

This article was downloaded by: 10.3.97.143

On: 03 Oct 2023

Access details: *subscription number*

Publisher: *Routledge*

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: 5 Howick Place, London SW1P 1WG, UK



Routledge Handbook of Russian Foreign Policy

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Military

Publication details

<https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9781315536934-12>

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Published online on: 29 Mar 2018

How to cite :- Valery Konyshev, Alexander Sergunin. 29 Mar 2018, *Military from: Routledge Handbook of Russian Foreign Policy* Routledge

Accessed on: 03 Oct 2023

<https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9781315536934-12>

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MILITARY

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Introduction

The military's role in Moscow's present-day world policies is a popular theme both in the Russian and international scholarship. However, upon closer examination, this topic, in fact, has not been extensively studied.

The bulk of the literature is, in fact, devoted to the study of civil-military relations in post-Soviet Russia (Herspring, 1996; Chaldymov, 2001; Maslyuk, 2001; Stepanova, 2001; Ulrich, 2002; Taylor, 2003; Betz, 2004; Knoph, 2004; Isakova, 2005: 159–194; Danilova, 2007; Gomart, 2008; Pallin, 2009: 15–48; Renz, 2011) rather than how the military affects Russia's foreign policy making. The second type of works focuses on Russian military reforms and their implications for Moscow's security policies in various regions of the planet (Taylor, 2003; Isakova, 2005: 195–229; Pallin, 2009: 49–63; Barabanov, 2011; Bartles, 2011; Lannon, 2011; McDermott, 2011; McDermott et al., 2011; Makarychev and Sergunin, 2013; Gressel, 2015; Russell, 2015; Golts and Kofman, 2016). A third group of authors has studied the state of affairs of the Russian armed forces and their military capabilities at present and in the foreseeable future (Taylor, 2003; Galeotti, 2010; McDermott et al., 2011; Persson, 2016). Few scholarly works examine the role which the military actually plays in Russia's foreign policy making and implementation (Betz, 2004; Isakova, 2005; Allison et al., 2006: 36–40; Sergunin, 2008, 2016: 167–194; Pallin, 2009: 15–48).

The scholarship on the Russian military can be divided to two groups – Alarmists and Pragmatists. On the Alarmist side there are those arguing that Russia's military is poorly controlled and aggressive. Here, there are also those who believe that Putin is dependent on the military and exploits their instincts for diversionary politics and regime stability (Betz, 2004: 151–156; Knoph, 2004; Isakova, 2005: 159–194; Pallin, 2009: 15–48; Renz, 2011; Golts and Kofman, 2016: 13–19). For instance, for them, Russia's Ukrainian and Syrian policies are both predicated on Putin's survival tactics (Marten, 2015). On the Pragmatist side, the authors argue that Russia remains largely defensive and, while not being a Western-style democracy, is controlled by civilian authorities (Allison et al., 2006: 36–40; Gomart, 2008: 6–10). In a certain sense, Putin has continued Russia's historical tradition: the absence of successful military coups implies that Tsars were firmly in charge in the army, not the other way around (Taylor, 2003).

This study aims to argue that civilian control was largely established following the post-Cold War years although civil-military relations in Russia are still not fully in line with Western democratic standards and remain an object of criticism from the foreign policy-making and expert communities. One more point is that the military's role in Russian foreign policy is quite limited; the use of military force is seen as a last resort, when other – non-military – means are exhausted, and it is done in a rather limited/selective way.

Along with the general research objective (which role does the military play in Moscow's foreign policy?), there are several specific purposes of this study:

- How can the military (hard power) instruments be compared to other – soft power – tools (diplomacy, energy, city-twinning, compatriots, NGOs, research, educational and cultural cooperation, etc.) in terms of achieving Moscow's international policy objectives?
- How has the role of the Russian military in international affairs evolved since the end of the Cold War? Has it become more or less successful across time and relative to some other key political actors?
- What future questions and themes of the military in Russia's foreign policy are likely to arise?

