

CONCLUSION

Gold Eagle, Red Star

DMITRI V. TRENIN

The military organization of the Russian Federation is largely a relic of the second half of the 20th century. Among Europe's militaries, the Russian situation is hardly unique. For more than a decade following the end of the bipolar standoff, virtually every former Cold War adversary has been at odds with the emerging new strategic landscape. There are, however, at least three important distinctions. First, the situation in Russia differs fundamentally from the situation in the West because the change in the international order coincided with the collapse of Russia's domestic political, economic, and value systems. Second, Russia differs from its former Warsaw Pact satellites because from the beginning it had few prospects for early integration into Western institutions, such as NATO. Third, Russia is unlike any of the newly independent states of the former Soviet Union precisely because it is not a nascent state. It therefore did not have the option of creating a defense system from scratch. Rather, it entered the post-Cold War period saddled with an outdated, unwieldy military machine.

In Russia, where the government historically dominated society, the army was both the salient institution of an omnipotent state and its true emblem. The continental-size czarist empire traditionally relied on a massive military both to maintain cohesion and to protect and expand its borders. The Soviet regime was born out of a cruel civil war eventually won for the Bolsheviks by the Red Army. The communist regime acquired domestic legitimacy and international prestige as a result of the Soviet Union's 1945 victory in what became officially known as the Great Patriotic War against Nazi Germany. In the half century that followed, the Soviet Union owed its position as the world's second superpower almost entirely to its military, particularly its nuclear might. When the USSR collapsed under its own weight in 1991, the military stood by, bewildered but unscathed. It refused to concede defeat and instead talked of treason.

This historical outline makes clear that any attempt to radically reform Russia's military organization cuts to the core of the nation's identity. A further complication is that military reform is but one aspect of post-Soviet Russia's massive transformation agenda. The collapse of the command economy and the introduction of a crude version of the market; the end of communism as the state's unitary ideology and the arrival of political and ideological pluralism (it is still too early to talk of democracy in Russia); the tectonic shift in borders and dramatically altered relationships with international players, all had a direct bearing on the future of Russia's military and had to be factored in by the government when developing this agenda. Evidently, this was a tall order, perhaps even too tall.

Outwardly, the Russian military has undergone many major changes. The Soviet army, suddenly bereft of the state it had vowed to serve, was peacefully dismantled in 1991–92. With few exceptions (among them, the Black Sea Fleet), Ukraine and Belarus successfully claimed ownership of Soviet assets on their territory. Meanwhile, the Central Asians inherited most of the assets of the local Soviet infrastructure. Forces in the Caucasus, Moldova, and the Baltic States, as well as in the former East Germany, came under Moscow's jurisdiction. In May 1992, when the armed forces of the Russian Federation were legally formed, they still counted 2.73 million servicemen (out of the almost 4-million-man-strong Soviet army). The strategic nuclear forces were still at their all-time Cold War high and, although under Moscow's control, were deployed in four newly independent states.

By January 2004, the Russian military's authorized strength had plummeted to 1,132,000. Russian forces had withdrawn from East Germany, Central and Eastern Europe, the Baltic States, Azerbaijan, and Mongolia, though small garrisons still remain in a few countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). The nuclear arsenal, today concentrated exclusively in Russia, is steadily shrinking. Psychologists, often aided by Russian Orthodox priests, have replaced communist political officers. In essence, the Russian armed forces are a scaled-down, much battered version of the Soviet military. Throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, they experienced tremendous decay, yet remained surprisingly resilient. Although not a total failure, the Russian military has thus far failed to adapt to the new economic environment at home and the new strategic environment abroad.

This volume addressed three central questions about the Russian armed forces in the early 21st century. First, why, despite the deeply

troubled state of the Russian military, have there been no serious attempts at reform? It is striking that the areas in which the Soviet Union was clearly lagging behind, such as retail trade, the service sector, and even agriculture, experienced a revival in the 1990s while the armed forces, the Soviet crown jewel, fell into disrepair. Second, how has the military organization been able to withstand and absorb the seismic shocks brought on by the collapse of the Soviet Union? Indeed, there are few armies that under similar conditions would not have openly rebelled against the government or simply disintegrated. So what explains the Russian case? Third, what does the future hold for this organization? It is likely that Russia will play a significant role in Eurasian affairs in the early 21st century; that it will do so as an autonomous, essentially nonintegrated international actor is a certainty. What kind of a military instrument will Moscow wield in pursuit of its national interests? What follows is a summary of conclusions in all three areas.

