

**THE NEW RUSSIAN MILITARY**  
**by**  
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## **ABSTRACT**

**Russia's transition to democracy and to a market economy has drastically affected its armed forces and its civil-military relations for the worse. What was the mighty Soviet Army is now in a state of penury and humiliation. Every indicator of military potential--manpower and weapons, defence spending, training, morale and readiness--shows the Army to be in extreme distress. The Army is also increasingly involved in the political process, either through direct action, as in August 1991 and October 1993, or through influencing the actions of civilian leaders. This undermines the relationship between military and civilian authorities in Russia and poses the danger of a coup, or implosion of the armed forces. Russia's civil-military relations, in contrast with those of the Soviet Union, are now chiefly subjective, highly authoritarian, centralized and personalized in the office of President Boris Yeltsin. This does not bode well for the consolidation of democracy in Russia.**

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## INTRODUCTION

### Scope of the Study

The Russian Federation has a bewildering array of military and para-military Forces, most of which were inherited from the Soviet Union, but also including a few new formations since 1991. Apart from those forces directly subordinate to the Ministry of Defence (MoD), namely the Strategic Missile Forces, the Ground Forces, the Air Forces, the Air Defence Forces, and the Navy, there are the Border Troops (formerly under the KGB, but independent since 1992), the troops of the Ministry of the Interior (MVD), the Presidential Guard, and armed forces belonging to no fewer than 13 other federal ministries.<sup>1</sup> This paper will focus on the current status of the forces of the Ministry of Defence, generally subsumed, following Russian practice, under the term Army, with a particular emphasis on civil-military relations.

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<sup>1</sup> Estimates of the actual number of men in uniform bearing weapons for the various agencies of the federal government or private security agencies in Russia tend to be highly impressionistic. Most analysts, however, agree that Russia remains a heavily armed society. The Secretary of the Security Council, Ivan Rybkin, put the figure as high as 4.5 million men, suggesting also that military pluralism in Russia had produced a situation so chaotic that a reliable account was simply not feasible: "the lack of organization is incredible." (See *Rossiyskiye Vesti*, 29 November 1996:2.) The number of personnel under the MoD are reckoned at being between 1 and 1.2 million. The Ministry of the Interior has some 264,000 troops, and the Border Guards about 210,000. The Interior Ministry is actually larger now than it was under the Soviets. Having expanded greatly after the October Crisis in 1993, the last Minister of the Interior, General Anatoli Kulikov may have had under his command up to 29 divisions and 15 brigades. This is a force that is beginning to rival the Army itself. (See Valery Borisenko, "Gendarmerie or Army?" *Moscow News* (Moscow) 15-21 February 1996: 3. Essentially, no one really knows precisely how many troops there are in Russia today.

In referring to the Army, the military, or the Armed Forces, as an actor in Russian politics, this paper does not assume that it is feasible to speak of the military as a monolithic or entirely cohesive group with shared opinions on all matters. On the contrary, it assumes that the Russian military is deeply divided internally along a number of fault lines. In all armies there are differences between and within military ranks and hierarchies, as well as disputes among individual officers. In Russia, however, the cleavages between groups are particularly manifest. In fact, retired Colonel Yuri Deryugin, one of the foremost military analysts in Russia, wrote of the military in 1994 that it was “an army of polarities charged with the latent energy of internal conflict.” He divided the army into four distinctly visible factions, firmly opposed to each other: the first, composed of junior officers, are pragmatists who avoid going to hot spots and try to leave the service as soon as possible. The second, majors to front line generals, are the real servicemen; they support regulation, traditions, and discipline and remain on active duty because they have nowhere else to go. The third, members of the “Arbat Military District,” depend on patronage rather than military skills. The fourth, the truly corrupt, use their rank for private gain.<sup>2</sup>

Throughout the discussion in this paper, therefore, the reader should be aware that the Army suffers from strong fissiparous tendencies, that in many cases there is no single “military viewpoint,” and that in the absence of survey data on a particular subject, extrapolation of such a viewpoint from anecdotal evidence can be rather subjective.

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<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Timothy Thomas, "Fault Lines and Factions in the Russian Army," *Orbis* (Fall 1995): 533.

In this study, when discussing the political attitudes, moods or preferences of the Army, the term refers, unless otherwise stated, primarily to those officers (1) whose rank and role place them in a position where they have to manifest political skills, and are therefore likely to have been quoted in the open media; (2) whose political skills outweigh their rank, position, and role; (3) whose aspiration is to protect corporate integrity and cohesion; and (4) whose ambitions are political.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, it will be assumed that within the military there exist factions who share roughly the same values and beliefs on various issues which can be tracked through a combination of survey data, interviews and press reports.

### **Definitions**

Civil-military relations concerns the relations between the military of a state and its political leadership (government) on the one hand, and on the other the relations between the military and civil society. The basic purpose of most systems of civil-military relations is to prevent the military from challenging the essential values and political authority of the state. There are as many ways of achieving this goal as there are political systems; for each country will organize its civil-military relations in accordance with its history, culture and strategic requirements.

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<sup>3</sup> This template for distinguishing between officers and defining the politically active component of the officer corps is borrowed from Amos Perlmutter, *The Military and Politics in Modern Times*. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1977): 17.

The definitions of terms to be used in the essay which follow pertain to one type of civil-military relations which is known as democratic civilian control. It should be strongly noted, however, that civilian control over the military is not contingent on democracy. There are many ways of securing civilian control; Soviet civil-military relations were very effective in serving this purpose. Additionally, many of the features of democratic control can exist in non-democratic systems. Democracy, on the other hand, is contingent on the existence of civilian control over the military. The term democratic civilian control is used in this examination of contemporary Russian civil-military relations because Russia is a democratizing state and, therefore, should be moving toward a version of democratic civilian control. Its use is not meant to imply that civilian control can only be secured through democracy.

The fundamental requirement of democratic civilian control is that the key decision-maker represents the will of the electorate and is accountable to society, i.e. those who elected him/her: "civilians make policy, while the military implements it."<sup>4</sup> The election of decision-makers is what sets democratic control apart from most other types of civilian control. The principle of civilian supremacy involves a number of components. It encompasses government direction of military activity (defence and security policy), including the responsibility of the civilian leadership to determine where the line between military and civilian responsibility lies. It also involves civilian oversight over the military

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<sup>4</sup> Kenneth W. Kemp and Charles Hudlin, "Civil Supremacy Over the Military: Its Nature and Limits," *Armed Forces and Society* (Fall 1992): 8.

and its management of defence.

It would be an oversimplification to say that democratic civilian control is exhibited only in the clear and unambiguous subordination of the military to civilian authority. Such a formulation ignores the symbiotic relationship between the armed forces, political authority and civil society in a democracy which is complex and based on the principle of accountability. Democratic control more properly involves an understanding of the interdependence and mutual respect between the military and society which encompasses an implicit “civil-military bargain,” or agreement on mutual responsibilities, spheres of concern and areas of expertise and which allows for a degree of negotiation between parties on the direction of policy.

The basic function of the civil-military relationship in democracies runs as follows: the army is accountable to the government; the government is accountable to the army and to parliament; and Parliament is accountable to the people. While there may be, and probably should be, some friction between civil and military authorities in a democracy, there are also established mechanisms for the working out of conflicts. All debates, moreover, must take place under the clear assumption of civilian supremacy; the military may disagree with a particular decision, but having registered a position, if ordered, does as it is told.

Effective civilian control of the armed forces requires certain institutional and societal conditions to be met. These include a clear constitutional and legal framework. A constitution should create the framework for a stable legal system, and ensure that the powers of political and military authorities are clearly defined and therefore limited. A constitution should also establish clear and unambiguous lines of authority between the armed forces and the state, as constitutional and legal ambiguity in the chain of command may give rise to struggles among political actors and in their relations with the military. Parliament must also play a role in the legislating and oversight of defence and security affairs, including control of the budgetary process as well as general surveillance of the activities of the military through parliamentary committees.

Civilian control requires also a professional MoD, which includes both civilian and military personnel to advise preferably a civilian Minister on strategic policy planning, and that has the capacity to efficiently direct military activity. Additionally, civilian control relies on the existence of a civil society with a political culture, capable of developing an informed consensus on the proper role of the military. It should also include a strong non-governmental sector, particularly independent civilian defence experts, with the capacity to generate evaluations and interpretations of military policy and challenge that policy when and where necessary.

The open media has the dual role of articulating the preferences of civil society to government and military, and of communicating to society the views of the the

government and the military, as well as the sometimes contrary views of civilian defence experts.

The basic challenge in civil-military relations theory and practice is to establish mechanisms of defence oversight that can discern the difference between issues that are primarily technical or operational in nature and best left to the discretion of military leaders, and those that are primarily administrative or political and lie properly in the realm of civilian authority. The true test of a nation's civil-military relationship is whether it can maximize simultaneously both military professionalism and political accountability. In post-communist Russia, the civil-military relationship appears to have simultaneously *minimized* both factors as will be shown below.

The discussion of civil-military relations cannot be divorced from the topic of governance. Governance concerns the form of political regime, legitimacy of government, the process by which authority is exercised over resources, the capacity of government to formulate policies and discharge its functions, and the accountability of political and official elements of government (via free media, transparent decision-making, and effective accountability mechanisms).

A state which exhibits good governance has predictable, transparent, and professional government behaviour, efficient public sector management, a sound legal framework and accountability in its operations. It possesses a bureaucracy, of which the military is a part,

imbued with a professional ethos, an executive arm of government with ultimate authority that is accountable for its actions, a strong civil society that participates in public affairs, with all the above behaving under the law.

In contrast, poor governance is characterized by arbitrary and unenforced government policies and unaccountable government bodies susceptible to abuse or inefficient use of power. Clearly, Russia exhibits many characteristics of poor governance and few characteristics of good governance. This poor political climate underlies all discourses on Russian civil-military relations.

### **Background**

Principally this paper addresses two questions. In quantitative and qualitative terms, what is the current status of the Russian Army, in comparison to the Soviet Army of not long ago? And, to what degree are the Russian Armed Forces subject to the supremacy of civilian authority, as measured against the international norms of civil-military relations generally accepted, with moderate variation in degree and in kind from country to country, in the West.

These questions are inspired by the fact that by most accounts the Russian state remains a very insecure, highly unstable, and only partially democratic structure in which issues of civilian supremacy over a largely disgruntled military have acquired a special urgency.

The events of the last seven years in Russia have been *revolutionary*; Russia is undergoing

a genuine transformation of its economic, social and political structure, in which the military has played, and will continue to play, a prominent and possibly dangerous role.

At pivotal moments in Russian history the Army has played a role in deciding the outcome of political conflict. Numerous analysts have noted that the Russian Federation as it is now constituted is in fact a product of military action and military preference: the coup of August 1991, which elevated Yeltsin to power, failed because key units in the Army preferred not to support the plot by firing on its own people, while Yeltsin's anti-parliamentary coup of September-October 1993 succeeded because the Army's leadership preferred to support him, sensing that the alternate option of supporting Rutskoi and Khasbulatov might split the military and inspire a civil war.<sup>5</sup> Aleksandr Lebed, former 14<sup>th</sup> Army commander in Moldova, and also a prominent "soldier-politician" encapsulated the role the Army now plays in politics as follows:

Who became the chief politician of the country in October 1993? The commander of the tank division. It was he who advanced his 125 millimetre political arguments and decided the outcome of the campaign. So if you want to influence politics in Russia today, take good care of tank regiment commanders.<sup>6</sup>

As Carl Jacobsen noted in "Russia's Revolutionary Arbiter?" the Army has often been called to decide the outcome of political struggles in Russia, though it has never in all of

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<sup>5</sup> Robert Barylski, "The Soviet Military Before and After the August Coup," *Armed Forces and Society* (Fall 1992): 27-45.

<sup>6</sup> Cited in Efim Bershim, "I Was Not Just Led Into Politics, I Was Driven [interview with A. Lebed]," *Russian Politics and Law* (May/June 1996): 65.

history attempted to secure the mantle of political power for itself.<sup>7</sup> Such an event remains only a remote possibility even today. The Army remains highly professional in its outlook and in its relations with the state. On the other hand, it is also not subject to effective civilian control, which is inconsistent with the democratic system of government to which Russia aspires.

To return to the events of August 1991 and October 1993, the essence of the problem is not that the military twice played the role of king-maker in Russian politics. Nor is it the essence of the problem that the Army was used internally, or that it committed acts of violence against the Parliament at the behest of the President, though this was discouraging for those hoping that Russia would make a smooth transition to democracy. After all, even in democracies, where clear lines of legitimate authority exist, aid to the civil power in the face of armed insurrection is an acceptable, and even honourable, role for the military to play.

The problem is that in Russia clear lines of legitimacy and authority do not exist. The army chose not to support the coup-plotters in 1991, just as it chose to support Yeltsin against Khasbulatov and Rutskoi in 1993. It could have chosen to do otherwise, with radical consequences for Russian democracy and international security. Indeed, had Rutskoi not taken the precipitate action of ordering the attack on the Moscow TV station,

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<sup>7</sup> Carl Jacobsen, "Russia's Revolutionary Arbiter? Arms and Society 1988-1994," *War and Society* (May 1995): 8.

thus presenting the Army with what it perceived as a choice between supporting Yeltsin, and allowing a split in the military which might have caused a civil war (the real fear of the military throughout the confrontation), they might have refused to assault the White House for Yeltsin, as they refused to assault it in 1991 for the August Coup plotters.

That the military makes political choices based on its own preferences and its own conception of its duty to the state, points to the fact that the Russian Armed Forces are not under objective civilian control; control as it now exists is mostly subjective, based on surveillance, selective promotion and dismissal of officers, bribery (implicit licenses to abuse one's rank or office for financial gain), and the existence of large para-military forces. This is a dramatic change from the Soviet model, under which the military was firmly under civilian control of a mostly objective type, and shared many of the same values and interests of the ruling Party.

The military, however, is very unlikely to attempt a coup in the foreseeable future because it is simply an impractical option both from the point of establishing the legitimacy to rule afterward, and from the clearly inadequate resources available to the Army when compared to the magnitude of the task and the increasingly large para-military forces defending against such a move. A coup in Russia would be extremely bloody, it might set off civil war, and it would almost surely contribute to the further splintering of the Federation, all of which suggest the likelihood of such an event is low. The Army is, moreover, given the fractures within it, unlikely to be able to organize itself in coherent

opposition to the current regime without a currently non-existent charismatic military leader with aspirations to political leadership.<sup>8</sup>

Nonetheless, there are numerous other ways in which the lack of objective civilian control strongly undermines Russian stability, security, and democratic development. It also has worrying implications for international security. Ultimately, Russia cannot become democratic unless and until its political leadership reaches a mutually satisfactory *modus vivendi* with its Army that impels it to avoid political involvement, but that also allows its members to resume a respectable status in the social hierarchy, to receive adequate compensation for their work and to arm and train themselves for war with reasonable sufficiency to meet the agreed upon long-term security needs of the country. As Jacob Kipp said in a lecture to the Heritage Foundation in 1996:

Russia's civil-military relations are at a critical juncture. Either the government will recognize the profound need for a new concordance among the military, the political elite, and the citizenry, or it will face the Army.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Two charismatic military men, Aleksandr Lebed and Boris Gromov, for different reasons do not seem likely to take on this role. Lebed is more likely to win the Presidency through the ballot box, while Gromov, although politically active, is seemingly more concerned with influencing policy rather than directing it.

<sup>9</sup> Jacob W. Kipp, "Military Pluralism and the Crisis of Russian Military Professionalism: Reflections of a Military Historian," *The Future of the Russian Military: Managing Geopolitical Change and Institutional Decline*, Heritage Lecture No 578, The Heritage Foundation, Washington DC, 12 December 1996: 18.

## **Rationale**

Civil-military relations in all the post-communist states of Europe, but particularly in Russia, have attracted a great degree of nervous concern in the West, in large part due to the comments of military personalities such as Lebed and numerous others, which underline the apparent weakness of civilian supremacy over the military in Russia. Former CIS Commander in Chief, Evgenii Shaposhnikov, was quoted as saying in 1994, "I have a feeling that today the power structures [military and other security forces] are completely beyond presidential or governmental control."<sup>10</sup> While Lebed, likewise in December 1995 raised many Western eyebrows with his rumination on the value of Pinochet's Chile as a model for Russia:

You can't make an omelette without breaking a few eggs. Break a few heads and the rest will fall into line. I do not praise Pinochet in principle. But what did he accomplish? He averted the total collapse of the state and brought the Army to the fore. With its help he forced everyone to simply do their jobs. He brutally silenced all loudmouths. Everyone began to slave away. Chile is now a prosperous country despite its absurd geography -- a sausage that stretches thousands of kilometres. This confirms the theory whereby you slam your hand down on the table once, sacrifice 100 people to the fatherland, and the issue is closed.<sup>11</sup>

More than a few historically-inclined observers of events in Russia have commented on the eerie resemblance of contemporary Russia to Weimar Germany, pointing out the semantic similarity of Hitler's denunciations of the "traitors of 1918," who signed the armistice with the allies bringing to an end the Great War when many Germans felt that their army

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<sup>10</sup> "Russian Reform at Risk," *Economist* (25 December 1993- 4 January 1994): 63.

<sup>11</sup> Bershim, 75.

remained unvanquished, to comments such as Lebed's that, "to me it is indisputable that the [Soviet] Union was destroyed artificially from within."<sup>12</sup> It is a commonly held belief in the Army, not without justification, that Yeltsin facilitated the destruction of the USSR, in order to win power from Gorbachev--that he sacrificed the Union unnecessarily for his own political purposes.<sup>13</sup>

The awful material condition of the Army drives military involvement in politics. In February 1997, the Moscow newspaper *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* published a report on the Russian Army produced by a leading Moscow foreign policy research group, the Council for Foreign and Defence Policy. The Council's report argued that the Army had been devastated by the lack of government support, the collapse of defence industry and the failure of defence reform. Unless immediate steps were taken, the report continued, the Russian military would within three years either disappear as such, or break up into armed groups which would support themselves through arms sales or robbery, or even stage a coup that could grow into a dictatorship or war. The report concluded that:

The current state of the Russian Armed Forces can be described only as an accomplished catastrophe, which will develop into a NATIONAL CATASTROPHE very soon unless society and the state ... prevent this impending threat.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Bershim, 67.

<sup>13</sup> Major Alexander Belkin (Ret), "War in Chechnya: The Impact on Civil-Military Relations in Russia," paper presented at a conference at the US Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, CA, March 1997: 3.

<sup>14</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, (Moscow), February 14, 1997: 3.

On Army Day of the same month in 1997, then Defence Minister Igor Rodionov underlined the magnitude of Russia's military decline. "I am not a minister of defence," he lamented, "I am minister of a disintegrating army and a dying navy."<sup>15</sup> Yeltsin's response to Rodionov the next day speaks volumes about the state of Russian civil-military relations; he slapped his Defence Minister down publicly, telling him to "stop whining."<sup>16</sup> Clearly, the atrocious state of the Army is undermining the stability of Russian civil-military relations and thereby impacting on the democratic development of the country.

Students of politics have always appreciated the vital importance to democracy of stable relations between the armed forces, the political leadership of a country, and civil society more broadly. Indeed, it is generally accepted as a basic rule of human behaviour that he who can command violent force, will probably also command temporal power.

2400 years ago, Sun Tzu understood that the dispirited military man is a danger to his state, writing that, "the general whose only purpose is to protect the people and promote the best interests of his sovereign, is the precious jewel of the state."<sup>17</sup> More than two thousand years later Clausewitz echoed that thought as a caveat to his famous dictum

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<sup>15</sup> *Izvestia*, February 25, 1997. Cited also in Peter Ford, "Russia's Red Army has Lost its Roar," *Christian Science Monitor*, (1 June 1997).

<sup>16</sup> Cited by Pavel Felgengauer in "Russian Military Reform: Ten Years of Failure," paper presented at a conference on *Russian Defence Policy Toward the Year 2000*, US Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, CA, March 25-26, 1997: 17.

<sup>17</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, *On War* (New York:Penguin Books, 1982): 122.

“war is not only a political act, but a continuation of political commerce by other means,” by noting that the soldier must be subordinate to the state because “the political object of war lies outside of war’s province.”<sup>18</sup>

Due to its ability to bring coercive force to bear on its opponents, its internal cohesion and disciplined, organized structure, the military always has the latent power to intervene in domestic politics, whether overtly in the form of a military coup d’état, or more subtly by influencing the decisions of political actors. The military of any society thus constitutes a potential independent political force. As Samuel Finer noted in *The Man on Horseback*, given the apparent advantages of the military over other political actors “the wonder is not why the armed forces occasionally rebels against its civilian masters, but why it ever obeys them.”<sup>19</sup> In the case of Russia, Finer’s point on the wonder of the military’s disengagement from politics is especially germane. Indeed as one analyst noted as early as 1993, “according to most standard theories of civil-military relations, the Russian military officer corps should have attempted to overthrow Yeltsin by now.”<sup>20</sup>

In most Western liberal democracies (and in the USSR), however, coups or other serious tensions between the military and the political leadership occur so infrequently that

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<sup>18</sup> Clausewitz, 119.

<sup>19</sup> Samuel Finer, *The Man on Horseback* (London: Penguin Books, 1975): 5.

<sup>20</sup> Kimberly Marten-Zisk, “Civil Military Relations in the New Russia” Occasional Paper of the Mershon Centre at the Ohio State University, March 1993.

civilian supremacy over the military is seen as ‘natural’ – even by military officers themselves. In nations with long-standing democracies, the military lacks the capacity to make substantive decisions on policy, outside of its professional purview of national defence, because the people will not accept its right to do so, and will resist actively or passively any military attempt to act outside of its clearly defined role. The military lacks the all-important coin of authority in democracies: legitimacy. Lacking legitimacy, the military’s only recourse is to rule by force. Yet, as Samuel Finer demonstrated in an allegorical tale, force is not an effective instrument for running an advanced country.

Imagine a village school teacher. Suppose that his only means for getting his charges to school, keeping them there, making them regular attenders and — presumably — trying to teach them something, were by physical force alone. Imagine him motoring to the houses of the children; dragging them protesting and arguing from their houses; beating one or two to make the others more compliant; forcing them to sit, to exercise, to learn — all by threat and physical violence. We must suppose, too, for the sake of the example, that the children are determined, as ever expediency allows, to defy him, disobey him and if possible get rid of him. In these circumstances, calculate how much more of the schoolmaster’s time would be spent in rounding them up, punishing them and devising schemes to beat their opposition down than would be spent teaching them.<sup>21</sup>

The archetypal armed forces of democratic societies are professional and depoliticized; they are loyal to the legally and democratically constituted civilian authority, regardless of its political affiliation. In fact, as Samuel Huntington argued in *The Soldier and the State*, professionalism and depoliticization are dynamically linked. The maximization of professionalism leads to the maximization of depoliticization, and moreover, to the maximization of military effectiveness.

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<sup>21</sup> Finer, 16-17.

Between the armed forces, the political leadership and civil society in states with stable civil-military relations, such as most Western countries and the Soviet Union, there exists, moreover, a “social contract” that allows the army to have considerable latitude in tactical decision-making within its clearly defined security role, and to preserve its distinctive corporate traditions: cohesion, hierarchy, and discipline within its own ranks. In return, the armed forces do not seek to make policy for the nation, or subject society at large to the realism, pessimism, collectivism, historical-inclination, power-orientation, nationalism and militarism that informs the outlook of the majority of its members.<sup>22</sup>

The principle of civilian supremacy over the armed forces is widely accepted, and indeed almost completely unquestioned in most countries, not because it is natural, but because the structure of society makes it practically impossible for the military to intervene in politics and generally minimizes their reasons for wanting to do so. Military officers are free to concentrate on the perfection of their military expertise, and to maintain their traditions in a guarded environment at once separate from and a part of greater society, for which they are rewarded with a prestigious position in society and generally well-compensated financially. In effect, democratic systems are so arranged that democratic leaders are elected, responsible and removable only by the electorate and everyone, including those in the military, accepts this fact of political life.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>This arrangement of civil-military relations was called “objective control” by Samuel Huntington. See *The Soldier and the State* (New York: Vintage Books, 1964).

<sup>23</sup> There are some notable exceptions to the general rule that democracies do not suffer from coups. General de Gaulle came to lead the 5<sup>th</sup> Republic in France after the

In post-communist Russia, however, the efforts to transform the military establishment and its relationship to the state are taking place within the broader context of a society that is in the process of painfully re-examining its core values and beliefs in itself and in its place in the world, while wholly remaking its political and economic institutions. Civil society is underdeveloped, political institutions are weak, there is widespread economic and social chaos, and crime is rampant. Polls reveal that the Russian people are often apathetic about politics, and as a nation are deeply divided about their future path. The Russian people, therefore, cannot afford to be sanguine about the loyalty of their armed forces to its civilian authorities. Indeed, if the frequency of editorials and news reports about the crisis in the military is good gauge of the public's apprehension about the Army's role in politics, then it is high.

Russia is not a stable democracy, in which the political leadership enjoys an unassailable

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quasi-coup of *Treize Mai*. Then, beginning on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of April 1961, de Gaulle himself was the target of a coup attempt when Generals Challe, Zeller, Jouhaud and Salan, the leaders of French forces in Algeria, rebelled against him. The coup failed, but only barely, as the desperate televised plea of de Gaulle to the people of France, shortly after the coup began, when there was a real danger of rebel paratroops entering Paris, demonstrates: "*Françaises! Français! Aidez-Moi!*" The American general, Douglas MacArthur, also never really understood the proper political role of the military in a democracy. He said in 1952, "I find in existence a new and heretofore unknown and dangerous concept that the members of our armed forces owe primary allegiance or loyalty to those who temporarily exercise the authority of the Executive Branch of Government rather than to the country and its constitution which they are sworn to defend. No proposition could be more dangerous." It is, however, MacArthur's view which is dangerous. The moment the military is permitted to draw a distinction between the national interest and the elected government, they begin to develop their own notion of what constitutes that national interest. From that point it is only a short jump to substituting their view for that of the government in the name of 'higher loyalty.' See Finer, 78 and 83.

position of legitimacy vis-a-vis the armed forces. On the contrary, it is a transitional regime that is considered illegitimate and even traitorous by a substantial segment of society who are nostalgic for the Soviet/Imperial Russian past (the supposed Red/Brown coalition). Among military officers the emotional attachment to the USSR is particularly common and heartfelt. Many would probably agree with this impassioned quote from a Moscow-based Lieutenant Colonel in 1992:

For some of us our Motherland is simply THIS country. For me, and I know, not just for me alone, THIS country is my Fatherland — the Soviet Union. THIS people is my own, native Soviet people.<sup>24</sup>

Thus far, the armed forces appear to remain the *instrument* of other political actors, rather than an independent actor in its own right. There are, however, serious questions how valid that appearance is and, if it is a true observation, how likely it is to remain that way. The Army is being rapidly and thoroughly politicized. Some officers resent and resist this trend, other officers welcome it as a way to protect the Army. Former Defence Minister Pavel Grachev, for example, ordered 123 military officers to run in the parliamentary elections of 1995 in order to “represent the interests of the military.”<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Cited in Thomas Nichols, M. "An Electoral Mutiny? Zhirinovskiy and the Russian Armed Forces." *Armed Forces and Society*. (Spring 1995): 334.

<sup>25</sup> Jacob Kipp, "The Russian Military and the 1995 Parliamentary Elections: A Primer," US Army Foreign Military Studies Office, Fort Leavenworth KS, 5 October 1995: 16.

Not all the military officers running for office or serving as politicians in 1995 were Grachev supporters. On the contrary, military officers figured prominently on the lists of virtually all major electoral blocs, including Alexander Lebed (the *Congress of Russian Communities; the Honour and Motherland Movement*), Eduard Vorobyev, former Deputy Commander of the Ground Forces, who refused to take command of the Chechen operation and was subsequently cashiered by Grachev (*Russia's Choice; the Military for Democracy Movement*), Boris Gromov, Hero of the Soviet Union, commander of the last Soviet forces in Afghanistan and widely regarded as the best strategist in the Russian Army (*My Fatherland*), Lev Rokhlin, Russian Army General in Chechnya (*Our Home is Russia* [expelled], *The Movement in Support of the Army*),<sup>26</sup> and Yevgeny Podkolzin, Commander in Chief of the Airborne Forces (*For The Motherland*). The generals are indeed getting involved in politics, but it is the civilians who are inviting them in. Political parties have decided that men in uniform are a good way to woo the electorate and are

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<sup>26</sup> Rokhlin is a charismatic, outspoken and hard driving general in the Patton/Sharon mold. A hero of the Chechen War, where he led the Main Assault Force on Grozny, he declined the award of the "Hero of Russia" decoration on the grounds that a military officer cannot be decorated for taking part in a civil conflict. (See Belkin, *The War in Chechnya: The Impact on Civil-Military Relations in Russia* 8.) A seemingly loyal member of the pro-government party, *Our Home is Russia*, and Chairman of the Duma Defence Committee, Rokhlin published a strongly worded statement blaming Yeltsin for neglecting the needs of the Army and "destroying" the armed forces in the summer of 1997. Subsequently, he was expelled from *Our Home is Russia* to form his own party, *The Movement in Support of the Army*. In October of 1997, he announced that his movement intended to remove Yeltsin and his "hated regime," saying that it will hold a "rehearsal" in February, 1998 to determine whether it is strong enough to "overthrow the regime." (See "Rokhlin on Plans to Oust Yeltsin," *RFE/RL Newswire* (No 142, Part 1, 20 October, 1997.) *Our Home is Russia* has attempted to remove Rokhlin from his position as Chairman of the Defence Committee but he retains the support of a majority of Duma deputies, mostly from the *Communist, Agrarian and Popular Power* factions.

rushing to include soldiers on their ballots regardless of whether they have any political experience or not.<sup>27</sup>

Equally important is the question of what price other political actors must pay the military for its cooperation. Grachev again unwittingly underlined the gravity of this question prior to the parliamentary elections:

Leaders of many parties and movements have been actively visiting me in the last few months. They are trying to get in contact with me to prove that, should they win the election, they would strive to restore a powerful, strong army in Russia...All main leaders of parties and factions, except for the party of democrats headed by Yegor Gaidar, have already had meetings with me.<sup>28</sup>

The economic pains and loss of status resulting from Russia's move away from its stagnant Soviet inheritance are felt deeply throughout Russian society, but nowhere has Russia's retreat from greatness been so abrupt, so chaotic, or so painful as it has for its armed forces. The Soviet military was lavished with resources and occupied a prestigious position second only to the Party in the hierarchy of Soviet society. And now, the mighty Red Army, whose menace held the world in thrall for half a century is a shambles; Grachev called it a subsistence army, "hungry, barefoot, and underfinanced."<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> A good outline of Russian military candidates and their party affiliations may be found in "A Real General Election," *The Economist* (23 September, 1995): 4. See also Alexander Zhilin, "Yeltsin's Worst Nightmare: The Russian Military Enters Politics," *Prism* (17 November, 1995).

<sup>28</sup> Quoted in Thomas 543.

<sup>29</sup> Quoted in Benjamin Lambeth, "Russia's Wounded Military," *Foreign Affairs* (March/April 1996): 91.

The situation is so bad that troops frequently go months without being paid, and shortages of supplies, including food, are common. Starvation, due to breakdowns in supply, caused the deaths of four sailors in the Russian Far East in 1994.<sup>30</sup> Over 100,000 officers are still homeless and many others live in slum conditions. Survey data and anecdotal evidence indicate that the overwhelming majority of serving officers are completely dissatisfied with the quality of Army life and that morale in the Army is at an absolute nadir. One report noted ominously that the mood of officers was so despairing and hostile that 25 percent of officers would consider “using their weapons” to improve their standard of living.<sup>31</sup> The poor state of Russia’s civil-military relations has severe consequences for that country’s stability. Those consequences will be examined in the next chapter.

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<sup>30</sup> See Stanislav Lunev, “Is the Russian Army Starving?” *Prism* (17 November 1995).

<sup>31</sup> Andrzej Lomanowski, “Biedni, Głodni, Zli,” *Gazeta Wyborcza* (Warsaw) 12 December 1996.

## CHAPTER ONE:

### **What's at Stake in Russia's Civil Military Relations?**

The importance of maintaining a stable system of civil-military relations in post-communist Russia can be established easily without resort to alarmism. The purpose of the preceding discussion on the weakness of civilian control was not to suggest that the Russian military is likely to launch a coup d'état against the current regime. Such a bold assertion of military influence is, in fact, extremely unlikely to occur in the foreseeable future. Samuel Finer noted in *The Man on Horseback* that the advent of a coup d'état was governed by a balance of opportunity and motivation. While it could be argued that the motivation for the military to intervene in politics is present in Russia, perhaps even abundantly present, the opportunity to intervene is distinctly absent.

Russia places unique obstacles in the path of the potential coup-maker, quite apart from those present in stable democracies: the passive resistance of a people motivated by a political culture that would refuse to accept military rule. In that vein, it is interesting to read Edward Luttwak's highly engaging book, *Coup D'état: A Practical Handbook*, and apply his advice to a notional coup in contemporary Russia. The extreme impracticality of attempting to seize control of Russia through military action becomes readily apparent. Consider only one facet of the problem Russia poses to the potential coup-maker: geography. Russia still covers eleven time zones from its Western to Eastern frontiers. Given that, according to Luttwak, to be successful, a coup must be kept utterly secret

until the final moment of action, which must in turn be decisive, and simultaneously seize all major centres of opposition, allowing no time for the coordination of resistance, how could anyone hope to coordinate such an operation in Russia, particularly as the para-military forces guarding the current regime are far from insignificant? A coup in Russia, if not necessarily impossible, is nonetheless a highly dubious venture with an uncertain outcome. As was noted above, any attempt would likely be very bloody, perhaps ignite a civil war, and almost certainly contribute greatly to the further fragmentation of the Russian Federation. Finally, and this must be the central point of the discussion, the Russian military has no history of coup d'état; it is a concept alien to their history and tradition, and there is no evidence that anyone inside the Army is thinking about the possibility at this time.