Threat perceptions, doctrines

In the 1990s, there were certain discrepancies between foreign policy and military doctrines with regard to threat perceptions and the use of military force. For example, the Russian foreign policy concept of 1993 ('Kontsepsiya vneshney politiki', 1993) did not see any serious threats to Russia's security except those coming from the developing world. The document emphasized Russia's commitment to political and diplomatic methods and negotiation rather than to the use of military force, the admissibility of the limited use of force in strict accordance with international law to ensure national and international security and stability. In general, the document can be characterized as liberal and pro-Western in its spirit. In contrast, the Russian military doctrine of 1993 described systematically and at length both external and internal sources of military threats to the country (Yeltsin, 1994). Still, the document represented a radical departure from Soviet strategic thinking. The new doctrine did not identify the United States and NATO as primary sources of military danger. Rather, it warned against provoking a new confrontation by violating the strategic balance, i.e. military build-up in the regions adjacent to Russia and NATO expansion. The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and international terrorism were given a rather important status. This brought Russia closer to leading Western countries, which also consider these phenomena to be the most dangerous international developments.

The new reading of military threats has led to new approaches to military strategy, as well as to an appropriate organization and training of the armed forces. The document called for a re-targeting of the Russian armed forces from large-scale war to low intensity conflicts. The main aim of the use of the armed forces and other services in armed conflicts and local wars, the doctrine said, was "to localize the seat of tensions and stop hostilities at the earliest possible stage, in the interests of creating conditions for a peaceful settlement of the conflict on conditions suiting the interests of the Russian Federation" (Yeltsin, 1994: 9).

The doctrine, however, did not exclude the possibility of large-scale war. It mentioned that under certain conditions, armed conflicts and local wars can develop into an all-out war. According to the document, the priority was to develop the armed forces and other services designed to deter aggression, as well as mobile elements, which can be quickly delivered and

deployed in the required area and can carry out mobile operations in any region where the security of Russia might be threatened. Military operations should be carried out by peacetime groups of forces (those which organized for peace-time conditions, i.e. have incomplete personnel and arsenals; in the war-time period they are reorganized to be fully fledged military units), deployed in the conflict area. In case of need, they might be strengthened by a partial deployment and re-deployment of forces from other regions.

Furthermore, the military doctrine of 1993 recognized multiple dangers stemming from domestic developments and laid a legal foundation for the use of the armed forces in internal conflicts such as Chechnya. The doctrine also clarified Russia's nuclear policy, declaring that the goal of nuclear policy is to avert the threat of a nuclear war by deterring aggression against Russia and its allies. Therefore, nuclear weapons were seen as a political deterrent to nuclear or conventional aggression. This marked the shift in Russian strategic thinking to a Western-like concept of deterrence, compensating for conventional weakness. The most distinct departure of the new Russian nuclear doctrine from the Soviet one was Russia's abandonment of the principle of no-first-use (introduced by Leonid Brezhnev in 1982). At the same time, the document promised that Russia would never use its nuclear weapons against any member of the Non-Proliferation Treaty of 1968 if it is not aligned with a nuclear state against Russia (Yeltsin, 1994: 6). NATO members and nuclear states fell under these categories.

The 1993 military doctrine was a path-breaking document which laid basic foundations for Russia's defense philosophy in the post-Cold War period. This doctrine is regularly being updated but its main underpinnings remain intact. Moreover, this document has affected the Russian national security and foreign policy concepts developed under the Yeltsin, Putin, and Medvedev regimes.

However, the second Chechen war, NATO military intervention in Kosovo, and NATO's eastward enlargement (all in 1999) prompted the Kremlin and the new Russian President Vladimir Putin to revise its national security and foreign policy strategies. For instance, the national security and foreign policy concepts of 2000 elevated the importance and expanded the types of external threats to Russian security: the weakening of the OSCE and the UN; weakening Russian political, economic, and military influence in the world; further eastward expansion of NATO, including the possibility of foreign military bases or deployment of forces on Russian borders; proliferation of WMD and the means for their delivery; weakening of the CIS, and escalation of conflicts on CIS members' borders; and territorial claims against Russia (Putin, 2000a: 4, 2000b). They argued that, contrary to multi-polar tendency, the United States and its allies under the guise of multilateralism had sought to establish a uni-polar world outside of international law.

In addition to these threat perceptions, the military doctrine of 2000 pointed to a new threat of an information war against Russia as an important factor of the contemporary security environment in the world (Putin, 2000c). This document described in detail the nature of contemporary and future wars, distinguishing the following trends: use of high-precision and non-contact weapons, attacks throughout the whole enemy's territory, involvement of irregular forces, and high risk of the use of WMD. The doctrine defined different types of possible armed conflicts: intra-state, local, regional, and large-scale.