WHY THE LACK OF MILITARY REFORM?

In the fall of 2003, the Russian government pronounced military reform officially accomplished. It would be more accurate, however, to say that the reform effort had been largely abandoned. Russian politicians and citizens alike continue to view the military's situation as abominable and intolerable. Most accept the urgent need for reform, because so far even basic changes have been minimal. The Russian army still relies on conscripts, and the projected increase in the number of contract soldiers will not automatically make it more efficient; the army continues to lack a corps of noncommissioned officers, and creating such a corps will take decades rather than years; finally, its doctrine, organization, and training remain overly focused on the fairly improbable scenario of defending Russia against an aerial attack by the West. What distinguishes this army from its Soviet predecessor is, above all else, its inferior quality.

Many have been blamed for the lack of meaningful military reform in Russia. Some experts point to the lack of competence among the government officials charged with this task. As both Aleksandr Golts and Pavel Baev argue in their chapters, Soviet, and later Russian, leaders were for the most part ignorant of or uninterested in defense affairs. As president and commander in chief of the Russian armed forces, Mikhail Gorbachev, and later Boris Yeltsin, were unable and unwilling to consider the implications of their domestic reforms and foreign policies for Russia's defense

and security sector. Inevitably, the two leaders chose to rely on loyal senior officers who promised their political support in exchange for leaving the military organization largely intact. Both preferred these senior officers over younger reformers whose radical vision included the dissolution of the General Staff, or at least ridding it of “conservatives” who threatened to undermine military discipline and push the bulk of the army into the hands of hard-line communists or nationalists. The price the political leadership was forced to pay, of course, was allowing the military brass to reform itself—the functional equivalent of letting Gosplan carry out market reforms. It did not help that senior Russian officers, though well versed in military issues, were extremely narrow-minded in their overall outlook. Their knowledge of politics, economics, and world affairs was not only limited but also often distorted. In addition, they were accustomed to operating in an environment where resources were virtually limitless and, as far as the military organization was concerned, free. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, some liberal academics and several younger officers sought to challenge the views of the entrenched military elite, but were significantly hampered by their own lack of specialized knowledge or relevant experience. In sum, the military brass managed to preserve their monopoly over defense-related expertise, but it was a truly Pyrrhic victory.

Another explanation for the absence of genuine military reform was the vigorous opposition of certain vested interests. The General Staff and the defense ministry, which were entrusted with implementing the government’s reform program, were communities of survivors, not kamikazes. Unlike the captains and majors who in the late 1980s and early 1990s denounced the corrupt defense establishment, the generals and admirals had everything to lose in the event of a major overhaul of the system they had built to last. No military organization can reform itself on its own, and Russia’s is no exception.

Still other observers support the notion of “original sin,” according to which the fate of the Soviet military organization—indeed of the Soviet Union itself—was sealed at the November 1991 annual meeting of the Soviet high command, attended by both Gorbachev and Yeltsin. Given the choice of supporting the high command or Yeltsin, the generals decided to cast their lot with the Russian leader. In return for the generals’ loyalty, Yeltsin allowed the military hierarchy to run their organization as they saw fit and barred would-be reformists from interfering. The influence of this loyalty pledge is still being felt today: one can well imag-

ine the ever cautious Vladimir Putin carefully weighing the risks before taking on the top brass in a sweeping reform effort, only to have to resign in the wake of failure.

Finally, some experts argue that military reform was sacrificed as the price for stability. Amid the revolutionary (and chaotic) changes of the 1990s, Russia's defense ministry was faced with so many urgent tasks—including massive troop withdrawals and redeployments, adjustment to new borders and new neighbors, and even peacekeeping—that taking on additional responsibilities could have proved overwhelming. Moreover, beginning in late 1994, the high command trained its focus on the conflict in the North Caucasus. The war in Chechnya, while highlighting the inadequacy of Russia's military organization and the lack of cohesion among its key components, became a major roadblock to reform by politically empowering the conservative war-prosecuting authority.

