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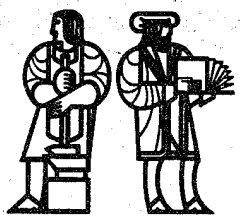

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November 1995

THE DEVOLUTION OF RUSSIAN MILITARY POWER

Stephen M. Meyer

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WP #95-4

THE DEVOLUTION OF RUSSIAN MILITARY POWER

by

Stephen M. Meyer[1]

I. INTRODUCTION

In the mid 1980s the Cold War was still cold. The United States and the Soviet Union were increasing their defense spending as they entered a new cycle of rearming. North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and Warsaw Pact forces faced each other across Central Europe. Today, a mere ten years later, there is no Soviet Union or Warsaw Pact. Former Soviet allies are clamoring to enter NATO and Russia's military is a literally a shadow of its former self.

Table 1 summarizes a dramatic evolution in the traditional indicators of Soviet/Russian military power. Standing capabilities such as troops and tanks are less than one-third former levels. Weapons production hovers at 1% of the rates observed a decade ago. And most significantly, there are no Russian forces in Eastern Europe.

Table 1: A Comparison of Soviet/Russian Military Power 1988-1994

	Total Troop Strength	*Heavy Divisions*	*Main Battle Tanks*	*Forces in Eastern Europe*	*Annual Tank Production*	*Annual Fighter Production*
1988	5.1 million	202	53,300	665,000	3500	700
1994	1.5 million	74	19,500	0	~20	~13

Sources: International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 1988-1989*, and *The Military Balance 1994-1995*; Kevin O'Prey, *A Farewell To Arms* (Twentieth Century Fund, forthcoming)

In the context of chronicling the contraction of Soviet military power the term "evolution" may seem misapplied. Evolution generally evokes images of an organism or system moving progressively toward more complex forms of order and functioning. Devolution may be a more fitting concept.

But this is the crux of the issue: Are we witnessing a devolutionary change in Russian military power? Do the trends and patterns we have followed since the collapse of the Soviet empire - drastically reduced resources and declining capabilities -reflect the likely state of Russian military power for the next decade? Or, are these trends merely noise that mask a truly evolution path toward a reinvigorated military?

There are two dimensions to this analysis. First we should consider indicators of current directions and trends in Russian military capabilities and use of force in support of national policy. These include both resource inputs (manpower, money, technology, etc.) and force outputs (unit manning levels, equipment readiness, logistics capacity, etc.) and address the question: How are capabilities likely to look *if trends continue largely unaltered?*

In fact the qualifier is the pivotal issue confronting us. How likely is it that current trends will continue? Isn't it more reasonable to assume that Russian leaders will intervene to halt, and even reverse, the decline in Russian military power? In fact, isn't it most likely that the continuing economic and political turmoil in Russia will bring to power a nationalist regime – or even a military regime – that would make rebuilding military power a priority?

Therefore, the second dimension to this analysis is an examination of political currents within the Russian military. Does the military, or some faction within it, have a political agenda to rebuild Russian military power? Is it capable of concerted and orchestrated activity to force a commensurate shift in State priorities?

II. Indicators of Current Trends in Russian Military Power

I consider four broad categories of indicators: budgets; manpower; equipment, training and operations; and bases and deployments. Each taps a different aspect of military power, yet as you will see each tells the same story of unabated decline.

Budgets

The most obvious – and the most problematical – place to start is with budgets and funding. The Russian military budget for 1994 was somewhere around R41 trillion , although only R29 trillion was actually spent[2]. The defense budget for 1995 is supposed to be R45 trillion. For comparative purposes, however, these ruble figures offer little insight since prior Soviet figures were for basically meaningless. Nevertheless some perspective can be gained by considering the fraction of the economy siphoned off for military purposes. If the Russian gross domestic product in 1994 was R630 trillion then defense was allocated about 6.5%, but actually consumed about 4.6%. This is about a quarter of the 15%-25% that most informed observers believe the Soviet Union spent for military purposes.

Keep in mind, however, that the Russian economy is less than half that of the Soviet Union, even in the latter's waning days. Thus resources flowing into Russian military capabilities are substantially less than suggested by the crude ratio comparison above. Clearly during the past five years real purchasing power for buying military capability has decline substantially across all

categories of defense spending – R&D, personnel, equipment, and operations and maintenance.

