THE RUSSIAN MILITARY IN POLITICS:

CIVILIAN SUPREMACY IN COMPARATIVE AND HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

by

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B.A. in Political Science, University of Iowa (1986)

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Submitted to the Department of Political Science in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN POLITICAL SCIENCE

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation investigates military involvement in high politics in Russia. The dissertation explains why, despite periods of both extreme challenges to the military's organizational interests and widespread political instability, the armed forces have sought to remain "outside politics."

I test four competing theories from the civil-military relations literature: international structure, domestic structure, corporate interest, and organizational culture. The international structure perspective maintains that states with high external threats have militaries disinclined to intervene in domestic politics. The domestic structure approach posits that military intervention occurs because low state political capacity provides the army opportunities to become involved in politics. The corporate interest approach maintains that intervention is caused by threats to the bureaucratic interests of the armed forces. The organizational culture perspective argues that the beliefs and norms held by officers explains military behavior in domestic politics.

The dissertation combines macro-historical analysis and focused case studies of actual or potential military intervention in Russian and Soviet history. Eighteen cases are studied, from the time of Peter the Great (1682-1725) to the present, with greatest attention to twentieth century cases. These case studies serve as tests of the relative performance of the four theories.

The corporate interest perspective on military intervention performs poorly in the Russian case. There has not been a single case of military intervention in Russia for corporate interest motives for almost two hundred years. The poor performance of this theoretical approach is especially noteworthy given its prominence both in the comparative politics literature on military intervention and in the literature on Soviet civil-military relations.

The other three approaches — international structure, domestic structure, and organizational culture — perform considerably better. Great power competition has helped focus the Russian armed forces on tasks external to the state. Military involvement in high politics has been greatest during periods of domestic political disorder, although the domestic structure approach cannot explain the extreme reluctance of the Russian army to become involved in politics. The organizational culture approach performs particularly well. Norms about the army's
proper role in politics have served as a barrier to military coups even when there were compelling rational (corporate interest) and structural reasons to expect intervention.

The dissertation is based on considerable primary source research, including extensive archival work and interviews. The thesis draws on and contributes to the comparative politics and international relations literature on civil-military relations, political capacity, state-building, democratization and transition, and organizational culture and politics.

Thesis Supervisor: Stephen M. Meyer
Title: Professor of Political Science
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The International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX) provided support for a year in Moscow, during which much of the research for this thesis was conducted. I thank the IREX Moscow staff for their support. While in Moscow in 1992 and 1993-1994 I was based at the Institute of USA and Canada, Russian Academy of Sciences. I particularly thank Andrey Kortunov for his help and guidance. I also thank the staffs of the following libraries and archives for their assistance: the Russian State Military Archive, the Russian State Military History Archive, the Russian Center for the Storage and Study of Documents of Recher. History, the State Archive of the Russian Federation, the Russian State Library, the Institute of Scientific Information for the Social Sciences of the Russian Academy of Sciences (INION), and the Russian-American Press Information Center. I am also grateful to various Russian military officers, politicians, and journalists for their time and assistance. I thank all of my friends in Russia, and particularly Olga Dmitriyeva and Irina Kurenkova, for their friendship.

The bulk of this thesis was written while on fellowship at the John M. Olin Institute at Harvard University and the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs (BCSIA), Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University. I also received a summer write-up grant from the Institute for the Study of World Politics.

None of the above organizations, of course, are responsible for the contents of this thesis.

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Three individuals made such immense contributions to this work that I have saved them to the very end. Kevin O’Prey became one of my closest friends during our very first year together at MIT and he has been a source of excellent advice and tremendous support in subsequent years. Sharon Weiner also is a long-time friend from MIT who has been extremely generous with her time, advice, and friendship for many years. Renée de Nevers shared the last 18 months, during which the dissertation was written and re-written, with me. She read every chapter and provided innumerable insights and suggestions. Most of all she gave me love and support during this difficult process, for which I warmly and affectionately thank her.

I especially thank my family, particularly my parents and my brother and sister-in-law, for their love and support over the years.

Finally, it is a source of great regret and sadness that my dear friend Mark Schmoll did not live to see the completion of this thesis. I thank his wife Jennifer Miller and their daughter Emma for their inspiration over these last two years. I miss Mark greatly, and I would like to think that he would have been proud of me.
A NOTE ON STYLE

I have used the transliteration system of the U.S. Board on Geographic names, which I believe is easier for non-Russian speakers to read than the Library of Congress system (Yakovlev rather than Iakovlev, Milyukov rather than Miliukov, etc.). I also have used the familiar English form for well known names (Trotsky rather than Trotsky, Tsar Nicholas rather than Nikolay, etc.).

Dates in the thesis are given in the form in which they would have been in Russia at that time. Thus, until February 1, 1918, dates are given in Old Style according to the Julian Calendar used in Imperial Russia. The Julian Calendar lagged twelve days behind the Gregorian Calendar in the nineteenth century and thirteen days behind it in the twentieth century. After February 1, 1918, dates are given in New Style, consistent with the Gregorian Calendar used in the West.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Brian Dean Taylor received his undergraduate education at the University of Iowa. He graduated with a B.A. in Political Science, a Minor in Russian, and a Global Studies Certificate in July 1986. He received a M.Sc. from the London School of Economics and Political Science in the Politics and Government of Russia and the Soviet Union (with Russian language) in October 1988. He is currently an International Security Fellow at the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University.
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INTRODUCTION

Coup}s are the ultimate problem of civil-military relations. The military coup has been the most common method by which executive power has changed hands in the post-World War II era. Seventy-five percent of the states that achieved independence since 1945 have experienced military rule. Coup{s have been particularly prevalent in the Third World states of Africa, Asia, and Latin America, but many European states, including Greece, Poland, Portugal, Spain, France, and Turkey also have experienced military intervention or rule in the post-war period.¹

The notion of a military coup evokes images of soldiers with machine guns seizing television and radio transmitters and surrounding government buildings with armored vehicles. Our stylized visions of the classic coup tend to obscure the fact that the military can have a decisive influence on determining who rules the state in many different ways. Staying in the barracks sometimes can be as influential as leaving them. When conceived of in this fashion, the notion of a coup is really shorthand for a range of military behaviors, both active and passive, that can lead to a change in the executive leadership of the state. The pervasiveness of military involvement in determining who rules the state in the post-war era has made controlling the armed forces a particular concern of actors in democratizing states, which are often seeking to break a cycle of military rule.²


Russia is the most significant of currently democratizing states. Its vast size and population, its standing as a former superpower, and its possession of thousands of nuclear weapons mean that whether Russia becomes a stable, well-institutionalized democracy or not will have a major impact not only on the lives of its citizens but also on regional and international security. Unlike many states in transition, Russia does not have a tradition of military intervention or rule: the last successful military coup in Russia took place in 1801. Still, the military's role in politics has been a major concern of the post-Soviet transition in Russia, and the armed forces were a key actor in events such as the failed August 1991 coup against Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev and the October 1993 uprising in Moscow. The alleged threat of a military coup is a staple of both Russian and Western journalistic and academic writing on the Russian armed forces.³ Are these fears justified?

The current troubles are the latest in a series of upheavals that have shaken Russia this century.⁴ The Russian Revolution and Civil War, the Stalinist terror of the 1930s, the Second World War, and the collapse of the Soviet Union are only the most prominent examples in a particularly tumultuous century. The military has weathered revolution, imperial collapse, and mass murder of the top ranks of the officer corps by the political leadership. Such a series of intense provocations would seem to provide more than adequate grounds for military intervention


⁴ Scholars of Russia are faced with the annoying fact that for seventy-four years the country had a completely different name (the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics). This lament is not, of course, a political statement about what Russia's "legitimate" borders are. Rather, it is a comment about the fact that most countries (France, China, Cuba, Iran, etc.) do not change their name after a revolution. For the sake of brevity and simplicity I will often refer to the Russian empire/Soviet Union/the Russian Federation as Russia.
in politics. And at times members of the military have intervened, such as during the Russian Civil War and the failed August 1991 hard-liner coup against Mikhail Gorbachev. In general, though, the Russian and Soviet armed forces have remained aloof from high politics. Indeed, the title of the dissertation is somewhat of a misnomer, because since the middle of the nineteenth century the army has endeavored to remain “outside politics.”

This dissertation explains why. I analyze Russian/Soviet officer corps behavior in high politics from the time of Peter the Great (1682-1725) to the present, concentrating on the twentieth century. I argue that the two prevailing approaches to military intervention in the social science literature, what I call the domestic structure and corporate interest explanations, are incomplete. The first approach posits that military intervention occurs because low state political capacity provides the army opportunities to become involved in politics. The corporate interest approach maintains that intervention is caused by threats to the bureaucratic interests of the armed forces. The literature on these approaches has greatly increased our knowledge of the conditions that lead to coups. However, this work is unable to explain -- indeed, makes no effort to explain -- why some militaries do not intervene in politics when faced with the opportunities and threats that allegedly cause coups. The point is not that these theories are wrong; in many cases they offer compelling explanations of army behavior. Rather, scholars working in these traditions have not delimited sufficiently the applicability of their theories.

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5 The phrase “outside politics” is in quotes because Russian officers often use these exact words to describe their role. See, in particular, Chapters Three and Seven.

6 In scientific language, these studies selected on the dependent variable by studying coups but not non-coups. This issue will be addressed in greater detail in Chapter One.

The corporate interest perspective on military intervention performs particularly poorly in the Russian case. There has not been a single case of military intervention in Russia for corporate interest motives for almost two hundred years. The Russian/Soviet military has endured severe threats to its corporate interests, such as the Stalinist purges, during which thousands of officers were murdered, and recent massive budget and force cuts that have left thousands of officers homeless and without pay for months. The poor performance of this theoretical approach is especially noteworthy given its prominence both in the comparative politics literature on military intervention and in the literature on Soviet civil-military relations.

The domestic structure perspective performs better than the corporate interest approach. The military did become involved in high politics during the two most tumultuous periods in Russian politics this century, the political revolutions that led to the creation of the Soviet state and its collapse. However, during these periods the armed forces were extremely reluctant to become involved and usually were dragged in by civilian politicians. This wariness to become involved is not explained by the domestic structure approach. Moreover, on several occasions when the opportunity for intervention existed due to the weakness of the state the military remained completely aloof from high politics. The domestic structure approach, then, is insufficient as an explanation for military behavior.

Two alternative perspectives on military intervention are necessary supplements to the domestic structure approach and provide strong explanations for the behavior of the Russian officer corps in domestic politics. These two alternatives, which have received considerably less attention in the extant literature, are an international structure explanation and an organizational culture approach. The international structure perspective maintains that militaries in states that face serious external threats will devote their attention to defending the
state against foreign enemies and will remain aloof from domestic political battles. This argument helps explain the Russian military's reluctance to become involved in politics, and draws attention to the importance of international-level variables in explaining domestic politics outcomes.⁸

The organizational culture perspective, which has received little attention in the existing literature, argues that the beliefs held by officers should be an important component of any explanation of military behavior. Rather than treating all militaries as essentially the same, responding in an automatic fashion to environmental stimuli (opportunities and threats), the organizational culture approach recognizes that all militaries do not hold the same ideas about what their role should be in politics. Officer corps' norms can be an important barrier to military intervention, even when there are strong motives for intervention and a clear opportunity exists. A key implication of this argument is that civilians seeking to control the armed forces should devote at least as much attention to the beliefs held by officers as they do to manipulating the opportunities and threats that militaries face.

This thesis, then, seeks to explain Russian military behavior in high politics. Three basic comparisons form the foundation of the analysis. First, the comparison to other states is explicit in the first chapter and implicit throughout. Second, I compare Russia to itself in a historical (diachronic) manner. Finally, I compare different types of military behavior to each other. The

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goal of these comparisons is both to explain the conduct of the Russian armed forces and to make conditional generalizations about when different explanations for military intervention are likely to be the strongest.

**Goals of the Study**

This dissertation has two major goals. The first is to provide an explanation for Russian/Soviet officer corps behavior in what I call sovereign power issues – determining who rules the state. There are many books and articles on Russian/Soviet civil-military relations, but there is no systematic study that looks directly at the question of military involvement in sovereign power issues. This is particularly surprising given the oft-voiced fears about the danger of a military coup in Russia.

A second major goal is to enhance our understanding of military involvement in sovereign power issues more generally. In particular, I aim to show the importance of organizational culture as an explanatory variable in determining military behavior in sovereign power issues. I am not seeking to show that culture is always a "better" explanation of officer corps behavior than those based on rational (corporate interest) or structural theories. I do aim to show, however, that rationalist and structuralist accounts are incomplete. Officers’ norms can serve as a barrier to intervention even when the opportunity to intervene exists and the military’s corporate interests are under threat. The beliefs held by officers should be central to the study of their behavior in sovereign power issues. Norms might not always be sufficient to prevent military intervention, given certain rational and structural conditions, but they do raise the threshold at which coups become likely and also make coups more likely to fail, since many officers may refuse to participate in an intervention due to their ideas about appropriate behavior. I am proposing what
Alexander George calls "a differentiated theory of conditional generalizations": militaries with different organizational cultures will have different motivational thresholds for intervention.⁹

This dissertation has eight chapters. The first chapter examines the existing theoretical literature on military intervention and establishes the theoretical base for the study. The second chapter is on civil-military relations and state development in Imperial Russia from Peter the Great until World War I. Chapter Three is a detailed case study of the Russian Revolution and Civil War. The fourth and fifth chapters examine Soviet civil-military relations and state development from 1920 until 1985, with a particular focus on military behavior in sovereign power issues. Chapter Six is a focused study of the Gorbachev period, including the August 1991 coup attempt and the collapse of the Soviet Union. Chapter Seven looks at the Yeltsin period and the post-Soviet transition, including the military role in the October 1993 events in Moscow. In Chapter Eight, the conclusion, I discuss the performance of the four explanations and summarize my findings.

CHAPTER 1: EXPLAINING MILITARY INTERVENTION

This chapter sets out the theoretical basis for the argument of the dissertation. I begin with a discussion of the dependent variable, military involvement in sovereign power issues. The bulk of the chapter explains the four alternative perspectives -- international structure, domestic structure, corporate interest, and organizational culture -- on this issue. I conclude the chapter with a discussion of my methodology, research design, and the cases selected for empirical study.

THE DEPENDENT VARIABLE: MILITARY INVOLVEMENT IN SOVEREIGN POWER ISSUES

The field of civil-military relations encompasses an immense range of important political issues. Timothy Colton provides a useful typology of the three major "domains" of civil-military relations: defense policy, societal choice, and sovereign power. Defense policy is concerned with issues directly related to the armed force's professional concerns, such as the defense budget, military doctrine, and procurement policy. Societal choice issues are non-defense domestic political, economic and social issues, such as macro-economic policy or educational policy. Although societal choice issues are not an obvious domain of civil-military relations, military role expansion into these questions has been a common route to more extensive military involvement in politics. The sovereign power domain concerns the question of who rules, and who decides who rules.¹ This dissertation focuses on sovereign power issues, and the central question of who holds state power.

My focus on the issue of military involvement in sovereign power issues, although a large topic in itself, makes the dissertation more tractable. The other domains of civil-military relations, defense politics and societal choice issues, will be discussed only to the extent that they shed light on officer corps behavior in the sovereign power realm. Despite the vast literature on Russian/Soviet civil-military relations, a systematic investigation of the potential and actual cases of military involvement in sovereign power issues in Russia does not exist. Much of the extant work that draws conclusions about past or potential future military intervention was actually written about different, if related, topics, and fails to survey the relevant universe of cases. Often evidence and interpretations about civil-military interaction in the defense politics sphere, for example, are used to draw conclusions about the sovereign power realm. Much of the disagreement about the likelihood of a military coup in Russia derives from a failure to distinguish between domains of civil-military relations. I hope to bring more clarity to this discussion.

The dependent variable of the study is the behavior of the armed forces in sovereign power issues. There are three possible codings for the dependent variable. The first is the traditional focus of much of the civil-military relations literature, military intervention. I define military intervention as the use, actual or threatened, of force by members of the military, either alone or with civilian actors, in an attempt to change the executive leadership of the state.  

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2 An example is Thomas Nichols' *The Sacred Cause*. Nichols uses evidence of civil-military conflict about military doctrine to conclude that the military represents a threat to civilian control. Civil-military conflict over doctrine, however, is prevalent in almost all states. Thomas M. Nichols, *The Sacred Cause: Civil-Military Conflict over Soviet National Security Policy, 1917-1992* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993). The literature on Soviet civil-military relations will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Four.

3 The members of the military that make a decision to intervene are almost always officers, so in most circumstances references to the armed forces, the army, or the military apply primarily to the officer corps. The terms "military" and "armed forces" will be used interchangeably. To avoid repetition, the term "army" will on occasion be used to refer to the military as a whole; it should be clear from the context whether the term "army" is being used in
The second possible coding is military resolution of a civilian sovereign power dispute, what I call *military arbitration*. Military arbitration occurs when multiple persons or groups claim to hold legitimate state power and the military is forced to decide from whom to obey orders. This is different than military intervention because the military has not made an autonomous decision to become involved in sovereign power issues, but is forced to play a role due to civilian activity. Military arbitration is a case of military *involvement* in sovereign power issues, but not one of military *intervention*. This category of military behavior has been ignored in the civil-military relations literature. The tendency has been to conflate military arbitration and military intervention, despite the fact that in the latter case the army intervenes willingly while in instances of military arbitration the armed forces are dragged in to high politics against its wishes. Indeed, in the most extreme case the army can refuse to follow the orders of any contender for power, which is also a form of choice. Military arbitration is historically an important class of events and should be studied as such. The December 1851 coup of French President Louis Napoleon Bonaparte, for example, is a clear case of military arbitration. There are no less than five cases of military arbitration in twentieth century Russia (see Table 1-4

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4 I thank Renée de Nevers for suggesting this term.

5 Samuel Finer did enumerate different “levels” and “modes” of intervention, but he did not single out military arbitration as a separate category. Similarly, Martin Edmonds distinguishes between “direct” and indirect intervention, but he also does not recognize military arbitration as a separate category. Finer, *The Man on Horseback*, pp. 77-78, 127-148; Martin Edmonds, *Armed Services and Society* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1990), p. 103.

The third possible coding of the dependent variable is *no military involvement* in sovereign power issues. This potential coding is crucial and often overlooked. Much of the existing literature on military intervention studies only coups and not non-coups, thereby introducing selection bias into the research design. The coding of "no involvement" may be overlooked so often because it is the "normal" state of events; military intervention and arbitration are rare occurrences. There are probably very few military officers who wake up every day and ask themselves, "should I organize a coup today?" Although there is a natural tendency to study the event rather than the non-event, without attention to this category it is impossible to determine the bounds of applicability of a particular theory.\(^7\)

**FOUR PERSPECTIVES ON MILITARY INTERVENTION**

There is a rich social science literature on military involvement in sovereign power issues. This literature, as noted above, focuses almost exclusively on coups. In the rest of this chapter I develop four competing perspectives on the causes of military intervention. I label these four perspectives the international structure, domestic structure, corporate interest, and organizational culture approaches (see Table 1-1).\(^8\)

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\(^8\) These four perspectives should be thought of as analytical approaches or paradigms, and not theories. However, each approach has its own logic that allows one to derive testable propositions. Many of the existing studies in civil-military relations combine insights from two or more of these perspectives. For heuristic reasons, however, I treat them as analytically distinct.
Table 1-1: Perspectives on Military Intervention

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<td>International Structure</td>
<td>Level of external threat to the state.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic Structure</td>
<td>Degree of state's political capacity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate Interest</td>
<td>Extent of government support for corporate interests of military.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Culture</td>
<td>Norms and beliefs of officers.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first approach, international structure, emphasizes the role that international systemic factors play in determining military behavior in sovereign power issues. States with a tendency to be involved in external wars tend not to have coups because they have externally focused armies. The second perspective, domestic structure, locates the causes of military intervention at the level of the state or society (what William Thompson calls “pull factors”). States that avoid coups do so because of the strength of their political institutions. The other two approaches, corporate interest and organizational culture, place primary emphasis on factors internal to the military (“push factors”). The corporate interest perspective attributes intervention to bureaucratic political motives -- the military’s desire to protect or enhance its resources or position. The organizational culture perspective, which has received little attention in the civil-military relations literature, argues that it is the norms held by officers, and not their corporate interests, that influence the military’s tendency to intervene in politics.

The next four sections explain these four alternative perspectives on military involvement in sovereign power issues in greater detail. Because the organizational culture perspective has been the least studied, and because one goal of this study is to develop such an approach in a more complete fashion than previous efforts, it will receive the most attention.

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Structure is defined as the formal arrangement of units and the distribution of material capabilities across these units. The key point about the formal arrangement of units for the international structure approach is that the system is ordered by anarchy, not by hierarchy. The consequence of anarchy for the major units in the international system, states, is that the system is one of self-help and thus states must provide for their own well-being and survival.\(^{10}\)

The need for states to provide for their own security leads them to create armed forces to defend themselves. The international structure approach maintains that states with severe security threats will have armed forces with an external orientation. This external focus keeps the military from being involved in domestic politics. Similarly, in the absence of serious external threats the army is more inclined to use its force internally. According to the international structure perspective, armies respond to the power realities of the international situation in which the state is located. All militaries would behave in a similar fashion if placed in the same situation.\(^{11}\)

The work of Charles Tilly is a prominent example of this approach. Tilly maintains that European state-building was largely driven by the need to create an efficient war-making machine. Paradoxically, however, the process of state-formation actually led to greater civilian control over the military, because civilian agencies to extract resources from society, such as the


\(^{11}\) I am presenting the most parsimonious version of this theory. I assume, therefore, that external threat is related to the distribution of material capabilities and not a product of "aggressive intent" (Stephen Walt) or "perceptions" (Robert Jervis). These approaches may well provide a more accurate account of how actors measure external threat, but they do so by invoking domestic political and cognitive considerations, which are not international structural variables. See: Stephen Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), esp. pp. 25-26; Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), esp. pp. 372-378.
police, were established. The state was also forced to bargain with powerful civilian groups in the process of mobilizing society for war. These civilian agencies and elites constrained military political activity, while also freeing the armed forces to concentrate on external defense. In contrast, Tilly argues, most Third World militaries rarely have a significant external threat and therefore they play a larger role in domestic politics.\(^{12}\)

Other writers have echoed Tilly's conclusions. Samuel Huntington's theory of military professionalism is based at least in part on the observation that European states in intense rivalry with each other were compelled to create a group of full-time experts to prepare a state's military defense. Military professionals were focused on the function of external defense and accordingly had no interest in domestic politics. Michael Howard also maintains that inter-state competition in Europe was one of the major factors leading to less politically active militaries in the region. The army's dominant responsibility shifted from internal repression to external war-making.\(^{13}\)

Stanislav Andreski explicates further the logic that militaries engaged in external war are less likely to intervene in politics. On the most prosaic level, the more time and effort that a


country's armed forces devote to preparing for and engaging in one activity limits the amount of time and effort it can devote to the other. Additionally, internal usage tends to cause political splits in the armed forces, lower morale, and undermine esprit de corps. Finally, the use of short-term conscripts allows a state to mobilize more resources for war, but conscripts are the least likely soldiers to have the necessary training and mind-set for use against their fellow-citizens.¹⁴

Most Third World states, unlike European ones, rarely have faced a serious external threat to their survival.¹⁵ In the absence of external threats, officers and civilian politicians alike have had few qualms about directing the armed forces' activity inwards. As Andreski states, "'The devil finds work for idle hands': the soldiers who have no wars to fight or prepare for will be tempted to interfere in politics." Although half the states in the international system have not fought an inter-state war, few are willing to go as far as Costa Rica and abolish the army and thereby eliminate the possibility of a military coup. The possession of armed forces, even in the absence of a likely potential foe, is usually seen as necessary either because of internal threats or for reasons of insurance and international prestige, with the army serving as a symbol of statehood. Reducing the size of the army has not proven to be a reliable guarantee against military intervention.¹⁶

¹⁴ Stanislav Andreski, "On the Peaceful Disposition of Military Dictatorships," *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 3 (December 1980), pp. 3-10. Michael Desch is currently working on a structural theory of civil-military relations that makes external threat a key variable and which is certain to be an important contribution to the literature. Desch notes that often it is assumed that greater external threat leads to military intervention (Lasswell's "garrison state hypothesis"). Desch discusses the historical evidence that supports Andreski's hypothesis and contradicts Lasswell's. See Michael C. Desch, *Soldiers, States, and Structure: Civilian Control of the Military in a Changing Security Environment* (unpublished manuscript, 1996).

¹⁵ The most interesting explanation of why this is true is the one advanced by Robert Jackson. Jackson argues that changing international norms in the post-colonial period has led to a series of "quasi-states" in the Third World whose sovereignty is more juridical than empirical, and that it is no longer internationally acceptable to deprive a state of its sovereignty by means of war and conquest. Robert H. Jackson, *Quasi-states: Sovereignty, international relations, and the Third World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

¹⁶ Stanislav Andreski, *Military Organization and Society*, 2nd ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press,
The logic of the international structure approach is functional. European states wanted militaries that were good at waging war to maximize state power and ensure their survival. This desire caused the development of armies that were externally, not internally, oriented. Inter-state rivalry and war caused those states with militaries that were not focused on war to either change their orientation or be selected out of the system.

The international structure perspective on civil-military relations leads to the following propositions about military involvement in sovereign power issues: **High external threat leads to an externally oriented military unlikely to intervene in sovereign power issues. In cases of military arbitration, the military will tend to side with the civilian contender that will contribute the most to the state's war-making capacity. Low external threat leads to a military likely to intervene in sovereign power issues. The military will show a greater willingness to arbitrate in cases of low external threat.**

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17 Here I am glossing over a large debate in the neo-realist international relations literature about whether states pursue power-maximization or attempt to maintain the status-quo, since either position is consistent with the international structure approach. For a discussion of this debate, see: Colin Elman, "Horses for Courses: Why Not Neorealist Theories of Foreign Policy?", *Security Studies, Vol. 6, No. 1 (Autumn 1996)*, pp. 22-24, 26-30.

18 A functional explanation, writes Arthur Stinchcombe, is one "in which a structure or an activity is caused (indirectly) by its consequences." In the technical language of Stinchcombe, being good at war is the homeostatic variable, an externally oriented military is the structure or activity that we are trying to explain, and inter-state competition is the tension that would upset the homeostatic variable caused by the structure or activity. See: Arthur L. Stinchcombe, *Constructing Social Theories* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), pp. 58-59, 80-81. I thank Barry Posen for noting the functional nature of this argument. This argument is also consistent with Waltz’s socialization and competition argument: Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, pp. 74-77, 127-128.

19 There are several possible ways to state these hypotheses. One alternative would be to state them as deterministic laws, i.e.: low external threat leads to a military that will intervene in sovereign power issues. Books in the Cornell University Press security affairs series sometimes adopt this approach. See, for example: Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, pp. 58-59, 78-79; Walt, *The Origin of Alliances*, pp. 32-33, 40, 46, 49; Jeffrey
The one possible exception to these predictions is military behavior in the face of military defeat. If the civilian leadership has botched the waging of a major war and the state is on the verge of collapse, or if a reckless leadership is taking actions that may precipitate a war that the military believes is not winnable, the possibility of military intervention may actually increase. This argument is not discussed in the literature, but it is consistent with the approach and is seemingly supported by the empirical record. For example, both the planned military coup against Hitler in the autumn of 1938 (before Munich seemingly vindicated Hitler’s strategy) and the attempted assassination of Hitler in 1944 are consistent with this logic. French military intervention in 1961 can also be traced to defeat in the Indochina war and the decision to recognize Algerian independence, which many officers saw as a humiliating defeat.\footnote{On Germany, see: Gordon A. Craig, The Politics Of The Prussian Army, 1640-1945 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1955), pp. 498-503. On France, see: Raoul Girardet, “Civil and Military Power in the Fourth Republic,” in Samuel P. Huntington, ed., Changing Patterns of Military Politics (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1962), pp. 121-149; John Steward Ambler, Soldiers Against the State: The French Army in Politics (Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, 1968); Eliot A. Cohen, Commandos and Politicians: Elite Military Units in Modern}

Several examples illustrate the major claim of the international structure approach. Israel, the state that arguably has faced the greatest external threats in the post-war period, has a military that has not become involved in sovereign power issues. In contrast, for many Latin American militaries defense against external threat is not their primary role and they are more inclined to
believe in the appropriateness of internal political activity. The armed forces of many Arab states are an interesting case, since they were highly coup-prone in the 1950s and 1960s. Military defeat was an important impetus for a change to an external and more obedient orientation, as both civilian and military elites sought to extract the armed forces from internal politics and direct them outwards.21

The quantitative evidence for the international structure perspective on military intervention is rather mixed. Data on war-proneness, perhaps the best indicator of a state’s external threat environment, sometimes support this perspective and sometimes do not, depending on how one chops up the data. I measure war-proneness in three different ways: as the number of battle deaths in inter-state wars per year the state has been a member of the international state system, as the number of wars per years of tenure in the international system, and the number of war months per year. This data has been compiled as part of the Correlates of War Project.

Here I discuss three different ways of presenting the data, which give contradictory results. These three methods are to compare all countries in the world, to compare the major world regions to each other, and to compare countries within each region to each other. When using the first two methods the data tend to support the international structure perspective, but when comparing countries within regions this approach is not supported by the evidence.

The first approach is to compare all countries in the world to each other. Analysis of this

Democracies (Cambridge: Center for International Affairs, Harvard University, 1978), pp. 65-70, 81-83.

data demonstrates that, in general, the most war-prone states tend to have fewer coups. Two of the three measures of war-proneness show that more war-prone states are less coup-prone. Using the measure of battle deaths per year, the twenty most war-prone states between 1812-1980 had an average of .75 military coup attempts per country from 1945-1978, compared to the average of 1.6 for all states. 22 Additionally, the twenty states that had the greatest war months per year that they were a member of the state system had 1.1 coup attempts per country, significantly below the average of 1.6 for all states. On the other hand, there is no strong link between wars per year and military coup attempts. The twenty states that fought the most wars per year had an average of 1.55 military coup attempts per country from 1945-1978, compared to the average of 1.6 for all states. The reason that the correlation between wars per year and coup-attempts does not correspond with the hypothesis is due primarily to Syria. Syria fought three wars during its first thirty-two years of independence, and also had an amazing thirteen coup attempts between 1949 and 1970. If Syria is left out, the remaining nineteen most war-prone states in this category had an average of .95 coup attempts per country. 23

There is also an inverse correlation between the war-proneness of a region and the number of military coup attempts in the region. The two most war-prone regions, Europe and Asia, have had the fewest number of coups. The regions that we generally associate with military coups and

22 These calculations were made on the basis of two separate sets of data, one on war-proneness and one on coup attempts. The data on war-proneness are from Melvin Small and J. David Singer, Resort to Arms: International and Civil Wars, 1816-1980 (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1982), pp. 165-180. The data on attempted military coups between 1945-1978 are from the table prepared by George Schott in Luttwak, Coup d’Etat, pp. 195-207. The data on coups was modified by attributing two coup attempts to the French military (1958 and 1961) that Schott did not count. I originally discussed this data in the following paper: "Professionalism and Politicization in the Soviet and Russian Armed Forces," paper presented at the 1995 APSA Annual Meeting.

23 It is worth pointing out that Syria lost all three of these wars (Palestine, Six Day, and Yom Kippur), and thus paid the cost for having a praetorian army involved in internal politics rather than an apolitical one oriented towards external threats.
rule -- Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East -- were also the most peaceful between 1816-1980. (See Table 1-2) This regional comparison also supports the international structure argument that states with a high external threat are less coup-prone.

**TABLE 1-2: War-Proneness and Military Coups, Across Region Comparison**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>War deaths per year</td>
<td>War months per year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Hemisphere</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle East</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Small and Singer's regional breakdown was used, which differs somewhat from that used by Schott. Sources: Small and Singer; Schott, in Luttwak. Full citations in footnote 22.

The international structure argument about the relationship between external threat and military intervention is not supported, however, when states within regions are compared to each other. For each of the five regions I coded each state for its war-proneness on the three different dimensions mentioned above. For the Americas, Asia, Europe, and the Middle East I then divided the countries into three groups: high war-proneness, moderate war-proneness, and low war-proneness. For Africa it made more sense to create only two groups, high war-proneness and low war-proneness, because as of 1980 only six African countries had been involved in an inter-state war. No correlation is found between war-proneness and military intervention. If

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24 Note that these categories are relative to the other states in the region. See Appendix A for a list of country
anything, the correlation is the opposite of that predicted by the international structure approach, particularly for the Middle East and Africa. The data are presented in Table 1-3.

TABLE 1-3: War-Proneness and Military Coups, Within Region Comparison

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>High War-Proneness</th>
<th>Moderate War-Proneness</th>
<th>Low War-Proneness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>1.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>.78</td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td>.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle East</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Hemisphere</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>4.56</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes and Sources: Same as Table 1-2.

The quantitative data on war-proneness and military intervention, then, provides a mixed picture.\textsuperscript{25} It is clear that there are many cases that the international structure approach fails to explain. The war-proneness of Syria and the high number of coups there has already been mentioned. South Korea, Vietnam, and Turkey are some other prominent exceptions to the argument that high external threat leads to military non-intervention in politics. It also fails to explain the many countries that are not war-prone but have had no coups. Examples here include Cameroon, Malaysia, and Ireland. Clearly the argument is not sufficient, despite the intuitive plausibility of the notion that armies involved in fighting wars will be less inclined to intervene in politics.

It could be argued that the universe of relevant countries for this argument should be only great powers, and not all states with high external threats. Great powers are the states that not only historically have been the most war-prone but also where the military has benefited

\textsuperscript{25} This relatively simple data is only illustrative. I have not controlled for other variables that may contribute to the explanation, such as level of economic development or regime type. More work remains to be done on this question, but it is beyond the scope of this thesis to fully test all permutations of the international structure.
materially from its external focus. The fact that many great power militaries have benefited materially from their external orientation, however, is largely a rationalist argument: being good at waging war is the best way to protect the army's corporate interests. The corporate interest explanation for military behavior will be discussed below. It is sufficient to note here that a great power argument, then, conflates a rationalist and a structural explanation: great power armies not only have a functional reason to be externally oriented, but it is also in their corporate self-interest.

The great power argument may also rely partially on a domestic structure explanation, since great powers tend to have strong states. Because a great power explanation combines the logic of several different perspectives, it is hard to isolate which of the posited causes is most important. It also is not clear why armies in states with high external threats, even if not great powers, would not have the same functional reason for an external orientation as great power militaries. For example, Poland in the inter-war period, located between Germany and the Soviet Union, would seem to have had even more of a reason than a great power for the army to stay focused on external defense and avoid political intrigue, but Poland experienced military rule for most of this period.

Restricting the discussion to great powers also would reduce the universe of possible countries to test the argument to a quite small number. Because coups are somewhat rare and great powers are very rare, one would not expect many interventions in these states. Moreover, there have been instances of military involvement in sovereign power issues in several great

perspective.

In the next section I discuss the possibility of a recursive relationship between the two variants, international and domestic, of the structural argument.

powers, including in Japan, Germany, and France. Finally, a great power argument has difficulty explaining variance in military involvement in politics in Russia. Russia/the Soviet Union was a great power and one of the most war-prone states of the last two centuries, but the military has on occasion been involved in sovereign power issues. During the eighteenth century, for example, Russia was involved in several external wars and the military also was heavily involved in sovereign power issues.  

Because Russia has been both a great power and highly war-prone for the past several centuries, it represents an easy, or "most-likely," test of the international structure argument. If the functional logic of this perspective is valid, process-tracing of military behavior in sovereign power issues should be able to find evidence for it in the case of Russia.  

*The Domestic Structure Approach*

The domestic structure perspective also focuses on the formal arrangement of units and the distribution of material capabilities across these units. However, the level of analysis is at the state, not the international, level. A domestic structure approach to military intervention highlights the armed forces' position in relation to the strength of other government institutions and other societal actors. The distribution of power that matters, then, is within the state and not external to it. By this logic, all militaries would behave in a similar fashion if placed in the same situation.

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28 For data on Russia/the Soviet Union's war-proneness, see: Small and Singer, *Resort to Arms*, pp. 165-180.

The domestic-level structural explanation fits into a broader literature on state strength and political capacity. Perhaps the most prominent example of this type of explanation is Samuel Huntington's *Political Order in Changing Societies*. Huntington argues that political disorder is caused by rapid economic and social change that outpaces the development of political institutions. Robust political institutions, and particularly strong political parties, are necessary to prevent rapid social change and modernization from leading to political instability and disorder. When political participation outstrips political institutionalization, according to Huntington's formula, the result is political instability. Those states in which institutionalization exceeds participation are called civic polities. Those countries in which participation exceeds institutionalization are called praetorian polities.\(^{30}\)

Huntington's explanation for military intervention, then, focuses on the domestic structural conditions that create the opportunity for intervention. Military involvement in sovereign power issues is depicted as the result of regime vulnerability due to the inability of the political system to cope with increased social mobilization, resulting in praetorian, weakly institutionalized polities. Huntington explicitly challenges approaches to military intervention that focus on the organizational level of analysis. He argues, "the most important causes of military intervention in politics are not military but political and reflect not the social and organizational characteristics of the military establishment but the political and institutional structure of the society." Military intervention is simply the most dramatic of extra-institutional means that actors adopt to influence policy in a weakly-institutionalized, praetorian state. In praetorian polities, in Huntington's famous phrase, "the wealthy bribe; students riot;"

workers strike; mobs demonstrate; and the military coup."

The explanation advanced in Samuel Finer's *The Man on Horseback* is broadly similar. Although he talks about "levels of political culture," Finer's indicators are basically structural. Finer is interested in whether political structures are strong and stable. He states, "where civilian associations and parties are strong and numerous, where the procedures for the transfer of power are orderly, and where the location of supreme authority is not seriously challenged: the political ambit of the military will be circumscribed."

Specialists on civil-military relations in many different states have emphasized the effect that political order, or its absence, has on military intervention. Mexican political stability after the revolution is cited as a key reason for the long-term subservient position of the armed forces, despite a prior historical tradition of political involvement. The greater political capacity and legitimacy of the Indian state as compared to the Pakistani one is frequently cited as a reason for the absence of military intervention in India. The failed military coup in Sri Lanka (Ceylon) in 1962 was brought on by a sense of national crisis. According to Donald Horowitz, the sudden confluence of religious, ethnic, labor, and economic problems in the early 1960s created an impression of a "sharp slide towards chaos" among the officer corps that precipitated the failed putsch. Turkey, although born in a war of independence led by the military hero Mustafa Kemal [Ataturk], became a state dominated by civilian institutions to which the military were subordinate, and for thirty-seven years (1923-1960) Turkey was free of the military coups common in the Middle East. However, after severe domestic political instability from 1957 until

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31 Huntington, Chapter 4 ("Praetorianism and Political Decay"), *Political Order in Changing Societies*, pp. 192-263. The quotes are from pp. 194-196.

32 Finer notes the similarity between his argument and Huntington's in the second edition of *The Man on Horseback*: Finer, *The Man on Horseback*, pp. 18, 239, passim.
1960 -- what Nur Yalman calls "a state of civil war without actual hostilities" -- and considerable encouragement from the civilian opposition, the military seized power in 1960.  

The domestic structure argument leads to the following propositions about military involvement in sovereign power issues: Militaries in strong states are unlikely to intervene in sovereign power issues. Armies in weak states are likely to intervene in sovereign power issues. Instances of military arbitration are likely in weak states, and unlikely in strong states.

A reasonable case can be made that the two structural approaches, the international and domestic, are consistent and reinforcing. Tilly's argument about European war-making/state-building is primarily about political capacity, with military non-intervention being an effect both of the process of state-building and of state strength itself. Huntington makes clear in Political Order in Changing Societies that he attributes the rise of civic polities in Europe to war, which promoted political modernization and state-building. The logic of this combined structural

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34 I use the terms state strength, political capacity, and political order interchangeably. For an extended discussion of this concept, see: Robert W. Jackman, Power Without Force: The Political Capacity of Nation-States (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993). I discuss operationalization and measurement of this variable later in the chapter.
argument is captured well in the title of Michael Desch’s article, “War and strong states, peace and weak states.”

Strong states, structural theorists maintain, tend to have more stable civilian control over the armed forces. The weakness of Latin American and African states compared to European ones partially can be explained by the benign security environment of these states. Joel Migdal notes that the few countries in Asia and Latin America with strong states (he lists Israel, Cuba, Vietnam, and the two Koreas) have all been invaded at least once since World War II. Jendayi Frazer’s work on African civil-military relations also is consistent with this approach. Frazer argues, “sustained anticolonial violence helps to create conditions that lead to regime stability.” Like Tilly, Frazer suggests that violent state-building leads to stronger states and less interventionary militaries.

Although external threat and state strength may tend to co-vary, they are not the same thing. Certainly states with a demanding external environment have gone through periods of relative weakness, such as Weimar Germany and, of great relevance for this study, Russia. Thus, the international and domestic structure perspectives on military intervention will be treated as two separate explanations for the purpose of testing.

One notable difference between the two structural approaches is the degree of attention the

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two perspectives have received in the existing literature. Although the international structure approach has received relatively little attention, particularly in the comparative politics literature on civil-military relations, the domestic structure explanation is perhaps the most widely held position on the causes of military intervention. Common sense alone suggests that armies in strong states will be less inclined to intervene in politics, and there is a strong theoretical and empirical literature behind this claim. Despite this impressive literature, however, the domestic structure argument has been hard to test quantitatively. Efforts to test Huntington's praetorianism model and Finer's political culture model using statistical methods have not been successful. Both theories are too vaguely specified to lend themselves easily to this form of analysis. How the variables are operationalized plays a key role in whether multivariate analysis lends support to the political incapacity hypothesis. Even so, Ekkart Zimmerman concludes after a thorough survey of the quantitative literature on military coups that "Huntington's theory of praetorianism still seems to provide the best and most encompassing theoretical starting point."37

One potential weakness of the structural approach, then, is the difficulty in measuring the independent variable of state political capacity. What is a strong state? The literature on this question is immense, and in the methodological section below I propose some measures. The danger of circular reasoning (using a coup as evidence of a weak state), however, is certainly present.

A related problem seems to be that much of this literature is sampled on the dependent variable (that is, only coups are studied, and not non-coups). States and societies often experience

structural weakness without provoking military intervention. David Goldsworthy observes, "the kinds of features said to give rise to coup-proneness are often just as characteristic of the polities where coups have not occurred."  

A final weakness is that, by focusing on the opportunity for intervention at the state level, these approaches tend to ignore the motives for intervention at the military level. The Japanese armed forces were heavily involved in sovereign power issues in the inter-war period, for example, and it would be hard to argue that a weak Japanese state or a low external threat environment was the cause. The dominant explanations of the interventionist tendencies of the Japanese military focus on characteristics of the organization itself.

At the very least, structural factors cannot be considered a sufficient explanation for intervention because the motives of the military are underspecified. After all, it is military behavior that we are trying to explain, so it would seem important to investigate processes internal to the armed forces in order to provide a complete explanation for their actions. The next two approaches, corporate interest and organizational culture, focus their efforts on explaining why military officers make the political choices they do.

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39 Finer argues that Huntington's assertion that the causes of military intervention are to be found not at the level of the group but at the level of society is not meant to imply that organizational motives are unimportant, but rather is a consequence of Huntington's focus on political development in Political Order in Changing Societies. See: Finer, The Man on Horseback, p. 238, n. 35. Finer may well be correct on this point, particularly since Huntington's The Soldier and the State places considerable emphasis on military-level variables. It is worth stressing again that I am presenting "pure" versions of the different theories for heuristic purposes. Finer was the first, I believe, to use the categories of opportunity and motive.


41 For a brief and helpful discussion of the distinction between "desires" (or motives) and "opportunities", see:
The Corporate Interest Approach

The corporate interest approach to military intervention focuses on the rational bureaucratic motives of the armed forces. Militaries are assumed to respond in a rational way to their environment, endeavoring to reduce uncertainty and to maximize the things all organizations seek to maximize: power, resources, and autonomy. The most common explanation for coups at the level of the military organization is that intervention is caused by corporate motives -- the desire to protect or enhance the military's resources or position. Armies respond rationally to the realities of the situation in which they find themselves. All militaries pursue these same basic goals.

This perspective is consistent with broader perspectives in political science. The essence of rational choice theory, as summarized by Kristen Renwick Monroe, is that "human behavior can best be understood by assuming individuals pursue their self-interest, subject to information and opportunity costs." Much of the literature from organization theory treats bureaucracies in a similar fashion. Anthony Downs, for example, states, "the fundamental premise of the theory is that bureaucratic officials, like all other agents in society, are significantly -- though not solely -- motivated by their own self-interests." Although this rationalist approach to organizations is not the only one (indeed, an alternative cultural one will be discussed below), it is the most prevalent. The two most prominent schools of thought are the "Neo-Weberian" approach of Herbert Simon and James March and economic theories of organization, such as agency theory. Ideas borrowed from organization theory have been widely applied to the study of civil-military relations in recent years. Most of this work has concerned the militaries of developed states and the issue realm of

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Jon Elster, Chapter 2 ("Desires and Opportunities"), Nuts and Bolts for the Social Sciences (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 13-21. Elster notes that the two mechanisms posited to explain desires are
defense politics, and relies heavily on this rationalist approach to bureaucracies.42

Eric Nordlinger's *Soldiers in Politics* is an excellent example of this approach. Nordlinger states, "by far the most common and salient interventionist motive involves the defense or enhancement of the military's corporate interests." Nordlinger contends that all public institutions seek to protect or enhance their interests and that they perceive these interests in similar ways. He lists budgetary support, autonomy, preservation of spheres of responsibility, and institutional survival as the most important of these interests. Militaries are very good at pursuing these interests, Nordlinger maintains, because they tend to be cohesive, have a high degree of *esprit de corps*, and possess considerable power. For this reason, Nordlinger concludes, the coup is a quite effective way for the armed forces to protect its corporate interests. Corporate interests, he argues, have played a prominent role in military intervention in such diverse states as Peru, Ghana, Egypt, and Honduras.43

William Thompson came to conclusions similar to Nordlinger's in his comprehensive, large-N study of all military coups between 1946-1970. At least eight of ten coups, according to Thompson, involve the advancement of either corporate or sub-corporate (what Thompson calls rational choice and norms, consistent with the alternative explanations discussed in the following two sections.


43 Nordlinger, *Soldiers in Politics*, pp. 63-78. The quote is from pp. 63-64. As noted above, although for heuristic reasons I place Nordlinger's work squarely in the corporate interest camp, he also discusses domestic structure reasons for intervention, just as Finer has a discussion of the military's corporate interests. Most authors trying to understand military intervention have not advanced mono-causal explanations.
"not-so-corporate") interests. Corporate interests relate to “the position and resource standing of the military organization.” Not-so-corporate grievances, according to Thompson, “reflect the elementary behavior of elites and suborganizational groups engaged in political competition.” A military coup, in Thompson’s view, “is essentially a small-scale internal war fought over positions and resources.” Douglas Hibbs finds statistical support for the view that intervention is often caused by the army’s desire to “protect its privileged budgetary status.” Bengt Abrahamsson also sees the military as a political actor pursuing its corporate interests, with the coup being only the most extreme example of military political activity.44

The corporate interest approach to military intervention has received considerable attention from scholars working in a single-country context. Guillermo O’Donnell, for example, provides a sophisticated explanation of military intervention in Argentina using this framework. O’Donnell explicitly notes that his argument is different from Huntington’s “structuralist” approach because O’Donnell emphasizes the organizational level of analysis in his explanation. Although O’Donnell does not deny the importance of state-level structural variables, he puts primary emphasis on “corporate military interest as an explanatory factor in the promotion of coups.” O’Donnell highlights the “reduction of uncertainty” as a goal underlying the military coup of 1966 in Argentina.45

John Mukum Mbaku uses a similar argument to explain military intervention in Nigeria and other sub-Saharan African states. Mbaku argues that rent-seeking (the extra-economic pursuit


of economic gain) is often a prominent motive for military coups. The military as a whole, or factions within the armed forces, seek sovereign power as a way of increasing their access to resources. "The military in sub-Saharan Africa," Mbaku concludes, "has evolved into a rent-seeking interest group."  

The corporate interest perspective on civil-military relations leads to the following propositions about military involvement in sovereign power issues: Militaries are likely to intervene in sovereign power issues if their corporate interests are threatened. Armies are unlikely to intervene in sovereign power issues if the government is responsive to their corporate interests. In instances of military arbitration, the armed forces will side with the contender who is most likely to advance the armed forces' corporate interests. These rational corporate interests are defined as minimizing uncertainty and maximizing power, resources, and autonomy. This proposition has been the one most consistently advanced in the study of Soviet civil-military relations, particularly in the work of Roman Kolkowicz and Timothy Colton.  

The corporate interest approach to military involvement in sovereign power issues has much to recommend it. It is consistent not only with our common sense notions of how political actors behave but also with a powerful body of social science theory. There is also considerable empirical evidence for this view, both from the qualitative literature and Thompson's quantitative study.

The corporate interest argument, however, suffers from the same weakness as the


domestic structure approach: it is sampled on the dependent variable. Thompson himself concludes his study by noting that the types of military grievances present in the coups in his study are also present in states that do not experience military intervention. Indeed, if threats to the military’s corporate interests were a sufficient condition then coups would break out all the time all over the world. Thompson suggests that “regime vulnerability” (“pull factors”, or domestic structure reasons) may be necessary for militaries to act on their grievances. At the same time, Thompson cautions against assuming these domestic structure reasons are sufficient: “military coup-makers...are fully capable of marching to their own drums and for their own reasons.”

A related weakness of the corporate interest approach is that all militaries (indeed, all political actors) are treated as having identical preferences. Armies pursue their self-interest, and these interests can be determined externally by observing a few key indicators of organizational power and well-being. Because this approach assumes that militaries subject to similar stimuli will react in the same manner, not enough attention has been paid to variation in officer corps’ motives. Although the wide variety of motives for coups has been noted, little effort has been made to explain this variance in motives, and why a sufficient reason for intervention for military A is not considered an appropriate motive for military B. An organizational culture approach, outlined in the following section, has the potential to overcome these weaknesses.

The Organizational Culture Approach

An organizational culture approach to military involvement in sovereign power issues,

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like the corporate interest perspective, also stresses the motives of the military as an organization.

Unlike the corporate interest approach, however, an organizational culture argument maintains that it is not the material interests of officers, but their beliefs and values, that explain their behavior in sovereign power issues. Officers in different militaries hold differing views on the appropriateness of involvement in high politics. Thus, in contrast with the three previous approaches, it is argued that militaries facing similar situations may well respond differently, depending on the organizational culture of their particular armed forces.49

There has been a renaissance of interest in the use of cultural and ideational variables to study political behavior in recent years.50 This renaissance is due to the perceived failure of rational and structural accounts to fully explain behavior. Culture -- patterns of assumptions and values held by a collective that help its members make sense of the world and orient their choices -- helps us to explain outcomes more fully by looking not only at actors' strategies but also at how they perceive their environment and what they value.51 Actors' preferences are no longer assumed and left exogenous, but are made endogenous and become a subject for investigation.

49 I do not explore a different type of cultural argument, that of political culture, here. Political culture obviously cannot explain variation in military intervention within a single country. A political culture approach has been most commonly applied to Latin America, but it has trouble explaining the considerable variance in that region of military involvement in sovereign power issues. See: Rouquie, The Military and the State in Latin America, pp. 3-5; Paul E. Sigmund, "Approaches to the Study of the Military in Latin America (Review Article)," Comparative Politics, Vol. 26, No. 1 (October 1993), pp. 114-115.


"Preferences and meanings develop in politics, as in life," James March and Johan Olsen state, "through a combination of education, indoctrination, and experience." Actors' behavior cannot be understood simply with reference to their forward-looking utility calculations; their socially formed subjective understandings and values also must be considered. Jeffrey Alexander makes a distinction between "mechanistic" conceptions of human action, which depict humans as reacting automatically to environmental stimuli, and "subjective" conceptions of human action, which locate the motivation for human action inside people's heads. The structural and rational perspectives are mechanistic; the cultural one is subjective. 52

Cultural analysis makes two major claims, what Harry Eckstein calls the "postulate of oriented action" and the "postulate of orientational variability." The postulate of oriented action states that "actors do not respond directly to 'situations' but respond to them through mediating 'orientations.'" Thus, different actors faced with the same structural conditions may well react differently because of their different cultures. The postulate of orientational variability states that orientations vary and must be learned. The postulate of orientational variability can be restated as a "postulate of cultural socialization." Actors learn their orientations, and members of different cultures learn different orientations. 53

Cultural and ideational analysis is being applied not only at the level of entire societies, but also to smaller collectives within states, particularly within organizations. 54

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54 Good introductions to the organizational culture literature include: Andrew M. Pettigrew, "On Studying Organizational Cultures," Administrative Science Quarterly, Vol. 24, No. 4 (December 1979), pp. 570-581; Schein, "Coming to a New Awareness of Organizational Culture"; Smircich, "Concepts of Culture and Organizational
organizational culture recently has been applied productively to the study of military organizations by Elizabeth Kier and Jeffrey Legro. Kier uses the concept of military culture to explain why the French armed forces between the wars adopted a defensive military doctrine, whereas traditional organization theory based on rational and functional analysis predicts that militaries will prefer offensive military doctrines. Legro explains why countries during World War II did not violate the pre-existing international norm on the use of chemical weapons, although they did violate the norms concerning anti-submarine warfare and strategic bombing, by reference to the respective militaries’ organizational cultures.55

Culture is often treated as a single or unified concept. As Ronald Jepperson and Ann Swidler point out, however, culture is more like a "meta-concept" than a single variable. Consider, for example, the difference between concepts such as rule, schema, identity, norm, and convention. Jepperson and Swidler argue that "a more differentiated set of concepts is obviously necessary before one can effectively measure cultural properties or effects."56 Kier, for example, divides the components of a military's culture into those aspects about factors external to the organization -- international and domestic -- and those internal to it. Similarly, Legro's concept of military culture only applies to "beliefs and norms about the optimal means to fight wars."57

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The aspect of a military's organizational culture that is most relevant to the study of army involvement in sovereign power issues is the set of beliefs held by officers about their proper relationship to the political leadership. In other words, what norms are held by officers on the question of who should rule the state? Norms are collective expectations about appropriate behavior. Cultural explanations of military intervention do not need to encompass all aspects of a military's culture, such as beliefs about doctrine, technology, or the nature of warfare, but only the specific set of norms related to the question of who should rule the state, and who decides who rules.

The organizational culture perspective stresses the unique experiences in the life of an organization as an explanation for subsequent behavior. Institutional lessons learned in response to "critical events" in the life of an organization powerfully shape the outlook of an organization's members. Critical events are defined as critical due to their place in history, their role in the development of organizational beliefs, or their metaphorical power. This approach is consistent with the political psychology literature, which also highlights the importance of critical events. People create schemas to make sense of important events, and use various scripts and analogies derived from these schemas as guides to future action. Robert Jervis argues that actors are most inclined to draw lessons from events that they experienced firsthand, that occurred early in their career, or that played a key role in the life of the nation. Because of the socialization processes that operate within organizations, dominant interpretations of these events tend to develop,

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although some sub-groups and individuals will draw different lessons than the group as a whole. Organizational socialization is particularly likely to lead to a dominant interpretation in a hierarchical organization such as the military.\textsuperscript{60}

Donald Horowitz notes that restraints on military intervention will be higher before the first coup than during subsequent interventions. In a country with a tradition of military intervention or rule, officers are less inclined to doubt their right to intervene in politics. As Douglas Hibbs states, "an 'interventionist' history is likely to develop a tradition or 'culture' that makes current interventions more likely than otherwise would be the case." On the other hand, a failed coup attempt, especially a failed first coup attempt, may strengthen officer corps' inhibitions against military intervention. For example, the failed Sri Lankan coup of 1962 reinforced prior beliefs that the military should not be involved in sovereign power issues. The organizational learning and political psychology literature suggests that failure leads to negative expectations about potential further repetitions of particular acts.\textsuperscript{61}

Militaries learn organizational lessons from events other than coups. Such events might include wars, domestic usage for police-type missions, mutinies, and major organizational or personnel changes. All of these may take the form of "critical events," defined above as critical due to their place in history, their role in the development of organizational beliefs, or their


metaphorical power. In general, one is more likely to "learn" from events that reinforce existing beliefs. However, there are limits to the extent to which beliefs can be maintained in the face of inconsistent evidence; critical events can often be catalysts for change.62

Several single-country studies have noted the importance of organizational learning as an explanation for subsequent military behavior. The effect of the failed Sri Lankan coup on officer corps attachment to the norm of civilian supremacy has already been mentioned. In neighboring India, according to Cohen, "Pakistan and Bangladesh provide chastening examples of failed military rule" to Indian soldiers. The Indian armed forces' extensive involvement in what are called "aid to the civil power" operations, from disaster relief to domestic policing, also has taught them of the dangers of political ventures. This is clearly a double-edged sword, however, since continued involvement in these missions could persuade officers that the civilian leadership is incapable of maintaining order.63

Germany's difficult history of civil-military relations shows how the lessons that officers have learned from past history effect officers' norms and their political activity. After German defeat in World War I, the chief of the army, General von Seeckt, self-consciously promoted the "maintenance of tradition," which emphasized the glories of past German armies. Although the connection of the Weimar-era armed forces to the Wilhelmine military is often overstated, Donald Abenheim persuasively argues that "maintaining a Prussian and imperial military tradition helped the Nazis to legitimate their rule and gain the cooperation of military professionals." The

62 March, Sproul and Tamuz, "Learning from Samples of One or Fewer," p. 7. I placed the word "learn" in quotes because, in a common-sense understanding of learning, nothing is really "learned" when experiences reinforce existing beliefs. The understanding of learning used here is different in that it refers to lessons taken from experience, including when those lessons are consistent with prior beliefs. I thank Donald Blackmer for this point.

63 Horowitz, Coup Theories and Officers' Motives; Cohen, "The Military in India and Pakistan," p. 305; Cohen, "The Military and Indian Democracy"; Ganguly, "From the Defense of the Nation to Aid to the Civil."
dilemma of re-making the military's culture was faced again by the post-war Bundeswehr. Abenheim demonstrates how soldiers involved in creating the Bundeswehr had learned new lessons from the "political failings" of past German militaries and established a new tradition compatible with democracy and civilian control.⁶⁴

Although Abenheim and others have emphasized these cultural and ideational factors in their historical accounts, most theoretical explanations of military intervention emphasize structural and rational reasons for coups. The question of officer corps norms, however, has not been entirely ignored. Robert Dahl notes that an army's beliefs about the importance of political neutrality are a "crucial factor" in explaining military intervention. Samuel Finer also points to "firm acceptance of civilian supremacy" as a key check on military intervention. Neither Dahl nor Finer, however, develops this notion in detail. Two existing studies of civilian supremacy in the Third World also highlight such ideational factors as "restraint" (Claude Welch) and civil-military "value congruence" (Constantine Danopoulos).⁶⁵ More recently, Eva Busza, Peter Feaver, and Jendayi Frazer have called attention to the importance of officer corps socialization and

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organizational norms. These newer approaches tend to look at the construction of civilian institutions of control over the military, rather than examining officer corps culture from the inside and how it develops.66

J. Samuel Fitch has offered perhaps the most comprehensive test of the importance of officer corps norms in his work on the Ecuadorian armed forces. Fitch argues that although officers' evaluations of government performance are the most important factor in determining their decision to support or oppose a coup (consistent with rationalist and structuralist accounts), another important factor is "the individual officer's beliefs about the political role of the armed forces in his society." Fitch divides the Ecuadorian officer corps into four subcultures: professionalist, constitutionalist, arbiter, and developmentalist. Professionalists adhere to a totally apolitical stance, constitutionalists believe the military should ensure civilian observance of the constitution, arbiters think the army should be the ultimate arbiter of civilian politics, and developmentalists assign an activist political role to the military in running the state. Using survey data, Fitch found that the dominant culture of the Ecuadorian armed forces was constitutionalist between 1954 and 1961, but after 1963 the arbiter norm became the dominant position of officers. He then demonstrates how this changing role definition influenced military intervention in politics.67

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Samuel Huntington's theory of military professionalism can also be read as an organizational culture approach to civil-military relations. Huntington argues that an ideal-type professional army is politically neutral and externally oriented. Instilled in the mind of each officer is the belief that the job of the army is to fight wars, not play politics. A professional military is apolitical with respect to the question of who rules, serving whatever regime captures legitimate political authority in the state. This seems to be a cultural account.⁶⁸ I noted above, however, that Huntington’s theory of military professionalism also can be read as an international structure argument. Huntington’s towering work has largely defined the field of civil-military relations, but scholars continue to disagree on what military professionalism is, where it comes from, and what it is supposed to explain.⁶⁹

Some critics argue that Huntington’s argument has been falsified by the many instances of “professional” militaries intervening in politics. These critics define professionalism in terms of the five key institutions highlighted by Huntington as necessary for the development of a professional officer corps: competitive entry, advancement based on seniority and merit, an advanced military education establishment, a general staff system, and esprit. Many scholars have noted that various militaries that seem to fit these criteria have intervened in politics, including in Latin America, the Middle East, Africa, and Asia.⁷⁰ Militaries of several developed


⁶⁹ I can think of at least four possible interpretations of Huntington’s argument. Two of these are discussed here: international structure and organizational culture. The other two focus on the degree of fit between the military’s conservative ideology and the dominant societal ideology, and the methods of civilian control employed (“objective” vs. “subjective”). Huntington is never explicit about which argument is the most important, or whether he is offering a synthesis of several different explanations. See: Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*, esp. pp. 80-97.

states have also met these criteria and been involved in deciding who rules, including in Wilhelmine Germany, France during the Fourth and Fifth Republics, and Imperial Japan.\textsuperscript{71}

Samuel Finer goes even further and argues that not only is professionalism not a barrier to intervention, but it is often a \textit{cause} of it. The military's conception of itself as professional, Finer contends, often motivates political conflict with the civilian leadership. Professional officers can come to believe that they are responsible to "the state" and not the government in power, and that the current government has demonstrated its incompetence by failing to provide adequately for military needs or by involving the military in domestic tasks. What is necessary, Finer concludes, is that "the military must also have absorbed the principle of the supremacy of the civil power. For this is \textit{not} part of the definition of 'professionalism.' It is a separate and distinct matter."\textsuperscript{72}

It is not clear, however, that commitment to the principle of civilian supremacy is absent from Huntington's definition of professionalism. One of the three components of professionalism, according to Huntington, is responsibility (the other two are expertise and corporateness). Huntington argues that a responsible officer "is guided by an awareness that his skill can only be utilized for purposes approved by society through its political agent, the state."

He also states that a professional military is "politically sterile and neutral."\textsuperscript{73} Thus, acceptance of


\textsuperscript{72} Finer, \textit{The Man on Horseback}, pp. 22-24; emphasis in original. See also Abrahamsson, \textit{Military Professionalization and Political Power}.

\textsuperscript{73} Huntington, \textit{The Soldier and the State}, pp. 15-16, p. 84.
civilian supremacy *does* seem to be part of his definition of professionalism.

Making acceptance of the principle of civilian supremacy part of his definition of professionalism creates a different problem for Huntington. Huntington’s argument is not necessarily wrong; the difficulty is that his argument is tautological. Finer points out that, according to Huntington, a professional military is one that is by definition politically neutral. At the same time, the degree of a military’s professionalism apparently is measured by its political activity. Thus, there is no independent measure of professionalism external to the definition itself. Behavior (political activity) is incorporated within the definition of culture (professionalism). By making professionalism synonymous with political responsibility and neutrality, Huntington’s argument becomes circular. As Peter Feaver notes, for Huntington "the putative link between professionalism and voluntary subordination...is not so much a relation of cause and effect as it is a definition."74

The significant scholarly dissension about Huntington’s concept of military professionalism makes the use of this concept as the core component of an organizational culture approach to civil-military relations problematic. In the next section I propose a cultural argument rooted in what I call the norm of civilian supremacy. This norm is basically what Huntington calls responsibility, and what many people now call professionalism. I avoid using the term professionalism because of its ambiguity. Certainly one of the major contributions of *The Soldier and the State*, however, is that it helped make explicit the importance of military internalization of the norm of civilian supremacy.75

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75 The discussion that follows is inspired by Huntington’s discussion of professional military responsibility, but is
The Norm Of Civilian Supremacy

An organizational culture perspective maintains that officer corps behavior is partially explained by the degree of military attachment to the norm of responsibility. This norm of civilian supremacy relates to the military's task and its subordination, answering the questions "what should we do?" and "to whom are we responsible?" The two aspects of the norm, in their ideal form, can be stated as follows:

Task: Our job is defense of the state against external attack.
Subordination: We obey legitimate civilian authority.

The task aspect of the norm, at its most fundamental level, is rooted in our very understanding of what militaries are: large organizations devoted to preparing for and fighting wars. When officers come to believe that they have tasks outside the domain of defense policy, the boundary between military and civilian spheres and officer attachment to the norm of responsibility is weakened. As Kenneth Jowitz states, "the character of political culture will vary with changes in tasks or task-mixes." Officers who see their tasks as extending into the societal choice and sovereign power domains have both greater occasion and more reason to question civilian judgment, thus undermining their attachment to the norm. Officers committed to the norm of responsibility believe that role expansion will dilute their ability to perform their primary duty, defense of the state against external threats. An officer corps committed to the norm of civilian supremacy understands the danger of getting involved in domestic missions.

Commitment to political neutrality includes the commitment to resist being used by civilians to

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not directly derivative. Note that I use the terms "norm of civilian supremacy" and "norm of responsibility" interchangeably. The other two aspects of Huntington's definition of professionalism, expertise and corporateness, are not relevant to the organizational culture perspective discussed here and thus are not explored further.

settle domestic political scores. Internal policing missions, in particular, carry the risk of domestic political involvement. Officers that adhere to the norm of civilian supremacy especially eschew this mission.

Many civil-military relations scholars have called attention to the task emphasis of the army as a measure of its political orientation. Morris Janowitz notes that the United States military, one with a high commitment to the norm of civilian supremacy, resists police activities, viewing them as "less prestigious [sic] and less honorable tasks." The Indian military, which also has a strong tradition of political neutrality, has been heavily involved in "aid to the civil power" operations. The army has been called on increasingly to deal with ethnic disturbances, despite the considerable expansion of paramilitary forces specifically designated for this role. However, Stephen Cohen reports that the army hates these missions, because they interfere with its training for external war. Thus, although Indian military involvement in non-defense tasks is worrying and may over time erode commitment to the norm of civilian supremacy, most officers still regard these tasks as improper.77

The experience of several countries demonstrates the dangers of the armed forces changing their task orientation from external to internal. Alfred Stepan made good use of data on changes in the Brazilian military's educational curriculum from a focus on territorial defense to one on counterinsurgency and internal warfare to demonstrate the increasing politicization of the Brazilian military in the 1960s. Similarly, Raoul Girardet and John Ambler show how the expanded roles of the French military in Algeria in the late 1950s, and the increased attention to

countering "revolutionary war" in French military doctrine, helped nurture praetorian tendencies among part of the French officer corps. In the most extreme cases, the military focuses primarily on tasks having little to do with external defense of the state, such as control over economic resources (Nigeria, Haiti) or social control of the countryside (El Salvador).  

A structural-functional account of a military's task orientation would argue that this orientation is a mere reflection of material reality and the presence or absence of external threats. A cultural account, although not discounting these factors, would maintain that culture is somewhat autonomous from structure and that there can be a disconnect between structure and culture. Legro argues that cultural change is "less automatic and efficient" than structural-functional theories imply. As norms persist and are less subject to contestation, they acquire a "taken-for-granted" character. In Ann Swidler's terminology, they move from being ideologies to traditions to common sense. Cultural elements with a long history become more institutionalized and take on the character of assumptions.

Culturalists would argue, for example, that the French military's focus on "revolutionary war" was caused not only by the security situation in Algeria but also the beliefs of officers that French civilian life was sick and corrupt and that only the military could defend traditional

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national values. The Sri Lankan military has never fought a foreign war and is essentially an internal security force. Yet the army trains as if preparing for external war and sees its internal mission as "emergency duty" that is not completely legitimate. In contrast, the Japanese military in the 1930s faced an extremely challenging external security environment, but the military was heavily involved in education policy and had a strong subculture (the Kodo-ha) that believed in the use of violence and terror against their civilian opponents. Spanish military officers that supported membership in NATO and an external orientation in the late 1970s and early 1980s were not responding to an increase in the Soviet threat, but to the particular lessons they had learned about the negative consequences of an internal focus for the organization. Task orientations do not automatically reflect the structural and material environment.\footnote{On France, see the sources cited in note 71. On Sri Lanka, see: Horowitz, Coup Theories and Officers' Motives, pp. 110-111. On Japan, see: Ienaga, The Pacific War, 1931-1945, esp. chapter 3; Hane, Modern Japan, pp. 245-272. On Spain, see: Paul Preston, The Politics of Revenge: Fascism and the military in twentieth-century Spain (London: Unwin Hyman, 1990), pp. 175-202; Alfred Stepan, Rethinking Military Politics: Brazil and the Southern}
away from the job of external defense. In cases of military arbitration officers will seek to discover which contender is the most legitimate and not, as the corporate interest approach maintains, which contender will best serve their interests.

The nineteenth century French officer corps exhibited a strong commitment to the subordination aspect of the norm of civilian supremacy. The army was known as "the Great Mute" because of its apolitical nature and lived by the motto "the army does not engage in politics." The Indian armed forces largely have inherited the British tradition of belief in the importance of military subordination to civilian leadership. Indian officers are taught that the army must remain apolitical and have come to believe that politics and the military profession do not mix. Like French officers in the nineteenth century, they assert that the military is "outside politics."\(^{81}\)

Other armies exhibit profoundly different views on the need to obey civilian leadership. The Spanish military, Paul Preston maintains, earlier this century came to believe that they were "the executors of a 'national truth'" and that they had the right to "dictate the political direction of the nation." Students in military academies were taught the dangers of democracy, and the General Military Academy indoctrinated the belief that the armed forces were the "supreme arbiter of the nation's political destiny." Similarly, many Latin American militaries historically have rejected the notion of unquestioning obedience to civilian rule and arrogated to themselves, at a minimum, an arbiter role that includes promoting the general welfare, maintaining public

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Officer corps commitment to the task and subordination aspects of the norm, at least in theory, could vary unequally; that is, a military could have a high commitment to one aspect of the norm and a low commitment to the other. In practice, though, it appears that the degree of commitment to the two aspects co-vary. The belief that the military has tasks other than external defense usually leads officers to hold policy views on these tasks. As the number of issues on which the military bargains with civilian elites, rather than simply follows orders, expands, the principle of obedience is undermined. Conversely, if officers feel no commitment to the norm of subordination, they are more likely to arrogate to themselves the right to set policy in the domains of societal choice and sovereign power. Horowitz explains how the process of role expansion in Sri Lanka led the military to question civilian decision-making over a range of political issues:

As the political sphere expanded, so did the military sphere, for the officers were called in to help resolve what seemed to them political problems. There was thus a growing overlap of functions. As the clear separation of functions vanished, so did the normative and prudential basis for adhering exclusively to the military function. As the armed forces were drawn into civilian political conflict, it no longer seemed fitting for them to abstain wholly from political judgment. On the contrary, the tasks they were called upon to perform appeared to make it proper for them to ask questions about what had previously been unambiguously civilian business.\footnote{Horowitz, \textit{Coup Theories and Officers' Motives}, p. 185.}
Of course, the task and subordination aspects of the norm sometimes can come in conflict.

In the ideal case, the subordination aspect of the norm should be stronger than the task one. Militaries that adhere to the responsibility norm do not like being assigned to internal roles, but the primary obligation is to obey orders.

The ideal-type apolitical military, then, is one that has thoroughly internalized both aspects of the norm of civilian supremacy.\textsuperscript{84} The opposite of an apolitical military is a praetorian, or politicized, one. Praetorianism is defined as a tendency towards military intervention in sovereign power issues.\textsuperscript{85} An ideal-type apolitical military is one for which a coup attempt is unthinkable. An ideal-type praetorian military is one for which military rule and intervention is a constant possibility. In principle, any state's armed forces can be situated on an imaginary spectrum with apolitical on one end and praetorian on the other (see Figure 1-1). This placement reflects the extent to which the officer corps is committed to the norm of civilian supremacy.\textsuperscript{86}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Apolitical</th>
<th>Praetorian</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High Attachment</td>
<td>Moderate Attachment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak Attachment</td>
<td>No Attachment</td>
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\textit{Level of Attachment to Norm of Civilian Supremacy}

**FIGURE 1-1: The Apolitical/Praetorian Continuum**

\textsuperscript{84} Consistent with the argument above about domains of civil-military relations, when I use the terms "apolitical" or "politically neutral" I am referring to sovereign power issues. Obviously the armed forces have political interests in the realm of defense and foreign policy.

\textsuperscript{85} Huntington, \textit{Political Order in Changing Societies}, pp. 192-263, esp. pp. 192-195; Nordlinger, \textit{Soldiers in Politics}, pp. 2-3; Amos Perlmutter, \textit{The Military and Politics in Modern Times: On Professionals, Praetorians, and Revolutionary Soldiers} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), pp. 11-13, 89-114, esp. p. 93. Nordlinger's definition of praetorianism is restricted to military intervention in politics, whereas Huntington and Perlmutter alternate between this restrictive definition and a broader one that also refers to the type of society in which military intervention is likely. I use the restrictive definition here.

\textsuperscript{86} I follow Robert Jackman in maintaining that many political phenomena are most fruitfully studied as questions of degree and continuity, rather than as all-or-nothing phenomena requiring qualitative taxonomies. See Jackman, \textit{Power Without Force}, pp. 42-43.
Many militaries will not exhibit a single culture on the norm of civilian supremacy. An ideal-type army, whether apolitical or politicized, will have a clear, dominant culture. Intermediate cases may have several subcultures, either a dominant one with several competing subcultures, or several competing subcultures with none of them clearly dominant. The most difficult task is to determine when a "boundary change" has taken place and one dominant subculture has replaced the previous one. Such a change, for example, happened in the Ecuadorian case when the arbiter norm replaced the constitutionalist one. Similarly, in Spain a younger group of officers favoring disengagement from politics represented an important organizational subculture during the transition to democracy. A boundary change in the direction of greater attachment to the norm of civilian supremacy has taken place in Spain in the last two decades.

Variation in norms is important for two reasons. First, because it can help explain why officers within the same army may respond differently to similar conditions, depending on the subculture to which they adhere. Second, variation in norms is important because it can help explain why officers in different countries may not respond the same way to similar objective situations. Conditions that cause coups in some countries do not cause them in others. Situations that would have provoked military intervention at one time in a certain state do not do so at a later period. Finally, the issue of boundary changes is crucial because not all coup motives are equal. Some reasons for military intervention will seem more compelling than others. Thus, an

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organizational culture approach can accept that structural and rational motives play an explanatory role in military intervention, because these factors help determine with what choices officers are faced. Unlike these two perspectives, however, the behavior of the military is not determined solely by objective conditions, but also by the subjective beliefs of officers. The next task is to explain how variation in military organizational culture and coup motives intersect.

Organizational Culture and Coup Motives

General surveys of civil-military relations theory tend to list a wide range of possible motives for military intervention, in an effort more to catalogue than theorize. However, civil-military relations theory is at a stage in which attempts should be made to delineate what types of motives for intervention will stimulate different kinds of militaries to act. Donald Horowitz urges scholars to treat military intervention as a more heterogeneous category, with proper attention to variation in motives. Horowitz’s recommendation is particularly relevant to a cultural approach, which recognizes that different armies will not respond in the same way to the same environmental stimuli.

The motives which might provoke a coup fall into four basic categories: national interest, corporate, sub-corporate, and personal. National interest motives include threats to the territorial integrity of the state, major military defeats, and systemic crises of the governability of the state. Corporate motives for intervention are related to threats to the armed forces' resources or political

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89 Martin Edmonds, for example, lists eighteen possible motives for intervention, grouped under the three broad headings of "sectional interest," "self-interest," and "national interest." Edmonds, *Armed Services and Society*, p. 103.

90 Horowitz, *Coup Theories and Officers' Motives*, pp. 200-220. Martin Edmonds and Samuel Finer do a fine job of discussing possible motives for military intervention, but they do not provide explanations for why some motives may instigate coup attempts in some countries but not in others. Finer, *Man on Horseback*, pp. 22-53; Edmonds, *Armed Services and Society*, pp. 93-112, esp. the table on p. 103.
position, and may include a traditional role as arbiter of political competition. Sub-corporate motives for intervention stem from factions within the armed forces or ascriptive divisions within society (class, ethnicity). Personal motives are the individual ambitions and grievances of officers.\footnote{Finer, \textit{Man on Horseback}, pp. 28-53; Edmonds, \textit{Armed Services and Society}, pp. 93-112, esp. the table on p. 103; Thompson, \textit{The Grievances of Military Coup-Makers}; Steven R. David, \textit{Third World Coups d’Etat and International Security} (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), pp. 8-9; Horowitz, \textit{Coup Theories and Officers’ Motives}, pp. 3-15, 200-209, 217-221; Nordlinger, \textit{Soldiers in Politics}, pp. 63-99.}

These four basic kinds of motives vary in their level of generality. Personal motives are by definition highly particular, and usually reflect dissension within the ruling junta over the appropriate distribution of power and resources. A small number of actors is involved in coups that result from personal motives. Sub-corporate motives are somewhat more general than personal ones, and thus require mobilizing greater support within the armed forces for action if the coup is to succeed. Coups undertaken for corporate motives tend to originate in the military's senior leadership, acting on their perception of the institution's interests as a whole or in the military's capacity of political arbiter. The most general level of motive is that behind the national interest coup, which tends to have the support not only of much of the officer corps but also other elements in society that believe the state is facing a systemic crisis.

I argue that the degree of a military's attachment to the norm of civilian supremacy influences which motives are likely to instigate intervention, given structural opportunities. Armies with different norms will respond differently (intervene or not intervene) to the same stimuli (motives and opportunities). This argument does not claim that rational and structural motives play no role in determining military behavior. What an organizational culture approach \textit{does} claim, however, is that a compelling rational motive or structural opportunity for Military A
to intervene may cause no reaction whatsoever from Military B. Adherence to the norm is not determined by forward-looking utility calculations but by prior socialization. Additionally, as Jon Elster notes, norms often serve as a guide to action when the outcomes of actions are uncertain.\textsuperscript{92} The subjective beliefs held by officers are crucial for understanding their behavior.

Militaries will exhibit different degrees of commitment to the norm of responsibility. Ideal-type apolitical armies (United States, United Kingdom) are unlikely to intervene in almost any circumstance. Armies with a moderate degree of attachment to the norm (Mexico, India) may be motivated to intervene for national interest reasons. In these cases a national interest motive is required to overcome existing norms against armed forces intervention. Militaries that are more praetorian in nature (Pakistan, Chile) are often prompted by corporate or sub-corporate motives, and attachment to the norm of civilian supremacy is weak and isolated in organizational subcultures. Highly praetorian armies with no attachment to the norm of civilian supremacy (Nigeria, Thailand) are subject to coups and counter-coups instigated by sub-corporate motives and personal ambitions and grievances.\textsuperscript{93}


\textsuperscript{93} Note that these categories are broadly comparable to Fitch's professionalist, constitutionalist, arbiter, and developmentalist cultures.
Figure 1-2 shows the posited relationship between the level of commitment to the norm of responsibility and coup motive. Militaries with no attachment to the norm of civilian supremacy may intervene for any of the four basic types of motives. Those armies with a weak commitment to the norm may not intervene over personal issues, but sub-corporate, corporate, and national interest motives might provoke a military coup. Further up the scale, it may take a national interest motive for armed forces with a moderate degree of attachment to the norm of responsibility to intervene in sovereign power issues. Those armies with an extremely high commitment to the norm are likely to eschew military intervention even for national interest reasons, and will only become involved in sovereign power issues at the order of civilian authorities.

An organizational culture approach contends that officer corps behavior is partially explained by the degree of military attachment to the norm of civilian supremacy. This leads to the following propositions: *The higher the attachment of officers to the norm of civilian*
supremacy, the higher the threshold against intervention. Militaries with a strong commitment to the norm are unlikely to intervene in politics. In cases of military arbitration, militaries with a strong commitment to the norm are likely to try to remain neutral. If forced to act, the army will tend to support the most legitimate contender for power. Armies with a weak or no commitment to the norm are likely to intervene in politics. In cases of military arbitration, militaries with a weak commitment to the norm are likely to seek the arbiter role. They will tend to support the contender for power who will most advance military corporate interests.

An organizational culture perspective on military intervention, although intuitively plausible, has not been widely or systematically applied to the study of civil-military relations. One possible reason for this is a general weakness of cultural arguments: they are difficult to test. Specifically, one reason that cultural factors have been downplayed in explaining behavior, including officer corps behavior, is the difficulty of reliably measuring culture. Many cultural explanations tend to be circular: they include behavior in the definition of culture, and then argue that culture explains the behavior being studied. Separating the behavior to be explained from the measurement of culture is therefore necessary, but raises the difficult issue of how a researcher gains access to the subjective understandings of the relevant actors. This is particularly difficult when the actors are unavailable for direct questioning, either because they are dead or because they are not accessible.

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94 Measuring structural variables, of course, is also no easy matter. The debate in the *American Political Science Review* on large-N quantitative studies of African coups d'etat highlights some of these issues. See Robert Jackman et. al., "Explaining African Coups D'Etat," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 80, No. 1 (March 1986), pp. 225-249. Much of the qualitative literature avoids these measurement problems by not stating clearly how their variables are operationalized and how they are coded. I discuss my coding rules for officer corps norms in the methodology section below.

95 On the problems of measuring culture, see: Eckstein, "'Observing' Political Culture," chapter 8 in *Regarding Politics*, pp. 286-303; Jepperson and Swidler, "What properties of culture should we measure?"; Sackmann, "Uncovering Culture in Organizations."
Recent practitioners of cultural analysis have tried to overcome these difficulties and avoid the circularity and non-falsifiability of previous attempts to study culture. Additionally, these scholars seek to use culture as a variable in scientific explanations that compete with rationalist or structural accounts, rather than simply as holistic "descriptions" or "interpretations." They are careful to separate culture from behavior, attempt to distinguish between ideas that are used instrumentally versus those that are truly held, and recognize that cultures are not universally held and that competing subcultures may exist within the same collective. Finally, these scholars pick their sources carefully and are cognizant of the danger of only finding ideas that "fit" their interpretation. To the extent possible with historical documents, they strive for inter-subjective coding reliability. As Harry Eckstein notes, the crucial task of this approach is "to penetrate reliably and with validity into the subjective." In the following section on methodology I discuss how I operationalize organizational culture in a manner that permits careful testing.

METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

I have discussed four alternative perspectives on military involvement in sovereign power issues and derived propositions for each approach. In this section I discuss measures and tests for each of the four perspectives, how I intend to conduct the tests, and the design of the study. I conclude by reiterating the goals of the project and laying out the organization of the chapters.

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96 On explanation versus interpretation or description in cultural analysis, see: Swidler, "Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies," p. 273; Eckstein, Regarding Politics, p. 296.

Variable Measurement

The propositions derived above were stated in general terms. Here I present specific variables that I will measure when testing the four approaches.

**International structure.** The international structure perspective on civil-military relations maintains that a country's external threat environment and whether or not it is a major participant in international and regional security competition determines the likelihood of military intervention in politics. This argument leads to the following propositions: *High external threat leads to an externally oriented military unlikely to intervene in sovereign power issues. In cases of military arbitration, the military will tend to side with the civilian contender that will contribute the most to the state's war-making capacity. Low external threat leads to a military likely to intervene in sovereign power issues. The military will show a greater willingness to arbitrate in cases of low external threat.*

The primary measure used to test this proposition will be the war-proneness data on Russia from the Correlates of War Project. These data are a good indicator of the propensity of states to be involved in external conflict. The external security environment and Russia's standing in the international system are also relevant components of the international structure argument; these indicators will be discussed qualitatively.

**Domestic Structure.** The domestic structure perspective contends that low political capacity is the most important cause of military involvement in sovereign power issues. This argument leads to the following propositions about military involvement in sovereign power issues: *Militaries in strong states are unlikely to intervene in sovereign power issues. Armies in weak states are likely to intervene in sovereign power issues. Instances of military arbitration are likely in weak states, and unlikely in strong states.*
The major difficulty with making the concept of political capacity an independent variable is how to conceptualize and measure the concept.\textsuperscript{98} Robert Jackman's treatment of political capacity is one of the most recent and thorough. Jackman argues that political capacity "involves the creation of legitimate institutions within which conflict can be resolved."\textsuperscript{99}

Political capacity, Jackman argues, has two components. The first is organizational age, measured both in chronological and generational terms. Organizational age has three elements: the age of the juridical state, the age of the current constitutional order, and the number of top leadership successions in that order. Jackman argues that the longevity of institutions demonstrates their institutionalization, thus meeting Huntington's four criteria for political development: institutions that are adaptive, complex, autonomous, and coherent.\textsuperscript{100}

Jackman contends that the second element of political capacity is legitimacy. The concept of legitimacy, of course, is as controversial as the concept of political order. Many scholars assert that the people's belief in the moral claim of leaders to rule is fundamentally important. Others, however, take a more cynical, or perhaps realistic, view, arguing that what matters is the

\textsuperscript{98} Uriel Rosenthal, for example, found six general ways of conceptualizing or measuring political order: 1) the absence of structural change; 2) rule-bound politics; 3) legitimate politics; 4) institutionalized politics; 5) the limitation of violence; 6) the stability of chief executive offices. Uriel Rosenthal, \textit{Political Order: Rewards, Punishments and Political Stability} (Alphen aan den Rijn, The Netherlands: Sijthoff & Noordhoff, 1973).


\textsuperscript{100} Jackman, \textit{Power without Force}, pp. ix-x, 38-45, 73-93, 124-138. For Huntington's discussion of institutionalization, which greatly influenced Jackman's approach, see: Huntington, \textit{Political Order in Changing Societies}, pp. 1-92. One possible objection to Jackman's use of the number of top leadership successions as a measure of organizational age and hence political capacity is that parliamentary systems with frequent regime changes will appear to have greater capacity than those with less frequent change (take Italy as an example). I would argue that leadership successions is still a valid measure for two reasons. First, the ability of a state to have frequent regime changes without a coup or a revolution overturning the existing political order is a reasonable measure of political capacity. Second, peaceful transfers of power are considered highly important indicators of the institutionalization of democratic regimes in transition (see: Samuel P. Huntington, \textit{The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century} (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), pp. 266-267). However, it is probably true that the age of the juridical state and especially the age of the current constitutional order are more important indicators of organizational age. I thank Steve Meyer for calling my attention to this point.
government's ability to monopolize control over coercive means. Justification for both views can be found in Max Weber's classic discussion of legitimacy.¹⁰¹ Jackman maintains that "a set of political institutions is legitimate to the extent that most citizens have a predisposition to regard compliance with the officers of those institutions as appropriate and reasonable," adding that an active belief in the legitimacy of the existing regime is not necessary, only "a degree of acquiescence...given the known or existing alternatives."¹⁰² This definition strikes me as a reasonable compromise between the competing approaches to legitimacy, emphasizing both citizens' normative commitments and the presence or absence of viable alternatives.

Jackman proposes that legitimacy be measured by two indicators of violence: to what extent does the regime use forceful coercion against its citizens, and to what degree do challengers to the regime resort to violence? Jackman discusses a variety of measures for these indicators (restrictions on political behavior, political executions, armed attacks, etc.) before settling on deaths from political violence as the best possible single indicator, although he acknowledges that this measure has conceptual and data problems. Jackman dismisses the argument made by Tilly and others that, in Tilly's words, "violent repression works." Jackman's definition of


legitimacy, however, seems to open up the possibility that government violence could be used to repress “known or existing alternatives” to the existing regime. There may be situations in which state-sponsored political violence can increase political capacity by eliminating or repressing potential opponents.\textsuperscript{103}

Jackman provides probably the most thorough discussion of possible measures of political capacity. His measures, however, are only partially helpful for this study. Organizational age is a reasonable indicator of political capacity in a cross-country comparative study, but in a single-country diachronic study it suffers from the serious limitation of being unable to account for the decline in political capacity of an established state. According to Jackman’s analysis, the longer the current constitutional order and the greater the number of top leadership successions in that order, the stronger the state becomes. There is thus no room for change in a downward direction independent of a change in the constitutional order. A second problem is that Jackman’s conclusion that state repression is always indicative of political weakness seems too sweeping. Jackman is right that repression sometimes fails, but Tilly is also correct in maintaining that state coercion can be successful.\textsuperscript{104}

Jackman’s indicators of political capacity, then, need to be supplemented with other indicators of state strength. The other major approach to measuring state strength that I use is the one originally proposed by Stephen Krasner and later modified by Joel Migdal. Krasner proposes three general categories to measure the strength of the state vis-à-vis society: the ability to resist

\textsuperscript{103} For Jackman’s discussion of these issues, see: Jackman, \textit{Power Without Force}, pp. 25-38, 109-114; the Tilly quote is from p. 112.

\textsuperscript{104} I thank Stephen Meyer, Barry Posen, and particularly Donald Blackmer for helpful discussions on these points.
private pressure, to change private behavior, and to change social structure.\textsuperscript{105} Migdal’s simplified version of Krasner’s classification is set out in Table 1-4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Resist Private Pressure</th>
<th>Change Private Behavior in Intended Ways</th>
<th>Change Social Structure in Intended Ways</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak</td>
<td></td>
<td>X\textsuperscript{a}</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: \textsuperscript{a} Or sometimes.  
\textsuperscript{b} Or often only slowly.
Sources: See note 105.

The approach of Krasner and Migdal is well-designed to conduct the form of diachronic comparison used in this project. I also, where appropriate and available, will use other numerical indicators to supplement the measures proposed by Jackman, Krasner, and Migdal. One useful indicator may be "irregular," non-violent challenges to the existing political order. Political strikes and regional independence or autonomy movements are two examples of regime challenges that may be non-violent.\textsuperscript{106} Other potential measures discussed by various authors include the ability of the state to collect taxes or the size of the public sector.\textsuperscript{107}

Corporate Interest. The corporate interest perspective on military involvement in sovereign power issues focuses on threats to the interests of the military organization as an explanation for army behavior. This approach leads to the following propositions: Militaries are likely to intervene in sovereign power issues if their corporate interests are threatened. Armies are


\textsuperscript{107} Migdal, \textit{Strong Societies and Weak States}, pp. 279-286.
unlikely to intervene in sovereign power issues if the government is responsive to their corporate interests. In instances of military arbitration, the armed forces will side with the contender who is most likely to advance the armed forces' corporate interests. These rational corporate interests are defined as minimizing uncertainty and maximizing power, resources, and autonomy.

Nordlinger suggests the following military corporate interests are the most important: budgetary support, military autonomy, the absence of functional rivals (para-military forces), and the survival of the military. Thompson produces a similar series of organizational interests. He breaks these interests down into two separate categories: positional and resource. Positional interests include autonomy, hierarchy (the chain of command), monopoly, cohesion, honor, and political position. Resource interests are such matters as budget, pay, personnel issues (promotions, appointments, assignments, etc.), training, and interservice relations. The bureaucratic politics literature suggests that autonomy is a particularly important organizational interest. Threats to all of these interests will be important indicators used to test the corporate interest perspective.108

Organizational Culture. The organizational culture approach posits that the norms and beliefs of officers are a key determinant of military involvement in sovereign power issues. This leads to the following propositions: The higher the attachment of officers to the norm of civilian supremacy, the higher the threshold against intervention. Militaries with a strong commitment to the norm are unlikely to intervene in politics. In cases of military arbitration, militaries with a strong commitment to the norm are likely to try to remain neutral. If forced to act, the army will

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tend to support the most legitimate contender for power. Armies with a weak or no commitment to the norm are likely to intervene in politics. In cases of military arbitration, militaries with a weak commitment to the norm are likely to seek the arbiter role. They will tend to support the contender for power who will most advance military corporate interests.

I proposed above that the norm of responsibility has two components, task and subordination. Evidence for the existence of norms, Martha Finnemore notes, can be found in one of two ways: they are found either in "patterns of behavior" or "articulated in discourse." The patterns of behavior used to measure culture must be different from those that the culture purportedly explains. If the norms are articulated in discourse, they can be examined in a hermeneutic fashion (i.e., through the interpretation of texts) and using content analysis. Survey research data is also available for more recent periods.109

The task aspect of the norm of responsibility has several possible measures. The topics of articles in military journals and military education curricula are good indicators of the armed forces' orientation. The amount of time that the army devotes to military preparation and training, as opposed to non-defense tasks, is another good indicator. If the armed forces are engaged in domestic policing or other non-military tasks, they will be coded as less committed to the norm. However, since subordination has primacy over task orientation, and officers may be ordered to engage in these tasks, equally relevant are statements of officers about their attitude towards these missions. The statements of top officers on the proper functions of the armed forces are a useful source.


The subordination aspect of the norm also is measured with a mix of behavioral and hermeneutic indicators. Important sources to examine include the socialization process of officers and the beliefs, values, and assumptions of military elites. I look for statements of officers that reflect whether they have internalized the view that they must obey legitimate authority and that they have no role to play in the resolution of sovereign power questions. Possible sources include military journals, memoirs, interviews, survey data, and internal armed forces communications.

Iain Johnston counsels the analysis of symbols, looking in particular for "frequently used idioms and phrases," "key words which appear to embody certain behavioral axioms, or which are used to describe legitimate actions," and "analogy and metaphors which function as short-hand definitions." Robert Jervis notes that the use of historical analogies by a decision maker is often a good sign of what lessons have been learned from past events. The behavior of officers also can be a good indicator of their degree of subordination. I particularly will look at their behavior in domains of civil-military relations other than sovereign power issues, such as defense politics or internal usage. Whether officers submit to civilian leadership in these realms can be indicative of their degree of attachment to the subordination aspect of the norm of civilian supremacy.110

One potential source of measurement error is improper coding of the variables. Both aspects of the norm of civilian supremacy (task and subordination) are coded, at least in part, hermeneutically. Content analysis is essentially the only method available for this sort of

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and Theory (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1975), pp. 131-228.

research.\textsuperscript{111} There are three potential problems with this approach. First, except for archival documents and other internal military communications, officers could be using culture instrumentally -- in essence, saying what they think they are supposed to say, rather than what they really believe. It may be hard to distinguish between those officers who have been socialized to hold the official government view and those who do not accept the official culture but consider it unwise to say so. To the extent that high-ranking officers express the same views in public this suggests, at a minimum, that they believe these views are the appropriate ones to hold and, in that sense, reflect the dominant organizational culture.\textsuperscript{112} Certainly the careful researcher has to be aware of the potential problem of manipulated culture and look for communications from a range of actors and in a variety of forms and media. This problem should not be overstated, however. Scholars of civil-military relations have been quite successful in the past in uncovering considerable variance in officers' views, including views directly at odds with official and dominant positions.\textsuperscript{113}

A second and related potential problem with qualitative content analysis is that finding dissenting views is particularly difficult under authoritarian regimes. This problem obviously is relevant to a study of Russia and the Soviet Union. I do two things in order to minimize this problem. First, as indicated, I use behavioral indicators of officer corps commitment to the norm of civilian supremacy as often as possible. Second, I concentrate on periods of either relative openness or those periods for which documentary and archival sources are available. In the

\textsuperscript{111} The three other methods that Eckstein suggests for observing culture -- survey research, experimental projective techniques, and participant observation -- are not available for the study of history. Survey research data will be used for the current cases. Eckstein, Regarding Politics, pp. 292-295.

\textsuperscript{112} I thank Laura Miller for this point.

\textsuperscript{113} Examples include: Ambler, Soldiers Against the State; Stepan, The Military in Politics; Fitch, The Military Coup d'Etat as a Political Process.
periods of relative openness, such as during the Revolution or the Gorbachev and Yeltsin periods, officers engaged in open political debate on many questions, with little evidence that they were not committed to the positions that they articulated.\footnote{I will discuss the problems of archival documents from the Stalin period in chapter Four. On the techniques of Kremlinology and the use of Soviet sources, see the following: Lilita Dzirkals, Thane Gustafson, and A. Ross Johnson, *The Media and Intra-Elite Communication in the USSR*, RAND Report R-2869 (Santa Monica: Rand, September 1982); Robert Conquest, Chapter 3 ("Questions of Evidence"), *Power and Policy in the USSR* (London: Macmillan Co., 1962), pp. 50-75; Erik P. Hoffmann, "Methodological Problems of Kremlinology," in Frederic J. Fleron, ed., *Communist Studies in the Social Sciences: Essays on Methodology and Empirical Theory* (Chicago: Rand McNally and Co., 1969), pp. 129-149.}

A third potential measurement problem is that the researcher's subjective bias can lead him/her to find only the elements of culture for which s/he is looking. This problem is hardly unique to the methodology of content analysis. The main prescription is for the researcher to be careful and honest.\footnote{For further reading on the methodological problems discussed here, see: Larson, *Origins of Containment*, pp. 60-61; Kier, *Culture, Politics, and Military Doctrine*, pp. 86-88, 462-463; Judith Goldstein and Robert O. Keohane, "Ideas and Foreign Policy," in Goldstein and Keohane, eds., *Ideas and Foreign Policy*, pp. 26-29.}

find evidence of competing subcultures. How does one know which is dominant, if any? To the extent that a culture is dominant, it should be reflected in materials prepared to socialize and train its members. Further, those who rise to the top of an organization are more likely to reflect the dominant culture than to be adherents of a minority culture. If there is truly no dominant culture, contradictory propositions are likely to be articulated both in formal literature and informal statements. Hierarchical organizations such as militaries also are more likely than other organizations to have a single dominant culture.\textsuperscript{117}

**Argument Testing and Study Design**

The dissertation combines macro-historical analysis and focused case studies of actual or potential military involvement in sovereign power issues in Russian and Soviet history. I survey the universe of relevant cases over the last three hundred years, concentrating on the twentieth century. Three historical chapters, one on imperial Russia and two on the Soviet Union, explore the interaction of international and domestic structural factors, military motives, and officer corps norms during these periods. This discussion provides the necessary context for understanding how the variables associated with the four alternatives perspectives developed and changed over the course of Russian and Soviet history. Additionally, multiple events within these periods are investigated and explained in terms of the competing approaches (see Table 1-5). These events are treated, in essence, as mini-case studies, and serve as partial tests of the four perspectives.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter (Separate Case Studies in Bold)</th>
<th>Observations</th>
<th>Military Intervention</th>
<th>Military Arbitration</th>
<th>No Military Involvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Chapter 2: Civil-Military Relations in Imperial Russia (1682-1917)</td>
<td>18th Century Palace Coups</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Decembrist Uprising</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1905 Revolution</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3: Revolution and Civil War (1917-1921)</td>
<td>February Revolution/ Abdication of the Tsar</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kornilov Affair</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>October Revolution</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Civil War</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4: From Revolution to War (1917-1941)</td>
<td>Post-Lenin Transition</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Stalinist Purges of Military</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Khrushchev and the &quot;Anti-Party Group&quot;</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Zhukov Affair</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<td>The Fall of Khrushchev</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The Andropov, Chernenko, and Gorbachev Successions</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>December 1991</td>
<td></td>
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<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Entire Period</td>
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<td>X</td>
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There are also three "structured, focused" comparative case studies. These case studies

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focus on the two political revolutions that have defined twentieth century Russian/Soviet history: the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution and the collapse of communism and the Soviet Union. The three cases are the Russian Revolution and Civil War, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the failed August 1991 coup, and the post-Soviet transition and the October 1993 constitutional crisis. Each case includes several discrete events, thereby producing eight separate observations.\textsuperscript{119} There are three cases of military intervention (the Kornilov Affair, the Civil War, and the August 1991 coup), four cases of military arbitration (the abdication of the Tsar in February 1917, the October 1917 revolution, the collapse of the Soviet Union in December 1991, and the October 1993 uprising), and two cases of a non-coup under conditions that might have caused a military intervention (the October 1917 revolution, and the post-Soviet transition). There are 18 observations, or cases, in the entire study when the mini-cases from the historical chapters are counted (see Table 1-5). These cases show variance on both the dependent variable (military involvement in sovereign power issues) and the independent variables derived from the alternative approaches.\textsuperscript{120}

The focused case studies test the alternative perspectives through a detailed investigation

\textsuperscript{119} On expanding the number of observations within cases, see: King, Keohane, and Verba, \textit{Designing Social Inquiry}, pp. 52-53, 208-230. As will be seen in Chapter Three, the coding of both the Kornilov Affair and October 1917 is not straightforward, and for October 1917 I decided that two codings best capture the army's behavior. The problem of divided culture and competing subcultures is directly relevant to the Revolution and Civil War case.

\textsuperscript{120} King, Keohane, and Verba recommend selecting cases only on the independent variable. However, as they recognize, this often is not feasible. A scholar of Russian civil-military relations obviously will know in advance the value of the dependent variable. I clearly have not selected only the cases that will fit the theory, a potential pitfall when the researcher knows the value of both the independent and dependent variables in advance, since I survey the universe of potential cases. Selection of the focused case studies was guided both by the importance of the cases and the availability of data. On case selection, see chapter 4 ("Determining What to Observe") in King, Keohane, and Verba, \textit{Designing Social Inquiry}, pp. 115-149. See also David Collier's and Ronald Rogowski's comments on \textit{Designing Social Inquiry}, and the authors' reply, in \textit{American Political Science Review}, Vol. 89, No. 2 (June 1995), pp. 461-470, 475-480.
of officer corps behavior. The relevant variables for each of the approaches are measured for the period immediately prior to the event being studied (in other words, at time t-1). The measure of officer corps commitment to the norm of civilian supremacy at t-1 is treated not as a conclusion but a hypothesis, which is tested by examining officer corps behavior in the case studies. The predicted outcomes of organizational culture theory are contrasted directly with those of the structural and rational corporate interest accounts. The test of which account is most persuasive depends on whether structural and rational conditions would lead one to predict military intervention, but officers were inhibited from intervening by their organizational culture. Similarly, in cases of military arbitration the different theories often predict different outcomes.

I also have to look for the possibility that officers were inhibited from intervening not by their norms but by the belief that a coup attempt was likely to fail and thus would not be in the army’s self-interest. This is a different type of rationalist explanation and a difficult hurdle for culturalist accounts. A plausible argument can always be made that officers had little faith in the prospect for a successful intervention, even if it can be shown that they saw their interests as threatened and that an opportunity existed. This hurdle should not be set too high, however. As many coups fail as succeed, and even those that succeed are extremely risky ventures, so officers often are willing to take these risks. Additionally, officer corps norms often will be central to the calculation of potential plotters. If potential coup-makers believe that they will face widespread military resistance because they that think most officers adhere to the norm of

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121 On the importance of treating the posited orientations as hypotheses, and not as conclusions, see: Eckstein, *Regarding Politics*, p. 297; Goldstein and Keohane, "I Ideas and Foreign Policy," p. 27.

responsibility, then norms have played an important role. Finally, it cannot be true that there is something about Russia that makes officers think coups are too difficult (e.g., the size of the country), since several interventions have taken place. Obviously, in some cases it may be possible to find evidence for multiple barriers to intervention. In these cases, military non-intervention may be “over-determined.” A more decisive test is when only one of the alternative perspectives can explain military behavior.

I use "process-tracing" to test these theories in the focused case-studies. In a process-tracing approach, according to Alexander George and Timothy McKeown, "the decision-making process is the center of investigation." Not only the outcome (coup or non-coup) is to be explained, but also the "stream of behavior" leading up to the decision. Because decision-making is a "social enterprise," actors will communicate with each other. The content of this communication is sometimes available to researchers, preferably in archives but also in interviews and memoirs. Process-tracing permits the analyst, as Stephen Van Evera argues, to see if "the actors speak and behave as the theory would predict." It also allows one to increase the number of observations within each case.

In addition to considering alternative explanations and the use of process-tracing, I also employ counter-factual analysis. I ask, "what would have happened if the norms had been different? What would have happened if the motive had been different?" This method supplements the study of actual cases in which there is variance in the explanatory variables.

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123 I thank Graham Allison for a helpful discussion that educated this point.


125 On the use of counterfactuals, see: James D. Fearon, "Counterfactuals and Hypothesis Testing in Political
I use a wide range of sources for the empirical sections of the dissertation. The macro-historical chapters are based on the Russian and English-language secondary literature and some primary source research, including the use of published documents and archives. When using secondary historical accounts, I have tried to distill the dominant viewpoint from the available sources and be explicit when I am taking sides in a debate. The detailed case studies are based almost entirely on primary source research, including extensive archival work and interviews. I found it necessary to consult the available primary sources myself either because the secondary literature did not speak directly to the questions which I am studying or because there were specific debates in the existing historiography that additional primary research could help resolve.\footnote{For a good discussion on the use of historical studies by political scientists, see: Ian S. Lustick, "History, Historiography, and Political Science: Multiple Historical Perspectives and the Problem of Selection Bias," American Political Science Review, Vol. 90, No. 3 (September 1996), pp. 605-618.}
CHAPTER 2: CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS IN IMPERIAL RUSSIA

Military power always has been of vital importance to the Russian state. Since the reign of Peter the Great at the turn of the eighteenth century, Russia has been an important European power primarily due to its military might. Historians and political analysts have debated whether imperial Russia and, later, the Soviet Union, were militaristic states, but there can be little doubt that military considerations loom large in Russian history.¹

Militarism, however, does not imply praetorianism, just as praetorianism does not imply militarism.² In this chapter I examine both the role of military considerations in the building of the Russian state and the influence of Russian officers in sovereign power issues. I present a historical survey of Imperial Russian civil-military relations, from the time of Peter the Great to the 1917 Revolution. Two major issues dominant the discussion in this chapter. The first issue is the development of the Russian state in response to international pressures and domestic developments. The international and domestic structure perspectives point to the role of international competition and state strength in shaping civil-military relations; I examine these


factors and discuss the building of the Russian state. The second major focus of this chapter is the question of military involvement in sovereign power issues. Three cases are discussed in detail: the palace coups of the eighteenth century, the Decemrist uprising of 1825, and the Revolution of 1905-1906.¹

**PETER THE GREAT AND THE BUILDING OF THE RUSSIAN STATE**

Peter the Great transformed Russia from Muscovy, a medieval and "eastern" polity, into the modern and European state of Imperial Russia. The creation of many highly important political and social institutions, including a standing army and navy, usually is traced to Peter. Peter also was responsible for Russia's emergence as an important European power. Indeed, the very notion of the "state" as something separate from and even higher than the sovereign can be traced to Peter's reign.⁴

Peter the Great's efforts to transform Russia were driven primarily by military goals and demands. Russia was at war for the first thirty-four years of Peter's thirty-five year reign (from 1689 to 1725). Russia's geographic proximity to central Europe, as well as Peter's own travels in the West, convinced him of the need for major reform. Historians disagree about the extent to which Peter's reforms were clearly thought out and implemented, but there is little conflict about

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¹ I thank Dominic Lieven and John Steinberg for their suggestions concerning relevant sources on Imperial Russian political and military history.

the rationale behind Peter’s efforts. In the words of Michael Florinsky, “the exigencies of wars...were the moving power behind practically all Petrine reforms.”

The first institution subject to major reform was the armed forces. There was no clear separation of military and civilian affairs in Muscovy before the seventeenth century, and Peter the Great traditionally is given credit for the creation of the first Russian standing army. Peter’s efforts to raise a standing army were neither wholly new nor completely effective, but he can properly be seen as the father of the Russian army because he created a unified force under centralized administration and established a legal basis for conscription. Most important, he was able to use the power of the autocracy and the institution of serfdom to bring a constant supply of new peasant soldiers in to the army to replace those who were lost at an equally rapid rate to attrition (death, desertion, and disease). Peter’s efforts eventually led to the defeat of Sweden in the Northern War (1700-1721) and Russia’s arrival as an important European power.

Peter’s widespread reforms, although ultimately directed towards the goal of increasing the state’s military power, went far beyond the armed forces. His efforts to put the state on a more firm financial basis and develop the economy were particularly important. “Money is the artery of war,” Peter remarked, and his government acted vigorously to extract more money from the

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6 On the conventional wisdom that Peter was responsible for the creation of a standing army, see, for example: G.H.N. Seton-Watson, "Russia," in Michael Howard, ed., Soldiers and Governments: Nine Studies in Civil-Military Relations (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1957), p. 103. John Keep argues that considerable credit needs to be given to Peter's predecessors in the establishment of a standing army, whereas William Fuller argues, on the contrary, that Peter never succeeded in creating a regular army. Keep and Fuller provide detailed discussions of the methods Peter
population. A poll tax and a host of other levies were introduced, all designed to squeeze more money out of the peasantry for the armed forces. Peter also began a process of state-led industrialization, particularly in such key sectors for the military as ship-building and metallurgy. The state also took the lead in building the empire’s transportation system, particularly roads and canals.  

Finally, Peter sought to rationalize and strengthen state administration with a series of far-reaching reforms. He divided Russia into ten provinces (guberniya), each presided over by a governor. The purpose of the reform was not to create autonomous regional governments, but to make the collection of taxes in the huge country more efficient. As with his other reforms, Peter’s goal was to increase state revenues for military purposes. Peter also introduced the Table of Ranks, which defined the basis for government service until the Revolution of 1917. The Table of Ranks created a hierarchy of fourteen grades for all military and civil officials. The real import of the reform was, in the words of Michael Florinsky, “the recognition of the priority of official rank over nobility of birth.” The purpose was to bind the elite more closely to the state and reinforce the importance of state service for all subjects of the Russian empire. 

The traditional picture of Peter the Great as the “modernizer” and “Westernizer” of Russia, then, seems somewhat misplaced. Certainly Peter sought to make Russia an important
European power. His methods, however, were similar to those used by previous Russian rulers. Peter sought to harness both the nobility and the peasantry to service for the benefit of the state and the autocracy. State power, most importantly in the form of the army, was increased, and the military served as an instrument of both internal coercion and external war-fighting.  

Similar patterns of state development can be discerned further west in the European heartland. The rulers of France, Prussia, and Austria all sought to build a more powerful state able to extract resources from society. As in Russia, the needs of external war-making and domestic control existed in a symbiotic relationship that drove the process of state-building. Peter the Great and his successors were probably the least constrained of European rulers. The nobility in Russia had fewer rights than elsewhere in Europe, and the merchant class was almost non-existent. The vast majority of the Russian population was made up of peasants, who had even fewer rights than their counterparts in western Europe. Russia’s vast size and the weakness of transportation and communication links made it difficult for autocratic power to penetrate the Russian countryside. The rulers of France, Austria, and Prussia, however, faced similar problems. In general, the Russian pattern of state-building was particularly coercive and was subject to fewer societal constraints than in Western Europe.  

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9 This picture of Peter’s reforms comes out clearly in the work of William Fuller and Joan Keep: Fuller, *Strategy and Power in Russia*, pp. 35-84; Keep, *Soldiers of the Tsar*, pp. 95-140.

A striking paradox of Peter the Great's rule is that, despite his many achievements in building a strong Russian state, he failed to establish a reliable mechanism for the transfer of supreme executive power. In the century after Peter's death in 1725 army officers were involved constantly in questions of sovereign power, although they never seized power for themselves. In this section I review these instances of military intervention in politics. None of the theories being tested in this dissertation -- international structure, domestic structure, corporate interest, and organizational culture -- is particularly helpful in making sense of these palace coups, although the domestic structure explanation is probably the strongest of the alternatives.

Peter himself had come to power with the assistance of military officers. Peter was ten years old when his father, Tsar Feodor, died in 1682. Feodor's sister Sophie, with the aid of Muscovite strel'tsy (musketeers), seized power and declared herself regent. In 1689 Peter organized her overthrow with the help of his so-called "play regiments," which later were transformed into elite Guards regiments. An attempted revolt by the strel'tsy in 1698 was crushed and Peter had their units disbanded; many of them were executed. Peter then ruled without challenge until his death in 1725. 11

In a momentous change before his death, Peter sought to make succession dependent on the wishes of the sitting tsar. Previously the oldest son generally had succeeded, but there was no set mechanism in the absence of an heir. Peter himself was unable to appoint his own successor, however, because he died suddenly in 1725. There were four pretenders to the throne in 1725: Peter's grandson, his two daughters, and his widow (Peter's only son, Alexis, had previously been
charged with treason and tortured to death). All of the successions in the next century were marked by instability and officer involvement, and there were at least eight coups or attempted coups during this period. The Guards regiments established by Peter played a key role in almost every subsequent transfer of power in the next century. The most tumultuous period was 1725-1762, during which seven different monarchs occupied the throne. Only with the accession to power of Catherine the Great in 1762 did Russia once again have a stable leadership.\(^{12}\)

The details of these succession struggles are less important for our purposes than some general points about the role of officers in these conflicts. First, these palace coups involved only a small fraction of the officer corps, elite Guards officers. These officers were members of the Imperial court, and they generally acted at the behest of and on behalf of more powerful members of the court. Second, these elite officers acted out of personal motives and grievances, not corporate ones. It was only in the late eighteenth century that Guards officers began to see themselves as distinctly military, rather than as members of the broader elite. Third, the Guards officers did not try to seize power for themselves. They remained loyal to the principle of autocracy.\(^{13}\)

None of the four theories under investigation does an adequate job of explaining this series of interventions. The international structure approach, which maintains that militaries involved in external war will not play an important role in internal politics, clearly is inadequate.

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\(^{12}\) These palace coups are summarized in: Florinsky, *Russia*, Volume I, 432-456, 496-505; Raeff, *Imperial Russia*, pp. 9-22.

From 1725-1762, the most pronounced period of palace coups, Russia fought with such major powers as Turkey, Sweden, and Prussia. The interventionist tendencies of the Guards regiments may have slightly hampered the ability of the Russian state to wage war, but in general the eighteenth century was a time of imperial expansion for Russia. Military interventionism and war-making went hand-in-hand in eighteenth century Russia.14

The domestic structure perspective offers perhaps the best explanation for the rash of palace coups in the eighteenth century. The opportunities that state weakness, particularly the absence of a clear succession mechanism, presented for intervention were often exploited by Guards officers. The nobility demonstrated greater political power relative to the state than under Peter the Great and was able to roll back its service obligations. The increase in peasant rebellions, including the famous Pugachev rebellion (1773-1774), during this period also was indicative of a weaker state. At the same time, this explanation is not wholly satisfactory. The Guards officers involved never acted on behalf of the military as a group, but as representatives of elite factional interests. Moreover, the state’s political capacity vis-à-vis society remained quite high during this period, and the state still maintained considerable power to repress the population. The principle of autocracy remained unquestioned. Eighteenth century Russia does not make a good comparison with the praetorian societies of Third World states in the twentieth century.15

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15 For discussions of state political capacity in eighteenth century, that usually emphasize both aspects of state strength and weakness, see: Florinsky, Russia, Volume I, pp. 481-488, 493-495; Fuller, Strategy and Power in Russia, pp. 117-123; Keep, Soldiers of the Tsar, pp. 143, 233-239; Pipes, Russia Under the Old Regime, pp. 130-138, 171-190. On the Pugachev rebellion, and the conditions that gave rise to it, see: Marc Raeff, “Pugachev’s Rebellion,” in Hamburg, ed., Imperial Russian History I, pp. 249-290.
The corporate interest approach to military intervention also provides a partial explanation for the palace coups of the eighteenth century in Russia. The pursuit of self-interest did play a key role in these interventions; contenders for the crown rewarded officers who provided their support. Conversely, grievances against the sitting tsar could serve as a motive for officers to join a plot. These motives were rationalist ones, but they were not corporate motives based on military power and resources. Individual, not corporate, motives were behind the palace coups of the eighteenth century. Elite officers did not think of themselves as a distinct military caste separate from the broader elite.16

The organizational culture perspective is hampered by the same problem as the corporate interest approach. If there was little sense of corporate identity, then there was no possibility for a distinct organizational culture to develop. There clearly was no norm of non-intervention, although the principle of autocracy was adhered to during these palace coups. Guards officers, it appears, believed it was appropriate for them to play a role in deciding who ruled the state.

None of the four theories provides an adequate explanation for the eighteenth century palace coups in Russia, although the domestic structure and corporate interest approaches are probably the best fit. The problem is that all of these theories were developed to explain twentieth century civil-military relations. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the major European states were going through the process of creating permanent and professional standing armies devoted towards external war-making, rather than internal coercion. These changes were not fully realized until the nineteenth century and after the momentous changes in international and domestic politics brought about by the French and Industrial revolutions and the Napoleonic

16 Keep, Soldiers of the Tsar, pp. 232-242; Keep, "The Secret Chancellery, the Guards, and the Dynastic Crisis
Wars. The impact of these changes will be discussed more fully below. In the next section, we will see the influence the French Revolution had on a group of early nineteenth century interventionary Russian officers known as the Decembrists.

**THE DECEMBRIST UPRISING**

The Russian armed forces had a tradition of involvement in sovereign power issues in the eighteenth century. At the beginning of the nineteenth century it seemed quite possible that this tradition would continue, and that a military organizational culture of praetorianism would develop. This section concentrates on the failed Decembrist intervention of 1825, which played an important role in changing military organizational culture toward a more apolitical stance.

The last successful military coup in Russia took place in 1801, a few decades before the Decembrist uprising. Tsar Paul I, who had succeeded his mother Catherine the Great to the throne in 1796, was assassinated by a group comprised largely of Guards officers. Paul had alienated the officer corps because of a purge of more than twenty percent of the officer corps, his favoritism towards elite units that he had established, and his adoption of Prussian drill and tactics. Fifty officers were involved in the coup, which makes it larger than the palace coups of the eighteenth century. The coup had some support in broader society, particularly among the nobility, who were unhappy with Paul’s efforts to restrict their privileges. Thus, unlike the previous interventions, which were strictly matters of the Imperial court, the intervention of 1801 had broader military and societal support. It also is important to note that Paul I had changed the law on succession, instituting the principle of primogeniture in 1797. Thus, the coup of 1801 was a


The force of French revolutionary ideas and arms led many European states to adopt liberalizing and modernizing reforms. The state became the nation-state, and more centralized and representative rule spread unevenly but inexorably across Europe. Alexander I, however, who had pursued limited political reform before the Napoleonic Wars, now resisted any
suggestion that further reform was necessary for Russia. The autocratic and patrimonial state of traditional Russia and its corollary institutions, particularly serfdom, were seen by the Tsar as vindicated because of the Russian defeat of Napoleon. The resistance of the Russian ruler to political or social reform was, in the words of William Fuller, "the baleful consequence of victory."^{19}

Russian educated society expected that reforms similar to those taking place in western and central Europe might also be enacted at home. Discontent grew when Alexander embraced a reactionary vision for Russia, particularly since before the war the Tsar had been perceived by many as relatively liberal and a reformer. Many officers shared these hopes for reform, and were disappointed by the conservative policies of the Tsar after 1815. Officers' self-confidence was high after their victories on the battlefield, and liberal elements in society looked to the army as a potential agent of change. Many officers felt the same way.^{20}

The origins of the Decembrist movement can be traced to the growth of a Russian "military intelligentsia" around the turn of the century. The term military intelligentsia refers to officers who, by virtue of their education, acquired a greater understanding of broader cultural, social, and political issues and, equally important, a willingness to question received ideas and to seek out new knowledge. These officers were not political radicals and they maintained the service mentality of the Russian aristocracy. At the same time, they found fault with conditions


both in the army and in the large society. A small but important element within the military intelligentsia had been to Western Europe during the Napoleonic Wars, and they shared their experiences and impressions with other officers. These officers objected to the arbitrariness of authority relations in the military and in Russia and sought greater security for the individual. The military intelligentsia, although committed to state service, also began to transfer their loyalty from the tsar to a broader notion of service to the people, the nation, or the state. David Saunders remarks, "moderate pursuit of the 'general good' marked the original impulse behind Decembrism."\(^{21}\)

In the years after 1815 the military intelligentsia began to organize itself in secret societies. These societies adopted such names as the Union of Salvation (the Society of True and Loyal Sons of the Fatherland), the Union of (Public) Welfare, and, a personal favorite, the Society of Military Men Who Love Science and Literature. The most prominent of these were the Northern Society, based in St. Petersburg, and the Southern Society, based in Tul'chín (in present-day Ukraine); these two societies came into being in 1821, after a split in the Union of Welfare. The Southern Society was dominated by Colonel P.I. Pestel', who possessed an authoritarian temperament and radical republican views. The leaders of the Northern Society, such as Captain N.M. Murav'ev, were more attracted to constitutional monarchy. Although members of the secret societies and the military intelligentsia were committed to reform, individual officers differed substantially in terms of their views of the appropriate goals. Views diverged even more

substantially on the question of means, with some supporting assassination of the tsar and a military dictatorship while others seemed uncommitted to any form of action other than discussion.\textsuperscript{22}

The event that gave the Decembrists their name was a failed military intervention launched in December 1825 after the death of Tsar Alexander I. Alexander died unexpectedly on November 19, 1825. He had no son, so according to normal succession procedures the oldest of his three brothers, Konstantin, should have taken the throne. Konstantin, however, had renounced his claim to the throne at Alexander's request in 1822 because of Konstantin’smorganatic marriage to a Catholic Polish Countess. According to a secret manifesto signed by Alexander in 1823, and agreed to by Konstantin, their brother Nicholas should be the next tsar. Because this agreement had not been publicized, considerable confusion accompanied Alexander's death and the throne remained unoccupied for over three weeks while Konstantin and Nicholas vacillated. The army originally swore loyalty to Konstantin, before the secret manifesto became known, and both Konstantin and Nicholas renounced the throne in favor of the other.\textsuperscript{23}

Members of the Northern Society, based in Peters burg, saw the confused interregnum as an opportunity for action. A hasty plan was hatched for armed opposition to the plans for the

\textsuperscript{22} On the secret societies and the views of their key members, see: Keep, \textit{Soldiers of the Tsar}, pp. 257-267; Keep, “Russian Army’s Response to the French Revolution”; Saunders, \textit{Russia in the Age of Reaction and Reform,} pp. 98-109; Seton-Watson, \textit{The Russian Empire,} pp. 183-194; Andrzej Walicki, \textit{A History of Russian Thought from the Enlightenmen to Marxism} (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1979), pp. 57-70. Marc Raeff’s \textit{The Decembrist Movement} reproduces many of the most important documents and writings of these societies and their members. Bruce Lincoln’s study concentrates on the career patterns and backgrounds of the Decembrists: Lincoln, “A Re-examination of Some Historical Stereotypes.”