As already mentioned, there were even broader reasons for the lack of military reform in Russia. The year 1991 represented the end of an era not just for the Soviet Union. The global security landscape also underwent abrupt and fundamental change. In this new environment, it was unclear what the principal security threats would be, and thus how to define them. Military establishments naturally look for identifiable enemies. So in 1993, when the Kremlin declared in a document entitled "Fundamentals of the Military Doctrine" that Russia no longer confronted any real enemies but only assorted threats and risks, the military leadership denounced it as naïve and irresponsible. Meanwhile, the top brass resolved to keep intact as much of the former Soviet military machine as possible, in the hope that someday Russia and its armed forces would be restored to their former glory. As it happened, this was not a futile hope. Ten years later, in the fall of 2003 the defense ministry issued a strikingly candid White Paper that emphasized defense against the United States as the prime mission of the Russian armed forces and proclaimed the military reform project to be over.

Engaging in "strategic camouflage" (i.e., nominally accepting the absence of enemies while keeping the overall strategic matrix essentially intact) was relatively easy for Russia's military elite, who still could not come to terms with the country's fundamentally changed domestic environment. The military leadership failed to appreciate the implications of the replacement of the Soviet command economy with a primitive version of the market. On the other hand, government reformers saw their task as the swift demilitarization of the new economy, which was essen-

tially a wartime economy with a relatively small, inefficient civilian sector. The reformers were in no mood to let the generals spend money on a bloated, outdated, and largely useless infrastructure. Typically for Russia, however, another *de facto* compromise was reached: in the early and mid-1990s, the defense ministry would receive roughly half of its budget request, but in general would be allowed to spend the money as it wished. Compromises of this kind (or the “original sin” of buying the General Staff’s loyalty by renouncing radical military reform) were responsible for the relative peacefulness of Russia’s postcommunist development. At the same time, however, such compromises greatly limited the scope and depth of the changes to come.

As Alexei Arbatov’s chapter illustrates, military reform was most closely linked to Russia’s foreign policy orientation. Here, the road taken was anything but direct. Initially, the Kremlin chose to pursue “integration on equal footing,” with Russia claiming to be second only to the United States within the expanded Western community. Spurned in this effort, the government then sought to develop a policy of “critical partnership,” which only increased tensions over NATO enlargement and nearly resulted in a conflict over Kosovo. Under President Putin, despite his post-September 11 opening to the West, Russia has stressed strategic independence, seeking a broad freedom of action, particularly in the former Soviet states. This international position *sui generis* has placed an especially high demand on the military to view the West as both a partner (i.e., against Islamic extremists) and as a potential adversary (regarding the CIS).

Russia’s economic upheaval in the 1990s greatly aggravated the military establishment’s manpower problems. Many of the best and the brightest left to follow more attractive career paths. At the same time, the military’s loss of prestige and material advantage deterred others from joining. Even more important, the government’s passage of new deferral measures also in the 1990s (as well as an increase in illegal ways to dodge the draft) effectively limited the military services’ manpower pool to members of the lower classes whose families could not afford either to send their sons to schools that offered draft deferrals or to bribe recruitment officials. Not only the newly rich but also the liberal intelligentsia, enjoying *de facto* protection from conscription for their sons, lost much of their interest in military reform.

Finally, with the end of the Cold War, virtually for the first time in Russia’s history, traditional defense concerns all but disappeared. There

were, to be sure, military security problems along Russia's periphery, from ethnic conflicts to small-scale wars (Chechnya included). None, however, was seen as an issue of life or death. The threat of a massive foreign invasion, calling for a patriotic war in defense of the motherland (which was consistently portrayed as the prime rationale for the existence of the Soviet/Russian military organization), had suddenly evaporated. The "June 22 complex" (i.e., fear of a massive surprise attack similar to the German assault against the Soviet Union in 1941), which had been so influential until the mid-1980s, began to lose its hold. As a result, defense procurement from 1992 onward plummeted to only a fraction of what it had been in the 1980s. Meanwhile, the armed forces' numbers remained high, with the government clearly preferring to see Russian men in uniform and in the barracks rather than jobless and on the streets. Yet, as the specter of all-out war receded, the likelihood of more numerous small wars along the borderlands began to increase. These "southern wars," however, were very different from the world war the Soviet Union had feared and prepared for during the Cold War. This difference was of decisive importance because, regardless of what they said, Russian political elites, the military brass, and society at large did not really consider fundamental military reform to be the top priority.

WHERE IS THE SYSTEM NOW?

There is a maxim in Russia that the army is never as strong as it boasts, but also never as weak as it may appear. What is truly surprising is that, against all odds and dire predictions, Russia's military organization (which in addition to the armed forces includes interior, border, and railroad troops, as well as armed services attached to the security services and other agencies) has neither collapsed nor even rebelled against the government. What has kept the system afloat, and how far can it go without a major overhaul?