It is misleading, however, to think of the existence or non-existence of coup d'état as the be all and end all of civil-military relations. Civil-military relations is not a coin – heads, stable or tails, unstable. It is, rather, a continuum of events and exchanges between the military and the political leadership, with complete military servility to the regime (as in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century Prussian military) on one extreme, and utter capriciousness of the military (as in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Bolivian military) on the other. Tensions often exist in stable civil-military relationships. The Somalia affair in Canada and the abolition of conscription in the US are only two of numerous such examples. In stable civil-military relations, however, there are mechanisms and forums for the negotiation of differences between civilian and military authorities. There is bargaining and debate, sometimes heated and

acrimonious, but the principle of ultimate civilian authority is not questioned.

In Russia there is ample cause to suspect that these conditions are not operative in the civil-military relationship. All the interdependent elements of objective civilian control — institutional controls and legislation, the general welfare of the serviceman and prestige of military service, a professional military ethos and congruence of values and interests between the state and the military — are inoperative or have been seriously eroded.

Recent studies of the Russian Army are increasingly apocalyptic and alarmist in their prediction of future events. For example, at a conference on the future of the Russian military at the US Naval Postgraduate School (Monterey, California, March 1997), Russian and American specialists were asked to rate “the probability of a coup, chaos or disintegration of the Russian military within the next 12 to 18 months.” Russian participants put the probability at 60-100 percent. The American participants were less pessimistic, reckoning that the chances of a real calamity were between 30–40 percent. As one participant noted, “the fact that we are all in basic agreement that the Russian military is going down the tubes is pretty significant.”<sup>32</sup> Indeed, there is a growing consensus among specialists on the Russian military that “the biggest threat to Russian security is the Russian Army itself.”<sup>33</sup> As Alexei Arbatov, a participant of the conference, noted:

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<sup>32</sup> An account of this particular aspect of the conference was reported in “Washington Whispers,” *US News and World Report* 14 April 1997:23-24.

<sup>33</sup> Cited in Ford, I.

Even the highest military leaders speak more and more rarely about the Armed Forces' inability to protect the country against external threat, but warn chiefly about the danger of a social explosion in the Army and its getting out of the state leadership's control.<sup>34</sup>

Even if the predictions at Monterey were overly alarmist, the increased frequency of such warnings indicates that the Russian military is under extreme stress and that the possibility of a calamity in Russian civil-military relations cannot be ruled out. Some problems, short of coup d'etat that are already evident or are likely to become so in the near future, include: military influence on foreign policy; military mutiny; military contribution to fragmentation of Russia; military resistance to reform; criminalization of the military; greater insecurity in the international system; and military inability to defend the nation.

### **The Army Supplants Foreign Policy Toward the Near Abroad**

The collapse of the Soviet Union created a space within which a number of new states could emerge. These newly-independent states are a diverse lot. Politically, they run the gamut from virtual dictatorship in Belarus under Lukashenko, to the democratizing Baltic republics. Their economic prospects are equally varied, from guardedly optimistic to decidedly pessimistic. Some states continue to look toward Russia, either from economic necessity or to counter a threat from a regional neighbour. Others are anxious to distance themselves from Moscow and deepen ties with the West. A minority of the new states are stable, with long-term futures. Most remain quite unstable economic "basket-cases," torn by internal conflicts or civil war. Virtually all the post-Soviet republics have border conflicts, major or minor, with Russia. Russian forces of one sort or another--border

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<sup>34</sup> Quoted in *FBIS-SOV-EUR* (17 July 1997): 7.

guards, regular infantry, sailors or anti-aircraft specialists—are currently stationed in 10 of 11 partner counties in the Commonwealth of Independent States,<sup>35</sup> while the presence of large Russian minorities in the near abroad also complicates relations with Moscow.

The former Soviet Republics represent a new military environment for the Russian Army, one to which it is drawn by cultural, political and historical links. There is a strong potential for the military to influence or supplant official foreign policy toward the region, to force the government through various acts into policy positions that it might not have otherwise chosen. Grachev, for example, warned in 1995 that if the government did not protect the rights of Russians in the near abroad, then “troops might be dispatched to those regions where the rights of ethnic Russians are violated.”<sup>36</sup> Given that Russian forces are still based in many of these countries, the Army is all too capable of carrying out this threat.

In recent years it has become evident that the military and the Yeltsin government have differing views on the near abroad and particularly on policy regarding the Russian diaspora there. As Lebed put it when describing the goals of his movement:

We want to represent the interests of Russians abroad. A nation torn apart is a nation of cripples. Until the economic premises are created for peoples' return to the motherland, this conflict will continue. We must preserve the motherland, and create the conditions that

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<sup>35</sup> Stephen Blank, “Strategic Over-Extension: A Recipe for Failure? Notes on Russian Security Policy,” *The Future of the Russian Military: Managing Geopolitical Change and Institutional Decline*, Heritage Foundation Lecture, Washington DC, 12 December 1996: 4.

<sup>36</sup>Cited in Aleksandr Golovkov and Sergei Leskov, “Top Guns: Who’s Who in the Russian Military,” *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientist* (May/June 1995): 55.

will allow our compatriots to live normally within the territories where fate has cast them.<sup>37</sup>

This is not to say that the Army favours a restoration of the Union by force. Although in a 1994 poll 70 percent of officers agreed that “the disintegration of the Soviet Union is a great misfortune,” and 44 percent thought that it should have been prevented by all means including use of force,<sup>38</sup> most officers accept that the current Russian borders are a fait accompli which would not be worth the cost of a revanchist attempt to widen them militarily.<sup>39</sup>

On the other hand, it is apparent also that the Army’s high command, seeking justification for defence spending, is quick to point to the persecution of Russians abroad as something which the armed forces should redress. Given the capacity of the military through the deployment of its forces to affect the defence posture of newly-independent states (such as the Baltic states, particularly Estonia and Latvia, on the borders of which the Army maintains substantial forces, and occasionally makes rumblings of intervention), the Army can force the government into policy positions at odds with the recommendations of its civilian advisors and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

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<sup>37</sup> Bershim, 71.

<sup>38</sup> James Brusstar and Alan Jones, “Attitudes Within the Russian Military” *INSS Strategic Forum* 15 (January 1995):4.

<sup>39</sup> Deborah Yarsike Ball, “The Political Attitudes of Russian Field-Grade Officers,” *Post-Soviet Affairs* Vol 12, No 6 (1996): 166.

A taste of the more radical military view which, it must be pointed out, according to surveys is not supported by a majority of officers, on the foreign and security policy debate can be found in the recently published paper “Army Reform and Security: Conceptual Theses of the Strategy of Reforming the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation,” in which the authors, Lieutenant General Valerii Dementyev (Ret), and Anton Surikov, articulate the hard-line position. Among the report’s main points:

- The US and NATO remain Russia’s enemies. Other foes include Turkey and most countries of the Former Soviet Union.
- Russia should be prepared to undertake military operations to reconquer the newly-independent states of the former Soviet Union.
- Such operations would include seizing command and control sites, “eliminating” the political-military leadership, and deporting “some categories” of the hostile population.<sup>40</sup>

The average Russian officer has no time for such imperialist or geo-strategic fantasies of recreating the USSR. The officer corps is hard-pressed to keep body and soul together, and its units intact, as they cope without money for wages, food or training. “There is some hope for reintegration with Kazakhstan and other republics,” noted Alexander Belkin, a former Army officer and now Deputy Director of the Moscow-based Centre for Foreign and Defence Policy, “but most officers are not busy making strategic plans; they are thinking only about survival.”<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Translated in Ariel Cohen, “Russian Hardliner’s Military Doctrine in Their Own Words,” *F.Y.I. #104*, The Heritage Foundation, Washington DC (30 May 1996).

<sup>41</sup>Ford, 2.

Since its creation in 1992, the Russian Army has been involved in five “peacekeeping operations” outside its borders, but within the confines of the old Union: Tajikistan, Moldova, Abkhazia, Nagorno-Karabakh and Southern Ossetia. None of these operations adhere to current UN guidelines on peacekeeping whereby:

- forces are introduced only with the consent and invitation of all parties in the conflict;
- forces are impartial; and,
- forces use their weapons only in self-defence.

On the contrary, according to one US Army analyst, little attempt has been made in Russian “peacekeeping” to secure the consent and invitation of all parties. Indeed, as Russian forces were typically already stationed in the region when conflict broke out, they were active combatants. Similarly, Russian forces have by no means been impartial to the outcome of the conflict, and offensive use of weapons is the norm.<sup>42</sup>

More importantly, Russian forces in the former Soviet Republics appear to have been only loosely controlled from financially-weakened Moscow, which possesses little authority on the ground. The Army frequently takes armed action in support of one side against another, in response to attacks on themselves or to pursue local agendas.<sup>43</sup> It is difficult, if not impossible in many cases to ascertain whether a particular action of Russian forces was ordered from Moscow or taken on the initiative of local commanders. Alexander Lebed’s

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<sup>42</sup>See Raymond Finch, “The Strange Case of Russian Peacekeeping Operations in the Near Abroad,” US Army Foreign Military Studies Office, Fort Leavenworth KS, (May 1997).

<sup>43</sup>Ibid, 6.

famous comment on to whom he owed supreme loyalty and obedience while in command of the 14<sup>th</sup> Army in Moldova suggests, however, that Moscow plays only a limited role:

I am a cat that likes to walk by itself. Theoretically, we are under the orders of the Commander-in-Chief of Ground Forces in Moscow. In practice, we take decisions here. Don't touch me, or the families of my officers, and I'll do nothing to you. Touch me and I'll hit you—hard.<sup>44</sup>

The conflicts in Southern Ossetia and Abkhazia (regions of former Soviet Georgia), provide another example of the capacity for weakly-controlled military forces in the near abroad to undermine official foreign policy toward the region. The Russian peacekeeping operation in Southern Ossetia came about in response to the eruption of violence in early 1991, engendered by the failure of the Georgian nationalist government of Zviad Gamsakhurdia to respect the autonomy of the Ossetian region. Following the replacement of Gamsakhurdia as President of Georgia by former Soviet foreign minister, Eduard Shevardnadze, a 1500-man Russian peacekeeping force was introduced into the region in the spring of 1992 under the command of Russian General Georgi Kondratiev. No political solution to the conflict had been agreed upon when forces were introduced; Kondratiev was ordered only to separate the warring sides. Not surprisingly, the Russians became active combatants in the confused conflict from early on, utterly neglecting any pretense of neutrality.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Quoted in "Russia's Armed Forces: The Threat That Was," *Economist* (28 August 1994): 17.

<sup>45</sup> Finch, 12.

Abkhazia, another region of Georgia, made more strident demands for sovereignty in the aftermath of Georgian independence. In July 1992, under the pretext of restoring order to the region, Georgian forces stormed the capital Sukhumi, forcing the Abkhaz leadership to flee to a neighbouring village. The scenario was not dissimilar from Southern Ossetia, except that in this case a much greater number and variety of Russian forces came to the aid of the Abkhazians. Units of the Russian Army in Abkhazia provided equipment and training to Abkhaz forces. Again, it is unclear whether this was done independently or on the orders of Moscow.

During the latest offensive against Sukhumi, the Abkhaz forces employed armoured equipment and artillery that, under the agreement, had been rendered unusable for combat and placed in the safekeeping of Russian units. This equipment could not have appeared in combat without the knowledge of Russian commanders.<sup>46</sup>

Russian military forces under General Kondratiev were clearly pursuing actions in Southern Ossetia, and particularly in Abkhazia in 1992 and 1993, which contradicted the policy of the civilian government in Russia, and (not incidentally) the policy of the Minister of Defence, Pavel Grachev, which was aimed at forging a friendly relationship with Georgia by respecting its territorial integrity.<sup>47</sup> The 14<sup>th</sup> Army under Lebed in Moldova was also clearly ignoring the orders of its nominal superiors in Moscow. Although the Army will for the foreseeable future be far too weak to launch imperial adventures in the near abroad, it does have the capacity to undermine Russia's official policy toward the region if it takes

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<sup>46</sup> Catherine Dale, "Turmoil in Abkhazia: Russian Responses," *RFE/RL Research Report* (27 August 1993).

<sup>47</sup> Golovkov and Leskov, 53.

directions they do not like.

### **Military Mutinies Against Civilian Authorities**

Morale in Russian Army garrisons has sunk to such a low that a dramatic attack against the government by military personnel is far from unlikely. For the uncorrupt officer, the profession of arms no longer guarantees even lower-middle class status today.<sup>48</sup> In February 1997, an excerpt from the diary of Colonel Viktor Baranets, an advisor to the Chief of the General Staff, was published in a popular Moscow magazine. The diary excerpt opens with Baranets describing the humiliation he feels at his inability to feed his family, and then reflecting that his office window in the General Staff building would be a good vantage point from which to open fire on Yeltsin's passing motorcade en route to the Kremlin. After considering various weapons, Baranets decides that a radio-controlled mine placed under the motorcade's route would be the most reliable method of assassinating the President and the least dangerous to innocent bystanders. Although such mines are readily available on the black market, Baranets — thanks to the Defense Ministry's chronic failure to pay salaries — cannot afford to buy one.<sup>49</sup> “How can you stop a hopeless, hungry, desperate man,” asked one Russian analyst, “if he has a tactical fighter and decides to crash

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<sup>48</sup> In June 1994, it was reported that “the pilot of a supersonic military jet makes 440 thousand rubles per month, whereas his civilian counterpart made more than 1.5 million rubles per month.” See Dale Herspring, “The Russian Military: Three Years On.” *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, Vol 28, No. 2 (1995): 172.

<sup>49</sup> Viktor Baranets, “At Who Will A Hungry Army Shoot?” *Sovershenno Sekretno* (February 1997). The banner over the title in bold letters read “A Howl of Despair from a Dying Army.”

it into the Kremlin?”<sup>50</sup>

Suicides of military officers are dramatically on the rise. In 1997, the 58<sup>th</sup> Army based in Vladikavkaz and recently returned from Chechnya had a rash of suicides. Outside his headquarters Lieutenant-Colonel Valeri Bulgakov blew himself up with a hand grenade. On the back of a photo of his daughter which he had left on his bed, he had written, “I had to do it, daughter. You will understand me later.” Another lieutenant-colonel, before taking his life, left a note saying “I cannot live any longer because I am a non-entity. I cannot look at my wife and son in the eye. Do not bury me. Burn me! Scatter the ashes, so that there is no trace.” More spectacularly, before shooting himself in the head, a junior officer waded into a group of soldiers, firing at them with his service pistol, killing several of them. The commander of the 58<sup>th</sup> Army, after a number of frank answers to a journalist about the problems in his command, when asked about the effect his openness would have on his career, sounded almost as fatalistic: “If we lose the Army, why should I worry about my career.”<sup>51</sup> Had the 58<sup>th</sup> Army been based in Moscow, how many of these officers would have elected to commit suicide while attacking the government?

Another scenario holds that the growing alienation of the military from the government could lead to officer-led mutinies, especially in response to a highly unpopular order. This

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<sup>50</sup> Ford, 2.

<sup>51</sup> These incidents were reported in Alexander Tolmachev and Alexander Zhilin, “Army Cuts Itself,” *Moscow News* (Moscow) 3-9 July 1997:3.

was very nearly the case in Chechnya on several occasions. By early 1995, the acrimony between civilian officials and military leaders over the conduct of the war in Chechnya was so bitter that the Russian Army was reportedly on the verge of disobeying the “ridiculous orders of its government.”<sup>52</sup>

Russia’s generals consistently criticized, publicly, the Chechen war aims of the civilian government. Statements attacking Moscow’s policies were given directly to journalists and clearly aimed at influencing public opinion on the war. Major General Ivan Babichev, commander of the Western thrust into Chechnya, told a reporter from the *Washington Post* outside Grozny that he would not advance any further no matter what order he received from Moscow: “They can fire us if they want but we are not going any further... It is not our fault that we are here.”<sup>53</sup> Colonel-General Eduard Vorobyev, deputy commander of ground forces, refused to accept command of the operation in Chechnya, commenting that, “this operation is impossible -- the forces available are inadequate.” For the lack of preparation he laid blame on Minister of Defence Grachev, who had lacked the “courage to report to the President that more time was needed to prepare the forces being sent to Chechnya.”<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Pavel Felgengauer, “The Chechen Campaign,” paper presented at a conference at the US Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, CA, March 1997: 8.

<sup>53</sup> Lee Hockstaedter, “Russian General Says He Refuses to Attack,” *Washington Post*, (Washington) 17 December 1994:A1.

<sup>54</sup> Cited in Lyle Goldstein, “Russian Civil-Military Relations in the Chechen War, December 1994-February 1995,” *Journal of Slavic Studies*, Vol 10, No 1 (march 1997):112.

Indeed, numerous commanders refused to follow Moscow's direct orders. Major General Nikolai Staskov, commander of Group East during the assault on Grozny in late December 1994, and Major General Vadim Orlov, commander of the 104<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division were both charged with cowardice. The 104<sup>th</sup> did not move as planned when the 129<sup>th</sup> Motorized Rifle Regiment attacked Grozny on 31 December, 1994. Subsequently the 129<sup>th</sup> was beaten badly by the Chechens and retreated on the 1<sup>st</sup> of January without having accomplished its mission. A neighbouring unit, the 131<sup>st</sup> Motorized Rifle Brigade was decimated in the same battle, emerging from Grozny with only 18 of its 120 combat vehicles intact.<sup>55</sup>

The officers and men of the 104<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division supported their commander, feeling that he had saved them by not ordering the attack. In their lightly-armoured, aluminum Airborne Infantry Fighting Vehicles, the paratroopers were vulnerable even to small arms fire in urban combat. In the aftermath of the Chechen campaign it was revealed that in total 11 senior officers were charged with cowardice for disobeying orders from Moscow.<sup>56</sup> The war in Chechnya has left many officers convinced of the social and political malfeasance of the Yeltsin regime—sending the Army to Chechnya (like Afghanistan before), but withdrawing support when things went wrong, leaving the military to “hold the bag.”<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> These incidents were cited in Felgengaer, “The Chechen Campaign,” 10-11.

<sup>56</sup> Felgengaer, “The Chechen Campaign.”

<sup>57</sup> Belkin, “War in Chechnya: The Impact on Civil-Military Relations in Russia” 6.

In fact, it is commonly felt within the Army that the politicians in Moscow decided to send an unprepared army into battle to cover up the disastrous covert attempt of the Federal Security Service (FSB) to depose the Chechen leader Dzhokar Dudayev using the Chechen opposition. The catastrophic loss of men and equipment and serious decline in morale caused by what they see as a civilian mistake is something that the Army “will not forget.”<sup>58</sup> Only a fraction of the Russian Army fought in Chechnya, but it was an ad hoc force drawn from virtually every unit and military district of the Federation. Naturally, on their return from the battlefield, veterans of Chechnya told their stories to their comrades. The attitudes of the Army in Chechnya have thus become the attitudes of the military in general. In this respect, the role of veterans of Chechnya in informing the attitudes of the Army is analogous to the role played by Afghan veterans in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

That the threat of mutiny or attack on the government by individuals or factions within the Army is perceived as a real threat in Moscow is shown by the careful preparation of the Yeltsin regime to defend itself against such an occurrence. Yeltsin has been very careful in keeping a close watch on the undercurrents of discontent and mood against him within the military. The Presidential Security Service, formerly under Lieutenant General Korzhakov, maintained an intelligence network in the Moscow Military District, closely allied with the FSB, and headed by Mikhail Barsukov, to warn of impending coups. Then, in 1996, it gained access to an even larger internal intelligence network when it was incorporated into the Federal Security Service (FSB), by that time commanded by Colonel-General Nikolai

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<sup>58</sup>Felgengaer, “The Chechen Campaign,” 9.

Kovalev, a staunch loyalist of Yeltsin.<sup>59</sup> In July 1997, the head of the FSB's military counterintelligence division told *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* that his organization kept the armed forces under "continuous and unremitting observation." This quote points to the government's awareness of both growing unrest in the Army, and its fear of officers' willingness to take measures against the government into their own hands.<sup>60</sup>

Even if the military were sufficiently disenchanted with Yeltsin to attempt a coup against him, organizing the required forces would prove extremely difficult. In addition to the Presidential Guard, Yeltsin has the Taman and Kantemir Guards Divisions and the Tula Airborne Division based near Moscow to protect him.<sup>61</sup> Together with other units of the Interior Ministry and FSB, these units constitute the Main Security Administration (MSA) which, despite the presence of Army units in it, does not fall under the Army's chain of command, but reports directly to Yeltsin. The loyalty of these troops is maintained by significantly higher pay and privileges than is extended to normal military units. It was rumoured in 1994 that a warrant officer in the MSA made more money than a colonel on the General Staff.<sup>62</sup> Thus Yeltsin has not only a large and well-equipped personal bodyguard but an extremely extensive internal intelligence network at his command. This

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<sup>59</sup> Mikhail Kazakovitch, "The Skeleton in the Russian President's Closet," *Transition* (November 1996): 16.

<sup>60</sup> "Political Stakes Rise on Russian Defence Reform," *Jamestown Monitor* (22 July 1997).

<sup>61</sup> "Russia's Armed Forces: The Threat That Was..." 17.

<sup>62</sup> Thomas, 536.

has led at least one analyst to conclude that:

The primary political objective of Yeltsin's military reorganization was to deliberately weaken and incapacitate the military as a potential instrument of any political rivals. That objective has been accomplished completely.<sup>63</sup>

### **Military Contribution to Fragmentation of the Russian Federation**

While the military cannot put the Soviet Union back together again, it has a great potential to add to the further splintering of the Federation. Analysts increasingly use the term "implosion" to describe a scenario of Russian military collapse. The term is understood to encapsulate such phenomena as rapid, uncontrolled depletion of the ranks and officer corps through resignations, desertion and draft evasion accompanied by the liquidation of the Army's materiel. Unable to support themselves or their families as military men, officers simply cease to serve and either walk off military bases to start over in some other occupation, or take their weapons and skills to use in banditry or other criminal ventures.

Implicit in the implosion scenario is the notion that the fragmentation of the military may lead to warlordism. Thrown on their own devices, and without the support of authorities in Moscow to properly feed the troops under their command, let alone carry out proper training, local military commanders have little choice but to seek partnerships with regional elites who step into the void left by the central authorities. In fact, economic exigency has already forced the MoD to encourage local units to seek support from the governments of

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<sup>63</sup> Alexander Belkin, "The System of Defence Decision-Making in Russia," paper presented at the US Army War College conference on *Russia's Future as a World Power*, Carlisle Barracks, PA (24 April 1997): 25.

the regions in which they are stationed.<sup>64</sup> The situation is such that a Russia watcher from the US Defense Intelligence Agency was quoted as saying that what we are now witnessing is “the quiet disintegration of the Russian Army which was built from the remnants of the Soviet Army.”<sup>65</sup>

In the event of confrontation between central and regional authorities in Russia, the ambiguous loyalty of military forces could have quite serious consequences. During the Soviet era, district commanders worked closely with the local civilian officials of the regions where their forces were based. Military and civilian officials coordinated their activities in Military Councils. Soldiers aided the local economy by helping in the harvest, and civilian officials provided the military with products that they could not receive on a regular or timely basis through regular channels. The old system of military administrative division was not discarded with the collapse of the USSR. Military districts were made fewer in number to conform with new borders, but their significance as centres of power and assets and their ties with local elites have not diminished. The danger of military districts in alliance with regional civilian leaders emerging as centres of opposition to the centre was clearly articulated by *Komsomolskaya Pravda*'s military correspondent Dmitri Kholodov in 1994:

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<sup>64</sup> “Russian Army Pay,” *FBIS Special Memo* (4 April 1997).

<sup>65</sup> Quoted by Stuart Goldman in “Russian Conventional Armed Forces: on the Verge of Collapse?” Congressional Research Service Report for Congress 97-820-F, September 1997: 33.

A frightening process has begun in the Army. District commanders no longer rely on their ministry [but instead] turn to local authorities directly for help. In this way, the Army is becoming tied to the regions, something that, in the event of a crisis, could break it up into component parts.<sup>66</sup>

The most notorious example of the incipient warlordism of local military commanders was provided by Alexander Lebed who boasted while still commander of the 14<sup>th</sup> Army that he “never served Yeltsin and was not about to serve him.” His sole loyalty was to “the Fatherland,” and in his view, nonparticipation of the military in politics was a “questionable formula” since it was impossible for generals to avoid involvement in politics in contemporary Russia.<sup>67</sup> Lebed also gave one of the most cogent warnings of the danger that regionalisation of the military posed to Russia:

Every regional “prince” now has his own troops. He pays them, and they are ready to unsheathe their swords for him. This is totally abnormal. All armed forces must be under one single command. This is the way it used to be. Now everybody thinks he can have his own private army.<sup>68</sup>

### **Military Resists Reform**

Debate on military reform in Russia stretches back into the Soviet era, but before the demise of the Soviet Union no comprehensive plans for reform had been adopted. Since 1991, reform of the Army has been an unqualified failure. The new doctrine approved by Yeltsin in November 1993, was not well-received either in Russia, or in the West. Western

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<sup>66</sup> Cited in Thomas, 537. Kholodov was murdered by an exploding briefcase shortly after writing this. He had turned his attention to the issue of corruption in the military. See Lambeth 96.

<sup>67</sup> Cited in Thomas, 537.

<sup>68</sup> Bershim, 25.

commentary focussed primarily on the abandonment by Moscow of its policy regarding the non-first use of nuclear weapons. Henceforth, nuclear weapons were to be used as and when necessary to defend Russia or its interests, particularly against the military might of NATO but not excluding conventional conflicts in other areas. Ironically, Russian nuclear posture now is reminiscent of NATO's nuclear strategy in the days when it was felt that Soviet conventional strength could only be met with nuclear forces.

The new doctrine said very little about the future structure of the military, other than to make vague pronouncements about the speed at which Russia was to create a "professional" military force. Only Grachev appeared to really support the new doctrine. Within the Defence Ministry itself, however, the doctrine was never considered a serious document. Top military leaders openly referred to it as "toilet paper."<sup>69</sup>

With so many other problems to handle, the reform of Russia's Army had low priority in the government for years, until the Russian Army's poor performance in Chechnya heightened public concerns over the crisis in the military and spurred debate over defence reform. Nonetheless, despite heightened public interest, reform quickly fell victim to the political battles between Yeltsin and his proxies and Alexander Lebed. By the time of the Presidential elections in Summer 1996, Grachev had grown so unpopular both with the public and within the MoD that he had become a liability for Yeltsin. In June, he was dismissed and replaced by General Igor Rodionov, at the behest of Lebed, who had joined

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<sup>69</sup> Felgengauer, "Russian Military Reform: Ten Years of Failure," 25.

Yeltsin and been appointed Secretary of the Security Council.

Rodionov became head of the Voroshilov Military Academy of the General Staff in the last days of the USSR, just as the Army was seriously beginning to address the need for reform. He was determined that the Academy of the General Staff, under his command, would play a leading role in the design of the reform plan. By the time he was appointed Minister of Defence he had been working on reform for almost seven years, and in cooperation with Lebed quickly floated several ideas for reform of the armed forces. Central to his reform plans was the reduction of some of the hollow units in the Army and the concentration of man-power in a small number of full-strength rapid reaction forces.<sup>70</sup>

The Lebed-Rodionov team was initially a natural and mutually advantageous one. Though widely respected in the military, Lebed was not a graduate of the General Staff. Rodionov added a theoretical rigour and background in military science to Lebed's reform platform, which carried a lot of weight in Army circles. Rodionov, in turn, eager to avoid the isolation and marginalization which had plagued Grachev, needed Lebed's political strength and populist rhetoric to articulate his own program.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> See the excellent biography of Rodionov by Timothy L. Thomas and Lester. W. Grau of the US Army Foreign Military Studies Office, "A Military Biography: Russian Minister of Defence General Igor Rodionov: in with the Old, in with the New," *Journal of Slavic Studies* (June 1996): 443-452.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid*, 448.

Although there was general agreement between the two on the desirability of ending mass-conscription and moving to an all-volunteer force, Lebed was soon distracted with ending the conflict in Chechnya. In February 1996, Rodionov had a falling out with Lebed over a plan to reduce the size of the airborne forces by 30 percent, and to subordinate them to the command of the Ground Forces. Lebed, calling Rodionov “only a politician with strong jaws,” claimed that this was the first move in abolishing the Airborne Forces. Rodionov responded to the heart of the matter: “everybody says that reform is needed, but not in my forces ... If Lebed had been a sapper, he would have reacted in the same way with regard to the sappers as to the airborne troops.”<sup>72</sup>

For Rodionov, Lebed proved to be a mercurial and inconsistent ally who left him in the lurch. Finally, in October 1996, Lebed was dismissed by Yeltsin, accused of plotting a coup against the government, and replaced as Secretary of the Security Council by Ivan Rybkin. (Rybkin, a politician with no previous military experience, was much closer to Yeltsin.) Plainly, Lebed’s interest at the time was not in reform but in politics, a field which Rodionov never grasped. “I never did understand who was running the country,” he admitted after his dismissal.<sup>73</sup>

The Airborne Command eventually went over Rodionov’s head to Yeltsin and the order to

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<sup>72</sup> Cited in Michael Orr, “Rodionov and Reform,” Conflict Studies Research Centre, Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst, January 1997: 8.

<sup>73</sup> Alexander Zhilin, “Rodionov Speaks Out After Dismissal [interview],” Moscow News (Moscow) 12-18 June 1997:1.

reduce the Airborne Forces was cancelled. Rodionov, now without allies, became embroiled in a bitter battle with the Secretary of the newly-created Defence Council, Yuri Baturin. The two fought publicly over reform, though neither of them put forward any comprehensive plan. The Army insisted that military reform could only go ahead if adequate financing was provided.<sup>74</sup> Baturin and the Defence Council argued that if the military had its way, Russia would be spending 15 percent of its GDP on defence, and if that were the case then there would be no reason to reform.

By early 1997, Rodionov was publicly attacking Baturin, accusing him of extreme incompetence, and also reversing his earlier position on conscription by attacking the 'New Russians' for pushing forward the idea of an all-volunteer contract army in Russia. "If there is war," said Rodionov, "the New Russians will want the Army to fight while they continue to fly to the Canary Islands for relaxation as they do today."<sup>75</sup> Yeltsin resolved the dispute between Rodionov and Baturin on May 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1997 by firing the Minister of Defence.

Rodionov's replacement, Strategic Rocket Forces General Ivan Sergeev, who is also well-respected in the military, submitted yet another reform plan to Yeltsin shortly after taking

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<sup>74</sup> This position was also held by Grachev who replied simply to journalists questioning the pace of reform: "If there is money, there is reform." Cited in Vitaly Shlykov, "The War in Chechnya: Implications for Military Reform and Creation of Mobile Forces," paper presented at a conference at the US Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, CA, March 1997.

<sup>75</sup> Cited in Felgengauer, "Russian Military Reform: Ten Years of Failure," 17.

office. The plan was signed by Yeltsin on the 16<sup>th</sup> of July, 1997. The reform plan calls for: (1) the consolidation of the five military services (Ground Forces, Navy, Air Force, Air Defence Forces and Strategic Rocket Forces) into three services, Ground, Air and Naval; (2) the office of Commander-in-Chief of Ground Forces to be abolished, with control of ground forces and tactical aircraft to be devolved to district commanders; (3) military manpower to be cut by 500,000 troops; (4) the defence budget to be no more than 3.5 percent of GDP; and (5) Construction and Railroad Troops of the MoD to be shifted to other ministries.

The reforms are strongly opposed by senior officers and many politicians. Lebed, Zyuganov and Rokhlin have stated that the proposed cap of 3.5 percent of GDP is completely insufficient to save the Army from collapse, with a figure of no less than 5-7 percent being the absolute minimum. It was in fact in response to Sergeev's reform plan that Rokhlin issued his inflammatory charges against Yeltsin, blaming him for "destroying" the Army and calling for his ouster.<sup>76</sup>

Pavel Felgengaer maintains that the reforms were drafted by a small clique of MoD and General Staff officers pursuing narrow bureaucratic interests. According to him, the Defence Council, which is the government body formally charged with defence reform, was deliberately bypassed by Sergeev, who went instead to the Military Reform Committee of Premier Chernomyrdin to have the plan rammed through. Civilian experts to the Defence

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<sup>76</sup> See note 26.

Council privately dismiss the reform plan as a “nightmare... ill-founded, ill-prepared and ill-considered.”<sup>77</sup>

Clearly, the politics surrounding Russian defence reform is a labyrinth. Both civilian and military participants change their positions with great frequency depending on what political mileage is to be made on a particular issue at any one time. The military itself embodies within its ranks numerous camps in opposition to each other over various issues of reform and in particular over the “professionalization” of the Army. Many officers would like to see Russia have a more “professional,” better trained, and more technically skilled army, but the officer corps has no experience in the techniques of commanding a long-service Army. Moreover, Russia lacks the corps of competent NCOs that would be necessary for such an armed forces.<sup>78</sup> Finally, in its current financial position the military simply cannot afford to man its units through any other means but conscription.

Defence reform is an important and not to be understated problem for Russia, which has fallen victim to political battles. There is some merit to both the military and civilian positions. In the short-run, down-sizing of the military will cost a considerable amount of money which the MoD does not have and the government must provide. In the long-run, Russia cannot maintain the type of military it now has: the Army is both too large and not

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<sup>77</sup> Cited in Goldman, 43.

<sup>78</sup> See Igor Rodionov, “That Painful Sergeant Problem,” *Krasnaya Zvezda* (4 June 1995):1.

sufficiently combat ready.

The General Staff, without clear-cut guidelines, with no consensus on what sort of threats Russia is likely to encounter in the future, with Yeltsin as a commander-in-chief who is unwilling or unable to provide adequate leadership to the Army, and with utterly insufficient funding, has become one of the most significant loci of resistance to reform.

For the time being, in the view of many in the General Staff, the best policy is simply to keep as much of the structures and arms of the Soviet Army alive for as long as possible and to quietly resist substantial change in the Army's structure. The Army must bide its time, wait for the economy to recover and for more money to come into the defence budget, or for an obvious external enemy to appear that would unite the nation and increase societal support for military spending.<sup>79</sup> The emphasis must be placed on preserving the best of the Soviet arsenal during these lean years, making it easier sometime in the future to build a new and stronger force on the Soviet model.<sup>80</sup> In the words of former Chief of the General Staff Colonel-General Mikhail Kolesnikov, "the most

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<sup>79</sup> Felgengauer, "Russian Military Reform: Ten Years of Failure," 5.

