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Marching to a different drum?

Political orientations and nationalism in Russia's armed forces^{*}

Since December 1993, elections have been ‘the only game in town’ for the legitimate transfer of political power in Russia. That has led politicians – and the Kremlin itself – to targeting specifically the military servicemen as an electorate. The large number of people associated with the military in one way or another in Russia makes it reasonable for politicians to consider the military a particularly important electorate. At the same time, in a political environment characterized by a high level of confrontation, the very loyalty of those representing the state’s coercive power has been seen as being at stake: An assumption underlying many analyses of the Russian armed forces' political sympathies, is that these in the future may be expressed through extra-constitutional military intervention at some level of policy formation.

Authoritarianism and nationalism (expressed as imperial nostalgia and Russian ethnocentrism) are relatively prevalent in Russia's population as a whole.¹ For instance, in a 1996 poll, the Public Opinion Foundation (FOM) asked a selection of citizens (not all military) to state their position on a total of

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¹ For the purposes of this article I will define ‘nationalism’ as a doctrine emphasizing the importance of belonging to an ethnic group and promoting the interests of this group – which is perceived by the ‘nationalist’ to form a ‘nation’. Above all, such promotion may imply efforts to make the borders of a state coincide with those of an ethnic group, but it may also take other forms. The character of the nationalism may vary depending, *inter alia*, on its perception of other ethnic groups and its territorial aspirations. I consider that expressions of Russian nationalist sentiment may be placed in one of four different categories. These categories form two broad continua: one covering territorial orientation (core vs. empire) and one covering focus (ethnic vs. statist). If we combine these continua, we find four possible category combinations. I consider that the most extreme category of the four – defined by its potential to cause conflict – is the one that combines territorial expansionism with ethnic supremacism. This model is elaborated in Simonsen, Sven Gunnar: ‘Raising ‘the Russian Question’: Ethnicity and Statehood – *Russkie and Rossiya*’. *Nationalism & Ethnic Politics*, vol. 2, no. 1, spring 1996, pp. 91-110.

nine statements, each meant to identify a separate 'idea' of Russia. At that time, one month before the presidential election in which Boris Yeltsin was re-elected, the position 'Russia should become a strong and wealthy state securing the well-being of its citizens' was on top, supported by 52%. Fourth, supported by 21%, was the statement 'Russia should be a strong military power'. Sixth (16%) was 'Russia should be a state for the [ethnic] Russian people'. Last on the list, but still receiving 7% support, was 'Russia should rise again as a strong military empire within the borders of the former Soviet Union'.² Similarly, authoritarianism is quite highly rated among Russia's voters, and probably even more so in recent years than in the early 1990s. In a late 1999 poll, 45% answered that the Russian people 'always needs' an iron hand, while another 27% said that power 'should be concentrated in one pair of hands now'.³ Given the multi-ethnic character of Russia's population, and the country's recent past as the dominant republic within a larger, authoritarian state, findings like these tell us of a certain potential for conflict both within and around the Russian Federation.

Theorists of civil-military relations tend to describe military men – irrespective of which type of regime they serve – as being more than average inclined towards authoritarianism, conservatism and nationalism.⁴ Most academic and journalistic conceptions of the Russian armed forces correspond to such a picture. At the same time, however, it is hard to come by research that provides details on what exactly the military's political sympathies are, and how they diverge from those of the general population. As Eugene Rumer wrote of the last years of the Soviet army: '[W]hereas the reactionary leanings of many in the high command were well known from their increasingly open imperialist and nationalist rhetoric, the mood and political makeup of the largely Russian officer corps remained unknown'.⁵ Since then, a similar impression of the forces has remained, fueled by the same category of actors. On the other hand, others arguing that the military is merely 'a mirror of society' – a phrase often heard in Russia – have been able to point to a diversity among highly profiled officers. This was particularly evident in the 1995 Duma elections, when military candidates running for elections included such politically different generals Eduard Vorobyov, Albert Makashov, Aleksandr Lebed, Lev Rokhlin, and Boris Gromov.

² Kutokovets, T.I, Klyamkin, I.M.: *Russkie idei. Na osnove sotsiologicheskogo oprosa 'Osobyi put Rossii'*. Vypuski 1-2. Moskva, Rossiya, Janvar-fevral 1997, p. 2. Multiple answers were possible, thus percentages do not add up to 100.

³ Dr. Nikolai Popov: 'The quiet appeal of dictatorship'. *Vremya MN*, 6 December 1999, reported by RIA Novosti. Poll by ARPI.

⁴ Among the classic works here, see e.g. Huntington, Samuel P.: *The Soldier and the State. The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations*. 1957 - renewed version 1985. The Belknap Press of Harvard University, London, p. 79, and Perlmutter, Amos: *The Military and Politics in Modern Times. On Professionals, Praetorians, and Revolutionary Soldiers*. Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1977, p. 2. (It should be pointed out that these writers' understanding of 'nationalism' may not correspond fully with the definition I presented above).

⁵ Eugene B. Rumer: *The Ideological Crisis in the Russian Military*. RAND/National Defense Research Institute, 1994, p. 17.

What, then, can we say about the (aggregate) political sympathies of the Russian military? Do the servicemen ‘march to a different drum’ than the population as a whole, with distinctly different political views? The purpose of this article is to identify traits in the political sympathies of Russian military servicemen – with particular emphasis on the officer corps – that have remained relatively stable through the tumultuous 1990s. This purpose will be pursued by means of examining sociological work conducted within the forces, statements and positions of individual military leaders, and reports and analyses of military voting behavior in the four national elections that have been held since the breakup of the Soviet Union. In the process, furthermore, issues related to the politicization of the forces will be discussed.

The conclusions that come out of the analysis have an immediate bearing on issues of civil-military relations. Specifically, they will suggest what is the overall *direction* of the Russian military's influence on policy formation, and what changes could be expected in the case of military intervention in politics at a higher level than what is the case in Russia at present.⁶ The very *likelihood* of such intervention is also touched upon directly in the examination of servicemen's support for authoritarian / military rule.

⁶ Interpretations of the military's role in Russian politics in the 1990s differ greatly. One scholar, Robert H. Epperson, wrote: ‘Let there be no doubt, the military has intervened in Russian politics to the highest level described by [S.E.] Finer.’ [i.e., supplantment – replacing a civilian government with a military one].’ (Robert H. Epperson: ‘Russian Military Intervention in Politics 1991-1996’. *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 3 (September 1997), p. 91.) S.E. Finer's categorisation of levels of military intervention in politics remains extremely useful. Finer distinguishes between four such categories (from low to high level of intervention): influence, pressure (blackmail), displacement, and supplantment. (S.E. Finer: *The Man on Horseback*. Praeger, New York, 1962.) As an example of this most radical form of intervention, Epperson (p.91) pointed to the military involvement in the October 1993 events. More in line with this writer's views, others have pointed out that the military's siding with Yeltsin at that time testifies more to the professional than to the politicized character of the officer corps. ‘In [both August 1991 and October 1993], when faced with the possibility of internal fissures along politically partisan lines, the commanders of forces (as opposed to the ministers) resisted taking decisive action’, wrote James H. Brusstar and Ellen Jones. (Brusstar and Jones: ‘*The Russian Military's Role in Politics*. McNair Paper 34, January 1995, p. 38.) Others, again, have tried to explain precisely to the absence of a full-scale military coup in Russia, pointing out that this would seem to be expected on basis of standard works on civil-military relations. See David Mendeloff: ‘Explaining Russian Military Quiescence: The “Paradox of Disintegration” and the Myth of a Military Coup’. *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, 1994, 27 (3), 225-246, and Kimberly Marten Zisk: ‘*The Future Political Role of Russian Military Officers: Participants or Coup?* Paper presented at the conference Civil-Military Relations in the post-Communist states in Eastern and Central Europe. Norwegian Institute of Foreign Affairs, Oslo, 5-6 October 1992.

