

Chapter 2. Crisis in the Russian Military: Both Politics and Culture Matter

In the previous chapter, the post-modern military organization in general and its specific professionalization process in particular were analyzed and the process of change was illustrated by the experiences of France, Belgium and The Netherlands. These insights will now be applied to the Russian military forces. Comparing the Western experience of socio-military issues with recent Russian realities is based on two considerations, which include: the post-war Western scientific discourse on changing military organizations, which provide a conceptual reference, can be used to analyze the Russian situation; and the Western experience reflects the reality of the Russian army to a certain extent since the Russian reform debate has been inspired by Western concepts. Indeed, using this comparative model contradicts the impression that Russian military affairs are a strange, incomprehensible and, unchangeable phenomenon despite the fact that immediate results of (ambitious) reform experiments fail to appear.

As an overall, holistic comparison between the evolution of military organizations in Russia and the West is, for practical reasons, impossible, the purpose of this chapter is to compare the development of the proposed and actual solutions to the Russian manpower problems with the French, Belgian and Dutch experience. This comparison makes it possible to put the Russian organizational crisis into perspective. At the same time, we will determine which specific Russian characteristics contributed to the failure of Russian reform. The basic arguments of this study are that political and cultural factors lie behind the failure for reform.

2. 1. Russian Manpower Development Beyond Control: Towards a Hybrid Army Type.

Organizational problems in the Russian military are not only a persistent issue in the Western and Russian press, they are also –due to their magnitude - perceived by Western analysts to be a threat to political, social and international strategy. All of these problems are well documented, but some fundamental characteristics of the Russian military organizational crisis have been less understood. The Russian organizational crisis may be explained by examining the basis of the structural variables which comprise the armed forces. Parallel with the findings of the French, Belgian and Dutch experience, the following variables will be presented: the development of active duty manpower in Russia; the distributions of army personnel over the separate branches of the armed forces; the Conscription Rate (CR) in general and in the forces; and the Military Participation Rate (MPR);. These structural variables reveal the basic characteristics of the Russian military, namely ‘size’, ‘mobilization’ and ‘homogeneity’, being the three key variables of a mass army. We will determine the main trends in the organizational changes of the Russian armed forces and compare them with the ideal types of the ‘mass army’ and the ‘post-modern military organization’.¹⁰³

¹⁰³ To ensure methodological coherence the data from the 1987/88-1998/99 editions of the *Military Balance* is used. In order to put the Soviet-Russian experience since 1985 in a broader context some data are also used from Ellen Jones’ basic study on the Soviet military organization before 1985.(see: Ellen Jones, *Red Army and Society, a Sociology of the Soviet Military*, Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1985) The distinction is also made between the Soviet period (1988-1991) and the Russian period (1992-1998) in order to make clear the difference between the process of ‘state making’ and ‘organizational change’. As may be clear, these two processes influenced each other. Consequently, this complicates the interpretation of Soviet-Russian figures in comparison with the West.

Ellen Jones, a distinguished researcher of Soviet manpower issues, in the 1980's, advised that in order to understand the Russian military system one must take both the historical heritage of the tsarist army and Marxist ideology into account in order to understand Soviet military manpower tradition.¹⁰⁴ Thus a brief outline of the manpower structure and the use of conscripts in the Soviet mass army are necessary in order to understand the Russian army.

The Soviet Type Mass Army

The reliance on some form of conscription is one of the strongest military traditions in Russia. This tradition goes back to the very beginning of the Russian Imperialist period. Conscription definitely predates the French Revolution's '*levée en masse*', which is often seen as the first example of the mass army. Russia has forced young men into the Imperial army as early as the eighteenth century, when men were recruited as a result of the Petrine reforms.¹⁰⁵ Although the conscription system itself has changed considerably in Russia and the Soviet Union, specific Russian-Soviet traits of the 300-year conscription system can still be identified. This is illustrated by an evocative picture of a conscript soldiers' life in the early 19th century.

“Economic instability and the struggle to survive in the most basic physical sense were constant features of military life...The character and the abilities of individual officers had a decisive effect on the social and economic conditions of the lower ranks. The state either chose or was forced, because of inadequate economic, and administrative resources, to rely extensively on ad hoc measures taken by individual officers and to tolerate flagrant violations of the law- all of which eroded bureaucratic rationality and professional efficiency...The army was then left with the unenviable task of trying to transform an obligation that...society regarded as an unmitigated disaster into a glorious and heroic deed.”¹⁰⁶

Today's Russian army shares many similarities with its Tsarist and Soviet past. The Soviet army relied heavily on recruiting a large number of soldiers as the Soviets especially emphasized 'size' in their concept of a mass army.¹⁰⁷ 'More is better' was their motto. The Soviet Union had a standing army of about 4.5 to 5 million soldiers and a reserve force which stood at an estimated number of about 50 million men and women. Soviet strategists believed the USSR was prepared for waging total war and a mass attack which would be decisive in future conflicts. These numbers also prepared the USSR for a protracted conflict. Mobilization and recruitment were considered the key aspects of Soviet manpower policy and

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

¹⁰⁵ About the Russian imperial tradition see for instance Elise Kimerling Wirtschafter, *From Serf to Russian Soldier*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990, pp. 3-25; John L. H. Keep, *Soldiers of the Tsar: Army and Society in Russia, 1482-1874*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1985; John Bushnell, 'Peasants in Uniform: the Tsarist Army as a Peasant Society', *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 13, No. 4, Summer 1980, pp. 753-780; Dietrich Beyrau, *Militär und Gesellschaft im Vorrevolutionären Russland*, Cologne: Bohlau Verlag, 1984; John Shelton Curtiss, *The Russian Army under Nicholas I, 1825-1855*, Durham: Duke University Press, 1965; Allen K. Wildman, *The End of the Russian Imperial Army*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980. L.G. Beskrovnyi, *Russkaia armia I flot v XVIII veke*, Moskva, 1958; L.G. Beskrovnyi, *Russkaia armia I flot v XIX veke*, Moskva, 1973; P.A. Zaionchkovskii, *Voennye reformy 1860-1870 goduv v Rossii*, Moskva, 1952.

¹⁰⁶ Elise K. Wirtschafter, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 149-150.

