The role of the military in Putin's foreign policy

An overview of current research

Fredrik Westerlund

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Cover: Russia's President Vladimir Putin (L) and Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu shake hands at a Victory Day military parade in Red Square marking the 75th anniversary of the victory in World War II. Moscow 24 June, 2020. Alexei Nikolsky / Russian Presidential Press and Information Office / TASS / Sipa USA

Abstract

Russia's Armed Forces have long played a significant role in foreign policy. Depending on the military's willingness and ability to influence foreign policy, its part has shifted between three ideal-type roles: the loyal Servant of the political leadership; the independent Shaper of foreign affairs; and the Sinker, unable or unwilling to contribute to Russia's international relations.

Under Vladimir Putin, the military has become a prominent player in foreign affairs. This report provides an overview of the way the Civil-Military Relations literature and complementary sources describe the role the Armed Forces have had since 2000, when Putin assumed power. It proposes an analytical tool, based on the three ideal-type roles and on findings from Civil-Military Relations literature regarding Soviet and Imperial Russia.

The military has evolved from a Shaper of foreign policy under Boris Yeltsin, to a Servant under the later Putin. Thus, Russia's use of military force towards other states reflects the intentional will of the political leadership. However, the current strong political control over the military is not necessarily a stable condition. In the event of large-scale sociodemographic stress in Russian society, we can expect the military to assume the role of a strong Shaper of foreign policy.

Keywords: Russia, foreign policy, Civil-Military Relations, civilian control, Armed Forces, military capability, Putin.

Sammanfattning

Den ryska krigsmakten har genom århundradena haft en påtaglig roll i utrikespolitiken. Rollen har skiftat över tiden, beroende på militärens vilja och förmåga att påverka formandet av Rysslands relationer med omvärlden. Militären har främst växlat mellan tre idealtyper: den lojale tjänaren åt den politiska ledningen; den självsvåldiga utövaren av utrikespolitik; samt bromsklossen, som inte vill eller kan bidra till att forma internationella relationer.

Under Vladimir Putins tid vid makten har militären kommit att bli en framträdande aktör i rysk utrikespolitik. Rapporten ger en översikt över den roll som litteraturen inom forskningsområdet civil-militära relationer och kompletterande källor tilldelat krigsmakten sedan Putins makttillträde (2000–2019). Den presenterar också ett analytiskt verktyg, baserat på de tre idealtypsrollerna samt på forskningsrön rörande civil-militära relationer under de sovjetiska och tsarryska epokerna.

Den ryska krigsmakten har utvecklats från en självsvåldig utövare under Jeltsin till en lojal tjänare under den senare Putineran. Detta innebär att rysk användning av militärt våld och hot mot andra länder numer speglar den politiska ledningens vilja och intentioner. Den starka politiska kontrollen över krigsmakten är dock inte nödvändigtvis bestående. Om det ryska samhället utsätts för stora omvälvningar kan vi förvänta oss att militären antar rollen som en självsvåldig utformare av rysk utrikespolitik.

Nyckelord: Ryssland, utrikespolitik, civil-militära relationer, Väpnade styrkorna, militär förmåga, Putin.

Acknowledgements

Russian civil-military relations and the role of the military in foreign policy forms part of Russia's security policy. It is an important factor in Russian military power, and affects the political leaderships' scope for the use of armed force in its policy implementation.

This report contributes to the Swedish Defence Research Agency's studies of Russia and its military capability by shedding light on the shifting roles of the Armed Forces in Russian foreign affairs under Vladimir Putin's reign. During the past decade, Russia has wielded its military might both in its vicinity – in Georgia 2008, in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine since 2014 and in Nagorno-Karabach in 2020 – and farther abroad in Syria, since 2015.

The finding that the military has become a loyal Servant of the President points to the importance of understanding the current political situation and its future development when assessing how and when Russia's Armed Forces may be put to use. That the military is largely unrestrained by other forms of civilian oversight is a finding that underscores the need for studying regime stability and domestic policy in order to gauge the military's future role. We address these issues in our reports on *Russian Military Capability in a Ten-Year Perspective*, and in other publications on Russian security policy.

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Stockholm, February 2021

Johan Norberg

Programme Manager
Russia and Eurasia Studies Programme

Table of Contents

1 Introduction

Russia has powerful Armed Forces, and politicians that apparently do not hesitate to use them in international relations. In 2020 alone, Russia has employed military force, or the threat thereof, as a foreign policy instrument on several occasions: for peacekeeping in Nagorno-Karabakh; for safeguarding Russian interests during the political crisis in Belarus; for providing Corona relief to Italy and other countries; and for intimidating NATO allies and partners; as well as in combat in the on-going armed conflicts in Ukraine and Syria.

This should make Russia an almost irresistible object for research on Civil-Military Relations,[1] an academic research field that has the question of civilian control over the military at its core. What does current Civil-Military Relations research suggest regarding the role of the military in foreign policy decision-making under Putin? What are the main implications for policy and research?

The purpose of this report is twofold, empirical as well as theoretical. Its empirical purpose is to contribute to our understanding of the role of the Armed Forces in Russian foreign policy under Vladimir Putin. The report provides an overview of existent Civil-Military Relations research on political control over Russia's use of military force in international relations.

The theoretical purpose is to propose a method for discerning the different roles the military may play in international relations, by developing an analytical tool based on ideal-type roles. The report proposes the roles of the obedient Servant; the independent Shaper of foreign policy; and the Sinker, unable to play a constructive role in international politics.

The focus of the study is on the use of armed force abroad, because previous research has found that this provides difficult cases for political control. Civilian and military preferences are highly likely to diverge concerning the use of force (Desch 1999:4–6). In addition, military operations are most of the time not directly observable for the politicians (Feaver 2003:68–75).

For other countries, the question of who shapes Russian foreign policy is of importance, in order to respond adequately to current events and to anticipate future actions. A closer look at this issue is motivated, not least, by Russia's traditional and persistent view of armed force as a key determinant of national status, and of its right to assert national interests using military means (Giles 2019:170). Furthermore, in a survey of opinions within the Russian civilian, military, and security agency elite, Rivera *et al.* (2020:21) find that the respondents rated the Ministry of Defence to be just about as dominant as the Ministry of Foreign

[1] This report employs the convention of using upper case when referring to the academic discipline, and lower case when referring to civil-military relations as a realm of social and political practise.

Affairs regarding the possibility to influence current Russian foreign policy. Only the president was rated higher. This opens up for a significant role for the Armed Forces in Russian foreign policy, and beckons the question of what our current understanding of this role is.

This study employs a qualitative research strategy, analysing existent Civil-Military Relations research on Russian civilian control over the military, in particular during the use of military force abroad. The understanding here is that the military is a separate bureaucratic entity with a considerable degree of autonomy, thereby able to be an actor in policymaking.

The description of the role of the military in foreign policy decision-making under the Putin era, i.e. since 2000, is constructed through a comparison with previous eras. Many Russian and other scholars treat Imperial Russia, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, and the Russian Federation as phases in the history of one country (e.g. Taylor 2003:xi). Arguably, from historical, geopolitical, and Strategic Culture Theory perspectives, there are reasons to expect more similarities than differences in Russian foreign policy and the political leadership's view on armed force as a tool. In light of this, a comparison with previous eras promises to provide insights.

The empirical approach is chronological, and the analysis relies on a two-dimensional framework. A heuristic assumption is that the role the military assumes in foreign policy is dependent on two factors: the willingness and the ability of the Armed Forces to comply with political policy preferences.

The main empirical material in this study is Civil-Military Relations literature focusing on Russia and its predecessors. In addition, some works that do not explicitly address civil-military relations have been included, where these have contributed to outlining the role of the military in Russian foreign policy.

The main delimitation of the scope of this report is that it only sparingly addresses other civil-military relations issues than civilian control over the Armed Forces in relation to foreign policy. Civil-military relations encompass a range of issues pertaining to the complex and multifaceted interplay between society and its armed forces.[2] Here, however, the focus is on the military's role in international security. I therefore have excluded issues of civilian control over other armed force structures, as well as domestic military activity. Finally, as mentioned above, the focus is on civil-military literature, which is why the report only sparingly relies on publications by scholars from other academic disciplines in the review of literature of previous eras. This means that authoritative works on Russian military history has been left out, such as Duffy (1981), Lieven (1998), Kagan and

[2] This report employs the convention of using upper case when referring to the organisation 'the [Russian Federation] Armed Forces', and the lower case when referring to armed forces in general.

Higham (2002), Higham and Kagan (2002), Persson (2010), Braithwaite (2012), Allison (2013), and others.

Here, the Putin era refers to the period from the year 2000, the beginning of his first term as president, up to – but not including – 2020. Putin has been in power for a long time. The Putin era is here divided into two phases: the early Putin era (2000–2008) covering his first two terms as president, and the later Putin era (2008–2019), spanning Dmitrii Medvedev's presidency and Putin's third presidency, as well as the first years of his fourth term as president.

This report consists of six chapters, including this introduction. In Chapter 2, the tool for analysing the role of the military in foreign policy is outlined. Chapter 3 describes the role of the military in Imperial Russia, the Soviet Union and the Yeltsin era. It provides a historical context, points of comparison for contemporary Russia, and additional elements of the analytical tool. Chapter 4 portrays the early Putin era, highlighting similarities but also emerging differences with the Yeltsin era. Chapter 5 describes the shift in roles for the military during the later Putin era, due to coinciding interests. Chapter 6 presents the tentative empirical results of the study, as well as two main findings of the report, followed by the implications of those findings.

2 Analysing the role of the military in foreign policy

In Civil-Military Relations research, military influence on government policy-making is a key aspect of both theoretical (e.g., Huntington 1957; Finer 1962) and more empirical approaches (see, e.g., Fuller 1985; 1992; Taylor 2003; Sherr 2017; Renz 2018). I focus on the willingness and the ability of the military to influence foreign policy, and propose three ideal-type roles that represent different combinations of these faculties. Before outlining the analytical tool, the terms 'military' and 'civilian' are clarified.

In this study, all structures that are part of the Armed Forces, and all the departments of the Ministry of Defence that military officers head are defined as 'military'. A military officer has been educated, trained and served in the Armed Forces. In those instances when the Minister for Defence has been a (retired) military officer, the entire ministry is regarded as military. In the report, the terms the Armed Forces, the (Red/Imperial) Army, the military leadership, the officer corps, and senior officers are interchangeably used when referring to the military.

The report regards as 'civilian', those not working under a military officer and who lack a career within the Armed Forces. This means that people with a military rank from other structures than the Armed Forces are considered as civilian in relation to Armed Forces' personnel. When referring to civilians, the terms politicians and political leadership alongside specific civilian institutions, such as the President, or the Cabinet, are interchangeably used.