Not only was the Soviet military machine enormous, but it was also built to prevail in a nuclear war against the combined forces of the West. The Soviet Union, however, was not defeated in a war. Internal crisis, rather than outside pressure, led to its disintegration. Whether the Soviet system could have survived longer than it did is moot. The essential fact is that two policies initiated by the Gorbachev government—glasnost and perestroika—followed by détente with the West, led to the undoing of the USSR and its military. Over decades of confrontation, however, the

Soviet military amassed huge stockpiles of resources that have kept its Russian successor going for years. These stocks are being depleted, however, and nowhere is this more evident than in the manpower sector.

Human Resources

The Russian Federation has thus far preserved the Soviet system of universal conscription. The country's wealthier families, however, have taken advantage of the government's system of deferrals to keep their sons out of the military; poorer families have not been as fortunate. At the same time, the population of Russia is declining even more rapidly than those in Europe, at an average rate (in the 1990s) of three-quarters of a million persons per year. Consequently, the pool of available conscripts is rapidly shrinking, which has raised growing concerns within the military leadership. For the first time in its modern history, Russia is unable to compensate in quantity what it lacks in quality in both personnel and materiel. Today, the defense ministry has to compete for human resources with both the civilian economy and the sprawling security establishment, which together employ more uniformed and civilian personnel than the armed forces.

The manpower crisis is not only a demographic problem but also a structural one. Russia's military remains virtually unique among the world's major countries in not having a corps of professional noncommissioned officers. Currently, commissioned officers number around 450,000, while there are slightly fewer than 690,000 conscripts and hardly any professional sergeants or warrant officers.¹ As a result, officers rely on "informal methods" to maintain discipline in the barracks, for example, through subcontracting authority to "senior" conscripts; this in turn has led to widespread hazing and other forms of abuse.

The military's key manpower problem, however, relates to the commissioned officers corps, which is top-heavy, poorly managed, and much too large. The sorry state of this pivotal body is the greatest testimony to the continuing degradation of Russia's military organization. At the same time, the domination of old patronage networks at the highest levels of the military hierarchy has effectively immobilized this vertically managed system. Most general officers are so accustomed to leading huge, conscript-based formations configured for large-scale war that they are

¹ "Oboronnyaya politika Rossii," paper prepared by the Council on Foreign and Defense Policy, November 2003, p. 5.

unable to adapt to more realistic war-fighting scenarios. The inexcusable failure of the State Duma to substantially raise the level of civilian expertise in defense matters (if anything, the opposite may be true) completes this generally bleak assessment.

Russia's civilian leaders have by and large continued the Soviet tradition of civilian-military relations. They insist on the generals' political loyalty in exchange for their own minimal involvement in defense matters. The appointment in 2001 of Sergei Ivanov as Russia's "civilian" defense minister failed to result in the overhaul of the obsolescent defense ministry structure. On the contrary, the new minister soon became an advocate of the traditionalist mainstream within the military establishment. Under Putin, the civilianization of Russia's military structures, meekly attempted by his predecessor, gave way to the pervasive militarization and securitization of the government at the highest levels. This change has had inevitable consequences for Russia's foreign and security policy outlook.

"Software"

As Pavel Baev argues in his chapter, the Russian political leadership and the military high command are still in a doctrinal muddle. The national security concept and the military doctrine offer lengthy catalogues of threats and risks, but both fail to assign priorities. Throughout the 1990s, defense against a Western (U.S./NATO) attack remained the principal option, both for reasons of sheer inertia and for the sake of preserving the existing military establishment. In the wake of the October 2002 Moscow theater hostage drama, however, President Putin's demand to refashion the military to better fight against international terrorism reflected the political leadership's belief that Russia's military organization had become outdated. Yet as Putin's acceptance of the defense ministry's October 2003 White Paper demonstrates, the Kremlin has no stomach for challenging the well-entrenched views of the top brass on defense issues.²

The White Paper contains references to a new security agenda while reflecting the essence of traditional thinking. It leaves little doubt that the Russian military continues to see the United States and its NATO allies as the country's principal potential adversaries. Consequently, the main

² Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation, "Relevant Tasks of Development of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation," September 23, 2003.

thrust of Russian force development is on preparation for defense against a U.S.-led attack. And to the extent they exist, military education and training remain focused on the West as the likely enemy.