The military in Russian elections, 1991-93

Well before the USSR fell apart, it was generally acknowledged that the military was a major political force in society. The character of civil-military – or, more properly, party-military – relations in the Soviet Union is in itself a field of scholarly discussion. Still, few would disagree that, regardless of the level of direct political involvement of the military in politics, placating the military was a central dimension of policy formation in this state. In August 1991, conservatives plotted a coup against Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev. While not so much a military coup as a coup organized by forces in both the CPSU and the power ministries distressed by Gorbachev's policies, the three days it lasted showed the real importance of the military.

Even before this event, in fact, the military specifically had played a role as an electorate in a free election. In June 1991, Boris Yeltsin was elected President of the RSFSR. Military men were particularly numerous among the candidates. General Albert Makashov, then commander of the Volga-Urals MD, placed fourth as presidential candidate. General Boris Gromov, deputy Interior Minister, was a candidate for the vice presidency under Nikolay Ryzhkov; they placed second. And, above all, there was air force colonel Aleksandr Ruts koy, who was elected as Boris Yeltsin's vice president. By the end of 1991, the military was again courted specifically; this time as Boris Yeltsin and Mikhail Gorbachev stood up against each other over the future of the Soviet Union. Yeltsin won that battle, convincing the reluctant military that the formation of the CIS in the USSR's place was necessary.

The stakes in the continuing struggle for the loyalty of the military once again became clear in 1992-93, as tension grew between President Yeltsin and his new opponents; the conservative Supreme Soviet, and his own Vice-President, Aleksandr Ruts koy. In late September 1993, Boris Yeltsin suspended both the parliament and the vice-president. The Supreme Soviet in turn countered the decree by suspending Yeltsin and appointing Ruts koy as acting president. The following days witnessed armed clashes in the streets of Moscow, leaving perhaps hundreds dead. On 4 October, after a day of bombardment that left the parliamentary building in flames, the opposition leaders surrendered.⁷ The October events changed the circumstances of the Russian armed forces in several ways. They implied, to post-Soviet Russia, a sharp breach with the (admittedly not completely adhered to) policy of not involving regular military formations in domestic conflicts. They forced the military leadership to take sides in a conflict in which there was no obvious all-right or all-wrong party – and in which its own sympathies were not necessarily with the side which maintained the command. As a result of the confrontation, politicians and parties with whom many military men may have sympathized lost their voices. And the dream of true democracy, if they ever nourished them, faded as the leaders' lacking ability to compromise was borne out.

⁷ Subsequently, they were detained and brought to the Lefortovo prison. They were freed in January 1994, by an amnesty from the newly elected Duma.

With political Russia still traumatized, elections to the lower chamber of a new federal assembly, the State Duma, were held in mid-December. Simultaneously, a referendum was held over a new Russian constitution. The constitution, which secured a very strong presidency, was approved by a small margin, and with low voter participation. The events of October 1993 did not signify the end of radical nationalism in Russia. On the contrary, the Duma election springboarded into high politics the erratic nationalist-populist Vladimir Zhirinovskiy. In the election for party lists, his so-called Liberal-Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR) was the clear winner, garnering 22.9% of the vote.⁸ Significantly, reports held that the military voted for his LDPR in even greater numbers than the population at large. At first, this was denied by the MOD, which insisted that there was no way that the vote of the servicemen could have been recorded. That, however, clearly contradicted the Ministry's own stating that 74% of the servicemen had voted for the constitution (which also Zhirinovskiy had endorsed). Soon, however, President Yeltsin himself went public stating that a third of the servicemen had voted for Zhirinovskiy. More alarming figures emerged elsewhere: *Segodnya's* military analyst Pavel Felgengauer reported that 43% of Russian servicemen in Tajikistan voted for the LDPR. Others reported of 'overwhelming' LDPR support from the elite Taman division – which had played a major role in defeating the opposition to Yeltsin two months earlier.⁹ An retrospective poll conducted by military sociologists in the first half of 1994, cited in *Moscow News*, gave more specific figures for the vote: among the of military servicemen polled, 23% supported candidates from the Russia's Choice bloc, while 38% voted for the LDPR. Broken down, the latter figure showed that 45% of officers had supported the LDPR. All other electoral associations received 3-8% of the military votes.¹⁰ Writing in 1996, military sociologists Vladimir Serebryannikov and Yuriy Deryugin gave an even higher estimate: they said 'more than 60%' of the 'military electorate' had voted for the LPDR, and another 11% for the Communist Party (KPRF).¹¹

Russia's armed forces: a distinct social stratum?

⁸ The leading democratic party, Yegor Gaidar's Russia's Choice, came second with a more modest 15.5%; the only slightly reformed Communist Party of the Russian Federation (KPRF), led by Gennadiy Zyuganov, placed third, with 12.4%. Figures from *Gosudarstvennaya Duma Federalnogo Sobraniya Rossiyskoy Federatsii vtorogo sozyva. Ves Mir izdatelstvo, 1996, p. 131*. Half of the Duma's 450 deputies are elected from party lists, the other half by majority vote in single-mandate districts.

⁹ Sherr, James: 'Russia's elections – the Military Implications'. *Jane's Intelligence Review*, February 1994, pp 67-68; Thomas M. Nichols: "'An Electoral Mutiny?'" Zhirinovskiy and the Russian Armed Forces'. *Armed Forces & Society*, vol. 21, no. 3, Spring 1995, pp. 328-330.

¹⁰ Aleksandr Zhilin: 'As times change, so does the military'. *Moscow News*. No. 36, September 15, 1994. Poll conducted by the Humanitarian Academy (formerly the Lenin Military -Political Academy).

¹¹ V. Serebryannikov, Yuriy Deryugin: *Sotsiologiya armii*. ISPI RAN, 1996, p. 89.

In practical terms, it is of course easier to draw a line around military servicemen as a group than it is for many other social categories. However, this does not necessarily mean that it is equally straightforward to speak of Russia's armed forces as one single social stratum. This section will examine the findings of accessible sociological work conducted among Russia's military men. It should be noted that such works are rather scarce, and have become even more so since 1994. With the deterioration of the forces, and Zhirinovskiy's 1993 election win, an MOD directive was implemented that prohibited regular sociological work in the forces.

Categories within the military

Most of the opinion polls in question have been made among military officers. This is not surprising; after all, they are the ones whose orders, in a standoff where different actors claim the power, may make or break a regime. The political opinions of conscripts is a different phenomenon; their presence in the forces is limited in time, and is not voluntary. Whereas they may be concerned about the lack of resources making their service miserable, they do not identify with the forces in the way officers will tend to do. Moreover, developments in the armed forces in the 1990s have served to undermine the loyalty of the conscripts further: disillusionment with the political authorities and the military leadership has eroded the Soviet-era pride in the service; the greater prevalence of crime and hazing makes the service less attractive, etc. (Of course, these circumstances are also highly relevant politically, as they will determine the extent to which conscripts will in fact execute orders in a case where the military involves itself in a situation of political turmoil.)

