IN THE SHADOW OF AN EMPIRE: MILITARY REFORMS OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

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INTRODUCTION

In the years following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russian society faced an identity crisis of monumental proportion. New and liberalizing ideals clashed with long established traditions, a conflict perhaps most apparent in the military. The Russian military, once arguably unmatched in the world, was reduced to mere rabble almost overnight. Only in the past few years has Russia made any serious gains in modernizing its military; the question, then, is why did it take so long? The Federation suffered embarrassment after embarrassment, yet made no progress to create a combat effective force. In the following paper, I demonstrate numerous attempts have indeed been made to increase the military's effectiveness, yet almost all have been blocked by those within the military itself. This apparent contradiction can be explained by a military leadership who is unwilling to adapt to modern warfare, admit the defeat of the Cold War, and recognize a new form of a military antagonist to the Russian state.

THE COLLAPSE

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia inherited the majority of its military might. Many in Russia immediately saw the need for some degree of reform and change of doctrine. Unlike their western counterparts, doctrine in Russia was not synonymous with military theory and science, but rather the policy and organization best able to serve

national interests.[1] "Before speaking about military doctrine and military reform it is necessary for the Russian Federation to determine how to contrast its defense – as part of the CIS or independently – and what Russia's national interests are."[2] Defining what Russia's national interests are would remain a point of contention for nearly the entire first two decades of the Federation. Those who opposed reforms wished to keep the Soviet system, in which the majority of the economy could be utilized for defense and security purposes. In short, those favoring modernization and liberalization of Russian life favored reform, while the old military elite sought to prevent it in an (unsuccessful) attempt to maintain the prestige of the Soviet military.

The immediate question after the collapse regarded the division of equipment and weaponry, as well as the position of the former Soviet republics. The Russian forces abroad were recalled or disbanded, and much of their equipment was left for indigenous militaries and paramilitary groups. The vast majority of missile defense instillations, early warning systems, and other strategic nuclear equipment were within the USSR's borders but now lay outside Russia's borders. "Little more than half the combat aircraft of the Soviet air force remained within the boundaries of post-Cold War Russia. Russia also lost four of every five Soviet repair facilities for armored fighting vehicles. As a result, only twenty percent of the tanks inherited by the Russian army remained serviceable by early 1994."[3] While Belarus acknowledged Russia's ownership of the missiles present, Ukraine claimed authority and ownership of such weaponry. However, "In the Ukraine there can be no doubt that the tradition of loyalty to the Soviet Union would be quickly re-awakened in a time of international tension. The Ukraine provided for hundreds of wars the core of the Soviet army, the best of its officers. The present doubt and disunity in the nation and the possibility of a two- or three-way split of the new Union Republic gives greater emphasis to the nostalgia and security of the previous national situation."[4] Kazakhstan too remains firmly within Russia's sphere of influence, and provides an observation point to look for Turkish expansion.

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[1] M. A. Gareev, "On Military Doctrine and Military Reform in Russia," *The Journal of Soviet Military Studies* 5, no. 4 (1992): 539.
[2] Ibid., 541.
[3] Benjamin S. Lambeth, "Russia's Wounded Military," *Foreign Affairs* 74, no. 2 (1995): 88.
[4] Nicholas F. Bradshaw, "The Role and Disposition of Military Forces in the Russian Federation," *GeoJournal* 34, no. 2 (October 1994): 161. This quote is from an article published 20 years ago.

Even as early as 1992, Gareev acknowledges there was talk of Russia joining NATO. He argues this would be a mistake as it would only drag NATO into the tumultuous economic and political situations of the former Soviet republics.[5] Furthermore, such an alliance, stretching from the Atlantic to the Pacific, would simply form an opposition to Chinese expansion and exacerbate international tensions. Russia's interests are better served by bolstering the defenses of the CIS. Bradshaw notes, "Meaningless concepts such as 'Partnership for Peace' ignore that if everybody is in an alliance there is no alliance at all…"[6] He also suggests rather bluntly that the Cold War is not over, as there are still 3,000 ICBM's pointed at each other. Russia maintains a military over a million strong, and structured to fight NATO and the US in large scale, conventional warfare. The CIS would provide the most effective way for the old military leadership to keep their dreams of the Empire alive; blinded by ignorance, they failed to see the Soviet military system built to fight the US/NATO was, and would continue to be, a cancerous growth for the new Russia.

