair34/34fal.html>, chap. 7.

In both 1991 and 1993, the military's internal deployments were calculated to prevent massive civil disorder—not to tip the domestic balance in one direction or another in a political showdown. The refusal of Russia's top brass to allow the military to entangle itself in domestic political disputes is undoubtedly in part a strategy to maintain discipline and order within the ranks during a period of political uncertainty.<sup>32</sup> By insisting upon an ethos of service to the Russian state and remaining formally neutral in governmental affairs, Russia's military leadership has been able to prevent the armed forces from fracturing along political and ideological lines.<sup>33</sup> The imperative of professional cohesion, political socialization, and a learned distrust of politicians all combine to make military intervention in Russia's internal political affairs very unlikely. Consequently, the reasons behind the failure of military reforms must lie elsewhere.

#### LACK OF SUFFICIENT FUNDING FOR COMPREHENSIVE REFORMS

A third explanation for why military reform has failed in Russia points to a lack of sufficient funding directed at this effort. Military officials have argued that recent levels of funding have been inadequate to properly maintain even the existing armed forces, and that consequently, undertaking large-scale reforms is impossible.<sup>34</sup> This argument, however, overlooks an important fact: the military system that Russia inherited from the Soviet Union has proven economically unsustainable.<sup>35</sup> Thus, stipulating an end to the military's budgetary crisis as a precondition to comprehensive reform turns logic on its head. Military reform is not precluded by a lack of funds per se, but rather by the lack of government oversight and control of military spending, as well as a similar inability to readily verify ministry of defense figures on force size and equipment.

From 1999 to 2003, Russia's defense budget more than doubled in real terms—from 109 billion rubles to 346 billion, with an annual rate of inflation of less than 20 percent.<sup>36</sup> Nevertheless, levels of combat readiness have not

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32. Brusstar and Jones, "The Russian Military's Role in Politics," <http://www.ndu.edu/inss/McNair/mcnair34/34how.html>, chap. 9.

33. Although there have been a few overt attempts by decorated officers to incite protest over conditions within the military, even these efforts have produced little effect. Alexander Golts, "Iyul'skie Tezisy Tovarisha Ilykhina" [July theses of Comrade Ilykhin], *Itogi*, August 28, 1998, p. 25.

34. Blank, "This Time We Really Mean It," p. 2.

35. Figures from Soviet military budgets are not a useful comparison because the conversion rate and purchasing power of the Soviet ruble were set by Soviet economic planners, not by standard market economic indicators.

36. Budgetary figures (in Russian) for fiscal years 2001–04 are available at <http://www.minfin.ru/budjet/budjet.htm>.

substantially improved. This apparent incongruity is possible because the military sets its own funding priorities without any real oversight from nonmilitary authorities. These priorities include several “black holes” that are capable of absorbing almost endless amounts of funding. One of the more bizarre examples of this phenomenon is in the realm of procurement.

Since 1992 a defense ministry priority has been to retain (at least on paper) Russia’s production capacity for a range of military hardware and equipment comparable to that produced in the USSR. In 2002 the state procurement order totaled 79 billion rubles, which, according to Defense Minister Ivanov, the armed forces used to purchase 340 different types of military equipment.<sup>37</sup> In many cases, however, the orders have been for a single piece of equipment (e.g., one tank or one airplane) rather than for an entire series.<sup>38</sup> Year after year the defense ministry has paid for this piecemeal without any guarantee that these weapons could be manufactured on a large scale. Nevertheless, Russia’s 2002 armament program again neglected to specify any government priorities for procurement.<sup>39</sup>

Another illustration of how the military’s autonomy in accounting matters contributes to systematic inefficiencies involves the handling of force reductions. Analysts who closely track official statements concerning the number of men serving in the Russian military may begin to doubt the leadership’s competence in basic arithmetic. In early 1999, for example, Russian Defense Minister Igor Sergeev reported that the armed forces had 1.2 million men in active service.<sup>40</sup> In 2000, Kremlin officials decided to reduce this number by 365,000, with 91,000 cuts scheduled for 2001.<sup>41</sup> At the beginning of 2002, however, Sergeev’s successor, Sergey Ivanov, reported that the 2001 reduction had been successfully carried out and that the armed forces now had 1,274,000 service

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37. Vladimir Mukhin, “Ministr Oborony RF: Taktiku Nashikh Deystvii na Severnom Kavkaze Neobkhodimo Utochnit’” [Minister of Defense of the Russian Federation: Our operational tactics in the Northern Caucasus must be made more precise], *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, November 26, 2002, p. 1.

38. Industries that supply products for military procurement have also deceived the defense ministry by offering in place of new engineering slightly modified products from weapons series produced in the late 1980s. Ivan Ivanyuk, “Byudzhets 2003 i Voennaya Reforma” [The 2003 budget and military reform], *Krasnaya Zvezda*, November 6, 2002, p. 3.

39. RIA-Novosti, November 11, 2002. See also Pavel Felgenhauer, “Murky Messy Procurement,” *Moscow Times*, January 23, 2003, <http://www.cdi.org/russia/241-12.cfm>.

40. Aleksandr Kholkhov, “Ministr Proveril: Svyaz’ bez Braka” [Minister verifies: A connection without defect], *Novie Izvestiya*, April 8, 1999, p. 3.

41. Vladislav Nikolaev, “Zadacha Stroitel’stvo Novoi Armii” [The goal—construction of a new army], *Krasnaya Zvezda*, November 22, 2000, p. 1.

members.<sup>42</sup> The explanation for such discrepancies is simple: military commanders manipulate claimed force numbers as the political situation requires. When budgetary issues are the theme, the generals inflate the numbers so that they can claim a larger share of the federal budget.<sup>43</sup> When policy discussions turn to planning force reductions or evaluating combat readiness, however, military leaders regularly cite lower figures.<sup>44</sup>

In a more direct attempt to forestall reforms, Russian military officials have also argued that maintaining an armed force based on conscription is considerably cheaper than a force composed of volunteer (“contract”) soldiers. They estimate that a single *contractnik* costs the state 40,000 rubles per year, as compared to 17,000 for a conscript.<sup>45</sup> This comparison, however, which is based mainly on wage differentials, omits numerous direct and indirect costs of the conscript system. These include resources expended to train roughly 400,000 conscripts annually for their twenty-four-month period of service, costs associated with the transport of these large numbers of recruits for training and service, as well as the costs of operating the network of military commissariats that manage the conscription process.

Government officials in Russia have no ability to independently verify the figures and estimates the defense ministry and General Staff provide regarding budget outlays, force numbers, or even the costs of basic troop maintenance. Without information of this kind, effective oversight of military spending cannot be achieved, and military officials can continue to plead poverty whenever the issue of reform arises.<sup>46</sup>

42. “Chislennost’ VS Sokrashena na 91 Titsh. Chelovek” [Size of the armed forces reduced by 91,000 people], *NG Novosti*, January 31, 2002, <http://news.ng.ru/2002/01/31/1012478365.html>.

43. Ground Forces Comdr. Col. Gen. Nikolai Kormiltsev cited the increase in the actual number of serviceman to 82 percent of those claimed on official staff lists as a major achievement of 2001. Aleksandr Bogatyrev, “S Uchetom Opyta Lokal’nykh Voyn” [Taking account of experience with local wars], *Krasnaya Zvezda*, December 28, 2001, p. 1.

44. In reality, many announced force reductions have often entailed merely the deletion of unfilled positions from the official staff list.

45. Viktor Baranech, “Do 30 Iyunya Sluzhit’ Otrpravlyatsya 162 Tyshtyachi Parney” [By June 30, 162,000 guys will head off to active service], *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, April 2, 2002, p. 5.

46. Attempts to improve the information available to civilian officials have had no real effect. In 2003 President Putin, following a long struggle in the State Duma, ordered military officials to declassify 50 percent of the military budget. Instead of the usual five lines of text describing its contents, Duma deputies and the public received a document containing fifty-nine lines of text with little additional information about military expenditures. Aleksei Arbatov and Petr Romashkin, “Bjudzhet Kak Zerkalo Voennoi Reformy: S Takim Planirovaniyem Voennykh Rashodov Nel’zya Reshat’ Seryeznykh Zadach” [The budget is a mirror of military reform: With this planning, military spending cannot resolve serious problems], *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, January 17, 2003, p. 1. See also the “Gosoboronzakaz” [State Defense Procurement Order] section of the Military-Political Committee finance report at [http://www.lcard.ru/~a\\_lapin/vpk/3\\_2002.htm](http://www.lcard.ru/~a_lapin/vpk/3_2002.htm).