When we look inside the Russian military budget we see other clues of declining capabilities. As shown in Table 2 the pattern of how Russian defense rubles are distributed has changed significantly.[3] Weapons acquisition – R&D and production – used to account for almost two-thirds of Soviet defense spending. Today it is roughly a quarter. Instead spending on personnel consumes almost two-thirds of the defense ruble; and keep in mind that this is

Table 2: Percent of Military Budget by Category

	Year	
Spending Category	1988	1994
Personnel	25%	62%
Equipment	44%	15%
Operations & Maintenance	12%	11%
R&D	19%	10%

for a military establishment only 30% as large.

In terms of missions Russian military sources report that scarce defense rubles are going first to the Strategic Forces and nuclear weapons and materials safety, and to a lesser extent air defense. This priority on preserving the most potent and dangerous arm of Russian defense capability leaves the army and navy – the services that shouldered the burden of Soviet empire – severely underfunded.

The situation seems bad enough, but it is compounded by the fact that the Russian government has not been paying its defense bills. Officers and soldiers often go months without pay. This past June, for example, the Ministry of Defense received funds sufficient to pay only 30% of the forces. Most were told to expect to receive some pay by the fall.

Close to R10 trillion is owed to the defense industries for goods already delivered. This number continues to grow. As a result, bankruptcy looms for even those enterprises with highly successful and competitive weapons programs (amd in supposedly priority procurement areas) such as the S300 air defense system. Not surprisingly many defense enterprises now refuse defense work without cash up front.

Similarly utility service providers – electricity and water, for example – often go unpaid. Some bases and critical defense facilities have had their power, heat, and water turned off by local utilities forcing base commanders to either

find the cash or threaten military action. Such disruptions and diversions can only undermine military discipline and capability.

Manpower

By mid-1995 the Russian armed forces stood somewhere between 1.2 million and 1.5 million in uniform. This is only about 70% of its authorized strength of 1.9 million and a mere quarter the size of the Soviet armed forces of just a few years ago.

To be sure the reduction in authorized strength is in part a nod to reduced security requirements. Russia does not possess the empirical expanse of the former Soviet Union. Its leaders have disavowed the ideology of messianic expansionism that drove Soviet leaders. And so a 50% force reduction fits the new circumstances.

But it is also a bow to the realities of limited resources: Russia cannot feed, equip, train, and house an army approaching 5 million people. Indeed it cannot cope with the 1.2 million-plus it has now.

The huge gap between current authorized and actual manpower is a good measure of how poorly the armed forces are fairing. On the one hand the move toward an all volunteer force - contract service - is hobbled by a gross insufficiency of funds to pay salaries and provide housing and benefits. Thus, the draft remains the most important source of new soldiers.

On the other hand, the draft has been providing only 50% to 70% of authorized manpower needs. The avalanche of deferments that flowed from the heady euphoria of Soviet collapse leaves only about 20% of the draft pool available for conscription. Some sizable fraction of this 20% manages to evade the draft.

The military manpower shortage is serious, but political and economic realities bar simple solutions. Despite strong arguments to end many deferments, the Yeltsin government has shied from incurring the wrath of Duma politicians and the public who support the deferments. To partially offset this shortfall the Russian government recently increased the length of service from 18 to 24 months, which merely slows the manpower drain.

The impact of consequent manpower shortages varies by service. The Strategic Forces are being kept at near authorized strength. Safeguarding the nation's ICBMs and nuclear inventory is a prudent choice. The Air Force receives about 70% of the draftees it needs, while the Ground Troops and the Navy stagger in below 50%.

There are also wide variations among regions, units, and specialties. For example, the army has only 60% of vehicles drivers it needs to outfit its

authorized units. Many air defense radar units – especially in Russia's remote regions and border areas – sit unattended.

The quantitative shortfall has forced Russian military authorities to use the military manpower it has in the least effective and least efficient manner. Many officers are working in positions that should be occupied by enlisted/draftee personnel. Senior officers are doing the work of junior officers. Conversely, many of the troops are working in positions for which they are neither trained nor qualified. For example, new Air Force draftees are sent directly to line units without training.

The hope that contract service would attract highly qualified people to serve in the armed forces, thus raising performance standards, has proven to be misguided. Evidence from Chechnaya testifies that contract soldiers are no more proficient than draftees although they cost many time more.