In this study, the extent to which the military is willing and able to give credence to political preferences is expressed with the simple heuristic dichotomy of 'less' or 'more'. As the willingness and ability of the military may not necessarily co-vary, the less-more dichotomy is applied to them separately. This provides a set of four different positions: willing and able; willing, but unable; able, but unwilling; and unwilling and unable. Table 2-1illustrates the potential outcomes of the different values on the two military faculties willingness and ability.

Furthermore, the report proposes to describe the role of the military in Russian foreign policy at a certain time as either Servant, Shaper, or Sinker, with regard to its willingness and ability to adhere to the preferences of the political leadership. In foreign policy, a Servant does as told, and Shapers do as they want, while a Sinker has little ability to play a constructive role.

Table 2-1 Potential positions of military willingness and ability to conform to political preferences

Military faculties		**Willing**	
		More	Less
Able	More	Willing and able	Able, but unwilling
	Less	Willing, but unable	Unwilling and unable

A number of additional roles are imaginable, but for analytical clarity the report discusses the changing roles of the Russian military using the three ideal-type roles Servant, Shaper, and Sinker. Admittedly, there are states that choose not to use military force as a tool in international relations, for instance due to a pacifist national grand strategy. Throughout Russia's history, however, having a strong military has been a vital means in its relations with the outside world (Facon 2012:275). According to Renz (2018:19–49), military power serves the purpose for Russia of allowing it to be seen and respected as a great power by other leading powers in the world, to ensure the country's sovereignty and freedom of action internationally, and as a tool for multilateral engagement with other great powers.

When the military is both willing and able, its role in foreign affairs is that of a potent but subordinated Servant. In this case, civilian control is the strongest, and the Armed Forces plays a prominent role in foreign policy when ordered to. The Servant, both in foreign and domestic policy issues, is the preferred role for the military in most Civil-Military Relations theories (Burk 2002:7). The issue of democratic accountability has long dominated the Civil-Military Relations research field (Nielsen 2005:78; Angstrom 2013:225).

The second role the military may assume is that of a Shaper of foreign policy, forming international relations without a political mandate to do so. In this regard the military act independently of the political leadership. This occurs when the military is able to influence foreign policy decision-making, but unwilling to respect political preferences. It is the most serious challenge to civilian control in international relations. It should be noted that the military can involuntarily become a Shaper. In situations where other national means of influencing

international relations are weak and uncoordinated, and political preferences are unclear, military acts can shape foreign policy.

It should also be noted that in cases when the military is the main government institution forming foreign policy, it is still considered a Servant if its actions are in line with political preferences and at least tacitly acknowledged by the politicians with legitimate authority over the military. The role Shaper refers primarily not to the extent of foreign policy-related activities undertaken by the military, but rather to the willingness and ability of the military to comply with political preferences. The role of the Servant is not passively obedient. Instead, they may well undertake proactive measures and act without explicit orders, as long as the measures taken, the result achieved and a proactive military is compatible with the political preferences. In short, a Servant may act in its own interests, but a Shaper acts against the political leaderships preferences and thus independently forms foreign policy.

The third and final possible role of the military is that of a Sinker. If the military is unable to influence foreign policy, it is a less useful tool for the government in shaping international relations. Civilian control is not merely a question of keeping the military subordinate to policy. Military impotence or unwillingness to influence international politics also undermines civilian control. The Armed Forces then becomes an inhibiting factor, depriving the state of an important foreign policy instrument. For Russia, as argued above, an impotent military certainly is a Sinker. Table 2-2 illustrates how the three ideal-type roles relate to military willingness and ability.

Table 2-2 Military ideal-type roles in foreign policy related to willingness and ability to conform to political preferences

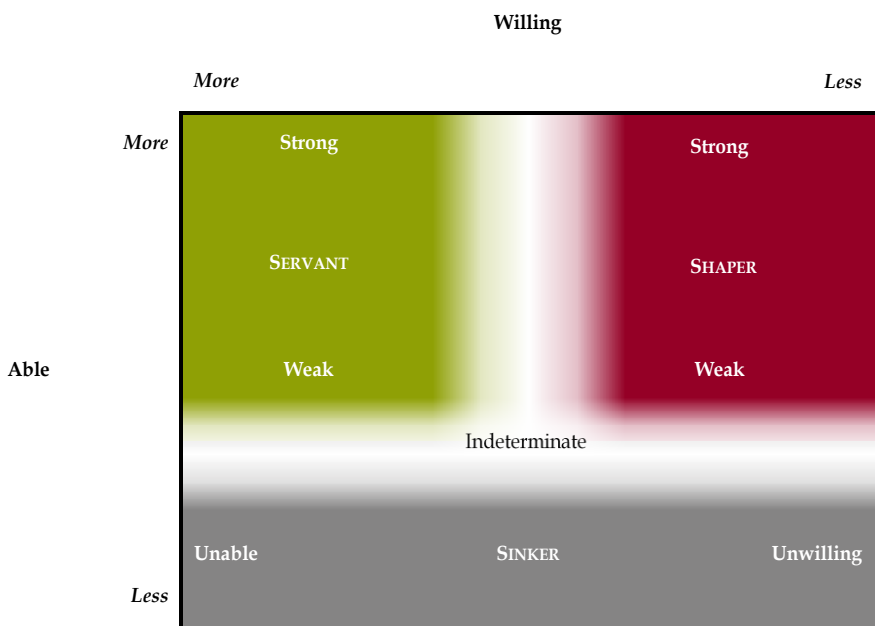
Military faculties		**Willing**	
		More	Less
Able	More	**Servant** Willing and able	**Shaper** Able, but unwilling
	Less	**Sinker** Willing, but unable	**Sinker** Unwilling and unable

It should be noted that the role of the military in foreign policy to a large degree depends on its power relative to that of other national instruments for shaping international relations. The actual capability of the military or its power relative that of the armed forces of other countries, though of importance, does not

necessarily mirror the military's ability to influence foreign policy decision-making. Instead, the military's strength relative to other measures primarily determines the scope of its influence. These measures may be diplomatic, informational, or economic – such as trade, finance and international aid, as well as science and industry. If other tools are impotent, even a weak military may be able to influence foreign policy.

In order to allow for more nuance, the report proposes to expand the categorisation of the three roles by qualifying them. It considers a Servant or Shaper that has a greater degree of ability to be 'strong', while they are regarded as 'weak' if their ability is intermediate. Likewise, Sinkers are specified as either 'unable' or 'unwilling', based on their will to comply with political preferences. If the will is intermediate, an unqualified 'Sinker' will do. Finally, the study acknowledges that there are indeterminate positions in-between the three roles. Forcing indeterminate cases into one of the three roles undermines the reliability of the result, and give little justice to the often ambiguous empirical reality. Figure 2-1 illustrates the three roles, their qualifications and the indeterminate areas in-between the roles.

Figure 2-1 Qualified ideal-type roles of the military in foreign policy.



For the analytical tool to be useful when classifying cases, it is necessary to qualify what specific faculties count as more, respectively less, willing and able. This is, however, difficult to do *a priori* in a reliable way. The report therefore proceeds to examine the Civil-Military Relations research regarding Russia prior to Putin's presidency in order to identify what characterises the military's willingness and ability to influence foreign policy decision-making.

3 Points of reference

The ability and willingness of the military to influence foreign policy has varied throughout Russian history. A selection of Civil-Military Relations literature on Imperial Russia, the Soviet Union, and the Russian Federation under the Yeltsin era serves as reference points for studying the Putin era. It also provides empirical indicators of willingness and capability for the purposes of the analytical tool, which I discuss in the second part of this chapter.

3.1 The military in foreign policy from Peter the Great to Yeltsin

This report relies on a selection of sources from the rich Civil-Military Relations literature. I have restricted the discussion of the Imperial and Soviet eras to a handful of principal sources, while relying on a larger number of works for the Yeltsin era. Of the latter, only two studies explicitly address the use of military force abroad (Brannon 2009; Konyshev & Sergunin 2018). Though representing merely a part of the vast literature – in particular on the Soviet era – the selected sources allow for identifying characteristics of the Russian military's willingness and ability to influence foreign policy decision-making.

Imperial Russia, 1682–1917

Fuller (1985; 1992) and Taylor (2003) portray the role of the military in Imperial foreign policy as shifting from, to use my terms, a strong Servant to an unwilling Sinker. The Imperial era of Russian history, beginning with the accession of Peter the Great (ruled 1682–1725) and ending with the abdication of Nicholas II (ruled 1894–1917), was 'a time of enormous transformation, including in the sphere of civil-military relations' (Taylor 2003:38).

Foreign policy and war supported each other from the reign of Peter the Great and throughout the 18th century, Fuller (1992:454) asserts.[3] He ascribes this to a large degree of consensus among the Russian elite. Apart from it being willing, he also describes the military as able to influence foreign policy, as the military system was congruent with Russia's goal and strategy, and as Russia's rulers, officers and diplomats worked closely to advance the interest of the empire (Fuller 1992:453).

[3] 'While [Russia's] generals campaigned, its cabinets could guard against a widening of the war; military operations could be modulated to reassure other powers about Russia's intentions; compensations in the form of territorial awards could be used to purchase foreign acquiescence in Russia's conquests' (Fuller 1992:454).

From 1881 to 1914, the Imperial Army played a minor role in the formulation of foreign policy, according to Fuller (1985). He notes that the Great Reforms initiated by Alexander II gave rise to civil-military conflict regarding ends and means in the late Imperial era.[4] Taylor (2003:63), in addition, argues that the Ministry of War lost political influence. Fuller (1985:xxiii–iv) also depicts the military as less able, by pointing out that the increasing compartmentalisation of imperial politics led to the ignorance of successive Ministers of War about diplomatic negotiations and Russia's foreign obligations.[5] Also, the poor performance of the Army in the Crimean War, 1853–1856, had highlighted its – and Russia's – technological backwardness (Fuller 1992:453). Consequently, the military functioned as an unwilling Sinker in late Imperial foreign policy.

The Soviet Union 1917–1991

The two World Wars and the violent Bolshevik seizure of power thoroughly transformed Russian society, but the role of the military in foreign policy initially remained that of an unwilling Sinker. During the Cold War, however, the Red Army came to play the role of a Servant in Soviet international relations.

Avidar and Taylor argue that the military had little influence on foreign policy decision-making in the early Soviet era. Avidar (1983:319) finds the Soviet military completely subordinated to the political power, and Taylor (2003:174) concludes that the officer corps were to a high degree committed to a norm of civilian supremacy, due to the legacy of the late Imperial military culture. Also, according to Herspring (1996:187), there was considerable conflict between Communist party officials and the officers in the early 1920s. The military resisted politically driven change, but submitted to the new order by the late 1920s. Furthermore, the combat capability of the Army was reduced by Stalin's purges of large numbers of the senior officers, as came to light when Nazi Germany attacked the Soviet Union.