The military's threat perceptions have also significantly affected Russia's national security and foreign policy documents of the Medvedev and the third Putin administrations – national security strategy of 2009, foreign policy concepts of 2008 and 2013, and military doctrine of 2010. The latter document, however, paid more attention to the challenges posed by the military reform, socio-economic aspects of the Russian military strategy and defense diplomacy, rather than to purely strategic issues (Medvedev, 2010).

The Ukrainian crisis of 2014 has further shifted Moscow's threat perceptions toward the hard security problematique. On December 26, 2014, an updated version of the Russian military doctrine was signed by President Putin (Putin, 2014). The new doctrine highlighted NATO's build-up and expansion toward the Russian borders as being the main external dangers to Russia's security. Other threats mentioned in the document include the development and deployment of the U.S. ballistic missile defense (BMD) systems, the implementation of the 'global strike' doctrine, plans to place weapons in space, deployment of high-precision conventional weapons systems as well as evolving forms of warfare such as, for example, information warfare. For the first time, the protection of Russia's national interests in the Arctic in peacetime was assigned to the Russian armed forces.

The doctrine showed increased Russian interest in improving its own ability to use precision conventional weapons. For the first time, the concept of non-nuclear deterrence was introduced in the document. This became a reflection of the fact that most of the military threats that Russia faces now are of a non-nuclear character and can be successfully met with conventional means. But the central question of when Moscow might feel compelled to use nuclear weapons seems unchanged: in the case of WMD attack or use of conventional forces threatening the existence of state (Putin, 2014). In general, however, the new version of the military doctrine retained its defensive nature.

The new doctrine differed from the previous one in treating internal threats to the country as military ones. The new document stated that "the destabilization of the domestic political and social situation in the nation" and even "information-related activity aimed at influencing the population, primarily the country's young citizens, with the goal of undermining the historical, spiritual and patriotic traditions in the area of defending the Fatherland" (Putin, 2014). Some Western experts believe that such a broad interpretation of internal threats may lead to perceptions of any political opposition as an activity requiring a military response (Sinovets and Renz, 2015: 2).

In late July 2015 Putin approved a new version of Russia's maritime doctrine that included both naval and civilian components (Putin, 2015a). The novelty of the document was that it emphasized the priority of the North Atlantic and Arctic where NATO activities and international competition for natural resources and sea routes continued to grow and required Russia's 'adequate response'. Along with the naval forces, the nuclear icebreaker fleet will be substantially modernized by 2020.

On December 31, 2015, Russian President Vladimir Putin approved a new national security strategy (NSS-2015). The doctrine paid great attention to the internal aspects of Russia's security. Particularly, security threats such as terrorism, radical nationalism and religious fanaticism, separatism, organized crime and corruption were identified. As for the external threats, the NSS-2015 accused the West of causing the Ukrainian crisis. The document noted a threat emanating from the biological weapons. "The network of U.S. biological military labs is expanding on the territories of countries neighboring Russia," it said. The NSS-2015 underlined that "Russia's independent foreign and domestic policy" has been met with counteraction by the United States and its allies. The new NSS also declared that Russia has demonstrated the ability, "to protect the rights of compatriots abroad" (Putin, 2015b). The doctrine has received a rather hostile reaction from the Western expert community (Lynch, 2015; Payne and Schneider, 2016).

On November 30, 2016, a new version of the Russian foreign policy concept was approved by the Kremlin. In contrast with the previous version of 2013, the new document underscored the increasing role of force (including its military component) in present-day international relations as a result of growing tensions between various international actors and the instability of the world's political and economic systems (Putin, 2016). However, the paper is based on the

assumption that the threat of a large-scale nuclear war is still highly improbable. The document underlined the need to complete the process of demarcation of Russia's land and maritime boundaries, and delimitation of continental shelves to eliminate a potential source of conflict with foreign countries.

It should be noted that the military doctrine of 2014, maritime doctrine of 2015, NSS-2015, and foreign policy concept of 2016 mark the culmination of a rather long process in deteriorating relations between Moscow and the West and in how the Russian security elite perceives security threats and challenges. On the other hand, these documents signal that Moscow is still open to cooperation with its Western and other foreign partners.

Decision-making

The Ministry of Defense (MoD) of the Russian Federation was formally established on March 16, 1992, with President Yeltsin fulfilling the role of minister. On 18 May he was replaced by General Pavel Grachev, a former Commander of the Soviet Airborne Forces, who played a critical role in obstructing the August 1991 coup d'état attempt.