As Rose Gottemoeller notes in her chapter, nuclear weapons play “a strong role in both Russian military doctrine and in the relationship of the Russian Federation to the outside world.” Russia’s nuclear posture is both a symbol of its residual status as a military superpower and its ultimate insurance policy vis-à-vis the United States and other major powers, such as China. Moreover, optimists at one time hoped that Russia’s huge nuclear arsenal would act as a foil by protecting Russian military reform from all kinds of strategic surprises. As discussed, however, the reform effort never got off the ground.

The surviving Soviet military infrastructure continues to dictate Russian force deployments, with one important addition: the North Caucasus, which because of the Chechen war has become a second front line. The new southern front, however, has not replaced the old western front in Russian military doctrine, but has only been added to it. Russian military engagements in CIS states, as Roy Allison discusses in his chapter, were aimed at ensuring that the outcomes would be consistent with Moscow’s perceived interests. The Russian military observed with a wary eye what it saw as Western encroachments in its strategic backyard. Analogies to the Great Game were offered repeatedly, and never totally refuted.

Hardware

Although the Russian nuclear arsenal has shrunk, it remains a potent force. The absence of limitations that would have been imposed by the START II treaty, and the extension of the life cycle of Soviet-built intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), have allowed the Russian military to optimize its strategic nuclear force within existing financial constraints. By contrast, Russia’s conventional arsenals have drastically deteriorated. Only one weapon system out of five deployed can be called “new.” The army is still saddled with its Soviet-era arsenals, which as Vitaly Shlykov argues in his chapter, has had dramatic implications for Russia’s defense industrial base. Having seen government orders plummet 70–80 percent, military industrial enterprises have virtually ceased to exist. This once proud empire, Shlykov suggests, has become a “forgotten archipelago.” The only such enterprises that have managed to thrive are producing arms for China, India, Iran, and other foreign buyers. Attempts to

streamline development and production have run against the grain of vested interests and have largely failed. Whether the Russian armed forces will eventually be able to equip themselves with domestically produced state-of-the-art weaponry is an open question.

WHAT ARE THE PROSPECTS FOR THE RUSSIAN MILITARY?

While the top brass has pronounced the reform of the Russian military complete, outside critics of this organization call it “unreformable.” Both views, though seemingly incompatible, are correct. Like the state itself, Russia’s armed forces survived the upheaval and turmoil caused by the Soviet collapse to reach a point of partial stabilization. Further radical changes are unlikely in the short to medium term. At the same time, Russia’s military, like the country’s political system, has demonstrated the limits of reform. Rather than being replaced by a totally new entity, such as the *streletsi* under Peter the Great, the current system will continue to muddle through, despite its obvious failings.

In this, a changed operating environment will help the Russian military. With the start of President Putin’s second term in March 2004, the traditional Russian state is staging a comeback. Should Russia’s economic growth, aided by high oil prices, continue, it would provide more resources for the military and security services. Defense modernization is one of President Putin’s stated priorities. From the Kremlin’s perspective, a strong conscript-based military is an institution of national consolidation. Although Russia will move cautiously toward building a more professional force, it will not abandon conscription for the foreseeable future. It is more likely that the deferral system will be reviewed and scaled back, and as a result more young men will be called up for duty. National service would become universal in more than name only, but the length of service would be slashed in half to one year. Military education is likely to be streamlined and better integrated with the civilian sector; officers’ housing and health care will probably see some improvements. Yet, characteristically, Putin has confined the focus of his military modernization efforts essentially to the support sector.

The government’s aim to build a military where by 2007 slightly more than 50 percent of its members would be contract servicemen will probably be achieved, formally speaking. It is more difficult to see, however, what this will mean in practice. Contract soldiers’ salaries remain very low, particularly in the context of today’s often-harsh service condi-

tions. A private under contract receives less than \$180 a month; a lieutenant makes \$200 a month (the average pay of a salaried worker); and a colonel earns \$330 a month. As Arbatov argues in his chapter, to be even marginally attractive, the wages of an academy graduate should equal those of a colonel. In the short term, this is rather unlikely. Instead of attracting the best and the brightest, the military will continue to rely on forces that can be obtained at minimum cost. Contract soldiers are not professionals. Consequently, personnel decisions and supervision, officer evaluations, postings, and promotion will continue to be nontransparent and all too often corrupt. In the medium term, the situation may change if Russia's foreign policy becomes progressively militarized, which could result in pay hikes for servicemen. However, the armed forces can hardly expect anything close to the windfall enjoyed by their colleagues in the domestic security services, which in recent years have increased in both size and strength. Currently, the gap in pay between military officers and security officers is 150 percent.