In his article, Gareev sets high expectations for reform and change in global strategy immediately following the USSR's collapse, almost none of which were met in the next two decades.[7] He suggests, as many did, that the size of the military be reduced, and manpower transitioned from conscripts to volunteers (*kontrakniks*). This streamlined military will be more capable of adapting to new threats and the changing nature of warfare, while a continued focus on strategic nuclear forces would maintain deterrence against a larger enemy. Conventional forces will defend until tactical or strategic nuclear weapons can be used. This form of deterrence is a dramatic departure from the Soviet military model. "…at one time our army intended to fight only on foreign territory, while now it turns out that it should be prepared to fight only on its own territory."[8] The proposals essentially eliminate Russian first strike capabilities; Russia will not start a war, but they will certainly engage in one if attacked. In simple terms, Russia must immediately take measures to reduce the quantity of their armed forces and increase the quality of them. The proposed reforms, however, were both too radical and too ethereal. "In the plans for military reform developed up to now, there are no concrete measures for improving

[5] Gareev, "On Military Doctrine and Military Reform in Russia," 543.
[6] Bradshaw, "The Role and Disposition of Military Forces in the Russian Federation," 165.
[7] Gareev, "On Military Doctrine and Military Reform in Russia," 545.
[8] Ibid., 549.

the qualitative parameters of the Army and Navy…but if we do not find concrete methods of resolving them, then the program for military reform will only be a collection of abstract wishes."[9]

GRACHEV'S INHERITED MILITARY

With Grachev's appointment as Minister of Defense in May of 1992, the Soviet General Staff, which had become the CIS General Staff, became the Russian Federation General Staff.[10] While not necessarily a reflection of command capability, the military of the Grachev era was a product of the inherited Soviet structure and mentality. The Federation's armed forces would be maintained to fight two threats: the US/NATO, and internal/near abroad rebels. While China was a potential threat down the road, NATO membership or intervention in a former Soviet state was a more immediate threat. This de facto continuation of the Soviet military leadership and mindset set the course of the nation for years to come. At the time, radical Islam was not considered to be a significant threat.

> "The so-called 'Southern Threat' from Islam is unlikely to materialize, and is nothing more than an excuse to add credibility to oppressive military operations. It reflects similar fears in America's defense policy, and has led to an unlikely meeting of minds between the two nations. Thus the US has been quick to ignore the evidence against the proposition that the Cold War is over, and instead collaborates on limiting Iranian influence and encouraging Turkish expansionism, thereby hopefully spreading the example of a secular Islamic state, especially among the Central Asian republics. In fact, Russia has not abandoned Iran at all and is at present energetically trading arms for Iranian oil, competing in the matter with the Chinese."[11]

The immediate nature of post-Soviet Russia's military leaders refused to acknowledge the end of the Cold War and Russia's status as a superpower. Through the CIS, Russia could effectively maintain some portion of the old Soviet sphere of influence. Grachev nevertheless saw the need for some change, and he envisioned three command groups able to operate independently: European, Central Asian, and Far Eastern. A brigade structure would replace the existing division system, allowing

[9] Gareev, "On Military Doctrine and Military Reform in Russia," 551.
[10] Bradshaw, "The Role and Disposition of Military Forces in the Russian Federation," 158.
[11] Ibid., 159.

rapid reaction forces to deploy within days. This vision would never be realized. Such a system threatens Moscow's central control, and critics said Grachev sought to weaken Russia's military capabilities. NATO and the Warsaw Pact states had signed the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe in 1990, mutually limiting the production and possession of conventional weaponry. Not only was disarmament not in the Russian plan, it is not within the realm of possibility. "Russia makes many statements of intent. It intends to comply with the CFE treaty, but to do so it would have to cut its industrial labor force by approximately forty percent. The West would have to cut by one third of one per cent, to satisfy the demands of the CFE. The Russian promise of disarmament may well have been made in good faith, but it seems impossible to fulfill."[12]