#### THE CONFLICT IN CHECHNYA

In 1994 Russia's military leaders acquired a further justification for rejecting reforms: the war in Chechnya.<sup>47</sup> Theoretically, the argument that involvement in full-scale military operations should be expected to increase the difficulty of carrying out military reforms does have merit. But reasonable arguments for postponing reform efforts until hostilities have ceased implicitly assume a level of pre-reform combat readiness sufficient to prevail in ongoing battle operations. The performance of Russia's armed forces in Chechnya has raised serious questions both domestically and internationally about Russia's ability to subdue the separatists and regain control of the region.<sup>48</sup>

Unfortunately, only war could demonstrate the actual degree of degradation in the combat readiness of Russia's armed forces. The first Chechen war began in late 1994 and lasted until 1996. In 1999 armed hostilities were renewed and continue to the present. Several months before the outbreak of the first conflict, Defense Minister Grachev reported that a military reform plan that included the creation of mobile combat forces had been successfully implemented.<sup>49</sup> Following the initial outbreak of hostilities, however, it quickly became apparent that Russia had no combat-ready units. The defense ministry was forced to cobble together companies and platoons from units around the country. In 1998 Defense Minister Sergeyev made the creation of units with permanent combat readiness a reform priority. He proposed to staff these units at 90 percent of the wartime norm and to fully supply them with military equipment. The defense ministry assured Kremlin officials that by 1999 it would have ten such formations.<sup>50</sup> When rebels invaded Dagestan from Chechnya in August 1999 and declared the establishment of an independent Islamist republic, however, more than a month passed before Russia was able to begin large-scale troop deployments to the area. The army at that time claimed to have 1.3 million active servicemen, but as Putin acknowledged, "There was nobody to send to war."<sup>51</sup>

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47. Dmitri V. Trenin, "The Forgotten War: Chechnya and Russia's Future," policy brief (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, November 28, 2003), p. 5.

48. See, for example, Pavel Baev, "Will Russia Go for a Military Victory in Chechnya?" PONARS Policy Memo No. 107 (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, February 2000), pp. 3–4.

49. Vladimir Zakharovyu, "Voennaya Reforma: Sostoyanie i Perspektivy Vlast'" [Military reform: Positions and views of the regime], *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, April 4, 2000, pp. 17–22.

50. "Beg v Meshke: Interviyu Marshala Sergeyeva" [Sack race: An interview with Marshal Sergeyev], *Itogi*, October 20, 1998, p. 21.

51. Quoted in "Posle Hapadeniya na Dagestan My Byli v Shagye ot Obyavleniya Mobilizatsiyi" [Putin: After the invasion of Dagestan we were one step away from starting mobilization], October 5, 2002, <http://lenta.ru/vojna/2002/10/05/dagestan/>.

The invasion of Dagestan also revealed that the military's capacity to mobilize large numbers of reservists had more or less evaporated. In an early reaction to the invasion, President Putin announced that he was one step away from declaring a general mobilization to quickly overpower the rebels.<sup>52</sup> Almost all adult males in Dagestan had served in the Russian or Soviet military and were listed as reservists. Moreover, indicators suggested that a large segment of Dagestan's population was willing to resist the rebels.<sup>53</sup> Much of the state's stockpile of weapons and equipment, however, had been exhausted during the first Chechen war and had not been replenished. Thus in the autumn of 1999, the General Staff was able to mobilize only a few thousand reservists to assist the military in responding to the emergency.<sup>54</sup>

The Dagestan crisis soon sparked a resumption of hostilities in Chechnya, which further heightened the demand for trained combat personnel. In response, Russia's military commanders had to lure volunteers from around the country with the promise of high wages (nearly \$1,000 a month for those taking part in combat operations).<sup>55</sup> According to Col. Gen. Vladislav Putilin, by 2000, 20 percent of the federal forces in Chechnya were volunteers as compared with 7 percent when military operations began.<sup>56</sup> As soon as the emergency subsided, however, these volunteers received only one-third of their promised wages. Subsequently, high-ranking officers complained cynically of a lack of discipline among contract soldiers in Chechnya, and have cited this as evidence that an all-volunteer army is not practical for Russia.<sup>57</sup>

In the meantime, the Russian military continues to suffer acute shortages of enlisted personnel. In recent years, military officials have succeeded in drafting less than 11 percent of those designated for conscription under Russia's system of short-term universal service.<sup>58</sup> Poor living conditions and low pay

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52. "Pered Izbraniyem Putina Rossiya Nahodilas' na Poroge Grazhdanskoj Voiny" [Before Putin's election, Russia was on the verge of civil war], October 5, 2002, <http://www.ntv.ru/news/index.jsp?nid=3558>.

53. Matthew Evangelista, *The Chechen Wars: Will Russia Go the Way of the Soviet Union?* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 2002).

54. Mark Galeotti, "War in Dagestan," *Jane's Intelligence Review*, October 1, 1999, p. 3, [http://www.janes.com/regional\\_news/europe/news/chechnya/jir991001\\_1\\_n.shtml](http://www.janes.com/regional_news/europe/news/chechnya/jir991001_1_n.shtml).

55. "Kontraktnikam v Chechnye Bol'she Ne Budut Vpylachivat' Boevye" [Contract soldiers in Chechnya: Fighters no longer getting paid], *Lenta.ru*, October 10, 2000, <http://www.lenta.ru/vojna/2000/10/25/contractnics/>.

56. Vladimir Mukhin and Nikolai Baranov, "Armii Ne Khvataet Soldat" [Not enough soldiers for the army], *Nezavisimoye Voennoye Obozreniye*, October 13, 2000, p. 1.

57. Vladimir Mukhin, "Ofitseri Dayut Volyu Rukam" [Officers take off the gloves], *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, July 3, 2003, p. 2.

58. Each year 40,000 young men evade military service by simply ignoring call-up letters sent by the draft board. Mikhail Demidenko, "Slabiye, Bolniye, Glupiye i Legkiye" [Weak, sick, stupid, and easy], *Kommersant*, April 18, 2003, p. 3.

(or no pay), combined with high rates of violence and other crime, have made life in the barracks unbearable for many conscripts, as reflected in their high rates of suicide and desertion.<sup>59</sup> In Chechnya, dependence on poorly trained conscript troops has impaired the effectiveness of Russia's field operations.<sup>60</sup> Shortages of trained fighters have also prompted Russian strategists in the second Chechen conflict to rely more heavily on aerial bombardment to decimate the enemy—a tactic that also tends to kill large numbers of civilians.<sup>61</sup> Despite these problems, Russia's military leadership staunchly opposes efforts to do away with universal conscription in favor of a force composed of professionally trained volunteer servicemen.<sup>62</sup>

Far from offering a credible justification for postponing military reform, the conflict in Chechnya has provided a steady stream of evidence for its absolute necessity. Russia's military has responded ineffectively to ongoing separatist threats within the country and has instead continued to prepare for large-scale war against improbable external enemies. Explaining why this situation exists, and why it has not resulted in more sustained pressure for change from either Russia's political leadership or the public at large, is the subject of the remainder of this article.

### *Explaining Russia's Failed Military Reform Efforts*

When President Yeltsin dismissed Defense Minister Igor Rodionov in 1997, he declared, "The generals are today the main obstacle to army reforms."<sup>63</sup> Opposition to reform from Russia's top brass, however, is only one piece of the puzzle. A full account of the failure of military reform in Russia also requires an

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59. Alek Akhundov, "V Rossiiskoi Armii Prestupnost pod Kontrolyem" [In the Russian army, criminality is under control], *Kommersant*, January 11, 2003, p. 4. In the first half of 2002 alone, 2,265 military conscripts deserted their posts. Fred Weir, "Going AWOL: Russian Soldiers Desert En Masse," *CDI Russia Weekly*, January 6, 2003, <http://www.cdi.org/russia/237-12.cfm>. See also "Suicidal Russia," *Pravda.ru*, April 9, 2003, <http://english.pravda.ru/main/18/87/347/10835-suicide.html>.