¹⁰⁷ Lenin's comment 'quantity is quality' may have been inspired by military issues.

it was practiced to the point of obsession.¹⁰⁸ Reliance on the concept of mobilization capacity, and the Soviet interpretation of combat readiness, originated in the traumatic experience of the Second World War, as the ‘Barbarossa Syndrome’. Historically, invasion by foreign powers had been a reality, but it had become a nightmare in the minds of Soviet military planners. This paranoid fear of external invasion together with the practice of total warfare, led to the conviction that society as a whole, and not just the armed forces, had to prepare for war. Besides this purely military understanding of the armed forces, the Soviet military organization fulfilled a considerable economic function as well. The military was used as a ‘flexible labor force’ for different societal needs, such as agricultural and construction projects. The Soviet military-industrial complex, which represented the majority of Soviet industrial capacity, supported the armed forces. Moreover, the Soviet military were seen as an important educational agent in Soviet society. It was regarded as the school of the nation in which multi-cultural attitudes could be installed and basic education could be provided. Ellen Jones, for instance, emphasized the socializing role of the Soviet army, which was in essence aimed at producing the notorious ‘Soviet Man’. In short, the army fulfilled an all-embracing political role in the Soviet polity and society.

All these military, economic, educational and political arguments resulted in an even higher incentive to call up as many as possible of the young men in the Soviet Union. Ellen Jones estimates that between 65-70% of the 18-year old pool were drafted in the 1970’s, and up to 75-80% in the beginning of the 1980’s.¹⁰⁹ Once they were enlisted, Army and Air Force conscripts served for two years, and three years when they were assigned to the Navy. Prior to the 1967 conscription law the service terms were even longer and the generals were only open for a reduction of training-time when this loss was compensated for by the revival of a program of initial or basic military schools, the so-called *nachalnaya voyennaya podgotovka*, or NVP. The intention was to give students of secondary schools ‘an introduction to military skills at an early age in order to instill enough military-technological knowledge to facilitate the absorption of a military specialty once the conscript was drafted’.¹¹⁰ The NVP also increased the mobilization readiness of Soviet society.

Christopher Donnelly has observed that the Soviet conscription practices had an important impact on the technological level of weaponry. He noted that there were strong pressures on the Soviet weapons procurement system to produce equipment which was simple to operate, highly robust, and on which it was relatively simple to do battlefield maintenance and repair.¹¹¹ Soviet manpower philosophy thus influenced the technological innovation (or the lack of it) in the Soviet Union. As a result of all these considerations, the Soviet Union lived under a very high MPR and CR. Jones estimated that in total the Soviet Armed forces professional-conscript ratio was 30:70. This rate corresponds with the figures of *The Military Balance* that noted that all branches in the Soviet forces used between 70% and 75%

¹⁰⁸ See for instance Ellen Jones, *Op. Cit.*, p. 38-41 and Chris Donnelly, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 153-161. In a paper presented by Dr. Charles Dick, Director of the Conflict Studies Research Centre at Sandhurst, the author emphasized the importance of Russian invasion history in order to understand Russian military policy in the 1990s (presentation of Dr Charles Dick on Friday 2 June 2000 at the seminar “Rebuilding Cooperation”, UK-Russian Security Support Seminar, organized by Air Vice-Marshal Professor Tony Mason, Birmingham University, 1-4 June 2000.)

¹⁰⁹ Herbert Goldhamer estimated that in 1967, the moment when a new Law of Universal Military Service replaced the 1939 Law, about 50% of the 18-year cohort was conscripted. Herbert Goldhamer, *The Soviet Soldier, Soviet Military Management at the Troop Level*, New York: Crane, Russak & Company, 1975, p. 7. The way deferments based on health, education and family situation were interpreted as well as demographic considerations influenced how ‘universally’ conscription laws were implemented in the Soviet Union. The estimates of Jones and Goldhamer demonstrate that it changed considerably over time.

¹¹⁰ Ellen Jones, *Op. Cit.*, p. 69.

¹¹¹ Chris Donnelly, *Op. Cit.*, p. 180.

conscripts to fill the ranks.¹¹² Based on Haltiner's typology, a CR of 70% means that the Soviet army can be labeled as a 'hard-core mass army', like countries such as Turkey, Greece, Finland and Switzerland.¹¹³

Finally, the Soviet armed forces were intended to be a homogeneous organization. This was emphasized by the fact that the Soviet Union strove to develop one specific type of man who had well defined characteristics that were embedded in an ideological framework. The nature of Soviet ideology thus only strengthened the phenomenon of homogenization. However, social, educational and ethnic realities proved to be more difficult to cope with as the evolution from 1988 onwards demonstrated.

Two specific Soviet characteristics installed control in the conscript army. First, the Soviet Union did not have a non-commissioned officer corps such as Western armies did. Small Unit command was given to the corps of *serzhanty*, which actually were fellow conscripts who had received additional specialized training of only six months.¹¹⁴ At the beginning of the 1970s a corps of so-called *praporshchiki* and *michmany* (warrant officers in the Army and Navy) were installed to cope with small unit command. However, this experiment to professionalize small unit command may not be seen as an overall success and this will be explained in the third part of this study. Secondly, besides the company commander, every company had a political officer (*zampolit*) who was formally responsible for the discipline and welfare of the soldiers. This difficult situation of dual command greatly lacked legitimacy at the troop level and was one of the reasons that an informal system of control came into existence. This system was the notorious *dedovshchina* system that Jones described as follows:

“Control is also maintained through an informal and [officially] unauthorized seniority or “caste” system among conscripts. Because soldiers are drafted at six-month intervals, a typical ground force unit will have four classes of conscripts: new soldiers (freshly arrived conscripts), soldiers with six or twelve months' previous service, those with twelve to eighteen months' service, and senior conscripts with less than six months' service remaining before demobilization. While informal customs regarding responsibilities and privileges of each 'class' vary from unit to unit, the senior soldiers enjoy a far higher status than their newly arrived counterparts, who must endure a six-month period of hazing by conscripts with longer time in service. The system is widely accepted by both conscripts and the career force. Conscripts accept the hazing they receive in the first six months in return for the privileges they receive upon achieving 'senior' status. The career force accepts the system because it simplifies the problems of maintaining control of large groups of post-adolescent males.”¹¹⁵

This system of informal control corresponds with the idea of the closed organization system. This system was shrouded in secrecy and mythology, just as the Soviet military actually was within Soviet society.