<sup>80</sup> It has been speculated that the failure of the Russian Army to employ the most advanced and expensive weapon systems in its possession is attributable to the feeling among the Higher Command that "advanced weapons were too expensive to be wasted in Chechnya, an operation that they did not support, and had to be saved for more serious contingencies." See "Russian Military Assesses Errors of Chechnya Campaign," *International Defense Digest* (No 4, 1995): 6.

important of the Army's missions in these times is to survive."<sup>81</sup>

One way in which conservative officers on the General Staff may have sabotaged reform efforts is very dangerous for Russia. Officials of the Defence Ministry have been accused of deliberately diverting funds earmarked for the construction of desperately needed military housing and for payment of wage arrears to pay for procurement of weapons, defence installations, research and development in defence laboratories and other military programs. The idea seems to be to preserve essential military capabilities by keeping a trickle of money flowing in to crucial defence-industrial sectors while at the same time exacerbating the crisis over officers' unpaid wages.<sup>82</sup>

The Army clearly understands that the total freezing of such things as military construction of control centres and underground bunkers will hardly set off a great hue and cry among the general public for more defence spending, while a million armed soldiers not receiving paychecks for almost half a year will. The alleged attempts to exacerbate the crisis among the military in order to heighten fears among the general public, if true, is both a blatant attempt to blackmail civilian authorities into devoting more scarce resources to the Army and a particularly dangerous sort of brinkmanship played by the high command of the armed forces.

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<sup>81</sup> Felgengauer, "Russian Military Reform: Ten Years of Failure..." 11.

<sup>82</sup> Colonel Stanislav Baratynov, "When the Generals are Bluffing: The Financial Mafia is Making Millions from the Military Budget," *Moskovsky Komsomolets* (22 April 1994), as translated in JPRS-UMA-94-022 (1 June 1994).

### **Criminalization of the Military**

The phenomenon of Russian military officers selling weapons on the black market in order to enrich or simply support themselves and their families is now so well-documented to have become a cliché. Crime is clearly flourishing in the armed forces in Russia. Both in and out of the Army, the armed forces are commonly referred to as “the mafia in shoulder boards,” and frequent derisory reference is made to the “Arbat Military District.” (The Arbat is a shopping district in Moscow). The Russian government arms company *Rosvooruzheniye* is popularly nicknamed “Rosvor” (Russian Thief), while Grachev’s nickname was “Pasha Mercedes,” a moniker acquired as a result of his public penchant for luxury automobiles.

The anecdotal evidence of criminality in the Army is pervasive. A Russian military justice official unintentionally highlighted the problem in late 1996, when he noted that theft of weapons in the military had declined that year, but only because the market had become saturated by earlier sales. The military has access to weapons and skills that are highly attractive to crime groups, and the pauperization of military officers raises the temptation to profit from theft and resale of weapons to a very high level.

Crime and corruption are not a new phenomenon in the Russian Army. Nepotism, theft of state property, abuse of one’s rank to obtain free labour from conscripts and so on, were all characteristic features of the Soviet Army. As the Soviet Army anecdote put it: “Why

can't the son of a general become a marshal? Because the marshal has his own son."<sup>83</sup> It is the mounting statistical evidence of the vast scale of mushrooming crime in the Army that is disturbing.

In 1995, while the overall crime rate in Russia rose by 5.6 percent, in the military the crime rate rose by 30 percent.<sup>84</sup> The statistic is even more alarming when it is considered that the true picture of crime in the military is understated by the tendency of commanders to conceal violations of the law in their units.<sup>85</sup> Weapons theft including the theft of fissile material, illegal commercial activities and contract killings are the most worrying trends in military crime.

As noted above, weapons theft may be declining, but only because the country is visibly awash with arms. The scale of theft is astounding. In the first quarter of 1992, the following items were stolen from the North Caucasus Military District: 27 T-72 Main Battle Tanks, over 100 Armoured Personnel Carriers, 1,330 cars and other armoured vehicles, 3,851 guns and mortars, 180,000 mines and 1,118 railway wagons containing 20

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<sup>83</sup> Quoted in T.R.W Waters, "Crime in the Russian Military," Conflict Studies Research Centre, Occasional Brief C90, Royal Military College, Sandhurst UK (November 1996).

<sup>84</sup> Mark Galeotti, "Russia's Rotten Army," *Jane's Intelligence Review* (March 1996): 99.

<sup>85</sup> See Yelena Skvortzova, "Good-Bye Boys! Try to Come Back Alive," *Obschaya Gazeta* (No 43, 1994), as translated in JPRS-UMA-94-048 (23 November 1994): 9.

tonnes of ammunition each.<sup>86</sup>

Even before the collapse of the Soviet Union, the sale of weapons and other military materials by members of the Western Group of Forces in Germany was notorious. This activity intensified during the phased withdrawal of Soviet forces from Germany. German police, for example, videotaped from a helicopter a high-speed chase of a Mercedes, stolen by the Russian mafia, through the streets of Berlin. The thieves drove to a Russian Army aviation base, and directly into an air force IL-76 transport plane which was waiting for them on the tarmac. The plane was last seen heading east toward Moscow. A German policeman commented on the spectacular getaway that “we couldn’t very well order a fighter jet to take off after him, could we?”<sup>87</sup> The last Russian commander in the region, General Matvei Burlakov (promoted to Deputy Minister of Defence by Grachev), was frequently accused of corruption from within and without the military.<sup>88</sup>

The illegal commercial activity of Russian Army officers is extremely varied. Much of it is rather minor and brought on by simple economic exigency. Military officers, for example, are legally barred from holding any other paid employment, so the 30 percent of officers who are forced to moonlight are technically in contravention of the law. Other relatively

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<sup>86</sup> From the *Summary of World Broadcasts* SU/1406/I (13 June 1992). Cited by Waters in “Crime in the Russian Military,” 11.

<sup>87</sup> Alexander Zhilin, “Has Russia’s Air Force Become Privatized?” *Moscow News* (Moscow) 17-23 April 1997:5.

<sup>88</sup> Golovkov, 53.

petty examples include the arrest of a captain and two non-commissioned officers in the Moscow Air Defence District in 1993 for removing the circuit boards of missiles under their control in order to extract the gold and platinum they contained.

However, large scale corruption, at the highest ranks is also quite evident. As of November 1997, 21 Russian generals, including the former Deputy Minister of Defence and head of the Main Military Inspectorate, General Konstantin Kobets, were under investigation for corruption.<sup>89</sup> The case of Major General Vladimir Rodionov, a commander of a Long-Range Aviation group in the Far East Military District, also provides a good example of the type of activities going on. Between 1993 and 1994, he and his deputy turned their top secret airbase into a transshipment point for goods and businessmen travelling between Russia and China. The bomber crews who flew the aircraft and shared in the profits of the venture came to see it as their primary occupation.<sup>90</sup>

In another famous case, a naval ship in the Pacific Fleet was deliberately scuttled on the orders of the local commander so officers could sell parts of it for valuable scrap.<sup>91</sup> Such

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<sup>89</sup> Kobets was eventually dismissed from the Army for having accepted US\$300,000 in bribes. See Ilya Bulavinov, "Konstantin Kobets is Removed from his Post and Discharged From the Army," *Kommersant Daily* (Moscow) 21 May 1997: 3. As translated in *Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press*, Vol XLIX, No 20 (1997): 16.

<sup>90</sup> Graham H. Turbiville, "Mafia in Uniform: The Criminalization of the Russian Armed Forces," US Army Foreign Military Studies Office, Fort Leavenworth KS, July 1995: 14.

<sup>91</sup> "Russia's Army: The Threat That Was..." 17.

stories are extremely common in both the Western and Russian press. As Graham

Turbiville noted:

Endless variations of business ventures involving the sale of miscellaneous military property abound. The incident in which senior officers of a unit engaged in developing “new military technologies” melted down and sold the silver, gold and other precious metals in their equipment is one innovative, but by no means unique case, of selling anything that might bring a good price. Overall, the range of military business intended for personal profit—irregular, semi-legal, patently criminal—is integral to the domestic operations of the Russian Armed Forces...<sup>92</sup>

The murder of Dmitry Kholodov, an investigative journalist from *Moskovski Komsomolets* who was looking into corruption in the military and who was killed by an exploding briefcase in 1994, focussed the attention of the public on the possibility that the military was now also involved in assassination to protect its interests. The main targets of Kholodov’s investigation, Defence Minister Grachev, General Burlakov and General Kobets were never linked directly to the crime, though most people felt that the murder was ordered by senior military people to warn other journalists. Grachev’s statement shortly after the murder that he would have been “proud to have had Kholodov as a son,”<sup>93</sup> earned him only the revulsion of most Muscovites. In 1998, Russia’s prosecutor-general finally ordered the arrest of Colonel Pavel Poporskikh for Kholodov’s murder. In the office of Poporskikh, who had served under Grachev for several years and was formerly the head of intelligence for the Airborne Troops, investigators found lists of journalists who

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<sup>92</sup> Turbiville, 15.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid, 22.

had been critical of Grachev, with suggestions of actions to be taken against them.<sup>94</sup>

It is widely suspected that the large pool of contract killers in Russia was drawn largely from the ranks of active or retired members of the armed forces. As one Russian specialist in organized crime in Russia put it, most assassins “grew out of the Army greatcoat.”<sup>95</sup>

The existence of military assassins is widely suspected but as yet unproven. However, the participation of Russian service personnel in so many other dimensions of organized crime lends credence to the theory that members of the security forces are also shopping their skills as professional killers.

#### **Military Contribution to Insecurity in the International System**

The theft of small arms and ammunition feeds the growing levels of violent crime in Russia, fuels secessionist conflicts by arming rebel groups, and generally leads to the increasing ungovernability of the country. These effects, however, are largely domestic in nature. From an international perspective, the mounting evidence of weak control over the military's stockpile of nuclear weapons and fissile materials is far more worrying.

The MoD has primary responsibility for the security of assembled nuclear weapons, while the Ministry of Atomic Energy (MINATOM) has responsibility for the stockpile of fissile

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<sup>94</sup> See “Charges Filed Against Suspect in Journalist's Murder,” *RFE/RL Newslines*, Vol II, No 30, Part I (13 February 1998).

<sup>95</sup> Igor Baranovsky, “Professional Killers,” *Moscow News* (Moscow) 31 December 1993: 2.

materials and for nuclear power generation. It is evident that neither ministry has firm control of these assets which are vulnerable to theft. In recent years, there have been numerous episodes of fissile materials being stolen from naval yards, Army bases and MINATOM storage facilities across Russia. There have been several seizures of fissile materials in Europe, albeit in quantities insufficient for bomb-making purposes.<sup>96</sup> Yet both agencies resist security inspections of their facilities by the new civilian agency created for that purpose, the State Committee for the Supervision of Nuclear and Radiation Safety (GOSATOMNADZOR). Voicing “security concerns,” the military claims that it cannot allow “incompetent civilian inspectors” on its bases. Yet most GOSATOMNADZOR inspectors are former military officers, who served either as directors of weapons labs, commanders of nuclear firing ranges, on nuclear submarines or in the Strategic Rocket Forces. Neither their technical credentials or their loyalty to Russia can be questioned. It appears that the MoD is more concerned with the protection of its remaining ‘secrets,’ and preventing embarrassing exposure of its inadequately secured nuclear stockpile, than it is with taking decisive steps to prevent the diversion of nuclear materials.

The “loose nukes” scenario, as it has come to be known, has several variants. The most common variant associated with the general deterioration and possible implosion of the Russian Army involves the spectre of renegade officers seizing control of some nuclear weapons. Rodionov may have been warning obliquely of the danger in February 1997,

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<sup>96</sup> Phil Williams, “The Real Threat of Nuclear Smuggling.” *Scientific American* (January 1996): 40-44.

when he said that, "Russia might soon reach the threshold beyond which its rockets and nuclear systems cannot be controlled."<sup>97</sup> Lebed, also in the Spring of 1997, entered the discussion on the security of Russia's nuclear systems, claiming that Russia had already lost as many as 100 "suitcase size" nuclear devices.<sup>98</sup>

The "loose nukes" scenario, despite the words of Rodionov and Lebed, did not arouse the degree of concern that might have been expected in the West. The US State Department considers that for the most part Russia is maintaining control of its nuclear arsenal.<sup>99</sup> Most analysts felt that Rodionov, in the midst of a battle over the military budget, was using the "loose nukes," scenario to extract more money from the government for the Army.

Lebed's comments, issued at a time when he was beginning to lose the attention of the world and Russian media, seemed also to have been timed to have maximum effect in Moscow and in Western politics, refocusing the media spotlight on himself.

This is not to suggest that Russia does not have a problem controlling its nuclear weapons; given the degree of under-funding in the military there may well be a problem despite the fact that much of the military's limited resources have been focussed on nuclear forces and nuclear weapons security in recent years. Rather, it is to point out that speculation on the

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<sup>97</sup> See Paul Goble, "Analysis from Washington - Playing the Nuclear Card," *RFE/RL* (10 February 1997).

<sup>98</sup> "Existence of Suitcase Bombs Denied," *RFE/RL*, 23 September 1997. And

<sup>99</sup>K.P. Foley, "US Not Concerned Over New Nuclear Doctrine," *RFE/RL Research Report* (13 May 1997).

security of nuclear arms cannot be divorced from the ongoing political conflict in Russia.

A less dramatic, but more likely variant of the nuclear scenario is related to the increasing age of Russia's nuclear forces and its strategic warning system. 58 percent of the ICBMs in active service are now past the end of their guaranteed service lives.<sup>100</sup> The remaining missiles depend on high rates of maintenance which is very expensive. Worryingly, Russia's nuclear posture is now reportedly based on a "Launch on Warning" policy – that is missiles are launched before enemy missiles arrive.<sup>101</sup> This strategy, to avoid catastrophic mistakes, depends on excellent command and control procedures and early-warning devices that Russia no longer has or is rapidly losing. The military frankly admits that 68 percent of its satellites are now past the end of their service lives, and 38 percent have only "limited capability."<sup>102</sup> All this drastically undermines nuclear stability and operational safety, making the world a more dangerous place than it should be.

### **Military Inability to Perform its Defence Mission**

An Army that is starving, both literally and figuratively, whose senior leadership is riddled with corruption and is deeply involved in politics, and whose rank and file does not train, as

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<sup>100</sup> Alexander Kovetsky, "Russia's Nuclear Shield is Getting Decrepit," *Sevodnya* (Moscow) 19 November 1997:3. As translated in *Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press*, Vol XLIX, No 46 (1997):14.

<sup>101</sup> Bruce G. Blair, "Who's Got the Button? The Slightly Shaky Control of Russia's Nuclear Weapons," *Washington Post*, 29 September 1996: A4.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid*, A4.

its attention is focussed almost entirely on simple survival, is unable to perform its primary role of defending the nation against external enemies. Indeed, as was already noted, such an Army is more a danger to its society than it is a protector.

Many long-time watchers of the Soviet and Russian military are not sure whether to applaud the decline of Russia's military power or to wring their hands in worry. Aside from the danger the weakness of the Army represents to Russia internally, Russia faces a great danger of strategic over-extension; the ambitions of its leaders far outweigh the capacities of its military forces.

Russians, at least those who can spare time away from the struggle for survival to think about politics, are unsure whether they are a people, a nation building a state within clearly defined boundaries, or if they should aspire to rebuilding the Russian Empire or the Soviet regime in some form. The conflict among nationalists, imperialists, reformers and communists over Russia's future course is divisive and goes to the nature of what Russia is and should be in the future. What all the groups share, however, is a sense that Russia, despite its now weakened state, is or should be a "great power" in an almost mystical sense.

The danger is that Russia could be drawn into a conflict with one of its smaller neighbours that it is unable to win with conventional arms. This was very nearly the case in Chechnya. What would have been the reaction of Russia's leaders if it were faced with defeat by a lesser power or regional challenger? The temptation to use its tactical nuclear forces might

be too strong to resist.<sup>103</sup>

### **Conclusion**

Clearly, there is much at stake in Russia's military decline. The military force that once held the world in thrall has been thrown into penury and humiliation, for the most part by the actions of its own government. While there is a plausible, albeit remote, possibility of a military coup in Russia, the more likely domestic effects of the Army's crises include: the undermining of foreign policy toward the "near abroad" by a military with forces based in and around the area; the growing threat of military attacks on the government aimed at punishing rather than replacing the civilian authorities; the contribution of a starving and weakly controlled Army to the further fragmentation of the Russian Federation along ethnic or regional lines; a continuing drag on the national economy by an Army consuming too much of the national wealth, while delivering too little security, and which resists doctrinal reforms and structural changes aimed at making it smaller and more "professional"; and the aggravation of existing social chaos by a criminalized military flooding society with arms and experts in violence.

Military decline in Russia also has wide ranging and significant effects on international security through the proliferation of nuclear weapons technology and possible nuclear

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<sup>103</sup> Stepen Blank discusses this problem in "Strategic Over-Extension: A Recipe for Failure? Notes on Russian Security Policy." *The Future of the Russian Military: Managing Geopolitical Change and Institutional Decline*, Heritage Foundation Lecture, Washington DC, 12 December 1996.

weapons to lesser states. The nuclearization of Russia's defence posture also aggravates international security because of a tendency to over-emphasize the nation's potential as a great power rather than to translate a realistic assessment of current capabilities into viable and wise strategic and foreign policies.

The next chapter will examine in greater detail conditions within the military which have provoked these problems.

## CHAPTER 2

### **The Army in The 1990s: Is it on The Verge of Collapse?**

The ghost of the Soviet Army poses a formidable psychological barrier to the Russian Army's adjustment to its role and position in the New Russia. Ten years ago, a career officer in the Soviet Army was part of a powerful military machine, equal to or greater than any other in the world, respected and feared by its Western opponents. Now, he serves in a destitute, ill-equipped, ill-trained force, of no threat to any organization "more combat ready than the Girl Guides,"<sup>104</sup> may have no adequate housing for himself or his family and almost certainly has experienced substantial delays in the payment of his already substandard wage. Adjusting to such radical changes would be acutely difficult for any armed forces; for one such as Russia's, possessed of a rich military history and mindful of its past glories, it is an especially bitter pill.

"The great conceit of the intellectual class," wrote the political scientist Irving Horowitz, "is that anyone who carries a gun is undemocratic..." For the time being, substantial survey and anecdotal evidence of the attitudes of the officer corps in Russia shows the contrary. It appears that in principle at least, the Russian Army continues to support democracy and is no less "democratic" than the rest of Russian society. A recent survey of 600 field-grade officers (major to colonel) revealed some significant insights into the thinking of the

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<sup>104</sup> According to C.J. Dick, Director of the Conflict Studies Research Centre at the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst. Quoted in "Russia's Army: The Threat That Was" *Economist* (28 August 1993): 17.

Russian officer on political issues: the majority of officers are committed to the basic tenets of democracy; do not support the creation of an authoritarian form of government; and, do not support the forcible restoration of the Soviet Union.<sup>105</sup> It is equally clear, however, from survey data, anecdotal evidence and electoral records that a high proportion of military personnel reject the form of “democracy” that has manifested itself in Russia.

Army officers tend to view the democratic and market reforms which Russia has undertaken in almost wholly negative terms. The vicious circle of failed reforms, the series of flip-flops, retreats and broken promises to the military, suggest to officers that practically nothing that the government says or does concerning economic or budgetary policy toward the military or defence reform can be taken seriously. Tellingly, official electoral records from December 1993 reveal that servicemen voted for Zhirinovsky’s Liberal Democratic Party in somewhat greater numbers than did the rest of society.<sup>106</sup>

“Soldier-politicians” opposed to Yeltsin and with varying degrees of admiration for democracy, such as Lebed and Rokhlin, also enjoy substantial support within the Army. The provocative social behaviour of the “New Russian’ bourgeois also does not go

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<sup>105</sup> The survey was conducted by Deborah Yarsike Ball under the auspices of the US Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory and the findings published in Deborah Yarsike Ball, “The Political Attitudes of Russian Field-Grade Officers,” *Post Soviet Affairs*, Vol 12, No 2 (1996): 161-183.

<sup>106</sup> For an excellent discussion of the political attitudes of the Army derived from electoral records see Thomas M. Nichols, “An Electoral Mutiny? Zhirinovsky and the Russian Armed Forces,” *Armed Forces and Society* (Spring 1995): 327-347.

unnoticed by the officer corps, whose consciousness continues to be motivated by a strong sense of patriotism and national pride and a desire for the motherland to be powerful and respected again.<sup>107</sup> In that sense it should come as no surprise that most officers “lament the passing of the Soviet Union,”<sup>108</sup> and that bitterness, resentment, alienation and a sense of betrayal are characteristic of their feelings toward the new civilian authorities in Russia.

The role and status of the Russian Armed Forces, their place in society and their relationship to civilian authority have undergone major changes since the collapse of the Soviet Union. The result, according to Yegor Gaidar (former Acting Premier of the Russian Federation, speaking in May 1997), is a situation wherein now “the chief national threat for the country is not the expansion of NATO, but its own unreformed, hungry and disgruntled Army.”<sup>109</sup> Before turning to an analysis of the current Russian Army it is necessary first to examine the Soviet Army whose past glories continue to haunt the Russian officer of today.

### **The Army in the Soviet Union**

The titanic military confrontation between East and West defined the Cold War for most people. That the Soviet Union possessed a military force of enormous size and power was

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<sup>107</sup> Nikolai Efimov, “The Army, Society and Reforms,” *Russian Politics and Law* (July/August 1996): 9.

<sup>108</sup> Ball, 164.

<sup>109</sup> Cited by Goldman, 26.

axiomatic in strategic analysis from the end of the Second World War, no matter which side of the ideological divide one stood on. The Red Army, far more than any other Soviet creation, material or ideological, was the pre-eminent example of the power of the Soviet state, and it was in the creation of military might that the USSR came closest to “catching up and overtaking the West.”<sup>110</sup> To some Cold War analysts, such as this one writing in 1980, it was the only success of state socialism:

The Soviet Union has acquired superpower status, and its voice is heeded in world affairs, because of and *only* because of, its military might. The status is not in any way due to economic power, or trade, nor is it due to political or ideological leadership. The USSR has a front seat in the councils of the world only because of the size of its armed forces and their potential threatened or actual use as an instrument of Soviet policy.<sup>111</sup>

Although the relative military power of the Soviet Union vis-a-vis the West probably peaked around 1985, even by the late 1980's when the weaknesses of the Soviet Union in almost every other field were revealed in stark detail, the Army remained in the eyes of most military analysts an extremely potent and effective force. To be sure, the Army suffered also from the malaise which infected Soviet society, but it was quantitatively and qualitatively different.

To equate the problems of Soviet agriculture and industry with those of the Soviet Army and Navy would be ludicrous. The former were woefully inefficient and utterly incapable

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<sup>110</sup> For a good discussion of the role of the military as the flag-bearer of Soviet power see David Holloway, “Military Power and Political Purpose,” in Alexander Dallin ed. *Russian and Soviet History 1500-1991: Civil-Military Relations in the Soviet Union* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1992): 98-119.

<sup>111</sup> Ray Bonds ed., *Soviet War Power* (London: Salamander Books Ltd, 1980): 9.

of competing with the West, while the latter had competed directly with the West for 50 years. In 1988, Christopher Donnelly, still today one of the most respected Soviet military analysts and former director of the Conflict Studies Research Centre at the Royal Military Academy, wrote *Red Banner: The Soviet Military System in Peace and War*—a detailed, balanced and cogent account of the Soviet military's many strengths and weaknesses. The Army, in the estimation of this analyst and many others, at the end of the 1980s, when the problems of the USSR were clearly manifest, remained well-trained, well-led, well-equipped, with a plethora of good to excellent equipment and well-prepared to fight the high intensity war with NATO for which it was designed. In short, though Soviet society was falling apart around it, the Army remained a bastion of strength, relative efficiency, pride and sense of purpose.

### *Soviet Strategic Culture*<sup>112</sup>

With an understanding of Soviet strategic or military culture, the maintenance of the relative strength of the Army to the very end of the Union is not altogether astounding. Soviet strategic culture was deeply informed by pre-Soviet traditions, more perhaps than by any dogmatic proscriptions of the official ideology. Foremost among those traditions was the perception of a consistent threat to Russia from one hostile neighbour after another—a perception deeply ingrained in the Russian mind by a thousand year history of invasion and occupation. History tells Russians that when the Army is weak the nation suffers the

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<sup>112</sup>The best survey on this topic is found in David Jones, "Soviet Strategic Culture," in Carl Jacobsen ed. *Strategic Power USA/USSR* (London: Macmillan Press, 1990).

degradations of invasion, and that military strength is a key condition of national survival. Russian commentary on the Army reveals an almost mystical, iconic sense of the military, as an essential pillar of Russian society rather than as a strictly rational aspect of national security. "This is the way it has always been," wrote Dmitri Volkogonov, a one-time advisor to Yeltsin on defence matters and later a Duma representative, "when it seems that nothing can be salvaged, at the most tragic minute, the Army remains the last hope of society."<sup>113</sup> In another example, the Moscow newspaper, *Zavtra*, on Army Day in 1996, carried on its front page a picture of Marshal Zhukov bearing the huge caption "Zhukov, Save Russia!"

In the Soviet Union, particularly after 1945, the Army came to hold a position of such prominence that it became something of a sacred cow. That the massive military effort of the USSR was deeply wound up in the structure of society as a whole, and that the Party itself had a large vested interest in the maintenance of vast military power, also made it difficult for Soviet leaders to cut back on defence spending. Until Gorbachev, all the post-war General Secretaries of the CPSU (with the exception of Khrushchev) found it was easier to demand further sacrifices from civilians than it was to deny the military the resources it wanted. As a result, the Army was lavished with resources of the highest quality right up to the end of the system, almost without regard to cost

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<sup>113</sup> Dmitri Volkogonov, "The Army in the Political System," *Russian Politics and Law* (Summer 1992): 49.

Another fundamental aspect of Russian, and hence Soviet, strategic culture was the profound integration of the military into every element of society—politics, economics, culture, education and even religion. From the early stages of Russian history the essence of the relationship between military, state and society was symbiosis: the Army had great influence in many non-military policy spheres while, at the same time, non-military influences were pervasive in the Army. Bolshevism reinforced this relationship as it met with both the theoretical predilections of the early communists, particularly V.I. Lenin, and the circumstances of war and threat of more war which characterized the early years (up to 1925) of the Soviet Union.

If the Bolsheviks and the former Tsarist officers who came to lead the Red Army, however closely monitored, could agree on nothing else ideologically it was on the salience of Carl von Clausewitz, of whose writings Lenin much approved. “War is the continuation of politics by other (namely violent) means,” wrote Lenin: “that well known quotation belongs to one of the deepest thinkers on military affairs, Clausewitz. Marxists justly have always considered that thesis the theoretical basis of views on the significance of any given war.”<sup>114</sup>

So too did the Army approve of Clausewitz, who had actually served for a time in the Imperial Russian Army. The implications of this simple dictum for the Army officer and Bolshevik alike, were that force was but one (and not necessarily the best one) of many means of pursuing national political goals; that force was justified only if it was the best

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<sup>114</sup> See D.E. David and W.S.G. Kohn, “Lenin’s ‘Notebook on Clausewitz,’” in David Jones ed. *Soviet Armed Forces Review Annual 1: 1977* (Gulf Breeze FL: Academic International Press, 1977) 188-222.

means of pursuing those goals; that political goals were superior to military goals and served to guide military action and, hence, that the soldier must be subordinate to the politician.

For the early Bolsheviks, moreover, there was a visceral reason for the underlying concordance which developed early on between Party and Army. The fight for dominance in the Revolution was almost immediately followed by a terrible fight for survival in the Civil War. Under conditions of extreme war-weariness and economic adversity, for the early Soviets, “to be a Bolshevik was to be a soldier. And the corollary, that a Red Army man or woman was also a Bolshevik (and propagandist and agent of state power) also became a truism.”<sup>115</sup> In short, the Army was integral to the state leadership in Tsarist times and in Soviet times.

The lessons of Russian history and the preferences of the Communist Party combined to generate a very high degree of support for the Army and for high defence expenditures. The result, on the one hand, was the extreme “militarization”<sup>116</sup> of Soviet society through military control and influence over substantial portions of education, industry, scientific research and development, and the overall state bureaucracy, and, on the other hand, the

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<sup>115</sup> Carl G. Jacobsen, “Moscow’s Military Industrial Complex: Its Nature and Impact,” in Carl G. Jacobsen ed. *Strategic Power USA/USSR* (London: MacMillan Press Ltd, 1990): 299.

<sup>116</sup> This, it must be understood, is not the same as ‘warlike,’ which the Soviet people were not.

penetration of the military sphere by civilian influences. To be sure, as the USSR experienced ever deeper economic decline and, particularly with the advent of *Glasnost*, when corruption and hazing in the Army came to be publicized, that support began to wane. Nonetheless, the decline of the Army was qualitatively and quantitatively less than in the Soviet Union as a whole.

### **The Army in 1998**

The Russian Army in the late 1990s is an utter shambles. The contrast of the Russian Army now, with the Soviet Army of not so long ago, is staggering to see. The collapse of the USSR and the subsequent division of the Soviet Army's personnel and equipment among the newly-independent states of the Former Soviet Union left Russia with the confused, disoriented, skewed, largely embittered and essentially rudderless fraction of the once great armed forces of the USSR.

"The Army today is beset by a myriad of problems, all of them more or less crippling and all inextricably linked. There are organizational and structural problems which inhibit combat readiness and capability and, above all, socio-economic problems which are exercising a destructive influence on officering, manning, training and morale. These, together with a failure of leadership, have combined to make Russia's a hollow army."<sup>117</sup>

Most people, both in Russia and abroad, recognize that today's Russian Army is a pale shadow of its Soviet predecessor—neither as dangerous nor as threatening. Few non-specialists, however, recognize the full extent of the decline of military power in Russia.

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<sup>117</sup> C.J. Dick, "A Bear Without Claws: The Russian Army in the 1990s," *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies* (March 1997): 1.

The Russian military “threat” has not merely diminished, it has disappeared altogether. All indicators show a sharp and precipitous decline in the size, strength and combat power of the Armed Forces. Since 1986, military manpower has decreased by more than 70 percent and will likely decline further as defence reform and financial pressures cause more contraction in the size of the military; the numbers of tanks and other armoured vehicles has fallen by at least two thirds over the same period; combat aircraft and surface warships have declined by at least a third.

Weapons procurement rates have plummeted since 1991 and have now virtually stopped in most major categories. This is a severe problem for the Russian Army which is almost certain to experience problems of obsolescence as Soviet era weapons, pushed well beyond their planned replacement dates, finally give out and have to be replaced. Russia is particularly vulnerable to obsolescence as a result of the Soviet procurement system which stressed long delivery cycles (often 20 years or more), and frequent upgrades of existing weapons. Without funds either to purchase new weapons or spare parts, Russian materiel is aging rapidly. Moreover, taking into account that many weapons are in such poor repair as to be unusable, or have been cannibalized for parts to keep other systems operating, it is probably not an exaggeration to say that the contemporary Russian Army has no more than ten percent of the non-nuclear combat power of the Soviet Army in the mid-1980s.

From the Russian military planner’s perspective, the situation is grim in almost every respect and worrying in the new strategic environment which Russia faces. Alexei

Arbatov, a leading Russian military analyst and Deputy Chairman of the Russian State

Duma Defence Committee gave this assessment of the military dilemma in Russia:

As recently as 1988, the Soviet Union and its Warsaw Pact allies held a quantitative edge over NATO of about 3-1 in the major weapons of conventional ground and air forces. But as a consequence of the collapse of the Warsaw Pact, the disintegration of the Soviet Union, and as a result of reductions in compliance with the CFE (Conventional Forces in Europe) Treaty, today Russia is quantitatively inferior to NATO forces by a ratio of from 1-2 to 1-3. With NATO first phase enlargement, this ratio will change to a 1-4 imbalance. And if some of the former Soviet republics join NATO, the odds will increase to 1-5 or beyond. Given the ability of NATO and the West to mobilize superior economic and technological resources, the discrepancy is even more alarming from a Russian perspective. Chillingly, in the case of revived hostilities, only nuclear weapons can be relied upon to negate this gaping imbalance.<sup>118</sup>

It is difficult to exaggerate the crisis in the Russian Army. Indeed, there is a growing consensus among analysts that the awful material condition of the Army and the miserable socio-economic conditions in which the serviceman now finds himself living have produced a situation where the military "threat," such as it is, is now more to Russia than it is from Russia. The consequences for the Army of the changes which have occurred in Russia are momentous. Its place in society and its relationship with the political leadership of the state have changed drastically.

Most visibly, the physical and psychological state of the Army has declined so far as to reach crisis proportions. This section will examine the state of the Army today by both quantitative (manpower and major weapons systems, weapons procurement and military

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<sup>118</sup> Alexei G. Arbatov, "The Russian Military in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century," Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, Carlisle Barracks PA, 3 June 1997: 7.

research and development, defence spending and defence industries), and qualitative (readiness, training, and morale) indicators. Throughout, comparisons will be made with Soviet times and Soviet practice for reference and for elaboration of emerging problems.

<b>Table 1: Russian and US Military Manpower and Equipment 1986/1996</b>			
<b>ACTIVE MANPOWER</b>	<b>1986</b>	<b>1997</b>	<b>Percentage Change</b>
USSR/Russia	4300000	1240000	-71
US	2143955	1447600	-33
<b>DIVISIONS</b>			
USSR/Russia	216	52	-76
US	32	20	-38
<b>TANKS</b>			
USSR/Russia	53200	15500	-71
US	15012	8239	-45
<b>AFV/APC</b>			
USSR/Russia	83000	15700	-81
US	26640	26768	0
<b>ARTILLERY/MRLs</b>			
USSR/Russia	29259	19153	-35
US	18016	9605	-47
<b>COMBAT AIRCRAFT</b>			
USSR/Russia	7365	3149	-57
US	7225	4007	-45
<b>MAJOR SURFACE WARSHIPS</b>			
USSR/Russia	269	60	-78
US	222	143	-36
<b>ATTACK SUBMARINES</b>			
USSR/Russia	360	87	-76
US	97	75	-23

\*All figures in this section are taken from the 1986/87 and 1997/98 editions of *The Military Balance*, International Institute for Strategic Studies (London: Oxford University Press).