60. For example, in January 2000, just as federal troops were poised to take control of the Chechen capital, Grozny, the most experienced 40 percent of soldiers engaged in the fighting were due to be replaced by new recruits. Faced with this prospect, the commanding officers preferred to break the law and force their experienced soldiers to remain on the front line beyond their terms of service. "Ranennykh v Chechnye Soldat Zastavlyayut Sluzhit' Bol'she Polozhennogo" [Wounded in Chechnya: Soldiers are forced to serve longer than prescribed], *Moskovskii Komsomolets*, April 20, 2000, p. 1.

61. Baev, "Will Russia Go for a Military Victory in Chechnya?" p. 1.

62. "Russia Will Never Abolish Conscription—Defense Minister," *MosNews.com*, June 6, 2004, <http://www.mosnews.com/news/2004/06/02/Ivanov.shtml>.

63. Quoted in Pavel Gazukin, "Vooruzhennyye Sily Rossii v Post-Sovetskoi Period" [The Russian armed forces in the post-Soviet period], *Otechestvennyye Zapiski*, November–December 2000, p. 81.

answer to the following question: why have the Russian political elite and public shown such enormous deference to the policies pursued by the armed forces, despite mounting evidence that the institution is mired in an unprecedented structural and operational crisis?

The answer lies in the structural and ideational legacies of a form of state militarism forged during Russia's rise as a great power in the eighteenth century. The ideational aspect of this legacy is captured in the concept of "defense-mindedness."<sup>64</sup> Defense-mindedness encompasses culturally embedded attitudes regarding the central role of the military in constituting the Russian state, together with the belief that Russia's security is ultimately guaranteed by the ability of its leaders to draw upon the full capacity of the state and its citizens for defense of the homeland. Institutionally, the military has occupied a privileged position in Russia's state structure throughout much of the country's history. For centuries it has succeeded in extracting enormous human and material resources from Russia's economy and society, which in turn has enabled the perpetuation of institutions that favor military goals and priorities. The primacy of military values and priorities throughout much of Russia's history, often at the expense of economic and social development, has imbued the Russian public and its political leadership with an instinctual deference to the military that is essential to explaining the fate of the government's recent reform efforts.

Although the notion of defense-mindedness is in many respects peculiarly Russian,<sup>65</sup> it contains elements recognizable in other militarist traditions, including those in Prussia and Japan in centuries past.<sup>66</sup> Alfred Vagts refers to

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64. In a meeting with journalists on February 20, 1997, Rodionov explained that for victory Russia needed neither modern arms nor well-prepared forces but rather a sense of defense-mindedness among its people. "If this element is present," the general declared, "we shall be capable of killing all enemies with sticks alone." Quoted in Pavel Felgenhauer, "Voennaya Reforma Vnov' Ob'yavlena Prioritetnoi Zadachi" [Military reform again declared an urgent task], *Segodnya*, March 21, 2000, p. 2; and Vladimir Mukhin, "V Voennykh Reformakh Zaputalos' Ne Tol'ko Obschchestvo, No i Rukovodstvo Strany" [Military reform entangled not only society, but the country's leadership as well], *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, February 21, 1997, p. 3.

65. Russia's brand of state militarism has not remained unnoticed by Western social scientists. See, for example, Stanislav Andreski, ed., *Structure, Function, and Evolution* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1991), pp. 152–156; and Harold Lasswell and Jay Stanley, eds., *Essays on the Garrison State* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction, 1997), p. 119.

66. By contrast, German historian Gerhard Ritter defined militarism in the German empire as a combination of two elements: the first being the overwhelming influence of military-technical considerations on political decisions; and the second being the predominance of militant and martial traits in Germany's political outlook. Wilfred von Bredow adds a third element: the deep penetration of military values and military attitudes into civil society. Constantine P. Danopoulos and

the difference between a country's need to prepare its army for possible war and full-blown militarism as "fundamental and fateful." The preparation for war, which Vagts terms the "military way," entails the "concentration of men and materials on winning specific objectives of power with the utmost efficiency, that is, with the least expenditure of blood and treasure. It is limited in scope, confined to one function and scientific in its essential qualities." By contrast, militarism "presents a vast array of customs, interests, prestige actions, and thought associated with armies and wars and yet transcending true military purposes. Indeed, militarism is so constituted that it may hamper and defeat the purposes of the military way. . . . Rejecting the scientific character of the military way, militarism displays the qualities of caste and cult, authority and belief."<sup>67</sup>

In militarist societies, the salience of the values described above is not confined to members of the military. Rather it carries over to civilian leaders and the general population. Vagts describes the civilian aspects of militarism as "the unquestioning embrace of military values, ethos, principles, [and] attitudes; as ranking military institutions and considerations above all others in the state; as finding the heroic predominantly in military service and action including war—to the preparation of which the nation's main interest and recourses must be dedicated, with the inevitability and goodness of war always presumed. Such high regard leads to the advocacy of applying military values, organization—notably hierarchical features—the totality of a nation's life." Attending these values, Vagts argues, is a "contempt for civilian politics" shared by members of the military, as well as by government officials and the public.<sup>68</sup>

Charles Tilly's theory of state formation in Europe helps to situate Russian militarism in a wider comparative context. Tilly examines the formation of modern states through the interaction of two processes: the concentration of capital and the concentration of coercion.<sup>69</sup> He identifies various trajectories of nation-state development in Europe that followed different configurations of capital and coercion in combination with other environmental factors. Capital concentration tended to enhance a state's means of production and distribu-

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Cynthia Watson, eds., *The Political Role of the Military: An International Handbook* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1996), p. 143.

67. Alfred Vagts, *A History of Militarism: Civilian and Military* (New York: Meridian, 1959), p. 13.

68. *Ibid.*, p. 453.

69. Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States, A.D. 990–1992* (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1992).

tion. The concentration of coercive means, in contrast, contributed to the capacity for “warmaking,” “statemaking,” and “extraction,” which Tilly defines as “drawing the means of state activity from members of that population.”<sup>70</sup> The logic of path dependency operates in Tilly’s theory to the degree that “the path followed by a state up to a certain point in time limit[s] the strategies open to its rulers beyond that point.”<sup>71</sup> Thus the effects of organizational structures and patterns of social relations generated by a government’s prior moves and decisions become part of the structural environment for later choices.

Russia’s starting position as a sparsely settled territory with few cities and a low concentration of capital contrasts sharply with conditions in more densely populated, capital-rich regions of Europe. This in turn provided Russia’s rulers a far different set of choices for amassing military power.<sup>72</sup> Tilly describes the Russian czars as having followed a trajectory of “high coercion” in their efforts to build a military capable of pacifying Russia’s expanding empire and competing militarily with European powers.<sup>73</sup> In the sixteenth century, Russia’s czars undercut the autonomy of the landlords by expropriating and redistributing their land based on patronage. This strategy forced the noble classes into service of the state (often for military ends) and contributed to the growth of an imperial bureaucracy. Russia’s peasantry during this period was being forced into serfdom, which gave landlords near-absolute control over the lives and property of their serfs. These developments together paved the way for the success of Peter the Great’s efforts to militarize the Russian state.

The argument elaborated in this section is not an iteration of the hypothesis, familiar outside Russia, that attributes the recent pathologies of Russia’s military institutions to the exigencies of coping with the loss of superpower status.<sup>74</sup> Although that explanation is not incompatible with our argument, it too ultimately raises questions about the political salience of military prestige among both Russian elites and the general public. The focus of our argument is instead on the causes and consequences of domestic “path dependencies” that have influenced, and continue to influence, the organization of Russia’s military establishment and its place within the institutional structure and political character of the Russian state.

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70. *Ibid.*, p. 54.

71. *Ibid.*, p. 137.

72. *Ibid.*, pp. 143–160.

73. *Ibid.*, pp. 137–143.

74. See, for example, Richard Pipes, “Is Russia Still an Enemy?” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 76, No. 5 (September/October 1997), pp. 65–78.