A number of surveys and analyses document a diversity of political preferences within the armed forces. (Typically, such surveys do not include respondents from the 'extended' electorate.) These suggest that several distinctions may be made between categories of officers, each relatively homogenous in political terms. Such distinctions may be between different levels of officers; between younger and older officers; between officers serving in different branches of the armed forces, different geographic locations, between conscripts and those serving on a contract basis; and more or less privileged units.¹² Unfortunately, few if any polls among officers have maintained such diversification in the published data.

In particular, it seems reasonable to draw a distinction between the older and younger officers. The former had served for many years in the Soviet Union, when membership in the KPSS was practically compulsory, as was communist indoctrination. As early as January 1992, military sociologist (and

¹² Some of these distinctions are explored in Timothy L. Thomas: 'Fault Lines and Factions in the Russian Army'. *Orbis*, vol. 39., no. 4, Fall 1995, pp. 531-548.

retired colonel) Yuriy Deryugin identified two specific groups among the post-Soviet forces that were particularly inclined to act in solidarity with radical nationalist organizations. First were the ‘orthodox, the most reactionary among the former high generality’. The other was the poor officers, and the officers that had been transferred to the reserves.¹³ While the older officers before the fall of communism typically had greater prospects within the force than the younger officers have today, they are now in a weaker position should they now opt to leave the force. By 1999, one military journalist reported that among Russia’s officers remained more than half who served in the Soviet Army, and were members of the Komsomol or the KPSS.¹⁴ Today's younger officers, on the other hand, may well have entered the armed forces after the demise of the Soviet Union. They feel less nostalgia, and less alienation from the current economic and social realities.

The military's political sympathies

Are the military political sympathies, then, different from those of the population as a whole? And, if so, are the military's sympathies of such a character that give particular reason for concern – for the generals’ direct intervention at some level of policy formation, or for the military’s leverage in elections? This section of the article will present some findings from sociological research among the military. Two issues of caution should be mentioned here. First, as noted, a directive prohibiting regular sociological research in the forces is still effective. This has served to limit the amount and also reliability of the information that exists about the political sympathies in the military. Information about opinion polls among military men continues to appear from time to time. However, this is often data provided by the MOD itself, and may thus reflect the political needs of the ministry as much as the real world.

Second, we should always keep in mind the shifting political dynamics of the nine-year period we are looking at. This means that political sympathies during the 1990s of course have fluctuated not only in the armed forces but also in the population at large. For all the expectations attached to Boris Yeltsin during his early years, his time in power saw a remarkable deterioration of the armed forces along a number of variables. Yeltsin is still considered a key architect of the 1991 Belovezha treaty that signified the end of the USSR; it was he who failed to effectuate meaningful military reform; who allowed the theft of state wealth and the begging from its former enemies; who in 1993 defeated his political opponents with the use of regular military forces; who one year later started the disastrous first Chechen war; who let the status of the military fall in society; who allowed for material deprivation of the forces and of the individual servicemen, etc. By mid-1999, a new sense of optimism was growing

¹³ ‘Reformu sleduet osushchestvlyat ‘s koles’’. *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 15 January 1992. Notably, Deryugin even at this early stage noted that Vladimir Zhirinovskiy was touring military institutions, finding quite a few people sharing his opinions.

¹⁴ Andrey Korbut: ‘Armiya gotovitsya k vyboram’. *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 30 July 1999.

rapidly. We can identify a large number of reasons why voters, and in particular the military, should attach their hopes on Yeltsin's anointed successor, Vladimir Putin. He had given the military a new war in Chechnya, and seemed to be winning with ease where his predecessor was loosing. He was giving his commanders a free hand to 'do what was necessary', thus avoiding the antagonisms where the military felt they were the victims of Yeltsin's and Grachev's incompetence. He would support the military at all crossroads, throwing in his own lies to support those of the command. He started paying salaries on time, pledged to pay old debts, and promised those serving the Dagestan/Chechnya pay as the ones on UN service. He increased procurements from the military industry. And his overall policies suggested increased self reliance and assertiveness on the international arena, and more emphasis on 'military values' in society. Among all these, the war in Chechnya was without any doubt the absolutely most important reason for his popularity in the forces. It is remarkable how different the dynamic of this war was compared to the 'First Chechen War', in terms of Russian civil-military relations.¹⁵

In a sense, the military's political sympathies for most of this period could easily be seen as springing from its antipathy against the Yeltsin regime. However, that alone does not tell us which other direction the military would be looking for alternatives. Would it be the democratic opposition, 'centrists', or 'national-patriots'? Moreover, it does not tell us what relative importance the military men attributed to each aspect of policy. Why, specifically, did so many vote for Unity (*Edinstvo*)/Putin in 1999/2000? And why, for instance, has a politician such as Vladimir Zhirinovskiy enjoyed persistently high support among military men since late 1993? Before we attempt to answer such questions, however, we should consider some reported findings from sociological work.

An essential issue with regard to civil-military relations is the military's preparedness to intervene in politics. Questions related to this issue have been asked in several military polls in post-Soviet Russia. In early 1992, before Russia had formally set up its own armed forces, a poll conducted by military authorities among 1,200 officers and non-coms throughout Russia, established that as many as 90% of the respondents were against the military govern by force. At the same time, a mere 17% supported the economic policies of the government, whereas 56% disapproved.¹⁶ A major poll conducted by military authorities between December 1992 and November 1993, among some 12,000 servicemen, half of them officers, revealed a high level of dissatisfaction among officers. The study showed that an overwhelming majority of officers did not wish to engage in politics. The most politicized group was the cadets, and even among these, only 12% expressed support for concrete parties or social movements. Among officers and non-coms, the figure was a mere 8%. These figures of apathy – or

¹⁵ Cf, *inter alia*, Lyle J. Goldstein: 'Russian Civil-Military Relations in the Chechen War, December 1994–February 1995. *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, vol. 10, no. 1 (March 1997), pp 109-127; Lieven, Anatol: *Chechnya. Tombstone of Russian Power*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998; Pavel Baev: *The Russian Army in a Time of Troubles*. Sage/PRIO, London, 1996.

¹⁶ Lieutenant-Colonel F. Makarov: '84 Percent of Servicemen Consider that Social Tension Is Mounting'. *Krasnaya zvezda*, quoted in *Russica* Russian Press Digest March 6, 1992

perhaps distrust in politics in general – stood in contrast to the finding that less than a third of the officers approved of the activities of the bodies of state authority.¹⁷

The results of a poll published in April 1995 by *Izvestiya*, conducted among middle level officers and servicemen, gave some reason for concern about military intervention in politics. Most significantly, 23% of the respondents believed that the Army should ‘stay out of politics.’ Yet, 16% thought that the Army should take upon itself leadership of the country. In the interpretation of *Izvestiya*, which also conducted the research, these figures were evidence to the effect that ‘corporative’ tendencies emphasizing ‘professionalism’ and ‘keeping out of politics’ were getting the upper hand in politics.¹⁸ Others might disagree; considerable support for military rule is not reassuring, and one could reasonably expect support for exclusive military control over military matters to be yet higher. Another 1995 survey conducted among 600 field-grade officers (majors through colonels, thus excluding the more senior and presumably more conservative officers) throughout Russia, supported by the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, found that only 5.2% agreed ‘fully’ with the proposition that ‘Russia will need authoritarian rule to solve her problems’ (32.5% agreed ‘somewhat’). As many as 78.5% agreed that it was ‘very’ or ‘somewhat’ useful that citizens had the right to criticize the government, while the existence of a strong system of political parties was seen as ‘fully useful’ by only 3.4%, and ‘somewhat useful’ by 36.7%.¹⁹

The most recent military poll cited which this author has found, is thought-provoking, but should also be treated with some extra caution. These findings were reported by a local newspaper in the North Caucasian city of Stavropol. According to this report, a poll conducted among officers and cadets of the Stavropol garrison showed that more than a third of them sympathized with communists and ‘national-patriots’. As many as 42% agreed to the proposition that the army should influence the political life of the country. 37% of the cadets and 42% of the officers consider that the military should be represented in the organs of power, in order to assert their interests, and 31,4% of the cadets and 30% of the officers consider that the military must take into their hands the power and responsibility for the fate of the country.²⁰ While these figures may not be reliable, they could be. That, in turn, does

¹⁷ Alexander Zhilin and Tatyana Skorobogatko: ‘Taking a look at the Russian army today’. *Moscow News*, 17 January 1994.