A dramatic change took place in civil-military relations in post-Soviet Russia in the early 1990s. Soviet-era controls and supervisory agencies were eroded, but no authoritative civilian institutions and conventions about the limits on military involvement in political matters have emerged to take their place. There were some hopes that a sort of civilian control over the military would be established. Some experts suggested the appointment of a civilian Defense Minister who would be a President's representative among the military establishment rather than a representative of the military elite in the entourage of the President.

According to this view, the Defense Minister should deal with issues such as military R&D and the defense budget, while strategic planning and operational control over the armed forces and military training should be the General Staff's responsibilities. There were also some more radical proposals such as the withdrawal of the General Staff from the MoD, its re-subordination to the Defense or Security Council, and the assumption by this body of the role of chief coordinator of all 'power' agencies' activities.

At the same time, the weakness of central authority and the lack of a sound decision-making system in the first half of the 1990s meant that the Russian military establishment enjoyed considerable autonomy and was able to gradually increase its influence on security policy. Its links with civilian politicians and expatriate communities provided the defense establishment with additional channels of influence on Russian decision-making. Along with Kozyrev, the Defense Minister became a member of the Security Council's Inter-Agency Foreign Policy Commission in December 1992. The General Staff dominated the process of drafting military doctrine in 1992–93. According to some accounts, at a meeting of the Security Council on February 28, 1993, Yeltsin asked the high-ranking military leaders to draft not only military-technical sections but also the political chapter of the new military doctrine – a prerogative which in principle belonged to the Security Council or the President himself (Malcolm et al., 1996: 253). The final version of the doctrine reflected military rather than civilian preferences.

In the 1990s, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' (MFA) neglect of relations with the former Soviet Union republics effectively invited the MoD to take the leading role in conflict management in the post-Soviet space (Baev, 1996: 38). The MoD often prevailed over other foreign policy institutions in Russia's relations with the Baltic States and the states of the South Caucasus (Crow, 1993). The MoD officials also opposed military intervention in the former Yugoslavia. Deputy Defense Minister Georgy Kondratyev announced in late April 1993 that Russia would not send additional peace-keeping forces there. Both Defense Minister Grachev

and then Commander in Chief of the CIS Armed Forces, Marshal Yevgeny Shaposhnikov protested against the use of military force in settling the conflict (Crow, 1993: 50). Furthermore, the MoD was quite independent in decisions on military agreements and cooperation with foreign countries. Finally, the military exercised its autonomy in expressing criticism, alongside the Foreign Intelligence Service, of plans to expand NATO and the possibility of replacing the UN with NATO in peace-keeping activities in the CIS area (*Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 1 August 1992).

It was President Putin who was able to establish an effective civilian control over the armed forces. In 2007, he appointed Anatoly Serdyukov, a former furniture salesman and tax inspector with no background in defense issues, to be Russia's first really civilian Defense Minister. According to Mankoff (2009: 57–58), the appointment of a complete outsider like Serdyukov signaled how little trust the Kremlin had in the upper ranks of the military. Yuri Baluevsky's (an outspoken critic of Serdyukov's reforms) departure as chief of the General Staff in mid-2008 was likewise connected to attempts by the MoD to rein in the military's autonomy and subject it to modernization in line with a perception of the country's civilian leadership that the military has failed to adapt to new realities and adequately confront the range of non-traditional security threats facing Russia in a globalizing world.

Under Serdyukov (2007–2012), the Russian armed forces had undergone the most serious structural changes in the post-Soviet era. In contrast to the Yeltsin administrations who tried simply to downsize the huge Soviet-born military monster, the Putin-2 (2004–2008), Medvedev (2008–2012), and Putin-3 (from 2012 to the present) teams intended to create a principally new army. The Kremlin aimed to make the armed forces adequate to the nature of domestic and external threats to Russia's military security on the one hand, and to Russia's economic, technical, demographic, and intellectual capabilities, on the other.

The priority was to develop the armed forces and other services designed to deter aggression, as well as mobile elements, which could be quickly delivered and deployed in the required area(s) and carry out mobile operations in any region where the security of Russia might be threatened. Special attention was paid to enhance the interoperable abilities of the armed forces. The core idea of the Russian military reform was the transformation of the armed forces from a conventional mobilization army to a permanently combat-ready force (Taylor, 2003; Isakova, 2005: 195–229; Pallin, 2009: 49–63; Barabanov, 2011; Bartles, 2011; Lannon, 2011; McDermott, 2011; McDermott et al., 2011; Makarychev and Sergunin, 2013; Gressel, 2015; Russell, 2015; Golts and Kofman, 2016).