By 1994, Russia sought to bring the autonomous republics firmly under control. "With the exception of the Baltic States...the Union Republics applied to rejoin the Commonwealth of Independent States."[13] Russia was surrounded by loyal or dependent nations. It is important to note that the Russian military at this time essentially dictated its own brand of foreign policy. Russia needed to shore up its borders and maintain influence over the near abroad, and the military saw this as their responsibility. "While the military leadership discarded the ideological precepts of communism quite readily, it also adopted a 'realist' view of geopolitics more rapidly than the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In part, this may reflect a military predilection to see the world in Manichean terms and emphasize competition over cooperation."[14] The lack of civilian oversight of the military made such an autonomous system possible.

Russia's military leadership now left the responsibility of maintaining the CIS borders mostly to indigenous forces; after all, Russia was surrounded by dependent states. The troops became a unifying factor in the CIS, and many of the Russian guards were veterans of Afghanistan. This delegation of authority left gaping holes, however. The border between Azerbaijan and Iran was reportedly left completely open.[15] Smuggling became a common practice, and the drug trade fueled the black-market economy in Russia. Links between warlords in the Caucasus and crime-lords in greater Russia were established and solidified. The

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[12] Bradshaw, "The Role and Disposition of Military Forces in the Russian Federation," 165. The Federation suspended observance of the CFE treaty in mid-2007.
[13] Ibid., 156.
[14] John W. R. Lepingwell, "The Russian Military and Security Policy in the 'Near Abroad,'" *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy* 36, no. 3 (1994): 72.
[15] Ibid., 71.

military focused on the southern border, and Grachev now began to emphasize a radical Islamic threat. Turkey, too, threatened Russian interests. Turkey wanted to stop both Iranian and Russian influence, and Russia sought to prevent Azerbaijani oil from being diverted to the Turks. At this time, the chaos created by the introduction of the market economy left the oil industry mismanaged and in ruin. Russia was a net importer of oil and halved its already abysmal production. The Federation essentially traded weaponry and the arms industry was Russia's only source of foreign income.

Grachev's role as Minister of Defense gave him a large degree of autonomy, and he often decided policy, brokered deals, and engaged in diplomacy. Such activity is usually left to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. "The manner in which the Russian military has acted in the south has varied, which indicates a range of strategies and tactics and the limitations on them. These strategies and tactics include a direct military role sanctioned by the host state (Tajikistan), a 'tripwire' role (Armenia) and covert military intervention and destabilization (Georgia). In all three cases, the strategies have had limited success in furthering Russia foreign policy."[16] Georgia provides an example of not only the military's foreign policy scheming but also the blowback associated with it. The Georgian government faced a sizable separatist movement and found itself at the verge of collapse. At the time in 1992, Georgia had yet to join the CIS. Still dreaming of an empire, Russian military leadership made plans to arm, train, and even fight with the separatists. The civilian-military disconnect found the Ministry of Defense at odds with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the latter brokered a cease fire. When hostilities erupted again, Grachev ensured there was no peace brokerage. On the brink of collapse, Georgia gave in to Russia and joined the CIS. Russian troops were deployed in Georgia in late 1993 to counter opposition fighters. The military played off forces in Georgia to attain their strategic aims; while not necessarily a planned strategy, it at the very least proved its flexibility.[17]

Grachev orchestrated his strategy in the south and east to some degree of success, but tensions still remained high between Russia and Ukraine. The bread-basket state maintained Soviet-era nuclear weapons, controlled the Black Sea Fleet, and counted a number of ethnic Russians among its citizenry. Most of the Fleet's officers leaned towards the

[16] Lepingwell, "The Russian Military and Security Policy," 75.
[17] Ibid., 76. Russian intelligence trained many Chechen guerrillas and mercenaries to fight alongside the Georgian separatists. One of these trainees was Shamil Basayev, who would draw Russian forces into costly wars later in the decade, as well as orchestrate the 2002 Moscow theater bombings among others.