*Manpower and Major Weapons Systems of the Army*

In 1986, on a population base of 279,500,000 people, the Soviet Union supported an armed forces of 4,300,000 troops in 216 divisions and four fleets, representing 1.6 percent of the total population. This immense army was manned by conscription. In his 18<sup>th</sup> year every Soviet man was required to report to the local military commissariat to register for the draft. Depending on the branch to which he was assigned, he was liable for either 24 months (Army), or 36 months (Navy) of military service. In some cases, deferments were possible for educational or family reasons, but such examples were rare and nearly impossible to obtain for healthy young men not pursuing a higher education. If one was lucky enough to obtain deferments until the age of 27, then military service was no longer obligatory. Draft evasion, although not impossible, was quite rare up until the late 1980s, and was harshly punished. For the most part, the inevitability of military service was accepted by nearly all except perhaps mothers and conscripts themselves.

All Soviet officers were career professionals, educated in one of more than a hundred military colleges run by the military, and in the latter stages of the USSR increasingly drawn from the “upper class” of a theoretically classless society. The officer corps came to constitute a social elite with privileged schools, shops, etc. Military “dynasties” with grandfather, father and son all serving as officers were not uncommon. Although the standard of living for the junior officer was not especially superior to that of the average civilian professional of similar rank, the quality of life for senior officers was very high-- high pay, cheap, good-quality apartments, access to special shops, staff cars, dachas etc,

were the norm.

As in pre-revolutionary times, the Soviet officer corps considered itself a part of the national elite, and it was in most regards. Military service was an attractive option for bright, ambitious young men looking for a career and the military attracted a high proportion of the best and brightest high school graduates. In 1989, for example, more than 1500 gold medalists (the academic elite of the Soviet secondary school system) competed for positions and were accepted into military schools to pursue a career as an officer.<sup>119</sup>

As a primarily conscript army, the Soviet Army, as opposed to many Western armies like the British or American, was not based on long-serving NCOs. Jobs that in most armies would be performed by NCOs in the West, were the responsibility of junior officers in the Soviet Army. This was certainly a drawback of being a Soviet officer and one which the Army came to recognize as a weakness in an era of ever more complex weapons systems. The military tried to create a NCO corps in 1972 with the introduction of the new rank *Praporschik* (translated either as Ensign or Warrant Officer). Praporschiks were professional soldiers without commissions who took on some of the role of Western NCOs. The system, however, was not very successful, as praporschiks had neither the imposing status of comparable Western NCOs, nor did they have commissions. Therefore, enforcing their authority among the troops proved a real problem, which undermined the

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<sup>119</sup> Efimov, 7.

effectiveness of the system.<sup>120</sup>

With regard to materiel, the Soviet Army had a vast arsenal of high-quality equipment, much larger in most categories than the United States. In 1986, the USSR had 53,200 tanks as compared to the US Army's inventory of 15,072. Their superiority in Armoured Fighting Vehicles (AFV), and Armoured Personnel Carriers (APC) was even more marked: 83,000 to 26,640. In combat aircraft there was near parity between the US and the USSR, with each holding in their inventory a little over 7,000 planes of various types. In absolute numbers the Soviet Union had a preponderance of naval strength, having 269 major surface warships (and hundreds of smaller ones), to the US Navy total of 222, while the Soviet total in submarines outweighed the United States by 360 attack submarines to 97.

In fact, in the naval case statistics do not account for the true nature of the balance which always favoured the Americans. US vessels were larger, more capable and more versatile than the Soviet models. The US Navy, while possessing fewer ships, had a higher total of tonnage, and all its submarines were nuclear-powered as opposed to only about one third of Soviet submarines, which did not require nuclear propulsion to fulfill their missions. Still, the Soviet Navy was an extraordinarily powerful force, particularly for the tasks of interdicting NATO's Sea Lines of Communication (SLOC) and for protecting the Berents Sea and Sea of Okhotsk operating areas of their nuclear-missile-carrying submarines. Moreover, for a nation with only a small historical interest in naval power it was an

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<sup>120</sup> Donnelly, 137.

enormous achievement and an indication of the vast resources allotted to the military that the junior service could have such strength. The USSR was quantitatively superior and qualitatively equal to the US in almost every major weapons system in the 1980s, though on a bloc level -- NATO vs. Warsaw Pact -- eastern preponderance was less marked.

By contrast, in 1998 according to the *Military Balance*, the manpower strength of the Russian Army is 1,240,000 troops, organized in some 52 active and reserve divisions and four fleets, plus many 'independent brigades.' The United States, with a slightly larger armed forces of 1,447,600 troops, has only 22 Army and Marine divisions (active and reserve). Even allowing for the fact that Russian divisions are almost a third smaller than US ones, and for the Russian practice of maintaining 'cadre' units with minimal manpower, it is statistically evident that the Russian Army is severely undermanned. Many units certainly exist only on paper. In fact, Defence Minister Rodionov in 1996 confirmed that the military maintained too many divisions for the manpower and funding it possessed: "analysis shows that we can maintain no more than 12 divisions that will not rot waiting for pay, but will be engaged in actual combat training."<sup>121</sup>

At the heart of the debate over military manpower in Russia lies the issue of "professionalization." Even before the end of the Soviet Union, policy-makers and military planners were grappling with the issue of whether or not with the complexity of military

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<sup>121</sup> Interview with Igor Rodionov by Alexander Zhilin, "Cutbacks in Russian Armed Forces a Must, Says New Chief," *Moscow News* (Moscow) 9 October 1996.

technology, state security would be better served by a smaller, but more “professional,” long-service Army. At the theoretical level, though not without reservation from some tradition-minded officers, there appears to be a consensus now that a professional military would be a good thing for Russia.<sup>122</sup>

In 1996, Yeltsin pledged to create an all-volunteer armed forces by 2000 and military officials have not rejected the idea (although they concede that it will not be achieved by that deadline). In any event, politically, professionalization of the Army is a goal which the military cannot easily criticize publicly without suffering severe consequences from civilian authorities. Interior Minister Anatoli Kulikov, for example, after criticizing the professionalization plans of the government on 7 February 1998, was forced to recant 5 days later, saying that as a military man he “fully shared the ideas of the Commander-In-Chief [Yeltsin] on plans for reforming the Russian Army.”<sup>123</sup>

The primary barrier to achieving professional armed forces is cost. Professionals must be paid more than conscripts and they must have additional facilities such as schools and housing for their families not normally provided to conscripts. Obviously, in order to pay for this on the same budget, the Army must be considerably smaller than it is now, perhaps

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<sup>122</sup> Pavel Felgengauer, “Sergeants, not Generals will Destroy the Army,” *Sevodnya* (Moscow) 2 February 1997.

<sup>123</sup> See “Kulikov Opposes Plan to Abolish Draft,” *RFE/RL Newslines* Vol 2, No 27, Part 1 (10 February 1998). And “Kulikov Says Remarks on Military Reform was Misinterpreted,” *RFE/RL Newslines*. Vol 2, No 30, Part 1 (13 February 1998).

half a million men or less. However, with approximately half a million officers still serving in the Army, it is clear that unless the new Army is to be composed entirely of officers, many who now serve must retire.

Unfortunately, the military also cannot afford to retire officers. By law, retiring officers with more than five years service are entitled to a severance package which includes a pension, ownership of an apartment and payment of all other arrears owed from pay or other allowances. Consequently, the cost of downsizing is actually higher than the cost of retaining current levels in the short run. Disbanding a motor rifle regiment costs 48 billion rubles while maintaining it cost only 14 billion rubles. As of 1996, every 100,000 military redundancies cost the Army 4,000 billion rubles.<sup>124</sup>

Although Yeltsin may have decreed that a professional Army would be in place by 2000, the MoD maintains that 2005 is the earliest date by which it can be accomplished; and even then, they have not explained how that time scale can be met without additional funding.

The Army is caught in recruitment pincers. The drive to create a professional armed forces is faltering, while at the same time, the conscription system is falling apart. On 14 February 1996, Major General Valery Astanin, representing the General Staff, spoke to the press on the results of the Autumn draft of the previous year. The draft target was 210,000

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<sup>124</sup> See M.J Orr, "The Deepest Crisis: The Problems of the Russian Army Today," Occasional Brief 48, Conflict Studies Research Centre, Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst (4 October 1996): 4.

conscripts, of which the Army's share was to have been 140,000 men. According to General Astanin, the armed forces actually inducted only 117,300 new soldiers, a 16 percent shortfall.<sup>125</sup>

This trend toward shortfalls in the draft had its beginning in the late Soviet era under the effects of perestroika and glasnost. As early as July 1990, then Defence Minister Dmitrii Yazov was complaining that there was a 400,000 man deficit in the Soviet Armed Forces. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union the problem of declining rates of induction has worsened with every year. Although clear figures for later draft periods are not available, the number of draft dodgers is known and serves as a barometer for the health of the conscription system. *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* reported in January 1998 that the number of draft dodgers in Russia had increased again, from 31,000 in 1996, to 40,000 in 1997.<sup>126</sup>

Moreover, as bad as the numbers of draft dodgers may be, the quality of inductees, according to a wide range of sources, is even worse. General Astanin noted in his briefing that of the 1996 inductees, 1 in 3 had not finished high school, 12 percent were drunkards or drug addicts, and more than 5 percent had criminal records.<sup>127</sup> Some sources would indicate that actually Astanin was understating the problem, claiming that:

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<sup>125</sup> "Russian Military Worried About the Draft," *Jamestown Monitor* Vol II, No 35 (19 February 1997).

<sup>126</sup> "Russian Military Call-up a Success in 1997?" *RFE/RL Newslines*, Part I, Vol II, No 13, (21 January 1998).

<sup>127</sup> "Russian Military Worried About the Draft."

- in 1994, nearly 20 percent of recruits had committed a legal offence, or been taken into custody, and about 10 percent had been convicted of a serious crime;
- in 1995, of the 15 percent of conscripts who had a criminal record, a third were for violent crimes.<sup>128</sup>

For young Russian men with even moderate intelligence, obtaining draft deferments or evading the draft is far less difficult than it was under the Soviet system. Indeed, there is now a flourishing open trade in advising young men on how to avoid conscription; on the Moscow metro one may purchase handbooks on the subject from one of the many kiosks. Exemption certificates may also be purchased, though the price is high (in 1996 it was reported that the cost of a certificate had risen from US\$500 to US\$6,000). In Moscow, it was cheaper for a time to pay a bribe to ensure that one's son did his military service close to home and was not sent to any 'hot spots' (Chechnya, Tajikistan etc). As a result, Moscow slightly over-exceeded its conscription quota in 1995.<sup>129</sup>

Finally, if all else fails, potential draft evaders can simply not show up. Very few criminal proceedings are instituted against draft dodgers: in 1996, of 31,000 potential conscripts who evaded the draft nationally, only 394 had criminal proceedings brought against them

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<sup>128</sup> These statistics were collected from a number of Russian newspapers by Dr T.R.W. Waters, "Crime in the Russian Military," Conflict Studies Research Centre, Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst, November 1996.

<sup>129</sup> M.J. Orr, "The Current State of the Russian Armed Forces," Conflict Studies Research Centre D60, Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst, November 1996: 7.

and only 87 were convicted.<sup>130</sup>

Evidently, Russian society is not willing to punish young men harshly for avoiding service in an Army where the conditions for conscripts are so spartan and the (in)discipline so brutal that potentially thousands of them die from non-combat causes every year. Given societal resistance to the draft, and the absence of any political will to enforce it, the Army has few ways of meeting its conscription quota.

Ill-health is another serious problem for the Russian conscription system. Declining health standards in Russia mean that about 30 percent of eligible inductees are now exempted on medical grounds, as compared to only 10 percent in 1989.<sup>131</sup> The Army is not in the habit of exempting inductees merely for being out of shape; these men are excused for actual ill health (problems resulting from malnutrition, pneumonia, tuberculosis etc).

“Why are you jumping on me for exposing 18 year old kids to Chechen bullets? I’ll expose whomever you give me! This is the only army we have!” Then Defence Minister Pavel Grachev uttered those words in response to the serious criticism he was receiving over the high casualties incurred by the Army in the 1995 storming of the Chechen capital Grozny.

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<sup>130</sup> “Russia’s Draftees: Criminals, Drunkards and Starvelings,” *Kommersant Daily* (Moscow) 15 February 1997:3. As translated in *Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press*, Vol XLIX, No 7 (1997):23.

<sup>131</sup> See O. Falichev, “Who Will Stand Beneath the Colours?” *Krasnaya Zvezda* (11 April 1996): 1. And O. Falichev, “Is it Difficult to Dodge the Army?” *Krasnaya Zvezda* (24 July 1996): 2.

As hundreds of zinc-lined coffins bearing the bodies of Russian soldiers killed in the fierce fighting were making their way slowly to grieving families in towns and villages across the country, journalists were pressing Grachev for answers on why casualties were so high in the operation. Chechnya revealed what had long been suspected. The manpower shortage in the Army is most severe in the Ground Forces, which with Ministry of the Interior Troops bore the brunt of the fighting in Chechnya; few if any but the most elite units are at full manpower levels.

Some military units such as the Taman and Kantemir divisions, part of Yeltsin's praetorian guard, may also be close to full manning levels, but they were not deployed to Chechnya. The units involved in the conflict in Chechnya came from military districts across Russia and even from different services. Most units had to be "fleshed out" before deploying; and there were numerous composite units (regiments cobbled together with smaller units or even individuals from a variety of sources). The operation was so ill-prepared and the troops so badly prepared that a few commanders boldly refused to deploy due to the poor shape of their units.<sup>132</sup>

Naturally, both conscripts and officers alike are reluctant to serve in such dangerous places as Chechnya and Tajikistan and do all they can to avoid such postings. The Army's response to the manpower shortage is the "contract service" system, by which private

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<sup>132</sup> Gregory Celestan, "Wounded Bear: The Ongoing Russian Military Operation in Chechnya," US Army Foreign Military Studies Office, Fort Leavenworth KS, August 1996: 10.

soldiers are inducted for a fixed term of service. The system has not been a great success in “professionalizing” the Army. The former Soviet officer corps, brought up on the conscription system refer to contract soldiers disparagingly as “mercenaries.” The low quality of volunteers has done little to alter their preconceived notions. A few contract servicemen are Afghan veterans who have never managed to adjust to civilian life, but many who join are men from the absolute bottom of society who simply have no better place to go. These comments from two combat officers of the 201<sup>st</sup> Motorized Rifle Division in Tajikistan on the value of contract soldiers speak well of the professionalism of the officer corps, but poorly of the contract system as a whole:

The absence of patriotism destroys an army...but today the most important thing for everyone is money. All sorts of riff-raff come crawling to us for its sake: men paying alimony, the homeless, criminals and deadbeats. Even the generals and colonels are destroying the Army. They do not care who rounds up the volunteers or who they are. Out of a hundred men sent to Tajikistan, five at best are fit for service. I am the commander of a platoon and I care who goes into battle with me. He may betray me or get cold feet, and I'll pay for this with my own life. I need only to look a soldier in the eye and I can tell immediately whether he is fit or not. For supplying contract soldiers to the military registration boards throughout Russia, officers get paid a monetary reward for fulfilling the plan. This is no secret. And it makes no difference to these vermin that such fighting cocks can expose a whole platoon and even a regiment to attack. They round up these people like dogs and send them here. Later, detectives come to our units and take away their wards to stand trial for some crime.

I went to Tambov to take a look at a group [of contract servicemen]. On the first day, I was given a choice of 20 people. This was a real wild bunch—from bitter divorcees paying alimony to alcoholics and criminals who had already served time. Of course, there were also some good fellows, but very few. I chose three. “What are you doing?” growled a major from the registration board. “Take more! You know they want heroes in Tajikistan!” I refused, “ I don't take criminals after they've been in for the second time.” I refused. “No matter what you do, you can't make good soldiers out of them!” I left, but they complained about me to Moscow. They have their own law. The local police have to get rid of their criminals, and the officers from the registration board must present a completed job to their bosses. One of my colleagues took only three out of two hundred.

They dismissed him from the Army.<sup>133</sup>

The program to hire contract soldiers has now almost completely degenerated. In 1997, 17,000 contract soldiers were discharged, while only 10,000 were hired to replace them. The total number of contracts is around 230,000, of which 115,000 are women. Women are more willing to serve for low pay because it adds a second income for officers' wives posted with their husbands to remote military bases. The result according to one analyst is that, "it looks as if the highly professional and mobile army promised for the next century will be made up of several hundred thousand married women burdened with children and under the command of their husbands."<sup>134</sup>

The manpower situation in the officer corps is equally severe. The Army has extreme difficulty in recruiting and retaining officers. The decline in the prestige of military service since Soviet times is enormous. By 1995, for the number of units it is trying to maintain, the Army had a shortfall of officers at all levels of 12 percent and it has grown since, reportedly to as high as 25 percent. At junior officer levels the problem is even more evident with a 38 percent shortfall in 1995 rising to a high of 45 percent today.<sup>135</sup> In effect,

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<sup>133</sup> Quoted in M. Shakirov, "Mercenaries: Conversations with military personnel on the road from Dushanbe to the forgotten Russians at Sary-Pulak," *Russian Politics and Law* (July-August 1995): 23-31.

<sup>134</sup> Pavel Fengengauer, "214,000 Russian Citizens Placed Under Arms" *Sevodnya* (Moscow) 16 July 1997:3. As translated in *Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press*, Vol XLIX, No 28 (1997):19.

<sup>135</sup> Orr, "The Current State..." 7.

the Army is getting extremely top-heavy, having far too many senior officers as opposed to junior officers. As part of the ongoing reforms, all serving officers signed 5 year contracts in 1993. All these contracts expire in 1998. In March 1997, Chief of the General Staff, General Samsonov, told journalists that 70 percent of officers did not intend to remain in service past 1998.<sup>136</sup>

Whereas in the Soviet system high rates of pay, prestige and special housing ensured a steady supply of top-quality officer candidates, the situation now is utterly reversed. Officers at all levels are paid pittance by civilian standards (a problem exacerbated by the once skyrocketing inflation rate), and the general conditions of service are appalling. By 1995 Moscow bus drivers earned 1.5 times more than trained fighter pilots, while a major-general of air defence's base pay was one third that of an unskilled auto worker. Such examples of the degradation of service conditions might be cited ad nauseam. Equally galling for the Army officer is the knowledge that he is paid much less than his peers in both the Border and Interior Ministry troops.<sup>137</sup> According to the MoD's Department of Military-Sociological and Legal Research, 95 percent of officers feel that it is impossible to live on their pay.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> Dmitri Potapov, "Defence Ministry Seeks Non-Traditional Ways of Working With Disaffected Officers," *Kommersant Daily* (Moscow) 15 March 1997:2. As translated in *Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press*, Vol XLIX, No 11 (1997):19.

<sup>137</sup> Benjamin Lambeth, "Russia's Wounded Military," *Foreign Affairs* (March April 1995): 91.

<sup>138</sup> Potapov, 19.

The best young officers are leaving military service as quickly as they can. Job dissatisfaction is at record levels. General Samsonov told reporters that 65 percent of serving officers wanted to leave the service right now, though the difficulty of finding civilian work would suggest that many will not.<sup>139</sup> These officers are not being replaced: in 1994, the same military schools which in 1989 had chosen from the academic elite of the Soviet Union, accepted over 1000 applicants who had actually failed the entrance examinations in order to fill their student quotas.<sup>140</sup>

The problem of manpower in the Army is complex and growing worse. Strength can be maintained neither through the conscription system, nor through the recruitment of professional servicemen. The Army needs to be reduced in size, but the MoD does not have the funds to pay the short term costs of retiring large numbers of officers. The General Staff seems at a loss as to how to solve the problem.

Equipping the Russian Army has proven almost as difficult as providing it with adequate manpower. The Russian military probably inherited about half the equipment of the Soviet Army. Due to the nature of the Soviet basing system, however, which placed the best units with the best equipment on the periphery, with the exception of the materiel held by the Soviet Western Group of Forces in Germany which went to Russia, what they inherited was often second-rate. Ukraine, on the other hand, acquired quite good material as there

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<sup>139</sup> Potapov, 19.

<sup>140</sup> Efimov, 7.

was a preponderance of top category Soviet units stationed on its territory.

Much of what remains in Russian hands of the Soviet stockpile is in poor condition and not serviceable. This problem is particularly pernicious as 40 percent of all Soviet maintenance and repair facilities, (including 80 percent of those for armoured vehicles and 50 percent for electronics) now lie on the territory of newly-independent states. Although only 20 percent of overall Soviet defence production capacity has been lost, the Soviet economic policy of extreme specialization means that Russia is self-sufficient for only one-fifth of its defence needs, as crucial component parts are made in other countries and can only be obtained for cash.<sup>141</sup>

The most striking decline in military equipment as indicated in Table 1, is that of the armoured forces. The tank force has declined by 71 percent since 1986; while armoured fighting vehicles have declined by 81 percent. For decades heavy armoured divisions were the basis of Soviet military might and strategy. It was the preponderance of armoured forces forward-deployed in Eastern Europe, in echelon after echelon, that gave cause to the West to question its ability to halt a Soviet advance in time of war.

The gutting of Russian armour may be seen as having two causes, one military-theoretical and one practical. Beginning with General Niiolai Ogarkov, Chief of the General Staff in the late 1970s, the Soviet Union began to reconsider the utility of its mass tank armies.

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<sup>141</sup> Dick, "A Bear Without Claws..." 2.

Exotic weapons, smart weapons, helicopters: all seemed to point to a declining role for the tank in future warfare. This is the military-theoretical, and almost certainly secondary cause of the decline in armoured forces.

The primary and practical cause is financial: tanks are expensive to purchase and to operate. The Army simply does not have the funds to buy new tanks or properly maintain the ones it has. In January 1997, for example, the MoD reported that the Finance Ministry had disbursed to it 72 percent of the funds budgeted for salaries in that period; but only 34 percent of the funds for food; 23.9 percent of the funds for capital construction; 1.8 percent of the funds for procurement; 0.9 percent of the funds for research and development; and none of the funds budgeted for repairs, transportation, communications, housing, uniforms or medical care.<sup>142</sup> Tanks, like most military items require a lot of regular maintenance. If the Army receives less than 2 percent of budgeted procurement funds and nothing for repair, it stands to reason that a high proportion of forces are unusable due to low maintenance.

The Russian Navy has experienced equally extraordinary declines in its surface fleet, which has dropped from 269 major combatants in 1986 to only 60 today. The fleet rarely puts out to sea, for lack of fuel, and therefore most training is done on shore. The submarine fleet, on the other hand, has been accorded a high priority for funding. This is thought by most analysts to reflect the mounting importance of Russia's nuclear forces as conventional

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<sup>142</sup> "Russian Army Pay," *FBIS Special Memo*, 4 April 1997: 8.

capacity collapses. Notably, the new Russian Minister of Defence Igor Sergeev was formerly the commander of the strategic rocket forces, which have also been maintained at nearly full strength.<sup>143</sup> Although the rate of submarine production has been cut back significantly, the cuts have been far less severe than for surface ships and other defence items. Moreover, while the force has been deeply reduced, most of the submarines taken out of service were older, obsolescent craft. The new force, though smaller, is more modern. Significantly, unlike most areas of US defence planning which no longer focus on Russian developments, US submarine procurement is still driven by Russian activities.<sup>144</sup>

*Weapons Procurement and Military Research and Development*

In the Soviet system, the principle which guided weapons procurement, in contrast with the West, was doctrine. Soviet military planners considered that if military might was to be an effective tool of state policy, then the structure and equipment of the Army must reflect the demands of the job it was designed to perform – the ends determine the means. Policy dictated the overall shape of the military system; doctrinal research under the banner of military science worked out the details. The military, based on clear doctrine, decided well in advance what it wanted to do on the battlefield, then set about purchasing equipment and designing force structures to do it. By design, doctrine in the Soviet Union, as opposed to the West, guided technological evolution rather than technological evolution forcing

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<sup>143</sup> Igor Sergeev, “Reform the Russian Armed Forces by the 21<sup>st</sup> Century,” *Military News Bulletin*, Vol VI, No 12 (December 1997): 1.

<sup>144</sup> Goldman, 8.

doctrinal change.

From the soldier's point of view, this was an excellent system which produced good equipment. "I hate the Communists," wrote Viktor Suvorov, "but I love Soviet weapons."<sup>145</sup> The Army had an abundance of good to high-quality equipment. In many cases, Soviet designs were cruder than their Western analogues, but what is important to realize is that the crudeness, or simplicity of a given weapon, was as often a rational feature of Soviet weapons design as it was a circumstantial result of poor technology. Driven by doctrine, Soviet procurement philosophy kept technology in its proper place. They did not eschew technology – on the contrary, they had a high regard for it. But they did not subscribe to the Western notion that if a particular weapon was not the latest in sophistication it was somehow inadequate.

Of course, at times technological progress created opportunities to develop radically new weapons. In such situations it was the task of Soviet military art and science to determine how each new development might best be incorporated into new weaponry and war-fighting potential. The Soviet record on technological innovation was quite good in most respects -- hovercraft were developed into really useful military transport by the Soviets despite it being a Western invention. Similar examples of Soviet ingenuity in weapons design, such as "wing in ground-effect" transports and rudderless helicopters, abound. If a

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<sup>145</sup> Viktor Suvorov, *Inside the Soviet Army* (New York: MacMillan Publishing, 1982):182.

new weapon were seen to only marginally increase effectiveness at greater cost than simply purchasing more of the old model, then it was likely to be rejected. If, on the other hand, the new weapon offered new capabilities giving rise to new tactical and operational concepts, then it would likely be acquired, even at great cost.

It is difficult to say exactly how much effort the Soviet Union invested in weapons research. The USSR had approximately 1.4 million scientists in the mid 1980s (about a quarter of the world's total), and perhaps 4 million support personnel in some 5,500 research institutes and laboratories. Not all institutes were engaged in military research, but the potential for military research was evident in all. The estimated number of institutes engaged in full-time, directed military research in the mid 1980s was 500.<sup>146</sup> A high proportion of the largest and most advanced institutes would have been included in that number. Weapons research attracted many of the best of Soviet scientists.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russian weapons procurement and research and development has plummeted. Table 2 shows that in some categories procurement has nearly stopped. Furthermore, not all of the weapons produced are destined for the Army's arsenal: a portion is for export, and what remains is then divided among the Border Troops, Interior Ministry and the MoD.<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> Christopher Donnelly, *Red Banner: The Soviet Military System in Peace and War* (Coulson, Surrey: Jane's Information Group, 1988) 128.

<sup>147</sup> Of late, the MoD has been last in line for new weapons, with the Interior Ministry getting the bulk of new orders. In 1997, the Interior Ministry submitted a

	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
Tanks	1280	650	1800	2200	1700	850	500	200	40	30	5
AFV/A PC	1125	750	2000	7000	3400	3000	700	300	400	400	250
Combat Aircraft				526	470	280	210	120	52	22	26
Major Surface Combat ants	9	6	10	1	2	3	1	1	0	1	1
Submar ines	7	6	4	8	12	6	6	4	4	3	2

The drop in production of tanks and aircraft has been particularly dramatic, deeply undercutting Russian combat effectiveness. In 1989, the Army purchased 1800 main battle tanks and 7000 AFV/APC's; by 1996 production had dropped to 5 and 250 respectively (the 1996 production of 5 tanks represents only .002 percent of the procurement of 1986). Combat aircraft procurement dropped from 526 in 1989, to 26 in 1996.

The collapse of weapons procurement emphasizes two issues: the decline in public finance for defence, and the weakening of military influence vis-a-vis other armed ministries (though the former is the more important indicator). Perhaps the most significant result will be the future prospect of massive obsolescence for many items in the Russian arsenal. Most of Russia's weapons inventory was produced in the 1970s and 1980s, and is coming

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budgetary request to the Duma which included provision of funds for 50 fighter/bomber aircraft; the Army was to receive none. LCol Valerii Volkov, Head North American Desk, Main Directorate of International Military Cooperation, MoD of the Russian Federation, Ottawa, personal interview, 20 February 1998.

to the end of its serviceable life now and in the next decade. The gap in recent procurement means the degradation of the inventory will accelerate as systems are cannibalized to release parts for the remaining operating stock. The longer the procurement gap continues, the greater will be the future shortfall – there is a limit to how long the massive Soviet stockpile can be extended.

There does not appear to be an end in sight to the budget crisis in Russia, and so we might expect present trends to continue. According to a US Army expert on the Russian military “the best estimate is that if present trends continue, only 5 to 7 percent of the force will have modern weapons by 2005.”<sup>148</sup> Russian military specialists fear and predict that “gradually we will slide toward the categories of armies of third world countries.”<sup>149</sup> Even if weapons procurement does increase in the near future, there will still be a period of acute obsolescence. Hardest hit will be weapons with a long lead time, such as naval vessels. Russia could lose its “blue water” capacity (the ability to operate in the open ocean) in the next century if procurement is not revived.<sup>150</sup>

The procurement problem is aggravated in Russia by Soviet practice. Ironically, the Soviet

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<sup>148</sup> Jacob Kipp, “Military Pluralism and the Crisis of Russian Military Professionalism: Reflections of a Military Historian,” *The Future of the Russian Military: Managing Geopolitical Change and Institutional Decline*, Heritage Lecture No 578, The Heritage Foundation, Washington DC, 12 December 1996: 13.

<sup>149</sup> Goldman, 9.

<sup>150</sup> Dale Herspring, “The Future of the Russian Military,” *Problems of Post-Communism* (March/April 1997): 52.

procurement system has been both a blessing and an albatross for the Russian Army. The vast military stockpile which it produced has enabled the military thus far to weather the long drought in procurement, while the structure of the system has virtually assured that the Army will face problems of obsolescence in the near future. As opposed to Western armies which tended to purchase replacements for aging weapons systems all at once, the Soviet military procurement system was gradual. Weapons were replaced on a continuous cycle – one unit might receive straight from the factory the last batch of a large order of T-64 main battle tanks at the same time another unit received the first batch of T-72 tanks. In the Soviet Army the arsenal did not improve by leaps and bounds with the introduction of each new weapon. Rather, as the difference between any particular weapon and its successor was often minimal and evolutionary, the latest model and the model preceding it might be purchased at the same time.

Standardization of parts and operation made the system work. The Soviets carried standardization to an extreme; the result being that the highly advanced thermal imaging device on the latest version of the T-80 can be mounted quite easily on a WWII era T-34 in the place of its primitive white spotlight – the attachments are exactly the same! If a soldier had trained on a T-64, he would be sufficiently familiar with a T-72's drive system to learn that also in a few hours. Thus the Army could mobilize huge reserves and equip them with modern weapons with which they would be sufficiently familiar to master in a few days or weeks.

In a system where the Army could expect that 5 to 7 percent of its inventory would be replaced on an annual basis, the procurement system was extremely stable and ensured a steady stream of new material to replace that which was used up in training or operations. It also means, for the Russian Army, unfortunate consequences; it is now extremely vulnerable to stoppages in supply such as have occurred in the 1990s. Canada, for example, replaced 100 percent of its fighter aircraft in 1982-1984 and can reasonably expect to weather the 20 year gap in procurement with relatively few problems. Russia cannot deal with procurement gaps of this kind. Without constant replacement, even if small as a percentage of total inventory, its war-stock rapidly degrades.

Russia's military research and development establishment is under equally extraordinary pressure as a consequence of the decline in procurement. According to the Ministry of Defence Industry, by January 1997, the production of civilian and military goods by enterprises belonging to the Ministry had fallen to 17.8 percent of the output of January 1991. The total number of enterprises under the Ministry has fallen from 1800 to 500 over the same period. By the end of February 1997, the Ministry had not received a single defence order for 1998.<sup>151</sup> The largest R&D laboratories and the many scientists who are normally employed there receive no salaries and are forced to work elsewhere, often in non-scientific jobs, but also (more worryingly) it is leading them to shop their skills overseas. Many institutes exist at the subsistence level and do no productive work. The

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<sup>151</sup> Vitaly Shlykov, "The Crisis in the Russian Economy," paper presented to the Annual Strategy Conference, US Army War College, Carlisle Barracks PA, 22-24 April 1997:10.

MoD, as noted in Chapter 1, attempts to preserve defence-industrial capacity in some crucial areas by diverting funds from other activities (notably salaries) into the defence R&D sector, but given the size of the military-science establishment built up by the Soviet Union, these are starvation wages only.

The situation in military research and development is not uniformly bleak. There exist some islands of activity, particularly in those sections of the science sector dealing with nuclear weapons, smart weapons and information warfare.<sup>152</sup> Nonetheless, even the much-touted Topol-H, a new ICBM with greatly improved accuracy and readiness over existing ICBMs, despite official support and as much government funding as could be provided, is at least three years behind schedule, and the space program – long a favoured child of the high-tech community – has also suffered setbacks. These are indications that even the best-funded sectors are in danger of being submerged in the general decay threatening the entire former Soviet science sector.

### *Defence Spending*

Estimating with a degree of accuracy the burden of defence spending on the Soviet Union is also extremely difficult. The problem is that making international comparisons of spending levels requires expressing defence expenditures using Western concepts and definitions. The Soviet Gross National Product (GNP), therefore, must be reconstructed

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<sup>152</sup> See Richard F. Staar, "Russia's National Security Concept," *Perspective*, Institute for the Study of Conflict, Ideology and Policy, Boston University, Vol VIII, No 3 (January-February 1998).

from Soviet sources, which excluded essential components of GNP such as services from its basic economic indicators. Moreover, as the Soviet price system was planned, not determined by the market, it did not reflect the relative scarcity of goods.

This creates a problem in estimating the cost of major defence products. The Typhoon class ballistic-missile submarine (SSBN), for example, is roughly comparable to the US Ohio class SSBN in terms of size and capability. The Typhoon, however, has a hull composed entirely of titanium, an extremely expensive metal, whereas the Ohio's is steel. By Western standards, the Typhoon would have been prohibitively expensive to build, because of the amounts of titanium required. By Soviet standards, where the price of titanium bore no relation to its scarcity, it was not prohibitively expensive. For these reasons, estimates of Soviet defence expenditure are only approximations with a high degree of variance.