The war against terrorism has revived the Russian security services, providing them with a new rationale and sense of mission. To the Russian armed forces, Chechnya has been less of a turning point and more of an add-on. In the early 21st century, the military will be configured to fight two types of war: regional or local conflicts against U.S.-led or U.S.-supported military forces, and counterinsurgency campaigns against Islamic rebels. The former will take precedence as the more intense and technologically more advanced form of warfare. Moscow confronts security vacuums south of its borders and feels obliged to act. Moreover, if Russia seeks to reestablish preeminence in the former Soviet space, the risk of military engagement in the CIS states will rise dramatically. This is likely to be accompanied by some kind of politico-military standoff with both the United States and Europe. Such a development would require a ready military force capable of power projection in the vicinity of Russia's borders, which is currently the defense ministry's key priority. Thus, the deterioration of Russia's relations with the West may help the Russian military escape the kind of reform that was widely envisaged in the 1990s. Rather than focusing squarely on 21st-century missions, the military will have to balance a complex combination of old and new threats.

In early-21st-century Russia, a civilian defense ministry will continue to be an oxymoron. Even if the titular head of the defense ministry is a retired general, his staff will be almost exclusively composed of uniformed officers. While recognizing the authority of the defense minister,

the General Staff is likely to continue in its historical role as the principal decision-making agency on defense matters, the prime implementer and controller. Over time, it is likely to emerge as the central node of planning, coordination, procurement, logistical support, education, and training for the entire military organization. In a legislature where the Kremlin-affiliated group has a constitutional majority, independent parliamentary control of the military and security services will be minimal. The Kremlin, on the other hand, will be closely watching the armed services. Meanwhile, the Russian public will be given more official information about the state of the armed forces, while being encouraged to make greater displays of patriotism.

Optimization and rationalization, rather than radical reform, will be the motto of Russia's military reorganization. The nuclear forces could be streamlined, partly out of choice and partly out of attrition, with the nuclear/land/sea triad folding into a land/sea dyad with ground-based ICBMs becoming the dominant component. As Russia's ongoing ICBM force modernization program shows, deterrence of both the United States (explicitly) and China (implicitly) remains a prime military security strategy. To make this strategy more flexible, Russia may consider three options: integrating its strategic and substrategic nuclear forces, developing miniaturized nuclear weapons to take account of an expanded array of possible targets, and lowering the nuclear threshold. Moscow will of course closely watch developments such as U.S. efforts to build a missile defense system and the so-called militarization of outer space. Meanwhile, nuclear weapons will allow the Russian high command breathing room to compensate for the growing gap in conventional capabilities and military technology.

The nuclear shield could either facilitate or impede Russia's military transformation. Current trends point toward a dual mission for Russia's conventional forces in the early 21st century. With NATO expanding from Estonia to Bulgaria, and U.S. bases redeploying from Germany to Poland and Romania, the principal mission of the Russian military will continue to be preparation for repelling a conventional attack in the west (from the Baltic to the Black Sea) and in the east (from Lake Baikal to Kamchatka). At the same time, the armed forces could be engaged in putting down various types of insurgencies along Russia's southern border. Lacking significant power projection capability, these forces would have to be deployed in the vicinity of the theaters of operation in the Caucasus and Central Asia. There is a clear need to develop rapid deploy-

ment capabilities (for both airborne troops and the air force) and to create a network of local alliances. Over time, a new structure of regional and functional commands will have to replace the antiquated system of military districts.

Whatever the thrust of Russia's foreign and defense policy, the military's education system will need to be drastically overhauled. This includes consolidating and improving the faculty and staff of the military academies; making further cuts in the number of academies and related educational institutions; and establishing a national security academy, under the authority of the president, that would train senior officers and officials for positions in the defense and other power ministries. A substantial increase in the civilianization of the curriculum and the coeducation of civilians and servicemen, however, is unlikely to occur. The officer corps will probably continue to be self-selective and keep its distance from the rest of society.

A new development could be the growing prominence of the government's security agencies, as the defense-security balance will continue to shift in favor of the security services. Consequently, the armed forces, even if they are able to reintegrate components such as the railroad troops and the construction units, will have no choice but to accept the new hierarchy in the national defense and security community, where the security agencies will dominate as the "senior service."