Given prevailing economic, social, and political realities closing the manpower gap between authorized and actual levels means reducing authorized levels.

Equipment, Training, and Readiness

If the average Russian soldier had twice the proficiency of the average Soviet soldier, access to better equipment, and more robust logistics support then one could argue the quantitative drop could be partially negated by the qualitative gain. This "lean and mean" argument has enraptured many western and Russian analysts. It is, however, an illusion.

Consider current training regimens. Former Soviet pilots flew about 150 hours per year in training exercises. NATO regulations call for 200 hours per year. In contrast, Russian pilots are averaging 20 to 25 hours per year, and this number is declining. Russian army helicopter pilots have seen flying time reduced by more than two-thirds: from 100 to 30 hours.

Ground force exercises, which used to be the show of shows for the Soviet Army, have been radically curtailed. There have been no division-level exercises in 3 years; most are company-level and below. 1994 passed without a single regimental exercise. Among those exercises that do take place, many are held without using live equipment.

Why? Part of the explanation is the simple lack of functioning equipment. The raw numbers of stocks of Russian military hardware, such as 19,500 tanks, mask the fact that much of this equipment is no longer in functional condition and is irreparable. Tanks, armored personnel carriers, and artillery systems, ostensibly mothballed, stand rusting and abandoned in huge equipment parks. Russian army sources report that only 60% of its combat helicopters are considered to be in "working order" as opposed to over 90% several years ago.

Keep in mind that Russian standards for things considered to be "in working order" are notoriously low.

How could it be otherwise given the severe shortage of supplies and logistical support? Fuel, lubricants, ammunition, and normal maintenance items such as fuel filters, tires, and electrical and electronics are scarce. Consequently hardware is not being used for fear of wearing it out. The irony is the longer the equipment sits unused and unserviced the larger the fraction that becomes unusable and irreparable.

Meanwhile modernized and replacement weapons systems – to the extent there are any – are rolling in at a trickle. In 1994 the army received only 5 new helicopters. (In contrast, the Internal Troops received 50 new helicopters to help deal with domestic unrest). Russian army officials report that factory retooling for the next generation Russian combat helicopter, the Ka-50 was completed five years ago, yet none have been procured due to lack of funding. No new naval ships or submarines have been built since 1991. Russian defense industry managers report that about half of all the money allotted for armaments purchases goes to just a quarter of the defense enterprises.

Yet another part of explanation for poor readiness levels lies in the fact that most units are heavily engaged in "self provisioning." The inability of the Russian state to support its grossly understrength armed forces means that units must find their own sources of housing, food, fuel, and funding. Electricity, heat, and water have been cutoff to military bases (in fact power was temporarily cut to the Strategic forces central command post for lack of payment!). Units are forced to undertake projects to earn money to pay for supplies or provide services in kind. Part of this bartering undoubtedly includes trade in military hardware and component parts – tires for meat, rifles for vegetables – further reducing force readiness.

Bases and Deployments

Even before World War II ended western strategists worried about the potential for the Soviet Union to project power outside its borders via extra-territorial deployments. They were rightly concerned. Soviet deployments in Europe – with the exception of Austria – were quickly converted to permanent forward bases. Later the Soviet Union worked diligently to establish military facilities in foreign countries: Cuba, Vietnam, and Somalia are a few of the better known examples.

The strategic deployment and external basing of Russian forces today is largely an artifact of the old Soviet base system and the political turmoil that followed the break up of the Soviet Union. On the one hand, Russian forces remain behind or have reoccupied facilities in a number of former Soviet Republics that are now independent countries. Central Asia and the Caucuses, in particular, still enjoy the presence of Russian military units. See Table 3. Some

Russian forces are part of mutual defense agreements while others are ostensibly serving in peacekeeping roles.

On the other hand, Russia has effectively abandoned those regions of Soviet military deployment that western governments historically have found to be most threatening. Russian forces have evacuated Eastern Europe, the Baltic

Table 3: Russian Forces Abroad

Location	*No. of Troops*
Belarus	6 air regiments
Caucasus	28,000
Moldova	9,000
Tajikistan	12,000
Turkmenistan	2,800
Black Sea Fleet	48,000

states, and (with some exceptions) the Ukraine.