Federation, and even as far back as 1994 many contemplated Crimea's return to Russia. "Scenarios involving conflict and leading to a takeover of Crimea either by Russian or, more likely, Russian-backed indigenous forces appear far more probably than those involving large-scale Russian intervention in Ukraine".[18] Apart from the communists and ultranationalists, the majority of Russia believed the military should not be used against the former Soviet republics. Instead, they should provide support in accordance with the Tashkent collective security agreement. While military leadership dreamt of restoring the Soviet level of prestige, they had little interest in large scale combat outside Russia. Memories of Afghanistan were still fresh, and Russians had discovered it was easy to invade a country but harder to install a puppet government. The CIS provided a different approach to restore former glory, a path chosen by military leadership independent of civilian political aspirations.

By the start of the first Chechen War (1994-96), the Russian military itself was in an abysmal state and close to implosion. In 1994 when only twenty percent of the tanks were serviceable, Grachev declared to the Duma that Russia had the worst military in the world.[19] While the Soviets purchased around 450 new fighter aircraft a year in the 1980s, there were only 23 new aircraft purchased in 1993 and 1994 combined; more aircraft were lost in training accidents than the Air Force were purchasing.[20] Pilots logged merely a fraction of the flight hours compared to their western counterparts, and against safety regulations, some aircraft had to be cannibalized to keep others flying. The Navy had no funding for fuel so they rarely put to sea, which made a service of untrained seamen and submariners. Furthermore, the Ground Forces had not conducted a division level exercise since 1992, and would not until 1999.[21]

The infectiveness of the conscription system became fully apparent during the Chechen War, yet military leaders refused to implement change. Desertion was rampant, hazing and abuse of first year conscripts by those in their second year was common, and seventy-five percent of Russian youths avoided the draft by simply not appearing when called to duty. "Russian air force analysts have reported that it now takes all of Russia's military airlift capability just to move one airborne division in two sorties. Today it is unlikely that Russia, with its decimated and

[18] Lepingwell, "The Russian Military and Security Policy," 80.
[19] Lambeth, "Russia's Wounded Military," 88.
[20] Ibid., 89.
[21] Ibid.

poorly supported conventional forces, could mount a large-scale cross border operation against a well-equipped opponent. Its logistics system has been stretched to the breaking point just to sustain some 40,000 troops bogged down in Chechnya."[22] Pay was low, housing was scarce, and quality of life was draconian. Moscow's bus drivers earned more than trained fighter pilots.[23] Officers would farm on the weekends to make ends meet. A disproportionate amount of officers were maintained, mostly high ranking officers in menial positions. The argument was, if Russia ever needed to call upon all its reserves and potential conscripts, they would need officers to command them. This top heavy system was expensive, ineffective, and provided little career prospects. The small number of junior officers and professional NCOs mean there was little opportunity for initiative and innovation at the tactical level.

> "Western forces would have to fight badly outnumbered and from a defensive and reactive posture against a massive, combined-arms military machine that retained full control over the nuclear weapons option and was prepared, as a matter of doctrinal principle, to trade high casualty rates for victory. The clash in Chechnya revealed a military of a sadly different sort: a ragtag band of hastily assembled conscripts who were not resourceful enough to evade the draft, led by underequipped, undertrained, and demoralized officers who freely admitted that they did not understand why they were there."[24]

As Minister of Defense, Grachev was blamed for the military's failures, corruption, and near destruction. He was both incompetent and corrupt, and his removal in 1996 due to the Chechen disgrace would soon see Rodionov as Minister of Defense. Rodionov, however, sought to again paint NATO as the primary adversary, undoing the minuscule amount of progress that had been made. His policy called for increase in both appropriations, funds which did not exist, and force levels, which were already too high. Yeltsin replaced the far right-wing Minister in less than a year with Sergeyev in 1997.

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[22] Lambeth, "Russia's Wounded Military," 90.
[23] Ibid., 91.
[24] Lambeth, "Russia's Wounded Military," 91.