In the following years, Cold War competition and the demise of the Soviet state proceeded to set their stamp on society, including on the Soviet army's role in foreign policy. The Second World War had proved the value of a military instrument for foreign policy. 'Until its failure in Afghanistan [1979–1989],' Odom (1998:389) argues, 'the Soviet military had been the most dependable mean of

[4] To the frustration of the officer corps, the efforts at economic and industrial modernisation in the 1890s led to reduced military spending, and the Army was employed to check and crush internal unrest. The Russian generals, on the other hand, came to be increasingly convinced that the sole purpose of the Army was to train for war (Fuller 1985:259–60).

[5] For instance, 'on the very eve of the First World War, Russia's diplomats were largely unaware of the Empire's true state of readiness, while Russia's generals were largely in the dark about the objectives of foreign policy' (Fuller 1985:xxiii–iv).

expanding the Soviet empire.' In other words, the Soviet military assumed the role of Servant.

Several scholars argue that from the 1940s civilian and military interests to a high degree coincided (Colton 1979:279–80; Herspring 1996:150; Odom 1998:389; Desch 1999:40). Military willingness persisted even through the sociodemographic deterioration and the mounting inefficiency of Soviet economy, industry, and technology in the decade from 1975 to 1985. Gustafson (1990:357–8) ascribes the harmonious relations to the defence sector's being insulated from the many-sided crisis by a long-established system of preferential allocation of resources.

From the Second World War and onwards, the military was also more able to contribute to foreign policy. Barylski (1998:91) notes that Soviet troops stationed in Eastern Europe became an instrument of Soviet foreign policy. He also identifies the elite airborne units as political tools in Europe. The Soviet State used them to overthrow the Hungarian leadership in 1956, and the Czechoslovakian reformers, in 1968.

In the 1970s, Soviet use of armed force in its foreign policy increased dramatically, as described by Porter (1990:285–93). This was the result of a series of massive military interventions in developing countries, such as Egypt 1967–1973, Angola 1975–1976, Somalia and Ethiopia 1977–1978, and Afghanistan 1979–1989. In addition to Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union also stationed troops in Vietnam and Mongolia, Porter notes.[6] Gustafson (1990:355) concludes that the Soviet military – or, at least, individual senior officers – assumed a new role in foreign affairs during the Brezhnev years. He notes that high-ranking officers and defence officials travelled the world as diplomats and arms salesmen, prepared the operations abroad during high-level visits, and played leading roles in arms-control negotiations.

Desch (1999) and Mathers (2003) find that political and military interest diverged, during the last years of the Soviet era, over Mikhail Gorbachev's reform program. Initially, many senior officers welcomed his effort to restructure the economic system (*Perestroika*). However, the reforms soon challenged the military's autonomy in defence issues and the very existence of the Red Army (Desch 1999:41–5). *Perestroika* rejected both the military's claim to the lion's share of state resources, and the military threat perception, as Mathers (2003:24) notes.

However, the military still respected civilian supremacy. Taylor (2003:257) argues that the half-hearted military participation in the August 1991 coup against Gorbachev, and the passive stance of the high command in December 1991, can

[6] The invasion of Afghanistan was by far the largest Soviet military force deployment abroad, peaking at well over 100,000 troops. In 1985, between seven and ten thousand Soviet troops were stationed in Vietnam, and some 75,000 in Mongolia – and roughly half a million in Warsaw Pact countries (Porter 1990:285–93).

be explained by a norm of civilian supremacy (see also Herspring 2006:196).[7] Overall, the Civil-Military Relations literature indicates that the Soviet military played the role of a Servant in foreign policy decision-making, at least up to the last days of the Soviet Union's existence.

The Yeltsin era 1991–1999

Gorbachev's reforms of the Soviet political system unhinged the apparatus of civilian control over the military, according to Tsypkin (2013:111). This affected both the ability and the willingness of the military to participate in foreign policy decision-making. The Civil-Military Relations literature portrays the military as a fairly strong Shaper of foreign policy during the 1990s and the Yeltsin era that followed the end of the Soviet Union.

The dissolution of the Soviet Union negatively affected the military's ability. As Renz (2018:50) points out, it soon became apparent that the huge military Russia inherited 'was more of a curse than a blessing.' Desch (1999:63) notes that both the organisation and the mission of the Armed Forces were unclear. It did not help that Yeltsin and his administration showed little interest in and know-how about defence affairs (Trenin 2004:219; Herspring 2006:198; Vendil Pallin 2009:171; Herspring 2013:241). By necessity, the military radically transformed itself. The military high command implemented enormous changes amounting to 'a scale of military redeployment unprecedented in the peacetime history of any major state', as Barylski (1998:486) notes. Partly due to this, meaningful military reform did not take place under Yeltsin (Vendil Pallin 2009:117; Golts 2017:20–73).[8]

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[7] Kokoshin's study of Soviet strategic thought also testifies to a norm of civilian supremacy: though debated, most military strategists in the Soviet Union regarded military strategy as subordinated to policy (Kokoshin 1995).

[8] Scholars have pointed to several reasons for the lack of progress. Allison (2004:156) and Barany (2007:136–40) find the mind-set of the military leadership to have been one of the major obstacles to military reform under Yeltsin. The high command insisted on preparing for large-scale military confrontation with major regional powers, rather than developing a force suitable for handling the local wars and armed conflicts Russia faced in its immediate neighbourhood. Even though there were a number of views among the officer corps on just what a military reform should look like, it was nevertheless united in its resistance to the reform proposals put forward by the civilian leadership (Desch 1999:61).

The generals were largely successful in opposing reform because of the organisational independence of the Armed Forces and Russian culture's long-standing deference to the military, according to Barany (2007:134–5). Facon (2012:283) reached a similar conclusion, asserting that '[d]eeply embedded strategic visions and derived operational concepts in a centuries-long militarized society serving an insular military institution' contributed to conceptual and organisational inertia.

While recognising the resistance to change within the military bureaucracy, Vendil Pallin (2009:172) regards the lack of political will and perseverance to be the main cause of the dismal

The far-reaching transformation of the Armed Forces affected the military's ability to perform combat operations if and when ordered to, as e.g. Herspring (1996:178; 2006:93) notes. Combat readiness continued to decrease during the late 1990s, mainly due to inadequate funding and the follow-on effects from that (Herspring 2006:112–6, 136, 147–51; 2013:216–9).

In addition, the president undermined the military's ability as a bureaucratic institution. To increase his control over the military, Yeltsin split authority between the General Staff and the Ministry of Defence – with both of them reporting directly to the President – creating a bureaucratic deadlock, Herspring (2006:199) argues, in the military leadership. Arbatov (2010:56) asserts, furthermore, that during the Yeltsin era 'the interaction between civilian leadership and the military was predominantly based on personal relationships'.

However, military influence on Russian foreign policy decision-making increased under the Yeltsin era, despite the decrease in the Armed Forces' abilities, in terms of readiness and combat capability, as well as it being subject to the president's divide and rule tactics. This outcome may seem contradictory, but some explanations have been forwarded.

First, institutional balances favoured the military. Davenport (1995), Baev (1996:51–9) and Desch (1999:63) all point out that during the Yeltsin era, civilian institutions were also weak and divided. This allowed the military leadership to influence policy. Desch (1999:53) has argued that the military played a key role in shaping the Russian government's position on proposed NATO enlargement in the 1990s. The civilian leadership was not initially against Western proposals to include Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary in NATO, but became negative to the idea after military opposition.

Konyshev and Sergunin (2018:172–3) note that Ministry of Defence officials also opposed military interventions in the former Yugoslavia, and that the Ministry could quite independently decide on military agreements and cooperation with foreign countries. In addition, the military establishment had a clear role in forming Russian foreign policy on arms control, military-technical cooperation and military-to-military contacts (Konyshev & Sergunin 2018:175). The military often has a say in these issues, but not necessarily always. Under Gorbachev, civilians dominated policymaking on arms control.

results. To keep the generals on his side, Yeltsin allowed them to continue to focus on large-scale wars and military superpower attributes (Herspring 2006:65; Barany 2007:167). Russia's steady economic downturn also hampered the transformation of the Armed Forces, as Betz (2004:64) and Renz (2018:54) note.

Second, the institutional checks on the military decreased. Yeltsin 'treated the military as his fiefdom', according to Barylski (1998:195).[9] Barany (2007:175) concurs, finding that civilian control of the military in Russia became little more than presidential control under Yeltsin. Several researchers note that the 1993 Constitution and the 1996 Law on Defence concentrated power over the military to the president, at the expense of parliamentary oversight and democratic accountability (Barylski 1998:434; Arbatov 2010:56; Tsypkin 2013:112). Furthermore, the president often neglected to oversee the military. Baev (2003:190) has asserted that the Kremlin left it to the military to sort out all the details, without even symbolic political oversight. In addition, Barany (2008a:590) points out, prominent generals were seldom held responsible for their actions.

Third, and perhaps most importantly, in virtue of its physical presence the newly created Russian Federation Armed Forces was instantaneously thrusted into foreign policy issues within the area of the former Soviet Union area and beyond. A large number of its bases were suddenly located in other states. In many cases, Baev (2003:190) points out, Russian garrisons happened to be right in the middle of the violence. In Moldova, Georgia, Tajikistan, Armenia and Azerbaijan, Baev (1996:103–26) – among others – notes, the Russian military became involved in fighting between different domestic factions competing for power.

According to Davenport (1995) and Desch (1999:55–6), the military assumed a significant role in Russian foreign policymaking in the early 1990s through armed intervention in conflicts, and by delaying troop withdrawals from the Baltic states. Barany (2008a:591) has pointed to a recurring military involvement in foreign affairs throughout the Yeltsin era: 'The Defence Ministry has aggressively promoted its interests in the Commonwealth of Independent States by delaying the division of the Black Sea Fleet with Ukraine and the withdrawal of its troops from elsewhere, such as Georgia and Tajikistan.' It should also be noted that the Russian military held more sway because no one else in the international community was prepared to get involved. The West, for instance, was at this time focused on Yugoslavia.[10]

Individual senior officers, such as General Lebed, while serving as commander of the 14th Army in the Moldovan breakaway republic of Transnistria, also influenced foreign relations. Elletson (1998:170–4) points out that Lebed formed Russian foreign policy towards Moldova by use of force and statements in press conferences, without prior orders from President Yeltsin and in violation of instructions from Minister for Defence General Grachev. Desch (1999:54) notes

[9] 'The key objective of civil-military relations under Yeltsin was the safeguarding of the president's personal power', according to Barany (2008b:22), to which Herspring (2013:241) concurs. As Betz (2004:155) notes, in the hostile domestic political atmosphere of the 1990s, it proved preferable for Yeltsin to have a partisan military – as long as it was partisan in his favour.