¹¹² Jones made room for some nuance on this issue when she observed that technology and the rapid expansion in both general and technical education of the Soviet youth influenced enlistment rates in the different forces. (Ellen Jones, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 70-73.)

¹¹³ Karl Haltiner, *op. Cit.*, p. 18.

¹¹⁴ Donnelly, *Op. Cit.* pp.180-182. Anatol Lieven saw the continuation of this tradition at first hand in the first Chechen war.

¹¹⁵ Elen Jones, *Op. Cit.*, p. 130.

Samuel Huntington has noted that in traditional military thought, the state is considered to be the most important political institution. In the Soviet context, the officer corps was encouraged to develop statist attitudes. This meant that the state always came first, even before personal liberty, personal freedom, individuality and human rights. In the Russian language it was said that officers were *'derzhavniki'* or (extreme) state servants. The idea of *derzhava* was also related with the idea of *gosudarstvo* which means 'state' with the attributes of greatness and/or superiority as well as firmness towards the people. Such an understanding of the idea of *derzhava* had the implication that the officer corps was in principle not against values such as personal liberty, personal freedom, individuality and human rights as long as they were compatible with the idea of the state. Clearly, such an attitude goes together with a higher tolerance of losses in combat and casualties even in peace time. This attitude was reflected in the high casualty and death rates seen during the different wars that the Soviet Union fought.¹¹⁶

In conclusion, the formation of the Soviet armed forces is based on developing a mass army which has specific Soviet features. The Soviet type mass army was a military force in which direct rule of the western type was replaced by totalitarian rule that was embedded in a particular ideological context. The Soviet-type mass army must be understood in the particular political context of the Soviet Union and its traumatic combat experiences. In the 1970 –1980's, the Soviet military was still experiencing the consequences of supporting a mass army, while in the West the first contours of decline in Western military organizations were being observed in the scientific literature. Thus it is due to its extreme appearance and its persistence, that the Soviet mass army was considered to be different than armies in the West. The assertion that 'the Soviet Union *had* no army, but *was* an army' illustrates the Soviet militarization rate.

An Analysis of a Manpower Crisis: Towards an Hybrid Army Type

The main characteristics of the present Russian military manpower policy and its relationship with the ideal types of the mass and post-modern military organization will now be assessed.¹¹⁷ Parallel with the presentation on the case of the Belgian, French and Dutch experience, the structural variables of 'size', 'mobilization level' and 'homogeneity' of the Russian armed forces will be reviewed. This point of comparison will provide a summary of what the Russian crisis in manpower exactly meant and it will indicate what the main causes of the crisis were.

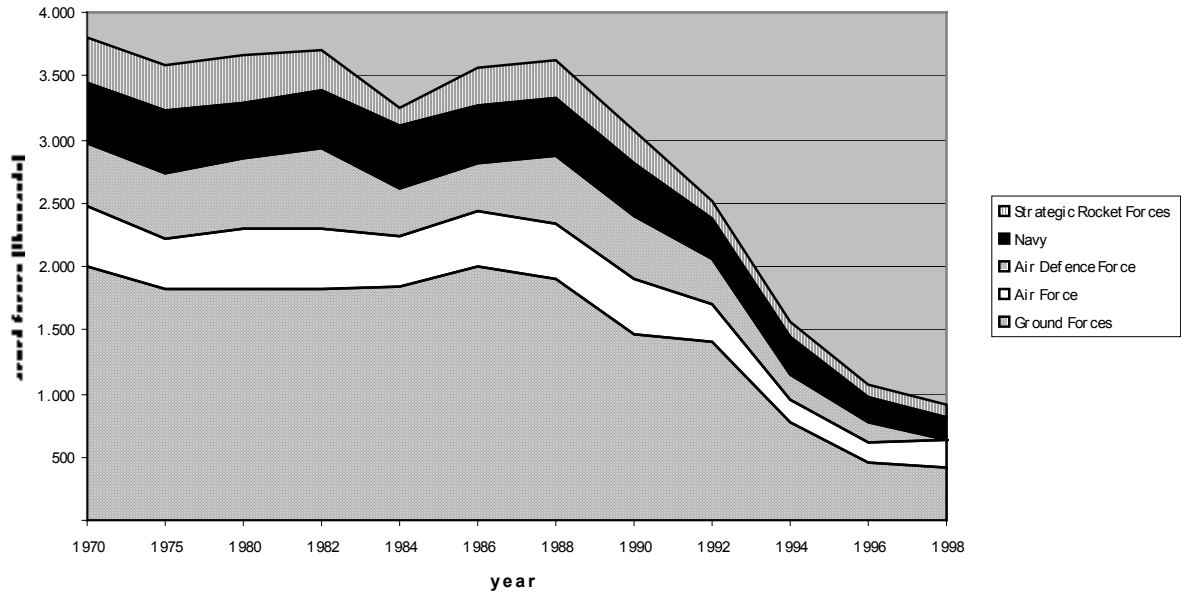
Size. The personnel levels of the Soviet-Russian armed forces have been reduced over time as anywhere else in the world.¹¹⁸ The Soviet armed forces shrank by 33% during the last four years of its existence (1988-1992). In the post-Soviet Russian Federation, the armed forces' have declined by 65%. In absolute figures this meant that the Soviet armed forces stood at

¹¹⁶ See for instance: Amnon Sella, *The Value of Human Life in Soviet Warfare*, London: Routledge, 1992. This observation completely contradicts the body bag hypothesis in the West.

¹¹⁷ Data are again retrieved from The Military Balance (edition 1986/87-1997/98). Russian sources generally affirm the IISS data. See for instance: Alexei G. Arbatov, 'Military Reform in Russia, Dilemmas, Obstacles, and Prospects', *International Security*, Vol. 22, No 4, Spring 1998, pp. 83-134; and G. A. Ziuganov, *Voennaia reforma: otsenka ugroz natsional'noi bezopasnosti Rossii, Moskva: Obozrevatel'*, 1997, pp. 79-80.