SERGEYEV'S REFORM

Reform was largely put on hold until 1997, when the Duma began its efforts to reign in the military. Yeltsin and the majority of the nation supported reform, though those on the Left and the Right (championed by Zhirinovsky, Rokhlin, and Rodionov) opposed reform, the President, and the President's party. The goals of reform were largely the same as they had always been, quantity must be traded for quality. Russia needed a small, combat effective force manned by contracted professionals rather than temporary conscripts. Focus must switch from large scale conventional warfare against US/NATO to local asymmetric conflicts in the south, central, and eastern border regions. The nuclear forces would retain priority and exist as a means of deterrence from a large scale invasion. "Making nuclear deterrence a priority does not, however, imply a crash missile buildup or a hair-trigger employment strategy. Rather, it means developing 'inherent enhanced deterrence'."[25]

The military leviathan that existed and still resembled the Soviet equivalent was designed to fight a war against any combination of the world's major powers. Reformists again cited threats in the immediate future would not resemble such an adversary, and instead wanted to take a logical look at potential antagonists. "The need for a stable nuclear deterrent and the complications of NATO enlargement notwithstanding, the principle contingency for the Russian military in the next five to ten years will concern local conflicts that could break out in several places simultaneously—a doctrinal point clearly formulated by President Yeltsin when he appointed Igor Sergeyev minister of defense in May 1997 (one of the few good personnel decisions Yeltsin has made)."[26] While the Soviets were twice as powerful as the European NATO forces combined, the western neighbors outnumbered Russian forces by at least two or three to one. Conventional forces in the European theater would simply act as a tripwire for a nuclear strike in the unthinkable event negotiations would deteriorate to that level.

Pakistan, Afghanistan, Turkey, and perhaps Iran represented growing threats to the south, most likely through proxy actions rather than direct confrontation. With the reduction of the number of forces, the qualitative emphasize should provide superiority over such adversaries. To the east, Japan might have represented a threat if it had been expansionist,

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[25] Alexei G. Arbatov, "Military Reform in Russia: Dilemmas, Obstacles, and Prospects," *International Security* 22, no. 4 (1998): 87.
[26] Ibid., 89.

but it would turn out not to be. China posed a problem to Russia at the turn of the century. Historical rifts and territorial claims could lead to rising tensions. China's strategic and nuclear capability pales in comparison to Russia however, and the continued arms sales to China provided another method of curbing eastern expansion; weapon sales could simply be slowed or stopped to hinder Chinese military modernization.

The economic decline in 1997, however, halted any reform efforts. The military was now too expensive to maintain as it was, change slightly, or change completely; there was no clear right answer. Yeltsin wanted to transform the military into an entirely volunteer force by 2000, though the Ministry of Defense refused such a schedule as conscripts were cheaper to maintain in the short term.[27] Some wanted a complete transition to volunteers, some wanted a mixed transition, and some wanted no change to the military structure. While politicians debated what the reform would look like or if there would even be one, the military remained extremely ineffective. There had still not been a division-level military exercise since 1992, equipment was barely operable, and officers became increasingly disillusioned with democracy. Many wanted the glory of the Soviet empire and believe just short of authoritarianism might bring some good to Russia. Rokhlin and his opposition comrades sought to politically use the military's low morale and turn the Armed Forces against Yeltsin completely. Reform efforts ground to a halt due to opposition and economic necessity.

In August 1999, Russian troops were again deployed to Chechnya to begin a second full scale war in five years. The Second Chechen War closely resembled the first, at least in terms of causalities, bombing of civilian targets, and the flood of refugees. The Russian army was more successful this time around however, at least in public relations. Mistakes were blamed on the Chechens while any successes were chalked up to the professionalism of the Russian military.[28] The ultimate failure in the Second Chechen War was due to Russia's attempt to solve a political problem with a military solution.[29] Again, a new attempt at reform would be initiated after the fact.

2001 & 2003 REFORMS

When he took office, Putin claimed military reform, doubling the GDP, and fighting poverty were the nation's top three priorities. When Putin replaced Sergeyev with Ivanov in 2001, reform was needed to

[27] Arbatov, "Military Reform in Russia," 98.
[28] Rajan Menon and Graham E. Fuller, "Russia's Ruinous Chechen War." *Foreign Affairs* 79, no. 2 (2000): 41.
[29] Ibid., 44.

address the antiquated military equipment as well as the social problems inherent in an underfunded, ineffective military. Desertion was just as widespread as it was in the early 1990s, conscripts failed to report for service, hazing was still common place, and officer morale remained abysmally low. The initial push for reform in 2001 again failed, as the consolidation of the branches was reduced to simply some bureaucrat clans winning out over others.[30] The size of the military was reduced but it did nothing in terms of combat effectiveness and discipline.