[10] I am grateful to my colleague Carolina Vendil Pallin for pointing this out.

that Lebed also refused to withdraw the 14th Army from Transnistria, challenging an agreement negotiated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.[11]

The military also meddled in Russian foreign policy beyond the confines of the former Soviet Union, in virtue of its physical presence. According to Desch (1999:54-5) and Barany (2008a:591), senior officers resisted the Kremlin's anticipated readiness to abandon Soviet bases in Cuba and Vietnam and to reach a compromise with Japan on the issue of the Kurile Islands.

The most debated instance of Russian military involvement in foreign policy – at least in the West – occurred during Yeltsin's last year as president. In June 1999, Russian Airborne Troop units based in Bosnia swiftly and covertly deployed to the airport in Pristina, the capital of Kosovo. Some 200 paratroopers under the command of Lieutenant General Victor Zavarzin occupied the airfield, preempting a NATO peacekeeping force scheduled to arrive the next day. As Brannon (2009:83) points out, the move created a tense situation with NATO, under whose authority the Russian force was ostensibly operating (see more on this incident below).

While the military's ability to influence international relations increased under the Yeltsin era, its willingness to respect civilian preferences diminished. Diverging civilian and military interests had already haunted civilian control over the military under Gorbachev, but the situation worsened in the early years of the Russian Federation's existence, according to Herspring (2006:205).

Baev (1996:55) argues that the political transition towards a democratic Russia, with friendly relations with its new neighbours and the West, and economic reforms at the expense of military spending created a rift in values and interests with the military. 'The top brass have consistently opposed strategic relations with the United States and NATO,' Barany (2008a:591) concludes, 'because it directly threatened their corporate interests.' Desch (1999:63) also notes that the civilian leadership's relation with the military was strained during the Yeltsin era.

However, opinions vary in the literature as to the degree that military actions should be interpreted as non-willingness. Davenport (1995) ascribed the military involvement in foreign policymaking under Yeltsin to the fractured and weak civilian authority, rather than the military's abandoning its norm of non-intervention in Russian politics. Baev (1996:51–9) concurs, arguing that while the Armed Forces was a main player in forming Russian policy in its Near Abroad, it was not of the military's volition, and that its political choices therefore could not qualify as interference in politics. In addition, Taylor (2003:319) concludes that '[m]ilitary attachment to a norm of civilian supremacy, although somewhat weakened during

[11] Later, both the Ground Forces commander-in-chief and Minister for Defence Grachev took the same position, in effect repudiating the agreement according to Desch (ibid.).

Yeltsin's reign, remained quite robust'. Herspring (2006:204) agrees, ascribing it to Russian military culture. Szászdi (2008:341) also found the senior officer corps loyal to the President. Their arguments indicate that military willingness was indeterminate under Yeltsin.

The most debated issue is the above-mentioned redeployment to Pristina Airport, in 1999. The surprise move was ordered by the Chief of the General Staff, Anatolii Kvashnin, but there are divergent views among scholars on whether he was following political directives or acted on his own initiative. According to Barany (2008a:590), Kvashnin misled the government when ordering the manoeuvre. Brannon (2009:96, 169) has argued that the military acted on its own initiative in Kosovo, and that Kvashnin shirked his responsibility to support the intentions of the Ministers for Defence and Foreign Affairs, who were against moving into Kosovo. Gomart (2008:67) found it to be 'a clear violation of the chain of command within the ministry and more broadly within the government.' However, the Chief of the General Staff does not take orders from the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and at the time he was not even subordinated to the Minister for Defence. As mentioned above, the Chief of the General Staff reported directly to the President, and was explicitly given the responsibility for the operational command of the Armed Forces in the Charter of the General Staff approved by Yeltsin (Prezident RF 1998).

As pointed out by Taylor (2009:311), the key issue from a civilian control point of view is whether or not President Yeltsin – as ultimately responsible for the Armed Forces as well as for foreign policy – approved the operation. It seems Yeltsin did approve it,[12] and it therefore also seems that the military was a Servant of the president's foreign policy in this instance.

Regarding the post-Soviet era, Konyshev and Sergunin (2018:176) find that the political leadership set the foreign policy agenda, and that there have been no purely military goals. This assertion is debatable concerning the 1990s. As discussed above, there is ample research indicating that the military on more than one occasion did pursue its own interests abroad, and consequently was involved in Russian foreign policy decision-making, both within the area of the former Soviet Union and beyond. Overall, the Civil-Military Relations literature depicts the military as a fairly strong Shaper of Russian foreign affairs under the Yeltsin era, with some notable exceptions such as the Pristina dash.

[12] Brannon provides little information to support the claim that Yeltsin was not in the loop. Taylor (2003:315), on the other hand, found considerable evidence that Yeltsin approved the operation in advance. Also, the force commander, Zavarzin, was promoted, and Kvashnin was rewarded by the President immediately after their actions (Brannon 2009:83, 169), which indicates consent (Szászdi 2008:225). Szászdi (2008:207–33) has even concluded that civilian and military officials closely cooperated in the decision-making, arguing that the Russians staged contradictions between the Ministers for Defence and Foreign Affairs, and the military commanders as a smokescreen for the ongoing operation.

3.2 Characterising the Russian military's role in foreign policy

The report proposes three proxy variables each for military willingness and the ability to influence foreign policy decision-making. The review of Civil-Military Relations literature in the preceding subsection, identified a number of specific faculties related to willingness and ability, respectively. This section categorises these indicators, relating them to Civil-Military Relations theory, and then complement the tool for analysing the role of the military presented in the previous chapter.

Willingness

As indications of willingness, I suggest the three proxy variables *compatible ideals* (1); *coinciding interests* (2); and *respect for civilian supremacy* (3). Like willingness, the values more and less are sufficient for all three proxies.

The compatible ideals variable includes values, culture and relational issues. Ideals of the more compatible type, can be expressed as 'consensus' (Fuller 1992:453) and 'harmonious relations' (Gustafson 1990:357–8). Less compatible are 'conflicting values' (Baev 1996:55), 'strained relations' (Desch 1999:63), and incompatible cultures, as when Herspring (2006:205) laments Yeltsin's 'lack of attention to Russian military culture'. Among Civil-Military Relations theorists, Janowitz (1960:418) focuses on values, and Schiff (2009), the degree of agreement – concordance, in her parlance – between the military, the political leadership and the citizens. Culture is key to Herspring (2013) in his theoretical framework, which to a large degree relies on Huntington (1957).

The notion of coinciding interests represents a more pragmatic and rational, than ideational, approach to willingness. The relation between civilian and military interests is central to civilian control in Civil-Military Relations theory (see e.g. Huntington 1957; Desch 1999; Feaver 2003; Schiff 2009). It rests on the rationalist assumption that when interests coincide, the military is more willing to respect civilian preferences. As presented in the previous subsection, several scholars discuss coinciding interests in the later Soviet era (Colton 1979:279–80; Herspring 1996:150; Odom 1998:389; Desch 1999:40). In contrast, Fuller (1985:259–60) notes conflicting interests in the late Imperial era, Herspring (1996:187) in the early Soviet era, and Desch (1999) and Mathers (2003) in the last years of the Soviet Union. For the period under Yeltsin, Baev (1996:55), Desch (1999:117), Herspring (2006:205) and Barany (2008a:591) point to conflicting civilian and military interests.

My third and final proxy variable for military willingness to heed political preferences is the respect for civilian supremacy. Even if military and civilian ideals and

interests are in conflict, the officer corps may still follow political instructions, due to a commitment to a norm of civilian supremacy. Such a military ethos is core to Huntington (1957) and the concept of military professionalism. Above, Taylor (2003) and Herspring (2006) repeatedly discuss in terms of military commitment to a norm of civilian supremacy. Szászdi (2008:341) and Kokoshin (1995) also do that, while Davenport (1995) discusses a military 'norm of non-intervention' in politics. Avidar (1983:319) frames it as the Soviet military being 'completely subordinated to the political power'. The contrasting term would be military insubordination. In the Pristina case, Gomart (2008:67) found it to be 'a clear violation of the chain of command', and Brannon (2009:96, 169) that the military acted on its own initiative. A greater degree of respect for civilian supremacy could mitigate less compatible ideals or conflicting interests, and vice versa.

Ability

To capture the military's ability to influence foreign policy decision-making, the report suggests the three proxy variables, *physical presence* (A), *relative bureaucratic power* (B), and *combat capability* (C). As for the main variable of ability, it seems sufficient to assign the values of all three proxies as more or less.

The physical presence of Russian military units abroad is a faculty that several scholars stress, as discussed in the previous subsection. During the Soviet era, Barylski (1998:91), Porter (1990:285–93) and Gustafson (1990:355) note that having troops stationed in Eastern Europe, Africa and Asia allowed for the Red Army to influence international relations. Under Yeltsin, the military shaped Russian foreign policy regarding several post-Soviet countries, according to Davenport (1995), Baev (1996:103–26; 2003:190), Elletson (1998:170–4), Desch (1999:54–6), and Barany (2008a:591). The latter two authors also point to the possession of military bases in Cuba and Vietnam as allowing senior officers to affect foreign policy. Furthermore, the presence of Russian troops in Bosnia enabled the deployment to Pristina Air Base in 1999, as discussed by Brannon (2009:83) and others.

The second proposed proxy variable is the bureaucratic power of the military relative to that of other institutions. The presence of institutional checks and balances on the military seems to affect the scope of the Russian military to influence foreign policy decision-making. In particular, Russia analysts have stressed the weakness of other foreign policy tools as a factor. Galeotti (2017a:3) argues that 'for Russia, the relative strength of its military compared with other instruments of foreign influence ensures that the military is called on to perform an especially broad range of other duties.' Golts (2017:13, 194) even argues that the 'new-born Army has become the most important, if not sole, efficient instrument for Moscow's foreign and domestic policy [original in Russian, translated by author].'

In the previous subsection, Fuller (1992:453) points to a greater military ability to influence early Imperial foreign policy, due to the military system's being congruent with Russia's goal and strategy, and the way that Russia's rulers, officers and diplomats worked closely together. In contrast, Fuller (1985:xxiii–iv) depicts the military as less able during the late Imperial era, because of the increasing compartmentalisation of politics. Taylor (2003:63) also notes that the Ministry of War lost political influence. The military continued to be outside the foreign policy loop in the early Soviet era, but later gained bureaucratic power, partly because of the physical presence abroad. As Gustafson (1990:355) notes, officers assumed a role as diplomats and arms salesmen during Brezhnev's time.