¹¹⁸ Manpower reduction went along with a severe reduction of the military arsenal. Andrew Duncan wrote a good overview of this issue on the basis of the latest CFE data: see Andrew Duncan, 'Russian Forces in Decline-Part I', *Jane's Intelligence Review*, September 1996, pp. 404-408; Andrew Duncan, 'Russian Forces in Decline-Part II', *Jane's Intelligence Review*, October 1996, pp. 442-447; Stuart Goldman did the same exercise for the Library of Congress. See: Stuart D. Goldman, *Russian Conventional Armed Forces: On the Verge of Collapse*, Washington: Congressional Research Service-The Library of Congress, September 4, 1997, pp. 4-9.

5,096,000 soldiers in 1988, 3,400,000 in 1992 and 1,159,000 in 1998. This is illustrated in Graph 6 where the decline is represented during the period from 1970 to 1998. This thirty year overview gives the reader a better understanding of the scope and velocity with which the decline of the armed forces occurred in Russia. Moreover, it can also be read as an extension and prolongation of Ellen Jones' overview of the trends between 1970-1985.



Graph 6: Estimates of Active Duty Armed Forces Personnel (Thousands)

The scale and the velocity of decline were therefore so great as to render it incomparable with the gradual, evolutionary process observed in France, Belgium and The Netherlands. The use of the words ‘devolution’ or ‘collapse’ used by Meyer or Goldman are therefore appropriate.¹¹⁹

	<i>Soviet Union (1988-1992)</i>	<i>Russian Federation (1992-1998)</i>
Army	-26%	-70%
Navy	-30%	-43%
Air Force	-32%	-56%
Air Defense Force	-12%	-62%
Nuclear Rocket Forces	-51%	-30%

Table 6 : Manpower Development in the Armed Forces in the Soviet and Russian Experience (1988-1998)

The decline of personnel in the forces was a dramatic phenomenon in the Russian Federation between 1992-1998. The Army especially underwent a ‘decline beyond control’, while the Nuclear Rocket Force was –in the context of the wider implosion- the least affected. The impression that the figures for the 1988-1992 period give us, is that during this period there is greater control of the policy intentions by the parties involved than there was during the 1992-1998 period in which there appears to have been not only a lack of control over military reform policy but the policy itself was unclear. Indeed, Gorbachev’s nuclear disarmament initiatives are shown in Table 6 in which the Nuclear Rocket Force was reduced

¹¹⁹ Stephen M. Meyer, *The Devolution of Russian Military Power*, Defense and Arms Control Studies Working Paper, (Cambridge: MIT, November 1995); Stuart D. Goldman, *Op. Cit.*, 1997.

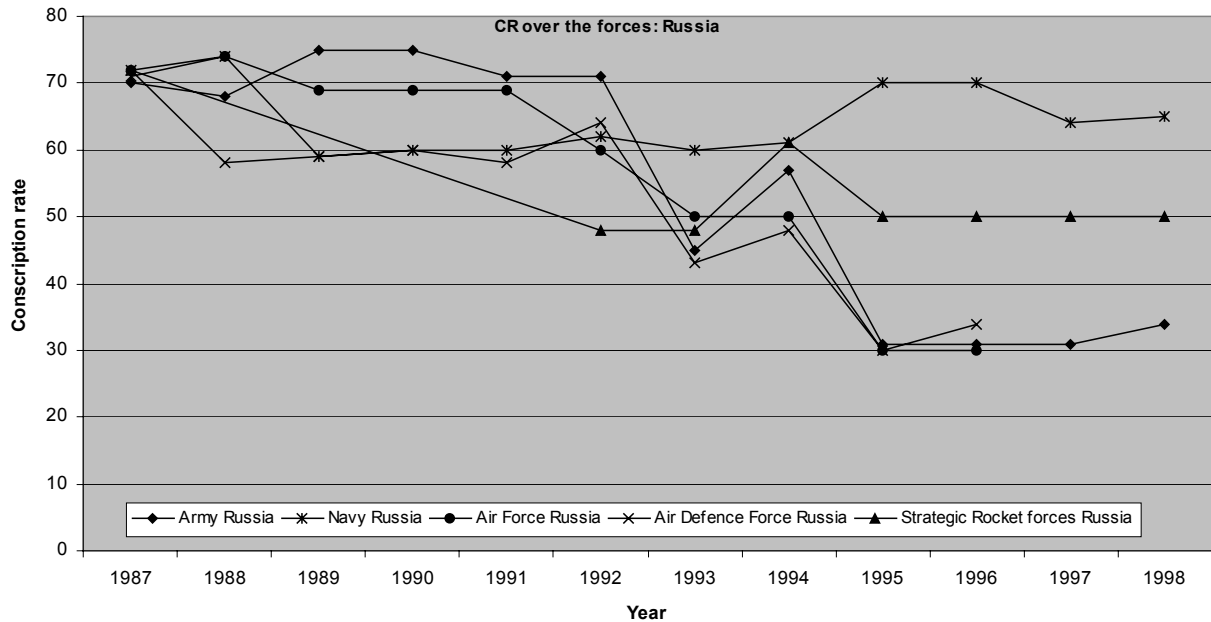
by 51%, while the other forces underwent a steadier decline. The fact that reduction of the armed forces in the Russian period was apparently out of control, is therefore an important characteristic of a military crisis. It appears that decision-makers in the Russian government were powerless to these influence events.

If one was to compare the relative importance of each separate force with the total armed forces the following findings can be noted:

	1988	1991	1998
Army	52,4%	55,5%	46,1%
Navy	12,6%	12,6%	19,7%
Air Force	12,2%	11,9%	23%
Air Defense Force	14,3%	14,1%	Merged with Air Force
Strategic Rocket Force	8,2%	5,7%	10,9%

Table 7: Relative Decline of the Forces in the Soviet and Russian Manpower Development (1988-1998)

What is remarkable is that the relative importance of the forces in the Soviet-Russian military organization was more or less stable or in other words, the basic nature of the forces stayed the same. There was –again in the context of the personnel implosion- no real sign of a qualitative change. Table 7 shows that there is an increase in the importance of the Air Force in 1998 compared with 1988, which is due to the merging of the Air Force with the Air Defense Force in 1998. This merger was an important decision from a structural point of view. Apparently, the Navy was the only force that survived the turbulent times of the 1990’s relatively well, however this observation must interpreted with caution. Indeed, when the CR of the forces is examined a different aspect of this evolution becomes clear.