The 2003 effort for reform sought to fix the persistent problems. Professional non-commissioned officers were to be placed in all units as early as 2004, and eighty percent of combat ready units were to be composed of contract troops. Conscript sergeants were counter-productive, as they had no more experience than their peers. Furthermore, higher pay, post-service benefits, education after service, and Russian citizenship for CIS immigrants were all planned. Once again, leadership in the Ministry of Defense fought the reforms and insisted conscripts were necessary for a modern Russian military. Lack of funding and cost effectiveness were again cited as justification for the old model military. This would keep the top-heavy officer corps necessary to handle an influx of conscripts in the event of a large scale war, as well as the redirection of industry for military purposes. The mixed conscript-volunteer model provided a temporary fix, though Ivanov intended that model to become the new norm.[31] However, training for volunteers was the same as for conscripts, which undercut their effectiveness and combat capability. The number of *kontrakniks* did not matter if they did not make a professional force.

Despite Russia's pledge to assist in the War on Terror, no effort was made to adjust the military's focus to anti-terrorist operations. This is largely due to skepticism of the war; many in the Ministry of Defense believe it is just an excuse for NATO and the US to further their geopolitical goals. Grachev's original reforms aimed to effectively divide the Soviet military infrastructure Russia had inherited. Rodionov's counter-reforms, for lack of a better term, sought to make the economic infrastructure subservient to military needs, as well as consolidate the use of military force under the Ministry of Defense. Sergeyev saw the need for combat-ready soldiers, though to do so he required a larger budget which

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[30] Alexander Golts, "Military Reform in Russia and the Global War Against Terrorism," *Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 17, no. 1 (2004): 30.
[31] Ibid., 33.

was not feasible. Ivanov had recognized the need for modern military equipment, as the Armed Forces were still using Soviet-era weaponry.

2008 REFORMS & PUTIN'S NEW MILITARY

By 2008, Russia had seemingly given up its Soviet-style global ambitions. As the nature of diplomacy and warfare changed with the turn of the century, a large foreign invasion became less of a threat. Internal threats and those in the near abroad were finally given the military's full attention. The need to modernize equipment was now more apparent than ever. In the 2008 South Ossetian conflict, sixty to seventy percent of the armored personnel carriers and tanks broke down, and fifty-five percent of the Air Force remained out of commission.[32] Serdyukov became the first civilian Minister of Defense, and the greatest structural changes since the Soviet era were implemented. "In contrast to the Yeltsin (and partially Putin-1) administrations who tried simply to downsize the huge Soviet- born military monster, the current Russian leadership (starting from the Medvedev and continued by the Putin-2 teams) intends to create a principally new army."[33] This new army would depart from the traditional conventional force to one that is permanently combat ready. In 2008, the military still numbered some 1.2 million men, though was reduced to 1 million by 2012. Reform was four years ahead of schedule thanks to Serdyukov's efforts. The officer corps was reduced by almost 200,000, and many positions were abolished or outsourced to the civilian sector. Junior officers finally outnumbered senior officers, and the General Staff departments were cut in half.

The reforms looked to the NATO model in a number of areas. The six military districts were reduced to four and resembled the US model: West, East, South, and Central. The unwieldy divisional system was replaced by the more mobile brigade structure that existed in NATO forces. The sixty-five institutions of military higher education were folded into ten, and only two of the ten Deputy Ministers of Defense had military backgrounds. Logistics and command and control systems were updated and streamlined. Pensions and pay were increased, and the everyday life of military personnel was made easier. Cell phones were allowed, the 5 day work week was established, and greater contact with civil society was permitted. Priority was given to the Strategic Nuclear forces, the Rapid Reaction Forces, Spetsnaz, and anti-terrorism units.

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[32] Andrei Makarychev and Alexander Serguinin, "Russian Military Reform: Institutional, Political, and Security Implications," *Defense and Security Analysis* 29, no. 4 (2013): 356.
[33] Ibid., 358.