The estimated share of defence expenditure as a percentage in Soviet GNP in the 1980s ranges from a low of 10 percent to a high of 17 percent, with both figures being much higher than any other NATO country. Neither of these figures, however, take into account the many secondary costs of Soviet defence procurement. One must calculate also the cost of removing from the labour pool over a million conscripts annually, who might otherwise have been engaged in some other economic activity. Additionally, most civilian assets such as aircraft, trucks and ships had a secondary military role which had to be incorporated into their design. Aircraft had to have strengthened landing gear so that they

could land on makeshift or damaged airstrips in time of war. Merchant ships had to have specially strengthened hulls so they could carry heavy military equipment. Fishing vessels needed to have expanded control facilities so that they could act as intelligence gatherers. Trucks and other machinery had to be built to military tolerances as they would be among the first civilian equipment to be called up by the Army in case of war. Factories also had to have the capacity to “surge” production in wartime and therefore required extra floor space and capital equipment. This made Soviet civilian goods more expensive to produce because they had to have a latent military capacity. Finally and tellingly, the burden of defence spending did not fall evenly on society. It was in those sectors with the highest numbers of skilled workers that the military effort made the greatest demands. Taking these additional costs into account, the real cost of Soviet defence could have been as much as 20 percent of GNP or more.<sup>153</sup>

Finally, the disadvantage of using such figures as the percentage of GNP is that it presents Soviet defence costs in Western terms, whereas in the Soviet Union this is not how they would have appeared. The burden of defence was not fiscal; rather, it was in the huge opportunity costs of using resources for defence that might otherwise have been used elsewhere in the consumer sector. Hence, Gorbachev’s misguided interest in using the military’s expertise in high tech to generate consumer products. To return to the example of the Typhoon SSBN, in the late 1980s it was recognized that the defence sector should

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<sup>153</sup> For an in-depth discussion on the subject of Soviet defence spending see C.G. Jabobsen ed. *The Soviet Defence Enigma: Estimating Costs and Burden* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).

turn to even greater production of consumer goods (which the defence sector already produced a lot of). The solution: the same facility which had been producing parts for the Typhoon's titanium hull began to produce titanium baby carriages. This did not strike planners as illogical at the time.<sup>154</sup>

The problem, as Vitaly Shlykov put it, is that the Soviet economy was not simply "militarized," as was the US economy, which had a large defence industry inside a much larger and generally more efficient civilian economy. The Soviet economy was "structurally militarized"; defence industry was the core and substance of the economy, to which the civilian sector was merely an adjunct, inefficient both in a "free-market" comparison and relative to the domestic defence sector.<sup>155</sup> In a structurally militarized economy, cutting defence expenditures does not necessarily mean a corresponding increase in the civilian economy. In fact, claims Shlykov, all defence procurement in such an economy could stop without a noticeable change for the better in the economy. It was in this sense that Gorbachev's attempts to reduce the defence burden were misguided; he attacked the symptom rather than the disease.

Contemporary Russia, with a population and GDP smaller than Brazil's, can in no way afford the level of defence expenditure which sustained the Soviet Army. The Yeltsin

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<sup>154</sup> See Vitaly Shlykov, "The Political Economy of Russian Defence," paper presented at a conference on *Russian Defence Policy Toward the Year 2000*, US Naval War College, Monterey CA, 25-26 March 1997: 13.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid*, 9.

regime, while under the influence of Yegor Gaidar, recognized the impossibility of sustaining defence spending at Soviet levels very early on. In 1992, defence spending on new hardware was cut by 80 percent – a cut which has never been reversed. The Russian government, backed by Western financial institutions, was convinced that this step was essential for Russia's transition to a market economy and was reassured in its decision by its conviction that whatever threats Russia now faces, they are internal rather than external. As a result, while the MoD has had its funding cut drastically, the Ministry of the Interior has seen its share of national spending rise.

The Russian defence budget is almost as difficult to calculate as was the Soviet defence budget. From an accounting perspective, Russia is in chaos. On a year to year basis, with the ruble fluctuating wildly in purchasing power parity and value of exchange, assessments of Russia's defence spending tend to be impressionistic, though unanimously giving impressions of extreme budgetary constraint. Shlykov, in the "Political Economy of Russian Defence," estimated Russian defence expenditure in US dollars as being: in 1993, \$7.4 billion; in 1994, \$18 billion; in 1995, \$12.8 billion and in 1996, \$15.1 billion. In terms of purchasing power parity, however, the budget was \$28.7 billion in 1993; \$40.2 billion in 1994; \$21.1 billion in 1995; and \$18.2 billion in 1996.<sup>156</sup>

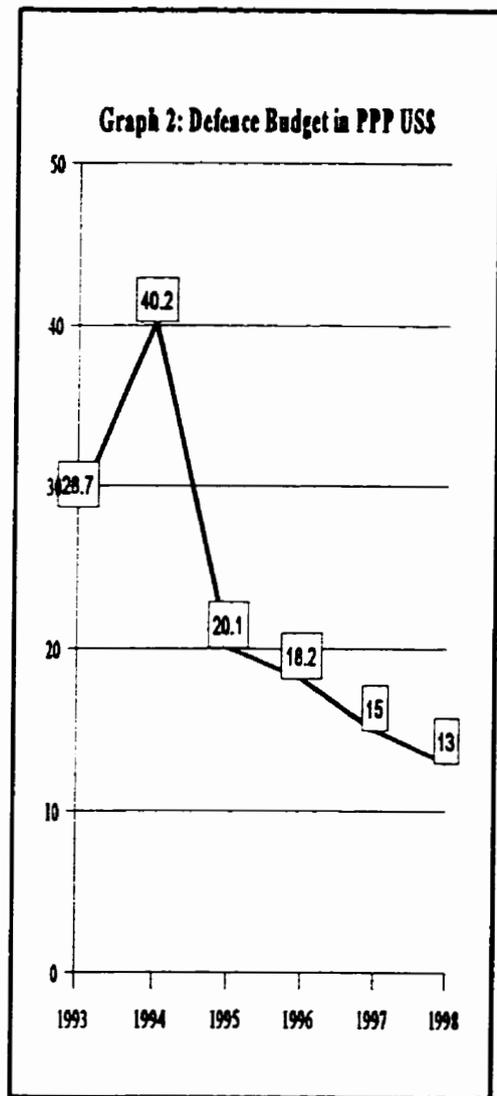
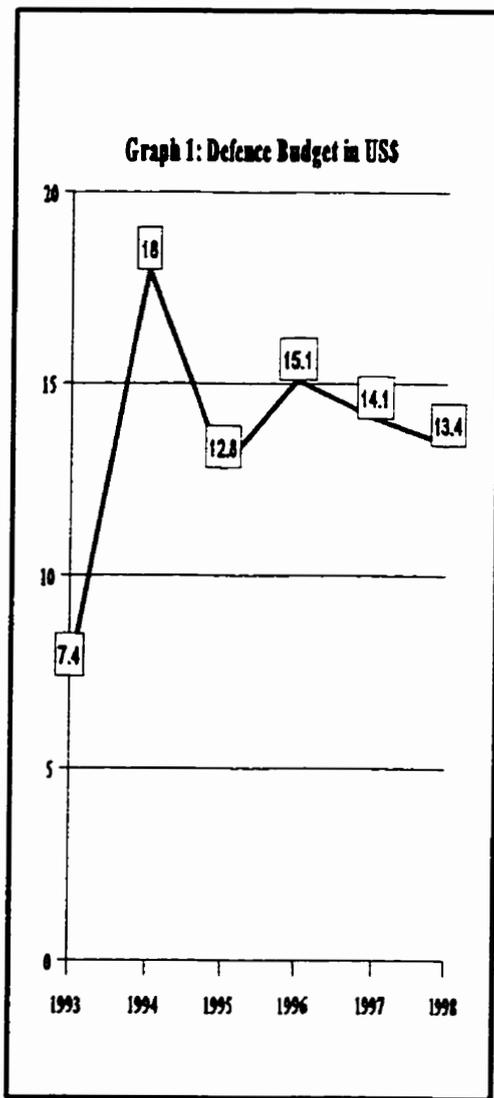
Using figures from *The Military Balance* on ruble expenditure on defence and from the *Economic Intelligence Unit* on purchasing power parity of the ruble, as graphs 1 and 2

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<sup>156</sup> Shlykov, "Political Economy..."19-22.

indicate, the defence budget in 1997 in absolute US\$ was 14 billion, and in 1998, 13.4 billion. In terms of purchasing power parity, the figures are 15 billion in 1997 and 13 billion in 1998.

In the Soviet era, official budgetary figures often perplexed analysts. Even at the official exchange rate, Soviet defence budgets were only a fraction of the US budget. In large part, the reason for this discrepancy was that the ruble bought more for the Army than was implied by the rate of exchange (ie it had greater purchasing power). In the post-Soviet era, the value of the ruble and its purchasing power are converging: the purchasing power of the military ruble in 1993 was nearly five times what it is in 1998. In 1994 the Army was squeezed by a military budget equivalent to \$US 40 billion in purchasing power parity, in 1998 it is being crushed by a purchasing power parity budget of approximately 13 billion.



By Shlykov's account, the defence budget was cut in half between 1993 and 1994, precisely as the Chechen War (which was paid for from the defence budget with no increase in funding) was heating up. To make matters worse, the official budget allocations to the Army do not reflect what is actually received by the MoD.

In most countries, the budget is a real funding plan for the nation for the next twelve months. In Russia, on the other hand, the budget is more of a statement by the government of good intentions, which no one expects that the authorities will actually fulfill.

Consequently, the defence budget has not been fulfilled in real spending since 1993. In 1996, for example, 30 percent of funds allocated to defence by the Duma in the budget were never delivered. A portion of what was delivered, moreover, was siphoned off by a corrupt senior leadership, long before it ever reached the troops.<sup>157</sup>

In 1997, according to Defence Ministry officials, military spending amounted to only 55.6 percent of that originally budgeted, with the balance never having been released to the MoD by the Ministry of Finance. The result of non-delivery of budgeted funds was that in 1997: expenditures for medical services for soldiers totalled just 41 percent of planned levels; spending on clothing amounted to 23 percent of the target; and only 50 percent of funds allocated for the purchase of food were delivered.<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> Jennifer Mathers, "The Generals Manoeuvre on the Political Battlefield," *World Today* (December 1995): 232.

<sup>158</sup> Some soldiers in Chechnya wore footwear provided by Moscow's Menatep Bank after it was revealed that the MoD lacked the clothing budget to purchase boots.

The Army simply does not have funds to support itself, or to pay its bills to suppliers. In the summer of 1993, Aeroflot announced that it would no longer accept transportation vouchers due to the MoD's chronic inability to clear its account.<sup>159</sup> Similarly, in September 1995, the electrical supply to a nuclear submarine base was shut off by local authorities because the bills had not been paid. The latter incident had potentially catastrophic consequences as the nuclear containment facilities on the base are dependent on steady uninterrupted electrical power. The switches were turned back on only after the base commander sent a group of naval commandos to threaten the plant director at gunpoint.<sup>160</sup> In the summer of 1997 at a military airfield in Mongokhto, some 50 officers' wives and their children blocked the runway and refused to leave until the authorities paid their husbands' back wages and allowances. At roughly the same time, 300 workers at the Navy's main nuclear submarine repair yard at Bolshoikamen, near Vladivostok, announced plans to block the Trans-Siberian railroad for 2 hours per day in protest over the non-payment of bills by the Army. The workers, who had not been paid in nine months, also disconnected the power to a recently overhauled nuclear submarine to prevent the Navy's taking it before paying for repairs.<sup>161</sup>

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See "Defence Budget not Fulfilled in 1997," *RFE/RL Research Report* No 194, Part 1, (13 January 1998). More recently, the Army has ceased to purchase dress uniforms which are seen as superfluous in such times of budget crisis.

<sup>159</sup> Mathers, 232.

<sup>160</sup> Mathers, 232.

<sup>161</sup> See "Military Debts: More Government Promises and More Protest Actions," *Jamestown Monitor* Vol III, No 128, (1 July 1997).

The battle over the 1998 defence budget has been bruising for soldiers and politicians alike. The military budget is set at 81.7 billion rubles (approx \$13.6 billion). Even if the total were paid in full, which is unlikely, it would still be insufficient. According to an article in the 10 January edition of *Sevodnya*, Defence Minister Sergeev wrote to the government formally to warn that the 1998 defence budget does not provide enough funding to meet the Army's basic needs or to pay for planned military reforms.<sup>162</sup> In February 1998, Anatoli Kvashnin, Chief of the General Staff, was even more explicit in budget hearings at the Duma. He claimed that the armed forces needed a minimum budget of 400 billion rubles (approx US\$ 67 billion) in order to survive.<sup>163</sup> Rodionov wrote of his job as Defence Minister that "the day begins and ends with the search for money for the Army." The situation has not changed for Sergeev.

Other ministries watch the defence budget carefully. In the wake of the near nuclear accident at the submarine base noted above, Yeltsin declared it illegal to cut off services to the military for non-payment of arrears. In February 1998, *Izvestiya* reported that the Fuel and Energy Ministry had calculated that the Army would have only 20 percent of the funds required to pay for heating and electrical services supplied to military installations.<sup>164</sup> Undoubtedly, the budget situation worries planners in this Ministry, as well as others

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<sup>162</sup> See "Spending to Remain Low in 1998" RFE/RL Newslines No 194, Part I, (13 January 1998).

<sup>163</sup> "General Staff Head Says Military Needs More Funding," *RFE/RL Newslines*, Vol 12, No 27, Part 1, (27 Feb 1998).

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*

required by law to provide services to the MoD with no guarantee of payment.

### *Defence-Industrial Complex*

The defence-industrial complex of the Soviet Union was extremely large. It was also extremely amorphous and difficult to quantify. Many civilian products such as VCRs and televisions were made in “defence” plants. Once again, drawing fine distinctions between military and civilian in the Soviet Union is difficult to accomplish. The military had a role in the civilian economy and vice versa.

The main features of the Soviet defence-industrial complex were: (1) a close connection between military end-user and production facilities; (2) the existence of a formal military doctrine which guided production decisions; (3) a competitive design process based on dedicated design bureaus; and, as a result of the preceding features, (4) relative efficiency vis-a-vis civilian industry and Western defence industry.

The uniformed military was deeply involved in the production process at all levels; design, production and quality control. At each defence facility there was a military representative whose job it was to ensure the Army’s requirements were being met and that quality control was of a high standard. Military representatives were serving officers with engineering qualifications. The job was a serious one and they had real power in the factory. This system had its genesis in the harsh conditions of World War II. At that time, military representatives were required to accompany any new weapon into its first combat

to train the soldiers in its proper use and to guarantee with their own lives that the system worked. The arrangement was so successful it was retained after the war. The injection of a soldier's viewpoint on the design and production of a weapon from the very first stages does much to explain the qualities of simplicity and robustness characteristic of Soviet weapons, as well as the very gradual nature of technological change in Soviet weapons design.

What often goes unrecognized in the general stereotyping of Soviet industry is that the defence-industrial complex was quite efficient. The designing process was very competitive, with multiple prototypes from different design bureaus being tested before production decisions were made. The near absence of the profit motive and the fact that innovation was driven by doctrine, meant that the Army was rarely saddled by "duds" (military equipment purchased for political rather than military reasons which has no military utility) as occurred with regularity in the West. Moreover, the productive efficiency of the Soviet defence-industrial sector was such that a 1982 US study concluded that, "the Soviet military procurement system can produce most items of military hardware of a combat effectiveness equal to that of Western equipment, but in half the time at half the cost."<sup>165</sup>

In 1998, however, it is clear that Russian defence industries are in marked distress.

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<sup>165</sup> Cited in C.G. Jacobsen, "Moscow's Military-Industrial Complex," in C.G. Jacobsen ed. *Strategic Power: USA/USSR* (London: MacMillan Press, 1990):325.

Government contracts to defence industry, as noted previously, have declined sharply and in some categories disappeared altogether. The military representative system is nearly dead and there is a growing rift between the defence-industrial complex and the MoD over unpaid bills and over the proceeds of arms sales. Contrary to Soviet practice, which never saw the export of the most advanced weapons until they were fully deployed with national forces, defence industry now, through the state arms sales agency Rosvooruzheniye, is anxious to increase arms sales abroad, not excluding the most sophisticated weapons. This is upsetting to the military on the grounds that it harms national security and, perhaps even more so, because the Army itself does not have the funds to purchase the same weapons being sold abroad. Moreover, the military has its own arms selling branch, which although it is limited to selling surplus arms, competes with defence industry for overseas contracts.

After having fallen every year since 1991, the production of arms and other military hardware in Russia still declined by 31.2 percent in 1997.<sup>166</sup> The state of financing for defence orders is nearing catastrophe; not only has the government cut back on its orders, it has persistently failed to pay for already fulfilled orders. By 1997, it was estimated that the MoD owed 42 trillion rubles (more than 40 percent of the total 1997 defence budget) to various military suppliers.<sup>167</sup> While on 13 February 1998, Economic Minister Yakov Urinson announced that the government would soon clear its debts to defence industry, he

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<sup>166</sup> See "Defence Industry in Steep Decline," *RFE/RL Newslines* Vol II, No 31, Part I (16 February 1998).

<sup>167</sup> "Russia: Sky Cloudy for Defence Ministry," *RFE/RL Newslines* (14 April 1997).

also warned that the government would pay only 10 billion (new) rubles (\$US 1.7 billion) of its 19.9 billion (new) ruble debt. The remainder of the debt, according to Urinson, was the responsibility of industry because they had produced more than the government ordered.<sup>168</sup>

If the government does not pay for orders, there are no wages for workers. Like soldiers, defence workers commonly experience delays of several months in the payment of their meagre wages. Simply finding alternative employment is difficult as defence enterprises are concentrated in provincial cities where there is insufficient opportunity for alternate employment. For some cities, like Krasnoyarsk where the military concentrated science efforts, there is virtually no other employment for a workforce made up of PhDs in various physical sciences. Not enough defence industries, however, have actually closed. Russian economic reform has not succeeded in “democratizing” the economy: the structural militarization of the economy described by Shlykov has not been reversed; thousands of defence plants, design bureaus and research institutes continue to have a huge presence in the economy; in most cases it is a dead weight.<sup>169</sup>

The future of Russia’s defence industry is hard to predict. The MoD’s priority has to be salaries, food and housing for its troops. At best, the Army can keep a trickle of funds

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<sup>168</sup> “Minister Promises to Clear Debts to Defence Industry,” *RFE/RL Newsline* (16 February 1998).

<sup>169</sup> Shlykov, “Crisis in the Economy...” 3-10.

going to a select few industries to hand-make prototypes of new weapons (but not production) for its own use, but the vast majority of defence industry by any accounting must be moribund.<sup>170</sup> Having failed to convert defence industry, the government has tried to commercialize it, in the hope that foreign weapons sales can keep the sector afloat. This is unlikely. Rosvooruzheniye is not selling enough weapons because Russia's traditional buyers are either nearly bankrupt themselves, under embargo (Iraq, Libya), or unwilling to base their defence on the weaponry of their former occupier (virtually all non-Soviet former Warsaw Pact countries). A few sales here and there, aircraft to Malaysia, missiles to South Korea etc, are not enough to tip the balance.

Fundamentally, the only bright side for the defence sector is the growing strategic partnership between China and Russia. China is an incredibly important potential market for Russian weapons. On the other hand, the Army is not at all pleased with the apparent readiness of the defence sector to sell the most advanced weapons to China, which remains a potential strategic threat. The defence-industrial sector is simply too large for the Russian economy. Substantial demilitarization of the economy is probably meritable in the long-run, but will cause further socio-economic dislocation in the short-run.

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<sup>170</sup> See "Kokoshin: Military Will Have to Wait for New Weapons," *Jamestown Monitor*, (2 February 1997).

*Readiness of the Army*

In the military sense, “readiness” as a concept refers to the amount of time necessary for the armed forces to prepare itself for war and its general ability to defend the nation at short notice in time of crisis. For reasons of history and geography, the Soviet Army always chose to emphasize the ability to build up forces inexorably over time in order to overwhelm an opponent with reserve division after reserve division, rather than to maintain a high state of readiness. A high proportion of Soviet divisions existed only as “cadre” formations. They had most or all of the equipment necessary for combat as well as the officers, but troops were to be provided from the reserves.

The level of equipment and manning determined what category of readiness a Soviet unit had. Even so, the Army was so large that the minority of its units kept in the highest category were the equal of NATO forces in Europe. In the Soviet Western Group of Forces based in East Germany, all units were of the highest category: for all intents and purposes they were at wartime levels of preparation at all times. The majority of Soviet forces, however, would have required from several days to several weeks to get into combat shape.

The Russian Army today is at the lowest state of readiness it has experienced since the 1920s. Among the various armed services, priority for scarce defence rubles goes first to the Strategic Rocket Forces, nuclear weapons (including the Navy’s submarine-launched

weapons), materials safety, and to a lesser extent air defence.<sup>171</sup> This priority on preserving the most potent and dangerous arm of Russian defence leaves the Army and the Navy's surface fleet severely under-funded. US and Russian military analysts in 1996 put the number of combat-ready divisions in the Ground Forces at zero to eight.<sup>172</sup> In the lead-up to the war in Chechnya, noted one analyst:

No military district had even a regiment which could be described as combat ready and men and equipment had to be scraped together to form "composite regiments". It is no exaggeration to say that to send a regiment to Chechnya required the cannibalization of at least a division.<sup>173</sup>

Judging from the difficulty of the General Staff in gathering units for the invasion of Chechnya the correct number of combat-ready divisions in the Army is probably much less than the higher figure of eight given above. One should be careful, however, in drawing conclusions about the Army solely on the basis of the war in Chechnya: the General Staff was actually excluded from planning and preparations for the war by Grachev<sup>174</sup>; the results of the initial invasion might have been greatly different had they not been. Nonetheless, a preponderance of indicators, in addition to Chechnya, suggest that Russia's is a hollow Army. In June 1997, Roman Roskovich, Deputy Chief of the Our Home is Russia political

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<sup>171</sup> Stephen M. Meyer, "The Devolution of Russian Military Power," *Current History* (October 1995): 322-328.

<sup>172</sup> Sherman Garnett, "A Wedged Bear in Great Tightness: Understanding the Constraints on Russian Power," Centre for Global Security and Cooperation, Science Applications International Corporation, Washington DC, 1996:7-8.

<sup>173</sup> Orr, "Current State of the Russian..." 12.

<sup>174</sup> Raymond Finch, "Why the Russian Army Failed in Chechnya," US Army Foreign Military Studies Office, Fort Leavenworth KS, May 1997.

faction, during a debate on military manpower in the Duma said, “let us admit there are virtually no fully manned units in the Ground Forces and the troops of the military districts and consequently there are no combat effective formations in the country.”<sup>175</sup> Clearly, readiness in the Russian Army is at an abysmal low.

Readiness in the other services has also declined, particularly in the Navy. The main effort seems to be directed at keeping some of the newer vessels operational, while the bulk of the Fleet is left to simply rust at dockside.<sup>176</sup> Russia’s fighter pilots according to the *Military Balance 1997/98*, now log on average only 40 hours in flight training per year as opposed to an average of 240 hours in the US Air Force. This, however, may be an exaggeration, as Russian journalists claim that front line pilots received no more than 15 hours in-flight training in 1997.<sup>177</sup> The lack of spare parts further limits flying time; the Air Force routinely cannibalizes aircraft to keep others flying. It is estimated that only 10 percent of the Air Forces planes are now in serviceable condition.<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>175</sup> Foreign Broadcast Information Service, 17 June 1997.

<sup>176</sup> Goldman, 19.

<sup>177</sup> Lambeth, 89.

<sup>178</sup> Aleksandr Zhilin, “Why a Russian Hero is Retiring,” *Moscow News* (Moscow) 25-31 December 1997:1-2.

### *Training the Army*

With 25 percent of the Army leaving after finishing their 2 years of military service, and 25 percent entering the Army through conscription every 6 months, the Soviet Army was in a constant state of training. Every division in the Army, except those of elite units and for those conscripts who were to become “sergeants” was, in effect, a training as well as an operational division. After a short period of basic training, the Soviet conscript was sent to his unit where he completed all further specialized training. Training was constant at the individual and unit level, and was very tough. Divisional exercises were held annually, and army mobilization less frequently, but with regularity.

Occasionally, the Army would stage enormous exercises involving all services of the regular forces and the mobilization of selected reserve divisions. In one exercise in 1975, for example, several category 3 reserve divisions (the second lowest level of readiness) were mobilized fully, trained to the required war standard and deployed to East Germany from bases scattered all over the USSR.<sup>179</sup> Such an exercise would have involved potentially millions of troops over several months of activity.

The Russian Army does no such comparable training; according to former Director of Training, and later Commander-in-Chief of Land Forces, General Vladimir Semenov, speaking in 1994: “the army does no real training in the old sense.”<sup>180</sup> There have been no

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<sup>179</sup> Donnelly, *Red Banner* 158.

<sup>180</sup> “Russia’s Army: The Threat That Was...” 17.

exercises larger than divisional level since 1992. Thirty percent of exercises planned for 1995 were cancelled due to fuel shortages, and thirty percent of regimental, brigade and divisional command post exercises (exercises in which no actual troops are involved except officers) did not involve deployment from the barracks. In 1996, the Ground Forces managed to conduct 12 regimental exercises (three times more than in 1995, but still no divisional exercises), 50 percent of the planned battalion exercises, and 60 percent of company level exercises, but only by diverting funds from other activities into the training budget.<sup>181</sup>

The lack of training is telling in inspections. In late 1995, when two regiments of a tank division from the Volga Military District deployed to the Totskoye training area for practice, only 9 of the more than 200 T-80 tanks which made up the regiments were in sufficient repair to fire on the ranges and all were graded “unsatisfactory.” On the second day of the range exercise, results were no better, with even officers earning results of “adequate” rather than the “excellent” which would be expected.<sup>182</sup>

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<sup>181</sup> Orr, “Current Status...”10.

<sup>182</sup> A. Bondarenko, “Lessons of One Inspection,” *Krasnaya Zvezda* (Moscow) 30 November 1995:2.

*Morale in the Army*

Though some of the methods of building morale were perhaps counter-productive (political education, exhortation to defend the “socialist working classes”), morale was extremely important in the Soviet Army. To the Soviet military mind, the “unshakeable” morale of the Soviet soldier took second place only to the General Staff’s mastery of the operational art in explaining the Red Army’s victory over the Nazis in the Second World War. Though service in the Soviet Army was by no means pleasant, the morale of the Soviet soldier was thought to be at least as good as that of the US soldier.<sup>183</sup> Moreover, while, the official ideology, depending on the individual, may or may not have had much motivating force, patriotism and the notion of defending the motherland had an undeniable emotional resonance for many soldiers.

The Soviet Army’s image was badly tarnished by glasnost. As the rest of society began to open up, resentment grew against the military for its secrecy, its waste of resources, its corruption, and especially for the way it allowed its conscripts to be mistreated by ‘dedhovschina’ (hazing), an institutionalized though unofficial practice whereby older soldiers viciously abused and exploited younger ones. This was a huge problem in the Soviet Army and one which remains today. The practice almost certainly claimed more deaths in the Army between 1979 and 1989 (counting the suicides it provoked) than did combat in Afghanistan. These trends contributed strongly to the rising number of draft

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<sup>183</sup> Richard Gabriel, *The Antagonists: A Comparative Combat Assessment of the Soviet and American Soldier*, (Westcourt, CN: Greenwood Press, 1984):117-127.

evaders which was noted in Chapter One.

In 1998, morale is very low among conscripts. At a basic level, undermanning in the Army means more work for those that are left. Unfortunately, much of the work that is to be done is non-military in nature and related to keeping body and soul together -- ie harvesting and other essential non-military labour. If they are doing no real training, soldiers are led to question why they are serving at all. The answer is rarely positive, and is probably aggravated by the generally anti-military nature of contemporary Russian youth about which the MoD is increasingly concerned.

In sociological surveys of conscripts in a number of oblasts encompassing the territories of the Volga, Urals and North Caucasus Military Districts as well as in Moscow and Moscow Oblast, almost 70 percent said military service was unnecessary, and more than 35 percent were ready to emigrate from the motherland. Every second conscript thinks such ideas as duty, honour and patriotism are things of the past and no longer have meaning.<sup>184</sup>

The perception of military service as wasted time, when no external threat to Russia is readily apparent, is undoubtedly an underlying factor in the low morale of the Russian conscript. Some of the more important other factors, however, might include:

(a) Inadequate housing: base arrangements for many military units are extremely primitive. Russia's Chief Military Prosecutor told a reporter in 1997, in explaining a rash of suicides and murders, that 60 percent of all soldiers lack basic hygiene items, that more than 800 men on one base are housed in a building that was condemned in 1989, and that on average, there is one toilet for every 94 men in Russian military housing.<sup>185</sup>

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<sup>184</sup> "Society Suffers from Lack of Spiritualism--the Best Remedy is Patriotism," *Krasnaya Zvezda* (Moscow) 12 April 1994: 2.

<sup>185</sup> Pavel Anokhin, "A Division of Deserters is on the Run," *Rossiskiye Vesti* (Moscow) 26 December 1997:3. As translated in *Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press*,

(b) **Inadequate diet**: the Army does not have sufficient funds to purchase rations. There have been several deaths from starvation. In March 1996, *Krasnaya Zvezda* carried the sad story of one private who after 3 months of service in the Moscow Military District weighed only 44 kilograms. He died on the street of dystrophy caused by starvation while making his way by public transport to his division's medical unit.<sup>186</sup> Even if they did not suffer from lack of food, the quality of rations is unlikely to impress the vast majority of conscripts.

(c) **Dedhovschina (hazing)**: hazing is an old problem in the Army. The depravity of the senior soldiers involved ('granddads' in Russian military slang) can be incredible. "They beat the boys with a hammer on the spine, head, hands and the joints of their arms and legs, and with boots on their heads and kidneys. From a blow with a hammer to the head, every victim falls unconscious as if shot," read one account of the abuse in the barracks published in *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*. According to an Academy of Sciences Report from 1994, any young man entering the military has an 80 percent chance of being beaten up, 30 percent in a "particularly savage or humiliating way" and a 5 percent chance of being the victim of homosexual rape.<sup>187</sup>

On 22 January 1998, the Chief Military Prosecutor announced that suicides accounted for 487 of the 1,103 non-combat deaths in the military in 1997; in 1996, for 430 of the 1,046 non-combat deaths; and in 1995, for 459 of the 1,017 non-combat deaths.<sup>188</sup> Most commentators attribute the high suicide rate to low morale as a result of delay in wages, hazing, poor food and living conditions. In fact, the actual number of non-combat deaths in the Army is a focus of much debate in Russia. Some activist groups such as the

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Vol 50, No 1 (1998):15.

<sup>186</sup> V. Uvoltsev, "An Inexcusable Tragedy," *Krasnaya Zvezda* (Moscow ) 6 March 1996: 1.

<sup>187</sup> Cited in Waters, "Crime in the Russian Military..." 5-6.

<sup>188</sup> "Suicide in Military Remains High," *RFE/RL Newslines* Vol 2, Part 1, No 15, (23 January 1998).

“Committee of Soldiers’ Mothers” put the rate of non-combat deaths as high as 10,000 per year.<sup>189</sup>

The morale problem of the Russian Army is by no means confined to the ranks of the conscripts. The officer corps too is suffering from a profound malaise; especially among junior officers, despair and job dissatisfaction are at a record high. A 1996 report of the Moscow-based Centre for Sociological Research cited by the Polish newspaper *Wyborcza Gazeta* reported that only 11 percent of serving officers would agree to their sons pursuing a military career.<sup>190</sup> One Russian lieutenant-colonel, quoted in *Krasnaya Zvezda* on returning from a shift at the local abattoir where he was moonlighting, after being asked by his son whether he should follow his father and go to military college, replied “over my dead body.”<sup>191</sup> The previously noted high suicide rate in the Army generally, and particularly among field officers, further confirms the appallingly low morale of the officer corps.

The flight of officers is a major concern for the Army, with potentially greater effect than the material decline of the armed forces. The officer-conscript ratio in the Army is

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<sup>189</sup> Reported by Fred Wier in the *Hindustan Times*, 21 June 1997. Cited by Goldman, 22.

<sup>190</sup> Andrzej Lomanowski, “Biedni, Glodni, Zli,” *Wyborcza Gazeta* (Warsaw) 12 December 1996.

<sup>191</sup> A. Bakovsky, Y. Khrustalev and S. Balychev, “The Russian Officer: Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow,” *Krasnaya Zvezda* (Moscow) 5 November 1996: 1.

approaching 1:1, far greater than any comparable Western Army. As the Russian Army does not possess a strong corps of professional NCOs, the workload for those officers that remain is even heavier, and the Army's dependence on them the greater. In 1996, shortly before being dismissed from his post as Minister of Defence, Igor Rodionov wrote that:

We must save our officer corps no matter what. Believe me, this country will need its officers more than once. However, we should keep in mind that the absolute majority of our officers now serve on the verge of the breaking point. They don't receive their pay grades, which are guaranteed by a multitude of laws and resolutions, for many months in a row. Mind you, such pay grades constitute the only means of existence for most officers and their families. On the other hand, the law expressly forbids our servicemen to work on the side. Terrible as it seems, cases of undernourishment are now being registered in many garrisons what with officers' families withering on the vine. This is simply outrageous. Not a single country in the world can 'boast' of such developments. Any foreign officer would refuse to serve under such atrocious conditions.<sup>192</sup>

The underlying cause of the collapse of military morale is first and foremost financial. Without money, the Army cannot pay for equipment, training, housing, medical services, uniforms, or even basic salaries. Like all Russian state employees, officers have experienced a sharp reduction in the real value of their wages as a result of inflation. The pay problem which had simmered since the early days of the Russian Federation, came to a head in 1995 when the government finally promised to index officers' pay to the inflation rate. The plan, however, quickly broke down when the Ministry of Finance offered a 28 percent pay rise, while the MoD was arguing that a 208 percent rise was the minimum necessary to bring Army pay back into line with pre-inflationary levels. In the end, the Ministry of Finance released 10.5 trillion rubles for military pay for the whole year. Mid-

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<sup>192</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, (Moscow) 29 August 1996, or as quoted in Kipp, "Military Pluralism and..." 18.

way through 1995, the Army had spent 80 percent of its salary budget; the funds provided by the state treasury proved insufficient to cover even un-indexed salaries for the whole year.<sup>193</sup>

At first, the Army ceased paying officers' special allowances for children, rations, travel and miscellaneous items, then it began to default on basic pay as well. By January of 1996, 80 percent of officers had gone without pay for five months or more and it was estimated that the MoD owed its officer corps on average 4 million (old) rubles (US\$750) each in back pay.<sup>194</sup> The pay dilemma continued through 1996 and 1997 and into 1998.