The new round of reforms under Defense Minister Sergey Shoigu (since 2012) includes the creation of five Joint Strategic Commands (North, South, Central, East, West) and a National Defense Management Center as the highest command and control body of Russia's armed forces; further modernization of strategic and conventional forces; improvement of control over planning, production, and testing of new weapons; development of plans to expand permanent military presence abroad (in addition to the Russian bases in Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, Syria, and Tajikistan, negotiations has started with Cuba, Vietnam, Venezuela, Nicaragua, Singapore, and others).

The coordination of long-term planning on military policy is done through the Security Council where the Defense Minister has a permanent seat, while the chief of the General Staff is a member of the Council. The MoD has a key role, and especially the General Staff, but from the composition of the Security Council Interdepartmental Commission on Military Security it is clear that military security encompasses the activity of a large number of ministries, services, and agencies. The chief of the General Staff heads the Commission (www.scrf.gov.ru/about/commission/MVK_VB_members/).

The Military-Industrial Commission is something of a hybrid president-government coordination vehicle. The President has chaired the Commission since 2014, while Deputy Prime

Minister Dmitry Rogozin is deputy chair. In this Commission the ministers of finance, industry and trade, and economic development are represented as well as the heads of the so-called power ministries and their deputies (including the MoD) (<http://docs.cntd.ru/document/420219875>). Within the government, Rogozin is responsible for questions pertaining to the defense industry, export control, international military-technical cooperation, civil defense, mobilization, and proposing systems to prepare the young for military service.

A system of parliamentary oversight over the military was effectively established under the Putin and Medvedev administrations (Allison et al., 2006: 38). Formally speaking, the Defense Minister is accountable to the Federal Assembly and should report to each of the two chambers on a regular basis (as other ministers do). In practice, the activities of the MoD are most closely considered by specialized committees on defense and security.

As for the MoD's role in decision-making, some experts believe that while after the collapse of the Soviet Union the MoD initially had a great deal of influence over the foreign policy direction of the country, Foreign Minister Evgeny Primakov who took this position in February 1996 "helped to seize the initiative that the military had increasingly been taking away from civilian authorities . . . and took considerable powers away" from the Defense Ministry (Tsygankov, 2016: 117).

Under three Putin and Medvedev administrations, the MoD has continued to lose its influence on foreign policy decision-making. The role of the military declined to the point where "the military had little influence in foreign policy formation" (Sakwa, 2008: 374). Part of this declining role in foreign policy can also be credited to the fact that the MoD had many domestic priorities including the war in Chechnya and the military reform process (Sergunin, 2008: 67, 2016: 175–176). Despite this decline of influence in areas of foreign policy, the areas of national security and disarmament still remained areas where the MoD retained influence. Within the MoD itself there are many branches that have responsibilities towards these areas of policy, particularly because "to a large extent [they] dominate the discourse because of their monopoly on technical expertise" related to the issues of arms control and disarmament (Sokov et al., 2009: 7). Areas such as missile defense and nuclear reductions talks are strongly influenced by the MoD because of their technical knowledge of the subjects being addressed.

Prior to the Ukrainian and Syrian crises, the President had assigned the MoD predominantly internal missions such as military reform, the war in Chechnya, etc. Even the CIS collective security system, including peacekeeping operations in the post-Soviet space and in the Balkans, were no longer the MoD's preferential areas. The ministry looked often more like a decision-taker, an instrument of implementing policies, rather than a decision-maker (Pacer, 2016: 10–11).

During the Syrian and Ukrainian crises, the most important decisions on the use of military force were also prescribed by political priorities of Kremlin. According to Bloomberg (Meyer and Arkhipov, 2015), the military plan of intervention in Syria was pushed by Sergey Ivanov (the then head of the Presidential Administration) and Nikolay Patrushev (Security Council's secretary), rather than by Defense Minister Sergey Shoygu.

Besides, Russia's decision-making system significantly rests on personal loyalty to a political leader (Averkov, 2012; Gomart, 2008: 1–2) as was the case with the last two Defense Ministers (Serdyukov and Shoygu) who didn't represent any influential policy or military elites and had no political ambitions of their own. This also demonstrates the political leadership's view of the military as an important but secondary actor in the decision-making process. As the President himself and his team have signaled many times, defense policies are framed mainly through the interaction of the Presidential Administration and Security Council, on the one hand, and the Federal Assembly (Russia's parliament), on the other.