\textsuperscript{23} For accounts of the Decembrist events, see: Raeff, \textit{The Decembrist Movement}, pp. 1-6; Seton-Watson, \textit{The Russian Empire,} pp. 194-196; Saunders, \textit{Russia in the Age of Reaction and Reform,} pp. 87-88, 110-111; Keep, \textit{Soldiers of the Tsar,} pp. 267-269. An excellent account of the events, from a biography of the Decembrist Lieutenant B.A. Rozen, is: Glynn Beckett, Chapter 3 (“December 1825”), \textit{The Rebel on the Bridge: A Life of the
army to swear loyalty to Nicholas, scheduled for December 14. The intent was bring troops to Senate Square in St. Petersburg on the fourteenth and declare the establishment of a dictatorship under Prince Sergey Trubetskoy, a Colonel. Trubetskoy got cold feet, however, and hid out in the Austrian Embassy, and a day-long standoff between the Decembrists and troops loyal to Nicholas ended in a rout of the Decembrists. An attempted uprising in the south also failed.

Several general points are in order before we turn to an assessment of the Decembrist uprising in light of theories of military intervention. First, the rise of the military intelligentsia should be separated somewhat from the failed Decembrist intervention. Many participants in the December events were not members of secret societies, and many members of secret societies did not participate in the Decembrist uprising. They were two related but distinct phenomenon, although the failure of December 1825 had considerable impact on the military intelligentsia movement, as we shall see below. Second, it seems likely that the Decembrist uprising would not have taken place if the succession had happened quickly and smoothly. At the time of Alexander's death there was no plan for a coup that could be taken off the shelf and implemented; the Decembrist uprising was an improvised response to an opportunity created by the power vacuum at the top. The act of swearing loyalty to Konstantin several weeks before officers were asked to swear loyalty to Nicholas, in particular, may have encouraged many of the Decembrists to come out against Nicholas. Third, another counterfactual worth considering is whether the secret military societies would have gone on to develop a more coherent plan for military intervention if no leadership crisis had arisen in 1825 and they could have gone on scheming. This counterfactual is more difficult to resolve, but it is known that the secret military societies

Decembrist Baron Andrey Rozen (1800-84) (London: Paul Elek, 1975). Barratt conveys the confusion of those
had been penetrated by government informers and that those in the south were being broken up even before the Decemöer 14 uprising.⁴

The four perspectives on military intervention being considered -- international structure, domestic structure, corporate interest, and organizational culture -- do a slightly better job in explaining the Decembrist uprising than they did for the palace coups of the eighteenth century. None of the four alternatives, however, performs particularly well. The approaches perform slightly better primarily because by the early nineteenth century, in particular after the Napoleonic Wars, Russian military officers had developed a greater corporate consciousness than they had in the previous century. It is for this reason that the historians John Keep and Dominic Lieven see the Decembrists as praetorians comparable to those of the twentieth century. Still, the Decembrist movement was largely an affair of Guards officers and the aristocratic elite, like the coups of the previous century.⁵

The international structure perspective does not perform well as an explanation for the Decembrist uprising. The experience of the Napoleonic Wars, and in particular Napoleon’s invasion of Russia in the War of 1812, should have caused officers to focus their attention on the task of external defense if this interpretation is correct. In contrast, most commentators agree that the Napoleonic Wars actually encouraged Russian officers to think more about domestic politics

days, particularly among the Decembrists themselves, and the vacillation of his subject, Lieutenant Rozen.

⁴ On these points, see: Lincoln, “A Re-examination of Some Historical Stereotypes”; Keep, Soldiers of the Tsar, pp. 262, 269-271; Keep, “The Russian Army’s Response to the French Revolution,” p. 229; Barratt, The Rebel on the Bridge, pp. 60-67; Saunders, Russia in the Age of Reaction and Reform, pp. 110-11.

and reflect on how Russian society could be transformed. The military intelligentsia had important roots in the experience of officers who fought in the wars.

The domestic structure explanation performs fairly well. It was the power vacuum at the top of the Russian state that facilitated and to a certain extent caused the military intervention. At the same time, prior to Alexander I’s death there was no reason to think that the political capacity of the Russian state was low. On the contrary, John Keep argues that the state was quite strong in 1825, particularly in comparison with the countries of southern Europe. Keep maintains that state strength was one reason the Decembrist intervention failed: “the power of the monarchy was still absolute, its hold over the machinery of government as yet unweakened, its image untarnished by military defeat.”  

The state in December 1825 was somewhat vulnerable, but not for the reasons that the domestic structure explanation puts forward.

The corporate interest explanation for military intervention has some merit, but the extent to which corporate grievances were a motivation for the Decembrists is still a topic of debate. John Keep argues that officer disgruntlement with military matters was a major cause of the growth of the military intelligentsia, and that “dissent grew out of the internal situation of the army itself.” David Saunders counters, however, that Keep’s view is “too narrow” and that social and political concerns were the most important motivations for the Decembrists. Saunders’ view is consistent with most of the historical literature on the Decembrists. Marc Raeff, one of the most prominent scholars of the Décembrists, draws a sharp distinction between the self-interested motives behind the palace coups of the eighteenth century and the “idealistic and moral passion that animated the Decembrists.” It seems fair to say that military corporate grievances did play

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some role in creating a group of officers inclined towards military intervention, but larger social and political goals were equally if not more important to this group of Russian officers.\textsuperscript{37}

The organizational culture perspective also sheds some light on the Decembrist uprising. It seems clear that the Decembrists were an organizational subculture and did not represent the dominant culture of the Russian military at the time. It is important to distinguish between the broader military intelligentsia and those officers directly involved in the Decembrist uprising. There were a few generals (7) and a significant number of lieutenant colonels and colonels (46) involved with the military intelligentsia (there were roughly 180 generals and 1550 lieutenant colonels and colonels in the Russian army at that time). However, no generals and only five lieutenant colonels and colonels were present for the revolt on Senate Square on December 14. Although there were sympathizers of the Decembrists in the high command, they chose not to come out in support. Indeed, the colonel who had been chosen to be provisional dictator, S.P. Trubetskoy, literally ran away and hid (in the Austrian Embassy) on December 14. Bruce Lincoln points out, “most [of those involved on December 14] were under thirty years of age, and 76 percent held the rank of captain or below.” Keep concludes, “the extent to which the armed forces had been affected by dissent and conspiratorial activity...was modest -- and anyway below the ‘threshold’ necessary for a successful Praetorian-type revolution.” The small numbers and low ranks of the officers involved in the military secret societies and the December 14 uprising

\textsuperscript{37} For Keep’s views, see: Keep, “The Russian Army’s Response to the French Revolution,” pp. 229-235; Keep, Soldiers of the Tsar, pp. 244, 256-257. For Saunders’ argument, and others consistent with the conventional interpretation of the Decembrists’ motives, see: Saunders, Russia in the Age of Reaction and Reform, pp. 97-100; Raeff, The Decembrist Movement, esp. pp. 28-29; Seton-Watson, The Russian Empire, pp. 183-198.
suggests that praetorianism was a minority subculture in the Russian army in the early nineteenth
century.  

If the Decembrists had succeeded, it is quite possible that praetorianism would have taken
hold in Russia. Russia did have a tradition of military involvement in sovereign power issues
throughout the eighteenth century. Moreover, the Decembrists and the military intelligentsia of
the early nineteenth century had broader concerns and more explicit political goals than the
officers involved in the palace coups of the previous century. Dominic Lieven notes, “the
Decembrists drew part of their inspiration from the victories of their radical Spanish officer
contemporaries and it is possible that success in 1825 might have had similar long-term
consequences. These might have included the politicisation of the army and frequent subsequent
coups.”

Instead, the failure of the Decembrist uprising had the opposite effect on civil-military
relations in Russia. In the words of John Keep, "praetorianism as a movement or tendency never
really got off the ground in Russia." The failed Decembrist revolt served as a critical event in
the life of the Russian armed forces and was a source of organizational lessons for decades to
come. Adherence to the norm of civilian supremacy in Russia received a considerable boost in
1825.

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259-261. For statistics on the officers involved with the military intelligentsia and the Decembrist uprising, in
addition to Lincoln and Keep, see: V.A. D’yakov, Osoboditel’noye dvizheniye v Rossii 1825-1861 gg. (Moskva:
"Mysl!", 1979), pp. 43-49; I have used the numbers reported by Lincoln here. I estimated the number of generals
and colonels based on figures provided in: Pinter, “The Burden of Defense in Imperial Russia,” p. 253; Peter


POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT AND CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS IN NINETEENTH CENTURY RUSSIA

The history of nineteenth century Russia is the story of a European great power struggling to maintain its position in comparison with its more wealthy and modern rivals. The century was a time of important changes for both the Russian state and civil-military relations. Changes in the state, and in state-society relations, were induced by the Industrial Revolution and the spread of a series of western ideologies corrosive of the old order in Russia, particularly liberalism, nationalism, and socialism. The state attempted to cope with and manage these changes in the midst of a dangerous international environment. Civil-military relations were also a major arena of reform, as military professionalism was pursued and universal conscription introduced. I begin by discussing the international and domestic structural components of Russian political development, and then turn to civil-military relations.

The Russian State in the Nineteenth Century

Tsar Nicholas I, upon his accession to the throne in 1825, became the ruler of a powerful and secure state. Nicholas had few goals but to maintain the status-quo at home and abroad. His conservative outlook led Nicholas to engage in political repression and censorship, and to refuse to countenance changes in the pivotal institution of serfdom. Nicholas also resisted nationalism and liberalism with the force of arms, both internally against the Polish uprising of 1831 and abroad during the revolutions of 1848. During his thirty year reign, W.E. Mosse notes, Nicholas imposed a “political deep freeze” not only on the Russian empire but on Central and Eastern

In an effort to deter both domestic and foreign revolutionaries, Nicholas I maintained the largest army in Europe, numbering around one million men by the 1850s. The army was so large, in fact, almost all of the military budget (around ninety percent) went to salaries, food and clothing, and fodder for the horses. This massive force, however, was more powerful on paper than it was in the field. In the Crimean War (1854-1856), the Russian army and navy were outclassed by the British and French forces. The military that had played such a key role in bringing down Napoleon forty years earlier was no longer able to compete with its European rivals.\footnote{For data on the size and expense of the Russian armed forces under Nicholas I, see: Pintner, “The Burden of Defense in Imperial Russia”; Pintner, “Russia as a Great Power.” See also: Fuller, \textit{Strategy and Power in Russia}, pp. 238-243, 252-264; John Shelton Curtiss, \textit{The Russian Army Under Nicholas I, 1825-1855} (Durham: Duke University Press, 1965).}

Russia’s humiliating defeat in the Crimean War is usually traced to Russian “backwardness.”\footnote{For more extended discussions of Russian backwardness, see: Fuller, \textit{Strategy and Power in Russia}, esp. pp. xvii-xx; Pintner, “Russia as a Great Power”; Mosse, \textit{Perestroika Under the Tsars}, pp. 4-15. The classic treatment is: Alexander Gerschenkron, “Economic Backwardness in Historical Perspective,” in Bert F. Hoselitz, ed., \textit{The Progress of Underdeveloped Areas} (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952), pp. 3-29.} This backwardness manifested itself in several ways during the Crimean War. The most obvious demonstration of Russia’s backwardness relative to Britain and France was technological. Russian weaponry had failed to keep up with advances in Europe. The Russian navy had been slow to introduce the steam-driven warships employed by France and Britain. The Russian army was equipped with muskets with a range of 200 yards, while the British and French had rifles with effective ranges of 1000 yards. Changes in transportation technology proved
particularly devastating to Russia. Russia had no railroads south of Moscow, and thus was forced to transport supplies overland by horse-drawn wagons. Britain and France were able to supply their forces much more efficiently and quickly by sea than the Russians could by land.³⁴

Russia’s technological backwardness was linked directly to the more general problem of economic weakness. Although Russia had begun to industrialize in the beginning of the nineteenth century, she lagged behind her European rivals. Because of its immense population advantage Russia had the largest economy of the European great powers in the first half of the nineteenth century. Russia lost this lead in the middle of the century, and in terms of per capita Gross National Product Russia was far behind not only Britain, France, and Germany but also the Hapsburg Empire and Italy. Paul Kennedy summarizes the difficult situation in which Russia found itself economically: ‘A general lack of capital, low consumer demand, a minuscule middle class, vast distances and extreme climates, and the heavy hand of an autocratic, suspicious state made the prospects for industrial ‘takeoff’ in Russia more difficult than in virtually anywhere else in Europe.’³⁵

Russia’s political and social institutions also suffered from stagnation and backwardness. Most important in this respect was the institution of serfdom. Serfdom inhibited mobility of labor and thus made economic diversification and industrialization more difficult. Serfdom also raised strong moral objections and deprived the regime of the support of some of its most talented and


educated citizens. Finally, serfdom inhibited the adoption of a military system based on universal conscription, with a small standing army and a large reserve force, that had been successfully introduced in Western Europe. It was considered politically and practically impossible to draft serfs for short-term military training and then return them to their owners.\(^{36}\)

Russia's defeat in the Crimean War and the problems of backwardness that the war made apparent served as a key impetus for the "Great Reforms" launched by Nicholas's successor, Alexander II (1855-1881). The most important of the reforms was the emancipation of the serfs in 1861. Other key reforms took place in the judicial, financial, military, administrative, and local government spheres. The Great Reforms had a complex series of motivations, but there can be little doubt that the need to remain competitive with the other European great powers played an important role in the thinking of Alexander II and many of his key officials. "The so-called Great Reforms of Alexander II," notes Dominic Lieven, "followed directly after Russia's humiliation in the Crimean War and were designed above all else to secure her position among the leading European powers by modernising the social, economic, and administrative structure of the Empire."\(^{37}\)


The Great Reforms of Alexander II marked the delayed beginning of Russia's attempt to adapt to the imperatives of the French and Industrial Revolutions and to catch up with its European competitors. This process would dominate Russian history in the last fifty years of the Empire, leading up to the Revolution of 1917. The Russian political elite, and most importantly the state bureaucracy, understood that modernization was essential to Russia's standing as a great power. They also understood that modernization would lead to social, economic, and political changes that could undermine domestic order. The autocracy sought throughout this period to both advance and control Russia's modernization.38

The image of the Russian state as the engine of industrialization is a long-standing one in the historical literature. Alexander Gerschenkron, in a highly influential essay, argued, "basic was the fact that the state, moved by its military interest, assumed the role of the primary agent propelling the economic progress in the country." Gerschenkron is correct to note that the Russian state in the nineteenth century played a large role in key sectors of the economy, such as railways and heavy industry. At the same time, the very large consumer goods sector and the vast world of the village developed largely in isolation from the state. The two largest industries in Russia in 1914 were the textile industry and the food industries, which between them accounted for fifty percent of total output value, more than double that of engineering, metallurgy, and mining

38 My thinking on these issues has been greatly influenced by the work of Dominic Lieven. See: Lieven, Nicholas II, pp. 1-21, 253-262; Lieven, Russia and the Origins of the First World War, pp. 5-24; Dominic Lieven, Russia’s Rulers Under the Old Regime (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), pp. 23-26, 277-308. See also: Kipp and Lincoln, “Autocracy and Reform.”
combined. Much of the late-Imperial Russian economy developed autonomously from state support and direction.  

Russian industrialization had an important impact on social and class structure. The landed aristocracy had never achieved the degree of political influence in Russia that it had in Western Europe. In the aftermath of the emancipation of the serfs and in the face of industrialization the aristocracy was further weakened. The gentry could not serve as a strong ally and bulwark of the state in the face of peasant unrest. Only the state could control the countryside, and this was extremely difficult in Russia’s vast expanse. In 1900 there were less than ten thousand state police officers for a peasant population close to 100 million, and the army in the aftermath of the Great Reform played a much smaller role in rural policing.

Industrialization also, of course, led to an expansion of the urban working class. The number of factory workers and miners increased from 800,000 in 1860 to over three million in 1914. The expansion of the industrial working class, in conditions of poverty and urban squalor, was a fertile base for urban strikes and unrest. The delayed nature of Russian industrialization also meant that, unlike in Britain or Germany, well-organized socialist parties existed before the sharp increase in the urban working class. Workers’ confrontations with their employers over economic conditions often led into confrontation with the autocracy because of the government’s

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40 On the aristocracy in the late-Imperial period, see: Roberta Manning, The Crisis of the Old Regime in Russia (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982); Lieven, Nicholas II, pp. 15-16; Lieven, Russia’s Rulers Under the
heavy involvement in managing labor protest and suppressing strikes. All of these factors contributed to the spread of revolutionary socialism among the working class and political challenges to the Tsarist state.  

Political modernization entailed not only changes in the economy and social structure, but also the basis of legitimation for the state. Russia’s last tsars (Alexander II, Alexander III, and Nicholas II), however, were reluctant to change the traditional ideology of statist autocracy. The tsars believed that only they could maintain social and political order while directing the modernization effort. Liberalization and democratization were out of the question for the Romanov rulers. Despite the many changes introduced during the Great Reforms, Jacob Kipp and Bruce Lincoln point out that “in the political realm, the concept of state embodied in the person of the autocrat was in no way altered....”

Nationalism, which increasingly served as the basis for political legitimation and social integration elsewhere in Europe, was unable to play a comparable role in Russia. Part of the problem, of course, was the fact that at the turn of the century more than half the population of the

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*Old Regime,* pp. 296-298; Pipes, *Russia Under the Old Regime,* p. 190. The statistics on police and peasants are from Lieven, *Nicholas II,* p. 11.

Russian empire was non-Russian. Even more important was that educated society did not view the tsarist state as the embodiment of Russian values; the state was more an object of contempt and despair than one of respect and pride. The state, on the other hand, was deeply suspicious of Russian nationalists and Pan-Slavists, whom it could not control and who seemed to threaten political order and the privileges of the autocrat and the bureaucracy. The regime thus held at arm’s length a potentially promising source of support.\footnote{Kipp and Lincoln, “Autocracy and Reform”; the quote is from p. 16.}

The tsarist state was even further divorced from pro-Western educated elites. Throughout the nineteenth century the challenge of a liberal, and later socialist, intelligentsia grew in strength. Different members of the intelligentsia embraced various ideologies and political programs, but they were united in their opposition to autocracy. Marc Raeff points out, “until the last decades of the nineteenth century, little distinction was made between the terms liberal and revolutionary or radical.” The content of the ideas in some ways was less important than the form, which was expressed in terms of a fundamental rejection of the existing order.\footnote{This argument is set out brilliantly in: Hans Rogger, “Nationalism and the State: A Russian Dilemma,” 
Comparative Study of Society and History, Vol. 4, No. 3 (March 1962), pp. 253-264.}

Political and economic development caused great strains on the Russian state from 1861 up to the turn of the century. Despite the state’s best efforts to overcome Russia’s “backwardness” and maintain its great power standing, the state found itself increasingly unable to compete with the powers of Western Europe, and particularly a unified Prussia after 1870.

Russia’s foreign failures during this period certainly did not help its standing at home; broad sectors of Russian society remained alienated from or hostile to the ruling autocracy. The state’s political capacity continued to decline throughout this period, leading up to another humiliating defeat versus Japan in 1904-1905 and the Revolution of 1905-1906. Before turning to a discussion of the Revolution of 1905-1906, I examine the changes in civil-military relations in nineteenth century Russia that accompanied this period of political and economic transformation.

Civil-Military Relations in Nineteenth Century Russia

The failed Decembrist uprising of 1825 made the new tsar, Nicholas I, extremely attentive to the political attitudes of the officer corps. Nicholas participated actively in the investigation and examination of Decembrist officers. He took several steps to insure his control over the armed forces, including a purge of the officer corps and the establishment of a secret chancellery (the Third Department) to monitor society and the bureaucracy, including the officer corps, for signs of political dissent. He also inculcated a rigid formalism in the army, with a focus on parade-ground discipline and the unthinking implementation of superior’s orders.

Nicholas I’s efforts to punish the military intelligentsia and impose strict discipline helped reinforce officer corps’ lessons learned from the failed Decembrist uprising. The Decembrist failure led the military intelligentsia to confine its political activity to discussion clubs and eschew

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45 I measure political capacity and state strength at the turn of the century in a more systematic fashion in Chapter Three.

revolutionary secret societies. Instead of seeking to overthrow the existing system, enlightened officers developed more moderate plans for military reform. During the 1830s and 1840s the involvement of army officers in liberal and radical underground organizations fell significantly, and the leadership of the intelligentsia passed to students and other civilians, who later spearheaded the movement against the autocracy.\textsuperscript{47}

The reign of Nicholas I was in many ways a time of stagnation in both political and military spheres. Paradoxically, though, Nicholas helped lay the groundwork for the establishment of a more apolitical officer corps. His efforts to root out political dissent in the officer corps and compel their strict political obedience, although usually disparaged for undermining military initiative and innovation, did have salutary effects. Allen Wildman observes, "Nicholas I turned parade ground exercises, cruel discipline, and blind obedience into the foundation of the Army and of his reign. The enduring legacy was that very special aversion to politics, even to imperial politics, of the senior officers...."\textsuperscript{48}

The danger of praetorianism in Russia, although diminished during the reign of Nicholas I, was not eradicated. In the 1850s, and particularly after Russia's defeat in the Crimean War and the ascendance of Alexander II to the throne, there was a rebirth of the military intelligentsia. This period was marked by a greater openness in Russian society and a general upsurge in excitement about the prospects for reform. Change was somewhat slow to come to the military sphere, however, as Alexander II appointed the conservative and cautious General N.O.


Sukhozanet to the post of War Minister. Sukhozanet served as War Minister from 1856 until 1861, and his continuation of the stasis of the Nicholas period contributed to the growth of pent-up demand for change on the part of the officer corps. Defeat in the Crimean War also bolstered officers’ desire for reform.\(^{49}\)

The military intelligentsia of the 1850s and early 1860s were different in several respects from the Decembrists and the military intelligentsia under Alexander I. Most important, they were no longer the vanguard of the opposition movement; students and other civilians played this role. Professional concerns, which were not insignificant to the earlier generation, played an even larger role in the 1850s-1860s. Several instances of overt military protest were precipitated by junior officers’ objections to specific instances of perceived injustice on the part of commanding officers. Reformist officers sought not to remake society, but to recast the army as servants of the people and the state and not just the tsar.\(^{50}\)

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\(^{50}\) Keep, *Soldiers of the Tsar*, pp. 357-364; Keep, Chapter 11 (“Chernyshevskii and the ‘Military Miscellany’”), *Power and the People*, pp. 267-292. Soviet scholarship, because of the need to substantiate Lenin’s thesis about a “revolutionary situation” existing in Russia in the late 1850s-early 1860s, labored to show that the military intelligentsia of this period had revolutionary goals. Thus, the leading Soviet authority on “revolutionary movements” in the army during this period, V.A. D’yakov, interprets several instances of professional and spontaneous protests as evidence for well-organized and politically radical groupings. See, for example: V.A. D’yakov, “Peterburgskie ofitserskiye organizatsii kontsa 50-x — nachala 60-x godov XIX veka i ikh rol’ v istorii ruskogo-pol’skikh revolyutsionnikh svyazei,” in I.A. Khrenov, ed., *Iz istorii klassovoy bor’by i natsional’no-osvogoditel’nogo dvizheniya v slavyanskikh stranakh* (Moskva: “Nauka,” 1964), pp. 281, 292-293, 296-297. D’yakov has better evidence for the existence of a revolutionary military organization in Poland; see the sources in the following notes.
It is important to distinguish between two related but separate types of reform-minded officers in this period. There existed simultaneously both a younger and more radical military intelligentsia and a more senior and moderate coalition of “enlightened bureaucrats” in the officer corps. The younger group was most prominent in St. Petersburg and Warsaw. The vast majority (88%) of officers involved in the so-called “revolutionary movement” were junior officers, and seventy-five percent of them were twenty-five or younger in 1861.\(^{51}\) These groups were also dominated by officers from the Western borderlands (Poland, Belarus, Ukraine, and the Baltics); they account for seventy-three percent of the total participants. Some of these officers, not surprisingly, played a role in the Polish uprising of 1863. In general, though, these groups of younger officers did not get very far in their plotting, and much of their activity was confined to discussing liberal and radical ideas current at the time. A young officer involved in a circle in Moscow noted that the Decembrist example showed the need to keep to small, self-contained groups.\(^{52}\)

Although the tendency to form “revolutionary circles” may have been confined largely to junior officers, there was broader support for military, social, and political reform in the officer

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\(^{51}\) Statistics on the “revolutionary movement” in the army have been compiled by D’yakov. See, in particular: V.A. D’yakov, “Chislennost’ i sostav uchastnikov osvoboditel’nogo dvizheniya v russkoy armii v 1856–1865 gg. (opyt istoriko-sotsiologicheskogo issledovaniya),” *Istoriya SSSR*, No. 1 (January-February), 1970, pp. 27-43; D’yakov, “Peterburgskie ofitsierskiye organizatsii....” The figure of 88 percent junior officers comes from some recalculations I made from Table 1 in “Chislennost’....” Specifically, I did not count, as D’yakov does, military doctors and veterinarians, civilians in the Ministry of War, and soldiers (non-officers) from the nobility. I also excluded officers of unknown rank on the assumption that they would be distributed in rough proportion to those of known rank. Following standard Russian usage, junior officers (ober-ofitserov) are ensigns, lieutenants, and captains.

\(^{52}\) On the nationality of the participants, see the sources by D’yakov in the previous note. On officers and the Polish uprising, in addition to these sources, see: V.A. D’yakov and I.S. Miller, *Revolyutsionnuye dvizheniya v russkoy armii i vosstanii 1863 g.* (Moskva: “Nauka,” 1964). The junior officer cited is quoted in: D’yakov, *Osvoboditel’noye dvizheniya v Rossii*, p. 240. For a discussion in English of the revolutionary intelligentsia in the military in the late 1850s-early 1860s, see: Keep, *Soldiers of the Tsar*, pp. 357-364.
corps. This reform movement was led by a group of “enlightened bureaucrats,” the most important of whom was Dmitriy Milyutin, Alexander II’s Defense Minister from 1861 until 1881. Milyutin had contacts with reformers in both the army and the civilian world, and in the 1840s and 1850s met regularly with like-minded thinkers committed to the abolition of serfdom, freedom of conscience, and the pursuit of science and education for the benefit of the nation and the people. From 1845 until 1856 Milyutin was a professor at the Nicholas Academy of the General Staff (hereafter the General Staff Academy), and was involved with efforts to reform military education and a variety of other enterprises designed to create a more professional officer corps. In 1858 Milyutin played a key role in gaining approval for a military journal that he believed could help raise the educational standards of the officer corps. The journal, Voyenniy Sbornik [Military Digest], pushed the cause of military reform and had considerable support in the officer corps. Its first editor was the civilian Nikolay Chernyshevskiy, who went on to become one of the most influential members of the radical intelligentsia. This is not as strange as it sounds, because in the 1850s Milyutin and Chernyshevskiy were united by more views than those that divided them; it was only later that their paths sharply diverged.53

When Milyutin became War Minister in 1861 he was able to enact much of the program of military reform that he had developed while at the General Staff Academy. He introduced important changes in military administration, military education, and the General Staff system.

Milyutin generally is credited with laying the basis for the creation of a professional officer corps drawn from all ranks of society with a well-grounded military education. In 1874 he succeeded in pushing through the system of universal conscription, which Milyutin considered critical if Russia was to remain competitive with the other European great powers.\textsuperscript{54}

Milyutin was committed to reform from above and the role of the state as an engine of progress and modernization. The fact that Milyutin occupied the top spot in the War Ministry for twenty years was crucial, because officers committed to reform could carry the struggle into the bureaucracy. To the extent that there was a possibility for a rebirth of a more prætorian military intelligentsia in the late 1850s and early 1860s, it was largely cut off by the Milyutin reforms. Milyutin himself evidently saw the need to channel young officers into professional concerns and away from the revolutionary movement. In this goal he undoubtedly succeeded; after the Polish uprising of 1863 there were few instances of officer involvement in oppositional activities.\textsuperscript{55}

The Milyutin reforms were a belated response to the transformation of warfare and society implied by the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars. They were part of a general

\textsuperscript{54} The most detailed treatment of the Milyutin reforms in English is: Miller, Dmitrii Miliutin and the Reform Era in Russia. In Russian, see: P.A. Zayonchkovskiy, Voyennye reformy 1860-1870 godov v Rossii (Moskva: Moskovskiy Universitet, 1952). For other discussions, see: Fuller, Strategy and Power in Russia, pp. 265-347; Fuller, Civil-Military Conflict in Imperial Russia, pp. 7-13; Keep, Soldiers of the Tsar, pp. 351-381; Wildman, The End of the Russian Imperial Army, Volume 1, pp. 13-17, 25-31; Menning, Bayonets Before Bullets, pp. 6-50; Carl Van Dyke, Russian Imperial Military Doctrine and Education, 1832-1914 (New York: Greenwood Press, 1990), pp. 49-90.

\textsuperscript{55} Perhaps the best example of a leading officer whose energies were channeled into military reform and away from more radical political activities was N.N. Obruchev, who had been involved with the revolutionary organization "Land and Freedom" in the early 1860s while a captain and refused to participate in the suppression of the Polish uprising in 1863. Obruchev became one of Milyutin's right-hand men and later served as Chief of the Main Staff. On Obruchev, see: P.A. Zayonchkovskiy, Samoderzhaviye i russkaya armiya na rubezhe XIX-XX stoletiy (Moskva: "Mysi," 1973), pp. 61-63, esp. n. 140; Menning, Bayonets Before Bullets, pp. 17-21, 90, 96-98; Fuller, Strategy and Power in Russia, pp. 282-283, 317. On the other points in this paragraph, see: Miller, Dmitrii Miliutin and the Reform Era in Russia, pp. 142-152, 228-230; Brooks, "The Improbable Connection"; Van Dyke, Russian Imperial Military Doctrine and Education, pp. 50-51, 58; Zayonchkovskiy, Voyennye reformy 1860-1870 godov v Rossii, pp. 41-44, 221-222; Keep, Soldiers of the Tsar, pp. 363-364.
European trend toward a better educated, more professional officer corps, devoting most of its energy to planning for external warfare.\(^{56}\) The Great Reforms of Alexander II and Milyutin also marked the culmination of a trend towards greater "civilianization" of the Russian state that had begun in the eighteenth century but had moved very slowly until 1855. Until this point the army had played a large role in civilian administration and local government, and had also run a system of military settlements through which large areas of the country were placed under military administration. Under Alexander II the traditional Russian service state was largely dismantled and the military was freed to concentrate more fully on its external functions. These changes in the Russian state in the nineteenth century were also consistent with general processes in European state-building. As John Keep remarks, "a modern state needed to be ruled by officials, not by officers."\(^ {57}\)

The Crimean War, besides marking the beginning of Alexander II's Great Reforms and Milyutin's reforms, also represented the turning point in Russia's military fortune. From the time of Peter the Great up until Alexander I and the defeat of Napoleon, Russia had been on a fairly steady incline in its power and prestige in Europe. The Crimean War marked the beginning of a decline that would culminate in the humiliation of the Russo-Japanese War and the collapse during World War I. Even the military victory in the Russo-Turkish of 1877-1878 was lost

\(^{56}\) On the changes in warfare and military organization in Europe in general, see: Howard, War in European History, pp. 75-115; Huntington, The Soldier and the State, pp. 19-58. It is interesting to note that the "subjective control" pursued by Nicholas I and the "objective control" implicit in the Milyutin reforms served to complement each other in terms of the creation of an apolitical officer corps in Russia.

\(^{57}\) The key source on these changes is the work of John Keep. See, in particular: Keep, Soldiers of the Tsar, pp. 275-381 (the quote is from p. 307); Keep, "Paul I and the Militarization of Government" and "The Military Style of the Romanov Rulers," in Power and the People, pp. 175-209. On state-making in Europe, and the process of civilianization, see: Tilly, Coercion, Capital, and European States, esp. pp. 122-126.
politically in the Treaty of Berlin. The unification of Germany also drove home the serious security challenges faced by the Russian state.\(^5^8\)

These military and political defeats, paradoxically, had positive effects on Russian civil-military relations in the sovereign power sphere. The most obvious point is that failure has a way of focusing the mind. The Milyutin reforms played an important role in making it possible for the military to shed some internal functions in order to concentrate on external defense. The curriculum of the General Staff Academy, from its inception in 1832, always had been focused on traditional military topics such as strategy, tactics, military history, and military administration. After Milyutin's reforms the importance of the Academy grew and it became a major vehicle for inculcating the top officer corps with high professional standards. General Staff officers formed the core of the new officer elite who by World War I largely were able to measure up to the standards of their European competitors.\(^5^9\)

\(^5^8\) Fuller, *Strategy and Power in Russia*.

A second, less obvious, effect of military defeat on Russian civil-military relations was the loss of confidence and prestige suffered by the officer corps. The low self-confidence of the officer corps made it more difficult for them to believe that they had the competence and the right to intervene in political matters. The German army, in contrast, was emboldened to play a prominent role in domestic politics partially due to their military successes.\(^{60}\) The declining prestige of the officer corps in Russia also meant that the most ambitious members of society pursued careers in the civilian world, not in the military. General M.I. Dragomirov, the Commandant of the General Staff Academy from 1878 to 1889, noted that the military attracted many “weak-charactered” young men who entered the army only because they had no other prospects and argued that there should be no place for these “losers” (neudachniki) in the military. The lack of prestige and self-confidence experienced by the officer corps in the last fifty years of Imperial Russia contributed to a more distant and passive attitude towards high politics and society in general, a temperament that William Fuller labels “negative corporatism.”\(^{61}\)

An additional factor in the decline of officer prestige, in addition to military defeat, was the worsening economic situation faced by officers. In the eighteenth and early nineteenth century the material position of officers was still considered respectable. Their economic situation, however, worsened in the second half of the nineteenth century. The state had more

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important priorities, particularly industrialization, and the general decline of the nobility made it more difficult for officers from that class to support themselves independently of their officer salary, as they had been able to do previously.⁶²

The noble element in the officer corps declined steeply in the second half of the nineteenth century. This was consistent with Milyutin's efforts to transform the officer corps into a meritocracy based on learning and talent rather than social standing. By 1912 roughly half of the officer corps was drawn from the non-nobility. There was, however, considerable variation depending on the type of unit and the stationing of the officer. Guards officers were exclusively noble, and the cavalry and the artillery were still dominated by the nobility. Non-nobles comprised a majority of infantry officers. Officers who had the good fortune to be stationed in St. Petersburg, not surprisingly, were also drawn heavily from the nobility. The German army also came to be dominated by non-nobles (70% in 1913) on the eve of World War I, but the Germans were much more successful in forging a unified officer corps still committed to an aristocratic outlook.⁶³

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⁶² On the economic situation of officers, see: Volkov, Russkiy ofiterskiy korpus, pp. 241-247; Zayonchkovskiy, Samoderzhaviye i russkaya armiya na rubezhe XIX-XX stoletiy, pp. 219-228; Fuller, Civil-Military Conflict in Imperial Russia, pp. 47-74, esp. p. 73; Kenez, "A Profile of the Prerevolutionary Officer Corps," pp. 129-130. On the decline of the nobility, see: Manning, The Crisis of the Old Regime in Russia.

⁶³ Most of the civil-military relations literature agrees that class and social background is not a good predictor of officer corps' political behavior. See: George A. Kourvetaris and Betty A. Dobratz, Social Origins and Political Orientations in a World Perspective (Denver, CO: University of Denver, 1977); Bengt Abrahamsson, Military Professionalization and Political Power (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1972), pp. 40-58; Alfred Stepan, The Military in Politics: Changing Patterns in Brazil (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), pp. 30-56. The exception has been the literature on German civil-military relations before World War I, but this literature also indirectly confirms the general finding that social background does not determine political behavior, because it argues that the officer corps retained an aristocratic outlook despite the fact that they recruited increasingly from the middle class. See: Craig, The Politics of the Prussian Army, esp. pp. 217-254; Kitchen, The German Officer Corps; V.R. Berghahn, Germany and the Approach of War in 1914 (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1973), pp. 3, 7-8, 13-17. Geoff Eley critiques this literature, but also notes the attempt "to manufacture social and professional homogeneity of the officer corps"; Geoff Eley, "Army, State and Civil Society: Revisiting the Problem of German Militarism," in his From Unification to Nazism: Reinterpreting the German Past (Boston:
The general picture that emerges of the officer corps in the last decades of the Russian Empire is of an institution in serious decline. Military interests were less influential in the making of state policy. The officer corps suffered from falling living standards and low public prestige. They were increasingly isolated, and self-isolated, from the rest of elite society. This marks a sharp contrast with their standing at the beginning of the century, during which they were in important ways the leading element in both the state and in the state’s primary opponents (the intelligentsia). 64

The apolitical nature of the Russian officer corps in the late-imperial period is another area in which there is broad agreement in the existing literature. Western scholars, Soviet scholars, and post-Soviet Russian scholars have all pointed to the disinterest and even naiveté of officers concerning political matters. 65 This issue will be examined more systematically in the next chapter. It is worth noting here, however, that the Romanov successions of the second half of the nineteenth century, unlike those of the eighteenth century, took place without military involvement. After 1825 the succession mechanism became more stable and officers withdrew from involvement in deciding who rules. Alexander II (in 1855), Alexander III (in 1881, after the


64 Much of the extant literature makes these points. See, in particular: Fuller, Civil-Military Conflict in Imperial Russia; Zayonchkovskiy, Samoderzhaviye i russkaya armiya na rubezhe XIX-XX stoletiy; Pintner, “The Burden of Defense in Imperial Russia”; Bushnell, “The Tsarist Officer Corps, 1881-1914”; Volkov, Russkiy ofitserskiy korpus, pp. 97-98, 294; John L.H. Keep, Soldiering in Tsarist Russia (Colorado: United States Air Force Academy, 1986).

65 Some representative cites are: Zayonchkovskiy, Samoderzhaviye i russkaya armiya na rubezhe XIX-XX stoletiy, pp. 75, 233-234, 317-318; Volkov, Russkiy ofitserskiy korpus, pp. 287-288; Kenez, “A Profile of the Prerevolutionary Officer Corps,” pp. 150-158; Oliver Allen Ray, “The Imperial Russian Army Officer,” Political
assassination of Alexander II), and Nicholas II (in 1894) all acceded to the throne without incident. It is true that some officers were involved in the Polish uprising of 1863, but this incident had little to do with changing the state’s political leadership; changing the country’s borders was the goal of the rebels.

The nineteenth century was a time of immense political, social, and military change for Russia. Russia’s backwardness, which had been no hindrance and in some ways an advantage in its competition with its European rivals in the seventeenth and eighteenth century, increasingly was a major liability in the aftermath of the French and Industrial revolutions. The Great Reforms launched by Alexander II began the process of dismantling the service state and modernizing the economy and the military. The armed forces turned away from their praetorian past and focused their energies on serving the state and defending the fatherland. Russia’s progress was put to the test in 1904-1906 as she experienced another humiliating military defeat abroad and a political revolution at home. The revolution of 1905-1906 represented a key trial for civil-military relations.

THE REVOLUTION OF 1905-1906

The tsarist regime defeated the revolution of 1905-1906 with a combination of political concessions and coercive military force. The fact that the military saved the regime can be seen

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as an instance of military arbitration of a civilian sovereign power dispute, although the government’s opponents did not occupy any positions of state power and thus were not, in a formal sense, legitimate contenders for executive leadership. It is thus not entirely clear how this case should be coded, a point I return to at the end of this section. It is also not obvious which of the four theories of military involvement in sovereign power issues -- international structure, domestic structure, corporate interest, or organizational culture -- is the most important. The factors highlighted by each of these approaches all played some role. Before exploring these issues, I provide a brief summary of civil-military relations during the revolution.

The use of the armed forces to counter domestic unrest was not a new phenomenon in Russia. The army had been involved in internal repression on behalf of the autocracy for centuries. Until the middle of the nineteenth century the army's domestic role had been confined primarily to suppressing peasant revolts. With the growth of an urban working class in the late nineteenth century, the military was forced to become involved in strike and riot-breaking as well. The army ever more frequently was summoned by civilian officials to restore order. Incidents of troops being called to the aid of civil power averaged 83 times per year for the period 1890-1894, 147 times per year for the period 1895-1899, and 312 times per year for the period 1900-1904. These missions caused increasing strain on the army. In 1903, for example, the army was used in domestic repression missions over 400 times, involving over 1000 companies; the equivalent of 73 infantry and 47 cavalry and Cossack regiments took part, which represented one-third of the infantry and two-thirds of the cavalry in European Russia.67

67 Fuller, Civil-Military Conflict in Imperial Russia, pp. 81-93; Bushnell, Mutiny amid Repression, pp. 31-32; Zayonchkovskiy, Samoderzhaviye i russkaya armiya na rubezhe XIX-XX stoletiy, pp. 33-35. A company of
The leadership of the armed forces objected to the growing usage of the army for domestic repression. The internal mission seriously interfered with the military's primary task, training and preparation for external war. The growing power of Germany was a particular concern for the military leadership. The Ministry of War, the Main Staff, and local Military District commanders all objected to the burdens of internal repression and frequently clashed with civilian officials. Army unhappiness with domestic repression, however, did not lead to officer corps' insubordination and they remained loyal to the autocracy.68

This simmering conflict over the military's role came to a head in 1905. Russia suffered a humiliating defeat in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05. Growing domestic turmoil, partially triggered by the defeat against Japan, burst forth as full-scale revolution in 1905. The armed forces found themselves completely overextended, with 800,000 soldiers tied down in the East and hundreds of thousands more involved in internal repression in European Russia.69

The army saved the government from collapse in 1905-1906. Yet it did so almost against the wishes of the military leadership and with widespread mutinies among the troops themselves. The War Ministry lost control over its commanders, who acted at the behest of local civilian officials rather than the central military administration. The Prime Minister, Sergei Witte, and the Interior Ministry devised a plan in early 1906 for frequent and decentralized deployment of army units, not only for repression of actual disorder but also deterrence. Although the War Ministry

infantry represented 96 to 168 men. An infantry regiment consisted of 1,536 to 2,688 men. Fuller, Civil-Military Conflict in Imperial Russia, p. 267.

68 Fuller, Civil-Military Conflict in Imperial Russia, esp. Chapter 3 ("The Tsarist Army and Repression, 1881-1904"); Bushnell, Mutiny amid Repression, pp. 24-32.

69 On the Russo-Japanese War, see: Fuller, Strategy and Power in Russia, pp. 394-407. Precise figures on the number of troops involved in repression are in: Fuller, Civil-Military Conflict in Imperial Russia, p. 144; Bushnell, Mutiny amid Repression, p. 52.
 objected to this loss of control and its effect on military efficiency and even coherence, it ultimately acquiesced, with certain provisos, because of the severity of the internal threat to the regime. It was not until 1908 that the War Ministry was able to once again reassert meaningful control over its own troops.70

Military behavior in 1905-1906 clearly was not a case of military intervention. It could be seen as a case of military arbitration, because internal repression carried out by the military saved Nicholas II’s regime. On the other hand, although the legitimacy of Nicholas II was quite low, there were no obvious contenders to the role of chief executive. The military never was called upon to make a choice between two specific individuals or groups that both could make a serious claim to state leadership. For this reason, military behavior during the revolution of 1905-1906 is best seen as a case of military non-intervention. The army carried out, albeit reluctantly and with difficulty, the orders of their civilian leaders. Not to do so would have qualified as insubordination. The military in 1905-1906 remained loyal and obedient.

Explaining the army’s behavior in 1905-1906 is at least as difficult as categorizing it. All four of the theories under consideration make a contribution to an explanation. The international structure perspective is clearly important, given the conjunction of war and revolution. The recent war with Japan, and the continued fear of rising German power, made the armed forces extremely reluctant to become involved in internal politics and domestic policing.

The domestic structure explanation is also key, and a weak state and political instability was a necessary condition for the important internal role played by the armed forces during the revolution. On the other hand, the domestic structure perspective maintains that the army is likely

70 Fuller, Chapter 5 ("Civil-Military Conflict in the Russian Revolution, 1905-1907"), Civil-Military Conflict in
to intervene under conditions of a weak state. This was clearly not the case in Russia in 1905-1906. The state was on the verge of collapse, yet the military showed no interest whatsoever in capturing sovereign power. If the domestic structure approach is vital to understanding the conditions under which the military came to play such a large internal role, it does not explain the army’s behavior, specifically its aversion to domestic missions.

The corporate interest perspective also provides important insights into military behavior during the revolution of 1905-1906. The armed forces’ leadership clearly believed that involvement in domestic repression was not in the interests of the military. Indeed, William Fuller argues that the military leadership often seemed to value its own bureaucratic interests over those of the regime.\textsuperscript{71} The desire of the army for organizational autonomy was an important component of the military leadership’s attitude towards internal missions. Other issues central to corporate interest explanations of military intervention, such as organizational power and resources, were less relevant in the case of 1905-1906.

Organizational culture also has considerable merit as an explanation for military behavior during the revolution of 1905-1906. Beliefs about the proper role of the armed forces loomed large in the considerations of leading officers. Domestic repression was seen as an interference with the military’s primary task, external defense. At the same time, military leaders continued to adhere to the idea that they were subordinate to the autocracy and had to carry out its wishes, even if the army did so reluctantly. To determine exactly how important the norm of civilian supremacy was in explaining military behavior would require a more concerted investigation than

\textit{Imperial Russia}; Bushnell, \textit{Mutiny amid Repression}.

\textsuperscript{71} Fuller, \textit{Civil-Military Conflict in Imperial Russia}, pp. 130, 156.
the one undertaken here. The Revolution of 1905-1906, however, was undoubtedly a critical event in the life of the Russian military and had a profound impact on the organizational culture of the Russian armed forces, as we will see in the next chapter.

The next chapter presents a detailed case study of the Revolution of 1917 and the Civil War. Fortunately, at least for the purposes of theory testing if not for the people of Russia, most of the significant issues raised by the 1905-1906 case are present in even sharper relief in 1917. A detailed case study of military behavior during 1917 permits a more complete test of the contending theories.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has presented an overview of the development of the Russian state and civil-military relations during the imperial period. The discussion of Russian state development highlighted the power of the Russian state from Peter the Great until Nicholas I. From the time of the Great Reforms of Alexander II, however, the political capacity of the state was challenged by the pressures of political, economic, and social modernization. In the sphere of civil-military relations, the key development was the shift in the nineteenth century from a military that traditionally had been heavily involved in sovereign power issues to one that was largely apolitical by the beginning of the twentieth century. This change can be traced to organizational lessons learned after the Decembrist uprising, Nicholas I's efforts to create a politically obedient officer corps, and the military reforms of Dmitriy Milyutin. The pressures of the external environment, particularly the European great power competition, also helped reorient the armed
forces towards international missions and away from a domestic political role. The change in
Russian civil-military relations in the nineteenth century set the stage for the revolutions of the
early twentieth century, during which the army could neither save the existing regime nor
establish one of its own. The Bolshevik victory in 1917-1920, the subject of the next chapter, was
the ultimate result.
CHAPTER 3: CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS DURING
THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

The control and use of coercive power was central to the dramatic events of the Russian Revolution of 1917 and the bloody civil war that followed. There can be little doubt that the Bolsheviks would not have succeeded if they had faced concerted resistance on the part of the Imperial Russian armed forces. The army was of necessity a crucial actor in the revolution.

This chapter analyzes civil-military relations during the Russian Revolution and attempts to explanation the behavior of the officer corps during these events. I discuss each of the four alternative approaches to military involvement in sovereign power issues -- international structure, domestic structure, corporate interest, and organizational culture -- and determine what behavior is predicted by each theory. I then conduct detailed process-tracing of the three key events of the period: the February Revolution, the Kornilov affair in late August, and the October Revolution. A fourth event, the outbreak of the Civil War in early 1918, is also treated as a case, although I do not study the entire Civil War. The case studies of these events serve as tests of the relative weight of the four alternative explanations.

A brief summary of the four cases provides the necessary background for the chapter. The February Revolution forced the abdication of the Tsar in early March 1917. The military was forced into the arbiter role by the three-way standoff between the Tsar, the revolutionary forces, and the leaders of the political opposition in the State Duma, the Russian parliament. The military leadership refused to stand behind Nicholas II during the crisis because of their fear that if order was not soon restored the revolution would spread to the front and endanger the war effort.

The Kornilov affair refers to the conflict between the Commander in Chief of the army,
General Kornilov, and the head of the Provisional Government, Alexander Kerensky. In late August Kerensky accused Kornilov of planning a coup and treason. Kornilov had not in fact been planning to seize power, but Kerensky’s accusation drove him into open rebellion, and Kornilov and several other leading officers were arrested. Most officers, however, sat out the affair.

The military leadership was again faced with a major political decision when the Bolsheviks seized power in October 1917. The military high command, with one significant exception, did initially follow Kerensky’s orders to move troops to Petrograd to quash the Bolshevik uprising. However, once it became clear that the Provisional Government had collapsed, the military made no serious efforts to resist the Bolshevik take-over in Petrograd or at military headquarters a month later.

The final case is the Civil War, in which the Bolsheviks struggled to hold onto power in the face of the military challenges of the Whites, who were led by former Tsarist officers. Former officers were also well-represented on the Red side, and the ability of the Soviet government to mobilize these officers on their behalf was a crucial element in the Bolshevik victory.

Table 3-1 shows that the military was a key participant in all of these events. When examined in depth, however, the most striking thing about these cases is how passive the military was in the face of obvious threats to its fundamental interests. Even the Kornilov affair, coded as a case of military intervention, came about only after, through a bizarre series of circumstances, the Prime Minister reneged on his commitments to the military leadership and accused its top general of treason. The military was largely a reluctant participant in the events of the revolution, up till the outbreak of civil war in 1918, at which point all officers were forced to decide which side they were on. Throughout 1917 most officers were focused on the war with Germany and the Austro-Hungarian Empire and sought to remain “outside politics.”
### TABLE 3-1: Chapter Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observations</th>
<th>Predictions</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Abdication of the Tsar</strong></td>
<td>Intervention or arbitration likely. Intervention unlikely. Intervention unlikely. Intervention unlikely.</td>
<td>Arbitration. Took position least likely to interfere with war effort.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intervention unlikely. If arbitration, will side with contender most able to enhance state's war-making capacity.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kornilov Affair</strong></td>
<td>Intervention for national interest motives possible. Intervention for arbitration likely. Intervention for national interest motives possible.</td>
<td>Intervention for national interest motives possible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If arbitration, will side with contender most able to enhance state's war-making capacity.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>October Revolution</strong></td>
<td>Intervention for national interest motives possible. Intervention for arbitration likely. Intervention for national interest motives possible.</td>
<td>Non-intervention and arbitration. Officer arbitrating took position that involvement was not military's job and would disrupt war effort.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If arbitration, will side with contender most able to enhance state's war-making capacity.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Civil War</strong></td>
<td>Intervention for national interest motives likely. Intervention for arbitration likely. Intervention for national interest motives likely.</td>
<td>Intervention.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If arbitration, will side with contender most able to enhance state's war-making capacity.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**INTERNATIONAL STRUCTURE AND THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION**

The international structure perspective maintains that militaries with a high external threat will have externally oriented armies with no interest in domestic politics. Coding the external threat variable for Russia in 1917 is entirely straightforward, because Russia at the time was in the third year of the largest and most destructive war that Europe had ever seen. In
this section I briefly examine the relevant factors used to code the external threat variable, and then state the predictions for the international structure approach.

The major source I use for coding the external threat variable is data on war-proneness. By several key measures, Russia was one of the most war-prone states of the nineteenth century. Between 1816 and 1913 Russia was involved in five inter-state wars and suffered 315,000 war dead. The only two states that come close to Russia are the Ottoman Empire, which fought seven inter-state wars and suffered 355,000 war dead, and France, which fought eight inter-state wars and suffered 253,000 war dead. In contrast, Europe’s other two major great powers, Great Britain and Prussia/Germany, fought in three and four wars, respectively, with war dead of 22,000 and 53,000. Russia was a major protagonist in the two bloodiest wars of the period, the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878 and the Crimean War.¹

By 1917, three years of intense warfare with Germany, Austro-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire had put an immense strain on Russia. Russia was literally fighting for its life.² Under these conditions, the international structure explanation makes three predictions. First, this approach predicts that the military will have little interest in sovereign power issues. Second, if forced into the role of arbiter, the army will side with the civilian individual or group that will best be able to prosecute the war. Third, if the civilian leadership mismanages the war effort so badly that a major defeat is likely, the prospect of military intervention increases.


² For a military-historical account of Russia’s war effort, see: Norman Stone, The Eastern Front 1914-1917 (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1975). On the mood in the army, particularly among the soldiers, during the first years of the war, see: Allan K. Wildman, Chapter 3 ("The Great Ordeal"), The End of the Russian Imperial Army: The Old Army and the Soldiers’ Revolt, Volume 1 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), pp. 75-120.
DOMESTIC STRUCTURE AND THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

The question of the political capacity of the Tsarist state on the eve of war and revolution is one of the most contentious in the historiography of twentieth century Russia. The majority view seems to be that the Tsarist state was quite weak in the early twentieth century; even without the war, further upheavals were likely. In this section I summarize the debate on the strength of the late-Imperial state and then turn to a closer examination of political capacity in the revolutionary year of 1917. There is quite widespread agreement that by 1917, and certainly after the February Revolution, the Russian state was extremely weak. The domestic structure approach, then, would predict both military involvement and intervention in sovereign power issues during 1917.3

The conventional historiographical literature on the Russian Revolution asserts that until recently there was a strong liberal consensus among Western historians that between 1905 and 1914 the Russian state had made important strides towards political and social stabilization. The liberal view, it is claimed, saw the constitutional settlement of 1906 as representing the first step towards constitutional democracy along West European lines. Similarly, the tenure of Petr Stolypin (1906-1911) is depicted as laying the basis for continued economic growth and social stability. Only the outbreak of the war, the liberals argue, detoured Russia’s development and led to the revolution of 1917.4

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3 For background on this period, see the section “The Russian State in the Nineteenth Century” in Chapter Two.

A survey of the recent major literature on the revolution, however, shows that this liberal view is not as dominant as most scholars contend. Indeed, a wide range of scholars agrees that continued state weakness and political disorder was more likely in the coming decades than social and political stability. Leonard Schapiro generally is identified as a leading proponent of the liberal view, but Schapiro is quite cautious in his assessment of Russian political stability. Although Schapiro is enthusiastic about the reforms introduced by Stolypin and the prospects for economic development in the absence of war, he also notes that Stolypin had lost the Tsar's favor by the time of his assassination in 1911 and that industrial unrest was increasing in the years before the war. Schapiro traces the clash between society and the monarchy that brought down the regime in 1917 back to the reform era of Alexander II. Robert Daniels is also cited as a proponent of the liberal viewpoint, but he is openly skeptical of the claim that Russia after 1905 was moving towards constitutional democracy. The Russian Empire on the eve of World War I, in Daniels' view, was characterized by "sickness at the top and the strains of a half-developed society below."  

Other scholars whose work is generally more consistent with the views attributed to the liberals, such as Richard Pipes, Dominic Lieven, and Martin Malia, also are quite pessimistic about the prospects for the development of constitutional democracy in Russia, even in the absence of war. Pipes is quite explicit in his view that "czarist Russia probably would have collapsed even without a war," noting that none of the problems that had led to the revolution of 1905-1906 had been solved and that Russia was a highly polarized and divided society on the eve of World War I. Lieven considers the question of the regime's chances in detail and

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comes to rather pessimistic conclusions. The peasantry and the workers were dissatisfied and were a "formidable threat to the imperial regime." The middle class and educated society were also disillusioned by their lack of rights and the failures of the Tsar and his ministers. A peaceful transition to democracy, Lieven concludes, was highly unlikely, and the inter-war experience of Italy, Spain, and the states of Eastern Europe suggests that constitutional liberalism was an unlikely outcome in Russia. Malia, similarly, notes that Russia was the most socially unstable country in Europe and that the country was "headed towards a major constitutional crisis" on the eve of World War I. Malia, like Lieven, thinks a right-wing dictatorship was a quite likely outcome, and that a left-wing regime was also possible, although not a Bolshevik one. Malia concludes, "it would have required a near miracle for Russia to have evolved organically and peacefully into a constitutional democracy had she been spared the shock of the First World War."^{6}

To the extent that liberalism was ever the dominant Western approach to assessing the strength of the Russian state on the eve of war and revolution, it has been overturned in recent decades by the work of "revisionist" historians. This label is now something of a misnomer, since the revisionist interpretation of the Russian Revolution is currently the dominant

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approach. The revisionists concentrate on 1917, not the period before the war, but they do suggest that the Russian state was marked by fatal contradictions even before 1914.  

The opening salvo in the revisionist attack on what it saw as the dominant liberal orthodoxy was Leopold Haimson’s article “The Problem of Social Stability in Urban Russia, 1905-1917,” an article that subsequently has rarely been cited without the modifier “seminal” being attached to it. Haimson set forth his “dual polarization” thesis, arguing that in 1914 there were two important and destabilizing cleavages in Imperial Russia. The first was between the revolutionary working class and the educated and propertied classes in the major cities, but equally significant was the polarization between most of privileged society and the tsarist regime. Haimson was careful to state that he was not arguing that revolution was imminent or inevitable in 1914. His basic point was that, unlike in 1905-1906 when there was a broad-based coalition of forces and classes revolting against the tsarist regime, by 1914 Russian society was dangerously polarized between the upper and lower classes in a manner that became evident in 1917. The war exacerbated but did not cause this fundamental split.

Subsequent revisionist scholarship has marshaled considerable evidence supporting Haimson’s basic point that Tsarist Russia in 1914 was marked by considerable social divisions and tensions and that the regime was dangerously weak. The peasantry still demanded the redistribution of noble estates, and the Stolypin agricultural reforms had probably increased,

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rather than decreased, peasant discontent. The working class was radicalized, partially because the regime restricted the development of free trade unions and thus helped transform economic grievances into political conflicts. The middle class was weak and divided, and the rural nobility was in serious decline. Even without the war, the revisionists conclude, the autocracy was in serious trouble.⁹

The bulk of historical scholarship, then, points to the weak political capacity of the Russian state in its last decades. Many scholars from diverse viewpoints believe that, even in the absence of major war, Russia was likely to experience further political and social upheaval. Major war, however, was on the agenda. The question of what would have happened in the absence of World War I in Russia is an interesting counterfactual thought experiment, but it is not clear how relevant it is to the conditions of early twentieth century Europe. As Theodore Von Laue stresses, “world wars were the order of the age.” International great power competition was a fundamental aspect of Russian political development.¹⁰

All observers agree that World War I placed great strains on the Russian polity. The effects of major war on Russia were predicted by the reactionary Russian politician Peter Durnovo in February 1914 in a famous memorandum to Nicholas II. Durnovo argued that Russia should reach an accommodation with Germany rather than risk major war.¹¹ His reasons

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⁹ Acton, Rethinking the Russian Revolution, pp. 55-82.


¹¹ Durnovo, in the language of international relations theory, was arguing for bandwagoning with Germany rather than balancing against it. On balancing and bandwagoning, see: Kenneth N. Waltz, Theory of International
were prescient and entirely consistent with the work of the revisionists on late-Imperial Russia, albeit with a different political spin. Durnovo argued that Russia was too weak for a major European war. He contended that Russia was particularly vulnerable to social disorder and that the lower classes (workers and peasants) were instinctively drawn to socialism. Russian peasants and workers alike were driven by the desire to expropriate property from the landlords and the capitalists. Wartime military failures would lead opposition elements from privileged society to attack the government, which would encourage the revolutionary parties to stir up unrest among the masses. The army, made up largely of peasants, would be unable to defend the regime. The liberals would be too weak to restrain the masses. Durnovo concluded, “Russia will be flung into hopeless anarchy, the issue of which cannot be foreseen.”

The initial period of the war led to a temporary truce between the regime and its opponents. The intense labor strikes of 1914 quickly died out and the middle and upper classes threw their support behind the Tsar. As Durnovo predicted, however, domestic peace did not last. Russian military defeats in 1915 led to despair among the elites, who blamed Russia’s difficulty’s on bureaucratic incompetence. A “Progressive Bloc” was formed in the Duma, with the support of two-thirds of its members, that called for a government of “public confidence.” The Duma wanted a Prime Minister and cabinet that enjoyed the support of a majority of parliament. Nicholas II believed that such a fundamental change in the system of government during the war would only weaken it, and the idea of parliamentary control over government policy also was inconsistent with his self-image as an autocratic ruler. Rumors in

Petersburg society about the influence of the Tsarina, Alexandra, and the "holy man" Rasputin on government policy further weakened the autocracy. Most important, the war was causing increasing strains on the economy, evidenced by inflation, supply problems, and dangerous food shortages in the cities.\textsuperscript{13}

By the end of 1916 the economic situation in Petrograd (the capital's name had been changed from the German-sounding St. Petersburg) had become critical. Police reports from late 1916 and early 1917 predicted that inflation and food shortages were likely to spark riots. The number of strikes in Petrograd increased sharply in the fall and winter of 1916-1917, reaching levels comparable to the massive strikes of 1914. It was an open question whether the regime would be able to cope with mass disturbances in the capital. A police report from October 1916 concluded, "the ever growing disorder in the rear, or in other words in the entire country, which is chronic and cumulative, has now attained such an extraordinarily rapid rate of growth that it now ... menaces shortly to throw the country into catastrophically destructive chaos and spontaneous anarchy."\textsuperscript{14}

There is a fairly broad consensus, then, that by the beginning of 1917 there were strong reasons to believe that the Tsarist regime was quite weak. Most observers attribute this


\textsuperscript{13} On domestic political developments during the war, see: Lieven, Chapter 8 ("The War, 1914-1917"), \textit{Nicholas II}, pp. 204-233; Tsuyoshi Hasegawa, \textit{The February Revolution: Petrograd, 1917} (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1981), pp. 3-211.

weakness to deep-rooted cleavages in Russian society, while some argue that they were caused by the war. There is little doubt that two and a half years of total war had severely taxed the capabilities of the Russian state. With this background in mind, I now turn to a more systematic analysis of the indicators used to measure state strength. The data is mixed on the period before the February revolution, but after that point it is not surprising that all of the measures of political capacity indicate a very weak state.

Robert Jackman proposes two basic measures of political capacity: organizational age and legitimacy. Organizational age has three components: the age of the juridical state, the age of the current constitutional order, and the number of top leadership successions in that order. The exact age of the Russian state is perhaps subject to debate, but even if one starts counting from the time of Peter the Great the state was over 200 years old by 1917. The Russian constitutional order in 1917 was only eleven years old, since the Revolution of 1905-1906 had forced Nicholas II to grant a new constitution. The tsar’s official title was still “autocrat,” but the Chairman of the Council of Ministers and the new legislature, consisting of the Duma and the State Council, represented potential rivals to the emperor. The tsar, however, appointed the Prime Minister and Nicholas II was not inclined to turn executive decision-making authority over to his ministers. The new constitution also failed to create a political consensus between the state (the tsar and the bureaucracy) and society (represented by the Duma). The third measure of organizational age, the number of top leadership successions in that order, was technically zero, since Nicholas II remained the tsar under the new constitution. On the other hand, there had been four successful regime changes since the last irregular transfer of

executive authority, the assassination of Paul I in 1801. Regardless of the exact measures of organizational age, most scholars agree that the new constitutional order introduced in 1906 had failed to create "legitimate institutions within which conflict can be resolved."15

Jackman proposes to measures legitimacy, his second component of political capacity, by the number of deaths from political violence. I have been unable to find good statistics on the number of deaths from political violence in Russia for the period 1900-1917. There were thousands of deaths during the revolution of 1905-1906; over 3,000 Jews died in pogroms alone during this period, and one source puts the number of total deaths at over 13,000. 250 people were killed by government troops during the Lena goldfields massacre in 1912. Thousands more died during the 1917 revolution. In the civil war that followed there were 800,000 combatant deaths and a total of 7-10 million people died from all causes. The numbers on deaths from political violence are far from comprehensive, and without a good comparative basis such as that provided by the World Handbook of Political and Social Indicators it is impossible to know whether political violence in Russia in the years leading up to the revolution (1907-1916) was particularly high.16


Better data has been collected on political and economic strikes for this period. In Russia before 1917 the authorities distinguished between “political” and “economic” strikes. Economic strikes were those pertaining to workplace issues, whereas political ones were usually demonstrative and part of larger processes of political disorder. Trade unions and strikes were illegal until 1905-1906, and political strikes were forbidden until 1917. In practice, trade unions after 1906 were frequently harassed and shut down and economic strikes were often declared illegal.\textsuperscript{17} Table 3-2 shows data on political and economic strikes for the years 1895-1917.

### TABLE 3-2: Strikes and Strikers, 1895-1917

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Strikes</th>
<th>Strikers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Economic</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1895</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1896</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1897</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1898</td>
<td>209</td>
<td>215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1899</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1902</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1903</td>
<td>424</td>
<td>550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1904</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1905</td>
<td>4,190</td>
<td>13,995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1906</td>
<td>2,545</td>
<td>6,114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1907</td>
<td>973</td>
<td>3,573</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1908</td>
<td>428</td>
<td>892</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1909</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>442</td>
<td>466</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>732</td>
<td>2,032</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1913</td>
<td>1,379</td>
<td>2,404</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1914</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan.-Jul.</td>
<td>1,205</td>
<td>3,493</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug.-Dec.</td>
<td>1,239</td>
<td>3,534</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1915</td>
<td>726</td>
<td>928</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1916</td>
<td>1,046</td>
<td>1,288</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1917</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan.-Feb.</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>1,357</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar.-Oct.</td>
<td>2,470</td>
<td>2,016</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Includes enterprises subject to factory inspection only.

The most notable thing about this data is the extreme instability of strike patterns in Russia. The key peaks were the years 1905-1907, 1912-1914, and 1916-1917. Patterns in Russia were quite different than in the rest of Europe. Although there was a general increase in strikes throughout Europe and the United States both before and after World War I, in general
there was less fluctuation from year to year than in Russia. Charles Tilly notes that “industrial conflict was most volatile in Russia,” adding that there is an inverse relationship between the extent to which organized labor is incorporated into national politics and the degree of variability in strikes. What separates Russia from the rest of Europe is not the amount of strikes (although no country had nearly as many strikes as Russia did in 1905), but their volatility and their nature. It was extremely difficult for the Russian working class to pursue its interests either through bargaining or through elections. Because of the political restrictions placed on labor by the state, the possibility of the working class developing along more reformist, trade union lines was cut off. In its dealings with the working class, just as in the case of its interaction with elite society, the Tsarist regime had failed to create “legitimate institutions within which conflict can be resolved.”

Peasant unrest was another sign of political disorder in 1917. Until the February Revolution there had been very few disturbances in the countryside. After the fall of the tsar, however, many peasants believed that what they saw as the unjust property structure had been overturned. Although the peasants hoped that the Provisional Government would satisfy their demands, by the summer they had become disillusioned with the ability of the government to redistribute property in the countryside. Government authority collapsed, and increasingly peasants took matters into their own hands. The most important form of peasant unrest throughout the summer of 1917 was the seizure of private and state lands. By the time of the

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October Revolution the traditional social and economic order in the countryside had been turned upside down, and almost all land was in the hands of peasants.\textsuperscript{19}

A final important form of irregular challenges to the existing political order were the national autonomy and independence movements of 1917. The collapse of the autocracy led to the spread of demands for various forms of autonomy -- cultural, administrative, political -- around the Russian empire. The Provisional Government refused to recognize any of these demands, maintaining that they could be resolved only after a Constituent Assembly had been elected. The context and content of these local conflicts varied substantially, with different social identities (ethnicity, class, etc.) sometimes in harmony and sometimes in conflict. Ronald Suny emphasizes, "it was not two kinds [national and class] of revolution, but one gigantic social upheaval that engulfed the whole of the Russian empire in the third year of the World War, bringing down the integrating imperial authority and launching a crisis of authority that continued well into the civil-war years." These national conflicts were both cause and consequence of the breakdown of state political capacity after the February Revolution.\textsuperscript{20}

The approach suggested by Stephen Krasner for measuring the strength of the state (see Chapter One) offers a final way of weighing the political capacity of the Russian state in 1917. It seems clear that in its last decades the Tsarist regime was unable either to change social


structure or private behavior in intended ways. The government was more capable of resisting private pressure, but at several points during the Revolution of 1905-1907 the Tsar was forced to offer political concessions to powerful private actors. After the collapse of the autocracy the Provisional Government’s authority was continually under challenge. The most important rival was the structure of local Soviets (councils), particularly the Petrograd Soviet. The inability of the Provisional Government to act without the approval of the Soviet came to be known as “dual power.”21 As 1917 progressed the Soviets grew stronger and the Provisional Government grew weaker, which culminated in the Bolshevik rise to power in October. Bolshevik rule, however, was only consolidated after several years of ferocious civil war. Throughout the period under study, then, state political capacity was weak or non-existent.

The domestic structure perspective on military involvement in sovereign power issues leads to the following predictions about armed forces’ behavior during the Russian Revolution. First, military intervention is considered likely. Second, instances of military arbitration are considered likely. The domestic structure approach predicts a high degree of military involvement in sovereign power issues when the political capacity of the state is weak.

**MILITARY CORPORATE INTERESTS AND THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION**

The corporate interest approach to military involvement in sovereign power issues argues that armies intervene in politics to protect their organizational interests. The conventional image of the Russian empire as an armed camp would suggest that military interests generally were satisfied by the Tsarist government. In fact, however, the bulk of the

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21 For a more nuanced treatment of the origins of dual power than I can possibly provide here, see: Hasegawa, *The February Revolution*, pp. 408-427.
recent historiography suggests that the army was often a loser in bureaucratic political battles in the last decades of the regime. However, on the eve of the war (roughly 1910-1914) the army was a more successful bureaucratic actor. During the war the military also received considerable resources and autonomy. After the February Revolution, however, military autonomy was under serious threat, and the corporate interest perspective would predict military intervention to protect the army’s interests.

In the previous chapter I discussed the decline of the Russian armed forces’ fortunes in the last decades of the imperial regime. The two most important indicators of an army’s political standing are its budget relative to other competing state tasks and its organizational autonomy. In both of these areas the late imperial period, except on the very eve of World War I, was not a happy one for the Russian army.

An examination of state budget expenditures from the middle of the nineteenth century until the outbreak of World War I shows a steady decline in military, particularly army, spending (see Table 3-3). Spending on the army dropped from over thirty percent of government spending in 1850-52 to less than twenty percent immediately prior to World War I. The Navy fared better than the army, but overall one can see in this period a growing tendency to favor the needs of other ministries over the War Ministry.²²

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TABLE 3-3: Distribution of State Budget Expenditures, 1850-1914

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Army (%)</th>
<th>Navy (%)</th>
<th>Total Military (%)</th>
<th>Remainder (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1850-1854</td>
<td>31.2</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>37.4</td>
<td>62.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1855-1859</td>
<td>35.6</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>41.0</td>
<td>59.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1860-1864</td>
<td>30.6</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>36.1</td>
<td>63.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1865-1869</td>
<td>29.0</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>66.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1870-1874</td>
<td>28.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>32.0</td>
<td>68.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1875-1879</td>
<td>28.8</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>33.0</td>
<td>67.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1880-1884</td>
<td>26.8</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>30.7</td>
<td>69.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1885-1889</td>
<td>22.8</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>27.2</td>
<td>72.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890-1894</td>
<td>23.8</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>28.1</td>
<td>71.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1895-1899</td>
<td>18.7</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>24.2</td>
<td>75.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900-1904</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>22.4</td>
<td>77.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1905-1909</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>76.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910-1914</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>25.2</td>
<td>74.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


William Fuller has made a thorough investigation of the causes of the military's declining budget share in the late-Imperial period. The basic reason for this change was a conscious policy decision on the part of the government to favor other areas of spending. During this period the Ministry of Finance came to be the most powerful and influential government ministry. The Ministry of Finance saw military spending as the biggest impediment to its plans for state-sponsored industrialization and railway construction. Although in principle these goals were consistent with military goals, in practice the Ministry of War had little influence over either sphere of state policy. Railways were built not for strategic reasons (i.e., the movement of troops), but for economic ones (i.e., the movement of goods). Indeed, when railways were built for strategic reasons it often was due to the pressure of the French, and not the War Ministry. This in itself is perhaps indicative of the bureaucratic power of the army during this period.23

23 Fuller, Civil-Military Conflict in Imperial Russia, pp. 58-71, 224. On the views of the Finance Ministry in this period, see the 1899 memorandum of its most famous chief, Sergei Witte, and the major study on Witte by Theodore Von Laue: Sergei Witte, “An Economic Policy for the Empire,” in Riha, ed., Readings in Russian

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Fuller notes that Russian military spending was still quite high in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Moreover, as the Finance Ministry argued, Russia was spending about the same amount on its army as Germany and France. Fuller and Walter Pintner convincingly argue that Russian military expenditures were so high because of the large size of its army relative to other European powers. For example, in 1893 Russia had almost one million men under arms, compared to around 500-600 thousand for France and Germany. The reason Russia had so many men under arms was because it took much longer to train its less educated soldiers, and because Germany was able to mobilize for war much more quickly than Russia. The basic problem was Russia's backwardness relative to its European competitors. Because Russia felt compelled to keep so many men under arms, the amount spent per soldier in France and Germany was over one and a half times that spent in Russia. Given that this same period followed the unification of Germany and also coincided with a major industrialization of warfare that required additional military spending, the Russian military leadership was alarmed by its declining share of the state budget.24

Other scholars, such as David Jones, have somewhat disputed the picture provided by Fuller and Pintner. Jones argues that "the commitment of Russian governments to their military has ensured the latter a regular, and usually a substantial share of the nation's funds." Jones' figures, somewhat different than those of Pintner and Fuller, also show a decrease in the percent of the state budget going to defense from 1885 (28%) to 1910 (22%), but his numbers

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show a big jump back to over twenty-eight percent by 1913. Jones is correct to point out that on the eve of the war the Russian military did receive a new infusion of money. Fuller also notes that Duma support for the military helped the army in its battles with the Finance Ministry and led to the adoption of the “Small Program” of 1910 and the “Big (or Great) Program” of 1914, both of which foresaw important increases in military expenditures and the size of the armed forces. On the very eve of the war, then, the military had reason to hope that the newly allocated money would allow them to improve their standing vis-à-vis Germany. The outbreak of war, of course, interrupted these plans for peacetime development.25

In sum, the military certainly felt itself to be a loser in bureaucratic battles with the Finance Ministry for most of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. However, the increasing danger of war in Europe and support from the Duma helped the armed forces argue successfully for increasing military expenditures from 1910 to 1914. On the eve of the war, the military had reason to hope that its bureaucratic power and access to state resources was increasing. Before turning to the question of war-time support for the army, it is worth looking at the degree to which the army was able to maintain organizational autonomy during the late-Imperial period.

For most of the last several decades of the Tsarist regime, the military leadership felt that its autonomy was even more under threat than its share of the state budget. The major reason for this loss of autonomy was the increasing involvement of the army in domestic

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24 Fuller, Civil-Military Conflict in Imperial Russia, pp. 47-58; Pintner, “The Burden of Defense in Imperial Russia.”

repression. As pointed out in the previous chapter, troops were called to the aid of civil power with increasing frequency from 1890 to 1904. During the revolution of 1905-1906 the army leadership basically lost control over its local commanders. The War Ministry again found itself on the losing end of a bureaucratic battle, this time with the Interior Ministry. Military courts also had to deal with a huge influx of civilian defendants being tried under emergency legislation. The army’s virtual loss of control over its own troops, by any measure an extreme infringement of organizational autonomy, lasted until 1908.26

Once the revolutionary crisis had abated the military fought to regain control over its troops. After the revolution the army had continued to play a large role in domestic police and guard duty. War Minister General V.A. Sukhomlinov (1909-1915) began to assert vigorously the need to free army units from domestic missions, and he was backed wholeheartedly by local commanders. Sukhomlinov gained the support of Nicholas II, and by 1914 military involvement in aid to the civil power had dropped dramatically.27

The picture with respect to organizational autonomy, then, was roughly similar to the budget story. From the 1880s until the 1910s the armed forces had experienced budget cuts and severe encroachments of organizational autonomy. These are the conditions that the corporate interest approach suggests causes military intervention in politics. From 1910-1914, however, the army had won important victories in both the budgetary and autonomy spheres. These bureaucratic successes should have lessened the pressures for military involvement in politics,

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26 See the discussion in Chapter Two and the two principle sources on the Imperial army and domestic repression, particularly during the revolution of 1905-1906: Fuller, Civil-Military Conflict in Imperial Russia; John Bushnell, Mutiny amid Repression: Russian Soldiers in the Revolution of 1905-1906 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985).
according to this approach. Fuller, however, whose work is generally consistent with a rationalist bureaucratic politics approach, concludes that the preceding decades had seriously damaged civil-military relations. The military felt that the interests of other ministries, particularly Finance and Interior, usually won out in government decisions. Fuller concludes, "in the eyes of the army leadership, the Russian state did not serve military interests before all else and did not in fact satisfy the most pressing of the army's needs."\textsuperscript{28}

The outbreak of world war in the summer of 1914 seemingly vindicated the War Ministry's demands for increased funding and freedom from domestic missions. For the next three years all the efforts of the Russian state were directed towards the war effort. Did the armed forces receive the resources and autonomy they needed to wage the war effort? The two issues of resources and autonomy will be covered in turn.

The opening battles of World War I on the Eastern Front present a decidedly mixed picture. The Russian disaster at Tannenberg must be balanced by Russia's success against Austro-Hungary in Galicia and the role the Russian offensive in Prussia played in slowing the German advance in France. The summer of 1915, however, turned into a debacle as Germany pushed Russia out of Galicia and Poland. Russian defeat led to a round of finger-pointing so extensive that much of the historical literature is devoted to figuring out whom to blame for Russia's military failures in 1915, the so-called Great Retreat. Some of the major suspects have been the political leadership, Russian generals, and the heralded "shell shortage." The details

\textsuperscript{27} Fuller, \textit{Civil-Military Conflict in Imperial Russia}, pp. 244-258.

\textsuperscript{28} Fuller, \textit{Civil-Military Conflict in Imperial Russia}, p. xxi.
of this debate need not concern us. What is most important for our purposes is whether the failures of 1915 can plausibly be seen as the result of encroachments on military autonomy.  

There is little reason to think that Russia’s military defeats in the summer of 1915 were caused by civilian interference in military affairs. This can be seen clearly in the political fallout over these defeats. The two major conflicts in the aftermath of the Great Retreat were civil-civil and military-military, not civil-military. On the civilian side, the liberal elements in Russian elite society attacked the Tsarist government for its mishandling of the war effort. Russian industrialists demanded greater participation in planning the war economy, and the Duma opposition asked for changes in the composition of the government. The military-military dispute centered around responsibility for the Great Retreat. The Supreme Headquarters of the Russian Army at the front, or Stavka, blamed War Minister Sukhomlinov and even executed one of his associates, a Colonel Miasoedov, on trumped-up charges of spying for the Germans. Most historians now agree that Stavka, commanded by Grand Duke Nikolay Nikolayevich, tried to shift the blame to Sukhomlinov in order to evade responsibility for their own mistakes in commanding the war effort. Moreover, since most European officers had expected that the coming war would be short, it is hard to fault Sukhomlinov for not being more prophetic than his European counterparts. Finally, the dispute between Sukhomlinov and Nikolay Nikolayevich can be traced back to disputes about military reform in the pre-war period. The disputes over who was to blame for the Great Defeat show that the major cleavages of the time were not civil-military. There had also been clashes between Stavka and the civilian government over spheres of responsibility in 1914-1915, but these were caused by

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29 For a good recent overview of these issues, see: Jones, “Imperial Russia’s Forces at War.” See also: Stone, *The Eastern Front*; Hasegawa, Chapter 2 (“The Political Crisis of Summer 1915”), *The February Revolution*, pp.
the regulations on wartime administration which gave the army too much power in the war zone and areas of the rear. To the extent that conflict in 1915 was civil-military, it was because the army had too much autonomy, not too little.\textsuperscript{30}

By 1916, Russia's military situation seemed to be improving. The Commander of the Southwest Front, General A.A. Brusilov, even achieved a major breakthrough in late May of that year before his offensive petered out. The material shortages of the previous year had been largely overcome. Indeed, the economic historian Peter Gatrell maintains that the government was pouring so much into the war economy that it was creating serious imbalances and shortages in the civilian economy. The military could no longer make a plausible claim that it was not being provided the necessary resources to wage the war.\textsuperscript{31}

A major consequence of the political recriminations following the Great Retreat was Nicholas II's decision in August 1915 to assume the responsibilities of Supreme Commander. The majority of the Council of Ministers opposed this decision because of their fear that the Tsar would be blamed for any further military disasters. Many also saw the machinations of the evil pairing of the Tsarina Alexandra and Rasputin behind the Tsar's decision. The historians David Jones and Dominic Lieven make a convincing case, however, that Nicholas


\textsuperscript{31} On the Brusilov offenses and the overcoming of the material shortages, see: Jones, "Imperial Russia's Forces at War," pp. 250, 306-308. For more detail on the Brusilov offenses, see: Stone, Chapter 11 ("Summer, 1916"), \textit{The Eastern Front}, pp. 232-263. On the war economy, see: Gatrell, "The Economy and the War."
II's judgment was correct in this case. The subsequent improvements in Russia's military situation in late 1915 and 1916 somewhat bears this conclusion out. Additionally, Nicholas could serve as a crucial "linchpin" connecting the military effort at the front with civilian administration in the rear. The essential point for our purposes is that the officer corps, as best as can be made out, apparently approved of Nicholas's decision. A crucial element in this support was the appointment of General M.V. Alekseev as Chief of Staff. Alekseev became de facto commander-in-chief and performed well in this role. Nicholas II, all observers agree, did not interfere in military decision-making.\textsuperscript{32}

If the armed forces could be basically satisfied with the degree to which their organizational autonomy was respected during the war from 1914 to 1917, this changed drastically after the February Revolution. One of the most momentous consequences of the overthrow of the government was the adoption on March 1\textsuperscript{33} by the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies of the justifiably famous Order No. 1. This decision completely disrupted military command authority. Order No. 1 sanctioned the formation of soldiers' committees and declared that government orders in the military sphere should only be executed if they were consistent with decisions of the Soviet. Although as written the order

\textsuperscript{32} David R. Jones, "Nicholas II and the Supreme Command: An investigation of motives," \textit{Sbornik: Study Group on the Russian Revolution}, Vol. 11, 1985, pp. 47-83; Jones, "Imperial Russia's Forces at War," pp. 291-295; Lieven, \textit{Nicholas II}, pp. 212-215. The two major historians of the February Revolution, Tsuyoshi Hasegawa and George Katkov, also agree that the officer corps supported Nicholas's II decision and were not worried that he would interfere in military matters: Hasegawa, \textit{The February Revolution}, p. 31; George Katkov, \textit{Russia 1917: The February Revolution} (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), pp. 141-142, 241. Generals Anton Denikin and Aleksey Brusilov provide differing opinions, with Denikin supporting the decision and Brusilov opposing it, but both agree that Alekseev called the shots: Denikin, \textit{Put' ruskogo ofitsera}, p. 289; A.A. Brusilov, \textit{A Soldier's Notebook 1914-1918} (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishers, 1976), pp. 170-172, 217, 226-227. Denikin's memoirs were originally published in New York in 1953 and are also available in English under the title \textit{The Career of a Tsarist Officer}. Brusilov's memoirs were first published in Moscow in 1929 as \textit{Moi vospominaniya}.

\textsuperscript{33} Note that almost all dates in this chapter are given according to the Old Style based on the Julian Calendar, which in the twentieth century is thirteen days behind the New Style based on the Gregorian Calendar used in the West. I switch to New Style after February 1, 1918, when the Soviet government made the change.
applied only to the Petrograd garrison, it had a highly disruptive effect on discipline at the front as well. From this point forward the autonomy of officers to make decisions was severely comprised. Allan Wildman aptly describes Order No. 1 as “the words that shook the Old Army to its foundations.” After the February Revolution military corporate interests clearly were seriously threatened.34

The corporate interest perspective on military involvement in sovereign power issues leads to the following predictions about armed forces’ behavior during the Russian Revolution. First, clear predictions about military behavior prior to the February Revolution are difficult to make. In broad terms, the decline of government support for military interests in the last decades of the Imperial regime suggests that military intervention should be considered likely. However, from 1910 to 1917 the armed forces had fewer reasons to complain about government support for their corporate interests. On balance, I conclude that prior to February 1917 the corporate interest approach would predict that military intervention was unlikely. After the February Revolution, however, this perspective clearly predicts military intervention. Finally, the corporate interest perspective predicts that in instances of military arbitration the army will side with the contender for power who is most likely to support the military’s corporate interests.

RUSSIAN MILITARY ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AND THE REVOLUTION

The organizational culture perspective on military involvement in sovereign power issues contends that officers' norms are a key determinant of military behavior. In the previous chapter I noted that there is widespread agreement in the primary and secondary literature on the apolitical nature of the late-Imperial Russian officer corps. In this section I investigate this claim of the literature in more detail, focusing on the two aspects of the norm of civilian supremacy, task and subordination. I conclude that this picture of an apolitical officer corps is in general correct, but also note troubling signs of politicization and the presence of distinct subcultures.

Task

The predominant view of the Russian officer corps on the eve of World War I was that the army's primary mission was external defense of the state. The military leadership had become increasingly disgruntled with internal missions that took them away from training. Military involvement in domestic suppression during the revolution of 1905-1906 served as a key institutional lesson. By 1914 the army had largely extricated itself from aid to the civil power missions. During World War I, however, the military leadership's involvement in domestic administration may have had a politicizing effect.

Soldiers in the imperial Russian army swore an oath to defend the regime against both external and internal enemies. Internal repression, as noted in Chapter Two, had been a mission of the Russian armed forces for centuries. The growth of the working class and the consequent urban disorder caused the regime to turn more and more to the army for support. The
revolution of 1905-1906 was the apogee of domestic usage, with more than 25,000 infantry companies and over 5,000 cavalry squadron being called out by civilians in 1905 alone.\textsuperscript{35}

This high level of internal usage would seem to suggest an officer corps that was not heavily committed to the task of external defense. In fact, the frequent use of the army for domestic repression was one of the major causes of civil-military conflict in the late-Imperial period. Most officers agreed that, if properly limited, aid to the civil power was a legitimate mission. The army was used similarly elsewhere in Europe. But officers often clashed with civilian officials over the extent to which the army could be used internally. The commander of the Kiev Military District, for example, reacted angrily in the 1880s when the Interior Minister suggested redeploying the districts' troops to make them better able to cope with domestic unrest. The commander replied that troop deployments should be based only on requirements of external defense, and that the Interior Minister's proposals would have harmful consequences for troop training.\textsuperscript{36}

Civil-Military conflict over internal usage became particularly acute during the revolution of 1905-1906. The revolution, of course, followed on the heels of the humiliating defeat in the Russo-Japanese War. Little wonder that the military leadership was particularly sensitive about taking the army away from external defense and training. The War Minister, General A.F. Rediger, wrote to the Prime Minister P.A. Stolypin in August 1906 to complain about what Rediger saw as excessive demands put on the troops by local civilian officials. William Fuller quotes Rediger at length:

\textsuperscript{35} An infantry company consisted of 96-168 men; a cavalry squadron was 138-180 men. See: Fuller, \textit{Civil-Military Conflict in Imperial Russia}, pp. 144, 267. See Chapter Two of this dissertation for a discussion of the army's role during the 1905-1906 revolution.

\textsuperscript{36} Fuller, \textit{Civil-Military Conflict in Imperial Russia}, pp. 76-77, 106-107.
"I have the honor to inform Your Excellency," wrote Rediger on August 3, "that I deem my primary task to be the preservation of the troops in order that they might above all answer to their chief function" -- i.e., external defense. Civilian authorities, requesting military support, never considered "how much these detachments are burdensome for the troops, how much they impede the War Ministry in the attainment of its main duty -- the training and military preparation of the units subordinate to it."37

The combination of military defeat against Japan and the widespread internal use of the army was a serious cause of military demoralization. The army was faced with the resignation of hundreds of officers, and by 1907 the army was twenty percent short of its target for officers. Both the failure in war and the involvement in domestic repression contributed to officers' sense of estrangement from society. Fuller notes that internal usage "could only debase the army in the eyes of the people and sully the soldier's reputation."38

Officer corps' opposition to internal missions led to a concerted effort after the revolution of 1905-1906 to free the armed forces from domestic usage. Rediger continued to fight with Stolypin on this issue, writing to the Prime Minister in 1908 that "it is essential to furnish [the army] with the opportunity of occupying itself with its primary task, thus abandoning service which has no direct connection to the strengthening and development of its military capabilities." In 1911 the War Ministry imposed strict limits on the use of the army in aid to the civil power missions. Sukhomlinov, Rediger's successor as War Minister, refused the request of the Amur River administration for a mere fifteen Cossacks, arguing that "it contradicts the interests of the army, the chief goal of which in peace is the appropriate training...[of soldiers]...in the event of war." By 1914 the military leadership had largely

37 Fuller, Civil-Military Conflict in Imperial Russia, p. 155.

38 Fuller, Civil-Military Conflict in Imperial Russia, pp. 142-144, 158, 166; A.I. Denikin, Staraya Armiya, Volume I (Paris: "Rodnik," 1929), p. 147.
succeeded in its efforts to free the army from internal missions. Fuller concludes, “on the eve
of August 1914, the Russian army was finally free to pursue its only goal in the minds of the
professional officers: the defense of the Empire from its external foes.... By having its
attention focused on military developments beyond Russia’s borders, the Russian army was at
last truly ‘vne politiki’ (out of politics).”

The Russian army, then, by 1914, had to a large extent succeeded in freeing itself from
internal missions. Its role in the 1905-1906 revolution was the source of an important
institutional lesson about the negative effects of internal missions. Robert McNeal notes that
one indicator of the feeling of the Russian military towards its role in 1905-1906 is the fact that
it prepared a sixteen volume official history of the Russo-Japanese War while not writing even
a single short study of the role of the army in 1905-1906 at home. The degree to which Russian
officers viewed police missions with distaste is also indicated by the fact that the tradition of
throwing a farewell dinner party for an officer being reassigned was not honored in the case of
those going into gendarme service, because it was seen as beneath the dignity of an officer.

The Cossacks were only a partial exception to this general feeling about the indignities
of domestic repression tasks. Cossacks were a hereditary warrior-caste that played an
important role in maintaining state control, particularly in border regions. Although they did
play a larger role in domestic policing than regular troops, in the second half of the nineteenth
century they were integrated into the regular cavalry and the War Ministry sought to limit

39 Fuller, Civil-Military Conflict in Imperial Russia, pp. 244-258. All of the quotes in this paragraph are from
this section of Fuller. For similar conclusions on the feelings of the Russian military towards domestic missions,

40 McNeal, Tsar and Cossack, p. 77; B.M. Shaposhnikov, Vospominaniya (Moskva: Voenizdat, 1974), p. 206;
Cossack involvement in aid to the civil power missions. Cossacks also felt embarrassed about their repressive role in 1905-1906 and did not glorify these missions. Cossack regiments often produced official histories of their role in Russia's external wars, but they did not follow the same practice with respect to internal usage.\textsuperscript{41}

The amount of time the Russian military could spend on training was also limited somewhat by the need to materially provide for its own troops. Military budgets were not sufficient to furnish everything the soldiers needed, so troops were required to perform such functions as growing food and sewing their uniforms. Soldiers also were assigned to work in the civilian economy to raise money for the regiment. The requirements of the "regimental economy" did divert the army from training for external war. Fuller has pointed out, however, that around ninety percent of Russian troops participated in summer exercises, much higher than the figure of one-third of the army for the French military. The regimental economy was a burden, but according to Fuller not a completely atypical one in comparison with other European militaries. In terms of the task orientation of officers, there is no reason to think that involvement in administering the regimental economy would lead officers to seek a role in societal choice or sovereign power issues. Indeed, officers were probably more likely than ever to remain focused on internal military issues.\textsuperscript{42}

\textsuperscript{41} McNeal, \textit{Tsar and Cossack}, pp. 57-58, 72, 77.

The outbreak of war in 1914 obviously provided an overwhelming incentive for the armed forces to concentrate on the task of external defense. At the same time, the regulations on wartime administration did give the high command a broad range of responsibilities in the theater of military operations. These responsibilities included such normally civilian matters as the right to issue compulsory decrees, the establishment of prices and tariffs, requisitioning, and censorship. Daniel Graf notes that the military leadership remained fixated on combat operations. Indeed, to a large extent those generals with civilian responsibilities saw them “as a mere adjunct of military operations and, in particular, of supply and provisioning.” Still, this expansion of military authority into the societal choice domain during the war did lead the army into much greater involvement in traditionally civilian spheres of activity. Graf concludes, “the basis was laid for the growing politicization of the military high command, both at Stavka and the front headquarters.”

The task orientation of the late-Imperial Russian military, therefore, was primarily on matters of external defense. Although the army played a growing role in domestic repression from the 1880s up until the 1905-1906 revolution, officers hated these internal missions and successfully fought to remove the army from them. Even the Cossacks were by and large focused on external defense. The demands of the regimental economy did somewhat limit the amount of time army units could spend in preparing for war, but these demands did not contribute to military task expansion, because the regimental economy was largely a closed affair of the armed forces. The onset of war did not lessen the military’s commitment to

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43 Graf, “Military Rule Behind the Russian Front.” The quotes are from pp. 393 and 411.
external defense, but the demands of wartime administration did involve the army in societal choice issues in a potentially politicizing manner.

**Subordination**

There is a broad consensus in the literature on the late-Imperial Russian military that it was "apolitical."\textsuperscript{44} We have already seen how the military had largely succeeded by 1914 in getting itself "outside politics" by drastically diminishing its involvement in domestic tasks. In this section I examine the subordination aspect of the norm of civilian supremacy by looking at officer corps' behavior and statements. I find that the dominant group in the officer corps adhered to the view that the military should be responsible to civilian authority. During the war, however, there seemed to be a growing subculture that saw a role for the military in sovereign power issues.

In the previous chapter we saw how the Russian army switched from heavy involvement in sovereign power issues in the eighteenth century to a stance of non-involvement after the failed Decembrist uprising of 1825. Later Imperial successions (Alexander II, Alexander III, Nicholas II) took place without incident. In the revolution of 1905-1906, the army remained loyal to civilian authority, despite the collapse of political order. The military leadership showed no interest in playing a role in sovereign power issues and was subordinate to tsarist rule.\textsuperscript{45}

The memoir literature on the late-Imperial officer corps goes even further, and notes not only the disinterest of the military toward sovereign power issues but indeed toward all political

\textsuperscript{44} See the brief discussion of this point in Chapter Two.

\textsuperscript{45} See Chapter Two of this dissertation for a more complete discussion.
issues. General Anton Denikin, for instance, stresses the complete apathy of officer candidates to political issues, in strong contrast to their politicized cohorts in civilian universities. Military schools and the General Staff Academy, in Denikin’s view, did not adequately prepare officers to understand the important political questions of the time. Thus, most officers were unable even to explain the political significance of Nicholas II’s October Manifesto of 1905, in which he guaranteed civil liberties and a popularly-elected legislature. Denikin maintains that the slogan “the army is outside politics (armiya -- vne politiki)” was taken too far, and was applied not only to the active participation of officers in political affairs, which Denikin considered a correct prohibition, but also to even an elementary knowledge of social and political questions. Denikin contends, “the state order was for the officer corps a predetermined fact, eliciting neither doubts nor different interpretations.”

General V.A. Sukhomlinov, Russia’s War Minister from 1909 to 1915, paints a similar picture of army attitudes. Sukhomlinov notes that as a military cadet in 1870-1871 he and his fellow cadets did not even think about major political events such as the unification of Germany. They did not read newspapers, and it was considered bad form to talk about politics. Sukhomlinov describes his views of the political role of the military in the following manner:

I thought that a soldier, from a private to a general, should be a stranger to all forms of politics. The mission of a state’s armed forces is to guard and defend the internal and external well-being of the country, protect the honor and dignity of the motherland, and support the peaceful mutual relations of the state. While maintaining order for the peaceful life and work of the population, the military is a force on which the existing state order is based.

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Imperial Russian army officers who went on to serve the Soviet regime also comment on the apolitical nature of the officer corps before the revolution. A.A. Ignat’ev, who during World War I was Russia’s military attaché in Paris, notes that when he was an elite guards cavalry officer no one mentioned politics at receptions and balls. He calls himself a “politically disarmed, helpless aristocrat” and emphasizes that he was “completely politically ignorant” in the pre-war period. B.M. Shaposhnikov, who later became Chief of the General Staff under the Soviet regime, offers a slightly different picture. Shaposhnikov states that it was important for officers to know the political programs of Russia’s different political parties, but he passes no judgment on whether officers other than himself possessed this knowledge. He reports that there were discussions and arguments among officers when Nicholas II issued the October Manifesto, but notes that ultimately “the duty of service took the upper hand.”

In sum, as William Fuller puts it, “Tsarist military memoirs almost in unison insisted that the Russian officer corps was apolitical.” Fuller proceeds somewhat to challenge this view. Fuller’s own conclusions, however, end up largely supporting the conventional wisdom. He is correct to challenge the notion that the officer corps was apolitical at all times on all issues. Clearly the War Ministry had organizational interests that it fought to maintain. The military sought higher budgets and greater autonomy, as traditional organizational theory would predict. It also tried to eschew involvement in tasks it considered not in keeping with its core missions, as much of the organizational theory literature, including the organizational culture literature, would expect. But Fuller also shows that the military had little interest in societal choice or sovereign power issues. The secret police, Fuller notes, had no success in uncovering

subversive officers in the army, despite persistent attempts. Moreover, the officers that Fuller identifies as politicized were interested primarily in military reform and “never represented more than a few hundred officers.” These “politicized officers” were thus a small organizational subculture, and they were fought by the higher military leadership. Fuller concludes, “the majority of army officers were ill-educated, apathetic, and unlikely to possess coherent political ideologies.”

Fuller notes several efforts by the War Ministry to ensure that officers did not engage in any sort of political activity. In December 1905 the War Department issued an order forbidding officers and enlisted men from joining or participating in any political group or society, and from taking part in political meetings or demonstrations. Fuller points out that “the War Ministry...was so committed to the ideal of an army above politics that it even proscribed right-wing organizations which it considered useful.” In October 1906 the War Ministry also prohibited the expression of viewpoints contrary to the governments’ by officers in the press.

To the extent that the bulk of the officer corps had political views, it could be summed up in the formula, “for faith, tsar, and fatherland.” The military’s chief values, according to Dominic Lieven, were “obedience, discipline, courage, and apolitical patriotism.” Officers

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49 Fuller, Civil-Military Conflict in Imperial Russia, pp. xx, 194, 196-207, 212-218, 259-263. Matitiahu Mayzel argues along lines similar to Fuller, and also ends up showing that those officers who had an interest in politics were primarily concerned with defense policy and were a small minority of the officer corps: Matitiahu Mayzel, Generals and Revolutionaries: The Russian General Staff During the Revolution: A Study in the Transformation of Military Elite (Osnabruck: Biblio-Verlag, 1979), pp. 33-35.

50 Fuller argues that the War Ministry adopted such stringent measures because they wanted to stamp out politically dangerous officers, particularly the military reformers mentioned in the previous paragraph. There is a much more straightforward explanation for the appearance of these new regulations prohibiting officer political activity. The Main Staff memorandum that served as the basis for the War Ministry directive of December 1905 was drafted on October 25, 1905, a week after Nicholas II’s October Manifesto granting civil liberties. Obviously such a change in the political order required rules pertaining to officer corps behavior, similar to those that existed in the European democracies. See: Fuller, Civil-Military Conflict in Imperial Russia, pp. 192-196, 207-210. For more information on political restrictions on Imperial officers, see: S.V. Volkov, Russkiy ofitserskty korpus (Moskva: Voenizdat, 1993), pp. 287-288.
tended, not surprisingly, to the conservative and authoritarian end of the political spectrum. Most officers retained a strong commitment to the person of the tsar and their oath of loyalty to him, although they were not formally indoctrinated with monarchist ideology. This commitment to the tsar was not seen by officers as a political act, but rather as a personal bond based on Russian traditions and officer subservience. Tsuyoshi Hasegawa is correct to point out that this bond between officers and the emperor was not nearly as strong as that which existed in Japan, and that patriotic service to the nation was in many ways a higher ideal than service to the tsar. Indeed, the whole logic of the Milyutin reforms was to create a modern nation-in-arms, and this ideal was somewhat at odds with any mystical attachment to autocracy.\footnote{Lieven, \textit{Russia's Rulers under the Old Regime}, pp. 173-175; Denikin, \textit{Put' russkogo ofitsera}, pp. 52-53, 214-215; Fuller, \textit{Civil-Military Conflict in Imperial Russia}, pp. 30-31; Volkov, \textit{Russkiy ofitserskiy korpus}, pp. 286-288; Jones, "Nicholas II and the Supreme Command," p. 52; Peter Kenez, "A Profile of the Prerevolutionary Officer Corps," \textit{California Slavic Studies}, Vol. 7 (1973), pp. 155-156; Peter Kenez, "The Ideology of the White Movement," \textit{Soviet Studies}, Vol. 32, No. 1 (January 1980), pp. 61-62; Evan Mawdsley, \textit{The Russian Revolution and the Baltic Fleet: War and Politics, February 1917-April 1918} (London: The MacMillan Press, 1978), pp. 10-11; Hasegawa, \textit{The February Revolution}, p. 192. See Chapter Two of this dissertation for more information on the Milyutin reforms. In addition to the many comments in the memoir literature on the lack of political views among young officers, see the comments of General P.O. Bobrovskiy, a leading expert in the late-Imperial officer corps on military education, on the complete absence of political or ideological indoctrination of future officers: Galushko and Kolesnikov, \textit{Shkola rossiiskogo ofitserstva}, pp. 127-128.}

This obedience to the tsar extended beyond the sovereign power realm. Russian military leaders stressed their subordination to the tsar in other domains of civil-military relations, including in the formation of foreign and security policy. Sukhomlinov notes that Nicholas II sought to limit inter-ministerial fighting between the War and Naval Ministries, telling its heads that “we should obey him and carry out his will.” Referring to decisions made by the Russian side in the July crisis of 1914, Sukhomlinov noted in his memoirs, “as War Minister I did not have a right to protest against such a decision -- a move on the chessboard of
power politics -- even thought it threatened war, because politics was not my affair. It was equally not my job as War Minister to decisively restrain the Tsar from war. I was a soldier and had to obey, because the army exists for the defense of the fatherland, and not to get involved in discussions." Similarly, Admiral A.A. Birilyov signed an important state treaty (the Treaty of Bjorkoe) without reading it, later remarking that "if he should find himself in the same position a second time he would do the same, considering that his duty as an officer of the navy obliged him to obey without question any order given him by his Sovereign Lord."

The Russian officer corps on the eve of World War I, then, had a strong commitment to the principle of subordination. As Peter Kenez states, "they repeated ad nauseam the doctrine according to which the Army stood above politics." Two important changes took place during World War I, however, that served to erode this extremely strong commitment to the subordination aspect of the norm of civilian supremacy. The first change involved the composition of the officer corps, the second was related to Russia's performance in waging the war.

Changes in the composition of the officer corps during the war came about because of the extremely high casualty rates suffered by the Russian military during the war. From April 1914 until January 1917 the number of officers increased from 40,590 to 145,916. In the same period the army lost 62,847 officers. During the war about 170,000 young men had become

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52 The Treaty of Bjorkoe was signed with Germany in 1905 and renounced shortly thereafter because it was incompatible with the alliance with France. For the quotes in this paragraph, see: Sukhomlinov, Vospominaniya Sukhominovoy, pp. 182, 223; Birilyov is quoted in Lieven, Russia's Rulers under the Old Regime, p. 175.

officers, and by 1917 less than ten percent of the officer corps were regular officers who had been in the service prior to 1914.  

Although the military leadership continued to be dominated by officers raised and trained in the imperial army, most junior officers by the end of the war were not products of this environment. In terms of social background, very few of these officers came from the nobility; most came from peasant or lower-class urban backgrounds. These new officers, including those who were in the reserves prior to the war, were far less likely to be committed to the dominant apolitical organizational culture of the officer corps. During the 1905 revolution some reserve officers had demonstrated their sympathy for liberal and radical goals. At least some of the new wartime officers had been politically active in progressive and revolutionary organizations before the war. Many of these junior officers had gone through accelerated four-month education courses, but this was not enough time to inculcate the pre-war organizational culture. It is not known how many of these new officers were politicized, in the sense that they did not automatically dismiss the possibility of an army role in sovereign power issues, but they certainly represented a potentially quite important organizational subculture. Although officers of the pre-war army were in the top command positions, junior officers could well play an important role in any political crisis. A secret police report from January 1917 noted ominously that there was a big difference between “cadre” and “war-time” officers and

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that only cadre officers could be expected to remain loyal to their oath in the event of mass demonstrations and protests.\textsuperscript{55}

The second important change during World War I relevant to the organizational culture of the Russian armed forces was the effect of Russia’s military performance on civil-military relations. Specifically, the domestic political confrontations between the autocracy and liberal members of elite society about the regime’s managing of the war effort spilled over into the Russian officer corps. Rumors about the pernicious influence of the Tsarina and Rasputin on the Tsar and government policy spread not only in elite circles in Petersburg but also at Stavka and among the army. Indeed, the Russian military attaché in Paris, Ignat’ev, reports that officers arriving in Paris told him about Rasputin’s machinations. Father Georgiy Shavel’skiy, the Chaplain-General of the Russian army from 1911-1917, reports that these rumors undermined the Tsar’s authority in the army. A secret police report on the mood of the army in January 1917 also states that many officers were very dissatisfied with the government and complained about the influence of the “German party.”\textsuperscript{56}

Based on these rumors, the feeling began to spread among army officers, including the high command, that pro-German elements in the government were undermining the war effort, if not actively plotting for a separate peace with Germany. Liberal Duma forces shared their concerns about the course of government policy with top officers in alarmist tones, and some


began to seek out officers who might participate in a palace coup either to remove the Tsarina from Petersburg or even topple the Tsar in favor of another member of the Romanov family. Historians disagree about how serious these plots were, with some dismissing them as part of the usual Petersburg gossip mill and others suggesting that they were quite serious and might well have been attempted if the February Revolution had not intervened. There is more agreement on the point that the military leadership was unprepared to support a palace coup. The Grand Duke Nikolay Nikolayevich was approached, but after some vacillation he rejected the idea because he believed the army would not go along with it. The only General clearly implicated in these plots was General A.M. Krymov, who believed that the country was headed towards ruin if drastic steps were not taken, and there is some evidence that other officers shared Krymov’s views. The prominent Duma deputy, Aleksandr Guchkov, later wrote of these plots that “I did a great deal for which I could have been hanged, but little of real achievement, because I could not succeed in involving anyone from the military.”

The two major Western historians of the February Revolution, Tsuyoshi Hasegawa and George Katkov, agree that there was little overt military support for these plots. Hasegawa gives two major reasons for military unwillingness to participate in any palace coup. First, officers’ primary consideration was the war effort, and they were concerned that such a momentous change in the political order would be disruptive. Second, Hasegawa states, “all the military leaders of the tsarist army were trained in the old school, which emphasized that

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military men were not to be involved in politics. Their inbred skepticism and disdain for domestic politics must have contributed to their refusal to join the conspiracies.” Shavel’skiy relates the story of a Colonel Pavlenko who was in charge of a reserve battalion of the Preobrazhensky Guards regiment based in Petersburg. Pavlenko was approached in January 1917 by a duke who asked how Pavlenko’s men would respond to a palace coup. Pavlenko immediately terminated the conversation. It seems that most officers, particularly the top commanders, were very concerned about the course of the war effort and the weakness of the government, but not prepared to violate their traditional subordination to civilian authority. For example, Colonel A.N. Verkhovskiy wrote in his diary on the last day of 1916 that “only a change in the political system can save the army from new misfortunes, and Russia from a shameful defeat.” However, he did not suggest the military intervene to change the political system.58

Russian officer corps’ commitment to the subordination aspect of the norm of responsibility was shown to be very high in the late-Imperial period. The statements of leading officers suggest that they were not only not interested in the political question of who should rule the state but most political questions. Officer corps behavior in the sovereign power realm since 1825 also demonstrates an apolitical stance towards these questions. Behavior in other domains of civil-military relations, such as security policy, provides further evidence that officers took the principle of subordination to civilian authority seriously. However, during the war this commitment was seemingly somewhat eroded, both because of the influx of new officers and because of the threat of Russian defeat in the war.

58 Hasegawa, The February Revolution, p. 192; Katkov, Russia 1917, pp. 42, 182, 187; Shavel’skiy, Vospominaniya, Volume I, p. 27; A.N. Verkhovskiy, Rossiya na golgofe (iz pokhodnago dnevnika 1914-1918 g.)
Summary

Thus, for both the task and subordination aspects of the norm of civilian supremacy I found a very strong commitment to the norm on the eve of the war. During the war, however, the appearance of more politicized organizational subcultures and the politicization of some of the old officer corps led to a drop in commitment to the norm. By 1917 I conclude that there was a moderate-to-high commitment to the norm of civilian supremacy for the officer corps as a whole. Figure 3-1 shows my estimation of the location of the Imperial Russian army on the apolitical/praetorian continuum for both the pre-war period and January 1917, on the eve of the February Revolution.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Apolitical</th>
<th>Praetorian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[---------BW--------DW---------]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Attachment</td>
<td>Moderate Attachment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Level of Attachment to Norm of Civilian Supremacy*

BW=Before War, DW=During War

**FIGURE 3-1: The Apolitical/Praetorian Continuum, Imperial Russian Army**

Figure 3-1 shows a drop from a high commitment to the norm of civilian supremacy before the war to a moderate-to-high attachment to it by January 1917. This drop suggests that by January 1917 military involvement in a coup attempt for national interest reasons had become a possibility (see Figure 1-2 in Chapter One). At the same time, intervention for corporate or sub-corporate motives was not likely. In cases of military arbitration, the organizational culture approach predicts that an army with a relatively high attachment to the norm will first try to sit the conflict out, and then if forced to decide will side with the

(Petrograd: 1918), p. 64.
contender it perceives is most legitimate and thus most likely to keep the military from further involvement in politics. In the next section I test the predictions of the four approaches as explanations for military behavior during the February Revolution of 1917.

THE OFFICER CORPS AND THE FEBRUARY REVOLUTION

The February Revolution and the resultant collapse of the Romanov dynasty came with a suddenness that shocked contemporary Russian observers. Despite the many weaknesses of the regime, and the “dual polarization” of Russian society, no one really expected what happened in February 1917. The Russian army was an absolutely key actor in these events, but it did not act as a unit. The regular troops of the Petrograd garrison were responsible for turning the mass strikes and protests into a revolution. And the military high command played a significant role in bringing about the abdication of the tsar. In this section I focus on the role of the military leadership. The leading theories of military involvement in sovereign power issues have little to say about the behavior of ordinary soldiers, although they were arguably the most important force in Russian politics in 1917. In the conclusion of this chapter I return to the question of soldiers’ actions and civil-military relations theory.

This section has two parts. I first present a brief narrative of the key events of the February revolution, focusing on the actions of the military leadership. I then turn to an examination of the motives of leading officers. Despite the disinclination of the military leadership to become involved in politics, they were thrust into the role of arbiter of a sovereign

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59 There are two first-class studies on the vital role played by soldiers during the revolution. See: Wildman, The End of the Russian Imperial Army, 2 Volumes; Frenkin, Russkaya armiya i revolyutsiya.
power dispute. Their behavior was strongly motivated by a desire to see order quickly restored, thus permitting the military leadership to return to its preoccupation with the war effort.

The February Revolution and the Abdication of the Tsar

The February Revolution began on February 23 (International Women’s Day) with a series of strikes and street demonstrations in Petrograd. The principal demand on the first day was for bread. The strikes and protests grew in intensity over the next several days, and by the twenty-fifth there was a general strike. The tsar was notified on the evening of the twenty-fifth of the disturbances, and he demanded that complete order be restored in the capital the next day. The twenty-sixth, a Sunday, was marked by violent street clashes in which around one hundred people died. Troops from the Petrograd garrison (the total strength of the garrison was 180,000) were employed in the operation to repress the demonstrations. Although the government won the day on the twenty-sixth, on the twenty-seventh over 65,000 troops of the garrison mutinied. By March 1 almost the entire garrison (over 170,000 troops) had joined the insurrection.60

The tsar received word of the garrison mutiny on the afternoon of February 27. Nicholas decided to send an expeditionary force from the front to suppress the revolution and to leave the next morning for Tsarskoe Selo, the royal residences near Petrograd where his wife and children were located. General N.I. Ivanov was put in charge of the troops from the front, and the chief of staff Alekseev began to send out orders for reinforcements. A force of several

divisions was to be assembled from units of the Northern and Western Fronts in Tsarskoe Selo, which was to serve as Ivanov's headquarters when he arrived there on March 1 (see Appendix B for maps of the Front and railroads between Stavka and Petrograd). Nicholas, meanwhile, left Stavka headquarters in Mogilev for Tsarskoe Selo on the morning of February 28, ignoring the suggestions of Ivanov, Alekseev, the leader of the Duma (M.V. Rodzyanko), and Grand Duke Mikhail that political concessions should accompany the military effort to restore order in Petrograd. Nicholas's efforts to travel to Tsarskoe Selo, however, were greatly disrupted by reports that pro-revolutionary forces had seized key train stations en route. The decision eventually was made to redirect the tsar's train to Pskov, an intermediate point between Mogilev and Tsarskoe Selo that was also the headquarters of the Northern Front. The Tsar finally arrived at Pskov on the evening of March 1.\textsuperscript{61}

The political situation had changed rapidly while Nicholas and Ivanov made their separate ways toward Tsarskoe Selo. Two new political bodies had come into existence on February 27. The Duma had been prorogued on February 26, and the next day an unofficial meeting of the Duma created a Provisional Committee of the Duma, which took responsibility for restoring order in Petrograd. On March 1 this Provisional Committee decided to form a Provisional Government (the Tsar's Council of Ministers had resigned on February 27). The other body created on the twenty-seventh was the Petrograd Soviet, harkening back to the workers' Soviet created during the 1905 revolution. The Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies and its Provisional Executive Committee came into being at the initiative of members of the socialist intelligentsia, particularly Mensheviks and independent socialists, and

\textsuperscript{61} Hasegawa, The February Revolution, pp. 431-441, 459-473.
with the support of the soldiers and the workers. Hasegawa tersely notes, “thus two conflicting authorities came into being.”

Alekseev had been in touch with Petrograd, particularly with the War Minister, General M.A. Belyaev, the commander of the Petrograd Garrison, General S.S. Khabalov, the General Staff, the Naval Staff, and Duma Chair Rodzyanko throughout the February 27-March 1 period. By the morning of February 28 it was clear that the city was in the hands of the revolutionaries and that the authorities, including Belyaev and Khabalov, had completely lost control. On March 1 Alekseev came to the conclusion that Ivanov’s expeditionary force was likely to meet stiff resistance and that the Duma Provisional Committee had succeeded in establishing order in Petrograd and over the railroads. Alekseev thus telegraphed Ivanov with instructions to delay his march on Petrograd and convey this news to Nicholas. The Tsar, however, never arrived in Tsarskoe Selo.

Nicholas II, rather, arrived at Pskov on the evening of March 1. The Commander of the Northern Front, General N.V. Ruzskiy, met the Emperor. On the basis of information he had received from Alekseev, Ruzskiy met with the Tsar for several hours and tried to persuade Nicholas of the futility of trying to put down the revolution with force and the need for political compromise with the Duma. A telegram from Alekseev to Nicholas arrived at about 11 p.m., in which Alekseev urged the Tsar to issue a manifesto granting a constitutional monarchy with a government formed by the Duma. Nicholas eventually agreed.

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63 Hasegawa, The February Revolution, 442-486. The motivation of Aleseev will be examined in the next section.
On the morning of March 2, however, Ruzskiy had a four hour "conversation" with Duma leader Rodzyanko over the Hughes apparatus, a kind of primitive teleprompter. By this point Rodzyanko had lost control of the Duma and the Provisional Government was established on March 1 without his participation. Rodzyanko told Ruzskiy that the Tsar's manifesto was too late and that the monarchy itself was in question. Ruzskiy sent a copy of the conversation to Alekseev, who polled all the front commanders. They unanimously endorsed the solution of Nicholas's abdication in favor of his son, Aleksey, with a regency headed by Grand Duke Mikhail. Nicholas agreed to this on March 2, but later that day decided that his son should abdicate as well, and that his brother Mikhail should become emperor. Mikhail, however, refused the throne the following day, March 3, after a lengthy discussion with the Provisional Government and the Duma Committee. The Romanov dynasty had come to an end.64

Explaining the High Command's Behavior during the February Revolution

Why did the military high command seemingly change its behavior so quickly, moving from support for repressing the Petrograd uprising on February 27-28 to endorsement of the Tsar's abdication a mere two days later? This rapid change in stance is sometimes explained as the product of some sort of conspiracy between the leading generals and the Duma Committee. The evidence for this interpretation is extremely weak, however. I follow the general conclusion put forward by Hasegawa in his comprehensive account of the February Revolution: "the actions and policies of the Duma Committee leaders and the military leaders are presented, not as conspiracies, but as their reaction to the over-all revolutionary situation in the capital."