## MILITARISM AND THE RUSSIAN STATE

The tradition of perceiving the military as the foundation of the state is deeply ingrained in Russian political culture and reflected in the organizational structure of the country's institutions. The origins of this tradition are traceable to the massive overhaul of Russia's state structure by Peter the Great in the early eighteenth century. The reforms introduced by Peter had one overriding objective: to build a massive military force capable of confronting Europe's major powers.<sup>75</sup> Even Peter's infamous decrees ordering Russians to shave their beards and adopt European-style dress were justified as necessary "for both the glory and beauty of the state and its military management." For nearly three centuries, the Russian military has praised Peter's achievements as worthy of emulation.<sup>76</sup>

In 1705 Peter created Russia's first regular army using recruits conscripted from the population. Every twenty peasant homesteads were required to send one soldier annually to serve in the military for 30 years, which in practical terms meant life service. This system operated for 170 years without significant modification, producing a seemingly inexhaustible source of manpower for the czars. While other European kings maintained contract armies whose sizes were limited by treasury constraints, Russia's rulers were able to assemble gigantic standing armies. In an epoch in which it was said, "God favor[ed] large battalions," this system initially provided absolute superiority over all adversaries.<sup>77</sup>

Peter likewise organized the administrative components of the state on the model of a military barracks "to give the state features of a united, grandiose military machine."<sup>78</sup> Under Peter's reign, "establishment officials had to carry out decrees strictly, just as soldiers and officers carried out the military regulations and instructions in manuals."<sup>79</sup> In this way, all types of service to the state were imbued with an overtly martial character and purpose.

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75. See, for example, Pavel N. Miliukov, *Gosudarstvennoe Khoziaistvo Rossii v Pervoi Chetverti XVIII Stoletii i Reforma Petra Velikago* [The Russian national economy in the first quarter of the 18th century and the reforms of Peter the Great] (St. Petersburg: Tip. M.M. Stasiyulevicha, 1905), p. 303.

76. Note, however, that many innovations subsequently recognized as "great" were in fact improvisations driven by the immediate needs of Russia's twenty-year-long Northern War against Sweden. See Fuller, *Strategy and Power in Russia, 1600–1914*, pp. 36–37.

77. Voltaire, letter to M. le Riche, February 6, 1770, in John Bartlett, *Familiar Quotations: A Collection of Passages, Phrases, and Proverbs Traced to Their Sources in Ancient and Modern Literature*, 10th ed. (Boston: Little, Brown, 1914), p. 987.

78. Evgenii Anisimov, *Vrem' i'a Petrovskikh Reform* [The time of Peter's reform] (Leningrad: Lenizdat, 1989), p. 261.

79. Nikolai I. Pavlenko, *Rossia v period reform Petra I* [Russia in the period of Peter I reforms] (Moscow: Nauka, 1973), p. 86.

Over the course of Peter's reign, the army began to carry out many basic state functions within the territory of the Russian empire.<sup>80</sup> Almost all revenues collected in Russia during his rule were put toward maintenance of the armed forces. Peter eliminated the administrative middleman by allowing the army to collect the taxes intended for its use. He appointed military officials as top political authorities in the provinces and encouraged officers to carry out police functions. In addition, when uprisings or other problems occurred in the provinces, Peter dispatched guard officers to restore order and to ensure that loyalty to the state and the army was maintained. Under Peter, the practice of quartering troops was instituted throughout the country to ease the state's financial burden for maintaining its soldiers.<sup>81</sup> After the end of the Northern War against Sweden (1700–21), Peter began to use the army for massive infrastructure projects, which included erecting fortresses, lining channels, expanding harbors, and helping to construct the empire's new capital, St. Petersburg, along the swampy shores of the Baltic Sea.<sup>82</sup>

Peter's military reforms proceeded largely in parallel with the expansion and consolidation of serfdom. The country and its people were treated as little more than sources of human and material capital to maintain Russia's massive armed forces. In the words of William Fuller, the very backwardness of the Russian population proved to be a "font of tremendous military power." He adds, "The very things that made Russia backward and underdeveloped by comparison with Western Europe—autocracy, serfdom, poverty . . . paradoxically translate[d] into armed might."<sup>83</sup> The autocratic character of the Russian state made it possible to mobilize the economy for even protracted wars. As Fuller writes, "It did not matter that the recruits were raw, that rations were short, that equipment was missing. The peasant conscripts were already inured to hardships, and there were more where they came from."<sup>84</sup>

This system made possible the series of victories that constitute the "golden age" of Russian military history. This era was marked by unconditional victories over the greatest European military leaders of the age—Charles XII, Frederic the Great, and Napoleon. When not engaged in military campaigns, Russian conscripts were often attached to labor gangs and sent to work in Rus-

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80. Anisimov, *Vrem' i' a Petrovskikh Reform*, p. 365.

81. Aleksandr A. Kornilov, *Kurs Istorii Rossii, XIX Veka* [The course of Russian history, 19th century] (Moscow: Vishaya Skola, 1993).

82. John L.H. Keep observes that "a soldier in Peter's army was as likely to find himself employed on construction tasks as on military operations." Keep, *Soldiers of the Tsar*, p. 109.

83. Fuller, *Strategy and Power in Russia, 1600–1914*, pp. 82–83.

84. *Ibid.*, p. 83.

sian factories to help construct railroads.<sup>85</sup> In the early nineteenth century, so-called military settlements—entire villages in which troops lived and worked alongside peasants to contribute to their own upkeep—became a common feature that enabled the state to support its massive standing army.<sup>86</sup>

In the meantime, however, Russia's military adversaries had continued to innovate. The Russian elite, still blinded by the glare of victory over Napoleon, failed to understand that the industrial revolution had deprived Russia of its military superiority. The result was Russia's defeat on its own territory in the Crimean War (1853–56) by much smaller armies. Both Russian and Soviet military historians, as a rule, explain this defeat as the result of technological disadvantage—the Russian army at the time had neither rifles nor a steam fleet.<sup>87</sup> Also important, however, was Russia's poor infrastructure and equipment shortages, which slowed the organization, provision, and deployment of forces to Sevastopol for many months. This defeat spurred attempts to reform and modernize the country's military. These efforts occurred against a political backdrop in which Russia's imperial system struggled to cope with the challenges posed by industrialization and liberalization elsewhere in Europe.

One difficulty associated with the modernization of Russia's military was that, as long as its principal recruitment base remained serfs conscripted for long-term service, the country was locked into supporting the largest and most expensive standing army in Europe. This system precluded Russia from emulating its adversaries by building a trained mobilization reserve with which to expand its forces during emergencies. The constant drain of this obligation on the imperial treasury constrained state investment in railroads and other infrastructure improvements needed to prevent Russia from falling further behind other European powers both economically and militarily.<sup>88</sup> The degree to which the impetus behind military reform (as opposed to, for example, pressures for industrialization and growing peasant unrest) contributed to the emancipation of the serfs in 1861 is a matter of historical debate.<sup>89</sup> Yet emancipation clearly forced substantial changes in the organization and character

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85. J.N. Westwood, *Endurance and Endeavor: Russian History, 1812–1980* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), pp. 21–22.

86. Keep, *Soldiers of the Tsar*, pp. 275–322. See also Taylor, *Politics and the Russian Army*, p. 56.

87. See, for example, Fuller, *Strategy and Power in Russia, 1600–1914*; and Anton A. Kersnovskii, *Istorii Russkoi Armii, Tom Vtoroi: Ot Vzyatiya Parizha do Pokorenia Srednei Azii, 1814–81* [History of the Russian army, vol. 2: From the capture of Paris to the conquest of Central Asia, 1814–81] (Moscow: Golos, 1993), p. 129.

88. Alfred J. Rieber, "Alexander II: A Revisionist View," *Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 43, No. 1 (March 1971), p. 47.

89. For a summary of this debate, see Keep, *Soldiers of the Tsar*, p. 352.

of Russia's military, crowned by the formal adoption of the Prussian model of selective universal conscription coupled with a mobilization reserve in 1874.<sup>90</sup>

Not surprisingly, changes made on paper did not transform Russia's military into a streamlined, Prussian-style force overnight. Poor infrastructure limited the ability to move soldiers and equipment as required for effective defense of Russia's sizable territory, and therefore the ability to reduce its standing force size. At the same time, developments in other areas conspired to subvert—albeit temporarily—the military's role as a central pillar of the state. Russia's military establishment was for the first time forced to compete seriously, and not always successfully, with other bureaucratic interests for resources and political favor.<sup>91</sup> The officer corps came to view itself as an increasingly marginalized “bulwark of conservatism” against forces that threatened to undermine the institutions and principles of the traditional imperial order.<sup>92</sup> In situations where reform requirements were in tension with established social relations or traditional values, the result was frequently inconsistent and lukewarm implementation. Examples include largely stillborn efforts to restructure the role of the officer corps and largely failed policies to promote the humane treatment and education of conscripts.<sup>93</sup>

Russia's halting military reforms and half measures of the final decades of the nineteenth century were repaid in its total defeat in the 1905 war against Japan and only limited victories in the Balkan wars of 1912 and 1913. Following the 1905 defeat at the hands of the Japanese, the Russian government initiated an ambitious program of rearmament, but it did not restructure the officer corps. After expectations for a rapid victory in World War I were frustrated,

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90. *Ibid.*, p. 357. Russian War Minister Dmitrii Miliutin, author of Russia's late nineteenth-century military reforms, had been deeply impressed by Prussia's performance in the 1870–71 Franco-Prussian War. He wrote in his diary, “The sheer size of the military force gathered by Prussia is striking, together with its capability to deliver fast blows to even a powerful enemy.” Quoted in Alexander Savinkin, ed., *Gosudarstvennaya Oborona Rossii. Imperativi Russkoi Voennoi Klassiki* [Russian national defense: Imperatives from the Russian military classics] (Moscow: Russkii Put, 2003), p. 505.