To summarize, there were ups and downs in the defense agency's influence on the decision-making process. Being created and properly institutionalized later than many other Russian governmental bodies, the MoD and General Staff have had to wage permanent bureaucratic warfare to secure their interests and authority. This often resulted in open confrontation with the MFA and presidential structures as well as inconsistencies in Russia's security and foreign policies in the world. In the 1990s, the military establishment managed to retain its positions in areas such as CIS military integration, peace-keeping in the post-Soviet space and Balkans, arms control, military-technical cooperation with foreign countries, and military-to-military contacts. The military lobby's influence increased in the periods when the President badly needed the army's support in domestic political struggles and decreased when the Kremlin's positions were more-or-less stable. As Putin enjoys stable domestic support, the MoD's impact on decision-making could rise only as result of a decline in relations between Russia and West.

Military power as a foreign policy tool

Russia has implemented far-reaching military reforms to create more professional and combat-ready armed forces that can swiftly deploy abroad, backed by expertise in non-conventional warfare tactics such as subversion and propaganda (Gressel, 2015). The West has misunderstood these reforms – focusing on shortcomings in equipment – and, as a result, has underestimated Russia's military capacity, as shown by its response to the Ukrainian and Syrian crises. Russia could now overwhelm any of the countries in the post-Soviet sphere if they were isolated from the West.

Assessing the fighting power of the Russian armed forces, military analysts try to find out what kind of military assets are available for three overall missions: operational-strategic joint inter-service combat operations (JISCOs), stand-off warfare, and strategic deterrence. The experts note that Russia possesses (and will retain in the foreseeable future) a large ground operations-centric force. The Russian military is able to launch at least one – possibly two – large-scale JISCOs, with thousands of vehicles and aircraft and around 150 000 servicemen in each (Persson, 2016: 192).

The experts also believe that Russia's military capability – both conventional and nuclear – is likely to continue to improve. As Russian military intervention in Syria and counter-measures to NATO's recent military build-up show, the emphasis will be put on obtaining new naval platforms for launching long-range cruise missiles as well as additional Iskander-M brigades.

Russia's military assets for strategic deterrence will most likely continue to increase during the 2020s. Apart from the ability to perform JISCOs and stand-off warfare, Russia will be able to maintain a substantial operational strategic nuclear weapons force. The organization in a triad will probably remain during the next ten-year period, with the land-based Strategic Missile Forces as the backbone. The number of deployed intercontinental missiles will decrease but, with more multiple-warhead missiles, the overall number of warheads is likely to remain the same. A larger share of these will be deployed on mobile launchers. The capability – and the strategic importance – of the SSBN fleet will increase if the introduction of Bulava missiles and the Borei class submarines can be carried out (<http://militaryrussia.ru/blog/topic-338.html>). The strategic bomber fleet of modernized aircraft may shrink slightly towards the mid-2020s, and there are significant uncertainties regarding deliveries of new strategic bomber aircraft.

Although NATO's military advantage over Russia is undermined by low combat-readiness, understaffing, and the need to coordinate between countries, Russia's military potential is still insufficient to pose a serious threat to Europe. Moreover, as Moscow's threat perception assessment demonstrates, the Kremlin has no aggressive ambitions in this region. Its strategic forces

aim to deter other nuclear powers (first and foremost the United States) while conventional forces are comparable or even inferior to the U.S./NATO and Chinese ones (see Table 10.1) and are designed for defensive missions as well.

In the post-Soviet era, Russia has systematically used military force to achieve its political aims. In the 1990s, Moscow intervened militarily in the local conflicts in the post-Soviet space to manage or stop them, as well as for peace-keeping and peace-enforcement purposes (Nagorny Karabakh, Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Tajikistan, and Transnistria). In August 2008, Moscow used its armed forces to stop Georgia's invasion of South Ossetia. In 2014–15, the Kremlin used military force to take over Crimea and support the breakaway republics in Donbass. Finally, Moscow intervened in the Syrian conflict to prevent the fall of the Assad regime and defeat international terrorism in this country.