Yet beyond the simple and reflexive desire to maintain Russian influence in the former Soviet republics that buffer Russia from the outside world the extra-territorial deployment of Russian forces today does not reflect any overall strategic plan or perspective. One does not find synergistic force packages – combinations of appropriate ground forces, air forces, air defense forces, logistics, naval forces, etc. – but rather remnants that reflect fundamental logistical and support weaknesses. These deployments exist on a very tenuous lifeline, with much of their cost being borne by the "host" states (i.e., former Soviet republics now members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)). Indeed, Russia has been using these deployments as a way to cover some of its defense costs.

To be sure these deployments may spell trouble for former Soviet republics, who have virtually no military capability of their own. But they pose little danger to the larger periphery. In particular, pretensions of a power projection capability into Asia, the Middle East, or Europe are pure fantasy.

Recognizing the economic and logistical weaknesses of the present situation the military is discussing two basic approaches to improving the ability of Russian forces to cope with regional contingencies. The first involves expanding the present forward basing structure. Russia and the host country would invest new resources in base infrastructure and Russian forces would remain on foreign soil. This is a Warsaw Pact model. The one constraint is the

fact that neither Russia nor her potential partners have the resources to invest in maintaining and renovating exisitng bases, let alone build new ones. Russia's own military bases are in disrepair and are degrading further with each passing month.

The second option involves prepositioning Russian equipment in depots and bases in former Soviet republics but keeping Russian troops in in Russia. Should circumstances require intervention, Russian troops would be transported to equipment sites. Transporting people is far easier and more efficient than transporting tanks, artillery, ammunition, etc. Since Russia does not have the capacity to move large numbers of troops rapidly this approach would really only address peacekeeping and supression of local skirmishes. Perhaps more importantly, this plan does not allow Russia to "bill" the host state for personnel salaries.

Even within Russia military basing today is an artifact of past and long since irrelevant defense planning. Driven by the need to rapidly repatriate troops for Eastern Europe, the Baltics, and Ukaine home deployments reflect convenience and accommodation not national security requirements. The tremendous cost of building a base infrastructure to match contemporary national security needs and the fundamental logistical weakness that will endure preclude any serious redeployment or reconfiguration of the Russian military.

Regardless of what Russian military doctrine may stipulate political and economic realities will prevent any meaningful improvement in Russian abilities to project military power (other than to drop nuclear weapons on an adversary) for the foreseeable future. Rather she will continue to muddle along using the decaying remains of Soviet basing infrastructure to maintain a foothold in the former republics.

III. The Politics of Russian Military Power

The description offered above is compelling. But it is a description of the recent past and present for which one can argue that at least some of what happened was directly or indirectly the result of explicit policy choices made in Moscow - albeit pressured by undeniable economic and social stresses. Russia's government chose to exempt a large portion of her male youths from the draft thereby producing a manpower shortage. Russian leaders chose not to continue purchasing and modernizing large quantities of military hardware.

In fact the fairly low priority that current Russian political leaders in both the Yeltsin administration and Duma accord the military is reflected in the distribution of scarce resources among the four key security organizations. Manpower, money, and equipment appear to be directed first to the Border Troops, the Internal Troops, and the Security Service whose requirements are generally met. The armed forces are last in line for new resources of any type. Even those politicians and parties - such as Zhirinovskiy's followers and the

Communists - that claim to support higher defense spending end up voting affirmatively for budgets that do just the opposite. If nothing else this behavior speaks to the powerful logic imposed by weaknesses in the Russian economy and polity.

Nevertheless future Russian governments need not be bound by these choices. New leaders and new circumstances could produce a reassessment of the value of military power and a new willingness to rebuild the Russian armed forces.

Two remilitarization scenarios seem to dominate most western and Russian discussions. The first sees a strongly politicized military establishment promoting and backing a nationalist leader who promises to vastly increase its allotment of human and material resources. The second sees the rise of the proverbial "man on horseback" - a charismatic military figure - taking control of the country, either by force or by election. Presumably, his well-tuned appreciation for national defense requirements as well as institutional loyalties would drive him to reverse the decline in Russian military power and return the country to its rightful place as a superpower.

Politicization as Corrosive Political Awareness

Common conceptions of a "politicized" Russian armed forces are built upon stylized notions of Latin American and African military establishments. These militaries are idealized in one of two forms. One model depicts them as highly cohesive organizations with strong institutional self-identification and loyalties. Representing a distinct social class (or ethnic/tribal group) within the parent society the military also has an explicit political and social agenda. Possessing a powerful superiority in the instruments of violence these politically active militaries are well placed to protect institutional resources and self-defined organizational goals, missions, and to assert group values.