Infrequently, the Ministry of Finance injects emergency funds, or the MoD diverts funds from other activities to pay salary arrears to its officers, but inevitably the debts begin to pile up again.

In March 1998, Aleksandr Kolenkov, Yeltsin's representative in the Duma, announced that the 1998 budget would be insufficient to cover the costs of a recently passed law which would have raised officers' pay and indexed it to rises in the national minimum wage in future. By no means is the pay problem on the wane. It is now estimated that the government owes each officer on average 10 million (old) rubles (US\$1600).<sup>195</sup> Moreover,

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<sup>193</sup> Orr, *Current State of the...* 17.

<sup>194</sup> See Felgengauer, "Russian Military Reform..." and "Where is the Promised Money?" *Krasnaya Zvezda* (Moscow) 2 March 1996: 1.

<sup>195</sup> "Officials Mark Holiday With Promises to Military," *RFE/RL Newslines*, Vol II, No 37, Part 1 (24 February 1998).

according to *Izvestia*, the amount of money Russia spends on each soldier (for salary, benefits, housing, training etc) is less than 1/13 of the US total and only 1/3 that of China's average expenditure per soldier. The government announced plans in July 1997 to double the average expenditure per soldier by 2001 and to "finally reach the Chinese Army figures by 2005."<sup>196</sup>

The officer corps has been pauperized by the combined effects of inflation and non-payment of wages. In 1990, a platoon commander in the Soviet Army earned 5.5 times the minimum wage. By 1996, an officer in the same position in the Russian Army earned only 1.5 times the minimum wage.<sup>197</sup> The officer corps no longer merits even middle class status. Anywhere from 30 to 50 percent of officers find it necessary to moonlight in order to make ends meet.<sup>198</sup> Stories of officers driving taxicabs, working as security guards or construction workers in order to supplement their wages are increasingly common in both the Western and Russian press.

Although most commanders recognize the necessity for moonlighting and look the other

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<sup>196</sup> Viktor Litovkin, "There is Hope That Russia Will Have a Modern Army," *Izvestia* (Moscow) 18 July 1997:1-2. As translated in *Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press*, Vol XLIX, No 29 (1997):2-4.

<sup>197</sup> Orr, "Current State of the..." 15.

<sup>198</sup> The lower figure is from the Centre for Sociological Research survey (see Lomanowski, "Biedni, Glodni, Zli). The higher figure is from "Russian Officers Face Personal and Political Insecurities," *Opinion Analysis*, United States Information Agency, Washington DC, 14 July 1997: 2.

way -- in fact, the MoD has instituted a "don't ask, don't tell" policy, suggesting that commanders take an "understanding attitude about how their subordinates deal with their financial problems," so long as subordinates perform their basic duties -- officers are specifically barred by law from holding any other paid employment.<sup>199</sup> Military men working in second jobs cannot, therefore, complain to the authorities about low pay or poor working conditions and have come to constitute "an unpretentious workforce somewhat akin to the gastarbeiter or Puerto Rican dishwashers in American diners hiding from the police."<sup>200</sup>

In the early 1990s, prior to the pay crisis, the lack of housing for military officers was the single most important source of discontent in the Army. Following the collapse of the Warsaw Pact, the Army faced the mammoth task of reintegrating into Russia where no adequate facilities existed, nearly 700,000 soldiers and their dependents. Many military families found themselves billeted in tank sheds, aircraft hangars and tents. Construction of military housing, despite financial support from Germany, lags far behind demand: in December 1995, there were still 155,000 'homeless' officers; by January 1996 the number had only dropped to 117,000.<sup>201</sup> In February 1998, then Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin indicated that the problem had actually worsened when he announced that

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<sup>199</sup> Dmitry Potapov, "Defence Ministry Seeks Non-Traditional Ways of Dealing With Disaffected Officers," *Kommersant Daily* (Moscow) 15 March 1997: 20.

<sup>200</sup> From an article in *Krasnaya Zvezda* cited by Orr, "Current State of the..." 7.

<sup>201</sup> Dick, "A Bear Without Claws..." 6.

the remaining 126,000 homeless officers could expect to have apartments by 2000.<sup>202</sup>

Aggravating the housing problem is the fact that approximately 50,000 officers live in appalling slum conditions. *Moscow News* described the horrifying living conditions of officers at one typical airbase as follows:

The conditions in which ordinary Army pilots and their families have to live defy description. The houses relatively recently put up by a Soviet construction battalion have gone lop-sided, not unlike the Leaning Tower of Pisa. Buildings of more venerable age, that is built in 1938, could tumble down at any moment. The ceilings sag and leak; the walls have rotted away; chunks of plaster fall with monotonous regularity...<sup>203</sup>

Such examples of incredibly poor military housing may be cited at length. While serving officers with apartments are better off than those living in tank sheds, for many families the quality of apartments is still extremely low. Finally, another approximately 150,000 retired officers have not yet received the apartments to which they are entitled by law.

Morale is not simply a product of service conditions -- soldiers almost by definition are expected to suffer hardship and they usually accept it as a badge of pride demonstrating their loyalty and patriotism. Psychological factors weigh equally as heavy on the low morale of the Russian officer. Many serving officers feel a sense of defeat stemming from the war in Afghanistan (most officers do not believe that they lost that war; rather, that the media wrongly and maliciously portrayed it as such), the collapse of the Warsaw Pact and

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<sup>202</sup> "Officials Mark Holiday with Promises..."

<sup>203</sup> Alexander Zhilin, "Kubinka is Seething with Discontent," *Moscow News* (Moscow) 11-17 December 1997: 1.

the withdrawal from Eastern Europe, the break-up of the USSR and, worst of all, the dismemberment of the Soviet Army. Sadly, the military is also growing alienated from civilians. They believe that the society which once cherished them, now rejects and despises them and that is why they receive little social protection and even less thanks for their efforts to preserve the Army and Russia's integrity and place in the world.<sup>204</sup>

Russian officers maintain that they elected to serve in the Army out of patriotic motives and accepted the discomforts and dangers of military life with open eyes. In a normal military, such as the Soviet army, however, the compensation was an adequate standard of living and, even more important, there was prestige: to be an officer in the Soviet army was to be respected and admired, at least officially. After only a few years of "democracy," Russian officers find themselves underpaid, in many cases to the extent that they cannot afford to feed, clothe or house their families on their only legal means of income; they are denied their old privileges and feel themselves to be resented by a society which has come to recognize how much they sacrificed under the Soviet system to the military.

The economic problems are relatively easy to comprehend; the Army's pay problems are hardly unique in Russia -- school teachers, civil servants, coal miners and any other group paid from the exhausted state treasury has also experienced the same problem. What the Army seems incapable of coping with is the loss of prestige and the lack of societal respect for the crucial task of national defence which they perform.

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<sup>204</sup> Dick, "A Bear Without Claws..." 7.

All of these factors, the incredible material decline of the Army, the plummeting morale, the terrible socio-economic condition and the loss of prestige of military service undermine Russia's civil-military relations. The Army is growing alienated from society and contemptuous of its civilian authorities. None of this bodes well for the consolidation of democratic rule in Russia.

## **CHAPTER 3:**

### **Mechanisms of Defence Oversight**

This chapter will examine Russian mechanisms of defence oversight. As Russia is a democratizing state, it will contrast them with comparable Western mechanisms in an attempt to assess the degree to which Russia now possesses democratic civilian control over its armed forces. While there is no 'correct' model of democratic civilian control, a concept which allows for a degree of variation from country to country to account for varying national/cultural traditions and strategic circumstances, there are features of civil-military relations and mechanisms of defence oversight which are common to all states with objectively controlled military establishments and which may be seen, therefore, as constituting a set of international norms on the subject.

First, all democratic states possess a coherent legal basis of defence which clearly defines the role, responsibilities and powers of the key institutions (president, parliament, ministry of defence and armed forces), involved in the defence and security policy process; applies legally binding checks and balances on the actions of each institution; and, establishes by statute an unambiguous chain of command outlining the lines of legitimate authority stemming from elected civilian politician to unelected military professional.

Second, civil authorities in democracies have access to formally constituted civilian-led agencies for defence policy-making and for option formulation. Politicians, therefore, can

obtain advice on defence policy from sources other than the military itself, with the result that the military is unable to control policy obliquely through a monopoly on defence expertise.

Third, democratic parliaments have substantive and detailed, not merely perfunctory oversight over defence spending. A parliament limited to a rubber-stamp role in these areas is firm evidence of weak civilian control over the military because control over the public purse is the major lever of control held by parliaments. Parliamentary oversight requires that budget submissions be extensive and detail precisely where and how defence dollars are going to be spent. The military, therefore, must be able to explain what strategic rationale lies behind individual budget items in a way that is understandable and convincing to the politicians authorizing the expenditure.

Fourth, in democracies there should be a fundamental congruence of values and interests between the military, the state and the society as a whole. The military officer should not be alienated from society; rather, he should be seen by himself and by society at large as a citizen in uniform, with special responsibilities, but nonetheless as an organic part of the nation's political life. On major issues such as the rights of the individual or the general direction of foreign policy, there should be no major differences between civil and military viewpoints. Similarly, the relationship between the soldier and the state must be based on mutual trust, entailing the respect of civilian authorities for the military's expertise and professional autonomy, balanced by the military authorities' unquestioned acceptance of

civilian supremacy in the policy realm.

In the case where civil and military imperatives create conflict and differences do emerge, such as over conscription policy, there must be established mechanisms for their resolution. Even then, the power of military authorities to debate policy issues is severely circumscribed. Having advised the military on various courses of option the role of the military leadership is to execute the will of the government, even if it considers the directed course to be the wrong one. It is the function of knowledgeable civilians, rather than officers, to represent the military in political disputes. Therefore, the military also has an interest in cultivating civilian experts in defence.

Fifth, even if it is rarely exercised, democracies must have the capacity to engage in an informed national debate on major issues of defence and security policy. In this respect, the media is especially important. A free and unobstructed media should inform the public about the issues at hand and articulate opinion on the matter from all quarters: government, opposition members, civilian experts, the general public and the military itself.

Consequently, an access to information policy that allows the media to investigate defence decision-making, with certain limitations for reasons of national security, is also a fundamental component of democratic control.<sup>205</sup>

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<sup>205</sup> For a good discussion on the features of democratic civilian control see Christopher Donnelly, "Defence Transformation in the New Democracies: A Framework for Tackling the Problem," *NATO Review* (January 1997): 15-19, and Marco Carnavale, "NATO Partners and Allies: Civil-Military Relations and Democratic Control of the Armed Forces," *NATO Review* (March 1997): 12-25.

Plainly, having good civil-military relations is not easy; very few democracies would claim to have achieved perfection in all the above features, but they will possess them to varying degrees. The basic problem in achieving democratic civil-military relations is that there is no such thing as a “democratic army.” Armies, by nature and by necessity, are authoritarian; if they were not, they could not fight wars with any real effectiveness. The object of the various mechanisms of defence oversight is not to wholly eliminate tension between civil and military authorities. It is to provide means for reconciling the activity of a non-democratic institution within a democracy. In optimal civil-military relations, the military is materially well treated by the state, its professional expertise and autonomy are respected by civilian authorities, and it feels that military service accords it some prestige. If all these conditions exist and both civil and military authorities believe the state to be stable and their own positions to be secure, then military disengagement from politics and military efficiency will be maximized.

Russian civil-military relations have accomplished precisely the opposite effect, simultaneously minimizing both military disengagement from politics and military efficiency. The military has not been materially well treated by the state, its professional expertise and autonomy have been repeatedly trod on by civilian authorities, it feels itself to be rejected by a society which no longer accords it any great prestige for its past efforts and self-sacrifice, and neither civil nor military authorities believe the state to be stable and their own positions to be secure. While many of the required institutional and legal ingredients of democratic control now exist in Russia, including a democratic constitution,

a freely-elected legislature, and a large body of laws regulating defence, their activities are warped by a perverse political climate which bears more resemblance to the nation's authoritarian past than to the democracy to which it ostensibly aspires.

Russia does not possess a coherent legal basis of defence. On the contrary, the law is very unclear on many crucial issues related to civilian control. The responsibilities of various state institutions are not clearly defined, nor are appropriate checks and balances applied to their activities. There are numerous agencies regulating various aspects of defence, including the Security Council, the Defence Council, the Duma Defence Committee, the State Military Inspectorate, the State Military-Reform Committee and others, but their respective roles are very murky and overlap in many cases.

In practice, these institutions have no inherent institutional strength as their power to regulate defence is determined not by statute, but by the degree of favour they have with Yeltsin and his administration. Similarly, the parliament has little institutional strength in regard to defence policy: it has no right to detailed oversight of defence spending; it may accept or reject the defence budget, but it has no right to detailed scrutiny of the line items within it.

The congruence of values and interests between state, military and society is also breaking down. In the case of conscription, foreign policy, military doctrine and other issues there is a clear difference of views between military and civil authorities. Nor does Russia possess

the properly constituted fora for resolution of these differences: military authorities cannot gain private access to the President to give their views on major decisions, while civilian authorities cannot be assured that the MoD will accept policy decisions it finds distasteful, or even if it does, that individuals or factions within the Army will not sabotage the implementation of the decision.

Finally, debate on defence issues has become polarized to such an extent that public consensus on what direction to take is nearly impossible to achieve. In this respect, the military-media relationship has become an especially problematic and vicious circle. The Army resents what it sees as a scandal-mongering media, while the media responds to obstruction and harassment with ever more vigorous investigations and relished portrayals of the military as corrupt and incompetent. The result is that in Russia today, all of the restraining conditions on military intervention implied by 'objective' control seem to be gone. The Russian Army is now much like the 14<sup>th</sup> Army in Moldova under Lebed writ large: "a cat that walks by itself."

The Soviet legacy has been both a blessing and a curse for Russian civil-military relations. On the one hand, the Soviet Army did not, nor does the Russian Army now conceive of itself as being a branch of the civil service like any other. Rather it feels itself to have a duty to the motherland that goes well beyond the short-term objectives of the government of the day. No other institution embodies the ideals of integrity, discipline, power, and order to the same degree as the military.

The maintenance of the Army is equated in military thinking with the maintenance of Russia's honour and place in the world, which it is the special responsibility of the Army to preserve. If the state itself is in question, the Army cannot easily understand its responsibility to the government. The officer is free to adopt his own ideas of the state, or take sides in a political conflict. Former Soviet officers, moreover, the best and brightest of their society, were an integral part of the political process of the Soviet Union, participating in decisions on defence, foreign and domestic policies. The Army, therefore, is particularly reluctant now to have civilians making decisions that concern its future.

In 1992, a poll of military officers found that in the opinion of the vast majority (79 percent), the military alone should have the last word in matters concerning the armed forces, while only a small minority (19 percent) thought that they should wait for decisions on matters concerning the military to be worked out by politicians.<sup>206</sup> Given this belief, it is difficult for the military to accept that the civilian government has ultimate authority in all matters to do with state policy, including defence. This single fact strongly suggests that the establishment of democratic civilian control is unlikely in the long run, though it does not necessarily preclude the maintenance of civilian control of another kind. On the other hand, while the armed forces which Russia inherited from the Soviet Union considers itself to have a special responsibility to the motherland, it is also highly professional. This deep

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<sup>206</sup> Yuri Deryugin, "The Bases of Reform and Counter-Reform," in V.K. Egorov, "The Armed Forces: Are They Political Forces?" *Russian Politics and Law* (January-February 1994): 64.

reservoir of military professionalism in the Russian officer corps may well be the last objective restraining condition on military intervention in politics. As late as 1995, as the pay crisis in the Army was beginning, one analyst wrote that the military still remained, ...a responsible and stabilizing force in Russian society, despite the internal strains and the aggravating factor of Chechnya. It has struggled to stay above politics, with commendable success. It has refused to support power-seekers from within its ranks. In the 1991 and 1993 coup attempts and in Georgia and Latvia during the last two years of Soviet rule, the military bridled at being ordered to use violence against civilians. It is not even remotely enthusiastic about the sordid assignment in Chechnya it was handed by President Boris Yeltsin. Nevertheless, despite repeated past professions of "never again" after such onerous missions, it has been following its orders--so far. Despite disarray at all levels, the military remains a pivotal player, for better or worse, in the Russian reform process.<sup>207</sup>

The Soviet Army was both highly efficient militarily and highly professional (ie it was responsive to civilian authority). Unfortunately, as was noted in Chapter Two, the new regime has completely destroyed the former and is rapidly eroding the latter feature.

Before turning to an analysis of contemporary civil-military relations it is necessary first to examine the Soviet system, which continues to inform the thinking of Russia's military leaders about the nature of their relationship to the state and society.

### **Soviet Civil-Military Relations**

The first step in understanding Soviet civil-military relations is to understand the relationship of two fundamental Soviet concepts on the organization of the state for war: military doctrine and military strategy. In the Soviet view, doctrine and strategy were

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<sup>207</sup> Benjamin Lambeth, "Russia's Wounded Military," *Foreign Affairs* (March/April 1995): 86-87.

related, but distinct notions answering two different sets of questions. Military doctrine was a set of politico-military assumptions about the relationship of politics, military power and war; it served as the basis for all military policy, guiding all decisions on procurement, force structure and planning. Being chiefly political in nature, military doctrine by definition fell under the authority of the top political leadership of the Soviet Union – the Politburo; it was the responsibility of the Politburo to answer the key doctrinal questions: how should the Soviet Army be used to support national objectives?; who is the most likely enemy in a future war?; what are the most likely kinds of war to be encountered in the future?; what sorts of weapons will be used?; how much of the economy should be devoted to defence?

Military strategy on the other hand, in the Soviet view, encompassed only those non-political principles and approaches to the use of military power most likely to produce victory for the USSR in time of war. Strategy was merely instrumental, it was the means of implementing the objectives set out by doctrine; doctrine told the military what it was to accomplish and what resources it would have to do so. Strategy was the detailed solution of how to go about it. As opposed to military doctrine, military strategy was for the most part recognized as the exclusive domain of the professional military.<sup>208</sup>

In theory, if the chiefly political and civilian doctrine of the Soviet Union was superior to

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<sup>208</sup> See Stephen Meyer, “Decision-Making in Defence: The Soviet Case,” in Carl Jacobsen ed. *Strategic Power USA/USSR* (London: MacMillan Press, 1990): 247-259.

the chiefly technical and military strategy of the Soviet Army, then the armed forces were clearly subordinate to the civilian authority in the defence policy realm. In practice, however, the distinction between the two was not always so clear-cut. For the largest part of Soviet history, the professional military was dominant in setting both the doctrinal and strategic agenda: through most of the 1930s, the mid to late 1950s, the mid 1960s to the late 1970s and early 1980s.<sup>209</sup> This time line corresponds to the early Stalin era, the early Khrushchev era, most of the Brezhnev era and through to the end of Andropov and Chernenko's interregnums. During the Stalin era, the balance tipped overwhelmingly to the civilian side, as it did less heavily in the late Khrushchev era, and more significantly throughout Gorbachev's tenure as General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU).

It should be understood, however, that military dominance of both doctrinal and strategic policy did not necessarily reflect a lack of civilian control. There is no evidence that the Soviet military ever competed with the Party for power, or that it ever refused to carry out the directives of the Party when called upon to do so. The Army did not control both doctrinal and strategic policy formulation because it was politically powerful and was asserting itself against the Party. Rather, it was a result of the political authorities being engaged in internal power struggles, preoccupied with other issues, or simply being disinterested in those issues. The military stepped into a decision-making vacuum left by political authorities who abdicated the bulk of their responsibilities to assume the lead role

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<sup>209</sup> Ibid, 253.

in agenda setting for Soviet defence policy. This situation became externally evident during the Brezhnev era, during which there emerged an observable contradiction between a defensive political doctrine and an offensive military strategy:

A certain disjunction was permitted between the political and military-technical aspects of doctrine under Brezhnev. While in the political dimension our doctrine was defensive...on the military-technical plane stress was placed on decisive offensive operations in case of the unleashing of war against the USSR and its allies. In other words, the defensive thrust of the political aspect of doctrine was in definite contradiction with the tenet of its military-technical aspect on offensive actions.<sup>210</sup>

The Party permitted this contradiction to exist because they felt that maintaining the stability of their ruling coalition was more important, which by the late Brezhnev era depended in part on the military and the defence-industrial complex, and because, for the most part, civil and military authorities in the Soviet Union were content with the arrangement of their relations. The Army was almost wholly consumed with thoughts of external threats to the state, rather than internal ones, for which the Party had other forces to meet.

On the other hand, the Army obeyed readily the Soviet civilian decisions to use force in Hungary in 1956, Czechoslovakia in 1968 and, though they counselled against it, in Afghanistan in 1979. Thus, the Army and the Party did not often come into conflict.

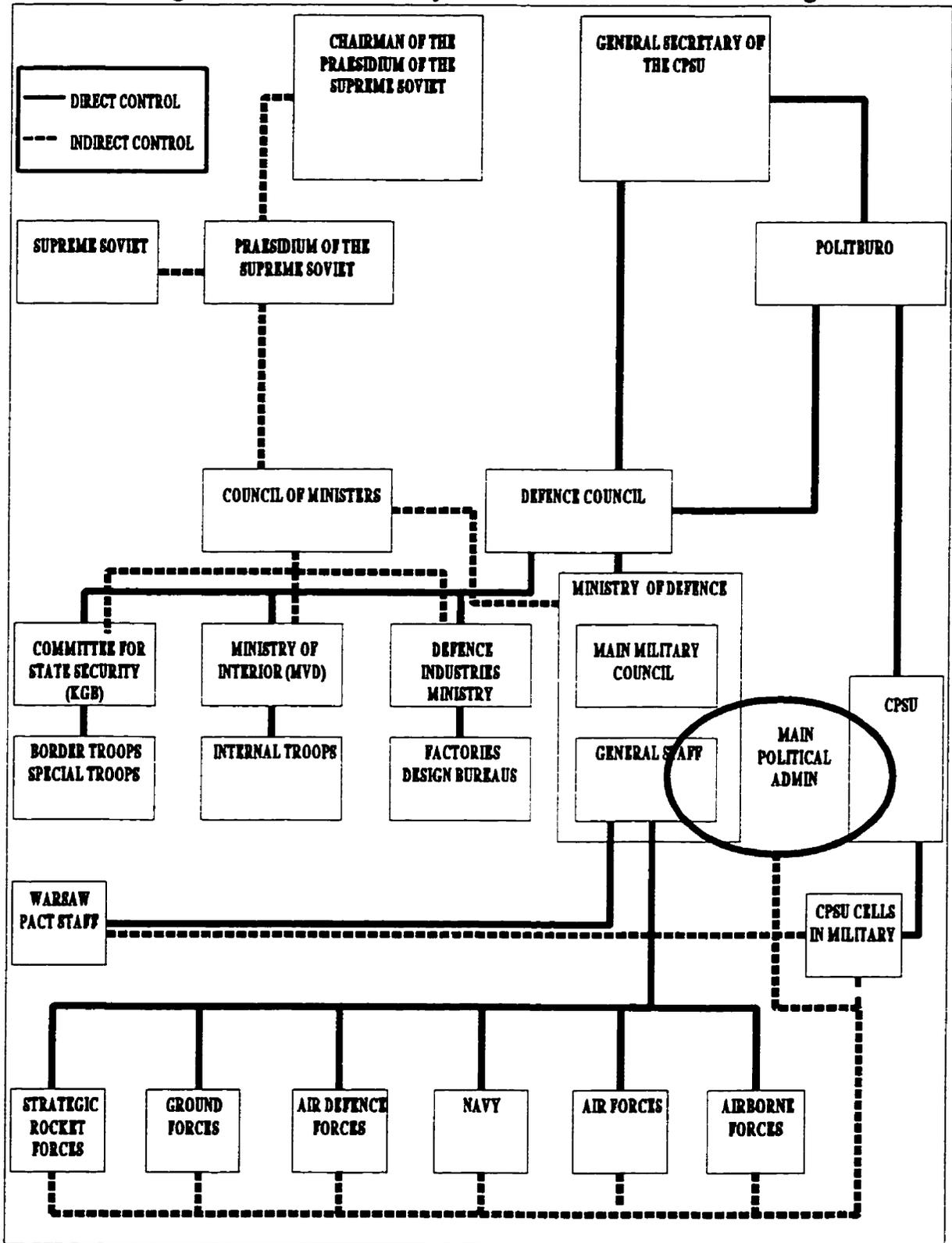
Soviet civil-military relations for most of its history were based on a clear mission for the

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<sup>210</sup> Soviet Defence Minister Dmitri Yazov quoted in Stuart Kaufman, "Organizational Politics and Change in Soviet Military Policy," *World Politics* 46 (April 1994): 370.

Army of defending the state from external enemies (with other forces being available for internal roles), the devotion of a high percentage of national wealth to defence needs, the extension of a privileged and honoured place in society to the Soviet military elite, and abdication at most times by the civilian authority of responsibility for doctrinal and strategic policy formulation to the military. The substantial professional autonomy of the military was balanced, however, by a strong loyalty to civilian/Party authority by the Army, which considered itself a model of professional duty and service to the state.

Figure 1: Lines of Authority in Soviet Defence Decision-Making



\*Based on a table in Chris Donnelly, Red Banner: The Soviet Military System in Peace and War (Coulson, Surrey: Jane's Information Group, 1988).

In speaking to the role of the military in defining doctrinal and strategic decision-making we refer specifically to the Soviet General Staff, known as the “brain’s of the Army.” The Soviet Army was a classic example of a professional general staff military system based on the Prussian model. The General Staff was the main policy planning organ of the MoD and thus for the state in general. It was comprised of several directorates, each with a specific area of specialization: operations, mobilization, intelligence, military science etc. In peacetime, control of the military flowed from the General Secretary of the CPSU, through the Minister of Defence to the General Staff, as indicated in Figure 1.

Within the MoD, the two most important individuals were the Minister of Defence and the Chief of the General Staff. Though the Minister was nominally superior to the Chief of the General Staff, in fact the offices were broadly equal in power. (The Main Military Council, which would become the High Command in wartime, was not particularly powerful in peacetime.) A particularly dynamic Chief of the General Staff might, in fact, be more influential than a minister.

This fact stemmed from two causes. First, the Chief of the General Staff through his control of the operations and intelligence directorates and the Academy of the General Staff, had direct control over option formulation in defence policy planning, whereas the Minister of Defence could only draw on these capabilities obliquely. Second, the Minister of Defence was not always a full member of the Politburo and, therefore, did not necessarily enjoy greater political weight than did the Chief of the General Staff. While

neither was the Chief of the General Staff a member of the Politburo, he always held the position of Secretary to the Defence Council – the state body which actually made military policy.<sup>211</sup>

Hence, the Chief of the General Staff had, in addition to his control of option formulation, a strong hand in setting the agenda for defence council meetings. As they had few other reliable sources of defence expertise outside of the military, the Defence Council essentially did little else but review the policy options provided to them by the General Staff, and choose the preferred course.<sup>212</sup> The Chief of the General Staff was a very important individual. A strong Minister of Defence was only marginally stronger than was the Chief of General Staff. A weak Defence Minister could be readily overwhelmed.

Political leadership of the military was exercised through three main bodies: the Politburo, the Defence Council and the Office of the General Secretary, with the Committee for State Security (KGB) also playing an important monitoring role. When he chose to exercise his influence, the General Secretary was by far the most powerful player in defence decision-making. As head of the Politburo, Commander-in-Chief of the Soviet Armed Forces, and Chairman of the Defence Council he directly controlled security and defence policy at every level except that of the General Staff.

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<sup>211</sup> Christopher Donnelly, *Red Banner: The Soviet Military System in Peace and War* (Coulsdon, Surrey: Janes Information Group, 1988): 86.

<sup>212</sup> Meyer, 251.

In theory, the Politburo, the top collective decision-making body of the USSR, was the most powerful institution in the country. In regard to security policy, however, the more important institution was the Defence Council. Whereas the Politburo included members from a wide variety of backgrounds, the Defence Council was composed only of the leaders of the 'power ministries,' plus members of the military. Doctrinal decisions were made in the Defence Council; the Politburo merely ratified them.<sup>213</sup>

Not counting Stalin, or Andropov and Chernenko, whose tenures were too short for conclusions to be drawn, each of the post-War Soviet leaders had a unique style of defence management. Near the end of the 1950s -- having finally consolidated his own political position -- Khrushchev, used the organizational power of his office to impose a new military doctrine which the Army did not favour. His new doctrine envisioned the likely future war to be very short, highly intense and dominated by a superpower exchange of strategic nuclear warheads in which conventional forces would play only a marginal role.

Consequently, Khrushchev decreed that a new armed service, the Strategic Rocket Forces, was to be created and accorded the status of lead-service in the Armed Forces, above that of the Ground Forces. The practical effect of the new doctrine was twofold: a massive conventional force reduction, with thousands of officers being made redundant; and the nuclearization of Soviet defence. When he was ousted in 1964, most of Khrushchev's doctrinal innovations were reversed by his successors--though the Strategic Rocket Forces

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<sup>213</sup> Meyer, 254.

remained the lead service of the Army--the conventional military capabilities of the Army to respond to a variety of threats without nuclear weapons was massively enhanced by Brezhnev.

Brezhnev's style was vastly different from Khrushchev's. He made few doctrinal initiatives of his own and by and large abdicated responsibility for doctrine and strategy to the Army. The military during his tenure was first in line for the best resources and the best people Soviet society could provide. Brezhnev's tenure of office carried no great surprises in civil-military relations. In 1977, while making a speech in Tula he made some statements on Soviet nuclear policy that were interpreted by some analysts as an attempt to recapture the doctrinal role he had long since surrendered to the Army. However, his ill health and declining energy precluded any strong attempt to recapture the defence policy process.<sup>214</sup>

### *The Army and Gorbachev*

The Army's relationship with Gorbachev was far more complex than with any other Soviet leader except perhaps Stalin. Prior to his tenure, the Army and the CPSU had had a reasonably harmonious relationship based on shared interests and largely congruent value systems, at least at the senior levels. With glasnost and perestroika, however, this relationship rapidly degraded.

Initially, the military was quite supportive of perestroika, even though it called for the

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<sup>214</sup> Kaufman, 378.

conversion of large parts of the defence sector to the production of goods for the civil sector. On the one hand, as Soviet citizens, military officers also had a stake in having a prosperous, economically viable nation with a higher standard of living. On the other hand, perestroika appealed in the military sense as well. The calls for a society more adept in its use of high technology had great resonance in the Army. For years the military had recognized that it faced a significant structural disadvantage vis-a-vis the West in some technological respects. Chiefly, while Soviet military science was on par with the West in most areas, there was a considerable and growing lag in products derived from primarily civilian-use technologies such as micro-electronics, software, computer simulation and weapons-design modelling techniques.<sup>215</sup> It was hoped that perestroika might address this weakness.

It was the non-economic aspects of perestroika which began to undermine the relationship between civil and military authorities. Beginning in 1986, with the Soviet unilateral nuclear testing moratorium, Gorbachev made a series of decisions on defence and foreign policy which the military opposed. First, he ordered large unilateral manpower cuts in Soviet forces in Eastern Europe. Second, he allowed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to adopt what the Army saw as an overly accommodating approach to negotiations over the Intermediate Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty and the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty. Third, from the Army's perspective, he bungled the public relations surrounding

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<sup>215</sup> See *Soviet Military Power 1990* (Washington DC: US Government Printing Office, 1990): 44-45.

the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan, allowing the media to portray the withdrawal as a humiliating failure of Soviet arms. Fourth, he abandoned the Warsaw Pact, allowing it to dissolve without pushing strenuously for a corresponding abandonment of NATO.<sup>216</sup>

To make matters worse, Gorbachev brought civilian institutions prominently into the doctrinal process. For the first time, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs under Eduard Shevardnadze was permitted to disregard military advice in arms control talks,<sup>217</sup> and various research institutes of the Academy of Sciences, notably the Institute for Space Research, the Institute of World Economy and International Relations and the Institute for the Study of USA and Canada were permitted to write on defence matters and to publicly criticize military policy.<sup>218</sup>

Perestroika, despite the military's initial support, had a corrosive effect on Soviet civil-military relations. Glasnost, however, was perhaps even more despised by the military. Hitherto, the Army had been above public criticism, its members were put on a pedestal and lavished with awards and praise for their wartime efforts, and enjoyed positions of substantial prestige in society. Glasnost changed all that. By 1989 -- as the economic and

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<sup>216</sup> John Leppingwell, "Soviet Civil-Military Relations and the August Coup," *World Politics* (July 1992): 548.

<sup>217</sup> John Leppingwell, "Soviet Civil-Military Relations and the August Coup," *World Politics* 46 (April 1994):550.

<sup>218</sup> Meyer, 256.

political situation continued to decline -- vociferous attacks against the military began to appear in the Soviet media. The military found itself being blamed for every ill which had befallen the country: corruption, wastage of resources, pollution, foreign policy misadventures and so on.

Most importantly, glasnost exposed to public scrutiny the military's internal problems: alcoholism, drug abuse and above all, the brutal way in which it allowed conscripts to be treated by dedhovschina. Meanwhile, fundamentally military values such as patriotism, duty, sacrifice for the country, the glory of past military campaigns and the honour of the military uniform were openly ridiculed in the media.