¹⁸ ‘For whom will Lt. Ivanov vote?’ *Russica* Russian Press Digest April 21, 1995.

¹⁹ Of course, here the significance of eyeing the context again becomes evident: At this point in time, the Yeltsin regime was so unpopular in the population and among the military that securing the right to criticize the government must have appeared as essential. Deborah Yarsike Hall and Theodore P. Gerber: ‘The Political Views of Russian Field Grade Officers’. *Post-Soviet Affairs*, no. 2, vol. 12, 1996, p. 164. See also Deborah Yarsike Hall: ‘How reliable are Russia's officers?’ *Jane's Intelligence Review*, May 1996, pp 204-207.

²⁰ ‘Tret armeyskikh ofitserov gotova vzyat vlast’. *Vechernyy Stavropol*, 4 December 1996. As for party orientation, 47,4% of the officers and 31.9% of the cadets supported the communists, 10.5% and 3.8%

not necessarily tell the whole truth about the Russian military. Notably, Stavropol is perhaps the Russian city where the influence of radical nationalists among military men is the strongest. Numerous reports tell of fraternization between mid-level officers and representatives of Aleksandr Barkashov's RNE.²¹

It appears that fewer polls have been published that deal directly with the military's attitude towards issues of nationality and Soviet restorationism. Comparing polls the Public Opinion Fund (FOM) did in fall 1992, spring 1993, fall 1993, and spring 1994, the polls show that the military decreased in support for the establishment of a centralized state on the territory of the former Soviet Union, and, if anything, scored lower there than the average for the population. By fall 1992, 19% supported this idea. By spring 1994, the figure was 15%. For the population as a whole, figures were 19% and 21% respectively.²² In one 1994 poll, officers were not divided into sub-groups, but rather seen as one group compared to other groups in society. Here, officers were on top among 11 categories of respondents, as being the most in favor of Russia pursuing a firm policy in relation to states that were encroaching on the rights of Russian-speakers (61% vs. 40%). At the same time, however, the officers were also the category with the highest preference for withdrawing Russian forces from the countries of the FSU (41% vs. 28%).²³ In the above quoted Lawrence Livermore poll among field-grade officers, a large majority disputed the legitimacy of the post-Soviet borders. Only 12.3% agreed fully that 'the borders of the FSU are the borders of our country' (21.3% agreed somewhat), but at the same time, only 5% agreed fully and 32.2% somewhat that the borders of Russia 'are completely just'. Suggesting a strong sense of cultural proximity to other East Slavs (and the ethnic Russian population of northern Kazakhstan), the idea of reunification was supported fully/somewhat by 49.8% / 31.4% in the case of Ukraine; 59.6% / 30.7% for Belarus; and 40.1% / 41.0% for Kazakhstan.²⁴

respectively supported the 'democrats', 17.5% and 4.8% the party of power, and 10% and 12.9% national-patriots.

²¹ For a journalistic account of a visit to the local RNE branch, where local army and interior troops men were giving combat training to youth, see N. Gritchkin, B. Urigashvili: 'Russian neo-Nazis claim to have agents in all power structures'. *Izvestia*, 12 July 1997. Translation by *What the Papers Say* (WPS), 15 July 1997. For an analysis of the strength of the RNE and its links with the military, see John B. Dunlop: *Barkashov and the Russian Power Ministries, 1994-2000*. Paper presented at the Sixth ICCEES World Congress. Tampere, Finland, 29 July-3 August 2000.

²² Klyamkin, I, V. Lapkin, and V. Pantin: *Politicheskii kurs B. Eltsina: predvaritelnye itogi*. Fond 'Obshchestvennoe mnenie', Moskva 1994, p. 70-71.

²³ Klyamkin, I, V. Lapkin, and V. Pantin: *Politicheskii kurs B. Eltsina: predvaritelnye itogi*. Fond 'Obshchestvennoe mnenie', Moskva 1994, p. 70-71.

²⁴ Hall, Deborah Yarsike, and Theodore P. Gerber: "The Political Views of Russian Field Grade Officers". *Post-Soviet Affairs*, no. 2, vol. 12, 1996, p. 168.

According to military analyst Vladimir Mukhin, precisely this proximity to the East Slav states plays an important role in deciding how military officers vote. By Mukhin's account in 1999, every third officer of the Russian Federation armed forces is from Ukraine or Belarus. A similar number of officers are married to women from the near abroad. As their links with home are very difficult, many representatives of the military electorate will vote for a candidate who will promote the idea of reunification between the Slavic former Soviet Union republics. Boris Yeltsin earlier tried to exploit this motivation by promoting a union with Belarus, but was not much trusted to be the one who could make reunification happen.²⁵ This may indeed be one mechanism at play when servicemen cast their votes. However, other sources indicate that the percentage of Ukrainians and Belarusians is lower than what Mukhin reported: In January 1996, *Obshchaya gazeta* wrote that ethnic Russians accounted for 79.7% of all officers and 73.1% of warrant officers in the Russian armed forces. The second largest ethnic group were the Ukrainians (respectively 11.7% and 15.5%).²⁶ *Argumenty i fakty* that same year cited identical figures for Russians and Ukrainians, and also reported that 3.8% of servicemen were Belarusians.²⁷

Polls regarding the military's specific party/candidate choice have tended to show a higher than average support for leaders including Aleksandr Rutskoy, Aleksandr Lebed, and Vladimir Zhirinovskiy. To cite a couple of examples: In the 1994 poll quoted earlier, officers scored higher than any other group (out of 12) on three specific options when asked who they would 'entrust the fate of Russia': 9% of them opted for social-democrats (4% in the population as a whole); 8% for the liberal democrats [Zhirinovskiy's party] (4%); and 5% for national-patriots (1%). The officers scored close to the average in preference for the communists (11% vs. 12%), but in the low end in relation to the democrats (17% vs. 20%). With regard to specific presidential candidates, the officers scored higher than any other group in preference of Vladimir Zhirinovskiy (12% vs. 7% population average). They were on top also in support for Aleksandr Rutskoy (13% vs. 8%).²⁸ According to a document prepared by the Russian MOD, cited in *Moskovskie novosti*, Russian officers shortly before the 1995 Duma elections preferred the KPRF more than any other party. This party was supported by some 25% the officers, while the LDPR, as second, scored around 20%. Third was NDR, followed by the Congress of Russian Communities (KRO) and Yabloko, all with some 10-15% support. Among specific party

²⁵ 'O simpatiyakh 'voennogo elektorata'. WPS *Oborona i bezopasnost*, January 18, 1999

²⁶ *Obshchaya gazeta*, 11-17 January 1996. Reprinted in WPS *Defense and Security*, 15 January 1996.