Under the Yeltsin era, Herspring (2006:199) and Arbatov (2010:56) note a weakened bureaucratic position for the military, due to Yeltsin splitting authority between the General Staff and the Ministry of Defence, and personal relations superseding institutional ones. However, Davenport (1995), Baev (1996:51–9) and Desch (1999:63) point to weak and fractured civilian authorities. Moreover, Barylski (1998:195, 434), Barany (2007:175), Arbatov (2010:56) and Tsypkin (2013:112) all note decreasing institutional checks on the military, bar the president. Yeltsin, however, neglected overseeing the military and punishing its interference in politics, according to Baev (2003:190) and Barany (2008a:590).

The lack of checks and balances arguably contributed to the military's shaping of Russian foreign policy under Yeltsin, despite low readiness and combat capability. This stands in contrast to the late Imperial era, when the military was more capable, but due to limited bureaucratic power did not shape foreign policy, instead taking the role of a Sinker.

A special case is in questions closely related to military security. Here the military could generally be expected to have more clout in virtue of their expertise. Konyshev and Sergunin (2018:172–5) point to the military's forming Russian foreign policy on arms control and international military cooperation, as well as opposing military interventions in the former Yugoslavia during the Yeltsin era. Also, Desch (1999:53) asserts that the military shaped policy on NATO enlargement in the 1990s. Therefore, lack of military influence over these matters indicates a low ability. Consequently, I regard the military as more able only when it independently forms policy on such matters.

The third and final proxy for ability is the combat capability of the military. It seems that being a more combat-capable military is necessary for it to play the roles of a strong Servant or a strong Shaper of foreign policy. It is not sufficient for either, however, as physical presence and relative bureaucratic power can compensate for the lack of combat capability. The military combat capability is not an objective measure, but relates to the capability of the adversary, and to geographical constraints (Norberg & Goliath 2019:59–65).

In the previous subsection, (Fuller 1992:453) and Herspring (1996:178; 2006:93, 112–6, 136, 147–51; 2013:216–9) discuss this in terms of poor combat readiness and performance. Renz (2018:50) points to the Armed Forces' being 'unorganised', and Barylski (1998:486) notes the preoccupation in the early 1990s with redeploying forces from abroad. All of these indicate a low combat capability. In contrast, Porter (1990:285–93) notes the massive military interventions abroad during the late Soviet era, while Barylski (1998:91) points to elite airborne units ensuring Moscow-friendly governments in Hungary and Czechoslovakia. Under Yeltsin, airborne units swiftly and covertly took control of Pristina airport, as discussed by Brannon (2009:83) and others.

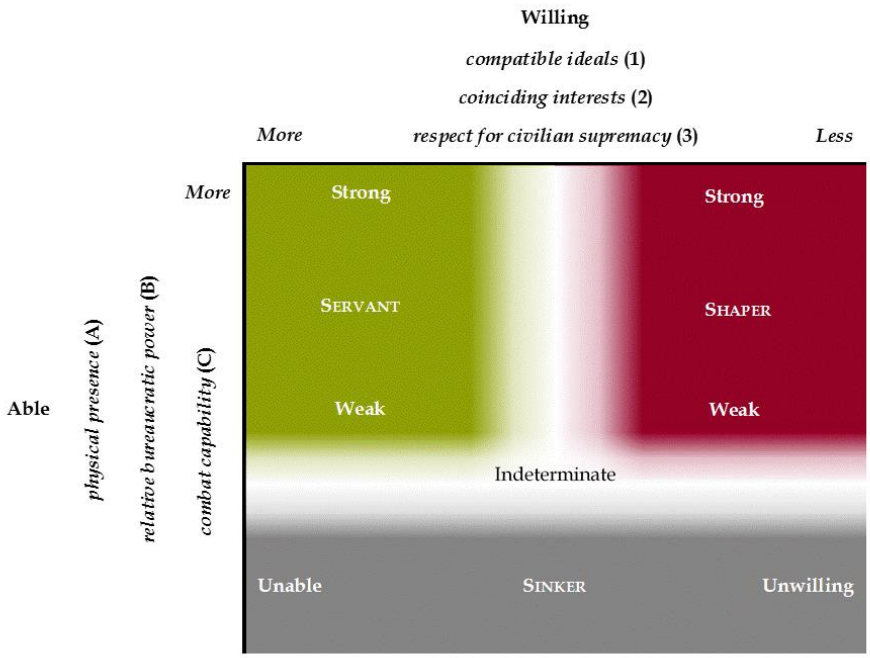
A complemented analytical tool

The Russian military's willingness and ability to influence foreign policy decision-making have varied through the ages, as the overview of Civil-Military Relations literature regarding the Imperial, Soviet, and Yeltsin eras in the previous section shows. The varying states of willingness and ability have caused shifts in roles for the military in Russian foreign affairs. The literature describes the military transformation from a strong Servant in the early Russian Empire, to unwilling Sinker in the late Imperial era and the Soviet Union's early decades, back to a Servant in the later Soviet era, before becoming a fairly strong Shaper of Russian foreign policy under the Yeltsin era.

The overview of the Civil-Military Relations literature regarding the Imperial, Soviet, and Yeltsin eras allows for complementing the analytical tool with proxy variables indicating willingness and ability. Figure 3-1 (overleaf) incorporates the three proxy variables for willingness and ability, respectively, along with their relation to the three ideal-type roles. I use this diagram in the following chapters to illustrate the positions of Civil-Military Relations research on the role of the military in international relations under Putin.

The causation of shifts in military ability and willingness is beyond the scope of this report. However, I note that the literature provides both a theoretical and an empirical explanation. Desch applies his structural threat environment theory to the Yeltsin era. He finds that the reduced external threat level after the end of the Cold War caused diverging civilian and military ideas about military policy and foreign affairs (Desch 1999:117).

Figure 3-1 Tool for analysing the ideal-type role of the military in foreign policy.



Several scholars argue that sociodemographic stress coupled with far-reaching reform efforts affected both willingness and ability. Fuller (1985; 1992) and Taylor (2003) find this concerning late Imperial Russia. Mathers (2003) reaches the same conclusion regarding Gorbachev's reforms and the Yeltsin era, a view that Baev (1996:55), Desch (1999) and Tsypkin (2013:111) seem to support. With this digression, I turn to the main empirical question of this report: What does current Civil-Military Relations research suggest regarding the role of the military in foreign policy decision-making under Putin?

4 The early Putin era, 2000–2008

By the time Yeltsin left office, on December 31, 1999, 'the military was a disaster,' Herspring (2006:200) notes. The Armed Forces had suffered a drawn-out period of neglect and fallen into a state of serious disrepair (Renz 2018:52). 'Russia', Betz (2004:151) concludes, 'entered the new century with an unreformed military and with civil-military relations in disarray.'

What does the Civil-Military Relations literature find regarding the role of the military in Russian foreign policy during the early Putin era (2000–2008)? I account for military willingness and ability separately, before concluding with a discussion of how current research depicts the role of the military. First, however, I briefly present the literature.

4.1 Civil-Military Relations literature on the early Putin era

The research on civil-military relations during the early Putin era mainly focuses on other issues than foreign policy. Only Vendil Pallin (2008), Konyshev and Sergunin (2018), and Renz (2018) explore the role of the military in international relations. In addition, Stewart and Zhukov (2009) contribute with a comparison of the views of the officer corps and the political élite on foreign policy issues.

The largest share of research on the early Putin era deals with presidential control over the military (Herspring 2006; Barany 2007; Herspring 2007; Barany 2008a; b; Gomart 2008; Blank 2011; Herspring 2013). Arbatov (2010) and Blank (2012) also discuss civilian control in a wider meaning.

Furthermore, Mathers (2003), Galeotti (2012), and Tsypkin (2013) discuss the impact of Russian military reform on civil-military relations, while Renz (2012) approaches it in terms of military modernisation. In addition, Renz (2007) also studies civil-military relations regarding Russia's total force structures, not just the Armed Forces.

Apart from the explicit Civil-Military Relations research, there are also a number of studies touching on the issue with regard to the early Putin era. I have relied on complementary data from a few authoritative works. These deal with military reform (Aldis & McDermott 2003; Vendil Pallin 2009; Baev 2010; Golts 2017), the transformation and modernisation of the Armed Forces (Vendil Pallin 2010), and Russian military strategic culture (Facon 2012).

4.2 A willing military?

The Civil-Military Relations literature portrays military willingness during the early Putin era as increasing compared to under Yeltsin, but the positions on the three proxy variables are spread. However, there seems to be scholarly consensus regarding the position on each of the proxy variables. The compatibility of civilian and military ideals was indeterminate, and interests were still in conflict, but the military generally respected civilian supremacy.

A couple of scholars depict civilian and military ideals as having been more compatible under the early Putin era than during Yeltsin's presidency, suggesting an indeterminate position. In contrast to his predecessors, Betz and Volkov (2003:41) argue, Putin showed respect for the military institution, seemed to share its values, and lamented its decline, gaining the respect of many officers. Furthermore, already as prime minister, Putin declared that he accepted personal responsibility for the campaign in Chechnya. This was well received by senior officers who worried about once again being made scapegoats for politicians, according to Herspring (2013:239). To the frustration of military commanders, both Gorbachev and Yeltsin had shrunk from responsibility for the military actions they had ordered (Golts 2017:211–2).

During Putin's two first terms as president, civilian and military interests continued to be in conflict on most issues. Facon (2012:278–9) notes that the military preferred to focus on large-scale conventional war capabilities to preserve Russia's great power status vis-a-vis other great powers, the military-strategic paradigm that had served Russia for three centuries. Over the course of the 2000s, the political leadership to a large degree adopted the military's threat perceptions, Blank (2011:2) argues. However, he notes that while sharing the officers' view of the threats to Russia, the political leadership was inclined to use other means to address them than those preferred by the military. Similarly, Vendil Pallin (2008:113) asserts that, in practise, military doctrine had little influence on foreign policy formulation or implementation during the early Putin era.

Diverging civilian and military interests, not least, characterised the views on foreign affairs during the early Putin era. Stewart and Zhukov (2009:336) conclude that 'Russian political and military elites differ on both the priorities of their country's foreign and defence policy and the role of military force as an instrument of national power.' They find that the views of military leaders were far more permissive towards the use of force as a foreign policy realpolitik instrument, than were those of senior civilians. However, Stewart and Zhukov also find that senior officers were less likely than politicians to attach salience to an interventionist foreign policy agenda, such as providing humanitarian assistance, state building and crisis response.