A SECURITY PARTNER FOR THE WEST?

In December 1991, in his first letter to NATO's secretary-general, Boris Yeltsin wrote that Russia envisaged joining the alliance in the near future. Two weeks later, a memo arrived from the Kremlin apologizing for a misprint. The original letter, it said, should have read that Russia did *not* envisage joining the alliance in the near future. During the intervening fourteen-day period, Moscow took the opportunity to study NATO's reaction. Similar ambiguities were notable in Putin's first term. Talking to BBC journalists in early 2000, for example, Russia's second president famously replied, "Why not?" to a question regarding possible Russian membership in the Western alliance.

At the beginning of Putin's second term, it is clear that Russia is not going to become part of an enlarged West. Rather, it will remain a free-standing political and strategic entity, attempting to play the traditional role of a regional great power in Central Eurasia. In addition, Russia's postcommunist transition has had to confront a variety of major systemic

obstacles on the road to democracy, a free market economy, and a vibrant civil society. This too has set Russia apart from the countries of Central and Eastern Europe that have successfully made the transition and “joined” the West. As Russia aspires to reaffirm its great power status, largely guaranteed by its military might, the leadership does not envisage a return to isolation and confrontation with the West. Relations with the United States and NATO are celebrated as “qualitatively different” than in the years of the Cold War.³ In the future, however, Russia’s security relations with the United States and the European Union (EU) will be defined roughly equally by domestic developments in Russia and by Russia’s relations with countries in the former Soviet space.

In some areas (e.g., the emergence of new security threats), Russia will have cooperative relations with both the United States and the EU. However, in the region that matters most to Moscow (i.e., the former Soviet space), relations could become highly competitive and even conflictual. Three developments will help to condition Russian actions: whether Russia remains essentially authoritarian, with its privatized economy closely regulated by the government bureaucracy; whether its civil society continues to be stifled and undeveloped; and whether its foreign policy strives not so much to integrate with the advanced industrialized parts of the world (i.e., Europe, Japan, and the United States), as to establish a power center of its own.

In 2003, Russia narrowed its foreign policy focus to the former Soviet space: Russian peacekeepers quietly withdrew from the Balkans; Moscow lost the ability to mediate between Baghdad and Washington, as well as between the United States and the “rogue” states of Iran, Libya, and North Korea; and Russia’s role in the Middle East “quartet” remained purely notional. On the other hand, Russia has concentrated its efforts in the former Soviet space, where it maintains real interests—interests the Kremlin will defend. After September 11, 2001, the U.S. military presence in Central Asia and Georgia was tolerated, but always on the assumption that it would be temporary, unlike Russian influence, which was there to stay. The reintroduction of a token Russian military presence in Kyrgyzstan in 2003 not only reverses the post-1989 trend; it sends a message of resolve both to Russia’s closest neighbors and to the United States.

³ “On the Main Results of the Development of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation in 2003,” report by Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov, <http://www.mil.ru/article4231.shtml>.

Russia will increasingly challenge the United States for position as the newest hegemon of Eurasia by attempting to gradually reduce U.S. influence in the Caucasus, Central Asia, and above all Ukraine. This could lead to a substantial cooling off period in U.S.-Russian relations, with alliance politics and arms control again playing an important role. This cooling need not be seen as the advent of a second Cold War. Russia, the United States, and the EU will continue to share certain major security interests. The profile of nuclear proliferation as a security issue has recently risen in Russia, although Moscow will resist U.S. attempts to drive it from the lucrative nuclear technology market. The Russian fight against Chechen separatism and Islamic militancy elsewhere in the CIS, and the U.S. fight against international terrorism, will occasionally intersect. The need to strengthen or, in some cases, restore regional stability may require joining forces for various kinds of peace operations. This will require a degree of interoperability and military and political coordination that is still a long way off.

Having rejected the option of becoming a junior partner to the United States, and viewing the value of cooperation with NATO as fairly limited, Russia will probably concentrate on rebuilding a military force geared to both the defensive “standoff” mission in the West and East and the new “active-duty” mission in the South. Occasionally, the United States and the EU may be Russia’s partners; at other times, they will be perceived as competitors and rivals. For allies, however, Moscow will look to members of the Commonwealth of Independent States, thus reviving an important Warsaw Pact tradition.