91. Fuller, *Civil-Military Conflict in Imperial Russia, 1881–1914*, pp. 58–63. Fuller explains that for the first time in its history, the Russian state had developed investment priorities that trumped those of the military. He attributes this to the influence of the ministry of finance under Alexander III.

92. Keep, *Soldiers of the Tsar*, p. 379.

93. *Ibid.*, p. 357. Before the reforms of the 1860s and 1870s, Russian officers had inculcated their soldiers with an unconditional obedience through long years of drilling. A conscript army built upon universal short-term military service relied on a different type of soldier, and therefore demanded officers devoted to honing command skills and professionalism to give conscripted soldiers adequate direction in, and motivation for, battle. Alexander II's progressive war minister, Dmitrii Miliutin, had undertaken to prepare officers for this role but was halted in mid-course by Alexander III.

Russia's government was compelled to mobilize the entire country for the war effort. Heavy personnel losses forced military officers to rely increasingly on floods of cursorily trained reservists and peasants who frequently arrived at the front lines weaponless.<sup>94</sup> When this supreme effort still failed to reverse the tide of Russia's defeats in battle, political tensions, heightened by shortages of food and other basic supplies, reached a breaking point. In early 1917, imperial soldiers in St. Petersburg mutinied and brought about the abdication of Nicholas II and the end of the czarist regime.<sup>95</sup> In October 1917, Bolshevik revolutionaries seized power from the provisional government and in March 1918 signed a treaty with the Germans at Brest-Litovsk that led to the withdrawal of Russia from the war.<sup>96</sup>

The overthrow of the Russian monarchy and the advent of the Soviet era initially suggested a radical break in the state's organizational patterns. During the first fifteen years after the October Revolution, however, Soviet leaders incrementally re-created the basic elements of Peter the Great's state structure. The Soviet state was characterized by the hypercentralization of political authority and the concentration of economic resources in service of state goals. Representative institutions were dismantled, and organs for the repression and control of private citizens were established in their place. In the early years, the Soviet government emphasized rapid collectivization and industrialization to fortify the state in its struggle against the forces of world capitalism. In a 1931 speech, Joseph Stalin asked the Soviet people, "Do you want our Socialist fatherland to be beaten and to lose its independence? If you do not want this, you must put an end to its backwardness in the shortest possible time and develop a genuine Bolshevik tempo in building up the socialist economic system."<sup>97</sup> Just as Peter had justified the construction of roads and canals by claiming military necessity, Stalin linked the Soviet Union's drive for rapid industrialization using familiar mechanisms of forced labor and state coercion to the larger goal of protecting the socialist fatherland.

In the military realm, the Bolsheviks initially followed their socialist ideals and tried to construct a voluntary militia-type army entirely from workers and peasants. As soon as the survival of Soviet power was threatened, however, they reverted to a system of forced conscription under a resuscitated imperial-

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94. Richard Pipes, *The Russian Revolution* (New York: Vintage, 1990), pp. 201–207, 215.

95. *Ibid.*, pp. 278–279.

96. *Ibid.*, p. 595.

97. Joseph Stalin, *Problems of Leninism* (Moscow: Foreign Language Publishing House, 1947), p. 356.

style command system. On May 29, 1918, the All-Russia Central Executive Committee adopted a decree entitled On Coercive Recruitment for the Red Army, the title of which speaks for itself.<sup>98</sup> The Soviet Union maintained a relatively small (in Russian terms) regular force until the late 1930s, when the signs of impending German aggression prompted the Soviet leadership to undertake a massive military buildup. The USSR is estimated to have had only 930,000 active military servicemen in 1935. By the time Germany launched its major offensive against the Soviet Union in the summer of 1941, however, the Soviet military had a force numbering roughly 5 million men.<sup>99</sup>

The Soviet victory in the Great Patriotic War over Nazi Germany had a tremendous effect on the Russian people and on the mind-set of its political elite—not unlike that of Russia’s nineteenth-century victory over Napoleon’s armies. For many, this victory vindicated the brutality of the means used to achieve it, in particular the complete subordination of Russia’s economy and society to the war effort. These methods were carried forward in substantial measure into postwar state organization and planning. Under Stalin and subsequent leaders until Mikhail Gorbachev, the Soviet state and economy were geared almost entirely toward enhancing the USSR’s military capacity in its drawn-out confrontation with the West in the Cold War. The post–World War II Soviet education system was geared toward the preparation of future soldiers. The purpose of the economy was not to produce consumer goods but to manufacture materials required for national defense. The energy sector, the iron and steel industries, and machine-building factories were organized to meet military demands through the system of mobilization readiness. Indeed, it became virtually impossible to distinguish the nonmilitary from the military sector of the Soviet economy.<sup>100</sup>

The addition of nuclear weapons to the Soviet military arsenal in the early 1950s had surprisingly little impact on the USSR’s overall strategic approach. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, Nikita Khrushchev and a small group of military strategists, believing that nuclear weapons had rendered ground forces strategically irrelevant, announced a policy to drastically reduce the number of Soviet conventional forces. The mainstream elements of the Soviet military

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98. Vladimir A. Zolotarev, *Istoriya Voennoyi Strategii Rossii* [A history of Russian military strategy] (Moscow: Kuchkovo Pole, 2000), p. 134.

99. *Ibid.*, pp. 204–225.

100. Vitalii Shlykov, *Chto Pogubilo Sovetskii Soyuz? Genshtab i Ekonomika* [What destroyed the Soviet Union? The General Staff and economics] (Moscow: International Foundation for Information Technologies, September 2002).

leadership foretold the “ultimate ruin of the army” if these plans were carried out.<sup>101</sup> Khrushchev’s relatively short tenure as general secretary of the CPSU, however, precluded a far-reaching transformation of the Soviet military according to this precept. Under Leonid Brezhnev’s leadership, the Soviet nuclear buildup continued, but Brezhnev reversed the policy of de-emphasizing ground troops and undertook a large increase in Soviet conventional forces in Europe. The result was to reinvigorate the Russian military’s reliance on its traditional core strategy within the context of nuclear deadlock with the United States.<sup>102</sup>

#### CONTEMPORARY EVIDENCE OF RUSSIA’S MILITARIST LEGACIES

The institutional and ideational legacies of militarism are still widespread in Russia, despite recent economic and political changes.<sup>103</sup> In early 2003, Aleksei Arbatov, then deputy chairman of the Duma Defense Committee, and Petr Romashkin, a military consultant to the Office of the Russian State Duma, observed, “Society and the parliament are still in large measure disposed to traditional admiration of the sacred cow of ‘defense and security’. . . . Officials in epaulets are perceived not simply as civil servants who can make mistakes or pursue narrow bureaucratic interests, but as priests who know a sacrament of truth inaccessible to civilians. A position taken by any ministry, as well as those taken by individual officials, should be open to criticism and reconsideration. But the plans of the Defense Ministry and other ‘power ministries’ are never challenged.”<sup>104</sup>

The systematic prioritization of military and security affairs over social and economic policy is evident in the structure of the post-1991 government of the Russian Federation. The government is organized into two parts of unequal status. Ministers who govern the social and economic spheres are lower in the bureaucratic hierarchy than the chiefs of the ten military and semimilitary ministries and state agencies. Whereas the first group reports to the prime min-

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101. Matthew Evangelista, *Unarmed Forces: The Transnational Movement to End the Cold War* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1999), pp. 103–104.

102. *Ibid.*, pp. 176–177.

103. Recognition of the tension between militarism and the goals of a civil society is hardly new. In 1850 Nikolai Obruchev, a future chief of the Imperial Main Staff wrote, “That armies provide for the security of the state is completely accurate, but to claim they are the foundation on which it is built is pure sophism.” Obruchev argued to the contrary that the distinctiveness of the state is “rooted in, and develops from, its civil life.” Quoted in Savinkin, *Gosudarstvennaya Oborona Rossii*, p. 83.