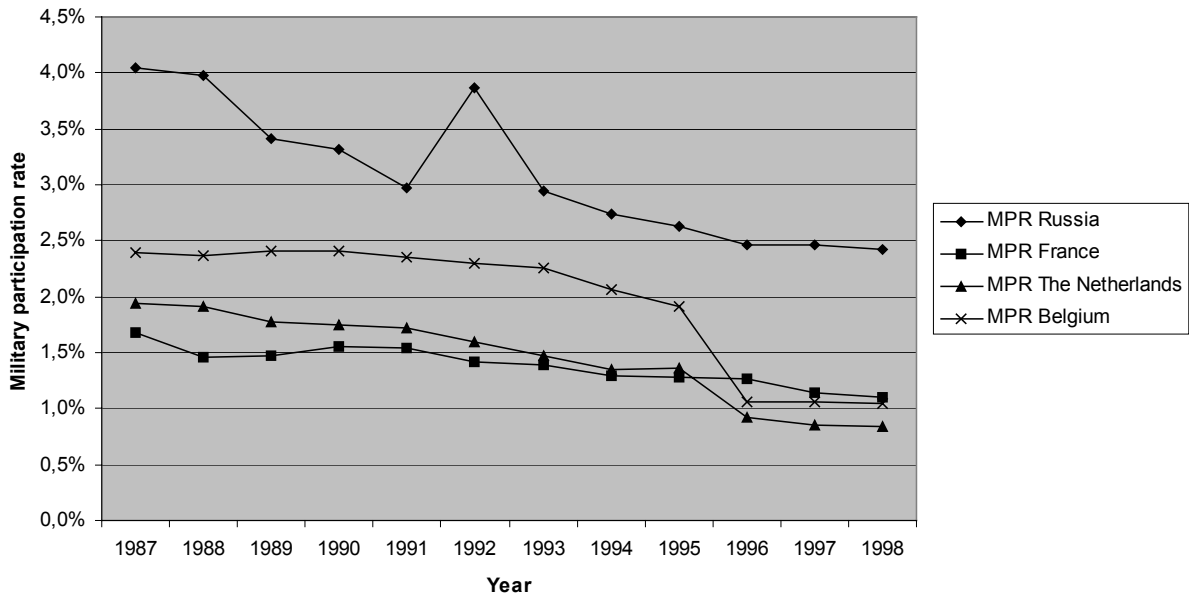


Graph 7: Conscription Rate over the Forces in the Soviet Union and Russia (1988-1998)

The CR of the forces illuminated an atypical characteristic. In the second half of the 1990’s the CR of the Navy was the highest of all the forces, followed by the CR of the Strategic Rocket Forces while the CR of the Army was comparable to that of the Air Force. These data contradicted the idea of using conscripts in the least technically sophisticated forces, while- inversely- there were more conscripts in the more technical forces. When in the former paragraph the relative importance of the Navy in the armed forces was noted, it must

be said that this force was filled with an ‘undereducated workforce’ to a large extent. This can be perceived as a remnant of the Soviet tradition, but certainly it did not conform with the idea of professionalizing the armed forces. It is also an atypical result when it is compared with the evolution of events in the West. Another point that may be made about this table is that these data reflect the chaotic, unstable and incoherent developments in the Soviet-Russian military organization. It was as if the developments that took place in the armed forces were beyond the control of the decision-makers. This idea of an ‘out of control’ evolution is further reflected upon and will be discussed in the following paragraph.

Militarization and Mobilization. While overall manpower levels collapsed between 1988-1998, the Russian MPR was still remarkably high. Russia’s MPR (MPR 1998 = 2.4) decreased by 1.5 points during the last decade. But this was still more than twice as high as France (MPR 1998= 1.1), The Netherlands (MPR 1998= 0.8), and Belgium (MPR1998= 1.1). If the MPR was one variable that expressed Russia’s mobilization capacity, it also showed that this key aspect of the mass army was still present in the Russian army. Moreover, if the MPR is considered to be a reflection of the relative militarization of a society, then Russia, although significantly demilitarizing during the 1990’s, was still more militarized than countries with a post-modern military organization.¹²⁰

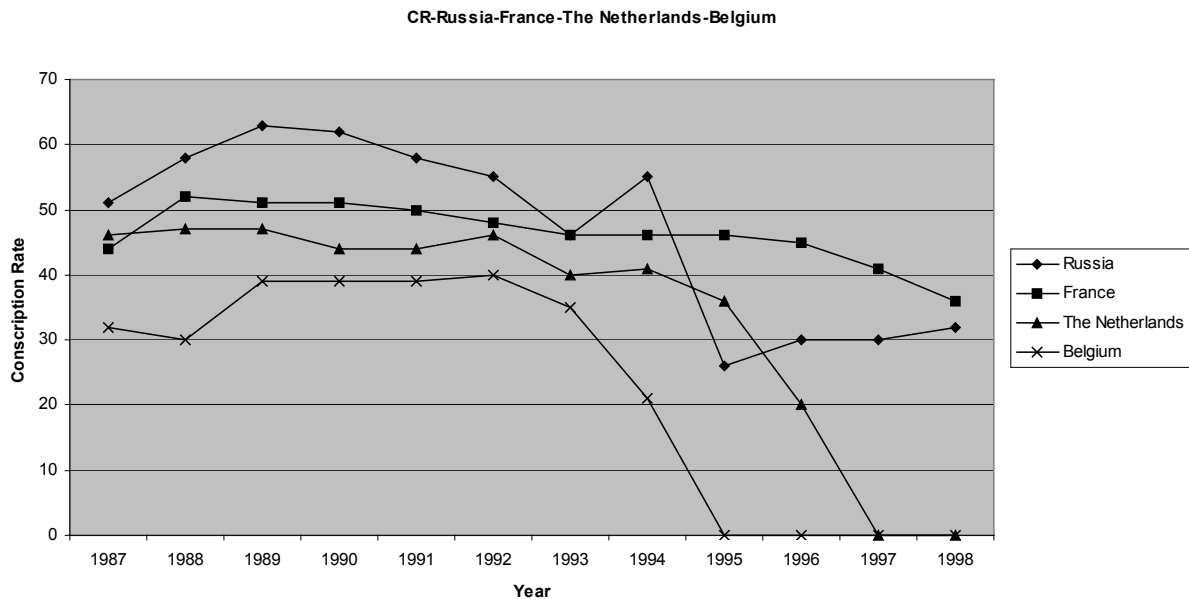


Graph 8: Military Participation Rate Russia-France-the Netherlands-Belgium (1988-1998)