²⁷ 'Armiya v tsifrakh'. *Argumenty i fakty*, no. 8, 1996. This report did not explicitly speak of these as 'officers'.

²⁸ These figures of course lend credibility to the reports that the military voted in large numbers for Zhirinovskiy in the Duma elections. The categorisation of the parties is that of the researchers. Klyamkin, Lapkin, and Pantin, op.cit., p. 77.

leaders, Aleksandr Lebed was in the lead, with Aleksandr Rutskoy as a close second, followed by Vladimir Zhirinovskiy.²⁹

The latter figures for party support of course also reflect the great support at the time for the KPRF in the population as a whole. What is more interesting, is that there appears to be a trend that the military will support more than average organizations with leaders who appear as strong, clear and decisive. If we take as a point of departure the politicians that the military have preferred, and examine the traits that are typically attributed to them, we may indirectly get some more input as to why voters have opted for them. In a 1995 VTsIOM poll, when asked which qualities were to the greatest extent a characteristic of different leaders, the respondents gave an very interesting picture of their images: On 'intellect', Zhirinovskiy was at the bottom, at 9%, while Lebed was second-lowest, with 14%. On 'reasonability', Zhirinovskiy was again at the bottom, with 3%, followed by Lebed, with 19%. However, on 'leadership abilities', Zhirinovskiy was on top, with 53%, with Lebed next at 33%. On the ominous quality of 'readiness to reach goals at any price, Zhirinovskiy was on a definite top, with 81%. Next were Zyuganov (23%), and Lebed (18%). As researcher Yuriy Levada commented, these responses not only presented the image of the politicians in the public imagination; they also, more importantly, drew a portrait of what are the *preferred characteristics* of politicians, to those who voted for each one of them.³⁰ If this is a correct assumption, it implies that the KPRF could have done quite a bit better within the military had their leader not been the rather dull Gennadiy Zyuganov. And it contributes towards an explanation why Vladimir Putin (and Unity) did so well among the servicemen.

The military's voting behavior in elections, 1995-2000

The size and character of the 'military electorate'

After the 1993 election, discussions about the military vote went high in the Russian and Western media. Under the presumption that military men and people sympathizing with them would vote differently than others, one of the major issues of discussion became estimates of the size of the military electorate. Another dimension that adds interest to the 'military electorate' is that this category is assumed to be particularly disciplined with regard to voter turnout. Thus, in a situation with low turnout, it would play a particularly important role in deciding the election result. Earlier, in Russia, the 'military electorate' would be understood as the category of voters who could be expected to vote for a military candidate. In recent years, however, the meaning of this term has changed somewhat. Now,

²⁹ Yabloko leader Grigoriy Yavlinskiy, and Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin. Notably, communist party (KPRF) leader Gennadiy Zyuganov placed way below any of these in terms of personal popularity. 'Armeyskie motivy'. *Moskovskie Novosti*, no. 78, 12-19 November 1995.

³⁰ Levada, Yuriy: 'Struktura rossiyskogo elektoralnogo prostranstvo'. In *Prezidentskie vybory 1996 goda i obshchestvennoe mnenie*. Vserossiyskiy tsentr izucheniya obshchestvennogo mneniya, Moskva 1996, p. 26.

into this category are counted voters with a 'military mindset', who vote for candidates or parties/blocs that have programs matching their own sympathies. The extended (potential) military electorate has thus, by a variety of analysts, been seen as including army servicemen, servicemen of the MVD, FSB, border troops, FAPSI etc, plus their families, military pensioners, and people associated with the military-industrial complex, and their families.³¹

Estimates of the size of the military electorate have been provided by a variety of actors – with a variety of agendas. Almost without exception, the estimates have been very high: Minister of Defense Pavel Grachev himself in spring 1995 calculated that the personnel of the armed forces, their families, and employees of the related defense industries made up 60% of the electorate. In a poorly veiled warning to the army and the military-industrial complex, Grachev on this occasion said that 'our people know for whom they vote. They understand for whom to vote in their interest.'³² Military sociologists Vladimir Serebryannikov and Yuriy Deryugin have stated that the electorate 'united by a military consciousness' in 1995 made up 'no less than 50% of the voters'.³³ *Moscow News* reporter Aleksandr Zhilin, himself a former officer who became an ardent, liberal critic of General Grachev, cited confidential military analyses which also gave a very high estimate for the size of the military electorate. They counted 1.8 million servicemen and civilian employees; members of their families (7 million); personnel at MIC enterprises and their families (up to 9 million); military pensioners and their families (20-21 million); and Russian Cossacks (2 million) – a total of some 40 million voters. On top of this came another 10-15 million voters associated with the MVD, the FSB, the border troops etc.³⁴ Other Russian media sources developed estimates in a similar pattern during the year of 1995, counting two million men in uniform, their family members, pensioners, Afghanistan and Chechnya veterans, MIC employees etc.³⁵

Prior to the 1999 and 2000 elections, speculations over the size of the military electorate again went high. One report, pointing to analysis of the 1996 presidential elections, suggested that this electorate at that time was made up of almost 18 million people, and that it would be no less in the upcoming elections.³⁶ *Nezavisimaya gazeta's* military correspondent on his part suggested that the military electorate counted 'no less than 20 million'.³⁷ Shortly before the 1999 Duma elections, *Itogi's* military analyst Aleksandr Golts reported that a recent meeting of the MOD collegium had been told that army servicemen with their families made up 5,5 million voters. And Col-Gen Vasiliy Volkov, a member of

³¹ 'O simpatiyakh 'voennogo elektorata'. WPS *Oborona i bezopasnost*, 18 January 1999.

³² 'Military vote uncertain'. *East European Markets*, 12 May 1995.

³³ V. Serebryannikov, Yuriy Deryugin: *Sotsiologiya armii*. ISPI RAN, 1996, p. 90.

³⁴ Aleksandr Zhilin: 'Armiya verit tolko armii'. *Moskovskie Novosti*, 3-10 September 1995.

³⁵ See e.g. 'For whom will Lt. Ivanov vote?' *RUSSICA Russian Press Digest* April 21, 1995, quoted from *Izvestiya*.

³⁶ 'O simpatiyakh 'voennogo elektorata''. WPS *Oborona i bezopasnost*, 18 January 1999.

³⁷ Andrey Korbut: 'Armiya gotovitsya k vyboram'. *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 30 July 1999.

the Central Electoral Commission, spoke of 10 million, seemingly including members of the families of draftees.³⁸

What appears to be a flaw of such high estimates, is that they fail to acknowledge that each voter has multiple identities. If having a 'military consciousness' means that one by necessity will 'vote militarily', at least the highest estimates cannot be fruitful. While the wife of an officer living with her husband in a unit in Tajikistan may be inclined to identify with 'military causes' and vote for the same party as he does, this will hardly be the case for all those counted in. Family members of servicemen have their own lives, and their living conditions are mostly defined by other things than the service of their sons, brothers etc. Even the 'core' of the estimates may be challenged: the total number of servicemen (estimated at 1.8 million by the 1995 election) includes a large number of conscripts with no plans to make a career in the forces. They know well of problems of financing, corruption, etc., but are probably more concerned with their own circumstances: issues of service time, hazing, service at 'hot spots' etc. Thus, perhaps the closest we can come towards a conclusion on the size of a military electorate, is to acknowledge that, given the pervasion of military institutions in Russian society, military considerations influence the voting behavior of a larger part of the total electorate here than in, say, European countries with conscript armies.