The literature portrays an increased military respect for civilian supremacy during the early Putin era. Barany (2008a:601) finds that despite conflicting interests, the inherited organisational culture within the military sustained the officer corps' adherence to a norm of civilian supremacy.

Furthermore, Gomart (2011:96) finds that the political leadership succeeded in gradually re-establishing itself at the top of the chain of command. This could be seen in greatly diminished insubordination by generals and a muted overt military opposition to state policy, in comparison to the Yeltsin era, according to Barany (2008b:34). Regarding the forming of international relations, Gomart (2011:82) asserts that '[t]here is no doubt that the Kremlin's supremacy in decision-making on security policy was reinforced under Putin. Nor is there any doubt that foreign policy is subordinated to security policy in the Russian case.'

Overall, the literature depicts an increased, but not clear, willingness of the military to respect civilian preferences on foreign policy during the early Putin era. Having established the scholars' different positions on willingness, I now move on to the ability of the military to influence international relations.

4.3 Less ability to influence foreign policy

During the early Putin era, the Civil-Military Relations literature indicates that the ability of the military to influence foreign policy decision-making diminished compared to the Yeltsin era. I assess the overall ability to reach an intermediate value. The Armed Forces retained an intermediate physical presence in its neighbourhood, and there is scholarly consensus that the combat capability remained very poor. There are different opinions, however, on the position for the proxy variable of relative bureaucratic power. These vary from intermediate to low, but a plurality of researchers indicate an intermediate position.

Regarding the proxy variable of physical presence, Sakwa (2008:374) notes that the military retained influence on foreign policy formulation in parts of the former Soviet Union through its involvement in post-Soviet Eurasian conflicts during the early Putin era. Vendil Pallin (2008:114) concurs, pointing to the considerable Russian military presence in the separatist republic of Transnistria, in Moldova, as well as peacekeeping forces in the Georgian breakaway republics of South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

The literature indicates that military ability as expressed by the proxy variable of relative bureaucratic power reached an intermediate position during the early Putin era. While the influence of the security and intelligence services visibly increased, Vendil Pallin (2008:111) finds the military lacking both political clout and bureaucratic sway.

The military system remained incongruent with Russia's goal and strategy. Facon (2012:283) points to military strategy, operational concepts and structures of war as being inadequate in the endeavours the Russian army had faced in the 1990s. According to Barany (2008b:34), Putin did not exhibit the necessary determination to move the military reform agenda substantially beyond Yeltsin's failed attempts. Vendil Pallin (2009:172) concludes that 'the main problem was the fact that the political leadership lacked the will, the ability and the means (know-how) to construct meaningful reform plans for the military to fulfil, as well as the mechanisms to scrutinize and evaluate implementation (perseverance).' As a result, the Armed Forces organisation and military strategy continued to be discordant with the political ambitions. Vendil Pallin (2008:117) finds that Russia's 'military might is poorly diversified and thus a blunt instrument in foreign policy.'

More importantly, the president expanded his control over the military by improving oversight and punishment of the military. The sinking of the Northern Fleet's submarine Kursk, in August 2000, became a turning point for Putin's relationship with the military, according to Brannon (2009:171). The dismal and incompetent way the Navy handled the accident led to some seminal political decisions. It increased the resolve of the political leadership to take over national media. Furthermore, according to Gomart (2011:87), the high command's failure to provide Putin with correct information about the accident, and to accept foreign help in time made the president determined to reinforce his control, though without directly confronting the General Staff. Putin dismissed the commander of the Northern Fleet, his chief of staff and the commander of the fleet's submarine flotilla, but let the Navy Commander-in-Chief continue to serve, Brannon (2009:162–3) notes. By punishing the directly responsible admirals, Putin strengthened his authority over the officer corps. According to Brannon, the move also placed the Navy Commander-in-Chief in a vulnerable position, rendering him more dependent on the president.

Putin also increased his scrutiny of military affairs. According to Tsypkin, he strengthened the role of the Federal Security Service (FSB) in overseeing the military, while increasing the presidential control over the FSB. Putin furthermore appointed his long-time confidante, Sergei Ivanov, as Minister for Defence (Tsypkin 2013:115). In the following years, Putin reduced the scope of the General Staff and resubordinated it to the Ministry of Defence and Minister for Defence Ivanov, who also served as deputy prime minister. The chain of command was thereby re-established and Putin's bureaucratic control over the military strengthened, Herspring (2006:202) asserts. He even argues that Putin became 'more in charge than any post-Stalin leader of the Soviet Union' (Herspring 2007:24). However, the president abstained from micro-managing military operations. According to Herspring (2006:200; 2013:239) and Gomart (2008:84), Putin left operational control of the Second Chechen War in the hands of the General Staff.

Still, Betz and Volkov (2003), as well as Golts (2017:80–3), find that political control over the military continued to be hampered by its lack of transparency and civilian expertise on military matters. The tradition of the Soviet and Yeltsin eras of having no substantial civilian representation within the Ministry of Defence endured, Barany (2007:177) notes. Ivanov was not a military person, although a general of the FSB, and he brought almost no civilians into the Ministry of Defence along with him.

While the president's power over the military increased, civilian control in any wider meaning continued to decline. Several researchers note that effective scrutiny by the parliament, non-governmental organisations, journalists and Russian citizens became even more circumscribed (Mathers 2003:25–6; Barany 2008b:29; Gomart 2008:41; Vendil Pallin 2009:174; Arbatov 2010:71). Arbatov (2010:74) concludes that defence was one of the Russian policy areas least influenced by civilian control and democratic accountability. Instead, the early Putin regime settled for political and administrative control over the military, primarily through budget allocations and appointments, according to Gomart (2008:39–41).

The military also retained a strong influence in arms control and disarmament – in particular related to missile defence and nuclear weapons, Konyshev and Sergunin (2018:174) find. They attribute it to the near monopoly on technical expertise in these areas that the Ministry of Defence enjoyed. Vendil Pallin (2008:114) reaches a similar conclusion, but finds military issues to be the exception from an otherwise generally insignificant role for the military in Russian foreign policy.

The third proxy-variable, combat capability, remained low during the early Putin era. According to Betz (2004:65), Putin inherited essentially unreformed Armed Forces in deplorable condition. Combat readiness was at an all-time low, Herspring (2013:241) asserts, due to a lack of everything from personnel, functioning weapons and equipment, to training and order within the Armed Forces. Herspring also finds that morale was low, that the government had withheld parts of the continuously reduced defence budgets, and that a decade had passed with almost no deliveries of new equipment.

The seriousness of the situation became known when the Second Chechnya War broke out, soon after Putin had been appointed Prime Minister in 1999. He later stated that a force of at least 65,000 men was deemed necessary for the initial operation, but from the nominal 1,4 million Armed Forces, merely 55,000 men were available, and units had to be brought in from all over Russia, Golts (2017:75-6) recounts. Putin took steps to improve the situation within the Armed Forces, Herspring (2006:155–85) notes.[13] However, as Baev (2010:171) points

[13] The government let the defence budgets increase at the same pace as the GDP grew, allowing for raising salaries and conducting exercises. The Government also intensified the procurement of

out, hardly any modernisation occurred during Putin's first two terms as president.

Because of political wavering and military resistance to reform, Russia's Armed Forces remained a dysfunctional and neglected organisation during the first one and a half decades of their existence. Facon (2012:277) finds that the military was essentially just a smaller version of the Soviet Red Army, and marred by corruption and draft-dodging as well as by lack of funding, while receiving only fitful attention from the political leadership. The combat capability of the Armed Forces remained low, Golts (2017:15) asserts, pointing to the mediocre military performance in the two Chechen wars.

Having referenced the positions expressed in the literature on both the willingness and ability of the military, I can now discuss the role of the Armed Forces in foreign policy during the early Putin era.

4.4 An indeterminate role for the military in the early Putin era

During the early Putin era (2000–2008), the military came to play an indeterminate role in Russian foreign affairs, the Civil-Military Relations literature suggest. Compared to the Yeltsin era, the military had a reduced influence on foreign policy formulation, Barany (2008a:601) asserts (see also Mankoff 2009:58). Konyshev and Sergunin (2018:176) maintain that the military was a tool in the hands of the political leadership in forming international relations.

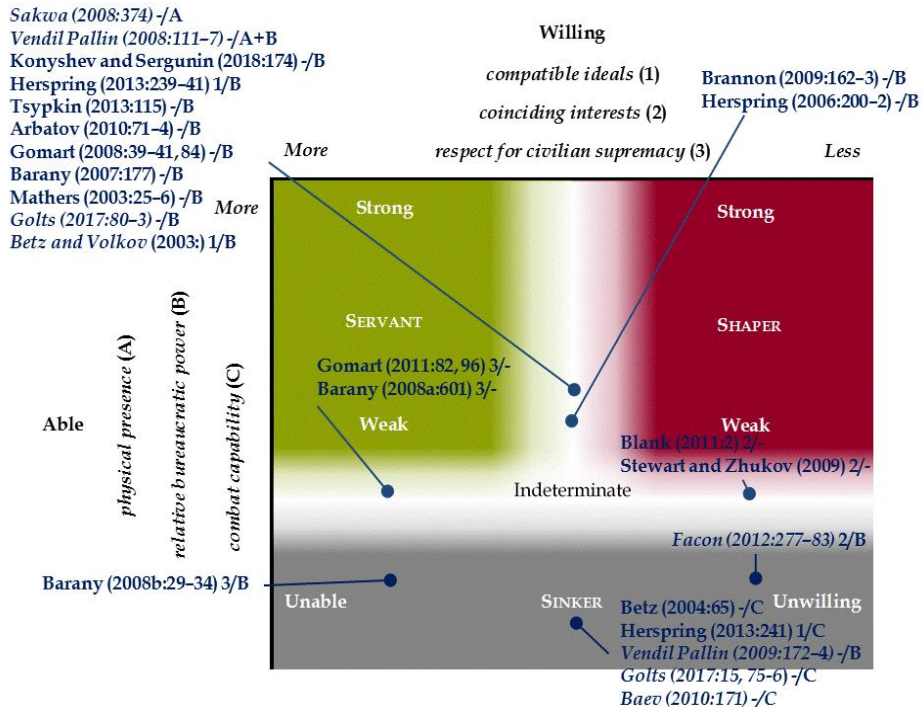
The literature indicates that both the willingness and the ability of the military to influence international affairs diminished compared to the Yeltsin era. Under Putin, the civilian and military ideals became more compatible and the respect for civilian supremacy remained, even though interests continued to clash. Tighter presidential control reduced the ability of the military to set the foreign policy agenda. Herspring (2007:24) argues that Putin has 'changed the nature of civil-military relations' in Russia and the Soviet Union, by not only assuming control over defence policymaking but also by deciding the military force structure and doctrine, which traditionally had largely been left to the officer corps.