64 See Hasegawa, The February Revolution, 487-515, 546-568, on the events narrated in the last two paragraphs. Again, the question of military motivations will be examined in the next section.
The high command was forced to respond to the events in Petrograd and the news they received from there as best they could, and they played a largely reactive role throughout the crisis. This conclusion is supported by primary sources that are available for process-tracing the thoughts and actions of the army leadership.\(^65\)

Perhaps the most extreme version of the conspiracy theory is put forward by Matitiahu Mayzel. Mayzel asserts, "the high command (and the officers behind it) wished to get rid of the tsar."\(^66\) Yet it is clear that on February 27th and 28th the high command, under Nicholas's orders, took a series of important steps towards putting down the revolution in Petrograd. On the twenty-seventh Alekseev communicated to General Yu.N. Danilov, chief of staff of the Northern Front, the need to send four ("the most solid and reliable") divisions to hook up with Ivanov, adding that "we must do everything to speed the arrival of solid forces. Our future

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\(^{65}\) Hasegawa, *The February Revolution*, p. xvi. Two major sources form the backbone of this section. First, all the key documents of communications between *Stavka*, the Northern Front, and Petrograd have been published. These documents are the most important sources on these events. They were published as: "Fevralskaya revolyutsiya 1917 goda," *Krasnyy arkhiv* [hereafter *KA*], Nos. 21 and 22 (1927), pp. 3-78, 3-70. A less complete version based on General Ruzskiy's papers was also published as: "Telegrammy i razgovory po telegrave mezhdyu Pskovom, Stavkoy i Petrogradam otnosyashchimi k obstoyatel'tvam v koikh proizoshlo otrechenyiye Gosudaya Imperatora, s primechaniyami general-ad"yutanta N.V. Ruzskago," *Russkaya letopis*, No. 3 (1922), pp. 112-160. I have tried to verify the completeness of these records in the Russian State Military History Archive (RGVIA, formerly TsGVIA) in Moscow, and have found the published versions to be accurate. In RGVIA, they are at: fond 2003 (*Stavka*), opis 1, dela 1751-1754. Hereafter I follow conventional citation rules: i.e., RGVIA, f. 2003, op. 1, d. 1751, followed by the page (l.) number. The other major source, which includes some of the key telegraphs as well as some relevant memoir excerpts, is: P.E. Shchegolev, ed., *Otreneniye Nikolaya II: Vospominaniya ochevidstev, dokumenty*, 2nd edition (Moskva: Sovetskiy pisatel', 1990). The 1990 version is an exact duplicate of the original version published in Leningrad in 1927.

\(^{66}\) Mayzel, *Generals and Revolutionaries*, p. 73. One example of Mayzel's tendentious reading of the evidence will suffice. On February 27 General Evert, the commander of the Western Front, sent a telegram to *Stavka* on the situation in Petrograd. Evert began the telegram by noting (I use Mayzel's translation here), "I am a soldier. In politics I have not interfered and have not been involved." Evert goes on to note that the disruption of transport and the movement of food supplies could have serious consequences for the army at the front. Evert concluded, "I consider it necessary to take proper, immediate military measures in order to guarantee the railway-movement and the passage of supplies to the army." Mayzel contends that although it is not clear what measures Evert favored, "one is inclined to think that Evert expressed his support for a military takeover." Not only is this interpretation competely at odds with the contents of Evert's telegram, but it also ignores the fact that Evert was one of the more conservative, apolitical, and pro-monarchical generals. Mayzel, *Generals and Revolutionaries*, pp. 70-71. The Evert telegram is in: "Fevralskaya revolyutsiya," *KA*, No. 21, pp. 8-9. Other Evert telegrams showing his loyalty to the Tsar are on pp. 26-27, 36.
depends on it." A similar number of forces were sent from the Western Front. On the afternoon of the twenty-eighth Alekseev informed all of the front commanders of the state of disorder in Petrograd and the troops being sent in the Ivanov expeditionary force to deal with the situation. Alekseev concluded, "on all of us lies our sacred duty to the Emperor and the motherland to maintain loyalty to their duty and oath among the troops of the front armies, to secure the movement of the railways and the flow of food supplies." Alekseev also ordered Brusilov, the commander of the Southwestern Front, to prepare additional troops as a reserve force if necessary.67

To the extent the military leadership took a political stance on February 27-28 it was the recommendation of Generals Alekseev, Ruzskiy, and Brusilov to Nicholas to rely not only on force to restore order in Petrograd, but also to grant the concession of a cabinet that enjoyed the support of the Duma. This course of action had been urged on the Tsar many times before from a wide range of political actors, and was also recommended to Nicholas by Rodzyanko and Grand Duke Mikhail on the twenty-seventh. At the same time, the military leadership continued to follow the Tsar's orders on sending troops from the front. The important point from the high command's perspective was that order be restored in Petrograd and on the railways, since continued disorder threatened to disrupt the war effort. As Hasegawa sums up the situation at Stavka on February 27 and 28:

The Stavka's determination to quell the revolution by force was indeed a serious one. Each time it received information that the situation was worsening in Petrograd, it stepped up military commitment to the counterrevolutionary attempt. This response emanated from the belief that Petrograd had fallen into the hands of irresponsible, anarchical masses, influence by left-wing elements -- an alarming situation that, if

allowed to develop further, would inevitably undermine the integrity of the army and seriously hamper military operations at the front. 68

Alekseev’s determination to use force was curtailed by news he received from Petrograd on the evening of the twenty-eighth. The Naval Staff informed Stavka that the Duma was trying to return the troops to the barracks, but that a government decision appointing a cabinet enjoying public confidence was necessary, and that without such a decision soon there was a danger that a worker-socialist organization could come to power. Alekseev also received news from General Gulevich, Commander of the 42nd Corps based near Vyborg, that a Provisional Government headed by Rodzyanko had been formed. Finally, Alekseev received a telegram in the name of Rodzyanko dispatched to all railway stations by the Duma member A.A. Bublikov, who had seized control of the Ministry of Transport and arrested the former Minister. The “Bublikov telegram,” as it came to be known, declared that the State Duma had taken power into its hands. From the point of view of Stavka, the essential part of the Bublikov telegram was that it called for all railway workers to stay at their posts and double their efforts to keep the trains moving. Stavka had made clear up to this point that one of its chief concerns was potential disruption of the railroads and the movement of supplies to the front. 69

At around one a.m. on March 1 Alekseev telegraphed General Ivanov at Tsarskoe Selo, although Ivanov actually did not arrive there until nine o’clock that night. Alekseev stated that he had information that the Provisional Government was reasserting control and that a compromise based on the “stability of the monarchical principle” and new elections and a new

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68 Hasegawa, The February Revolution, pp. 459-463. The telegrams from Brusilov and Ruzskii urging the Tsar to grant political concessions are in: “Fevral’skaya revolyutsiya,” KA, No. 21, pp. 7, 13.

69 “Fevral’skaya revolyutsiya,” KA, No. 21, pp. 29, 32-33, 35.
government was possible. Alekseev advised Ivanov to "change his methods of action" and that negotiations could lead to "conciliation" and the "avoidance of shameful civil strife, so desired by our enemy." Alekseev asked Ivanov to report all of this to the Tsar and expressed his wish that Nicholas would accept such an outcome, which would strengthen Russia. Alekseev's evident optimism has confounded historians, since it was apparently based on very little reliable information about the state of affairs in Petrograd. Alekseev, in particular, had not received any information about the "stability of the monarchical principle," as far as one can tell. The most likely explanation for Alekseev's change of mood is that he seized upon a couple of indicators of a change for the better, particularly the news about the railroads, and filled in the blanks in a manner consistent with his own thinking. The fact that he was exhausted and sick (he was running a fever) probably did not lend itself to lucid thinking. It is clear that Alekseev favored a constitutional monarchy with an expanded role for the Duma. He also knew that the Tsar had not yet arrived in Tsarskoe Selo, that Ivanov's reinforcements were also not in place, and that the garrison in Petrograd was completely unreliable. It is not surprising that he asked Ivanov not to proceed until news about the changed situation in Petrograd had been communicated to Nicholas.70

70 "Fevral'skaya revolyutsiya," KA, No. 21, p. 31. Several prominent historians, including Allan Wildman and George Katkov, have suggested that Alekseev was verging on insubordination by sending su\'o: a telegram to Ivanov. We are now into the realm of counterfactuals, but I do not find this argument entirely persuasive. There is no reason to think that Alekseev would have disobeyed a direct order from Nicholas if Nicholas had insisted that Ivanov continue his mission. Given the extent of Alekseev’s authority as Chief of Staff, the fact that he had not communicated with the Tsar all day, and that the situation in Petrograd had apparently radically changed, Alekseev’s decision that a highly risky repressive operation against Petrograd, with unclear prospects for success, should be delayed until the Tsar could assess the situation for himself was not unreasonable. It is also somewhat of a moot point, since Nicholas himself telegraphed Ivanov asking him to halt his operation at midnight on March 1 (a mere three hours after Ivanov arrived in Tsarskoe Selo), and Ivanov’s reinforcements had not yet arrived. This telegram is: “Fevral’skaya revolyutsiya,” KA, No. 21, p. 53. For Wildman and Katkov’s views, see: Wildman, The End of the Russian Imperial Army, Volume I, pp. 205-207; Katkov, Russia 1917, pp. 302-305, 313-317.
When the Tsar finally arrived in Pskov on the evening of March 1 things finally came to
a head. Alekseev continued to hold the view, as expressed by Quartermaster General A.S.
Lukhomskiy, that "it is impossible to conduct a war while a revolution is taking place in
Russia" and that the Tsar should "issue an act that can calm the population." Alekseev sent a
telegram to the Tsar in Pskov on the afternoon of the first, to be delivered by Ruzskiy when
Nicholas arrived. Alekseev pointed out that the disorder had spread to Moscow and that it
would be impossible to keep the railroads running and deliver supplies to the front in such a
condition. This would be "fatal" for Russia and could lead to "a shameful conclusion of the
war, with all the corresponding difficult consequences for Russia." It would be impossible,
Alekseev argued, to isolate the army from revolution in the rear. He considered it his duty to
inform the Emperor that it was "necessary to take immediate measures to calm the population
and restore normal life in the country." Alekseev believed that without such a decision by the
Tsar it was possible that extremist elements would come to power. He said, "I beg your
highness, for the sake of saving Russia and the dynasty," to appoint a prime minister enjoying
public confidence with the authority to form a cabinet. 71

Northern Front commander Ruzskiy was entrusted by Alekseev with the task of
persuading the Tsar to accept a political compromise. Originally Rodzyanko had planned to
come from Petrograd to negotiate with Nicholas, but he had failed to do so. Ruzskiy met with
Nicholas on the evening of March 1, after the emperor's arrival in Pskov. Ruzskiy later
remarked that he understood that the most serious hour of his life had arrived, "when from a

71 "Fevral'skaya revolyutsiya," KA, No. 21, pp. 36-37, 39-40. For an excellent account of the mood at Stavka
at the time, see the memoirs of the Russian diplomat Nicolas de Basily, the director of the Diplomatic Chancellery
at Stavka: Nicolas de Basily, Chapter 5 ("The Abdication of Nicholas II"), Diplomat of Imperial Russia 1903-
front commander-in-chief he was turned into a purely political actor.” Ruzskiy began his conversation with the Tsar, which was to drag on for several hours, by noting “that it was difficult for him to speak, because his report was beyond the limits of his competence” and he asked Nicholas to bear in mind that since the decisions to be made dealt “not with military questions, but those of state administration,” he would understand if the Tsar found it objectionable to listen to his report. Nicholas told Ruzskiy to speak with complete openness. Ruzskiy then set to work to persuade the emperor of the need to form a cabinet that would be responsible to the Duma. Nicholas declined, and said that he did not cling to power for its own sake, but that he was acting in accordance with his views of what was best for Russia. The Tsar said that only with a different upbringing could he accept Ruzskiy’s formula, “the emperor reigns, and the government governs.” Nevertheless, Ruzskiy eventually was able to persuade the Tsar of the need to communicate to Rodzyanko his willingness to grant the political concession of a responsible ministry.  

About this time a second telegram arrived from Alekseev also urging this concession. Ruzskiy later remarked that he doubts that he would have been able to persuade Nicholas without Alekseev’s support. Alekseev began by again reminding the Tsar of “the growing

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72 The details of this meeting are based on Ruzskiy’s recollections, available in two second-hand accounts (of S.N. Vil’chkovskiy and A.V. Romanov) and one brief newspaper interview. Most historians have relied on the more detailed second-hand accounts provided by Vil’chkovskiy and Romanov. The diary entries of Nicholas II for March 1 and 2 shed no light on this meeting. For Ruzskiy’s accounts, see: Gen. S.N. Vil’chkovskiy, “Prebyvanie Nikolaia II v Pskove 1 i 2 marta 1917 g.,” in Shegolev, ed., *Otrecheniye Nikolaya II*, pp. 146-168, here at pp. 151-154; Gen. N.V. Ruzskiy, “Beseda s zhurnalistom V. Samoylovym ob otrechenii Nikolaya II,” in Shegolev, ed., *Otrecheniye Nikolaya II*, pp. 142-145; “Iz dnevnika A.V. Romanova,” *KA*, No. 1 (26), 1928, pp. 201-208. Nicholas II’s diary entries are also in Shegolev: “V dni otrecheniya (Iz dnevnika Nikolaya II),” p. 34. For a brief discussion of the reliability of the Ruzskiy sources, see: Katkov, *Russia 1917*, pp. 320-321. On the fact that Alekseev had entrusted Ruzskiy with this task, in addition to Ruzskiy’s recollections, see the telegram from Alekseev’s assistant, General V.N. Klembovskiy to the Northern Front in: “Feval’skaya revolyutsiya,” *K1*, No. 21, pp. 41-42. On Rodzyanko’s failure to arrive to negotiate with the Tsar, see: Hasegawa, *The February Revolution*, pp. 450-458; Katkov, *Russia 1917*, pp. 318-320.
danger of the spread of anarchy across the entire country, the further disintegration of the army and the impossibility of continuing the war” under these conditions. He “implored” the Emperor to grant a responsible ministry headed by Rodzyanko. Alekseev had tasked the Foreign Ministry representative at Stavka, Nicolas de Basily, with preparing the text of such an act. Nicholas agreed to the text without changes. Nicholas seemed so indifferent that Ruzskiy asked again “if he would be acting against the wishes of the Emperor if he were to inform Stavka and Petrograd of Nicholas’s agreement to the manifesto.” The Tsar replied that it was a difficult decision for him but that he took it in the best interests of Russia.⁷³

Most historians have concluded that, in the words of George Katkov, Ruzskiy “gave the emperor no choice” but to agree to these political concessions. It is of course impossible to know what Nicholas was thinking, but it should be stressed that neither Ruzskiy nor Alekseev ever suggested to the Tsar that they would not follow his orders if he decided differently. In the crucial Alekseev telegram that arrived in the middle of Ruzskiy’s discussion with Nicholas, Alekseev wrote, “I zealously implore your Imperial Majesty, if you please,” to agree to the manifesto prepared at Stavka, hardly a coercive choice of words. The pressure of the circumstances certainly forced Nicholas’s decision as much as any threat of military insubordination, which would have been quite out of character for either the Tsar or the high command to contemplate.⁷⁴


⁷⁴ Katkov, Russia 1917, p. 324. Hasegawa agrees with Katkov on this point: Hasegawa, The February Revolution, pp. 494-495. Hasegawa makes much of the fact that Alekseev at some point on the evening of March 1 switched from supporting a “ministry of confidence” to a “responsible ministry.” The essential difference was that in a “ministry of confidence” the Tsar would appoint people acceptable to the Duma, whereas in a “responsible ministry” the Duma itself would appoint the government. Hasegawa thereby invents a conversation between Ruzskiy and Alekseev via the Hughes apparatus during which they must have agreed on this change. I found no evidence for such a “lost conversation” in the archives. Moreover, the second telegram mentioning the
Ruzskiy's relief at persuading Nicholas to accept this political concession was quickly dissipated when he had a four hour conversation with Duma leader Rodzyanko over the Hughes apparatus, beginning at 3:30 a.m. on March 2. Ruzskiy contacted Rodzyanko to tell him of the Tsar's decision. Rodzyanko replied that Ruzskiy and Nicholas II were obviously not aware of the most recent developments in Petrograd, where "the most frightening revolution" was taking place and which Rodzyanko thought would be difficult to control. He stated that "the dynastic question has been put point blank," and that Nicholas needed to abdicate in favor of his son. Ruzskiy replied by noting the threat of anarchy to the country in general and the war effort in particular. He emphasized, "the crisis needs to be liquidated as soon as possible, in order to give back to the army the possibility of looking only forward in the direction of the enemy." He further noted that spring would arrive soon and that the army had to be ready for joint activity with its allies. Ruzskiy concluded, "if the anarchy of which you are speaking spreads to the army, and commanders lose the authority of power -- think, what will become of our motherland then?"\(^{75}\)

The army, having already been forced to arbitrate between the Duma Committee and the Tsar on the question of a responsible ministry, was immediately thrust again on to center stage. The contents of the Ruzskiy-Rodyanko conversation was immediately relayed to *Stavka*. Around noon on March 2 Alekseev began to inform the other front commanders about the previous night's developments. Alekseev communicated his opinion that there was no other

\(^{75}\) "Fevral'skaya revolyutsiya," *KA*, No. 21, pp. 55-59.
option than for the Tsar to abdicate in favor of his son, under the regency of Grand Duke Mikhail. Alekseev argued that there was no other choice because the Provisional Government in essence had control over the functioning of the railways and the future of the army. "It is necessary to save the army in the field from collapse," Alekseev stressed, "to continue the struggle with the external enemy to the end and save the independence of Russia." De Basily later remarked that Alekseev endorsed abdication because "to oppose it would have been to add civil war to external war." Alekseev asked all of the front commanders, if they agreed with his views, to send them to the Tsar as soon as possible. Alekseev concluded:

Among the high command of the front armies there needs to be a unity of views and goals and thus save the army from wavering and possible instances of betrayal of duty. The army should with all of its might struggle with the external enemy, and decisions about internal affairs should free it from the temptation to take part in the revolution, which can be more painlessly accomplished with a decision from the top.76

All of the front commanders supported Alekseev’s position. The need to maintain unity among the high command in such a situation was stressed in particular by Evert, the commander of the Western Front, and Brusilov, the commander of the Southwestern Front. Evert noted that this decision had to come from the top (i.e., Nicholas), because otherwise the army could split, and Brusilov stressed the need for "complete solidarity." In the afternoon of March 2 Alekseev telegraphed Nicholas with the replies of the front commanders. The Grand Duke Nikolay Nikolayevich, commander of the Caucasian Front, wrote that victory in the war was necessary both for Russia and the future of the dynasty and thus required extraordinary measures. The other commanders replied in similar terms, stressing the importance of the war effort. Evert also noted the difficulty the army would have in its present state suppressing the

76 "Fevral’skaya revolyutsiya," KA, No. 21, pp. 67-70; de Basily, Diplomat of Imperial Russia, p. 120.
revolution with force. The one dissonant note came from General V.V. Sakharov, the commander of the Romanian Front, who denounced the Duma in extremely bitter terms. Sakharov concluded, however, that there seemed to be no other choice but to submit to the Duma's demands if the war were to be continued. Alekseev concluded his telegram to Nicholas by noting, "the army's contact with matters of internal politics will signify the inevitable end of the war, shame for Russia, her collapse."77

On March 2 Ruzskiy once again met with the Emperor, this time on the question of the Tsar's abdication. He found this discussion with the Tsar much easier than the one on granting a responsible ministry the previous evening. Nicholas had already crossed the Rubicon the night before by agreeing to a constitutional monarchy with a strong parliament, thereby giving up on the ideal of autocracy that he had adhered to since his childhood. Moreover, the combined opinions of the military leadership, including his trusted chief of staff Alekseev and his uncle the Grand Duke Nikolay, certainly carried great weight. According to the diplomat de Basily, Alekseev was a "faithful soldier [who] had never failed in his loyalty to his sovereign and supreme commander," but Alekseev saw no other way out without risking internal disorder and military defeat and collapse. Hasegawa sums up the stance of Alekseev, and the entire high command, in similar terms: "the best course of action seemed to Alekseev to take the posture of noninterference in internal politics, while putting pressure on the Tsar to sacrifice himself for a peaceful settlement of the crisis." Katkov offers a similar assessment, rejecting the view that

77 "Fevral'skaya revolyutsiya," KA, No. 21, pp. 67-75.
the abdication of the Tsar came about because of a “general’s revolution.” “Throughout the war,” Katkov concludes, “the generals adopted a strictly non-political attitude.”78

The decision of the Tsar to abdicate in favor of his brother, Grand Duke Mikhail, rather than his son Aleksey instantly threw the entire revolutionary settlement into an additional round of turmoil. Evidently Alekseev and leading Duma liberals such as Rodzyanko, Aleksandr Guchkov (who became the first Minister of War in the Provisional Government) and Pavel Milyukov (who became Minister of Foreign Affairs) expected that the abdication in favor of a child would end the revolutionary upheaval in Petrograd while maintaining the Romanov dynasty. Katkov states, “even when the abdication had been decided upon the generals still believed that they were taking part in an action to save the monarchy and maintain the dynasty.” Grand Duke Mikhail’s accession to the throne was more problematic from both a political and legal point of view.79

Rodzyanko contacted Alekseev early on the morning of March 3 and asked that Alekseev delay the announcement of the abdication of Nicholas II. Rodzyanko explained his desire to hold up the news on the basis of his judgment that Grand Duke Mikhail was an unacceptable candidate as emperor who had no popular support. Rodzyanko said that the Duma Committee and the Provisional Government would rule until a Constituent Assembly could be called. Alekseev was extremely unhappy with this news. He considered both the uncertainty about the dynastic question and the calling of a Constituent Assembly during the

middle of the war harmful from the point of view of the army. Alekseev noted that "all the thoughts and endeavors of command personnel of the field army" are directed towards keeping the army focused on the war and not allowing it to come into contact with "the unhealthy internal condition that part of Russia is experiencing." He concluded by emphasizing, "I am a soldier, and all of my thoughts are directed west, towards the front and the enemy."\(^{40}\)

This latest news from Petrograd apparently convinced Alekseev that he had been played for a fool by Rodzyanko during their negotiations over the last several days. Alekseev first had been led to believe that the granting of a constitutional monarchy by the Tsar, and then Nicholas II's abdication, would end the revolution and allow the army to concentrate on the task of defeating Germany and Austro-Hungary. Now he was being told that the entire dynastic principle was in question. The afternoon of March 3 Alekseev telegraphed all of the front commanders. He summarized the current situation and then laid out a series of conclusions. He maintained that the Duma Committee was divided and that left-wing elements had gained influence over Rodzyanko. He noted that the Petrograd garrison had become "harmful and dangerous for everyone." The entire situation, Alekseev argued, was full of grave danger for the front armies and could undermine Russia's fighting capacity, leading to military defeat, the loss of territory, and the triumph of extreme leftist elements in Russia's remaining territory.

Aleskeev considered it necessary to insist to Rodzyanko that the Tsar's abdication manifesto be realized, and that there be a conference at Stavka of all the front commanders "to establish unity in all cases and circumstances." He suggested that if the new commander-in-chief, Grand Duke


\(^{80}\) "Fevral'skaya revolyutsiya 1917 goda," KA, No. 22 (1927), pp. 25-27. See also Rodzyanko's conversation with Ruzskiy the morning of March 3 on pp. 27-29.
Nikolay Nikolayevich, could attend, then the date should be set by him; otherwise the conference should be March 8 or 9. He concluded, "the collective voice of the army's highest ranks and their conditions...should become known to all and influence the course of events." 81

This March 3 telegram of Alekseev often has been interpreted as a possible prelude to military intervention. Hasegawa states, "the proposal for a conference of commanders in chief clearly indicated his [Alekseev's] intention to revive the plan of military intervention against Petrograd." There are several problems with this interpretation. It is true that this is the strongest language Alekseev had used on the need for the military to influence a sovereign power question. He was clearly frustrated about first being thrust into the arbiter role, only to end up with the least desirable outcome from his point of view. At the same time, it seems an overstatement to claim that a potential coup was in the offing. If Alekseev was interested in using force against the Provisional Government, he would have had to take bolder steps than calling for a conference a week later, to be chaired by the new Commander-in-Chief (Grand Duke Nikolay). Additionally, the very day (March 3) that Alekseev was allegedly contemplating military intervention he ordered General Ivanov to return to Stavka. The previous day (March 2) the movement of troops from the front to hook up with Ivanov was halted. This would indeed be a strange coup, then, because troops were being ordered to move away from Petrograd and the planning for it was to take place a week later. Allan Wildman's characterization of Alekseev's March 3 telegram seems more accurate: "This was the first glimmer of the impulse to suspend the traditional view of the Army as 'above politics' for the

sake of reestablishing authority and discipline.” Thus, Alekseev had no plan to intervene, but a “glimmer of [an] impulse.”

Regardless of Alekseev’s intent, the suggestion of a conference at Stavka of the Front commanders was rejected by the commanders themselves. Ruzskiy noted that the best way to maintain unity among the high command was for Stavka to be in direct contact with the government, and for Stavka to then issue government orders to the commanders of the fronts. Several of them stressed the need for the commanders to remain at the front in order to maintain discipline. Brusilov stressed the need to appeal to the troops with the message that they were to defend Mother Russia and that the army “cannot get involved in politics now.” The new Supreme Commander, Nikolay Nikolayevich, maintained that he should represent the “unified opinion” of the army in dealings with the government, and not the “collegial opinion” of the front commanders. Evert pointed out that events were developing so fast that a conference of commanders, which he thought was necessary, could not be put off until March 8. Only Sakharov gave an unqualified endorsement to Alekseev’s proposal.

On the evening of March 3 Alekseev had a final series of conversations with Guchkov and Rodzyanko during which he learned of Grand Duke Mikhail’s decision to abdicate. Alekseev reacted with despair to this news, which he thought would have a negative impact on the armed forces. He stated, “the current army in the field needs to be preserved and spared

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82 Hasegawa, The February Revolution, p. 552. Katkov, similarly, speaks of “the formation of a military junta” as a possible result of Alekseev’s proposed conference: Katkov, Russia 1917, p. 350. Hasegawa reconstructs the movement of Ivanov’s units in considerable detail, and shows that Ivanov’s mission was not cancelled because of unreliable troops, as some (particularly Soviet) scholars have argued, but due to a change in policy: Hasegawa, The February Revolution, pp. 478-486. Most of the relevant telegrams on troop movements are in: “Fevral’skaya revolyutsiya 1917 goda.” Wildman’s quote is from: Wildman, The End of the Russian Imperial Army, Volume I, p. 213.

from all kinds of passions about internal questions.... The ferocious struggle [with the enemy] is still far from over, and the fatherland needs every fighter.” He reminded Rodzyanko that spring operations would begin soon and requested that the new government do its utmost for the defense effort and the maintenance of unity and discipline in the armed forces.84

The two abdication manifestoes were distributed throughout the armed forces on March 4. There were only a few reported instances of senior commanders refusing to announce the abdications. Many of them left the task of explaining the abdications to their junior officers. Wildman notes that this reluctance may have been due to their fears that their authority as commanders had been undermined, but he explained their hesitation as a product of something else: “Perhaps more fundamental was their total unfamiliarity with ‘politics’: when suddenly thrust into the role of explaining a political act of the first magnitude (one, moreover, that went to the heart of their own loyalties), they were at a complete loss.”85

Summary

The outcome of the February Revolution hinged importantly on the political stance of the military leadership. The army became the arbiter of the sovereign power dispute that the revolution provoked. The army high command was far from eager to play this role, but it had no choice. Throughout the revolutionary crisis, leading Russian officers were guided by their concern that the war effort continue without disruption. The desire of the military leadership to stay “outside politics” and focused on external defense is consistent with both the international

84 “Fevral’eskaya revolyutsiya,” KA, No. 22, pp. 36-42.

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structure and organizational culture perspectives on military involvement in sovereign power issues. The domestic structure explanation also is essential for understanding why the military was thrust into thearbiter role, although it does not account for the extreme reluctance of the military to become more directly involved, let alone to try and seize power for itself. The corporate interest approach may help explain why the army was willing to come to terms with the Duma leadership, which it thought could help advance the war effort. More important, though, was the fact that the military leadership wanted political stability so it could continue the war. It did not behave as a rational bureaucratic actor seeking to gain for itself a more powerful role as a result of the revolutionary chaos. The Russian army in February 1917 was not predisposed towards a virtual military dictatorship, similar to the arrangement in Germany under Hindenburg and Ludendorff.66 In the next section we will see to what extent these views of the Russian officer corps had changed as a result of the disintegration of the armed forces in the aftermath of the February Revolution.

THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT AND THE KORNILOV AFFAIR

The February Revolution, in the eyes of most segments of Russian society and the Russian political elite, was supposed to usher in a new era in the country’s political life, a bold departure from the old regime. There was little agreement, however, on the terms of the new order. The sharpest clash was between elite society and the bulk of the Russian population. If the February Revolution had abruptly ended the polarization between the government and the

elites, the polarization between the upper and lower classes was as sharp as ever. The war effort was perhaps the most contentious of issues dividing Russian society.

This polarization of Russian society was clearly reflected in the army. The officer corps, naturally, believed in a continuation of the war effort until victory was achieved. The soldiers, on the other hand, were ready for peace. The February Revolution marked the beginning of the disintegration of the Russian armed forces, which severely strained relations within the army and between the military and the government.

Efforts by the military leadership to fight disintegration within the country and the army eventually led to a confrontation between General Lavr Kornilov, appointed Supreme Commander in July, and the Provisional Government headed by Alexander Kerensky. In late August Kornilov was denounced as a plotter by Kerensky and dismissed as commander. Kornilov at this point raised the flag of revolt and tried to march on Petrograd, but he had little backing and his putsch was quickly defeated. Whether Kornilov had been planning a military coup before Kerensky’s denunciation of him is a hotly contested issue in the historical literature. Based on research in the archives in Moscow, I find little evidence that a military coup was being planned, although the idea did have some support in the officer corps. Kornilov is undoubtedly guilty of insubordination, but only after Kerensky decided to dismiss him.

In this section I discuss the key political developments between the February Revolution and the Kornilov affair. I concentrate on the attitude of the high command toward developments in the armed forces and the thinking of leading officers about the role of the army in sovereign power issues. I then explain the behavior of the armed forces during the Kornilov affair.
Dual Power: The Provisional Government, the Soviets, and the War

After the smoke of the February Revolution had cleared, two authority structures emerged as contenders for influence in the formation of state policy. The Provisional Government, as we have seen, was formed on the basis of the Duma, and bourgeois liberals dominated the first government. The revolution in Petrograd, however, had largely been accomplished by workers and soldiers, and the Petrograd Soviet represented their interests. The Soviet rejected the prospect of either trying to establish a revolutionary government of its own or of entering into a coalition with the bourgeois liberals, and adopted a policy of conditional support for the Provisional Government. Dual power, Ronald Suny notes, “was an accurate mirror of the real balance of forces in the city and the mutual suspicion that kept them from full cooperation.”

The entire period of Provisional Government rule was marked by a series of crises, confrontations, and accommodations between the government and the Soviet. Perhaps the most vexing question of all was the war. The first Provisional Government, and particularly Foreign Minister Milyukov (the leader of the liberal Kadet party) and War Minister Guchkov (the leader of the more conservative Octobrists), were committed to a continuation of the war effort with no change in the ultimate aims being pursued by Russia. These aims included the territorial expansion of Russia after the defeat of the Central Powers, as agreed to in the allied treaties signed by the Tsarist regime. The socialists that dominated the Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet found such a position to be an anathema, seeing it as an expression of

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imperialism. On March 14 the Soviet issued an “Appeal to the People of the World” that called for all the peoples of Europe to rise up against their oppressors in support of peace. The Soviet rejected the idea of a separate peace, but called for a general European settlement in which all countries would reject “annexations and indemnities.” The government was forced to accept the Soviet position, but Milyukov attached a note to the allies stating that Russia would continue to abide by all of its prior agreements and would pursue a “decisive victory.” The massive protests caused when this note was leaked to the press, known as the April Crisis, showed that only the Soviets had real authority in the capital. Milyukov and Guchkov left the government, and in May a “coalition government” based on the Kadets and moderate socialist elements from the Petrograd Soviet came into being.88

The new coalition government and its War Minister, the socialist Kerensky, decided that a Russian military offensive was necessary to force the allies to take them and their program for an immediate peace seriously. The Soviet also supported the offensive for this reason. The Kadets in the government, and the military leadership, thought that a military offensive was the only way to stop the disintegration of the armed forces. The “Kerensky offensive” was launched on June 18 and collapsed almost immediately. The first coalition government fell apart, and once again violence erupted in Petrograd (the “July Days”). The problem of the war had not been solved. A separate peace was ruled out on the grounds that it could lead to German victory in the war and German hegemony in Europe, which would probably be fatal for

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the revolution. Yet the army was obviously in no state to fight, and its disintegration gathered speed after the failure of the Kerensky offensive.\textsuperscript{99}

The war was by no means the only problem faced by the Provisional Government. Equally vexing issues were the state of the economy, the demand of the peasantry for land, the rise of national autonomy movements, and the need to call a Constituent Assembly to provide the government with greater legitimacy. All of these issues, however, were bound up with the war, and were difficult if not impossible to solve until the war was over. Most relevant from the point of view of the army, it was difficult to solve the land question during the war. The redistribution of land could not take place without risking a complete collapse of the front, since many peasant-soldiers would return to their native villages to get their fair share. Most soldiers thought that the February Revolution signaled the end of the war and the distribution of land, and the inability of both the government and the Soviets to solve either problem contributed significantly to the drift of the army masses to the Bolsheviks, who promised to satisfy immediately the soldiers’ desire for peace and land.\textsuperscript{90}

**The High Command and the Revolution**

The adoption by the Petrograd Soviet of Order No. 1 (discussed above) was both a cause and a symptom of the collapse of the old authority relations in the Russian military. Dual

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\textsuperscript{99} On the Kerensky offensive and the government’s peace policy, see: Wade, *The Russian Search For Peace*, pp. 51-117. On the offensive and the disintegration of the army, see: Frenkin, *Russkaya armiya i revolyutsiya*, pp. 341-384; Wildman, Chapter 3 (“The Revolt Against the Offensive”), *The End of the Russian Imperial Army*, Volume II, pp. 73-111.

\textsuperscript{90} On the linking of all other issues to the war, see: Wade, *The Russian Search For Peace*, pp. 142-143. On the peasantry and the land question in 1917, see: Gill, *Peasants and Government in the Russian Revolution*. On soldiers’ desire for peace and land, see: Frenkin, *Russkaya armiya i revolyutsiya*; Wildman, *The End of the Russian Imperial Army*. 

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power quickly became a fact of life at the front as well as in the rear. The polarization in Russian society between the elites and the masses was reproduced in the army, with an often unbridgeable gulf separating the officers from the troops. Soldiers at the front, like workers and soldiers in the rear, looked to the Petrograd Soviet. Soldiers’ committees sprang up at the front to represent their interests, and were already well institutionalized by April. These committees were a clear symbol of dual power in the army.\footnote{Frenkin’s and Wildman’s excellent studies provide a comprehensive examination of the army in 1917, focusing on the soldiers rather than the officer corps. On the initial effects of the February Revolution in the army, and the establishment of soldiers’ committees, see: Wildman, \textit{The End of the Russian Imperial Army}, Volume I, pp. 202-290; Frenkin, \textit{Russkaya armiya i revolyutsiya}, pp. 53-181.}

The high command expected the Provisional Government to continue the war effort to final victory and was dismayed to discover that the revolution had seriously undermined officer control over the troops. Wildman observes, “the command authority of the Army was a direct casualty of the February Revolution.” Equally distressing to the high command was the clear evidence that the Provisional Government was dependent on the Petrograd Soviet. The Soviet pursued an internally contradictory policy towards the army, striving both to maintain it as a fighting force to defend the revolution from the Central Powers and to undermine it as a possible base for counter-revolution. The officer corps found itself under attack from below and lacking real support on the part of either the Provisional Government or the Soviet.\footnote{Frenkin’s and Wildman’s excellent studies provide a comprehensive examination of the army in 1917, focusing on the soldiers rather than the officer corps. On the initial effects of the February Revolution in the army, and the establishment of soldiers’ committees, see: Wildman, \textit{The End of the Russian Imperial Army}, Volume I, pp. 202-290; Frenkin, \textit{Russkaya armiya i revolyutsiya}, pp. 53-181.} This sub-section examines the response of the military leadership to these pressures.

The abdication of Nicholas II and the end of the monarchy, as noted above, was announced at the front on March 4. Most troops and officers, according to reports to \textit{Stavka}, accepted the changes “calmly” \textit{(spokojno)}. To the extent that officers expressed a negative reaction, it had to do with the activities of the Petrograd Soviet, particularly Order No. 1, which
officers saw as a deliberate attempt to undermine their authority and to sow distrust between them and their men. Many officers were apparently optimistic, seeing the fall of the autocracy as marking the end of the pernicious influence of the "German lobby" (the Tsarina, Rasputin, and their "circle") on state policy. General V.I. Selivachev enthused in his diary, "is not this the beginning of the end for Germany??" Within a week, however, Selivachev had become extremely pessimistic and was predicting "a time of terror and civil war." Colonel (later General) A.I. Verkhovskiy also welcomed the end of the monarchy, but his mood fluctuated wildly in the week after the revolution. He looked forward to the officers and soldiers of a free Russia working together to maintain discipline and defend the fatherland, while at other times he was despairing about the potential collapse of the armed forces. Order No. 1, Verkhovskiy wrote, was like "a bomb of poisonous gas."\textsuperscript{93}

The high command already had lost considerable faith in the Provisional Government during the negotiations over the abdication, and as the revolution spread to the front their alarm was readily apparent. Between March 4 and March 7 Alekseev fired off a series of telegrams to the government, particularly to Prime Minister G.E. L’vov and Defense Minister Guchkov. Alekseev noted that complaints were coming in from front commanders, particularly from the Northern and Western fronts (the ones closest to Petrograd and Moscow), of the appearance of "delegates" from the capital in the army, claiming to speak for the workers or the Soviet.

\textsuperscript{92} Wildman, The End of the Russian Imperial Army, Volume I, pp. 374-375; Schapiro, 1917, p. 89.

\textsuperscript{93} The reactions of the armed forces to the abdication announcements can be found at: RGVIA, f. 2003, op. 1, d. 1755, lI. 14-50. Alekseev summarized these reports for Prime Minister L’vov on March 9: "Verkhovnoye komandovaniye pervye dni revolyutsii," KA, No. 5, 1924, pp. 233-235. Wildman suggests that this summary is "so highly colored by Alekseev’s immediate purpose as to be of little use to the investigator." In fact, they are an accurate summary of what was reported to Alekseev, and in many instances he quotes directly from front reports. See: Wildman, The End of the Russian Imperial Army, Volume I, p. 219, n. 43. For the diaries of Selivachev and Verkhovskiy for this period, see: "Iz dnevnika gen. V.I. Selivacheva," KA, No. 9, 1925, pp. 108-114; Verkhovskiy, "Rossiya na golgofe," pp. 67-74.
Alekseev stressed that all orders to military commanders should come through Stavka and only from the Provisional Government; the army did not recognize the Petrograd Soviet as a governing body authorized to make pronouncements on military matters. The arrest and even murder of officers by their own troops was seriously undermining officer morale and military discipline. Alekseev asked for an order from the War Minister calling on the army to remained focused on its primary duty of fighting the external enemy and upholding the need for "firm discipline." He also stressed that any change in army service regulations should be deferred until after the war. The high command, only a few days after the abdication, began to warn of the possible collapse of the army and the threat to the country from Germany if the military disintegrated.  

Alekseev was further dismayed when the Provisional Government informed him that Grand Duke Nikolay Nikolayevich was an unacceptable Supreme Commander. L'vov and Guchkov told Alekseev that as a Romanov the Grand Duke was seen as a counter-revolutionary and thus did not inspire confidence in Petrograd among the masses. Alekseev's protests that Nikolay Nikolayevich was extremely popular in the armed forces and that he had demonstrated his loyalty to the new government during the revolution were dismissed by L'vov and Guchkov. L'vov stated that since the revolution it was the rear, and not the front, that was more important and that it was not the "wishes of the government," but the "psychology of the masses" that determined events. Guchkov wrote to Alekseev that "the provisional government

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94 RGVIA, f. 2003, op. 1, d. 1756, ll. 50, 83-87, 100-101; "Verkhovnoye komandovaniye," K4, No. 5, pp. 225-228; "Fevralskaya revolyutsiya," K4, No. 22, pp. 50-52, 57-58. The revolution had been particularly violent in the Baltic Fleet, with 76 officers losing their lives and hundreds more being arrested. I do not deal with the Navy here because naval officers had little opportunity to be involved in sovereign power questions. The sailors of the Baltic Fleet were notably radical and gave the Bolsheviks considerable support. For two good studies of the Baltic Fleet and the revolution, see: Mawdsley, The Russian Revolution and the Baltic Fleet; Norman E. Saul,
does not have any real power at its disposal” and that its decisions could only be carried out
with the approval of the Petrograd Soviet, which controls “the most important elements of real
power.” The provisional government, Guchkov stressed, existed only because the Soviet
tolerated it. Nikolay Nikolayevich was forced to step down on March 11, and Alekseev was
promoted to Supreme Commander.95

Given the real balance of power in Petrograd, Alekseev was forced to instruct the front
commanders that the Provisional Government had no power and that the military had no choice
but to cooperate with the Soviet. He put a positive spin on this necessity, arguing that the
majority of the Soviet’s deputies were “moderate” elements, which he went on to define as
those that “understood the necessity of continuing the war to victory, maintaining the army,
discipline, order, and subordination to commanders.” Alekseev recommended that the officer
corps become more open to their troops and respond to their inquiries. He stressed the need to
convince soldiers that everything was done for their benefit and that the officer corps
understood “their lives, interests, and needs.” Wildman contends that Alekseev’s plan was that
“officers, in contrast to the time-honored tradition of being outside politics and organized only
as a hierarchy of authority, were now to function collectively as political mentors and
benevolent confidants of their men.” Alekseev, however, did not mention the word politics
once in this telegram and he did not suggest, as Wildman states, that officers answer “political
questions.” Rather, Alekseev was concerned about the evident split between officers and their

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95 “Fevral’skaya revolyutsiya,” KA, No. 22, pp. 59-64, 68-70; L.S. Gaponenko et. al., eds., Velikaya
oktyabr’skaya sotsialisticheskaya revolyutsiya: Revolyutsionnoye dvizhenie v Rossii posle sverzheniya
samoderzhaviya. Dokumenty i materialy [hereafter cited as VOSR: sverzheniya] (Moskva: Izdatel’svo Akademii
men and hoped that the authority of the officers could be restored if they appeared more responsive to the troops' needs. Alekseev's primary motivation, as before, was to maintain the fighting capacity of the army.\textsuperscript{96}

That the military high command had no interest in having the army, including both officers and soldiers, involved in politics is clear from their reaction to a decision of the Provisional Government to allow military personnel to participate in politics. Guchkov issued Order No. 114 on March 5, only a few days after taking office as War Minister. Order No. 114 introduced several major changes in the army's service regulations, including those that related to officers titles and the way they addressed their troops. The change that elicited the biggest outcry from the officer corps was the one permitting military personnel to become members of organizations with political goals.\textsuperscript{97}

Alekseev fired off a telegram to Guchkov on March 6 protesting against Order No. 114. Alekseev stated that a fundamental change in the service regulations that allowed military personnel to participate in political groups during wartime would be "disastrous" for the war effort and military discipline. He predicted an "inevitable split" in the army. He also asked that the old practice of the War Ministry of consulting with Stavka before changing regulations be upheld. On March 7 Alekseev reiterated his views not only to Guchkov but to Prime Minister L'vov and the head of the Duma, Rodzyanko. He reminded them that the army was currently at war and that "turning it into an arena of political struggle will inevitably entail catastrophic consequences." All countries in the world keep their armies out of politics, he

\textsuperscript{96} VOSR: sverzheniya, pp. 627-628; Wildman, The End of the Russian Imperial Army, Volume I, pp. 261-262.

\textsuperscript{97} For the text of Order No. 114, see: VOSR: sverzheniya, p. 424. For more on officers' reactions to Order No. 114, in addition to the material discussed below, see: Wildman, The End of the Russian Imperial Army, Volume I, pp. 233-234.
argued, and any attempt to change this policy in wartime was "dangerous." He concluded that he considered it his duty to insist that this part of Order No. 114 only apply to rear units, arguing that if politics were allowed into front-line units it would benefit the enemy. Alekseev's recommendation was ignored by the government.\textsuperscript{98}

A detailed reply to Order No. 114 on behalf of \textit{Stavka} also was drafted by Quartermaster-General A.S. Lukomskiy, and dispatched to Guchkov on March 6. Lukomskiy declared that the permission for soldiers to get involved in politics is "completely intolerable" and a "violation of the one true principle -- the non-interference of the army in politics." "History teaches us," Lukomskiy continued, "that an army dragged into politics will always take part in coup d'etats." Lukomskiy stressed that the army recognized the revolution and the new government, and that it should be left alone and not become occupied with political questions. If the army was dragged into politics, he warned, its "currently calm voice" would possibly become "threatening" and that it was hard to predict what political position the army would take. Lukomskiy concluded that the consequences of involving the army in politics would be dire, including military defeat by the Germans and a "lengthy civil war" in Russia.\textsuperscript{99}

Other officers, from front commanders on down, also protested Order No. 114 and its potentially pernicious effects on the military. Brusilov, the Commander of the Southwestern Front who would replace Alekseev as Supreme Commander in May, protested the change in service regulations during wartime to \textit{Stavka}. Alekseev passed on this telegram to the War Ministry with his endorsement. Brusilov wrote:

\textsuperscript{98} RGVIA, f. 2003, op. 1, d. 1758, l. 95; RGVIA, f. 2003, op. 1, d. 1760, l. 23.

\textsuperscript{99} RGVIA, f. 2003, op. 1, d. 1758, ll. 131-137.
Allowing soldiers to participate in political organizations is undoubtedly harmful, because it undermines the basic foundations of military service and introduces into military units a political element, when an army should be outside it. The interference of the army in politics is a destructive influence on its necessary discipline and inevitably distracts the military from its direct goal, and this will always be a threat to the firmness of state power and will weaken the stability of the state organism. The army is isolated from political influences and overtures in all states, even those with the most liberal political systems.  

Similar views were expressed by other officers. Corps Commander Mishchenko considered the changes concerning political activity in Order 114 “completely incompatible with the military spirit” and said that the Duma should work out the laws and the army should carry them out. Maj.-Gen. Andreyev of the Third Army Corps maintained that such a change was “intolerable” and that the army should pursue a single common goal, rather than mutually contradictory political goals. Gen. M.F. Kvetsinskiy, the Chief of Staff of the Western Front, noted that officers had been raised under the old system and were thereby politically “inert,” but other groups were already active among the troops and working successfully to bring them over to their side. Kvetsinskiy predicted that if prohibitions were not reinstated that officers also would start to become involved in politics. A Major-General and a Colonel telegraphed the War Ministry from the Far East to protest Order No. 114, arguing that all officers should be “outside politics” and that those who could not adhere to such a stance should retire. Gen. Tsikhovich, commander of the 44th infantry division, also protested the change, noting that the introduction of politics into the army would divert them from “the most important threat, the presence of a persistent enemy.” Tsikhovich added that the enemy’s military was not being

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100 RGVIA, f. 2003, op. 1, d. 1760, ll. 32-35.
disrupted by various soldiers' organizations, which he considered "alien to the military spirit."\textsuperscript{101}

The innovations of the Provisional Government encapsulated in Order No. 114 sharply contradicted the organizational culture of the Russian officer corps. The notion that officers and soldiers could participate in politics was fundamentally at odds with their world view, which saw the army as a body of state power united behind a common goal. The fact that this change took place during wartime made it even more difficult to accept. Nevertheless, the Provisional Government let the order stand and went one step further, setting up a commission to work out a "Declaration of Soldiers' Rights." Military personnel of all ranks were given the right to join any political organization and to express their political views when off duty either in print or orally. In late April Alekseev objected strongly to Guchkov about the provisions in the draft declaration. Alekseev wondered if there was any distinction between free speech and treason, noting sarcastically that under the new declaration apparently one could work for, say, the restoration of the monarchy or "solicit donations for the German navy." He noted that no other European army had such regulations or could possibly introduce such innovations, even though these countries had a higher cultural level than Russia. "The army," Alekseev declared, "should be a bulwark and force of the state."\textsuperscript{102}

On May 1, Guchkov resigned from the Provisional Government, partially over the contents of the Declaration of Soldiers' Rights but also due to the government's lack of real power and the outcry caused by the "Milyukov note." The Declaration of Soldiers' Rights was

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\textsuperscript{101} RGVIA, f. 2003, op. 1, d. 1760, ll. 41-49, 60; RGVIA, f. 366, op. 1, d. 11, ll. 170-173, 308-311.

\textsuperscript{102} RGVIA, f. 2003, op. 1, d. 1760, ll. 79-81. For a similar account of Alekseev's reaction to the Declaration of Soldiers' Rights, see: Robert Paul Browder and Alexander F. Kerensky, eds., The Russian Provisional
issued by the new War Minister, Kerensky, on May 8. Kerensky had been the only socialist to
join the first Provisional Government and was a lawyer with no military or foreign policy
experience. Alekseev had no faith whatsoever in Kerensky, deriding him as a “nincompoop,
buffoon and charlatan” in his diaries. Most historians have been equally unkind to Kerensky,
accusing him of engaging in “banal theatrics,” of being “hysterical,” and noting that he “was
doubtless a poseur and a windbag.” Kerensky engineered the dismissal of Alekseev as
Supreme Commander, presumably because of Alekseev’s support for the allied war aims and
his opposition to the Declaration of Soldiers’ Rights. Kerensky had Brusilov, the commander
of the Southwestern Front and the hero of the 1916 summer offensive, appointed in Alekseev’s
place.  

The collapse of the June Kerensky offensive was both a consequence of the
disintegration of the army and a further catalyst to its breakdown. Throughout the period
leading up to the offensive the military leadership had complained of the dire situation in the
army. But they had endorsed the offensive, at least partially motivated by the belief that
remaining on the defensive was even worse for the armed forces’ morale and cohesion. After
the offensive had failed so ignominiously the despair among the high command reached new
depths. Their mood was expressed well by General P.S. Baluyev, commander of the Eleventh
Army on the Southwestern Front. Baluyev telegraphed Kerensky and Brusilov on July 12,
claiming that he was “horrified (в ужасе) at the shame and ruin that threatens Russia and the


revolution." Many units, he reported, have become "undisciplined armed crowds." Baluyev considered it necessary to restore the commanders' full powers that had existed before the revolution, to reintroduce the death penalty, and for all meetings and political discussions in the army to end until the war was over.\footnote{Baluyev's telegram is in: RGVIA, f. 2003, op. 1, d. 1786, ll. 192-197. For Alekseev's reports from March, April, and May on the state of the army, see: L.S. Gaponenko, ed., Revolyutsionnyye dvizheniya v russkoy armii 27 fevralya – 24 oktyabrya 1917 goda: sbornik dokumentov [hereafter RDRA] (Moskva: "Nauka," 1968), pp. 35-38, 61-63, 111. Officers' letters during the summer of 1917 also reflected their despair about their loss of authority and the disintegration of the army: RGVIA, f. 2003, op. 1, d. 1786, ll. 5-23. For more details on the disintegration of the army in 1917, see: Wildman, The End of the Russian Imperial Army; Fienkin, Russkaya armiya i revolyutsiya.}

The Supreme Commander Brusilov telegraphed Kerensky on July 13 with a list of similar demands. Brusilov began by noting that the officer corps had shown its loyalty to the motherland and the revolution over the last five months and stated that it "does not think about counter-revolutionary activity." He called on the government to state definitively and publicly that the officer corps was not a threat to the revolution and that what threatened the revolution most of all was the possible collapse of the army. Brusilov said that a series of measures was needed to restore the army, including: granting commanders full disciplinary powers; forbidding political meetings; reducing the role of committees to advisory status, dealing only with questions of the soldiers' daily life; and "categorically forbidding soldiers' participation in any political societies or organizations during the war.\footnote{RGVIA, f. 366, op. 1, d. 81, ll. 50-53.}"

Kerensky, in response to the failure of the June offensive and the clamor from the officer corps for stricter discipline, called a conference at Stavka on July 16 that included all of the Front commanders plus several other prominent generals, such as Alekseev and Ruzskiy (both were retired at the time). The military leadership called for discipline to be restored, the
raising of the authority of the commander, the abolition or curtailment of committees and commissars in the army, the cancellation of the Declaration of Soldiers' Rights, and the abolition of politics from the army. On July 12 the government had approved the restoration of the death penalty at the front for military personnel guilty of certain crimes, and at the Stavka conference it was proposed that it be extended to the rear. The conference had little effect, since, as Leonard Schapiro notes, the military leadership was "demanding the impossible -- that the clock be turned back, and that the effects of the revolution on the army be wiped out."¹⁰⁶

The most important change to come out of the July 16 Stavka conference was the appointment of a new Supreme Commander. General Lavr Kornilov had been Commander of the Petrograd Garrison during the April Crisis, but resigned after his intention to use force in support of the government against demonstrators was countermanded by the Petrograd Soviet. He was made Commander of the Eighth Army on the Southwestern Front, and under his command the Eighth Army enjoyed some initial success in the June offensive before his army fell apart and retreated. Kornilov made a name for himself by applying summary execution to deserters and with a toughly-worded telegram (which was leaked to the press) calling for tough measures on the part of the government to restore discipline in the army. Kornilov had not attended the July 16 conference, but a telegram he sent to the meeting was more conciliatory towards committees and commissars than the views expressed by the rest of the high command. Kerensky apparently found Kornilov more acceptable than the other top generals, despite

Kornilov's reputation as a stern disciplinarian. Kornilov was appointed on July 18 to replace Brusilov as Supreme Commander.  

Kornilov, the Provisional Government, and the Question of Dictatorship

Kornilov's appointment as Supreme Commander came at a time when the mood in the country evidently had shifted somewhat towards the right. The collapse of the June offensive had demonstrated the desperate position of the army. The violence of the "July Days," in which radical workers, soldiers, and sailors, with definite Bolshevik participation if not leadership, tried to force the Petrograd Soviet to push aside the Provisional Government and take power for itself, was also seen by some elements of society as proof that firm state power was needed. During the July Days the Provisional Government announced that they had information demonstrating that Lenin and other Bolsheviks were working for Germany. All of these developments helped push the leading liberal party, the Kadets, to the right. The military leadership, having witnessed the effects of Bolshevik propaganda on the troops, also supported wholeheartedly the need for a crackdown on the Bolsheviks and strong state power.


108 Both the July Days and the question of "German money" are controversial historical issues. Most historians seem to accept Alexander Rabinowitch's conclusion that during the July Days the Bolshevik party was very divided about whether they should try to seize power and that Lenin had opposed such a move: Alexander Rabinowitch, Prelude to Revolution: The Petrograd Bolsheviks and the July 1917 Uprising (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1968). For the opposing view, see: Pipes, The Russian Revolution, pp. 419-438. The most recent treatment of the issue of German financial support finds that the Germans allocated money to support the Bolsheviks, but shows that the previously held view of how this money reached the Bolsheviks is false; whether German money ever made it to Bolsheviks in Petrograd remains an open question. See: Semion Lyandres, The Bolsheviks' "German Gold" Revisited, The Carl Beck Papers in Russian and East European Studies, No. 1106 (Pittsburgh: Center for Russian and East European Studies, February 1995). There can be little doubt, however, that the accusations of the Provisional Government against the Bolsheviks were widely believed at the time; see, for example: Wildman, The End of the Russian Imperial Army, Volume II, p. 119; Alexander Rabinowitch, The Bolsheviks Come to Power: The Revolution of 1917 in Petrograd (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1976), pp. 14-20; Schapiro, 1917, pp. 83-84, 94-95. On the Kadets move to the right in July and August 1917, see: William G.
General Kornilov’s hard-line views on military discipline were well-known when he became Supreme Commander on July 19. One of his conditions for accepting this post was that the government apply stern measures like the death penalty for military crimes in the rear as well as the front. Throughout the month of August Kornilov was involved in negotiations with Kerensky and the Deputy War Minister, B.V. Savinkov, to get government agreement to his program, which included not only the death penalty but also raising the power and authority of commanders and curtailing the responsibilities of soldiers’ committees and government commissars. One measure that would have undercut the Bolsheviks in a serious way was Kornilov’s proposal to make not only mutiny and insubordination capital offenses, but also the incitement of such acts through agitation or the distribution of seditious material. Government pursuit of such policies would put it not only on a collision course with the Petrograd Soviet but also with several socialist ministers in the Provisional Government.¹⁰⁹

Kornilov was the most visible symbol of the desire among some sectors of society for a “strong hand.” He thus garnered the support of a wide range of groups who had been agitating throughout the summer for a strong government, a restriction on the authority of the Soviets, and a prosecution of the war effort to victory over the Germans. These groups often consisted of prominent members of the bourgeoisie and had titles like the Society for the Economic Rehabilitation of Russia, the Republican Center, and the All-Russian Union of Trade and Industry. The Kadet Party was the most important political party among these groups.


¹⁰⁹ On Kornilov’s program, see: Katkov, The Kornilov Affair, pp. 41-64; Rabinowitch, The Bolsheviks Come to Power, pp. 100-109. Katkov is very sympathetic to Kornilov, while Rabinowitch is rather hostile. I generally am more inclined to support Katkov’s reading, particularly his emphasis on the war-time exigencies that inspired
Although it is clear that these groups supported Kornilov’s program, there is less convincing evidence on whether they supported a military dictatorship and the extent of Kornilov’s contacts with these groups.\textsuperscript{110}

Several military organizations also have been accused of conspiring with these organizations and Kornilov to establish a military dictatorship. These include the Union of Officers, the Military League, the Union of Cossack Troops, the Union of St. George Cavaliers, and the Union of Military Duty. The most important of these groups was the Union of Officers, which had been formed in May. The Union of Officers was an avowedly professional organization that disclaimed any political goals. Indeed, its chief organizers reacted with hostility to any assertions that they were political. They argued that the Union was based on the contention that the introduction of politics into the army was one of the chief causes of its disintegration. These protests were undermined by the adoption of several statements and resolutions that advanced seemingly political goals, such as siding with Milyukov about Russia’s war aims and demanding that the government adopt Kornilov’s program for increasing order and discipline in the army. Kerensky and the Deputy War Minister Savinkov, as well as many others in Petrograd and many of the troops, saw the Union of Officers as “a nest of reaction.” Kerensky’s brother-in-law, Col. V.L. Baranovskiy, who was a key assistant to Kerensky in the War Ministry, disagreed with this assessment, but his voice was evidently a minority one. Savinkov asked the chief Commissar at Stavka, Captain M.M. Filonenko, to monitor the activities of the Main Committee of the Union, and also asked Kornilov to transfer

\textsuperscript{110} Kornilov’s demands. For the text of the Kornilov program submitted to the Provisional Government on August 10, see: \textit{Krasnaya letopis’}, No. 1 (10), 1924, pp. 207-217.
the Main Committee of the Union of Officers to Moscow, away from Mogilev where Stavka was located.\textsuperscript{111}

That there were praetorian sentiments among some members of the Russian officer corps, and that these sentiments increased between March and August, there can be little doubt. Officer support for a coup, however, was not, as best as one can tell, widespread, and little concrete evidence of plotting has appeared. General P.N. Vrangel\textsuperscript{'} [Wrangel] claims that he saw the need for a military dictatorship shortly after the February revolution and decided on Kornilov as the most suitable candidate, although Allan Wildman notes that Vrangel\textsuperscript{'} probably "exaggerated his prescience" and that Vrangel\textsuperscript{'} was more engaged in "political fantasies" than serious activities. Military censors noted in June an officer's letter that said that "some officers say that only a military dictatorship can save us." By August the desire for a strong hand was widespread among officers, but this view must be disassociated from support for a military coup. Wildman accepts the claims that the Union of Officers was plotting against the government, but rejects the idea that its views represented the majority of officers. To the extent that interventionist sentiments existed within the military, they probably represented a small organizational subculture.\textsuperscript{112}


\textsuperscript{111} The various military organizations are discussed by the sources in the previous note. On the Union of Officers, see: Katkov, \textit{The Kornilov Affair}, pp. 11-19; Allan Wildman, "Officers of the General Staff and the Kornilov Movement," in Frankel, Frankel, and Knei-Paz, eds., \textit{Revolution in Russia}, pp. 92-94. Protests by the Union of its non-political stance are in: RGVIA, f. 366, op. 2, d. 38, l. 7. The demand of the Union that Kerensky support Kornilov's program is in: RGVIA, f. 2003, op. 1, d. 1786, ll. 176-179. For the views of Baranovskiy, Kerensky, and Savinkov on the Union, see: RGVIA, f. 366, op. 1, d. 67, ll. 19-30; RGVIA, f. 366, op. 2, d. 38, l. 16. See also: Rabinowitch, \textit{The Bolsheviks Come to Power}, pp. 117-119.

A second minority subculture was that of the so-called “democratic officers,” who supported the revolution and endeavored to work closely with the soldiers’ committees and rejected any thoughts of military pressure on the government. A good example of this type of officer was Colonel Verkhovskiy, the Commander of the Moscow Military District from June until August and War Minister after the Kornilov affair. Verkhovskiy believed that officers needed to work with “the most conscious” soldiers to convince them of the need to restore military discipline for the good of the war effort and he opposed any return to the more strict and physical type of discipline favored by other Russian officers. Although some officers undoubtedly worked closely with the committees more out of expediency than conviction, there was also a definite group of “democratic officers.”\(^{113}\)

It seems that the majority of officers, and particularly the high command, occupied a position somewhere between the “praetorian” and “democratic” subcultures. These officers were apolitical patriots who were distressed by the disintegration of the army and believed that politics should be removed from the army and that the military should concentrate on the war effort. Verkhovskiy describes his encounter with a group of officers at a military school in Moscow. These officers, Verkhovskiy notes, believed that the revolution was now over and that everyone should concentrate on military affairs. He said these officers thought that “politics is death and that discipline is needed.” These officers were not interested in parties and programs, noting that they had “only one motherland.” Verkhovskiy agreed with these military school officers that “of course, the army should be outside politics,” but noted that discipline could only be restored if soldiers felt that officers were not their enemies and were

\(^{113}\) Verkhovskiy published a very compelling diary shortly after the revolution, *Rossiya na golgofe*. On the particular points in this paragraph, see, for example, pp. 84, 87. See also: Wildman, “Officers of the General Staff
not counter-revolutionaries. These officers had no idea how to do this, Verkhovskiy claimed, because they “just repeated the writings of the military catechism.” “Such officers were never interested in politics,” Verkhovskiy noted, “don’t want to know it, and correctly think that politics is not the army’s affair.” Although Verkhovskiy thought that not all officers felt this way, “many, very many” did. Even those officers that supported the notion of a coup, Verkhovskiy noted, did so not because they were counter-revolutionaries but simply because they wanted to “create strong revolutionary power, which could raise the fighting capacity of the army.”

A similar assessment of officer corps’ sentiments was made by Prince G.N. Trubetskoy, who was Director of the Diplomatic Chancellery at Stavka from March until the Kornilov affair and thus in close contact with the high command. Generals like Denikin (Commander of the Southwest Front during the Kornilov affair), according to Trubetskoy, had an “exclusively military world view, discussing all current events from that point of view.” Denikin told Trubetskoy that “it was offensive (protivno) for him to engage in politics.” Despite this opposition, Trubetskoy contends, Denikin and other top officers were somewhat forced into politics by the collapse of discipline in the army. This fall in discipline was connected to politics and thus the military leadership could not avoid political questions. Events such as the July Days, he said, convinced officers of the direct link between events in the rear and at the front. As for Kornilov, Trubetskoy gave the following characterization of him: “he is first of all a soldier and he little understands complex political questions. In this sense he clearly reflects

and the Kornilov Movement,” pp. 87-90.

114 Verkhovskiy, Rossiya na golgofe, pp. 89-90, 106. Another military diary from 1917 that expresses the very views that he attributes to many officers is that of General V.I. Selivachev: “Iz dnevnika gen. V.I. Selivacheva.”

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the properties of the entire command staff of the army.” Most subsequent historians have agreed that Kornilov was rather ignorant regarding politics. Rabinowitch states, “Kornilov remained very much an officer of the old school; national political issues interested him only insofar as they affected the primary task of restoring the army.”

General I.P. Romanovskiy, the Quartermaster-General at Stavka at the time of the Kornilov affair, summarizes the outlook of the military leadership well. Politics, Romanovskiy asserts, was “completely foreign” to him. He describes himself as a patriot motivated by love of the Motherland and the army. The disintegration of the army in 1917 was a cause of much suffering, and Romanovskiy says he came to the conclusion that strong power was necessary to save the army and Russia. “What kind of power it was essentially was all the same to me, as long as it was strong.” These views were perfectly consistent with those articulated by the high command before the February Revolution, during it, and in the months after the overthrow of the Tsar. They reflected an organizational culture based on opposition to military involvement in sovereign power issues combined with the sentiment that the potential collapse of the army and the state should not be permitted.

By August 1917, then, there was a widespread feeling in the officer corps and among significant elements of the non-socialist political elite that a firm hand was needed to wage the war and prevent government collapse. General Kornilov was the most prominent symbol of this sentiment. Some of those who longed for a strong hand believed that a military coup

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would be required for it to come about, and they looked to Kornilov as the potential "man on horseback." For a plot to succeed, however, it needed a leader, and it is far from clear that Kornilov saw himself as a putschist. To better answer this question, we need to look in more detail at the Kornilov affair.

The Kornilov Affair

Since his accession to the post of Supreme Commander in late July 1917, Kornilov had been urging the Provisional Government to adopt his program of tough military measures to restore the fighting capacity of the army. His disillusionment grew after two trips to Petrograd on August 3 and 10 produced no definitive results. Most shocking, perhaps, to Kornilov was the discovery that an evident traitor was a member of the Provisional Government; both Kerensky and Savinkov told him not to go into too much detail during his operational report because they suspected a minister of passing information to the Germans (the suspected member was Agriculture Minister V.M. Chernov, the leader of the Socialist Revolutionary [SR] Party). The fall of Riga to the Germans on August 20 was another major demoralizing event.\(^{117}\)

After his August 3 trip to Petrograd, during which time he found out that there were suspected German spies in the cabinet, Kornilov ordered the movement of the Third Cavalry Corps to an area about 250 miles from Petrograd. This troop movement could be justified by

\(^{116}\) GARF, f. 1780, op. 1, d. 14, l. 87.

\(^{117}\) The most detailed study in English of the Kornilov affair is: Katkov, *The Kornilov Affair*. I have relied on Katkov's account heavily for background and basic narrative. Probably the most important Soviet study is: Martynov, *Kornilov*. Several revisionist Western historians provide an interpretation of the affair similar to that put forward by Martynov; see, for example: White, "The Kornilov Affair"; Rabinowitch, *The Bolsheviks Come to Power*, pp. 94-150. Allan Wildman's interpretation is closer to Martynov's than Katkov's, although he refers to Katkov's book as "an excellent account": Wildman, "Officers of the General Staff and the Kornilov Movement"; Wildman, *The End of the Russian Imperial Army*, Volume II, pp. 184-223, esp. pp. 191-192, n. 13.
the threat to Riga and potentially Petrograd from the Germans, but the deployment also had a political purpose. Kornilov's Chief of Staff, General Lukomskiy (the previous General-Quartermaster), suspected as much and asked Kornilov his reasons. Kornilov answered that according to available reports the Bolsheviks were planning an action in Petrograd for the end of August (the six-month anniversary of the February Revolution), intimating that these troops might be used to suppress any demonstrations. Kornilov went on to state that it was necessary to introduce firm measures to save the army and Russia. He added that he was not a counter-revolutionary and that he hated the old regime, but that the Provisional Government, although it contained strong people, also had members who were fatal for Russia. Thus, Kornilov said, it might be necessary to put pressure on the government and that if there was disorder in Petrograd he would have to repress it. Kornilov said he counted on broad support, and that a reconstituted government would have to include people like Kerensky and Savinkov. Lukomskiy thus concluded that the government commissar at Stavka, Filonenko, who was extremely close to Kerensky and Savinkov, must be aware of Kornilov's plans. Lukomskiy states that he had no doubt that Kerensky and Kornilov would come to an agreement. Kornilov was certainly, though, entertaining the idea of pressuring the government, although he had no concrete plan to do so.118

118 Kornilov's motivations are discussed in more detail below. The account in this paragraph is based on Lukomskiy's deposition to the Investigative Commission, which is probably the best single source on military command thinking during the Kornilov affair, even more informative than Kornilov's own deposition. See: GARF, f. 1780, op. 1, d. 14, II. 50-54. A similar version of this conversation is in: General Loukomsy, Memoirs of the Russian Revolution (London: T. Fisher Unwin Ltd., 1922), pp. 95-101. Kornilov's deposition was published in Russia in 1995: "General L.G. Kornilov pered chrezvychaynoy komissiyey vremennogo pravitel'stva," Kentavr, Nos. 5-6 (September-October, November-December), 1995, pp. 105-120, 101-113. The version in Katkov is missing some text, although it is essentially correct: Katkov, The Kornilov Affair, pp. 165-194. A supplement to this deposition was also published: Martynov, Kornilov, pp. 193-194. In the archives, consult: GARF, f. 1780, op. 1, d. 5; f. 1780, op. 1, d. 14.
Savinkov and Filonenko, respectively the Deputy Defense Minister and the government commissar at *Stavka*, played a key role in the Kornilov affair. Savinkov and Kerensky were both members of the SR Party and political freemasons, and Savinkov basically ran the War Ministry as Kerensky's deputy from the end of July until the Kornilov affair, although Savinkov and Kerensky briefly fell out in mid-August. Filonenko was also a Socialist Revolutionary and had served as commissar under Kornilov in the Eighth Army, the Southwestern Front, and finally succeeded Savinkov as government commissar at *Stavka* when Savinkov moved to Petrograd at the end of July. Savinkov and Filonenko worked closely with Kornilov in drafting his program for military reform, and played a key role in negotiating between Kerensky and Kornilov over the contents of the reform program.\^\textsuperscript{119}

Kerensky's intentions towards Kornilov's program were not clear. Although Kornilov had become Supreme Commander on condition that his military reform proposals be accepted, after two fruitless trips to Petrograd it appeared that Kerensky was wavering about whether to adopt Kornilov's program. Kerensky certainly understood that by siding with Kornilov he would be breaking his ties with the Soviet, his original base of support after the February Revolution. Kerensky called a conference of public organizations in Moscow for August 13-15 called the Moscow State Conference. The purpose of the conference was to consolidate all of Russian society, with the exception of the extreme right (monarchists) and left (Bolsheviks), behind Kerensky's program of continuation of the war while consolidating the gains of the

revolution. The Conference, in fact, was an ignoble failure, which only served to demonstrate how polarized Russian society was.  

Kerensky evidently decided to press ahead with the Kornilov program after the Moscow State Conference, and he tasked Savinkov to go to Stavka to come to a final agreement with Kornilov. Kerensky told Savinkov on August 17 that he had accepted Kornilov’s demand that the death penalty be extended to the rear and that the Petrograd Military District, with the exception of Petrograd itself, be placed under the authority of the Supreme Commander. The plan to create a separate Petrograd Army had been proposed as early as April and had been put in motion by Kornilov in early August. Kornilov implored Kerensky several times around the time of the fall of Riga to authorize this step and to adopt his program, arguing that every day Kerensky delayed was another “nail in the coffin...of our unfortunate motherland.” Kerensky also instructed Savinkov to agree with Kornilov on the dispatch of the 3rd Cavalry Corps to Petrograd at the end of August to repress the projected Bolshevik demonstration and any disturbances provoked by the announcement by the Provisional Government of the adoption of Kornilov’s program and the placement of Petrograd under martial law.

Savinkov discussed these plans with Kornilov at Stavka on the evening of August 23 or 24 (accounts vary on the date). Kornilov complained to Savinkov about Kerensky’s indecisiveness, but Savinkov convinced Kornilov of Kerensky’s indispensability and told him

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121 These developments are discussed in: Katkov, The Kornilov Affair, pp. 65-67. On Kerensky’s instructions to Savinkov, see: GARF, f. 1780, op. 1, d. 31, l. 35 [this delo contains the final report of the Investigative Commission]; Martynov, Kornilov, p. 79. For Kornilov’s telegrams to Kerensky, see: RGVIA, f. 366, op. 1, d. 127, ll. 26-27. On the formation of the Petrograd Army, see the accounts of Lukomskiy, Kornilov, and Romanovskiy: GARF, f. 1780, d. 1, op. 14, ll. 50-53, 82-83; “General L.G. Kornilov...,” Kentavr, No. 6, pp. 105-106.
that Kerensky had agreed to introduce the death penalty in the rear. Savinkov also negotiated, on Kerensky’s order, the demarcation between the area of the Petrograd Military District under Kornilov’s command and the area under the control of the Petrograd Military Governor. This agreement was immediately communicated to the War Ministry in Petrograd and Kerensky issued a telegram to Kornilov confirming the subordination of the Petrograd Military District to the Supreme Commander. Finally, Savinkov requested, under Kerensky’s authority, the dispatch of the 3rd Cavalry Corps to Petrograd to repress a possible Bolshevik demonstration and any opposition to the new measures adopted by the Provisional Government from either the Bolsheviks or the Petrograd Soviet. All present (Savinkov, Kornilov, Lukomskiy, Romanovskiy, and Baranovskiy) agreed that it was important that they act decisively and firmly. Kornilov informed Savinkov before Savinkov’s departure that he believed the government was moving in the right direction and he asked Savinkov to tell Kerensky that he would support Kerensky for the good of the fatherland. All those at Stavka thought that Kornilov’s program had finally been accepted and that firm power was soon to be introduced in the country that would halt the collapse of the army.\footnote{For an overview of Savinkov’s discussions with Kornilov at Stavka, see: Katkov, The Kornilov Affair, pp. 67-72. I have relied on the following primary sources to confirm all of the details in this paragraph: “General L.G. Kornilov...,” Kentavr, No. 5, pp. 115-117; GARF, f. 1780, op. 1, d. 31, ll. 37, 56 [Commission Report]; GARF, f. 1780, op. 1, d. 14, ll. 54-56, 82-84 [Lukomskiy and Romanovskiy depositions]; GARF, f. 1780, op. 1, d. 11, l. 3 [Trubetskoy deposition]; D.A. Chigayev, ed., Velikaya oktyabr’skaya sotsialisticheskaya revolyutsiya: Revolyutsionnoye dvizhenie v Rossii v avguste 1917 g: Razgrom kornilovskogo myatezha. Dokumenty i materialy [hereafter cited as VOSR: Razgrom] (Moskva: Izdatel’sstvo Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1959), pp. 421-425, 451; RGVA, f. 366, op. 1, d. 67, ll. 45-51 [Baranovskiy reports to War Ministry on Savinkov-Kornilov agreements].

One issue the sources disagree on is whether Savinkov convinced Kornilov that General A.M. Krymov should be replaced as head of the 3rd Cavalry Corps and whether the so-called Savage Division be replaced by a regular cavalry division. Savinkov claims that Kornilov promised to replace Krymov at Kerensky’s request. Other sources have Kornilov either not responding to this request or saying that he would try, without making a firm promise. There is one piece of tantalizing evidence that Kornilov agreed to appoint General Diterikhs as Krymov’s Chief of Staff as a way of appeasing Kerensky, but this must remain unconfirmed. Regardless, as the Investigative Commission noted, Kornilov’s failure to replace Krymov and the Savage Division hardly can be taken as evidence that he planned to overthrow the Provisional Government. See: GARF, f. 1780, op. 1, d. 31, ll. 37, 98. For a discussion, see: Katkov, The Kornilov Affair, pp. 70-72, 193, 194, n. 10.}

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At this point the Kornilov affair becomes rather strange, if not downright surreal. On August 22 V.N. L’vov, who had been the Procurator of the Holy Synod in the first two provisional governments, went to see Kerensky in Petrograd. L’vov had apparently decided, either on his own volition or because of his conversations in Moscow with two public figures, Dr. I.A. Dobrinskiy and A.F. Alad’in, that Kerensky needed to be persuaded to change the make-up of the government. L’vov told Kerensky that a powerful group of people stood behind his demand to change the government, and Kerensky evidently empowered L’vov to negotiate on his behalf with this “powerful group.”

L’vov returned to Moscow, where he told several people that he had been sent by Kerensky to negotiate with Kornilov, and then on to Stavka on August 24. L’vov met with Kornilov on the night of the 24th or the morning of the 25th (again, the accounts vary on the exact date). L’vov told Kornilov that he had come on Kerensky’s behalf to discuss the composition of the new government. L’vov laid out three options: 1) a new government formed by Kerensky; 2) a directorate that would include Kornilov; 3) a dictatorship. Kornilov replied that he favored the third option, that he would not reject the role of dictator if offered to him, and that regardless he considered the participation of Kerensky and Savinkov in the

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121 Kerensky himself confirmed this last detail on one occasion, but on others denied it. V.N. L’vov should not be confused with the Prime Minister of the First Provisional Government, G.E. L’vov. All contemporary observers and later historians have regarded L’vov as unreliable if not delusional. L’vov gave no fewer than four different versions of his story to the Investigative Commission between August 27 and October 5, which vary considerably on key details. L’vov claimed on several occasions that Dobrynisky had told him that a coup against Kerensky was being planned at Stavka, but Dobrynisky and Alad’in categorically denied this and on other occasions L’vov did not make this claim, stating rather that he went to Kerensky on his own accord. Despite broad agreement on L’vov’s unreliability, many historians have relied on his account. This is a crucial point, since L’vov is the key source for the claim that Kornilov was planning a coup against Kerensky. For good discussions of L’vov’s varying testimony, see: GARF, f. 1780 op. 1, d. 31, ll. 5-18, 97 [Commission Report]; Katkov, The Kornilov Affair, pp. 74-82. Martynov is probably the most important example of a historian who notes the unreliability of L’vov’s depositions but then proceeds to rely on them, since Martynov’s book has been widely used by subsequent Western scholars: Martynov, Kornilov, p. 80.
government desirable. Kornilov also told L'vov to relay to Kerensky and Savinkov his desire that they come to Stavka, since he could not guarantee their safety in Petrograd and the composition of the new government could be agreed in Mogilev.124

Lukomskiy maintains that one of the major sources of the subsequent disagreement was over the term dictatorship, which he maintains implied for Kornilov a collective, and not a personal, dictatorship. Lukomskiy's account is backed by other sources, and on August 25 and 26 there were several discussions about the composition of a future government. On August 25 Kornilov asked Filonenko about the desirability of a dictatorship, to which Filonenko replied that the best option would be a directorate with Kerensky as head and Kornilov a member. Lukomskiy and Kornilov testified that on the twenty-sixth opinion at headquarters had centered around the notion of a Council of National Defense (Sovet Narodnoy oborony) with Kornilov as its head and Kerensky as its deputy. Lukomskiy states that in practice Kerensky would have been the Prime Minister in Petrograd, since Kornilov as head of the Council would remain in Mogilev. The fact that no firm decision had been made by Kornilov about the exact composition of a future government is clear from the fact that on the twenty-sixth he telegraphed Milyukov (the leader of the Kadets), Rodzyanko (the head of the Duma), and several other leading figures, asking that they come to Stavka to discuss the composition of a new government.125

124 Katkov recounts these discussions in detail: Katkov, The Kornilov Affair, pp. 77-81. The relevant primary sources are cited in the following note.

125 "General L.G. Kornilov...", Kentavr, No. 6, pp. 101-104; GARF, f. 1780, op. 1, d. 31, ll. 5-18, 26, 67-69 [Commission Report]; GARF, f. 1780, op. 1, d. 14, ll. 56 -57 [Lukomskiy deposition]; GARF, f. 1780, op. 1, d. 11, l. 3-5 [Trubetsky deposition]; GARF, f. 1780, op. 1, d. 14, l. 37 [Alad' in note on his discussions with L'vov, attached as appendix to Kornilov deposition]; VOSR: Razgrom, p. 450.
While L’vov was in Mogilev, Savinkov had returned to Petrograd to report his agreements with Kornilov to Kerensky. Despite the fact that Kerensky had agreed to accept Kornilov’s proposals at the time he sent Savinkov to Stavka (August 17), he now hesitated to adopt them. Savinkov tried several times on August 25 and 26 to persuade Kerensky to sign the new laws and bring them before the cabinet. Kerensky eventually agreed to submit them to the government on the night of the twenty-sixth.126

L’vov, meanwhile, returned to Petrograd on August 26 to report to Kerensky the results of his discussion with Kornilov. Until this meeting Kerensky had no idea who L’vov allegedly was representing. L’vov now said that he had come on behalf of Kornilov, although L’vov had told everyone else that Kerensky had sent him to Kornilov, and not the other way around. Kornilov and everyone else at Stavka also thought that L’vov had come as an emissary of Kerensky. L’vov told Kerensky that Kornilov had presented him with the ultimatum that Kerensky and the entire government resign and that all military and civil power be transferred to Kornilov, and L’vov also stated Kornilov’s desire for Kerensky and Savinkov to go to Mogilev. Katkov correctly notes that “the word ‘ultimatum’ is the pivot on which the whole Kornilov affair revolves,” and Lukomskiy states that the notion that Kornilov had sent an ultimatum was the second major misunderstanding of the affair (the first was about the word “dictator,” mentioned earlier). Kornilov believed, according to his and Lukomskiy’s depositions, that he had merely told L’vov his preferences about the shape of a future government, reiterated his belief that the measures worked out with Savinkov be immediately

introduced, and asked that Kerensky and Savinkov come to Stavka to discuss the composition of the future government and for their own safety.\textsuperscript{127}

Kerensky decided to double-check L'vov's "demands" by conducting a conversation with Kornilov over the Hughes apparatus that night (August 26). L'vov was also supposed to attend this conversation, but he showed up late and Kerensky therefore impersonated L'vov. Kerensky asked Kornilov to confirm the message he had sent with L'vov, without stating the message's content. Kornilov verified that he had asked L'vov to transmit a message and that he requested that Kerensky and Savinkov come to Stavka. Neither Kerensky nor Kornilov, however, said anything specific about the content of Kornilov's message to Kerensky. Kornilov's very phrasing, however, suggests he had not sent an ultimatum; Kornilov referred only to "the outline that I had sketched for Vladimir Nikolayevich [L'vov] with the request that he report it to you [i.e., Kerensky]." Kornilov's failure to state explicitly the nature of his message to Kerensky was, as Lukomskiy stated, "a very serious mistake." Kerensky's failure to ask is equally culpable.\textsuperscript{128}

Kerensky had L'vov arrested and telegraphed Kornilov, ordering him to give up his post to the Chief of Staff, Lukomskiy. Kerensky then reported to the cabinet that night that Kornilov had sent L'vov with an ultimatum to hand over dictatorial power to Kornilov. Kerensky received from the cabinet extraordinary powers to deal with the crisis, and all ministers submitted their resignation to Kerensky. Kerensky refused Savinkov's request that he

\textsuperscript{127} Katkov, The Kornilov Affair, pp. 86-88; GARF, f. 1780, op. 1, d. 14, l. 57 [Lukomskiy deposition]. VOSR: Razgrom, pp. 441-442, has Kerensky's account of this meeting and the note composed by L'vov with Kornilov's "demands."

\textsuperscript{128} Kornilov's request took the form, in Russian, "s pros'boy dolozhit' Vam." The text of this "conversation" between Kornilov and Kerensky is available in every source on the Kornilov affair. In Russian, see: VOSR:
be allowed to clear up the misunderstanding with Kornilov over the Hughes apparatus, arguing that it was not a misunderstanding but a "crime." Kerensky had his own reasons for not wanting to come to an agreement with Kornilov, both because he feared him as a rival for power and because going along with Kornilov's program would mean breaking with his socialist allies in the Soviet. 129

At Stavka the Hughes apparatus discussion between Kornilov and Kerensky was taken as clear evidence that Kerensky would take the steps agreed between Savinkov and Kornilov and would also come to Stavka to work out the composition of the new government. Kornilov telegrammed Savinkov the previously agreed telegram on the movement of the 3rd Cavalry Corps to Petrograd and the introduction of martial law beginning on August 29. It was also at this time that he requested that Milyukov and the other leading public figures come to Mogilev to discuss the new cabinet. The arrival of the telegram dismissing Kornilov, Trubetskoy reports, was like an "exploding bomb." Kornilov and others close to him at Stavka concluded that either Kornilov was the victim of some provocation (some blamed L'vov, others Kerensky, others Savinkov and Filonenko) or that leftist elements in the government and the Soviet had pressured Kerensky to break with Kornilov. 130

Lukomskiy told Kerensky that he considered himself unable to accept the post of Supreme Commander at such a time and that it was too late to go back on the agreements that Kerensky had made with Kornilov through Savinkov and L'vov. Lukomskiy maintained that

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Razgrom, p. 443; in English, see: Katkov, The Kornilov Affair, pp. 90-91. For Lukomskiy's remark, see: GARF, f. 1780, op. 1, d. 14, l. 57 [Lukomskiy deposition].

129 Katkov, The Kornilov Affair, pp. 91-95, 157; Martynov, Kornilov, p. 100.

130 "General L.G. Kornilov...," Kentavr, No. 6, p. 104; GARF, f. 1780, op. 1, d. 31, ll. 98-99 [Commission Report]; GARF, f. 1780, op. 1, d. 14, ll. 57-59, 84 [Lukomskiy and Romanovskiy deposition]; GARF, f. 1780, op. 1, d. 11, ll. 4-5 [Trubetskoy deposition].

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only the program proposed by Kornilov could save the army from collapse and Russia from a humiliating defeat. Both Filonenko at Stavka and Savinkov in Petrograd believed that a huge misunderstanding had taken place, and Savinkov had a long conversation with Kornilov over the Hughes apparatus on the afternoon of August 27 to try to ameliorate the situation. By this point, however, neither Kerensky nor Kornilov was interested in backing down. Kerensky issued a public telegram on the twenty-seventh stating that Kornilov had sent L’vov to him with the demand that he turn over all government power, accusing Kornilov of “attempting to encroach on supreme power in the state,” and ordering Kornilov to give up the post of Supreme Commander to General V.N. Klembovskiy, the commander of the Northern Front. Kornilov responded with an inflammatory appeal to the population accusing the Provisional Government of being under the influence of “the Bolshevik majority of the Soviets [the Bolsheviks did not in fact have a majority in the Soviet at this time -- B.T.] acting in complete agreement with the plans of German General Staff” and proclaimed, “Russian people, your great motherland is dying!”

The fact that the Kerensky-Kornilov dispute was now out in the open made it impossible for it to be resolved in a way satisfactory to both sides. Klembovskiy, like Lukomskiy, also refused to take over the position of Supreme Commander, asserting that he would be unable to run the army from Pskov (Northern Front headquarters), that he did not feel up to the task at such a “difficult time,” and that changing the Supreme Commander now was “very dangerous.” Kornilov sent word to Krymov to continue his advance on Petrograd, on foot if the railroads were disrupted, but then lost communication with him. As Kornilov told

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the Investigative Commission, he had made no alternative arrangements to stay in touch with Krymov since the operation was being carried out in agreement with the government and he did not foresee that the very same government would order communications between the two of them cut off.\textsuperscript{132}

The chaos in the high command was mirrored by chaos in the ruling circles in Petrograd. Kerensky had been granted dictatorial powers, but on August 28 he continued to meet informally with various ministers. Several Kadets proposed that Kerensky enlist the services of the former Supreme Commander, Alekseev, to resolve the crisis, and there was even the proposal that the premiership be offered to Alekseev. Kerensky instead proposed to Alekseev that he become Supreme Commander. Alekseev read all of the available documents and concluded that too much was unclear and therefore it would be potentially "fatal" to replace Kornilov at this point. He appealed to Kerensky to compromise with Kornilov, but Kerensky said that was impossible. On August 29 telegrams continued to arrive at the War Ministry from the front commanders asking to whom they were subordinate. Alekseev decided that the situation was too dangerous and could be exploited by the Germans, so he decided to become Chief of Staff under Kerensky as Supreme Commander and to work with Kornilov to defuse the crisis.\textsuperscript{133}

Alekseev and Kornilov "spoke" on the Hughes Apparatus several times on August 30. It was agreed that Alekseev would come to Stavka as soon as possible and that until he arrived the Provisional Government would issue a statement that all of Kornilov's orders relevant to

\textsuperscript{132} VOSR: Razgrom, pp. 453, 455-456; "General L.G. Kornilov...," Kentavr, No. 6, p. 107.

\textsuperscript{133} Katkov, The Kornilov Affair, pp. 100-103. For Alekseev's reasoning on his decision, see: VOSR: Razgrom, pp. 466-467; GARF, f. 1780, op. 1, d. 12, ll. 2-3 [Alekseev deposition].
operational matters should be obeyed. As Kornilov sarcastically remarked in a letter to Krymov dispatched on August 30, “thus came about an episode unique in world history: a supreme commander, accused of treason and betrayal of the motherland and handed over to justice for it, received an order to continue to command the armies.” Alekseev arrived at Mogilev on the afternoon of September 1. That evening Alekseev arrested Kornilov, Lukomskiy, Romanovskiy, and Colonel Plyushchevskiy-Plyushchik (who worked under Romanovskiy, the General-Quartermaster at headquarters). Alekseev was forced to take this step to avoid further confrontation, because Kerensky had ordered a Colonel Korotkov based near Mogilev to march on Stavka, and Verkhozyskiy, the Commander of the Moscow Military District, had also overstepped the chain of command and decided to organize an expedition to Mogilev to arrest Kornilov. Alekseev’s arrest of Kornilov averted the possibility of an armed clash at headquarters.\footnote{For a summary, see: Katkov, The Kornilov Affair, pp. 105-114. For Alekseev’s conversations with Kornilov and Kornilov’s letter to Krymov, see: VOSR: Razgrom, pp. 466-469; Martynov, Kornilov, pp. 191-193.}

Krymov’s expedition, in the meantime, had petered out on the outskirts of Petrograd. Initially on August 27 both Kerensky and Kornilov believed that Kornilov was likely to succeed. Some accounts attribute Krymov’s failure to the counter-mobilization of the Soviets, soldiers’ committees, and other mass organizations. Other analysts emphasize the confusion faced by Krymov, his officers, and his troops upon learning that there was no Bolshevik uprising in Petrograd and that Kerensky had accused Kornilov of mutiny. Both accounts undoubtedly contain an element of truth and are not mutually inconsistent. Regardless, as George Katkov points out, “not a single shot was fired on either side.” Krymov was met by a friend of his, Colonel Samarin, outside Petrograd on August 30, who came with a message from
Alekseev and a promise of safe conduct to the capital. Krymov met with Alekseev and Kerensky on August 31 and then went to a friend's apartment and shot himself.  

**Explaining the High Command's Behavior during the Kornilov Affair**

The fact that Kornilov refused to submit to the Provisional Government on August 27 means that the Kornilov affair must be coded as a case of military intervention. There is no doubt that after August 27 Kornilov was insubordinate and took steps to change the executive leadership of the state. Kornilov's insubordination, however, is not proof of a previous plot to overthrow the government. The question of whether a prior plot existed is one of the most contentious questions of the historiography of the Russian Revolution.

As should be clear from the previous section, the evidence for a Kornilov conspiracy is weak. Some claims made about Kornilov's involvement in a long-standing conspiracy obviously are not true. For example, James White argues that the Society for the Economic

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135 On the belief that Kornilov was likely to succeed, see: Katkov, *The Kornilov Affair*, pp. 100-101; Rabinowitch, *The Bolsheviks Come to Power*, pp. 127-128. Soviet and Western revisionist accounts stress the counter-mobilization of the masses: Martynov, *Kornilov*, pp. 129-151; Wildman, *The End of the Russian Imperial Army*, Volume II, pp. 184-202; Rabinowitch, *The Bolsheviks Come to Power*, pp. 129-150. Conservative Western historians emphasize the confusion sown by Kerensky as the chief impediment to Krymov's mission: Katkov, *The Kornilov Affair*, pp. 105-106, 197; Pipes, *The Russian Revolution*, pp. 461-462. Incidentally, it appears that there was in fact no planned Bolshevik demonstration in Petrograd, and that the information was based on an unreliable counter-intelligence report. Lukomskiy later argued that rumors about Kornilov's plan to suppress the Bolsheviks made it to Petrograd and thus convinced the Bolsheviks to cancel the demonstration. There were, however, definitely plans for a series of Soviet fund-raising rallies to be held on August 27. Regardless, there can be no doubt that Kerensky, Savinkov, and Kornilov believed the report, and also expected opposition from the Bolsheviks and perhaps the Petrograd Soviet when the law on applying the death penalty in the rear was announced. It was not simply a "cock-and-bull story," as Allan Wildman asserts. See: "General L.G. Kornilov...,," *Kentavr*, No. 5, p. 120, n. 22; Loukomsy, *Memoirs of the Russian Revolution*, p. 105; Rabinowitch, *The Bolsheviks Come to Power*, p. 117; Wildman, *The End of the Russian Imperial Army*, Volume II, p. 195.

136 The most sloppy handling of the available evidence is that of Matitaihu Mayzel, who discusses the movement of the 3rd Cavalry Corps on Petrograd but neglects to mention that this was agreed in advance with the Provisional Government. The Kornilov affair makes no sense if one leaves out Kornilov's discussions with Savinkov or L'vov's intervention. See: Mayzel, *Generals and Revolutionaries*, pp. 122-123.
Rehabilitation of Russia in early April 1917 decided that Kornilov should be the future dictator, and that Kornilov accepted such a proposal. This notion makes no sense, since in late April Kornilov asked to be removed from the command of the Petrograd Garrison, a perfect position from which to launch a coup, and be placed at the head of a front army. The notion that Kornilov was present when the Republican Center was founded in Petrograd in May 1917 is equally dubious, since at the time he was commander of the Eighth Army on the Southwestern Front.137

The Investigative Commission established by the Kerensky Government to examine the affair found no evidence for a previous conspiracy. The only witness who claimed to have direct evidence for the existence of a plot was L’vov, and his testimony on this issue was contradicted by three other witnesses -- and L’vov himself on two occasions. Kerensky insisted that there was a plot, and indeed spent a considerable portion of the rest of his life trying to prove its existence. He was unable to produce any evidence for the Commission, however, and his claim that he had information from counter-intelligence was directly contradicted by N.D. Mironov, a counter-intelligence officer who was sent by Savinkov in August to Stavka to check on potential plotters in the Officers’ Union. Mironov was unable to uncover any evidence for a plot and was completely surprised by the Kornilov “uprising.” The Commission also found no evidence for a plot among the high command or the Officers’ Union, basing their conclusion on extensive interviews with all of the relevant parties and searches of their premises. No documents supporting the existence of a plot were uncovered. Similarly, none of the officers of the 3rd Cavalry Corps believed that they were acting against the Provisional Government.

Everyone at Stavka, the Commission concluded, believed that Kornilov and Kerensky were working together.\textsuperscript{138}

Many scholars point to the dispatch of a group of officers to Petrograd to assist Krymov's Third Cavalry Corps in putting down the anticipated Bolshevik demonstration as evidence of the existence of a plot. Thousands of officers were ordered to Stavka at the end of August for instruction in the use of English bomb-throwers and trench mortars. Allegedly this was a "pretext," because a group of these officers were sent to Petrograd as part of the Kornilov "conspiracy." Soviet scholars, who provide the evidentiary basis for this claim, have not been honest in their use of sources.\textsuperscript{139} In fact, the training in the use of British munitions was not a pretext at all. The head of the British Mission at Stavka, Charles Barter, had raised the idea with the Russian high command while Brusilov was Supreme Commander. Eventually it was agreed to hold the training at the end of August, to be conducted by an English Colonel named Finleystein who arrived at Stavka on August 23. However, the training could not take place because the munitions were delayed on the way from Arkhangelsk. Kornilov decided that the officers, who had begun to arrive on August 25-26, should be sent to Petrograd to assist Krymov. On August 25-26, as outlined above, Kornilov had every reason to think he was acting in accordance with the Provisional Government. The officers were told that they were to

\textsuperscript{138} GARF, f. 1780, op. 1, d. 31, ll. 5-41, 48-57, 97-102 [Commission Report]. Wildman argues that one member of the Investigative Commission, R.R. Raupakh, was involved in the Kornilov conspiracy and thus made sure the Commission did not implicate Kornilov. Wildman bases his conclusion on an interview given by a Russian émigré in 1937. Katkov agrees that Raupakh was sympathetic to Kornilov. This does not explain, however, why the other four members of the Commission, including two from the Petrograd Soviet, went along with Raupakh. See: Wildman, \textit{The End of the Russian Imperial Army}, Volume II, p. 197, n. 27; Wildman, "The General Staff and the Kornilov Movement," p. 101, n. 36; Katkov, \textit{The Kornilov Affair}, pp. 99, 118, 158. On Kerensky's later efforts to prove the existence of a Kornilov conspiracy, see: Katkov, \textit{The Kornilov Affair}, pp. xiii, 74-75, 136-144, 200-201.

be at the disposal of Krymov and assist him in putting down a Bolshevik uprising. No action against the Provisional Government was discussed, the officers had been chosen at random by their divisional commanders, and officers were given the option of not going. About 38 officers were sent to Petrograd; evidently the vast majority were either not asked or chose not to go (figures on the number of officers summoned for training range from several hundred to three thousand). The training in the use of English munitions was eventually held in October.\textsuperscript{140}

Other information pointing to the existence of a Kornilov plot appeared in the years following the revolution in various émigré memoirs and newspapers. Many of these accounts were published years or decades after the event and contradict each other on key points. It does seem true, nevertheless, that various individuals and organizations, including some officers, took concrete steps to assist Kornilov at the end of August. Clear links between these individuals and groups and Kornilov, however, have not been well established. Most important, the goal of these various plots seemed to be directed towards suppressing the Bolsheviks and perhaps the Petrograd Soviet, and not the Provisional Government itself. It also seems possible that some of the people surrounding Kornilov, including his orderly V.S. Zavoyko, were somewhat unsavory characters and may have been pushing for an outright military coup. Much of this evidence is quite weak, however, and is based largely on L'vov's faulty testimony.\textsuperscript{141}

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\textsuperscript{140} The testimony of the officers involved in this mission are at: GARF, f. 1780, op. 1, d. 21. See also: GARF, f. 1780, op. 1, d. 11, l. 146, 173-175 [Pronin and Rozhenko depositions]; GARF, f. 1780, op. 1, d. 14, l. 63 [Lukomskiy deposition]; GARF, f. 1780, op. 1, d. 31, ll. 42-48, 101-102 [Commission Report].

\textsuperscript{141} For an account that relies heavily on these various reports and rumors about conspiratorial activity, see: White, "The Kornilov Affair." Katkov is fairly dismissive of this material: Katkov, \textit{The Kornilov Affair}, pp. 136-144.
The best evidence for any praetorian leanings on Kornilov's part is found in Lukomskiy's testimony (see above). Several times in August Kornilov had considered pressuring the government to adopt his reform plans and expel the members that he believed were traitors, such as Chernov. The relevant counter-factual is whether Kornilov would have tried to overthrow the government if it had decided not to adopt his proposed measures. My reading of the available evidence is that Kornilov had no actual plan to move against the government in late August if his reforms were rejected, but that some of his associates probably were urging him on and that Kornilov may have undertaken such an effort later if he became convinced that the external military threat to the army and the country was severe enough. It is certainly true that Kornilov and many other top officers were focused more and more on societal choices issues, having come to the conclusion that the disintegration in the army was inextricably linked to political and economic developments in the rear. This led Kornilov to prefer a reconfigured government with a substantial military component. Kornilov did have an exaggerated sense of his own popularity and did not have the right temperament or necessary experience for such a political position as Supreme Commander. He belonged at the front, not negotiating with the Prime Minister and his cabinet.¹⁴²

Kornilov justified his own behavior both before and after August 27 as motivated by national interest reasons, in particular the disintegration of the army and the possible loss of the war. His appeals to the people on August 27 and 28 argued that the Provisional Government's actions "are killing the army and shaking the country from within" and undermining "the very independent existence of the state." He contended that the traitors were not at Stavka, but in

¹⁴² For an interpretation of the Kornilov affairs that emphasizes his political simplicity, the malevolent influence of intriguers surrounding him, and his unsuitability for the position of Supreme Commander, see, for
Petrograd, where they were “selling out Russia...for German money.” In a telegram from Kornilov and General-Quartermaster Romanovskiy to the army on August 29 they emphasized their belief that Kornilov’s dismissal was a provocation that demonstrated that “irresponsible forces,” working for the Germans, had taken power in Petrograd. In his testimony to the Investigative Commission Kornilov also stressed his goals of forcing “traitors to the Motherland” from the cabinet and pressuring the government to create “strong and firm power” in the country. Kornilov’s constant references to the Germans and “traitors” were not paranoid ravings, but based on the widespread belief that the Bolsheviks were working for German money, and on his experience at the August 3 cabinet meeting, at which he was told to keep his military report general because members of the government were suspected of having ties with German agents.143

General Lukomskiy, Kornilov’s chief of staff, admitted openly that by supporting Kornilov on August 27 his stance was, in a formal sense, criminal. Lukomskiy argued that to understand his decision of August 27 one needed to understand the situation in the army and the country. The measures proposed by Kornilov, Lukomskiy believed, such as the death penalty in the rear, were absolutely essential to maintaining the fighting capacity of the armed forces. If they were not adopted rapidly, then in the next 2-3 months the army would collapse, leading to the “death of Russia.” Lukomskiy also stressed the pernicious influence of the Bolsheviks in the army and the influence of extremist elements from the Soviet on government policy. The dismissal of Kornilov implied to Lukomskiy that extremists had gained the upper hand in the

example: Golovin, Rossiyskaya kontr-revolutsiya v 1917-1918 gg., pp. 7-12.


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Provisional Government and would not adopt the policies needed to prevent the disintegration of the army and German victory over Russia. He also stressed that if Kornilov had not previously agreed on these measures with the government then Kornilov’s actions after August 27 would not have been justified, and that he as chief of staff would have had to prevent further action by Kornilov. But the dismissal of Kornilov after already having reached agreement with him was so “base and provocative” that everyone at Stavka sympathized with Kornilov. Lukomskiy also still hoped after August 27 that the government would compromise with Kornilov, and believed that it would not be honorable to accept the Supreme Command from a government that had acted in such a fashion. He also said that he feared that [former Duma deputy] Alad’in, Zavoyko, and several younger officers close to Kornilov would encourage more extreme measures in his absence. Lukomskiy said that he directed all of his actions after August 27 towards preventing a civil war and minimizing the consequences of the Kornilov affair for the army in the field.\footnote{GARF, f. 1780, op. 1, d. 14, ll. 57-68, 71-74 [Lukomskiy deposition]. See also: Loukomsy, Memoirs of the Russian Revolution, p. 112; VOSR: Razgrom, pp. 447-448.}

The commanders of the various fronts were also placed in a difficult position. All of them had endorsed the measures proposed by Kornilov for restoring discipline and the fighting capacity of the army. The front commanders first heard of the conflict between Kornilov and Kerensky on August 27 in a telegram from Lukomskiy. Lukomskiy merely informed them that a telegram in Kerensky’s name (without a title or number, as was required by regulations) had arrived calling for Kornilov’s dismissal, and that Kornilov and he had decided to not submit to this telegram “before a complete explanation of circumstances.” Generals Baluyev (Western Front), Shcherbachev (Rumanian Front), and Klembovskiy (Northern Front) telegraphed to
**Stavka** and Petrograd their support for Kornilov and his program, but without taking a stand of open defiance towards the Provisional Government. The commander of the Caucasian Front, General Przheval’skiy, telegraphed his support of the Provisional Government and stated that “any split in the army and its participation in a civil war will be fatal for the fatherland.” General Denikin of the Southwestern Front, on the other hand, took a stance of open defiance to the government, arguing that the dismissal of Kornilov would lead to the collapse of the army and the death of the country, and that “I will not go with it [the government] along that path.”

In the end only Denikin refused to submit to the Provisional Government. He undertook no military efforts to offer support to Kornilov, however, and was arrested by a commissar and a crowd of troops. Once the “paper war” between Kornilov and Kerensky broke into public view on August 28 Baluyev and Shcherbachev sided openly with the Provisional Government. Klembovskiy was in a trickier spot, because he had refused the Supreme Command when so instructed by Kerensky. Klembovskiy adopted a stance of neutrality and made no effort to support either side. Klembovskiy explained his behavior to the Investigative Commission in the following manner:

In general I adhered to the policy that the military should not interfere in politics, and should exclusively devote its efforts to operational questions. If I had started to interfere in politics and written various appeals then it could have been harmful to military operations. To divert the army from its most important tasks at such a serious moment was impossible.

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145 The relevant telegrams are quoted in full in: Martynov, *Kornilov*, pp. 102, 114-116.

146 The Investigative Commission concluded that only Denikin of the front commanders was insubordinate, and that Klembovskiy had not supported either side and “tried to stand apart from the struggle.” See: GARF, f. 1780, op. 1, d. 31, l. 1 [Commission Report]; GARF, f. 1780, op. 1, d. 83, l. 20. Wildman came to a similar conclusion in his research; he also provides a good account of the behavior of the front commanders during the Kornilov affair. See: Wildman, *The End of the Russian Imperial Army*, Volume II, p. 193-202; Wildman, “The General Staff and the Kornilov Movement,” pp. 95-96. For Klembovskiy’s account, see: GARF, f. 1780, op. 1, d. 83, ll. 14-17 [Klembovskiy deposition].

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One reason the Kornilov affair was liquidated so quickly without a single shot being fired was the political caution of top Russian officers. Front commanders, much as they had during the February revolution, seemed most concerned about the effects of any political cataclysm on the troops and the army's ability to wage the war. Some, like Denikin, evidently had decided that only military intervention could bring about the necessary measures to restore the army and defend the country. Kornilov's stance was not directed towards military intervention until after he was dismissed by Kerensky, and his reaction on August 27 is at least partially due to his rage at Kerensky's erratic behavior. Allan Wildman, who gives more credit to the notion of a Kornilov conspiracy than I think is warranted, concludes, "the hard-core support for Kornilov was exceedingly slight and revealed itself only among a certain section of the general-staff officers."  

Kornilov received the most support at Stavka, whose officers knew of Kornilov's prior agreement with the government and believed that L'vov had acted as Kerensky's emissary. These officers evidently felt a certain obligation of military honor to stay by the Supreme Commander's side in light of what they perceived as his shabby treatment by the government. Even the Officers' Union, often portrayed as a nest of reactionary officers, was not four-square behind Kornilov. For example, Lieutenant Colonel Govorov, head of the Officers' Union in the 10th Army on the Western Front, appealed to all members of the Union to remain subordinate to the Provisional Government and remain focused on their "only task, to raise the fighting capacity of the army for saving the Motherland from foreign invasion." He

147 Wildman, "The General Staff and the Kornilov Movement," p. 98. The commissars of the Western Caucasian, and Rumanian fronts reported either loyalty to the provisional government or neutrality on the part of the command staff. The commissar of the Northern Front presented a mixed picture, depicting some, such as Klembovskiy, as pro-Kornilov, others as neutral, and some as pro-Government. The commissar for the Southwestern Front, where the command under Denikin was the most pro-Kornilov, did not submit a report. See: RGVIA, f. 366, op. 2, d. 99, ll. 172-179.
reminded Officers’ Union members that the first clause of their regulations stated that the Union was a purely professional organization with no political platform.\textsuperscript{148}

Summary

The behavior of both Kornilov and the officer corps in general needs to be explained in these events. The Kornilov affair was a case of military intervention in politics, but it hardly conforms to any reasonable definition of a military coup. This in no way resembled a well-planned military conspiracy. Kornilov’s intervention came only after his agreement with the Provisional Government broke down because of a bizarre series of circumstances. To the extent there was intervention by Kornilov it was stimulated by national interest motives: concern about the fate of the country due to the conviction that the government’s policies were leading to the disintegration of the armed forces and inevitable military defeat at the hands of the Germans. The belief that German agents were sitting in the government and the Soviet obviously reinforced the sense of urgency. A national interest intervention of this type is most consistent with the international structure and organizational culture perspectives. The domestic structure approach also is key as an explanation for why military involvement in sovereign power issues came about, namely due to the weakness of the state. A corporate interest account is consistent with those historians who contend that there was a military conspiracy behind Kornilov, because the encroachments on officer autonomy in 1917 represent a clear grounds for military intervention from this perspective. I found the evidence for a Kornilov plot weak, and thus see the corporate interest explanation as the weakest of the four.

\textsuperscript{148} Lukomskiy discusses the importance of military honor in his decision to stay with Kornilov: GARF, f. 1780, op. 1, d. 14, l. 61 [Lukomskiy deposition]. See also: GARF, f. 1780, op. 1, d. 24, l. 11.
The failure of the rest of the officer corps to act in support of Kornilov is best explained by their organizational culture, which stressed the impermissibility of military intervention in politics. The organizational culture explanation may also help account for the presence of two minority sub-cultures, the praetorian one embodied by Vrangel' and perhaps Denikin and the “democratic” one embodied by Verkhovskiy, both of which were present prior to 1917. There is little evidence that the rest of the officer corps was deterred from supporting Kornilov by the prospect of failure, because initially both the government and Stavka thought that Kornilov was likely to succeed. Given the chaos and disintegration around them, the relative inactivity of the officer corps is best explained by prior norms that inhibited military intervention. Their apolitical stance is shown even more clearly in the next section, in which the October Revolution and the Bolshevik rise to power is discussed.

THE OFFICER CORPS AND THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION

The Bolshevik party took power in Petrograd on the night of October 25-26. Was this a revolution or a coup d’etat? Most observers at the time apparently saw it as a reckless coup, and predicted that the Bolsheviks would be unable to hold power. In the end, it took a bloody civil war for the Bolsheviks to consolidate their rule. On the other hand, there are strong grounds for calling the October events a revolution, reasons that the revisionist literature on the revolution makes clear. Allan Wildman’s description of the “so-called ‘October Revolution’ of 1917” strikes me as the most apt; he notes that October “was concurrently a social upheaval and a contest for power.”

149 Wildman, The End of the Russian Imperial Army, Volume II, p. 262. Richard Pipes has recently been the most insistent historian on the point that October was a coup; see: Pipes, The Russian Revolution. Pipes, “1917
The officer corps and the high command, like the rest of Russian society, had to define their stance toward the Bolshevik assumption of power in Petrograd. To many officers, it will be recalled, the Bolsheviks were little more than German agents trying to undermine the Russian state from within. Lenin in his famous April Theses had called for the abolition of the army, and the Bolsheviks had made their hostility toward the officer corps clear. Given the Bolsheviks' positions on the war and the army, one might have expected a more forceful and consistent reaction on the part of the military leadership to the October events. Although the high command at Stavka did try to send troops to Petrograd in support of the Provisional Government, these efforts were somewhat half-hearted, and the commander of the vital Northern Front acted to impede the dispatch of troops to Petrograd. Even more remarkably, perhaps, Stavka capitulated to the Bolsheviks without resistance a month later. This passive stance can be explained partially by rational calculations that the troops were uncontrollable, but also by officer corps' beliefs that their primary mission was unchanged, to remain at the front and defend the state against external attack. In October and November 1917 officers were not prepared to launch a civil war to defeat the Bolsheviks; this action would come later, and only really gathered steam once the war was over.

In this section I examine the October revolution (if I can be permitted this loaded term), the Bolshevik take-over at Stavka, and the response of the armed forces. I first discuss the

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and the Revisionists." For the revisionist view, which tends to see October more as a popular revolution than a coup and is now probably the dominant view among historians, see: Action, Rethinking the Russian Revolution, pp. 167-209; Suny, "Toward a Social History of the October Revolution;" Ronald Grigor Suny, "Revision and Retreat in the Historiography of 1917: Social History and its Critics," The Russian Review, Vol. 53 (April 1994), pp. 165-182; Rabinowitch, The Bolsheviks Come to Power; Israel Geltzer, "Richard Pipes's 'Revisionist' History of the Russian Revolution: Review Article," Slavic and East European Review, Vol. 70, No. 1 (January 1992), pp. 111-126. Suny contends, in my view correctly, that the revisionists have successfully demonstrated "that the Bolsheviks came to power in 1917 with considerable support in the largest cities of the empire.... What might still
relevant political and military developments, and then provide an explanation for officer corps’
behavior.

The Bolshevik Victory and the Military

The Kornilov affair further undermined the tottering Provisional Government and was a
fillip for the Bolshevik party. Liberal and conservative elements in society felt betrayed by
Kerensky as word leaked out that he had been cooperating with Kornilov and then denounced
him at the last minute. The masses lost faith in Kerensky and turned even more to the Soviets
to represent their interests. The Bolsheviks gained most of all, as they were most responsive to
mass demands for immediate peace and land.150

The effects of the Kornilov affair in the armed forces were devastating. The split
between the officer corps and the troops became more pronounced than ever. More arrests of
officers by their troops took place, and on the Northern Front one commander reported that
“there is complete distrust towards the high command staff and there are voices among the
soldiers that the entire command staff should be raised on bayonets.” Similar reports came in
from other fronts. Verkhovskiy, who had been promoted to General and War Minister due to
his perceived service to the revolution during the Kornilov affair, noted in his diary that “the
masses look at their officers like a convict looks at his chain.” A sharp growth in support

be disputed is the degree, consistency, durability, and meaning of that support.” Suny, “Revision and Retreat in
the Historiography of 1917,” p. 175.

150 Schapiro, 1917, pp. 118-119; Rabinowitch, The Bolsheviks Come to Power, pp. 165-167; Wildman, The
End of the Russian Imperial Army, Volume II, pp. 223-226; Frenkin, Russkaya armiya i revolyutsiya, pp. 435-
446, 546, 557; Katkov, The Kornilov Affair, pp. 121-124.
among the soldiers for the Bolsheviks was noted by multiple observers, particularly on the Northern and Western fronts.\textsuperscript{151}

The “social upheaval” in the country, as Wildman notes, was accompanied by a “contest for power.” The dual power after February had given way to a general feeling of powerlessness, particularly on the part of the Provisional Government. The Socialist Revolutionary S. Mstislavskiy later remarked that “power was in essence lying on the ground. In order to pick it up...it was enough to bend over.” Lenin not only grasped this fact but was determined to act on it. In September and October Lenin worked relentlessly to convince the Bolshevik leadership of the need to take power immediately. In September the Bolsheviks secured a majority on the Petrograd Soviet and on September 25 a Bolshevik-dominated Presidium was elected with Trotsky as chair. At about the same time the Central Executive Committee of the Soviet decided, under Bolshevik prompting, to call a nation-wide (Second) Congress of Soviets in Petrograd for late October. Lenin worked throughout October to persuade the rest of the Bolshevik leadership to seize power prior to the Second Congress of Soviets in order to present the Congress with a \textit{fait accompli}.\textsuperscript{152}

The seizure of power in the capital required an armed force to carry out the operation. On October 9 the Petrograd Soviet formed a Military Revolutionary Committee (MRC) to defend the capital against “counter-revolution.” The specific catalyst for the formation of the

MRC was the announcement, in the second week of October, that the Provisional Government intended to move troops from the Petrograd Garrison to the front. The Commander of the Northern Front, General V.A. Cheremisov, opposed this step, convinced that more unreliable troops were the last thing he needed. The government went ahead anyway, and the fear that they might be sent to the front inclined most of the Petrograd garrison to either remain neutral or side with the Bolsheviks during the seizure of power. Kerensky and Colonel G.P. Polkovnikov, the Commander of the Petrograd Military District, seemed unaware that they had very few reliable troops to resist a Bolshevik attempt to seize power, the prospect of which by the second half of October was an open secret.\footnote{Mstiskavskiy is quoted in: Frenkin, \textit{Russkaya armiya i revolyutsiya}, p. 577. On Bolshevik party politics in September and October, see: Schapiro, \textit{1917}, pp. 121-128; Rabinowitch, \textit{The Bolsheviks Come to Power}, pp. 168-208.}

The Bolshevik take-over really began on October 21-23, when the MRC made a largely successful bid to wrest political control over the Petrograd garrison from the Provisional Government. On October 23 the MRC gained control over the Peter and Paul Fortress, overlooking the Winter Palace, and the neighboring Kronwerk Arsenal. By October 24 Bolshevik efforts to grab key government buildings were well underway, and the government finally woke up to the fact that it had few reliable troops in the capital. The main force on the government side consisted of military school cadets and the Women’s Battalion; even Cossack units in the capital refused to support the Provisional Government. Much of the military

activity on the Soviet side, meanwhile, was carried out by Baltic Fleet sailors and Red Guards, sometimes acting independently of the MRC.\footnote{Rabinowitch, The Bolsheviks Come to Power, pp. 241-272; Rex A. Wade, “The Red Guards: Spontaneity and the October Revolution,” in Frankel, Frankel, and Knei-Paz, eds., Revolution in Russia, pp. 65-69.}

The final act in the struggle for Petrograd, as during the February Revolution, was played out at the front. Efforts to order troops from the front began in earnest on October 25. Kerensky ordered Cheremisov, the Northern Front Commander, to dispatch two Cossack divisions and several other units to Petrograd; Cheremisov immediately carried out this order. Kerensky himself fled Petrograd the morning of the twenty-fifth in search of reliable troops from the front. By the evening of October 25 more than an entire corps had been dispatched toward Petrograd.\footnote{Many of the key telegrams and documents on the high command and the October Revolution have been published. See, in particular: G.N. Golikov, ed., Velikaya oktyabr’skaya sotsialisticheskaya revolyutsiya: Oktyabr’skoye vooruzhennoye vosstanovleniye v Petrograde. Dokumenty i materialy [hereafter cited as VOSR: Vosstaniye] (Moskva: Izdatel’stvo Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1957), esp. pp. 277-278, 399-426, 593-663; “Oktyabr’ na fronte,” KA,Nos. 23-24 (1927), pp. 149-194, 71-107; “Stavka 25-26 Oktyabrya 1917 g.,” Arkhiv russkoy revolyutsii [hereafter ARR], Volume 7 (1922), pp. 279-320. On these specific orders, see: VOSR: Vosstaniye, pp. 399, 593-594; “Stavka 25-26 Oktyabrya 1917 g.,” pp. 286-291.}

Cheremisov had been in touch with officers at the General Staff in Petrograd, located across Palace Square from the Winter Palace, several times on the twenty-fifth. First he was told that even the most disciplined units were abandoning their posts, that “the government is deprived of the remnants of power,” and that the Cossacks were disobeying orders and refusing to leave the barracks. At 6:30 p.m. Cheremisov was told by the General Staff in Petrograd that Colonel Polkovnikov had been removed as Commander of Petrograd and that the Kadet politician N.N. Kishkin had been named Governor-General of the city. Chaos reigned at the General Staff, the situation was regarded as hopeless, and the conversation broke off when Cheremisov’s interlocutor at the Staff said that the building was being seized by the MRC and
that he was stopping work and leaving immediately. Cheremisov also undoubtedly knew that the Bolsheviks had made considerable inroads among the troops of his front in September and October; Bolsheviks represented a plurality of Northern front delegates to the Second Congress of Soviets, and with their allies the Left SRs they were a majority.\footnote{VOSR: Vosstaniye, pp. 405, 407-408; Wildman, The End of the Russian Imperial Army, Volume II, p. 286.}

At 10:00 p.m. on October 25 Cheremisov ordered that all forces dispatched from the Northern Front toward Petrograd should come to a halt. Cheremisov had been skeptical about the use of front troops in Petrograd from the beginning. On October 23 he received an order to have troops ready to send to Petrograd if necessary; Cheremisov handed the order to his commissar, W.S. Voytinskiy, stating, “This is political and has nothing to do with me.... You can try to execute it if you think it can be done.” The news from Petrograd obviously reinforced his prior beliefs that the front army should not be used in what he called the “political scrape” in Petrograd. When a demoralized Kerensky arrived at Pskov on the evening of the twenty-fifth, Cheremisov apparently persuaded Kerensky that further resistance was futile, and Cheremisov later insisted that the order to halt the troops moving on Petrograd came from Kerensky. Kerensky even suggested at one point that he would name Cheremisov as Supreme Commander in his stead.\footnote{A good secondary account, which includes the Cheremisov quote, is: Wildman, The End of the Russian Imperial Army, Volume II, pp. 294-298. See also: Katkov, The Kornilov Affair, pp. 128-129. For Cheremisov’s actions, see: VOSR: Vosstaniye, pp. 411-413, 603-609.}

Kerensky reversed himself the morning of October 26 and decided to continue his bid to march on Petrograd with troops from the front. Kerensky was persuaded to continue by front commissar Voytinskiy, Quarter-Master General of the Northern Front Baranovskiy (Kerensky’s brother-in-law), and General P.N. Krasnov, the commander of the Third Cavalry Corps. All of
them thought that Cheremisov was being overly pessimistic and thereby dooming the
Provisional Government’s real chances for success. Kerensky and Krasnov set off to rejoin
Krasnov’s units, which had been halted in transit the night before on Cheremisov’s order.
Krasnov really only commanded a division, and not a corps, since the other two divisions in the
corps were scattered across the Northern Front and unable to join up with him, and even the
First Don Cossack Division under his command was far from full strength.158

Kerensky continued to order additional units from Stavka and the Northern Front as he
and Krasnov moved on Petrograd. Dukhonin, the Chief of Staff at Mogilev, believed that
plenty of troops were en route and that Krasnov and Kerensky would have a more than
adequate force. Most of these units suffered from resistance of the troops and delays imposed
by the railroad workers en route. Cheremisov believed that sending more troops from the
Northern Front was dangerous because it would cause the army to split into competing factions.
He persuaded Dukhonin on October 27 to halt the movement of troops from the 12th Army
under his command. Cheremisov noted that two of his three front army committees were pro-
Bolshevik and various units had discussed going to Petrograd to assist the revolution.
Cheremisov believed that all troop movements in support of either side should stop, since
otherwise the situation “could lead to a civil war at the front and to the collapse of the front.”
Thus when Krasnov went into battle against pro-Bolshevik forces (mainly sailors and Red
Guards) on October 30 on the outskirts of Petrograd he was heavily outmanned. Krasnov in
fact had only about 1,000 troops compared to the 10-20 thousand armed men (I hesitate to call
them troops) on the Bolshevik side. Krasnov’s Cossacks opted to negotiate, and a cease-fire

was worked out. Kerensky fled the scene before he could be handed over to the Bolshevik side, and the whole affair was over.\textsuperscript{159}

**Soviet Power and the Capitulation of Stavka**

The Bolsheviks had now temporarily secured power in Petrograd. Their seizure of power had received the backing of the Second Congress of Soviets (the Bolsheviks and the Left SRs together formed a majority even before the moderate socialists walked out), which opened in Petrograd in the midst of the revolution on October 25. Many Bolsheviks and all Mensheviks and SRs, as well as most army units, believed that the Congress's call for a Soviet-based government implied the formation of a broad-based socialist government. The most important policy decisions of the Second Congress were the decrees on land and peace, which called for an immediate peace and the transfer of private lands to peasant committees without compensation for the landlords.\textsuperscript{160}

The Bolsheviks also successfully seized power in Moscow by November 2. The Moscow Soviet, which had a Bolshevik majority, formed a Military Revolutionary Committee on October 25 and worked to take power. Resistance, including from the military, was much more fierce than in Petrograd, and more than one thousand people died in a week of fighting. It seems that much of the military opposition came from students at military academies and that many officers did not participate on either side. The Western Front, which was the closest to Moscow, was experiencing similar difficulties to the Northern Front, and the Chief of Staff of

\textsuperscript{159} A good account of the battle and troop movements in the days prior to it is: Wildman, *The End of the Russian Imperial Army*, Volume II, pp. 298-307. The relevant primary sources for this paragraph are: "Oktyabr na fronte," *KA*, No. 23, pp. 155-156, 166-167, 171-173, 176-182; *VOSR: Vossaniye*, pp. 610-613, 638-640.
the front, General R.F. Val’ter, also feared the consequences among the troops at the front of trying to send reinforcements to either Petrograd or Moscow.\textsuperscript{161}

Despite Bolshevik victories in the two most important cities, many Russian elites, including the military leadership, remained convinced that the Bolsheviks’ days were numbered. On October 26 a Committee to Save the Revolution and the Motherland (KSRR) was formed in Petrograd whose membership consisted primarily of SRs and Mensheviks. KSRR members continued to forecast the imminent collapse of the Bolsheviks well into November and stressed opposition to the alleged threat of bourgeois counter-revolution as much as opposition to the Bolsheviks. Dukhonin, now the acting Supreme Commander, did not recognize either the Bolshevik Council of People’s Commissars (Sovnarkom) or the KSRR as a legitimate government and continued to command the troops at his own discretion while he waited for the political situation to become more clear. Kerensky also commanded no support after the failure of Krasnov’s troops on October 30. On November 1 Dukhonin commanded all troops to remain at the front and continue to fulfill their “duty to the motherland” while political negotiations on the formation of a new government were conducted. Both the KSRR and the army leadership were seriously concerned about the prospect of civil war and were more inclined to talk than to pursue an immediate solution based on the use of force.\textsuperscript{162}


A key card in the Bolshevik deck was their effort to secure an immediate peace and thus further to undermine the high command. On November 7 Lenin directed Dukhonin to begin negotiations immediately with the enemy on a cease-fire, to be followed by peace talks. The next day Lenin, Stalin, and N.V. Krylenko, on behalf of Sovnarkom, contacted Dukhonin and asked him what steps he was taking to implement the government's instructions. Dukhonin replied that only a government supported by the country and the army would have enough weight with the enemy to be able to achieve meaningful results. Later that day Dukhonin told the new War Minister and Chief of the Generai Staff that he had heard that the Bolsheviks had no power in Petrograd and that obviously this peace proposal was a desperate gambit to halt their plummeting support.163

The Bolsheviks responded to Dukhonin's refusal by dismissing him as Supreme Commander and appointing in his place Krylenko, a Bolshevik activist with limited military experience and no command experience who held the rank of ensign (praporshchik). Dukhonin replied that he could only give up power to a government that had the support of the majority of the people. "I am completely unconcerned with the political face of that authority," Dukhonin stated, "since at the current moment merely an authority as such is necessary." Dukhonin continued to concern himself with operational matters and trying to maintain some semblance of authority at the front.164


Krylenko, in the meantime, was doing his best to make Dukhonin’s position untenable. Krylenko set out for the Northern Front on November 11, announcing that he was going to the front to secure peace. He summoned Cheremisov to meet him. Cheremisov refused, asking Krylenko to come to him so he could tell Krylenko why his peace efforts were “impracticable.” Krylenko did not go to see Cheremisov but pushed on to the Fifth Army on the Northern Front, where the commander, General V.G. Boldyrev, also refused to meet with Krylenko. The morning of November 12 Krylenko addressed a meeting of the Fifth Army Committee at which he declared his intention to secure peace, over the “corpses” of the “counter-revolutionary command staff” if necessary.165

The Bolsheviks had considerable support in the Fifth Army and on November 13 Boldyrev was arrested. Cheremisov asked Dukhonin to be relieved of his command. Dukhonin urged him to remain “for the good of the motherland,” but by November 15 Cheremisov’s Chief of Staff, General S.G. Lukirskiy, was acting front commander. General V.V. Antipov, who had been a corps commander, assumed the command of the Fifth Army. Lukirskiy contacted Antipov on November 15 to find out if Antipov was a “Krylenko protégé,” asking: “Do you see Krylenko as Commander-in-Chief, or as the representative of a well-known political party?” Antipov gave a vague answer, saying he would take orders from his direct superior, the Commander of the Northern Front (i.e., Lukirskiy), and that orders from Krylenko would be passed on to his army committee and MRC, “which are in control.” Lukirskiy pressed Antipov, and Antipov ultimately stated that he recognized Krylenko “only as the representative of a well-known party very popular today in the ranks of the army.” Antipov

165 For descriptions of these events by Cheremisov, Boldyrev, and Baranovskiy (General-Quartermaster of the Northern Front), see: “Nakanune peremiriya,” pp. 208, 223-227; ORA, pp. 110-111.
also noted that he had told Krylenko that he considered politics in the army to be "completely intolerable" and that he had never involved himself in politics and would not do so. Lukirskiy seemed satisfied and thereby "appointed" Antipov as Commander of the Fifth Army. The next day, however, Antipov asked to be removed "for health reasons."  