Another variable that reveals what type of military organization a nation has is the Conscription Rate. Based on the general CR in 1998, the Russian armed forces was not a typical mass army. But, although the CR definitely fell below 50% after 1994, the decline was incoherent. It therefore probably had more to do with societal and organizational chaos rather than a deliberate choice. Hence, the collapse of the CR in 1994 (without special policy

¹²⁰ Joachim Schmidt-Skipiol came to the same conclusion as he published the following data concerning the number of military personnel per thousand citizens in 1998: USA: 5,2; France 6,1; Great Britain: 3,6; Germany: 4,1; and Russia: 8,2 (even 13,5 if all military personnel in other ministries besides the MoD is counted). See: Joachim Schmidt-Skipiol, *Die Militärreform in Rußland Teil II: Aktueller Stand und Zukunft* [Military Reform in Russia Part II: Contemporary situation and future], *Berichte des Bundesinstituts für Ostwissenschaftliche und Internationale Studien*, No 54-1998, Köln: Bundesinstituts für Ostwissenschaftliche und Internationale Studien, 1998, p. 22.

changes in that year) subsequently had more to do with the inability of the Russian state to implement conscription effectively rather than with implementation of a policy on this issue. Moreover, the Russian CR slightly increased after 1996 while the CR in Belgium, France and The Netherlands constantly declined. Instability and incoherence- are the persistent characteristics of a crisis situation that can be noted here.



Graph 9: Conscription Rate Russia-France-the Netherlands-Belgium (1988-1998)

Reform Failure Synthesized

The crisis the Russian armed forces experienced had several important characteristics. They are synthesized below with reference to the structural variables that have already been presented.

Between 1988-1998, there was a *chaotic* evolution. This chaos resulted in a hybrid type of army that contained Soviet, ‘Western’ and atypical characteristics. Some demobilization (and demilitarization) of Russian society undoubtedly took place, but comparatively speaking, the level of mobilization remained higher in Russia than in France, Belgium and The Netherlands.

From 1994 onwards the CR collapsed, but this did not demonstrate a constant downward trend. The use of conscripts in the forces, expressed in the Conscription Rate in the forces, show two things. Firstly, compared with the West, the Russian armed forces’ crisis was and is a crisis *of the Army*. The Army suffered the most and seemed to be the least resistant to instability. This is consistent with the Western evolution. Secondly, the Navy resisted the turbulent times the best: but their intensive use of conscripts reflects a Soviet tradition. The use of conscripts was not decisively influenced by the technological demands of respective forces. Ideological, cultural, political, and economic factors all made conscript labor a tradition that is embedded in the Russian armed forces.

The evolution of the armed forces in Russia developed in tandem with another domain of Russia's post Soviet period. Richard Erickson suggested that Russia's economic system could be labeled as 'Industrial Feudalism'.¹²¹ He observed that:

“The transformations to date clearly seem to have eliminated the Soviet “command economy” as the operational system, but it also seems to me that they have not (yet?) succeeded in creating a coherent market-based economic system. What is evolving appears to be neither a modern market economy, of whatever variant, nor a continuation of its modern challenger, the bureaucratically managed Soviet-type economy. Indeed, in many of its structural and operational characteristics it seems to be recreating the economic system of an earlier, pre-industrial, era-medieval feudalism.”¹²²

In other words, Erickson observed the emergence of a hybrid economic system in which achievements of the industrial era were combined with structures and operations of the past. Given the structural analysis of military manpower policy, Erickson's argument is interesting because it shows that the military system co-evolved in parallel with the structure of the economy and society in general. At the same time it gives us grounds to adopt the open-organization paradigm in order to study the Russian military organization. Finally, it can be argued that Russian military organizational evolution is not ‘exceptional’.

Not only is the evolution of the Russian military not exceptional, but it may be argued that: the deterministic evolution from a command economy towards a market economic system and the evolution from a mass army towards a post-modern All-Volunteer Force is a complex phenomenon and therefore a difficult objective to achieve. Cultural and political decision-making in Russia have had a major impact on society; but organizational change is apparently not determined to evolve along Western lines, despite all hope and efforts embodied in the ‘Washington Consensus’ and European euphoria concerning Russia's political, economic, and military development in the 1990's.¹²³

2. 2. Studying an ‘Out of Control’ Process

The manpower crisis in the Russian armed forces was characterized by a web of interconnected factors which included a lack of control over an organization which had no internal coherence and was undergoing a transitional process of extreme proportions. The way the crisis was managed and the way decision-making was organized are important reasons for

¹²¹ See Richard E. Erickson, “The Post-Soviet Russian Economic System: An Industrial Feudalism?” at <http://www.columbia.edu/-ree3/> January 1999 and George Breslauer, Josef Brada, Clifford G. Gaddy, Richard Erickson, Carol Saivetz, and Victor Winston, ‘Russia at the End of Yeltsin’s Presidency’, *Post-Soviet Affairs*, Vol. 16, No. 1, 2000, pp. 1-32. (especially, p. 18-31). Also Vladimir Shlapentokh used the ‘anarchic quasi-feudalism’ idea in his thinking. (See: Vladimir Shlapentokh, ‘Russia as a medieval State’, *Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 19, No. 1, 1996, pp. 395-412, and Vladimir Shlapentokh, ‘Early Feudalism-The Best Parallel for Contemporary Russia’, *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 48, No. 3, May 1996, pp. 393-411). Anatoly Lieven opted for the ‘cacique’ system analogy in his writing to characterize the hybrid political system in Russia. (See Anatoly Lieven, *Chechnya, Tombstone of Russian Power*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), pp.151-152). Many others commented the hybrid system as for instance Michael McFaul who called Russia quiet optimistically an ‘unconsolidated democracy or illiberal democracy’ (See Michael McFaul, ‘Russian Democracy: Still Not a Lost Case’, *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 23, No. 1, Winter 2000, p. 163.)