Some senior officers sensed a conspiracy directed against the Army. General Rodionov, then the Director of the General Staff Academy, wrote:

If we analyse this entire dirty, disgusting torrent which is raining its constant detractors down on the Army – the Ogoneks and Vzglyads [referring to reformist print and broadcast media], Komsomol members and perestroika academicians – this entire squall of rebukes, slander and profanity is being arranged in a definite outline with regular consistency.<sup>219</sup>

Gorbachev's reforms sparked a torrent of public debate in the Soviet Union and brought into view the military's growing discontent. Perestroika unleashed in the Army a level and type of politicization that had never before been seen in the USSR. One of the main objectives of Gorbachev's reforms was the revitalization of political discourse in the

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<sup>219</sup> "A Visit to General Rodionov's Office," *Den* (May 1991):1. As translated in JPRS-UMA-91-015:39. Cited by Stephen Meyer in "How the Threat (and the Coup) Collapsed" *International Security* (Winter 1991-92):17.

country. Restrictions on the organization of political parties were lifted, multiple candidate elections were held and new political structures outside of the Party were invested with some real decision-making power. Serving military officers were not barred from holding political office. On the contrary, they were welcomed under an electoral system which accepted parliamentary deputies from social and labour groups rather than only on the basis of geography.

Hundreds of military officers ran as candidates in the elections of 1989. The political orientation of these “soldier-politicians” covered the political spectrum, from pro-perestroika *Servicemen for Democracy*, and *Shield*, to the anti-reform, highly conservative *Officer's Union*. The wide-ranging and unanticipated effects of the politicization of the military were two-fold.

First, the Army gained a legitimate political platform from which it could openly criticize the government on its foreign, defence and domestic policies. In some cases, criticism from military quarters of Gorbachev was quite strong, as when the “Black Colonels,” Viktor Alksinis and Nikolai Petrushenko, demanded Gorbachev’s resignation if he could not make his reforms work within twenty days. In effect, perestroika utterly destroyed the notion that the Army was a neutral observer of politics; it was not above the political fray, it was deeply involved in it.

Second, politicization had extensive, fissiparous effects within the military establishment

itself, revealing in detail what had previously been unseen divisions among the officer corps. Junior officers elected to the Congress of People's Deputies were suddenly able to openly attack their superiors in the Army over the course of military reform and over the rapidly declining quality of life for young officers, without fear of punishment for having gone outside the chain of command. One junior officer and leading reformer, Major Vladimir Lopatin, went so far as to develop his own plan for the reform of the military, calling for massive restructuring and deep cuts in force levels, and presented it to the parliament from his position as a People's Deputy. In retaliation, he was expelled from the military, but the damage had already been done to the High Command, which was seen to have lost touch not only with society but with its own junior officers.<sup>220</sup>

The effects of perestroika on the armed forces continue to be felt today. It created multiple politicizing forces in the Army officer corps, fracturing the rank structure along generational and ideological lines and destroying the unity of the Army. Soldiers lost any sense of institutional affiliation with either the Soviet state or the Soviet Army, which had lost its ideological sense of purpose. Military professionalism and reserve, built up over decades to become the hallmark of the Soviet officer corps, was eroded and has continued to erode in the post-Soviet era.<sup>221</sup>

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<sup>220</sup> Leppingwell, 556.

<sup>221</sup> For a discussion of the factions within the Army see Timothy Thomas, "Fault Lines and Factions in the Russian Army," *Orbis* (Fall 1995): 531-548.

By the eve of the August Coup in 1991, the officer corps was extremely discontented and had acquired a high degree of contempt for Gorbachev and his reforms. On the other hand, the fractured military had not been effectively mobilized by any group opposed to Gorbachev. Indeed, the discontent of the Army was directed equally at its own leaders, who had consistently failed to address the concerns of younger officers, losing their trust and respect on the way. Thus, when one portion of the nomenklatura that had lost its position of power and influence in Soviet society finally launched a palace coup against Gorbachev in the summer of 1991, the military, despite its discontent and its basic receptiveness to the nationalistic message of the coup leaders did not mobilize in support of the takeover.<sup>222</sup>

The failure to mobilize the Army was one of the more curious mistakes of the plotters; it sealed the collapse of the coup. Although there were a number of prominent military men among the plotters, such as Marshal Akhromeyev and the Defence Minister Dmitri Yazov, the Army was neither the instigator nor the organizer of the takeover attempt. Indeed, the military men directly involved, particularly Akhromeyev, had very ambiguous roles and seemed totally disconnected from the general current of opinion among the security forces, assuming that when it was ordered the Army would do as it was told in support of the coup, without question.

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<sup>222</sup> Stephen Meyer, "How the Threat (and) the Coup Collapsed," *International Security* (Winter 1991/92): 6.

The contrary proved to be the case. Army, KGB and Interior Ministry units refused to fire on the demonstrators at the White House. Commanders ignored orders to deploy their units to Moscow while, at the same time, particularly airborne units with Afghan experience openly defended Yeltsin. Even the elite KGB commando unit "Alpha" refused to attack the forces defending the White House and to arrest Yeltsin as they had been ordered.<sup>223</sup> Lebed's comment on his thinking during that time is probably illustrative of the views of many officers who, while not admiring Gorbachev, were equally unimpressed with the coup plotters:

I did not defend the White House, I defended common sense. They tried to make me, a Russian general, fire on my own people in our capital city. No such force exists that could compel me to do that.<sup>224</sup>

From the discussion above, it emerges that the post-war Soviet military, up until Gorbachev, was subject to civilian control. Indeed, from a structural point of view, one might conclude that Soviet civil-military relations conformed with the parameters of "objective" civilian control as described by Huntington in the *Soldier and the State*.

In one major respect, however, Soviet civil-military relations diverged radically from the objective model. In the objective model, the armed forces are loyal to the civilian

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<sup>223</sup> "They Refused to Storm the White House: Interview with KGB Major General Viktor Karpukhin and Subordinate Officers," *Russian Politics and Law* (Summer 1992): 8-15.

<sup>224</sup> Efim Bershim, "I Was not Just Led into Politics, I Was Driven [interview with Aleksandr Lebed]," *Russian Politics and Law* (May-June 1996): 66.

government, regardless of which political party forms it. In the USSR, it was not simply a matter of securing civilian governmental control over the military, but of securing Party control, to the exclusion of any other political faction. The Army was not simply the servant of the state, it was the servant of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union; that the Party was for all intents and purposes the state, only masks this important distinction. In Soviet civil-military relations there were two separate and parallel lines of control and authority -- state-governmental and Party-political -- with the latter being superior to the former (see figure 1).

### *The Army and the Party*

Central to the discussion of political control over the Soviet Army was the unique institution called the Main Political Administration of the Soviet Army (MPA). The MPA was the military wing of the Communist Party and directly connected the CPSU to the Soviet General Staff. Communist Party cells existed throughout the Army down to the unit level. MPA officers were assigned to military units as small as company size.

According to the once influential, but now much-refuted, interest group model, the MPA was a means of exerting subjective Party control over the Army. The model's chief architect, Roman Kolkowicz, argued that the creation of the MPA was necessitated by the fact that the Party and the Soviet Army were institutions with distinct and opposite attributes, goals and outlooks on society. In addition to being "inherently anti-military," the Party exhibited five traits – egalitarianism, subordination to ideology, proletarian

internationalism, social involvement and anonymity – which were diametrically opposed to five military traits – elitism, professional autonomy, nationalism, detachment from society and heroic symbolism. Relations between the two were characterized by “perpetual tension,” mistrust and mutual suspicion. The mission of the MPA was to observe the Army’s activities and pass on information to higher political levels; politicize the officer corps through indoctrination; regulate promotion so that only ideologically reliable men advance in rank; and, promote adherence to the Party line through intimidation, threats of dismissal or coercion.<sup>225</sup>

In contrast with the interest group model, the participatory model of Timothy Colton emphasized those features of Soviet civil-military relations that most resembled objective control. Colton’s main argument was that rather than fighting over policy, the Party and the Army cooperated in a wide range of areas. Military leaders, in this approach, probably had the capability to overthrow the regime, but they chose not to exercise their power aggressively against the Party. The generals, according to Colton’s thesis, never tried to take power in the USSR, “because Party policies on most issues, and at most times, were consistent with the preferences of most Soviet officers, and because the military’s corporate interests were well served by the Party.”<sup>226</sup>

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<sup>225</sup> Roman Kolkowicz, *Soldiers, Peasants and Bureaucrats* (London: George Allan and Unwin, 1982).

<sup>226</sup> Timothy Colton, “The Party-Military Connection: A Participatory Model,” Dale Herspring ed. *Civil-Military Relations in Communist Systems* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1978): 71. And Timothy Colton, *Commissars, Commanders and Civilian Authority: The Structure of Soviet Military Politics* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1979.)

In his examination of the MPA, Colton found that between officers of the MPA and regular military officers there was an essential congruence on most issues. By and large, he found that the two groups had similar interests, shared many of the same values and tended to have reasonably good personal relationships. Thus, he concluded that if the MPA's original role was to control and monitor the military, it yielded to a post-war role as military administrator with responsibility for the maintenance of morale and discipline and inculcating esprit de corps and a will to fight in the Soviet soldier.

Finally, the historical congruence model of William Odom,<sup>227</sup> contrary to both Kolkowicz and Colton, whose models presupposed the existence of some tension between Party and Army, controlled by subjective means in the former and masked by the military's satisfaction with Party policy in the latter, rejected the notion that there was any discernible cleavage between military and civilian authorities in the USSR. Pointing out that Colton and Kolkowicz were merely arguing "opposite sides of the same coin," Odom maintained that the real substance of Soviet civil-military relations was the congruent and overlapping interests and mind sets of both institutions, which blurred the distinction between the two.

As evidence of the essential congruence that defined Soviet civil-military relations, Odom noted the pervasive influence in society which the Army was permitted to have. At nearly

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<sup>227</sup> William Odom, "The Party-Military Connection: A Critique," in Dale Herspring ed. *Civil-Military Relations in Communist Systems* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1978): 30.

every stage of a young Soviet citizen's life there would have been some military presence. By the time he was inducted into the Army, for example, the young Soviet man would have already received at least 140 hours of basic military training as a part of his regular schooling. The Army, moreover, directly controlled a large part of Soviet industry and one of every seven higher technical schools were operated by the military. To the average Soviet citizen, Odom concluded, "the omnipresence of the military was normal, to be expected."<sup>228</sup> This military influence on society would only have been permitted if the Army was deeply trusted by the Party. The role of the MPA, therefore, could not have been as antagonistic as Kolkowicz made it out to be.

It seems that the best approach to understanding Soviet national security decision making is provided by the participatory model. While Kolkowicz overemphasized conflict between civil and military authorities, Odom went too far in wholly eliminating it. The military, as was noted above, were not merely "executants of the vast Soviet military posture," implementing Party policies "but not in a position to frame the issues, only responding to the way issues were framed above them," as Odom proposed.<sup>229</sup>

The Party always retained ultimate authority in policy decisions, but in practice it tended to yield to the expert opinion of the military on most defence matters. On the really major

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<sup>228</sup> William Odom, "The Militarization of Soviet Society" in Alexander Dallin ed. *Russian and Soviet History 1500-1991: Civil-Military Relations in the Soviet Union* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1992): 275.

<sup>229</sup> Odom, "The Party-Military Connection: A Critique," 44.

issues of foreign policy, however, the Party kept its own counsel and used the military as it saw fit; the military at no time refused to follow the directives of the Party, even when, such as in the invasion of Afghanistan, they disagreed with them. Moreover, although it was exercised rarely in the Brezhnev era, when the General Secretary chose to assert his authority in the doctrinal area, the military could not resist.

The role of the MPA in the post-war military also tends to support the participatory model. In theory, the MPA had enormous influence within the Army. In reality, this was not the case for a number of reasons. The vast majority of officers (never less than 90 percent, and virtually 100 percent at senior levels) were either Komsomol or Communist Party members. It was clearly recognized that to become an officer in the Soviet Army, it was necessary to be a Party member and thus it became a pro forma part of the application process. Prospective officers accepted the state ideology, recognized its boundaries, and did not cross them. The MPA's blocking role in the officer recruitment process atrophied when all officer candidates were already members or prospective members of the Party.

Second, except for a brief period during the Civil War and at the beginning of the Second World War, the MPA officer was always subordinate to the military commander and had no role in the operational chain of command in combat. After Stalin died, only a very unwise MPA officer would cross his military commander who, in addition to holding a higher military rank, may well have held a more senior position in the Party.

Third, the MPA officer came to have more in common with his military counterparts than he did with his fellow Party members: they wore the same uniform, did much the same basic training, had the same rank structure, and followed roughly the same career paths. The result was that the institutional loyalty of the MPA was not necessarily always with the Party. In situations where the Army came into conflict with the Party over some issue of policy, the MPA tended to side with the military. In short, at some times and on some issues, the MPA proved to be the political wing of the Army, as much as it was the military wing of the Party.<sup>230</sup>

### **Contemporary Civil-Military Relations**

Inasmuch as was possible in a one-party state, the Soviet Army, up until Gorbachev, was subject to civilian authority along the lines of the objective model. Civil-military relations were generally harmonious, with the Army enjoying a high degree of professional autonomy, given the strongest voice in defence policy-making and a privileged and prestigious position in Soviet society. In return, the Army did not tread on the Party's territory; it did not question the official ideology, did not hesitate to obey political leaders when ordered, and never threatened the Party's political primacy even though its influence on education, industry and other sectors might have allowed it to do so.

In contemporary Russia, civil-military relations exhibit little of the harmony of the Soviet era. Strangely, the military is simultaneously politically important (as was shown in August

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<sup>230</sup> Kaufman, 72.

1991 and October 1993), but lacks political power; is weakly controlled, but is subject to excessive civilian monitoring; and is militarily ineffective, but poses a danger of armed violence to the state, and to the stability of the new nations of the near-abroad. As Russian scholar Mikhail Tsypkin noted:

Russian civil-military relations are characterized by a contradiction between the military's crucial political importance (because of the weakness of civilian institutions) and its lack of power in deciding major issues of defence policy such as the budget. At the same time, the military, in effect, runs Moscow's security policy in the "hot spots" of the near-abroad without much control by the civilian authorities.<sup>231</sup>

The Russian Army does not have nearly the same degree of officially recognized professional autonomy as did the Soviet Army; what autonomy it has is unofficial, jealously guarded and constantly threatened by the civil authorities and other armed agencies. With the shift in defence priority from mainly external to mainly internal threats, moreover, the military has also lost its leading voice in defence policy formation to other agencies such as the Ministry of the Interior and the FSB. Finally, far from enjoying a privileged and prestigious position in society, officers are poorly paid and have atrocious living and working conditions.

Samuel Finer defined military intervention as:

The armed forces' constrained substitution of their own policies and/or their persons, for those of the recognized civilian authorities. The military may pursue such intervention by acts of commission but also by omission. It may act against the wishes of the government; or it may refuse to act when called on by its government. In either case, it brings constraints to bear.

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<sup>231</sup> Quoted in Robert Epperson, "Russian Military Intervention in Politics." *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*. (September 1997):101.

Clearly, as a result of the discord in the civil-military relationship, the Army, by **Finer's** definition, has repeatedly intervened in Russian politics: it exercises influence over politics directly through military representatives in the Duma, and indirectly through its relationship with selected pro-military, civilian politicians; it has used blackmail against the government, threatening catastrophic consequences such as military collapse or loss of control over nuclear weapons, if it does not receive better funding; it has displaced civilian policy on defence reform through sabotage, hesitation or rank refusal to obey; and, it has openly supplanted official foreign policies toward the near-abroad with which it does not agree, with contrary policies of its own.

Although it played an instrumental rather than an initiating role in the coups of August 1991 and October 1993, these events show also that the senior leadership of the military, when pressed, is not above the use of violence to achieve political objectives. Few analysts would have seriously proposed that the Soviet military would ever have attempted a takeover in the USSR, either on their own or in alliance with an opposition group. In Russia, however, thoughts of coup d'état are a regular feature of political discourse.

In speaking of the institutional mechanisms of defence oversight and civil-military relations in Russia, it is important to recognize that institutions are important only insofar as they give an official platform to the individual at its head. It is not by institutions that Russia is governed, but by individual relationships and groups of individuals. The political system is

regulated by group patronage and friendships, not by law. As all levers of control over the military are held by the President, civilian control over the military hangs on a tangled web of highly tenuous personal relationships of individuals with Yeltsin. The single most important criterion of appointment to a military or government post, therefore, is political loyalty to the President.

The hyper-centralized, personalized and essentially authoritarian nature of Russia's civil-military relations is clearly reflected in its defence legislation. The primary effect of the large, incoherent and often contradictory body of law on defence is to concentrate all real decision-making authority in the office of the President. Of all the players in the defence policy process, only Yeltsin's position is secure. Since 1991, under his leadership, Russia has had:

- two heads of the FSB (Mikhail Barsukov and Nikolai Kovalev);
- two Defence Council Secretaries (Yuri Baturin and Andrei Kokoshin);
- three Ministers of Defence (Pavel Grachev, Igor Rodionov, and Igor Sergeev);
- three Chiefs of the General Staff (Mikhail Kolesnikov, Viktor Samsonov and Anatoli Kvashnin);
- three Ministers of the Interior (Viktor Yerin, Anatoli Kulikov and Vladimir Stepashin (acting minister)); and,
- five Security Council Secretaries (Yuri Skokov, Yevgeni Shaposhnikov, Oleg Lobov, Aleksandr Lebed, and Ivan Rybkin).

The lessons to be drawn from the extremely high turnover rate of Russian defence officials explains much about the nature of civilian control in Russia: all individuals who head agencies with real decision-making power are directly accountable to Yeltsin and are subject to hiring and firing at will; and, all agencies which are not subject to the direct authority of the President, notably Parliament, lack real decision-making power.

### *Powers of the President*

Like the General Secretary of the CPSU, in addition to being the Commander-In-Chief of the Armed Forces, the Russian president is also Chairman of the Security Council and the Defence Council. Furthermore, he alone appoints the chairmen of other committees and institutions such as the Commission on Military Development, also known as the Military Reform Commission (until recently headed by Viktor Chernomyrdin), the Commission on Financial and Economic Support for Military Reform (until recently headed by Anatoli Chubais), the Higher Military Certification Committee which approves all military appointments above the rank of lieutenant-colonel (now headed by Andrei Kokoshin), and the State Military Inspectorate. Finally, as the president appoints the cabinet, he also controls all ministerial posts.

The Russian Federation Law on Defence<sup>232</sup> signed by Yeltsin in May 1996, enumerates

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<sup>232</sup> *The Russian Federation Law on Defence* was printed in full in *Krasnaya Zvezda* (Moscow) 5 June 1996.

those agencies permitted to have armed forces, and firmly establishes the unfettered authority of the President over them. While it states that the purpose of the armed forces is to “repulse external aggression and to carry out tasks deriving from the international obligations of the Russian Federation,” it also states that “the Russian Federation President can use the Russian Federation Armed Forces to perform tasks outside their remit.” This article gives the President the extra-legal powers to enter into war, order military mobilization and to declare martial law nationwide or in specific localities without authorization of the Duma. Aside from being required to report annually to the Federation Council, he need only communicate his intentions to Parliament. In fact, in Chechnya, Yeltsin did not even do that and did not suffer because of it.

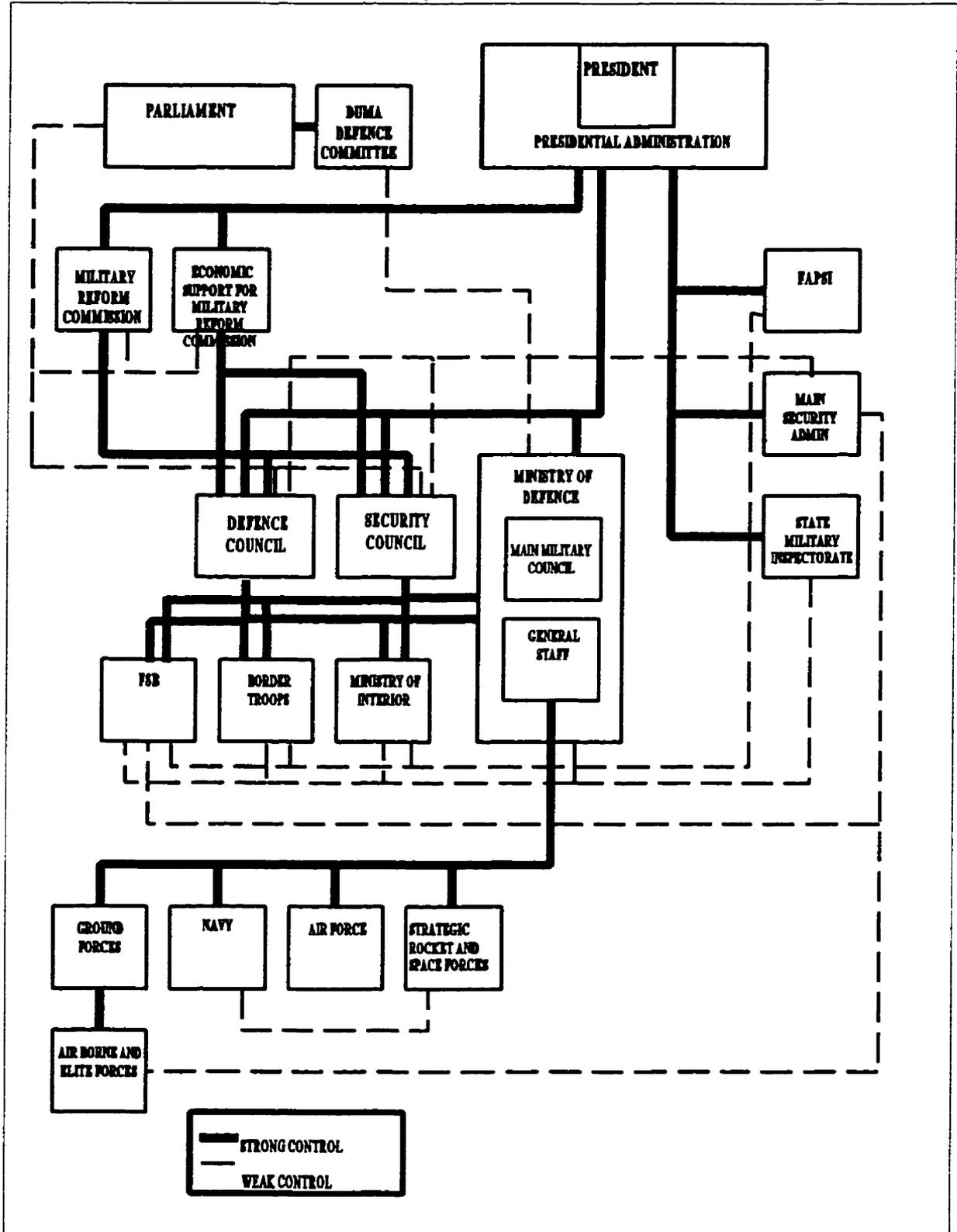
In addition to the Army and the other armed ministries, the President has sole authority over several other important agencies, including the various intelligence services, the Federal Agency of Government Communications and Information (FAPSI), and the Presidential Security Service. The last two organizations are particularly significant. The Presidential Security Service, which is closely connected to the FSB, by some estimates may amount to as many as 40,000 men<sup>233</sup>, is well-armed and well paid and has an extensive intelligence network. FAPSI controls the entire government communications apparatus, including that of the military. This allowed Yeltsin, in the lead-up to the October Crisis in 1993, to cut off the General Staff’s communications centre, effectively precluding them

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<sup>233</sup> Amy Knight, “Internal Security and the Rule of Law in Russia,” *Current History* (October 1996): 313.

from coordinating support for Ruskoi (not that they necessarily would have), while Yeltsin could still communicate with sub-unit commanders as he required.

Figure 2: Lines of Authority in Russian Defence Decision-Making



*Powers of the Parliament*

In contrast with the President, the Russian Parliament is extremely weak. Even on an issue as publicly unpopular as the war in Chechnya, the Duma was unable to exert much pressure on Yeltsin. Russia's laws on defence give the Duma little to no accountability over the formulation of military policy at any level. Neither the Ministry of Defence, nor any other "power ministries," are required to report to parliament on their activities. Similarly, the Security and Defence Councils are also not responsible to parliament in any way. The Duma Defence Committee under Lev Rokhlin has a purely declarative role. Its members can point to problems in the Army, and criticize the government's defence and security policy, but it actually has little legislative authority; any decisions it might take carry at best moral weight with the Ministry of Defence if they do not accord with the official military doctrine.

The Russian Parliament does not have the power to declare partial or full mobilization of the Army, martial law, or the existence of a state of war. It does not have any authority over the use of Russian forces abroad, nor does it have the right to direct how the President may exercise his control over the nuclear forces.<sup>234</sup> Moreover, as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is wholly accountable to Yeltsin, and he is not required to report to the Parliament, the President is free to make treaties with foreign governments to which the Duma is not privy.

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<sup>234</sup> Paul Goble, "Are Russian Nuclear Safeguards Safe?" *RFE/RL Newswire*, No 177, Part 1 (14 August 1997).

In every way, the powers of the Duma to oversee defence are constrained by the Law on Defence, the Constitution and the extra-legal powers of the President. Even its ability to pass new legislation on defence is severely circumscribed. The new Russian military doctrine, as opposed to Soviet doctrine, is actually enshrined in the law and acts as something akin to a military constitution. This severely limits the legislative power of the Parliament. According to the Law on Defence, Parliament may pass legislation on defence issues, but only in accordance with the dictates of military doctrine. Predictably, the Law on Defence explicitly bars the power of the legislature to define or ratify military doctrine, giving those powers solely to the President.

Finally, in most countries the greatest strength of the legislature is its ability to control public ministries obliquely through its control over spending. A president may have the capacity to order troops into combat, but he must still ask the legislature to pay for it. The Russian Duma does not have this capacity. The military does not accept that the Duma should have the right to detailed and effective scrutiny of the defence budget and the law does not require it. The Army's budget submission to Parliament is no longer than two pages.<sup>235</sup> It consists of headings for major items like capital spending, medical services, construction and so on, but does not elaborate further than that.

The Duma may approve or not approve the budget submission. It may not, however,

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<sup>235</sup> Pavel Felgengauer, "Russian Military Reform: Ten Years of Failure," paper presented at a conference on *Russian Defence Policy Toward the Year 2000*, US Naval War College, Monteret CA, 25-26 March 1997: 12.

examine precisely how the money is going to be spent. Neither does the Duma have the right to monitor spending of funds that have been released to the military for specific purposes like salaries or construction. From the politician's point of view the Ministry of Defence is a black box; money goes in but nobody knows exactly how it is spent. This explains how funds released by the Ministry of Finance to pay back wages to officers might actually come to be spent on construction of missile silos, or how funds for military housing for homeless officers might be spent on dachas for generals.

In short, the Russian Parliament has little substantive role in the making of legislation on defence, has little to no control over the actual use of military force either internally or externally, does not monitor the activities of the Ministry of Defence or any other "power ministry," has limited control over the defence budget, and cannot investigate how the funds it approves for spending on defence will actually be spent.

In 1993, Grachev replied to a reporter's question of what the Army would do if the Duma amended his new military doctrine, saying that "we shall amend the Parliament."<sup>236</sup> In almost any other country any military officer making such a joke would be drummed out of the service. In light of the real power of the Duma, it is easy to see how Grachev was not only not censured, but continued to serve as Minister for three more years.

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<sup>236</sup> "Expert Sees Hawks Win on Military Doctrine," FBIS-SOV-EUR (18 November 1993): 39-40.

*Powers of the Ministry of Defence*

That the Minister of Defence could thumb his nose at the Duma does not mean that he had substantially more power than they did. Accountability in Russia runs vertically from Ministry to President, not horizontally. In fact, the Minister of Defence in all of Russian history has probably never been so feeble as he is now. Never before has the Army's ability to influence policy decisions been so limited. In Soviet times the Ministry of Defence was the most powerful of the armed ministries, and at the very least equal in power to the (KGB). The situation is now altogether changed.

Russia has several armed forces in addition to the Army, notably the Interior Ministry Troops and the Border Troops. While the Army remains the single largest armed force, the combined weight of the other forces may now equal its own in terms of manpower. During the Soviet era, the Ministry of the Interior was far less powerful than the Army. Since 1991, however, it has actually increased in size. By some accounts, recently dismissed Minister of the Interior Anatoli Kulikov may have had as many as 29 divisions under his command.<sup>237</sup>

Since Interior Ministry Troops are actually paid better than regular Army officers, the

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<sup>237</sup> Valery Borisenko, "Gendarmerie or Army?" *Moscow News* (Moscow) 15-21 February 1996:3.

MoD loses up to 10,000 officers to the MVD every year.<sup>238</sup> Naturally, these officers are the best and brightest in the Army. The MoD may regard this as poaching by the Ministry of the Interior, but in its current financial position it can do little to stop the exodus.

Indeed, Rodionov could only complain to reporters in February 1997, that:

Today the "other forces," taken as a whole, are just as large as the Army and Navy in terms of numerical strength. Needless to say, they have their own generals and their own supply system. While the Army struggles for survival, these other forces are receiving monetary support and everything they need on a monthly basis, and even in greater amounts than the Army and Navy.<sup>239</sup>

Although the inability to reverse or even slow the material decline of the Army provides the best evidence of the waning influence of the MoD on state policy, there are other telling indicators of the decline. While the MoD has drastically cut the number of generals in its ranks, the other armed ministries are increasing their numbers of generals. During the Soviet era there were 90 generals in the Border Troops; now there are more than 200. The Internal Troops also used to have about 90 generals, but have increased them to more than 120 now. Tellingly, FAPSI has gone from only 18 generals in 1991, to 70 in 1997, an increase of over 350 percent.<sup>240</sup>

The Army's battle with the Ministry of the Interior has been especially bitter. It was even

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<sup>238</sup> "Rokhlin's Call to Mutiny Sparks New Controversy," *Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press*, Vol XLIX, No 26 (1997):3.

<sup>239</sup> Quoted in Igor Korotchenko, "Minister of Defence Asserts that Soon Russia Will Have no Defence," *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* (Moscow) 8 February 1997: 1-2. As translated in *Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press* (12 March 1997): 1-3.

<sup>240</sup> Korotchenko, 3.

discovered that in Chechnya, Army units and MoD troops engaged in “clarifying battles” with each other. In one incident witnessed by reporters, a severely wounded soldier of the Interior Ministry was actually turned away from an Army hospital.<sup>241</sup> In October 1996, the Interior Minister Anatoli Kulikov, on his own initiative and in tandem with the FSB and FAPSI, launched his own mini-coup against Lebed. Accusing him of planning a takeover, he severed inter-city communications on the night of 16-17 October and mobilized 100,000 MVD troops to detain Lebed.<sup>242</sup> Lebed almost certainly was not planning a takeover, but the charges were sufficient to oust him from his post as Secretary of the Security Council. Far from being punished by Yeltsin for staging this coup, Kulikov was rewarded by being made the Deputy Prime Minister for Security Affairs. For the Ministry of Defence, to have an MVD General technically in control of all Russia’s armed forces was an especially bitter pill.<sup>243</sup>

Another indicator of the weakened condition of the Minister of Defence became evident in late 1996 and early 1997. In November 1996, Rodionov was presented with clear evidence that the Commander-in-Chief of Land Forces, General Vladimir Semyenov, was involved in corruption: among other things, with the “help” of a Moscow banker, he had bought a

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<sup>241</sup> Raymond Fitch, “Why the Russian Military Failed in Chechnya,” US Army Foreign Military Studies Office, Fort Leavenworth, KS, May 1997:8.

<sup>242</sup> Stephen Blank, “Towards the Failing State: The Structure of Russian Security Policy,” Conflict Studies Research Centre F56, Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst, November 1996: 2.

<sup>243</sup> See “Power Wielders Acquire Their Own Deputy Prime Minister,” *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, (Moscow) 6 February 1997:3.

house worth 500 million rubles for only 65 million rubles. Rodionov, who was publicly leading a fight against corruption in the Army, immediately dismissed Semyonov. The general, however, continued to come to work, insisting that as the President had not signed the order firing him, he was still employed by the Ministry of Defence – he was right.<sup>244</sup>

The Minister of Defence no longer has the power to make decisive personnel changes within his department, with or without cause. According to Rodionov in an interview in April 1997:

The Defence Minister is bound hand and foot. Thanks to the laws that have been adopted, the only people I can dismiss are those whom I can appoint by directive. That is, no one higher than a colonel. People of higher ranks can be dismissed only by the President.<sup>245</sup>

Yeltsin controls all military appointments and dismissals above the rank of colonel through the Higher Military Certification Committee, which is chaired by the Secretary of the Defence Council. As Semyonov had close ties to the President, having been amongst those who defended the White House in 1991 and pressured for the military to intervene against the Parliament in 1993, the President hesitated to confirm Semyonov's dismissal until April of 1997, four and a half months after Rodionov signed the original order.<sup>246</sup> Just over two

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<sup>244</sup> Aleksandr Budberg, "Igor Rodionov: I'm Mired in a Struggle for Survival," *Moskovsky Komsomolets* (Moscow) 12 April 1997: 2. As translated in *Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press*, Vol XLIX, No 15 (1997): 18.

<sup>245</sup> Ibid.

<sup>246</sup> See Ilya Bulavinov, "Boris Yeltsin Sacks Four Generals," *Kommersant Daily* (Moscow) 12 April 1997: 2. Translated in *Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press*, Vol

months later, Rodionov was summarily dismissed himself by Yeltsin in a fit of violent fury, saying: "I am not merely dissatisfied, I am outraged over how Army reform is being carried out and over the condition of the Armed Forces as a whole."<sup>247</sup>

There is a consensus among most observers that Rodionov was fired for continually pressing for more money, embarrassing the government and for publicizing the disastrous state of the Army in order to stir up public opinion in support of the military. The new Minister of Defence, Igor Sergeev, was careful not to repeat Rodionov's error by too strongly linking the success of military reform to the level of funding provided to the Army, which won him considerable favour with Yeltsin. In December 1997, however, he could restrain himself no longer, sending a letter to the government expressing, in other words, Grachev's and Rodionov's simple dictum: "Without money, there will be no reform."<sup>248</sup>

### *The Security Council and the Defence Council*

The Security Council and the Defence Council of the Russian Federation are very similar institutions. In fact, in terms of their mandates, composition and supposed origins, they are

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XLIX, No 15 (1997): 19. And Pavel Felgengauer, "Defence Minister Decides to Remove Commander-in-Chief of Land Forces," *Sevodnya* (3 December 1996): 1. As translated in *Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press*, Vol XLVII, No 49 (1996): 18.