The appraisals of the military's role differ somewhat between researchers. Figure 4-1 illustrates the approximate positions of the sources discussed above. A handful of scholars portray the military as a Sinker, including Betz (2004:65), Barany

weapons and equipment, and Putin pushed for increasing unit combat readiness by employing soldiers on contract basis. Furthermore, Putin began addressing the problems with conscription of soldiers and housing for officers.

(2008b:29–34), Baev (2010:171) and Herspring (2013:241). This is mainly due to the low combat capability, but also to the relatively less bureaucratic power.

Figure 4-1. The role of the military in early Putin era foreign policy, according to the literature.



Note: Figure assembled by the author. Positions are approximate. Complementary sources, which do not focus primarily on civil-military relations, are in italics.

The majority of sources, however, indicate a military role somewhere in between a weak Servant and a weak Shaper, as Figure 4-1 shows. This primarily rests on portrayals of the relative bureaucratic power of the military as intermediate. Most researchers do not address aspects of willingness, and those nine sources that do are evenly distributed between more, less and intermediate.

The Civil-Military Relations literature indicates that the role of the military in foreign policy began to shift in the early Putin era, from that of a fairly strong Shaper during the Yeltsin era. I now proceed to discuss the literature regarding the later Putin era, in order to find out if a change in roles really occurred, and if so to which ideal-type role.

5 The later Putin era, 2009–2019

The economic growth of the 2000s provided Putin with the financial resources needed to undertake military reform. Baev (2010:171), among others, argues that the reform amounts to a profound change, comparable to the military reforms by Dmitrii Miliutin, in the 1860s, after Russia's defeat in the Crimean War. The determined and mostly successful implementation of the reform during the later Putin era (2008–2019) strengthened the military's combat capability as well as the political leadership's power over the military. By 2020, Putin had overseen a thorough transformation of Russia's Armed Forces as well as basked in the success of military campaigns in Georgia, Ukraine, and Syria.

As in the previous chapter, the next section briefly presents the literature, and then accounts, separately, for the willingness and the ability of the military. Finally, I arrive at a conclusion as to how current research depicts the role of the military during the later Putin era.

5.1 Civil-Military Relations literature on the later Putin era

There is a relatively small amount of research on civil-military relations during the later Putin era, in particular after 2013. As noted in the previous chapter, only Konyshev and Sergunin (2018) and Renz (2018) focus on the role of the military in foreign policy.

As also noted in Chapter 4, Tsypkin (2013) discusses military reform, and Renz (2012) military modernisation. Golts (2012) and Douglas (2014) contribute to the reform discourse by studying the effects of the Armed Forces' personnel structure, and of conscript versus contract recruitment.

In addition, Blank (2011) and Herspring (2013) deal with presidential control over the military, while Arbatov (2010) and Blank (2012) discuss civilian control in wider meaning in the first years of the later Putin era. Furthermore, Douglas (2019) delves into public control of the Armed Forces.

In this chapter, too, I rely on some complementary sources. These do not explicitly deal with civil-military relations, but touch upon aspects of interest in assessing the role of the military in foreign policy in the later Putin era. These works deal with military reform (McDermott 2011; Galeotti 2012; Golts 2017; Renz 2018), the transformation and modernisation of the Armed Forces (McDermott *et al.* 2012), and Russian military strategic culture (Facon 2012), as well as military force structure and capability (Westerlund & Oxenstierna 2019; IISS 2020).

5.2 Military willingness to respect civilian preferences

The literature indicates that the willingness of the military to respect civilian foreign policy preferences may have continued to increase during the later Putin era. In the first years, relations were strained, interests clashed and officers openly opposed the political leadership's reform agenda. However, military and civilian ideals became largely compatible, and military opposition subsided. The sources, although fewer in number, indicate that the military became more willing to accede to civilian preferences during the later Putin era.

Military and civilian ideals seem to have become more compatible during the later Putin era. Sherr (2017:3) argues that, after 25 years of incongruity and tension, Putin brought the military perspective into close alignment with the political objectives. He notes that concepts of geopolitical security long associated with Russian military thinking now underpin state policy. This corresponds to the finding of Blank (2011:2), referenced in the previous chapter, that the political leadership embraced much of the military's threat perceptions over the course of the 2000s. In return, the officer corps seems to have come to terms with there being a significant share of contract soldiers in the organisation, and with the shift of emphasis from mass mobilisation to standing forces. Sherr (2017:3) asserts that Russia has reached an impressive degree of political-military integration in pursuit of its state objectives, and in its approach to peace, crisis and war.

The political leadership's rapprochement to military views has also been visible in Russian foreign policy. Konyshev and Sergunin (2018:169-72) argue that while there were visible discrepancies between Russian foreign policy statements and military doctrine in the 1990s, civilian and military views on foreign affairs grew closer through the 2000s. They find that military threat perceptions came to have a significant effect on Russia's national security and foreign policy documents during the Medvedev and the third Putin administrations.

Furthermore, civilian and military values also seem closer in the later Putin era. Facon (2012:281) points out that the political leadership has stressed that a strong army is necessary for Russia to obtain recognition and respect as a Great Power in the world, a sentiment that the Russian military appreciates and shares.

The reform of the Armed Forces initially strained relations between the political leadership and the officer corps. As Facon (2012:280) notes, several of the reform elements were in conflict with Russian military tradition. Minister for Defence Anatolii Serdiukov, Russia's first truly civilian person in the post, announced deep cuts in the number of units and senior officer posts, as noted by Galeotti (2017b:26) and McDermott (2011:65–6). Furthermore, high-readiness units were to be manned exclusively by contract soldiers, while conscript manning was to be reduced (McDermott 2011:78–85). Taken together, Baev (2010:172)

argues, these measures constituted a complete rejection of the mass-mobilisation system. As Golts (2017:134) points out, mass mobilisation had determined the composition of the Armed Forces and underpinned Russian military strategy for four centuries.

However, by the end of the 2010s, relations had become harmonious. In November 2012, Serdiukov was relieved of his duties, ostensibly for corrupt dealings, but in reality because of opposition to the reform from inside the Armed Forces and the defence industry. He was replaced as Minister for Defence by the long-serving former minister and head of the Ministry for Emergency Situations and Natural Disasters (MChS), Sergei Shoigu, well-known for his organisational skills and for being able to masterfully navigate among the power struggles inside the Russian system, according to Golts (2017:158–60). In contrast to Serdiukov, Shoigu donned a military uniform from the start and already had the rank of general, though from MChS. Golts (2017:181) notes that he also had the civilian staff wear 'office suits', similar to uniforms, and with shoulder pads corresponding to military ranks. Shoigu's military appearance and managerial skills arguably smoothed over the rifts with military traditions brought about by the reform.

The Civil-Military Relations literature depicts a similar development regarding the proxy variable of coinciding interests. In the first years of the later Putin era, political and military preferences still clashed. Galeotti (2012:63-4, 84) notes that the diverging interests came to light when the political leadership initiated the reform of the Armed Forces. Many officers within the military high command, but also officers throughout the Armed Forces, saw key reform features as a threat both to the self-interest of senior officers and to the self-image of the military as a whole.

One of the most contentious issues was the manning of the Armed Forces units. Most senior officers advocated maintaining conscription and massive mobilisation reserves as the main source for supplying the country with soldiers.[14] The political leadership preferred a sizeable share of contract manning in order to improve the availability of forces. In view of the Armed Forces' difficulties in swiftly deploying capable units in the two Chechen wars and, again, in the 2008 Five-Day War with Georgia, the politicians saw a greater need for standing forces with high readiness. The military elites, however, remained stubbornly against change on this issue, as Douglas (2014) note.

From the invasion of Crimea in 2014 and onwards, the issue of conflicting civilian and military interests has not been in the forefront of academic research. It seems that interests have come to coincide, or at least coexist, as ideals have become more compatible and the results of the reform have come to fruition. I therefore

[14] Having an almost infinite supply of manpower had been the organising principle of the Armed Forces, and the basis of Russian military art, during nearly 300 years, as Golts (2012) points out.

assume that civilian and military interests coincided at the end of the later Putin era.

The third proxy variable, respect for civilian supremacy, similarly, is no longer a primary issue in the literature. As discussed above, there was considerable resistance from the officer corps when the politicians launched the reform. According to Golts (2017:208), however, the generals no longer openly challenged the political leadership under the later Putin era, as they did in the 1990s and early 2000s. Instead, Gomart (2011:96) argues, the political leadership succeeded in gradually re-establishing itself at the top of the chain of command. Still, Golts (2017:209) holds that the generals have mastered the art of silently sabotaging the political decisions that are not to their liking.

The military campaigns in Georgia, Ukraine and Syria have provided opportunities for the military to act on its own initiative in foreign policy, as during the Yeltsin era. According to Mankoff (2009:83), the military drew Russia and the political leadership into the war with Georgia. However, current Civil-Military Relations literature and other complementary sources, though scant, do not point to military insubordination as being the case in Georgia nor in the later campaigns. I therefore assume that during the later Putin era the military to a large degree respects civilian supremacy.

In sum, the literature, albeit a small number of sources, indicates a military that in the end is a willing one. The absence of discussion of civilian and military interests as well as of military respect for civilian supremacy also reduces the confidence of the conclusion.

Having arrived at an indication of the military's willingness, I continue with exploring the position of the Civil-Military Relations literature on the ability of the military to influence foreign policy decision-making.

5.3 A more able military than in decades

The ability of the military to influence foreign policy decision-making significantly increased during the later Putin era, compared to what the early, Civil-Military Relations literature and complementary sources indicate. Also in comparison to the Yeltsin era, the military became more able. According to the literature, the position on all three proxy variables indicates a more able military, in particular regarding combat capability. Overall, the span between different positions in the literature is smaller. Based on this, I asses the ability of the military to influence international politics to be more able.

During the later Putin era, the military was able to exploit and increase its presence abroad. Though not discussed in the Civil-Military Relations literature,

complementary sources indicate a strong physical presence. Russia's military presence in the Georgian breakaway provinces of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, as well as the naval base in Sevastopol, on the Crimean Peninsula, improved the Armed Forces' ability to influence foreign policy. Arguably, the Russian naval service facility in Syria and the presence of military advisors likewise, to some extent, facilitated the deployment of forces to assist the al-Assad regime.