The situation on the Western Front was similarly chaotic and difficult for the command staff. On December 12 the Minsk MRC asked General Baluyev whether he considered himself subordinate to the MRC and if so he was ordered to enter into armistice negotiations with the Germans. Baluyev replied that he did not take orders from the MRC, would not enter into negotiations, and that if the MRC resorted to force then he would resign. Despite Dukhonin's protests and suggestion that the Western Front military leadership resist the MRC with force, virtually the entire top command staff of the front resigned. The Chief of Staff of the front, General Val'ter, told Stavka that it would be impossible to resist the MRC, "on whose side are all the troops of the front." Baluyev signed an order appointing the MRC's choice as front commander, a pro-Bolshevik regimental commander named Lieutenant Colonel V.V. Kamenshchikov. Much of the Western Front staff decided to stay in place, however, arguing that the situation was temporary and that they could not leave administrative control either to "completely inexperienced people" or "the winds of fate." They agreed to stay in their posts on the condition that they be removed from politics and that they play no role in the peace negotiations, a position that Stavka endorsed.  

Dukhonin continued to believe that the Bolshevik position was weak and that Stavka could hold out. The peace negotiations would fail, Dukhonin argued, because neither the

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Germans nor the allies took the Bolsheviks seriously. "The attempt of Krylenko to conclude an armistice will," Dukhonin remarked, "of course, lead to nothing except the usual fraternization." He denounced Krylenko as a possible German agent who should be arrested. Dukhonin also made arrangements to resist with force any attempt by Krylenko to move on Stavka. He appealed to all political parties to solve the question of state authority, and asked the troops to not be fooled by promises of peace, warning them of Russia's possible enslavement to imperial Germany.\(^1\)

Dukhonin's position, however, was becoming more tenuous by the day. Already he had lost control over the Northern and Western Fronts. The Bolsheviks were weaker on the Southwestern and Rumanian Fronts, but their peace proposals resonated with the troops there also. The political situation on these latter two fronts was even more chaotic because on November 6 the Ukrainian Rada (Council) had declared the founding of the Ukrainian People's Republic and on November 7 the Cossack Ataman General Kaledin proclaimed a Don Republic and invited the Bolsheviks' opponents to come to the region to organize resistance. The Germans, moreover, had proved quite happy to enter into negotiations on a cease-fire directly with Russian units at the local level, since a separate peace on the Eastern Front would free up resources for the war in the West.\(^2\)

By November 18 Dukhonin and Stavka had apparently decided that further resistance was pointless. The All-Army Committee based at Stavka, which had remained loyal to

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\(^1\) "Nakanune peremiriya," pp. 218-220, 223, 226, 229-231; RGVIA, f. 2003, op. 1, u. 1802, ll. 31-37.

Dukhonin while many of the front committees were becoming pro-Bolshevik, stated its desire to avoid bloodshed and come to an agreement with the Sovnarkom. The garrison in Mogilev also was moving in that direction, and on the night of November 18 the Mogilev Soviet established a MRC and recognized Krylenko as Commander-in-Chief. Dukhonin tried to persuade the commander of the Rumanian Front, General Shcherbachev, to take over his position, because he wanted to transfer his command without Bolshevik participation, which would imply "obedience." Shcherbachev begged off, and even suggested that the new Commander-in-Chief be elected by the front and army committees! Dukhonin and the rest of the military leadership also considered moving headquarters to Kiev, but negotiations with the Ukrainian Rada went nowhere and the high command could not decide among themselves. ¹⁷⁰

Krylenko arrived at Stavka on November 20, by which point Dukhonin had decided to submit peacefully. Although there were still some units willing to fight, Dukhonin allowed himself to be arrested without incident. One of his last decisions was to order the release of Kornilov and the other officers implicated in the Kornilov affair, who made their way to the Don region to begin organizing what would become the White Volunteer Army. A mob of soldiers, driven perhaps by the release of Kornilov or simple blood-lust, attacked Krylenko’s railroad car where Dukhonin was being held, dragged him out, and viciously beat and murdered the last Commander-in-Chief of the Russian Empire. ¹⁷¹

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¹⁷⁰ "Nakanune peremiriya," pp. 236-238. See also: Wildman, The End of the Russian Imperial Army, Volume II, pp. 399-400; Kenez, Civil War in South Russia, 1918, p. 52.

¹⁷¹ Wildman, The End of the Russian Imperial Army, Volume II, pp. 400-401; Kenez, Civil War in South Russia, 1918, pp. 52-53.
Explaining Officer Behavior After the October Revolution

The coding of the October Revolution case is a tricky question. The officer corps’s behavior clearly was not a case of military intervention. It is hard to code it as a case of military arbitration, since the military leadership did not really chose anyone as their preferred contender for supreme executive power. The Chief of Staff, Dukhonin, remained loyal to the recognized Supreme Commander, Kerensky, until after Kerensky ran away for good. But the military leadership did not hold to a consistent line, since Cheremisov clearly worked against sending troops to support the Provisional Government. For this reason I have coded this case as both military arbitration and military non-involvement. The military high command was unwilling to recognize the Bolshevik government as legitimate for several weeks, but eventually there were no other viable contenders and the Bolsheviks won by default.

Dukhonin’s stance when the October Revolution broke out is perhaps the easiest to understand. He took orders from the Supreme Commander, Kerensky, and carried them out as best he could until the defeat of Kerensky and Krasnov’s forces. The Provisional Government, Dukhonin remarked in a telegram to the population on October 27, was the “authorized organ of democracy” until the Constituent Assembly convened, and he noted that the front army was prepared to defend the government with force.172

The activity of Cheremisov, the Northern Front commander, is more difficult to explain. General Krasnov and Cheremisov’s front commissar, Voytinskiy, suggest that Cheremisov was a Bolshevik-sympathizer and actively working to undermine Kerensky’s position. This is clearly not true, since when Krylenko arrived at the Northern Front on November 12

172 VOSR: Vosstanye, p. 609.
Cheremisov refused to see him. In fact on several occasions Cheremisov made quite disparaging remarks about the Bolsheviks, and he went into emigration after the revolution.173

Cheremisov justified his opposition to sending troops to Petrograd on three grounds: the need to maintain the front, his opposition to interference in politics, and the futility of the effort. In a lengthy exchange on the Hughes apparatus between the Northern Front and Stavka on October 27 he articulated all of these reasons. Cheremisov told Dukhonin that he was repeating the same arguments that he had used with Kerensky when Kerensky had arrived in Pskov the night of October 25: “an overwhelming number of front troops and the entire fleet [Baltic] stand for non-interference in the Petrograd political scrape and demand that the army fulfill only its direct task, i.e. the defense of the front....” Cheremisov reminded Dukhonin of the order that Cheremisov had given to his troops on the twenty-fifth, which he had forwarded to Dukhonin, in which he called for all troops to maintain discipline and order and to “stubbornly maintain the currently held positions.” “The political struggle should not concern us,” Cheremisov remarked, and noted that he had restrained units from going to Petrograd to support the Bolsheviks, telling them that “I personally consider the active interference of the army in politics intolerable and therefore I consider it inexpedient in general to send troops to the support of one or the other of the warring parties.” Only by taking such a position, Cheremisov said, “have I succeeded so far in preserving the front from collapse.... I am

pursuing an exclusively operational task, i.e. first of all and only strive to prevent the front from collapsing.”

Dukhonin’s response demonstrates clearly the dilemma faced by the military command. Dukhonin noted both the need to maintain the front, but also to follow orders from the existing government. Dukhonin said, “Undoubtedly, the principal task is to firmly maintain the front.... On the other hand, I have to be concerned about the attempt of a separate group of the population to seize legitimate power in their hands and impose their will, which could in the most decisive manner effect the defense of the motherland and her vital interests.” Dukhonin, however, eventually relented to Cheremisov’s protests that sending troops from the Northern Front “inevitably will lead to civil war and the collapse of the front,” and agreed that except for the Third Cavalry Corps (Krasnov’s forces) no more units would be sent from Cheremisov’s front.

Cheremisov’s stance is perfectly understandable, but he did skirt the boundaries of insubordination. For example, around midnight on October 25 he contacted the commander of the Western Front, Baluyev, and told him that “the Provisional Government in its previous form essentially does not exist” and noted that his front committee had decided to stand neither with the government nor the Bolsheviks. Cheremisov suggested that he and Baluyev “unite their activity and views.” Baluyev replied, “It’s a pity that your forces are participating in politics; we have sworn an oath to the Provisional Government.” Baluyev also noted that

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174 VOSR: Vosstaniye, pp. 611-612. The order in which communications between Stavka and the Northern Front took place is confusing based on the published documents. Based on my archival research, the documents should be read in the following order: VOSR: Vosstaniye, pp. 614-615; “Oktaybr na fronte,” KA, No. 23, pp. 163-166; VOSR: Vosstaniye, pp. 610-613. See: RGVIA, f. 2003, op. 1, d. 1807, ll. 259-274. See also Cheremisov’s comments in: “Oktayibr na fronte,” KA, No. 23, pp. 176-182.

175 VOSR: Vosstaniye, pp. 612-613.
military policy was determined by Stavka, and not by commanders deciding to unite their views. Cheremisov replied that the Provisional Government no longer existed and that under the circumstances "we do not have the right to evade politics and not take into consideration the political mood of the masses; we are obligated to consider this mood, so that the front does not open up for the enemy." Baluyev's position was that "as a soldier, at the current time I recognize only one policy for us -- to save the Motherland from the Germans, and on that point I am in solidarity with you." Baluyev concluded, "It is decisively all the same to me who is in the Provisional Government as long as it exists and it eliminates the ruin that is reigning in Russia."176

Cheremisov did not, it appears, ever ignore or disobey a direct order, but he did his best to maneuver Kerensky, Dukhonin, and Baluyev around to his point of view that it would be catastrophic for the army to send troops from the front to deal with the "political squabble" in Petrograd. He even told Dukhonin on October 27 that he would like to be removed from his command if Stavka insisted on sending more troops from his front, arguing the situation would become uncontrollable under those circumstances. Dukhonin, Krasnov, Baluyev, Voytinskiy, and Baranovskiy all became suspicious of Cheremisov's actions and considered his behavior inappropriate if not downright treasonous. Cheremisov was hardly at the mercy of the front committees and MRCs, though, as is sometimes suggested. Cheremisov told the chair of the MRC in Reval that he had taken from the beginning a stance of the front army's non-interference in Petrograd politics, but that Kerensky had nonetheless decided to send troops. Cheremisov noted that since the army must be "an organized army, and not a disorganized

crowd,” the orders of the Supreme Commander (Kerensky) and Stavka had to be
“unquestionably carried out.”\textsuperscript{177}

It turned out that Cheremisov was right about the difficulty that the military would have
in moving troops from his front to Petrograd, and several of his subordinates, including his
Chief of Staff and his army commanders, agreed with him on this point. The Provisional
Government’s claim to legitimacy was quite weak, both because of the manner in which it took
power and because of the nature of “dual power” and the popularity of the Soviets.
Cheremisov also felt, along with most other observers, that the Bolsheviks would not last.
Hardly anyone present at the time would have believed that the October Revolution heralded
seventy-five years of Bolshevik rule. Despite all of these caveats, Cheremisov’s very
determination to not interfere in Petrograd politics was a form of political arbitration, because
he did not unflinchingly implement government orders.\textsuperscript{178}

The behavior of top generals such as Dukhonin, Baluyev, and Krasnov, on the other
hand, should be coded as military non-involvement in a sovereign power dispute because they
carried out orders of the existing government up to the point when that government \textit{de facto}
ceased to exist. These officers did so even though there was no love lost between the officer
corps and Kerensky, who was blamed for bringing the army to ruin and despised for his
duplicitious dealings with Kornilov. Krasnov, the commander of the Third Cavalry Corps, later
reflected on why he had supported Kerensky during the October Revolution, summarizing his

\textsuperscript{177} \textit{VOSR: Vosstaniye}, pp. 603-609 611-613; “Stavka 25-26 Oktyabrya 1917  g.,” pp. 300, 302-303; “Oktyabr

\textsuperscript{178} For the views of Cheremisov’s subordinates, and Cheremisov’s views on the Bolshevik’s staying power,
see: “Oktyabr na fronte,” \textit{KA}, No. 23, pp. 163, 168, 176-182, 192-194; “Oktyabr na fronte,” \textit{KA}, No. 24, pp. 71-79; \textit{VOSR: Vosstaniye}, p. 601. See also the diary of General Boldyrev, the commander of the Fifth Army on the
thoughts the night of October 25-26 when he went to meet Kerensky: “Yes, I am going. Because it is not to Kerensky I go, but to the Motherland, to great Russia, which I cannot disavow. And if Russia is with Kerensky, then I too will go with him. I will hate and curse him, but I will go and serve and die for Russia.” The dislike for Kerensky on the part of his officers and Cossacks, Krasnov avers, helped contribute to their defeat.179

The difference between the behavior of Cheremisov and the other top generals, although coded differently, should not be exaggerated. All of the high command, including Kornilov, cared little about which government ruled in Petrograd, as long as they could end the anarchy in the country and army and continue the war effort. The difference in the behavior of different officers was based more on tactical considerations, in conditions of chaos and poor information, than strategic differences about the proper role of the army.180

Once Krasnov’s expedition had failed it became clear to all of the top military command that there was no sense in offering further resistance. Dukhonin and the front commanders expressed the view that their single task was to attend to operational matters and the integrity of the front. Cheremisov, for example, told General Ya. D. Yuzefovich, the commander of the 12th Army on his front, on November 4 that Stavka had decided to stop sending troops to Petrograd. All political parties, not excluding the Bolsheviks, support the notion, Cheremisov maintained, that “the army should apply all of its strength to maintaining its currently held positions [on the front]. Let them [the parties] believe whoever they like and worship whatever


179 Krasnov, “Na vnutrennem fronte,” pp. 149, 163. For more discussion of officer corps feeling toward Kerensky, see: Jones, “The Officers and the October Revolution,” pp. 210-212.

180 I thank Don Blackmer for this point.
they like, but let them help us, that is the command staff, in our operational tasks." Cheremisov advised Yuzefovich "not to get involved in any sort of politics, but carry out your operational tasks and approach all questions from the practical point of view." Yuzefovich affirmed that he was not getting involved in politics. Cheremisov noted the irony that the KSRR, which was close to political parties (the Mensheviks and the SRs) that had "nearly eight months ruled Russia and persecuted us, the command staff, as counter-revolutionaries now...demand that we save them.... The picture is absolutely revolting."\textsuperscript{181}

Baluyev, similarly, called on all of his officers to devote themselves to strictly military matters. Already on October 29, before the failure of the Krasnov expedition, Baluyev had complained to Dukhonin that "I need for there to be some sort of government, in whose name I can act." On November 5 Baluyev informed his army and garrison commanders that their current task was to "uphold the front and not tolerate internal and fratricidal clashes among the troops." Baluyev noted that power had gone over to the MRC and that he had informed them that "until a new authority is set up in Russia and order is reestablished I will not enter into any political struggles." He advised his subordinates to take a similar line and to devote all their energies to stabilizing the front.\textsuperscript{182}

Dukhonin, as explained above, held the position that his tasks were purely military and that his job was to maintain order in the army until a legitimate government came into being. The Provisional Government’s acting War Minister and the General Staff Chief in Petrograd, Generals A.A. Manikovskiy and V.V. Marushevskiy, agreed to serve the Soviet regime on the

\textsuperscript{181} "Oktyabr na fronte," KA, No. 24, pp. 75-79.

condition that they focus entirely on "the daily needs of the army." Marushevskiy noted, "we categorically are removing ourselves from involvement in internal politics." Manikovskiy and Marushevskiy, however, were arrested by the Bolsheviks on November 19. The General-Quartermaster at Stavka, General M.K. Diterikhs, told the commander of the Southwestern Front, General N.G. Volodchenko, on November 9 that the high command was not going to react to Sovnarkom’s appointment of Krylenko as Commander-in-Chief. Diterikhs stated, "that affair is in the hands of the political parties that are organizing power. We soldiers live in an anarchic time and carry out our technical work in order to ease the general difficult situation of Russia."\(^{183}\)

Dukhonin complained bitterly to General Shcherbachev on November 13 or 14, noting, "the situation is, of course, extremely difficult, complicated by the complete bankruptcy in state relations of the political parties, who cannot in any way come to an agreement, leaving the army, primarily the command staff, to disentangle the mess they’ve created.” Despite these bitter feelings, a week later Dukhonin and the rest of Stavka capitulated without a fight to Krylenko. The General-Quartermaster at Stavka, General M.K. Diterikhs, argued on November 18 that the fact that the allies had communicated their views on a separate peace to Sovnarkom was an "oblique recognition by the allies of Petrograd [i.e., Bolshevik] authority.” Thus, Stavka should cancel its plans to evacuate to the South because, "being a strictly military organ, Stavka cannot concern itself with the political struggle for power.” Diterikhs persuaded Dukhonin to “save the dignity of a non-political Stavka” and submit to arrest when Krylenko

arrived. Most of the officers from the various departments at Stavka continued to work under Krylenko.184

Indeed, the tendency of some officers to submit to Bolshevik authority, despite the extreme hostility of the Bolsheviks to the officer corps, was evidenced even in these early days of Soviet power. On November 19 the new commander of the 12th Army, General V.F. Novitskiy, urged Dukhonin to come to an agreement with the Sovnarkom. Noting that his army committee was pro-Sovnarkom, Novitskiy argued that the only way to “weaken the anarchy that exists in the army” is to come to “an agreement with the new authority, and not in the rejection of an agreement.” Only such a course, Novitskiy contended, could lead to the establishment of a unified authority in the army and the country and thus avoid the “heavy consequences” of a split in the army. Even if the command staff disperses, he concluded, “surely Russia and the army will remain and they need in these great and difficult historical minutes courageous, firm, and experienced leadership, which can save them from complete disintegration.”185

The new temporary commander of the Southwestern Front after the fall of Stavka, General N.N. Stogov, complained to the new Chief of Staff, General M.D. Bonch-Bruevich (whose brother was a leading Bolshevik activist), about the large number of political questions with which he was being forced to deal. The Southwestern Front was particularly chaotic, with the Ukrainian Rada, the Cossacks, and various pro-Sovnarkom Military Revolutionary Committees trying to assert their authority and move about troops in their own political


185 ORA, pp. 144-145.
interests. “In relation to politics I stand on the point of view I have stated more than once,” Stogov stressed, “the non-interference in the conflict of political tendencies.... Despite that from all sides the appearance of demands about giving this or that order with a political tinge has not stopped.” Stogov added that given these conditions he would have a hard time taking moral responsibility for further developments, despite his “desire to carry out his soldierly duty to the motherland to the end.”

The historian David Jones discerns three main types of officer corps behavior in the aftermath of the October Revolution, and his conclusions are perfectly consistent with the evidence discussed in this section, and throughout the entire chapter, about the existence of a dominant organizational culture and two sub-cultures in the Russian officer corps during the revolution. One subculture that Jones highlights is the group of officers such as Kornilov, Denikin, and Alekseev who after the October Revolution went south to try to organize an anti-Bolshevik resistance. Jones maintains that this group was a small one consisting of “the most embittered” officers. A second small group was made up of officers like Bonch-Bruevich and Novitskiy who decided that the Bolsheviks represented the best chance to restore strong power in the state. Jones concludes:

A third group (at first by far the most numerous) tried, like Boldyrev, to remain politically neutral in conditions of growing internal strife.... These officers usually attempted to hold the front while a front remained, and then sought to retire temporarily

\[186\] RGVIA, f. 2003, op. 1, d. 1803, ll. 92-101, 142-143, 187-191. Although Bonch-Bruevich did become a Soviet general and his brother was a leading Bolshevik, it is not clear that he was pro-Bolshevik in October 1917. It seems that force of circumstances and loyalty to Russia were equally important. On November 22 he noted that Stavka’s functions were purely technical and not political. See: RGVIA, f. 2003, op. 1, d. 1803, ll. 32-34. David Jones has studied Bonch-Bruevich’s decision to serve the Bolsheviks and also concludes that professional and not political considerations were primary. See: David R. Jones, “The Officers and the Soviets, 1917-1920: A Study in Motives,” in David R. Jones, ed., Soviet Armed Forces Review Annual, Volume 1 (Gulf Breeze, FL: Academic International Press, 1977), pp. 178, 184 (n. 24).
from military life as a means of preserving their neutrality amidst the conflicting claims, appeals and demands of both Whites and Reds.\textsuperscript{187}

Summary

The military high command’s passive behavior during the October Revolution gives additional weight to the organizational culture interpretation. The other three approaches (international structure, domestic structure, and corporate interest) all would lead one to expect the officer corps to offer more vigorous resistance to a political party, the Bolsheviks, that had called for Russia’s defeat in the war, was suspected of working for Germany, and had called for the abolition of the armed forces. It is hard to imagine a more decisive threat either to the military’s corporate interests or its ability to wage external war. Process-tracing of this case has demonstrated that officers were guided in their behavior by their beliefs about the army’s proper role in politics, specifically the norm that the military was “outside politics” and should not interfere in party political disputes.

This is not to say that the other explanations are not important. The oft-expressed concern about the ability to uphold the front is consistent with the international structure approach. The domestic structure perspective, as in the other cases in 1917, is absolutely crucial as an explanation for why the military was faced with choices about sovereign power issues. The domestic structure approach, however, predicts not just military involvement in

\textsuperscript{187} Jones, “The Officers and the October Revolution,” p. 223. A similar conclusion about the behavior of most officers is reached by the noted historian of the Soviet military, John Erickson, who comments on “the old army’s extreme reluctance to mix in ‘politics.’” See: John Erickson, “The Origins of the Red Army,” in Richard Pipes, ed., \textit{Revolutionary Russia} (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), p. 230. The Soviet historian A.G. Kavtaradze, writing during the perestroika period, also agrees with Jones and Erickson. He demonstrates convincingly that the standard Soviet view that the “overwhelming majority” of the officer corps was actively anti-Soviet power in October 1917 is false. At a maximum, Kavtaradze writes, less than three percent of the officer corps was openly against the October Revolution. The majority took a wait-and-see attitude. See: Kavtaradze, \textit{Voyennye spetsialisty...}, p. 37-38.
sovereign power issues under conditions of political disorder, but military intervention, which was not how the military responded in October 1917. On the other hand, the continued weakness of the Russian state, as this approach expects, contributed to the politicization of the officer corps that helped create the conditions for the split in its ranks that came about during the Civil War.

THE CIVIL WAR

The civil-military relations theories being explored in this dissertation were not designed to explain such a complex political phenomenon as revolution, and thus at times have not adequately captured the multiple and mixed motivations of officers. This observation applies even more to the ability of these theories to explain military behavior in a civil war. The Russian Civil War lasted three years and cost millions of lives. Military officers were of course key actors on both sides of the lines. In this section I briefly discuss the motivations of officers who fought for the Reds and the Whites.\textsuperscript{188}

The new Bolshevik regime achieved an armistice with the Germans on December 2, and peace talks opened at Brest-Litovsk on December 9. The Soviet government was initially unwilling to agree to the harsh terms demanded by the Central Powers, and tried to adopt the policy proposed by Trotsky of “Neither War nor Peace.” In the meantime, the new government was busy consolidating Soviet rule at home. By February 1918 most of the old Russian Empire was under Soviet control. The Ukrainian Rada fell in January, and in February the Don

Cossack resistance collapsed and the Volunteer Army under the leadership of Generals Alekseev, Kornilov, and Denikin was forced to abandon Rostov and head out onto the steppe.\(^{189}\)

The Volunteer Army was the first and ultimately most important source of resistance to Soviet rule. General Alekseev, the former Supreme Commander who was in retirement after his dismissal, had begun work to create an organization of conservative officers even before the October Revolution, and after the Bolsheviks seized power he endeavored to congregate anti-Bolshevik officers in the Don Cossack region in the south of Russia. Peter Kenez notes, “Alekseev was the first to recognize that in order to fight the Bolsheviks it was necessary to form a new army rather than try to save units of the old one.” Very few officers answered Alekseev’s call in November 1917, and even many officers in the region (in the Don and Kuban) did not join the Volunteer Army. The entire army was only 4000 men strong by February 1918 (the size of the Russian officer corps in November 1917 was 250,000).\(^{190}\)

The Volunteer Army was composed of the most bitter of officers from the old army. They were ardent patriots and nationalists who believed that the Bolsheviks were leading Russia to ruin. The leaders of the Volunteer Army were committed to continuing the war against Germany. They believed that the Bolsheviks were German agents, so to continue the war against the enemy one had to fight both the Bolsheviks and the Germans. Kenez, the major Western historian of the Volunteer army, remarks, “to ask the generals to give up fighting the foreign enemy was to ask them to be something other than they were.”\(^{191}\)

\(^{189}\) Mawdsley, *The Russian Civil War*, pp. 3-29; Schapiro, 1917, pp. 151-169.
\(^{190}\) Kenez, *Civil War in South Russia, 1918*, pp. 57-71; Mawdsley, *The Russian Civil War*, pp. 20-21; Kavtaradze, *Voyennye spetsialisty...,* p. 28.
While Alekseev, Kornilov, and Denikin were trying without much success to raise a force capable of opposing the Bolsheviks, the new Soviet government continued its efforts to undermine the old army. Evan Mawdsley observes, “by mid-November no one controlled the army.” The Front commanders did their best to hold the army together, but many soldiers and officers drifted away. The Sovnarkom decision in mid-December to introduce elections for commanders further accelerated the collapse, and on January 29 Krylenko announced the demobilization of the entire army. When Trotsky on February 10 (new style; the Russian calendar was synchronized with the Western one on February 1) at Brest-Litovsk declared the end of the war, even though no formal peace treaty had been signed, the Soviet government had no real army to defend the country. Germany attacked on February 18 and took Minsk on February 21 and Kiev on March 2. The Soviet government at that point accepted extremely harsh terms from the Central Powers and signed the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk on March 3.192

The most important consequence of the German onslaught on Russia in late February, the so-called Eleven Days War, was the impetus it provided to the Soviet regime to establish a regular army. Utopian plans for a workers’ and peasants’ militia had to be scrapped. The Soviet government appealed to old officers to come to the defense of the motherland, and thousands of officers answered this call; A.G. Kavtaradze, the leading specialist on this question, puts the number at more than eight thousand. These old Tsarist army officers that joined the Red Army were referred to by the Soviet regime as “military specialists.” Mawdsley stresses, “A central fact about the Red Army, one often forgotten, is that it was originally

192 Mawdsley, The Russian Civil War, pp. 31-37.
intended for use not against counterrevolutionaries but against the Germans and the Austrians.\textsuperscript{193}

Many of these old army officers that came to the defense of the Soviet regime were quite explicit about their patriotic motives and the fact that they had not decided to join the Red Army out of love for Bolshevism. According to Kavtaradze, these officers stated their opposition to any involvement in civil war, but they were prepared to work for the defense of the country from external attack, which they saw as their duty to the motherland. One early recruit to the Red Army in February 1918 was General D.P. Parskiy, who told Bonch-Bruyevich, now head of the Soviet Supreme Military Council, “I am far from this socialism that your Bolsheviks preach. But I am ready to work honorably not only with them, but with anyone, even the Devil and his disciples, if only to save Russia from German slavery.”\textsuperscript{194}

Thus, many of the officers fighting for both the Reds and the Whites saw themselves as defending the fatherland against external invaders. This was a particularly important motivation for the “military specialists,” but even the Volunteer Army officers, who were quite clearly focused on fighting inside Russia, saw the war against the Bolsheviks as a continuation of and inextricably linked to the war against Germany. Many who supported the Whites apparently saw Brest-Litovsk as further proof that the Bolsheviks were German spies. For the “military specialists,” as Mawdsley points out, the enlistment in the Soviet army in February 1918 to fight against Germany served “as a bridge -- a one-way bridge -- to the service of the

Soviet regime and to battles on the 'internal' front.” Once they had enlisted in the Red Army for patriotic reasons, it was easier to redirect them internally once the German threat had passed. The Soviet regime probably would not have survived without the assistance of the “military specialists,” who filled an overwhelming majority of the top command and staff positions in the Red Army during the Civil War.195

It is important to stress that, although thousands of officers joined the Soviet and Volunteer armies in late 1917-early 1918, hundreds of thousands of officers remained neutral. The vast majority of the old officer corps had no stomach for civil war. As David Jones puts it, these officers believed that “their duty was to defend the ‘Fatherland,’ not decide who best represented it.” The former Supreme Commander, General Brusilov, was asked by younger officers in early 1918 what they should do. According to Jones, “he [Brusilov] repeatedly reminded them that governments could come and go, but Russia would remain; an officer should therefore remain aloof from the civil strife, and wait until he could again honorably serve the nation against its external foes.” Brusilov himself, like many other officers, eventually joined the Soviet army only after the Polish invasion of April 1920.196


196 Jones, “The Officers and the Soviets, 1917-1920,” pp. 177-178. This article is an excellent analysis of the question of why old Tsarist officers decided to serve the Soviet regime. On the response of Brusilov and other officers to the Polish invasion, see: Kavtaradze, Voyennye spetsialisty..., p. 169; Jones, “The Officers and the Soviets,” p. 181; Voynov, “Ofitserskiy korpus belykh armiy na vostoke strany,” p. 62. For Brusilov’s reasons for staying in Russia, see: Brusilov, A Soldier’s Notebook, pp. 326-327. Peter Kenez also stresses the point that most officers sought to stay out of the civil war: Kenez, Civil War in South Russia, 1918, p. 71; Kenez, “The Ideology of the White Movement,” p. 66.
As the Civil War continued, it became more difficult for officers, as for the rest of the Russian population, to remain completely outside the conflict. Both the Reds and the Whites introduced conscription in the second half of 1918. Many of the officers drawn into the civil war ended up on one side or the other because of non-political motives, such as where they and their families lived or personal or professional ties. Even many of those who ended up in the Red Army from the very first days of the October Revolution did so not because of commitment to the Bolshevik cause but out of a sense of patriotism, duty, and what Jones calls "professional inertia." Kavtaradze stresses that many officers that ended up serving the Whites did so because they lived in regions under White control and the pressure of material circumstances; a similar observation could be made about those fighting on the Soviet side.  

A striking and strange aspect of the Russian Civil War is that most of the officers fighting and dying on both sides seemed to care little about the political and ideological issues that were allegedly central to the conflict. This is seen most clearly on the Soviet side. Bonch-Bruyevich noted in the summer of 1918 that many of the officers living in the area controlled by the Bolsheviks were reluctant to join the Red Army because they saw it as a narrow class and party-based force more for fighting counter-revolution than for defense of the state against external enemies. Those who did volunteer, who represented less than ten percent of the officers living in the Soviet zone, did so out of patriotism and the habit of military service, and perhaps economic necessity. Material circumstances and coercion certainly played a role for those old army officers that were enlisted in the Red Army once conscription of officers started in the second half of 1918. Kavtaradze, quoting an unnamed "military specialist," says that

197 Jones, "The Officers and the Soviets," pp. 178-180; Kavtaradze, Voyennye spetsialisty..., p. 49; Kenez, Civil War in South Russia, 1918, p. 278.
most of them upheld the "basic principle of no involvement in politics and service exclusively in military affairs." As the Bolshevik regime endured, many old tsarist officers came to accept it as the legitimate Russian government. One reason for the Bolshevik victory, Mawdsley emphasizes, was that "the Bolsheviks were able and willing to make use of much of the apolitical debris of the Tsarist state, including the army officer-corps...."\textsuperscript{198}

It is less true of the Whites that they did not care about politics. The White political leadership, unlike on the Soviet side, was dominated by officers; the territory under White control was essentially under the rule of military dictatorship. The White leadership, though, seemed to have no clear ideology other than a conservative, patriotic nationalism. For the White leadership, the Bolsheviks were not compatriots but an evil and alien force that had taken over their country; for many White officers this feeling expressed itself as a paranoid and vociferous anti-Semitism. The White military leadership continued to express the old maxim of the Imperial army, that the military is "outside politics." Denikin, the leader of the Volunteer Army for most of its existence, argued that the White officers had little interest in political or class warfare. They were, he argued, fighting for the very existence of Russia. The Whites put forward no clear political program, arguing that they did not want to predetermine the future state system, which was a question to be addressed by the Russian people. General N.N. Yudenich, the commander of the White Northwestern Army, adopted the slogan, "Against the Bolsheviks, without Politics.” The leader of the Russian Army in the East, Admiral A.V. Kolchak, adopted a similar attitude towards politics.\textsuperscript{199}


\textsuperscript{199} Denikin’s views are expressed in: \textit{Denikin. Yudenich. Vrangel’: Revolyutsiya i grazhdanskaya voyna v opisaniyakh belogvardyeytsev} (Moskva: Otechestvo, 1991), pp. 15, 18 (note 1) [originally in A.I. Denikin, \textit{Ocherki
Kenez notes the absurdity of trying to be “above politics” during a civil war. But there is no reason to doubt the sincerity of the White officers on this point. They were not, as Kenez makes clear, the reactionary monarchists of Soviet demonology, although there were clearly both monarchists and reactionaries on the White side. Most leading White officers were patriots and nationalists, fighting for the idea of “Russia” more than any other idea. Kenez concludes that the primary reason for the White failure was not military but political: “The leaders of the Volunteer Army were such poor politicians that they did not understand the nature of the war they were fighting. They misunderstood politics to such an extent that they believed it could simply be avoided. Such ostrich-like behavior invited disaster.”

Summary

The Russian Civil War clearly represents a case of military intervention in politics, the largest in Russian history. Which side represented the legitimate government of Russia is a political and ideological question that will not be resolved here. What is clear is that this was a military intervention motivated by national interest reasons. Officers were not motivated by corporate or sub-corporate motives; even the sub-corporate motive of class, which was supposedly central to the Russian Revolution and Civil War, seemed to play no role in determining on which side officers ended up. The Whites, who can be much more easily

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200 *Kenez, Civil War in South Russia, 1918*, p. 280; *Kenez, The Ideology of the White Movement.*

201 On the inadequacy of class as an explanation for the behavior of officers in this period, see: *Jones, The Officers and the Soviets,* p. 177; *Kenez, The Ideology of the White Movement,* p. 60.
accused of military intervention than the "military specialists," clearly were motivated to act by the military defeat of Russia in the war and the perceived role of the Bolsheviks in causing this national catastrophe. Neither side was populated by praetorian officers with grand political visions; both Red and White officers were first and foremost patriots caught up in an all-encompassing political revolution.

The four civil-military relations theories being tested are not well-equipped to explain behavior during a civil war, but several of them contain important insights. The international structure explanation contends that one of the few occasions on which a great power military will intervene in politics is in the aftermath of a major military defeat, because the regime had demonstrated its inability to protect the state; this factor clearly was central to the Russian Civil War. The domestic structure approach does highlight how various social groups, including the military, become politicized during periods of low state political capacity. The corporate interest approach fares the worst as an explanation for military involvement in the Civil War, since much bigger issues were at stake than narrow military ones. The organizational culture perspective maintains that militaries with the level of attachment to the norm of civilian supremacy exhibited by the Imperial Russian army will intervene only for national interest motives, as was the case. The organizational cultural approach also helps explain the political, or more aptly, non-political stances taken by so many White and Red officers during the Civil War. Even after the revolutionary upheaval of 1917, most officers continued to articulate the view that it was not their job to become involved in politics; they were supposed to protect the country from external enemies and remain aloof from domestic politics. Most officers did their best to sit out the Civil War, and those that did become involved did not do so for political or personal gain. For most officers of the Imperial Russian Army, the Civil War was not an
opportunity to grab power but a national tragedy that, like the rest of the population, they were unable to avoid.

**CONCLUSION**

The armed forces were a key player during much of the Russian Revolution and Civil War. All four of the civil-military relations theories being explored tell us something about the behavior of the officer corps, although the corporate interest perspective performs the worst.

Low state political capacity, as the domestic structure approach emphasizes, was an important factor determining officer corps behavior. State weakness was a key necessary condition for the revolution, and thus for creating the political crises to which the military leadership was forced to respond and in two cases arbitrate. This approach predicts military intervention, however, when it would be more accurate to predict merely military involvement in sovereign power issues. The military high command did its best to remain aloof from both the February and October revolutions. The domestic structure approach performs better as an account for the Kornilov affair only if one sees it as a planned coup attempt, an interpretation that I have shown is not supported. This perspective does work as an explanation for the behavior of the military in the civil war to the extent that officers became key political actors during a period of state collapse.

The corporate interest approach does not provide a good account of officer corps' behavior. Threats to the military's autonomy and even existence were not defended by vigorous efforts to intervene in politics. This is seen most clearly in the case of the October Revolution and its aftermath, when the military put up little resistance to the seizure of power by a revolutionary party completely hostile to military interests. The two instances of military
intervention, the Kornilov affair and the civil war, were motivated by national interests motives rather than corporate motives. Rational motivations did play a role in officer corps' decisions, but not in the way predicted by this body of theory. Rational calculations of the prospects of successful military action did serve to inhibit army intervention during the October Revolution, although this was not the only cause.

The international structure explanation performs quite well. Throughout the revolutionary and civil war period officers were motivated largely by their concern about the external threat to the state. The war with Germany and Austria loomed large in the calculations of officers about their proper response to domestic political crises. Even during the civil war this traditional focus on external war-fighting played an important role for many officers on both sides.

Organizational culture also provides a very good account for many of the decisions made by officers in this period. Throughout the revolution and civil war we saw that officers were motivated by their previously held beliefs about their proper task and role in politics. A commitment to the task orientation of external defense and of remaining "outside politics" in the resolution of sovereign power issues was an important motivation for officer corps' behavior. Officers clearly violated the norm of civilian supremacy, particularly during the Civil War, but it continued to shape their thinking and behavior. Perhaps the most surprising aspect of the revolution and civil war is how long it took to push the officer corps to intervene, despite the absence of political order and the serious threats to their interests that the revolution entailed. It took much less to impel the German officer corps to take the lead role in domestic politics during the war.
All four of the theories do a poor job of explaining one key aspect of military behavior during the Russian Revolution and Civil War: the role of the troops. The army rank and file were a key actor in the revolution, yet theories of civil-military relations have little to say about their behavior. Most assume, in the words of Katharine Chorley, that "the rank and file...are far more politically sluggish than their officers...." In the Russian Revolution this was decisively not the case. At the beginning of 1917 soldiers outnumbered officers by roughly forty-five to one, a disparity compounded even more by the traditional weakness of the Russian non-commissioned officer structure. Chorley argues that the troops are only important in revolutions after failure in war, a condition that obviously obtained in this case, which not incidentally served as the key example of Chorley's argument.\textsuperscript{202}

In general, the combination of external war, revolution, and civil war makes this case a difficult one for civil-military relations theory.\textsuperscript{203} Even so, some of the existing theories clearly perform better than others. The corporate interest perspective, in particular, did not perform well. The variables highlighted by the international structure, domestic structure, and

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\textsuperscript{203} I know of only one book on the specific question of civil-military relations and revolution: Chorley, \textit{Armies and the Art of Revolution}. Chorley, as noted, focuses on officers and her explanation for military behavior combines the two most prominent theories in the literature, the domestic structure and corporate interest explanations. John Ellis's book on armies and revolution is a historical account of the causes of military success or failure in various revolutionary wars; see: John Ellis, \textit{Armies in Revolution} (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974). There is a body of literature on the question of the relationship between revolution and war, exploring the causal arrow in both directions, but it does not deal with the topic of civil-military relations. See: Jonathan R. Adelman, \textit{Revolution, Armies, and War: A Political History} (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1985); Theda Skocpol, \textit{States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia, and China} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979); Theda Skocpol, "Social Revolutions and Mass Military Mobilization," \textit{World Politics}, Vol. 40, No. 2 (January 1008), pp. 147-168; Stephen M. Walt, "Revolution and
organizational culture perspectives were more important. In the next chapter we will see how officers' ideas about their proper role in politics were carried over into a very different regime and continued to influence military behavior in sovereign power issues.

CHAPTER 4: FROM REVOLUTION TO WAR: SOVIET CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS, 1917-1941

This chapter looks at civil-military relations in the Soviet Union from the founding of the state until the end of World War II. I first look at the body of social science theory on Soviet civil-military relations and show how its predictions compare to those of the broader literature on the question. The second section examines the foundations of the new Soviet army and discusses continuities and discontinuities with the Imperial Russian armed forces. I show that there was considerable basis for the apolitical organizational culture of the tsarist army to be passed on to the Red Army, and that Bolshevik efforts to institute firm control over the army tended more to reinforce than dramatically to alter the previous culture. The third section discusses the project of state-building in the first decades of the Soviet regime and examines the government's political capacity. I argue that the new regime had significant continuities with the old state, and that state strength grew throughout the inter-war period, until by the mid-1930s the Stalinist state was quite powerful.

The final two sections focus more specifically on questions of sovereign power and civil-military relations (see Table 4-1). I examine the post-Lenin succession and the Great Purges of the military under Stalin. In both of these cases the military did not become involved in sovereign power issues. The Great Purges receive the most extended treatment both because of their theoretical and intrinsic interest (why did the officer corps not do more to protect itself?), and because of new sources available from Soviet archives. I find that there were definite corporate motives for military intervention in 1937-38, but a combination of organizational culture and domestic structure deterred any potential military coup. International structural factors also may
have played a role, as did purely personal self-interest considerations, a variable not encompassed by any of the four theories under investigation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observations</th>
<th>Predictions</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>International Structure</td>
<td>Domestic Structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Post-Lenin Succession</strong></td>
<td>Intervention unlikely.</td>
<td>Intervention or arbitration likely.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Great Purges</strong></td>
<td>Intervention unlikely, although possible for national interest motives.</td>
<td>Intervention unlikely.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**THEORIES OF SOVIET CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS**

There is a massive literature on Soviet civil-military relations. During the Cold War, American academics and policy-makers devoted considerable attention to understanding the relationship between the Communist Party and the armed forces.¹ Despite this substantial research effort, however, there is no systematic study of military intervention into the sovereign power domain. Most of this literature, for good reason, focused on issues of defense policy. Topics such as military doctrine, arms control, and weapons procurement were of great importance to United States foreign-policy making and hence attracted considerable attention. Some studies, however, looked more broadly at Soviet civil-military relations and drew

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¹ Because the Communist Party was the effective leadership of the state, references to "civilians" or "civilian authority" should be taken to indicate the Party, and vice versa.
conclusions about army behavior in sovereign power issues and the likelihood of military intervention. With one exception, this literature did not address the pre-Soviet period.

These broader conceptual studies tend to adopt a corporate interest explanation for Soviet military behavior. The Soviet military is portrayed as a bureaucratic actor struggling to protect its interests. Military intervention is a potential danger if the army's interests are sufficiently threatened.

Roman Kolkowicz, for example, explicitly adopts an "interest group" approach to Soviet civil-military relations. He derives military interests from it's function, as do other corporate or bureaucratic approaches to civil-military relations. These interests are relatively constant across militaries in large, industrialized societies. Thus, organizational culture plays no role in Kolkowicz's analysis. Operating within this framework, and focusing most closely on the Khrushchev period, Kolkowicz concludes that the relationship between the party and the army is "essentially conflict-prone and thus presents a perennial threat to the political stability of the Soviet state."

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2 Although the major works in the Soviet civil-military relations literature, such as those of Roman Kolkowicz and Timothy Colton, arguably made important contributions to the general civil-military relations literature, there was a tendency both by the authors and by others to treat this literature as a separate sub-field. In this section I hope to situate the main tendencies of this literature in the broader comparative work on civil-military relations. Two relatively recent summaries of the Soviet civil-military relations literature are: Timothy J. Colton, "Perspectives on Civil-Military Relations in the Soviet Union," in Timothy J. Colton and Thane Gustafson, eds., Soldiers and the Soviet State (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), pp. 3-44; Thomas M. Nichols, Chapter Two ("Bureaucrats or Bonapartes? Western Views of the Soviet Military"), The Sacred Cause: Civil-Military Conflict over Soviet National Security Policy (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), pp. 21-32.

3 The exception is the work of William Odom, which will be discussed below.

Timothy Colton has challenged Kolkowicz's "conflict model" of Soviet civil-military relations. Rather, Colton proposes a "participatory model" that holds that army-party relations are best understood in terms of the "compatible objectives and cross-cutting interests" of the two institutions. Despite Colton's sharp disagreement with Kolkowicz, however, he shares with Kolkowicz a focus on the interests of the armed forces as an explanation for officer corps behavior. Colton states, "officers intervene against civilian authorities when their perceived interests are being denied or threatened by civilian policy." Given this framework, Colton concludes that lack of military intervention must be explained by the party generally having satisfied the military's interests. Quiescence during periods when the army's interests were not respected, such as the Stalinist purges, is due to the party having previously been a major booster of the military. But Colton holds open the possibility of "full-scale intervention" in the event of "a number of policy choices highly unfavorable to military interests." 5

Another scholar adopting an approach similar to Colton's is Edward Warner. Warner explicitly uses a bureaucratic politics framework. He argues that "the Soviet military establishment is an active institutional participant in the politics of the Soviet Union." Warner confines his analysis primarily to the sphere of defense policy. Although he discusses the "institutional ideology" of the Soviet armed forces, his approach is not an organizational culture one. For Warner, "institutional ideology" is derived from the bureaucratic functions of the organization. Not surprisingly, he finds that the Soviet military is concerned about the military threat posed by "imperialism" and committed to a strong national defense and Soviet patriotism.

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Institutional autonomy is a prime concern of the armed forces, states Warner, but the military "fully [accepts] its ultimate subordination to the party leadership." This is as close as Warner comes to discussing the norms held by Soviet officers about their potential involvement in sovereign power issues.⁶

William Odom correctly notes that Kolkowicz's and Colton's models can be seen as "two sides of the same coin." Both Kolkowicz and Colton predicted conflict if the party leadership did not satisfy the military's interests. They differ only in their assessment of how often the military was dissatisfied. Thomas Nichols suggests that both authors' conclusions reflected the period in which they were writing, with Kolkowicz writing mainly on the conflictual Khrushchev period and Colton basing his argument on the harmony evident during the Brezhnev "golden age."⁷

The views of Odom and Nichols are harder to classify. Both of them advance arguments consistent with a corporate interest approach to military intervention, but their accounts tend to stress other elements that differ from this perspective.

Odom, for example, seemingly advocates an approach similar to that of Kolkowicz and Colton by recommending a bureaucratic politics approach. His description of what this approach entails, however, sets him apart from classic organizational theory in important ways. For Odom, a bureaucratic politics approach means looking at struggles for control and information within a particular bureaucracy, not between that bureaucracy and the political leadership. Moreover, he


denies the possibility of party-military bureaucratic conflict by contending that the army is the "administrative arm of the Party, not something separate from and competing with it." By denying the possibility of conflict across the civil-military boundary, indeed by maintaining that this boundary is very blurry in practice, Odom offers a quite different account than that provided by traditional organization theory. The fundamental insight of the bureaucratic politics approach, that "where you stand depends on where you sit," does not seem to apply to Soviet civil-military relations. Odom's "congruence model" is in fact more consistent with the totalitarian approach to Soviet politics, a framework that Odom argues was superior to an interest group model.8

Odom's rejection of the possibility of party-military conflict makes it difficult for him to explain military intervention. He continued to hold his "congruence model" until at least 1990, arguing that his approach did a better job of explaining Gorbachev era civil-military relations than Kolkowicz's or Colton's. Odom's commentary on the August 1991 coup had little to say about the armed forces. By 1993, however, it seems he had abandoned the congruence model, arguing that the Russian army was in a position to force its policies on the civilian leadership.9

Odom's explanation of the sources of civil-military amity, however, warrant attention. Odom attributes the lack of conflict to the "military imperatives" of rule faced by both the Tsarist

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empire and the Bolshevik regime. Both regimes had to hold together a multinational empire "that embraces very powerful centrifugal forces." Military power is emphasized to "cope with political realities." He concludes, "the marshals cannot afford the luxury of corporate military interests; they are in the same political boat with the CPSU."

For Odom, then, civil-military value congruence is explained by structural factors, largely domestic but also arguably international. At the same time, Odom does not discuss what actions the military will take if civilians do not respond to the "military imperatives" of rule as he understands them. Odom’s approach is specifically designed to explain Russian and Soviet civil-military relations and seemingly would apply only to other multi-national empires and not all states.

Thomas Nichols argues, consistent with Kolkowicz and in opposition to Colton and Odom, that Soviet civil-military relations were marked by conflict. In contrast with Kolkowicz, though, Nichols contends that the military was a Marxist ideological organization and that the party was more pragmatic -- this was the source of the conflict. Furthermore, Nichols maintains that disputes over military doctrine were "by definition opposition to the Party leadership." Nichols makes doctrinal conflict within the realm of defense policy the focus of his study. He does not acknowledge Colton's crucial distinction between realms of civil-military relations. For Nichols, conflict over defense policy inexorably leads to conflict over sovereign power issues. In this sense, Nichols is also using a corporate interest model; military intervention results from threats to the military's doctrinal positions.

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Nichols dismisses the proposition that there were normative constraints on officer corps involvement in politics. He notes that there was "an almost complete lack of constitutional norms regulating the civil-military relationship." Further, he contends, "there were few informal norms to supplant this dearth of legal mechanisms." On the other hand, he states that "senior Soviet officers were able to act as legitimate players within the political structure and actually engage in the politics of national security." In other words, Nichols does believe that there were norms regulating Soviet civil-military relations, but he thinks that these norms encouraged rather than inhibited military participation in politics. Norms can either inhibit or promote behaviors that outsider observers consider "bad" or inappropriate. It also is worth noting that, according to Nichols, military participation was legitimated for "the politics of national security"; one is hard pressed to think of a state in which it is not legitimate for the military to participate in national security politics. Nichols, as previously noted, does not distinguish between domains of civil-military relations.\footnote{Nichols, The Sacred Cause, pp. 11-14. On the fact that social norms can encourage either "good" or "bad" behavior, see: Martha Finnemore, National Interests in International Society (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), p. 32.}

In Table 4-2 I set out what the different authors see as the fundamental cause of military intervention in sovereign power politics. With the exception of Odom's work, and my own, these theorists have not tried to generalize to the pre- or post-Soviet period. Soviet civil-military relations was treated as something sui generis. In this chapter and the subsequent two chapters on the Soviet period I will evaluate the explanatory power of these theories, in addition to my assessment of the general civil-military relations theories being investigated in the dissertation.
### TABLE 4-2: Predictions about Military Intervention

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Cause of Military Intervention</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kolkowicz</td>
<td>Threat to military corporate interests.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colton</td>
<td>Threat to military corporate interests.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Odom</td>
<td>None. Military is executant of Party Decisions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nichols</td>
<td>Disputes over ideology and military doctrine.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taylor</td>
<td>Interaction of motives and organizational culture.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**A NEW SOVIET ARMY?**

This section examines the development of the Red Army in its first few decades. The principle question is whether the Soviet military was an army "of a new type," as the Bolshevik regime claimed. I find that in fact there were significant continuities from the old imperial army, both in terms of personnel and organizational culture. The Bolsheviks undertook strenuous efforts to change the military’s culture, but most of these endeavors were consistent with officer corps adherence to the norm of civilian supremacy.

The Bolsheviks, like other European socialist parties, had an antipathy towards professional standing armies and were ideologically committed to a militia system for national defense. The exigencies of civil war, however, led them quickly to abandon these ideals in 1918 in favor of a traditional military system. The issue of what form the military should take in a socialist state attracted renewed debate once victory in the Civil War was achieved. At the Tenth Party Congress in March 1921 the Bolsheviks decided in favor of a regular army, which had proved its usefulness during the Civil War and in the war with Poland. The existence of a
standing army separate from the people implied that civil-military relations would remain an important political issue in the Soviet Union, just as it was in capitalist states.\textsuperscript{13}

The Bolshevik leadership was particularly nervous about the question of control over the armed forces. Their Marxist world view and their tendency to draw analogies from European revolutionary history led them to attribute special importance to the problem of “Bonapartism.” The fact that the overwhelming majority of Red Army officers during the Civil War were ex-Tsarist officers ("military specialists") made many Bolsheviks extremely suspicious of the army high command. At the same time, the Bolsheviks had little choice but to rely on “military specialists” because they lacked trained officer cadres of their own.\textsuperscript{14}

During the Civil War the command staff of the Red Army was made up overwhelmingly of “military specialists.” After the war was over the Bolsheviks tried to reduce their reliance on “military specialists,” since Trotsky's extensive use of imperial army officers had been quite controversial in the party throughout the Civil War. Even so, after demobilization more than thirty percent of the command staff of the Red Army were “military specialists,” including many of those in top positions. Ex-tsarist officers particularly dominated two key institutions, the General Staff and the General Staff Academy. The officers who designed the Soviet staff system were educated in Tsarist military academies, and the structure and functions of the Red Army Staff closely mirrored those of the imperial system. Timothy Colton notes, “some of the ablest of


\textsuperscript{14} The role of “military specialists” in the Civil War was discussed in Chapter Three. The best study of the military specialists is: A.G. Kvataraev, \textit{Voyennye spetsialisty na sluzhbe Respubliki Sovietov 1917-1920 gg.} (Mosvka: “Nauka,” 1988). For some examples of Bolshevik nervousness about “Bonapartism,” see: von Hagen,
them [ex-tsarist officers] staffed new central staff organs that carried on the tradition of the Imperial General Staff in everything but name." "Military specialists" were more than ninety percent of the teaching and administrative staff of military academies and schools. Not surprisingly, the methods and in many ways even the curriculum were copied from the Imperial General Staff Academy. Indeed, in most cases the same buildings were used. Dale Herspring states, "they [the Bolsheviks] put 'military specialists' in charge of reorganizing the entire educational system."

In the mid-1920s, during the so-called "military reform" period, efforts were made to cut back the Red Army’s reliance on "military specialists" by shrinking the officer corps and training new officers. More than half of the officer corps at this time had been educated as officers in the Imperial Army; of course, even the 37 percent that had been trained in Soviet military establishments were instructed by former Tsarist officers. One reason among many for Trotsky's ouster as head of the Soviet armed forces was his heavy reliance on ex-tsarist officers. Mikhail Frunze, an old Bolshevik with Civil War experience and the leader of the armed forces in 1924


and 1925, cut large numbers of "military specialists" from the officer corps. By the end of the
decade ex-tsarist officers represented around ten percent of the Soviet officer corps.16

"Military specialists," however, continued to dominate the military intelligentsia. 79 of
the 100 authors of the 1929 *Field Service Regulations* were ex-tsarist officers, and more than
eighty percent of contributors to military journals that year were also "military specialists." The
Red Army (later General) Staff was headed by former Imperial army officers from 1926 until
World War II: Mikhail Tukhachevskiy, Boris Shaposhnikov, and Aleksandr Yegorov. "Military
specialists," as noted above, played a dominant role in military education. Leading theorists such
as Shaposhnikov and Aleksandr Svechin had been educated at the Imperial General Staff
Academy. Svechin was one of the dominant instructors at the General Staff Academy in the
1920s and reportedly had little time for Marxist jargon in his classroom.17

"Military specialists" again came under attack in 1929-1930 as part of Stalin's general
campaign against his political opponents and "bourgeois specialists." The purge in the military
during this period did not go as far as it did in other agencies, however, and many of these officers
returned to their previous positions a few years later.18

Throughout the 1920s we have seen that ex-tsarist officers represented a significant, albeit
progressively shrinking, contingent within the Red Army officer corps. More important than their
quantitative influence was their qualitative influence on military education, the General Staff, and

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17 Erickson, *The Soviet High Command*, pp. 318-319; Garthoff, *Soviet Military Policy*, p. 34. On Svechin, see:
Herspring, *Russian Civil-Military Relations*, pp. 3-20, 57; Vitaly Rapoport and Yuri Alexeev, *High Treason: Essays

18 On attacks on "military specialists" in 1929-1930, see: Erickson, *The Soviet High Command*, pp. 314-315;
military thought. Thus, despite the Bolshevik claim to have created an “army of a new type,” there were considerable continuities from the Imperial Army to the Red Army. There were certainly “transmission belts” to make it possible for key elements of the organizational culture of the tsarist armed forces to be carried into the Soviet army. Even so-called Red Commanders, who had not served in the imperial army and came into the military as committed Bolsheviks, often associated more with “military specialists” than with the troops and adopted quite willingly the privileges of officership.19

The most important change from the old period to the new was the vigorous effort by the Bolsheviks to ensure the political reliability of the officer corps. This policy had three components. First, political commissars were attached to military officers and counter-signed their orders under the policy of dual command (dvoyenachaliye) instituted during the Civil War. Starting in 1924 dual command was gradually phased out in favor of one-man command (edinonachaliye). Commissars were maintained, however, and made responsible for political instruction. The second policy used to ensure officer corps loyalty was the political instruction of the officer corps in Bolshevik party ideology. The regime desired that officers would be consciously committed to the party’s policies and goals, rather than apolitical with respect to domestic politics. Third, the Bolsheviks adopted a policy of “affirmative action” in favor of workers and poor peasants as officer candidates and discriminated against former nobles, bourgeoisie, Cossacks, and so-called “kulaks” (wealthier peasants). The party believed that workers and poor peasants would be more sympathetic to Bolshevik rule.20

19 For Red Commanders’ adaptation to traditional officer roles, see: von Hagen, Soldiers in the Proletarian Dictatorship, p. 177.

20 For additional background on these policies, see: von Hagen, Soldiers in the Proletarian Dictatorship; Erickson, The Soviet High Command; Herspring, Chapter 4 (“Red or Expert: Personnel Issues”), Russian Civil-
These innovations in some respects reinforced and in other ways undermined an apolitical organizational culture. The Bolsheviks were committed firmly to the principle of civilian supremacy and believed that the military should play no role in sovereign power issues. The difference from the previous regime was that in the Red Army military obedience was to be maintained by the conscious (i.e., pro-communist) political views of the officers, rather than their disinterest towards politics. Bolshevik policy represented an alternative approach to civilian control, then, rather than a repudiation of the principle. To the extent that officers were rewarded for their political commitment or class background, though, the notion that the military was “outside politics” was undermined. Indeed, such a slogan would be an anathema to the party leadership. In 1924 the military leadership under Frunze warned against the “spirit of apoliticism” in party political education in the armed forces. Frunze was probably right to be concerned, because there is evidence that regular officers and soldiers were less than committed to political education, and that military training often took precedence.²¹

²¹ The difference between Imperial and Soviet efforts at civilian control is captured somewhat by Samuel Huntington’s distinction between objective and subjective civilian control. Huntington argues that objective control is the superior strategy, but there is no reason that the two policies cannot both inculcate the norm of civilian supremacy. Indeed, as the Soviet regime matured the two policies were often used in a mutually reinforcing fashion. See: Samuel P. Huntington, The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations (Cambridge: Belknap Press/Harvard University Press, 1957), pp. 80-85. On political education and “apoliticism,” see: von Hagen, Soldiers in the Proletarian Dictatorship, p. 253. On resistance to political education, see: Brzezinski, ed., Political Controls in the Soviet Army, pp. 20, 40-41, 47-48, 87-88; Reese, Stalin’s Reluctant Soldiers, pp. 79-80.
There was one final check on the Red Army officer corps if these efforts to ensure their political reliability failed: the secret police.\textsuperscript{22} Secret police units, called Special Departments (\textit{Osobyte otdely}, or OO) were established in the armed forces during the Civil War. Special Departments, with the aid of informants, conducted political surveillance over military personnel. Throughout most of the inter-war period the secret police also controlled the Internal Troops, although at times they were under the jurisdiction of a separate Interior Ministry. The Border Troops, likewise, usually were under the authority of the secret police during this period. In principle the Internal Troops and Border Troops could act as an armed counter-balance to the armed forces, but in practice their principle mission involved internal repression and border control. The most important secret police check on the army were the Special Departments.\textsuperscript{23}

These other armed bodies, which numbered tens of thousands of personnel, helped free the armed forces from internal missions after the Civil War. The army did occasionally perform domestic missions in the 1920s and 1930s, but much of this work fell on the Internal Troops, the Border Troops, and the secret police. These internal missions included suppressing local disturbances and fighting partisans and armed detachments, particularly in unstable border regions (collectivization will be discussed below). The army apparently was able to focus largely on external defense once the Civil War was over. William Fuller suggests that "former tsarist

\textsuperscript{22} The secret police went through multiple name changes throughout Soviet history; the names perhaps best known are Cheka, NKVD, and KGB, but there were several others. For details on these organizational changes, see: Amy W. Knight, \textit{The KGB: Police and Politics in the Soviet Union} (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1988), pp. 10-52, 315.

\textsuperscript{23} On the Special Departments, see: Knight, \textit{The KGB}, pp. 249-275; Brzezinski, ed., \textit{Political Controls in the Soviet Army}, pp. 54-83; George Leggett, \textit{The Cheka: Lenin's Political Police} (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), pp. 95-98, 205-208. On the organization and functions of the Internal and Border Troops, see: Knight, \textit{The KGB}, pp. 221-247; Leggett, \textit{The Cheka}, pp. 90-95, 209-213, 224-229, 232; William C. Fuller, Jr., \textit{The Internal Troops of the MVD SSSR}, College Station Papers No. 6 (College Station, Texas: Center for Strategic Technology, Texas A & M University, 1983). Fuller argues convincingly that internal control, and not counter-balancing the army, was the most important mission of the Internal Troops.
‘military specialists’ may have impressed the importance of emancipating the regular army from internal service on their new Soviet masters.” In this sense, also, there was considerable continuity from the old regime.\textsuperscript{24}

One final way in which the Red Army differed from the Imperial Army was the emphasis placed by the political leadership on using the armed forces as a “school of the nation.” Such a role, of course, was not unique to the Soviet Union; since the nineteenth century all European states have to varying degrees used the armed forces to spread literacy and nationalism. The Milyutin reforms in the Imperial Army partially were motivated by Milyutin’s realization that Russia needed to mobilize more societal resources in the age of nationalism. Perhaps no other European regime, though, was quite as conscious as the Bolsheviks were of the need to use the armed forces to, paraphrasing Eugen Weber, turn peasants into Soviet men. The bulk of the army, of course, came from the peasantry, and the army was seen as the ideal vehicle for exterminating the pernicious influences of village life on young peasants and enlisting them in the cause of “building socialism.” Von Hagen notes that the military leadership was ambivalent about these goals. Although they recognized the importance of building support among the peasantry, who represented the large majority of conscripts, the military leadership was reluctant to divert the armed forces too much from the task of preparing for war. Frunze warned in 1925 about the dangers of neglecting military training in favor of rural propaganda. The army, Frunze noted, is most importantly “an instrument of war.”\textsuperscript{25}

\textsuperscript{24} Fuller, \textit{The Internal Troops of the MVD SSSR}, pp. 13-22 (quote on p. 20); Knight, \textit{The KGB}, pp. 222-229.

\textsuperscript{25} Frunze is quoted in: von Hagen, \textit{Soldiers in the Proletarian Dictatorship}, p. 231. Von Hagen and Reese both treat the issue of using the army as a “school of the nation” extensively, with von Hagen attributing more success to these efforts than Reese: von Hagen, \textit{Soldiers in the Proletarian Dictatorship}, esp. pp. 231-325; Reese, \textit{Stalin’s Reluctant Soldiers}, esp. pp. x, 1-3, 71, 80-99. The Milyutin reforms were discussed in Chapter Two. On Europe in general, see: Barry R. Posen, “Nationalism, the Mass Army, and Military Power,” \textit{International
The Red Army, then, was only partially an “army of a new type.” Many members of its officers corps were educated in tsarist military institutions and had served in the Imperial Army. The Red Army Staff and the Military Academy were especially important “transmission belts” of the old organizational culture into the new army, and also served as a base for advocates of traditional forms of military organization and doctrine and a focus on external warfare as the army’s primary task. On the other hand, the Bolsheviks introduced several important innovations into military life, most importantly a series of political controls and efforts to use the army to develop conscious support for regime goals among both officers and enlisted men. Thus, the Red Army in the inter-war period was an amalgamation of old and new. Most important, perhaps, it was an institution whose sense of identity was in the process of being created. In the section on the purges below I will discuss some recent evidence on the norms held by officers in this period.

RE-BUILDING THE RUSSIAN STATE, OR BUILDING THE SOVIET STATE

This section has two basic goals. The first is to explore the continuities and discontinuities between the Russian imperial state and the Soviet Union. As is the case with the armed forces, there were elements of both constancy and change across the two periods. The second purpose of the section is to gauge the political capacity of the Soviet state in its first decades. I discuss the different assessments of historians on this question and also examine the measures of state strength discussed in Chapter One. In its early period the state was quite weak, but, driven by international and domestic pressures, the ideology of the ruling party, and the

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personality of Joseph Stalin, by the mid-1930s a quite powerful state apparatus had been built. This larger political context is important for understanding the military’s role in sovereign power disputes in the inter-war period, because the structural approaches to military involvement in sovereign power issues stress these factors.

Lenin and the Bolsheviks did not believe that they were becoming the custodians of Russian statehood when they seized power in October 1917. The Russian Revolution was supposed to be the first act of the general European socialist revolution. Beyond the simple slogans that had helped propel the Bolsheviks to power, such as “land and peace” and “worker’s control,” they did not take office with a clear program for action.26

During the first years of their rule the Bolsheviks were overwhelmingly preoccupied with the Civil War and the struggle to maintain power. Beyond the purely military reasons for victory (control of the heartland and Trotsky’s success in raising a regular army), there were several important political reasons for the Red victory. Foremost was the relative attractiveness of their political program. Although the Bolsheviks never had majority support in the country and alienated many sectors of the population, in comparison to the Whites they seemed a better bet to the workers, peasants, and national minorities. The use of Red Terror against potential political opposition also played a role. Bolshevik policies during the Civil War period, including the

economic policy of War Communism and the use of Red Terror, had their roots both in Bolshevik ideology and in the circumstances that the new regime confronted.\textsuperscript{27}

One crucial reason for the Bolshevik victory was their ability, relative to their political and military opponents, to create functioning government institutions. Moshe Lewin makes the point well: “The Bolsheviks worked feverishly to create a central government as well as important civilian service and local authorities; at the same time they organized a war machine, complete with an armament industry. To sum it all up, they created a state.”\textsuperscript{28}

That the Reds proved more proficient than the Whites at state-building is somewhat ironic, since Lenin had vowed to “smash” the bourgeois state in Russia and the Whites were “statists.” In reality the Bolsheviks essentially took over the old state apparatus. The policy of using “specialists” from the old regime was by no means limited to army officers, and Lenin argued that the regime could not survive without the assistance of those individuals with bureaucratic and economic expertise, regardless of their class background or political views. Daniel Orlovsky


\textsuperscript{28} Lewin, “The Civil War,” p. 401.
notes, “essentially the structures and even personnel of the old regime and Provisional Government remained in place.”

The heavy reliance of the early Soviet state on institutions and personnel from the old regime is seen clearly with respect to the central government. The Council of People’s Commissars, or Sovnarkom, had an almost identical structure to the ministerial system of the tsarist and provisional governments. The bureaucracy of the government was acquired from the previous governments, and a majority of officials carried over into the new government. Lenin noted in 1923 that, with the exception of the foreign affairs ministry, “our state apparatus...represents in the highest degree a hangover of the old one....” The most prominent Western expert on the early Sovnarkom, T.H. Rigby, observes, “the structural changes were scarcely greater than those sometimes accompanying changes of government in Western parliamentary systems.” Rigby concludes, “the conditions were thus propitious for the transfer not only of specialist knowledge and administrative techniques, but also of less tangible behaviors and attitudes.”

The Soviet state, of course, was not identical to the tsarist state. The Bolsheviks, most importantly, were motivated by fundamentally different goals than the old regime. The Bolsheviks were quite willing, however, to use the structures and personnel of the old regime to

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advancing their goals. The ability of the Bolsheviks to rebuild the Russian state and establish centralized control over most of the old Russian empire during the Civil War undoubtedly played a role in legitimizing Bolshevik rule in the eyes of some of the old elite. General A.A. Brusilov, for example, a prominent "military specialist" who had been the Supreme Commander for several months in 1917 under the Provisional Government, wrote in 1922: "they [the Bolsheviks] have not allowed our martyr Russia to fall to pieces altogether, and, apart from a few frontier areas, they have held united those pieces that were beginning to fall apart. I believe this has been a great state accomplishment."32

The Bolshevik's success in building a strong centralized state also has been touted as one of their most important achievements by historians and social scientists. Theda Skocpol argues, "the most striking feature of the New Regime was the predominance of a Party-state complex ever so much larger and more dynamically powerful within society than the tsarist regime had ever been." Skocpol produces statistics on state personnel demonstrating that the state apparatus grew considerably in the 1920s and 1930s, perhaps by as much as five times. She contends that the Soviet government had a much higher political capacity than the tsarist one and was able to accomplish its social and political goals much better than the old regime. The historian Theodore

30 T.H. Rigby, Lenin's Government: Sovnarkom 1917-1922 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979); the quotes are from pp. 51 and 64. See also: Orlovsky, "State Building in the Civil War Era."

31 What became the most fundamental feature of the Soviet regime, the dominance of Communist Party structures over all aspects of political, administrative, economic, and social life, was not evident in the first years of Bolshevik rule. Lenin clearly believed in Bolshevik domination, but he expected the party to work through the government and not rule over it, and he focused largely on state matters as head of Sovnarkom from 1917 until his death. Two good accounts of how the party came to dominate the government gradually during the early Soviet period, one focusing on the government and the other on the party, are: Rigby, Lenin's Government; Service, The Bolshevik Party in Revolution. For an interesting analysis of some features of Lenin's political thought that contributed to this outcome, see: A.J. Polan, Lenin and the End of Politics (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

32 Quoted in: Benvenuti, The Bolsheviks and the Red Army, pp. 210-211. For more information on Brusilov, see Chapter Three.
von Laue, similarly, argues that the Soviet regime succeeded where the tsarist government had failed; it made Russia a stronger state, better able to cope with the demands of great power politics in the twentieth century.\(^{33}\)

The notion of an all-powerful Soviet state was the basis for one of the most prominent theoretical approaches to the study of the Soviet Union, totalitarianism. The literature on totalitarianism focused on the claims by the ruling regime to authority over all aspects of political, economic, and social life in the country. The clear tendency of the totalitarian school was to depict the Soviet state as an extremely powerful actor, able to act seemingly at will to change social structure and private behavior in far-reaching ways. Totalitarianism as a concept dominated the study of the Soviet Union in the 1950s but came increasingly under attack in the 1960s and 1970s. Some scholars objected to the use of this label to describe the entire Soviet period, arguing that its application should be restricted to the Stalinist period, while others questioned the term’s accuracy even as a description of the Stalin era.\(^{34}\)

The debate among historians about Stalinism became particularly heated in the 1980s, when revisionist social historians attacked the picture of Soviet society in the 1930s as directed from an all-powerful center. These historians, writing “from below” (i.e., focusing on groups


other than the national political elite), argued that the state was much weaker in the 1930s than the traditional picture pretends. Most (but not all) revisionists did not challenge the view that the center initiated the key policies of industrialization, collectivization, and the Great Terror in Stalin’s “revolution from above.” They did emphasize, however, that the regime had less control over these policies than claimed, that there were many unintended consequences of the state’s actions, and that there were important social constituencies for the “revolution from above.”

One aspect of the Soviet state in the inter-war period that this new literature helped underscore was the degree to which the ruling Bolshevik party felt itself to be isolated and under threat. The Bolsheviks felt isolated both in the country, as a “worker’s party” in an overwhelmingly peasant society, and internationally, as a “socialist” state in a world of capitalist ones. This Bolshevik sense of isolation was quite warranted. During the revolution and civil war the size of the industrial proletariat, the Bolshevik’s key constituency, dropped by more than fifty percent as many workers returned to their native villages when the industrial economy collapsed. The New Economic Policy (NEP) of the 1920s was based on accommodation with the peasantry, but the Bolsheviks profoundly distrusted the peasantry as a potentially hostile class. Under NEP private entrepreneurs (the so-called Nepmen) flourished, and many elements of the old way of life (café society, prostitution, gambling, etc.) distasteful to hardened socialists returned. The Communist Party had made few inroads into the countryside in the 1920s, where its organizational structure was weak everywhere and in many places nonexistent. Within the party,

Graeme Gill notes, there was a “prevailing perception of a threatening environment and the dangers of infections from it...”

The causes of the “revolution from above” marked by the collectivization and industrialization campaigns of the late 1920s-early 1930s will long be debated. From 1929 until 1933 “a veritable civil war,” in the words of Moshe Lewin, raged in the Soviet countryside. But the battle was unequal, and most resistance by peasants to the collectivization drive was passive. The establishment of the Stalinist system was marked by incredible levels of violence, but almost all of it was directed by the regime against society and not the other way around.

Stalin’s “revolution from above” was a risky policy, given the weakness of the party and the state in the country. But there was little chance that the regime would be directly threatened. Organized political opposition had been eliminated in the country in the early 1920s, and the

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secret police were a reliable element of state power that was capable of defeating any organized acts of resistance or violence. If the state was weak, the society that it was attacking was even weaker. There were also groups within society that benefited from the regime’s coercive policies and became “upwardly mobile,” stepping into the positions of those who had fallen or been wiped out; one might call them Stalin’s yuppies. The extent of social support for Stalin’s policies should not be over-stated, however. The labor historian Jeffrey Rossman has recently declared, on the basis of research in formerly closed party, state, and secret police archives, that “most social groups opposed Stalin’s ‘revolution from above’” and concluded that the revisionists overstate the degree of working-class support for Stalin’s policies.38

Recent historical writing, then, has challenged the general picture put forward by the totalitarian school of an all-powerful Soviet state. Revisionists argue that the power of the state to enforce its decisions was much weaker than previously believed. The measures used in this dissertation to assess state strength are of limited help in adjudicating this dispute, because different approaches lead to fundamentally different conclusions. Robert Jackman’s use of organizational age and political violence to indicate political capacity leads one to conclude that the state was very weak, whereas Stephen Krasner’s focus on the ability of the state to change

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private behavior and social structure leads to the exact opposite conclusion. These two divergent perspectives are discussed here.³⁹

Jackman points to two indicators of political capacity: organizational age and deaths due to political violence (as a rough measure of legitimacy). Both of these measures suggest that the Soviet state was extremely weak in the inter-war period. In terms of organizational age the Soviet state was quite young. The Soviet order was only a few decades old and had undergone only one transition of the supreme political leadership.

Political violence during the 1920s and especially during the 1930s was outrageously high, although the exact figures are the subject of considerable dispute. R.J. Rummel, based on his survey of some of the sources available in English up until 1990, estimates that there were more than 2 million victims of Soviet “democide” (Rummel’s term for government murder of its own citizens) in the NEP period (1923-1928), more than 11 million for the collectivization period (1929-1935), and more than 4 million for the Great Terror period (1936-1938). Rummel, however, ignores some important sources available at the time, including those in English, and also did not have access to the data based on Russian archives that has come out in the past ten years. One might think that new archival information would show previous estimates to have been too low, but in fact it seems that Rummel and others have overestimated the number of deaths due to political violence for this period, although clearly the last word has not been heard on this issue. This recent work suggests that the total “excess” deaths (famine, repression, etc.) for the period 1927-1938 were in the 9-11 million range, and possibly lower. The famine of 1932-1933, which all observers have attributed to government policy and not “natural” causes,

³⁹ See Chapter One for a complete discussion of these measures.
was responsible for most of these deaths, around 4-7 million by recent estimates. There was also peasant violence against state and party officials during collectivization, but the number of deaths probably numbers in the hundreds from violence directed against the regime. Regardless of the exact figures, the Soviet state in this period clearly was one of the most murderous in history.\footnote{Rummel’s numbers are from: R.J. Rummel, Lethal Politics: Soviet Genocide and Mass Murder since 1917 (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 1990). Rummel’s biggest error seems to be a significant over-estimation of the size of the camp population, which he then uses to estimate annual deaths in the camps. For the more recent data, both on deaths and camp population in the 1930s, see: Alec Nove, “Victims of Stalinism: How Many?” and Stephen G. Wheatcroft, “More Light on the Scale of Repression and Excess Mortality in the Soviet Union in the 1930s,” both in J. Arch Getty and Roberta T. Manning, eds., Stalinist Terror: New Perspectives (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 261-290; V.P. Popov, “gosudarstvenny teror v sovetskoy Rossi. 1923-1953 gg. (istochniki i ikh interpretatsiya),” Otechestvenne arkhivy, No. 2, 1992, pp. 20-31; N.A. Aralovets, “Poteri naseleniya sovetskogo obshchestva v 1930-e gody: problemy, istochniki, metody izucheniya v otechestvennom istorii,” Otechestvennya istoriya, No. 1 (January-February), 1995, pp. 135-146. One recent source suggests that Rummel’s numbers are fairly accurate, but I have not seen this number confirmed or repeated by other sources: Vera Tolz, “Ministry of Security Official Gives New Figures for Stalin’s Victims,” RFE/RL Research Report, Vol. 1, No. 18 (May 1, 1992), pp. 8-10. Of course, Rummel’s probable over-estimations are less egregious than some of the notorious underestimations, such as J. Arch Getty’s “thousands”: J. Arch Getty, Origins of the Great Purges: The Soviet Communist Party Reconsidered, 1933-1938 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 8. On violent peasant resistance to collectivization, see: Fitzpatrick, Stalin’s Peasants, pp. 42-43, 65-67; Lewin, Russian Peasants and Soviet Power, p. 486; Conquest, Harvest of Sorrow, pp. 154-158.}

Jackman contends that regimes that must rely on the use of force do not generate either legitimacy or political capacity and rejects the argument made by Charles, Louise, and Richard Tilly that “repression works.” Jackman specifically acknowledges, however, that in cases like the Stalinist period in the Soviet Union “severe repression can demobilize potential challengers for long periods.” Given that Jackman’s definition of legitimacy does not require positive commitment on the part of citizens, but only “a degree of acquiescence...given the known or feasible alternatives,” it is not clear why he believes that repression cannot generate political capacity. Stalin’s “revolution from above” could not have been successful without the apparent belief of a critical mass of party and secret police officials that once the regime had decided to use
physical coercion there was no turning back until the regime had carried the policies of collectivization and industrialization through to the end.41

Elite opposition to Stalin did persist in the early 1930s, with some support for a less radical approach to domestic politics and also disagreements with his foreign policy. The Great Terror of 1936-1938 was Stalin's final, and successful, bid to establish himself as the uncontested dictator of the Soviet Union. Stalin's political opponents, past, present, and future, real and imagined, were all labeled enemies and marked for destruction. Repeatedly throughout the 1930s Stalin was able to mobilize sufficient elite support for his policies, relying heavily on coercion, to ensure that no viable alternatives to his rule persisted. Contrary to Jackman's argument, it does appear that Stalin's use of repression was a decisive factor in increasing the political capacity of the Soviet state.42

Stephen Krasner's approach to state strength leads to different conclusions than Jackman's about the inter-war Soviet Union. The Soviet Union for Krasner is a prime example of what he calls a "dominant" state: it was able to resist private pressure, change private behavior in intended ways, and change social structure in intended ways. Krasner's view is thus consistent with the

41 The relevant sections of Jackman are: Robert W. Jackman, Power without Force: The Political Capacity of Nation-States (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993), pp. 30-31, 35-38, 98-99, 109-114. On the party's "closing ranks" during the "revolution from above," see: Gill, The Origins of the Stalinist Political System, pp. 223, 247-252; Khlevnyuk, 1937-y, p. 25. This is not to say there was no elite opposition to Stalin (see cites in the next note), but only to recognize that even Stalin's political opponents in the party were committed to the maintenance of political order and the continuation of Bolshevik rule.

totalitarian school discussed above. Although some of the revisionist scholarship discussed here has provided a much more complex portrait of Soviet politics in the 1930s, ultimately Stalin’s success in carrying out the “revolution from above” seems to validate the conclusion of the totalitarian school that the Soviet regime was very powerful in the 1930s. Krasner is thus right to stress the dominant power of the Soviet state.43

The political capacity of the Soviet state, then, grew progressively stronger during the inter-war period. During the Civil War chaos reigned in the country but ultimately the Bolshevik regime was able to re-create a functioning state apparatus and restore political order in the country. During the 1920s the Soviet state faced no serious political challenges to Bolshevik rule but its influence throughout the country was quite weak. The party’s sense of isolation helped contribute to the defeat of NEP as a political and economic program and led to the “revolution from above.” Once this revolution had been successfully carried out and Stalin’s purges had solidified his personal rule there could be little doubt about the dominant position of the Soviet state. This assessment of the growing strength of the Soviet state serves as an important backdrop to our discussion of the military’s role in sovereign power issues in the inter-war period.

SOVEREIGN POWER ISSUES AND THE MILITARY: FROM LENIN TO STALIN

In this section I look at two crucial periods for civil-military relations in the inter-war period: the post-Lenin power struggle and potential resistance to Stalin’s “revolution from above.”

In the next section I provide a more extended treatment of the most important civil-military relations rupture in this period, the purges of the high command in 1937-1938.

**The Post-Lenin Power Struggle**

The early 1920s was a difficult time for Soviet civil-military relations. The post-Civil War demobilization and the general economic crisis in the country had a deleterious effect on the Red Army. The officers and soldiers that remained in the military felt adrift, with no clear sense of purpose and subject to the hostility of many in the Party. In addition, the succession struggle touched off by Lenin's prolonged poor health and eventual death in January 1924 was a potential opportunity for military intervention in politics, particularly since Leon Trotsky, the War Commissar, was a major contender for power. Why did the military remain quiescent during this period, given perceived attacks on its corporate interests (resources and autonomy) and the potential for greater influence implied by the weakness of Bolshevik rule and the leadership power struggle?

There are several familiar responses to this question. Perhaps the most common is that the army was prevented from intervening in politics by Communist Party penetration into the military in the form of commissars (the Political Administration). Roman Kolkowicz calls the commissar system "the Party's crucial instrument of control." Timothy Colton, who is in general quite critical of Kolkowicz's argument, also notes that party penetration of the military was important in the earliest years of the Soviet state.44

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The second conventional response to why the military did not become involved in the post-Lenin succession struggle, often made by historians of Soviet high politics of this period, emphasizes how Trotsky made no attempt to involve the army in high politics. Isaac Deutscher, for example, argues that Trotsky restrained his supporters in the armed forces who wanted to mobilize support for him in the army. Deutscher argues that Trotsky accepted Politburo authority over the military and believed that it was impermissible in a socialist state to use the armed forces for political gain.45

Both of these arguments provide part of the explanation for the military's political quiescence in the early 1920s. It is certainly true that the party leadership was concerned about controlling the armed forces, and that Trotsky made no attempt to appeal to the military for support. But this is only part of the story. At the height of the struggle between Trotsky and the ruling triumvirate of Joseph Stalin, Grigoriy Zinoviev, and Lev Kamenev in the fall and winter of 1923, the Political Administration was in the hands of a Trotsky ally, Vladimir Antonov-Ovseenko. Antonov-Ovseenko suggested that Trotsky had the support of Bolsheviks in the army, and there is some incomplete evidence for this view. The triumvirate demonstrated its concern about the political leanings of army communists by replacing Antonov-Ovseenko in January 1924. Thus, party control of the military through the Political Administration is at best only a partial explanation, since the Political Administration was not controlled by the ruling group.46


46 Whether Antonov-Ovseenko obliquely threatened a coup against the party leadership by invoking the specter of using the army's "peasant masses" to call the party leaders "to order" is still unclear. In Dmitry Volkogonov's recent biography of Trotsky, based on archival sources, he makes no mention of this alleged threat, noting only Antonov-Ovseenko's claim that military communists were discussing the need to support Trotsky "as one." On the role of Antonov-Ovseenko and the Political Administration in the 1923 power struggle, see: Dmitry Volkogonov, Trotsky: politicheskiy portret, Volume 2 (Moskva: Novosti, 1992), pp. 32-33, 45; Roy Medvedev, Let History Judge: The Origins and Consequences of Stalinism, Revised edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 133-136;
It is true that Trotsky believed it was illegitimate to appeal to the army in a sovereign power issue. He also had good reason to believe, as Roy Medvedev argues, that the army was not a "docile instrument" in his hands. Army officers were of two basic types: either committed Bolsheviks who had started in the party and made their military career during the Civil War, or former Imperial officers. The first group was committed to the idea that the party, not the military, should decide who rules, and the second group had already demonstrated their willingness to serve whatever regime captured power. The fact that the Reds had won the civil war meant that those tsarist officers who had fought on the winning side saw themselves as non-interventionists opposed to military dictatorship, which the Whites had represented. Moreover, although some officers and party members were looking for new enemies to fight, it appears that the majority were looking for a respite after the long, difficult years of the Civil War. Thus, Trotsky's position as War Commissar did not necessarily give him a tangible advantage in the party struggle.47

The most fundamental reason that Soviet civil-military relations in the early 1920s are hard to conceptualize in terms of military intervention is because of the weakness of the civil-military divide during these early years. The armed forces leadership, including Trotsky and his successors Mikhail Frunze and Kliment Voroshilov, were Bolsheviks first and foremost and had their initial experience with the military during the Civil War. The commissar institution, the


47 Medvedev, Let History Judge, pp. 133-136. Von Hagen argues that the older generation of officers were happy to slip into a more comfortable lifestyle, whereas younger officers were likely to possess more revolutionary enthusiasm: von Hagen, Soldiers in the Proletarian Dictatorship, pp. 185-195. On the desire of party members for social peace in the early 1920s see, for example: Cohen, Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution, p. 132; William G. Rosenberg, "Introduction: NEP Russia as a ' Transitional' Society," in Fitzpatrick, Rabinowitch, and Stites, eds., Russia in the Era of NEP, p. 1.
Political Administration, also was obviously dominated by those with a party, not a military, background. In other words, civil-military relations during this period was more a contest between competing groups of militarized Bolsheviks for control over the armed forces, rather than a contest between civilians and officers.

As the 1920s went on there was a conscious effort to separate more clearly the civilian and military spheres. Frunze, Trotsky's successor as head of the Red Army, launched a program of reform that included a policy of "militarization." Militarization, Mark von Hagen argues, "actually meant the remilitarization of an institution that was perceived to have lost its distinctive military spirit because civilian organizations and practices had so penetrated the army's way of conducting its affairs." The reformers sought tighter discipline and introduced unity of command (edinochalie), so officers were no longer required to have their orders countersigned by political commissars. Although Frunze died mysteriously in 1925 during surgery, his successor Voroshilov, a Stalin ally, continued the policy of militarization. 48

This trend towards a more traditional and separate military is evidenced by the appearance in 1928 of the so-called "Inner-Army Opposition." The "Inner-Army Opposition," in fact, had no ties whatsoever to Stalin's political opponents on the Left (Trotsky et. al.) or the Right (Nikolay Bukharin et. al.). The "Inner-Army Opposition" was composed of a group of military commissars, associated mainly with the Tolmachev Main Military-Political Academy in Moscow and the Political Administration of the Belorussian Military District. The complaints of this grouping were confined to the question of party control over the army; this group was in no way

involved in the post-Lenin power struggle. Specifically, the "Inner-Army Opposition" was concerned about how edinochalie was being introduced and believed the role of party organs in the military had been reduced too far. They favored strengthening the role of the party in the armed forces.49

The political leadership reacted harshly to the appearance of the "Inner-Army Opposition." Many members of this group were forced from both the army and the party. The political leadership's reaction is explained more by their insecurities due to the recent political situation -- the "war scare" of 1927, the continuing battles with the Right and Left Opposition, and the beginning of collectivization -- than any threat posed by the "Inner-Army Opposition." The group had no ties with the "real" opposition (in fact, they never used the word opposition) and had nothing to do with sovereign power issues.50

The Left and Right Opposition apparently had little support in the armed forces. The United (or Left) Opposition of Trotsky, Zinoviev, and Kamenev of 1926-1927 did have some backing in the army. The Deputy Commissar of War in 1925-1926, Mikhail Lashevich, was an ally of Zinoviev and was removed for his participation in a secret opposition meeting in 1926. There are also unsubstantiated allegations that in 1927, at roughly the same time that Trotsky was criticizing the party leadership for not adequately providing for the country's defense, a group of officers submitted a secret memorandum to the Politburo questioning Voroshilov's competence as


50 Main, "The Red Army and the Soviet Military and Political Leadership in the Late 1920s."

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War Commissar. A Secret Police report from November 1927 also refers to support for the United Opposition in the armed forces.51

The most recent examination of the issue, however, concludes that neither the Left nor the Right Opposition had much military backing. Boris Orlov provides several reasons for weak army support for the United Opposition. First, personnel changes in the officer corps in the 1920s removed potential supporters. Second, the nationalist orientation of Stalin's policy of "socialism in one country" resonated more with officers than Trotsky's internationalist stance. Third, fear of persecution for publicly opposing the Stalinist leadership was also important. Support for the Right Opposition of Bukharin, Aleksey Rykov, and Mikhail Tomsky was even weaker in the armed forces. None of these party leaders had many ties with the officer corps, even from the Civil War period.52

There were, of course, officers such as Lashevich who supported the opposition within the party to Stalin. There is no evidence, however, that attempts were made either by commanders or by party oppositionists to involve the army as a political force. To the extent that there were

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51 The question of officer corps support for the United Opposition bears revisiting now that there is better access to the relevant archives. Erickson, who provides perhaps the most detailed English language account of the Red Army and high politics in the 1920s, claims that Lashevich tried to gather support for the opposition in the army in 1926. However, the party resolution Erickson cites on this matter makes no such claim; rather, it censures Lashevich for taking part in an underground opposition meeting. Recent material from Soviet archives also confirms that Lashevich's activity was confined to participation in the opposition meeting. On the so-called Lashevich affair, see: Erickson, *The Soviet High Command*, pp. 201-202; *VKP (B) v resolyutsiyakh i resheniyakh s"ezdov, konferentsiy i plenumov TsK*, Vol. 2, 5th edition (Moskva: Partizdat, 1936), pp. 114-121; Lars T. Lih, Oleg V. Naumov, and Oleg V. Khlevniuk, eds., *Stalin's Letters to Molotov, 1925-1936* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), pp. 100-101, 113-118. Erickson also cites Isaac Deutscher about the alleged letter from some officers about Voroshilov's incompetence. Deutscher, however, provides no citation for this claim. See: Erickson, *The Soviet High Command*, p. 286; Deutscher, *The Prophet Unarmed*, p. 350. The Secret Police (GPU) report referring to military support for the United Opposition is cited and reproduced in: Reiman, *The Birth of Stalinism*, esp. Chapter 3 (pp. 19-36) and Appendix One (pp. 123-126). Reiman found the GPU report in German Foreign Ministry archives. However, Reiman himself notes that the reliability of the GPU report is suspect. The GPU had self-interested reasons for exaggerating the extent of opposition support in general, and opposition support in the military in particular. For another example of deliberately misleading GPU reports from this period, see: Volkogonov, *Trotsky*, Volume II, pp. 75-76.
officers who supported the opposition, they worked within party channels for their political beliefs. The military did not involve itself as a corporate actor. Moreover, as Boris Orlov correctly points out, none of the most prominent military leaders of the Red Army, such as Tukhachevskiy or Shaposhnikov, were ever discussed as pretenders to power.53

The Military and Stalin’s “Revolution from Above”

The military leadership in the late 1920s and early 1930s devoted their energies to the sphere of defense politics. They had little interest in questions of sovereign power, which was a matter for the Bolshevik Party. Top officers also were concerned about the effect that involvement in societal choice issues had on military training and readiness. This concern is demonstrated most clearly with respect to the military's reaction to the collectivization of agriculture, which began in the winter of 1927-1928.

The civilian political leadership expected the armed forces to play an active role in the collectivization campaign. Party organs in the military were called on to prepare peasant soldiers for positions in the collective farms upon demobilization. Army personnel organized in special brigades were also used to repress peasant resistance, although these brigades were organized by secret police Special Sections (OO) and were led by the OO outside the normal military chain of command. Elements within the military leadership, however, became increasingly unhappy with the impact that collectivization was having on military training and troop morale. Officers feared the detrimental impact that widespread participation in collectivization and other societal choice issues could have on military readiness. Mark von Hagen demonstrates convincingly that the

opposition of top officers led to a slowdown in the pace of collectivization in 1930, with renewed attention devoted to military training and readiness.54

Stalin expressed displeasure with officers' reactions to collectivization. He instructed several commanders from the Ukrainian Military District that "the military should occupy themselves with their own business and not discuss things that do not concern them."55 Military resistance to collectivization was in many ways based on the same premise: that the army should concentrate on military preparation and training. Officers protested against collectivization precisely because it was interfering with their efforts to strengthen national defense. Army objections to collectivization were limited to written and verbal protests. Roger Reese suggests that there was "a very real potential for cooperation between the high command and Bukharin against Stalin." Reese bases this conclusion on evidence of opposition, particularly among soldiers, to forced collectivization. Reese admits, however, that there is no evidence that the military leadership believed that Stalin should be replaced as party head, or that Bukharin ever thought of appealing to the military leadership for support. Military opposition to collectivization implies neither officer corps opposition to Stalin as party leader nor a willingness to intervene in sovereign power issues.56

In the mid-1930s the armed forces were able to concentrate on further professional development. The Red Army Staff was renamed the General Staff, the rank of Marshal was introduced, the Commissariat of Defense was reorganized, the armed forces were considerably


56 Reese, "Red Army Opposition to Forced Collectivization."
expanded, and officers were granted more privileges and autonomy. The growing military threat from both Germany and Japan seemed to warrant these professional developments. This considerable progress was wiped out, however, along with much of the top officer corps, during the Great Purges, which hit the armed forces in 1937-1938.

**THE GREAT PURGES AND THE MILITARY**

Stalin's purges of the Red Army officer corps on the eve of World War II has long puzzled observers. Condoleezza Rice states, "Stalin's willingness to launch extensive purges in the midst of a war scare is difficult to understand." Thousands of officers were repressed (killed or arrested). The highest levels of the military were hit the hardest: for example, all military district commanders were removed, and 76 of 85 members of the Military Soviet, the country's top military body, were repressed (72 of them were shot, committed suicide, or died in a prison camp). The military catastrophe of 1941 often is attributed directly to the purges.

Many observers have wondered why Stalin purged his officer corps on the eve of a major war. An even more interesting question is why they let him get away with it. The purges clearly were a massive threat not only to the corporate interests of the armed forces, but also to the very

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37 On this period, see: Erickson, Chapter 12 ("A Brief Triumph: 1934-1935"), The Soviet High Command, pp. 366-403; Rapoport and Alexeev, Chapter 15 ("A Brief Flowering"), High Treason, pp. 177-193.


39 With very few exceptions, no one takes the official justification for the military purges seriously: that there were a large number of "enemies of the people" inside the armed forces, who were trotskyist-fascist spies and wreckers. Nor can the claim that there was a military plot to overthrow Stalin be sustained, as I demonstrate below.
lives of its officers. A case also can be made that the purges threatened the national interest of the Soviet state, affecting not only the early course of the war but even Hitler's very decision to attack in 1941. Given the massive power that the army possessed, why did it not offer resistance to the purges? Why was there no military coup? Although much has been written about the purges of the Soviet military, only recently has access to the Russian archives allowed one to explore in detail the thinking of officers about the purges. Much important archival information is still not available, but there is enough new material to warrant a fresh look at this question.

This section has three parts. First, I provide a basic description of the prelude to and implementation of Stalin's purge of the army. Second, I examine officer corps' thinking during the purges and discuss some of the political views held by officers that may have placed them under suspicion. Third, I offer an explanation for military behavior during the purges. Although there were obvious corporate motives for intervention, the variables emphasized by the international structure, domestic structure, and organizational culture approaches inhibited the development of a military plot.

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61 I have relied on material from the former Communist Party archive, now known as the Center for the Storage and Study of Documents of Recent History [hereafter by its Russian acronym, RTsKhIDNI], and the major military archive for this period, the Russian State Military Archive [RGVA]. The method used for archival citations is explained in Chapter Three. Both of these archives, particularly RGVA, have much useful material available, but access is not unrestricted. Moreover, access is not available either to the secret police archive or the Presidential Archive, where the most valuable material on the purges of the military undoubtedly is held. Thus, I have not had access to files on the top military leadership, as I did for the revolution case. Secret police and political administration reports on the military do provide some insight into officer corps thinking for this period; certainly we have a better picture than we did before.
Purge of the High Command

The main blow against the armed forces high command came in May-June 1937, when Marshal Mikhail Tukhachevskiy and other top officers were arrested and shot, accused of working with foreign governments and plotting against Stalin. Before discussing these events, however, we must go back to 1936 and look at the period leading up to Stalin’s attack on the military leadership. Several leading officers took small-scale steps in the autumn of 1936 to resist the escalating purges. By the time of the February-March 1937 Central Committee Plenum, which signaled the launching of wide-scale terror directed against the party, there were ominous signs that the military would not be exempted from the purges. The most likely period for military resistance was somewhere in late 1936 or early 1937.

During previous purges of the party in 1929 and 1933-1934 the military had been less affected than the party as a whole. Five percent of military communists were purged in 1929 and 4.3 percent in 1933, compared to 11.7 and 17 percent, respectively, for the party as a whole (unlike in 1937-1938, those purged were not threatened with the euphemistic “highest measure of punishment,” i.e. execution). For the period 1924-1936 the military dismissed around 47,000 officers, 22,000 of them in the years 1933-1936; apparently five thousand of them were former oppositionists. As noted above, the military had not been a prominent player in Stalin’s disputes with his party opponents in the 1920s, and in the campaign against “specialists” in the late 1920s the military suffered less than other agencies. Thus, up to 1936 the military leadership had little reason to think that Stalin’s campaign against “internal enemies” was directed at them.62

62 Figures on the 1929 and 1933 purge are from: Conquest, *The Great Terror*, p. 185; Erickson, *The Soviet High Command*, pp. 315, 374. The numbers on total officers dismissed from 1924-1936 is from Voroshilov’s report to the February-March 1937 Plenum: RTsKhIDNI, f. 17, op. 2, d. 612, vyp. (vypusk) II, l. 82. The complete stenogram of the Plenum has been published in *Voprosy istoriya* from the years 1992 to 1995, and Voroshilov’s speech is available in: *Voyennye arkhivy Rossii*, No. 1(1993), pp. 6-28. J. Arch Getty has argued, in
The arrest of high-ranking officers began in the summer of 1936. In July Divisional Commander Dmitriy Shmidt of the Kiev Military District was arrested. In August the Deputy Commander of the Leningrad Military District, Corps Commander V.M. Primakov, and the military attaché in London, Corps Commander V.K. Putna, were arrested. Shmidt, Primakov, and Putna all had to some degree been involved with the Trotskyist opposition in the 1920s. Several other officers associated with these three also were arrested. Because of the past ties of Primakov, Putna, etc., to the opposition, those officers who had remained loyal to the party's "general line" (i.e., Stalin's position) probably did not see themselves as vulnerable at this point. The important backdrop to these arrests was the first major public trial of the Great Purges, the Zinoviev-Kamenev trial of August 1936, which focused popular attention on the campaign against "enemies of the people."\(^{64}\)

The Commander of the Kiev Military District, Army Commander First Rank Ion Yakir, was a Civil War hero and a full member of the Central Committee. Yakir's response to the arrest...

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63 Ranks in the Soviet officer corps in the interwar period carried different titles for officers of general rank. The titles and their current equivalents, in descending order, were: Marshal (Marshal), Army Commander First Class (General of the Army), Army Commander Second Class (Colonel General), Corps Commander (Lieutenant General), Division Commander (Major General), and Brigade Commander (Major General or Colonel, depending on responsibilities). From the rank of Colonel down there is no difference from the current practice.

64 On these early steps in the military purge, see: Conquest, *The Great Terror*, pp. 188-190; Robert C. Tucker, *Stalin in Power: The Revolution from Above, 1928-1941* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1990), pp. 379-380. Conquest and Tucker also should be consulted on the general question of the purges and show trials. A very important glasnost-era Soviet source is: "Dela o tak nazvyamemoy 'antisovetskoy Trotskytskoy voennoy organizatsii' v krasnoy armii," *Izvestiya TsK KPSS*, No. 4 (April), 1989, pp. 42-80; on the points here, see pp. 43-45. This source draws heavily on the report of the Shvernik commission formed under Khrushchev, which had complete access to all the relevant archives; large excerpts from this report have now been published. See: "M.N. Tukhachevskiy i 'voenno-fashiistskiy zagovor': Spravka o proveke obvineniy," *Voyennye arkhiv Rossi*, No. 1,
of Shmidt and several other officers from his district took two forms, both of which suggested he was not a whole-hearted proponent of Stalin’s campaign against enemies. First, in July 1936, a few weeks after Shmidt’s arrest, he sent a long order to officers and party organs in his district calling on them to pay more attention to the “political-moral condition” of their units. What is most notable about this order is what it does not say: there were no calls for “unmasking” enemies of the people, appeals for “greater vigilance,” or references to “wrecking” activities. Given its wording, this decree could have been issued at any time in the history of the Red Army. It was cosigned by Yakir’s political officer, Commissar Second Rank M.P. Amelin (who also was later killed in the purges).65

A second signal that Yakir was a potential opponent to a spread of the purges into the army was his encounter with the head of the secret police, Nikolay Yezhov, over the Shmidt case. Yakir’s willingness to challenge Yezhov demonstrated his potential opposition to the spread of the purges. Yakir traveled to Moscow, where Shmidt was being held by the NKVD (the abbreviation for the Internal Affairs ministry). Previous versions claim that Yakir went to intercede on behalf of Shmidt, but a recent Russian account asserts that Yakir went to Moscow after finding out that Shmidt had implicated Yakir himself in planning a military uprising. Needless to say, “extraordinary methods” had been used to extract this “confession” from Shmidt. Regardless of Yakir’s motive for the trip, Shmidt repudiated his previous forced testimony in Yakir’s presence, and wrote a note to defense minister Voroshilov to this effect. However, after

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1993), pp. 29-113; “O mashtabakh repressiy v krasnoy armii v predvoyennye gody,” VZh, Nos. 2-3, 5, 1993. Further cites to these reports will cite only the journal name and the issue and page number.

65 RGVA, f. 25880, op. 4, d. 39, ll. 384-407. A month later (in August) Amelin sent a separate order to political organs in the Kiev Military District asking them to check out more closely former “Trotskyist-Zinovievist opportunists.” He did not, however, call for their immediate dismissal from the army and party. RGVA, f. 25880, op. 4, d. 39, l. 481.
Yakir returned to Kiev he was contacted by Voroshilov, who told him that under additional questioning Shmidt had confirmed his earlier confession. Shmidt was eventually executed in May 1937.46

Other top officers also were in various ways obstructing the spread of Stalin’s purge into the armed forces. Perhaps one of the most important was Corps Commander B.M. Feldman, who was head of the cadres department of the defense ministry (the People’s Commissariat of Defense, or NKO). In October 1936 Feldman sent a memorandum to Voroshilov noting that many military district commanders had been sending in packets calling for various officers to be expelled because of Trotskyist activity in the past or relations with former Trotskyists. Feldman reported that he had checked many of these cases himself and found an insufficient basis for dismissal. He called these incidents “shameful” and suggested that all recent dismissal orders be returned to the local level for reconsideration. Voroshilov wrote “correct” on Feldman’s report, and asked for some examples to use in a subsequent order to this effect. Four days after his initial report Feldman notified Voroshilov that the number of officers dismissed had been reduced from 1000 to 300. In November 1936 Voroshilov prepared an order in which he called for officers to bring this “irresponsibility” to an end and to take a more “bolshevik attitude” towards cadres instruction (by “bolshevik attitude” Voroshilov meant more of an effort to work with and politically educate officers with suspect backgrounds). Voroshilov also instructed Feldman to report any incorrect discharges to him. Throughout the second half of 1936 and the beginning of 1937 Feldman

46 The previous evidence on Yakir’s intervention is summarized in: Conquest, The Great Terror, p. 192; Tucker, Stalin in Power, pp. 380-381; Rapoport and Alexeev, High Treason, p. 240. The recent Russian version is: Valentin Kovalev, Dva stalinskikh narkoma (Moskva: “Progress,” 1995), pp. 218-219. See also the version of Bukharin’s wife Anna Larina, which she heard from Yakir’s wife: A.M. Lzina, “Nezabyvayemoye.” Znamya, No. 12, 1988, p. 135. Kovalev was Minister of Justice of Russia and thus had access to closed archives, but there are no footnotes in the book so it is impossible to know what sources he used. I thank Terry Martin for calling my attention to the Kovalev book.
intervened on behalf of various officers accused of politically suspect backgrounds or views and suggested that they be kept in the army and worked with, rather than dismissing them.67

One source reports that Feldman was the only top officer to consider military action against Stalin to stop the purges. Allegedly Feldman raised the issue with both Tukhachevskiy and Yakir in late 1936 - early 1937, and both of them rebuffed this suggestion. Feldman is quoted as saying to Tukhachevskiy, “Do you really not see where this is leading? He will suffocate us all one by one like baby chicks. We must do something.” Tukhachevskiy reportedly replied, “What you are suggesting is a coup. I will not do that.” Obviously is it impossible to verify this story, which comes from a generally well-informed and well-researched samizdat publication from the 1970s. The story itself is not implausible, and we have seen that Feldman was concerned about the course of events in the army. The authors, Vitaliy Rapoport and Yuri Alexeev (a pseudonym), contend that this episode “is the only attempt to organize resistance to terror in the Army that we know took place.”68

The Zinoviev-Kamenev show trial of August 1936 was followed by another show trial in January 1937, sometimes referred to as the Pyatakov-Radek trial (named after the two most famous defendants). Two major show trials in the space of six months were a herald of things to come. The real signal for the launching of the Great Terror of 1937-1938, however, was the February-March 1937 Central Committee Plenum. Stalin, Yezhov, and Molotov all gave major

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67 The Voroshilov order in the archives has no date or number on it, so it is possible that this order was not issued. All of these documents are in: RGVA, f. 37837, op. 21, d. 88, ll. 160-165. For examples of Feldman's intercession on behalf of officers accused of Trotskyism or counter-revolutionary activity, see: RGVA, f. 37837, op. 21, d. 99, ll. 90-91, 116; RGVA, f. 37837, op. 21, d. 109, l. 126.

68 Rapoport and Alexeev, High Treason, p. 282. The possibility of a military coup will be discussed in more detail below.
reports on the topic of enemies of the people and called for greater vigilance on the part of all party members in unmasking spies, wreckers, Trotskyists, etc.  

Both Voroshilov and the head of the Political Administration, Commissar First Rank Yan Gamarnik, made reports to the Plenum on wrecking in the armed forces and efforts to deal with it. Voroshilov, as noted above, seemingly supported Feldman’s efforts in the fall of 1936 to slow down the pace of purges in the armed forces. Rapoport and Alexeev also report rumors that Voroshilov was against wide-scale purges in the army, presumably because he realized the effect the purges would have on military readiness. Regardless, Voroshilov reported to the Plenum on the activity of Trotskyists and spies in the armed forces. He noted that so far they had uncovered “not very many” enemies, and stated his hope that the Red Army would not have many enemies in it because the party “sends its best cadres to the army.” Voroshilov reported on the confessions of Shmidt, Putna, and several other officers, and noted that he was certain that more “Japanese-German, Trotskyist-Zinovievist spies, saboteurs, and terrorists” would be uncovered in the Red Army. He also called for more attention to political and ideological work in the army, and specifically singled out Army Commander First Rank I.P. Uborevich, commander of the Belorussian Military District, for neglecting political instruction. In general, though, Voroshilov’s

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69 The complete stenogram of the February-March 1937 Plenum, as noted above, has been published in the journal *Voprosy istorii*. For discussions of the Plenum and its importance, see: Conquest, *The Great Terror*, pp. 173-181; Tucker, *Stalin in Power*, pp. 420-431. Neither Conquest nor Tucker had access to the complete stenogram at the time of writing, but their accounts stand up better than several based on the actual text, although some of the details are wrong. For an example of a revisionist reading of the stenogram, see: Thurston, *Life and Terror in Stalin’s Russia*, pp. 43-49. Thurston downplays both the extent to which the Plenum signalled the launching of the Great Terror and Stalin’s role in it. Sheila Fitzpatrick, who has read the Plenum transcript and is generally associated with the revisionists, correctly notes that at the February-March 1937 Plenum “Molotov, Stalin, and Ezhov made blood-curdling denunciations of wrecking and conspiracy by highly placed Communists, signalling the onset of the Great Purges.” Fitzpatrick, *Stalin’s Peasants*, p. 281. For an excellent discussion of the events leading up to the Plenum, see: Khlevnyuk, *1937-y*, pp. 72-152.
tone was less threatening than that of Yezhov or Molotov, and he did not say much in his report about the need for greater vigilance and the unmasking of enemies.\textsuperscript{70}

Gamarnik reported to the Plenum on the insufficiencies of party-political work in the armed forces. Gamarnik noted that everything that Stalin said in his report about the failures of party organs to root out Trotskyists and spies in their midst applied to the Political Administration of the Red Army. He was rather short on specific examples, however, and confined himself largely to mundane matters. For example, he talked about the feeding of soldiers, noting that “the food is not always prepared clean and tasty” and chastised commanders for “insufficient vigilance” in this matter. Molotov and Stalin interrupted Gamarnik during his speech and asked for more specific details, with Molotov complaining that “we still need one concrete instance of criticism of political work.”\textsuperscript{71}

Molotov, in an ominous sign for the armed forces, went out of his way in his closing speech to single out the military for criticism. He noted the importance of the armed forces for the country and the efforts that enemies would go to in order to infiltrate the military with spies and wreckers. He stated that Voroshilov, Gamarnik, and Yakir had all known Shmidt well and had failed to unmask him. Molotov criticized the army’s political organs for their insufficient vigilance both in unmasking enemies in the armed forces and in the Political Administration itself.\textsuperscript{72}

\textsuperscript{70} Voroshilov’s speech is available in several places, as noted above. I have used the archival copy: RTsKhIDNI, f. 17, op. 2, d. 612, vyp. II, ll. 76-85. On Voroshilov’s alleged wavering, see: Rapoport and Alexeev, \textit{High Treason}, p. 275.

\textsuperscript{71} RTsKhIDNI, f. 17, op. 2, d. 612, vyp. III, ll. 41-45.