Serdyukov handled the military reforms with an economic, business-like approach, though faced as much opposition as, if not more than, all the previous reform attempts. His approach was disdained by the old military leadership and blamed for the lack of professionalism still present. The number of deputy ministers with military backgrounds was a point of contention, and was increased to seven of ten when his successor was appointed. The transition to the brigade system was said to weaken military capabilities and confined its purpose to limited warfare. Serdyukov's modernization efforts also drew criticisms. The Russian military industrial complex provided no viable equipment, and foreign weaponry was imported, often via the French. Despite the progress he had made in the right direction, Serdyukov was replaced in 2012. His successor Shoigu has no intentions of stopping Serdyukov's changes, but merely trimming them heavily.

In 2006, Putin had famously claimed the military had 1.4 million men yet no one able to fight. Many suggest Putin waited for Medvedev to take the presidency to initiate the needed reforms, giving him plausible deniability. Putin's second term started a sub-reform process, continuing the step taken in 2008. "Now another phase of the reform process begins, one that could last for many years—namely, the cultivation and training of new and educated officers who are able to think for themselves and take initiative when needed, as well as a corps of professional sergeants that can maintain discipline in the barracks."[34] The dwindling number of Russian males of military age necessitates the switch to contract soldiers. Some, including Putin, still propose a million man army, though even the current number of some 710,000 is still placing too much economic pressure on the government. Even by allocating three to four percent of the GDP to the military, Russia can still only maintain 500,000 to 600,000.

> "The irony is that the order to keep 1 million troops makes no military sense. Today, control over large swaths of territory is ensured not by the size of the armed forces but by surveillance from outer space, the ability of troops to deploy and relocate quickly, the technical resources for the operational deployment of forces and, of course, by modern long-range, high-precision ('smart') weapons. To ensure such deployment and the possibility of troop movements,

[34] Alexander Golts, "Reform: The End of the First Phase - Will There Be a Second?" *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 27, no. 1 (2014): 133.

> combat-ready forces are created and heavy-weapons depots are deployed in advance in the threatened areas (first and foremost, this means the Caucasus region and the regions adjacent to the Russian-Kazakh and Russian– Chinese borders, and also along the border with North Korea). No one can explain why this magical figure—1 million—appeared. I suppose that Vladimir Putin believes that a million-strong army is a mandatory attribute of a great power."[35]

One of the defining characteristics of an effective and modern military is civilian oversight; this is inherently contradictory to Putin's superpresidential system. Putin continues to drastically restructure the military and its organization, and it seems the old guard of the Soviet era have either dispersed or fallen in line. The recent crisis in Ukraine has provided Putin with an opportunity to test the effectiveness of his new military. After pushing his reforms through, Putin has solidified the support of the military by showing Russia may yet still achieve the military prestige of the Soviet Union. This has been the primary goal of those opposing reforms since the Federation was founded. The operations in Crimea and Ukraine have effectively demonstrated Russia's ability to rapidly deploy combat-effective troops. This move is in no small part meant to show NATO and the rest of the world Russia has achieved the status of a modern military force, or is at the very least well on its way to becoming one.

CONCLUSION

The loss of prestige and pride associated with the Soviet collapse remained an open wound for military leadership during the Federation's first two decades. As the rest of the Russian society learned to embrace democratic and free market ideals, the military remained a bastion of Soviet-thought. Reform, it was argued, would only weaken the military more and further reduce its prestige. For the officers who still dreamt of an empire, it was their responsibility to project an image of power and protect the homeland. This meant maintaining a large, conventional force capable of engaging the US and NATO. The realities of modern warfare and diplomacy have only now begun to set in, and reform efforts are finally making progress. By pushing his changes through, Putin initiated radical changes in the military structure that will continue in the coming years. The reform efforts have introduced contract soldiers, though the military

[35] Golts, "Reform: The End of the First Phase," 135.

still relies on a substantial number of enlisted personnel. The recent expedition in Ukraine has demonstrated the effectiveness of Putin's new military, and I believe the future of Russia's military is closely tied with the future of the Ukraine crisis. While reform has always been met with significant opposition in the Federation, priority has always been placed on the Strategic Nuclear Forces. As long as Russia's conventional military capability remains in question, disarmament is out of the question. I believe there will not be a serious reduction of nuclear arms in Russia until the identity crisis of the Russian military is resolved.