104. Arbatov and Romashkin, “Bjudzhet Kak Zerkalo Voennoi Reformy.”

ister, the latter are members of the Security Council and report directly to the president. Similar “two-tiered” cabinets existed in Prussia and later in the German empire. The continued influence of militarism is also evident in the anachronistic-sounding term “military-political leadership” that is still used in Russia to refer to authority in the defense realm and security sphere.

According to a poll conducted in January 2002 by VTsIOM, the All-Russia Center for Public Opinion, the military was the third most trusted institution among Russians behind only the president and the Russian Orthodox Church—and ahead of both the media and the internal security service, or FSB. The poll suggests that for the majority of Russians, the military remains an important symbol of the state.<sup>105</sup> Even amid the contemporary surge in attention to individual rights and freedoms in Russia, the majority of Russian citizens would agree that the state has the right to require great sacrifice for strengthening its defense capacity. This somewhat contradictory stance consistently reveals itself in public attitudes toward the military and military service.

On the one hand, few Russians actively challenge the right of the state to call people to military service, despite high rates of suicide among recruits and large numbers of lives lost to brutality in military barracks. Russian public opinion remained indifferent after Defense Minister Ivanov reported that over a ten-month period in 2002, some 531 servicemen were killed in various service-related crimes. And the Russian public has for the most part accepted human losses in Chechnya without demanding that the defense ministry and General Staff provide accurate information as to their causes or magnitude. On the other hand, Russian society does not generally condemn those who use whatever means are available to avoid military service.<sup>106</sup> In the VTsIOM poll mentioned above, only 22 percent of the individuals polled were positively disposed toward a “son, brother, husband or other close relative” serving in the military.<sup>107</sup>

The attitude of Russia’s government elites toward the military is also

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105. Alexei Levinson, “Neizbivni Atribut” [Unyielding attribute], *Yezhenedelnyi Zhurnal*, September 17, 2002, p. 10.

106. Individuals seeking conscientious-objector status have faced an uphill battle in Russia. The military has staunchly opposed this option, viewing it as little more than institutionalized draft dodging. A law on alternative military service passed by the Duma in July 2002 was declared invalid by the courts one year later because it required terms of alternative service nearly double those of military conscripts. Robyn Dixon, “An Unappealing Alternative to Russia’s Draft Military: A Likely Law Will Make the Choice Two Years of Service versus 3 1/2 of Noncombatant Work,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 22, 2002, <http://www.cdi.org/russia/johnson/6321-7.cfm>.

107. *Ibid.*

difficult to understand without an awareness of the military's enduring importance in the political folklore that underlies state power.<sup>108</sup> The authority to initiate and terminate the use of military force in armed hostilities remains the most coveted symbol of power among Russia's leaders—even as the capacities in question have become increasingly symbolic. This is nowhere more evident than with regard to control over the government's "nuclear suitcase." Before undergoing heart surgery in the autumn of 1996, President Yeltsin temporarily transferred presidential power, including possession of the "suitcase," to Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin. Immediately after regaining consciousness, Yeltsin insisted that the "suitcase" be returned to him.<sup>109</sup> The recovering president surely was not afraid that Chernomyrdin would initiate a nuclear war. Rather, possession of the "nuclear suitcase" has become a powerful symbol of ultimate political authority—not unlike the scepter and orb in earlier times.

The significance of political control over the defense and security of the Russian state was also evident in the political maneuverings that accompanied the first post-Soviet transfer of presidential power: in September 1998 a major theme in the political tussle surrounding the appointment of a new prime minister was whether the individual selected would have authority to appoint the chiefs of the so-called power ministries—the ministries of defense, internal affairs, and emergency situations, as well as the federal intelligence and counter-intelligence services. Under normal conditions, this power belongs to the president as part of his plenary authority over issues of internal and external security (the prime minister's portfolio is limited to responsibility for economic and social affairs). The individuals seeking the position of prime minister in the fall of 1998, however, viewed themselves as competing for position as Yeltsin's successor. All emphasized acquiring control over security affairs as a signal that a power transition had in indeed occurred.<sup>110</sup> This question occupied center stage, despite the unprecedented economic and international financial crisis Russia was experiencing at the time.

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108. Arbatov and Romashkin, "Bjudzhet Kak Zerkalo Voennoi Reformy."

109. Nikolai Yakubovskii and Laura Belin, "Yeltsin Regains Consciousness . . . and Takes Power Back from Chernomyrdin," *RFE/RL*, No. 215, pt. 1, November 6, 1996, <http://www.friends-partners.org/friends/news/omri/1996/11/961106I.html>.

110. In the autumn of 1998, this control was purely symbolic. Andrei Kokoshin, then secretary of the Security Council, had prepared a report for Yeltsin that concluded that the army and internal ministry troops would not execute orders to use force against Yeltsin's political opponents. Alexander Golts, "Promakh Andreiya Kokoshina" [Andrei Kokoshin's blunder], *Itogi*, September 15, 1998, p. 19.

Yeltsin's decision to renominate Chernomyrdin as prime minister over the popular mayor of Moscow, Yuri Luzhkov, turned on the fact that Luzhkov openly sought control over the power ministries, whereas Chernomyrdin was less insistent. After the Duma twice rejected Chernomyrdin's nomination, he stepped aside in favor of Yevgeny Primakov. Shortly after Primakov's appointment, Yeltsin gathered top officials from the power ministries to reinforce publicly that only the president possessed authority to issue orders and make appointments—not the prime minister.<sup>111</sup> By contrast, immediately after Yeltsin chose Putin as his successor in 1999, the latter was temporarily installed as prime minister and, in an unprecedented move, placed in charge of military operations, with the generals being told to report to him rather than to President Yeltsin.

During his presidency, Putin has demonstrated an even greater affinity and deference toward the armed forces than Yeltsin.<sup>112</sup> Virtually all of Putin's major initiatives for reform of Russia's state structure have been designed in line with the theory that the best way to govern a country such as Russia is by means of a strictly hierarchical, military-style command system.<sup>113</sup> Time after time, however, Putin has failed to react when members of the military elite have openly violated the principles of command hierarchy. For example, Putin remained publicly silent after Maj. Gen. Valery Shamanov openly blackmailed the Kremlin to expand operations at the beginning of the second Chechen war by threatening to "tear off his stripes" if he were ordered not to cross the Terek River.<sup>114</sup> In another case, Putin waited a year before punishing the admirals responsible for the 2000 *Kursk* submarine disaster, in which the entire crew died as the result of onboard explosions. Moreover, he hesitated several months before intervening in an unprecedented public quarrel between Chief of the General Staff Anatoly Kvashnin and Defense Minister Sergeyev over the future status of Russia's strategic rocket forces that polarized Russia's high command as it was trying to conduct operations in Chechnya.

In situations where Putin has acted to rein in high-ranking military officers,

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111. "Prezident i Ego Pomekhi" [The president and his impediments], *Moskovskii Komsomolets*, October 11, 1998, p. 1.

112. Yeltsin demonstrated the limits of his tolerance for perceived obstruction of military reforms by dismissing Defense Minister Rodionov together with the chief of the General Staff in May 1997. "Yeltsin Fires Defense Chief," *Washington Post Foreign Service*, May 23, 1997.

113. These reforms include the creation of the State Council, the establishment of seven federal territories, efforts to curb the powers of governors, and the centralization of control over budgetary processes in the regions.

114. Olga Alentova, "Valery Shamanov: Ya Daleko Ne Yastreb" [Valery Shamanov: I am not a hawk], *Kommersant*, September 11, 1999, pp. 1–3. See also Alexander Golts, "Ni Tchislom, ni Umeniem" [Neither numbers, nor skills], *Itoogi*, September 21, 1999, p. 27.

he has gone to great lengths to soften their fall.<sup>115</sup> For example, after General Shamanov was unofficially advised to resign from the armed forces, he received financial support from the Kremlin to run for governor of Ulianovskaya Oblast. The admirals dismissed for their role in the *Kursk* incident all subsequently received positions within other security agencies. And although Sergeyev was forced to step down as defense minister following his public row with Kvashnin, soon thereafter he was appointed as Putin's adviser on strategic stability. Putin's hesitation to openly challenge the conduct of individual members of the military elite or the policies and priorities of military institutions has not, however, invited widespread political criticism. Such behavior is entirely consistent with the expectations of many within the political elite and with the overwhelming majority of the Russian public who continue to view these matters through the lens of defense-mindedness.