It should be noted that in all cases, Russian uses of military force since the early 1990s share a fundamental similarity: the Kremlin used its military, first and foremost, to achieve foreign policy goals. The military objectives were driven by the policy mission; in other words, there have been no purely military goals. According to Charap (2016: 1–2), Russia's use of force is best understood as a means of coercion. He uses Thomas Schelling's theory of military coercion developed in his classic *Arms and Influence* (2008) to explain Moscow's approach to the use of military force as a foreign policy tool. Schelling classifies coercive military acts as either deterrence, aimed at preventing adversary behaviors, or compellence – threatening or taking action to force the adversary to induce compliance (Schelling, 2008: 79).

The Russian cases of the use of military force clearly were acts of both deterrence and compellence. For example, in March 2014 the Federation Council, the upper chamber of the Russian parliament, provided President Putin with the permission to use armed forces on the Ukrainian territory until the “normalization of the situation” in this country. This was a clear message to the new regime in Kiev to prevent it from using force against the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, which had decided to hold a referendum on secession.

On other occasions, such as the peace enforcement operation in South Ossetia (August 2008) and alleged operations against the Ukrainian army at Ilovaisk (August 2014) and Debaltsevo (January–February 2015), this did not result in the total defeat of the Georgian and Ukrainian forces but did demonstrate Moscow's willingness and ability to force Tbilisi and Kiev to change their behavior. Russia's intention was not just to change the Georgian and Ukrainian military's behavior; it also forced their political leaders to the negotiating table as well as to stop hostilities and produce ceasefire agreements.

One should understand the military component of Russian policy as one element of a broader coercive bargaining process related to political outcomes. The Georgia and Ukraine cases were elements of Russia's campaign to block these countries' integration in the Western military and economic structures. The Syria intervention is part of the international bargaining process over the civil war that dates from 2011. In all these cases the use of force came as a last resort. Russia tries to achieve its objectives by using diplomacy, economic pressure, threats, etc., and only when it still has not succeeded does it resort to the military tool. It should also be noted that Moscow has only intervened when the stakes were perceived to be high relative to other regional or global crises. Worst-case scenario outcomes in either Syria and especially Ukraine would have been very detrimental for Russia's security (as seen by the Kremlin). All above coercive bargaining processes that reached the threshold for the use of force were thus tied into Russia's core national security concerns (Charap, 2016: 3). In addition, Moscow's objective has been to prevent or reverse (perceived) geopolitical loss, not to make new geopolitical gains. Russia wanted to restore the status quo in South Ossetia, return Ukraine to its orbit after it drifted away in the wake of the February 2014 coup, and sustain the regime in Syria from rebel/international terrorist overthrow.

Table 10.1 Russian, U.S. and Chinese military capabilities, 2015

Item	Russia	U.S.	China
Military expenditure, U.S. \$bn	65.6	597.5	145.8
Military personnel			
Active	1,013,628 ^a	1,381,250	2,333,000
Civilian	889,423 ^a	14,850	–
Reserve	2,000,000	840,500	510,000
Conventional forces			
<i>Army</i>			
MBT ^b	2,700	2,384	6,540
RECCE ^c	1,200	1,900	250
AIFV ^d	5,400	4,559	3,950
APC ^e	6,000	16,377	5,020
ARTY ^f	4,180	5,923	13,178
<i>Navy:</i>			
Tactical submarines	49	57	57
Principal surface combatants	35	98	74
Aircraft	186	1,123	346
Helicopters	185	563	103
<i>Air force:</i>			
Aircraft	1,090	1,442	2,306
Helicopters	669	129	53
Strategic forces			
Submarines	13	14	4
Bombers	76	90	62
ICBM ^g	332	450	

^a – 2017

MBT^b – main battle tank

RECCE^c – reconnaissance vehicle

AIFV^d – armored infantry fighting vehicle

APC^e – armored personnel carrier

ARTY^f – artillery

ICBM^g – intercontinental ballistic missile

Sources: The International Institute for Strategic Studies 2016; Interfax 2017 <https://news.mail.ru/politics/29239264/?frommail=1>

Russian military operations in many cases share several important characteristics. Moscow has used just enough military force to achieve policy goals, but not more. Coercion was conducted by degree, in measured doses. According to Schelling (2008: 173), the objective of coercive warfare is to “make the enemy behave,” not to annihilate him. For example, Moscow’s peace enforcement operation in South Ossetia (August 2008) started only when the Georgian troops invaded this breakaway republic and killed the Russian peacekeepers. It continued until the pre-conflict status quo was restored but it did not aim to oust the Saakashvili regime in Georgia. In Eastern Ukraine, Russia’s alleged interventions near Ilovaisk and Debaltsevo only came when the Donbass rebels were on the verge of catastrophic failure. These interventions, if they happened, were quite limited; no high-end capabilities were employed, and the majority of the Russian forces concentrated at the Russian-Ukrainian border never crossed it. As soon as Kiev agreed to the ceasefire negotiations in Minsk, the Russian troops left Donbass and were moved from the border.