The second model sees Latin American and African militaries as representations of the political and social fractures in their larger societies. Corresponding factions within these militaries try to resolve societal antagonisms forcefully by taking advantage of their access to the nation's arsenal. Coups and counter-coups routinely occur.

In either case these third world models of military politicization fail miserably in explaining past Russian (Soviet) military behavior and predicting future actions. Examining any three consecutive months of news articles or recent academic writings about Russia one will find a ludicrous sequence of assessments trumpeting a gain, a loss, and then again a gain in the political influence of the military to account for Russian current events. Can it really be the case that the military gained tremendous influence from its storming of the Supreme Soviet, but then lost it almost immediately in failing to stop the new Duma from cutting its budget almost in half, but then regained it sufficiently to

force the attack on Chechnaya, but then a month or so later lost its influence when it could not convince the Yeltsin government to eliminate crippling draft deferments? Much like *post hoc* explanations of the daily rise and fall of the U.S. stock market these attempts to explain isolated political events in terms of relative military influence produce absurd incongruities.

This is not surprising since the Russian armed forces is not by any measure a third world military. In the context of the institutional history of the Russian military and still strong threads of professionalization among the officer corps we should instead think of the politicization of the Russian military in terms of increased political awareness - not political activism or intervention. In particular Russian officers and enlisted personnel are intensely mindful of the fact that any order they receive or any action they take will be scrutinized in a highly political atmosphere and the institution itself has little or no capacity to protect its members. It is not surprising, therefore, that in the political, economic, and social chaos that is Russia today personal stakes dominate military institutional concerns.

Then too manpower for the Russian armed forces continues to be drawn broadly from the populous. There is neither a "junker class" nor a distinct ethic fragmentation. Therefore the political awareness of Russian officers and troops tends to atomize political involvement by organizational members because, unlike third world militaries in which such fractures line up coherently along class, ethnic, or tribal lines, in the Russian military these fractures cut in many unparallel directions and therefore do not produce clear and enduring alignments. Consequently this undermines institutional influence and creates an atmosphere of lost confidence and indecisiveness.

Corroborating evidence comes in several forms. First we have three benchmark events: the 1991 coup against President Gorbachev, the October 1993 assault against the Supreme Soviet, and the 1995 war in Chechnaya.[4] In each case - and in contradiction to the expectations of most observers - the military was hesitant and indecisive in both deliberations on options and in actual implementation of orders. Practically every senior field commander and field staff contacted by then Defense Minister (and coup conspirator) Yazov during the 1991 coup refused orders to mobilize forces to support the takeover. It is now well known - though conveniently ignored - that the military leadership did not want to approve the use of troops to storm the Supreme Soviet; it was Yeltsin's civilian advisors that forced the decision. And practically none of the Ministry of Defense's senior leaders were aware of the decision to use force in Chechnaya. Again, it was civilians on the Security Council that moved the decision - contradicting western interpretations that the military was behind the effort.

Military Attitudes and Policy Preferences

The underlying diversity of Russian military politicization is found in polling data on "military" attitudes and political preferences. In one survey officers in the Moscow and North Caucuses military districts – who are among the most politically sensitized in the armed forces – were asked if they thought restoration of the Soviet Union was desirable. Only 10% answered yes while 60% replied that it would be best if Russia stayed within her current borders.[5] This parallels popular attitudes among the citizenry.

TABLE 4 compares military and public preferences for presidential candidates. The distributions are not very different but do reflect some interesting differences at the margin.[6] Neither group shows a marked preference for any candidate. For those concerned about a right-wing military political coalition the results are anomalous: the public prefers Zhirinovskiy over Yeltsin by 2:1; the military prefers Yeltsin to Zhirinovskiy by 4:3! The liberal democrat Yavlinskiy has greater appeal among the public, but nevertheless ties the two military figures – Lebed and Rustkoy – among the military polled.