¹²² Richard E. Erickson, “The Post-Soviet Russian Economic System: An Industrial Feudalism?” at <http://www.columbia.edu/-ree3/>, p. 1

¹²³ The ‘Washington consensus’ was the US administration’s definition of reform in Russia, which contained the idea of installing ‘democracy’ and a ‘free marked economy’. Especially President Clinton, Vice President Al Gore, Strobe Talbott and Lawrence Summers were important authors of this policy.

this crisis and the failure to reverse this trend. The fact that a hybrid type of army emerged in which traditional Soviet and post-modern Western organizational ideas ‘clashed’, created a patchwork of cultural influences that developed and compels us to study the socio-cultural environment in which this crisis occurred. Studying political and cultural arguments is therefore necessary to understand the failure of reform in Russia. In the literature on post-Soviet Russia, these political and socio-cultural arguments are usually neglected and overshadowed by the economic argument. In the following section the economic argument will be reviewed and contrasted with the comparatively ignored socio-cultural debate.

A One-Sided and Tautological Economic Argument

The economic argument is a one-sided and incomplete explanation of the army’s organizational crisis. The debate’s one-sidedness can be found in its emphasis on budgetary concerns. While the economic explanation offers two distinct aspects, namely a structural and monetary variable, the military reform discussion is usually evaluated by budgetary standards; while the structure of the everyday (civilian) economy and how it functions is an important area of study that has been neglected in the wider discussion on Russian defense issues.

As stipulated in the first chapter, it is necessary to see the parallel between the management of the military and the inter-related management styles used in the civilian economy and concomitant managerial organization types that prevail throughout Russian society itself. The economic structural debate is a more profound discussion based on long-term future planning, while the budgetary debate is politically a highly sensitive issue that occurs annually and hence is a short-term discussion. Vladimir.V. Shlykov, a ‘dissident’ Russian military economist, pointed out this distinction as follows:

“Unfortunately, the difficulties of dismantling a structurally militarized economy have been ignored by the Russian reformers themselves. As a result, they have committed several grave mistakes, have wasted precious time, and, sad to say, lost some irretrievable opportunities to thoroughly dismantle Soviet-Russian militarism. Their biggest mistake was a firm belief that money can play a decisive role in changing the ways of the Russian economy, and that it can be managed with the help of a budgetary and credit policy. It is certainly tempting to use financial indicators in summing up the results of economic developments and formulating its goals, instead of getting bogged down in the intricacies and problems of technological and structural imbalances between the civilian and military sectors of the economy. Moreover, this practice of using financial indicators is accepted all over the world and is intellectually and administratively not very demanding, with ready-made and tested recipes galore.”¹²⁴

If one is to consider just the military budget alone, it is clear that the devastating problems of the Russian economy have compromised the attempt to reform the Russian military forces. This point is made by the authors of *The Military Balance* who have stated that: ‘The major threat to the Russian armed forces in 1997 was not military, but financial. A dire lack of funding was compounded by delays and genuine difficulties in implementing

¹²⁴ Vitaly V. Shlykov, ‘The Crisis in the Russian Economy’, June 30, 1997, p. 11. Monograph originally presented at the US Army War College’s Annual Strategic Conference held April 22-24, 1997.

urgently needed structural reform'.¹²⁵ The data concerning the Russian military budget confirm this view:

	Defense Budget ¹²⁶	%Federal Budget	Defense spending
1992	901	16,0	
1993	3,116	16,6	\$ 7,4 billion
1994	40,626	20,9	\$ 18 billion
1995	48,577	19,6	\$ 12,8 billion
1996	80,185	18,4	\$ 15,1 billion
1997	104,300	19,7	
1998	81,765	16,4	

Table 8 : Russian Defense Budget Estimates (1992-1998)

Source: *The Military Balance, 1998-99* (first two columns) and Stuart D. Goldman, 'Conventional Armed Forces on the Verge of Collapse?', (CRS Report for Congress, September 4, 1997), p. 12. (Third column)

Data concerning the procurement of major weapons systems are even more striking:

	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
MBT*	1,800	2,200	1,700	850	500	200	40	0-30	5	5
IFV**	2,000	7,000	3,400	3,000	700	300	380	400	250	350
FGA***		526	430	250	150	100	50	20	25	35

Table 9: Production of Major Weapon Systems in the Soviet Union and Russia (1988-1997)

Source: Stuart D. Goldman, *Conventional Armed Forces on the Verge of Collapse?*, (CRS Report for Congress, September 4, 1997), p. 10 and *The Military Balance 1998-99*, The International Institute for Strategic Studies, (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 1998.p.

* Main Battle Tank

** Infantry Fighting Vehicle

*** Fighter, Ground Attack (aircraft)

However, the problem with this analysis is that many Russian (and Western) defense specialists state that economics was the *only* reason why there was no western-style professional army in Russia.¹²⁷ This argument is in itself a self-fulfilling prophecy. The longer military reform is postponed, the less time there will be for political and economic maneuvering in an institution which is rapidly deteriorating. Moreover, the economic argument is very often misused by the Russian military elite themselves as an excuse for not

¹²⁵ The International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 1997/98*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 101.

¹²⁶ In current Billion Rubles

¹²⁷ Two important Russian voices can be noted who did NOT emphasize too much the economic argument. However, these voices were aired in the second half of the 1990's. The first is the well known military theoretician Machmut Gareev who stated that 'Eine Berufsmarine, ..., kostet natürlich viel Geld, so dass sie sich nicht jeder Staat leisten kann. Doch dieser Aspekt der Frage wird gewöhnlich übertrieben' [A professional army ... costs of course a lot of money, in order that not every state can afford it. However, this aspect of the problem is usually exaggerated.] (See: Machmut A. Garejew, *Konturen des bewaffneten Kampfes der Zukunft, Ein Ausblick auf das Militärwesen in den nächsten 10 bis 15 Jahren*, Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 1996, p. 152, my translation) The second voice is expressed by the Council on Foreign and Defense Policy which said: 'The deep crisis in the armed forces is an evidence of the comprehensive crisis in the society, the state and the government of Russia. It points not so much to economic bankruptcy of the government, ...' (See: Sergei Karaganov (Editor) *Strategiia dlia Rosii: Povestka dnia dlia prezidenta-2000*, Moskva: Sovet po Vneshnei i oboronnoi politike (SVOP), 1998) p.254)

reforming the system. In fact, this economic rhetoric is based on a tautology.¹²⁸ The deplorable economic situation was used as the basic reason for reforming the system while at the same time it was used as a profound excuse for not reforming the armed forces.