Interestingly, Russia has portrayed the use of military force in all these cases as consistent with international law. In South Ossetia, Moscow referred to Russia's legitimate right for peace enforcement operations to force Georgia to comply with previous international agreements. In Crimea, the Russian-Ukrainian agreements on the Black Sea Fleet basing and the principle of self-determination were invoked. In Donbass, the Kremlin denied the fact they had intervened militarily as such and claimed they were providing humanitarian assistance to the people of the Donetsk and Lughansk republics who had suffered from the Ukrainian blockade. In Syria, Moscow points out that in contrast to the U.S.-led coalition, the Russian military were formally invited by Damascus.

These arguments are important for Moscow in terms of legitimizing the use of force and keeping its image as a responsible international actor who plays by the rules established by the UN and other international organizations.

It should be noted that the Kremlin is cognizant of the limits of the use of military force; it understands that coercion can sometimes produce resistance rather than restraint or compliance (as in the cases of Ukrainian and Syrian opposition). That's why Moscow always tries to use diplomatic and political instruments in parallel or in addition to military tools.

Conclusions

Several conclusions emerge from the above analysis.

First, the military was an important determinant of Russia's foreign policy in the post-Soviet era and will remain so for the foreseeable future. The military influences Russia's foreign policy by shaping the elites' threat perceptions, forging foreign and national security policy doctrines, partaking in the decision-making process, and using military force to achieve geopolitical goals.

Furthermore, under the Putin and Medvedev administrations, Moscow managed to exercise an impressive military reform which resulted in becoming more efficient, and having better equipped and trained armed forces. This may provide the Russian political leadership with additional incentives to use military force and coercion in achieving its geopolitical goals.

The nature of civil-military relations in Russia has substantially changed since the 1990s. It was President Putin who was able to bring the military under strict political control and introduce some important elements of parliamentary and public oversight. These relations, however, are still not fully in line with Western democratic standards and, for this reason, foreign strategists and military analysts remain critical about the state of affairs in this field.

There have been ups and downs in the military's role in Russia's foreign policy decision-making since the late 1990s, but the general trend is that this role continues to steadily decline. With the exception of purely military issues, the MoD and General Staff look more like decision-takers rather than decision-makers in the foreign policy domain. The military is considered just one of Russia's foreign policy instruments, rather than the only or main one.

The Kremlin uses military coercion as a last resort when other non-military means are exhausted, and does it in a limited way to try to dissuade its opponents from hostile actions or compel them to comply with certain Russian requirements rather than to completely defeat or destroy the opposition.

In this sense, the military (hard power) instruments complement rather than exclude or clash with the soft power tools in terms of achieving Moscow's international policy objectives. When used in combination, military and non-military means reinforce each other and make Moscow's foreign policy even more effective. It is also important for the Kremlin to provide its military/coercive actions with a legitimacy from the point of view of international law.

Several questions related to the role of the military in Russia's foreign policy will remain on the future political agenda. First, Russia's military reform and further changes in civil-military relations still have unfinished business, and it is unclear how these reforms will proceed in the foreseeable future. It also remains to be seen how the Ukrainian and Syrian crises will affect Russia's strategic thinking, particularly Moscow's threat perceptions and foreign policy and national security doctrines. There are also some concerns regarding Moscow's potential inclination to use military force as the seemingly simplest way to resolve its foreign policy problems. A possible excessive reliance by the Kremlin on the use of military coercion may occur once other available means (economic, diplomatic, cultural, etc.) have been limited under the conditions of economic hardship and growing international isolation. Western and some post-Soviet countries are also intrigued by Moscow's intent to use so-called 'hybrid warfare' against them, albeit the Kremlin accuses its foreign opponents of doing the same. It should be noted that the 'hybrid warfare' tactics and strategies blur the boundaries between real and virtual wars, and bring both sides to the brink with all its dangerous consequences.

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