As I will come back to, the source of information that appears as the most direct way of gaining knowledge of actual voting behavior of the 'narrow' and the 'extended' military electorate, is the results from the 'closed' polling stations. While including only a fraction of the military voters in recent elections, results from these have often been extrapolated quite directly onto the entire military electorate. Thus, they have also lent support to assumptions of a distinct military voting pattern, and the existence of a very large military electorate. (As for assumptions of voter discipline, these seemed to be confirmed by the reports after the 2000 presidential election. The Russian MOD reported that 96- 98% of army personnel participated. That would account for at least 2% of all voters given in that election.³⁹ If an 'extended' military electorate participated to the same extent, and voted in the same manner, this could indeed have had a major effect on the election result.)

The military vote, 1995-2000

As a consequence of the unwelcome publicity around the military vote in 1993, the Kremlin has since made certain that military men as a rule vote in open polls. Therefore, it seems nearly impossible to estimate the military's support for different parties. Before the 1995 election, it was reported that the MOD had increased the number of precincts with closed military polling stations; later, however, the

³⁸ Aleksandr Golts: 'Elektorat v kamuflyazhe'. *Itogi*, no. 49, 7 December 1999.

³⁹ Vladimir Georgiyev: 'Military ensured victory'. *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 28 March 2000. *Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press* 26 April 2000 Vol. 52, No. 13; Pg. 3.

Ministry reversed this policy.⁴⁰ In the end, only a small minority voted at closed stations.⁴¹ The same policy for closed polling stations has been upheld since then. Thus, in the 2000 presidential election, only 160 closed polling stations for the military was operating, according to the MOD. These were set up mainly in remote garrisons, on ships and submarines, at border posts and in units outside of Russia.⁴²

The 1995 election was one where winning the hearts of the military seemed particularly urgent. Two days after this election, the MOD announced that 75-80% of the military servicemen had voted for Chernomyrdin's NDR. This figure is dubious not only because it simply should not exist (given that only a small minority voted at closed polls), but also for the mere improbability. The divergence between the MOD's figures and independent estimates are remarkable: Reports cited to by Timothy Thomas held that the real vote was more probably around some 20% for the LDPR, with the KPRF and KRO taking second and third place, with NDR down at less than 10%.⁴³ Serebryannikov and Deryugin cite experts to the effect that both the KPRF and the LDPR gained 20-22%, KRO around 15%, Yabloko 10-12%, and NDR only 7-8%.⁴⁴ As for the first round of the 1996 elections, military analyst Vladimir Mukhin, citing unnamed sources in the MOD, in retrospect said that the military had Zyuganov on top of their list, with some 30% of the vote. Yeltsin garnered 25%, Lebed 17%, Zhirinovskiy 11%, and Yavlinskiy 5%. In the second round, Yeltsin gained some more votes after joining up with Lebed, but still won less than 50% of the vote.⁴⁵

For both the 1999 and 2000 elections, the MOD made public exact figures for the vote at closed military polling stations. For Russia's voters as a whole, 23.3% voted for Unity. From the closed

⁴⁰ Aleksandr Zhilin: 'Which political parties will win the Russian army's hearts and minds?' *Jamestown Prism*, 8 September 1995.

⁴¹ Vladimir Mukhin reported that almost 90% of servicemen voted in open stations. 'Za kogo golosovala armiya?'. WPS *Oborona & bezopasnost*, December 1995. Serebryannikov and Deryugin said only 2% voted at closed stations. *Sotsiologiya armii*, op.cit., p. 90.

⁴² Vladimir Georgiyev: 'Military ensured victory'. *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 28 March 2000. *Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press* 26 April 2000 Vol. 52, No. 13; Pg. 3.

⁴³ Thomas, Timothy L.: 'The Russian Military and the 1995 Duma Elections: Dissatisfaction Continues to Grow in the Armed Forces'. *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 3 (Sept. 1996), p. 532-3.

⁴⁴ V. Serebryannikov, Yuriy Deryugin: *Sotsiologiya armii*.op.cit., p. 90. As for the electorate as a whole, the NDR won 10.1% of the vote; the KPRF 22.3%, the LDPR 11.2%, and and Yabloko 6.9%. Figures from *Gosudarstvennaya Duma Federalnogo Sobraniya Rossiyskoy Federatsii vtorogo sozyva*. Ves Mir izdatelstvo, 1996, pp. 87-88.

⁴⁵ 'Why Putin won in the first round?'. WPS *Defense and Security*, March 31, 2000. The same total for Zyuganov, Lebed and Zhirinovskiy (58%) was reported in Vladimir Georgiyev: 'Military ensured victory'. *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 28 March 2000. *Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press* 26 April 2000 Vol. 52, No. 13; Pg. 3.

polling stations, however, figures ranging between 40% and 60% were reported. One out of two voters in the Joint Group of Forces in the North Caucasus supported Unity, two-thirds at the Plesetsk test range did; among Russian servicemen Tajikistan in the figure was one-third; and in the Strategic Missile Forces it was 40%. A comparison of broken-down figures for the military and for the general population show some remarkable patterns: While some 23% of the general population voted for Unity, the military's support was 48%. 24% of the general population supported the KPRF, while support in the military was a modest 18%. The one party except for Unity that was more successful than average among the military, was Zhirinovskiy's Bloc; it gained 6% in the general population, but as much as 14% among the military. Taken together, Yabloko and the Union of Right Forces gained some 15% in the general population, but less than 2% among the military.⁴⁶ As for the result of the 2000 presidential election, a spokesman for the Armed Forces' Chief Administration for Educational Work on 26 March reported that at least 80% of voters at closed polling stations supported Vladimir Putin; Zyuganov finished second (7-8%), and Zhirinovskiy third (5-8%). MOD sources said that 87.3% of the Russian peacekeepers in Bosnia and Herzegovina voted for Vladimir Putin (7% voted for Zhirinovskiy and some 3% for Zyuganov). In the Black Sea Fleet, 86% vote for Putin, and 5.6% for Zyuganov.⁴⁷

The question arises, however, to what extent these figures can tell us of the voting behavior of a military electorate in general. This question, in turn, has two parts: first, we may ask whether the voters at the closed stations vote similarly as other military men. And second, we may ask whether the figures are at all trustworthy.

Representativity and reliability

Russian military analysts do not appear to see any problem in extrapolating the closed station vote onto a larger military electorate. As for the 2000 presidential elections, the MOD reported that at least 400,000 people voted at the 160 stations in question. That included local 'extended' military electorates, including family members, and civilian employees at the units. According to the MOD, voter turnout in the army and the navy was at 96-98% -- the highest ever in post-Soviet Russia, and at least 2% of the total number of voters participating (not counting the family members and civilian personnel). *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, reporting the figures, suggested that they were very likely to be similar as for the servicemen in the forces as a whole, saying that the sympathies of the military electorate does not vary much from place to place.⁴⁸ Three months earlier, in the Duma elections, the

⁴⁶ Support for the OVR was 12% in the population and 7% among the military. Andrei Korbut: 'The army voted for the 'party of power''. *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 25 December 1999.

⁴⁷ Vladimir Georgiyev: 'Military ensured victory'. *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 28 March 2000. *Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press* 26 April 2000 Vol. 52, No. 13; Pg. 3.