\textsuperscript{72} RTsKhIDNI, f. 17, op. 2, d. 612, vyp. II, ll. 89-90.
One of the focal points of the February-March 1937 Plenum was the question of the fate of the former Right oppositionists Nikolay Bukharin and Alexey Rykov (the other leading Rightist, Mikhail Tomsky, had committed suicide in August 1936). Uborevich allegedly went over to Bukharin and “pressed his hand” in a show of sympathy, publicly suggesting that he did not believe Bukharin was an enemy of the people. There are also reports that Yakir was suspicious of the charges against former oppositionists. Voroshilov, Gamarnik, Yakir and Marshal Semen Budennyy, an old ally of Stalin’s from the Civil War period and the Inspector of Cavalry, were all on the party commission on the “Bukharin-Rykov affair.” Budennyy and Yakir are listed as voting for Yezhov’s proposal that Bukharin and Rykov be brought to trial and shot, while Voroshilov supported Stalin’s proposal that the matter be turned over to the NKVD. No vote is recorded by Gamarnik. Anna Larina, Bukharin’s widow, was told by Yakir’s and Uborevich’s wives, as well as by others, that Yakir in fact abstained during the commission vote. Larina believes that the commission’s voting record in the party archives was altered at Stalin’s instructions. If this is so, it raises the interesting question of why Gamarnik’s apparent abstention was allowed to be recorded for posterity.73

After the February-March Plenum it was clear to party members that the purge was going to gather strength and that resistance was highly dangerous. There is evidence, however, that several top members of the military leadership continued to speak out on behalf of arrested associates and drag their feet on implementing the purges. In April Corps Commander I.I. Garkavy, the Commander of the Urals Military District (and a relative of Yakir’s: they were

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married to sisters), was arrested. Again Yakir interceded on his behalf, going to Stalin himself. Several lower-ranking officers accused Gamarnik of foot-dragging on implementing the Central Committee directives of the February-March Plenum, although two of the three complaints I uncovered were sent only after Gamarnik had committed suicide and been denounced as an enemy of the people. Gamarnik, these officers asserted, approached the question of saboteurs “in a purely formal manner” and “without teeth.” A similar account of Gamarnik’s lack of vigilance appeared in the perestroika years by a former officer, but in this case it was a compliment and not an accusation.74

None of these small-scale efforts by top military leaders such as Feldman, Uborevich, Yakir, and Gamarnik had any chance of stopping Stalin’s juggernaut. Robert Conquest notes that Stalin apparently distrusted the military, not least because they had failed “to show enthusiasm for the increasing tempo of the purge....” Stalin was not prepared to take the risk that more concerted and organized military resistance would not appear later. It is highly significant that Stalin’s blow against the military came at the very point when he was moving from attacks on former political opponents to a more widespread purge among those who had previously been loyal to his line. Conquest notes:

If undoubtedly loyal followers of Stalin, men who had taken no part in opposition movements, were now to be destroyed, then no one was safe.... In such circumstances, it was quite reasonable for Stalin to have thought that the Army leadership, whose representatives may have opposed even the Bukharin purge, or at any rate had only assented with obvious reluctance, might finally be driven into resistance.... Thus it is natural enough that he should have planned his blow at the Army leadership to coincide exactly with the period when he was turning on his own insufficiently subservient followers.75

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Stalin, with the willing assistance of the NKVD, turned up the pressure on the armed forces after the February-March Plenum. In April and May former NKVD and military officers were coerced to implicate leading officers, including Tukhachevskiy, Yakir, and Uborevich, in counter-revolutionary activity. The accusations that the NKVD elicited from its prisoners against the military leadership included the existence of a wide-spread plot in the armed forces to overthrow the Soviet government and spying on behalf of various foreign governments, particularly the Germans. Tukhachevskiy was supposed to go to London in May for the coronation of George VI, but this trip was canceled under the pretext that the NKVD had uncovered evidence that the Germans were planning a “terrorist act” against Tukhachevskiy while he was in London. Needless to say, no such evidence about a German terrorist act has been found in the secret police archives. Stalin also made threatening noises about enemies in the armed forces at a dinner of the military leadership at Voroshilov’s apartment after the May Day parade.76

A series of personnel shuffles in April and May kept top commanders off guard and in some cases isolated them from familiar troops. On April 15 Yakir’s Chief of Staff was moved to the Frunze Academy in Moscow, Feldman was moved from the Department of Cadres to Deputy Commander of the Moscow Military District, and Uborevich’s Deputy Commander was moved into Feldman’s spot. On May 4 Uborevich’s other Deputy Commander was reassigned. On May 10 Marshal A.I. Yegorov was removed as Chief of the General Staff, Yakir was appointed to be head of the Leningrad Military District, and Tukhachevskiy was demoted from his position as Deputy People’s Commissar of Defense to the command of the insignificant Volga Military

76 Robert Thurston seemingly believes that the NKVD was trying to protect Tukhachevskiy, writing that “the decision [to cancel his trip] was taken for his own protection.” Thurston, *Life and Terror in Stalin’s Russia*, p. 50. This is far-fetched in the extreme, particularly given that the NKVD had not in fact received any reports on a planned attack on Tukhachevskiy. The relevant cites are: *Voyennye arkhivy Rossi*, No. 1, 1993, pp. 31-41; *Izvestiya TsK KPSS*, No. 4, 1989, pp. 45-49.
District. On May 20 Yakir’s appointment to head the Leningrad Military District was canceled and he was named head of the Transcaucasus Military District, Uborevich was named the Commander of the Central Asian Military District, and Gamarnik was appointed Commissar under Uborevich. Not all of these command changes were implemented – Yakir and Uborevich were still heads of the Kiev and Belorussian Military Districts when arrested (although the replacement of their deputies had probably already been implemented) – but they did heighten uncertainty and confusion among the high command. 77

The major arrests among the high command were made in May. Army Commander Second Rank A.I. Kork, the head of the Frunze Academy, was taken in on May 14 and Feldman was detained on May 15. Tukhachevskiy referred to Feldman’s arrest as a “monstrous provocation.” A week later, on May 22, Tukhachevskiy himself was arrested, shortly after he arrived in Kuybyshev to take up his new post as Commander of the Volga Military District. Gamarnik and Yakir voted for Tukhachevskiy’s expulsion from the Central Committee a few days later. Also taken in on May 22 was Army Commander Second Rank R.P. Eydeman, the head of Osoaviakhim (a civil defense organization). Eydeman earlier that spring had expressed his bewilderment that good party people were being arrested as enemies of the people. 78

The final group of “plotters” was detained by the NKVD at the end of May. Yakir was arrested on May 28 and Uborevich on May 29. Both of them were arrested en route to Moscow, and allegedly Yakir had been instructed specifically by Voroshilov to travel by train (Yakir had

77 Some of these personnel changes were announced at the time (such as the moves of Yegorov, Yakir, and Tukhachevskiy on May 10), but others apparently were not publicly announced, since they are not mentioned in the major secondary accounts. My source is Politburo protocols from the Communist Party Archive: RTsKhIDNI, f. 17, op. 3, d. 986, ll. 10, 18; RTsKhIDNI, f. 17, op. 3, d. 987, ll. 27, 37, 69-70.
intended to fly), which clearly should have tipped Yakir off to what was in store for him. The last key figure to go down at this time was Gamarnik, but his fate was somewhat different. Gamarnik shot himself on May 31. Different versions, not necessarily incompatible, of Gamarnik’s suicide exist. His daughter maintains that Marshal V.K. Blyukher, the commander of the Far East, came to visit on May 30 and told Gamarnik that either he would have to sit in judgment of Tukhachevskiy and the others or be tried himself. According to the official Soviet commission established under Khrushchev, Gamarnik killed himself on May 31 after being informed that he was being dismissed from his post for his ties with Yakir, who had been implicated in the “military-fascist plot.”

All of the leading officers upon detention denied any participation in plots against the government or cooperation with Germany or other foreign powers. However, confessions were eventually beaten out of them. Tukhachevskiy’s deposition is spattered with blood. Other means of coercion were habitually used as well, including various psychological pressures and threats against the accused’s family. Yezhov played an active role in the questioning of several of the key “plotters,” including Tukhachevskiy and Yakir. Stalin was heavily involved in the process, receiving copies of the prisoners’ depositions daily and meeting with Yezhov and other top NKVD officials involved in the “investigation” almost daily. Copies of the confessions were

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78 Tukhachevskiy’s and Eydemann’s comments are quoted in: Conquest, The Great Terror, p. 199. On the arrests, in addition to Conquest, see: Voyennye arkhivy Rossii, No. 1, 1993, pp. 38-45; Izvestiya TsK KPSS, No. 4, 1989, p. 49.

circulated among other key Politburo members, particularly Voroshilov, Molotov, and another pro-Stalin hard-liner, Lazar Kaganovich.\textsuperscript{80}

Trumped-up evidence of Tukhachevskiy's ties with the Germans was also created abroad and arrived in Moscow in the form of a dossier with forged documents. It is probable that Stalin himself was behind this dossier, although no smoking gun has been (or is likely to be) found. It is also possible that the NKVD initiated this action on its own; there is evidence that the secret police had been spreading rumors about the anti-Soviet views of Soviet "military specialists" in the Russian émigré community since the 1920s. However, it seems unlikely that Yezhov would fabricate documentary evidence against a Marshal of the Soviet Union without Stalin's instructions. Regardless, it is clear that the original source for this faked dossier was Moscow. In December 1936 a Russian émigré general, Nikolay Skoblin, met with Reinhard Heydrich of the Nazi Security Service and told him of a plot headed by Tukhachevskiy in connection with the German General Staff to overthrow Stalin. Convincing proof from the KGB archives has now been produced demonstrating that Skoblin was an NKVD agent. The Germans decided it was in their interest to convince Stalin that his leading generals were plotting against him, and forged documents were created that eventually made their way to Moscow by May 1937.\textsuperscript{81}


\textsuperscript{81} On this aspect of the Tukhachevskiy affair, see: Conquest, The Great Terror, pp. 195-199; Tucker, Stalin in Power, pp. 381-383; Rapoport and Alexeev, High Treason, pp. 258-262; Donald Cameron Watt, "Who Plotted Against Whom? Stalin's Purge of the Soviet High Command Revisited," Journal of Soviet Military Studies, Vol. 3, No. 1 (March 1990), pp. 46-65. Several late-Soviet versions discuss this fabricated dossier on Tukhachevskiy, but seem unaware of the NKVD's role in the affair: Volkogonov, Triumf i tragediya, Vol. I, pp. 531-534; Izvestiya TsK KPSS, No. 4, 1989, p. 61. Robert Thurston doubts that Stalin was behind the doctored dossier and states "there is no proof that Skoblin was a Soviet agent." Thurston, Life and Terror in Stalin's Russia, pp. 53-58. The evidence from the KGB archives that Skoblin was an agent for the Soviet secret police is in a series of articles by Leonid Mikhailov in the paper Nedelya: Nedelya, Nos. 48-50 (November-December), 1989. Additional evidence on Skoblin's background is in: B. Pryanishnikov, Nezrimaya pautina (Silver Spring, MD: B. Pryanishnikov, 334
Regardless of whether Stalin or the NKVD was behind the forged dossier, it played little role in the denouement of the “Tukhachevskiy affair.” It was not used in the military trial against the accused plotters, although apparently it was referenced at a Politburo meeting on May 24. There are several important reasons that Stalin would not want to use the dossier unless absolutely necessary, as Rapoport and Alexeev point out. First, it would introduce the inconvenient notion that material proof was required to sentence enemies of the people, which would have greatly complicated the massive purges, which were based on forced confessions. Second, there was always the risk that the Germans would expose their role in the affair and make Stalin look like a dupe and a fool. One of the officers participating in the trial might also have noticed the forged quality of the documents.82

It seems superfluous to say so, but it is worth stressing that no convincing evidence of a military plot against Stalin has ever been found, nor is there any proof that they were fascist spies. I only mention it because even to this day scholars occasionally argue that a real military plot against Stalin existed. The biographer of Trotsky and Stalin, Isaac Deutscher, made this argument, and recently the American historian Robert Thurston also has endorsed the view that a real plot existed. Thurston relies on the report of an ex-NKVD Colonel (in fact, a border guards officer) and a junior-ranking army officer from the Far East. Why either of these officers would

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82 On the reference to the dossier at a Politburo meeting, see: Watt, “Who Plotted Against Whom?” p. 61. On Stalin’s reasons to not use the dossier, see: Rapoport and Alexeev, High Treason, pp. 268-270; Conquest, The Great Terror, 201-202. Thurston maintains that Stalin would not have gone to all the trouble to create a forged dossier and then not have used it in the trial. As noted, there were several good reasons not to use it. The question should really be turned around: if Stalin actually believed the forged evidence of a Tukhachevskiy plot, why did he not use it? Thurston has no answer for that question, nor can he explain why the Soviet ambassador to Germany, Ya. Surits, who was apparently implicated in the forged documents, was not purged if Stalin believed the dossier was genuine. Thurston, Life and Terror in Stalin’s Russia, p. 54. On Surits, see: Conquest, The Great Terror, p. 202n.
have known about the thinking of military leaders such as Tukhachevskiy and Yakir is unclear, and their accounts are either contradicted by available evidence or are utterly fantastic; the conspiracy in the Far East, for example, was supposed to begin with an uprising in Khabarovsk, which is 6000 miles from Moscow. Moreover, the account of the officer from the Far East, according to Robert Tucker, “has been persuasively exposed by an ex-Soviet source as a forgery.” The Red Army in the Far East was, incidentally, the last area in the armed forces targeted for repression.83

Official investigations into the Tukhachevskiy affair carried out under Khrushchev and Gorbachev turned up no evidence of such a plot. The reports from these investigations demonstrate with considerable material from the most secret archives in Russia that the “evidence” against the military command was falsified and internally contradictory. Other scholars with unimpeded access to the archives, such as the former General Dmitriy Volkogonov, also found no evidence of a military conspiracy. I looked for months in party and army archives in Moscow and found no evidence of a plot at any level in the armed forces. Of course, it is impossible to definitively prove a negative, but it is known that the evidence used to sentence the “Tukhachevskiy group” was falsified and that there was thus no basis for the sentences against these officers. An NKVD officer who monitored Tukhachevskiy for years was unable to uncover any compromising material on him. It is also inexplicable why the “Tukhachevskiy group” all would have gone like lambs to the slaughter in May if there had been a real plot; they had

adequate warning that a major purge was being prepared against the high command, and thus could have tried to implement their plans before it was too late.\textsuperscript{84}  

Whether Stalin believed in the existence of a military plot is impossible to say. Stalin's suspiciousness, if not outright paranoia, is recounted in Khrushchev's "secret speech" and elaborated on by many subsequent biographers. Stalin's closest Politburo colleague, Molotov, evidently believed that Tukhachevskiy represented a real threat to the Soviet leadership. Molotov reportedly remarked later in his life that it is hard to say if Tukhachevskiy was anti-Soviet, but he was undoubtedly "not completely reliable" and had ties with the right opposition. Molotov defended the use of terror and considered it necessary for the regime's stability. But the fact that political leaders like Stalin and Molotov evidently distrusted their leading officers is hardly proof of a military plot, nor an adequate explanation for the murder of thousands of officers.\textsuperscript{85}  

From June 1 to June 4 an expanded session of the Military Soviet of the USSR met with the participation of Politburo members to pass judgment on those officers arrested by the NKVD. Already twenty members (out of eighty-five) of the Military Soviet had been arrested. The first day the Military Soviet heard the report of Voroshilov on "the uncovering by the NKVD organs of a counter-revolutionary conspiracy in the RKKA (the Worker's and Peasants Red Army)."\textsuperscript{86}  

\textsuperscript{84} Voyennye arkhiy Rossi, No. 1, 1993 (the NKVD officer who monitored Tukhachevskiy is cited on p. 101); Izvestiya TsK KPSS, No. 4, 1989; Volkogonov, Triumf i tragediya, Volume I, pp. 530-555; Volkogonov, Sem' vozhd', Volume I, p. 205.  


\textsuperscript{86} The most complete secondary account of the four day meeting is in the Shvernik commission report: Voyennye arkhiy Rossi, No. 1, 1993, pp. 47-49.
On June 2 Stalin himself addressed the assembly. Stalin stressed the work of the Tukhachevskiy group as German spies and had little to say about a plot against the Soviet government; when he mentioned the alleged plot, it was something that the Germans had urged on the group of military spies and not something that they had planned themselves. This further undermines claims that a real plot existed. The one specific accusation that has a ring of plausibility to it was Stalin’s claim that “they felt sorry for the peasants,” a probable reference to military unhappiness with collectivization. In the second half of his speech Stalin concentrated on the failure of “signalization” in the armed forces. “Every member of the party,” Stalin stressed, “every honest, non-party, citizen of the USSR not only has the right but the duty to inform about insufficiencies that he notices…. You are obligated to send a letter to your People’s Commissar, with a copy to the Central Committee.” He also emphasized the need to promote younger cadres more boldly to leading positions. Stalin concluded by emphasizing that those who had “accidentally” came into contact with enemies of the people could come forward and tell all that they knew and themselves be forgiven. Stalin’s message was not subtle and could hardly fail to be noticed by the officers present: a purge was being unleashed in the armed forces, and it was time for officers to unmask the enemies in their midst.87

In the week following the Military Soviet meeting preparations were made for a military trial of eight top officers: Tukhachevskiy, Yakir, Uborevich, Kork, Feldman, Eydeman, Putna, and Primakov. Stalin met regularly that week with Yezhov, his chief prosecutor Andrey Vyshinskiy, Voroshilov, and other top Politburo members (Molotov and Kaganovich) to prepare the trial, which was held on June 11. The trial was not held in public, like the show trials;

87 The complete text of Stalin’s speech has been published: “‘Nevol’niki v Rukakh Germanskogo Reykhsvera’: Rech’ I.V. Stalina v Narkomate oborony,” Istochnik, No. 3, 1994, pp. 72-88.
presumably the NKVD had not had enough time to work on the officers and ensure that they would play their designated roles. Stalin created a special military tribunal consisting of top officers to sit in judgment of their former colleagues. Marshals Blyukher and Budennyy, Commanders First Rank Shaposhnikov and I.P. Belov, Commanders Second Rank Ya.I. Alksnis, P.E. Dybenko, and N.D. Kashirin, and Division Commander E.I. Goryachev joined Military Jurist of the Army First Class V.V. Ulrikh in deciding the case. The verdict, of course, was predetermined, and by the end of 1938 six of the eight commanders in the tribunal were dead. Only Shaposhnikov and Budennyy survived the purges. 88

Although Stalin received the verdict he expected (the defendants were all shot), the trial did not go completely as planned. Tukhachevskiy, Yakir, and especially Uborevich denied certain of the accusations against them. At one point a one hour break had to be declared because Uborevich was not cooperating, and Vyshinskiy and Ulrikh never returned to questioning him. Blyukher and Dybenko asked for specific details of the accused officers’ wrecking and spying activities, which Yakir and Uborevich said they could not provide. The main focus of the trial, as in the Military Soviet meeting, was the accusation that the group had worked for Nazi Germany. The one charge that may have had a factual basis was the claim that the group had sought to remove Voroshilov as People’s Commissar of Defense; Tukhachevskiy and other professional officers had no respect for Voroshilov’s knowledge of military affairs. Yezhov reported to Stalin after the trial that of the members of the military court only Budennyy had participated actively and most of them had sat silent throughout the trial. 89

88 On Stalin’s role in preparing the trial, see: Voyennye arkhyivy Rossii, No. 1, 1993, pp. 49-52; Izvestiya TsK KPSS, No. 4, 1989, pp. 54-56.

The Tukhachevskiy affair marked the beginning of a wide-scale purge of the Soviet officer corps. Within ten days of the Tukhachevskiy trial 980 command and political officers had been arrested, including eighty of general rank. Thousands of officers were shot as counter-revolutionaries in 1937-1938, and thousands more were discharged from the army in this period. The purges wound down at the end of 1938 (the removal of NKVD head Yezhov was the most important signal of this policy change), but not before tremendous damage had been done to the armed forces.  

The toll was the most severe at the very top of the Red Army. Three of five marshals (Tukhachevskiy, Blyukher, and Yegorov), three of four army commanders first rank (Yakir, Ubolevich, and Belov), and all nine army commanders second rank were killed. 76 of 85 members of the Military Soviet were repressed, and 72 of these 76 were killed or committed suicide. In the years 1937-1940, as a result of Stalin’s terror, all military district commanders, ninety percent of district chiefs of staff and deputies, and eighty percent of corps and divisional

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*Krasnaya zvezda*, April 17, 1991, p. 4. The Shvernik Commission uncovered evidence that the stenogram of the trial was falsified, so the exact course of the trial probably will never be known. On the views of Tukhachevskiy, Yakir, and other professional soldiers on Voroshilov, see, for example: Erickson, *The Soviet High Command*, pp. 207, 459; Bayer, *The Evolution of the Soviet General Staff*, pp. 102-112; N.M. Yakunov, “Stalin i krasnaya armiya (Arkhivnye nakhodki),” *Istoriya SSSR*, No. 5 (September-October), 1991, p. 175. Marshall Georgiy Zhukov relates how relations between Tukhachevskiy and Voroshilov were poor, and how Tukhachevskiy once told Voroshilov to his face that he was incompetent: Simonov, “Zametki k biografii G.K. Zhukova,” *VZh*, No. 12, 1987, p. 42. In the previous section I mentioned as yet unsubstantiated claims that a group of top officers had called for Voroshilov’s dismissal in 1927 because of his incompetence. Voroshilov himself mentioned opposition to him on the part of Tukhachevskiy, Yakir, Ubolevich, and Gamarnik in his address to the Military Soviet on June 1: *Izvestiya TsK KPSS*, No. 4, 1989, p. 53. For an unflattering betrayal of Voroshilov’s capacity as a military leader, see: Dmitriy Volkogonov, “Marshal Voroshilov,” *Oktaybr*, No. 4 (April), 1996, pp. 158-167.

90 The arrest numbers for the ten day period after the Tukhachevskiy trial are from: *Izvestiya TsK KPSS*, No. 4, 1989, p. 57; *VZh*, No. 2, 1993, p. 72. For the last phase of the purges, see: Conquest, *The Great Terror*, pp. 427-441.
commanders were removed. Over ninety percent of those of general’s rank or higher, and over eighty-five percent of colonels, were repressed.\footnote{Izvestiya TsK KPSS, No. 4, 1989, pp. 58-60, 74-80; VZh, No. 2, 1993, p. 73; Volkogonov, Triumf i tragediya, Vol. 2, p. 52; O. Suvenirov, “Narkomat oboronny i NKVD v predvoennye gody,” Voprosy istorii, No. 6 (June), 1991, p. 30; Lt. Col. A. Gerasimov, “Pravna i obyazannosti,” Voyennyy vestnik, No. 3, 1990, p. 7; Rapoport and Alexeev, High Treason, pp. 276-277. See also the lists compiled by O. Suvenirov of those purged down through the rank of Division Commander (Major-General) published in multiple issues of VZh in 1993, and a similar effort made by Rapoport and Alexeev down to the rank of Brigade Commander (Major General or Colonel); High Treason, pp. 365-373.}

The total number of officers purged during the Great Terror was in the tens of thousands. The number 40,000 has often been taken as a reliable estimate, based on a speech made by Voroshilov in November 1938 and several published Soviet sources, including the official history of the Great Patriotic War and Volkogonov’s works. It now seems clear that the 40,000 figure refers to the number of those dismissed from the armed forces in 1937-1938, and not the number killed, as some historians have interpreted these figures. Over 10,000 of those dismissed were later reinstated. More research remains to be done, but at a minimum more than 20,000 officers were permanently discharged from the officer corps and thousands of them were killed.\footnote{The American historian who has examined this question most closely is Roger Reese: Reese, Stalin’s Reluctant Soldiers, pp. 132-162; Roger R. Reese, “The Impact of the Great Purge on the Red Army: Wrestling with Hard Numbers,” The Soviet and Post-Soviet Review, Vol. 19, Nos. 1-3 (1992), pp. 71-90; Roger R. Reese, “The Red Army and the Great Purges,” in Getty and Manning, eds., Stalinist Terror, pp. 198-214. Key Russian-language sources on the number of officer purged include: A.T. Ukolov and V.I. Ivkin, “O mashtabakh repressii v krasny armii v predvoennye gody,” VZh, No. 1, 1993, pp. 56-59; “O rabote ze 1939 god: Izotchta nachal’nika Upravleniya po nachal’stvuyuchemu sostavu RKKA Narkomata Obrony SSSR E.A. Shchadenko,” Izvestiya TsK KPSS, No. 1, 1990, pp. 186-192.}

What Was a Counter-Revolutionary? Political Beliefs of the Soviet Officer Corps

Sufficient data is not yet available to allow a complete account of what sorts of officers were most likely to be purged. It is known that the purges hit the highest ranks the hardest, and that certain nationalities were also targeted. Indeed, in 1938 all officers and political workers of
the following nationalities were discharged into the reserves: Germans, Poles, Lithuanians, Estonians, Koreans, Finns, Latvians, Rumanians, Turks, Hungarians, and Bulgarians. The purpose of this section is to investigate what sorts of statements would attract the attention of the secret police and political officers. Reports filed by NKVD and Political Administration (PUR) officers represent the best source we have on the organizational culture of the Soviet armed forces for this crucial period. Of course, these reports tend to stress "political insufficiencies" uncovered in the officer corps, so they are not a representative sample. Those officers who did not attract the attention of the secret police or commissars evidently either adhered to the regime line or were sufficiently discreet. A Soviet officer who emigrated after the war later remarked that because of monitoring by the NKVD and PUR he "avoided all talks which would bring out my antigovernmental views or my views on the party." Still, many officers did express views that attracted unwanted attention and much can be learned by an examination of the thinking of those who expressed "counter-revolutionary" ideas. The most important finding is that there is very little evidence that officers believed that the armed forces should play a role in sovereign power issues, or that a military coup was an appropriate response to the purges. Much more common was the view that the military should stay out of politics and focus on strictly military affairs.\footnote{The order on the expulsion of various nationalities is in: RGVA, f. 4, op. 18, d. 46, l. 99. The émigré officer is quoted in: Reese, Stalin's Reluctant Soldiers, p. 96. For another scholar's reflection on the tendency of the}

Several officers in 1937 made comments about the possibility of military intervention or suggesting that the army should play a more prominent role in politics. In early 1937 an NKVD OO (Special Section) officer recounted the remarks of a Lieutenant Revels from the Moscow Military District on the show trials of the old opposition: "If the trotskyists carried out a coup and killed Stalin, Voroshilov, and others, probably many from the Red Army would support them.
They would probably even find commanders [who would support them].” Revels concluded that many people are “unhappy with Soviet power”; Revels was arrested shortly thereafter. Another junior officer, T.N. Kravchuk, said in late 1936 that the army should play a bigger role in government because it is “the most prepared for leading government.” Kravchuk was also arrested as a “trotskyist.” Finally, in June 1937, less than a week after the execution of the Tukhachevskiy group, a PUR officer informed that he heard an officer remark that the large number of arrests “could lead to a military coup.” The comment in itself is not unreasonable, given that analysts have wondered for decades why the Soviet military did not do more to protect itself during the purges. These comments are the most explicit I found that referred to the possibility of military intervention, or called for a larger role for the armed forces in politics. It is thus possible that a more praetorian subculture existed in the armed forces in the 1930s, although none of these statements refer to any specific plans, but rather to a general mood of disenchantment. This mood apparently was inspired by unhappiness with Soviet policies, such as collectivization and the purges.94

The most common reaction to the news of the uncovering of the “anti-Soviet trotskyist military organization” was not the thought of military intervention, but bewilderment and incomprehension at the announcement. Political officers filed reports on the mood of the armed forces during this period, and the most common reaction was statements by soldiers and officers that now they do not know whom to trust. A Pacific Fleet officer remarked, “Who can you trust now? Now all orders from superiors are placed in doubt because no one can guarantee that the

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94 RGVA, f. 9, op. 39, d. 29, ll. 122-123, 184-188; RGVA, f. 9, op. 30, d. 56, ll. 112-113. I omitted the soft sign in my transliteration of Revels (correctly, Revel’s) so as not to confuse non-Russian speakers with the strange placement of an apostrophe.
orders are not wrecking. Now, having received an order, I’ll first think – should I carry it out or not?” The PUR reports also suggest that many in the military were demoralized. There were frequent instances of expressions of doubt about whether Tukhachevskiy, Gamarnik, and the others were guilty. Some military personnel criticized Stalin or the NKVD.95

Memoirs of former Soviet officers, including the World War II hero Georgiy Zhukov, who was a corps commander in the Belorussian Military District in 1937, also note the confusion reigning in the officer corps at the time. Zhukov states that people did not understand what was going on, but that one could not express doubts openly. L.S. Skvirskiy, who was an instructor at the Frunze Academy in 1937 and later attained the rank of Lieutenant-General, observes that he and his colleagues were “bewildered,” “horrified,” and “stunned” by the announcement regarding Tukhachevskiy, Yakir, and the others. Although the accusations did not make sense, Skvirskiy adds, it was also dangerous to express doubts aloud.96

Prior to the arrest of the top military command in May 1937 the purges in the officer corps had developed slowly starting in 1936 and grown in intensity in the first half of 1937. We saw above that key figures in the military leadership had been unenthusiastic implementers of the purges. Similar foot-dragging was evident at lower levels. Indeed, the most common denunciation in NKVD and PUR reports was that officers did not take political work in the armed forces seriously. Discussions in the central administration of the NKO (defense ministry) in the spring of 1937 show a disturbing lack of “vigilance” among military personnel. One officer saw

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95 RGVA, f. 33879, op. 1, d. 233, ll. 24-38, 39-57; RGVA, f. 33879, op. 1, d. 234, ll. 1-18, 34-48, 166-192, 214-238, 298-308, 317-347, 366-379; RGVA, f. 4, op. 19, d. 37, ll. 148-149; RGVA, f. 9, op. 30, d. 56, ll. 128-130, 140-147. The exact quote is from: RGVA, f. 33879, op. 1, d. 234, l. 2.

the calls for greater vigilance as a political fad. Another objected to the study of Marxism-
Leninism, suggesting that it could be carried out at home. Entire party bureaus decided to make
party-political study voluntary, and in some sections party-political study had not been conducted
for an entire year. Other directorates were accused of “apoliticism,” with low attendance at party
meetings and demonstrations; even the party organizer for one directorate was censored for not
attending party events. Thirty or forty people knew a copy of Mein Kampf was circulating at the
Central House of the Red Army, a major cultural enlightenment center for Moscow-based military
personnel, without reporting it to the proper authorities. Thus it is not surprising that in July 1937
the political organs of the central administration of the NKO noted considerable “obstructionism”
among the central apparat, concluding that Gamarnik, Tukhachevskiy, and Feldman had
“implanted enemies of the people in all branches of the Red Army.”

Reports on the apolitical views of officers came in from other parts of the country as well.
Kravchuk, the junior officer mentioned above, came under suspicion for his poor relations with
his political officer. Kravchuk refused to allow the political officer to read party announcements
to the troops during marches because it would “spoil the soldiers’ mood.” He also complained
about the NKVD, referring to them as “parasites.” A military instructor noted that many
communists in the armed forces were simply careerists. A lieutenant was dismissed in November
1936 for arguing for the abolition of political organs in the army; Tukhachevskiy himself had

Grigorenko, a military engineer in the 1930s, who also would rise to the rank of general: Petro G. Grigorenko,

97 The troops had around 5-6 hours a week of political training, and officers had 2-4 hours per week of political
lessons. Roger Reese shows how haphazardly political instruction was carried out. See: Brzezinski, ed., Political
Controls in the Soviet Army, pp. 40-42, 51-53; Colton, Commissars, Commanders, and Civilian Authority, pp. 72-
73; Reese, Stalin’s Reluctant Soldiers, pp. 79-80, 92-93.
previously come into conflict with Gamarnik and Stalin over one aspect of PUR's responsibilities. Major L.V. Maksimov, a regimental chief of staff, got into trouble with the NKVD in April 1937 for criticizing the amount of party material being published by the army and comparing the Red Army unfavorably with the tsarist army. Soviet officers were "illiterate," remarked Maksimov, "and also stuffed with Marxism-Leninism. All that is disagreeable to me." Maksimov also was critical of the NKVD. Lieutenant P.I. Zimin of the Kiev Military District attracted the attention of the NKVD for similar reasons. Zimin lauded Trotsky for his use of "military specialists" during the civil war and his efforts to limit the role of the political apparatus of the Red Army, which interfered with the functions of the command staff. Zimin also complained about the constant monitoring of people's political views in the armed forces.99

Complaints about the role of the PUR and the NKVD, then, were among the most common grounds for being suspected of counter-revolutionary activity in late-1936 and early-1937. One junior officer, a Lieutenant T.T. Bure of the Moscow Military District, was particularly blunt in stating his views. Asked by a commissar named Malygin if he had read a summary of Stalin's report on the new Soviet constitution, Bure replied: "Why are you pestering me about Stalin's report? I need to know combat affairs, and you political workers need to know reports and the history of the party, it's your bread-and-butter. I don't have time to study party history and Stalin's reports."100

98 RGVA, f. 9, op. 30, d. 56, ll. 8, 46-47, 55-60, 83, 93, 111, 120-127, 131-134. One soldier, in a sarcastic comment on the state of the Soviet armed forces, remarked about the Mein Kampf incident, "in two years we are going to be reading that book anyway."

99 RGVA, f. 9, op. 39, d. 29, ll. 184-188, 202-205; RGVA, f. 37837, op. 21, d. 109, l. 59; RGVA, f. 37837, op. 22, d. 1, ll. 258-261; RGVA, f. 9, op. 39, d. 30, ll. 49-51. On Tukhachevskiy's disagreement with Gamarnik and Stalin over the role of military district political officers, see: Volkogonov, Triumf i tragediya, Volume I, p. 537.

100 RGVA, f. 9, op. 39, d. 29, ll. 91-92.
Other grounds for being suspected of counter-revolutionary views included a series of statements that were basically factually true but still politically dangerous. Pronouncements that could get one into trouble included: comments about the poor conditions for workers in the Soviet Union, observations that Trotsky played an important role in the revolution and civil war or that Stalin played a lesser role in the same events, or suggestions that it was impossible to build socialism in one country. Remarks critical of collectivization could also attract NKVD attention. A political instructor in the Leningrad Military District, A.N. Barinov, was politically quite prescient, it seems, but also quite reckless. Barinov was accused of counter-revolutionary agitation for complaining about the absence of freedom of expression, for noting the danger of keeping a diary with private thoughts, and for concluding that Stalin will shoot every old Bolshevik who stands in his way.\textsuperscript{101}

After the February-March Plenum some members of the high command endeavored to convince their subordinates of the need for greater attention to political matters. Marshal Yegorov, then chief of the General Staff, engaged in a ritual act of “self-criticism” at a party aktiv meeting in the NKO in April 1937. Yegorov noted that party members in the General Staff had demonstrated a lack of political vigilance. Too much attention to an officer’s work qualities in promotion decisions, Yegorov stressed, means that we often overlook their political deficiencies. Gamarnik, similarly, in a series of speeches from February to April 1937, criticized party members for the belief that party work interferes with military training. Many officers, Gamarnik maintained, had a narrow business-like approach to their work and were politically “backward.” Gamarnik noted that 5-6 months previously he had witnessed several central apparatus

\textsuperscript{101} RGVA, f. 37837, op. 21, d. 109, passim; RGVA, f. 9, op. 39, d. 39, ll. 147-148.
commanders complain to Voroshilov that too much time was wasted on Marxist-Leninist indoctrination and that it was interfering with their work. Neither Yegorov nor Gamarnik were saved by these ritual acts of self-criticism, but their comments probably reflect real “deficiencies” in the officer corps at the time.102

The spring of 1937 was probably the worst time ever for an officer to base his claim to service on his apolitical views.103 At a meeting of NKO party aktiv in June, after the execution of Tukhachevskiy and his co-defendants, speaker after speaker stressed that military personnel should look for the political basis for even professional disagreements. The armed forces were thrown into turmoil by the campaign to weed out “enemies of the people” (the effects of this campaign will be discussed below). The entire method of evaluating the political reliability of officers was changed. Before April 1937 Gamarnik (the head of the PUR) and Feldman (department head for cadres) worked closely together in deciding personnel questions. After June 1937 Voroshilov played a much bigger role in cadres’ decisions, in conjunction with the NKVD. The department for cadres, now headed by E.A. Shchadenko, simply received long lists of personnel subject to arrest from Voroshilov’s office.104

102 RGVA, f. 9, op. 30, d. 85, ll. 422-428; RGVA, f. 9, op. 29, d. 319, ll. 2-19, 22-52, 285-293.

103 Ironically, at the very moment when the Red Army command was being prepared for an outbreak of political attacks and denunciations, a former tsarist officer wrote Voroshilov asking for permission to return to service in the Soviet military. Former staff-officer Captain Matveyev wrote to Voroshilov in March 1937 requesting permission to return to the Soviet Union (Matveev wrote that he had fought in World War I but had emigrated and not taken part in the Civil War). “I love the army and the cavalry more than any political prejudices, which I rejected long ago, and more than any party or politics,” wrote Matveyev. “To serve my great motherland, her government, her people and army, is my highest ideal.” Matveyev’s fate is unknown, but the head of the cavalry, Marshal Budenny, recommended that he be allowed to return: RGVA, f. 4, op. 14, d. 1867, ll. 1-7.

104 The stenogram of the June 1937 NKO party meeting is in: RGVA, f. 4, op. 18, d. 61. To compare the control over personnel policy before and after the Tukhachevskiy affair, see: RGVA, f. 37837, op. 21, d. 99; RGVA, f. 37837, op. 21, d. 109; RGVA, f. 37837, op. 22, d. 1.
Despite this all-out campaign, however, officers continued to get into trouble for comments about their distaste for political work in the armed forces, or politics in general. An Air Force officer, A.V. Zamyatin, noted in July 1937 that he had not read the report of Politburo member Andrey Zhdanov to the February-March Plenum, because “I’m not subordinate to the party and it doesn’t have anything to do with me.” Another officer, this time from the ground forces, remarked in July, “I’m a non-party person, politics doesn’t interest me.” Other officers who were not Communist Party members took a similar line, arguing that they were not subject to criticism; a Captain Khokhlov went further, noting that the services of non-party people were essential for war and thus concluding that he should be left alone. A Lieutenant Shavshan remarked that it was hard to know who to believe [after the Tukhachevskiy affair] and “I am now outside politics (vne politiki).” The head of a military educational institute for tank officers was expelled from the party and army for stating, “I don’t need party work, but service.” Even commissars were criticized for neglecting political work. The belief of officers that they should be “outside politics” had apparently persisted from the pre-revolutionary period among at least some officers, but now such sentiments, if expressed openly, could subject them to arrest by the NKVD.105

Denunciations and arrests for apolitical beliefs and statements continued into 1938 and 1939. A lieutenant in the Transbaikal Military District was denounced in March 1938 for avoiding political lessons, about which he reportedly said, “you can’t eat politics.” Colonel Vladimirov of the Far Eastern Army was denounced by a PUR officer in June 1938 for similar views. The PUR officer wrote, “Vladimirov is hardly at all interested in the political life of the

105 RGVA, f. 33879, op. 1, d. 234, ll. 318, 336-337, 367; RGVA, f. 9, op. 39, d. 29, ll. 279-280; RGVA, f. 9, op. 29, d. 372, ll. 216-217. For two examples of commissars neglecting political work, see: RGVA, f. 37837, op. 349
country, the army, or his division. In my opinion he even reads newspapers very irregularly.\[1\]
He has served in the party for a long time, but he doesn’t feel the weight of it, like a communist.”
Captain Somov from the Central Asian Military District was denounced by a OO officer in May 1939 for his attitude toward political work. Somov said, “I will not engage in party-political work, the regulations do not require it. Let the political officer do it, it’s his bread-and-butter.”
Colonel A.Ya. Kruze, the commander of a regiment in the Kiev Military District, was denounced by his commissar in October 1938 because he ignored party work in the unit. The commissar said Kruze would often try to remove political training from the schedule so the troops could concentrate on military training.\footnote{22, d. 7, l. 218; RGVA, f. 9, op. 29, d. 340, l. 447.}

Some officers were so hostile to political work that it is difficult to see how they survived as long as they did. Brigade Commander F.N. Zelentsov, the head of the Moscow Railroad Military School, was denounced by two PUR officers in April 1939. The political officers complained that Zelentsov completely ignored party-political work, because he believed that it did nothing to prepare lieutenants for war. Reportedly when Zelentsov found out in June 1937 that Gamarnik had committed suicide, he marched into the commissar’s office and said sarcastically: “Well, comrade regimental commissar, now we all understand just what was going on in the army – the institution of commissars, self-criticism, etc. – all that was the work of the enemy Gamarnik.”\footnote{106 RGVA, f. 4, op. 19, d. 29, l. 118; RGVA, f. 9, op. 39, d. 69, ll. 247-254; RGVA, f. 9, op. 39, d. 75, ll. 83-85; RGVA, f. 9, op. 36, d. 2892, ll. 93-95.}

Many officers, of course, were denounced for reasons having nothing to do with their views on military training and the role of the political organs. Some common grounds for being

\footnote{107 RGVA, f. 9, op. 36, d. 2892, ll. 73-76.}
condemned included: having a relative or close colleague who was an “enemy of the people”; having lived abroad, or having relatives who lived abroad; having concealed one’s social origins (i.e., aristocratic or bourgeois ancestors); nationality; having served in the tsarist army; having lived in territory under White control during the Civil War. Certainly we should not look too hard for logic in the decisions to purge certain officers. Nevertheless, one of the most frequent grounds for dismissal I encountered in the archives were statements by officers that belittled party work in the army, and conversely stressed the attention that should be devoted to military training and more narrow professional tasks.\textsuperscript{108}

Statements that suggested widespread adherence to an apolitical organizational culture were common in the Soviet officer corps in the late 1930s. Conversely, as noted above, I found very few instances of expressions of praetorian views, despite the interest that OCo and PUR officers undoubtedly would have shown in such statements. Several major NKO and PUR conferences held in 1937-1938 produced no concrete reports on interventionary actions or sentiments held by officers. In contrast, complaints about the inattention of regular commanders to political affairs often were expressed. For example, in the Leningrad Military District enemies of the people had allegedly “cut off” the political organs from the district staff and thus brought about a situation in which “no one is taking care of questions of political training.”\textsuperscript{109}

It is impossible to determine on the basis of archival evidence if the apolitical organizational culture was the dominant one. There were certainly many officers who were

\textsuperscript{108} For examples of people being expelled from the army for criteria such as nationality or social origins, see: RGVA, f. 9, op. 29, d. 372.

\textsuperscript{109} See: RGVA, f. 9, op. 29, d. 340; RGVA, f. 4, op. 14, d. 2020, ll. 79-92.
committed communists and party members and did not chafe at party-political work. It seems that there were two competing sub-cultures in the Soviet officer corps in the 1930s, the apolitical one and the pro-Bolshevik one. The communist organizational culture was dominant in the sense that it was the one articulated by the military leadership, but a quantitative assessment of dominance is not possible. What is clear is that both of these organizational cultures were non-interventionary, and that there were few adherents to a praetorian military culture at this time. Many officers with more interventionist tendencies had self-selected themselves out of the country by siding with the Whites in the Civil War, and the NKVD and the PUR were unable to uncover more than a handful of officers with praetorian sentiments. Most important, there is no reliable evidence of a potential or actual military plot during the Great Terror.

This section has not provided as complete a picture of the organizational culture of the Soviet armed forces during the Great Purges as one would like. Given the totalitarian nature of the state and the strict political controls over the officer corps, it is impossible to provide a comprehensive picture of the degree of military attachment to the norm of civilian supremacy. Material discussed earlier in this chapter showed that the officer corps did not play a significant role in sovereign power issues in the 1920s and 1930s, and that the military leadership focused on professional issues and endeavored to minimize non-defense tasks (such as collectivization or internal repression). Military specialists from the old regime helped instill the notion that the military should be "outside politics." Although the party leadership undertook serious efforts to weed out such views, it is clear from NKVD and PUR reports that they persisted into the 1930s.

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110 Petro Grigorenko, for instance, who later became a famous dissident, was a true believer in the 1930s: Grigorenko, Memoirs, pp. 36, 77. For another account of an officer who was a committed communist in the 1930s, see: V. Zabrodin, interview with Col.-Gen. (ret.) A.S. Zheltov, "'Odna nepravda nam v ubytok...',' Kommunist vooruženikh sil, No. 12, 1989, pp. 76-78.
The bulk of the available evidence suggests a strong commitment to the norm of civilian supremacy among the Soviet officer corps in the 1930s.

**Explaining Military Behavior During the Purges**

The previous two sub-sections have examined the development of the purges in the armed forces under Stalin and the political views of the officer corps during this period. In this section I examine more closely the reasons for the non-intervention of the Soviet officer corps to prevent the purges against the military.\textsuperscript{111}

There were definite motives for military intervention during the Terror. First, there were purely personal motives related to saving one’s neck that might have provoked intervention. Although this option was not available to the average officer, those in command positions could have tried to rally their troops to support them when the NKVD came calling. Rapoport and Alexeev, for instance, wonder why Blyukher did not physically resist the secret police when they came for him in the Far East in 1938. They ask, “What could Stalin do after that? Send the Red Army marching against the Far East? Hardly.” But Blyukher, like other commanders in his position, gave himself up without resistance. He clearly was not an officer lacking courage; he was eventually beaten to death by the NKVD in Moscow, during their attempts to get Blyukher to confess.\textsuperscript{112}

Corporate motives also were present in 1937-1938. It is hard to imagine a greater infringement on the autonomy of the armed forces than Stalin’s purges. The political leadership

\textsuperscript{111} See Chapter One of this dissertation for a discussion of the importance of studying non-events, or “dogs that don’t bark.”

\textsuperscript{112} Rapoport and Alexeev, *High Treason*, p. 291. On Blyukher’s death, see: *VIZh*, No. 2, 1993, pp. 73-75.
of the country delivered the army into the hands of secret police thugs. The behavior of NKVD officers, and the monitoring by NKVD special sections, was a frequent source of complaint by the military. During the purges many officers wrote to top military and party officials, including Voroshilov and Stalin, to protest against NKVD excesses. A political officer based in the Ukraine, G.Ya. Mishchenko, wrote to Voroshilov and Yezhov in November 1938 to complaint about a OO sergeant [!] in his unit. Sergeant of State Security Zagryadskiy, according to Mishchenko, would ask for secret materials and search various offices without informing the commander or commissar, as required. Zagryadskiy even would give orders to army officers without their commanders’ approval, so the commander would have no idea where his subordinates were. Petro Grigorenko states that NKVD officers liked to intimidate regular officers and would stress the dependence of commanders on them.113

The infringement of autonomy was the most important potential corporate motive for intervention, but several other corporate motives also were present. The most important of these was the influence of the purges on the ability of the armed forces to carry out their professional tasks. The purges contributed to substantial shortfalls in officer corps Manning levels, particularly at the highest ranks. The commander of the Transcaucasian Military District, N.Y. Kuybyshev, told a NKO conference in November 1937 that he had three divisions currently commanded by captains. The Armenian Division was commanded by a captain who before that had commanded neither a regiment nor a battalion; he had commanded only a battery. In June 1938 the commander of the Kharkov Military District, I.K. Smirnov, noted that junior lieutenants were

commanding battalions (which are normally commanded by lieutenant colonels). It is completely natural, Smirnov concluded, that they cannot handle the work. Roger Reese points out that the shortfall in officers was caused not only by the purges but by the rapid expansion of the officer corps at this time. By neglecting to mention that the purges hit hardest at the very top of the military leadership, however, Reese's argument understates the purges' importance. Those officers most competent to implement such an expansion of the officer corps were wiped out, along with the leading figures responsible for the development of military doctrine, technology, and organization.114

The purges also severely disrupted training and the relations among military personnel. Zhukov reports that military and political training suffered as a result of the purges, and that discipline was severely undermined. At major military conferences in November 1937 and June 1938 there were many complaints about the disruption of training. The purges made officers afraid to maintain normal professional contacts due to the fear that an associate might be denounced as an enemy of the people and that one would be guilty by association by virtue of having worked with this person in the past. The carrying out of one's professional duties was also fraught with danger. Grigorenko relates how he was accused of "wrecking" by an inspector of the Minsk fortified area who used incorrect procedures to check installations for their ability to resist a chemical weapons attack. The inspector, not Grigorenko, was arrested when it was revealed that he had made a mistake in his inspection. Colonel General A.T. Stuchenko tells the classic story of

the arrest of Army Commander I.I. Vatsetis, a military specialist who was a leading lecturer at the Frunze Academy. During the break between a two-part lecture, the class commissar announced, “Comrades! The lecture will not continue. Lecturer Vatsetis has been arrested as an enemy of the people.” Such an environment was hardly conducive to either effective military training or the building of esprit de corps within the officer corps or the armed forces in general.115

The effects of the terror on the corporate interests of the armed forces were severe enough that a reasonable argument can be made (indeed, often has been made) that the purges dangerously weakened the ability of the armed forces to defend the state. Many officers at the time believed this to be true. Upon hearing of the execution of the Tukhachevskiy group, one junior officer remarked, “There has never been such a critical moment in our country. This moment is the most advantageous for a war with the USSR.” Four officers wrote to Stalin and Voroshilov in August 1938, arguing that the mass arrests were undermining the state’s ability to defend itself. A legendary civil war hero, Corps Commander E.I. Kovtyukh, was arrested in 1937 as an enemy of the people. He wrote to Voroshilov and Kaganovich, maintaining that he was not an enemy and that he was a commander “necessary for the future war with world fascism.” Kovtyukh was shot in 1938.116

115 Zhukov, Vospominaniya i rasmyshleniya, Vol. 1, pp. 234, 246; Grigorenko, Memoirs, pp. 74-84, 88, 91; Colonel General A.T. Stuchenko, in Bialer, ed., Stalin and his Generals, pp. 79-83. For the stenograms of the November 1937 and June 1938 conferences, see: RGVA, f. 4, op. 18, d. 54; RGVA, f. 4, op. 14, d. 2020; RGVA, f. 4, op. 18, d. 47. For specific complaints see, for example, the speeches of Krivoshein, Shustin, and Shtern: RGVA, f. 4, op. 18, d. 47, II. 37, 44, 76-78. For other statements on the effects that fear in the officer corps had on officer corps cohesion and morale, see: Zhukov, Vospominaniya i rasmyshleniya, Vol. 1, pp. 229-230; Colonel I.T. Starinov, in Bialer, ed., Stalin and His Generals, pp. 65-79; Edmund Iodkovskiy, interview with Lt.-Gen. N.G. Pavlenko, “Istoriya voyna esche ne napisana,” Ogonyek, No. 25 (June 17-24), 1989, p. 7.

116 On the effects of the purges on military performance in World War II, see the cites in note 57. See also the discussion in: Volkogonov, Triumph i tragediya, Volume II, pp. 49-65; Mark von Hagen, “Soviet Soldiers and Officers on the Eve of the German Invasion: Towards a Description of Social Psychology and Political Attitudes,”
There were clearly, then, personal, corporate, and arguably national interest motives that could have provoked a military intervention during Stalin's terror. Yet no coup attempt took place. Paradoxical as it may sound, in some ways non-intervention was overdetermined. The organizational culture, international structure, and domestic structure perspectives all suggest that intervention was unlikely. Intervention was possible according to the international structure and organizational culture approaches only if the officer corps believed that the purges were putting the country in serious danger of military defeat in a major war or state collapse, and there is not sufficient evidence that many officers feared this prospect. For the reasons suggested by these three perspectives, resistance to the military purges came largely on an individual and small group basis.

The organizational culture impediments to military intervention have already been discussed. The two most important organizational cultures were the culture of communist true believers, who believed in the party and were committed to Stalin's rule, and the culture of apolitical officers who were soldiers first and foremost and had little interest in politics. These two cultures are well represented by Yakir, who was a committed Bolshevik, and Tukhachevskiy, who had immense ambitions as an officer but little interest in politics.117 Neither of these groups believed that the armed forces should play a role in sovereign power issues. There were probably some officers who thought that under circumstances such as the Great Terror military intervention was acceptable, but this group seems to have been a small one. This group would have been

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117 This picture of the views of Yakir and Tukhachevskiy is from: Rapoport and Alexeev, High Treason, pp. 283-290.
inhibited from intervening for several reasons, including the knowledge that support for a coup would likely be low because of the norms held by the majority of officers.

Domestic structure also presented obvious obstacles to military intervention. The Stalinist state had a high degree of political capacity and was able to crush any potential domestic sources of opposition. The regime had shown its ability to withstand severe trials, such as collectivization. From the 1920s on no serious opposition to party rule had come forward. There were no obvious alternatives to Stalin’s government. Military officers with praetorian tendencies were likely to see the opportunity for successful intervention as lo x.

International structural factors were probably less important than organizational culture and domestic structure. It is true that the need to prepare for possible war with Germany was a factor that gave the military an external focus. However, as noted, it could be argued that the purges were such a threat to the military’s ability to defend the state that the international structure perspective might predict intervention, so it is hard to say how important this factor was in determining military behavior. Additionally, I found little direct evidence of the role of external threat to the state in determining officer corps behavior.

Considerations of individual self-interest, which fall outside the four perspectives considered here, also played a role. Officers who were not deterred by reasons of organizational culture or international or domestic structure still had to overcome the collective action problem. Given the presence of both secret police officers and commissars in every military unit, it would have been difficult to build support for a conspiracy without getting caught. An additional danger was that one would be reported as an “enemy of the people,” even by regular line officers. Even if a group of officers had been able to overcome this collective action problem, there was still the
possibility of counter-balancing by secret police armed units (the internal troops). A military coup, then, would have been a very risky enterprise.\footnote{The classic work on collective action is: Mancur Olson, Jr., \textit{The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups} (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965). Special sections, commissars, and internal troops were discussed above.}

There were several important barriers, then, which inhibited military intervention against the purges. There was, however, some resistance by officers to the purges, but this resistance came in the form of individual or small-group response. Future World War II heroes such as Zhukov and Marshal I.S. Konev (a Corps Commander in 1937-1938) were among those officers who defended their colleagues accused of being enemies of the people. \textit{Konev} even attracted the attentions of the head of PUR at the time, L.Z. Mekhlis, who denounced him to Stalin and Beria in December 1938. Mekhlis wrote that Konev “acted against the unmasking and arrest of counter-revolutionary elements” and noted that Konev had defended Uborevich at a party conference in the Belorussian Military District after Uborevich’s execution. Other officer memoirs, such as those of Grigorenko and Stuchenko, note instances of officers defending colleagues from attacks against them. The historian Oleg Suvinierov has uncovered dozens of examples of the resistance of military personnel to the purges. These acts of resistance, moreover, were not always in vain, and both Grigorenko and Zhukov note that if a party cell (the lowest level in the organizational hierarchy of the party) held together it could often resist the spread of denunciations.\footnote{Mekhlis’s attack on Konev is in: RGVA, f. 9, op. 29, d. 405, ll. 4-8. The other cites are: Zhukov, \textit{Vospominaniya i rasmyshleniya}, Vol. 1, pp. 233-236; Grigorenko, \textit{Memoirs}, pp. 88-90; Stuchenko, in Bialer, ed., \textit{Stalin and his Generals}, p 81; Suvinierov, “Za chest’ i dostoinstvo voinov RKKA”; Oleg Suvinierov, “Protiv repressiy v krasnoy armii (1937-1940 gody),” \textit{Kommunist}, No. 17 (November), 1990, pp. 67-75. For additional examples, see: Colton, \textit{Commissars, Commanders, and Civilian Authority}, pp. 147-150; Skvirskiy, “V predvoennye gody,” pp. 62-63. For examples of resistance by non-military Soviet citizens, see: Khlevnyuk, \textit{1937-y}, pp. 175-195.}
Resistance obviously was not the only strategy available for trying to survive the purges. Analysts have highlighted three basic strategies; Timothy Colton labels these strategies withdrawal, offense, and active defense. Withdrawal involved the attempt to “hide” as much as possible from the surrounding purge process, while an offensive strategy consisted of denouncing others in either a sincere attempt to uncover enemies or a cynical attempt to save one’s skin. Both Colton and the major Russian expert on the purges, Oleg Khlevnyuk, conclude that withdrawal was the most common strategy adopted.\textsuperscript{120}

A necessary corollary of the purges, and the offensive strategy of denunciation, was that many people moved up in status very quickly. The phenomenon of captains commanding divisions and junior lieutenants in charge of battalions has already been discussed. For those benefiting from the purge, there was an element of self-interest in \textit{not} resisting the purges, but riding the wave and seeing how high it would take you. This strategy, of course, was not without risk, but it is another part of the explanation of why there was not more resistance to the purges.\textsuperscript{121}

One final reason why some officers did not resist the purges, of course, is that they \textit{believed} that the country and the armed forces were full of enemies of the people. How widespread these beliefs were is difficult to say. There is plenty of testimony from people who believed in the presence of enemies, those who doubted such stories, and those who were


\textsuperscript{121} Those who moved up rapidly in the hierarchy are known in Russian as \textit{vydvizhentsy} (literally, those being advanced). Stalin, Voroshilov, and the rest of the leadership elite made a virtual fetish out of the process of promoting younger cadres in 1937-1938, thereby making a virtue out of necessity. The party and military archives for this period are replete with references to the need to promote younger, “faithful to the Motherland and the Lenin-Stalin Party” cadres. See, for example, Voroshilov’s order from December 1937 “On the results of military training in 1937 and the tasks for 1938”: RGVA, f. 4, op. 15, d. 13, ll. 231-237. For a brief discussion of military \textit{vydvizhentsy}, see: Colton, \textit{Commissars, Commanders, and Civilian Authority}, pp. 150-151. For a discussion of the expansion of the educational system to bring in junior officers, see: Reese, \textit{Stalin’s Reluctant Soldiers}, pp. 147-158. The best general discussion of \textit{vydvizhentsy} is by Sheila Fitzpatrick; see: Fitzpatrick, \textit{The Cultural Front}, pp. 11-15, 141-182.
confused and did not know what to think. Grigorenko states that at the time he believed that most of those accused were enemies of the people; by 1938, however, he had learned of the use of torture and forced confessions. Zhukov, on the other hand, had doubts about many of the cases when people were accused of being enemies, and states flatly that “no one” believed the accusation that the commander of the Belorussian Military District after Uborevich, Commander First Rank I.P. Belov, was an enemy (Belov was shot in 1938). Stuchenko also states his doubts about many of the accusations. To the extent that there were officers who sincerely believed that the armed forces had been infiltrated by enemies of the people, though, this both abetted Stalin’s purge and made resistance more difficult. Moreover, some of those who did not believe in the widespread presence of enemies in the country still believed that Stalin himself was not aware of NKVD excesses in carrying out the purges.122

Domestic structure and organizational culture provide the best explanations for military non-intervention during the Great Purges. International structure also may have played a role. What about the theories of Soviet civil-military relations discussed at the beginning of this chapter? Two of them can be dismissed easily. Odom’s argument that the army and the party were bound together by a unity of interests and the military was the executant of party decisions does not make sense as a description of the purges. Similarly, Nichols’s argument that civil-military disputes grew out of differences over doctrine, or the army’s adherence to Leninist ideology, is clearly not an adequate account of the purges.

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The approaches of Kolkowicz and Colton do better, although neither is without its problems. The late 1930s certainly was a period of civil-military conflict, which Kolkowicz's argument expects, and in some sense it was a conflict of party and professional interests. On the other hand, Colton is correct to note that the political administration was not the main mechanism used to carry out the military purges. The NKVD, not the PUR, played this role, although the recent archival evidence shows that the PUR played a bigger role in monitoring the officer corps than Colton suggests. Colton also has a problem with the purges in that his explanation for Soviet civil-military relations is based on congruent interests, which clearly was not the case in 1937-1938. Colton stresses the rewards to the non-purged members of the armed forces as one explanation for political quiescence, but by so doing underplays the obvious dangers that existed at the same time.\textsuperscript{123}

In short, none of the approaches from the Soviet studies literature offers a satisfactory account of the military's behavior during the Great Purges. The best explanations are rooted in organizational culture and domestic structure, as well as purely personal calculations of self-interest. Further evidence is needed to provide a complete account. Still, even once we have access to the personal files of Tukhachevskiy, Yakir, Blyukher, and other top commanders, we may not be able to completely unravel Soviet military behavior during the fateful years of 1937-1938.

\textsuperscript{123} Colton, \textit{Commissars, Commanders, and Civilian Authority}, pp. 136-151, 276-277.
CONCLUSION

This chapter has examined Soviet civil-military relations during the first two and a half decades of Soviet rule. This period was a time of flux in civil-military relations. There were both significant continuities from the Imperial army and state, and substantially new elements of both military organizational culture and state structure and performance.

During this period the armed forces did not play a role in sovereign power politics. The most startling case of military inactivity was the Great Purges, during which clear motives existed for military intervention. I have argued that a combination of reasons explain this behavior. The officer corps had a relatively high commitment to the norm of civilian supremacy, both due to influences from the tsarist army, transmitted by military specialists, and political indoctrination by the new regime. The power of the Stalinist state as a barrier to intervention, as emphasized by the domestic structure argument, also played an important role. An international structure explanation would stress the need for the army to concentrate on defending the state. Finally, the corporate interest approach to military intervention obviously does not explain the army's behavior during the purges, which severely threatened organizational interests.
CHAPTER 5: FROM VICTORY TO STAGNATION: SOVIET CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS, 1945-1985

The victory over Nazi Germany was the crowning achievement of the Soviet state in its seventy-four years of existence. This chapter examines civil-military relations in the period from the military victory in the Great Patriotic War to the rise to power of Mikhail Gorbachev in 1985. The war established the Soviet Union as a global superpower, which led ultimately to the Cold War competition between the United States and the Soviet Union. The country’s victory also helped legitimize Soviet rule in a way that more than twenty years of “building socialism” had been unable to do. Both international and domestic structural approaches, then, would predict more benign civil-military relations in the post-war period, because the external threat was high and the domestic political order was fairly solid. The army’s corporate interests generally were respected by the post-Stalin leadership, and the officer corps remained attached to an apolitical organizational culture. Post-war civil-military relations, then, were likely to be relatively stable.

The first and second sections of this chapter investigate sovereign power issues in the post-war period, first in the Khrushchev era and then in the period from Brezhnev to Gorbachev (see Table 5-1). In the Khrushchev period there was one instance of military arbitration due to leadership disputes in the political leadership. The army also played an implementation role in one power struggle, but under strict party control and not as an independent actor. The armed forces never sought an expanded political role and aside from these two episodes played no role in resolving the sovereign power issues that arose.
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<td>Corporate Interest</td>
<td>Intervention unlikely.</td>
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<td>Organizational Culture</td>
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<td><strong>Khrushchev and the &quot;Anti-Party Group&quot;</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>If arbitration, will side with contender most able to enhance state's war-making capacity.</td>
<td>If arbitration, will side with contender most likely to promote corporate interests.</td>
<td>If arbitration, first choice - neutrality, second choice - side with most legitimate contender.</td>
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<td><strong>The Zhukov Affair</strong></td>
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The third section examines more systematically the reasons for military behavior in the post-war period. One difficulty in this process is the inability to measure rigorously organizational culture, due to the highly controlled nature of Soviet society and thus the dearth of sources on officer corps' norms. In the fourth and final section of the chapter I make an effort to gauge Soviet military organizational culture in the post-war period, particularly the late-Brezhnev period, based on some recently available sources. This measurement effort sets the stage for the more tumultuous period of civil-military relations that were to follow, the Gorbachev and Yeltsin eras.
SOVEREIGN POWER ISSUES DURING THE KHRUSHCHEV ERA

Stalin made clear in the immediate aftermath of the war that the system he had built would not be changed. The revolutionary phase of Stalinism that predominated in the 1930s came to an end, and the postwar Soviet state was marked by highly conservative tendencies. Stalin preserved all of the most important aspects of the system: personal dictatorship, mass terror, a powerful police state, and a secondary role for the Communist Party. If terror never again achieved the levels of 1937-1938, the smaller purges carried out by Stalin in the post-war period were an obvious reminder of the previous terror and served to stifle any oppositionist tendencies within either the regime or society at large. Several leading officers were removed in the "mini-purges" of the post-war period, including the commanders of the Air Force and Navy -- Air Marshal Alexander Novikov and Admiral Nikolay Kuznetsov. Marshal Zhukov, the most prominent of Stalin's World War II generals, was also demoted and disgraced. Stalin in the post-war period went to great length to demonstrate that the military's achievements in the Second World War did not warrant a larger political role for the armed forces. Moreover, Stalin's authority was extremely high and there were no civil-military conflicts of significant magnitude that an intervention in sovereign power issues was likely or feasible. The post-Stalin transition, however, opened up several opportunities for greater military involvement in high politics.¹

This section discusses four such episodes during the years 1953-1964. These four incidents are: the arrest of Beria (1953), Khrushchev’s struggle with the so-called “Anti-Party Group” (1957), The Zhukov affair (1957), and the fall of Khrushchev (1964). The armed forces were a significant player in these events, but in none of these cases did the army show an interest in acquiring political leadership in the state. The army played a role due to the reliance of the party leadership, particularly Khrushchev, on military support during key crises. He turned to the army for help in the arrest of Beria and also received support from Zhukov in the conflict with the anti-party group. Khrushchev was quick to cut the military back down to size by summarily dismissing Zhukov as defense minister four months later. Despite severe disagreements over military policy in the intervening years, the armed forces were not involved in planning the ouster of Khrushchev in 1964, and chose to remain aloof from the entire affair.

The Arrest of Beria, 1953

Stalin’s death in March 1953 touched off a power struggle at the top of the Soviet leadership. The three major players were: Georgiy Malenkov, the Chair of the Council of Ministers; Lavrentii Beria, a Vice-Chair of the Council of Ministers and the head of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD); and Nikita Khrushchev, who was the senior member of the Central
Committee Secretariat. The first round of the power struggle ended with Beria's arrest in June 1953. He was executed in December 1953.²

Khrushchev was the key organizer of the arrest of Beria. The arrest was a difficult undertaking because of Beria's position as head of the MVD, which combined the functions of the interior ministry and the secret police. Beria controlled political surveillance, Kremlin security, and two MVD divisions in Moscow. Khrushchev turned to a group of military officers to carry out the mission, and units of the Moscow Military District were mobilized to prevent pro-Beria actions by MVD troops.

The role of the military in Beria's arrest, then, was crucial. Strobe Talbott, the editor of Khrushchev's memoirs, argued in his commentary on the memoirs that "it is likely that some of the marshals...were far more active in the preliminary plotting than is suggested here [by Khrushchev]." Amy Knight, using recent revelations from the Soviet press, also maintains that military support was the key to Khrushchev's victory. She contends that the military "demanded a tougher line" in foreign policy in return for their support, and that "a say in party politics...was the quid pro quo exacted from Khrushchev by the generals in return for their support."³

The available evidence, however, shows no military involvement in planning Beria's arrest; their role was one of implementation. Moreover, there is no evidence that the military asked for policy changes or a greater political role in return for their support. In fact, the available testimony makes clear that the officers involved, with the possible exception of Zhukov, had no

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idea what their mission was until the morning of the arrest. There is little direct testimony on the motives of the officers involved, but the available evidence shows that they responded to a direct order from the party and government leadership to carry out the arrest -- no bargaining was involved. Despite the army's key role, then, this case is coded as an instance of non-involvement because the military simply carried out the orders of the political leadership. A review of the relevant events demonstrates that the military was not involved in organizing Beria's arrest.

The most important task for Khrushchev was to get Malenkov, the Chair of the Council of Ministers and a perceived ally of Beria's, on his side. According to Khrushchev, over a period of time he was able to convince Malenkov that Beria was dangerous and had to be removed from power. Khrushchev also had the support of Nikolay Bulganin, the Minister of Defense. Bulganin was a career party official and a former political officer; he was not a professional soldier. Khrushchev and Malenkov then enlisted the support of Vyacheslav Molotov, who was a vice-chair of the Council of Ministers and highly influential. Eventually Khrushchev gained the support of a majority of the members of the Communist Party Presidium (the name at the time for the Politburo).4

The arrest of Beria was complicated by the fact that he was in charge of Kremlin security and several MVD divisions in Moscow. For this reason, Khrushchev turned to several military officers to carry out the arrest. The head of the Moscow military district, Col.-Gen. P.A. Artem'ev, had been an interior ministry commander before the war and was potentially an ally of Beria. Bulganin arranged for Artem'ev to be sent to Smolensk to observe exercises. Khrushchev

4 Knight, Beria, pp. 194-196. The most complete first-hand account is Khrushchev's: see Khrushchev Remembers, pp. 322-335. Molotov's version, as told to F. Chuyev, is in: F. Chuyev, Sto sorok besed s Molotovym: Iz dnevnika F. Chuyeva (Moskva: Terra, 1991), pp. 343-346.
and Bulganin turned to General K.S. Moskalenko, commander of Moscow's Air Defense Forces (PVO), to carry out the arrest.⁵

Khrushchev called Moskalenko at 9 a.m. on June 26th, the day of the scheduled Presidium meeting at which Beria was to be arrested. Moskalenko was told to prepare a group of loyal officers for a special mission. He chose four officers either currently or previously under his command in the Moscow PVO. Bulganin called Moskalenko and told him to bring this group, armed, to the Ministry of Defense. Moskalenko saw Bulganin alone and was told that they were to arrest Beria at the Kremlin. According to Moskalenko, he and Bulganin decided to add Zhukov and several other officers to the group because it was too small.⁶

Zhukov's role in the plot to arrest Beria is unclear. Three different versions exist of Zhukov's depiction of his role in the arrest, two of them second-hand and one third-hand. These three accounts differ significantly in terms of the details of Zhukov's involvement: whether he became involved the day of or the day before the operation, whether he was contacted by Khrushchev, Khrushchev and Malenkov, or Bulganin, whether he knew what his mission was before he arrived at the Kremlin, etc. All of these versions, however, agree on one key point: that

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⁵ On Artem'ev, see: A. Antonov-Ovseenko, "Ka'era Palacha," in V.F. Nekrasov, ed., Beriya: konets kar'ery (Moskva: Politizdat, 1991), p. 133; Anatoliy Sulyanov, Arestovat' v Kreml: O zhizni i smerti marshala Beriya: Povest' (Minsk: MP "Slavyane", 1991), pp. 306-307. Sulyanov's book is a self-described "narrative." Dialogue is invented, no footnotes are provided, and there is imaginative speculation on many of the details. However, Sulyanov is probably correct that Khrushchev and Bulganin turned to the PVO because they were concerned about the reliability of troops under Artem'ev and the presence of secret police "special sections" in regular ground units of the Moscow Military District.

Zhukov played no role in preparing the plot against Beria, but merely carried out the will of the political leadership.  

The designated group of officers proceeded to the Kremlin in Bulganin's car and one separate car. They went in Bulganin's car because as a member of the Presidium his car was not required to stop when going into the Kremlin, and at that time officers had to give up their weapons upon entering the Kremlin. Bulganin took them into a waiting room adjacent to where the Presidium meeting was to take place. Khrushchev and Bulganin (and perhaps Malenkov and Molotov) came in to tell the group their mission. It was explained to the officers that they were to wait outside the Presidium meeting until they received a signal from Malenkov to come in and arrest Beria. According to Moskalenko and Colonel I.G. Zub, another participating officer, not all members of the Presidium had been informed of the manner of Beria's arrest and they were startled when the officers came in. The officers arrested Beria without much difficulty.

The officers had to wait until that night to remove Beria from the Kremlin. A group of PVO officers was brought in to replace the Kremlin guard. Units of the Moscow PVO and the Kantemirov and Taman divisions were mobilized to prevent MVD armed units from supporting Beria. Beria was detained by Moskalenko and eventually transferred to an underground military bunker, where he was held until his trial and execution in December 1953.

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8 Colonel Zub's version of the arrest of Beria is in Capt. S. Bytrov, "Zadanie osobogo svoystva," Krasnaya zvezda [hereafter KZ], March 18-20, 1988. See also the accounts of Khrushchev, Moskalenko, Zhukov, and Molotov cited above. Knight provides the most detailed summary in English.

The arrest of Beria represented the greatest military involvement in a sovereign power issue in Russia since the Civil War. The incident, however, does not demonstrate any praetorian ambitions on the part of the Soviet military. All of the eyewitness accounts agree that the officers involved in the arrest of Beria played a purely operational role. The armed forces were not involved in the plot, which was organized by Khrushchev and other Presidium members.

The handful of officers involved in the arrest had every reason to see the order as a legitimate one handed down by the party and the government. Moskalenko states that because he had orders from Khrushchev and Bulganin, he believed it was sanctioned by the Communist Party, its Central Committee, and its Presidium. Moskalenko had never met Beria and had no reason to dislike him personally. Zub also claims that he was only fulfilling his military duty. Moskalenko and Zub turned down Bulganin's proposal that five of the participating officers should be named Heroes of the Soviet Union, maintaining they had done nothing heroic and that any other officer would have done the same thing.\(^\text{10}\)

Knight attributes military participation partially to "the long-standing animosity between the military and the police." There was indeed considerable hostility towards the secret police on the part of the armed forces due to the purges and police interference in military affairs during World War II. Zhukov maintained that he blamed Beria for the plots against him in the post-war period. Even if this was a motive for Zhukov, however, it could not have been for the other officers, who had little time to think about their orders before they were called on to implement

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Knight found additional evidence that troops were mobilized in a U.S. Embassy report held in the National Archives. See also the account of Lt.-Col. A. Skorokhodov about the mobilization of PVO units: A. Skorokhodov, "Kak nas 'gotovili na voynu' s Beriy," in Nekrasov, ed., Berya, pp. 289-295. Skorokhodov states that it was not until July 2, a week after Beria's arrest, that they heard rumors about the reason for their mobilization.

\(^\text{10}\) Moskalenko, "Kak byl arestovan Beria"; Bystrov, "Zadanie osobogo svoystva"; Volkogonov, Sem' vozhdey, Volume I, p. 356.
them. Once inside the Kremlin, moreover, they knew that if they failed they would be arrested or killed by Beria's Kremlin guards. Zub states that Khrushchev reminded them just before the Presidium meeting that they would be named "enemies of the people" if they were unsuccessful.\footnote{Knight, Beria, p. 196; Sokolov, "Slovo o Marshale Zhukove"; Burlatskiy, "Khrushchev," p. 14; Bystrov, "Zadanie osobogo svesstva."}

Additional evidence that the military was not a major player in the planning of the Beria arrest, and that they had made no political demands in return for their support, is found in the transcript of the July 1953 Central Committee Meeting at which Beria's arrest was sanctioned. No professional officers (there were 28 in the Central Committee) were invited to speak. Military matters were mentioned by only one speaker, Defense Minister Bulganin, who argued that the MVD should be "demilitarized" and made a purely civilian ministry. This issue received one paragraph in a printed transcript that runs to 142 pages. It was not mentioned in the formal Central Committee resolution on Beria. The resolution and the Plenum focused on Beria's domestic and foreign policy positions, his alleged personal vices, and his purported intent to seize power. The one signal of party gratitude to the army was Zhukov's promotion from candidate to full Central Committee member. If the military had been a key player, one would have expected a higher profile position at the Plenum.\footnote{"Plenum TsK KPSS: iyul' 1953 goda: stenograficheskiy otchet," Izvestiya TsK KPSS, Nos. 1-2 (January-February), 1991. The data on military Central Committee membership are from: Timothy J. Colton, Commissars, Commanders, and Civilian Authority: The Structure of Soviet Military Politics (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), p. 27; military officers were about twelve percent of total Central Committee membership.}

Thus, there is no basis for concluding from the arrest of Beria that the military was an influential independent actor in sovereign power issues. The role of the armed forces was crucial in the affair, but strictly as an implementer of a party decision. The arrest of Beria was not a case of military intervention or military arbitration. The military acted at the behest of the legitimate
party leadership, and Beria never claimed to be the legitimate executive leader in the state. The available evidence suggests that the Soviet military in this period had a relatively strong commitment to the norm of civilian supremacy, and that they saluted and followed orders when commanded to arrest Beria.

**Khrushchev and the “Anti-Party Group”**

The power struggle at the top of the Presidium did not end with the arrest of Beria. Malenkov was forced to resign as Premier in early 1955. Unhappiness with Khrushchev's growing power and opposition to some of his policies, however, led to an attempt to remove him in June 1957 by the so-called "anti-party group" headed by Malenkov, Molotov, and Lazar Kaganovich. Zhukov played an important arbiter role in defeating the "anti-party group", and he became the first professional soldier in Soviet history to serve as a full member of the Politburo. Zhukov's rise was short-lived, however, and he was removed from the Presidium (Politburo) and dismissed as Defense Minister four months later, in October 1957 (the so-called “Zhukov affair,” which will be discussed next).

The "anti-party group" made its move against Khrushchev at a June 18, 1957, Presidium meeting. Malenkov, Molotov, and Kaganovich had planned carefully for the attempt to oust Khrushchev, lining up a majority of seven out of eleven Presidium members behind them. They immediately proposed that Khrushchev be removed from the chair and replaced by Bulganin, the

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Chair of the Council of Ministers. They attempted to remove Khrushchev as Party First Secretary. However, three members of the Presidium were absent, as well as two candidate Presidium members, and Khrushchev argued that it was necessary for all Presidium and Secretariat members to be present for a decision to be made. More importantly, it appears that Zhukov (at the time he was a Candidate Presidium member) threatened to appeal to the army if the majority forced a decision at that point.\footnote{What exactly Zhukov said, and when he said it, is still unclear. According to some accounts, Zhukov said, "the army is against this decision, and not one tank will move from its place without my order." Other accounts say that Zhukov said he would appeal to "the army and people" and that they would support him. Zhukov claims he said he would appeal to party organs in the army and tell them what was happening. Zhukov also maintains he made this statement on June 18; none of the other accounts are specific about the date. See: Burlatskiy, "Khrushchev," p. 15; "Khrushchev protiv Zhukova," \\textit{Glasnost}, October 3, 10, 17, 1991; Petro G. Grigorenko, \textit{Memoirs} (New York: W.W. Norton, 1982), p. 224.}

The Presidium and Secretariat met again on June 19, with all members present. The "anti-party group" still had a majority of the Presidium (7 vs. 4), but they were a minority of all of those present (8 vs. 12) because Khrushchev had the support of most candidate Presidium and Secretariat members. Khrushchev and his allies argued that only the Central Committee (CC) could remove the Party First Secretary. The Presidium continued to meet for four days, until June 21. A CC meeting was forced by the arrival at the Kremlin of a group of CC members demanding that the Presidium call a Plenum. The "anti-party group" was forced to relent and the matter went to the full CC, which fully supported Khrushchev.

The pressure of Central Committee members on the Presidium played a decisive role in Khrushchev's victory. Several CC members argued at the Plenum that they had become aware that the Presidium had been meeting for several days and that Khrushchev had been deprived of
the chair, and thus they spontaneously organized themselves.¹⁵ Even if this explanation is true for those CC members working in Moscow, it does not explain the arrival in Moscow of CC members from all over the country. Khrushchev had used his control over the party apparatus, the KGB, and the armed forces to organize the arrival in Moscow of Central Committee members. Zhukov organized the dispatch of Air Force planes to fly some CC members to Moscow. Y. I. Molotov particularly highlights the role of CC Secretary Suslov and KGB head Serov and their control of the technical apparatus in calling CC members to Moscow.¹⁶

The arrival of the delegation of Central Committee members at the Presidium meeting on June 21 caused a stormy reaction on behalf of the "anti-party group." Indeed, it appears that some of them believed that Zhukov had made good on his threat to call out the army in support of Khrushchev. Presidium member Saburov, one of the "anti-party group," reportedly exclaimed that tanks had been sent to surround them. The CC delegation, according to Zhukov, was seen by the "anti-party group" as a "specially organized group of ruffians" to disrupt the work of the Presidium. The fact that Marshal Konev was one of the CC members who arrived at the Presidium meeting to request a Plenum certainly contributed to the impression that Zhukov had implemented his threat. CC Secretary A.B. Aristov said that when the names of officers were mentioned as part of the delegation, "a quick transformation of several comrades from lions to

¹⁵ One speaker making this claim was Marshal Konev, who argued that Zhukov's absence from the Ministry of Defense for four days naturally raised questions: "Poslednyaya...", No. 4, 1993, p. 52. See also the comments of Dmitriy Ustinov: "Poslednyaya...", No. 6, 1993, p. 33.

¹⁶ Chuyev, Sto sorok besed s Molotvym, pp. 354-355.
rabbits took place. I saw how the faces of Malenkov, Kaganovich, and [Presidium candidate member] Shepilov changed."17

The armed forces, then, seemingly played a key role in Khrushchev's victory over the anti-party group. The "anti-party group" had sounded out Zhukov's position before the Presidium meeting, with both Kaganovich and Malenkov hinting to Zhukov that he could become a full Presidium member if he supported them. Many of the speakers suggest that the key institutions over which the struggle ensued were, in order of importance, the First Secretary position and the CC Secretariat, the KGB, and the Armed Forces. Zhukov and Khrushchev both later pointed to the importance of Zhukov securing the army's support for Khrushchev.18

It is clearly the case that Zhukov's stance in June 1957 was crucial to Khrushchev's victory. How the role of the Armed Forces as an institution should be evaluated, however, is less straightforward. Could Zhukov have called out the army in support of Khrushchev? The dissident general Petro Grigorenko maintains that the army would not have followed Zhukov. What role did other officers play in the June 1957 events? Only the participation of Marshal Konev is clearly indicated in the transcripts of the June 1957 Plenum. There were a total of 18-20 military members of the Central Committee, about 7-8% of the total. Although they obviously voted for the Khrushchev line, how many of them were part of the delegation to the Presidium on


June 21 is not known. And there is no information on internal military discussions of these events and officer views on the proper stance of the military.¹⁹

The rationale for Zhukov's stance can be inferred from his statement to the Plenum. Zhukov, of course, asserted the loyalty of the armed forces to the Communist Party. He referred to the importance of party unity, and the negative consequences of a split in the party for the Soviet Union's standing abroad and with its allies. It is quite possible that Zhukov was sincere about this point, and that he saw the "anti-party group" as a destabilizing development in the party.²⁰

Perhaps the most important motivation for Zhukov's pro-Khrushchev stance, though, was the issue of the mass repressions in the army organized by Stalin and unmasked by Khrushchev in his "secret speech" at the Twentieth Party Congress in 1956. Zhukov devoted a great deal of attention in his Plenum speech to the responsibility of Molotov, Malenkov, and Kaganovich for the Great Purges, particularly in the armed forces. Zhukov personally had been threatened by Molotov, both during the war and in the post-war period, and Molotov had been the most active opponent of destalinization. Khrushchev had succeeded in covering up his involvement in the purges (by having documents destroyed) and gaining credit for the "secret speech" and destalinization, even though he also was heavily involved in the Great Purges and Malenkov and others also had supported the destalinization campaign. Regardless, Khrushchev received the major credit for the denunciation of Stalin's activities and the rehabilitation of the victims, including officers. Zhukov also had information that Malenkov had continued to use the secret

¹⁹ For Grigorenko's views, see: Grigorenko, Memoirs, p. 224. Colton reports eighteen full and candidate military members of the Central Committee; Kolkowicz reports twenty. Colton, Commissars, Commanders, and Civilian Authority, p. 27; Kolkowicz, The Soviet Military and the Communist Party, p. 331.
police to spy on the top military leadership after Stalin's death. He evidently feared a return to repressions in the army if the "anti-party group" were victorious.²¹

The Zhukov Affair

Does Zhukov's stance in June 1957 demonstrate a praetorian mood in the Soviet armed forces? The strongest evidence that Zhukov's behavior did not reflect a greater desire for political power on the part of the military is the fact that four months later Zhukov was removed as Defense Minister and tossed out of the Presidium, with no opposition from the armed forces. Neither Zhukov nor any other member of the military leadership made any effort to mobilize army support for Zhukov; his standing in the Politburo clearly was dependent on Khrushchev's continuing good will. A brief review of this episode demonstrates the subservience of the military to party rule.

On October 5, 1957, Zhukov left Moscow for a three week visit to Yugoslavia and Albania. In his absence a campaign was launched to remove him. On October 19 the Presidium met to discuss "party-political work in the Armed Forces," and a report was presented by General A.S. Zheltov, the head of the Main Political Administration (MPA), the communist party

²⁰ Konev, the other professional officer to speak at the Plenum, also stressed this point: "Poslednyaya...", No. 4, 1993, p. 52.

²¹ For Zhukov's speech at the June 1957 Plenum, see: "Poslednyaya...", No. 3, 1993, pp. 13-20. According to other speakers, Zhukov's also raised the issue of the purges in the Presidium: "Poslednyaya...", No. 4, 1993, p. 57. Konev also raised the issue of the purges and Molotov's use of threats against officers during World War II: "Poslednyaya...", No. 4, 1993, pp. 52-54. For information on Zhukov's relations with Molotov during the war, see: K.M. Simonov, "Zametki k biografii G.K. Zhukova," VZh, No. 10, 1987, p. 57. For information on the events leading up to the "secret speech," including Khrushchev's "cleansing" of the archives, see: Vladimir Naumov, "'Uverdit' dokladchikom tovarishcha Khrushcheva',' Moskovskie novosti, No. 5 (February 4-11), 1996, p. 34; Aleksey Bogomolov, "Tayna zakrytogo doklada," Sovershenno sekretno, No. 1, 1996, pp. 3-4. The Naumov article is based on new archival sources and seems more reliable than Bogomolov's piece, which is based on memoirs and interviews. I thank Mark Kramer for calling my attention to these articles, and for his assistance with many other recent sources on Soviet post-war history.
organization in the armed forces. On October 22-23 a meeting of party members of the Moscow garrison and Ministry of Defense was held at which Zheltov and Khrushchev both gave reports attacking Zhukov. Similar meetings were held in military districts around the country. On October 26 Zhukov returned to Moscow and was taken immediately to a Presidium meeting, at which he was removed as Minister of Defense. On October 28-29 the Central Committee met and dismissed Zhukov from the Presidium and the Central Committee.\textsuperscript{22}

There were a host of accusations against Zhukov, including weakening Communist Party control over the military, creating a Zhukov "cult of personality" in the army, and, most seriously, of trying to acquire unlimited political power and of "Bonapartism." Khrushchev stated in his memoirs, "Zhukov was striving to seize control...we were heading for a coup d'etat.... We couldn't let Zhukov stage a South American-style military takeover in our country."\textsuperscript{23}

There is absolutely no evidence that Zhukov had any intention of trying to seize power. According to the American scholar Mark Kramer and Russian historians who have read the complete October 1957 Plenum transcript, none of the speakers, in particular none of the officers present, accused Zhukov of organizing a coup. The best piece of evidence that Khrushchev could produce for the alleged plot was that Zhukov had taken steps to set up a central school for special forces (Spetsnaz) and had informed only two other officers, without achieving CC approval. Khrushchev said accusingly, "Beria also had his group of commandos." In fact, every Military

\textsuperscript{22} The most important source on Zhukov's removal is the published excerpts from the October 1957 CC Plenum: "Khrushchev protiv Zhukova," \textit{Glasnost}, October 3, 10, 17, 1991 [cited hereafter as \textit{Glasnost} with the appropriate date]. The excerpts include part of Suslov's introductory speech, most of Zhukov's presentation, and part of Khrushchev's speech. Also particularly useful is: Vladimir Karpov, "Taynaya rasprava nad marshalom Zhukovym," \textit{Pravda}, August 17 and 19, 1991. A recent English-language account is in: Spahr, Zhukov, pp. 235-252. The study by Timothy Colton is still valuable: Colton, Chapter 8 ("The Zhukov Affair"), \textit{Commissars, Commanders, and Civilian Authority}, pp. 175-195.
District had established Spetsnaz companies, and Zhukov simply was trying to create a better training method for the special forces. He informed the Plenum that he did not consider this a new question that needed party approval. Moreover, it is simply untrue that only Zhukov and two other officers knew of the existence of the school; plans for establishing the school were conducted through regular Ministry of Defense channels.24

The fact that Zhukov was not trying to seize power also is evident from how he was treated at the time. Zhukov was not arrested, reduced in rank, or dismissed from the party. After Khrushchev's removal from power in 1964 the accusations of "Bonapartism" against Zhukov were dropped. Recent archival revelations show that Zhukov remained distressed for years about this accusation. In private conversations with his wife, reported to Khrushchev by the KGB, Zhukov said he "couldn't make peace" with the allegation. "What facts are there? None," Zhukov complained. "If I had been trying to seize power," he noted, "why wasn't I arrested?"25

23 For the charges against Zhukov, see Suslov's speech to the October 1957 Plenum: Glasnost, October 3, 1991, p. 7. Spahr and Colton also summarize the principal charges (see the previous note). For Khrushchev's account, see: Khrushchev, Khrushchev Remembers: The Last Testament, pp. 14-17.

24 Mark Kramer has read the transcript of the October 1957 Plenum in the archives in Moscow and confirms earlier reports of Russian historians that Zhukov's alleged "Bonapartism" was never mentioned: personal communication. On the issue of the "reconnaissance" or "diversionary" units and school, see: Glasnost, October 3, 10, and 17; Karpov, "Taynaya rasprava...", Pravda, August 17, 18, 1991.

25 Colton, Commissars, Commanders, and Civilian Authority, pp. 178-184; "G.K. Zhukov: neizvestnye stranitsy biografii," Voyennye arkhivy rossi, Vol. 1, 1993, pp. 237-238. Khrushchev also claims that Moskalenko accused Zhukov of planning to seize power. According to Khrushchev, Zhukov replied, "How can you accuse me? You yourself told me many times, Take power in your own hands. Just take it! Take power!!" Khrushchev states that he believed Zhukov that Moskalenko had said this. He contends that no action was taken against Moskalenko because of his assistance in the arrest of Beria in 1953. This story of Khrushchev's is very hard to believe. It is inconceivable that Moskalenko would be allowed to remain the commander of the crucial Moscow Military District until 1960 if he had stated praetorian tendencies. He was later appointed head of the Strategic Rocket Forces. Moreover, as the Russian military historian V.A. Anfilov points out, Zhukov had nothing bad to say about Moskalenko in his memoirs; in fact, he said good things about Moskalenko. He certainly would have been more critical of Moskalenko if Moskalenko had accused him of planning a military coup in October 1957. See: N.K. Khrushchev, Khrushchev Remembers: The Glasnost Tapes (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1990), pp. 62-63, n. 8; V.A. Anfilov, "N.S. Khrushchev: 'Sam ya ne slyshal, no mne govoril...',' VZzh, No. 4, 1994, p. 89.
Although there is no evidence that Zhukov had any intention or desire to seize power, there is recent data that suggests that there was a real clash between the MPA and the professional officer corps, and Zhukov in particular. Zheltov, the head of the MPA, took advantage of Zhukov’s absence in October to discuss with the political leadership his objections to how Zhukov was conducting party-political work. Khrushchev called a Presidium meeting (on October 19) at which Zheltov outlined his objections to how the MPA was treated. Marshals Konev and Malinovsky were asked to attend the Presidium meeting and give their reaction; they argued that Zheltov was settling a personal score with Zhukov. Allegedly other Presidium members suggested that members of the party leadership be sent to investigate the question at the local level, which led to the series of meetings held immediately prior to Zhukov's dismissal.25

Zhukov’s statement at the October 1957 Plenum also demonstrated that his views on army-party relations were out of step with those of the party leadership. Zhukov admitted that he underrated the role of the political organs and overrated the role of the commanders. He argued that he believed that commanders should also lead political work, because almost all professional officers were by this point overwhelmingly educated, committed communists. He noted that many of them held positions in party bodies at the appropriate level. Zhukov said, "these commanders should now be looked at in a different light than they were 20-25 years ago." In

25 Zheltov also suggests that it was his initiative that led to Zhukov’s ouster. This seems implausible, since Zheltov’s discussions with the party leadership took place after Zhukov had been sent out of the country for three weeks, and Zhukov almost certainly was sent abroad in order to allow the leadership to plan his ouster. Mark Kramer confirms, however, based on his reading of the October 1957 Plenum transcript, that personal animosity between Zhukov and Zheltov played an important role and was evident in the transcripts. For Zheltov’s account, see: Capt. S. Bystrov, “V oktyabre 1957-go,” KZ, May 21, 1989, p. 4. It also appears that Zheltov was one of the authors of the piece published in Pravda on November 3, 1957, denouncing Zhukov and signed by Konev. Konev was told he could follow Zhukov into retirement if he did not sign the article. According to Anflov, the article was prepared by the MPA and the General Staff: Anflov, “N.S. Khrushchev,” VZh, No. 4, 1994, p. 91. Additional evidence that Konev did not write the piece, and that the alleged rivalry between Zhukov and Konev may be oversown, is in: “G.K. Zhukov,” Voyennye archivy rossi, Vol. 1, 1993, p. 237.
other words, the need for political commissars overseeing the work of professional officers had
diminished since the early days of the Soviet state. Although he still saw a role for party bodies in
the armed forces, it is clear that Zhukov wished to change substantially the nature of the
relationship between the MPA and the regular army.27

There were, then, real policy differences behind Zhukov's dismissal, but none that
threatened civilian control. As Zhukov remarked later, he was not entirely innocent in his
dismissal -- "there is no smoke without fire." This policy difference, however, was primarily used
as a pretext for Zhukov's dismissal. The most likely reason for the sacking was the fear of
Khrushchev and other Presidium members that Zhukov, with all his popularity and prestige, had
been allowed to become too powerful.28

This fear of Zhukov on the part of Khrushchev and other members of the political
leadership was rooted in Zhukov's pronouncements in June 1957. At the October Plenum both
Khrushchev and Suslov stressed how dangerous was the idea that Zhukov could appeal directly to
the army and the people during an intra-party struggle. Zhukov later argued that he was dismissed
by Khrushchev because Khrushchev feared competition. Zhukov said:

There was a moment when he staggered, and I secured for him the support of the
army. At the time he sincerely thanked me, but he drew completely opposite
conclusions: what if I suddenly wished to sit in his place?.... Wrongly! I never
wanted state power - I'm a soldier, and the army is my concern.29


28 Kolkowicz, then, was partially correct that a conflict between the party, particularly the MPA, and the army
played a role in Zhukov's dismissal. Colton, however, is also correct in seeing the allegation about Zhukov's under-
appreciation of political work as a pretext, with other motives being more important. See: Kolkowicz, The Soviet
Military and the Communist Party, pp. 113-135; Colton, Commissars, Commanders, and Civilian Authority, pp. 175-
195. For the Zhukov quote, see: Simonov, "Zametki k biografii G.K. Zhukova," VZh, No. 12, 1987, p. 46.

29 Glasnost, October 3 and 17; Mirkina, "Ne skloniv golovy," p. 70.
Other members of the political leadership also distrusted and feared Zhukov. Allegedly some Presidium members would look to Zhukov to see how he was voting when they were not certain of how to vote. At the October Plenum Zhukov commented that he was surprised to learn that other members of the Presidium were alarmed because of his character and authority, that they were afraid of him and did not trust him. Observers have noted how Zhukov's bearing was intimidating, and his rudeness and conceitedness was remarked on by many of his colleagues. Zhukov apparently remained proud until the end. He later told former comrades, "all this could have been managed differently if I could have bowed down low enough, but I couldn't bow down. And why should I bow? I don't feel guilty of anything that I should have had to beg for."30

Recent revelations about the Zhukov affair strongly confirm earlier conclusions that Zhukov himself had no designs on power and that his dismissal was rooted more in personal politics than institutional competition. Neither in June nor October 1957 did the Soviet army demonstrate praetorian ambitions. As with the arrest of Beria, however, the 1957 events show how the armed forces can be drawn into sovereign power issues in political systems without a strong legal order or stable succession mechanisms.

The Fall of Khrushchev, 1964

Khrushchev clashed seriously with the military leadership during his rule, particularly in the later years. In 1960 he announced plans to reduce the armed forces by more than one million men, including 250,000 officers. Recent archival evidence shows how Khrushchev ran roughshod over military concerns and interests with these cuts. Khrushchev also pushed a

10 Karpov, "Taynaya rasprava...", Pravda, August 17, 1991, p. 4; Glasnost, October 10 and 17, 1991; Pavlenko, "Razmyshleniya...," VZh, No. 12, 1988, pp. 34-35; Burlatskiy, "Khrushchev," p. 16; Colton, Commissars.
"single-variant" military doctrine that placed almost exclusive reliance on nuclear missiles, significantly downgrading the importance of the army, navy, and air force. In August 1964 Khrushchev took the extreme measure of eliminating the ground forces' separate command structure and subordinating it directly to the General Staff. Prominent marshals were dismissed at various points during these political battles, such as Chief of the General Staff V.D. Sokolovskiy (1960), First Deputy Minister of Defense I.S. Konev (1960), and Chief of the General Staff M.V. Zakharov (1963).31

These well-documented civil-military fights have led to speculation that the military played an important role in Khrushchev's ouster in October 1964.32 In fact, evidence that has come to light in recent years demonstrates convincingly that the army was not a major player in Khrushchev's ouster. Indeed, even though a group within the Presidium had been planning to topple Khrushchev since the spring of 1964, the military high command was not notified until several days before the plot was carried out.33


The persons responsible for initiating the effort were Leonid Brezhnev and Nikolay Podgorny, who both held senior leadership positions and were considered by Khrushchev as possible successors. Brezhnev and Podgorny carefully lined up support among other members of the Presidium, the Secretariat, and the Central Committee. It was particularly important that they attract to their side A.N. Shelepın, a key CC Secretary, and V.E. Semichastny, the head of the KGB. With Shelepın and Semichastny on their side they could be fairly confident that word of their plotting would not get back to Khrushchev. Brezhnev worked his way through a list of CC members, carefully sounding them or their associates out, putting a plus or minus next to each name.34

The armed forces leadership played a completely passive role. The Minister of Defense, Malinovskiy, was, according to Semichastny, notified only two days before the Presidium meeting at which Khrushchev was ousted. Neither Malinovskiy nor any other officer sat on the Presidium and no officers were present at the key Presidium meeting of October 12 at which the conspirators got formal support for the removal of Khrushchev. The commander of the Moscow military district also had not been informed, but KGB special departments in the district had orders to report to Semichastny any suspicious troop movements. According to Petr Shelest, the Ukrainian Party Secretary and a Presidium member, Malinovskiy told the group of plotters that the military was "outside politics" and would support neither side.35


35 "Kak znamy N.S. Khrushcheva," p. 3; Khrushchev, _Khrushchev on Khrushchev_, p. 136; Tompson, _Khrushchev_, pp. 270-271. Georgi Arbatov, who was at the time a self-described "rather senior official in the Central Committee apparat," argues that Chief of the General Staff Marshal Biryuzov "had been informed about the plans to remove Khrushchev and was probably involved in them." It is quite possible that Biryuzov was informed, but there is no evidence for the assertion that Biryuzov was involved in the planning. His name is not mentioned in any of the accounts of direct participants in the event. Arbatov also attributes a more minor role to Brezhnev and a more important role to Suslov than is in fact the case, suggesting that he has little direct knowledge about these events.
Khrushchev was called back to Moscow on October 13 by the rest of the Presidium and was formally removed by a CC Plenum on October 14, 1964. Khrushchev had alienated almost all major sectors of the Soviet political elite by this time. Most of the criticism leveled at Khrushchev by other Presidium members had to do with his imperious and rude leadership style and his policies that threatened the interest of party officials, who were the most important constituency in the CC. Brezhnev’s speech to the CC on October 14 attacked Khrushchev’s “rude violation of Leninist norms of party leadership” and his policies in the spheres of agriculture and local party organization. Brezhnev did not mention defense policy once in the entire speech. William Tompson notes, "remarkably little attention was paid to the complaints of the military, which further confirms the belief that the armed forces were not involved in the plot."^{36}

The fall of Khrushchev is a case of military non-intervention. Although there were two contenders for supreme executive power at the time (Khrushchev, and the Presidium and Central Committee majority behind Brezhnev and Podgorny), neither side appealed to the army for support. The army remained completely neutral and let the Communist Party decide the matter. The stance taken by the armed forces leadership shows that they had no desire or inclination to become involved in sovereign power disputes.

The Soviet military’s passive role in the ouster of Nikita Khrushchev suggests that corporate motives alone are not a sufficient cause of military intervention. Khrushchev directly

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^{36} "Kak snimali N.S. Khrushcheva," pp. 6-15; Tompson, Khrushchev, p. 272. On the widespread opposition to Khrushchev’s leadership and policies, see: Tompson, Khrushchev, pp. 257-277; N.A. Barsukov, "Oktyabr’ 64-go," Svobodnaya mysl’, No. 10, 1994, pp. 24-27. Even Georgi Arbatov, who is very critical of Khrushchev’s removal, notes: "There was virtually no outcry in the Party or among the public. In fact, the changeover was met with approval, and even joy, almost everywhere." Arbatov, The System, p. 101.
and increasingly attacked the military's prerogatives in the last years of his rule, but the armed forces did not participate in the extensive conspiracy to overthrow him and stated that the army would not become involved when it finally was informed of the plot. A rational bureaucratic actor would have been willing, even eager, to join the anti-Khrushchev group. Moreover, the abolition of the ground forces command was not reversed for three years; it clearly would have been reversed earlier if the military's interests had played an important role in Khrushchev's fall. The military's passive stance in October 1964 further strengthens the viewpoint that Zhukov's key influence in June 1957 derived from his personal standing in the party leadership, and not from any institutionally powerful role for the Soviet armed forces.\textsuperscript{17}

\textit{SOVEREIGN POWER ISSUES FROM BREZHNEV TO GORBACHEV}

It has become commonplace to refer to the Brezhnev era, in a phrase coined by Jeremy Azrael, as the "golden age" of Soviet civil-military relations. Leonid Brezhnev's reign as General Secretary of the Communist Party from 1964 until 1982 is seen as a period in which the armed forces were granted most of their wishes and in which there was extraordinary harmony between the military and civilian leaderships.\textsuperscript{18}

What accounts for this "golden age"? Two very different interpretations have been provided. One approach stresses either "congruent values" (William Odom) or "compatible objectives and crosscutting interests" (Timothy Colton) between the military and party leadership.


An alternative view, put forward by Thomas Nichols, is that the "golden age" came about due to the abdication of civilian control -- the political leadership simply chose not to challenge a politically powerful military.\textsuperscript{39}

This debate cannot be resolved here. Indeed, it is somewhat tangential to the main thrust of this dissertation, which focuses on military participation in sovereign power issues. Discussions about the reasons for the "golden age" revolve around issues of defense policy. Moreover, even in the realm of defense policy, the entire Brezhnev period was not one of civil-military harmony. Azrael's original piece on the topic restricted the term "golden age" to the first ten years of the Brezhnev leadership. Azrael and others have demonstrated growing civil-military conflict in the late 1970s and early 1980s. These conflicts took place over such major defense policy issues as arms control, the defense budget, military doctrine, the Ministry of Defense leadership, weapons procurement, and Afghanistan. The military failed to carry the day in many of these disputes, a point discussed in more detail below. Moreover, these disputes were often intra-civilian and intra-military and were not simply civil-military.\textsuperscript{40}


The one defense policy issue that often is depicted as bearing directly on sovereign power issues is the firing of Chief of the General Staff Marshal Nikolay Ogarkov in 1984. Ogarkov had been involved in a multi-year dispute with the civilian leadership about the scale of the Soviet military effort. Many Western commentators attribute his eventual dismissal to the coming succession struggle related to the serious illnesses of General Secretary Konstantin Chernenko and Minister of Defense Dmitriy Ustinov. These analysts argue that Ogarkov would have been the major candidate for Defense Minister upon Ustinov's death, and thus would be in a strong position to influence the post-Chernenko succession, because since 1973 the Defense Minister had been a member of the Politburo and it would be hard to deny Ogarkov this post. Thus, it is suggested, Ogarkov had to be dismissed.41

New evidence suggests a different explanation for Ogarkov's dismissal as Chief of the General Staff. Former Politburo member Vitaliy Vorotnikov has recounted how Ogarkov came to speak with him after Ustinov had recommended transferring Ogarkov to the head of the Western TVD (theater command) at a meeting of the Defense Council. The Defense Council was chaired by the General Secretary and was the Politburo's top advisory body on defense issues. Ogarkov told Vorotnikov that he and Ustinov had clashed for many years over various questions of military policy, including military development, tactics, procurement, and social support for officers and soldiers. Ogarkov added that Ustinov did not like his directness and authority. Ogarkov also met with Mikhail Gorbachev, another Politburo member, to voice his complaints. He wished to meet

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with General Secretary Chernenko, but Vorotnikov told him that this would serve no purpose because of Chernenko's closeness to Ustinov. The influential chair of the Council of Ministers, Nikolay Tikhonov, raised the possibility of keeping Ogarkov as Chief of the General Staff at a Politburo meeting, and he was supported by Vorotnikov and Gorbachev. But Chernenko looked at Ustinov, who reiterated the need to shift Ogarkov to a new post, and, according to Vorotnikov, "that was that."42

In Vorotnikov's view Ogarkov's dismissal arose purely due to a conflict between Ogarkov and Ustinov. His account does not suggest that Ogarkov was seen as a growing political threat, and the political leadership certainly was not unanimous in seeking his removal. Rather, other Politburo members were willing to defer to Ustinov's judgment on a matter directly under his supervision. The uniformed military was in no way involved and powerless to protect Ogarkov in a matter that fell under the party leadership's authority. Vorotnikov's description of the Ogarkov incident is consistent with other reports that suggest that Ustinov and Ogarkov often clashed over defense policy, particularly procurement issues. Ustinov was a civilian party official with a long background in the military-industrial sector and his institutional loyalties were to the party and military industry, not the officer corps.43


It is crucial to bear this point in mind when discussing the post-Brezhnev successions. Ustinov was an influential member of the Politburo when Yuriy Andropov became General Secretary in November 1982 and when Chernenko became General Secretary in February 1984. Ustinov had been a candidate member of the Politburo since 1965 and a full member since 1976, which made him one of the longest-serving Politburo members. Ustinov certainly played an important role in the Andropov and Chernenko successions. But he did so as a leading member of the Politburo, and not as Defense Minister. In particular, Ustinov did not have a "military vote" in succession decisions, especially since he represented the views of the party leadership and not the uniformed military.\(^4\)

By the time of Brezhnev's death the succession procedure had become somewhat institutionalized. The recent memoir literature agrees that Andropov and Chernenko acceded to the head of the party without much difficulty. Both Andropov and Chernenko were the head of the Secretariat and the second person in the party behind the General Secretary prior to their respective successions. Their elevation to the top job was therefore to be expected, barring unforeseen contingencies. Andropov's attempt before his death to leapfrog Gorbachev over Chernenko into the number two spot was no more successful than that of any previous Soviet leader to anoint his successor without broader agreement in the Politburo. Other Politburo and

\(^4\) On Ustinov, the military, and the post-Brezhnev successions, see: Parrott, "Political Change and Civil-Military Relations," pp. 69-75, 90-91; Amy Knight, "The KGB and Civil-Military Relations," in Colton and Gustafson, eds., Soldiers and the Soviet State, pp. 104-107. Arbatov suggests that Ustinov played the key role in choosing Chernenko as the successor to Andropov, and contends that Ustinov was so powerful because "he had many military divisions at his disposal." Arbatov, The System, p. 278. This view is problematic for four reasons. First, with the exception of the two incidents under Khrushchev discussed above (the arrest of Beria and the June 1957 Plenum), the threat or use of force was never raised in Soviet succession struggles. Second, as mentioned, Ustinov did not represent the professional military. Third, as I discuss next, the post-Brezhnev successions took place in a much more straightforward manner than implied by Arbatov's reference to "military divisions." Fourth, according to Gorbachev, Ustinov thought Gorbachev, not Chernenko, should be named General Secretary after Andropov's death: Mikhail Gorbachev, Zhizn' i reformy, Volume I (Moskva: Novosti, 1995), pp. 248-249.
Secretariat members at the time agree that the Gorbachev faction was too weak in 1984 to challenge Chernenko.45

It also was expected that the new General Secretary would put forward a candidate for the second position in the party soon after taking power. The so-called "second secretary" chaired the Secretariat's meetings and also chaired the Politburo in the absence of the General Secretary. Andropov put forward Chernenko for second secretary, who at the time was considered the second most authoritative figure in the party and the only possible contender to Andropov for the top job. Similarly, Chernenko advocated Gorbachev for the second spot, even though he had hitherto shown no noticeable sympathy for Gorbachev. But Gorbachev was an authoritative figure in the party with considerable support, and probably the strongest possible competitor to Chernenko for the position of General Secretary in 1984. In both cases it appears that the new general secretary offered an olive branch to the second strongest Politburo faction by appointing the leader of that group to the position of second secretary.

Some of the old guard in the Politburo, however, opposed Gorbachev's elevation to the second position. In particular, Soviet Premier Tikhonov strongly objected. He received the support of Viktor Grishin and Grigoriy Romanov, who saw themselves as contenders for that position. All Politburo members knew that Chernenko was very sick and that therefore whoever

became second secretary had a strong chance of succeeding to the top job in the near future.

Ustinov supported Chernenko's proposal, and Gorbachev's other supporters also fought back against Tikhonov. In the end, it seems (accounts differ slightly on this point), no firm Politburo decision was made, although Gorbachev de-facto became second secretary and moved into the office traditionally reserved for that person. Gorbachev took the chair the first time Chernenko was unable to chair a Politburo meeting. The difficulty that Gorbachev had in winning the second position demonstrates that there was little chance of his claiming the top job in 1984.46

Dmitriy Ustinov died in December 1984. He was replaced as Minister of Defense by Sergey Sokolov, a career officer. Sokolov was not made either a full or candidate member of the Politburo at that time (this shows, incidentally, that Ogarkov's removal was almost certainly not related to apprehension in the Politburo about having to appoint Ogarkov to head the Ministry of Defense and make him a Politburo member in the event of Ustinov's death). Although Ustinov and his predecessor Marshal Grechko had been full Politburo members, the fact that Sokolov did not become even a candidate Politburo member until after Gorbachev's succession confirms that there was no automatic "military slot" in the Politburo.

General Secretary Chernenko died in March 1985, having served in that position for only thirteen months. Yegor Ligachev, a Secretariat member and Gorbachev ally who was later to become Gorbachev's principal conservative opponent in the party, contends that Gorbachev's victory was very narrow. Other first-hand accounts, however, contradict Ligachev's version. It appears that Grishin had some hopes of challenging Gorbachev, but in the end decided his position was not tenable and he offered no opposition. Regardless, the armed forces played

46 Gorbachev, Zhizn' i reformy, Volume I, pp. 250-252; Vorotnikov, A bylo eto tak..., pp. 39-40; Ligachev, Zagadka Gorbacheva, p. 27; Ryzhkov, Perestroyka, pp. 59-60; Roxburgh, The Second Russian Revolution, pp. 18-
absolutely no role in Gorbachev's succession. The decision was made in the Communist Party inner circle, from which they were at the time shut out.47

EXPLAINING MILITARY BEHAVIOR IN POST-WAR SOVEREIGN POWER ISSUES

From 1953 to 1985 there were a series of sovereign power issues in Soviet politics in which the armed forces potentially could have intervened. In none of these cases was there military intervention. On one occasion the military played the role of an arbiter in a party conflict. During Khrushchev's struggle with the anti-party group the Minister of Defense, Marshal Zhukov, played a key role in his capacity as a candidate member of the Presidium. This incident, however, does not indicate a military leadership bent on grabbing for itself a larger role in domestic politics. In all other sovereign power disputes in this period the military played a passive role or no role at all.

This section systematically examines the explanations offered for this behavior by the comparative and Soviet studies' theories of military intervention. Several of the theories do a

47 Ligachev claims, in particular, that the first Politburo meeting on the evening of March 10 did not result in a decision on who would chair Chernenko's funeral commission. Roxburgh also advances this claim. The question is important because traditionally the chair of the funeral commission became General Secretary. Ligachev's account is explicitly rejected by Gorbachev, Vorotnikov, and Ryzhkov. Gorbachev, of course, was at the meeting. Vorotnikov was not at the meeting on the tenth because he was in Yugoslavia, but when he returned the next morning he called the head of the Central Committee General Department and was told that Gorbachev had been chosen to head the funeral commission. Ryzhkov, at the time a Secretariat member, also contends that Gorbachev was named to head the funeral commission. This fact is confirmed by the published transcript of the March 11 meeting at which Gorbachev was formally named General Secretary, as is the fact that no military officers were present at the meeting. None of the memoirs mention the participation of any military personnel in the succession question. See: Gorbachev, Zhizn' i reformy, Volume I, pp. 262-272; Ligachev, Zagadka Gorbacheva, pp. 57-66; Vorotnikov, A bylo eto tak..., pp. 56-59; Ryzhkov, Perestroyka, pp. 78-81; Roxburgh, The Second Russian Revolution, pp. 5-9; "'Nam ne nuzhno menyat' politiku', — zayavil M.S. Gorbachev pri vydvizhenii ego na post General'nogo sekretarya TsK KPSS," Istochnik, No. 0, 1993, pp. 66-75.
good job of explaining army behavior, although not all of the perspectives perform well in each case.

**International Structure**

Russia/USSR has been one of the most war-prone states of the past two centuries. Since 1815 Russia/USSR has had more battle deaths (9.7 million) and more battle deaths per year (59 thousand) in inter-state wars than any other country. Russia/USSR ties for fourth (with Great Britain) in terms of the number of wars per year that the state has been a member of the international system. It ranks thirteenth in the number of war months per year as a state. Russia/Soviet Union was a major combatant in the two bloodiest wars in human history, World War I and World War II. The experience of World War II, during which more than 25 million Soviet citizens lost their lives, convinced the Soviet leadership that national security, and military power in particular, should be the preeminent concern of state policy. The Cold War competition with the West kept the armed forces focused on its external defense role.  

The international structure approach, then, would lead one to predict an externally oriented armed forces with relatively low interest in sovereign power issues. This is an accurate description of the Soviet military in the post-war era. The international structure

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perspective performs well. The theory is too blunt, however, to offer an explanation for the arbitration role the military played in 1957.

**Domestic Structure**

The Soviet Union after World War II had a very high degree of political order. The war itself was a crucial test for the Soviet system. As Seweryn Bialer has argued, the ability of the system to weather the stress of the war and emerge victorious was perhaps the most important source of the regime’s legitimacy in the post-war period. In the post-war period a full-blown cult of the war was created and promoted by the Communist Party leadership, who both identified with the war effort personally as participants and who seemingly realized the war’s importance for regime legitimation.50

The post-Stalin political leadership introduced several important changes in the political system without taking any steps that would endanger Communist Party hegemony. Key changes included the switch from personal dictatorship to oligarchy, the end of mass terror, the reining in of the secret police, and the development of a more regularized bureaucratic structure and decision-making institutions. Bailer notes, “the leadership as a whole, and the elites as a whole, wanted a new deal.” The most important aspect of the new deal was a more normal and comfortable lifestyle, and the freedom from fear that state service entailed under Stalin.51

The population as a whole also was ready for a new deal after Stalin’s death. Although it would be misleading to say that popular pressures led to the policy changes adopted under


Khrushchev and Brezhnev, the regime did undertake a series of reforms that partially dismantled the Stalinist system and brought about some important improvements in the quality of life for Soviet citizens. Victor Zaslavsky refers to the post-Stalin system as one based on an "organized consensus" in which society accepted the existing political system and the regime granted greater physical and economic security to those who did not challenge it. George Breslauer, similarly, dubbed the system in the post-Stalin period as one of "welfare-state authoritarianism."

One striking aspect of the post-Stalin political system was the domination of the regime by a group of political leaders, such as Nikita Khrushchev and Leonid Brezhnev, who had risen to prominence at a young age due to the opportunities for advancement created by the great purges of 1937-1938. The post-war political elite, unlike the early Bolshevik leaders, had no real desire to change the social structure of the country. They placed their emphasis on maintaining the existing system and preserving strong government and political order. Although there were pressures for reform throughout the period, any changes introduced were limited and carefully controlled. Zaslavsky points out that the political leadership was willing to sacrifice economic efficiency for the more important goal of internal stability. The essential conservatism of the post-Stalin leadership meant that more sweeping reform would have to wait until this generation left the political stage. Although the consequences of such a policy in the long-run were

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pernicious, in the short-run it guaranteed that the state would remain sufficiently powerful to deter and repress any potential opposition.\textsuperscript{53}

The factors discussed here suggest that the Soviet state continued to have a high degree of political capacity in the post-war period. After Stalin, perhaps, the state was no longer what Stephen Krasner would call a “dominant state”; there was no revolutionary impulse to remake the social structure of the country. The regime was quite content to ensure, in Bialer’s words, “the indefinite reproduction of the basic existing social relations.” In Krasner’s classification, the Soviet state from the 1950s to the 1980s was a strong state, able to resist private pressure and change private behavior in intended ways.\textsuperscript{54}

The criteria used by Robert Jackman to measure political capacity provide a more mixed picture. After Stalin’s death there was a significant drop in political violence, although the exact figures are not known. Much less attention has been devoted to this question than the research on political violence in the 1930s. R.J. Rummel concludes that millions of people died in the camps in the post-Stalin period, most of these shortly after Stalin’s death as the gulag system was being scaled back. We saw in Chapter Four that Rummel’s estimates for the 1930s were too high, and

\begin{itemize}
\end{itemize}
his statement in 1990 that “the party’s totalitarian control of all aspects of Soviet life is still in place” does not inspire confidence. More research needs to be done on this question. It is clear, however, that compared to the pre-war period the number of deaths from political violence decreased significantly. The two biggest known disturbances were in Tbilisi in 1956 and in Novocherkassk in 1962; the official figures on deaths in these incidents is twenty-two and twenty-three, respectively. After 1962 there were apparently very few deaths from political violence, according to the World Handbook of Political and Social Indicators (see Table 5-2).55

TABLE 5-2: Deaths From Political Violence, Soviet Union, 1953-1977

<table>
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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100</td>
<td>289</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
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</tbody>
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Source: Taylor and Jodice, World Handbook of Political and Social Indicators. Full cite in note 55.

Jackman’s second criterion for political capacity is organizational age. By the time of Stalin’s death in 1953 the Soviet regime had been in power for thirty-six years. During that period there had been only one leadership succession. The Soviet state had no formal institutional mechanism for choosing a successor to the top leadership position, which introduced an element of instability to an otherwise highly stable political system. It was only by the 1980s that the

Communist Party leadership managed to create an informal but institutionalized mechanism for transferring power.56

The absence of a well-institutionalized succession mechanism created the possibility either for the military to insert itself into the process or for contending factions to appeal to the armed forces for support. Military intervention or arbitration, then, was a built-in possibility with respect to Soviet sovereign power issues. This was an important change in the political system after Stalin's death.

The instability of the Soviet succession mechanism points to a potential weakness of the domestic structure approach. Although by most criteria the state in the post-war era had a high degree of political capacity, it did have an Achilles' heel that opened up the opportunity for great military involvement in sovereign power issues. Jackman's focus on organizational age can account for this weakness of the system, but Krasner's approach does not incorporate this aspect of state strength.

Despite this weakness of the system, in comparative terms the Soviet political order was highly stable. Thus, a domestic structure perspective on military involvement in sovereign power issues would predict no military intervention in the post-war Soviet period.57 This approach, then, also performs fairly well. The episodes during which the Soviet military

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became involved in sovereign power issues, once as an arbiter and once as an executor, were due to the absence of an institutionalized mechanism for the transfer of power. However, in neither case did the army try to take advantage of the opportunity presented by this institutional weakness to gain a larger political role, as the domestic structure approach might expect. The army’s reluctance to be involved in sovereign power issues was due to other considerations.

Corporate Interest

The Soviet armed forces were treated well by the political leadership during most of the post-Stalin period. The degree of government commitment to the military is indicated by the size and economic burden of the Soviet military. The Soviet armed forces in 1985 were the largest in the world (5.3 million), and 15-25% of Gross National Product was devoted annually to military spending. The one exception to this general picture of widespread government support is the latter half of Khrushchev’s rule. During this period, as noted above, Khrushchev clashed with the military over such issues as the size of the armed forces and military doctrine.  

The corporate interest perspective, then, would predict the likelihood of military intervention in one period from 1953 to 1985: the early 1960s. In fact, the armed forces leadership played virtually no role in the plot that led to the removal of Khrushchev in 1964. They were informed of the plot almost on the eve of its implementation, and showed no desire to become involved. The corporate interest approach would predict greater military

involvement in Khrushchev's ouster. On the other hand, the general non-involvement of the army in sovereign power issues in the post-war period can be attributed partially to its satisfaction with its power, resources, and degree of autonomy. Additionally, Zhukov's support for Khrushchev in June 1957 probably was due to his belief that the "anti-party group" was implicated in the military purges under Stalin and thus were a potential threat to military autonomy.

Organizational Culture

The Soviet armed forces had a high commitment to the norm of civilian supremacy, judging by the evidence on officer corps thinking in the 1930s discussed in the previous chapter. The war and post-war experience under Stalin strengthened this apolitical organizational culture. Stalin’s efforts to "keep the military in its place" reinforced the institutional lessons the armed forces had learned during the purges. Marshal Zhukov, for example, noted that officers understood that it was dangerous to contradict Stalin on general political questions, because "everyone still remembered the recent past." Assertions that Stalin was incorrect, Zhukov noted, could lead immediately to an invitation to "drink coffee with [secret police chief] Beria."59 During the war the armed forces learned that the military profited the most when it stayed focused on defense issues under the general guidance of Stalin and the party leadership. After the war was over, Stalin again went to considerable lengths to demonstrate his mastery over the armed forces. All of these episodes probably strengthened the

army's commitment to the norm of civilian supremacy, reinforcing both the task and
subordination aspects of the norm.

This conclusion must be tentative, because there are few available sources that provide
an uncensored look at military organizational culture in the pre-Gorbachev post-war period.
Process-tracing of key events such as the arrest of Beria, the Zhukov affair, and the fall of
Khrushchev seems to reinforce these conclusions and show the role that officers' beliefs played
in their behavior during these episodes. During the arrest of Beria officers simply carried out
party orders and played no independent political role. The accusations of "Bonapartism"
 leveled against Zhukov in 1957 have been shown to be completely false. And Defense Minister
Malinovskiy told the plotters against Khrushchev in 1964 that the army was "outside politics,"
and the military took a hands-off stance to the sovereign power dispute, as the organizational
culture approach predicts. The one exception in the post-war period was Khrushchev's struggle
with the "anti-party group" in 1957, when Presidium member Zhukov played a key role and
apparently asserted his authority by virtue of his control over the armed forces. Zhukov and the
armed forces leadership had no intention to act independently against the Party, however, as the
Zhukov affair four months later demonstrated.

These events warrant further study. A complete analysis will have to await access to intra-
military communications, in which the norms held by officers may be more clearly revealed than
they are in currently available sources. Still, the above analysis of these cases does seem to
demonstrate an important role for organizational culture in explaining military behavior in
sovereign power issues. In the next section I will analyze military organizational culture in the
pre-Gorbachev period in a more systematic fashion.
Soviet Studies' Theories

The approaches to the study of civil-military relations developed by Sovietologists also, for the most part, perform reasonably well. Both Timothy Colton and Roman Kolkowicz based their frameworks on a corporate interest perspective, but they differed over how well military interests were served by the Soviet state. Colton in general seems to be correct that the military was a satisfied bureaucratic actor throughout most of this period. He has little to say about the period when military interests were most threatened, the late-Khrushchev period, other than stating that the reduction in the military's size was handled with due attention to officers' material needs (this has now been shown to be false) and noting the opposition of the military to Khrushchev's "dilettantism." Colton also underestates the extent to which conflict between Zhukov and the head of the MPA, Zheltov, apparently played a role in Zhukov's downfall. Kolkowicz's explanation performs less well than Colton's. Kolkowicz, like Colton, is unable to explain military non-involvement in the fall of Khrushchev (indeed, Kolkowicz argued that it was involved). For the rest of this period Colton is largely correct that military interests were not seriously threatened, which goes against Kolkowicz's depiction of near-constant civil-military conflict.\(^{60}\)

William Odom's depiction of the army as the executant of Party decisions is a largely accurate description of civil-military relations in the period 1945-1985. The army remained loyal to party rule throughout this period. On the one occasion when the army played a role in sovereign power issues it acted by virtue of Zhukov's standing in the party leadership, which

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supports Odom’s point about the blurring of the civilian-military divide, although this is a less
persuasive depiction of army-party relations throughout the entire post-war period.\textsuperscript{61}

Thomas Nichols’ approach to Soviet civil-military relations performs the worst. Disputes over ideology or military doctrine never drove the army to intervene in sovereign power issues. The one case of military arbitration, the showdown with the “anti-party group,” did not involve doctrinal issues.\textsuperscript{62}

\textbf{Conclusion}

Multiple theoretical approaches perform reasonably well in explaining Soviet civil-military relations in the post-war period. In this sense, then, non-intervention was somewhat over-determined. The next two chapters deal with two periods, the Gorbachev and Yeltsin years, in which the predictions of the different perspectives diverge more sharply. Before turning to these cases, I examine Soviet military organizational culture on the eve of the Gorbachev revolution.