Table 4: Comparison of Public and Military Preferences for Presidential Candidates

	General Public	*Military*
Yeltsin	3%	12%
Zhirinovskiy	6%	9%
Yavlinskiy	14%	11%
Lebed	4%	11%
Rutskoi	4%	11%

What is truly revealing about these data is that Zhirinovskiy, among others, has made many declarations in the military press about wanting to increase defense spending. Yavlinskiy, in contrast, as been equally adamant in the military press that economic realities prevent any consideration of increased resources going to the military. Yet the latter has a marginally greater proportion of military supporters.

Equally notable are surveys of negative attitudes. A poll of 615 officers found that 69% held a negative view of Zhirinovskiy compared to 59% who disliked Yeltsin.[7] Interestingly the same poll found that Defense Minister Grachev also was appraised negatively by 52%. Other current and former military officials– such as Makashov and Rutskoi – had equally poor showings. The latter, once considered by many to be a serious presidential contender, has no reak political base within the military or outside it – nor did he ever.

Similarly survey and interview data fail to demonstrate any significant difference between civilian and military views on key policy issues. Regardless of whether the questions probe potential sources of threats, preferences on the orientation of national security policy and foreign policy (e.g., NATO expansion into Eastern Europe), or policy toward former Soviet republics the concentration and distribution of attitudes within the officer corps and the troops parallel those of the public at large.

Nor are attitudes toward the war in Chechnaya a systematic dividing point between civilians and the military (presumptions in the press notwithstanding). There are supporters and opponents of the campaign in both groups and in roughly similar proportions,. Interestingly the military opponents have been among the most outspoken critics, perhaps because they had so little to do with the decision to use force.

So clearly no right-wing military alliance is emerging in Russia. There exists a strong diversity of political views within the military and social and economic trends serve to reinforce, if not accentuate, these differences. Perhaps this is because Russian officers and soldiers are not a class apart from Russian society.

The Man on Horseback

Of course a small tight-knit core of senior military officers could attempt to seize power. The evidence strongly suggest, however, that few if any military units would respond - as was the case in the 1991 coup - because there is no broad-based allegiance within the military today. For example, only 23% of officers surveyed scored Minister of Defense Grachev favorably in terms of his authority, yet glancing through western press reports and scholarly publications one finds daily references to his growing power and authority.

In contrast to Africa or Latin America a few military units cannot control Russia. Simultaneously eizing physical control of Moscow, St. Petersburg and a dozen other cities - which the military could almost certainly not do - would have not provide the regime with any meaningful control on the population or the economy. If anything events in Chechnaya clearly show the wide gap between establishing marshal law on the one hand and civil order and commerce on the other.

And what of the proverbial "man on horseback" rising up to give the country a firm hand and a steady course? In recent months the name of General Alexander Lebed (now retired), former commander of the 14th Army, has been heralded as a possible Russian Napoleon. Examining the outspoken General's views on military spending, military missions, and national security policy one finds them no more extreme than those held by most moderate and center political figures in Russian politics - and indeed comparable to most of the polity at large.

When military officers were queried about their alleged champion only 26% rated Lebed favorably in terms of "professionalism" - a measure that might tap professional/institutional identification and, hence, allegiance.[8] In fact Lebed did not fair any better than Defense Minister Grachev (23%). Neither Lebed, nor Grachev, nor any other Russian military officer is in a position to stage a coup.

If Lebed or any other military man comes it lead Russia it will be because he was elected. It will be because the larger Russian polity wants it.

IV. IMPLICATIONS

The present Russian government is in many ways an anomalous product of the collapse of Soviet power and the rise of the nascent Russian republic. Similarly, its policy orientation reflects its unique birth. It is almost certain that future Russian governments will implement new policies - including national security policies - that spell significant change from current policies. If and when that happens it will be the consequence of fundamental political and social forces within Russia and not the relative political influence of the military.

In this respect the political candidacy of a former general or action by the Duma to increase Russian defense authorizations cannot be considered a harbinger of Russia's remilitarization. Should we assume that the U.S. is remilitarizing because former Chairman of the Joint Chief of Staff Colin Powell is being touted as a presidential candidate and the Congress has added money to the U.S. defense budget? In Russia today, as in the U.S., there is a yearning for a leader of unimpeachable character, discipline, a record of accomplishment, and a sense of purpose. In both countries charismatic military leaders seem to fit the bill, if only in the public's imagination. Their political ascension, however, has nothing to do with national security or militarism.[9]

Undoubtedly there will be a number of foreign and defense policy decisions and actions Russia is likely to take in the years ahead that will not please Western governments or Russia's neighbors. We must recognize that to a large extent these policies enjoy broad - albeit latent - political support within Russia. We can only help to make them popular causes for nationalists by reacting in knee-jerk fashion with admonitions and threats of sanctions.