⁴⁸ Vladimir Georgiyev: 'Military ensured victory'. *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 28 March 2000. *Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press* 26 April 2000 Vol. 52, No. 13; Pg. 3.

number of active military voters at closed stations was the same. Then, also, a reporter with the same newspaper described the 2% as ‘a very representative sampling’.⁴⁹ Another analyst similarly concluded that how the army voted may be decided only on the basis of the data from ‘closed’ garrisons.⁵⁰

Whereas the sympathies of the military may not vary much, there may still be reasons why the results at closed stations may not be representative for the rest. Firstly, it could be speculated that personnel in faraway places may be easier subject to manipulation from their superiors. They may have less access to alternative sources of information, and they may also believe that their vote may be ‘traced’ and thus fear to vote for anything else than what the superiors suggest would be preferable. Accordingly, prior to the 1995 elections, the chairman of the Duma defense committee, Sergey Yushenkov (Russia's Democratic Choice), predicted that the soldiers’ vote would depend on where they would be voting: ‘If they vote at closed polling stations, there is a great possibility to manipulate the election results’.⁵¹

Political campaigning within military units is prohibited. On the other hand, commanders are obliged by law to make the soldiers and sergeants known of the ideas of different blocs and parties. Consequently, it is close at hand to conclude that these will tend to vote as they superiors do, since they are the ones that will be doing this work. Indeed, prior to the Duma elections, there were reports to the effect that the Kremlin was leaning on unit commanders in order to have the political educators make servicemen vote for Unity. Officers told *Izvestiya* how they had been told to emphasize Unity in their work, and how they were given a sense that they were made responsible not only for the campaign, but also for the election results.⁵² The same newspaper also reported that military districts had received faxes telling them to reprint in unit newspapers an article that amounted to advertising for Shoigu’s bloc.⁵³ At the presidential elections three months later, the acting Russian commander in Chechnya, General Gennadiy Troshev, was less than subtle in his recommendations: ‘I think soldiers have already made their choice. We know who is the one who, today, together with the military, is fulfilling this mission ... who supports us’.⁵⁴ A few weeks earlier, on the Defenders of the Fatherland holiday, Troshev himself had been honored by Putin and promoted – for the second time in less than three months. In this respect Putin did not differ from his predecessor, who gave promotions to all his commanders-in-chief only three days before the first round of the 1996 presidential elections.⁵⁵

⁴⁹ Andrei Korbut: ‘The army voted for the ‘party of power.’ *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 25 December 1999.

⁵⁰ Vladimir Mukhin: ‘Voennosluzhashchie proyavili aktivnost’. *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 21 December 1999.

⁵¹ ‘Silnaya ruka. Drug voennykh’. *Novoe vremya*, 10 August 1995.

⁵² ‘Golosuy – ili promakhneshsya! *Izvestiya*, 17 November 1999.

⁵³ ‘Rukovodstvo Minoborony poluchilo ukazanie podderzhat blok ‘Edinstvo’’ *Izvestiya*, 10 December 1999.

⁵⁴ AFP, 17 March 2000.

⁵⁵ Ilya Bulavinov: ‘Putin bestows awards -- generals count Kremlin stars’. *Kommersant*, 22 February 2000, *Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press*, Vol. 52, No. 8; Pg. 1. 22 March 2000.

Second, of course, it may be that the election results at these stations is less difficult to falsify altogether. Certainly, election results in post-Soviet Russia have been disputed. As for the 1993 election, the analyst Aleksandr Sobyenin made waves by alleging that several million votes had been falsified, in order for the constitution to be passed. Benefactors at that time were allegedly the LDPR, and to a lesser extent the KPRF and the Agrarian Party.⁵⁶ Also the more recent elections have been challenged. That is not least the case with the 1995 Duma elections. On the whole, it was reported that more than 70% of servicemen at closed stations outside of Russia voted for Our Home is Russia (NDR). Among particularly suspect official figures regarding the military vote in the 1995 elections were those reporting that Aleksandr Lebed's Congress of Russian Communities (KRO) received only 12,9% among servicemen in Transdnestr, whereas 43,2% voted for NDR.⁵⁷ Probably the most unlikely results were those reported by the Central Electoral Commission (TsIK) from Chechnya. Among the 40,000 servicemen from the MOD and Interior Ministry (MVD) stationed there, official figures held that 76% voted for NDR. For KPRF the vote reported was 3.3%, for LDPR 1.3%, and for KRO 1.6%.⁵⁸ Given the intense aversion among the troops there against the leadership in Moscow, it is extremely difficult to see these figures as representing the true will of the voters. When *Komsomolskaya pravda* visited troops in the Volgograd MD, they were told by the commanders that a majority of soldiers and officers voted for Lev Rokhlin and NDR.⁵⁹ However, many soldiers told the journalist that they sympathized with Zhirinovskiy and Stanislav Govorukhin, but had had been instructed to vote for NDR by political officers. According to the newspaper, commanders across the country had been informed that their future careers depended on what sort of vote they could come up with. As a result, eagerness to report 'good' results were so great that complete results from the counting in some places were precise even before the polling stations had closed.⁶⁰ Allegations of falsification have come also in connection with the later elections. In 1996, international observers were particularly clear in pointing to instances of rigging in the republic of Tatarstan, and for the second round also raised questions about the 'remarkable turnaround of electoral support' for the two candidates in Bashkortosan, Dagestan, Mordova and Tatarstan.⁶¹

As for the official 1999 and 2000 results – while these have been even better for the party of power than in earlier years – analysts have been less eager to declare them unreliable: Aware of Vladimir Putin's popularity in the forces, some would conclude that for the first time in post-Soviet Russia, in

⁵⁶ "Sind die Ergebnisse in Russland gefälscht worden?". *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 7 May 1994.

⁵⁷ Lebed was the commander of the 14th Army in Transdnester in 1992-95, and was very popular among his troops.

⁵⁸ TsIK statement quoted in 'Armiya golosovala po komande: 'Volno'!' *Komsomolskaya pravda*, 19 December 1995.

⁵⁹ Rokhlin was a commander in Volgograd before going to Chechnya in January 1995.

⁶⁰ 'Armiya golosovala po komande: 'Volno'!' *Komsomolskaya pravda*, 19 December 1995.

⁶¹ OSCE/ODIHR: *Election for the President of the Russian Federation. Final statement of the OSCE/ODIHR observer mission* – reports from the first and second rounds of voting.

<http://www.osce.org/odihr/election/rus1-1.htm>; <http://www.osce.org/odihr/election/rus1-2.htm>

1999 a majority of the 'military electorate' voted in favor of the 'party of power'. One of the few to question the reported results of the 2000 presidential elections was military analyst Pavel Felgengauer. He pointed to a series of unlikely local outcomes of the elections (for the population as a whole): In Chechnya, where federal forces were at war with locals, Putin got 49.4% of the vote, with most votes counted. In Ingushetia, with hundreds of thousands of Chechen refugees, Putin got more than 80%. In the Muslim-inhabited republics of Tatarstan and Bashkortostan, Putin scored more than 60%. 'The only plausible explanation for these electoral miracles is purported massive vote-rigging', concluded Felgengauer.⁶²

While it is impossible to determine the scope of falsification that has occurred in Russia's elections, these accounts certainly testify to the increase in politicization of the forces that has taken place over the last ten years. The protest votes, the political pressure from commanders, and the falsification of election results – these are all aspects of a development where, according to Samuel Huntington's terminology, civilian *objective control* over the forces – achieved by 'militarizing the military' – has been allowed to decline. Consequently, *subjective control* – achieved by 'maximizing the power of civilian groups in relation to the military' – has become more important for the purpose of keeping the military from intervening (more) in politics.⁶³ In a setting where prominent politicians disagree even over fundamental ideas of what their country should look like, allowing for the military's professionalism to decline is a dangerous game to play. Since 1991, Russia has seen a number of prominent generals coming out against the country's political leadership, and defending their own right to enter politics. The then commander of the 14th Army in Transdnier, Aleksandr Lebed said in 1994 that in a 'civilized state', you cannot force the military into politics even with a stick. 'It's another case here, where every question is a political one.'⁶⁴

Conclusions

What can we say about the political sympathies in the armed forces, based on the preceding sections of this article? Is there reason to conclude that the military does march to a different drum than the population as a whole, that they are more inclined towards nationalism and authoritarianism than the average Russian? While keeping in mind the uncertainties that are attached to much of the material that has been presented, and the fluctuations that have occurred over time, we should have the grounds to make some quite clear conclusions:

It seems that military men are to a significant degree uninterested in party politics, and for most of the post-Soviet years, few would describe themselves as supporters of a specific party. As for particular

⁶² Pavel Felgengauer: Miracles, or Election Fraud? *Moscow Times*, 30 March 2000.