\textit{SOVIET MILITARY ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE PRE-GORBACHEV}

In this section I make use of some newly available sources on Soviet military organizational culture under Brezhnev. This data both bolsters the view that organizational culture played an important role in inhibiting military involvement in sovereign power issues in the post-war period and provides a baseline with which to compare the organizational culture of the army in the late-Gorbachev period. The degree of officer corps attachment to the norm of

\textsuperscript{61} Odom’s work is discussed in Chapter Four.

\textsuperscript{62} Nichols’ approach is discussed in Chapter Four.
responsibility in the early 1980s is measured and shown to be very high. The Soviet military saw its task as external defense of the state, and believed that it should be subordinate to civilian authority. The army was apolitical with respect to sovereign power issues. The task and subordination aspects of the norm of civilian supremacy are discussed in turn.

Task

The Soviet officer corps’ task orientation is coded based on their writings, structure, training, and activities. For the pre-Gorbachev period a very high degree of commitment to external defense on the part of the army is clear from these sources.

The official institutional history of the Soviet armed forces concentrates on the external orientation of the armed forces and does not discuss an internal role for the military. Primary emphasis is given to the Soviet victory in the Great Patriotic War (World War II). There is no mention of some of the more sensitive moments in Soviet civil-military relations, such as collectivization, the purges, or the Zhukov affair. Although it is impossible to know to what extent the views articulated in the history were held by officers, this text was used to educate officers and it seems likely that this orientation toward external defense was shared by the vast majority of the armed forces.63

Soviet officers were taught that the armed forces had only an external, not internal, function. According to the Communist Party Program, "from the standpoint of the country's internal conditions our society does not need an army."64 Troops of the Interior Ministry


(MVD) existed for internal missions. We saw in the previous chapter how the Internal Troops were established in the earliest days of the Soviet state. These internal troops, after several organizational changes in the 1950s and 1960s, eventually became settled in the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) in 1966. The Internal Troops generally took on the job of suppressing internal resistance to the regime if the use of force was necessary, although the army was occasionally called on for support (see the discussion of Novocherkassk below). William Fuller argues that this was the primary mission of the Internal Troops, and that serving as an armed counterweight to the army was a less important function. Regardless, the Internal Troops largely freed the regular army from an internal role and thus served to reinforce the military's external orientation.\\n
The Soviet military's focus on external defense missions is demonstrated clearly by an analysis of army publications. The main journal of the Ground Forces of the Soviet Armed Forces was *Voyenniy Vestnik* [Military Herald]. *Voyenniy Vestnik* [hereafter *VV*] was the primary journal for the forces that would most likely be used for internal missions, including the Airborne Forces and mechanized and infantry units.\\n
I have conducted a comprehensive review of *VV* for the period 1980-1993. In this section I report the results for 1980-1985; in the chapters on Gorbachev and Yeltsin I give my findings for the 1986-1993 period. Each article in the journal was coded as pertaining to one of seven categories: Political Indoctrination, Societal Choice, Tactics and Training, Personnel Issues, Military History, Foreign Militaries, 

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65 William C. Fuller, Jr., *The Internal Troops of the MVD SSSR*, College Station Papers No. 6 (College Station, Texas: Center for Strategic Technology, Texas A & M University, 1983).

66 The journal *Voyennaya mys'l*, the main General Staff journal, also would have been appropriate for content analysis. However, a complete set of the journal for the period under study was not available. Although *Voyenniy vestnik* was geared to junior officers, it still is indicative of the culture that the military leadership desired to
and Internal Security. The results are presented in Figures 5-1 and 5-2. Figure 5-1 covers all articles except lead or featured pieces. Figure 5-2 comprises lead or featured articles. (see Appendix C for more detailed tables on this data).

Figure 5-1 shows a fairly consistent orientation of the journal *Voyenniy Vestnik* between 1980 and 1985. Articles on Tactics and Training dominated the coverage, running between 63-74 percent of the articles. The second largest category was Personnel Issues, which amounted to 10-15 percent of the pieces. The category that showed the most variation was Military History, due to the high number of articles published in the anniversary years (from the end of World War II in 1945) of 1980 and 1985. Most significantly, there was not a single article on Internal Security during the entire five year period. Moreover, Societal Choice issues also received little attention (1-3 percent). These few articles on Societal Choice tended to be about developments in the civilian economy.

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67 Political Indoctrination refers to Communist Party or leadership propaganda, material on the foreign and defense policy of the state, and official Soviet holidays. Societal Choice issues are domestic economic and social issues and includes military involvement in or discussion of matters outside the realm of defense policy. Tactics and Training covers a range of narrow military issues, including training, tactics, operational art, military education, and military organization. Personnel Issues are such matters as officership, human relations, morale and discipline, legal questions, officers' living conditions, etc. Military History encompasses articles about World War II and other past Soviet and Russian wars. Foreign Militaries pertains to articles written about the armed forces of other states. Internal Security refers to pieces on internal threats to the state and military internal activity. Many articles, of course, covered more than one theme. For each article I determined what I believed the dominant topic of the article was. For example, a quote from Lenin was not enough for an article to be coded as "political indoctrination" if the main thrust of the piece was on a different topic.
Figure 5-2, which provides the results for lead or featured articles, shows a slightly different picture. In particular, there were significantly more articles in the "Political Indoctrination" category. It is not surprising that editorials and lead articles would stress the importance of Communist Party direction of the armed forces and highlight the achievements of the Soviet state. As was true with the rest of VV, though, Tactics and Training and Personnel Issues received significant attention. Internal Security was never the topic of a lead article, and only two out of more than one hundred were on Societal Choice issues.

A typical issue from 1983 illustrates what topics Voyenniy Vestnik emphasized. The first lead article of the October 1983 issue stressed the need for Soviet vigilance in the face of the "imperialist" and "reactionary" policies of the United States. The second editorial was on the importance of proper training of troops in protection against "weapons of mass destruction" (nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons). The final featured article was on the Soviet Constitution; Constitution Day was October 7. The rest of the issue had one piece of Marxist-Leninist indoctrination, several on the Great Patriotic War, a piece on the Polish armed forces, and several pieces on Personnel Issues, such as the importance of attention to the individual soldier. The majority of the articles were on Tactics and Training, many directed to specialists in different areas (artillery, engineering, communications, etc.). Other pieces would focus on ways to improve training and military education.

This survey of Voyenniy Vestnik demonstrates an extremely high degree of attention to issues related to improving the military capability of the armed forces for external warfare. This focus marks a sharp contrast to some of the examples considered in Chapter One, such as the attention the French military gave to revolutionary war in the 1950s and the Brazilian military's concentration on internal subversion in the 1950s and 1960s.
The Soviet military's task orientation towards external defense also is evident in the writings of foreign observers. General books providing overviews of the Soviet armed forces in the Cold War era, not surprisingly, devoted almost all of their effort to Soviet military doctrine, weaponry, training, and personnel. These works also noted, however, that the Soviet military did on occasion fulfill tasks in the realm of societal choice at the direction of the political leadership. For example, every year thousands of soldiers were sent to collective and state farms to help bring in the harvest. This was not unique, however; high school and university students, and sometimes even employees from civilian industry, were also mobilized to bring in the harvest. The Soviet military also had its own farms. Additionally, railroad and construction troops in the armed forces worked on civilian projects. However, these troops were in separate units and regular army troops in general were not tasked with these activities. The importance that the Soviet military attached to these non-defense activities is indicated by the fact that one paragraph in the five hundred page official history deals with these issues. With the exception of Marxism-Leninism, nonmilitary issues were not taught at the General Staff Academy. Sergey Akhromeyev, former Chief of the General Staff, noted that the use of 200-250 thousand soldiers every year for bringing in the harvest hampered military training.68

The available evidence suggests a high degree of orientation to the task of external defense on the part of the Soviet armed forces. In the following section on subordination I

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discuss the one well-known episode of Soviet military involvement in internal policing missions from the 1960s and 1970s, the Novocherkassk riots of 1962. This episode will provide even more evidence that the military saw its purpose as external defense.

Subordination

Soviet officer corps' commitment to the subordination aspect of the norm of civilian supremacy is difficult to measure for the pre-glasnost era. It obviously was not possible for Soviet officers to publish works questioning civilian supremacy. However, a combination of behavioral measures and works published in the glasnost era permit an adequate assessment of Soviet military thinking on this topic.

Communist Party dominance over the military was part of the training of all officers. Many steps were taken to ensure that the principle of civilian and party control embedded in the Constitution and Party Program was transmitted to officers. The Soviet Officer's Handbook, for example, stressed, "the decisive role of the supervisory, organizing, and educational activities of the Communist Party in Soviet military development is emphasized in the Program of the CPSU, in resolutions adopted at Party meetings, Plenary meetings of the Central Committee, and other Party Documents." The primacy of the civilian political leadership in determining national security policy and military strategy was taught at the General Staff Academy and other military academies.
Published memoirs suggest considerable variation in the degree to which officers accepted Marxist-Leninist ideology, but even those who rejected Communist teachings accepted the importance of civilian rule.  

The Zhukov affair sometimes is treated as a case of Soviet officer insubordination to the political leadership and a challenge to the principle of civilian rule. As discussed above, however, there is no evidence that Zhukov had any intention or desire to overthrow the Party leadership or that he questioned their legitimacy. The rest of the military leadership went along with Zhukov's dismissal without any opposition. Zbigniew Brzezinski and Samuel Huntington pointed out over thirty years ago that the Zhukov affair was similar to President Truman's clash with General MacArthur. In neither case did the military leader challenge the principle of civilian supremacy, and in both cases the civilian leader was able to dismiss a prominent general without much difficulty. Khrushchev probably was motivated to cut Zhukov down to size because of Zhukov's role in the showdown with the "anti-party group." It seems reasonable to suggest that this example reinforced earlier institutional lessons about the importance of non-involvement in sovereign power issues, but direct evidence is lacking.

One General who did challenge the Communist Party was Petro Grigorenko. A committed Communist for much of his career, he began to have doubts about the Party and in

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69 Maj.-Gen. S.N. Kozlov, ed., *The Officer's Handbook*, United States Air Force translation (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1971), pp. 4-38, esp. p. 5; Wardak and Turbiville, *The Voroshilov Lectures*, pp. 58, 61, 406 (Volume I), pp. 27-29 (Volume II). On military memoirs, compare, for example, the liberal democratic views of Marshal Evgeniy Shaposhnikov with the hard-line communist views of General Valentin Varennikov. Shaposhnikov is not clear, however, about when he came to hold more liberal and democratic opinions; this may have happened only during perestroika: Evgeniy Shaposhnikov, *Vybor: zapiski glavnokomanduyushchego* (Moskva: PIK, 1993); Valentin Varennikov, *Sud'ba i sovest'* (Moskva: Paleya, 1993). I suggest below that a generational explanation for this variation in commitment to Soviet ideology, and particularly whether an officer had served in the Great Patriotic War, has considerable merit.

1961 he spoke out at a party meeting. He eventually was stripped of his rank and party membership, imprisoned, and eventually exiled. Grigorenko's behavior was unique, particularly for a high-ranking Soviet officer. Despite his brave challenge to the Communist Party, he never questioned the notion of civilian control or the need for army subordination. He did not seek to organize officers against the Communist Party. When he was called before the party collegium of the Party Control Commission he wore a civilian suit to underline the fact that he was there as a party member and not as an officer. Grigorenko also challenged the view held by some that Zhukov, not Stalin, was the main author of the USSR's victory in World War II. He noted that the commander-in-chief is responsible for many things other than preparing particular battles -- coalition warfare, the wartime economy, etc. -- and concluded that "the leaders of states have to take upon themselves the role of commander-in-chief, a role not suitable to military men."\(^{71}\)

Aleksandr Lebed also is not a typical former Soviet officer. The retired General rose closer to the pinnacle of political power in Russia than any professional officer since General Kornilov. Lebed will feature prominently in the next two chapters. The portrait in his memoirs of his early career, however, is of a typical Soviet officer. He dwells on tales of his boxing exploits, his broken bones from various accidents, and the quotidian details of barracks life. He has little to say about politics, other than his observations about the lackadaisical attitude he and his fellow officers had towards Marxism-Leninism and party-political work in the army. Party-political work, Lebed was taught at the Frunze Military Academy, was based on the "three Os: *kino, vino, i domino* [movies, wine, and dominoes]." The fact that he was a

Communist Party member is not mentioned until the Central Committee must approve his appointment as a divisional commander in 1988, and he had at least one nasty encounter with an overly zealous political officer. It is only later in Lebed's career that he became politicized and began to pay more attention to high politics. Lebed's detached attitude toward the Communist Party also differentiates him from some prominent members of the generation of officers that had served in World War II, such as Akhromeyev and General Valentin Varennikov.  

Civilian supervision over the armed forces was quite robust. Akhromeyev notes that the Administrative Organs Department of the Central Committee had to sign off on every speech given by the Minister of Defense, even if given to a closed military audience. Frequently the CC would make changes in the text with which, Akhromeyev observes, "it was useless to argue." As Chief of the General Staff Akhromeyev also encountered similar "guidance" from the CC.

The amount of direct testimony of Soviet officers on the subordination aspect of the norm of responsibility from the Brezhnev period is limited. However, the Soviet military's behavior in disputes with the political leadership also serves as a useful indicator. I already have demonstrated that the Soviet armed forces played no role in the Brezhnev, Andropov, Chernenko, and Gorbachev successions. Here I discuss several episodes from the realm of defense policy. Although the military was expected to articulate their views on these matters

72 Aleksandr Lebed, Za derzhavu obidno... (Moskva: Redaktsiya gazety "Moskovskaya pravda," 1995), pp. 93, 163, 175-176, 182-185, 216, 218-224; Akhromeyev and Korniyenko, Glazami marshala i diplomata, pp. 31, 152-159; Varennikov, Sud'ba i sovest. The views of Marshal Evgeniy Shaposhnikov, who like Lebed is not a World War II veteran, are closer to Lebed's. See: Shaposhnikov, Vybor, esp. pp. 55-60.

73 Akhromeyev and Korniyenko, Glazami marshala i diplomata, pp. 33-34.
and had considerable authority, there is substantial evidence that the civilian leadership was able to order the military to implement positions with which it disagreed.

SECURITY POLICY. Two examples from the realm of defense policy, arms control and the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, demonstrate Soviet military subordination to civilian control.\textsuperscript{74} Arms control is one sphere in which the military leadership occasionally clashed with their civilian counterparts. Although many Soviet military officers believed that arms control agreements with the United States would enhance Soviet security, Minister of Defense Marshal Andrei Grechko objected to the SALT I and ABM Treaties of 1972. Grechko fought against starting strategic nuclear arms control negotiations in the first place, and allegedly refused to allow a military officer to head the SALT delegation because of his opposition to the process. According to Arkady Shevchenko, a former high-ranking official in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Grechko remained permanently apoplectic during SALT." Georgiy Korniyenko, the former First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, was a key figure in the Soviet negotiating process. Korniyenko says that Grechko was suspicious that he was an American agent because he was such an advocate of the ABM Treaty; only Yuriy Andropov, then head of the KGB, was able to dispel Grechko's doubts. Grechko allegedly fought against the SALT I Treaty in the Politburo up to the very end.\textsuperscript{75}

Brezhnev and the rest of the Politburo overrode Grechko's objections, approved SALT I and ABM, and continued to pursue strategic arms control with the United States. Military

\textsuperscript{74} The ability of Khruschev to impose a series of defense policy decisions extremely disadvantageous to the armed forces, noted above, also indicates military subordination to party rule.

views were given considerable weight on the Soviet side (and, incidentally, on the American side). Korniyenko states that Foreign Minister Andrey Gromyko often deferred to the military because of their ultimate responsibility for the defense of the country. At the same time, the civilian leadership clearly had the authority to overrule the military, and did so on several occasions. Georgiy Arbatov, former head of the USA-Canada Institute and a strident critic of the Soviet military, relates how Brezhnev overrode military objections during both SALT I and the 1974 Vladivostok accords. Former Soviet Ambassador to the United States Anatoly Dobrynin gives a similar account. The former American negotiator Raymond Garthoff also states that the Soviet military opposed several Soviet concessions. Shevchenko notes that Grechko fought the SALT process throughout but remained "obedient to higher orders."76

The Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan was one of the most consequential national security decisions during the Cold War. Arbatov claims that "the Ministry of Defense actively supported the intervention." Thomas Nichols endorses Arbatov's view, stating that "the high command and the Party leadership shared the blame for the Afghan decision."77 In fact, every professional officer consulted on the decision, including the Chief of the General Staff Marshal Nikolay Ogarkov, opposed the intervention. Minister of Defense Dmitry Ustinov was one of the key Party leaders who made the decision, but, as explained above, Ustinov was a career Communist Party official and not a professional officer.

Officer opposition to the intervention in Afghanistan is evident not only from the personal testimony of the officers involved but also civilian participants and archival evidence.


In April 1978 the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) seized power. Throughout the next year and a half the PDPA government faced growing internal opposition. Although the PDPA received considerable support from the Soviet Union, the Soviet government rebuffed requests for direct military intervention from March 1979 until the decision to intervene in December 1979. Throughout this period Soviet military officers advised against direct military involvement. Key officers that opposed military intervention included: Chief of the General Staff Ogarkov; his first deputy, Akhromeyev; the Chief of the Main Operations Directorate of the General Staff, General Varennikov; Commander of the Ground Forces, General I.G. Pavlovskiy; and the chief of the military advisory group in Afghanistan, Lieutenant General L.N. Gorelov.  

This military opposition came on multiple occasions. In April 1979 Ogarkov advised against sending Soviet helicopter pilots to Afghanistan. Pavlovskiy opposed an Afghan request for a brigade of Airborne Forces during a fact-finding mission in August. Most important, when the political leadership decided in early December 1979 to send in Soviet troops, Ogarkov and Varennikov told Brezhnev, Ustinov, Andropov, and Gromyko (the four key decision makers) that military intervention would be a mistake. When Ogarkov told Ustinov that the decision was "reckless," Ustinov retorted, "are you trying to instruct the Politburo? 

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You only have to carry out orders."79 Ustinov, of course, was right: The armed forces had to carry out orders, and they did so.

INTERNAL USAGE. A discussion of one final episode will demonstrate what happens when the task and subordination aspects of the norm of civilian supremacy come into conflict. In 1962 the armed forces were used to repress a peaceful civilian demonstration in the Russian city of Novocherkassk; according to official figures, 23 or 24 people died. The existing evidence shows that the officers involved resisted using their units against peaceful demonstrators, consistent with their belief that the army only had an external mission. Armed force eventually was used against the demonstrators, which may suggest that when push came to shove the military followed party orders, but it appears that MVD troops were the ones most directly involved in the shootings.

The demonstrations in Novocherkassk broke out at the Novocherkassk Electric Locomotive Works on June 1, 1962, in response to price increases and wage cuts. The tactless handling of worker protests by the plant manager inflamed the situation. The violence took place in the center of Novocherkassk on June 2 after a crowd of workers marched on Communist Party headquarters.80

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79 See, in particular, Gromov, Ogranichenniy kontingent, p. 78; Sevost'yanov, "Dokumenty sovetskogo rukovodstva...," pp. 93-95. Colonel (Retired) Vitaliy Tsygichko, who worked as a General Staff modeler in the 1970s, said the General Staff studied the problem in the late 1970s and concluded that Soviet intervention would be a disaster. Ogarkov used the results of this study to argue against intervention. Author's interviews with Col. Vitaliy Tsygichko, summer 1992. Incidentally, Soviet military opposition to intervention is completely consistent with Richard Betts' findings about the advice given by American military officers during cold war crises. See: Richard K. Betts, Soldiers, Statesmen, and Cold War Crises (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977). However, in some cold war crises it appears that the Soviet military took a more hardline stance. See: Jack Snyder, Myths of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambition (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), pp. 242-243. For an analysis of Soviet military thinking about third world crises, see: Celeste A. Wallander, "Third-World Conflict in Soviet Military Thought: Does the 'New Thinking' Grow Prematurely Grey?", World Politics, Vol. 42, No. 1 (October 1989), pp. 31-63.

80 Brief descriptions of the events in English are in: Vladislav Zubok and Constantine Pleshakov, Inside the Kremlin's Cold War: From Stalin to Khrushchev (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), pp. 262-264;
Forces from the North Caucasus Military District, as well as MVD units, were dispatched to Novocherkassk the night of June 1-2 on the order of the political leadership. The commander of the military district, Army General I.A. Pliyev, was conducting training operations on June 1 and took no action concerning the demonstrations until he received direct orders from several Presidium members on the scene, as well as by phone from Khrushchev and Minister of Defense Malinovskiy. 81

On June 2 a crowd from the factory marched on the city center. A key bridge into the city was blocked by tanks, armored vehicles, and soldiers, but the crowd crossed the bridge without incident. Two different versions of what steps were taken by the army to stop the crowd exist. Lieutenant General Matvei Shaposhnikov, the Deputy Commander of the military district in 1962, claims that he disobeyed a direct order from Pliyev to open fire on the crowd. Shaposhnikov states that he was in radio contact with Pliyev and that he told Pliyev that he did not have enough men to stop a crowd of seven thousand people. Pliyev instructed Shaposhnikov to use the tanks against the crowd, to which Shaposhnikov allegedly said, "I see no enemy that our tanks ought to attack." A.S. Davydov, who was Chief of Staff of the Novocherkassk Tank Division in 1962, says that Shaposhnikov told him on June 1 that the army should not be used and that the KGB and the militia were responsible for establishing order. Shaposhnikov later reflected, "I believed all my life in Soviet power, and now I was


81 Tretetskiy, "Novocherkassk," pp. 69, 72.
being told to shoot at my own people, unarmed people." He said that he had always been taught that "the Soviet army simply did not attack its own people. You could read it in Lenin, in all the Party rulebooks!... The Party and its army would never act that way."  

Shaposhnikov's version of Pliyev's conduct and the incident on the bridge, however, differs substantially from that of other eyewitnesses. Lieutenant-General D.A. Ivashchenko, the head of the Political Administration for the North Caucasus Military District, maintains that Pliyev told Presidium member Andrey Kirilenko that "the army should never be used in such situations." Another officer, M.A. Derkachev, contends that Pliyev told Kirilenko that "the army will not act against the people." A KGB officer present at the time also maintains that Pliyev told the deputy head of the KGB that this was not the army's affair, adding that "in his wish not to use the army he [Pliyev] was very consistent." The Secretary of the Rostov Oblast Party Committee, M.K. Fomenko, states that on June 1 Pliyev told him that he opposed the introduction of troops to Novocherkassk because it was not their mission and that he would call out his units only if ordered to do so by the Minister of Defense. Moreover, several officers state that the soldiers did not have ammunition at the time and that no order was given to open fire when the protesters crossed the bridge.

The question of who first opened fire in central Novocherkassk on June 2 is also murky. A story has circulated for decades that a captain or major who received an order to open fire shot himself in front of his troops rather than carry out the order, but it remains unconfirmed. There are also reports that some people were shot when a crowd attacked a soldier and tried to

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grab his gun, which accidentally discharged, and when demonstrators broke into several buildings and police officers and soldiers tried to defend themselves. A Gorbachev-era report by the Main Military Procuracy concluded that several MVD troops opened fire on the crowd without a direct order. Ol'ga Nikitina, who has interviewed many of those involved and dozens of eyewitnesses, also believes that the MVD was responsible, but she is not certain. She concludes, "the army did everything possible to avert bloodshed."  

It is difficult to know to what extent military officers refused to follow orders during the Novocherkassk crisis. The only direct claim to have disobeyed orders comes from Shaposhnikov, whose account is disputed by several others. Obviously those officers still alive have an interest in portraying their activity in the best possible light. But their accounts are supported by a KGB officer and a party official who witnessed the events and maintain that the army and its local commander Pliyev resisted the use of force. These later accounts also show that several Presidium members were in Novocherkassk and were unhappy with the foot-dragging, and perhaps insubordination, of army officers. The available evidence suggests that Pliyev opposed the introduction of army troops, followed orders to do so when received through proper channels, and was not responsible for the firing on civilians, which seemingly occurred either by accident or was carried out by MVD troops.

The Novocherkassk events further strengthen the evidence presented above that the Soviet military in the pre-Gorbachev period had a strong commitment to external defense as

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83 Nikitina, "Novocherkassk," No. 8, pp. 125-126, No. 9 p. 139; Tretetskiy, "Novocherkassk," pp. 70, 72-73, 75-76. One officer who served directly with Shaposhnikov maintains that Shaposhnikov and Pliyev had poor relations and attributes Shaposhnikov's later version of Pliyev's behavior to this fact.


their only legitimate task. Soviet officers in Novocherkassk apparently also adhered to the principle of subordination to civilian authority, eventually bringing in troops when a proper order was received. In general, the evidence discussed here shows the military in the pre-Gorbachev period was highly subordinate to civilian authority.

Summary

The available evidence suggests a high degree of officer corps commitment to the norm of civilian supremacy in the late-Brezhnev period. This is true of both the task and subordination aspects of the norm. The hypothesized level of commitment to the norm of civilian supremacy for the period 1980-1985 if shown in Figure 5-3. I also found no evidence of organizational subcultures that favored a praetorian role for the army. This may be because of the relative paucity of direct sources on officer corps thinking during this period. It is at least equally plausible, however, that the legitimacy conferred on the system by World War II and the stability of the post-war order meant that there were few reasons or opportunities for different subcultures to develop.

\[
\begin{array}{ccc}
\text{Apolitical} & \text{Praetorian} \\
\hline
\text{High Attachment} & \text{Moderate Attachment} & \text{Weak Attachment} & \text{No Attachment}
\end{array}
\]

*Level of Attachment to Norm of Civilian Supremacy*

**FIGURE 5-3: The Apolitical/Praetorian Continuum, 1980-85**

Note: LB = 1980-1985
CONCLUSION

This chapter has examined Soviet civil-military relations in the post-war period, up to Mikhail Gorbachev's rise to power in 1985. Soviet victory in World War II and the stability of the mature Stalinist and post-Stalinist political system set the foundation for generally trouble-free civil-military relations. On those occasions when the army clashed with the party leadership over defense politics, as in the late-Khrushchev period, this did not lead to military intervention in sovereign power issues. The one episode of military arbitration arose as a result of the weakness of the Soviet succession mechanism and not from a desire by officers to be involved in high politics. These outcomes can be explained by several different theoretical approaches. In the last section of the chapter I demonstrated the high degree of officer corps attachment to the norm of civilian supremacy. This finding serves as crucial background to the period discussed in the next chapter, the Gorbachev era, when the theories of military intervention diverge substantially in their predictions about military behavior.
THE RUSSIAN MILITARY IN POLITICS:
CIVILIAN SUPREMACY IN COMPARATIVE AND HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

by

Brian Dean Taylor

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on October 3, 1997 in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science

ABSTRACT

This dissertation investigates military involvement in high politics in Russia. The
dissertation explains why, despite periods of both extreme challenges to the military's
organizational interests and widespread political instability, the armed forces have sought to
remain "outside politics."

I test four competing theories from the civil-military relations literature: international
structure, domestic structure, corporate interest, and organizational culture. The international
structure perspective maintains that states with high external threats have militaries disinclined
to intervene in domestic politics. The domestic structure approach posits that military
intervention occurs because low state political capacity provides the army opportunities to become
involved in politics. The corporate interest approach maintains that intervention is caused by
threats to the bureaucratic interests of the armed forces. The organizational culture perspective
argues that the beliefs and norms held by officers explains military behavior in domestic
politics.

The dissertation combines macro-historical analysis and focused case studies of actual or
potential military intervention in Russian and Soviet history. Eighteen cases are studied, from the
time of Peter the Great (1682-1725) to the present, with greatest attention to twentieth century
cases. These case studies serve as tests of the relative performance of the four theories.

The corporate interest perspective on military intervention performs poorly in the Russian
case. There has not been a single case of military intervention in Russia for corporate interest
motives for almost two hundred years. The poor performance of this theoretical approach is
especially noteworthy given its prominence both in the comparative politics literature on military
intervention and in the literature on Soviet civil-military relations.

The other three approaches – international structure, domestic structure, and
organizational culture – perform considerably better. Great power competition has helped focus
the Russian armed forces on tasks external to the state. Military involvement in high politics has
been greatest during periods of domestic political disorder, although the domestic structure
approach cannot explain the extreme reluctance of the Russian army to become involved in
politics. The organizational culture approach performs particularly well. Norms about the army’s
proper role in politics have served as a barrier to military coups even when there were compelling rational (corporate interest) and structural reasons to expect intervention.

The dissertation is based on considerable primary source research, including extensive archival work and interviews. The thesis draws on and contributes to the comparative politics and international relations literature on civil-military relations, political capacity, state-building, democratization and transition, and organizational culture and politics.

Thesis Supervisor: Stephen M. Meyer
Title: Professor of Political Science
CHAPTER 6: CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS UNDER GORBACHEV

Mikhail Sergeyevich Gorbachev became the last General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) in March 1985. Less than seven years later the Soviet Union had disintegrated, the CPSU had been declared illegal, and Gorbachev had been reduced to political irrelevance. The rapid collapse of a powerful empire was unexpected and even in retrospect is not easy to understand and explain.¹

The role of the armed forces in this collapse is perhaps the most baffling element. The prominent Sovietologist Jerry Hough wrote in 1992 that one reason he did not think the Soviet Union would fall apart was the assumption that countries do not just collapse unless their army has been destroyed or gravely weakened in war. “It was inconceivable,” Hough maintains, that the military would let the Soviet Union collapse “without even being seriously bloodied. Simply inconceivable. I still don’t believe it.”²

This chapter analyzes civil-military relations in the Gorbachev period and offers an explanation for the army’s behavior. I discuss each of the four alternative approaches to military involvement in sovereign power issues -- international structure, domestic structure, corporate interest, and organizational culture -- and determine what behavior is predicted by each theory. I then conduct detailed process-tracing of the two key events of the period: the failed August 1991 hard-liner coup and the collapse of the Soviet Union in December 1991 (see Table 6-1). Several leading officers, including the Minister of Defense, were involved in the

August 1991 coup, but key subordinates refused to follow orders and the putsch rapidly collapsed. The army was thrust into the arbiter role in December 1991, but chose not to intervene to prevent the collapse of the Soviet Union.

**TABLE 6-1: Chapter Summary**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observations</th>
<th>Predictions</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>August 1991 Coup Attempt</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Structure</td>
<td>Domestic Structure</td>
<td>Corporate Interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intervention for national interest motives possible.</td>
<td>Intervention or arbitration likely.</td>
<td>Intervention likely.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>If arbitration, will side with contender most likely to promote corporate interests.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 1991 and the Collapse of the USSR</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Structure</td>
<td>Domestic Structure</td>
<td>Corporate Interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intervention for national interest motives likely.</td>
<td>Intervention or arbitration likely.</td>
<td>Intervention likely.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If arbitration, will side with contender most able to enhance state’s war-making capacity.</td>
<td></td>
<td>If arbitration, first choice - neutrality, second choice - side with most legitimate contender.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The detailed case studies of these two events serve as tests of the relative weight of the four alternative explanations. The international structure perspective performs quite well and helps explain both the August 1991 coup for national interest motives and the reluctance of the army to become involved in domestic politics, although this approach also would expect the army to stop the state’s collapse. The domestic structure approach correctly predicts military involvement in sovereign power issues during periods of weak state capacity, although this perspective cannot explain the extreme reluctance of the army to be involved in sovereign powers issues under these conditions. The corporate interest approach performs poorly. The
army did intervene, but not for the motives posited by this approach. Moreover, the army in December 1991 took the stance most harmful to its organizational interests. The organizational culture perspective performs well by predicting the possibility of military intervention for national interest motives, the reluctance of the army to be involved in sovereign power issues, and its siding with the most legitimate contender in December 1991. In contrast, the theories from the field of Soviet studies perform poorly.

This chapter has six major sections. In the first four sections, I discuss the four alternative explanations in turn and what each of these approaches would predict in terms of officer corps behavior. In the fifth section I discuss military participation in the August 1991 coup attempt and the coup's rapid failure. In the sixth section I explain the army's failure to intervene in December 1991 to prevent the collapse of the Soviet Union. I conclude the chapter by discussing the relative performance of the four perspectives.

INTERNATIONAL STRUCTURE AND THE GORBACHEV REVOLUTION

The international structure perspective maintains that states with a high external threat environment will have militaries devoted to preparing for war and with relatively low interest in domestic politics. The Soviet Union in 1985, the year Mikhail Gorbachev became General Secretary of the Communist Party, was one of the world's two superpowers, locked in an intense security competition with the United States and the West. As discussed in the previous chapter, the Soviet Communist Party drew considerable legitimacy from the victory in World War II and from the USSR's super-power standing. The Soviet Union also was engaged in a costly local conflict in Afghanistan beginning in 1979. All of these factors, international

The data discussed in the last chapter on the war-proneness of the Soviet state demonstrated the Soviet Union's propensity to be engaged in external war. The Cold War competition with the West, although it did not lead to major inter-state war, had been waged for forty years with varying degrees of intensity. The Soviet Union also was involved in two small "hot" interstate wars (with Hungary and Afghanistan) in the post-World War II period.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty</td>
<td>December 1987</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gorbachev UN speech announces unilateral Soviet reductions</td>
<td>December 1988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan</td>
<td>February 1989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berlin Wall opened</td>
<td>November 1989</td>
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<tr>
<td>German Reunification</td>
<td>October 1990</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty</td>
<td>November 1990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START)</td>
<td>July 1991</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Gorbachev's policy of “new thinking” led to a reduction in international tensions and ultimately the end of the Cold War. Most authors associated with the international structure approach, however, tend to depict the process by which the international environment effects civil-military relations as being of a relatively long-term character. They would not expect that the changes introduced by Gorbachev would lead to an immediate change in the military’s orientation.

It is also not clear that the external threat had changed so significantly by the end of Gorbachev’s reign. Many of the events listed above as indicators of a lessened external threat for the Soviet Union, moreover, could easily be seen as harmful to Soviet national security, particularly the collapse of the Warsaw Pact and the reunification of Germany.

Military officers conditioned to be focused on the international security environment and external threats, in particular, would be unlikely to adopt a cavalier attitude towards some of these changes. And in fact the military high command often spoke critically of these events. General V.N. Lobov, who became Chief of the General Staff after the August 1991 coup,
argued in February 1991 that the CFE treaty favored NATO and made Gorbachev's military doctrine of "defensive sufficiency" impossible. Colonel-General Igor Rodionov, the head of the General Staff Academy, argued in May 1991 that Soviet disarmament "has taken on the character of panicked flight. And the enemy immediately arrives and fills the vacuum in the places that we have abandoned." The Chief of the General Staff, General Mikhail Moiseyev, although bound by his position to support Soviet policy, nevertheless lamented that "we stand alone against NATO, without allies" and criticized "the open pretensions of the USA to the role of world hegemon."

The international structure perspective, in short, would expect little change in the apolitical stance of the Soviet military. Although Gorbachev's foreign policies had led to a lessening of international tensions, an army conditioned by decades of international security competition to have an external focus was unlikely to switch its orientation immediately. The international structure approach predicts military non-involvement in politics, unless the state itself is threatened.

DOMESTIC STRUCTURE AND THE GORBACHEV REVOLUTION

The domestic structure perspective maintains that military intervention in politics occurs when a weak state presents the opportunity for military intervention. Political order declined significantly during the last years of the Soviet state. Gorbachev's reform efforts, rather than invigorating the decrepit Soviet system, deepened the crisis of the regime. All

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indicators of state strength and system stability show that the state was very weak and that the military had a clear opportunity to intervene in the last years of the Soviet Union.

Gorbachev's initial reform efforts during his first two years in power were relatively modest and primarily involved tinkering with the centrally-planned economic system. Radical economic and political reform gathered steam in 1987 and 1988, as it became clear that limited approaches would not be sufficient to turn around the Soviet economy and revitalize the system. Political reform, in particular the policies of glasnost (openness) and democratization, became necessary as a way to expose and get rid of the enemies of reform and mobilize the broader society in support of perestroika.⁶

Gorbachev's policies of glasnost and democratization, which opened up the political arena to competition and open debate, were the key steps leading to the weakening of the Soviet state. Alexander Dallin points out that these policies had two devastating effects on regime legitimacy. First, in Dallin's words, the opening of the political system "brought about a remarkable sense of having been lied to." The (many) dark spots of Soviet history were

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⁶ Gorbachev, although stating that he came to power recognizing the need for fundamental reform, in his memoirs traces the "turning point" towards radical reform, particularly political reform, to 1988. The last American Ambassador in Moscow, Jack Matlock, has also noted the partial nature of early reform efforts and the turn towards more radical political change when Gorbachev encountered resistance from the system; Matlock suggests 1987 as the key turning point. See: Mikhail Gorbachev, Zhizni reformy, Volume 1 (Moskva: Novosti, 1995), esp. pp. 364, 396; Jack F. Matlock, Jr., Autopsy on an Empire: The American Ambassador's Account of the Collapse of the Soviet Union (New York: Random House, 1995), pp. 64-67. Whether or not Gorbachev came to power with a clear and comprehensive reform plan is hotly debated and beyond the scope of this dissertation. Gorbachev emphasizes his commitment to fundamental reform from the beginning, whereas his political enemies, such as Yegor Ligachev and Nikolay Ryzhkov, accuse Gorbachev of reckless experimentation that ruined a more moderate and sensible economic reform plan. See: Gorbachev, Zhizni reformy; E.K. Ligachev, Zagadka Gorbacheva (Novosibirsk: Sibirskiy tsentr SP "Interbuk", 1992); Nikolay Ryzhkov, Perestroika: istoriya predat'ls'v (Moskva: Novosti, 1992). Western analysts also are divided on the issue. For the view that Gorbachev was a committed radical reformer from the beginning, see: Archie Brown, The Gorbachev Factor (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996). For the view that Gorbachev blundered unwittingly into dismantling the system, see: John Dunlop, The Rise of Russia and the Fall of the Soviet Empire (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993). For an excellent early discussion of Gorbachev's reforms and their effects, see: Richard Sakwa, Gorbachev and His Reforms 1985-1990 (New York: Prentice Hall, 1990).
exposed and the Communist Party's claim to universal authority was rendered hollow. Second, glasnost and democratization had an explosive effect on the ethnic republics and national consciousness.\textsuperscript{7}

\textbf{TABLE 6-2: Deaths From Political and Ethnic Violence, Soviet Union, 1986-1991}

<table>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>605</td>
<td>328</td>
</tr>
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Sources: See note 8.

The declining legitimacy and political capacity of the Soviet regime is demonstrated clearly by many different indicators of state strength. Let us first consider deaths from political violence, Robert Jackman’s proposed indicator of government legitimacy (see Table 6-2). The number of deaths from political and ethnic violence in the last five years of the Soviet states was 1224, compared to an average of 5-10 per every five years for the period 1963-1977 (see Table 5-2, Chapter Five).\textsuperscript{8} The huge increase in political violence in the last years of the Soviet

\textsuperscript{7} Dallin, "Causes of the Collapse of the USSR," pp. 296-299.

\textsuperscript{8} Accurate data on deaths from political violence are very difficult to locate. The data for 1986-1991 were compiled by the author from multiple sources. Although clearly not all deaths from ethnic violence were political in the sense that it was either caused by the regime or during actions directed against the regime, sorting the data on ethnic violence by "political" and "non-political" seems an impossible task. Moreover, I think the rise in ethnic violence in the last years of the Soviet Union is a good indicator of declining legitimacy and political capacity. The sources used were: Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty publications, particularly \textit{Report on the USSR} and \textit{RFE/RL Research Report}; Open Media Research Institute, \textit{Daily Digest}; SIPRI Yearbook; Zvi Gitelman, "The Nationalities," in Stephen White, Alex Pravda, and Zvi Gitelman, eds., \textit{Developments in Soviet Politics} (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990), pp. 137-158; "Chronology of Noteworthy Events," in Edward A. Hewett and Victor H. Winston, eds., \textit{Milestones in Glasnost and Perestroika: Politics and People} (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1991), pp. 499-536; data provided by the Division of Ethnopolitical Research, Analytical Center, Council of the Federation, Russia; and data gathered by the author from the Soviet/Russian press. The data, for the most part, reflect official statistics. These data are almost certainly incomplete. Mark Beissinger cites a figure of 1314 deaths from inter-ethnic conflict for the period January 1988-May 1991. Thus, although I may have slightly undercounted, I am certainly in the right ballpark. Mark R. Beissinger, "Nationalist Violence in the Former Soviet Union, 1987-1992: An Event Analysis," Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies, Washington, D.C., October 1995.
state is indicative of a regime that was rapidly losing its ability to demand compliance from its subjects and maintain political order.

The other aspect of Jackman’s conception of political capacity, organizational age, formally remained unchanged during this period. The Soviet Union had survived for over seventy years and had gone through eight leadership successions. This provided a certain sense of inertia to Soviet rule. At the same time, Gorbachev’s political reforms largely dismantled Communist Party rule, which had formed the basis of the previous political order.

The first major political reform of the Gorbachev period was the advent of a legislature based on competitive elections. The Congress of People’s Deputies (CPD) and the Supreme Soviet, which was the more full-time legislature chosen from the larger CPD, existed in an uncomfortable parallel relationship to Party structures, with the locus of ultimate authority somewhat unclear. The next major change in the Soviet political system was the removal of Article 6, which established the "leading and guiding" role of the Communist Party, from the Constitution. This change was approved by the Central Committee in February 1990 and the Constitution was amended by the CPD in March 1990. Communist Party domination, already seriously waning by this point, was declared officially over. A Soviet presidency was instituted in March 1990 simultaneously with the abolition of Article 6, and Gorbachev had himself elected to the post of president by the CPD. Gorbachev introduced further constitutional changes at the end of 1990. The post of vice president was created, and the Federation Council was upgraded from an advisory body to a policy-making one. The Federation Council included the USSR president and the heads of the fifteen republics, an acknowledgment of their growing importance. The rules of the game established over decades of Communist Party rule were
upended in the space of a few years. These multiple institutional changes in the Soviet political system led to a serious weakening of the state.\footnote{For a thorough treatment of these political reforms, see: Matlock, \textit{Autopsy on an Empire}, pp. 201-226, 288-294, 306-321, 331-337, 359-362, 388-390, 421-434; Brown, Chapter 6 ("Gorbachev and Political Transformation"), \textit{The Gorbachev Factor}, pp. 155-211.}

The sharp decline of the Soviet regime's legitimacy during its last years was evidenced also by the rise of autonomy and independence movements in the republics. A "parade of sovereignties" began during which republican laws were declared preeminent over Union laws and the decisions and instructions of central institutions were ignored by republican governments in the "war of laws." The push for independence was particularly strong in the Baltic states, Moldova, Armenia, and Georgia. Most remarkably, the new political leadership in Russia \textit{de facto} endorsed the claims of the republics against the center by launching its own sovereignty drive and challenging central institutions. The decline in Union legitimacy forced Gorbachev to negotiate a new Union Treaty with the republics that would have granted them sovereign status; the August 1991 coup was launched a day before the treaty's scheduled signing.\footnote{This story has been told in many places. Good, short retrospectives include: Viktor Zaslavsky, "Nationalism and Democratic Transition in Postcommunist Societies," \textit{Daedalus}, Vol. 121, No. 2 (Spring 1992), pp. 97-121; Ronald Grigor Suny, Chapter 4 ("Nationalism and Nation-States: Gorbachev's Dilemma"), \textit{The Revenge of the Past: Nationalism, Revolution, and the Collapse of the Soviet Union} (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), pp. 127-160. A useful source on the republican challenge to the Union is: Lubomyr Hajda and Mark Beissinger, eds., \textit{The Nationalities Factor in Soviet Politics and Society} (Boulder: Westview Press, 1990). On the Russian case, see Dunlop, \textit{The Rise of Russia and the Fall of the Soviet Empire}.}

Another useful indicator of the decline of the state's political capacity is the huge increase in strike activity during the late-Gorbachev years. From the period 1956-1983 there were an average of about four strikes per year, although for obvious reasons this unofficial data may under-report actual strike activity. In contrast, by 1991 there were strikes in over 1700
enterprises in the Russian Federation alone. Of course, strikes are not \textit{prima facie} political events, but many of these strikes were in fact motivated by ethnic or political demands. The miners' strikes of 1989-1991 played a particularly crucial role in challenging the Soviet political order. Prominent demands of the spring 1991 miners' strike in some regions included Gorbachev's resignation and the establishment of a Federation Council, headed by the leaders of the fifteen republics, to run the country. In effect, the miners were supporting Boris Yeltsin, the head of the Russian Federation, in his challenge to the central government.\footnote{11}

All of these indicators suggest a huge drop in state capacity in the last years of Gorbachev's rule. If anything, though, these numerical measures understate the weakness of the Soviet state from 1989 to 1991. A look at Stephen Krasner's three general categories used to measure the strength of the state vis-à-vis society -- the ability to resist private pressure, change private behavior in intended ways, and change social structure in intended ways -- illustrates the decline of Soviet political capacity.\footnote{12} It is probably true that the Soviet state had the ability to resist private pressure in the sense described by Krasner; state policy had not been hijacked by private actors. But this was largely because the policies of the central government were increasingly irrelevant. There was no point in capturing the state if the state had no power. The government had lost the ability to change private behavior as the centrally planned


economy broke down and the Party’s authority to give enforceable directives was removed. The state did still have the ability to change the social structure, but again by default: as the state weakened, new actors rushed in to fill the vacuum, both in the economic and political sphere.\textsuperscript{13}

Krasner’s categories also understate the weakness of the Soviet state from 1989 to 1991 because they do not incorporate the federalist element. The most important actors undermining the Soviet state were not private but the political leadership in the fifteen republics, who refused to follow directives from Moscow or contribute resources to the center, including young men for the draft and payments to the central budget. Gorbachev turned to the right in late 1990 and allied himself with statistas and conservatives, including the police and the military, who were willing to use force to enforce central rule. By the spring of 1991, however, it had become clear to Gorbachev that he could not accomplish anything without the support of the republics, and he launched negotiations with republican leaders to reform the union.\textsuperscript{14}

All of these factors point to a profound weakening of the state’s political capacity in the last years of Soviet rule. The domestic structure perspective predicts that military intervention and arbitration becomes likely when the state is weak and the opportunity for intervention arises.


\textsuperscript{14} On Gorbachev’s turn to the right in late 1990 and his return to reform in the spring of 1991, see: Matlock, \textit{Autopsy on an Empire}, pp. 421-517.
MILITARY CORPORATE INTERESTS AND GORBACHEV

The corporate interest approach to military involvement in sovereign power issues argues that militaries intervene in politics to protect their bureaucratic interests. Gorbachev’s policies at both the foreign and domestic level seriously threatened the organizational interests of the Soviet armed forces and created a clear motive for a military coup. Both the power and resources of the military were under threat, their autonomy was impinged, and organizational uncertainty increased. By the end of the Gorbachev period, the very existence of a unified Soviet military was under question.

Gorbachev’s first key move against the armed force’s organizational interests were his efforts to reduce the high degree of military autonomy over defense policy. Gorbachev empowered civilian actors, such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and policy specialists, and gave them more influence over military doctrine and national security policy. A rollback in military autonomy in the defense policy sphere was necessary for Gorbachev to further his policies of perestroika and new thinking, which were designed at least in part to allow the transfer of resources from the defense sector to the civilian economy.¹⁵

Greater control over defense policy and a lessening of East-West tensions were crucial prerequisites to Gorbachev’s efforts to cut the armed forces. These goals were accomplished by 1987-1988, and Gorbachev stepped up his efforts to reduce the military burden on the economy. He told the Politburo in 1988 that perestroika could not be accomplished without cuts in the military, and he had widespread agreement from his colleagues on this point.

¹⁵ The military had a high degree of autonomy in the pre-Gorbachev period, but the civilian leadership retained ultimate decision authority. On this issue, see: Condoleezza Rice, “The Party, the Military, and Decision Authority in the Soviet Union,” World Politics, Vol. 40, No. 1 (October 1987), pp. 55-81. On Gorbachev’s
Gorbachev received support for far-reaching unilateral cuts in conventional forces totaling half a million men. Gorbachev also launched a highly visible program to convert defense industries to civilian production, and beginning in 1989 defense procurement orders were cut back by thirty percent per year.\textsuperscript{16}

Gorbachev's far-reaching political reforms, discussed above, further endangered Soviet military interests. The democratically-empowered parliament elected in 1989, the Congress of People's Deputies and the Supreme Soviet, began to seek influence over a range of defense and security policies. The legislature sought to exert more control over the defense budget, manpower policies, and other military issues.\textsuperscript{17}

Liberalization in the Soviet Union also led to political change in Eastern Europe. In 1989 all of the Soviet-backed Communist regimes collapsed, with the acquiescence of Moscow.

\textsuperscript{16} There are many sources on the link between Gorbachev's domestic and international policies. Gorbachev states clearly in his memoirs that the economy was severely militarized and that he needed to reduce international tensions and lessen the defense burden if his reforms were to succeed. See: Gorbachev, Zhizn' i reformy, Volume 1, p. 334, Volume 2, p. 7. For a good short summary of the competing explanations for change in Soviet security policy under Gorbachev, see: Wohlfarth, "Realism and the End of the Cold War," pp. 106-108. On the Soviet leadership's decision to unilaterally cut the armed forces, see the account of Gorbachev's chief foreign policy advisor, Anatoliy Chernyaev: A.S. Chernyaev, Shest' let s Gorbachevym: Po dnevnikovym zapisym (Moskva: "Progress" - "Kultura", 1993), pp. 253-260. The notes of a late December 1988 Politburo meeting make clear both the widespread leadership support for cuts in the military and their linking these cuts to economic reform: "'Po samym optimisticheskim prognozam, mne dayut god-pol'tora', -- zayavil M.S. Gorbachev v dekabre 1988 goda," Istochnik, Nos. 5-6, 1993, pp. 130-147. On Gorbachev's defense conversion program and cuts in military procurement, see: Kevin P. O'Prey, A Farewell to Arms?: Russia's Struggles With Defense Conversion (New York: The Twentieth Century Fund Press, 1995), pp. 27-33.

The dramatic revolution in Eastern Europe fundamentally damaged military interests. More than twenty highly-capable Soviet divisions, involving hundreds of thousands of personnel, had to be withdrawn from Eastern Europe in the space of a few years. This rapid retreat not only seriously weakened the Soviet military's position in Europe, but also created severe headaches for the high command as they had to organize the withdrawal and rebasing of these troops in the Soviet Union. The collapse of the Warsaw Pact and its deleterious effects on the Soviet armed forces was a cause of bitter complaint by the Soviet officer corps.18

The rise of republican political power and independence movements severely threatened the armed forces. The Baltic and Transcaucasian republics and Moldova were particularly aggressive in challenging the military draft. By the summer of 1991 over thirty laws or acts had been passed by republican parliaments or governments that interfered with the all-Union draft, and the number of draft evaders grew dramatically in the last years of the Soviet state.

Several republics also began to establish their own armed formations.19

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The corporate interest perspective on military intervention contends that the army intervenes when its interests are threatened. In the late-1970s Timothy Colton elaborated a scenario under which the Soviet armed forces might intervene in politics:

The only inducement to full-scale intervention would be the conflux of a number of policy choices highly unfavorable to military interests. One can envisage, for example, a reformist civilian leadership embarking upon policies of ideological revision, military demobilization, shifting of investment priorities, and accommodation with foreign adversaries such as would alarm military leaders.20

These conditions were clearly met by at least 1988. After that date, further developments impinged even further on the armed forces’ corporate interests. This perspective leads to the prediction that the Soviet army would intervene in politics to protect itself against these threats to its interests. In cases of military arbitration the army would side with the contender most likely to defend its interests.

SOVIET MILITARY ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE UNDER GORBACHEV

The organizational culture perspective on military involvement in sovereign power issues points to the norms held by officers as a key determinant of military behavior. At the end of the last chapter the Soviet military’s commitment to the norm of civilian supremacy was measured and shown to be very high on both the task and subordination aspects of the norm. In this section I re-measure Soviet military organizational culture in the late-Gorbachev period to see if commitment to the norm of responsibility had weakened. I find a slight weakening of

20 This scenario of Colton’s about potential intervention is consistent with his general claim that “officers intervene against civilian authorities when their perceived interests are being denied or threatened by civilian policy.” Timothy J. Colton, Commissars, Commanders, and Civilian Authority: The Structure of Soviet Military Politics (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), pp. 288, 240.
attachment to the norm, including the appearance of a more praetorian subculture in the armed forces. The dominant culture, however, retained a relatively strong commitment to the norm.

Task

The Soviet military retained its focus on external defense as its main task in the last years of Gorbachev’s rule. A wide range of evidence is available to support this view, including the content of military journals, surveys of the officer corps, and the statements of the military leadership. Several critical events during this period also served as institutional lessons that reinforced the focus on external defense. However, there was a slight shift towards more attention to internal missions and societal choice issues as the Soviet Union approached collapse. Additionally, a subculture developed in the officer corps that argued for greater military involvement in politics. These developments slightly weakened the orientation towards external defense of the Soviet armed forces.

The military journal Voyenniy Vestnik, like in the late-Brezhnev period discussed in Chapter Five, continued to devote the vast majority of its coverage to narrow military issues in the years 1986-1991 (see Figure 6-1).21 Tactics and Training remained the topic of a majority of VV's articles, although the amount of coverage dropped from over seventy percent at the beginning of the period to the 50-60 percent range for the last three years. Personnel Issues remained the second major topic, gathering around ten percent of the coverage from 1986-1988 and fifteen percent from 1989-1991. This greater attention to Personnel Issues reflected the

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21 On the coding rules used here, and the comparison with the pre-Gorbachev period, see the discussion in Chapter Five. See Appendix C for more detail on the content analysis summarized here.
prominence of such issues as officers' living conditions and inter-ethnic relations in the army. There was also an increase in articles on Military History.  

Non-military issues continued to get little coverage in Voyenniy Vestnik. There was a slight increase in the number of articles on Societal Choice issues and a slight decrease in Political Indoctrination pieces. The most interesting change, perhaps, is that in 1990 the first articles on Internal Security in the twelve-year period under study appeared. There were three articles (one percent) on Internal Security in 1990 and four articles (one percent) on Internal Security in 1991. These articles dealt either with the use of the military for internal missions, particularly in Baku in January 1990, or independence movements in the republics. There were no articles on the use of army units in Tbilisi in April 1989 or in Vilnius in January 1991, events for which the Soviet army was vilified. The insignificant coverage of Internal Security issues in VV as the Soviet state was on the verge of collapse is indicative of a resilient organizational culture focused on narrow military issues.

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22 This rise is explained by three factors: articles on the war in Afghanistan after 1989 were coded as Military History and not as Tactics and Training; more attention was paid to historical issues other than World War II, including topics such as the pre-revolutionary Russian armed forces and Stalin's military purges of the 1930s; and 1990 and 1991 were anniversary years, marking respectively the 45th anniversary of the Soviet victory and the 50th anniversary of the German attack on the USSR.

23 Perhaps the most alarmist of these pieces on Internal Security was on Ukrainian nationalism. The author, a retired Lieutenant-Colonel, said that Ukrainian nationalists were working for "Western intelligence and ideological centers" in their effort to "undermine" the Soviet state from within. Lt.-Col. (retired) P. Tyrtov, "Posledyshi oborotney," Voyenniy Vestnik [hereafter VV], No. 7, 1991, pp. 29-30.
Figure 6-2: Task Orientation, Voyenniy Vestnik Editorials, 1986-1991
The changing orientation of \textit{VV} editorials is also telling (see Figure 6-2). Political Indoctrination, which had been a major topic of lead and featured articles pre-Gorbachev, received much less attention after 1987, the seventieth anniversary of the Revolution. In 1989 and 1991 there were no Political Indoctrination editorials. In 1989 the number of lead articles dropped in half, and \textit{VV} used interviews rather than articles as their feature pieces. These interviews focused mainly on Tactics and Training. In 1990 and 1991, however, there was a big jump in discussion of Societal Choice issues (15\% and 38\% respectively). Some of these were innocuous, such as an interview with a professor about ecological issues. Others, however, included interviews with officers whose conversations more and more seemed to drift towards discussions of larger social and political issues.\textsuperscript{24} If the content of regular articles demonstrates a remarkable fixation on narrow military issues, the focus of lead interviews provides a more mixed picture.

The most prominent contending task, other than external defense, that faced the Soviet military was internal policing, due to the increase in ethnic violence in the last years of the Soviet state. \textit{VV} conducted two polls on this issue. The first, conducted in the Moscow Military District, showed that fifty-two percent of officers and soldiers believed that the military should not be used to "support social order." More than a third said the military could be used for such a task, but only in extreme situations. All of those polled agreed that there should be a decision of the Supreme Soviet if the army were to be used internally. A poll of its readers showed similar results, with sixty-four percent against internal usage and a third

\textsuperscript{24} Interview with Dr. V. Akovetskiy, "Za prirodu v otvete kazhdyy," \textit{VV}, No. 8, 1991, pp. 3-7; Interview with Col.-Gen. Albert Makashov, "Voyennaya reforma: priobreteniya i poteri," \textit{VV}, No. 7, 1991, pp. 3-7. Makashov was one of the most outspoken reactionary officers and an adherent of a more praetorian organizational
supporting it if there was a corresponding decision of the Supreme Soviet. Poll results published in the military newspaper *Red Star* showed even more striking results. 96 percent of officers polled said external defense was the main task of the armed forces. Only 24 percent believed the army had a role in dealing with natural disasters and major accidents. According to the military sociologist who conducted the poll, Lieutenant Colonel K. Polyakov, officers were “categorically against” using the military for maintaining social order, stopping inter-ethnic conflicts, and carrying out economic tasks. 

*Kommunist vooruzhenykh sil* [Communist of the Armed Forces -- hereafter *KVS*] published a series of articles in late 1989 on the issue of internal missions. The lead article in the series was by General of the Army Valentin Varennikov, the Commander of the Ground Forces who was later involved in the August 1991 coup. Varennikov argued that the Armed Forces had only one "function" -- "preparation for the rebuff of external aggression." Varennikov made a semantic distinction between an army's "function" and various "tasks" that it might be called on to fulfill. Varennikov offers two justifications for army involvement in domestic tasks, including internal order and economic chores, such as construction or assistance with the harvest. First, says Varennikov, the army may be the only means available for the government. Second, Varennikov emphasizes that as an "integral part" of the people, the army cannot stand aside from the people's difficulties. The first reason is completely consistent with

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an organizational culture infused with the norm of civilian supremacy, but the second justification suggests a greater willingness to be involved in societal choice issues.26

Most of the other officers involved in the KVS discussion disapproved of internal missions. Colonel K. Vorob'ev stressed that dealing with internal disorder was a function of the Internal Troops and the police, not the Armed Forces. If the Internal Troops are not strong enough they should be expanded, but they should not have to turn to the army for help. Colonel O. Bel'kov noted that the army exists to protect the security of the state, and that other organizations should be responsible for economic tasks. Bel'kov stated that the army does not have an internal function and that it "will not go against the people." Major-General V. Samoylenko argued that the external function of the armed forces is it's basic and most important one. At the same time, he took the view that in an emergency situation the government should be able to use the army to restore social order.27

A minority view is advanced by retired Colonel P. Skorodenko. He argued that the army still plays an important internal role in defending socialism against counter-revolution. He lauded the introduction of martial law in Poland in 1981 and criticized the failure of party and state leaders in Czechoslovakia in 1968 to use the army against the impending "counter-revolutionary coup."28 Skorodenko's article demonstrates the existence of an institutional subculture that saw defense of socialism, and not just the state, as the purpose of the Soviet


army. This view is understandable in light of some Communist Party propaganda, but it was not the dominant one in the armed forces.

Minister of Defense Marshal Dmitriy Yazov articulated the same definition of the military's mission as the one put forward by Varennikov. Yazov said that the army had a single, external function: "defense of the peaceful work and life of the Soviet people, defense of the Motherland, the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country, prevention of war, the guarantee of international security and peace." All other tasks, including economic ones and the maintenance of social order, are not part of the army's function. The use of army units for internal missions was possible only in extreme situations. Yazov argued that as the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) was strengthened it would become unnecessary for the armed forces to provide internal support. Yazov concluded, "this will allow the army and navy to more fully do the job for which it is intended -- securing a high and unceasing readiness to defend the Motherland."29

Other leading officers also made clear their view that the mission of the armed forces is external defense and that the army should eschew domestic policing or economic tasks. Sergey Akhromeeyev, the Chief of the General Staff from 1984 to 1988 and Gorbachev's chief military adviser from 1989 to 1991, recounted in his memoirs the functions of the General Staff when he was its head. Not surprisingly, he focused on its role in national security policy, military doctrine, and military technology and procurement issues. He noted that a final task of the General Staff was dealing with economic tasks to which the army was assigned, such as


construction or bringing in the harvest. These were commitments, Akhromeyev complained, that the armies of other major powers did not have, but the Soviet state was too poor to conduct these activities without army help. He remarked that, although this work was needed by the state and the people, it interfered with the military's work in carrying out its own duties and was a "heavy burden" for the army and navy.\textsuperscript{10}

The use of the army for domestic policing or economic tasks was a frequent source of complaint in the military press. \textit{Voyenniy Vestnik} noted somewhat bitterly that in the United States one of the "fundamental principles" of army development was that military training could not be interrupted and that soldiers could not be diverted to other tasks. \textit{VV} claimed that an American tank soldier was engaged in military training ten times more than a Soviet one. Captain A. Bolkunov summed up well the feeling of officers towards these economic assignments:

\begin{quote}
I understand that it is necessary to build a storehouse for equipment, and that pigs in the subsidiary farm need to be raised, but it is also necessary to reliably defend the Motherland.... Removing people from planned military and political training is a healthy blow to both the level of military discipline and the authority and prestige of military service.\textsuperscript{31}
\end{quote}

The well-known Russian General Aleksandr Lebed returns again and again in his memoirs to his view that the military should not be involved in internal missions. Lebed was commander of the Tula Airborne Division from 1988 to 1990, and elements of his division were on several occasions sent to "hot spots" around the former Soviet Union. Recalling his first assignment to Baku in November, 1988, Lebed notes that he was ordered to go to Lenin

\textsuperscript{10} Akhromeyev and Korniyenko, \textit{Glazami marshala i diplomat}, pp. 175-190.

Square in the center of the city, although he had no idea what an airborne regiment was supposed to do there. We were well prepared, he states, "but prepared for war with an external enemy." He cites approvingly the views of the early twentieth century General Aleksandr Denikin (see Chapter Three), who also believed the army's single mission was external defense and that it should not be involved in maintaining domestic order. Lebed declares:

I thought then and I think now: it's not the army's job to deal with internal disorder.... Placing police functions on the army in general, and on the airborne forces in particular, is the greatest humiliation for the army. The army is not psychologically prepared for that sort of activity, and if it is still forced to undertake it this will lead to only one result -- wild bitterness and difficult and unbearable insults on the part of the crowd towards the army.\(^{32}\)

The influential General Boris Gromov, who in 1990 was head of the Kiev Military District and in 1991 was the Deputy Minister of the MVD, also stated his opposition to the internal use of the military. Asked about the possibility of using the military internally, Gromov replied: "I am categorically against that, if the situation is connected to internationality relations. Everyone should stick to their own affairs." Gromov also dismissed rumors about the possibility of a military coup as "unfounded nonsense."\(^{33}\)

Consistent with the organizational culture approach, there was a key event during the Gorbachev period that significantly shaped officer corps thinking about their task orientation. The defining moment for the Soviet Armed Force's attitude towards internal missions came on April 9, 1989, when military units, along with MVD Troops, were used to disperse a political

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1990, p. 13. See also: Lt.-Col. V. Ivannikov, "Nikakikh uborok urozhaya i svinarnikov," \(V\), No. 10 (October), 1990, pp. 43-44.


\(^{33}\) B. Gromov, "Slukhi o voyennom perevorete rapsuskayut ne ot bol'shogo uma," in Gorshkov and Zhuravlev, eds., Nesokrushimaya i legendaraya, pp. 116-117. The interview took place in March 1990 and was originally published in Argumenti i fakty.
meeting in Tbilisi, Georgia. The question of responsibility for this event, in which nineteen people died, will be discussed below in the subordination section. What is important to consider here is how the events in Tbilisi influenced officers' outlooks.

The key institutional lesson drawn from the Tbilisi events was that it was detrimental to the prestige and integrity of the armed forces for the army to play a role in internal political disputes. This lesson came to be known as the "Tbilisi syndrome." The "Tbilisi syndrome" had two basic components. First, the events in Tbilisi reinforced the view that the military did not have an internal mission and that the MVD should have responsibility for domestic disturbances. Second, many officers concluded that it was politically and professionally dangerous to carry out these missions because, regardless of the facts, the military would be blamed for any negative outcomes.

Minister of Defense Yazov referred explicitly to the "Tbilisi syndrome" in his discussion of the use of the army in emergency situations in the Transcaucasus, particularly to prevent ethnic violence in Armenia and Azerbaijan. Yazov said that officers were psychologically "fettered" by the "Tbilisi syndrome," which caused hesitation in carrying out their orders and duties in these situations. Yazov argued that the legal basis for using the army in emergency situations needed to be strengthen to help officers overcome their diffidence.  

General Lebed was the commander of the Tula Airborne Division at the time that division was sent into Azerbaijan in January 1990 to stop ethnic violence and suppress the Azerbaijain National Front. Lebed confirms in his memoirs that the "Tbilisi syndrome" weighed on the minds of officers involved in this action. Shortly after the Baku events an

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Yazov, Voyennaya Reforma, p. 52. The original version of Yazov's comments appeared in Pravitel'stvenny Vestnik, February 1990.
investigative commission was sent to Baku to report on the activity of the army there. Lebed writes:

I and they clearly realized that at any minute we could fall victims to the exalted decision of some very highly-placed party bureaucrat or an entire bureaucratic apparatus, or the next tele-show of Gorbachev. There were enough fresh examples before our eyes. The most striking of these was Colonel-General Rodionov [the Commander of the Transcaucasus Military District during the Tbilisi events], who with unusual ease was turned into a hostage of administrative-bureaucratic, nomenklatura-party legal games.35

The institutional lessons learned by military officers after the Tbilisi affair also was reflected in the series of articles on the function of the armed forces that appeared in KVS. The events in Tbilisi were mentioned in three of the six articles. Colonel K. Vorob’ev wrote that the use of the army against the people was "an extremely undesirable measure. It causes colossal damage to the army’s prestige and its unity with the people...." Colonel N. Belyakov referred to the Novocherkassk events of 1962, discussed in Chapter Five, as another source of institutional lessons. The use of the army in Novocherkassk, Belyakov wrote, "contradicted the nature and assignment of the Armed Forces, strained relations between the army and the people, and undermined the authority of ‘the man with a gun.’"36

Officers who objected to using the military for internal missions, according to polling data, specifically cited the Tbilisi events as influencing their opinions on the issue. On the second anniversary of the Tbilisi affair the military newspaper Red Star ran a front page article on the “Tbilisi syndrome.” The author, Captain V. Yermolin, wondered aloud whether the

35 Lebed, Za derzhavu obidno..., p. 297.
January 1991 violence in Vilnius would lead to a "Vilnius syndrome" to supplement the "Tbilisi syndrome." The use of army in Baku in January 1990 and in Vilnius in January 1991 strengthened the "Tbilisi syndrome" and confirmed the lessons learned from that event about internal involvement.37

The dominant organizational culture of the Soviet armed forces in the last years of Gorbachev's reign, then, continued to reflect the view that the primary task of the army was external defense. Domestic economic activities and internal policing were looked down upon. Critical events for the Soviet military, such as the Tbilisi and Vilnius affairs, reinforced this task orientation. In the words of General Dmitriy Volkogonov, "I think that the army should not have any internal role and the majority of the military share my viewpoint."38 At the same time, in the years 1989-1991 one began to hear more military voices arguing for a larger role in politics and society. Furthermore, the explosion of national independence movements infringed both on the military's ability to manage its internal affairs and the territorial integrity of the state. These factors, which somewhat undermined the task orientation of the Soviet armed forces, are discussed in the following paragraphs.

The most strident voice for a more politically and socially active Soviet military was that of a Russified Kurdish writer named Karem Rash, who is not an officer. This in itself is perhaps telling, but Rash's views were published in Voyenno-istoricheskiy zhurnal [Military History Journal] and evidently at least some military officers were receptive. Rash maintained

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that the Russian army had always been not just an armed force but also a cultural and moral one. "The army and navy," wrote Rash, "is the purest, strongest, and most elevated expression of our Fatherland." He lauded not only Soviet Marshal Georgiy Zhukov's military exploits during World War II but also his political ones in the 1950s, calling him the "savior of the Fatherland." "At the turning points of history," Rash asserted, "the army has been the primary and real hope of the people, and often has carried out tasks that at first glance are not their duties."39

Many officers probably appreciated Rash's defense of the armed forces as the greatest expression of Russia, particularly because under perestroika the army was openly and severely criticized in many papers and magazines, something to which the army was completely unaccustomed. But there were few vocal adherents among the officer corps for Rash's view that the army should come forward as the "savior of the Fatherland."40

The most open manifestation of political activity by officers was their involvement in parliamentary politics. The old Supreme Soviet always had military members, but when the body was strictly a rubber-stamp for Communist Party decisions their presence was mandated by the Party and did not reflect officer corps' culture. After 1989, however, the Congress of


40 Indignation at press attacks on the armed forces was expressed by many officers. For extreme versions of these sentiments, see, for example: A. Makashov, "O chem tokuyut nashi uchenye-tetereva?", in Gorshkov and Zhuravlev, eds., Nesokrushimaya i legendarnaya, pp. 123-124; the original is from KZ, June 21, 1990, p. 2. See also General Rodionov's comments in "V gostyakh u Generala Rodionova." Akhromeyev and Lebed offer similar, but less strident, comments in their memoirs. See: Akhromeyev and Korniyenko, Glezami marshala i diplomata, pp. 288-289; Lebed, Za derzhavu obidno..., pp. 363-373.
People's Deputies and the Supreme Soviet began to reflect a diversity of opinions. The political leadership did not take steps to bar serving officers from running for parliament. 41 82 Deputies in the Soviet Congress elected in 1989 had ties to the military. Although less than four percent of the 2,250 deputies, the military members had a high profile. Moreover, if one counts military legislators at all levels of government (republic, oblast, city, etc.), more than 9000 military deputies (less than two percent of the officer corps) were serving by April 1991. 42

Military deputies ranged across the political spectrum, and as deputies they had the right to criticize government policy. The sight of uniformed officers attacking the political leadership from the floor of the parliament obviously undermined the view that the military should be focused exclusively on external defense. 43 Military deputies did not present a united front, however, and officers such as the radical democrat Vladimir Lopatin and the reactionary "black Colonel" Viktor Alksnis stood at opposite ends of the political spectrum. Minister of Defense Yazov made clear that he thought that military deputies should concentrate on defense issues and explaining Supreme Soviet decisions to their units. When Alksnis went too far in his criticisms of Gorbachev, Yazov publicly noted that Alksnis "does not represent the Soviet Army." Yazov also called in Alksnis and told him that he was "compromising the army" by

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41 The Law on Elections did not prohibit officers from running for legislative office; in fact, the law set out the process for nominating candidates from the military. See: Zakon Soyuza Sovetskih Sotsialisticheskih Respublik o vyborakh narodnykh deputatov SSSR (Moskva: Izvestiya sovetov narodnykh deputatov SSSR, 1988). Despite the negative consequences of permitting officers to serve in parliament, Gorbachev praised their efforts, referring to military deputies as "fighters for social consolidation." Priyem v Kremlje, Pravda, June 27, 1990, pp. 1-2.


his actions. Alksnis subsequently told the parliament that he was expressing his opinion as a deputy, and thus by implication not as an officer.\(^{44}\)

Yazov made clear in his public statements that he saw the military's mission as external defense, and his censuring of Alksnis demonstrates that he did not seek an expanded political role for the military. At the same time, Yazov was faced with a genuine dilemma, because the national independence movements were impairing the ability of the armed forces to carry out their mission. The collapse of the draft in many republics, calls for the removal of Soviet army bases from certain regions, and efforts to set up republican militias and armies were a direct threat to the fighting capacity of the armed forces. Yazov went on TV in November 1990, "at the order of the President," to denounce efforts in certain republics to undermine the Soviet army. These activities, Yazov declared, "threaten the defense capability of the state." He rejected calls for changing the deployment of Soviet military units:

The army will be located where it is necessary for it to fulfill its primary function: defense of the state and guaranteeing its security. Changes in this sphere are possible only by a decision of the President of the USSR and completely exclude any damage to the business of defending the Fatherland.\(^{45}\)


Gorbachev backed up Yazov's statement several days later with a decree that nullified any republican decisions in the defense realm that violated Union laws. This decree was, like Gorbachev's other decrees, largely ignored. There is little question, though, that Gorbachev and the military leadership saw eye to eye on the need to maintain the Soviet Union. This caused a profound dilemma for the officer corps, which was committed both to an external orientation and to defending the territorial integrity of the Soviet state. Soviet ideology had long taught that the internal role of the military had disappeared, but to all appearances it was back. As Akhromeyev remarked, "the army's internal constitutional function was revived: securing the territorial integrity of the Fatherland and the security of the population of several regions."46

Coding of the task orientation for the Soviet armed forces, then, is complicated by a mixed picture. Military journals continued to focus on external defense issues. Leading military officers, including the Minister of Defense, repeated over and over again that the army did not have an internal function, and an authoritative discussion in a leading military journal affirmed this view. Survey data confirmed that the majority of officers opposed internal missions. On the other hand, the armed forces clearly did play an expanded internal role in the late-perestroika period, particularly in dealing with ethnic unrest. The officer corps hated playing the gendarme role, but they also could not tolerate the collapse of the state. Moreover,

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46 For Gorbachev's decree, see: "O nekotorykh aktakh po voprosam oborony, prinятых v soyuznykh respublikakh," in Gorshkov and Zhuravlev, eds., Nesokrushimaya i legendarnaya, pp. 198-199. The original version appeared in Pravda on December 2, 1990. See also: Stephen Foye, "Gorbachev, the Army, and the Union," Report on the USSR, Vol. 2, No. 49 (December 7, 1990), pp. 1-3; Akhromeyev and Korniienko, Glazami marshala i diplomat, p. 293. Gorbachev's commitment to maintaining the Union is clear from many sources. The Gorbachev-Fund has released an entire book entitled Soyuz mozhno bylo sokhranit [The Union Could Have Been Preserved]. See also the comments of Gorbachev's chief foreign policy aide, Anatoliy Chernyaev, on Gorbachev's views on Baltic independence: Chernyaev. Shes't let s Gorbachevym, p. 339.
there was a small but vocal minority that demanded a larger military role. In sum, the Soviet military largely remained committed to external defense as the army's proper role, but there was a slight erosion in this commitment in the late-Gorbachev period.

Subordination

In previous chapters I showed that the Russian and Soviet officer corps had a long history of remaining subordinate to civilian authority. Officers believed that they were responsible to the civilian political leadership. Did the armed forces commitment to this aspect of the norm of civilian supremacy decline during the perestroika years? I measure this variable in two ways: by scrutinizing the statements of key officers, and by examining their behavior with respect to non-sovereign power issues.

Top military officers continuously stated their commitment to remain subordinate to civilian power during the late-perestroika years. At a Politburo meeting in March 1988 Yazov stated, "the army should be united with the people and should work under the leadership of the Communist Party." The Chief of the General Staff, General of the Army Mikhail Moiseyev, said, "we are prepared to carry out any order of the Motherland in defense of the Soviet people." When the post of President was introduced in March 1990, General Moiseyev noted that according to the recent constitutional amendments the President was Commander-in-Chief and the president was responsible for the defense of the state and the development of the armed forces. Moiseyev argued that the president's powers over defense should have been defined
even wider, with explicit responsibility set out in the constitution for military doctrine, the defense budget, arms control, nuclear command authority, and the military draft.47

Akhromeyev also made clear his commitment to the view that the military should be subordinate to civilian rule. In his memoirs, Akhromeyev relates how he and then Minister of Defense Sergey Sokolov had their first working meeting with newly-selected Soviet Communist Party General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev on March 24, 1985. At the end of the meeting, Gorbachev remarked that it was a difficult time and that he knew what needed to be done in the economic sphere. He said defense matters were new to him, so he would rely on Sokolov and Akhromeyev for their help. Gorbachev concluded, "I hope that you both understand the position of the Central Committee General Secretary in the party and country and to whom you are subordinate." Akhromeyev states, "that was extremely clear to us."48

Akhromeyev published often in the press in the last years of perestroika, defending the armed forces against what he perceived as unjustified attacks. The possibility of a military coup was a hotly discussed topic in the democratic press. Akhromeyev consistently asserted that the military was subject to civilian control. In December 1989 he wrote, "the authority of our Motherland's supreme organs of power is indisputable for these people [the high command]." At that time he linked this subordination to their "devotion to the socialist Fatherland" and their communist convictions. After the introduction of the presidential system in 1990 Akhromeyev accordingly changed his emphasis, noting that the Politburo and the

Central Committee have been replaced by the Congress of People's Deputies, the Supreme Soviet, and the President of the USSR and that this is understood and accepted by generals and officers. In August 1990 he maintained:

the Army has been and will be with the people and will steadfastly carry out the instructions and orders issued by the legally elected highest organs of power and its own supreme commander in chief -- the USSR president -- and the USSR Supreme Soviet to which the people have given that right.

Akhromeyev made a similar point in his memoirs:

Officers understood that the Armed Forces are not a political force and that they should not participate in political struggles. Their job -- punctually carry out the decisions of the supreme organs of state power and the President of the USSR.\(^49\)

This position of the top military leaders was echoed by other officers. In the discussion in *Communist of the Armed Forces (KVS)* on the internal use of the military, Colonel Bel'kov wrote:

The army is an instrument of the state. The forms and limits of its usage are defined by state power as embodied by her legislative and executive organs. They, precisely they and only they are empowered to take decisions about the use of the army. In a law-governed state the army should be subordinate to a democratically elected government.\(^50\)

The commander of the crucial Moscow military district, Colonel-General N.V. Kalinin, was asked about the possibility of applying pressure on local governments to extract apartments

\(^{48}\) Akhromeyev and Korniienko, *Glazami marshala i diplomata*, pp. 34-35. Incidentally, it is interesting that Gorbachev did not meet with his minister of defense and the chief of the general staff until two weeks after he became general secretary. This is indicative of the (low) political influence of the army.


\(^{50}\) Bel'kov, "Armiya dolzhna delat' svoye delo," p. 18.
that they had failed to provide in violation of agreements with the armed forces. His interlocutor asked Kalinin whether he had considered not providing soldiers to help with the harvest. Kalinin replied, "I, like all of our generals and officers, could not even think of using pressure tactics on the organs of Soviet power."\textsuperscript{51}

A skeptic would argue that these statements do not reflect these officers "true" views. However, the fact that the highest-ranking officers expressed these views in public suggests, at a minimum, that they believed these views were the appropriate ones to hold and, in that sense, reflected the dominant culture.\textsuperscript{52} Moreover, there were officers that expressed differing viewpoints, so evidently officers did have some leeway in their public pronouncements. For example, Alksnis declared to the Supreme Soviet:

They [presumably, the "democrats" - B.T.] are frightening the people with threats of a military coup. The army will not go against the people, but the army has been pushed to the limit by the nationalists' activities. If the necessary measures are not taken, the people with weapons will take to the streets. This will not be a military coup. The military will be defending their human rights.\textsuperscript{53}

Although Alksnis was clear to say he was not talking about a military coup, he was referring to autonomous activity by the military, even if on an individual basis. His views were inconsistent with those of the military leadership, but they probably did reflect a minority subculture that believed the military needed to act on its own to defend the armed forces, and potentially the integrity of the state.

The changes introduced in Soviet political institutions, particularly the switch from Communist Party to presidential rule, also introduced confusion into the question of to whom

\textsuperscript{51} Interview with Col.-Gen. N.V. Kalinin, "Na grebne peremen," \textit{VV}, No. 2 (February), 1991, p. 5.

\textsuperscript{52} I thank Laura Miller for this point.
the military was subordinate. The top military leadership, such as Moiseyev and Akhromeyev, were careful to be explicit about the switch in subordination to the President. Others, such as the hard-line commander of the Volga-Urals Military District, Colonel-General Albert Makashov, were not prepared to switch their allegiance from the Communist Party so quickly. Makashov noted that officers were indoctrinated in the principles of "patriotism, internationalism, and Leninism" and claimed that communists in the armed forces "are not planning on ideological surrender....We are decisively against any attempt to depoliticize the armed forces."\(^{54}\)

Depoliticization refers to the debate about the status of Communist Party bodies in the armed forces. After Article 6 was removed from the Constitution, the question naturally arose as to why the Communist Party should be the only political party with formal structures in the army. The Main Political Administration (MPA) was responsible for the education and indoctrination of troops and was subordinate to both the Central Committee and the Ministry of Defense. In addition, Communist Party cells existed in military units at all levels. The debate about depoliticization, then, really referred to two debates: one about the status of the MPA (" depoliticization") and one about the status of Communist Party cells (" departyization"). In 1990 and 1991 Gorbachev took a series of steps to remove the MPA from Central Committee control and make it a state body under the Ministry of Defense. At the same time, Gorbachev


\(^{54}\) Makashov, "O chem tokyut nashi uchenye-tetereva?". See also his comments to the Congress of People's Deputies in March 1990 in: Izvestiya, March 16, 1990, p. 6.
was against complete “departyization” of the armed forces, and he remained a committed communist until the end of his Presidency.55

The extent of officer corps support for depoliticization and departyization is unclear. The Ministry of Defense leadership supported the plans to turn the MPA into a state body under the Ministry of Defense, but also opposed efforts to remove the Communist Party from the military entirely. On the other hand, John Lepingwell provides evidence that by 1991 less than half of Soviet officers supported the Communist Party. Stephen Meyer argues persuasively that the junior officer corps, in particular, wanted the Party out of the army. According to a poll conducted in the Turkestan Military District, 81 percent of officers wanted all parties out of the military, 14 percent wanted only the Communist Party to have organizations in the army, and 4 percent favored allowing other parties to organize in the military. Apparently, even some political officers had little enthusiasm for politics. One soldier recounts how the political officer in his unit, obviously bored, would read from the newspaper at their lessons, and that if

you asked him a question about politics or the Supreme Soviet “he would shrug his shoulders and say that the army is one thing, and that civilian life is something different.”  

Regardless of officers’ views, legally servicemen were guided by the law and superior’s orders, and not the decisions of political parties. General Gromov probably spoke for many when he argued that all militaries undergo some degree of political indoctrination by the state, and thus some form of political education was necessary. Asked whose policies the military should follow, Gromov answered, “the ruling party’s. I think and hope that the CPSU [Communist Party of the Soviet Union] will remain the ruling party.”

The statements of leading officers showed a continued strong commitment to the subordination aspect of the norm of civilian supremacy. At the same time, evidence that a more praetorian subculture began to develop also exists, as reflected by the statements of officers such as Alksnis and Makashov. One cause of this development clearly was the decline of Communist Party legitimacy and the transfer of civilian authority from the party to the president and the parliament after seventy years of party rule. Still, the military leadership went along with these changes without much resistance. Finally, persuasive evidence that the Soviet officer corps continued to adhere to the belief in the importance of subordination to civilian rule is clear from their behavior in the non-sovereign power realms of civil-military relations. In the rest of this section I explore in detail military behavior in two realms: security policy and internal usage.


SECURITY POLICY. The Soviet military often was depicted as having almost unbridled control over security policy. In Chapter Five I showed how this view is mistaken, and how the armed forces submitted to party decisions on such matters as arms control and the invasion of Afghanistan.

The Gorbachev period provides the most persuasive imaginable test of who had the final word in Soviet national security policy. The changes introduced by Gorbachev in security policy lead to budget and force cuts, far-reaching arms control treaties, and the collapse of the Warsaw Pact, with the subsequent withdrawal of Soviet forces stationed there. Did the military resist these changes? Were they able to stop them? The answers, are, respectively, yes and no. The military fought within the Soviet leadership against many of Gorbachev's security policies, but they were powerless to stop them. In the end they saluted and carried out orders.

When Gorbachev came to power there was already an established mechanism for developing Soviet security policy. Most arms control and defense policies were worked out either in the Defense Council or in a Politburo commission headed by Lev Zaykov. These bodies worked with the participation of representatives of the Ministries of Defense and Foreign Affairs, the Central Committee International Department, the KGB, Gosplan, the Military-Industrial Commission (VPK), and various scientific institutes. Gorbachev notes that Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze often became frustrated with the military in these inter-agency discussions and would complain to Gorbachev. At that point Gorbachev would intervene in the process and they would "work everything out." The "final prerogative" in

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Additional evidence that the Soviet armed forces were not committed to the continuation of Communist Party rule became clear after the August 1991 coup and is discussed below; see footnote 123.

deciding foreign policy, Gorbachev adds, belonged to the Politburo and the General Secretary. Akhromeyev states that sharp discussions were often carried out and that Gorbachev was often critical of military views, but concludes that "he [Gorbachev] conducted the work democratically, but the last word was, of course, his own."\textsuperscript{59}

Akhromeyev believed it was only natural that the military would hold conservative views, given its organizational interests. He also noted that Gorbachev and his circle were from a different generation, both from the previous political leadership and the military leadership at the time, who had all gone through the Great Patriotic War and whose views were conditioned by that experience.\textsuperscript{60} Regardless of his personal or organizational views, Akhromeyev (and the rest of the military leadership) was forced to accept many decisions with which he disagreed. His memoirs at times become a virtual litany of Soviet policies to which the army was opposed: the unilateral moratorium on nuclear testing, leaving naval forces out of conventional arms control negotiations, leaving French and British nuclear weapons out of nuclear arms control negotiations, and including the SS-23 in the INF Treaty. Akhromeyev and his co-author, former Deputy Foreign Minister Georgiy Korniyenko, were particularly irritated with how German reunification and the decision to withdraw Soviet forces from Eastern Europe were handled.\textsuperscript{61}

\textsuperscript{59} Gorbachev, \textit{Zhizn' i reformy}, Volume 2, pp. 12-14; Akhromeyev and Korniyenko, \textit{Glazami marshala i diplomata}, pp. 71-74; see also pp. 90-91.

\textsuperscript{60} Akhromeyev, "Napadki na vooruzhennye sily SSSR," p. 2; Akhromeyev and Korniyenko, \textit{"Glazami marshala i diplomata"}, pp. 61-64, 73-74.

\textsuperscript{61} Akhromeyev and Korniyenko, \textit{Glazami marshal i diplomata}, pp. 95-98, 109, 130-133, 226-233, 258-264. Paradoxically, it seems that Akhromeyev did not oppose the Soviet unilateral reductions announced by Gorbachev in December 1988 at the UN. Akhromeyev's resignation as Chief of the General Staff occurred at about the same time as Gorbachev's speech, so it was naturally inferred that Akhromeyev had resigned in protest. Some Western analysts also have claimed that the unilateral reductions decision was made without the support or even the knowledge of the General Staff or the military leadership. However, both Gorbachev and Akhromeyev maintain in their memoirs that Akhromeyev and the General Staff had been completely involved in preparing the unilateral
The armed forces were often compelled to accept political decisions that they played little or no role in formulating. Several moves in East-West arms control negotiations were taken without military input. Shevardnadze, frustrated by what he saw as military intransigence, began to advance his own proposals in negotiations with the West. Once he had worked out a deal with the Americans he would present the agreement to Gorbachev for his approval. Only after Gorbachev had signed on would the military be informed. The military, according to Akhromeyev, was particularly frustrated by the fact that the changes in Eastern Europe were never discussed in a comprehensive way with the military. The armed forces used their control over implementation to try to minimize the consequences of some of these agreements, particularly the CFE Treaty. Gorbachev was able to force the military back into line, partially by giving them a bigger say in how the dispute over CFE was resolved.62

INTERNAL USAGE. Three episodes during the late-Gorbachev period called into question the degree to which the civilian leadership controlled the military's domestic usage: the Tbilisi events of April 1989, the coup scare of September 1990, and the crackdown in Vilnius in January 1991. All of these events have a Rashomon-like character, with both facts and interpretations varying wildly depending on the source. The central question in each affair is

cuts and that Akhromeyev resigned for other reasons (Akhromeyev cites his age, his health, and the coming collapse of the Warsaw Pact, which he claims he foresaw and which he would not be able to stomach if he remained in the military leadership). The unilateral reductions were approved at a Defense Council meeting on November 9, 1988, so there is no question that the military was involved in the decision. Yazov noted at a Politburo meeting in late 1988 that the armed forces “understood” the need for the unilateral cuts. See: Nichols, The Sacred Cause, pp. 206-209; Gorbachev, Zhizn’ i reformy, p. 132; Akhromeyev and Korniyenko, Glazami marshal i diplomata, pp. 211-217; “Po samym optimisticheskim prognozam....,” p. 143.

"what did Gorbachev know and when did he know it?" No definitive answers can be given in every case, but tentative conclusions are possible. These three events will be discussed in turn.

**Tbilisi.** In the early morning of April 9, 1989, a demonstration of several thousand people in central Tbilisi was broken up by the MVD and the army; nineteen people died as a result. The demonstrations had begun on April 4 and concerned a variety of issues, including the status of the region of Abkhazia within Georgia (the demonstration’s leaders wanted Abkhazia to lose its autonomous status) and that of Georgia within the Soviet Union (they wanted Georgian independence). Official inquiries differ markedly in their assessment of the nature of the demonstrations and the degree to which public order and safety was endangered. The First Secretary of the Georgian Communist Party, Dzhumber Patiashvili, appealed to Moscow on

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April 7 for assistance; Patiashvili said the situation was almost "out of control" and requested MVD and army troops and the introduction of a state of emergency.\(^{64}\)

Gorbachev was in London, along with Politburo members Shevardnadze and Aleksandr Yakovlev, until the night of April 7. Earlier that day Politburo member Yegor Ligachev had conducted a meeting of the seven Politburo members who were available in Moscow. This group decided to send the requested MVD and army troops, while advising the Georgian party leadership that political means should be used to resolve the crisis and denying the request to introduce special rule and declare a curfew. When Gorbachev returned to Moscow that night he was met at the airport by all the members of the Politburo and the Secretariat, as was the custom of the Soviet leadership. Gorbachev was told of the afternoon meeting on Georgia and its decisions. Gorbachev agreed that the situation in Tbilisi should be resolved by political means, supported the steps already taken, and declared that Shevardnadze and another member of the Politburo, Georgiy Razumovskiy, should fly to Tbilisi to investigate the situation.\(^{65}\)

The next day, April 8, the decision was made to disperse the demonstration. Apparently this decision was made by the Buro of the Georgian Communist Party. It is unclear why Shevardnadze and Razumovskiy did not go to Tbilisi, as ordered by Gorbachev. Patiashvili allegedly told Shevardnadze that the situation was under control and that the trip was not

\(^{64}\) See the Sobchak Commission report and the Prosecutor's report and investigative materials.

\(^{65}\) The first-hand accounts vary on exactly who said what at the airport the night of April 7 and how much was said. According to Ligachev, Gorbachev "decisively" supported the steps already taken. Gorbachev declared at a Politburo meeting on April 20, 1989, that he "did not cast doubt on that decision [to send troops]." At a minimum, therefore, Gorbachev knew of and did not oppose the decision to send troops. Shevardnadze claims that only MVD, and not army, troops were mentioned at the airport, but no one else makes this argument. Gorbachev's Chief of Staff Valeriy Boldin maintains that Gorbachev had been kept informed via KGB channels of the Tbilisi events while in London. On the airport meeting, see the accounts of Ligachev, Gorbachev, Shevardnadze, Boldin, Ryzhkov, and Sobchak in their memoirs. Note that Gorbachev's version is related not only in his memoirs but also the interview with Aleksandr Zhilin and the edited volume *Soyuz mozhno bylo sokhranit*.
necessary. The fact that Shevardnadze and Patiashvili, both Georgian politicians with a long history of mutual relations, did not get along with each other probably explains both Shevardnadze's apparent reluctance to go and Patiashvili's unwillingness for him to come. It is not known whether Patiashvili told Shevardnadze, or anyone else in Moscow, of the decision to break up the demonstration.66

The role of the military leadership is equally unclear. It is known that Defense Minister Yazov, in accordance with the Politburo decision of August 7, told General Staff chief Moiseyev to send an Airborne Troops (VDV) regiment to Tbilisi. These troops were supposed to be used for guarding key government properties and controlling major roads in and out of Tbilisi. Deputy Minister of Defense General K.A. Kochetov and Colonel-General Igor Rodionov, the commander of the Transcaucasus Military District, were sent to Tbilisi. On April 8 Rodionov was put in charge of the operation to disperse the demonstration and became the main scapegoat for the deaths there. Gorbachev, Patiashvili, Yazov, Kochetov, and Rodionov himself have all denied making the decision to put Rodionov in charge of the operation. The Soviet Prosecutor's report concluded that the idea to put Rodionov in charge had been Kochetkov's and that the Buro of the Georgian Communist Party made the formal decision, after which the Communist Party, MVD, and Minister of Defense in Moscow were informed.67

The question of Rodionov's role became even more important in July 1996, when he was appointed Russian Minister of Defense. Given the degree to which the participants'

66 See the Sobchak Commission report and the accounts of Shevardnadze, Gorbachev, Ligachev, Rodionov, Ryzhkov, and Boldin.

67 See the Sobchak Commission report, the accounts of Gorbachev and Sobchak, and the Prosecutor's report, particularly the excerpts published in KZ.
accounts vary, there is a remarkable degree of consensus on the belief that Rodionov was against the use of the army to disperse the rally until the last minute. The best evidence on Rodionov's opposition to using the army are two telegrams he sent to Yazov on April 7 and April 8. On April 7 Rodionov complained that "the leadership of the republic is trying to stabilize the situation with the help of the active use of [army] troops, which is aggravating existing negative attitudes towards the army." Rodionov recommended that army units be used for guarding government buildings. On the eighth Rodionov telegraphed Yazov and reported that the party and state leadership of Georgia was not "homogeneous" in its relation to the events in Tbilisi. Rodionov argued that they were trying to use the introduction of a curfew and a special regime to "remove from themselves complete responsibility" for further developments. He believed the introduction of a curfew would be "inexpedient and even harmful." Rodionov reiterated his view that army units should be used in conjunction with the MVD to secure key buildings and roads.68

Shevardnadze, one of the most prominent critics of the decision to disperse the demonstration, said on several occasions that Rodionov had opposed the operation. On April 14, 1989, while in Tbilisi investigating the events, Shevardnadze told the Georgian Central Committee that Rodionov had spoken against the operation beforehand. The army, Shevardnadze added, "went on to the streets of Tbilisi against its will." A year later he told an

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68 The legal implications of "special status" and "curfew" in Soviet law were unclear at this time. It is possible that imposing these conditions would have been tantamount to martial law, in which case Rodionov would have been named Commandant of the city and would have been forced to take responsibility for a range of political decisions. On this point, see: Elizabeth Fuller and Stephen Foye, "'Special Status,' 'State of Emergency,' and Presidential Rule," Report on the USSR, Vol. 3, No. 5 (February 1, 1991), pp. 33-35. A key point of ambiguity in Rodionov's telegrams is whether he believed that the only way he could take under control key government buildings was by clearing the square in front of them of demonstrators. This question is not addressed directly by Rodionov in his accounts or by the Soviet commission. For Rodionov's telegrams, see: Zhilin, "General Igor Rodionov."
interviewer that "the only one who opposed its [the army's] use until the end was Rodionov." Otar Cherkeziya, who in 1989 was the chair of the Georgian Supreme Soviet, has stated, "the truth is that Rodionov was against the use of the army in the then unfolding situation, right up until he received the order."  

Rodionov told the Prosecutor's investigators that the Georgian political leadership had constantly turned to the army for help since November 1988, when mass protests first rocked the republic. The Georgian MVD, according to Rodionov, had lost the trust of both the political leadership and the people. Rodionov rebuffed all of these efforts to bring in the army, on each occasion arguing that the local MVD should deal with the situation. He took the same position April 5-7. However, on April 8 he changed his mind because, in his view, "the character of the meeting had taken on a clearly aggressive direction and events were leading to unpredictable consequences."  

Rodionov planned the operation in such a way that the two VDV battalions would not come into contact with the demonstrators. They were to secure the square in front of the main government building after the crowd had been dispersed by the MVD. However, the MVD troops met with stronger resistance than they expected and the Deputy Chief of Staff of the Soviet MVD, Major-General Yu.T. Efimov, believed his troops were in danger of being surrounded and that the operation was on the verge of collapse. Efimov requested help from Rodionov, who sent a VDV company to assist the Internal Troops. Once the Internal Troops' flank was closed, which took about ten minutes, the VDV company was withdrawn and had no

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70 "Sto sorok tomov protiv versiy," p. 4. See also: Rodionov, "Nuzhna polnaya pravda."
further contact with the demonstrators. Despite this, the army received most of the blame for the deaths in Tbilisi.\footnote{The popular perception of Tbilisi was that soldiers with "sharpened shovels and poisoned gas...in a frenzy of violence" killed nineteen demonstrators. See, for example: Angus Roxburgh, \textit{The Second Russian Revolution: The struggle for power in the Kremlin} (London: BBC Books, 1991), pp. 131-133. The reality is far more complicated. MVD troops were armed with shields and truncheons. The VDV troops had sapper shovels as protective devices, since they were not carrying firearms and some members of the crowd had sticks and knives, and bottles, bricks, and rocks were being thrown. No one was killed with a shovel, although 6-21 people did receive shovel wounds. 18 of the 19 fatalities, including 16 women, were asphyxiated in the push of the crowd. The Sobchak Commission report concluded that the use of gas dispersants played a role in these deaths; the Prosecutor concluded that the type and quantity of chemical agents used was not enough to have contributed to the deaths. It is obvious that the agents used by the MVD (not the army) were not intended to be lethal, because none of the troops were wearing protective gear. The chemical agents used were not considered lethal by both Soviet and Western experts under normal circumstances. The fact that some of the demonstrators physically resisted the troops is clear from many eyewitness accounts, including the testimony of those who fought with the troops. It should also be noted that some of the leaders of the demonstration, particularly I. Tsereteli, Z. Gamsakhurdia, and G. Chanturia, had shown little interest in negotiating, had rebuffed appeals to clear the square (the meeting was unauthorized), and were singled out by the Sobchak Commission as bearing "legal, political, moral and other responsibility" for their part in the events. Shevardnadze said, "the leaders of the so-called informal organizations completely consciously led people who believed in them to the slaughter." Gamsakhurdia later became President of Georgia, instigated an extreme nationalist dictatorship, was violently overthrown, and finally committed suicide on New Year's Eve 1993 after a failed attempt to regain power by force. None of this is meant to excuse the decision to disperse the demonstration by force, which was a mistake, or the manner in which the operation was carried out. But the notion that this was a premeditated, punitive massacre of a completely peaceful protest being led by a liberal and democratic intelligentsia cannot be sustained. See the Sobchak Commission's report and the Soviet Prosecutor's report and investigative materials. Shevardnadze's quote is in: Shevardnadze, "Ob obstanovke v Gruzii." On Gamsakhurdia and his political career, see: Elizabeth Fuller, "Eduard Shevardnadze's Via Dolorosa," \textit{RFERL Research Report}, Vol. 2, No. 43 (October 29, 1993), pp. 17-23; Simon Sebag Montefiore, "Zviad Egg," \textit{The New Republic}, Vol. 210, No. 8 (February 21, 1994), p. 9.}\n
There may never be a definitive answer to the question of what Gorbachev knew and when he knew it. Transcripts are unavailable for key meetings, several important conversations took place over the phone, and orders were given orally. Not surprisingly, Gorbachev and his political allies, particularly Shevardnadze, claim that Gorbachev had no knowledge of the decision to disperse the meeting with force. Gorbachev's political opponents, including former Prime Minister Ryzhkov and Gorbachev's former chief of staff, Valeri Boldin, maintain that Gorbachev was responsible for the decision. What is known is that the military officer who
received much of the blame at the time, Rodionov, should not bear primary responsibility for the Tbilisi affair.\textsuperscript{72}

September 1990 Coup Scare.\textsuperscript{73} In September 1990 Moscow was gripped by a massive coup scare. The sudden and suspicious movement of several airborne (VDV) regiments towards Moscow on September 9 caused a scandal in the press, and the Supreme Soviet established an investigatory commission. Minister of Defense Yazov was called before the Supreme Soviet, where he testified that some of the units were engaged in maneuvers, some were preparing for a parade, and some were picking potatoes. Many listeners, particularly in the democratic camp, did not find his answers persuasive.

It turns out that these observers had good reason to be suspicious. There was no coup attempt in September 1990, but President Gorbachev had ordered the VDV to move towards Moscow in anticipation of the opening of the Supreme Soviet and a planned democratic rally on September 16. After the scandal broke out, Gorbachev kept silent and disassociated himself from the decision.

The fact that no coup attempt was under way is clear from the movement of troops. In particular, as was pointed out at the time, the most likely units to be involved in a coup attempt, the Taman and Kantemirov Divisions based near Moscow, had not moved, nor had several other special units based in the Moscow area. The movement of VDV regiments, on the other

\textsuperscript{72} The versions of Gorbachev, Shevardnadze, Ryzhkov, and Boldin were cited above. Akhromeyev also strongly defended Rodionov and asserted that Rodionov was fulfilling orders of the political leadership. See: Akhromeyev, "Napadki na vooruzhennye sily SSSR. Pochemu?".

\textsuperscript{73} The best source on these events is: Kevin P. O'Prey, "Anatomy of a Coup Scare," Soviet Defense Notes, Vol 3, No. 1 (January/February 1991). The subsequent testimony of two officers directly involved clears up the questions that were still unanswered when O'Prey wrote his piece. See: Lebed, Za derzhavu obidno ..., pp. 343-350; Interview with Col.-Gen. E. Podkolzin [Commander of the VDV] by D. Makarov, "VDV, kak vsegda, na strazhe," Argumenty i fakty, No. 12 (March), 1993, pp. 1, 6.
hand, suggests preparation for civil disorder, since the VDV had been called on to deal with these situations on several occasions under Gorbachev.\(^{74}\)

Colonel-General E. Podkolzin was Chief of Staff of the VDV in 1990. Podkolzin later explained that Gorbachev had ordered the movement of troops into Moscow. When the outcry erupted a cover-up was ordered and Podkolzin, as Chief of Staff, was put in charge of drawing up materials (maps, orders, etc.) showing that the troop movements were part of a training exercise. Lebed was commander of the Tula Airborne Division at the time and he also was involved in the cover-up. He was ordered to cooperate with Podkolzin by the Commander of the VDV, General Vladislav Achalov, who was put in charge of the cover-up by Yazov. Both Podkolzin and Lebed dismiss the idea that Yazov could have ordered the troop movements himself. Yazov testified in the trial of the August 1991 coup plotters that 3-4 times in 1990-1991 he had received verbal orders from Gorbachev to move troops to Moscow, usually before the opening of the Supreme Soviet or on holidays. Although Yazov is not specific about the dates, the two most prominent such events were in September 1990 and March 1991.\(^{75}\)

Yazov, one might say, had obvious reasons to lie about these events. But there was little motivation for either Podkolzin or Lebed to lie, particularly 3-5 years after the fact. Gorbachev remained silent at the time of the coup scare, and neither he nor any of his top aides mention this incident in their memoirs. The most telling fact is that no one lost their job because of these incidents. It is hard to believe that the President would have been either so


\[^{75}\] Aleksandr Pel'ts, "Kakie ukazaniya daval Mikhail Gorbachev?”, KZ, January 29, 1994, p. 2. See the sources in note 73 for Podkolzin's and Lebed's accounts.
silent or so serene about such a scandal if the military had been operating behind his back. The
evidence is quite strong that Gorbachev ordered these troop movements.

Vilnius. On Sunday, January 13, 1991, Soviet army, MVD, and KGB units killed 17 civilians
in an operation to seize the radio and television stations and television tower in the Lithuanian
capitol of Vilnius. This new “bloody Sunday,” as it was called, was another setback to peaceful
reform in the Soviet Union and an international public relations disaster for Gorbachev. Many
Moscow liberals, including the Russian leader Boris Yeltsin, denounced Gorbachev and stood
together with Lithuania and the other Baltic states of Latvia and Estonia. Gorbachev denied
responsibility for the violence. The question of Gorbachev’s responsibility for the Baltic
crackdown, however, still has not been successfully resolved.

The conflict between Moscow and Vilnius had, of course, been going on for some time,
particularly since Lithuania’s declaration of independence on March 11, 1990. Events came to
a head in January 1991. The Lithuanian government’s decision to raise food prices sharply in
the new year led to protests by pro-communist, mainly Russian, forces in Lithuania and the
resignation of the government of Prime Minister Kazimera Prunskiene.

The primary impetus for the crisis, though, came from Moscow. On January 7 Soviet
VDV troops arrived in the Baltics, ostensibly to look for draft resisters (most Baltic youth had
stopped reporting for Soviet military service). On the same day the head of the pro-Moscow

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76 The most thorough account in English is: Alfred Erich Senn, Gorbachev’s Failure in Lithuania (New York:
St. Martin’s Press, 1992), pp. 127-141. The best account in Russian, using some Party and KGB documents, is:
Georgia Urushadze, Vybrannye mesta iz perepiski s vragami: Sem’ dney za kulisami vlasti (Sankt-Peterburg:
Izdatel’stvo Evropeyskogo Doma, 1995), pp., 270-289. Other sources for documents are: V. Stepanov and Ye.
decides Gorbachev’s lot,” New Times, No. 5 (January), 1992, pp. 9-11. Gorbachev’s account is in: Gorbachev,
Zhizn’i reformy, Volume 2, pp. 504-513. Two accounts of former Gorbachev assistants are: Chernyaev, Shest’ let
splinter faction of the Lithuanian Communist Party, Mikolas Burokyavichyus, sent a letter to Gorbachev asking for the introduction of presidential rule. On January 10 Gorbachev sent a telegram to the Lithuanian leadership, headed by President Vytautas Landsbergis, noting that he was receiving many appeals from Lithuania for the introduction of presidential rule and insisting that the Lithuanian government recognize the validity of the USSR Constitution and halt its efforts to restore the “bourgeois order.” On January 11 a shadowy pro-Moscow Lithuanian Salvation Committee announced that it had taken power. Military pressure on Vilnius was stepped up from January 10th to the 12th and thousands of Lithuanians rallied in central Vilnius to resist pressure from Moscow. After the violence on January 13th and the subsequent outcry in Moscow and around the world pressure on Vilnius was lessened and the Landsbergis government retained power.  

Defense Minister Yazov, as well as KGB head Vladimir Kryuchkov and MVD chief Boris Pugo, denied knowledge of the events. Yazov claimed that the commander of the Vilnius garrison, Major General Vladimir Uskhopchik, was responsible and blamed the violence on the Lithuanians. This claim was extremely implausible and subsequent evidence demonstrates that Yazov and the KGB and MVD heads were fully aware of what their troops were doing in Vilnius; the only question is whether Gorbachev knew what they were doing.

The crackdown on Lithuania was apparently planned in the office of Gorbachev's chief of staff Boldin on January 8. Also in attendance were Yazov, Kryuchkov, Pugo, Burokyavichyus, and two Central Committee Secretaries, Oleg Baklanov and Oleg Shenin.


77 These events are summarized by: Senn, Gorbachev's Failure in Lithuania, pp. 127-141; Urushadze, Vybrannye mesta iz perepiski s vragami, pp. 270-289.
The day before, January 7, the Deputy Minister of Defense for nationality issues and emergency situations, General Achalov, had been sent to Vilnius. Three days later the commander of the Ground Forces, Varennikov, joined Achalov. There is no question that the central Ministry of Defense was heavily involved in the operation.\textsuperscript{78}

Gorbachev's account leaves unanswered many important questions. In particular, he skips over the arrival of VDV troops in Lithuania on January 7 and his own telegram to the Lithuanian leadership on January 10. His aides Chernyaev and Ignatenko also skip over the events leading up to the violence on January 13. Gorbachev had to know about the dispatch of Soviet forces to Lithuania and the protests in Vilnius on the days before January 10, yet he chose to exert additional pressure on January 10.\textsuperscript{79}

The hard-line People's Deputy and "Black Colonel" Alksnis claimed that Gorbachev was behind the establishment of "national salvation committees" in Lithuania and Latvia. A week after the violence Alksnis said that pro-Moscow Latvian and Lithuanian communists had told him that they had acted under Gorbachev's instructions and that he had betrayed them. Alksnis maintained, "halfway he got cold feet and became afraid, and as a result the army is being given the blame for the bloodshed." General Achalov also said that "Gorbachev knew everything" about the events in Vilnius. Several senior KGB officers claimed in subsequent investigations that in late December 1990 the KGB was tasked by Gorbachev with preparing documents on the introduction of presidential rule in Lithuania. Members of the elite Alpha

\textsuperscript{78} On these events, see: Mlechin, "Vilnius decides Gorbachev's lot"; Lashkevich, "Zagovor protiv Litvy," October 1, 1991; Senn, \textit{Gorbachev's Failure in Lithuania}, pp. 129-131. Senn mistakenly states that the meeting in Boldin's office took place on January 7, not January 8.

\textsuperscript{79} See the accounts provided by Gorbachev, Chernyaev, and Ignatenko cited above. Before the violence on January 13, however, Gorbachev advisers were singing a different tune. For example, on January 7 Georgiy
unit of the KGB, who also were involved in the operation, felt betrayed by Gorbachev when he denied responsibility for the operation.80

Other key observers who maintain that Gorbachev knew about the impending crackdown, however, are less specific and often not very persuasive. In particular, Boldin contends that Gorbachev during that period had ordered several Security Council members to work out measures for introducing emergency rule in different areas of the country, but he is not specific about dates. Boldin states that he does not know how much Gorbachev was involved in planning the Vilnius operation, but he is certain that Gorbachev knew what was going on. Boldin, however, says nothing about the meeting in his office on January 8 or what conversations he had with Gorbachev about the crackdown. Other observers, such as Gorbachev's former economic advisor Nikolay Petrakov and one of Yazov's former assistants, also assert that Gorbachev knew in advance but do not provide specifics.81

The mystery of how much Gorbachev knew about the crackdown in Vilnius may never be satisfactorily answered. Probably the most accurate assessment of Gorbachev's responsibility was made by the United States Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) immediately after the Vilnius events. The CIA concluded that Gorbachev had ordered the deployment of

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VDV troops to the area, even if he had not given a direct order to shoot, and had thus set into motion the tragedy. Gorbachev, they said, "was strategically if not tactically" responsible for the January 1991 events in Vilnius. It also appears, although this is less clear, that Gorbachev started the process of introducing presidential rule and then later backed off.  

A certain pattern emerges from the three events discussed here. In each case, there is very strong evidence that Gorbachev knew of and approved the movement of troops. However, when things went badly or there was a scandal Gorbachev was in a position to deny responsibility. In other words, Gorbachev was always careful to maintain "plausible deniability."

This is certainly the view held by leading officers. The Chief of Staff of the Airborne Troops under Gorbachev, Podkolzin, later contended that Gorbachev was behind the use of the army in many "hot spots" but that Gorbachev "always pretended that he did not know anything." Podkolzin noted that it was always "unpleasant" to watch Gorbachev's statements on TV because the whole army was watching how "its Commander-in-Chief brazenly lied." General Leonid Ivashov, who worked in one of the Ministry of Defense Directorates under Yazov, also is critical of Gorbachev's "style" of claiming that he did not know what was going on and that he certainly did not give any orders.  

Lebed provides a particularly scathing account of how officers viewed their involvement in "hot spots" and Gorbachev's distancing himself from these operations. Lebed notes that the orders were always delivered orally, not in writing, and extremely vague. He

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82 The CIA almost certainly had access to signal intelligence about the movement of Soviet troops when drawing up their conclusions. On the CIA report, see: Beschloss and Talbott, At the Highest Levels, pp. 307-309.

83 Interview with Podkolzin, "VDV, kak vsegda, na strazhe"; Ivashov, Marshal Yazov, pp. 60-61.
paraphrases, "fly where they have sent you and make everything okay. What is considered okay and how you achieve it is your problem." No questions were asked if everything worked out, Lebed states, but if there were difficulties then an investigation would begin and anyone could be blamed because there were no written orders. This was "Gorbachev's style of work," according to Lebed, especially if Gorbachev could claim he was absent at the time.⁸⁴

Gorbachev's civilian advisers also are critical of him for not taking responsibility for events such as Tbilisi or Vilnius. After the Vilnius events Chernyaev wrote a letter of resignation to Gorbachev in which he stated that Gorbachev should either have announced that he was prepared to use all necessary means to hold the Soviet Union together or denounced the violence and fired those who were responsible. Boldin also took issue with how Gorbachev handled these events. Boldin maintains that he told Gorbachev after the Tbilisi bloodshed that as Commander-in-Chief he was responsible for the activity of his subordinates and should accept it, even if he was not in fact aware of what had happened. In those cases he could punish those responsible while still protecting the army from political accusations. Yegor Kuznetsov, an assistant to Gorbachev's top aide Shakhnazarov, told me that Gorbachev in cases like Vilnius would order the armed forces to "restore order" but refuse to authorize specific activities, telling the military leadership to work things out for themselves. Kuznetsov added, "they [the military leadership] hated him for that."⁸⁵

⁸⁴ Lebed, Za derzhavu obidno..., pp. 230, 280, 288.

⁸⁵ Chernyaev, Shest' let s Gorbachevym, p. 409; Boldin, Krusheniye p'edestala, pp. 348-349; Interview with Yegor Kuznetsov, July 18, 1994. Chernyaev's assistant talked him out of submitting the resignation letter. It also should be noted that, with the exception of Rodionov, who was moved from command of the Transcaucuses Military District to the directorship of the General Staff Academy, no one was ever fired or even transferred or demoted for allegedly, in Gorbachev's own account, disobeying the commander-in-chief.
A wide range of evidence on Soviet officer corps attachment to the principle of subordination has been surveyed in this section. The statements of leading officers demonstrated a strong commitment to subordination to civilian control. There also is some evidence for a subculture that was less committed to this norm. Soviet military behavior also showed a fairly strong degree of army commitment to civilian control. In the realm of defense and foreign policy the military was forced to accept many policies with which it disagreed, including significant force cuts, arms control treaties, the collapse of the Warsaw Pact, and the reunification of Germany. The picture is more murky in the realm of internal usage, but it does appear that the military was acting in accordance with Gorbachev's general guidelines, even if he was not directly responsible for every specific military step. In general, the Soviet armed forces demonstrated a relatively strong attachment to the principle of subordination in the late-perestroika years.

Thus, for both the task and subordination aspects of the norm of responsibility I have found a rather robust organizational culture that retained a moderate-to-high degree of attachment to the norm. It does appear, however, that there was a weakening of this attachment from the pre-Gorbachev period. This weakening is best explained by the most important change in the military's task, their greater involvement in domestic order operations, and the most important change in their subordination, with the switch from party to presidential rule. Both of these changes served to slightly undermine the strong commitment to the norm of responsibility found for the pre-Gorbachev period. Figure 6-3 shows my best judgment of the location of the Soviet armed forces on the apolitical/praetorian continuum for the years 1989-1991.
FIGURE 6-3: The Apolitical/Praetorian Continuum, 1989-1991


Figure 6-3 shows a drop to a moderate-to-high degree of commitment to the norm of civilian supremacy on the part of the Soviet officer corps. This drop suggests that by 1991 Soviet military involvement in a coup attempt for national interest reasons had become a possibility (see Figure 1-2, Chapter One). At the same time, intervention for reasons of corporate interest during this period was unlikely. In cases of military arbitration the armed forces would first opt for neutrality and then side with the most legitimate contender. In the next two sections I test the four alternative approaches to military involvement in sovereign power issues by providing a detailed examination of the behavior of the Soviet military in August and December 1991.

THE AUGUST 1991 COUP

In August 1991 a small clique of hard-line government officials attempted to depose Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev and institute emergency rule in the country. Defense Minister Dmitriy Yazov was one of the eight members of the State Committee on the Emergency Situation (GKChP). Military units were brought into Moscow to enforce the state of emergency. The coup collapsed, however, when resistance developed within the armed
forces to a planned storming of the Russian White House, the headquarters of the resistance to
the putsch led by Russian President Boris Yeltsin.  

This section has three major parts. First, I examine the four alternative approaches and
discuss their predictions regarding military intervention. I also discuss the leading theories
from the Soviet civil-military relations literature. Second, I engage in detailed process-tracing
of the key event of the August 1991 coup, the failure of the army to storm the Russian White
House. Third, I explain military behavior in light of the evidence and in reference to the
competing explanations. Before turning to these issues, however, I briefly deal with the claim
that no coup attempt in fact took place in August 1991, and that the whole event was a charade
staged by Gorbachev himself.

Even before the coup had collapsed rumors began to circulate that Gorbachev was
behind the GKChP. Many of the conspirators, for obvious reasons, have endorsed this view,
but it had not received much credit in American accounts until Amy Knight endorsed it in her
1996 book *Spies Without Cloaks*. A full discussion of this issue would take us too far afield,

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86 A very good discussion of the 1991 coup is in Dunlop, *The Rise of Russia and the Fall of the Soviet Empire*,
pp. 186-255. Early sources on the military’s role include: Lepingwell, “Soviet Civil-Military Relations and the
August Coup”; Meyer, “How the Threat (and the Coup) Collapsed,” pp. 5-38; Bruce D. Porter, *Red Armies in
Crisis* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1991), pp. 55-60; Brusstar and Jones,
*The Russian Military’s Role in Politics*, pp. 13-16. The most valuable Russian sources on the coup are: Stepankov
and Lisov, *Kremlevskiy zagovor*; “Obvinitel’noye zaklyuchenie sledstviya po delo GKChP,” *Novaya
ezhednevnaya gazeta* [hereafter *NEG*], July 30, August 4, 6, 25, 27, September 1, 1993; Urushadze, *Vybranniye
mesta iz perepiski s vragami*, esp. pp. 309-408. Both the Stepankov and Lisov book and the *NEG* materials are
based on the prosecutor’s case against the GKChP. Urushadze is a St. Petersburg journalist who was an expert on
the Russian Supreme Soviet’s commission on the coup. He uses and provides lengthy cites from many party and
KGB documents. Many of the major participants have provided memoir accounts on the coup. For Yeltsin’s, see:
Boris Yel’tsin, *Zapiski prezidenta* (Moskva: Ogonek, 1994), pp. 67-133. For Gorbachev’s, see: Gorbachev, *Zhizn’
i reformy*, Volume 2, pp. 555-581; M.S. Gorbachev, *Avgustovskiy putch: prichiny i sledstviya* (Moskva: Novosti,
1991). Some of the other memoir accounts are cited below. Most of the major sources on the military role come
from interviews and the investigative materials cited above. For a good discussion of Yazov’s role by one of his
top assistants, see: Ivashov, *Marshal Yazov*. Lebed’s account is also very useful. See: Aleksandr Lebed, * Spektakl’
nazyvaliya putch: neizvessnoye ob izvestnom* (Tiraspol, Moldova: Lada, 1993). This pamphlet was also published
as part of his memoirs: Lebed, *Za derzhavu obidno...*, pp. 383-411.
but I will note that I find this interpretation of the August coup completely unconvincing. It is true that Gorbachev had on previous occasions discussed with his top officials the possibility of introducing a state of emergency, and the GKChP did hope that he would endorse their efforts. But they also had decided to remove him from power and isolate him if he did not go along, as the subsequent testimony of Yazov made clear. Knight's account is based largely on the claim that Gorbachev was not really isolated at his presidential compound (Foros) in the Crimea. This view is refuted by the evidence provided in several of the investigations into the coup.87

Although Knight points out some of the (minor) inconsistencies in this evidence, she does not discuss any of the abundant evidence that refutes her claim. Why did Yazov and Akhromeyev say they had betrayed the president? Why did Yazov say on August 17th that Boldin was going to Gorbachev on the 18th in the role of Brutus if Gorbachev was behind the plot? Why did Akhromeyev and Pugo and several others commit suicide? Did Raisa Gorbachev fake her nervous breakdown? Why did Varen'kov say that the GKChP was justified because Gorbachev was violating the constitution by agreeing to the Union Treaty? These questions could go on and on. Although Gorbachev is at fault for surrounding himself

87 Amy Knight, Spies Without Cloaks: The KGB's Successors (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), pp. 12-37. Dunlop also raises the issue of Gorbachev's responsibility but leaves it an open question: Dunlop, The Rise of Russia and the Fall of the Soviet Empire, pp. 202-206. The documentary evidence refuting this view is in: Stepanov and Lisov, Kremlevskiy zagovor; "Obvinitel'nuye zaklyucheniya..." NEG, esp. August 6, 1993. Knight maintains that the Stepanov and Lisov book was a cover-up, but much of the evidence they present and which appeared in NEG, including the depositions of the key figures involved, speaks for itself. Urushadze had access to much of the same evidence and concludes that Kryuchkov was behind the coup, but notes that aspects of Gorbachev’s isolation at Foros remain unexplained. The memoirs of Gorbachev’s aide Chernyaev, who also was at Foros at the time, are quite reliable on most issues and he is adamant, and quite persuasive, that they were cut off. See: Chernyaev, Shest' let s Gorbachevym, pp. 477-488; Anatoliy Chernyaev, "Foros, avgust-91," in Nikol'skiy, ed., Avgust-91, pp. 160-179. Much has been made of the fact that Gorbachev made no effort to leave Foros. Of course, the fact that he had reason to believe he might be shot if he attempted to leave may explain Gorbachev's inactivity. Gorbachev explained his activity in the following manner at the trial on the GKChP: "I took measures corresponding to the level of a president of a country: I demanded communications and a plane. What did you want me to do, climb over the fence?" See: Leonid Nikitinskiy, "Yavleniye Gorbacheva," Izvestiya, July 16, 1994, p. 4.
with figures like Kryuchkov and Boldin, the evidence for the claim that he himself was behind the GKChP is weak and unpersuasive.\textsuperscript{88}

Regardless of Gorbachev's role, the military officers who determined the fate of the coup could not have known at the time whether Gorbachev was behind it or not. They had to make decisions on what to do based on the information available at the time. Which of the four perspectives on military involvement in sovereign power issues best explains the behavior of Soviet officers?