Correspondingly we must eschew simple and ignorant explanations - such as power struggles between the good guys and the bad guys - of policy change in Moscow. Russian unwillingness or failure to pursue a security policy that we approve is neither an indicator of demise of democracy nor evidence of the rise of "dark forces." It is evidence of a maturing Russian state with interests that, not surprisingly, will not always coincide with ours.

In this respect as U.S. policymakers consider our leverage to influence developments in Russia they should keep in mind that our ability to push Russia

in undesirable directions is far greater than our ability to push her in desirable ones. The promotion of an eastward expansion of NATO is one poignant example where our actions galvanize a strong, pervasive, and enduring popular reaction against the West over what is, presently, a minor elite issue in Russia.

Even though Russia is a new country Russian interpretation of the history of the past 70 years of relations between the Soviet Union and the West continues to produce strong currents in Russian politics. Add to this historical baggage the peculiarities of the politics of state-building and the situation is ripe for seemingly innocuous actions by Western states to be interpreted as meddling in internal affairs, attempts at political and economic sabotage, and efforts to permanently demilitarize Russia. Offering a helping hand and then threatening to withdraw it at each indication of policy changes in Russia may be more inimical to western interests than not offering any help at all.

Ironically, it appears that the surest way for the U.S. to reduce the risks of Russian militarism or warlordism is to encourage and reinforce Russian military professionalization. Despite the bad press that the Russian (and Soviet) military has received, the history of the Cold War and the present clearly show that the professional military has been a moderating influence on Russian (Soviet) political leaders' inclination to use force in foreign and domestic policy.

V. CONCLUSION

The decline of Russian military power has been underway for more than half a decade. It is just one of the aftershocks of Soviet collapse. All indications suggest that the rate of decline has actually accelerated in recent years and that a "bottoming out" of Russian military power is not yet in sight.

To be sure this decline is partly a consequence of policy decisions made in Moscow. Even more so it is a consequence of a wide array of political, economic, and social forces affecting Russia which essentially dictated policy choices to Moscow. Although we cannot forecast the intentions of future Russian governments we can gain some assurance from the fact that regardless of their policy preferences – real or imagined – real world constraints will prevent a substantial expansion of Russian military power over the next decade. The Soviet Union collapsed, in part, because the system ignored the serious economic and social dislocations that resulted from its infatuation with the trappings of military power. Even the conservative Russian Duma seems to understand this: the country just does not have the resources to spend on military power. And within the foreseeable future even those most wild-eyed and militant Russian leader will run up against the realities of the nascent Russian state that limit defense policy choices.

We must use this knowledge to temper our reactions to advocacy and even pronouncements of Russian national security policies that we perceive as counter to our interests.

ENDNOTES:

[1] Research support for this paper was provided by a grant from the Carnegie Corporation and contract with the Office of Net Assessment, Department of Defense [MDA- 903-C-0139]. The views expressed in this paper are those of the author.

[2] Trying to convert these ruble sums into dollars is a meaningless exercise. Given the state of the Russian economy the dollar value tells us nothing about what can be purchased, or what the economic tradeoffs might be. For those who insist on knowing the dollar equivalent, at present exchange rates approximately 4400 rubles buy one dollar.

[3] Data from: *Chest imeyu*, No. 9, September 9, 1994, p.2-7.

[4] On the 1991 coup see Stephen M. Meyer (1992) *International Security*. On the 1993 struggle with the Supreme Soviet see Brian Taylor (1994) "Russian Civil-Military Relations After the October Uprising,"*Survival* , Vol. 36, No. 1, pp. 3-29.

[5] *Izvestiya* (April 21, 1995)

[6] Data from: *Obshchaya gazeta* (1995, No. 8).

[7] *Argumenti I fakty* (October 1994), No. 3., p. 2.

[8] *Izvestiya* (April 21, 1995)

[9] The other point that should be made is that military men who take over the reigns of government become must less effective agents for military institutional interests. Where previously they could concentrate their political energies on single-issue lobbying (military requirements) as heads of government they take on responsibility for managing and balancing all the interests of government.