### *Current Reform Efforts and Longer-Term Prospects*

On July 10, 2003, the Russian government formally adopted the Special Federal Program to Transform the Staffing of the Armed Forces Primarily to Contract Servicemen. The program is designed to convert eighty units of permanent combat-ready troops (in which 145,500 privates and sergeants serve) from conscript to volunteer forces.<sup>116</sup> The transition, which began on schedule in late 2003, is slated for completion by 2007.<sup>117</sup>

At first glance, the program offers several reasons for optimism. First, the goal of creating all-volunteer units is a clear departure from the objectives of prior Russian military reform programs, which emphasized force reductions and minor organizational reshuffling. Second, the program provides for the formation of a professional NCO corps to build leadership capacity at the junior level and to increase the attractiveness of a military career to promising young officers.<sup>118</sup> Indeed Defense Minister Ivanov pledged that this aspect of

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115. The same is true with regard to Putin's handling of civilian officials. See David Filipov, "Putin's Paradox: In Public, He's Boss; Behind the Scenes, He Takes Political Cues," *Boston Globe*, June 21, 2003, <http://www.cdi.org/russia/johnson/7232-6.cfm>.

116. Seventy-two of the participating units are from the armed forces, together with five units from the interior troops and three border guard units.

117. "Chasti postoyannoi gotovnosti VS RF Planiryetsya Perevesti na Contractnuyu Osnovu" [Plans to transform permanent combat-ready troops of the Russian Federation into contract units], *Strana.ru*, April 15, 2003.

118. The premature exodus of large numbers of trained officers has thrown Russia's junior officer corps into crisis. In 2002 alone, 29,000 officers chose early retirement. Vladimir Urban, "Kogo My Nazivaem Vragami Vnutrennimi?" [Whom do we designate as internal enemies?], *Gazeta*, February 11, 2003. According to Col. Gen. Nikolai Pankov, deputy defense minister for personnel,

the program would also provide professionally trained sergeants for service in conscript units.<sup>119</sup> And finally, the goals of the program appeared to have strong public support.<sup>120</sup>

If the past is any guide to the future, however, the military commanders responsible for implementation of the program should be expected to thwart its prospects for success. For example, shortly after the July 2003 announcement, Ivanov began to temper expectations by publicly expressing skepticism that the defense ministry could meet the program's recruitment goal of 170,000 volunteers—despite salaries for ordinary volunteer soldiers that exceed those of company commanders among conscript forces.<sup>121</sup> In addition, the defense ministry and General Staff are likely to use any delays in the transfer of funds from the state budget as an excuse to modify or cut back the program. Meanwhile, commanders are likely to ignore instructions regarding the training of short-term conscripts versus professional soldiers. Ivanov in fact admitted that training for the first regiment of contract paratroopers would rely on the same methods and timescale used for training conscripts.<sup>122</sup> A regiment prepared in this way cannot be expected to be more skilled or more disciplined than a conscript unit.

In an October 2003 report outlining its vision for the future development of the Russian armed forces, the defense ministry expressed nominal support for a partial transition to a volunteer force. The report, however, insists that a full transition is “not a goal for the development of the armed forces.”<sup>123</sup> In an ear-

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37 percent of the officers who retired early were between thirty and forty years old—the backbone of the officers corps. Oleg Falitchev, “My Obyazani Sberech Ofiterskii Korpus” [We must save the officer corps], *Krasnaya Zvezda*, January 9, 2003, p. 1.

119. Aleksandr Bogatyrev, “Nam Nuzhna Sovremennaya Armiya” [We need a modern army], *Krasnaya Zvezda*, April 17, 2003, pp. 1, 7.

120. A public opinion poll conducted in 2003 in Moscow indicated strong support (86 percent) for transforming Russia's conscription-based military into one that is volunteer based. April 2003 VTsIOM poll, cited in “Russians Unhappy with Their Generals,” *Gazeta.ru*, April 28, 2003, <http://perso.club-internet.fr/kozlovsk/pubop.html>.

121. “Ministr Oboroni Rossii Sergey Ivanov: Nashu Armiyu Usilyat Dobrovolitsi iz SNG” [Russian Defense Minister Sergey Ivanov: Our army is increasing CIS volunteers], *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, April 2, 2003, p. 1.

122. Djibuti, “Ravnenyie Napravo,” p. 1. More than 500 volunteers canceled their contracts once they realized they would be sent to Chechnya within a few months of beginning training.

123. Significantly, the report also included scaled-back projections for staffing units with professional NCOs over the medium term (only 50.7 percent by 2007), but included no reference to broadening the liberal education of professional officers or to modifying the internal system of officer discipline and promotion to reduce patronage and corruption. The report also proclaimed that an effective system of civilian control over military affairs is in place, implying that no change toward greater political oversight is needed.

lier statement, the chief of the Main Organizational-Mobilization Directorate of the General Staff, Lt. Gen. Vasilyi Smirnov, cautioned that a reduction in the required number of conscripts should be expected only after 50 to 60 percent of the armed forces is staffed by volunteers.<sup>124</sup> To make the implications of this assessment more concrete, military officials anticipate that, despite projected conscription shortfalls, by 2008 at most 15 percent of Russia's armed forces will be composed of volunteers.<sup>125</sup> The message is clear: military leaders do not intend to allow the implementation of organizational changes that would lead to the scaling back of universal military conscription.

Nevertheless, it is not obvious why Russia's military commanders would want to undermine efforts to introduce even a small number of volunteer units into the military force structure. After all, militaries containing both professional and conscript personnel are common in Europe. Several countries with "mixed" systems—for example, Hungary, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland—also maintain sizable reserves.<sup>126</sup> Where the Russian military system differs, however, is in its basic reliance on the capacity for mass mobilization in strategic planning. Russia's military leadership considers universal military service necessary to train Russia's massive reserve force. The leadership fears that introducing volunteer units will lead to pressures for limited conscription (as in NATO countries) or for the elimination of conscription altogether. Military leaders also believe that universal service is key to perpetuating defense-mindedness among the Russian people.<sup>127</sup> This attitude goes hand in hand with maintaining state controls over industrial and procurement enterprises and other policies that subordinate economic and social imperatives to military demands.

The goal of preserving a mobilization reserve based on short-term universal conscription also reinforces a number of other features of the current system.<sup>128</sup>

124. Dmitrii Litovkin, "Soldat v Rublyakh i Shutkakh" [Soldiers in rubles and jokes], *Izvestia*, February 5, 2003, p. 7.

125. According to Smirnov's predecessor, Col. Gen. Vladislav Putilin, the population decline in Russia will soon mean a real shortfall of conscript-age men. Beginning in 2006, the number of young men registered by the military authorities is expected to fall rapidly. If nothing is done, the armed forces and security ministries and agencies will find themselves with only 49–53 percent of the men they need. Alexander Golts, "Potemkinskii Prizyv" [Potemkin draft], *Yezhenedelnyi Zhurnal*, April 8, 2002, p. 4.

126. See Christopher Jehn and Zachary Selden, "The End of Conscription in Europe?" *Contemporary Economic Policy*, April 2, 2002, pp. 93–100.

127. For a wider discussion of this issue, see Ronald R. Krebs, "A School for the Nation? How Military Service Does Not Build Nations, and How It Might," *International Security*, Vol. 28, No. 4 (Spring 2004), pp. 85–124.

128. Zolotarev, *Istoria Voennyi Strategii Rossii*, p. 528.

Universal conscription lends itself to a top-heavy officer corps—Russia’s military ranks currently have more colonels than lieutenants. According to defense ministry officials, this surplus of senior officers is needed to prepare division commanders for reservist units in the event of a mobilization. The commitment to maintaining Russia’s vast mobilization capacity also undercuts pressure to reorient the military’s training and education system toward the needs of professional soldiers.<sup>129</sup> And finally, as long as the mobilization reserve is formally preserved, the General Staff need not rework its strategies and plans for defense of the country, which will continue to be based on the use of massive numbers of ground forces.

Threats to these features of the system generate strong disincentives for Russia’s military elites to cooperate with reforms that would require discarding Soviet-era strategic concepts. During the transition to a market economy in the early 1990s, the Russian government secured the cooperation of the “red directors” (industrial leaders under the Soviet planned economy) by encouraging them to seek private ownership of their enterprises. For many individual officers in the ministry of defense and the General Staff, the dark cloud of comprehensive military reforms contains no similar possibility of a silver lining (or golden parachute).