**Alternative Explanations for the Coup**

*International Structure.* This perspective would tend to predict military non-intervention in the case of a great power like the Soviet Union with a high external threat. William Odom's view of Soviet civil-military relations, discussed in Chapter Four, is consistent with this view. Odom did not believe the Soviet military would intervene in politics.\textsuperscript{89} Intervention in great powers when it does occur should only occur in extreme circumstances of national emergency. The closest analogy for this school from post-World War II Europe would be the coup attempts by elements of the French military in 1958 and 1961 over the Algiers crisis. To these officers, Algeria was part of France and the civilian leadership had failed to

\textsuperscript{88} Knight suggests that Pugo and Akhromeyev did not commit suicide but were murdered because they "knew too much and could not be counted on to keep quiet." Of course, Kryuchkov, Boldin, and Yazov all knew more than Pugo and Akhromeyev, and none of them have kept quiet since August 1991. Knight, *Spies Without Cloaks*, pp. 26-27. Knight also maintains that "the Emergency Committee never planned to storm the Russian White House." I demonstrate below that this claim is false. Knight, *Spies Without Cloaks*, p. 22.

hold the state together. The Soviet military, in this view, intervened to protect the territorial integrity of the state that they were sworn to defend. At the same time, one would expect officers with a functional orientation towards external defense to exhibit extreme reluctance to intervene in sovereign power issues. This explanation, as shown below, finds considerable support.

*Domestic Structure.* This approach contends that military intervention is likely when state weakness creates the opportunity for independent military activity in the sovereign power realm. According to this view, the Soviet military intervened because of the collapse of state capacity in the late-Soviet period. This seems like a persuasive explanation for the August 1991 coup. The major problem with the domestic structure account is that it is unable to explain the *timing* of the intervention. The weakness of the Soviet state was plainly evident by 1990 at the latest. At the same time, state weakness certainly seems to be a necessary condition for the August 1991 coup. This approach performs best as a predictor of when military involvement in sovereign power issues becomes possible, but not of when the military is likely to intervene.

*Corporate interest.* This approach to military involvement in sovereign power issues, one of the most influential perspectives in both the comparative politics literature and the Soviet studies field, predicts that the army is likely to intervene when its organizational interests are threatened. I quoted above a scenario sketched by Timothy Colton in the late-1970s that might lead the Soviet armed forces to intervene in politics. Colton's scenario -- a

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reformist civilian leadership, a shift in investment priorities, accommodation with the West -- in many respects was a prescient description of how civil-military relations developed under Gorbachev. The greater friction between civilian and military leaders under Gorbachev is explained largely by the policy steps that Colton envisioned.

On closer examination, however, this interest-based scenario fails as an explanation for the August 1991 coup. In particular, as with the domestic structure approach, the timing of the coup does not fit with an interpretation based on corporate interests. Ideological revision, military demobilization, a shift in investment priorities, and accommodation with foreign adversaries all took place beginning in 1987-88. By 1990, with the collapse of the Warsaw Pact and the reunification of Germany, these processes had gone far beyond what an interest-based explanation would suggest was the threshold for military intervention. The argument that civil-military conflict over military doctrine leads to intervention, as Thomas Nichols proposes, suffers from the same flaw and is even less persuasive. Serious doctrinal change began around 1987 and was much less important by 1991 than larger political issues such as the republican challenge to the armed forces and the Union as a whole.91

Organizational Culture. The organizational culture perspective contends that the norms held by officers determine their behavior in sovereign power issues. The Soviet military had a moderate-to-high degree of attachment to the norm of civilian supremacy in the late-Gorbachev

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period. According to this approach, the most important cause of military involvement in the August 1991 hard-liner coup attempt was the conjunction of an organizational culture with a moderate-to-high attachment to the norm of civilian supremacy and a national interest motive. If the Soviet military’s commitment to the norm of responsibility had been weak, then one would have expected military intervention prior to August 1991 for corporate interest motives. If the army’s attachment to the norm of civilian supremacy had been very strong, intervention probably would not have taken place at all. Instead, what happened was a weak and indecisive intervention that quickly collapsed.

The organizational culture approach has considerable explanatory power. Like the international structure approach, it can accommodate the possibility of intervention for national interest reasons. Thus, it is difficult to determine which of the two perspectives performs better. The international structure perspective maintains that concern for the defense of the state is the key motive for military intervention. The organizational culture approach has a similar prediction, arguing that the task orientation of the armed forces plays a crucial role in determining what behavior officers view as appropriate. The one indicator that might separate the two approaches is the extent to which the activity of the military can be explained by unique events in the history of the organization, as the organizational culture approach contends. Some evidence for this view is found by detailed process-tracing in the case; this evidence is discussed below.

That military involvement in the August 1991 coup is attributable to officer concern about the territorial integrity of the state is clear. The centrality of national interests,

1989), pp. 13-33. For Akhromeyev’s extremely illuminating thoughts on military doctrinal revision under Gorbachev, see: Akhromeyev and Korniyenko, Glazami marshala i diplomata, pp. 121-127, 184.
particularly the threat of state collapse, as a motive for military intervention is obvious both from the timing of the intervention and the testimony of the key figures involved. The coup attempt took place on the eve of the intended signing of the new Union Treaty that Gorbachev had negotiated with nine of the fifteen republics. The plotters believed that this treaty would lead to the break-up of the Soviet Union.

Minister of Defense Yazov was the key military plotter, without whom the coup almost certainly would not have taken place. Yazov told investigators the day after the coup's collapse that the proposed Union Treaty, which was to have been signed August 20, would have led to the collapse of the USSR, and that this fact motivated the urgency with which the plot was implemented. Two of his assistants also attribute Yazov's participation in the plot to his concern about the fate of the Union. At the same time, all observers agree that Yazov acted half-heartedly. Major-General A.V. Tsal'ko (in August 1991 he was a Colonel and a USSR People's Deputy) explains that Yazov was going through an internal struggle, as if between two people, throughout the coup. On the one hand, Yazov was agitated by the collapse of the state; on the other hand, he did not want to send the army against the people. Thus, Yazov did not make clear decisions and took half measures. Yeltsin later stated that Yazov "played a passive role the whole time."92

The most resolute military supporter of the coup was General Valentin Varennikov, Commander of the Ground Forces. Varennikov was the military representative at the famous

meeting with Gorbachev in the Crimea on August 18, and he was the only military figure involved in planning the storming of the White House who seemed to have no doubts about undertaking it. At his trial in July 1994, Varennikov maintained that his only desire in joining the coup attempt was to “disrupt the signing of the Union Treaty, dismantling the USSR, scheduled for August 20.” Varennikov compares his participation in the failed coup attempt with his service during the Great Patriotic War, stating that “in August 1991 I also came forward in defense of our Motherland -- against the collapse of the Soviet Union.” Deputy Minister of Defense Vladislav Achalov, the third member of the top military leadership intimately involved in the coup attempt, also maintains that preserving the USSR was a proper goal of the GKChP, even if they adopted improper means. General Boris Gromov, a career army officer who was serving as Deputy Interior Minister in August 1991, has also justified the coup as an effort to “maintain the Soviet Union.”

There is no evidence that the military intervened either because of threats to its corporate interests, such as autonomy or budgets, or because they wanted to take advantage of the weakness of the state to seize power. Those military officers that backed the coup, in conjunction with their civilian co-conspirators, were motivated by their concern for what they saw as the impending collapse of the Soviet Union.

Storming the White House

On the morning of August 19 Yazov convened a meeting of the Military Collegium at which he informed them of Gorbachev’s “illness” and the introduction of a state of emergency.

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He sent an order to the commanders of all of the military districts informing them of the state of emergency and ordering heightened military readiness and strengthened security measures. The heads of the Moscow and Leningrad military districts were named military commandants of those cities.\textsuperscript{94}

The extent to which military officers around the Soviet Union would have been prepared to enforce a state of emergency was never really tested. Practically all commanders undertook the steps ordered by Yazov; at the time the orders were received, these commanders had no reason to doubt their legitimacy. Nine deputy ministers, ten military district and fleet commanders, eight heads of central departments, and three lower level commanders were removed from the high command for activity in support of the GKChP, which usually involved either adopting statements in support of the GKChP or taking measures against soldiers who opposed the GKChP. A total of 316 officers were removed for their activities. On the other hand, there were acts of resistance to the GKChP within the military from Leningrad to the Far East. Many officers came to the defense of the Russian White House on their own volition. It is difficult to predict how officers would have reacted if more active measures would have been ordered. Extrapolating from events in Moscow, it appears that military behavior would have been highly dependent on the activities of the local population and civilian political leadership. Most officers seemed to adopt a “wait and see” attitude, because they had orders from the

\textsuperscript{94} The material in this section is based largely on the following sources, which are in fundamental agreement on the key details: Stepanov and Lisov, \textit{Kremlievskiy zagovor}; Ivashov, \textit{Marshal Yazov}; “Obvinitel’noye zaklyuchenie...,” \textit{NEG}; “GKChP: Armiya privlekalas’, no ne uchastovala ” \textit{Armiya}, No. 6 (March), No. 7-8 (April), 1992 [Russian Supreme Soviet hearing on military participation in the coup, hereafter cited as \textit{Armiya} with the issue and page number]; Lebed, \textit{Spektakl’ nazyvalsya putch}; “Pochemu ‘Grom’ ne gryanul,” (depositions of Boris Gromov and Pavel Grachev), \textit{Moskovskiye novosti}, No. 29 (July), 1994, p. 8.
Minister of Defense but by the afternoon of the 19th doubts had begun to grow about the legitimacy of these orders.\textsuperscript{95}

The key event in the three day drama was the resistance to the coup led by Russian President Boris Yeltsin and the possibility that the Russian government headquarters, the so-called White House, would be stormed by force. A joint operation to storm the White House by army, MVD, and KGB forces was planned and scheduled for the night of August 20-21. The story of why the storming did not take place demonstrates the thinking of Russian officers about their role in resolving sovereign power questions and the crucial role that organizational culture played in determining the outcome of the crisis.

Two Ground Forces divisions, the Taman Motorized Rifle Division and the Kantemirov Tank Division, were introduced into Moscow on August 19. They were placed at various locations around Moscow, but given no specific tasks. Also brought into Moscow was the 106th Tula Airborne Division. Units of this division were responsible for guarding such key installations as the State Bank and radio and television stations. The behavior of this division would turn out to be decisive. Lieutenant-General Pavel Grachev was the commander of the Airborne Forces (VDV) in August 1991, and his deputy, Major-General Lebed, was tasked by Grachev with operational control of the Tula Division, which Lebed had previously commanded. At around noon on August 19, Grachev ordered Lebed to take the second battalion of the Tula Division’s Ryazan regiment to “organize the guarding and defense” of the White

\textsuperscript{95} On those officers dismissed for support of the GKChP, see the statements of Marshall Yevgeniy Shaposhnikov and General Konstantin Kobets in: “GKChP,” Armiya, No 6, p. 16, p. 24. On military activity outside Moscow, see: Dunlop, The Rise of Russia, pp. 234-236, 250; Lepingwell, “Soviet Civil-Military Relations and the August Coup,” pp. 563-565; “GKChP,” Armiya, No. 7-8, pp. 27-28. An officer serving in the General Staff in August 1991 claims that almost all General Staff officers remained neutral during the coup, although privately senior officers (generals) tended to support the coup and mid-level officers (Colonels) tended to oppose it. Interview with Colonel (retired) Valeriy Yarynych, October 28, 1994.
House. Lebed was told to enter into negotiations with the head of White House security about
the placement of the battalion. Why did Grachev send this battalion to the White House? 96

This episode is one of the most mysterious of the putsch. Two completely opposing
explanations have been offered for this episode. One explanation is that Grachev sent the
battalion to the White House at Yeltsin's request -- i.e., that this unit went over to the
"defenders" of the White House. 97 The second explanation is that Grachev sent the unit at
Yazov's order, to take the White House under control. 98

Lebed's account of these events are revealing, but they provide no clue to Grachev's
motivation. Lebed himself was completely in the dark about his mission; he had an order to
"guard and defend" the White House, but he had no idea from whom he was defending it.
Indeed, it was only on the evening of the 19th, while meeting with Yeltsin's representatives,
that Lebed learned of the existence of the GKChP! Lebed's political deputy, Lt.-Col. O.Ye.
Bastanov, told Colonel Sergey Yushenkov, a Russian People's Deputy present at the White

96 This battalion should not be confused with the company of the Taman Division, commanded by Major
Sergey Evdokimov, that undoubtedly went over to the White House. For Evdokimov's story, see V augste 91-
Stepankov and Lisov, Kremelvski zagovor, pp. 152-153, pp. 177-178.

97 Yeltsin phoned Grachev early on the 19th from his dacha to ask what was going on. He told Grachev that he
believed the GKChP was unconstitutional and asked for Grachev's support. Grachev, after some hesitation,
agreed to send a battalion to the White House and, apparently, a company of troops to Yeltsin's dacha. Yeltsin
turned to his wife after this discussion and said, "Grachev is ours." Confusingly, Yeltsin claims that Grachev
agreed to send forces to protect him at the dacha, and Urushadze confirms this based on KGB evidence. All other
accounts, however, concentrate on Grachev's decision to send a battalion to the White House. Yeltsin's version is
in: Yel'tsin, Zapiski prezidenta, pp. 83-85. See also: Urushadze, Vybrannye mesta is perepiski s vragami, pp. 353-
354. Grachev also stressed his support for Yeltsin in interviews. See: Izvestiya, September 4, 1991, p. 8; KZ,
August 31, 1991, p. 3; "Pochemu 'Grom' ne gryanul," Moskovskiiye Novosti.

98 This is the conclusion the prosecutor came to after weighing all the evidence. See "Obvinitel'nye
zaklyucheniy," HEG, August 25, 1993. General Konstantin Kobets, then the chair of the Russian Supreme
Soviet Committee on Defense Reform, who was in charge of the defense of the White House, was not persuaded
that the unit had come over to the Russian side. See: Korichnevyy putch krasnykh: August '91 (Moskva: Tekst,
1991), p. 75. Yazov later claimed that Grachev and Lebed's conduct was satisfactory during the putsch: Dmitrii
House, that they had orders to defend the facility but not the people, and that they would not have resisted an attack with force. 99

Ultimately, only Pavel Grachev knows for certain his motivations at the time. Although he tended to stress his pro-Yeltsin stance in subsequent interviews, the most likely explanation for his behavior is that he was adopting a wait-and-see attitude. He was able to say "yes" to both Yazov and Yeltsin without committing firmly to either camp. In one revealing interview at the time, Grachev gave the following explanation for his behavior:

Question: Thus rumors about a split in the army and that the airborne troops went over to Yeltsin's side do not correspond to reality?
Grachev: Of course. If I had allowed my forces to split, then at that minute I would have been replaced. And who would have taken my place and what orders they would have given is difficult to say. Understand properly: Yazov ordered me to take under guard...the RSFSR Supreme Soviet. And Yeltsin ordered that I provide him with security. Therefore about the non-fulfillment of an order there was no discussion in the beginning: I tried to tack between the army leadership and the Russian government. 100

Regardless of Grachev's motives, the units were not allowed to place their armored vehicles next to the White House. Lebed had agreed on the approach of these units with the Russian leadership, but Colonel Tsal’ko became suspicious and persuaded the crowd to stop the column. Given that Grachev and Lebed's motives were unclear, and that the Airborne Troops

99 Although Lebed's claim about his lack of knowledge about the GKChP sounds fantastic, it is quite plausible, because since early morning Lebed had been organizing the movement of the 106th Tula Division to Moscow and he had not had an opportunity to watch TV or listen to the radio. Lebed's account is an excellent description of the enormous chaos present in the military during those three days, although he explains this chaos as a product of some larger conspiracy: Aleksandr Lebed, Spektaki nazyval'sya puch. Interview with Sergey Yushenkov, July 20, 1994. Yushenkov was the chair of the Duma Defense Committee from 1993 to 1995.

100 Emphasis in original. Interview with Col.-Gen. Pavel Grachev by Sergey Romanovskiy, "'My vse okazalis' založnikami Yazova,'" Sobesednik, No. 36 (September), 1991, p. 7. For other interviews with Grachev about August 1991, see the cites in note 97.
would most likely play a key role in any attempt to storm the White House by force, Tsal’ko’s caution was appropriate.\footnote{The Russian military analyst Pavel Fel’gengauer believes that Tsal’ko’s move was crucial. Interview, July 7, 1994. See also his Nezavisimaya gazeta [hereafter Nez. gaz.] article of August 24, 1991, reproduced in Gorshkov and Zhuravlev, Nesokrushimaya i legendarnaya, pp. 231-233. Tsal’ko credits his decision to an “internal feeling.” Interview. Lebed maintains that Tsal’ko was motivated by his offense at rough treatment by one of Yeltsin’s bodyguards, who was accompanying Lebed at the time: Lebed, Speziakl’ nazyvalsyu putch, pp. 20-22.}

On August 20 the GKChP decided to attempt to storm the White House by force. KGB head Vladimir Kryuchkov, MVD chief Boris Pugo, and Yazov tasked their deputies with drawing up a plan for a joint operation to seize the White House. Achalov, Varennikov, Grachev, and Lebed were present at the planning meeting, as was Gromov, a career army officer who was serving as the Deputy Interior Minister. At Grachev’s request, Lebed was asked to report on the situation at the White House. Lebed stated that there was a crowd of up to 100,000 people at the Russian Supreme Soviet, that there were extensive fortified barricades, and that there was a well-armed security force in the building. The use of force, Lebed predicted, “would lead to a grandiose blood-letting.” Varennikov criticized Lebed for his report, saying that he was “obligated to be an optimist, and you have introduced pessimism and lack of confidence here.”\footnote{See the cites in note 94 for this and subsequent paragraphs.}

Grachev and Gromov both made moderate efforts at this meeting to delay the storming. Grachev claimed that the Airborne Troops had insufficient forces to fulfill the tasks assigned to them; Achalov ordered that two additional regiments be flown to Moscow. Gromov suggested that his troops enter Moscow only in wheeled, not tracked, vehicles, and that they not carry weapons during the operation. According to Gromov, when the meeting ended Grachev stated
that the operation would lead to much bloodshed, but no one reacted to this statement. The operation was given the code-name "Thunder."

Both Grachev and Gromov took a series of steps to impede the operation later that evening. After another trip to the White House for reconnaissance, Lebed reported to Grachev that the operation was senseless and that he would not participate. Grachev "beamed" and replied, according to Lebed, "I always believed in you, and it is excellent that I was not mistaken." Grachev sent Lebed to the White House to warn them of the planned attack and assigned him the task of receiving the two regiments being flown in at Achalov's orders. Two of Lebed's regimental commanders from the 106th Tula Division also reported to Achalov that storming the White House would be impossible, and it appears that the reinforcing regiments did not arrive as planned.

Gromov protested the planned operation to Pugo, but Pugo told him that orders were to be followed. Nevertheless, Gromov told the commander of the elite MVD Dzerzhinsky division not to move his forces without a direct order from Gromov, even if he received an order from Pugo. Gromov also took steps to inform the White House about the GKChP's plans. Gromov and Grachev also spoke by phone and agreed that their units would not take place in the storming. Grachev and Air Force Commander Yevgeniy Shaposhnikov also agreed that their forces would not participate.103

103 After the coup was over Shaposhnikov and Grachev claimed that they had agreed on a plan to bomb the Kremlin in the event that operation "Thunder" was launched. However, in his memoirs Shaposhnikov notes that he ordered that two planes be prepared to fly over central Moscow as a "warning," but they were not to be armed. I have not discussed Shaposhnikov's role in any detail because the behavior of the army, and not the air force, was the key to the failure of the coup. The most important step Shaposhnikov took from an operational standpoint was to delay the movements of other units by the Military Transport Aviation. See: Shaposhnikov, Vybor, pp. 25-27, pp. 40-41.
The KGB special forces were experiencing similar opposition to the storming.\footnote{The KGB is covered in detail in: Stepankov and Lisov, Kremlevskiy zagovor; "Obvinitel'noye zaklyuchenie..." NEG; Boltunov, Al'fa ne khotela ubivat', pp. 346-367.} Thus, Operation "Thunder" collapsed before it ever began. Although the operational plans had been worked out, all of the key units seemed to be waiting both for direct orders from the top and for activity by the forces of the other ministries. Grachev and his deputies joked bitterly that all the plotters were sleeping and "hoping that we would start the massacre."\footnote{Because Kryuchkov and Yazov did not give a direct order in the early morning on August 21 to start the storming the plotters have subsequently claimed that they did not plan to storm the White House. But orders had been given the previous evening and they fully expected the storming to go ahead as planned, but the inactivity of Grachev and Gromov prevented the storming. The head of the KGB's Alpha unit, General Karpukhin, did intend to carry out the assault but his deputies and the rest of the unit resisted. At that point he told Grachev that his unit would not participate. In addition to the interviews with Grachev cited above, see: Boltunov, Al'fa ne khotela ubivat', pp. 357-363; and the interviews with the relevant KGB officers in Gorshkov and Zhuravlev, eds., Krasnoye ili beloye?, pp. 108-111.} In any event Grachev had already pledged to Yeltsin, Gromov, Shaposhnikov, and his deputies that the VDV would not take part in the storming. Gromov also seemed determined to resist the operation.

Achalov, in the early morning of August 21, about thirty minutes before the planned storming, called Grachev to check on the situation. Grachev told Achalov that there was a huge group of people in front of the White House and that he was going to withdraw his forces. Achalov went to the White House himself to inspect the scene. Seeing the large crowd, and hearing of the deaths of three civilians, Achalov decided that the operation should be called off. He reported this to Yazov, who after some hesitation gave the command to halt the movement of all forces. Achalov informed Grachev and Gromov of Yazov's decision.\footnote{In an otherwise compelling account of the coup, John Dunlop argues that the three civilians who died were killed at the beginning of the attempt to storm the White House. However, the units involved were from the Taman Division, who had no designated role in Operation "Thunder," and were moving away from the White House at the time of the incident. These units were involved (unsuccessfully) in trying to enforce the curfew. Dunlop, The Rise of Russia, pp. 244-245; Stepankov and Lisov, Kremlevskiy zagovor, pp. 176-77; Kobets, in V avguste 91-go, p. 166; Lebed, Spektaki' nazyvalsy a push, pp. 38-39.}
Yazov refused to attend the meeting of the GKChP on the morning of the 21st, informing them that he was "leaving this game." Yazov called a meeting of the Military Collegium, at which it was agreed that all armed forces should be withdrawn from Moscow. The other members of the GKChP came to the Ministry of Defense to try to change Yazov's mind, but, relying on the decision of the Collegium, Yazov refused to rescind his order to withdraw the troops. He told them, "What, did we start this thing in order to open fire? We were able to screw up, now we have to be able to answer [for what we did]." Yazov proposed that they fly to the Crimea to see Gorbachev, and thus the coup attempt collapsed.

Explaining Military Behavior During the August Coup

Why did the Soviet military fail to take decisive measures to carry out the coup? There were certainly strong corporate interests in supporting the hard-liners, who would have been more sympathetic to military priorities. National interest motives were also present, particularly the possible collapse of the Soviet state, and were a key factor in Yazov's decision to join the plotters (the key role in organizing the plot, all observers agree, belonged to KGB chief Kryuchkov). The paradox of the August 1991 coup attempt, as noted by Russian People’s Deputy Lev Ponomarev, was that without the participation of the military the coup would not have taken place, but that it was precisely the "passive participation" of both the armed forces leadership and the troops they commanded that led to the coup's collapse.107

107 Ponomarev’s comments are in Armiya, No. 6, p. 15.
There are two possible explanations for this passivity. The first is that officers were passive because they foresaw the possibility of the coup's failure and did not want to be on the losing side. The second explanation is that the particular beliefs held by officers, whether rooted in their self-understanding as a great power military or in the army's organizational culture, inhibited officers from acting decisively. I argue that the second reason is the more important, although the argument that the coup failed because officers for reasons of self-interest did not want to be on the losing side is also relevant.\textsuperscript{108}

There is some evidence for the view that individual officers tried to protect themselves by using a "fence-sitting" strategy. The fence-sitting behavior exhibited by officers such as Grachev, who tried to "tack between" Yazov and Yeltsin, is in part explained by self-interested calculation. Adopting a "wait-and-see" attitude is a sensible course when an officer is uncertain about the validity of orders. The Russian military analyst Pavel Fel'gengauer noted that officers always follow an order, for otherwise they can face a military tribunal. But when contradictory orders start to come from different sources and the legality of these orders is unclear, Fel'gengauer continued, "any normal, not too politicized officer will try to act cautiously, slowly, and, if possible, confusedly...activity seems significantly more severe than inactivity. The majority of officers acted along these lines."\textsuperscript{109}

This explanation has a great deal of merit. It benefits considerably, however, from hindsight. As Mikhail Boltunov points out in his book on the KGB Alpha unit, what if the coup had lasted three weeks, and not three days? At the time that Grachev, Gromov, Lebed,

\textsuperscript{108} As Jon Elster points out, both self-interested and normative reasons may be present in any particular action, but this does not mean that norms are not autonomous or important: Jon Elster, \textit{The Cement of Society: A Study of Social Order} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 97, 106-107, 125-151.

\textsuperscript{109} Fel'gengauer, in Gorshkov and Zhuravlev, \textit{Nesokrushimaya i legendarnaya}, pp. 231-232.
and Shaposhnikov had decided to disobey orders it was not at all clear that the coup would collapse so suddenly. Indeed, it was only the failure of the military to carry out orders that caused the putsch’s failure, as Gorbachev himself noted later. Shaposhnikov and his deputies thought that he might be arrested when he was summoned to Yazov’s office on the 20th, and Grachev stated that he knew that he could face a tribunal for insubordination. Shaposhnikov and Grachev both have noted that open opposition would lead to their being replaced by people more willing to carry out any orders. Grachev later remarked, "you civilians can squabble, but we have regulations."  

Another common explanation for coup failures is counter-balancing: the use by the government of para-military units to deter or resist coup attempts. This rationale was not present in August 1991, however, because the two organizations that had the coercive potential to counter-balance a military coup, the KGB and the MVD, were also involved in the plot. Moreover, all three organizations experienced resistance from officers during the putsch.  

Something other than self-interested calculation had to be present for top officers to resist orders and drag their feet, because not carrying out orders was as risky as implementing them. This inhibiting factor can be explained either by the international structure or the organizational culture approach. I argued above that the dominant military culture in 1991 was at the threshold of when a national interest coup becomes possible, and the international structure perspective also maintains that a military coup in a great power is only likely when the state itself is threatened. The national interest motive guided Yazov’s decision to intervene,  

110 Gorbachev, Augustomskiy putch, p. 21; Shaposhnikov, Vybor, pp. 28-37; Interview with Grachev by Romanovskiy, ““My vse okazalis’ zalozhnikami Yazova.””  

which was later partially endorsed by Gromov and Achalov. At the same time, the top military leadership held the belief that the military should not be involved in sovereign power issues and that they should remain subordinate to civilian control. Thus, these officers faced an internal struggle, and Yeltsin and his allies successfully used these military beliefs to disrupt the coup. The dominant organizational culture did not see military involvement in sovereign power issues as appropriate.

The August 1991 events also showed the presence of two subcultures within the armed forces. One subculture was embodied by Varennikov, who was one of the few top officers who was willing, even eager, to use harsh measures to achieve their goals. Varennikov sent five telegrams on the 19th and 20th from Kiev, where he went after Foros to talk with Ukrainian President Leonid Kravchuk, to complain about "indecisiveness and half-measures" and to urge "immediate measures to liquidate the group of B.N. Yeltsin's adventurists." Varennikov ordered, seemingly on his own initiative, the deployment of army aviation and three additional tank companies from the Taman Division to assist the storming. The head of army aviation, Pavlov, did not fulfill Varennikov's order, and the commander of the Taman Division, Marchenko, refused the order since it was not delivered in writing.112

The other subculture was the one embodied by officers such as Tsal'ko, Yushenkov, and General Konstantin Kobets, then the chair of the Russian Supreme Soviet: Committee on

112 Stepankov and Lisov, Kremlevskiy zagovor, pp. 149-150; Armiya, No. 7-8, pp. 24-25. Another adherent to this "hardliner" subculture was the infamous General Makashov, commander of the Volga-Urals Military District. On his activity during the coup, see: Armiya, No. 7-8, p. 28; A Tarasov, "Chem byl zanyat vo vremya perevorota general Makashov?" Izvestiya, September 21, 1991, p. 8. Makashov remained unrepentant a year later: Interview with Albert Makashov by Vladimir Voronov, "Menya uvol'nyali Gorbachev, El'tsin, Bush i papa rimskiy!?," Sobesednik, No. 33 (August), 1992, p. 10.
Defense Reform, who immediately supported Yeltsin. Junior officers, in particular, seemed more inclined to embrace the Russian pro-democracy movement.\footnote{Evidence of junior officer support for reform is discussed in: Meyer, "How the Threat (and the Coup) Collapsed." For additional survey data on officer support for reform and democracy, see: Deryugin, Obraztsov, and Serebryanikov, Problemy sotsiologii armii, pp. 45, 50. See also the quote of General Staff Colonel Yarynich cited in note 95.}

The dominant military organizational culture, however, was the one adhered to by Shaposhnikov, Gromov, Achalov, Grachev, and Lebed. They faced a situation in which they had orders from the Minister of Defense to fulfill and the consequences for insubordination were potentially severe, but also the growing knowledge that the military was deeply involved in a sovereign power dispute. In such a situation the question of who holds legitimate power can play a key role in determining military behavior. Officers that adhere to the norm of civilian supremacy will tend to support those politicians who will be able to rule without the need to rely on military force, because involvement in domestic politics is not considered a proper function of the armed forces.

Boris Yeltsin and his advisers clearly understood this military dilemma between following orders and staying out of politics, and worked hard to exploit it to their advantage. Yeltsin possessed enormous legitimacy and authority. Two months prior to the coup he had been elected President of Russia with 57 percent of the vote in the first popular presidential election in Russian history. Yeltsin, his Vice President Alexander Rutskoy (an Air Force Colonel and an Afghanistan war hero), and General Kobets made several appeals to the armed forces not to participate in unconstitutional activity. Yeltsin also declared himself Commander-in-Chief of the Russian Federation, since the legal Commander-in-Chief, Gorbachev, was isolated from power. Kobets explains that they used various channels, such as personal
contacts and people's deputies from the military, to explain their position to key officers. Understanding that he could not ask these officers to disobey direct orders, Kobets appealed to commanders to delay the implementation of orders until he had time to organize counter-measures. Kobets states that Colonel-General Kalinin, the Commander of the Moscow Military District who was named the Military Commandant of Moscow, in essence fulfilled both Yazov's and Yeltsin's orders.¹¹⁴

Popular legitimacy, evidenced by the large and resolute crowd at the White House, also played a crucial role. Some commentators have argued that the presence of the crowd made little difference and that the White House could have been stormed easily. But it is clear from the account of key figures such as Lebed, Grachev, Gromov, and Achalov that they were not morally prepared for the massacre that would have taken place in the event of a storming. Yeltsin states, "the 'massive bloodletting' [quoting Lebed] would have been a most serious blow to the military, from which they would not have recovered. Therefore they only imitated the preparation for a storming, imitated military activity, wasted time."¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴ On the efforts of Yeltsin and his allies to gain support in the armed forces, see: Yeltsin, Zapiski prezidenta, pp. 103-116; Kobets, in V avguste 91-ga, pp. 101-4; Ivashev, Marshal Yazov, pp. 90-91; Dunlop, The Rise of Russia, pp. 213-215; Ruslan Khasbulatov, The Struggle for Russia: Power and change in the democratic revolution (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), pp. 131-169. Yeltsin claims that it was Lebed’s idea that Yeltsin declare himself Commander-in-Chief, because otherwise his appeals to officers and soldiers to not participate in the coup would put them in the position of violating orders, which is a violation of their oath. Yeltsin would have a firmer basis if he was prepared to take over Gorbachev’s functions within Russia. Lebed makes no mention of this meeting in his account. Colonel Anatoliy Volkov, who was the assistant of General Dmitriy Volkogonov, Yeltsin’s military adviser in the presidential administration, was sent by Kobets to the Taman and Kanemirov Divisions and the Moscow Military District Headquarters with Yeltsin’s orders to the military. Interview with Volkov, July 20, 1994.

¹¹⁵ On the alleged ease of a military storming of the White House, see: Albats, The State within a State, p. 289; Yeltsin, Zapiski prezidenta, pp. 113, 116. Incidentally, when the considerably less well defended White House was stormed in October 1993, about 100 people lost their lives. Many more would have died if an attempt had been made in August 1991.
Gorbachev, despite his general unpopularity at the time, was the legitimate leader of the Soviet Union, and this fact also had an effect on officers. Most officers would have gladly voted against him in a free election, but his displacement by the GKChP was clearly unconstitutional. Shaposhnikov maintains that he “felt uncomfortable” when Yazov announced at the Collegium meeting on the 19th that Gorbachev was ill and that Vice President Yanayev had taken on the president’s duties. Yushenkov notes that Shaposhnikov and Grachev were helped in their “difficult decision” by the fact that the Soviet president had been “effectively denied power.”\textsuperscript{116}

If Gorbachev was unpopular but legitimate, the members of the GKChP were unpopular and illegitimate. The GKChP clearly were concerned about the appearance of legality. They forced the leading role in the State Emergency Committee on Vice President Gennadiy Yanayev because of constitutional reasons, even though he was too weak a personality to be the lead figure (he earned the nickname “shaking hands” for his performance at the GKChP’s press conference). Yanayev tried to persuade them that Anatoliy Lukyanov, the speaker of the Supreme Soviet, should take on Gorbachev’s responsibilities, but Lukyanov refused to become acting president or a formal member of the GKChP because it was an executive body, and he represented the legislative branch. Few people were fooled by these legal maneuverings, though, and the members of the GKChP did not have the popularity or charisma to command support either among the populace or in the army.\textsuperscript{117}

\textsuperscript{116} Interview with Shaposhnikov in Kom. pravda, August 27, 1991, p. 3; Shaposhnikov, Vybor, pp. 18-19. Interview with Yushenkov.

\textsuperscript{117} Stepanov and Lisov, Kremlevskiy zagovor, pp. 101-102; “Obvinitel’noye zaklyucheniye...,” NEI, July 30, August 4, 1993. The press conference is vividly described in Remnick, Lenin’s Tomb, pp. 471-472. For Yeltsin’s comments on the “apparatchik” nature of the coup plotters, see Zapiski prezidenta, p. 108. A KGB officer cited in Urushadze notes that it was after the press conference that many KGB officers began to doubt in
The efforts of Yeltsin to convince officers that the GKChP was illegitimate and that Gorbachev and he were the rightful leaders of the Soviet Union and Russia played an important role. No longer did officers face the simple task of carrying out orders; they were put in a position in which the military was involved in a sovereign power dispute. As hypothesized in Chapter One, the key officers, who still adhered to the norm of civilian supremacy, ended up de facto supporting the legitimate side, rather than the side that appealed to their corporate interests.

Even Yazov's behavior suggests that he understood he had violated his own conception of the military's role and position by becoming involved in the coup. Yazov's half-measures were mentioned above, as was the fact that Yazov gave the order to withdraw the troops, and his refusal to order force caused the coup to collapse. Moreover, Yazov did not take punitive steps against Shaposhnikov and others who were obviously not complying with orders in a timely fashion. The day after the coup collapsed Yazov remarked, "I was an old fool to participate in this adventure."\textsuperscript{118}

Akhромеев also violated the norm of civilian supremacy, even though he had sworn for years that the military was subordinate to civilian leadership and would intervene in politics. Akhромеев did not take part in planning the coup, but he supported it and provided his assistance to the plotters. Norms are sometimes violated (incest is the classic example here), but the violator usually feels a sense of shame for having transgressed.\textsuperscript{119} Although it is

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\textsuperscript{118} "ChP v dele GKChP," Izvestiya, October 10, 1991, p. 7.

\textsuperscript{119} On norm violation and shame, see: Elster, The Cement of Society, pp. 99-100, 105.
impossible to know for sure, this sense of shame probably played a role in Akhromeyev's decision to commit suicide after the coup failed. The day after the coup collapsed he wrote to Gorbachev:

I understand that as a Marshal of the Soviet Union I violated the Military Oath and committed a military crime. I also committed no less of a crime as an adviser to the President of the USSR. Nothing remains for me now except to take responsibility for my actions.\textsuperscript{120}

The international structure and organizational culture approach would both lead us to expect officers to hold the view that they did not have an internal role. The military's unpreparedness for a violent storming of the White House is explained largely by these beliefs and the influence they had on decisions made by officers.

The predictions about military behavior that can be derived from these two perspectives, as noted above, are basically the same. Thus, it is difficult to tell which is the most important explanation. There is some evidence that axioms and events particular to the Soviet military, consistent with the organizational culture approach, played a key role. For example, the Soviet military often expressed the maxims that "the army and people are united" and "the army will never go against the people." Shaposhnikov noted that these words had become a "hackneyed stereotype, and were treated as such. The extreme situation of August 19-21 suddenly showed that these were not words, they were reality!\textsuperscript{121}

The lessons of Tbilisi, Baku, and Vilnius were prominent in the minds of those involved. On each of these prior occasions the army had been blamed for the consequences of

\textsuperscript{120}Stepankov and Lisov, Kremlevskiy zagovor, pp. 240-242.

poor decisions made by political leaders. Shaposhnikov recalled how immediately after the Collegium meeting on the August 19 he remembered the events in Tbilisi, Baku, and Vilnius. He thought, "Why should our poor soldier, our miserable officer, our hoodwinked general pay for the mistakes and ambitions of politicians?" Ivashov argued that one of the factors leading Yazov to act indecisively was the "sad experience" of these incidents and the "dark stain" they had cast on the army. Grachev maintained that every soldier and officer began to feel special responsibility for his activity after these events, and to think about for what purpose he was being asked to "spill the blood of peaceful citizens, compatriots." He said, "In essence it was precisely the army that was able to stop the bloodletting that could have taken place the night of August 20-21. You see, the army learned its lesson from the January events in Vilnius." The importance of these critical events in the organization's history gives additional weight to the organizational culture view.

The Soviet armed forces exhibited few praetorian tendencies during the August 1991 coup. Even Defense Minister Yazov, who got the military involved in the first place, showed no enthusiasm for a role in high politics. With few exceptions, most officers in positions of responsibility did everything they could to avoid decisive actions. Their "passive participation" was testimony to a military organizational culture with an attachment to the norm of civilian supremacy. The military's unwillingness to get involved in sovereign power issues is also consistent with the international structure perspective. These two approaches offer the best explanation both for the military's involvement in the August 1991 coup and its failure. The domestic structure perspective also is crucial for understanding the change in state

political capacity that made intervention possible. Corporate interests did not play an important role in the August 1991 coup attempt.

THE COLLAPSE OF THE USSR

The failed August 1991 coup gave a sharp impetus to the process of the disintegration of the Soviet Union. By the end of the year the USSR had collapsed. Why did the armed forces not intervene to halt the breakdown of the state they were sworn to defend? All four of the perspectives on military involvement in sovereign power issues would lead one to think a coup attempt was likely. The international structure perspective argues that coups are unlikely in state’s with high external threats, but also notes that military intervention often occurs when the territorial integrity of the state is at risk. The domestic structure approach expects coups when states are weak, and it is hard to imagine a weaker state than the Soviet Union in the last few months of its existence. The corporate interest explanation for military intervention would also predict a coup attempt, given that the collapse of the Soviet Union was likely to have extremely negative consequences for the military’s corporate interests. Finally, the organizational culture perspective also would predict military intervention is likely when attachment to the norm of civilian supremacy is moderate-to-high and there are national interest motives present.

Although the military did not intervene in December 1991, they did play an arbiter role. After Yeltsin and the leaders of Ukraine and Belarus declared the Soviet Union dissolved, both Gorbachev and Yeltsin met with the high command and asked for support. The military
refused to intervene, which *de facto* meant that they had acquiesced to Yeltsin's position and the collapse of the Soviet Union.

This section discusses the last months of the Soviet Union and the military's role during that period. Military behavior is explained both by rational calculation, specifically the belief that a coup attempt would fail and that the instigators of a military putsch would be punished, and by cultural reasons, particularly the view that the military should not intervene in high politics. The August 1991 coup attempt was a critical event in the life of the Soviet military that reinforced pre-existing beliefs about the impermissibility of military involvement in sovereign power issues.

The Effect of the August 1991 Coup on the Military

The rapid collapse of the hard-liner coup effort had serious consequences for the armed forces. The minister of defense, the chief of the general staff, nine deputy ministers, ten military district and fleet commanders (including the commander of the Moscow Military District), and eight heads of central departments were dismissed for support of the failed putsch. Additionally, Communist Party organs inside the armed forces were abolished, while the party itself was banned. The removal of Communist Party bodies was strongly supported by the new Minister of Defense, Yevgeniy Shaposhnikov, and by a large majority (over ninety percent) of the officer corps. The respected Russian military analyst Pavel Fel'gengauer told me that the military used the failure of the August coup to destroy party bodies in the armed
forces, which they had never liked. After over seventy years of party domination, however, this change certainly contributed to the post-coup upheaval in the armed forces.\footnote{Information on those dismissed for support of the GKChP was provided above. On Shaposhnikov’s views on the removal of Communist Party bodies from the armed forces, see: Shaposhnikov, Výbor, pp. 97-101; Interview with Shaposhnikov, "Vozrodit’ avtoritet armii," KZ, August 30, 1991, p. 1. Interview with Pavel Felgengauer, July 7, 1994. 94 percent of officers and warrant officers supported the "departyization" of the armed forces (the removal of Communist Party cells). 71 percent supported the removal of political organs, which were responsible for political education. This number was over 80% for regular line officers (i.e., not counting political workers). V. Serebryannikov, Zagadka perevorota: Kak razgryvali armeyshku kartu (Moskva: "Pravda Severa," 1992), p. 39.}{\footnote{On these personnel changes, see: Stephen Foye, "El’tsin Begins Housecleaning in the Defense Ministry," Report on the USSR, Vol. 3, No. 36 (September 6, 1991), pp. 31-34.}}

Those officers who actively opposed the coup were rewarded. The new Minister, Shaposhnikov, and his new first deputy, Grachev, had distinguished themselves during the August days for their resistance to the GKChP. The rise of an air force officer to the top job and the appointment of an Airborne Forces general to be his top deputy was a remarkable change for an army that had always been dominated by Ground Forces commanders. The new Chief of the General Staff, General Vladimir Lobov, was head of the Frunze Military Academy at the time of the coup and had refused an appointment by the GKChP as military commandant of a region of Moscow. General Kobets, who had helped organize Yeltsin's defense of the White House, was named the chair of the Russian Federation commission on military reform.\footnote{On these personnel changes, see: Stephen Foye, "El’tsin Begins Housecleaning in the Defense Ministry," Report on the USSR, Vol. 3, No. 36 (September 6, 1991), pp. 31-34.}

The new military leadership stressed repeatedly in interviews after their appointments the principle that the army should not be involved in politics. Shaposhnikov stated, "the army cannot be and should not be an arena of party or political confrontation, nor a means for the satisfaction of someone's ambitions. Serving the people, upholding the Constitution, defending the Fatherland -- these are the three foundations for military service." Shaposhnikov later remarked in his memoirs that he saw ending the army's internal involvement as one of his key
tasks upon becoming Defense Minister. General Staff Chief Lobov said, "the military should, of course, be largely under the control of civilian authorities, and the military should not interfere in politics." The Defense Ministry ordered local military commanders not to become involved in ethnic conflicts in a clear attempt to prevent the use of the military for resolving internal missions.\footnote{Interview with Shaposhnikov, "Vozrodit’ avtoritet armii"; Shaposhnikov, Vybor, pp. 66, 72; Interview with General Vladimir Lobov by Yuli Semenov, "Mayak Morning Panorama," Mayak Radio, September 26, 1991 [FBIS-SOV-91-189, September 30, 1991, p. 41]; TASS, “Protivostoyaniye narastayet,” KZ, September 25, 1991, p. 1.}

The effect of these changes on the officer corps was clear. First, much of the top military leadership was changed, thereby disrupting personal and institutional ties within the highest ranks of the officer corps. Second, a clear message was communicated that officers with praetorian leanings were not wanted in the Soviet officer corps. Third, an equally stark message was sent that those who resist following dubious orders are likely to be rewarded. Finally, the new military leadership stated plainly their commitment to the norm of civilian supremacy. All of these changes strengthened the determination of many officers, including the top leaders, to keep the army out of politics at all costs. This firmness was required for the military to weather the chaos of the coming months.

The Collapse of the USSR and the Military’s Reaction

The first states to break free from the Soviet Union were the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. Their independence was recognized by the United States on September 2, 1991, and the new Soviet State Council (Gorbachev plus the heads of the other republics) on September 6. After the coup collapsed an avalanche of independence declarations came out,
the first and most significant being the August 24 declaration by Ukraine. By the end of September Belarus, Moldova, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Kirgiziya, Georgia, Tajikistan, and Armenia had all announced their independence in one form or another.

These independence declarations had a somewhat symbolic character, and the future of the Soviet state was still undetermined. Gorbachev entered into negotiations with the leaders of the remaining republics (except Moldova and Georgia) on a new treaty for a "union of sovereign states." These negotiations dragged on for several months, but they eventually reached a dead end after over ninety percent of Ukrainians voted for independence on December 1. Almost all observers agreed that there could be no serious talk of a union without Ukraine's participation. Shortly after the Ukrainian vote, on December 7-8, Yeltsin, newly-elected Ukrainian President Leonid Kravchuk, and chair of the Belarussian Supreme Soviet Stanislav Shushkevich met in the Belovezhskaya Forest in Belarus and declared the death of the Soviet Union and the founding of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Other former Soviet republics were invited to join, and the deal was clinched on December 12 when the five Central Asian states asked to join. The Commonwealth Declaration was signed by the leaders of eleven republics (all except Georgia) on December 22 in Alma Ata, Kazakhstan.

Gorbachev resigned as Soviet leader on December 25, and the Soviet Union ceased to exist.\footnote{For overviews of the events between August 1991 and January 1992, see: Dunlop, The Rise of Russia, pp. 256-284; Matlock, Autopsy on an Empire, pp. 605-647. The accounts of Gorbachev and Yeltsin, although largely a mutual exercise in finger-pointing, are still useful. See: Yeltsin, Zapiski prezidenta, pp. 143-169; Gorbachev, Zhizni i reformy, Volume 2, pp. 582-602; Sovuz mozno bylo sokhranit', pp. 201-338; Mikhail Gorbachev, Dekabr’-91: Moya pozitsiya (Moskva: Novosti, 1992). Gorbachev’s aides have also left accounts: Andrey Grachev, Dal’she bez menya: Ukho pod presidenta (Moskva: "Progress-Kultura," 1994); Georgii Khosroevich Shakhnazarov, Tsena svobody: reformatiya Gorbacheva glazami ego ponoschchnika (Moskva: Rossika: Zevs, 1993), pp. 276-309; Chernyaev, Shest’ let s Gorbachevym, pp. 488-517. Chernyaev, although an obvious sympathizer of Gorbachev, did not share Gorbachev’s belief after August 1991 that the Union still could be saved.}
The fate of the military was a major topic of the post-August negotiations. In fact, by November nearly all of the all-union ministries had been disbanded; the Soviet presidency and legislature and the defense and foreign affairs ministries were about the only significant institutions remaining. The State Council decided in November that, whatever the ultimate shape of the future union, the armed forces would remain unified and under a single command. There were considerable grounds for skepticism, however, because several of these same republics were hard at work "privatizing" the Soviet military units on their territory. The key player, again, was Ukraine, which had declared its control over these units in August and had appointed its own Minister of Defense, Major General Konstantin Morozov. By October the Ukrainian Supreme Soviet had established much of the legal basis for their own armed forces.127

Events in the military sphere moved at a breathtaking pace in December. On December 6, just after the referendum on independence, Ukraine's Supreme Soviet adopted a new military oath of allegiance to Ukraine and Morozov became the first officer to take the oath. The agreement between Yeltsin, Kravchuk, and Shushkevich on the CIS did not call for a unified military, but only unified control over nuclear weapons, with "joint" command over the "common military-strategic space" of the commonwealth. On December 13 Kravchuk

declared himself Commander-in-Chief of the Ukrainian Armed Forces and decreed that the Ukrainian military would be formed from Soviet forces stationed in the country. Although Morozov said on December 17 that the forces in Ukraine were still subordinate to Moscow and that the transfer of control would take place "in stages," the direction in which Ukraine was heading was clear.  

The threat of the collapse of the armed forces generated considerable anxiety among officers. In late November a General Staff department issued a protest against the collapse of the state and the army. The head of the department, Major-General Leonid Kozhendayev, stressed that they were not "putschists" or "mutineers." The army, he said, "does not want to and will not force the people to do something." The military, according to Kozhendayev, was ready to help politicians stop the "active civil war" taking place in the country. Another officer, Captain V. Shurygin, published an open letter to Shaposhnikov in the hard-line paper Den'. Shurygin complained bitterly and sarcastically about the collapse of the state and the army, asking rhetorically, "in what army do we serve?"  

Rumors of an impending military coup once again circulated in the Soviet and Western press. Lobov was removed without warning on December 7, allegedly for "health reasons." John Dunlop subsequently linked these rumors and Lobov's dismissal to the formation of the

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CIS, arguing that it was necessary for Yeltsin to "act quickly and decisively to head off a military-police putsch."\textsuperscript{130}

No evidence has emerged to substantiate these rumors of an impending putsch, and Shaposhnikov categorically rejected them. The reason for Lobov's removal was completely commonplace -- he lost a turf battle with Shaposhnikov. Since his appointment in August Lobov had been promoting a reform plan that would have removed the General Staff from the Defense Ministry and subordinated it directly to the president. The Defense Ministry in Lobov's plan would have been headed by a civilian and its jurisdiction would have been limited to personnel and supply issues; the General Staff would have had control over military training and operations. Shaposhnikov stated that Lobov was dismissed because he continued to agitate for this re-organization of the armed forces even after the Military Collegium and President Gorbachev had rejected it. Shaposhnikov's version of Lobov's dismissal was endorsed by other officers and military analysts. Yeltsin noted in his memoirs that rumors of a military coup circulated at the time, but he gives them no credit, and none of the other civilian memoirs, including Gorbachev's, even mention the possibility of a military coup.\textsuperscript{131}

There is no evidence that a plot was hatched in the armed forces to stop the collapse of the Soviet state. On the contrary, apparently Shaposhnikov even resisted an invitation from the commander-in-chief, Gorbachev, for the military to take power. Gorbachev called

\textsuperscript{130} Dunlop, \textit{The Rise of Russia and the Fall of the Soviet Union}, pp. 271-274.

Shaposhnikov in November 1991 and told him that there was only one remaining solution: the military should take power in its hands, restore order, install a government agreeable to it, and then step aside. Shaposhnikov told Gorbachev that they would both end up in Matrosskaya Tishina (the Moscow prison where the GKChP plotters were being held) with Yanayev and Yazov if the military tried to seize power. Yeltsin's authority is very high, said Shaposhnikov - such a decision could lead to a civil war. Politicians have created this mess (*kasha*), he concluded, and they should clean it up. Gorbachev replied that he had just been thinking out loud.\(^{132}\)

The Belovezhskaya Forest agreement creating the CIS again put before Shaposhnikov the need to decide his political stance. Shaposhnikov knew that Yeltsin, Kravchuk, and Shushkevich were discussing the position of the three Slavic states (Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus) towards the future union, but it was only when Yeltsin called him on the evening of December 8 that he learned of the CIS agreement. Shaposhnikov was heartened by the news that the three leaders had agreed on unified control over nuclear weapons. Yeltsin admitted that they had not reached agreement yet on conventional forces, but reiterated his support for unified armed forces. Shaposhnikov supported the establishment of the CIS because he believed the Union had reached a "dead-end" and that the CIS provided some concreteness to a hitherto completely amorphous situation. He also thought there was still a chance for a

\(^{132}\) Marshall Yevgeniy Shaposhnikov, in response to a question asked by the author during Shaposhnikov's appearance at Harvard University, October 17, 1994. Shaposhnikov left this incident out of the first edition of his memoirs, but it appears in the second edition: Evgeniy Shaposhnikov, *Vybär*, Second Edition (Moskva: PIK, 1995), pp. 137-138. This incident was also alluded to during Varennikov's trial. See Arkadiy Zhelydkov, " Sobralsya li Gorbachev vvesti voyennoye polozhenyi?", *Izvestiya*, June 22, 1994, p. 2. This incident has not been confirmed by other sources. The only other person in a position to confirm it is Gorbachev, who for obvious reasons has made no mention of this incident. It is highly implausible, however, that Shaposhnikov would invent such a conversation.
common approach to defense and security. Morozov, the Ukrainian Defense Minister, opposed Ukrainian participation in the CIS because he believed it hindered the process of officers transferring their loyalty to Ukraine. Morozov, however, like Shaposhnikov, was not consulted on his views about the CIS beforehand and was not present at the Belovezhskaya meeting.\footnote{Shaposhnikov, \textit{Vybor}, pp. 120-128; General Konstantin Morozov, in response to a question asked by the author during Morozov's appearance at Harvard University, February 16, 1995. Gorbachev accuses Shaposhnikov in his memoirs of having discussions with Yeltsin "over his head" and dissembling about how much he knew about the Belovezhskaya agreement. See: Gorbachev, \textit{Zhizn' i reformy}, Volume 2, pp. 598-599.}

Gorbachev made another bid for the support of the high command after the Belovezhskaya Forest agreement creating the CIS was announced. He met with the senior military leadership on December 10 and asked them to help save the Union. Gorbachev's performance was not well received, however, particularly since he began the meeting by "repenting," as Shaposhnikov put it, for not paying more attention to army problems in the past. Moreover, there was little that Gorbachev could offer the military. Russia was already in charge of state finances, and Yeltsin had promised a pay increase to officers because of burgeoning inflation. Yeltsin met with the high command on December 11, the day after Gorbachev, and stated his support for unified armed forces and his belief that the CIS offered a solution to the impasse the union treaty negotiations had reached. Yeltsin's presentation reportedly was received more favorably than Gorbachev's by the top officer corps.\footnote{Shaposhnikov, \textit{Vybor}, p. 137; Pavel Fel'gengauer, "V bor'be za armiyu, pokhozhe, pobedhdayet Boris Yel'tsin," \textit{Nek gaz.}, December 12, 1991, p. 1; V. Yuzbashyev, \textit{Izvestiya}, December 12, 1991, excerpted in Gorshkov and Zhuravlev, eds., \textit{Nesokrushimaya i legendarnaya}, pp. 258-259; Stephen Foye, "From Union to Commonwealth: Will the Armed Forces Go Along?", \textit{Report on the USSR}, Vol. 3, No. 51 (December 20, 1991), pp. 4-7. Gorbachev staffer Yegor Kuznetsov claims that after Yeltsin and the leaders of Ukraine and Belarus announced the creation of the Commonwealth of Independent States on December 8 Gorbachev was "desperate" to do something to stop the agreement. A speech was prepared calling for the support of the army and patriotic forces. However, that version was rejected because it was clear by that point that Gorbachev had no power. Top Gorbachev aide Georgiy Shakhnazarov recounts a meeting of Gorbachev advisers held on December 10 at which their response to the Belovezhskaya agreement was discussed. At this meeting Yevgeniy Primakov, a top Gorbachev associate, stated the Gorbachev would not be able to rely on the army. Interview with Kuznetsov, July 18, 1994; Shakhnazarov, \textit{Tseno pobedy}, pp. 304-306.}
This, then, was the extent of military arbitration in December 1991. Military support for Gorbachev would have necessarily entailed the use of armed force to prevent the collapse of the Soviet Union. Given the very high standing of Yeltsin in Russia, as well as Kravchuk at the time, the army would have been forced to act decisively to resist their decision. The high command had no desire to undertake such a mission, particularly after the August 1991 experience. This refusal to use force meant that the Belovezhskaya agreement would stand and the Soviet Union would collapse, but the army was not prepared to support the discredited Gorbachev against the highly popular Yeltsin. There was also still hope that a unified military would be maintained.

The future of the armed forces was discussed by the CIS heads of state in Minsk on December 30. The right of each state to form its own army was affirmed, but "strategic forces" were to remain under joint control. The Minsk agreement seemed to include all but ground forces under the term "strategic forces," but the Ukrainian leadership took the position that only nuclear forces were strategic. The military high command accused Ukraine of acting in bad faith and maintained that all forces required for the common defense of the CIS were strategic. Regardless, Ukraine moved immediately in early January 1992 to resubordinate the general purpose forces on its territory to Kiev. Officers were required to swear a new oath and the General Staff communications links from Moscow were shut off. A major brouhaha erupted between Moscow and Kiev, particularly over the Black Sea Fleet.\(^{135}\)

The last gasp of the Soviet military was heard in Moscow on January 17, 1992, at the All-Army Officers' Assembly. 5000 officers attended the conference and angrily protested the collapse of the Soviet Union and the armed forces. Shaposhnikov, whose new title was that of Commander-in-Chief of the CIS Armed Forces, angrily stalked out when one officer called for his resignation. After a unanimous vote asking for Shaposhnikov to return, he came back to a standing ovation. Shaposhnikov pointed out that the CIS heads of state had agreed that each state had the right to form its own army, and Shaposhnikov reiterated his view that this transition should take place gradually. He concluded emotionally:

I believe that all the questions should be settled without tears and suffering for your families and yourselves. Can't you understand? What else can be done? What do you expect me to do -- order the troops to turn their guns and tanks on Moscow? We have had that already, but that is precisely what they [those who called for his resignation - B.T.] were hinting at. I know what this would mean. We are not Thailand. We represent one-sixth of the earth's surface. We are being looked upon, comrades, as sick. I beg your forgiveness.136

The Assembly came to an abrupt end less than thirty minutes after this impassioned confrontation. The officers adopted a declaration to the "peoples, parliaments, and heads of government of the Commonwealth of Independent States" asking them to maintain a unified armed forces. Many observers at the time believed the conference was evidence of the praetorian leanings of the Soviet army, and Fel'gengauer argued that the conference indicated that a military coup was likely. Polls conducted at the meeting also showed that the officers were in a dangerous mood, with 71 percent supporting the restoration of a unified government

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in the Soviet Union's former borders and 79 percent of those polled believing that the armed forces themselves should decide the future of the military.\textsuperscript{137}

The All-Army Officers' Assembly certainly was evidence of a disgruntled officer corps. Given the collapse of the state and the disintegration of the armed forces, as well as political and ethnic violence in several different parts of the former Soviet Union, the officers' mood is hardly surprising. Adopting a declaration, however, is a restrained reaction to the collapse of a superpower and its armed forces. Indeed, the officers ended the declaration by noting that they did not aspire to interfere in politics and decide the question of the structure of power in the independent states, which is a matter for the people. They were concerned, they said, about their fates and the fate of the armed forces.\textsuperscript{138}

The armed forces continued to disintegrate over the next several months. By the end of March, in Shaposhnikov's view, the officer corps had come to accept that there would not be unified armed forces and that some form of joint command had to be worked out in the CIS. The final nail in the coffin was driven on May 7, 1992, when Russia finally established its own armed forces. Technically the Joint Armed Forces of the Commonwealth of Independent States continued to exist, but the fact that the Soviet armed forces had utterly collapsed was apparent to everyone.\textsuperscript{139}

\textsuperscript{137} For the text of the declaration, see: KZ, January 21, 1992. For Fel'gengauer's analysis, see: Nez. gaz, January 21, 1992. The poll results were published in: Nez. gaz, February 5, 1992. All of these pieces, plus additional materials on the Assembly, are reproduced in: Gorshkov and Zhuravlev, eds., Nesokrushimaya i legendarnaya, pp. 279-306. Shaposhnikov gives a detailed account of the conference in his memoirs. See: Shaposhnikov, Vybor, pp. 142-147.

\textsuperscript{138} KZ, January 21, 1992, as reproduced in Gorshkov and Zhuravlev, eds., Nesokrushimaya i legendarnaya, pp. 294-296.

Explaining Military Behavior and the Collapse of the USSR

Jerry Hough, as noted at the beginning of this chapter, believed it was "inconceivable" that the military would let the Soviet Union collapse without offering serious resistance. Hough was right to be baffled. The four alternative perspectives all lead us to expect that military intervention is either possible or likely in such a situation. Moreover, the international structure and corporate interest approaches would have predicted that the army would in a case of military arbitration side with the contender that promised to hold the state together.

The most obvious reason that there was no coup effort in December 1991 or an intervention on Gorbachev’s behalf to hold the Soviet Union together is the fact that the August 1991 hard-liner coup had failed so spectacularly. Donald Horowitz, as noted in Chapter One, argues persuasively that a failed coup attempt strengthens officers' inhibitions about military intervention. The August 1991 coup reinforced officers' commitment to the norm of civilian supremacy. As Yazov told the prosecutor the day after the coup collapsed, "this example should serve as a lesson to all of us." Additionally, the August failure suggested that intervention was highly risky and that potential plotters would be punished. Thus, non-intervention in December 1991 had two basic motives -- organizational culture and self-interested calculations of the prospects of success.\(^{140}\)

There were several reasons to think that a coup in December was even less likely to succeed than the August attempt. Many top officers had been removed after the failed putsch, so potential plotters would have less faith in their associates if they had only served together a short time. The removal of Communist Party bodies from the military also had a disruptive

effect on the army. The key organization behind the August effort, the KGB, had been put in
the hands of a committed reformer and divided up into several parts. The central government
had lost control of most all-Union structures, including financial ones, which further
complicated the tasks of a takeover effort. Finally, some officers had already transferred their
loyalty to the republic governments, which undermined the assurance that orders from Moscow
would be carried out. For example, in Ukraine about forty percent of the military was ethnic
Ukrainian, including about twenty percent of the officer corps, and seventy percent of personnel
in the Black Sea Fleet voted for Ukrainian independence.\textsuperscript{141}

It is also important to remember that the collapse of the state and the armed forces was a
gradual process. There was no clear, decisive moment when it would have been easy for
plotting officers to agree that they should intervene. Many of the former republics declared
their independence in the month after the August coup, and in October and November the
central government was steadily stripped of its powers. The Ukrainian independence
referendum was on December 1. The period between December 8, when the CIS was formed,
and December 25, when Gorbachev resigned, was probably the most likely period for an
intervention. In many ways, however, the CIS was preferable to Gorbachev's amorphous
union, particularly because it included Ukraine. A majority of officers at the All-Army
Officers' Assembly supported the establishment of the CIS. Moreover, it was not until January
1992 that it became clear that a united armed forces would not be maintained. The drawn out
nature of the Soviet collapse probably helped inhibit those officers with praetorian ambitions,

\textsuperscript{141} For the figures on the Ukrainian armed forces, see: Foye, "CIS: Kiev and Moscow Clash over Armed
Forces," p. 2; Pyskir, "The Silent Coup," pp. 146-147; Brian Taylor, "Ukrainian Security: Dilemmas of
because it would have been hard to persuade a core group of plotters that the time for action had definitely come.\textsuperscript{142}

These reasons for non-intervention in December 1991 are important but not sufficient explanations. Hough was right to point out that the Soviet military was not even "seriously bloodied." Armies often intervene, even when they risk failure (coup\-s by their very nature are risky undertakings), if there is a sufficiently strong motivation. The most important deterrent to intervention was the organizational culture of the Soviet armed forces. The international structure argument is less helpful here, because a military with a functional orientation towards defense of the state would have good reasons to act to avert the state’s collapse.

The aftermath of the August 1991 coup, as noted, led to the dismissal of many of those officers adhering to a more praetorian subculture. Additionally, the dominant culture that held a relatively strong attachment to the norm of responsibility was bolstered. This reinforcement of an organizational culture committed to the belief that the military should not intervene in politics was embodied most clearly by the new Defense Minister, Marshal Shaposhnikov. Less than a week after the failed coup Shaposhnikov stated that he had a "positive attitude" towards Baltic, Ukrainian, and Belarussian independence. "If the parliaments of the republics decide they want to secede from the Union," Shaposhnikov said, "they must be allowed to do so. I am against forcibly holding back those who want to break away."\textsuperscript{143}

Shaposhnikov held rigorously to his view that the military should not be used in sovereign power disputes and to hold the union together by force throughout his tenure as

\textsuperscript{142} On officers' attitudes towards the forming of the CIS, see: "A nastroyeniye ofitserov takoye," KZ, January 22, 1992, p. 2.

\textsuperscript{143} Interview with Marshal Shaposhnikov by Raimund Loew, Vienna Oesterreich Eins Radio Network, August 26, 1991 [FBIS-SOV-91-166, August 27, 1991, p. 58].
Soviet Defense Minister and Commander-in-Chief of the CIS Armed Forces. He demonstrated this by his categorical rejection of Gorbachev's suggestion that the military step in to hold the state together. After the formation of the CIS was announced, Shaposhnikov declared, "we need to get away from a situation in which soldiers have to chose between someone. This is a job for politicians, it's for them to define. The job of the minister of defense of the USSR is to not permit dragging the army into political games." He made a similar assertion at the All-Army Officers' Assembly:

As commander in chief of the CIS armed forces I state yet again that I will never allow our Armed Forces to be used against our own people in the resolution of interethnic and political conflicts. I think I will express the will of everyone if I say that we will never sink so low as to dethrone someone or to enthrone someone with the aid of our bayonets. This is not our task.144

The Chief of the General Staff between August and December, General Vladimir Lobov, also was a strong adherent to the norm of civilian supremacy. In January 1992, after his dismissal, he noted bitterly that the army was in a "tragic situation," because it did not know to whom it was subordinate and which state it belonged to and should defend. Lobov criticized the planned officer's assembly, commenting that it would only "rub salt in the wounds" and drag the already politicized army into a "dangerous game." Lobov added, "A political decision is needed, but one taken not by soldiers but by politicians." A commentator in the military newspaper Red Star advocated a similar viewpoint, stating that "it is not the army's job to

participate in political games....the army should serve the Fatherland. That is its sole and definitive choice."\(^{145}\)

The determination of Shaposhnikov and the rest of the top officer corps to keep the military out of politics was challenged verbally by some participants of the All-Army Officers' Assembly. When Shaposhnikov threatened to resign, however, he received the support of the meeting. More importantly, there was no attempt by other officers to take matters into their own hands, either alone or with civilian actors, to try to hold the Soviet Union together. Ultimately the Soviet officer corps accepted the collapse of the state because their organizational culture inhibited military intervention, and this normative constraint was reinforced by the failed August 1991 coup. Even motives of the highest national interest, the collapse of the country officers were sworn to defend, could not motivate an intervention after that experience.

CONCLUSION

The corporate interest perspective on military intervention performed the worst. The Soviet armed forces' corporate interests came under attack by Gorbachev long before the August 1991 coup. The military weathered a series of sharp challenges to their prerogatives and interests beginning in 1986-1987 and lasting throughout the period. A corporate interest explanation would have predicted earlier and more resolute intervention. National interest motives were the reason for military intervention in August 1991, not corporate interests.

Finally, the collapse of the state represented a severe blow to the military's organizational interests, but the army acquiesced in this decision.

Theories from the Soviet studies literature also perform poorly. Timothy Colton and Roman Kolkowicz predict that military intervention is likely when the army's corporate interests are threatened. William Odom denied the possibility of military intervention and expected the party and the military to work together to keep the state intact in the face of centrifugal forces. Thomas Nichols envisioned military intervention for doctrinal and ideological reasons, neither of which were important in August 1991.

The domestic structure explanation provides an important part of the story. The weakening of the Soviet state during its last few years helped create a situation in which involvement in sovereign power issues was possible. This perspective does help explain the August 1991 coup attempt. This approach has a more difficult time explaining the extreme reluctance of the army to intervene, however, particularly when the state was so weak that it completely collapsed.

International structure and organizational culture provide the best explanation for the armed forces' half-hearted participation in the August 1991 coup. The refusal of key officers to support the intervention in August 1991 caused its failure, and this reluctance is best explained by these two theories. An organizational culture explanation performs particularly well. Although attachment to the norm of civilian supremacy was weakened during the Gorbachev period, particularly from 1989 to 1991, it still remained strong enough to inhibit effective military intervention.
Organizational culture, to a greater extent than international structure, explains why the military failed to intervene in December 1991 to prevent the collapse of the Soviet Union. The international structure approach predicts military intervention in the face of state collapse. However, the organizational lessons learned from the failed August 1991 coup attempt strengthened the position of apolitical officers and reinforced the norm of civilian supremacy. This led the military high command to take a passive stance in December 1991 and support the most legitimate political leaders, even if this meant that the state collapsed around them.
CHAPTER 7: CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS UNDER YELTSIN

The Soviet Union collapsed in December 1991. The Red Army, however, managed to outlive the state itself by a few months as the armed forces of the Commonwealth of Independent States. In May 1992 this fiction was abandoned when Russian President Boris Yeltsin decreed the establishment of the Russian armed forces, which were formed on the basis of the old Soviet military. Unlike in 1917, when there were both continuities and discontinuities from the imperial to the Soviet period, there was no question that the new Russian army was the direct descendent of the Soviet armed forces and the inheritor of most of its personnel, equipment, institutions, and culture.

The Russian military has experienced a period perhaps even more politically tumultuous than the Gorbachev era. In October 1993 the armed forces were once again thrust into the role of political arbiter in the conflict between President Yeltsin and the Supreme Soviet. A year later, in December 1994, the Russian army became involved in its largest internal war since the Civil War in the bloody conflict with Chechnya. These events have strained Russian civil-military relations, as have the continuing economic and social problems faced by the armed forces.

The significant difficulties of the Russian state and its army have, once again, brought about speculation about the possibility of military intervention in politics.1 Indeed, a spring

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1 A striking example are the results of an informal poll taken of American and Russian specialists at an early 1997 meeting in Monterey, California. The Russian participants thought that the probability of "a coup, chaos, or disintegration of the Russian military within the next 12 to 18 months" was 60 percent, with some putting the probability at 100 percent. The Americans were only slightly less pessimistic, concluding that the probability of one of these bleak outcomes was 30-40 percent. See: Douglas Stanglin et. al., "Washington Whispers: Behind Closed Doors," U.S. News & World Report, April 14, 1997, pp. 23-24. For other predictions of a Russian military coup, see, for example: Peter Reddaway, "Desperation Time For Yeltsin's Clique," New York Times, January 13,
1992 poll in Russia showed that a majority of respondents thought that a military coup was "probable." The armed forces, however, have continued to show little interest in being a significant player in sovereign power issues. In October 1993 the military only with great reluctance was sucked into the political arbiter role. Since that date, despite the continuing hardships and disorder, the armed forces have remained "outside politics."

**TABLE 7-1: Chapter Summary**

<table>
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<th><strong>Observations</strong></th>
<th><strong>Predictions</strong></th>
<th><strong>Outcome</strong></th>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>International Structure</strong></td>
<td><strong>Domestic Structure</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>October 1993 Events</strong></td>
<td>Indeterminate. If arbitration, will side with contender most able to enhance state's war-making capacity.</td>
<td>Intervention or arbitration likely.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Entire Period</strong></td>
<td>Indeterminate.</td>
<td>Intervention or arbitration likely.</td>
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This chapter analyzes civil-military relations in the Yeltsin period and offers an explanation for the army's behavior (see Table 7-1 for a summary). I discuss each of the four alternative approaches to military involvement in sovereign power issues -- international structure, domestic structure, corporate interest, and organizational culture -- and determine what behavior is predicted by each theory. I also confine this measurement to the 1992-1993 period, since I can hardly use variable measurements from 1994-1997 to explain events in late

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1993. I then conduct detailed process-tracing of the key civil-military event of the period: the October 1993 uprising in Moscow. The final major section of the chapter discusses developments since October 1993. I conclude the chapter by discussing the relative performance of the four comparative perspectives.

INTERNATIONAL STRUCTURE AND THE NEW RUSSIAN STATE

The international structure approach contends that militaries in war-prone states will be disinclined to become involved in sovereign power issues. The Russian state, as noted in previous chapters, has been one of the most war-prone states of the last several centuries and a great power at least from the time of the Napoleonic Wars. In the last years of the Soviet state the political leadership undertook a concerted effort to reduce international tensions. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the accompanying political and economic upheavals left Russia the weakest she had been in several hundred years.³

An extreme period of state weakness presumably would increase the external threat to the state and make it vulnerable to foreign enemies. Most Russian and foreign observers, however, have argued that post-Soviet Russia faces a more benign international security environment. The Russian political leadership, including the country’s first Minister of Defense, General Pavel Grachev, maintained that Russia had no enemies. The military leadership stated that the threat of nuclear and major war had decreased, although noting at the same time that the possibility of regional, local, and small-scale wars had increased. Other top

³ The British journalist Anatol Lieven asserts that Russia today is as weak as she has been in nearly four hundred years, i.e. since the “Time of Troubles” (1598-1613) in the early seventeenth century: Anatol Lieven, “Russia’s Military Nadir: The Meaning of the Chechen Debacle,” The National Interest, No. 44 (Summer 1996), p. 24.
officers challenged the official view, however. For example, Colonel General Igor Rodionov, the head of the General Staff academy, maintained that the United States and NATO still represented a threat and asserted that these countries were not reducing their forces, but building them up.  

Coding the external threat variable is also complicated by the local conflicts in the "near-abroad" that the Russian armed forces were involved in after the collapse of the Soviet state. Several of these conflicts took place inside states that were, like Russia, members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). These hostilities near Russia's borders are another potential indicator of a threatening external environment. On the other hand, the ambiguous nature of Russia's relations with the former Soviet republics within the CIS made these conflicts seem more a sign of post-Soviet chaos and instability than evidence that Russia's external position had become more dangerous. The Russian armed forces involvement in these episodes, at least formally (the question of Russian responsibility will be discussed below), was as regional peacekeepers and not as direct combatants.  

The predictions of the international structure perspective, then, are somewhat indeterminate. The armed forces had been conditioned by decades of international competition

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to have an external orientation, but with the end of the Cold War and Russia's loss of great power status the possibility of major war sharply decreased. There were still potential points of conflict, however, on Russia's periphery. The external threat to Russia probably had declined, but it is unclear how much. Under these conditions the international structure approach leads to the prediction that the military would be more inclined to become involved in sovereign power issues than in previous periods. This perspective also predicts that in cases of military arbitration the armed forces will side with the civilian contender that is likely to contribute the most to the state's war-making capacity.

**DOMESTIC STRUCTURE AND THE NEW RUSSIAN STATE**

The domestic structure perspective maintains that the military will be inclined to become involved in sovereign power issues in weak states. The weakness of the Soviet state in its last years was dramatically confirmed by its collapse in December 1991. The successor Russian state was plagued by similar problems, and many observers predicted that Russia was likely to disintegrate as well. The basic indicators of state strength and political order indicate that the Russian state was very weak and that the military had a clear opportunity to intervene in sovereign power issues.

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A series of indicators of political capacity demonstrate the weakness of the post-Soviet Russian state. First let us consider Robert Jackman's two criteria for political capacity, organizational age and legitimacy. The most significant change came in the institutional age of the state. Arguably the year of independence remained the same (1775), since Russia was more the successor to the Russian empire and the Soviet Union than an entirely new state. Although in practice the old Soviet constitution remained in effect until a new one was adopted in December 1993, in essence a new constitutional order began in 1992 with Boris Yeltsin as the first chief executive of the new period. This "liability of newness" facing the Russian state led to sharp political conflicts between the executive and legislative branches of power, which occasionally involved the judiciary as well. The rules, norms, and divisions of power governing these relations were highly uncertain and the object of intense struggle.7

The continuation of rather high levels of political violence, Jackman's surrogate measure for legitimacy, also reflects the political disorder of Russia. The trend that started in the second half of the Gorbachev period continued in 1992 and 1993 (see Table 7-2). This violence reflected the inability of the Russian state to create legitimate institutions for managing political conflict.8


TABLE 7-2: Deaths From Political Violence, 1986-1993

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<td>2</td>
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<td>91</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>605</td>
<td>326</td>
<td>583</td>
<td>225</td>
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Several other quantitative and qualitative indicators also suggest the weak political capacity of the new Russian state. One such indicator is the ability of the central state to compel the transfer of resources to the government. The performance of the Russian federal government in this respect shows the inability of the state to enforce compliance with its directives. For example, federal revenues declined from 16.2 percent of GDP in 1992 to 11.9 percent in 1993. This figure is comparatively low; for example, in high income countries this figure runs from 15 percent in the highly decentralized Japanese system to 50 percent in the more centralized system in the Netherlands. Such a sharp downward drop in one year is also highly unusual in comparative terms. Several regions – Bashkortostan, Chechnya, Sakha-Yakutia, and Tatarstan – unilaterally declared themselves fiscally sovereign and halted all or most revenue transfers to the federal government (taxes are collected at the local level). According to one World Bank study, in 1992 about twenty regions unilaterally halted full payment to the center, and this number increased to around thirty regions, although it is not clear that many of these efforts lasted more than a few weeks. Still, this pattern was a worrisome repeat of the processes of republic self-assertion that had doomed the Soviet system.

provided by the Division of Ethnopolitical Research, Analytical Center, Council of the Federation, Russia; and data gathered by the author from the Soviet/Russian press.
In late 1993 the Russian Finance Minister, Boris Fedorov, accused regional governments of trying to kill the central state through “financial asphyxiation.”

Political parties are one of the most prominent and reliable mechanisms for the creation of legitimate institutions through which political conflict can be resolved. Indeed, Samuel Huntington argues in his classic study Personalities in Changing Societies, that “at least one highly institutionalized party” is “the prerequisite of stability.” After the collapse of the Soviet Communist Party, however, there were no institutionalized parties in independent Russia. At the most what existed in 1992-1993 were social movements or “proto-parties.” The institutional design of the legislature, the Supreme Soviet, allowed no role for political parties and the “factions” that existed had little influence over their members. The President, Boris Yeltsin, also lacked a party institutional base upon which he could rely. The absence of political parties was another indication of the relative absence of legitimate and effective institutions and the political disorder in the new Russia.

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Finally, if we consider Stephen Krasner’s three criteria to measure state strength vis-à-vis society, the Russian state was very weak. These three criteria are the ability to change state structure and private behavior in intended ways, and the ability to resist private pressure. The regime in some sense was able to change social structure, but not in intended ways. The government was able to launch the transition to a market economy by freeing prices and eschewing government planning, but this ability to change social structure was more a reflection of state weakness than strength. The changes in private behavior that took place were in some ways consistent with state desires, as entrepreneurs rushed to make money in the new economic order. However, the government was unable to control, regulate, or tax the new private economy in a consistent manner. It also was not able to achieve its goal of monetary stabilization. Finally, the government was not able to resist private pressure, as it constantly was forced to change and in some cases abandon its reform policies in response to the pressures of private actors. Michael McFaul, for example, shows how enterprise managers were able to hijack the state’s privatization program in pursuit of their own interests. By Krasner’s criteria the new Russian state was a weak one.11

The domestic structure approach predicts that military involvement in sovereign power issues becomes likely when the state is weak. Instances of military arbitration are more likely to appear, and the armed forces may try to take advantage of state weakness to seize state power.

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MILITARY CORPORATE INTERESTS AND YELTSIN

The corporate interest approach maintains that militaries intervene in politics when their organizational interests are threatened. The Russian military continued to suffer a loss of power and resources in the post-independence period. Indeed, the cuts experienced under Gorbachev look like child's play compared to those of the Yeltsin era. The dual pressures of state collapse and economic reform had particularly negative consequences for the armed forces. The one potentially positive change from the perspective of organizational interests was the greater autonomy the military apparently enjoyed under Yeltsin. In general, however, the army’s corporate interests were under serious threat.

Two of the most straightforward measures of corporate interest, organizational size and budget, dropped rather markedly in 1992-1993. The size of the armed forces fell dramatically, from around 2.8 million at the time the Russian military was created in May 1992 to less than 2 million by 1994. Military spending also dropped substantially, from over 10% of GNP in the late-Soviet period to around 5% of GNP in the first years of the Russian state, and this took place at a time when the size of the economy had shrunk dramatically.\textsuperscript{12}

These aggregate figures on downsizing trends actually understate the difficulties faced by the armed forces. Across a range of issues the military was in a state of crisis, including housing, manpower, social support, troop withdrawals from abroad, training, and supplies. In

terms of housing, for example, more than 100 thousand officers and warrant officers did not have an apartment, and more than 400 thousand more officers and retired or reserve officers would need housing in the next few years. Over seventy percent of military personnel were dissatisfied with their living conditions, and more than sixty percent thought that poor housing affected discipline and readiness. The situation with manpower policy was equally bleak. The Law on Military Service exempted more than eighty percent of draft-age men from military service. Some reports suggested that the armed forces were short of around 700-900 thousand personnel because of difficulties with the draft and the departure of tens of thousands of junior officers unsatisfied with their conditions of service. Salary increases failed to keep up with inflation, and officers often had their pay delayed by months at a time.\(^\text{13}\)

The threat to the military’s corporate interests across a range of indicators, then, was severe in 1992-1993. Organizational uncertainty also was extremely high, given the difficulties

in coping with state collapse, radical economic reform, and political turmoil. The one organizational interest that perhaps was being somewhat upheld was the desire for corporate autonomy. Contrary to the demands of some civilian reformers, the Russian Ministry of Defense continued to be led by and dominated by professional officers. The military had substantial authority over questions such as military reform and doctrinal change. Parliamentary control over the armed forces was also limited. Although President Yeltsin was ultimately in charge, the army did have considerable autonomy over institutional matters.\textsuperscript{14}

The general picture, however, was of a military whose corporate interests were not being respected. This is certainly how a vast majority of officers saw it.\textsuperscript{15} The crisis in the Russian armed forces led many observers to suggest that a coup was possible. Kimberly Marten Zisk, for example, argued in March 1993:

\begin{quote}
An anti-Yeltsin coup may thus become likely if Yeltsin proves either unwilling to meet military demands, or unable to solve the social, economic, and corporatist problems officers now face. Yeltsin must demonstrate, continually, both sympathy toward the military and competence as the crisis in Russian society continues. If he does not, the patience of the Russian General Staff may very well snap.\textsuperscript{16}
\end{quote}

The corporate interest approach leads to the prediction that the military would be likely to intervene in politics to defend its organizational interests. In cases of military arbitration, according to this perspective, the armed forces should side with the contender for power most sympathetic to military concerns.

\textsuperscript{14} On military autonomy and civilian control, see, for example: Zisk, "Civil-Military Relations in the New Russia," pp. 12-13; Lepingwell, "The Russian Military in the 1990s," pp. 121-123.


ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

The organizational culture approach maintains that officers’ beliefs about their proper role in politics is a key determinant of their behavior in sovereign power issues. In Chapter Five I demonstrated that the Soviet armed forces had a very strong commitment to the norm of civilian supremacy, and in Chapter Six I showed that there was a slight drop in this attachment during the late-Gorbachev period and that a small praetorian subculture appeared. In this section I measure Russian military organizational culture in the early years of the Yeltsin era. I find that the dominant organizational culture retained a commitment to the norm of civilian supremacy. However, there were some indications that this attachment had weakened still further and the praetorian subculture that became apparent under Gorbachev persisted into the post-Soviet period. As in previous chapters, the discussion of the army’s organizational culture is divided into two parts, one on its task orientation and a second on the subordination aspect of the norm of responsibility.

Task

The Russian armed forces since the mid-nineteenth century have had a strong focus on external defense as the military’s main task. This orientation continued under Yeltsin. I survey a wide range of data in this sub-section, including the content of military journals, leadership statements, and survey research. The collapse of the Soviet Union, however, left some Russian military units based in former Soviet republics (the “near-abroad”), and these troops were on occasion involved in conflicts in these states. Although these missions were external ones, because the conflicts were in the former Soviet space and were usually civil wars they were not traditional external wars. This Russian military involvement, then, may have had corrosive
effects on the army's task orientation. Additionally, there continued to be a small subculture of officers who argued for a larger military role in politics. These last two factors slightly weakened the Russian military's orientation towards external defense.

The military journal *Voyenniy Vestnik* [VV], as in the period 1980-1991 discussed in Chapters Five and Six, continued to devote the large majority of its coverage to narrow military issues (see Figure 7-1).¹⁷ Figure 7-1 shows that in 1992-1993 VV dedicated more than ninety percent of its coverage to various military issues. Tactics and Training remained the topic of a majority of articles. Personnel Issues remained the second largest topic. Non-Military issues continued to get little coverage in VV. Indeed, there were no articles on Internal Security in 1992-1993 and there was also a drop in materials on Societal Choice issues. The slight rise in Political Indoctrination articles is explained primarily by the appearance, particularly in 1993, of various government laws and decrees relevant to the armed forces. If in the Soviet period there was an effort to indoctrinate the officer corps in Communist Party teachings, in the new Russia there was an attempt to make soldiers aware of their legal rights. The general picture that comes through from this content analysis is of a military focused on its own internal problems in the years 1992-1993, with diminished attention to Internal Security and Societal Choice issues.

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¹⁷ I show the results for 1988-1991 so that the continuities and discontinuities from the late-Soviet period are evident. On the coding rules and categories used here, see the discussion in Chapter Five. See Appendix C for more detail on the content analysis summarized here.
Figure 7-1: Task Orientation, Voyenniy Vestnik, 1988-1993
Figure 7-2: Task Orientation, Voyenniy Vestnik Editorials, 1988-1993

- Internal Security
- Personnel Issues
- Foreign Militaries
- Military History
- Tactics & Training
- Societal Choice
- Political Indoctrination
The content of Voyenniy Vestnik lead articles was less consistent (see Figure 7-2). As noted in Chapter Six, in 1989 the number of lead articles dropped in half, and VV usually used interviews rather than articles as their feature pieces. In 1992-1993 most of these interviews focused on either Personnel Issues or Tactics and Training. The Political Indoctrination lead articles were features on military legislation (the entire March 1993 issue was devoted to four laws on defense). The two Societal Choice interviews from 1993 were on larger political issues that still had a defense-related aspect, Russian involvement in “peacekeeping” in the near-abroad and military conversion. There were no featured interviews on Military History, Foreign Militaries, and, most importantly, Internal Security.

The content of Voyenniy Vestnik in 1992 and 1993, then, demonstrates a continued commitment of the Russian army to its focus on narrow military issues and a general avoidance of discussion of internal missions or larger social and political questions.

The military leadership continued the Soviet tradition of maintaining that the army’s primary role was the defense of the state and asserting that the army should not be involved in politics. Minister of Defense Grachev listed a number of tasks for the Russian armed forces in July 1992, shortly after the army was formed. The primary function of the military was defense against external aggression. Along with this task Grachev listed maintaining the territorial integrity of the state, participation in international peacekeeping efforts, and working with law enforcement agencies to prevent terrorist attacks on “strategically important objects,” such as nuclear weapons or energy stations. Similarly, in March 1993 Grachev noted that the military’s
major task is "defense of the sovereignty of Russia." and that the army wished to be able to focus on their "primary affair – military training."^{18}

Grachev reiterated continuously in his first years in office that the military should be "outside politics." In September 1992 he noted how President Yeltsin's order to "departyze" and "de politicize" the army would be carried out "strictly." Grachev added, "whoever cannot get along without politics, let him engage in it. But first of all he is obligated to resign from the ranks of the Armed Forces of Russia." Grachev clearly stated the Ministry of Defense position in December 1992:

The army should be outside politics, and the leadership of the Armed Forces will not permit it to be dragged into politics. Soldiers do not want to become hostages, or even more so participants in any political games. A ban on political activity in the army was declared in the Law On Defense. Hence our attitude towards those people who want to involve the office corps in politics, to politicize soldiers.^{19}

The role of the military in sovereign power issues was frequently discussed in Russia in 1992-1993 because of the power struggle between President Yeltsin and the Russian parliament (the Congress of People's Deputies and the Supreme Soviet). Grachev and the military leadership consistently took the line that the army was not on the "side" of any particular branch of government, but "on the side of law and the Constitution." Moreover, they appealed to leading civilian elites to eschew attempts to get the army involved in political struggles. For example, in a speech to the Congress of People's Deputies in December 1992, Grachev noted

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the efforts of “various groupings” to “split the army” and “drag officers into political struggle.” He asked for a “moratorium” on such attempts. In March 1993, during a serious clash between Yeltsin and the legislative branch during which Yeltsin threatened to impose “special rule,” the Main Military Collegium, the military’s top body, issued a statement that “the dragging of the army into political confrontations is intolerable.” The Collegium warned against appeals to the officer corps by competing political forces and attempts to split the army. The Collegium had issued a similar pronouncement in October 1992.20

Institutional lessons learned in the late-Soviet period played an important role in shaping officer corps norms about involvement in sovereign power issues. The “Tbilisi syndrome” (see the discussion in Chapter Six) was strengthened by the failure of the August 1991 coup attempt. In December 1992 Grachev told the Congress of People’s Deputies, “Today the overwhelming majority of soldiers do not want to get pulled into any sort of political battles or games. They learned well the lessons of the dramatic events of the perestroika period and August 1991.” Colonel-General M. Burlakov, the commander of Russian forces based in a unified Germany during their withdrawal, observed in March 1993 that Russian soldiers had learned some important lessons in the last few years. The most important one, Burlakov stated, was that the army should be “secured from the influence of

political battles, in order to prepare for battles of a different kind in a planned and systematic way.” The military newspaper Red Star similarly emphasized institutional lessons and their influence on the officer corps:

In the last few years it [the army] has learned a great deal. So many times it has been set up and betrayed. There was Afghanistan, and Tbilisi, and Vilnius, and the August putsch of 1991. The bitter experience received in the burden of these dramas, of course, had its effect. And if there are some political forces or leaders that even theoretically consider the use of military force in the resolution of internal political problems, they need to think about this.21

Leading military officers understood that a large domestic political role would take them away from what they saw as their primary task, external defense. General of the Army Vladimir Lobov, the Chief of the Soviet General Staff after the August 1991 coup, argued, “if the army is involved in internal political conflicts, it degrades as an armed force and loses its ability to effectively withstand external threats.”22

Grachev took a series of steps to communicate the message to officers that engaging in political activities was not their function. For example, he decided that Officers’ Assemblies, like the one held in Moscow in January 1992 discussed in Chapter Six, should not be held above the level of regiment. Grachev and the Ministry of Defense leadership, such as Deputy Minister of Defense Valeriy Mironov, argued that Officers’ Assemblies should be conducted among officers who know each other well and should discuss problems in their unit. Mironov


maintained that at higher levels these assemblies "often become politicized, and that is impermissible." Grachev also dismissed officers who did not comply with legal restrictions on political activity in the armed forces.  

There were strong sentiments in the Russian military leadership, then, that the army’s primary task was external defense and it should not be involved in internal politics. This commitment not to be used internally was weakened somewhat, however, by the legacies faced by the Russian army after the collapse of the Soviet Union. There was a five-month lag between the collapse of the Soviet Union and the creation of a Russian military. During this interim period the Soviet army lived on as the Joint Armed Forces of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). The distinction between external and internal tasks was very unclear in a situation in which the country had collapsed but its army remained intact. The situation was only partially cleared up after the Russian armed forces were created in May 1992. Around thirty percent of Russian officers were based outside Russia, whether in Germany, the Baltic states, or the Caucasian states. The line between external and internal was blurry for hundreds of thousands of Russian officers.  

Defense Minister Grachev himself gave contradictory signals on this issue. In May 1992, shortly after his appointment, Grachev declared, "At present I believe in carrying out what were formerly described as functions outside the competency of the army." After

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14 The data on Russian officers abroad is from: Lt.-Col. V. Mukhin, "God posle 'putcha'. Chem zhivet armiya?", Armiya, No. 18 (September), 1992, p. 48.
referring to inter-ethnic violence in Central Asia, the Transcaucasus, and the Baltics (*sic*). Grachev added, "the situation is so serious that the internal troops will simply not be able to cope with this task." He added, however, that he had no legal basis at that time for using the army. A few weeks later Grachev came out against using the army for these purposes, stating, "We are against the involvement of the army in inter-nationality conflicts, but anyone who tries to encroach upon the Russian soldier should know that he will be given a harsh rebuff." By March 1993 Grachev was expressing his opposition to such missions more clearly. He said, "The policy of the Ministry of Defense is directed toward not getting the army involved in inter-nationality conflicts." Grachev cited the experiences in the late-Gorbachev period in Tbilisi, Baku, and other "hot spots" in the Caucasus as a basis for military opposition to participation in policing ethnic disputes.25

The debate within the Russian officer corps about being used to deal with ethnic disputes, either in Russia or within other CIS states, was evident in a discussion of the topic in the journal *Armiya*. The participants were sharply divided on the issue. Major-General (retired) I. Tyushkevich began by noting that official Soviet ideology had claimed that the military did not have an internal role, but that in the transition period the army had played a "stabilizing" role inside the country. Tyushkevich was contradicted by the civilian researcher V. Tsimbal and Lt.-Gen. (retired) O. Rogozin. Rogozin argued that the Internal Troops of the Interior Ministry (MVD) and other organs existed to "secure stability in society." Rogozin continued, "it is ignoble, inhumane, amoral for the military man to raise arms against his own

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people. The army needs to find its niche in the series of questions associated with national security." The deputy editor of the journal, Colonel N. Belyakov, responded that prohibitions against officers joining political parties and organizations were correct, but that it was wrong to deny that the army could be used internally at the orders of the constitutional government. Belyakov maintained that the "internal enemy" was "nationalism," and that the army could be used to uphold the territorial integrity of the state and to stamp out inter-ethnic conflict. The last word in the exchange went to Major-General V. Yerokhin, the chief editor of the General Staff journal *Military Thought*. Yerokhin argued that if the army is used for inappropriate functions "sooner or later it will slip out of control.... Therefore I disagree that an internal function is inherent to the armed forces."26

Polling data also demonstrated that the officer corps was divided in its opinion about being used for internal policing missions. A majority of those polled (53%) in the spring of 1993 were against the use of the army for peacekeeping between the Ingush and Ossetians in the North Caucasus area of Russia. According to those who conducted the poll, these officers thought that regulating ethnic conflict was not the function of the armed forces, and that using the army in such a role made soldiers in the region "objects of attack" for various political forces.27

Divisions among the officer corps about their proper role in internal missions such as inter-ethnic peacekeeping are understandable in light of the chaos caused by the disintegration


27 Lt.-Col. S. Solov'ev and Lt.-Col. S. Yanin, "Rossiyskaya armiya god spustya: problem ne ubavljaetsya," *Armiya*, No. 10, 1993, p. 31. This data, like much survey data, was presented incompletely. For example, the percentage of those polled who supported the use of the military in the Ingush-Ossetian conflict was not reported. For background on the Ingush-Ossetian conflict, see: Fiona Hill, "Russia's Tinderbox": *Conflict in the North
of the Soviet Union. As the authoritative military theorist, Lieutenant-General (retired) V.V. Serebryannikov noted, even such well-consolidated democracies as the United States and Italy occasionally have to use the armed forces internally.\textsuperscript{28} The fact that a majority of officers continued to object to such missions, even after military inactivity had made the collapse of the Soviet Union possible, shows a relatively well-entrenched belief that, at a minimum, internal missions were only to be undertaken in exceptional circumstances and were not part of the core task of the Russian armed forces.

The dominant organizational culture of the Russian army followed in the tradition of the Soviet army in seeing the military's major task as external defense. Leading officers were particularly adamant that the armed forces should not play a role in sovereign power issues, although they were more divided on the question of internal stability operations. As in the late Soviet period, however, there was an organizational subculture that continued to argue for an expanded army role in politics. There is some evidence that this subculture grew larger in the inchoate period after the Soviet collapse.

Many of the more praetorian-minded officers were familiar figures from the late-Soviet period. In most cases these individuals were now retired, but they continued to speak out on issues of civil-military relations. The infamous “Black Colonel,” Viktor Alksnis, in February 1992 denounced the collapse of the Soviet Union and its armed forces. He had little hope that the officer corps would be able to intervene effectively in the near term, but he held out hope that a group from within the army would eventually come forward. Alksnis’s position is worth


\textsuperscript{28} V. Serebryannikov, “Osnovnoy zakon i oborona,” \textit{Armiya}, No. 18, 1993, p. 43.
quoting at length, because it shows how extreme national interest motives (namely, state collapse) can call into question officer corps attachment to the norm of civilian supremacy and make intervention possible:

If one starts from the logic of a normal political struggle in a civilized state, then the Armed Forces, of course, should be outside politics. It makes no difference to the army who is in power – communists, democrats, or the representatives of some other political tendency. That is not the army’s concern. The army stands on guard of statehood. But since today in our country we are talking about not simply the change of the regime, but about the collapse of the state and practically about the annihilation of its most important institution – the Armed Forces – then political neutrality in this case is hardly possible…. If all problems had been decided within the framework of a united USSR, then the “ politicization” of the Armed Forces would have been out of the question. But in as much as destroying the state also destroys the army, it cannot remain inactive.²⁹

Early 1992 was certainly a crisis period in civil-military relations for Russia. Indeed, the collapse of the state could hardly be expected to proceed smoothly, and the amazing thing is how non-violent the collapse was. In the previous chapter I discussed opposition to the Soviet Union’s dissolution at the All-Army Officers’ Assembly held in January 1992. The factors noted here – state and military collapse, the delay in creating the Russian armed forces, and the ambiguous position of units based in the “near-abroad” – led a majority of officers (63%) at the January assembly to believe that the army’s internal function would be retained in the coming years.³⁰

Most troublesome was the evident minority support that existed in 1992 for some form of military intervention. The exact size of this support is difficult to gauge. In February 1992,

²⁹ “Stanet li armiya razmennoy kartoy?”, Armiya, Nos. 3-4 (February 1992), pp. 16-17. Incidentally, Alksnis’s statement presents further evidence supporting a point discussed in Chapter Six; those officers who became more praetorian in the late-Soviet period were motivated not by political ideology but by their concern about the collapse of the state. Alksnis and his ilk were hard-line Soviet patriots, but not die-hard communists.

in a poll of 1200 officers and warrant officers from all different services, ninety percent stated their opposition to military rule and their belief that civilian professionals should run the state. A poll conducted in June 1992 among attendees of a meeting of the coordinating council of the Officers’ Assembly (and therefore those officers most likely to be interested in politics) showed that seventy-five percent of respondents said it was not the job of the military to take power; the responses of the remaining twenty-five percent were not reported. Data on the size of the coordinating council (126 members) and the number of respondents (80%) suggests that only one hundred people were involved in this poll. Finally, the military sociologist Yurii Deryugin reported that in August 1992 around thirty percent of Officers’ Assemblies representatives supported the military taking power. Deryugin, however, gives no cite for this claim, and also no information on the size of the poll, the questions asked, the breakdown of responses, etc. It also is unclear whether he is referring to Officers’ Assemblies at the regiment level and below, which were still legal, or the informal ones that continued to be called by the hard-line “Union of Officers,” an organization made up largely of retired officers.31

It is difficult to know what to make of this survey data, given the limited information about it. Clearly the majority of the officer corps in 1992 was opposed to military intervention, but whether this was seventy percent or ninety percent of the officer corps is a significant difference. The variation could be explained by changes over time or by the group of officers polled; as noted, representatives at Officers’ Assembly meetings were likely to be the most politically active soldiers, particularly if these meetings were ones banned by the Ministry of

Defense. Only the first survey, which showed ninety percent opposition to military intervention, is known to have been of a large and representative enough sample to be meaningful. Despite these data limitations, it is still instructive to compare these survey results with J. Samuel Fitch's work on the Ecuadorian officer corps. Fitch's data showed that the percentage of Ecuadorian officers committed to the "classic professional" view ("military involvement in political questions is illegitimate") dropped from just sixteen percent in 1954 to zero percent by the mid-1960s. The Russian officer corps, then, had a comparatively high commitment to the belief that the military should not be involved in sovereign power issues. It also apparently was not interested in the arbiter role that many Latin American militaries have traditionally played.12

The more praetorian military subculture was informally represented by the above-mentioned "Union of Officers." The "Union of Officers" attacked the Yeltsin regime and the Ministry of Defense under Grachev as "unconstitutional" and called on all officers to "serve the people, and not the current mafioso groupings." The head of the Union of Officers was Stanislav Terekhov, a Lieutenant-Colonel who had been dismissed from the armed forces. In February 1993 Terekhov claimed that the union was "storing up forces" to stop the collapse of Russia. Terekhov also asserted that his organization represented 70-80 percent of the armed forces, and on at least one occasion said they had the support of ninety-nine percent of officers.

Despite these bold claims, most observers concurred that the Union of Officers did not have much influence in the officer corps.33

The period after a fundamental shock is often seen as the most likely period for cultural change.34 We have seen some evidence for cultural change in the military’s task orientation after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Most evident was greater dissension about the appropriateness of internal missions, particularly in stopping inter-ethnic conflict. In general, though, we have found more continuity than discontinuity, particularly with respect to sovereign power issues. The failed August 1991 coup attempt served as a critical event in the life of the Russian officer corps, which reinforced prior beliefs that the military should be “outside politics.” In general, the Russian officer corps remained committed to external defense as its primary task, and wary of involvement in domestic politics.

Subordination

In the previous chapters of this dissertation I showed that the Russian and Soviet officer corps had a long tradition of remaining subordinate to civilian authority. Did the commitment to this aspect of the norm of civilian supremacy change in the post-Soviet period? As in previous chapters, I measure this factor in two ways: by examining the statements of officers, and by examining their behavior in non-sovereign power domains of civil-military relations.

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The dominant organizational culture, as before, held the belief that the military should be subordinate to civilian rule. The problem for Russian officers was that it was unclear to which civilians they should be subordinate, the president or the legislature. This weakness in the chain of command had pernicious effects on civil-military relations. A second problem was the uncertain standing of troops based outside Russia’s borders, which led to some military freelancing, although it appears the extent of this insubordination has been over-stated. In general, the organizational culture of the Russian armed forces retained a fairly strong commitment to the principle of subordination.

Leading military officers in 1992-1993 repeatedly emphasized their commitment to civilian rule. Minister of Defense Grachev, for example, shortly after his appointment remarked, “as a military man, I am accountable to civilians and I implement the will of the president, the Supreme Soviet, and the government.” Grachev’s statements were usually of a general nature, so as to avoid getting caught between Yeltsin and the Supreme Soviet. He told the Congress of People’s Deputies in December 1992, “The army was and will be on the side of the people, on the side of law, on the side of the Constitution. The army serves the Fatherland, it is an instrument and attribute of the state, and that says everything.”

The one occasion when Grachev and the military leadership seemed to lean towards Yeltsin was in October 1992, when a group of Supreme Soviet deputies published an open letter calling for Yeltsin’s resignation. The Main Military Collegium, at Grachev’s urging, publicly stated that they were against Yeltsin’s resignation. The Collegium urged the

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legislative and executive branches to work together. They noted that they are not always in complete agreement with the government and the parliament, giving the example of the timetable for the withdrawal of troops from the Baltic states. “But it is well known,” the Collegium added, “that soldiers are disciplined and orderly, always prepared to carry out the orders of its leadership....” In March 1993, during the confrontation between Yeltsin and the Supreme Soviet, the Collegium also stressed the military’s subordination to civilian authority, in neutral and vague terms: “the army acts and will act in correspondence with the Constitution and the laws of the Russian Federation. The leadership of the Armed Forces considers intolerable the involvement of the army in political confrontations.”

The position of the armed forces toward civilian authority in March 1993, and in general, was summed up by the lead political commentator of Red Star, Aleksandr Gol’ts. Gol’ts asserted that the army “has no intention to intervene in a political skirmish,” consistent with the dominant task orientation of the Russian military. The very question about whose side the army is on, Gol’ts said, was “humiliating” for the officer corps. It suggests that politicians distrust the military and think them capable of a “state crime.” Gol’ts wondered what was the source of these suspicions: “Indeed we, thank God, do not live in a ‘banana republic,’ where military coups take place with the periodicity of monsoon rains. There is no tradition in the Russian army of it taking on itself the role of a decisive force in a struggle among politicians.” Gol’ts further noted that the events of August 1991 showed that the military does not aspire to this role.

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36 “Rukovodstvo vooruzhennykh sil....”; “Obrashcheniye Kollegii Ministerstva oborony RF....”

Officers in other military publications also stressed the tradition of subordination to civilian authority in the Russian and Soviet armed forces. Colonel Oleg Belkov noted that the Russian army "does not have putschist traditions, and also no putschist inclinations." Colonel V.M. Rodachin, writing in the General Staff journal *Military Thought*, noted that in general the tradition of civil-military relations in a country have a major influence on the stance of the officer corps. Rodachin compared Russia to the United States and Italy, two other countries with a historically loyal army. Pre-revolutionary Russia, observed Rodachin, had "firm traditions of soldierly obedience, inspired by the ideas of faithful service to the tsar and Fatherland." Similarly, he continued, in the Soviet period the army was "unquestionably subordinate [to] the institutions of power controlled and directed by the party." Even during the purges, Rodachin observed, there was no military opposition to the civilian leadership.\(^{38}\)

The Ministry of Defense position on subordination to civilian rule was set out in early 1993 by Major-General of Justice V.G. Strekzov. Strekzov's article on the position of the armed forces in the state was originally published in *Military Thought* and then printed up as a separate pamphlet to be used in officer corps training. Strekzov offered a slight modification of the slogan "the army is outside politics." As a state institution, Strekzov maintained, the military is not divorced from politics:

> The army is often the object of politics, but it cannot be, must not be, its subject. The army cannot define policy, either external or internal. The army is an instrument for the realization of policy determined by the highest legislative and executive organs of the state.... Civilian control over the army is an indispensable condition of the normal functioning of a civilized state.

\(^{38}\) Col. O. Bel'kov, "Armiya i politicheskaya bor'ba (zametki politologa)," *Armiya*, No. 20 (October), 1992, p. 26; Col. V.M. Rodachin, "Armiya i politicheskaya vlast'," *Voyennaya mysl';* No. 5 (May), 1993, pp. 13-14.
The leadership of the Russian armed forces, Strek佐v noted, was the Supreme Soviet, the President – Commander-in-Chief, and the government of the Russian Federation. This was defined in the Law on Defense and was the basis of civilian control of the armed forces.39

Streko佐v’s point about the status of the military in political matters was echoed by other top officers. Colonel-General Boris Gromov, a Deputy Minister of Defense who was an important military figure in the Gorbachev period and played a key role in opposition to the August 1991 coup, was responsible for the withdrawal of Russian forces from abroad in 1992-1993. He was asked if he was afraid that he would cross the line between military and political affairs, given the political nature of the withdrawal issues. Gromov replied, “The sphere of politics that concerns the defense and security of the state nowhere in the world is decided without the military. It’s another matter that taking the decision is the prerogative of the political leadership. And here the military really should not interfere.”40

The Russian military leadership stressed repeatedly their subordination to civilian control in 1992-1993. As in the task aspect of the norm of civilian supremacy, however, there was a small but vocal group of officers that questioned this principle. The Union of Officers, for example, asserted, contrary to the historical record, that the Russian officer corps has always “taken active and vital positions.” The head of the Officer’s Union, Terekho佐, stated in February 1993 that “officers have decided to act independently.” In this case he was referring to acting independently of the military leadership under Grachev, which Terekho佐 and the

Officer's Union despised, but the notion of independent action was a challenge to the principle of subordination.\textsuperscript{41}

The subordination aspect of the norm of responsibility, although still firmly upheld by the military leadership, also was weakened by factors similar to those that helped undermine commitment to external defense as the only mission of the armed forces. First, from January 1991 to May 1992 there was no clear government structure over most officers. The command of the Joint Armed Forces of the CIS technically was subordinate to the CIS Council of Heads of State, which met infrequently and could hardly exercise effective oversight. Moreover, the break-up of the Soviet Union further confused lines of authority. Some states, most notably Ukraine, acted decisively to resubordinate units on their territory to their control. In other cases the legal status of forces based outside Russia was ambiguous, and Yeltsin was forced to issue a series of decrees in the spring of 1992 bringing troops in the Baltics, the Transcaucasia, and Moldova under Russian control. This period of uncertainty threw into turmoil the traditionally strong lines of civilian control over the armed forces. Only when the Russian army was formed in May 1992, and Russia took responsibility for some units based in the former Soviet republics, was this uncertainty ended.\textsuperscript{42}

\textsuperscript{40} Interview with Col.-Gen. B.V. Gromov [Deputy Minister of Defense], "Vstrecha posle aaznacheniya," Armiya, No. 18 (September), 1992, p. 22.

\textsuperscript{41} "Tovarishchi ofitsery, ob'edinyaytes'!" and "Interv'yu bez repliki in kommentariyev" in Gorshkov and Zhuravlev, eds., Nesokrushimaya i legendaraya, pp. 426, 472.

The first half of 1992 was particularly tense for soldiers based in the Transcaucasus. In the newly-independent states of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia, as well as the break-away region of Chechnya, military bases came under frequent attack as various para-military formations sought to "privatize" the equipment held in the region. Sixteen servicemen were killed in the region from January 1 to March 11 of 1992, and dozens more were wounded, attacked, or taken hostage. Armored vehicles, small arms, and ammunition were stolen, starting in 1990 and continuing into the post-Soviet period. In one hostage-taking incident, in Armenia in the spring of 1992, the high command in Moscow reportedly threatened to retaliate against the Armenian government if the hostages were not released in twenty-four hours, without seeking approval from the civilian leadership of Russia or the rest of the CIS. In June 1992 Grachev issued an order allowing units based in "hot spots" to defend themselves without consulting with Moscow each time. Given these conditions, it was difficult for Moscow to maintain strict control over its troops.43

Polling data among military personnel in 1992-1993 shows how these pressures temporarily weakened commitment to the principle of subordination. A survey conducted in June 1992 of about one hundred members of the coordinating council of the Officer's Assembly found that around one-third of those polled thought that the unsanctioned use of

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arms by soldiers in the regions in which they were based was possible. This was most true for
those based in various “hot spots,” such as Moldova or the Transcaucasus. A wider survey of
the military conducted in the summer of 1992 showed that thirty-six percent considered that the
demonstration or use of force was a permissible way for soldiers to protect their rights. Only
nineteen percent thought that a written protest was the appropriate response. The military
sociologists conducting the poll again attributed this result to the feelings of those based in the
“hot spots,” and argued that these opinions were less political than a determination on the part
of soldiers to protect themselves and their families. These sentiments were held only
temporarily. A survey conducted of ten thousand Russian military personnel in May 1993
found that only eight percent of officers believed that force was a legitimate way to protect their
rights, compared to forty-nine percent who favored written complaints. By October 1993, in a
similarly large poll, only four percent of officers foresaw the use of force as an appropriate
response.44

More significant than this temporary blip in the stated willingness of officers to use
force to protect their rights was the more general distrust of orders with a political tinge to
them. Twenty percent of officers polled in 1993 stated that they might not fulfill orders in a
crisis situation if they were not certain of their legality. Another twenty-eight percent did not
have a clear position on the question. These results were a clear reflection of the “Tbilisi
syndrome” and the institutional lessons learned by the military in events such as Tbilisi,
Vilnius, and the failed August 1991 coup. As the military observer Pavel Fel’gengauer put it,

44 Zaleskiy, “Chto segodnya trevozhit ofitserov,” p. 13; Mkhin, “God posle ‘putcha’,” p. 49; Solov’ev and
Yanin, “Rossiyskaya armiya god spusty,” p. 32; Spravochno-Analiticheskiy material..., p. 5.
“the sad experience of the last few years has fully convinced many soldiers of the veracity of old army wisdom: never hurry to carry out orders, especially oral ones.”

The political meaning of this data should not be overstated. They suggest more a problem with military discipline than with the principle that the armed forces should be subordinate to civilian control. As Fel’gengauer observed, “the armed forces in general are not suited to independent, without an order, collective activity. The Russian officer corps bears little similarity to, for example, the Chilean one....” The intriguing possibility suggested by this data is that, because of the institutional lessons learned in the late-Soviet period, the Russian officer corps had a stronger commitment to the task aspect of the norm of civilian supremacy than the subordination one. Given the blurred lines of authority from the civilian leadership, Russian officers might refuse to follow any orders in a political crisis.

The final step in coding the military’s commitment to the subordination aspect of the norm of responsibility is to analyze its behavior in non-sovereign power issues. Did the military remain subordinate to civilian authority in issues in the domain of defense and security policy? I briefly discuss military behavior for 1992-1993 on two sets of issues, security policy and military involvement in the “near-abroad.”

SECURITY POLICY. In previous chapters I showed how the civilian leadership was invariably able to demand military compliance with its decisions on a range of defense and foreign policy issues. In the early Yeltsin period there were several security issues in which the military was forced to accept positions that it opposed.

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45 The polling data is discussed in: Serbryannikov, “Voyennaya sotsiologiya,” p. 29; Deryugin, Obraztsov, and Serbryannikov, Problemy sotsiologii armii, pp. 199-200. The quote is from: Fel’gengauer, “Armiya po pokaneytral’na.”

46 Fel’gengauer, “Armiya po pokaneytral’na.”
One of these, which has already been mentioned, was the timetable for the withdrawal of troops from Eastern Europe and the Baltic States. The military leadership disagreed with the timetable for withdrawal of Russian troops from the Baltic states. The primary concern of the Russian military leadership was the need for adequate housing for returning officers. There were several interruptions in the withdrawal, but these were due to political decisions. The withdrawals were completed on schedule by the end of August 1994. Between 1989 and 1994 more than 700,000 military personnel returned to Russia from Eastern Europe and the Baltic states, as well as 500,00 dependents.47

The military also was forced to accept a number of serious setbacks directly in the realm of military policy. In the section above on corporate interest explanations I noted how the military had to accept huge cuts in its budget and its size. For example, the military had no choice but to accept civilian decisions to exempt more than eighty percent of young men from the draft.48

On other security issues the military seemed to have more influence. For example, military opposition to a deal with Japan over the Kurile Islands probably played a role in hardening the Russian position on this issue. There also was significant opposition in the Supreme Soviet and among other sectors of Russian society to Russian compromise on this issue; a poll taken in 1993 found that seventy-two percent of Russians supported retaining the


islands. Military pressure alone was not responsible for Yeltsin’s unwillingness to give up the islands. Defense Minister Grachev made clear his opposition to a withdrawal of Russian military forces from the Kuriles, but also noted that “if there is a political decision within the framework of a reduction of the army, I will carry out the order.” It is not unusual that the military would have a large say on issues related to changing the boundaries of the state, but the army’s position was within the context of their overall subordination to civilian rule.49

The security policy issue on which military subordination was most unclear was the issue of the “near-abroad.” The role of Russia in general, and the Russian armed forces in particular, in several disputes in the former Soviet space has been a subject of considerable debate. Definitive conclusions are not possible, but I will examine the Russian military’s role in three disputes: the debate with Ukraine over control of the Black Sea Fleet, the war between Georgia and the Abkhazian region, and the fight between Moldova and the break-away region of Transdniester.50

**Black Sea Fleet.** The dispute between Russia and Ukraine over the Black Sea Fleet began immediately after the collapse of the Soviet Union in December 1991. The Ukrainian political and military leadership claimed that the fleet belonged to Ukraine, while their Russian counterparts claimed that the Black Sea Fleet was “strategic” and thus under CIS control according to the December 1991 Minsk agreement of the CIS heads of state. When Ukraine began the process of swearing loyalty to Ukraine among fleet personnel in early January 1992,

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Yeltsin announced that he had instructed Admiral Chernavin, the commander of the CIS Navy, to tell his troops that they should not swear an oath to Ukraine and that they had Yeltsin’s protection. Yeltsin declared, “The Black Sea Fleet was, is, and will be Russian.”

From the beginning the struggle over the Black Sea Fleet was of more political than military significance. In particular, the question was linked to the status of Crimea, which had been transferred from Russian to Ukrainian jurisdiction in 1954 when Nikita Khrushchev was the First Secretary. Nationalist Russian politicians, such as Vice-President Aleksandr Rutskoy and Supreme Soviet Deputy Sergey Baburin, argued that Crimea should be part of Russia. More liberal politicians, such as Petersburg Mayor Anatoliy Sobchak and Duma Deputy Vladimir Lukin, took a similar line. The highly political nature of the dispute meant that it had to be resolved at the highest levels, and several agreements between Yeltsin and Ukrainian President Leonid Kravchuk in the summer of 1992 stabilized the situation by agreeing to jointly manage the fleet until an agreement could be reached on its ultimate division between the two states.