⁶³ Huntington, Samuel P.: *The Soldier and the State*, *op. cit.* pp. 80; 83.

⁶⁴ "Aleksandr Lebed: Sama zhizn zastavlyayet generalov zanimatsa politikoi", *Izvestiya*, 20 July 1994.

parties/blocs or candidates, one finding that comes out of both opinion polls and election reports is a clearly higher support for Vladimir Zhirinovskiy than we see in other groups. Candidates with military background – above all Aleksandr Lebed, but also e.g. Aleksandr Rutskey – have enjoyed clearly more support in the military than in the population in general. Their high regard in the forces also seems to reflect a military preference for candidates who emanate decisiveness and strength. Not surprisingly, the position that the military should be responsible for military politics gets more support in the military than in general, and is a widespread one in the forces. Fewer consider that the military should rule the country, but the number of supporters of such a radical position may still not be comforting. This is a simple distinction, but an essential one and one that is often ignored.⁶⁵

Just about all political parties and candidates have tried to appeal to the military; for its votes and to win its loyalty. In this process, countless extravagant promises of money and support have been made. Populism is a prominent trait of the policies of most parties in Russia, and the military's plight is also a concern outside the forces. Making sense of and making a choice among the parties, voters who do indeed wish to use their vote for the good of the forces, will need to consider more than just actual promises; at least, they will have to make an assessment of trustworthiness. And that is probably where Boris Yeltsin failed among the military in 1996, despite his exploiting the powers of the incumbent, and making a promise as radical as abolishing conscription by the year 2000.

Precisely the antipathy against the Kremlin under Boris Yeltsin is a very clear trait of the military. For a number of reasons, discussed earlier, Yeltsin has been seen as the destroyer of the USSR and its once mighty forces. We may or may not choose to believe the official reports of great support for the NDR, and for Yeltsin personally, in the 1995/96 elections. In any case, such results reveal the potential for manipulation of some sort – and the willingness of the Kremlin to draw the military into politics for its own short-term benefit. While the 1999 and 2000 results in the military are remarkable, they appear less unlikely if seen in the context of the opinion polls findings that were reported prior to the two elections. Admittedly, some raised the question whether the series of opinion poll might also have been manipulated in order to 'build up' for a Unity/Putin win,⁶⁶ it seems likely that enthusiasm for Putin was genuinely rising at the time – full control over the opinion pollers would indicate a control that Putin perhaps aims to establish, but which he did not have at the time. What in retrospect is most remarkable about the military support for Putin, is probably the way so many were led to believe that this leader could easily solve the problems and win the war that had haunted his predecessor and his generals.

⁶⁵ 'The Russian military has strong, although limited, motives for intervention in politics in order to redress its grievances and attain better conditions', concluded Mikhail Tsyarkin in a 1992 article. ('Will the Military Rule Russia?' *Security Studies*, vol. 2, no. 1, autumn 1992, p. 46.) Similarly, this writer, in a study of national identity of Russian officers, found that servicemen, although they may have sympathized with nationalist causes, most often would give priority to their own, personal welfare. See Sven Gunnar Simonsen: "'You Take Your Oath Only Once.'"Crimea, the Black Sea Fleet, and National Identity Among Russian Officers' *Nationalities Papers*, vol. 28, no. 2, 2000, pp 289-316.

⁶⁶ This interesting discussion took place on *Johnson's Russia List* in the fall of 1999.

Among parties, the ones that have suffered the most among the military for Yeltsin's failures, are those termed the 'democrats' – linked to names such as Gaidar, Chubais, Kirienko, Fedorov, and Nemtsov. Yavlinskiy's Yabloko has kept some distance to these, but also suffered badly among the military in the most recent elections. As pointed out, the SPS and Yabloko together reportedly gained only 2% among the military compared to 15% in the general population in the 1999 Duma elections.

At the same time, if we consider the more illiberal and radical nationalist organizations and candidates – with the exception of the LDPR/Zhirinovskiy – there is really not much evidence to suggest that they enjoy much support among servicemen. 'National-patriots' such as Sergey Baburin and Dmitriy Rogozin, or the most radical, such as Aleksandr Barkashov, Eduard Limonov, and Albert Makashov, probably do have some more support in the military than in the general population, but this support still is quite small. The Movement in Support of the Army (DPA) might have been in a position to change this picture somewhat, had its founder Lev Rokhlin not been killed (as happened in July 1998)⁶⁷ However, when the DPA became the vehicle of KPRF rabble-rousers Viktor Ilyukhin and Albert Makashov, its chances to become a major force disappeared. By December 1999, the DPA was little more than a mouthpiece for the two leaders' rabid anti-Semitism, and it scored close to nil in the elections.

If we move beyond the points above, it becomes more difficult to reach firm conclusions about how nationalistic military servicemen are. Looking at positions on specific questions that serve as indicators of a nationalistic mindset is one thing, concluding on this from voting behavior and support of parties or presidential candidates is something different. Basically: Which party choices should we consider primarily nationalist? The LDPR may seem a clear-cut case, but what about, say, the DPA under Makashov and Ilyukhin? Or the KPRF? It has become quite common to describe Gennadiy Zyuganov as a nationalist, but a vote for his party is often not seen as a nationalist vote. The philosopher Aleksandr Tsipko, himself a moderate nationalist of sorts, in early 2000 commented that Vladimir Putin's election win led to 'the decline of all of the former political stars', and that the KPRF's 'mission ... as a party of leftist patriotism lost its meaning because Putin embodies both patriotism and social ideals.'⁶⁸

In much the same way as Putin appealed to a wide variety of voters, *including* those particularly nationalistically minded, those voting for him had a variety of motives. To many voters, these motives to a greater or lesser degree *also* regarded issues what we may term indicators of nationalism. They

⁶⁷ For an account of Rokhlin's radicalization and his political appeal in 1997-98, see Sven Gunnar Simonsen: "Rokhlin enters the political fray". *Jane's Intelligence Review*, vol. 10, no. 1, January 1998, pp 14-17. About the controversies surrounding his death, see Andrei Rogachevskii: 'The Murder of General Rokhlin'. *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 52, no. 1, January 2000, pp. 95-110.

⁶⁸ Alexander Tsipko: 'Another Russian revolution has ended'. *The Daily Yomiuri* (Tokyo), 6 April 2000.

may not have been decisive, but they contributed to the vote for Putin. Any voter normally has several reasons to vote for a given party or candidate; he may indeed dislike his own choice for several reasons, but the likes may in the end override the dislikes. From what we know about the military's inclinations, what tipped so many in his direction could have been his military policies, his 'patriotism', or the message of authoritarianism in many of his pre-election statements and actions.