<sup>247</sup> "Irate Yeltsin Fires Defence Minister, Chief of Staff," *Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press*, Vol XLIX, No 21 (25 June 1997): 1.

<sup>248</sup> "Even a Marshal Can't Conduct Reforms Without Money," *Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press*, Vol 50, No 2 (1998): 13-14.

nearly exact copies of each other. For example, the Statute on the Russian Defence Council states that:

The defence council elaborates decisions on important issues such as measures to prepare for the protection of the Russian Federation from armed attack...the elaboration of an overall concept of military organizational development, the coordination and monitoring of the activity of the Russian Federation Armed Forces and other troops and military formations, and the definition of their mission, composition and size...<sup>249</sup>

At the same time, the Security Council is charged with:

...formulation of the main avenues of ensuring the security of the personality, society and state...improving Russia's security system through the drafting of proposals for the reform of the security organs...to organizing the executive organs of power in implementing decisions pertaining to security.<sup>250</sup>

Both institutions are also credited with having been modelled on the Defence Council of the USSR, which as was noted earlier, was the primary defence decision-making body of the Soviet Union, composed of the heads of the "power ministries" plus the General Secretary and the Chief of the General Staff. With the exception of the Chief of the General Staff, who is no longer the secretary, nor necessarily even a member of either council, the traditions of the old Defence Council remains the basis of membership in the new councils. In fact, the membership of both councils is almost exactly the same.

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<sup>249</sup> *Statute on the Russian Federation Defence Council*, as translated in J.L. Black ed. *Russia and Eurasia Documents Annual 1996*, Vol 1 (Gulf Breeze FL: Academic International Press, 1996): 151-153. The statute was also published in Russian in *Krasnaya Zvezda* (Moscow) 30 July 1996.

<sup>250</sup> The text of the *Statute on the Russian Federation Security Council* was published in *Rossiyskaya Gazeta* (Moscow) 6 May 1992.

<b>Table 3: Membership of the Security and the Defence Council (July 1996)</b>	
<b>Security Council</b>	<b>Defence Council</b>
<b>Boris Yeltsin (Chairman)</b>	<b>Boris Yeltsin (Chairman)</b>
<b>Aleksandr Lebed (Secretary)</b>	<b>Yuri Baturin (Secretary)</b>
<b>Viktor Chernomyrdin (Prime Minister)</b>	<b>Viktor Chernomyrdin (Prime Minister)</b>
<b>Nikolai Kovalev (head of FSB)</b>	<b>Nikolai Kovalev (head of FSB)</b>
<b>Anatoli Kulikov (Minster of Interior)</b>	<b>Anatoli Kulikov (Minster of Interior)</b>
<b>Igor Rodionov (Minister of Defence)</b>	<b>Igor Rodionov (Minister of Defence)</b>
<b>Yevgeni Velikhov (head of Academy of Sciences)</b>	<b>Yevgeni Velikhov (head of Academy of Sciences)</b>
<b>Yevgeni Primakov (Minister of Foreign Affairs)</b>	<b>Yevgeni Primakov (Minister of Foreign Affairs)</b>
<b>Andrei Nikolaev (head of Border Troops)</b>	<b>Andrei Nikolaev (head of Border Troops)</b>
<b>Vladimir Panskov (Minister of Finance)</b>	<b>Vladimir Panskov (Minister of Finance)</b>

The similarity in mission, structure and composition of the councils has led many analysts to wonder why Russia needs two institutions to perform this role. Two theories have been proposed to explain this situation. The first theory holds that the Defence Council was created in 1996 as a body which could oversee defence reform, thereby relieving the overburdened Security Council of this task. As Vladimir Klimenko, the Chief of Staff of the Defence Council, outlined it, the difference between the councils was to be chiefly functional. The Defence Council would concentrate solely on “questions of military structure and military reform, separating these tasks from the whole issue of national security into a separate problem.”<sup>251</sup> The work of the Defence Council and the Security

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<sup>251</sup> Quoted in “The Defence Council of the Russian Federation,” Conflict Studies Research Centre C95. Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst, March 1997:2.

Council were to be interconnected, with the Security Council defining the security interests and requirements of the Russian Federation, while the Defence Council worked out how the armed forces would meet those requirements and protect those interests in the military sphere. In this view, then, the role of the Defence Council would be to assist the Security Council, by taking on the detailed and onerous task of co-ordinating defence reform, leaving the Security Council to concentrate on defining Russia's defence needs.

The second theory is more cynical. It holds that the Defence Council was actually created to ensure that the recently appointed Security Council Secretary Aleksandr Lebed, did not acquire too much power. This seems a credible theory, given that Lebed's appointment to the post by Yeltsin in return for his support in the Presidential elections struck many observers as odd. Since its creation in 1992, many analysts suspected that the Security Council could become a new Politburo.<sup>252</sup> With all of the "power ministries" represented in it, the Secretary of the Council had a potentially very powerful position.

In fact, the high turnover rate of secretaries – Yuri Skokov (April 1992-May 1993), Yevgenny Shaposhnikov (June-September 1993), Oleg Lobov (Septemeber 1993-June 1996), Aleksandr Lebed (June-October 1996) – suggests that Yeltsin was careful not to leave anyone in the position too long. A Security Council Secretary, left too long in the position, might build a power base independent of, and a threat to, Yeltsin's administration.

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<sup>252</sup> See William Derleth, "The Evolution of the Russian Polity: The Case of the Security Council," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, Vol 29, No 1 (1996):43-58.

The longest serving Secretary, Oleg Lobov, was unusually loyal to Yeltsin.

By creating the Defence Council, Yeltsin could publicly reward Lebed with a high position while, at the same time, substantially reduce the powers of his office. Lebed became known as Russia's "Security Tsar," but in fact, his actual powers were probably overstated. First, many of the functions of his office were transferred to the Defence Council. Second, the key members of the Council, such as Kulikov and Kovalev, had ready access to Yeltsin not dependent on the Security Council Secretary. Lebed was unable to exercise a "gate-keeper's" influence on policy formulation, through controlling access to the President. One of the main functions which was specifically removed from the profile of the Security Council Secretary and transferred to the Defence Council Secretary, was the responsibility to serve as Chairman of the aforementioned Higher Military Certification Committee. It stands to reason, that if the President was concerned Lebed not be able to build up his constituency in the Army, he must be banned from approving military promotions.

Indeed, though it is likely that some elements of the first theory may be true – military reform is a monumental task for which a dedicated agency is not a bad idea – a preponderance of indicators suggest that the second theory carries more weight. In the aftermath of the creation of the Defence Council, the locus of decision-making on defence shifted there. While the office of the Security Council Secretary waned in power, the Defence Council Secretary's grew. It was the Defence Council Secretary, Yuri Baturin, who led the bruising battles over the defence budget with Igor Rodionov which resulted in

Rodionov's dismissal. Baturin had a much higher profile than did Rybkin, the new Secretary of the Security Council. Then Baturin, before he could consolidate a power base, was himself dismissed by Yeltsin and replaced by Andrei Kokoshin.<sup>253</sup>

The lesson of this is that although having two councils for defence and security issues does nothing to improve the quality of Russian policy, it is of great value to the Russian President. As both secretaries are appointed and dismissed solely by the President, he can reward trusted lieutenants and/or potential enemies with a significant post, while retaining the ability to transfer their powers elsewhere if needed.

There is a bright point to Yeltsin's recent appointments. Both Sergeev and Kokoshin are well respected in the Army. Kokoshin was the Deputy Minister of Defence for several years prior to his appointment. Sergeev, while not a radical reformer, is a real professional with a clear view of what must be done and a commitment to do it. Where Rodionov and Baturin were oil and water, (Rodionov, despite his excellent military qualities was not a politician and was not an effective Minister of Defence), Sergeev and Kokoshin are a better fit. Defence reform may progress more smoothly under their command.

### *Other Agencies*

A few other agencies involved in the defence policy process have crucial powers in more

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<sup>253</sup> See Military Bureaucratic Manoeuvres," *Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press*, Vol XLIX, No 50 (1997):17.

narrowly-defined areas. The Higher Military Certification Committee which, as was noted, comes under the chairmanship of the Defence Council Secretary, serves an important role in controlling the military through its management of senior military appointments; it is also accountable to Yeltsin through the Secretary.

The Commissions on Military Development (also known as the Military Reform Commission), and on Financial and Economic Support for Military Reform, until recently headed by Viktor Chernomyrdin and Anatoli Chubais respectively, are also interesting. They tend to confirm the thesis that Yeltsin exercises the “divide and rule” principle amongst his subordinates. Technically, both these issues should have come under the Defence Council, which has the specific mandate of overseeing defence reform. As was noted by Pavel Felgengauer, however, the latest military doctrine actually bypassed the Defence Council, going directly to Chernomyrdin’s committee. By dividing and re-dividing his administration, setting his subordinates against one another, Yeltsin acquires another lever of control, and prevents power plays against himself.

Finally, in November 1996, Yeltsin created yet another defence agency, the State Military Inspectorate. Like the Security and Defence Councils, the State Military Inspectorate has its origins in the Soviet and Imperial past; both of which possessed agencies for ensuring that training and readiness were at a high standard. However, the new Inspectorate has important features which make it potentially much more powerful than its ancestors: the Inspectorate has the capacity to inspect not only the Army, but all the armed forces

belonging to the “power ministries;” the Inspectorate is accountable only to the President; and it is not a part of the Ministry of Defence.

Thus, in addition to his control over the appointment and dismissal of all government ministers and secretaries of councils, Yeltsin also possesses an independent agency to monitor the activities of his subordinates in all the armed ministries.

*Congruence of Values and Interests Between the Army, Society, and the State*

The relationship between the Russian Army and its state and society is an unusually rich and complex one. On the one hand, as was previously noted, the Russian people on average are far more willing to devote a high level of the national wealth to defence, even in peacetime, than are the people of most countries. On the other hand, at no time in Russian or Soviet history, has Russian society had a role in making demands on, or formulating expectations about its Army. Quite the opposite, the role of the society was to serve the Tsar’s, the Party’s, and the military’s needs by supplying a steady stream of disciplined and well-trained citizens ready to serve the state. In Russia, the military/state has always dominated and made demands on society, not vice-versa.

Surprisingly, the military’s dominance over society has not had a purely negative effect. For one thing, the Russian Army was never particularly alienated from its society, like many Western militaries were and are. Rather, as the great Soviet military theorist Mikhail Frunze wrote, the Army always considered itself to be a reflection of society in microcosm.

This closeness between Army and society may be explained in part by the tradition of manning the Army through mass conscription. Naturally, if the Army inducts all of society's young men on a regular basis, it is liable to be representative of that society. Yet, neither was the professional officer corps alienated from Russian society. Indeed, Soviet officers felt themselves to have an important socializing role in society. The Soviet Army, for example, took very seriously, for better or worse, its role as the "school of the nation," imparting valuable (Russian) language and literacy skills to soldiers from diverse ethnic backgrounds.

Despite all the problems it has suffered in the post-Soviet era, the Army remains aware of its obligation to society. Surveys reveal that over 80 percent of officers object to using the military to aid farmers at harvest time, or to assist in the construction of roads, railways, or other public works of importance to the national economy – tasks they were routinely called upon to perform in Soviet times which tended to detract from combat capability. At the same time, however, officers also feel a strong obligation to help the nation in times of need: 97 percent agree that the military should help whenever and wherever a natural disaster occurs in Russia. More importantly, the vast majority (68 percent) of officers feel it is wrong to use the military to resolve domestic disputes, even in the case of regional secession. The Russian Army, like the Soviet, is motivated primarily by its responsibility to protect Russia from external attack; 98.5 percent of officers would fight to defend the Kurile Islands if Japan were to attack them.<sup>254</sup>

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<sup>254</sup> All survey results above are from the Ball survey.

These survey results indicate that the military remains highly professional in its outlook on its role in society and in defence of the nation. While officers do not want to be engaged in distracting and onerous civilian tasks such as harvesting, neither do they want to be involved in the resolution of domestic conflicts. Basically, the Army did not choose to play the role of king-maker in the continuing battle between President and Parliament that constitutes Russian politics; if they did, according to most theories of civil-military relations, they would be king by now.<sup>255</sup>

Nonetheless, cracks are beginning to show in the relationship between Army and society. While survey data indicates that the officer corps is as divided politically as is the rest of society, with only a slightly greater proclivity towards conservative/nationalist forces,<sup>256</sup> certain issues reveal substantial discord. Above all, society is weary with conscription, and the brutal way in which conscripts are treated. Over a decade after defence reform became a public issue, and despite the efforts at “professionalization” of the military, conscription continues. This means that every six months, the Army reaches into all Russian families with sons of service age, and threatens them with the potential death and, likely, the physical or sexual assault of their child. The very low rate of criminal conviction of draft evaders shows that society is simply unwilling to allow the punishment of young men for avoiding service under those conditions.

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<sup>255</sup> See Kimberly Martin-Zisk, “Civil-Military Relations in the New Russia,” *Occasional Paper of the Merston Centre at the Ohio State University*, March 1993.

<sup>256</sup> See Timothy Thomas, “Fault Lines and Factions in the Russian Army,” *Orbis* (Fall 1995):531-548.

In Soviet times, the hazing of conscripts was not widely publicized and, if it were, families were in no position to resist anyway. Now Russia has civic associations dedicated explicitly to exposing the weakness of the Army, the abuse of conscripts and to holding the Army to account. The best known of these associations is the Committee of Soldiers' Mothers. In the West, this group is known as a peace group because of its public demonstrations against the wars in Afghanistan and in Chechnya. This is however, a misnomer for the Committee of Soldiers' Mothers. Its chief goal is forcing the reform of the Russian Army; peace is a secondary objective. As the Soldiers' Mothers noted:

The Army must cease to be a closed institution, if the necessary changes are ever to take place. In times of peace or in times of war, society has a just claim to information on expenses, on military doctrine, and every single casualty or injury of the soldier.<sup>257</sup>

The Committee of Soldiers' Mothers has been both a thorn in the side and an ally of the Army. While it has spared no effort digging up information on the abuse of soldiers and publicizing it widely both domestically and internationally, it has also given the military essential ammunition in its fight for funding. Chechnya serves as a case in point. Both Soldiers' Mothers and Army officers considered it almost criminal malfeasance on the part of the government for it, in the space of one year (1995-1996), to have increased the numerical strength of the armed forces (by lengthening the term of conscript service from 18 to 24 months), to have driven the Army into an expensive and brutal war in Chechnya for which no funds were provided from the Treasury, and to have purchased 50 incredibly

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<sup>257</sup> Quoted in Brenda Vallance, "Shaping Society's Demands: Russian Soldiers' Mothers and Military Reform," Conflict Studies Research Centre C91, Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst, December 1996:6.

expensive-to-operate strategic bombers from Ukraine while, at the same time, reducing military expenditure by over 50 percent.<sup>258</sup>

In looking at the military-media relationship, it is important to recognize that the Army does not appear to understand yet the concept of an open media. The Army's view of mass communication is deeply conditioned by Soviet experience. In fact, the Army has its own media outlet, *Krasnaya Zvezda*, which has the second largest circulation of any Russian daily. Certainly, in comparison to Soviet times, the media is far more capable of engaging the nation in a national debate on defence issues. There are a number of well-known and respected former military officers, no longer beholden to the Army or the state, contributing their expertise to editorials in major newspapers, as well as a number of very good civilian defence analysts. Nonetheless, the Army continues to reject and belittle civilian expertise in defence, referring to them as "dilettantes and amateurs." The murder of Dimitri Kholodov, moreover, served notice to the media that the corrupt element within the Army was not above killing journalists to shut them up.

Perhaps the Army felt with Kholodov's murder, that a line had been drawn in the sand. It has not. The media now regularly report on corruption in the Army, on human rights violations in Chechnya, on the abuse of conscripts, and on a whole host of problems that the Army wishes it would not. The tone of reporting, moreover, is extremely adversarial.

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<sup>258</sup> Vitaly Shlykov, "The Political Economy of Russian Defence," paper presented at a conference on *Russian Defence Policy Toward the Year 2000*, US Naval War College, Monterey CA, 25-26 March 1997: 9.

The Army senses that the media is controlled by forces opposed to the military. This sense is reinforced by the media, which uses highly inflammatory language in its reporting on the Army. For example, an article in *Kommersant Daily* about Grachev bore the title: "A Thief Should be in Prison – He Should Not be Minister of Defence."<sup>259</sup> Thus far, the armed forces have not learned how to deal effectively with the media -- they continue to harass journalists and there is no effective access to information policy -- nor the media learned how to deal effectively with the armed forces.

In its relationship with the state, aside from those problems already noted with the current regime, the Army seems to share much the same problem as society at large. Basically, there is no consensus on what Russia is, or should be, in either society or the Army. Should Russia be a great power or a European power? Is democracy the right path for the nation, or should it return to a more authoritarian system? These questions and many others like it have not yet been decided in Russia.

This is a huge problem for civil-military relations. Establishing congruency of values and interests between military and state is all but impossible when the government of the day does not appear to have any values beyond the maintenance of its own power. In such an environment, the military officer is left to develop his own notion of the state, to define by himself to whom or to what he is loyal, and to establish his own priorities. This affects

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<sup>259</sup> See Aleksei Gerasimov, "Poegli Didn't Insult Grachev," *Kommersant Daily* (Moscow) 28 March 1997:5. As translated in *Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press*, Vol XLIX, No 13 (1997):22.

civil-military relations deleteriously; it fractures the unity of the Army, because not all officers will share the same ideas; and, it means that officers are not likely to accept the legitimacy of any particular government, as all governments are illegitimate if the system is wrong. In effect, it undermines the remaining features of objective control in Russia, and ensures that only subjective measures can be relied upon to secure civilian control.

Russia's civil-military relations, either in terms of the essential congruence necessary between Army, state and society, or in its legal makeup or institutional structure, not to mention the atrocious conditions of service, in no way approximate democratic civilian control. All levers of control are concentrated in the hands of the President. Whatever Yeltsin's personal proclivities are or may be, Russia's legal basis of defence is an excellent foundation for future autocrats.

## CONCLUSION

In all states, the health of effective, civilian, democratic control over the armed forces serves as a barometer for the overall health of the state. Clearly, by that logic, Russia is a very sick country. Russia is not now a democracy, nor on the evidence of its civil-military relations, does it appear to be evolving in that direction. The Army is on the verge of collapse. Every indicator -- manpower and equipment, morale, training and readiness -- shows the Army to be in a state of extreme distress. Russia's armed forces are, in some cases, quite literally starving. Such a situation would be difficult for any military to endure. For Russia's, still haunted by the past glories of the Soviet Army, it is especially difficult and undermines its relationship with the state.

In fact, the Army according to Rodionov, seems to be coming to the conclusion that the civilian authorities simply do not care about the Army:

We write letters and we meet with key officials at all levels, but we get no feeling that they have an interest in, or are concerned about, the current state of the Russian Army.<sup>260</sup>

An Army on the verge of collapse, that is coming to the end of its rope, is unlikely to disintegrate quietly. Quite possibly, it will lash out at the civilian power as it goes down, perhaps by launching a coup d'état, but more likely in the ways implied by the implosion scenario: the loss of control of nuclear weapons and nuclear materials, the proliferation of

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<sup>260</sup> Igor Korotchenko, "The Minister of Defence Asserts that Soon Russia Will Have No Defence," *Nezavisimaya gazeta* (Moscow) 8 February 1997:1.

crime and violence, assassination of government leaders, mutiny and contributing to the general ungovernability of Russia.

What is particularly disheartening about Russia's civil-military relations is the absence of any apparent will on the part of the government to stop the decline and put the Army on stable financial footing. Granted, in the short term, downsizing the Army and treating discharged officers humanely will be expensive and is clearly beyond the means of the military to accomplish on its own resources. On the other hand, maintaining the status quo is also not cheap and carries severe long term consequences to Russia's internal stability, democratic development and to international security.

Sadly, the response of the new regime to the crisis in the military has actually been to massively strengthen subjective measures of control over the military, regulating military appointments, granting implicit licence to selected officers to enrich themselves through corruption, monitoring the activities of the Army using the security agencies, and maintaining a powerful praetorian guard. The unavoidable conclusion of an examination of Russia's legal and institutional system of defence oversight is that it is designed not to mimic democratic systems, but to effectively concentrate all real decision-making power in the office of the President, to protect his position above all others and to deny constructive roles to any parties not utterly beholden to him, while providing a facade of democratic accountability. Russia's laws on defence serve as camouflage for what is a highly centralized, personalized and authoritarian system of civilian control.

Numerous dictators have proven that subjective civilian control of the military can actually be quite strong and reasonably stable and does not necessarily impinge on the armed forces, military effectiveness (witness the German Army in World War II). On the other hand, such systems are far from failure-proof and failures of subjective control likely to be violent. Moreover, subjective civilian control is fundamentally incompatible with democratic rule.

Notwithstanding the system of civilian control instituted by Yeltsin, which does not, in fact, “control” the military all that well (it merely precludes them from easily threatening the Presidency), the most important restraining condition on military involvement in politics is not, however, subjective. It is, rather, the deep reservoir of professionalism built up in the officer corps over decades during the Soviet era. Russian army officers have a very strong sense of personal and corporate pride and responsibility to the society and to the state. The potential for embarrassment also probably plays a role in the prevention of coups. There is a real fear among the officer corps that Russia’s Army is sinking to Third World status; a coup d’état, even if they could carry it off successfully, in the view of most officers, would solve relatively few of their problems, and only confirm their fear that Russia’s Army has degenerated to the level of say Bolivia’s to be true. Finally, as was noted previously, coup is not something that the Army, always loyal, has ever attempted in the past. The Army has no tradition of rulership and does not see itself in that role.

Thus, there are really several factors now preventing a real calamity in the Russian military:

deep professionalism, which compels the Russian officer corps to stay out of politics; much reputed stoicism, which allows the military to endure the current privations, hoping that a resurgence of support for the Army will occur, as happened every other time the military went into decline (such as in the late 1920s); and historicism, which teaches officers that aside from their over-arching loyalty to the “Motherland” (which also undermines the establishment of democratic control in the long run), they are not cut out to rule the nation. As such, three predictions of future events in Russia are possible: the optimistic view, the neutral view, and the pessimistic view.

#### **The Optimistic View: Present Trends Improve**

The optimistic view holds that Russian military professionalism, stoicism and historicism will prevail until such time as the Russian economy begins to recover, the Treasury starts to fill and the state decides to seriously tackle the issue of defence reform. Implicit in this view, is the idea that the government will devote substantial financial resources, at a time when many other sectors will also be calling for governmental support, to implement much needed reforms.

In this scenario, cashiered officers will be taken care of, at the very least actually receiving the apartments, pensions and payment of back pay and allowances to which they are now entitled by law and, in the best case, will actually have access to retraining programs allowing them to re-enter the civilian workforce. Within the military, decisive efforts will be made to improve the socio-economic conditions of service for both officers and men

while, at the same time, corrupt officers will be expunged and the practice of dedhovschina brought to a halt.

As the conditions of service improve so too will morale. The rate of draft evasion will fall and gradually the Army will build up a core of professional long-service NCOs capable of leading the military into the next century. Conscription will be eventually either abolished completely, or substantially reduced. With the improvement in morale, subjective controls over the military will be less necessary. Again, gradually, parallel security forces might be amalgamated into the MoD. The benefit realized by the amalgamation of the various armed forces through the elimination of duplicate services could further lessen the burden of defence on the Treasury and hasten economic recovery.

Finally, with the military content, secure in its own position and assured that the state is stable, the political atmosphere will improve enough to allow the reworking of Russia's laws on defence. Parliament should gain the substantive powers of oversight over defence spending to which it is entitled as the representative of the people and will begin to play a role in the creation of new legislation on defence. The President's extra-legal powers will be curtailed and civilian experts on defence will come to the fore, being recognized by both military and civilian authorities as potential allies and essential components of democratic control.

In short, an economic recovery will allow Russia to develop a workable system of

democratic civil-military relations, with uniquely Russian characteristics (perhaps, for example, Russia will retain the practise of appointing serving or recently retired officers to the position of Minister of Defence), but by and large in accordance with the objective model.

### **The Neutral View: Present Trends Continue or Worsen**

In the neutral view, professionalism, stoicism and historicism in the officer corps begins to wane, but this effect is offset by an increased implementation of subjective controls. Also mitigating against a military explosion in this scenario is the continued material decline of the Army which, while it contributes to the growing desire of the military to intervene in politics, effectively undercuts their capacity to do so.<sup>261</sup>

Implicit in this notion is the continued growth of the other armed ministries to rival or exceed the forces of the MoD in combat power. Gradually, the Ministry of the Interior will supersede the MoD in size and in funding, and the MoD will lose even more of its voice in defence policy formulation as the government's priorities shift from the perception of external to internal threats to its security.

Within the military, the factionalization of the Army will worsen, with the greatest division

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<sup>261</sup> This notion, entitled "The Paradox of Disintegration," is said by some analysts already to be the case. See David Mendeloff, "Explaining Russian Military Quiescence: The Paradox of Disintegration and the Myth of a Military Coup," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, Vol 27, No 3 (1994):225-246.

appearing between the “haves” and the “have nots” – those who can abuse their positions for personal profit or are members of elite units, as opposed to those who are not. The land forces will become increasingly marginalized. Essentially, with the MVD taking on the primary responsibility for ground conflict, the land element of the Army will become a rump force. By far the most important part of the military will be the Strategic Rocket Forces and the Navy’s submarine fleet. Officers in these services will be paid better and have better working and living conditions than other officers; increasingly they will be alienated from the rest of the military.

Again, in this scenario a major catastrophe is avoided and the Army, rather than exploding, simply disintegrates quietly. Crime levels rise as military officers sell weapons and use their weapons to support themselves, but this is met by increased repression and feeds the increased importance of the Interior Ministry. Russia’s democratic development will likely be aborted. Quite possibly, this also might reignite an East-West conflict, because once again Russia will be a repressive regime, instead of a democratizing state.

### **The Pessimistic View: Present Trends Continue or Worsen**

Like the neutral view, the pessimistic view envisages present trends continuing or worsening. As the crisis in the military reaches the breaking point, professionalism, stoicism and historicism fail: implosion of the Army ensues. Such an event might also be accompanied by a coup d’état. Most likely, this would not be initiated by the military alone, but would be undertaken in alliance with, or in support of, conservative or

nationalist forces. Such scenarios are multitude and need not be detailed. Obviously, such events would bring to a halt Russia's democratic development and its market development, as Western investors flee the ensuing chaos. Worryingly, such a scenario does not depend on a worsening of present trends; the continuation of current trends is sufficient to initiate these events.

It is difficult to say which of these scenarios is the most likely. All have some merit and are at the very least plausible. Notably, two of the scenarios involve the probable end of democratization in Russia. In that sense, it is clear that civil-military relations matter in Russia. Moreover, as the salience of Russia's importance on European and therefore, international security is also clear, it has effects well beyond the confines of Russia's borders.

With regard to the optimistic scenario, there are indications that Russia may in fact be on the cusp of a mild economic recovery. However, the simple macro-economic growth of Russia's economy may not be sufficient to avert the crises described in the other two scenarios. If increasing wealth remains confined to a narrow sector of society and is not reflected, because of tax evasion, in an improvement of public finance, then the government will still not have the resources necessary to devote to the alleviation of the problems in the military. Present trends will continue, or even worsen as officers fall further in socio-economic status. Thus, the optimistic scenario is perhaps not the most likely of outcomes.

Neither, however, is the pessimistic scenario the most likely outcome. In the seven years since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the military has suffered setback after setback, yet it remains professional in its outlook, and the majority of officers are determined to stay out of domestic and political conflicts. We may not yet have plumbed the depths of Russian military professionalism or the oft-noted Russian military stoicism. After a time, moreover, the continued absence of coup d'état, despite the predictions of Western theory, suggests that historicism is perhaps a stronger motivating factor than had been thought. It is possible that such an organized assault on its government is still regarded by the military as beyond the pale and not to be attempted under any but the most extreme circumstance, and certainly not on its own.

It seems for the most part that the neutral view is the most likely. Russia's economic position may soon recover but this will not necessarily be translated into a decisive effort by the government to improve the condition of the military. In fact, economic recovery need not be accompanied by a decisive improvement in Russia's public administration and therefore may not incur the improvement in civil-military relations necessary to avert a crisis. Given all the other demands on their attention, the government may decide that it is better to let the Army wither on the vine, substituting for the military with internal forces, and maintaining subjective control until the crisis passes.

A major disaster, however, might be precipitated by the death of Yeltsin. None of the potential replacements from the reformist camp appear to be motivated by a concern that

the military's problems be solved, being obsessively focussed at this time on economic reform and the enrichment of their own cliques. A change in government not accompanied by a change in attitude toward the military might elicit a backlash against a weak and unconsolidated presidency. As the mechanisms of control are now highly centralized in the person of Boris Yeltsin, it would take the new leader some time to establish his authority. During that time, he would be vulnerable to a military takeover or a takeover by opposition groups supported by the military.

Another situation that might avert an immediate crisis in the Army would be the election of a conservative/nationalist politician such as Lebed to the office of the President. The military would probably react well to such an electoral outcome. However, the nationalist leader would not be able, even as President, to radically improve the position of the military in a short time, particularly if he tried to rule on the basis of the law. On the other hand, the system of government control created by Yeltsin would give him extraordinary powers as an autocrat. Given the nationalist proclivity for "simple" solutions to complex problems, suggested by Lebed's public admiration for Pinochet, the temptation to rule as a dictator might be too much to resist for Yeltsin's successor.

The common thread in the two latter scenarios is the suspension of democratization in Russia. This is the chief threat posed by the parlous state of Russia's civil-military relations. Ultimately, Russia cannot become democratic until its political leadership comes to a mutually satisfactory relationship with its military that impels the Army to remain

above the political fray, but that also compensates it well for the crucial functions it performs in defence of the nation. Thus far, it appears that Russia, unfortunately, has a long way to go before it reaches that level of association.

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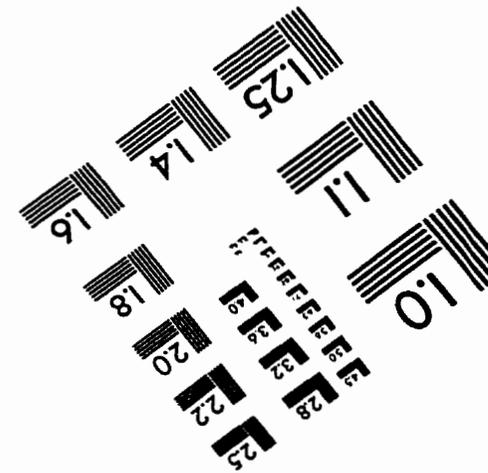
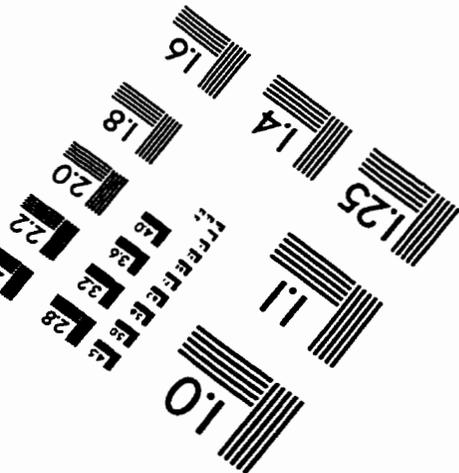
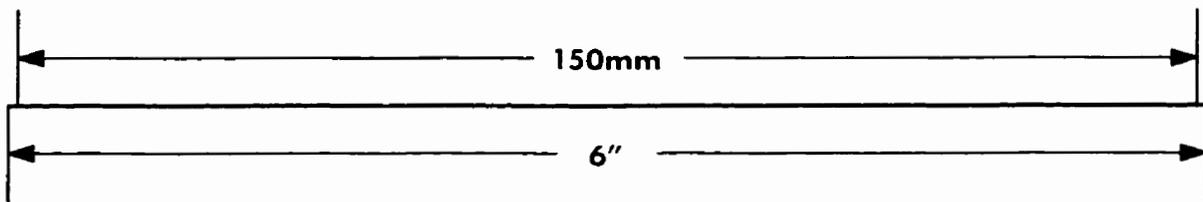
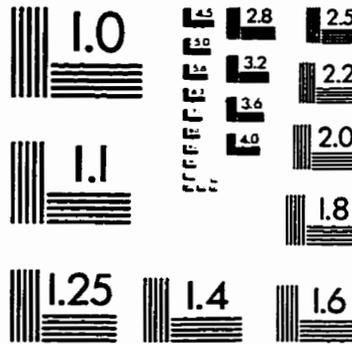
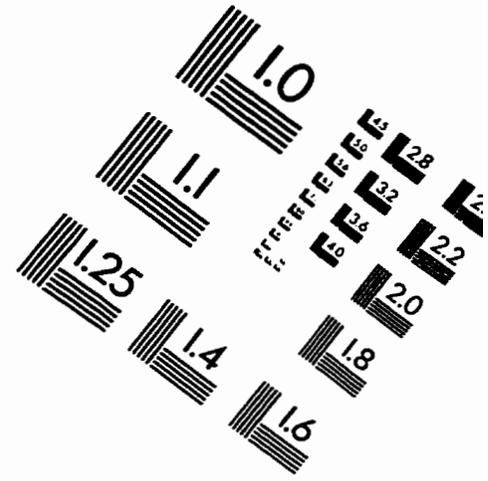
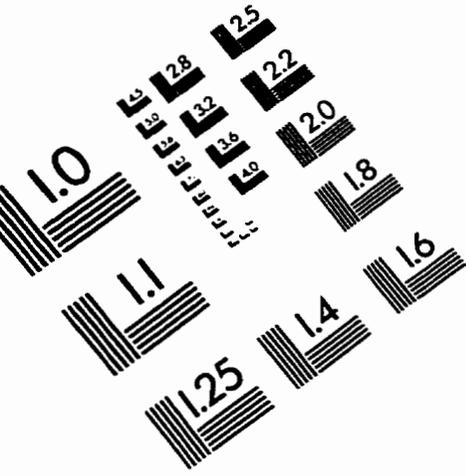
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