The failure of the political leadership of the two states to arrive at a definitive settlement of the issue increased the uncertainty for officers serving in the Fleet. From the ultimate issue

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50 For reasons of space I do not discuss other conflicts in the former Soviet space, such as Tajikistan and Armenia-Azerbaijan. The episodes I discuss are the ones where accusations of military insubordination have been most prominent.


of loyalty and subordination to more quotidians (but equally important) concerns such as pay. the Black Sea Fleet was in a state of limbo. The Fleet's two commanders in 1992 and 1993, Admirals Igor Kasatonov and Eduard Baltin, at various times expressed their support for maintaining a unified fleet under Russian control. The Officers' Assembly of the Black Sea Fleet also spoke out in favor of such a solution. Furthermore, on several occasions crises were sparked by decisions by ships crews to raise either the Ukrainian or Russian flag. The officers and crew of the Black Sea Fleet became more politicized as the dispute continued to fester and their fate remained unresolved.53

Still, the dispute over the Black Sea Fleet was primarily a political conflict between Russia and Ukraine and not a question of military insubordination. Indeed, combat vessels did not participate in the hoisting of Russian flags during several of the crises, and Admiral Baltin specifically ordered the flying of the regular flag (the old Soviet flag) during one tense period, and he was not disobeyed. Finally, although the final resolution of the Black Sea Fleet dispute did not take place until 1997, after the period under study, it is clear that the Black Sea Fleet officer corps was in no position to block a political settlement, including one in which Russia had to compromise more than Ukraine. Thus, there is no reason to consider the Ukrainian-Russian dispute over the fleet an indicator that Russian military officers rejected the principle of subordination to civilian control.54


Abkhazia. Abkhazia is a region in the republic of Georgia that has a long history of tense relations with its larger and more populous Georgian neighbors. From 1921 to 1931 Abkhazia had a status equal to Georgia inside the Soviet Union, but after 1931 it became an autonomous republic within Georgia. During Soviet rule the ethnic Abkhaz share of the population dropped from around 28 percent of the population to 18 percent by 1989. Tensions between Georgia and Abkhazia grew as the Soviet Union unraveled, particularly due to the nationalist policies of Georgian President Zviad Gamsakhurdia.\textsuperscript{55}

The Georgian-Abkhaz conflict became militarized when Georgian Defense Minister Tengiz Kitovani launched an attack on the Abkhazian capital of Sukhumi in August 1992. Throughout 1992 and 1993 a war raged in Abkhazia, and in September 1993 the Abkhazians succeeded in pushing the Georgians out of Sukhumi. A Russian-mediated cease-fire was achieved in December 1993 after Georgian President Eduard Shevardnadze gained Russian intervention by agreeing to become a member of the CIS, and in 1994 Russian peacekeepers were deployed between the two sides.\textsuperscript{56}

The ability of the Abkhazians, with a population of around 93 thousand, to defeat the Georgian nation of 3.8 million, has raised questions about the reason for the Abkhaz success. Many observers believe that Russian military involvement was crucial to the Abkhaz victory. The Russian armed forces, on the other hand, consistently stated their neutrality during the


conflict. There are four possible explanations for the Russian military’s role. First, the military may have been neutral, as they claimed. Second, it is possible that the official Ministry of Defense position was one of neutrality but local commanders “free-lanced” in support of Abkhazia. Third, the Russian military may have been pursuing a policy independent of the political leadership. The fourth possibility is that the Russian army was involved with the approval of President Yeltsin.

It is important to note that an Abkhaz victory without Russian support is not the incredible prospect that many observers have claimed.57 It was in Georgia’s interest to inflate the importance of Russian efforts in order to excuse their own poor performance, and also to obfuscate the fact that Georgia started the war. Shevardnadze himself admitted in April 1993 that Georgia really did not have an army and that discipline was “very weak.” There was also considerable volunteer and mercenary activity in support of Abkhazia from Russian Cossacks and the peoples of the North Caucasus, who consider themselves ethnic kin of the Abkhazians. Finally, Georgia seemingly did its best to provoke Russian military involvement. In December 1992 Georgia shot down a Russian helicopter evacuating refugees, killing 62 people. Georgian forces also repeatedly attacked a Russian seismology laboratory in Eshera, which was being guarded by a Russian paratrooper battalion, and carried out armed raids on Russian depots and military installations. Thus, some Russian military involvement was in response to Georgian

57 The journalist Thomas Goltz, for example, maintained that it was “surely incredible” that Abkhazia could beat Georgia unaided, stating “there are limits beyond which reason cannot leap.” However, Goltz attributes the victory of Chechnya over Russia, in which case the Chechens were outnumbered 200 to 1 (the Abkhazians were outnumber 40 to 1) not to outside help but the Chechen “spirit.” See: Thomas Goltz, “Letter from Eurasia: The Hidden Russian Hand,” Foreign Policy, No. 92 (Fall 1993), pp. 104-105; Thomas Goltz, address at the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, Harvard University, April 30, 1997.
attacks and was consistent with the rules of engagement set out by Yeltsin and Grachev; these retaliations should not be seen as Russian efforts to support one party to the conflict.⁵⁸

These points, however, bear primarily on the relative weight of Russian assistance. There are good grounds to believe that the Russian military was not completely neutral in the conflict. Evidence on the use of Russian aircraft on several occasions, for example, is fairly well-documented. It also seems that Abkhazian heavy equipment being held by Russian forces as a condition of a July 1993 cease-fire later reappeared with the Abkhazian forces. A former Russian officer, reserve Lt.-Col. Sergey Leonenko, fighting on the Abkhaz side (his wife was Abkhazian) maintained that Russian officers provided advice on planning military operations, while suggesting that Russian units were not directly involved in the fighting. Thus, it does appear that there was some Russian military support for Abkhazia.⁵⁹

The question, then, is whether Russian military support for Abkhazia, regardless of its exact scale, was government policy or due to military insubordination. There is some evidence of “free-lancing” on the part of local commanders. One problem was illegal arms sales or transfers, although it also should be remembered that some arms were transferred to Georgia as part of an inter-state agreement and some arms were seized by various armed groupings. The Ministry of Defense leadership, including Grachev, admitted on several occasions that illegal

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arms sales had taken place. The Georgian Minister of Security, Igor Georgadze, claimed that
some Russian officers had fought in support of Georgia; if this is true, then clearly this activity
was not sanctioned by Moscow. Leonenko also intimated that he would get active-duty
Russian officers in trouble if he gave too many details of their involvement, given Grachev's
orders on non-interference.60

The most worrisome notion would be that the Russian Ministry of Defense leadership
was pursuing a policy without the political leadership's approval. Georgian President
Shevardnadze suggested that this might be the case on several occasions. One frequent
suggestion has been that the Russian military hated Shevardnadze for his part in the destruction
of the Soviet Union and were thereby exacting their revenge.61

The bulk of evidence, however, seems to suggest that, to the extent the General Staff
controlled its units in the area, the Russian military was acting largely with Yeltsin's blessing.
First, as noted above, official rules of engagement approved by Yeltsin allowed the military to
defend themselves with deadly force when under attack. Second, there was never an instance
of a Russian officer being fired for unauthorized activity in support of Abkhazia. Third, there
are reports that the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service and the Ministry of Security also were
involved, which, if true, suggests the existence of a central government policy being
implemented by multiple agencies. Fourth, United States' intelligence analysts concluded that

60 For admissions of Russian arms transfers, albeit with suggestions that these episodes were rare, see: Col.-
Gen. Boris Gromov [Deputy Minister of Defense], interviewed by Sanobar Shermatova, "Boris Cromov," MN,
No. 30 (July 25), 1993, p. A11; Ostankino Television, September 27, 1992 [FBIS-SOV-92-192, October 2, 1992,
pp. 4-5]. For Georgadze's and Leonenko's claims, see: Igor' Georgadze [Minister of Security, Georgia],
interviewed by Sergey Chemykh. "Gruziya obeshchayet vzyat' Rossiyu v razvedku," Komsomoiskaya pravda
[hereafter Komsomoiskaya pravda], November 11, 1993, p. 2; Leonenko, "Za Pravoye delo?"

61 For statements by Shevardnadze, see: Ostankino Television and INTERFAX, October 5, 1992 [FBIS-SOV-
92-194, October 6, 1992, pp. 54-55]. On the supposition that the Russian military was acting out of hatred for
Yeltsin was behind Russian military policy in the “near-abroad,” and could point to particular meetings between Yeltsin and Grachev as evidence. 62

Most important, there was a growing Russian consensus for a strong role in the “near-abroad” starting about mid-1992 and continuing into 1993. Although the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had initially articulated a liberal foreign policy line à la Gorbachev and Shevardnadze’s “new thinking,” this position was gradually hardened under concerted attack from the parliament and other foreign policy elites. The outbreak of several violent conflicts along Russia’s borders played an important role in convincing the Russian elite that Russia needed to play a larger role in maintaining order in the “near-abroad.” Yeltsin began to speak out more on Russia’s special responsibility “as the guarantor of peace and stability in the region.” 63

The Russian military leadership was one of the important institutions arguing for a central Russian role in the near-abroad. The armed forces also were the first institution to have to confront this issue because of the large number of troops based in the “near-abroad.”

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army almost certainly were an influential voice, but, as John Lepingwell notes, "there is little evidence...of extensive civil-military conflict over the military's role in security policy." At most, in the words of Fiona Hill and Pamela Jewett, "Yeltsin had...turned over Moscow's management of the [Abkhaz-Georgian] conflict to the military." It does not seem, however, that the Ministry of Defense operated without Yeltsin's approval in the Abkhaz crisis.⁶⁴

In the Georgian-Abkhaz war, then, there is no good evidence of systematic military insubordination at the top level. There is evidence, however, that some local officers did engage in "free-lancing" on behalf of the Abkhaz side of the conflict. Although this activity was in no way a direct challenge to civilian rule, it does indicate that insubordination was becoming a problem in the Russian officer corps.

**Transdniester.** Transdniester is a region within Moldova that historically (since 1793) has belonged to the Russian/Soviet empire. The rest of Moldova (Bessarabia), on the other hand, has close historical ties with Romania. The basis for conflict between the Transdniester region and the government of Moldova was set during the Gorbachev period, when Moldovan nationalist elites strove either for independence or for reunification with Romania. Transdniester's population was about 53 percent Slavic (25 percent Russian and 28 percent Ukrainian) and 40 percent Moldovan, and the political and economic elite in the region leaned toward Moscow. The self-proclaimed Transdniester Republic (PMR) came into existence in September 1990 and sought to separate from Moldova proper. The divergent interests and

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identities of the peoples and elites in Transdniestra and the rest of Moldova helped push the two sides into open conflict.\textsuperscript{65}

Fighting between Transdniestra and Moldova began after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The conflict remained at a low level until around March 1992, when Moldovan President Mircea Snegur declared a state of emergency throughout Moldova. The fighting escalated until June 1992, when the Russian 14\textsuperscript{th} Army based in the PMR briefly sided openly with the Transdniestra government and enforced a peace that maintained PMR control over the region. This peace has endured, without resolution, since 1992.\textsuperscript{66}

The question of the role of the 14\textsuperscript{th} Army in the conflict, and the extent to which their activities were directed from Moscow, has been hotly debated.\textsuperscript{67} The 14\textsuperscript{th} Army was based in Ukraine and Moldova, and Russia and the PMR also laid claim to some of its resources. The headquarters of the Army was Tiraspol, the capital of the self-declared PMR. The PMR decided in January 1992 to form its own military on the basis of units in the republic, and it had the support of Lieutenant General Gennadi Yakovlev, the Commander of the 14\textsuperscript{th} Army until he sided with the PMR and briefly became head of its Defense and Security Department. Yakovlev was replaced by Major General Yuriy Netkachev.


\textsuperscript{66} On the events of 1992, in addition to the sources in the previous note, see: Brian D. Taylor, "Commentary on Moldova," in Arbatov et. al., eds., Managing Conflict in the Former Soviet Union; O'Prey, "Keeping the Peace in the Borderlands of Russia," pp. 42-44.

\textsuperscript{67} Much of the material in the rest of this section is drawn from my article "Commentary on Moldova."
Netkachev had considerable difficulty in the winter and spring of 1992 in maintaining control over his troops. More than half of the command personnel were from the Transdniestra region, and the percentage was even higher among junior and mid-level officers. These officers sympathized with the local population. Although the 14th Army was officially neutral, some of its officers engaged in fighting on the PMR side and also transferred weapons to PMR irregular forces and the Russian Cossacks fighting with them. President Yeltsin’s decision to bring the 14th Army under Russian control in April 1992 slowed the process of disintegration in the army, but personnel continued to aid the Transdniestra separatists.  

There is good evidence, then, that the participation of Russian military personnel in the Transdniestra conflict was the result of local free-lancing. Unlike in Abkhazia, where Russian military personnel had few ties to the local population, in Transdniestra the majority of officers were from the area and supported the PMR independence movement. Under these conditions the 14th Army command was unable to maintain control over the army.

To reassert Russian control over the 14th Army, Moscow sent a new commander considered reliable by Minister of Defense Grachev. The new commander was Major-General Aleksandr Lebed, who distinguished himself during the August 1991 events in Moscow and who had been close to Grachev for more than a decade. Lebed successfully re-established Moscow’s control over the 14th Army and brought an end to the fighting by his outspoken verbal attacks on the Moldovan leadership and his more restrained, but effective, use of artillery against the Moldovan side. This turn of events forced Moldovan President Snegur to sign a

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peace agreement with Yeltsin in July 1992 that resulted in the deployment of peacekeeping troops.

There is considerable evidence that Lebed acted with Moscow’s blessing, including that of the political leadership, during his initial actions in Moldova. He was specifically sent to reassert control over the 14th Army, and he succeeded. However, he soon fell out with Grachev and became a thorn in the side of Yeltsin because of his outspoken behavior. In particular, Lebed got into trouble for statements to the press on July 4, 1992, in which he labeled the Moldovan government and President Snegur “fascist” and urged the Yeltsin government to stop going around the world “like a goat after a carrot.” Grachev telegraphed Lebed the next day, ordering him to stop making statements to the press. “Evaluating the activities and decisions of the government of Moldova is the prerogative of the government and Supreme Soviet of Russia,” emphasized Grachev. “Your task is to successfully lead the 14th Army and not to permit attacks on its military objects, and to protect the lives of its soldiers.”

Lebed telegraphed Grachev that all of his statements to the press “correspond to reality.” Grachev replied the same day that whether Lebed’s statements were true or not was irrelevant; Lebed had an order to not talk to the press, and he should stick to his professional tasks and “stop engaging in political populism.” Grachev said he hoped that appointing Lebed to the command of the 14th Army had not been a mistake for either Yeltsin or himself.

Lebed and Grachev engaged in another war of telegrams in September 1992, in which Grachev again stated his position that officers should not engage in politics and made clear that he had discussed Lebed’s activities with Yeltsin. Grachev said that he and Yeltsin had not
completely given up hope in Lebed's "loyalty and reliability for Russia." Grachev emphasized again that "politics is the affair of the political leadership and to a certain extent the Minister of Defense, and that's it." Grachev reminded Lebed that he was "a military officer and not a former employee of the CC CPSU [Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union]."

Lebed remained Commander of the Fourteenth Army until he was removed in June 1995. Despite his political grandstanding, evidently Yeltsin and Grachev decided he was a useful figure who could control the 14th Army. Equally important, he was less of a threat to either of them in Tiraspol than in Moscow, where he would have even more opportunities to engage in politics.70

Thus, in Moldova we have the clearest case of Russian military insubordination. First, elements of the 14th Army assisted the PMR without the approval of their commander or Moscow. This took place during the period of greatest uncertainty for officers, before the Russian army was established in May 1992 and when the military was ostensibly under the control of the CIS. Second, the new commander of the Army, General Lebed, flaunted his political popularity to directly challenge the Minister of Defense and the President. Although Grachev and Yeltsin apparently decided it was not in their interest to remove Lebed until 1995, Lebed's stance did serve to undermine military discipline. At the same time, it is clear that the Ministry of Defense was not conducting a policy separate from the government's, and that

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69 Lebed's press-conference and his exchange of telegrams with Grachev is printed in the back of Lebed's memoirs: Aleksandr Lebed', Za derzhavu obidno... (Moskva: "Moskovskaya pravda," 1995), pp. 450-463. These telegrams are the source for the following paragraphs.

Grachev endeavored to uphold the principle that the military should be subordinate to civilian control and not engage in politics.

In this section I surveyed a range of evidence on Russian military commitment to the subordination aspect of the norm of civilian supremacy. The military leadership repeatedly stressed their attachment to this principle, and took steps to ensure that it was taught to officers. There also was evidence, especially from polling data, of a minority subculture, particularly in the “near-abroad,” that believed that officers had to more forcefully defend their rights in the turmoil of the Soviet collapse. This partial breakdown in subordination in the various “hot spots” was also evident to a small extent in the case of the Black Sea Fleet, and somewhat more so in Abkhazia. The biggest example of the loss of central control took place with the 14th Army in Moldova.

All of this evidence provides reason to believe that there was a further weakening of officer corps attachment to the subordination aspect of the norm of civilian supremacy in the period 1992-1993. This conclusion, however, should be properly qualified. These instances of a breakdown in discipline were not indicative of a rise in praetorianism, i.e., a belief by officers that they should rule the state. Although these episodes were corrosive of the army’s traditional apolitical culture, they were not necessarily harbingers of a military coup. Indeed, the polling data above on the wariness of officers about potentially political orders showed that the officer corps had little desire to participate in sovereign power issues. This points to one of the weaknesses of a cultural approach: the difficulty of creating measures that can validly capture the beliefs of the group under study. While there was clear evidence that commitment to the principle of subordination had declined, it is not obvious that this created a risk of military involvement in politics.
For both the task and subordination aspects of the norm of responsibility, then, I found a further slight weakening from the Gorbachev period. This weakening is explained by the difficult and highly amorphous situation in which the officer corps found itself after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The available evidence suggests, however, that more praetorian views were held by only a relatively small subculture and that the military leadership and the majority of officers wanted to remain “outside politics.” Despite radical changes in the conditions officers faced, the commitment to previous beliefs about the military’s proper role remained strong among a majority of officers. Indeed, institutional lessons such as the “Tbilisi syndrome” and the example of August 1991 served to bolster previously held ideas. Figure 7-3 shows my best judgment of the location of the Russian officer corps on the apolitical/praetorian continuum for the years 1992-1993.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Apolitical</th>
<th>Praetorian</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LB----------MG---------BY----------</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>High Attachment</td>
<td>Moderate Attachment</td>
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*Level of Attachment to Norm of Civilian Supremacy*

**FIGURE 7-3: The Apolitical/Praetorian Continuum, 1992-1993**


Figure 7-3 shows a drop to a moderate degree of commitment to the norm of civilian supremacy. The most important point is that, according to my hypothesis about the relationship between organizational culture and motives, the Russian military was unlikely to intervene for corporate interest motives. The one potential motive for intervention was the national interest one, namely the potential collapse of the state. In the next section I examine military behavior
during the October 1993 crisis in Moscow and test the competing explanations for military involvement in sovereign power issues.

THE OCTOBER 1993 CRISIS

The Russian political system was under severe stress throughout most of 1992-1993. After the euphoria following the August coup passed, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the launching of radical economic reform quickly polarized the political landscape. President Yeltsin fell out with two key former allies, his vice-president, the Air Force General Alexander Rutskoy, and the speaker of the Russian Supreme Soviet, Ruslan Khasbulatov. In March 1993 Yeltsin stepped to the brink of open confrontation by threatening to introduce direct presidential rule, but then pulled back. His next gambit was more successful; in April 1993 a nation-wide referendum was conducted in which the voters expressed their support for Yeltsin and his policies, and also voted for early parliamentary elections but not presidential ones.71

The political conflict over government policies was exacerbated greatly by the lack of clear rules of the game and the contested nature of political institutions. The Russian Constitution was based on the heavily amended and internally contradictory Constitution of the Russian Federation from 1978. The political system combined both an executive presidency and a parliamentary system. The constitution stated that Russia’s government order was based on the separation of powers, while at the same time asserting that the Congress of People’s Deputies was the “highest organ of state power.” The Congress was able to amend the

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71 The exact results of the April 1993 referendum were: 58 percent support for Yeltsin, 53 percent for his policies, 67 percent for early parliamentary elections, and 49.5 percent for early presidential elections. These figures, and an overview of the political situation in 1992-1993, are in: David Remnick, *Resurrection: The Struggle for a New Russia* (New York: Random House, 1997), pp. 37-56.
constitution virtually at will, which it did over 300 times in 1992-1993 alone. Parliamentary speaker Khasbulatov had set himself the goal of either impeaching Yeltsin or reducing him to a mere figure-head. It was obvious that something had to give.\(^2\)

Yeltsin took the fateful step in September 1993, when he issued a decree (No. 1400) disbanding the parliament and calling for a new constitution and fresh elections. He based this decision on his election to the presidency in 1991, the results of the April 1993 referendum, and his constitutional responsibility for the security of the country. Yeltsin did not have the constitutional authority to dismiss the parliament, however, and the Constitutional Court, led by its Khasbulatov-leaning Chairman Valeriy Zorkin, quickly declared Decree 1400 unconstitutional and concluded that there were grounds for removing Yeltsin from the presidency. The Supreme Soviet did not wait for the Constitutional Court’s ruling, however, and moved to displace Yeltsin from the presidency and swear in Rutskoy as “acting president” only a few hours after Decree 1400 was released.\(^3\)

The constitutional crisis of September 1993 forced the armed forces into the role of arbiter. They were faced with two political leaders who claimed the role of commander-in-chief. This section examines the behavior of the armed forces during the events of September-October 1993. There are three major parts to this section. First, I look at the behavior of the

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\(^3\) In fact, the Supreme Soviet did not have the constitutional authority to remove Yeltsin, which resided with the Congress of People’s Deputies. For the text of Yeltsin’s decree and the decisions of the Supreme Soviet and
armed forces from September 21 to October 3, the non-violent phase of the conflict. Second, I examine in detail the decision made by the armed forces on the night of October 3-4 to support Yeltsin once the conflict became violent. Third, I explain military behavior in light of the evidence and in reference to the competing perspectives on military involvement in sovereign power issues. 

The Crisis in Moscow and the Army: September 21-October 2

The first officer to learn of Yeltsin’s plan to dismiss the parliament was, of course, Defense Minister Pavel Grachev. Yeltsin informed Grachev, along with several other top ministers, on September 12. According to Yeltsin, Grachev had been in favor of such a step for a while. It appears that the rest of the military leadership, the Military Collegium, was informed on September 20 or 21. Decree 1400 was issued on the twenty-first. The Chief of the Constitutional Court, see: A.P. Surkov, ed., Moskva. Ocen ’93: Khronika protivostoyaniya (Moskva: Republika, 1994), pp. vii-xii, 7-17.

General Staff, Colonel-General Mikhail Kolesnikov, later remarked, “maybe Yeltsin discussed it [the decree] with the Minister, but he did not discuss it with us.”

News of the Collegium meeting immediately leaked to the Supreme Soviet leadership. Indeed, Rutskoy and Khasbulatov already were aware that Yeltsin was planning to dismiss the parliament and were planning their counter-reaction. Apparently Khasbulatov was informed of the Collegium meeting by Deputy Minister of Defense, Colonel-General Konstantin Kobets. Kobets was also a Supreme Soviet Deputy, which apparently explains why he went to Khasbulatov. Still, the episode is mysterious, since Kobets was a Yeltsin loyalist. Regardless, Kobets told Khasbulatov and Yuriy Voronin, the deputy speaker of the Supreme Soviet, that the Military Collegium had met and that Yeltsin had asked for the support of the army. The Collegium, however, had decided to take a neutral stance in the political conflict.

Khasbulatov summoned General Staff chief Kolesnikov to the Supreme Soviet building, known colloquially as the White House. According to the Law on Defense, not only the president as commander-in-chief but also the Supreme Soviet and the government were responsible for managing the armed forces. Kolesnikov apparently confirmed that the Collegium had decided to adopt a stance of neutrality in the conflict between Yeltsin and the

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75 Yeltsin, Zapiski prezidenta, pp. 349-352; Interview with Pavel Fel’gengauer, defense correspondent for the newspaper Segodnya and a “personal friend” of Kolesnikov’s, July 7, 1994.

76 The accounts of this Collegium meeting come mainly from the anti-Yeltsin opposition and are internally contradictory about when the meeting took place and when Kobets came to the White House to meet with the Supreme Soviet leadership. According to Khasbulatov and Voronin, Yeltsin called Grachev while the meeting was in progress. Voronin states that Kobets told them only what Grachev said, while Khasbulatov claims that the entire Collegium could hear the conversation, and gives a fantastic account of the dialogue between Grachev and Yeltsin, and between Grachev and the members of the Collegium. For the different versions, see: Khasbulatov, Velikaya rossiyskaya tragediya, Volume I, pp. 186-189; Yuriy Voronin, Svintsom po Rossii (Moskva: Paleya, 1995), pp. 183-184; Ivanov, Analizma, p. 15; Ravil’ Zariyov, interview with General (retired) Vladislav Achalov, “Po tu storonu ‘barrakadny’,” Komm. pravda, October 7, 1994, p. 6. A contemporary press story that refers to this Collegium meeting is: Unattributed, "Silovye vedomstva ne khoteli by vmeshivatsya v konflikt," Komm. daily, September 23, 1993, p. 3.
parliament."

Rutskoy made a fatal blunder the first night (September 21-22) of the conflict. At a
session of the Supreme Soviet he announced that he was appointing the former Deputy Minister
of Defense, Colonel-General (retired) Vladislav Achalov, his "Minister of Defense" and that
Grachev was to be dismissed. Rutskoy also appointed new ministers of security and internal
affairs (MVD). The appointment of Achalov had several negative consequences for Rutskoy.
Most important, it raised the possibility of a split in the armed forces. This was the outcome
that the military leadership was most intent on avoiding. The appointment of Achalov, then,
drove the high command into Yeltsin's arms. There was no chance that the military leadership
would subordinate themselves to Achalov. From an operational point of view the step was
meaningless, because Achalov had no means available to communicate with or control forces
outside the walls of the White House. The move was also a personal affront to Grachev, who
had served under Achalov in the Airborne Forces in the past. Achalov later claimed that he
knew the move was a mistake and that Rutskoy had not even asked him in advance about the
appointment.78

77 Khasbulatov, Velikaya rossiyskaya tragediya, Volume I, pp. 189-190; Voronin, Svintsom po Rossii, pp. 187-
188. Reports about Kolesnikov's visit to the White House also appeared in the press at the time: Veronika

78 The Supreme Soviet decree appointing Achalov is in: Moskva. Ocen'-93, p. 40. Achalov told me himself
that he knew at the time it was a mistake, but that he felt obligated to accept because the Supreme Soviet had
protected him from prosecution for his role in the August 1991 coup attempt by refusing to revoke his
parliamentary immunity: Interview with Vladislav Achalov, July 26, 1994. Ivan Ivanov, a pseudonym for
someone who worked directly for Achalov during the crisis, writes that Achalov told him during the crisis that it
had been a mistake to appoint new power ministers (defense, security, and internal affairs) and that he had not
been consulted in advance: Ivanov, Anafema, pp. 40-41, 70. Achalov also told a reporter at the time that he could
not "betray" his colleagues in the Supreme Soviet after their previous support for him: Stepan Kiselev et. al.,
Pavel Fel'gengauer told me the appointment of Achalov was Rutskoy's crucial error that essentially "decided the
issue"; interview with Fel'gengauer, July 7, 1994. See also: Fred Hiatt, "The Army's Crucial Role," Moscow Times,
Rutskoy, Khasbulatov, and others in the parliament called for officers and soldiers to come to the defense of the White House. On September 22 Rutskoy sent an order to the head of the Airborne Troops and the Commander of the Moscow Military District demanding that units be sent to the White House. He also appealed to the commanders of four of the five military services (army, navy, air force, and air defense forces – evidently he was not yet in need of the help of the strategic rocket forces) to not remain “outside politics” and take an “active position.” He continued to send appeals to various units throughout the crisis, and called on officers not to fulfill orders of Yeltsin and Grachev. Khasbulatov and other parliamentarians claim to have expected that the army would be on their side and that units loyal to them would arrive within a day or two.\footnote{Rutskoy, \textit{Krovavaya osen'}, pp. 31-34, 184-186, 231, 232-233, 286-287, 302; Khasbulatov, \textit{Velikaya rossiyskaya tragediya}, Volume I, pp. 184-185, 194, 297. For more on Rutskoy's and the parliament's appeals to the armed forces, with examples, see: \textit{Moskva. Ocen' -93}, pp. 58, 99, 101-102; \textit{93-Oktyabr'}, \textit{Moskva}, pp. 12, 50; \textit{Listovki belogo doma: Moskovskiy letuchiye izdaniya 22 sentyabrya - 4 oktyabrya 1993} (Moskva: [s.n.], 1993), pp. 14, 20.}

There was some reason to think that Rutskoy and the Supreme Soviet might be successful in their efforts to gain the support of the officer corps. Rutskoy was a general and a Hero of the Soviet Union due to his service in Afghanistan. Rutskoy and the parliament had throughout 1992 and 1993 sought to show their support for the armed forces and blamed Yeltsin for the collapse of the Soviet Union and the impoverishment of the army. The military correspondent of \textit{Moscow News}, Aleksandr Zhilin, cited polls showing that 52 percent of officers supported Rutskoy. Other polling data from the spring and summer of 1993 found that 60-70 percent of officers and warrant officers were for Rutskoy, while only 12-14 percent were for Yeltsin. At the same time, allegedly 70 percent of generals were pro-Yeltsin. Regardless of the exact accuracy of this polling data (as is often the case with Russian military polling data,
the complete results were not published), there was certainly reason to believe that Rutskoy might be able to bring some units over to his side.80

In fact, the White House had almost no active support from the army. Although at the time the pro-parliamentary forces made exaggerated claims about the backing they had from various officers, Rutskoy later admitted that these statements were disinformation and that not a single unit came to their defense. In the aftermath of the affair Rutskoy was criticized by pro-parliamentary hard-liners for not accepting the support of military units that offered it, to which Rutskoy replied by asking them to name one unit that offered help and Rutskoy refused. Rutskoy's support was limited to individual officers and private armed organizations, such as Cossack groups and the fascist Russian National Unity. The maximum number of active-duty officers that came to the White House was two hundred, and it was probably far less. Grachev claimed only fifteen officers went to the White House, Lieutenant-General (retired) V.V. Serebryannikov, an adviser to Khasbulatov, put the number at sixty, and during the crisis itself Achalov said they had the support of eighty officers. The Union of Officers lead by Lieutenant-Colonel (retired) Terekhov also supported Rutskoy, but many of these officers were retired, and less than one hundred of them were present at the Supreme Soviet building. This is a minuscule amount of support in a multi-million man army.81

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Rutskoy and Achalov had colleagues throughout the armed forces, including in the high command, and they worked to gain additional support during the crisis. Rutskoy claimed that both Air Force Commander Petr Deynekin and Deputy Minister of Defense Boris Gromov had offered moral support, but were unwilling to go further. Voronin states that Kolesnikov and Deputy Defense Minister General V. Mironov took a similar stance. Yeltsin and Grachev later claimed that Deynekin and the other members of the high command who spoke with Rutskoy rebuffed his appeals for help and told him that there was only one president (Yeltsin) and one minister of defense (Grachev). Rutskoy also maintained that he had two meetings with a representative from the Moscow Military District who said that they were considering sending units to support the White House; allegedly on October 2 Rutskoy was told that a regiment would arrive on October 3. However, elsewhere in his account Rutskoy states that in response to all of his appeals to the army for help the only reply he received was that officers promised to “consider the matter.” Achalov’s assistant Ivanov was sent to a brigade based on the outskirts of Moscow to ask for support. Ivanov was initially rebuffed, according to his version, but eventually the commander came out to speak with him and said that he would not support Yeltsin and that he would consider intervening on behalf of the White House if the MVD stormed it. 82

Despite these intensive efforts and considerable public bluster, allegedly in private Achalov had no illusions about his prospects. He told his associates in private on the second night of the crisis that they could not count on the army if the conflict became violent. Khasbulatov blamed the failure of the pro-parliamentary forces to bring units to the White

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House as “blue helmets” (i.e., peacekeepers) on the incompetence of Achalov and the other “power ministers” of Rutskoy. On September 25 Khasbulatov asked Achalov where the promised military units were, to which Achalov sarcastically replied, “the same place your promised workers’ collectives are.” The desperation felt by the pro-parliamentary forces in terms of relations with the military is evident from Rutskoy’s order to Achalov to take up his post at the Ministry of Defense headquarters, an order that Achalov obviously had no hope of carrying out.\(^3\)

The one active step involving armed force taken by pro-Rutskoy forces in the early days of the crisis was an attack on the military headquarters of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) in Moscow. The attack took place the night of September 23 and was organized by Terekhov from the Officer’s Union. Rutskoy, Khasbulatov, and Achalov denied any involvement in the attack and said it had not been sanctioned by the White House. Indeed, Rutskoy and Ivanov later suggested that it was a provocation organized by Yeltsin to discredit the pro-Rutskoy forces. However, Terekhov himself later admitted, indeed bragged about his role in planning the attack. The hard-line leader of “Worker’s Russia,” Viktor Anpilov, also was involved in the attack on CIS headquarters. Moreover, government sources reported that Achalov’s “Deputy Minister of Defense,” the retired Colonel-General Albert Makashov (who had been a vociferous supporter of the August 1991 coup), had taken an armed group to the State Committee on Emergency Situations on September 23 and demanded that it be turned over to the White House. It is probably true that Rutskoy and Khasbulatov had not sanctioned

\(^3\) Ivanov, Anafema, pp. 40-41; Khasbulatov, Velikaya rossiyskaya tragediya, Volume I, p. 297; Rutskoy, Krovavaya osen’, pp. 157, 331-332.
these efforts, but they were indicative of the extremist orientation of some of their supporters. Khasbulatov later castigated those who carried out the attack against the CIS military headquarters as “light-headed” people who, while claiming to defend the Constitution, had done great damage to the pro-parliamentary side.  

While Rutskoy and Achalov were making concerted efforts to gain the support of the officer corps, Yeltsin and Grachev continued to stress that the army should not be involved. Yeltsin appealed to the armed forces on September 22 to remain calm and to stay focused on military training and the defense of the state. He urged them not to respond to provocations that tried to draw them into politics. On September 25 Yeltsin issued an order that officers making political speeches would be dismissed. Throughout the period after September 21 Grachev reiterated his oft-stated maxim that the army should be “outside politics.” He emphasized that the MVD had responsibility for internal order, that the army would stick to its own affairs, and that military units would not be introduced to Moscow. Grachev stated, “the army will not meddle in political activity…. Leave the army alone.” To curtail Rutskoy’s and Achalov’s attempts to drag the army in, Grachev imposed a harsh communications regime in the Ministry of Defense, shutting off most telephones in the building. He ordered that military units reinforce their security, not allow unauthorized personnel on to their territory, and not distribute weapons to personnel. Only orders from Grachev and Kolesnikov were to be

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obeyed.\textsuperscript{15}

Once Rutskoy had appointed his own defense minister, Grachev and the military leadership had to make clear that only Yeltsin was the lawful commander-in-chief and only Grachev had the authority to give orders as Minister of Defense. A stance of strict neutrality would have raised doubts in the minds of commanders about whose orders should be obeyed and would have led to the very split in the officer corps that Grachev and the high command were working to avoid. Grachev announced that the entire command staff had affirmed that they followed only the orders of Grachev and Yeltsin. Kolesnikov, who only a few days before had told Khasbulatov that the military would remain neutral, stated on September 23, “I obey the Minister of Defense, the Minister of Defense obeys the Supreme Commander. The army is strong and mighty because of its linchpin, and its linchpin -- unity of command.”\textsuperscript{16}

A large majority of officers hoped that the political crisis could be resolved peacefully, without military involvement. In an opinion poll conducted on September 25 eighty percent of military personnel surveyed maintained that the army should remain neutral in the conflict. The figure for the general population on the same question was sixty-two percent for army neutrality, twenty percent for military support for Yeltsin, and only five percent for army support for the parliament. Military opposition to playing an arbiter role in the conflict can be


compared to data on Ecuador from the 1950s and 1960s. In Ecuador more than eighty percent
of officers reportedly believed the military should be involved actively in politics during
constitutional or political crises. This comparison indicates the degree to which the Russian
army, on a comparative basis, was committed to the norm of civilian supremacy. ³⁷

Khasbulatov and his deputy Voronin maintained, probably correctly, that much of the
officer corps supported the so-called “zero option,” which involved a return to the pre-
September 21 status-quo and simultaneous presidential and parliamentary elections. An
unidentified “highly placed General Staff officer” also maintained that most officers expressed
their support for a return to the status-quo and that all officers were hoping for a peaceful
resolution of the conflict. On the eve of the outbreak of violence, October 2, officers from the
key Moscow Taman and Kantemirov divisions were adamant that they would not get involved.
Analysts for the paper Kommersant” daily argued early in the crisis that neither side could
count on military support. ³⁸

The main political commentator of the army newspaper Red Star, Aleksandr Gol’ts,
articulated the military’s hopes for a peaceful solution on October 2. Gol’ts invoked the
experiences of Tbilisi, Baku, Vilnius, and August 1991 as proof that the military wanted to be
“outside politics,” as it is in “civilized” states. Due to these episodes, Gol’ts argued, the
military has “developed an immunity to political games.” Russian soldiers understand that
their personal political views can only be expressed “in the voting booth,” and that these views

³⁷ The polling data for September 1993 is in: 93-Oktiabr’, Moskva, p. 129. On Ecuador, see: Fitch, “The

³⁸ Khasbulatov, Velikaya rossiyskaya tragediya, Volume I, p. 337; Voronin, Svintsom po Rossii, p. 190; Sergey
Turchenko, “Chernaya pobeda: ispoved’ ofiserva general’nogo shtaba,” Sovetskaya rossiya, December 18, 1993,
p. 4; Deryugin, Obraztsov, and Serebryannikov. Problemy sotsiologii armii, p. 82; Unattributed, “Silovye
vedomstva ne khoteli....”
are not relevant to the carrying out of one’s military duties. Army commanders, Gol’ts stated, should not have to “work out political riddles” or “analyze legal details regarding the legitimacy of this or that person.” The military, he argued, was very fearful of the possibility of a split in the armed forces and the prospect of civil war. For this reason “irresponsible orders” to disobey commanders and bring units to the White House were ignored. The president, Gol’ts concluded, had won a “definite moral and political victory” by asking the military to remain calm and go about its business. Gol’ts hoped that both sides would continue to show such restraint.⁸⁹

Bloodshed in Moscow and the Army: October 3-4

The armed forces, by all accounts, were determined to not get involved directly in the political confrontation between Yeltsin and the Supreme Soviet. Why, then, did the military leadership agree to attack the White House on October 4? In this sub-section I show that only the outbreak of widespread violence in Moscow the night of October 3-4 was seen as sufficient cause to bring in the army, and the military leadership wavered considerably before agreeing to send in several units. It took a personal visit from President Yeltsin and Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin to the Ministry of Defense, and a direct, public, and written order from Yeltsin, to persuade Grachev and the military leadership to storm the White House. Ultimately the military’s subordination to the commander-in-chief trumped their extreme reluctance to play the arbiter role.

Violence in Moscow broke out on the afternoon of October 3. On the previous day


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there had been sharp clashes between the police and several thousand pro-parliament demonstrators at a meeting not far from the White House called by the hard-line "Worker's Russia" and the National Salvation Front. The demonstrators had built barricades and lit several fires. October 3 was a Sunday and unseasonably warm, and a large crowd (probably around 4-10 thousand, although Achalov's assistant Ivanov claims up to half a million) of demonstrators gathered for a demonstration at October Square, several miles from the White House. The crowd marched toward the White House and overwhelmed the special police units that tried to block their way. The demonstrators continued toward the White House, and succeeded in breaking through the police encirclement of the building that had been put in place on September 24, after the attack on the CIS headquarters.\textsuperscript{90}

Rutskoy, after having been isolated in the White House for almost two weeks, reacted rashly to this apparent turn in his fortunes. At about four in the afternoon on October 3 Rutskoy addressed his supporters from the balcony of the White House, asking them to form fighting detachments "to take by storm the Mayor's and Ostankino [the television center]."

The Mayor's office was located across the street from the White House and the crowd and pro-parliamentary forces succeeded in driving out the remaining police and taking control of the building. Ostankino was several miles across town, and the pro-parliamentary demonstrators set out for their next goal, led by General Makashov. Khasbulatov also addressed the crowd, declaring, "I call on our valiant soldiers to bring troops and tanks here in order to take the

Kremlin by storm, where the usurper is holding power, former president Yeltsin, the criminal.\textsuperscript{91}

Rutskoy, Khasbulatov, and their supporters now claim that the failure of the police to stop the crowd en route to the White House on October 3 was a planned provocation by the authorities. The purpose of this alleged provocation was to make it possible for Yeltsin to suppress the opposition with force and strengthen the dictatorship of him and his clique. There is much that remains murky about the violence in Moscow on October 3-4. Both sides claim to have given orders not to open fire first and state that they have video footage proving that the other side started the shooting. This applies, in particular, to the storming of the Mayor’s office and Ostankino on October 3, but also the storming of the White House on October 4.

Journalists and other eyewitnesses provide contradictory testimony on all of these episodes. What remains undisputed is that the two leaders of the opposition, Rutskoy and Khasbulatov, called on their supporters to storm key government buildings, and that Rutskoy’s “Deputy Minister of Defense,” Makashov, played a key role in the attack on both the Mayor’s and Ostankino. Yeltsin’s alleged conspiracy would not have worked if Rutskoy, Khasbulatov, and Makashov had not taken these actions. The conspiracy theory also looks ridiculous in light of the army’s stance during the affair; Yeltsin could not have known in advance what position the army would take if violence erupted, and thereby would have been running a huge and unnecessary risk by escalating the conflict. Finally, some of the arguments made by Rutskoy and his supporters are so patently absurd as to completely undermine their credibility on other issues. Rutskoy, for example, argues that the United States government instructed Russian

\textsuperscript{91} Moskva. Ocen’-93, p. 365; Khasbulatov, Velikaya rossiyskaya tragediya, Volume II, p. 112. Yeltsin claimed that all the events of October 3 were a planned uprising by the pro-parliament forces, but there is no good
premier Chernomyrdin on how to bring about the disintegration of Russia and “the method of carrying out a coup d’état.” Ivanov is even more entertaining, with his claims about the role of Mossad agents and Israeli special forces in carrying out Yeltsin’s conspiracy.92

Even if the conspiracy theory propounded by Rutskoy and his supporters is true, the behavior of the army leadership still has to be explained in light of the information that was available to them at the time. The military high command believed that the Interior Ministry (MVD) had been unable to control the situation in Moscow, and that the White House had launched attacks on the Mayor’s office and Ostankino and called for a storming of the Kremlin. This was the situation they faced on the night of October 3-4.

Yeltsin had been taking the day off at his dacha outside Moscow when the violence broke out in the city. He signed a decree introducing emergency rule in Moscow and returned to the Kremlin around six in the evening. The governments of Russia and Moscow, in conjunction with the ministers of internal affairs, security, and defense, were instructed to restore order in the city.

When the Ministry of Defense first introduced troops into Moscow is unclear. According to Grachev, orders went out to units around 5:00 p.m. and the first groups arrived at the General Staff, Ground Forces Staff, and Airborne Troops Staff around 9:00 p.m. Grachev claimed that he could have sent units to Ostankino, but MVD head Yerin told him that no army units were required. The commander of the Taman Division, Major-General V.G. Yevnevich,

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92 The literature on the details of the fighting of October 3-4 that bears on the conspiracy question is enormous; I cite only a few major sources here. For the pro-Yeltsin treatment, see: Moskva. Ocen ‘-93, pp. 526-529.
states that he received an order from Grachev at 18:00 and arrived at the Ministry of Defense at 23:30. A high-ranking General Staff officer also maintains that a decision to bring in military units was made already that afternoon. At this point, however, no decision had been made about using the army. It makes sense that, given the outbreak of violence in the city, Grachev would bring in units to protect Ministry of Defense buildings. However, Yeltsin claims that he checked with the head of the Moscow traffic police to verify Grachev’s statements that military units were in the city and was told that there were no military forces in Moscow and that they were all waiting at the edge of the city; Yeltsin does not give a time for this conversation. Journalist’s reports from the time are also contradictory, with some reports consistent with Grachev’s statements and others that report that the military did not arrive in Moscow until sometime after midnight on October 4. 93

The Military Collegium met the evening of October 3 (starting sometime between 5:00 and 7:30 p.m.) to discuss the army’s stance in the crisis. Already by that point, it seems, the army leadership had been besieged by calls from members of the Yeltsin administration asking what the army was going to do. According to an anonymous General Staff officer, at this meeting “the military leadership did not want to drag the army into the conflict....no concrete operational decisions were taken.” 94

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94 Turchenko, “Chernaya pobeda.” Pavel Fel’gengauer first reported that by 18:30 the Collegium had been meeting "several hours," then in a later story said the meeting began at 19:30: Pavel Fel’gengauer, “Armiya vse-taki
The failure of the army to come out promptly and decisively to suppress the parliamentary forces apparently caused panic among some members of the Yeltsin administration. An operational staff for putting down the uprising was created under the presidential administration headed by Deputy Defense Minister Kobets, with Yeltsin’s adviser on military affairs, retired General Dmitriy Volkogonov, as his deputy. Kobets allegedly called Yeltsin several times to argue that the White House be stormed during the night. Kobets’ operational staff ultimately played no role in planning and carrying out the attack on the White House, but it did organize the defense of other key objects in the city. Kobets’ staff also sent emissaries to military units near Moscow; several presidential representatives allegedly were turned away by the commandery. This is not surprising, given that Grachev had sent out special instructions not to allow unauthorized personnel on bases.95

The First Deputy Prime Minister, Yegor Gaydar, was alarmed by what he saw as the foot-dragging and inactivity of the power structures. Gaydar appealed to Muscovites via radio and television to come to the support of President Yeltsin at the Moscow City Council building in the center of the city, a few blocks from the Kremlin. Thousands of Muscovites responded to his appeal. He also talked with Sergey Shoygu, the head of the State Committee on Emergency Situations, to find out what weapons were available to him in Moscow’s civil

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defense system. Gaydar requested 1000 automatic weapons with ammunition, which Shoygu apparently was willing to provide if necessary. Gaydar later claimed that if the MVD and the army had not been able to reassert government control in Moscow that they would have been able to defeat the pro-parliamentary forces by distributing weapons to pro-Yeltsin volunteer militia (druzhinniki).96

Such extreme measures were not required. The Internal Troops of the MVD were able to defeat the efforts of Makashov and the pro-parliamentary forces to take control of the Ostankino television center, at a cost of forty-six deaths. At that point Makashov returned with his forces to the White House, although many of the demonstrators and onlookers who had gone to Ostankino did not return there with them. Rutskoy and his allies then prepared for a government storming of their headquarters at the White House.97

The decisive moment that determined the further conduct of the armed forces was the visit of President Yeltsin and Prime Minister Chemomyrdin to the Ministry of Defense in the middle of the night (around 2:00 a.m.) on October 4. It was at this meeting that Grachev and the Ministry of Defense leadership agreed to use the army to storm the White House. Reportedly at first Grachev insisted that storming the White House was not the army’s job and that the MVD and other special units could handle the matter. This argument was rejected by

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the government. Grachev was able to win several other arguments, however. The Ministry of Defense was called upon to carry out no other tasks than the storming of the White House. Moreover, Grachev apparently insisted that the operation not take place at night, as some of Yeltsin’s advisers wished, but in the morning. Grachev was concerned both about government units firing on each other in the darkness and about the crowd that was still outside the White House during the night. “I am not going to crush a crowd,” Grachev reportedly said.98

The military was very hesitant to act without direct authorization from the commander-in-chief. Yeltsin had to issue a second decree on the state of emergency at 4:00 a.m. on October 4. This decree underlined Yeltsin’s responsibility for the decision and authorized the use of the military in an internal conflict. Yeltsin writes that during the meeting at the Defense Ministry the officers present had no concrete proposals on the operation until a member of his bodyguard was introduced by the chief of the presidential bodyguard, Aleksandr Korzhakov. This officer suggested several possible alternatives for storming the White House. Once there was a concrete plan, according to Yeltsin, it became much easier for all present. Chernomyrdin asked if there were any objections. Grachev turned to Yeltsin and asked, “Boris Nikolayevich, are you giving me sanction to use tanks in Moscow?” Chernomyrdin exploded at Grachev,

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98 There are several different accounts of the decisive meeting at the Ministry of Defense. Sources disagree about both the time of the meeting and the participants. According to Yeltsin, he and Chernomyrdin met with the Military Collegium. According to Chief of Staff Kolesnikov, the meeting was a Security Council meeting with the following individuals present: Yeltsin, Chernomyrdin, Grachev, Kolesnikov, Yerin, Security Minister Nikolay Golushko, Head of the Foreign Intelligence Service Yevgeniy Primakov, and the Chair of the Security Council, Oleg Lobov. According to Ivanov, the following individuals were present: Yeltsin, Chernomyrdin, Grachev, Yerin, Head of the Presidential Administration Sergey Filatov, Moscow Mayor Yuriy Luzhkov, and Moscow Militia Head Vladimir Pankratov. Later, according to Ivanov, other military officers joined them. For these accounts, see: Yeltsin, Zapiski prezidenta, pp. 384-386; Pavel Felgengauer, interview with Col.-Gen. Mikhail Kolesnikov [Chief of General Staff], "Mikhail Kolesnikov: Real'noye sokrashcheniye armii operezhayet zaplanirovannoye," Segodnya, December 29, 1993, p. 9; Ivanov, Anafema, pp. 317-323. The Grachev quote is from: Fel'gengauer, "Army's Role." Other sources on this meeting used here are: Turchenko, "Chernaya pobeda"; Burbyga, "Belyy dom ya videl...."
asking why the President should have to decide exactly how Grachev would carry out the operation. Yeltsin promised to send Grachev a written order, and had one drawn up as soon as he returned to the Kremlin; the order was hand-delivered to Grachev.99

Grachev delegated command of the operation to Deputy Minister of Defense Colonel-General G.G. Kondrat’ev. Units were brought in from the Taman and Kantemirov divisions, the 119th airborne-parachute regiment, the 27th Motorized Rifle Brigade, the Tula Airborne Division, and a company of separate Airborne Troops special forces (spetsnaz). Reportedly some officers from the Kantemirov division refused orders to participate. The operation began around 7:00 a.m., by which point there were very few people in front of the building. Tank fire was used against the White House, and the fighting lasted until that afternoon, when Rutskoy and Khasbulatov finally capitulated. MVD units were also involved. A key role in the operation was played by members of the Union of Afghan Veterans, who were substituted for conscripts in several units and rode in on the top of armored personnel carriers, cleared the barricades, and participated in the firing on the White House.100

Yeltsin had considerably more trouble with his own Kremlin guard than he did with the Armed Forces. Two special anti-terrorist units, “Alpha” and “Vympel,” which previously had been part of the secret police (KGB/Ministry of Security), resisted participating in the storming

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99 Yeltsin, Zapiski prezidenta, pp. 385-386. The officer from Korzhakov’s staff who came up with the plan was Naval Captain First Rank G.I. Zakharov; for his account, see: Moskva. Ocen'93, pp. 601-605. For Yeltsin’s decree on the morning of October 4, see: Boris Yeltsin, “Sem’ blizhayshikh dney,” Nez. gaz., October 5, 1993, p. 2.

of the White House. At five a.m. on October 4 Yeltsin was asked to meet with about thirty officers from the group. Yeltsin addressed them directly: "Are you ready to carry out the order of the president?" None of the officers replied. Yeltsin tried again: "Then I will ask you in a different way – do you refuse to carry out the order of the president?" Again there was no response. Yeltsin stormed out, telling their commander that the order must be carried out. Eventually several volunteers from "Alpha" were persuaded to go near the White House for "reconnaissance." One of their personnel was shot (according to the opposition, by a government sniper), and only at that point did the entire unit agree to participate. "Alpha" and "Vympel" did not storm the White House, but entered into negotiations with Rutskoy and Khasbulatov, who agreed to capitulate. "Alpha" and "Vympel" did not fire a single shot.\(^\text{101}\)

The operation to storm the White House was hindered by the presence of thousands of onlookers in the area. One brigade commander stopped the movement of his unit and said that they were leaving, because the people had come to defend the White House and the army would not go against the people. Only when he found out that the crowd was by and large supportive of the army or neutral did he agree to continue. The military was upset with the militia for not keeping the area near the White House free of onlookers. Many of the dead (101, according to official statistics) and wounded were apparently those in the crowd who got too close to the

Rutskoy continued to appeal for military support up to the moment when he surrendered. In one radio transmission, Rutskoy yelled, "I implore military comrades!... Immediately to the aid of the Supreme Soviet building! Pilots, if you hear me! Bring out combat vehicles!" He was shown on CNN that afternoon cowering under a desk, yelling into a transmitter, "I appeal to military pilots, I implore you, I demand: send the planes into the air!"

Khasbulatov states that until the end Rutskoy and Achalov kept insisting that forces would come to rescue them. Makashov argued against surrendering even after "Alpha" and "Vympel" had come into the building and agreed with Khasbulatov and Rutskoy on their surrender. In fact, hardly any military officers tried to bring units over to the White House on October 4. Two officers (a colonel and a naval captain-lieutenant) tried to bring over small groups of soldiers (around 17-18 men), but both groups were intercepted en route. Another Lieutenant-Colonel also tried to organize a group to defend the White House, but received no support. There were also a handful of students from Moscow area military academies who supported the White House on an individual basis. As one of Achalov's deputies put it, "in Moscow there was not one battalion that remained faithful to its oath [i.e., to 'President Rutskoy']." Rutskoy notes how he appealed to the army, the police, and the workers, but "no one came to our defense."103

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102 Burbyga, "Belyy dom ya videl..."; Moskva. Ocen'.-93, pp. 452-455, 532-534; Chernyak, "Ministr Grachev utverzhdayet."

On October 5, the day after the storming, Defense Minister Grachev claimed that the armed forces had "rallied like never before, become more united and manageable." This statement was obvious hyperbole. It must be stressed, however, that despite the fears of a split in the armed forces and some hesitation the night of October 3-4, the army almost single-handedly blockaded and stormed the White House less than 24 hours after Yeltsin had declared a state of emergency in Moscow. This took place at a time when over 20,000 soldiers in the Moscow Military District were away from their units picking potatoes. The Russian armed forces successfully carried out one of its first missions, one for which it was not designed, not prepared, and had no desire to carry out.104

**Explaining Military Behavior during the October Events**

Grachev and the armed forces leadership claimed throughout 1992 and 1993 that the army was "outside politics." They took the exact same stance from September 21 to October 2. Why, then, did the military shell the parliament building with 125-mm shells on October 4? Three aspects of the army's involvement must be explained. First, why was it necessary to call in the army the night of October 3-4? Second, why did the army initially hesitate to become involved? Third, why did it eventually carry out the suppression of the pro-parliamentary forces at the White House on October 4?

**Military involvement.** The fact that the army was dragged into the political dispute between Yeltsin and the Supreme Soviet was due to the low political capacity of the new Russian state. It was inevitable given the sweeping and painful economic reforms introduced by the Yeltsin

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administration that there would be serious political opposition. It was the weakness of the state, however, and particularly the ambiguities and contradictions in the design of the political system (see the introduction to this section) that led to open conflict. Both sides to the dispute share the blame for allowing the crisis to reach this point. Ultimately Rutskoy, Khasbulatov, and their supporters are primarily responsible, because it was their actions the evening of October 3 that pushed the political conflict into its bloody denouement.\textsuperscript{105}

The domestic structure approach best explains why the armed forces became involved in a domestic political crisis. Instances of military arbitration are considered likely in states with low political capacity. The October 1993 events were not, however, the classic military coup that the major works in this tradition consider likely in periods of political disorder. October 1993 was not a case of military intervention. Otto Latsis, political commentator for the newspaper \textit{Izvestiya}, noted after the October events:

The use of the army in internal conflicts is no gift, it signifies the failing of politics.... But this in principle shouldn't be confused with the intervention of the army in politics, that is an independent political decision of the military.... It would have been intervention if the army had not stormed in October 1993, having an order from the legal president and commander-in-chief.\textsuperscript{106}

\textbf{Military hesitation.} Many of President Yeltsin's most ardent supporters criticized the military leadership after the October events for being slow to come to the defense of the Yeltsin regime the night of October 3-4. Reportedly some members of Yeltsin's team even used the word "trea
to describe Grachev’s behavior that night. Deputy Prime Minister Gaydar, as noted above, made plans to arm private citizens in case the army did not bring in troops to support Yeltsin. Western commentators also have commented negatively on the army’s hesitation.\textsuperscript{107}

The hesitancy that Grachev and his deputies displayed the night of October 3-4 is difficult to explain in terms of the domestic structure approach. This perspective maintains that the weakness of the state leads to praetorian tendencies in the army. However, the armed forces showed no desire to become involved in a sovereign power dispute in October 1993 and did its utmost to avoid playing a role. State weakness, then, explains the fact that the military was forced to act, but not its extreme hesitancy to do so.

The corporate interest explanation contends that armies intervene in politics when their organizational interests have been threatened. The post-Soviet Russian army had fared extremely poorly as an organization in its first few years of existence. The political crisis of September-October 1993 could have been a golden opportunity to promote the military’s interests. Rather than seeking a larger role in politics, however, the army hoped to avoid any involvement and wished simply to be “left alone,” as Grachev put it. Furthermore, despite speculation to the contrary, there is no evidence that the military gained any concessions from Yeltsin the night of October 3-4 as a way of winning its support.\textsuperscript{108}

The international structure approach provides a better explanation for military hesitancy October 3-4. The Soviet armed forces were prepared for fighting external wars, not internal


\textsuperscript{108} This issue is dealt with extensively in: Taylor, “Russian Civil-Military Relations After the October Uprising.”
policing. Although the external threat to the Russian state is arguably lower now than it has been in some time, and therefore the predictions of the international structure perspective are somewhat indeterminate, the previous need to be well prepared for external missions could have influenced military hesitancy to undertake internal repression. Gol’ts, from *Red Star*, stressed after the October events that the military is “designated for defending the Fatherland from external threats.” Lieutenant-General Leonid Ivashov also stressed that “defense of the Motherland” is the profession of the army, and that it should be prepared for aggressors who “encroach on the sovereignty and independence of the Fatherland,” and not for internal missions. For the most part, though, references to the army’s external focus were not a prominent part of subsequent explanations for its waverings the night of October 3-4.\(^{109}\)

The best explanation for the hesitancy of the Russian army to storm the White House is its organizational culture. There were two, inter-related aspects of the organizational culture that were important and reflected both long-standing traditions and recent organizational lessons. First, there was the “Tbilisi syndrome,” which had been further strengthened by the August 1991 coup effort; the army had learned that it should avoid internal missions because it was often made the scapegoat when things went wrong. Second, there was Grachev’s favorite axiom, “the army is outside politics,” which had been adopted as a direct consequence of events such as Tbilisi and August 1991 and heavily promoted by Grachev and the government. These were deeply-rooted components of Russian military organizational culture and had been reinforced in recent years.\(^{110}\)

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\(^{110}\) See the discussion in Chapter One about the importance of axioms and historical analogies for an organization’s culture.
These cultural barriers to military participation in a sovereign power dispute were well known to both sides of the conflict. Yeltsin wrote in his memoirs that they all (the government, the military, and society) "had become hostages of a pretty formula: the army is outside politics."

Gaydar, Yeltsin's Deputy Prime Minister, made the same point:

In the course of recent years we repeated many times that the army is outside politics, that it should never be used to decide internal political aims. It had become in a certain sense an article of faith, convincingly confirmed in August 1991 and from that time acquiring a special durability. None of us had ever discussed the possibility of using the army in an internal political struggle.\textsuperscript{111}

Members of the opposition also recognized that the army's institutional culture was a barrier to involvement. Khasbulatov notes that Grachev was hoping to the end that the army would not have to be used. The general mood in the armed forces the night of October 3-4, writes Khasbulatov, was "do not get involved, avoid bloodshed."\textsuperscript{112}

Officers pointed to the military's norms about internal politics as an explanation for their reluctance to get involved. General Volkogonov, who was communicating with officers in Moscow and around the country, noted, "until the last moment, literally until Monday night (October 4), this slogan was heard everywhere, that the army is outside politics." Deputy Minister of Defense Mironov observed that the slogan "the army is outside politics...undoubtedly, made a definite imprint both on societal perceptions and on the psychology of soldiers." \textit{Red Star} ran a long piece responding to complaints in the liberal press that the army had been slow to act during the crisis. Vladimir Leonidov asserted that the maxim "the army is outside politics...is the law by which the armed forces live in all civilized states." Leonidov stated:


\textsuperscript{112} Khasbulatov, \textit{Velikaya rossiyskaya tragediya}, Volume I, pp. 341, 344.
"The army outside politics" is the formula which, if you like, has entered into the souls of the military, sincerely accepted by them. Taught by the bitter experience of August 1991, the military, frankly speaking, came to believe that never again do they need to send their tanks and BTRs [Armored Personnel Carriers] along the streets of Moscow. And if a dramatic spiral of events leads to that, then an extremely responsible and detailed explanation is necessary.\footnote{Volkogonov and Kiselev, "Itogi"; Col.-Gen. V.I. Mironov [Deputy Minister of Defense], interviewed by Aleksey Surkov, "Raskol armii ne grozil," in Moskva. Ocen'-'93, p. 591; Vladimir Leonidov, "Okazyvayetsya, Rossiyu spasla Akhmedzhakova!" KZ, October 7, 1993, p. 3.}

These behavioral maxims in several instances had acquired the force of law. General Ivashov noted that after Tbilisi, Vilnius, and the August 1991 coup “there were heard demands to call to account soldiers who carried out criminal orders. This norm was even written into the draft military regulations.” Moreover, Ivashov observed, the Law on Defense permitted the use of the army inside the country only on the basis of a law or decree adopted by the Supreme Soviet. Segodnya’s military correspondent, Pavel Fel’gengauer, notes that because of the provisions of the Law on Defense the military leadership was not certain it had the legal right to attack the White House. For this reason the written, public order of Yeltsin to Grachev the morning of October 4 was crucial. Retired Colonel Vladimir Lopatin states, “Yeltsin took on himself the responsibility for going outside the law, in the name of putting down mass disorder and securing the stability of the state.”\footnote{Volkogonov and Kiselev, "Itogi"; Col.-Gen. V.I. Mironov [Deputy Minister of Defense], interviewed by Aleksey Surkov, "Raskol armii ne grozil," in Moskva. Ocen'-'93, p. 591; Vladimir Leonidov, "Okazyvayetsya, Rossiyu spasla Akhmedzhakova!" KZ, October 7, 1993, p. 3.}

It is not surprising that the armed forces were very hesitant to become involved in the conflict between Yeltsin and parliament the night of October 3-4. The notion that the army is “outside politics” was central to their organizational culture. They had no desire to play the arbiter role. Moreover, although Yeltsin was the commander-in-chief, the legality of several of his steps, including Decree 1400 and his order to use the army on October 4, were dubious. Given
these constraints on military activity, why did the armed forces leadership eventually agree to storm the White House?

**Military subordination.** The decisive factor propelling the army into action on October 4 was a direct, written order from Yeltsin. When asked what it was that eventually moved the military leadership, General Volkogonov replied without hesitation, “the order of the Commander-in-Chief, the order of the Commander-in-Chief, which was given in the presence of the Prime Minister.” Yeltsin later reflected, “I took the view that the defense minister should have acted himself, but he did not. That is why I had to give the order.” When push came to shove, the military leadership’s unwillingness to be involved in sovereign power issues was trumped by the need to carry out the orders of the legitimate head of state.115

This is not to say that the military leadership would have carried out any order of Yeltsin’s. If it took one blunder of Rutskoy’s, the appointment of Achalov, to drive the military into Yeltsin’s arms, it was his catastrophic mistake of ordering the storming of Ostankino and the Mayor’s office that was decisive on October 3-4. The Red Star commentator Leonidov argued, “[the] fact that we were already talking not about political competition, but the threat of bloody chaos, fearsome unlimited criminality, marauding, civil war in the country, in the end, was the single legal basis for the introduction of forces into Moscow.” The former Minister of Defense, Marshal Yevgeniy Shaposhnikov, drew a sharp distinction between events like Tbilisi and Vilnius and the October 1993 episode. In October 1993, Shaposhnikov maintained, “the army was not

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115 As Igor, Chernyak, the defense correspondent for Komsomolskaya pravda remarked, it was “rather strange” for the Commander-in-Chief to complain that Grachev had not acted without orders. See: Volkogonov and Kiselev, "Itogi"; Unattributed (AFP-Reuters), "President Criticizes Grachev on TV," Moscow Times, November 13,
sent against a peaceful demonstrating people, but against armed thugs. There is a big
difference.\textsuperscript{116}

Any claim to legitimacy that Rutskoy had was lost in the eyes of the military leadership on
October 3. Even before that date only a small minority of the officer corps took his claim to be
president and commander-in-chief seriously. Yeltsin commanded greater legitimacy as the
existing president and commander-in-chief who had won a major referendum in April 1993. A
poll conducted on September 22 found that eighty percent of Russians considered Yeltsin their
president, compared to twenty percent for Rutskoy. A poll conducted in Moscow the night of
October 4, after the violence, was even more definitive: seventy-one percent of respondents
supported Yeltsin, while only four percent supported Rutskoy and Khasbulatov. Seventy-eight
percent of those polled supported the use of force to restore order in the capital.\textsuperscript{117}

The armed forces had several reasons, then, to carry out Yeltsin’s orders. Still, many
officers considered the use of the army a violation of their oath. This was true even of many
liberal and moderate officers. For example, Major-General Aleksandr Tsal’ko, the Head of the
Presidential Commission for the Social Protection of Soldiers and their Families, who made his
name as a pro-reform deputy in the Soviet parliament, was critical of the military’s behavior in
October 1993. Tsal’ko said that both the President and the army acted unlawfully, and that the

\textsuperscript{116} Leonidov, “Okazyvayetsya, Rossiyu spasla Akhedzhakova!”; Yevgeniy Shaposhnikov, interviewed by
Yelena Dikun, “The Army in the City -- The Final Argument of the President,” \textit{Oschchaya gazeta,} October 15-
No. 93-045, December 22, 1993, pp. 1-2. This view also was endorsed by Major-General (retired) Vladimir
Slipchenko, the former head of scientific research at the General Staff Academy, and Colonel Sergey Yushenkov,
who was head of the Duma Defense Committee from 1993 until 1995. Interviews. See also: Hiatt, "The Army’s
Crucial Role."

\textsuperscript{117} \textit{Moskva. Ocen ’93,} pp. 63, 488-489.
crisis should have been resolved with other methods. He declared, "one cannot do such things (Nel'zya tak delat)." The retired General V.V. Serebryannikov, although he worked for Khasbulatov, was seen as relatively liberal on civil-military relations issues and wrote several important pieces on the strengthening of civilian control. Serebryannikov argued that the army's storming of the White House was a violation of its oath to uphold the Constitution, and that the military should have supported neither side. Serebryannikov maintained that "an army that only follows the order of its commander is a criminal army," adding that the military needs to be taught respect for the law and the constitution.118

More hard-line officers were even more critical of the military's behavior in October 1993. A Colonel A.N. Ivanov (presumably a pseudonym) wrote an open letter to the newspaper Nezavisimaya Gazeta denouncing the Yeltsin regime in the strongest terms. He called the shelling of the White House "monstrous" and said that the main feeling of the army toward the government was "HATRED, ALL-CONSUMING BLUNT HATRED, HATRED." Ivanov said he was "ashamed" for the army and that he was embarrassed to wear his uniform in public anymore.119

A sense of shame is often expressed when someone feels a norm has been violated. The anonymous General Staff officer cited above also stated that many officers felt ashamed to wear their uniforms after October 4. Most officers, he claimed, opposed the storming of the White House and argued that the conflict should have been resolved peacefully. Of course, none of

118 Interview with Maj.-Gen. Aleksandr Tsal'ko, July 28, 1994; Interview with Lt.-Gen. (retired) V.V. Serebryannikov, July 6, 1994. Tsal'ko stressed that his views were his "personal opinion." For more on Serebryannikov's views, see: Serebryannikov, "Osnovnoy zakon i oborona"; Deryugin, Obraztsov, and Serebryannikov, Problemy sotsiologii armii, pp. 55-130.
these officers were in the position of Grachev and the military leadership, who received a direct order of the commander-in-chief. Nor were they in the position of those unit commanders who had to bring in their troops. Those who had to carry out such orders, such as General Yevnevich, the commander of the Taman Division, remarked later that it was “emotionally and morally difficult,” but that “no one has the right to not carry out” an order of one’s commander. Similarly, *Red Star* observed on the first anniversary of the October events, “the military, as befits it, carried out the order. The tragedy of the events many men in uniform felt more sharply and painfully than anyone else.” The sense of shame felt by many officers was certainly genuine, and alluded to even by those who supported Grachev’s decision. Shaposhnikov stated, “it seems to me that a normal officer or soldier regrets that he was drawn into this conflict and now desires only one thing, that it not be repeated. This is a black mark on the White House, and a mark on all of us, on Russia.”

The alternative perspectives, other than organizational culture, are less able to explain the military’s hesitation the night of October 3-4, and its eventual decision to storm the White House on October 4. The domestic structure argument makes no prediction about which side the military will support when placed in the arbiter role, but it does anticipate that during periods of weak state capacity the military will be inclined to intervene in politics. During the October events, however, the military was very disinclined to become involved.

The international structure perspective does not make determinate predictions about

119 Col. A.N. Ivanov [MO employee], ”K neschat’yu, ostalas’ sovest’ (letter),” *Nez. gaz.*, November 2, 1993, p. 8; emphasis in original. For a reply to Ivanov from a junior officer, see: Ml. Lt. V. D. Tarasov, ”Gde pryatalas’ sovest’?” *Nez. gaz.*, November 16, 1993, p. 8.

120 On shame and norms, see Chapter One. The cites here are: Turchenko, ”Chernaya pobeda”; Interview with Yevnevich, “Puat’ sudyat politikov”; Vladimir Gavrilenko, “Nasha pamyat’ i bol’: chto donosit do nas veter iz proshlogodnego oktyabrya,” *AZ*, October 4, 1994, p. 1; Shaposhnikov, ”The Army in the City....”
military behavior for this case because it is unclear how the external threat variable should be coded. In cases of arbitration this approach predicts that the military will side with the contender that promises to contribute the most to the state’s war-making capacity. The army, however, sided with a government that had played a large role in the collapse of the Soviet Union, had cut defense spending drastically, and was accused by its opponents of having sold out Russia to the West. The opposition was led by a general and parliament that had emphasized throughout the 1992-1993 period their support for a strong national defense.

Similarly, the military did not see the October crisis as an attempt to gain greater influence and promote their corporate interests. The army did not bargain for a better deal. In the end, they supported the contender that was less sympathetic to military corporate interests. Indeed, after October 1993 the military’s corporate interests, in terms of power and resources, have been cut even more than they were in 1992-1993.

Thus, the best explanation for the military’s behavior in October 1993 is the organizational culture approach. The domestic structure approach also provides an important part of the story by pointing to the conditions that make military involvement in sovereign power issues likely. The combination of these two factors suggest that militaries with a relatively strong adherence to the norm of civilian supremacy will opt for arbitration, and not intervention, when extreme state weakness forces military involvement in sovereign power issues. The international structure perspective’s performance is more ambiguous, but may contribute to an explanation of why the army was reluctant to get involved in internal affairs. The corporate interest approach performs poorly.
The Russian armed forces have not been involved in a sovereign power issue since October 1993. Despite frequent warnings by various observers, the military has not intervened in politics. There also have been no episodes of military arbitration since 1993. This section briefly discusses some important developments in the period since October 1993, and examines recent data on the organizational culture of the Russian army. Commitment to the norm of civilian supremacy remains strong enough to make military intervention in sovereign power issues unlikely.

Yeltsin and the Military, 1993-1997

Much of the political commentary on the October 1993 events emphasized the enhanced power and influence of the army after it “saved” the Yeltsin regime.\textsuperscript{121} William Odom called Yeltsin’s reliance on the military a “Faustian bargain” which would lead to increased military spending and “a new Russian empire” in the former Soviet space. Other commentators went further. Andranik Migranyan and Aieskandr Kuz’mishchev, for example, separately referred to the “latin-americanization” of Russian politics and predicted that the army would make a bid for sovereign power at some point in the future. Such predictions continued to be uttered well after the October events were over. In 1995, for example, Thomas Nichols argued that “the attack on the White House seems to have boosted the high command’s power in the Kremlin to unprecedented levels.” Nichols concluded by warning of the danger of the “army card” being

\textsuperscript{121} The word saved is in italics because the military did not really save Yeltsin in October 1993, despite the conventional wisdom. Once the pro-parliament forces were defeated at Ostankino by the MVD, they returned to the White House. They had no hope of storming the Kremlin and ousting Yeltsin.
played and of "emergent praetorianism among the high command."\textsuperscript{122}

In fact, to state the blindingly obvious, there has not been a military coup in Russia in the last four years. The armed forces have not been involved in any sovereign power issues. The one sovereign power issue in this period was the presidential elections of 1996. This was the first presidential election conducted since the collapse of the Soviet Union and the adoption of a new constitution in December 1993. The election was seen by many as an important indicator of the success of Russia’s rocky transition to democracy. Yet in the early months of 1996 (the elections were held in June and July) there were considerable doubts as to whether they would be held at all. Some of Yeltsin’s advisers, and particularly his influential bodyguard Aleksandr Korzhakov, reportedly urged Yeltsin to cancel the elections, believing that Yeltsin could not win a free election. This option was rejected, allegedly, because Yeltsin’s Interior Minister, Anatoliy Kulikov, told Yeltsin that MVD troops could not be counted on to reliably enforce such a decision. There have been no reports that Defense Minister Grachev was consulted on the matter. The elections were held on schedule, and Yeltsin went on to win a stunning victory after trailing badly in the polls in early 1996.\textsuperscript{123}

The Russian armed forces have not been involved in sovereign power issues despite repeated blows to the army’s corporate interests. The military’s decline, which began under Gorbachev and accelerated under Yeltsin, has continued apace with no signs of a turn-around in


the near future. The British journalist Anatol Lieven states flatly, “the Russian army today is weaker than it has been for almost four hundred years.” The Russian and American press are full of stories about the terrible conditions in the military, including lack of military training and readiness, corruption, collapsing discipline, deteriorating equipment, and backlogs in salaries lasting several months. In February 1997, on Armed Forces Day (the 23rd), Defense Minister Igor Rodionov stated, “what sort of defense minister am I? I am the minister of a disintegrating army and dying navy.”

General Iev Kokhlin, the chair of the parliament’s defense committee, remarking on the abysmal conditions in the armed forces, stated in February 1997 that “if this happened to the army of a well-to-do country, there would have been a military coup long ago.” President Yeltsin does not seem to be too concerned about this prospect, as his government has consistently rebuffed the military’s requests for more funding. Additionally, Yeltsin has been able to make personnel changes in the military at will. Pavel Grachev, the defense minister from 1992 until 1996, was seen by some analysts as so powerful as to be beyond Yeltsin’s control. Aleksandr Zhilin, for example, wrote in July 1995 that Grachev “no longer has any competitors among the force ministries and the president himself is very much dependent upon him.” Yeltsin had no trouble, however, dismissing Grachev in June 1996 when it became politically expedient for him to do so during the presidential elections. Similarly, Grachev’s

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successor, Igor Rodionov, was dismissed in May 1997 when Yeltsin gave him a humiliating
dressing-down on national television.125

Although the armed forces have not been involved in any sovereign power issues since
the October 1993 events, they have been involved in internal politics in two separate spheres,
the Chechen war and parliamentary elections. The military’s role in these affairs in neither case
demonstrates an interest in sovereign power issues.

Chechnya. There are two important civil-military relations issues about the war in Chechnya:
who made the decision to start the war and whether the government controlled the army’s
activity once the war had started. On the decision to start the war, it is clear that Yeltsin made
the final decision. The decision was made at a Security Council meeting on November 29,
1994. Reportedly Yeltsin instructed all those present to vote in favor of war. Yeltsin’s move
was prompted by the embarrassing failure of covert efforts to overthrow Chechen Leader
Dzhokar Dudayev. These efforts, approved by Yeltsin, had been led by the Federal Counter-
Intelligence Service (FSK) and the Ministry for Nationalities. Reportedly the FSK had
recruited Ministry of Defense personnel for the operation without Grachev’s knowledge. When
the covert operation failed, and the details were made public, Yeltsin and Grachev were both

125 Rokhlin’s quote is from: Sergei Sharqorodsky, “Russians Blue in the Face Over Ailing Red Army,” The
Salt Lake Tribune, February 24, 1997 (electronic version). Zhilin’s quote is from: Aleksandr Zhilin, “Chechnya’s
Spreading Impact on Kremlin Politics,” Prism: A Bi-Weekly on the Post Soviet States (Jamestown Foundation
electronic publication), July 21, 1995. On Grachev’s dismissal, see: Pavel Fel’gengauer, “Grachev nakonets
Rodionov’s dismissal, see: INTERFAX, May 22, 1997 (FBIS-SOV-97-142, electronic publication); Vladimir
Klimov, “Posledniy vykhod ministra,” Rossiyskaya gazeta, May 24, 1997, p. 2; Pavel Fel’gengauer,
“Administrativny raznos vnesto voyennoy reformy,” Segodnya, May 23, 1997, p. 1; Yevgeniy Krutikov,
“‘Liniya Mazhino’ prokhodit cherez general’skuju golovu,” Segodnya, May 24, 1997, pp. 1, 3; II’ya Bulavinov,
Aleksandr Zhilin, “Igor’ Rodionov: ‘Ya tak i ne ponyal, kto zhe rukovodit stranoy,’ MN, No. 22 (June 1-8), 1997,
p. 7; Igor’ Rodionov, interviewed by Vladimir Kiselev, “Posle ostavki,” Obshchaya gazeta, No. 21 (May 29-June
enraged and humiliated. Until that point it seems that Grachev had been opposed to military operations in Chechnya, which were backed by the FSK, the Ministry of Nationalities, Korzhakov of the Presidential Security Service, and the MVD. Until that point the military had played no role in Russian operations in Chechnya, and it was largely dependent on the FSK and the Ministry of Nationalities for intelligence and information. Grachev did contribute to the decision by boasting, in a fit of bureaucratic one-upmanship, that a single paratroops regiment could take the capital of Chechnya, Grozny, in two hours. Yeltsin ignored the advice of his more liberal colleagues who opposed military action. Yeltsin’s ultimate responsibility for the decision is clear from several decrees he signed at the time, including one in secret. In January 1995, in response to speculation that he was not in charge, Yeltsin stated publicly, “I strictly control the power structures, know every day the situation in Chechnya, and nothing serious there happens without me.”

There was considerable opposition within the armed forces to the war in Chechnya. In fact, the Main Military Collegium did not discuss the issue before the decision to invade was made by the Security Council. Three deputy defense ministers (Boris Gromov, Georgiy

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Kondrat’ev, and Valeriy Mironov) were dismissed for opposition to the war. Gromov argued that the army’s involvement in domestic politics “has not once produced positive results.” Colonel-General Eduard Vorob’ev, the deputy commander of the Ground Forces, resigned rather than take command of the Chechen operation. The prominent General Aleksandr Lebed’ also was an outspoken critic of the war. Over 500 officers refused to go to Chechnya in the first few months of the war.127

The humiliation for the armed forces grew as the war dragged on. Most alarmingly, perhaps, there were suggestions that military units in Chechnya were out of control and that the country’s civilian political leadership was unable to exercise oversight over military conduct. The influential editor of Nezavisimaya gazeta (The Independent Newspaper), Vitaliy Tretyakov, argued in April 1996 that the military would not obey a withdrawal order and that if Russian troops were withdrawn the president would be overthrown. Galina Starovoitova, a liberal member of the Duma, similarly argued in August 1996, “The reason the war in Chechnya has not ended has become increasingly apparent. Our military is not accountable to the civil society. They do not even answer to the President. They are generals waging their own war, and they do what they want.”128


The military leadership consistently denied there was a problem with civilian control of the military. Minister of Defense Grachev noted in May 1996, "the leadership of the Ministry of Defense does not and cannot have a position different from the position of the Commander-in-Chief." Yet in August 1996 Yeltsin's newly appointed National Security Adviser, Aleksandr Lebed, who was in charge of Chechen peace negotiations, ostensibly faced down a local commander (Lieutenant-General Konstantin Pulikovskiy) who had given an ultimatum to the Chechen rebels, allegedly without official Moscow backing. Russian journalists differed both over whether the Russian armed forces favored an end to the war and whether Pulikovskiy was acting in accordance with Yeltsin's and Lebed's plans. Yeltsin's adviser on ethnic issues, Emil Pain, stated that Pulikovskiy's ultimatum had been approved by the country's leadership and that Lebed certainly knew of it. Regardless of the details of this episode, Lebed successfully completed a peace settlement with Chechnya and all Russian forces were withdrawn. Tretyakov and Starovoitova were clearly wrong that the army in Chechnya was out of control and that the political leadership could not enforce their will.129

Parliamentary Elections. The ability of military officers to participate in parliamentary politics, as discussed in the previous chapter, contributed to the erosion of the military's

attachment to the norm of civilian supremacy. The Yeltsin administration missed a golden opportunity to bar active-duty officers from running for parliament in the period before the December 1993 elections when Yeltsin ruled by decree and a new constitution was adopted.

Defense Minister Grachev, as well as other military leaders, expressed their opposition to army participation in the December 1993 parliamentary elections. Only seven active-duty officers were elected to the new Duma, a much smaller number than the 78 soldiers who were members of the last Soviet Congress of People’s Deputies and the 46 who were members of the Russian Supreme Soviet before its disbandment.  

Nationalist and communist parties did very well in the December 1993 elections, and many observers expected that the military’s fortunes would turn around. The army exerted a huge effort to win a bigger budget in 1994, but lost big. The army’s optimal budget was 87 trillion rubles, with the “absolute minimum” of 55 trillion rubles, the amount needed to keep up with inflation. The government proposed a budget of 37 trillion rubles, and the Duma ultimately approved a 40.6 trillion ruble budget. The army newspaper Red Star published a list of how each deputy voted on the budget with a bitter commentary remarking that there was not a single political party or parliamentary fraction that seriously upheld the interests of the armed forces.

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131 Vladimir Ermonin, "Priminaya federal’nyy byudzhet, Gosduma soglasila s urezannymi oboronnymi raskhodami," KZ, June 16, 1994, p. 3. For additional commentary on the military budget battle of 1994, see: Aleksandr Gol’ts, "Bitva za byudzhet: spor o tsifrakh tak i ne stal diskussiey o problemakh bezopasnosti strany," KZ,
The armed forces leadership sought to reverse this unhappy situation in the 1995 parliamentary elections. The Ministry of Defense leadership helped organize 119 officers to run for independent seats in the Duma, and more than forty ran with various parties and electoral blocs.\textsuperscript{132} Grachev, who had spoken against officer participation in the 1993 parliamentary elections, reversed himself in 1995. Grachev argued that there needed to be people in the parliament that "know the problems of the army, are concerned about it and are able to defend the interests of the army." Similarly, General Lev Rokhlin, a commander who rose to prominence during the Chechen war, contended, "We [the military] understand the we made a mistake by not participating in elections earlier. Often in local power organs and in the parliament our problems and requests come up against a brick wall." Deborah Yarsike Ball and Theodore Gerber correctly concluded that the military participated in the elections in 1995 because it wanted to protect its interests and felt that politicians had failed to do so in the past.\textsuperscript{133}

Although officers entered the parliamentary races mainly to protect military interests, the possibility that dozens of officers would be in a position to constantly question government

\textsuperscript{132} The number of "official" Ministry of Defense candidates was usually listed as 123, but the list published in \textit{Red Star} on the eve of the election consisted of 119 names, suggesting that four potential candidates withdrew or failed to meet the registration requirements.

policy on a range of political issues was clearly an undesirable outcome because of the potentially corrosive effects on military organizational culture. Thus, it was fortunate for Russian civil-military relations when almost all of the officers standing for parliament lost. Only two of the 119 officers on the Red Star list were elected to the Duma. A total of five officers who listed their profession as “soldier” were elected, and another six military deputies from the 1993-1995 Duma (and thus listed their profession as “deputy”) were re-elected. Thus, even using the most liberal counting rules there were eleven active-duty officers in parliament, less than 2.5 percent, which is perhaps another striking indication of the decline in the army’s social standing. The government got lucky in 1995, then, but it still has not taken steps to restrict the participation of active-duty officers in legislative politics.\footnote{Nikolay Sakharov, “Kakiye oni, deputaty?” Rossiyskiye vesti, January 16, 1996, p. 2; “Otvetstvennost’ za sud’bu Rossii...”; Ivanov, “Nuzhny li Rossi i politiki v pogonakh?”}{134}

Russian civil-military relations after the October 1993 events continued to be very rocky. They included a major internal war, several elections, and continual disputes about the poor state of the armed forces. For the purposes of this dissertation, though, the fundamental point is that there was no military involvement in a sovereign power issue. This non-involvement of the army in high politics is particularly noteworthy given the severe threats to military corporate interests and the continued weakness of the Russian state.

Military Organizational Culture, 1993-1997

An important part of the explanation for military non-involvement in sovereign power issues is the army’s organizational culture, which continued to adhere to the norm of civilian supremacy. After the October 1993 events the dominant military organizational culture

\footnote{Nikolay Sakharov, “Kakiye oni, deputaty?” Rossiyskiye vesti, January 16, 1996, p. 2; “Otvetstvennost’ za sud’bu Rossii...”; Ivanov, “Nuzhny li Rossi i politiki v pogonakh?”}{134}
continued to adhere to this norm, although as before there were troublesome signs of a more praetorian sub-culture. In this sub-section I briefly discuss the organizational lessons learned by the army from the October 1993 events and then present some recent survey data that confirms military adherence to the norm of responsibility.

In the aftermath of the October events many officers stressed their desire to ensure that such an experience never be repeated. Marshal Shaposhnikov, the former Defense Minister, as noted above, stressed after the crisis that “a normal officer...desires only one thing, that it not be repeated.” A conservative General Staff officer, reflecting on what should be done in the aftermath of October 1993, did not even think to suggest military intervention. Rather, he stated that “the only hope is that our people will be able to find a normal government.... I am confident that we will never again permit a shameful and low act like occurred in October 1993.” Aleksandr Gol’ts remarked in Red Star that the state needs to strengthen its ability to act in extreme situations, so “the army, which is designated for defending the Fatherland from external threats, will not have to ‘untangle' the mistakes of politicians the next time.” Grachev stated in his year end press conference in 1993 that he and many other officers were angry that they had to clean up “political rubbish.” The army’s biggest fear, it seems, was that they would be forced into the political arbiter role again.\footnote{Shaposhnikov, “The Army in the City...”; Turchenko, “Chernaya pobeda”; Aleksandr Gol’ts, “Grazhdanskaya voina ostanovlena. Do grazhdanskogo obschestva eshchedaleko,” KZ, October 9, 1993, pp. 1-2; Vadim Solov’ev, “Glavnoye sobytie goda – voyennaya doktrina,” Nez. gaz., December 30, 1993, p. 1.}

Several major polls administered in the last few years have provided further evidence of the Russian army’s commitment to the norm of civilian supremacy. A major poll by the German Friedrich-Ebert Foundation was released in the fall of 1994. Seventy-one percent of

officers thought that a military coup in the next two years was improbable, ten percent thought it was a certainty and eleven percent thought it was probable. This scenario was considered the second least likely of twelve scenarios, falling only behind a “seizure of power by Russian fascist elements.” Full Russian membership in NATO in the next two years was considered more likely! Officers also expressed objections to most potential domestic uses of the army; the only three that officers approved were in case of natural disasters, the struggle against organized crime, and nuclear power accidents. They opposed being used both to protect the parliament and the president (by almost equal margins: 27 percent for and 50 percent against and 28 percent for and 52 percent against, respectively). Majorities also opposed being used against separatist movements, for construction and economic projects, for gathering the harvest, and to break strikes.\textsuperscript{136}

A poll released in the spring of 1995 by the newspaper Izvestiya found similar results to the Ebert Foundation poll. Izvestiya reported, “the possibility of a military dictatorship was evaluated as undesirable and improbable by soldiers themselves.” Sixteen percent of those polled thought that the military would come to power in the future. On the other hand, 41 percent thought that the military would be dragged into politics. Only 23 percent thought that the military would be able to remain “outside politics.” This poll was taken after the October 1993 events and the outbreak of the Chechen war, and clearly reflect that experience. Officers were cynical that they would be able to avoid political entanglements. The analysts concluded that based on their data “professionalism” and “depoliticization” were being strengthened in the Russian army and that “this mentality is a definite guarantee against the involvement of the

\textsuperscript{136} The Military Elite in Russia 1994 (Munich/Moscow: Friedrich-Ebert Foundation, August 1994).
army in any doubtful political activities.\textsuperscript{137}

The most comprehensive analysis of Russian officer corps opinion was conducted by Deborah Yarsike Ball in the summer of 1995. Ball arrived at a number of findings that are indirectly relevant to an assessment of officer corps organizational culture. First, Ball found that the majority of officers hold democratic views and do not support an authoritarian government. Second, she found that they do not support the use of force to restore the Soviet Union. Third, Russian officers hold conservative economic views and believe that economic reforms should be slowed down.\textsuperscript{138}

Ball also asked a number of questions that bear quite directly on the task and subordination aspects of the norm of civilian supremacy. She found that Russian officers continue to believe that the army's primary task is external defense of the state and to reject internal usage. On the other hand, Ball detected troublesome signs that officers feel less responsible to civilian authority. On the first issue, that of task orientation, Ball arrived at data similar to the Ebert Foundation. More than eighty percent opposed using the army for public works and railroad construction and for harvesting crops. On the other hand, seventy percent approved of using the military in case of nuclear power plant accidents and ninety-seven percent approved using the army to help in case of natural disasters. Officers also opposed using the armed forces for a variety of domestic policing missions (see Table 7-3).

\textsuperscript{137} Aleksandr Golovkov, "Za kogo progolosuyet Leytenant Ivanov?", Izvestiya, April 21, 1995, p. 4. As is often the case, full data was not reported, so it is impossible to verify these conclusions.

\textsuperscript{138} Ball and Gerber, "The Political Views of Russian Field Grade Officers."
TABLE 7-3: Approval or Disapproval of Using Armed Forces for Certain Roles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Approve</th>
<th>Disapprove</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fight against separatism in regions of Russia?</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fight organized crime?</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protect Parliament?</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protect President?</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protect the Kurile Islands if attacked by Japan?</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ball, "The Unreliability of the Russian Officer Corps." See note 139.

These results are very similar to those achieved by the Ebert Foundation, with the exception that a majority in the Ball survey also disapproved of using the army against organized crime. Summarizing her results on the military's task orientation, Ball concludes, "the military feels that internal troops should take care of the country's 'internal' problems, and that the military should be responsible for protecting the nation against external threats."

Ball's data on the subordination aspect of the norm of responsibility are more disturbing, and similar to the polling data available for 1993 discussed above. Large numbers of officers said that they would not follow orders to be used internally against separatists. The results are presented in Table 7-4.

Ball and I disagree about the meaning of these data. Ball argues that these data show that there is a "serious breakdown in discipline" in the Russian officer corps. "It is unusual for a highly trained, professional officer corps to admit to the possibility of disobeying a lawful order," Ball maintains. I am not certain the disobedience rates would be as high as suggested in the event that there was a legal, written order. Rather, officers' responses reflect the institutional lessons embodied in the "Tbilisi syndrome" and reinforced in August 1991 and
October 1993: officers' activities in the event of domestic usage are likely to be heavily scrutinized, and one should be very cautious about fulfilling orders of dubious legality. It was this concern that prompted Grachev to insist on a written order from Yeltsin on October 4, 1993. The polling data from 1993 discussed above showed a similar unwillingness to carry out doubtful orders. Ball also found that fifty-one percent of officers stated that they would have disobeyed orders to storm the White House in October 1993. Despite considerable data, then, about the potential for insubordination in the army, only a handful of officers actually disobeyed direct orders in October 1993. It is relatively simple to tell a pollster that you would disobey an order, but more difficult to do so when the consequences could well be a dishonorable discharge from the armed forces.140

**TABLE 7-4: Would You Follow Orders to Put Down a Separatist Rebellion?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Definitely follow orders</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probably follow orders</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probably not follow orders</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definitely not follow orders</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refused to answer</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Ball, "The Unreliability of the Russian Officer Corps."

Regardless of the exact meaning of this data, it does not demonstrate praetorian urges on the part of the officer corps. This very hesitancy to follow questionable orders would likely doom any attempt at intervention. General John Reppert, U.S. Military Attaché in Moscow,


140 Ball, "The Unreliability of the Russian Officer Corps," pp. 24-25, 27.
contends that the military is likely to sit out any future sovereign power dispute in Moscow. American journalists, in conversations with a range of Russian and Western experts, came to similar conclusions when interviewing specialists on the potential role of the army in 1996 if Yeltsin had tried to cancel the elections or hold on to power unlawfully. Alexander Gol’ts of Red Star said, “The military will do their best not to take a political role of any kind.” Marshall Ingwerson of the Christian Science Monitor found that “no one here [Moscow] foresees the armed forces acting wholly on their own initiative.”

These conclusions still are valid today. A survey of 1200 active-duty officers conducted in May 1997 found that 78 percent of those questioned maintained that the military should not be involved in politics. These results are quite consistent with those discussed above from the 1992-1993 period, and show a relatively strong adherence to the norm of civilian supremacy, despite the continued weakness of the Russian state and severe blows to the army’s organizational interests. As then defense minister Igor’ Rodionov remarked in February 1997, “a military coup in Russia is out of the question. Only people with diseased minds could have such fantasies.”

CONCLUSION

The corporate interest approach performs the worst of the four alternatives. The

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Russian military has suffered a multitude of blows to its interests in the last ten years but has shown no desire to try to defend them through extra-legal means. Moreover, in October 1993 the military did not try to play the two sides in the dispute against each other to promote its organizational interests, and ultimately the army sided with the contender for power who was less likely to promote the military’s interests.

The performance of the international structure approach is more difficult to gauge. By most measures the external threat to the Russian state has decreased, while the internal threat has increased. The Chechen war is only the most striking example of this change. This would lead one to expect a military more inclined to intervene in politics. However, Russia’s long history of involvement in external warfare, in the functional account of the international structure approach, probably still has residual effects. If current trends continue, however, this perspective predicts a change in Russian military behavior from past practice.143

The domestic structure perspective performs reasonably well. State weakness was an important pre-condition for the circumstances that led to the army being thrust into the arbiter role in October 1993. However, the weakness of the post-Soviet Russian state has not impelled the armed forces to attempt a military coup, as the proponents of this perspective contend is likely.

The organizational culture perspective shows considerable merit. Institutional lessons specific to the Russian armed forces have greatly influenced officer corps behavior, both in the October 1993 crisis and in subsequent developments. In October 1993, when domestic

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143 Michael Desch, in his international structure approach to civil-military relations, argues that Russian civil-military relations have gotten significantly worse since the end of the Cold War: Michael C. Desch, Soldiers. States, and Structure: Civilian Control of the Military in a Changing Security Environment (unpublished manuscript, 1996).
structural factors forced the military to play an arbiter role in sovereign power issues, the army leadership at first tried to remain neutral and only became involved after receiving a direct order from the commander-in-chief. Subsequently, military attachment to the norm of civilian supremacy, although somewhat weakened, has remained quite robust given the revolutionary changes in the country and in the army’s political fortunes.
CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSIONS

In the introduction I set out two basic goals of this dissertation. These two goals were the explanation of officer corps behavior in sovereign power issues in Russia, and an examination of four different theoretical approaches to understanding military involvement in sovereign power issues more generally. In this chapter I summarize my findings on these two points.

PERFORMANCE OF THE FOUR APPROACHES

Four theoretical perspectives on military involvement in sovereign power issues have been investigated in this dissertation. I labeled these four perspectives the international structure, domestic structure, corporate interest, and organizational culture approaches. These perspectives were derived from the social science literature on civil-military relations, and particularly the literature on military intervention.

These approaches were tested using eighteen cases from the history of Russian and Soviet civil-military relations (see Table 8-1). These eighteen cases include all cases of military intervention or military arbitration in the last two centuries, as well as the most significant cases of non-intervention. They are significant because one or more of the theories being investigated would have predicted military intervention in these incidents.

Throughout the dissertation I have weighed the performance of these four different theoretical approaches. The most striking finding is that one approach, corporate interest, performs quite poorly as an explanation for Russian military behavior in sovereign power issues.
The other three perspectives – international structure, domestic structure, and organizational culture – all offer important insights.

### Table 8-1: Case Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter (Separate Case Studies in Bold)</th>
<th>Observations</th>
<th>Military Intervention</th>
<th>Military Arbitration</th>
<th>No Military Involvement</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2: Civil-Military Relations in Imperial Russia (1682-1917)</td>
<td>18th Century Palace Coups</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Decembrist Uprising</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1905 Revolution</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3: Revolution and Civil War (1917-1921)</td>
<td>February Revolution/ Abdication of the Tsar</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kornilov Affair</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>October Revolution</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Civil War</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4: From Revolution to War (1917-1941)</td>
<td>Post-Lenin Transition</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Stalinist Purges of Military</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>Khrushchev and the &quot;Anti-Party Group&quot;</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Zhukov Affair</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Fall of Khrushchev</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Andropov, Chernenko, and Gorbachev Successions</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>December 1991</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Entire Period</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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International Structure

The international structure approach maintains that militaries in states that face serious external threats will devote their attention to defending the state against foreign enemies and will remain aloof from domestic political battles. This perspective has considerable explanatory power in the Russian case. Russia has been one of the most war-prone states of the last three centuries. As this approach would predict, since the middle of the nineteenth century the Russian armed forces have generally eschewed involvement in sovereign power issues.

The two periods of greatest military involvement in sovereign power issues in the twentieth century were at the beginning and end of the century. In both periods the future of the state itself was in question. In Chapter One I suggested that only if the state was at risk of losing a major war or was on the verge of collapse might the international structure perspective expect armies in states with high external threats to become involved in sovereign power issues. Under these circumstances the army’s focus on defending the territorial integrity of the state would take on a different meaning that might lead to military intervention. These are exactly the periods when the Russian armed forces were most inclined to be involved in politics.

The international structure perspective performed best in the Revolution and Civil War case. Process-tracing of officer corps thinking in 1917 showed that military behavior was motivated primarily by their concern for Russia’s war effort. During the February Revolution, the high command was greatly concerned that the revolution would disrupt communication links between the front and the rear and undermine Russia’s military capability, and that the use of the army to repress the revolution in Petrograd would siphon off troops desperately needed at the front. Forced to play the arbiter role, the high command ultimately ended up supporting a resolution of the dispute that they did not desire and that no one would have anticipated – the
abdication of the tsar. They endorsed this outcome because at the time it seemed the best way to end the political crisis and thus free up the army for continuing the war. The Kornilov affair, although coded as a case of military intervention, was far from a classic coup. Only Prime Minister Kerensky's denunciation of General Kornilov as a putschist and traitor, after a bizarre series of events and misunderstandings, provoked Kornilov into open rebellion. Kornilov believed that no other option was available for saving the fatherland from a humiliating defeat. During the October Revolution and its aftermath the high command also did its best not to become involved in domestic politics and to stay focused on the war. National interest concerns (military defeat and state disintegration) also played a key role in explaining the behavior of both White and Red officers during the Civil War.

The final case of military intervention in twentieth century Russia, the failed August 1991 coup, also can be explained partially by the international structure approach. The participation of the Minister of Defense, Dmitriy Yazov, and some other top officers in the effort was due to their alarm at the impending collapse of the Soviet Union, the state they were sworn to defend. The international structure perspective does less well as an explanation of military behavior in December 1991, when the state was allowed to collapse without military intervention.

The international structure approach also had a hard time with the cases of military intervention in eighteenth century Imperial Russia. Russia was equally war-prone in the eighteenth century, yet the officer corps was heavily involved in sovereign power issues. None of the existing theories did a good job of explaining the eighteenth century palace coups, however, so this failure should not be judged too harshly. This approach does help explain how the military developed into one with little interest in sovereign power issues in the nineteenth
century. International state competition and great power rivalry meant that the Russian armed forces had to devote considerable energy toward preparation for external war. This fixation on external war continued into the twentieth century.

This focus of the officer corps on external threats helps explain the army’s reluctance to become involved in sovereign power issues. As noted in Chapter One, Russia is an “easy case” for the international structure perspective, because Russia/the Soviet Union has been perhaps the most war-prone state of the last two centuries. That the theory performed quite well as an explanation for Russian officer corps behavior suggests that greater attention should be devoted to international structural factors as an explanation for the degree of military involvement in sovereign power issues. It would be interesting to know how this approach performs in other countries and regions, both in cases where external threat is high and cases where it is low. The quantitative data discussed in Chapter One suggests that there are plenty of states that do not fit the pattern observed in the Russian case (high external threat, apolitical military). Examples that come readily to mind include Syria, Turkey, and inter-war Japan and Poland. In general, though, more attention to the international sources of domestic politics is an important area of research for scholars of international relations and comparative politics.¹

Further research on the international structure perspective will have to deal with several potential difficulties with the approach that became apparent in this dissertation. One problem is with the predictions this approach makes about military arbitration. I posited in Chapter One that the international structure perspective would expect that a military in a high external threat environment would be likely to side with the civilian contender that will do the most to enhance the state’s war-making capacity. It does not seem that the army leadership behaved this way, particularly in December 1991 and October 1993. There is a bigger problem, however, that logically precedes this one: how does the military leadership judge which contender will best provide for the state’s national security? And how does the scholar judge the choice made by the military? In the two periods this century when sovereign power issues were most contested, the Russian revolution and the recent reform period of Gorbachev and Yeltsin, it was and is hard to determine which contenders for power would best be able to enhance the state’s war-making capacity. Many Russian officers in 1917-1918 ended up siding with the Bolsheviks, the contenders who were most hostile to the prevailing nature of international power politics and even the continuation of the international state system. In hindsight one can argue that the Bolsheviks enhanced Russia’s international power and thus acquitted themselves quite well on this score, but this retrospective judgment can hardly be counted as a factor in explaining the choices made by officers at the time.\(^2\) The international structure perspective seems to be too

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blunt an instrument to do a good job of explaining officers’ choices in cases of military arbitration.

Another problem for the international structure approach is perhaps even more troublesome: how does one know when a state faces a challenging international environment? In the theoretical chapter I set out the most parsimonious version of the international structure perspective and argued that external threat is related to the distribution of material capabilities across units (states). This is a structural account, but it is not clear that this is how states and militaries evaluate their external environment. The intentions of other states and perceptions of these intentions play an important role in the formulation of national security policy. Variables such as intentions and perceptions, however, are not international structural variables; they relate more to domestic politics, individual cognition, bureaucratic politics, and, arguably, organizational culture.¹

On balance, though, the international structure approach performed quite well. Most of the comparative politics literature on military intervention was written about Third World states, which in general have faced a less challenging external environment than that of European states. This perspective seems to point to an important variable (external threat) that the previous literature has largely ignored.

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Domestic Structure

The domestic structure approach to military involvement in sovereign power issues also performs quite well. The two periods of greatest military involvement in high politics were during intervals of very weak state capacity, the revolutionary transformations of Russia that took place at the beginning and end of the century. Table 8-1 makes clear that the years 1917-1920 and 1991-1993, periods of extreme state weakness, experienced several important episodes of either military intervention or arbitration.

The chapters on these periods demonstrated how the extremely weak political capacity of the state virtually forced military involvement in politics. In conditions when, as noted in the chapter on the Revolution, “power was virtually lying on the ground,” the struggle for power and to hold the state together willy-nilly involved the armed forces, as the institution most associated with statehood. The officer corps on several occasions was forced to take a stand on sovereign power issues.

The domestic structure approach, then, is indispensable for highlighting the conditions under which military involvement in sovereign power issues is most likely. This perspective, however, claims to do more than this. The predicted behavior of the military in weak states is military intervention, not just military involvement. For example, Samuel Huntington in Political Order in Changing Societies contends that praetorian militaries are a consequence of praetorian societies.\footnote{Samuel P. Huntington, Political Order in Changing Societies (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), esp. Chapter 4 (“Praetorianism and Political Decay”).} State weakness is depicted as an opportunity for military intervention.

The Russian armed forces, however, have not seen periods of political disorder as opportunities for intervention. Although many armies probably see weak states as more of a
curse than a blessing, few have demonstrated the extreme reluctance to get involved in politics that has historically marked the behavior of the Russian military. The Russian armed forces' threshold for the tolerance of political disorder has been considerably higher than that of militaries in many other states. Only when the state was on the verge of a catastrophic military defeat or complete collapse did the army intervene in politics, and never with enough resoluteness or unity to be successful. This high threshold, I contend, has been due largely to the army's organizational culture.

The Russian army's behavior, then, is somewhat different than that predicted by the domestic structure approach. A major reason for this disconnect is that the category of military arbitration was obscured by the literature's focus on military intervention. The variable of military involvement in sovereign power issues has three values, not two, once military arbitration is included as a distinct class of events. Once this factor is taken into account, the domestic structure approach can be reformulated to state that armies in weak states are likely to become involved in sovereign power issues. If understood in this fashion, the domestic structure approach performed quite well in the Russian case.

A second problem with much of the work in this tradition is that it is sampled on the dependent variable. Scholars studied military coups and found that they often took place in weak states, while neglecting to study weak states that did not suffer military coups.  

There also was one case of military involvement in sovereign power issues in twentieth century Russia when the state was by most estimates quite strong: military arbitration in 1957.

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during Khrushchev's struggle with the so-called "Anti-Party Group." This instance of military arbitration came about because of a weakness of the political system, namely the absence of an institutionalized succession mechanism. This political weakness was also a fundamental cause of military intervention during the palace coups of the eighteenth century, the period of greatest military involvement in sovereign power issues.

Noting this institutional weakness, however, only points to a more fundamental problem, that of operationalizing the concept of weak state political capacity. Scholars have been unable to agree on how to measure political capacity and state strength, and only some approaches include the succession process as an indicator. Without clear measures the danger of circular reasoning in the study of military involvement in sovereign power issues becomes severe: a military coup is an obvious potential measure of political disorder, but the dependent variable has to remain separate from the independent variable if the theory is to be falsifiable.

The domestic structure perspective, then, is not without its difficulties. The conventional statement of this view is somewhat misspecified in that it predicts military intervention when it really should predict military involvement in sovereign power issues. The theory also has potential measurement problems. Still, the behavior of the Russian armed forces in sovereign power issues cannot be understood without reference to this approach, and the political conditions that led to military participation in high politics.

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6 For a survey of the different approaches to measuring political order, in addition to the discussion in Chapter One, see: Uriel Rosenthal, Political Order: Rewards, Punishments and Political Stability (Alphen aan den Rijn, The Netherlands: Sijthoff & Noordhoff, 1978).
Corporate Interest

The corporate interest approach performs the worst of the four theoretical approaches under investigation. The Russian and Soviet armed forces in the twentieth century have experienced several periods when their institutional interests were under threat. These periods include the late-Imperial period, the early-to-mid-1920s, the military purges under Stalin, the force cuts under Khrushchev in the early 1960s, and the military reforms and cuts under Gorbachev and Yeltsin. In none of these cases was there military intervention for corporate interest motives. It is hard to imagine a military’s organizational interests being more severely threatened than they were under Stalin or than they have been during Yeltsin’s period of rule, yet the armed forces did not and have not intervened in sovereign power issues during these periods.

Even in cases of military arbitration, with the exception of Zhukov’s stance during Khrushchev’s conflict with the “Anti-Party Group,” the military has not used these opportunities to advance its corporate interests. It has not sided with the contender most likely to advance its interests, nor has it engaged in bargaining with the competing sides.

The poor performance of this perspective is somewhat surprising. The corporate interest approach to military involvement in sovereign power issues is prominent both in the general comparative politics literature and in the Soviet studies sub-field literature. Major studies of military intervention by Eric Nordlinger and William Thompson found that corporate interests were one of the most prominent causes of military coups.  

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books on Soviet civil-military relations, the studies of Roman Kolkowicz and Timothy Colton, also adopted this approach.⁸

The reason that the corporate interest perspective performs poorly in the Russian case is similar to one of the problems with the domestic structure approach: most of the studies in this vein are sampled on the dependent variable. Nordlinger and Thompson are undoubtedly correct that threats to an army's corporate interests often can provoke intervention. However, it is impossible to determine the limits of the applicability of this theoretical approach without attention to those cases in which the military's interests are threatened but it does not intervene.⁹

The weakness of the Soviet studies literature adopting this perspective is somewhat different. The major problem is that this literature did not adequately delimit its dependent variable. Most of the literature on Soviet civil-military relations focused on questions of defense policy. Conclusions about civil-military interaction in the defense politics realm were sometimes then used to draw inferences about the likelihood of military intervention in sovereign power issues. There was no necessary reason, however, that civil-military conflict over military doctrine or spending, for example, would lead to a military coup, any more than similar conflicts in the United States lead to military intervention.¹⁰

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⁹ On the importance of determining the bounds of a theory's applicability, see: King, Keohane, and Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry*, p. 101.

Even the combination of low political capacity and threatened organizational interests was not sufficient to bring about intervention by the Russian armed forces. There may be cases when it appears that the combination of these two variables, domestic structure and corporate interest, is sufficient. The evidence discussed in this thesis, however, suggests that such a conclusion is misleading and would be unwarranted. It may be true that militaries that feel their interests threatened in weak states will be inclined to intervene, but only if there are not normative barriers to military intervention. In cases where the military’s dominant organizational culture adheres to the norm of civilian supremacy, even the combination of threats to corporate interests and political disorder is not sufficient to bring about military intervention. By examining cases of non-intervention, this conclusion becomes more evident.

One reason, then, that the Russian army did not intervene in high politics, despite severe threats to its corporate interests, is that the officer corps did not believe it was right for the army to be involved in sovereign power issues. The military’s tolerance for challenges to its corporate interests was considerably higher than that of many other armies. In other words, military intervention was constrained by the army’s organizational culture.

Organizational Culture

One of the fundamental conclusions of this dissertation is that organizational culture is an important and under-studied explanatory variable in the study of military involvement in sovereign power issues. There has not been a successful military coup in Russia since 1801, and a major reason for this is that the dominant organizational culture since around the middle of the nineteenth century has adhered to the norm of civilian supremacy. Russian and Soviet officers have believed that it is not their job to play a role in deciding who rules the state.
The one case of widespread military intervention in sovereign power issues was during the Civil War. Military intervention came about only after political revolution and defeat in a major war led to the partial dismemberment of the state. The Treaty of Brest-Litovsk convinced at least some White officers of their previous suspicions that the Bolsheviks were little more than German agents. Conversely, many of the “military specialists” who initially agreed to fight with the Reds did so on the condition that they would be used to fight against the Germans and Austrians. The largest group of officers had no stomach for getting involved in a civil war and did their best to sit out the conflict.

The other serious case of military intervention was the failed August 1991 coup attempt. This effort was spearheaded by the KGB, not the armed forces, and the Minister of Defense, Dmitriy Yazov, seemed of two minds about the intervention from the beginning. Yazov was convinced that the collapse of the Soviet state needed to be prevented, but also was inhibited by his belief that the army should be subordinate to civilian authority. Resistance to the coup within the armed forces ultimately doomed it to failure. Only a small minority subculture of hard-line officers pursued the coup with determination, but they were ineffective in the face of the foot-dragging and open opposition of those who believed that the army should not decide sovereign power issues.

Officer corps norms were also influential in determining the military’s stance in two cases of arbitration, the collapse of the Soviet Union in December 1991 and the October events of 1993. In both cases the army leadership ultimately sided with the most legitimate contender, and the one who was least likely to need to rely on the army to remain in power. The army took this stance in December 1991 even though it meant their acquiescence to the collapse of the state they were sworn to defend. As the Minister of Defense, Marshal Yevgeniy
Shaposhnikov, remarked in response to critics within the officer corps, "what else can be done? What do you expect me to do -- order the troops to turn their guns and tanks on Moscow?.... I know what this would mean. We are not Thailand." For Shaposhnikov and other officers, it was a matter of professional pride that they were different in their organizational culture from Third World praetorian armies.

The importance of organizational culture became most evident when process-tracing the behavior of the military. Officers frequently referred to specific institutional lessons, such as the "Tbilisi syndrome," and common idioms and phrases, such as "the army is outside politics," in justifying their behavior both to themselves and others. The maxim "the army is outside politics" was referred to frequently during the Russian Revolution and the political turmoil of the Gorbachev and Yeltsin years, and even during the Stalin period when the party leadership rejected this formulation. Detailed process-tracing showed that, in Stephen Van Evera's words, "the actors speak and behave as the theory would predict."  

Domestic structure and organizational culture factors interacted in interesting ways in several of the cases. A key finding of this dissertation is that, in cases of weak state capacity, militaries with a strong attachment to the norm of civilian supremacy tend to end up in the arbiter role if forced to become involved in politics. Russian officers eschewed intervention and endeavored to remain neutral in sovereign power disputes, but in situations when "power was


13 I thank Don Blackmer for encouraging me to emphasize the major points of the next several paragraphs concerning the interaction of the cultural and structural variables.
virtually lying on the ground" this became impossible. Good examples of this interaction of domestic structure and organizational culture forcing the military into the arbiter role were the abdication of the Tsar in February 1917, the October Revolution, the collapse of the Soviet Union in December 1991, and the October 1993 events in Moscow.

In general, in the Russian case military attachment to the norm of civilian supremacy was so strong that only severe circumstances having to do with either international (major military defeat) or domestic (potential state collapse) structure factors were able to overcome this cultural inhibition. Those cases when the normative barrier was partially overcome, at least for a sub-set of officers, include the Kornilov Affair, the Civil War, and the failed August 1991 coup attempt. Moreover, the strength of the apolitical organizational culture doomed these attempts at intervention to failure because of the foot-dragging and opposition of other officers.

In the cases of virtual state collapse, during the Russian Revolution and the demise of the Soviet Union, it appears that international structural factors actually may have encouraged the growth of a more praetorian organizational subculture. The need to uphold the territorial integrity of the state helped officers rationalize the need to become involved in sovereign power issues. This more praetorian sub-culture, however, was never powerful enough to overcome the dominant organizational culture and bring about a successful military coup.

The organizational culture perspective also is not without its problems. Perhaps the most bedeviling of these is the question of measurement. It is difficult to access the norms of a group of people that is closed off from direct observation and in most cases not available for direct questioning or survey research. Despite the use of content analysis, polling data, and behavioral measures, much of the measurement of organizational culture in this dissertation has had to rely on hermeneutics, i.e. the interpretative analysis of texts. Although I have tried to be
careful to search for multiple viewpoints and use available sources responsibly, inevitably subjective judgments were made about the meaning and importance of various documents. The problem of assessing the importance of organizational subcultures was also evident in this respect. Most problematic, perhaps, was the attempt to measure organizational culture for much of the Soviet period, when good sources on the norms and beliefs of officers were difficult to come by.

This is not to suggest that the other approaches do not face similar problems of operationalization and measurement. As I have already noted, these problems are not unique to cultural accounts. The potential fuzziness of such terms as “external threat,” “political capacity,” and “corporate interests” indicates that these methodological difficulties are widespread and not the unique concern of any particular paradigm.

Moreover, the organizational culture account is capable of being falsified. The measures of organizational culture set out in various chapters were hypotheses that could have been falsified if the army had behaved in a way contrary to the predictions made for the hypothesized level of commitment to the norm of civilian supremacy. For example, a coup in Russia in the current period would falsify either my measurement of the military’s organizational culture or my hypothesis about the relationship between officers’ norms and coup motives.

One final conclusion about the measurement of organizational culture is that careful historical research, or what I have called process-tracing, allows one to ameliorate the problem of circularity in the measurement of culture. It is invalid to use the behavior of a group as an indication of their culture. The absence of a coup is not evidence of a strong commitment to the norm of civilian supremacy. However, detailed investigation of the reasons for a particular
action provide evidence about the norms and beliefs of actors. These reasons for behavior at
time $t$ help demonstrate the validity of the measurement of culture conducted at time $t-1$. For
example, the invocation of the "Tbilisi syndrome" by officers as an explanation for their
behavior in August 1991 or October 1993 provides additional confirmation for the
organizational culture approach, beyond that provided by their behavior, i.e. their extreme
reluctance to get involved in sovereign power issues.

Summary

Several important conclusions of this dissertation warrant re-emphasis.

First, studies of military involvement in sovereign power issues need to be cognizant of
the complete range of values for the dependent variable. In order to explain coups, non-coups
need to be studied. Military arbitration needs to be distinguished from military intervention and
treated as a separate and important class of events.

Second, the corporate interest perspective does a poor job of explaining Russian army
behavior in sovereign power issues. Threats to military organizational interests have not led to
military intervention for nearly two hundred years.

Third, the international structure, domestic structure, and organizational culture
approaches do a much better job of explaining Russian military behavior. The domestic
structure approach performs best if it is modified to predict military involvement in sovereign
power issues, rather than military intervention, which is how this argument has traditionally
been presented.

Finally, the international structure and organizational culture perspectives have been
subject to less empirical research than the other two approaches and need to be investigated
more fully. The importance of the normative element of military behavior in sovereign power issues came out particularly clearly in this dissertation, especially in combination with structural variables. The Russian and Soviet military was not always able to remain "outside politics," but officers' adherence to an apolitical organizational culture powerfully shaped the outcomes of the most important sovereign power disputes in twentieth century Russia.
APPENDIXES

Appendix A: War-Proneness and Military Coups, Within Region Comparison

Appendix B: Accompanying Maps to Chapter Three

Appendix C: Task Orientation of the Soviet Military, 1980-1993
APPENDIX A: WAR-PRONENESS AND MILITARY COUPS, WITHIN REGION COMPARISON

The table below shows the regional breakdown of the war-proneness ranking of countries. States were placed in one of three categories: high war-proneness, moderate war-proneness, and low war-proneness. The placing was dependent on the state’s regional ranking on three criteria: the number of battle deaths in international wars per year the state has been a member of the international system, the number of wars per year of tenure in the international system, and the number of war months per year. The data are from the Correlates of War Project and cover the years 1815-1980. Additional information on this data is in Chapter One.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>High War-Proneness</th>
<th>Moderate War-Proneness</th>
<th>Low War-Proneness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>Ethiopia, Mauritania, Somalia, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda</td>
<td>Afghanistan, Indonesia, Mongolia, New Zealand, North Korea, Pakistan, Thailand</td>
<td>Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burundi, Cameroun, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Congo, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritius, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sao Tome Principe, Seychelles, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Swaziland, Togo, Upper Volta, Zaire, Zambia, Zimbabwe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>Australia, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, North Vietnam, Phillipines, South Korea, South Vietnam</td>
<td>Belgium, Cyprus, Finland, Greece, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Rumania, Yugoslavia</td>
<td>Bangladesh, Bhutan, Burma, Fiji, Laos, Malaysia, Maldive Islands, Nepal, Papua New Guinea, Singapore, Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Western Samoa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>Austria, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Soviet Union, Spain, United Kingdom</td>
<td>Afghanistan, Indonesia, Mongolia, New Zealand, North Korea, Pakistan, Thailand</td>
<td>Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burundi, Cameroun, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Congo, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritius, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sao Tome Principe, Seychelles, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Swaziland, Togo, Upper Volta, Zaire, Zambia, Zimbabwe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle East</td>
<td>Egypt, Israel, Morocco, Syria, Turkey</td>
<td>Belgium, Cyprus, Finland, Greece, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Rumania, Yugoslavia</td>
<td>Albania, Denmark, Iceland, Ireland, Luxembourg, Malta, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Hemisphere</td>
<td>Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Mexico, Paraguay, United States</td>
<td>Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>Algeria, Bahrain, Kuwait, North Yemen, Oman, Qatar, South Yemen, Sudan, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX B

Map 1: Russian Armies at the Front, 1917

Map 2: The Railroads in North-Western Russia, 1917
The Railways in North-Western Russia, 1917

Route of the Tsar's train, 28 February - 1 March 1917

0  50  100  150 miles
APPENDIX C: TASK ORIENTATION OF THE SOVIET MILITARY, 1980-1993

This appendix contains the tables that were used to generate the figures in Chapters Five, Six, and Seven based on content analysis of the military journal Voyenniy Vestnik [Military Herald]. Both raw scores and percentages are reported for the categories used for coding Voyenniy Vestnik articles based on their task orientation. “Editorials” refers to lead or featured articles or interviews.

An article was classified as an editorial based on the year-end index. Percentages in the tables may not add to 100 because of rounding. The contents of the tables and the corresponding figures are as follows:

**TABLE** | **FIGURES** | **CONTENTS**
--- | --- | ---
C-1 | 5-1, 6-1, 7-1 | Regular articles, 1980-1993
C-2 | 5-2, 6-2, 7-2 | Editorials, 1980-1993

**TABLE C-1: VOYENNIY VESTNIK, 1980-1993**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Political Indoctrination</th>
<th>Societal Choice</th>
<th>Tactics &amp; Training</th>
<th>Military History</th>
<th>Foreign Militaries</th>
<th>Personnel Issues</th>
<th>Internal Security</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
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<td>16 (5%)</td>
<td>3 (1%)</td>
<td>218 (66%)</td>
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<td>12 (4%)</td>
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<td>18 (5%)</td>
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<td>255 (71%)</td>
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<td>42 (13%)</td>
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<td>211 (71%)</td>
<td>14 (5%)</td>
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<td>35 (12%)</td>
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<td>296</td>
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<td>11 (3%)</td>
<td>207 (63%)</td>
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<td>19 (6%)</td>
<td>35 (11%)</td>
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<td>330</td>
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<tr>
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<td>16 (5%)</td>
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<td>24 (7%)</td>
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<td>8 (62%)</td>
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fond 25880 (Kiev Military District)
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