For instance, the question remains today, whether, if the Russian military received a higher percentage of the Russian GNP, the money would be used more rationally and inevitably lead to a well-functioning military organization. The above mentioned authors of *The Military Balance* noted that: “Although the military forces receive nearly 20% of the total federal budget, the money is not being used to continue the reform program, rather, it is being used, at least in mid-1997, to maintain as far as possible the inefficient status quo.”¹²⁹ In other words, the problem is how additional funds to the military forces could be used to bridge the gap between long-term structural goals and short term objectives. Furthermore, another political problem exists which questions whether the military elites were actually guilty or at least partially responsible for the poor economic situation.¹³⁰ Finally, it is interesting to note that even in the West, one of the most profound army reforms in centuries, that is the transition to All Volunteer Forces, has been accomplished under severe budgetary restraints.¹³¹ Organizational change is therefore something more than a budgetary or purely economic problem.

In conclusion, the dire state of the Soviet-Russian economy may not be ignored or seen as a hindrance to reform. But it is wrong to state that the economy was solely responsible for the lack of results in the military reform debate. The difficult economic situation of the armed forces and its weak position in budgetary discussions can be interpreted more broadly and seen as a result of its loss of both societal and political legitimacy.

An Ignored Socio-Cultural Argument

In a certain way, it is understandable that studying the socio-cultural environment of an organization in order to evaluate the Russian military forces is a perspective that has often been neglected.¹³² By using the socio-cultural argument, Russia is confronted with its contemporary self, its history and society. At the base of the socio-cultural variable lies a daring question: is the idea of the All-Volunteer Force suitable for Russian society at present? Are the ‘normative’ socio-cultural conditions present in Russia for this transformation to an All-Volunteer Force to take place?

These conditions are, as outlined in the first chapter, situated in the mentality of the individual, in Russian society in general, and in the Russian military organization itself. The fact that the whole of society itself is intimately related to the idea of having professional armed forces is not only an academic issue. It also locates the responsibility for either success or failure of the project in Russian society as a whole and not solely with one actor, be it either the military or the state apparatus.

¹²⁸ This contradiction was, in fact, the origin of a dispute between Rodionov and Baturin in the spring of 1997. Rodionov stated that military reform was not possible without a substantial increase in the military budget (this may be seen as the military’s general perception). Baturin, as the head of the Defense Council and as a representative of the civilian view on military reform, stated that military reform must be implemented at current spending levels.

¹²⁹ The International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 1997/98*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 101.

¹³⁰ For the contradiction between internal decline and external expansion, see: Seweryn Bialer, *The Soviet Paradox, External Expansion Internal Decline*, London: I.B.Tauris & Co, 1986.

¹³¹ This is even the case for most private firms, as they have to reform in periods of financial crisis.

¹³² An exception is Anatol Lieven, *Chechnya, Tombstone of Russian Power*, London: Yale University Press, 1998, especially pp. 186-219.

For instance, violence in the ranks, and the responsibility for it, is not only a problem of the military organization, but is also a crime committed by a 'civilian' youth against one of his peers. Besides individual malpractice in the army, there is also a revealing parallel between the army's conditions and the conditions in prisons and even in orphanages in Russia.

The following questions are a result of this observation. Firstly, is it possible to speak about a particular Russian condition, perhaps steered by necessity and scarcity rather than by choice and abundance? If this is the case, is it not an absolute contradiction to introduce an ultra-modern idea into a 'retarded' social environment? This unevenness, or this 'cultural lag', lies at the core of this survey and it is not a new idea in Russian studies. Students of Russian history are familiar with this topic. Alex Simirenko noted "one of the striking features of Soviet society as it emerged from its world isolation during the post-Stalin era was its superior technological and industrial position coupled with predominantly nineteenth-century Russian and European culture."¹³³ Significantly, Orlando Figes concluded in his study of the Russian revolution that: "Russia's prospects as a democratic nation depend to a large extent on how far the Russians are able to confront their own recent history; and this must entail the recognition that, however much the people were oppressed by it, the Soviet system grew up on Russian soil."¹³⁴

The 'peasant question' as Riasanovsky formulated it, is also in essence one of the variables that strained modernization.¹³⁵ Therefore, in this study the problems of the conscript soldier are deliberately called the 'soldiers' question', by which a direct link is made to the historical peasant question and the problem of Russia's inherent 'cultural lag'.

Conclusion

In 1988, the idea of a Russian all-volunteer force was placed on the Russian political agenda. In 1998 this topic faded from politico-military debates. During these ten years many environmental arguments in favor of real structural change in the Russian military organization were made. However, reality shows that no military organization of this type has been constructed. What could have been the cause of such an intuitive contradiction? In this study I investigate some of the causes of this contradiction. In a sense this is a study about something that did not take place. The basic problem that examined in this thesis is the structural incompetence of Russian attempts to implement the Western model as well as Russia's wider struggle to catch up with the West. Some limits have been set for the study of this complex social problem. Economic, technological and international arguments are beyond the scope of this study. However, I will examine the political and cultural debates that surround this issue in part II and part III of this thesis.

¹³³ Alex Simirenko, *Soviet Sociology, Historical Antecedents and Current Appraisals*, Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1966, p. 328.

¹³⁴ Orlando Figes, *A People's Tragedy, The Revolution 1891-1924*, London: PIMLICO 1996, p. 808.

¹³⁵ Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, 'The Problem of the Peasant', in: Wayne S. Vucinich (editor), *The Peasant in Nineteenth-Century Russia*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1968, p. 263.