A transition toward a professional military would necessitate a wave of forced retirements at the highest levels and a redirection of resources toward establishing a corps of junior NCOs. In most cases, officers who achieve the rank of general have endured 30 years of political scrutiny and institutional indignities to receive their stars.<sup>130</sup> The prospect of being stripped of this status prematurely cannot be welcome to those in question. In addition, officers who remain in uniform will likely be denied many of the illegitimate “benefits” they have come to expect. These include under-the-table payments to secure desired outcomes in procurement contracts, the promotion and posting of subordinates, the issuance of recruitment deferrals, and other discretionary functions. High-level officers also commonly use conscripts for personal projects, such as constructing summer houses (*dachas*). In recent years, some military

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129. Recent proposals for military education reform include reducing the period of officer training from five to four years and eliminating liberal education from the curriculum. Part of the goal is to improve rates of retention by ensuring that the education and training that junior officers receive is largely worthless outside the military.

130. Although Russia’s officer corps has many of the formalities of professionalism, in reality junior officers are locked into a system characterized by arbitrariness and patronage. Falitchev, “My Obyazani Sberech Ofiterskii Korpus.”

commanders have even begun leasing out their soldiers to farmers and factories.<sup>131</sup> Under a volunteer-based service, tolerance for such behavior would decrease substantially.

A second source of internal resistance to comprehensive reforms involves fear among military elites that their expertise and experience will have limited value for training and leading a professional military. Russian generals manage the task of preparing for war and defending the homeland using ideas and strategic concepts forged during and immediately after World War II. Except for the small number of cadres engaged in the operation of sophisticated systems (e.g., fighter planes and missile forces), the range of expertise among Russia's military elite is largely limited to the ability to train mass conscripts for deployment against Western-type forces. These skills will not be required in the Russian military organization envisioned by the reformers.

Even as positive inducements to secure cooperation from military elites are lacking, the institutional autonomy of the defense ministry and General Staff gives civilian authorities little ability to compel military elites to carry out unwanted reform policies. In Western liberal democracies, civilian control over the military is ensured through a combination of budgetary and oversight measures. Although these same types of levers are, in theory, available to Russia's civilian officials, no leader has yet been willing to condition military budget increases or the jobs of top officials on reform progress. A punitive approach to achieving military reforms is unthinkable for Kremlin officials whose own domestic political stature depends in part on buttressing the military's prestige and power.

In addition, the Russian public, although generally supportive of the concept of military reform, has not actively pressed the government to change course, despite widespread awareness of the crisis facing the military. A few organizations, such as the Committee of Soldiers' Mothers, exist specifically to protest the conditions of military service.<sup>132</sup> Local human rights organizations are attempting to focus public scrutiny on the military's past and present human rights violations.<sup>133</sup> There is also a grassroots campaign to create a legally enforceable conscientious-objector status for individuals morally

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131. "Russian 'Factory Soldiers' Exposed," *BBC News World Edition*, November 26, 2003, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/3240866.stm>.

132. See Committee of Soldiers' Mothers of Russia, <http://web.tiscali.it/no-redirect-tiscali/WIN/054.html>.

133. See, for example, Human Rights Center, "Memorial," <http://www.memo.ru/eng/about/whowe.htm>.

opposed to military service.<sup>134</sup> Such movements, however, are exceptional. For the vast majority of Russians, defense-mindedness still largely blunts any inclination to question the management of military and security affairs or to demand increased political oversight.

### *Conclusion*

“An army so built that it serves military men, not war, is militaristic,” wrote Alfred Vagts.<sup>135</sup> Since 1992, Russia’s military leaders have contributed to the failure of several reform efforts directed at transforming the military’s Soviet-style force structure and command system into a smaller, more modern armed forces staffed primarily by volunteers. The defense ministry and General Staff have repeatedly deflected reform pressures from the president and the Security Council by using various delaying tactics or by accepting reform goals in principle and then failing to carry them out. Russia’s military elites have capitalized on the absence of political oversight in budgetary and operational matters to continue to set their own priorities aimed at prolonging the institutional status quo and, ultimately, restoring the Russian military to its former size and strength. Both the tenacity of the military’s resistance to restructuring and the tepid reaction of the Russian public to repeated reform failures appear highly irrational to many observers outside Russia, given the overwhelming evidence that the country’s military is mired in crisis.

The militaristic origins and development of the Russian state and its structural and ideational legacies are vital to explaining this phenomenon. The traditionally tight linkage between military power and state prestige in Russia and the Soviet Union contributed to the structural privilege and operational autonomy afforded to military leaders and institutions. The dominant position of both was sustained in large measure by the coercion intrinsic to serfdom and autocratic rule. Over time these features combined to produce a culture of deference and sacrifice to military needs and priorities—defense-mindedness—among the Russian people, which in turn reinforces the first two elements. These structural and ideational legacies have persisted through technological revolutions, regime changes, and dramatic transformations of Russia’s external strategic environment. They are essential to understanding the attitudes of military elites opposed to reform, as well as the weak response of political

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134. “Russian Parliament Debates Bill Providing for Alternative Military Service,” Associated Press, April 17, 2002.

135. Vagts, *A History of Militarism*, p. 15.

officials and the public at large to the repeated failure of military reform initiatives.

The causes underlying Russia's military reform failures suggest that actors outside Russia can do little over the short term to alter incentives for actors inside the military establishment to support reforms. Nevertheless, both foreign governments and members of the private sector should be encouraged to support longer-term measures to create pressure for reform. For example, expert training is needed to train a new generation of Russian journalists and analysts of civil-military relations to monitor and report on developments in military affairs and in the relationships between the military, government, and society as a whole. Also needed are well-resourced independent research organizations inside Russia dedicated to the study of defense and security issues. More generally, funding for human rights education can help to lay the groundwork for increased rights awareness and public activism in favor of policy changes.

At the governmental level, foreign militaries can shift their emphasis from military-to-military contacts at the senior level to providing Russian junior officers with training and educational opportunities abroad. Exposing such officers to alternative concepts and models of military organization before they enter the senior ranks will improve the prospects for the later application of those ideas. In addition, outside help is needed to educate a new cadre of military trainers and theoreticians to serve the needs of a professional military. Partnerships with academic institutions outside Russia are essential, as is access to alternative military histories and social science research from leading universities and institutes in the United States and Europe.

An approach to Russia's national security based on the government's right to demand the mobilization of the entire population and economy for military purposes is incompatible with liberal-democratic ideals. If Russia were to continue along a path of liberalization, eventually it would undermine the ability of military and political elites to demand, either in theory or in practice, the total mobilization of Russia's economy and society for military purposes—and with it the defense-mindedness of its people. The early reaction of Russia's government to a series of internal terrorist incidents in mid-2004 that resulted in the deaths of more than 400 civilians, however, suggests grounds for pessimism on this account.<sup>136</sup> Still, signs of overwhelming institutional dysfunction

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136. Anatoly Medetsky, "Papers Say Kremlin Mounting a 'Coup,'" *Moscow Times*, September 15, 2004, <http://www.cdi.org/russia/johnson/8368-4.cfm>. These attacks involved a subway bombing, two bombings on board commercial flights, and a hostage standoff at a primary school in

and decay in Russia's armed forces may eventually prompt some within the military establishment to seek alliance with members of the political elite and with nongovernmental actors to create momentum for military reform.<sup>137</sup> With each additional operational mishap or widely publicized strategic reversal, the window is opened a bit wider for an alternative discourse of reform to begin to cut across traditional lines of influence in Russia.

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Beslan, North Ossetia. On September 13, 2004, President Putin announced new measures to deal with the threat posed by domestic and international terrorists that included abolishing direct election of parliamentary deputies and regional governors, and giving enhanced powers to Russia's security services. "Putin Tightens Grip on Security," BBC News World Edition, September 13, 2004, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/3650966.stm>.

137. For examples of military innovation brought about through pressures from civil society, see Barry R. Posen, *Sources of Military Doctrine: France, Britain, and Germany between the World Wars* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1986), pp. 225–226. See also Jeffrey A. Isaacson, Christopher Layne, and John Arquilla, *Predicting Military Innovation*, RAND Documented Briefing (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, 1999), <http://www.rand.org/publications/DB/DB242/>.