Prior to the Five-Day War with Georgia, in 2008, Russia reinforced its peacekeeping force in Abkhazia and the peacekeeping battalion stationed in South Ossetia (IIFFMCG 2009:14–20). On the night of 7 to 8 August, Georgian Armed Forces struck Tskhinvali and its surroundings with massive artillery and began advancing into South Ossetia. A large number of regular Russian Armed Forces units, including air and naval forces, met the Georgian offensive. Russian forces advanced into Georgia proper from both South Ossetia and Abkhazia, taking control of key towns and communications links, forcing Georgia to sign a ceasefire plan on 12 August (IIFFMCG 2009:19–22).

The Russian naval base in Sevastopol allowed Russia to covertly deploy Special Forces units and elite troops belonging to the Airborne Forces and Naval Infantry on Crimea in the days leading up to the night of 27 February 2014, when Russian forces without insignia seized the building of the Crimean parliamentary assembly. Within days, Russian forces deployed to Sevastopol had blocked the entry points to Crimea, as well as Ukrainian military bases, and begun seizing military command facilities. Russia proceeded by bringing in regular Armed Forces units, in order to reinforce its military presence on the peninsula (Westerlund & Norberg 2016:590–2). This also allowed it credibly to threaten mainland Ukraine with a Russian invasion from Crimea (Freedman 2014:22).

In the Syrian Arab Republic, Russian military advisors had supported the Syrian Army long before the civil war broke out. The Russian Navy had also been operating a support facility in Tartus since the 1970s. It was not a naval base, but designated a 'Material-Technical Support Point' and only able to service smaller vessels. It was nevertheless the only remaining Russian military foothold in the Middle East (Tsyganok 2016:59–63).

The Armed Forces' physical presence abroad expanded during the later Putin era. After the war with Georgia, Russia deployed additional forces in South Ossetia and Abkhazia, amounting to a motorized rifle brigade each. In 2019, these numbered some 7,000 thousand troops in total. Russia also made substantial force deployments to Crimea following the illegal annexation of the peninsula. In 2019, these amounted to some 28,000 thousand troops. Russia reportedly had an additional 3,000 men deployed in the Ukrainian Donbas region in 2019. Since September 2015, Russia has deployed forces in Syria. In 2019, some 5,000 troops were deployed at the airbase in Khmeimim and the naval facility in Tartus. In addition, Russia has established a permanent naval task group in the

Mediterranean Sea (IISS 2020:170, 208). The deployment to Syria is the first sizeable Russian military operation outside the former Soviet Union area since the creation of the Russian Federation, as pointed out by Pukhov (2016:105).

It should also be noted that in late 2020 Russia established a new peacekeeping force, numbering almost 2,000 men, in Nagorno-Karabach, to uphold a truce between Azerbaijan and Armenia, in accordance with a trilateral agreement (Presidential Administration 2020). The presence of a Russian base in Armenia facilitated the troop deployment into Nagorno-Karabach. The trilateral agreement creates a platform for a peacekeeping mission in the area, something Moscow has long sought in order to extend its political influence in the region (Hedenskog *et al.* 2020).

The Civil-Military Relations literature and complementary sources indicate that the relative bureaucratic power of the military – the second proxy variable for ability – grew stronger during the later Putin era. Even though presidential oversight increased and the military's institutional power seemed to diminish, other aspects of bureaucratic power arguably compensated for that. A military system congruent to state objectives, an increased military role in diplomacy related to Syria, and further erosion of civilian checks and oversight – besides the president – point to overall relatively strong bureaucratic power for the Russian military during the later Putin era.

As mentioned above, there had been several attempts at reforming the Russian military. However, it was not until after the 2008 Five-Day War against Georgia that the Russian government initiated a systematic and serious effort to transform the Armed Forces into a structure congruent with Russia's goal and strategy. The Five-Day War served as a catalyst for the announcement of extensive military modernisation, Renz argues (see also Facon 2012:280; Klein 2012:29–31; Galeotti 2017b:25). The following structural and organisational reforms were pushed through with 'unprecedented determination' and followed up with a costly programme of rearmament (Renz 2018:62, 84). The Russian authorities' determination endured, even in the context of financial and economic crisis, Facon (2012:280) observes.

The reform resulted in a military tool well suited to execute Russian policy. During the later Putin era, Russia bridged the gap between its policy ambitions and military capability, as my colleagues and I conclude (Westerlund 2019:143). Renz (2018) reaches a similar conclusion.

Furthermore, the military campaign in Syria enhanced the role of the Ministry of Defence in Russian diplomacy. Since early 2016, it has assumed the primary responsibility for Russia's contribution to the Syrian peace process. This has manifested itself through chairing international conferences, and a coordination centre for reconciliation established in Damascus by the Russian Ministry of Defence

(RF Ministry of Defence 2016). Presumably, the peacekeeping force in Nagorno-Karabach will allow the military a diplomatic role in a possible peace accord.

During the later Putin era, the president consolidated the control over the military as an institution. Baev (2010:175) points out that the appointment of Serdiukov as Minister for Defence in 2007 broke the pattern of leaving the military to deal with its own problems. Gomart (2011:92) argues that Putin and Medvedev used the reforms of the Armed Forces as a political tool to dominate the military. Around the launch of the reforms, the president also strengthened the power over the military through appointments to key officer posts, as noted by several scholars (Gomart 2011:97; Tsypkin 2013:113; Golts 2017:146). According to Facon (2012:281), the downsizing of the officer corps and the ousting of conservative generals challenged the military's institutional autonomy.

The tendency to personalise power and authority also continued, as in other spheres of society. Konyshev and Sergunin (2018:174) find that Russia's decision-making system significantly rests on personal loyalty to a political leader. Similarly, Mathers (2003:35) argues that the centuries-old legacy of personalised civilian control thrives in Russia, as is often the case in authoritarian systems. For the military, as any bureaucracy, this results in a weaker institutional position.

However, the military-style clothes Shoigu introduced for civilians serving in the Ministry of Defence to some extent strengthened the Armed Forces' institutional standing. When civilian staff appears as officers, Golts (2017:208) argues, it conserves the Ministry of Defence as a military institution and increases the risk that the Minister for Defence becomes hostage to the military.

The bureaucratic power of the military, was also reduced during the later Putin era by an increase in the presence of civilian expertise within the Ministry of Defence. Before Putin stepped down as president and exchanged positions with Prime Minister Dmitrii Medvedev in 2008, he replaced Ivanov with Anatolii Serdiukov, a truly civilian Minister for Defence. Serdiukov brought with him former colleagues from the Federal Tax Service. He thereby markedly increased the proportion of civilian staff, as Renz (2012:195) notes. She also points out that Serdiukov, in addition, oversaw cuts of the personnel in the General Staff by up to 50 per cent, further reducing the sway of the General Staff within the Ministry of Defence.

In addition, the civilian leadership strengthened the financial control over the military. By the first half of 2008, Golts (2017:125–6) notes, Serdiukov had introduced a new system for distributing financial allocations that increased the Ministry's control over the money and reduced the top commanders' discretion with funds. This strengthened the institutionalisation of civilian control at the executive level, and civilian decision-making in defence planning and policy, Renz (2012:204) argues.

While Konyshev and Sergunin (2018:174), have argued that a system of parliamentary oversight and control over the military was effectively established under Putin, most academic findings point towards the contrary. Tsypkin (2013:117–8) finds that the role of the Duma diminished, parliamentary scrutiny continued to be weak, and the secrecy around military matters – including the budget – continued to increase during the later Putin era. The substitution of wider civilian control with presidential oversight continued under the later Putin era. 'Civilian control has been strengthened,' Tsypkin (2013:120) finds, 'but in a narrow way, excluding representative institutions and civil society.' Similarly, Renz (2012:196) concludes that the improvements to the system of civilian control under Putin 'have been limited to the executive level and have not led to the establishment of a broader system of checks and balances.'

The century-long tradition of military affairs as a sphere closed to the public and only accessible to the initiated has not been broken, according to Golts (2017:205). Douglas (2019:761) finds that the resources of power – in the form of domination of the public discourse, the legal framework, and formal channels of access – have accumulated with the political and military elites. Mathers (2003:35) concludes that the 'legal, constitutional and procedural frameworks regulating civil-military relations in Russia [were] incomplete,' a situation that has not improved during later Putinism. In addition, Renz (2012:197) finds that Russian journalists investigating corruption in the defence sector not only risk being charged with disclosing state secrets, but also being murdered on orders from corrupt officials. In effect, Blank (2012:54) finds 'a systematic absence of democratic control or accountability throughout the system.'

As in the early Putin era, the military retained a strong influence in foreign policy issues related to military security, Konyshev and Sergunin (2018:174) point out. Taken together, the literature indicates that the relative bureaucratic power of the Russian military became strong under the later Putin era. I now turn to the third and final proxy variable for military ability to influence foreign policy decision-making: the Armed Forces' combat capability.

Throughout the later Putin era, the Armed Forces' combat readiness and performance significantly increased. Russia proved its capability to perform military interventions abroad, not least due to an increased number of available highly skilled units. The complementary literature indicates a strong military combat capability during this period.

As noted above, the unreformed Armed Forces were a tool less well adapted to fighting the Five-Day War in Georgia. By the occupation of Crimea, the readiness of the units and formations had significantly increased. Galeotti (2017b:27) asserts that "[t)]he reforms undoubtedly created a much leaner, more effective and responsive military. In 2014, for example, the Russians were able to deploy perhaps 40,000 troops to the Ukrainian border within seven days at the start of their

intervention into the south-eastern Donbas region. In 1999, it had taken three times as long to mobilize a similar force for Chechnya." By 2019, the unit readiness level allowed for most units to be available, as Kjellén and Dahlqvist (2019:23–5) note.

Even though some reform features materialised only partly, Golts (2017:204) finds that the reform measures also decisively improved the effectiveness of the Armed Forces during the later Putin era. In the operation in Crimea and the low-intensity war in Donbas, the Armed Forces proved to be a considerably more sophisticated tool, as noted by, for example, Westerlund and Norberg (2016), and Renz (2018:197). Russia's military campaign in Syria has further indicated an improved combat capability. Among others, Pukhov (2016:105) points to the fact that the Aerospace Forces have managed to maintain a large number of combat sorties over a protracted period of time with only a handful of aircraft losses. According to Pukhov, the performance in Syria testifies to the very high capability to plan and execute combat operations on all levels within the air expeditionary force deployed.

Furthermore, the military campaigns in Ukraine and Syria, have also provided combat experience for a large part of the Armed Forces. Moreover, the Syrian campaign has allowed the Ministry of Defence to refine training and tactics as well as develop the Armed Forces' organisation, according to Kjellén and Dahlqvist (2019:25–6). During the later Putin era, the fighting power of Russia's Armed forces significantly increased, Norberg and Goliath (2019: 72–5) conclude.

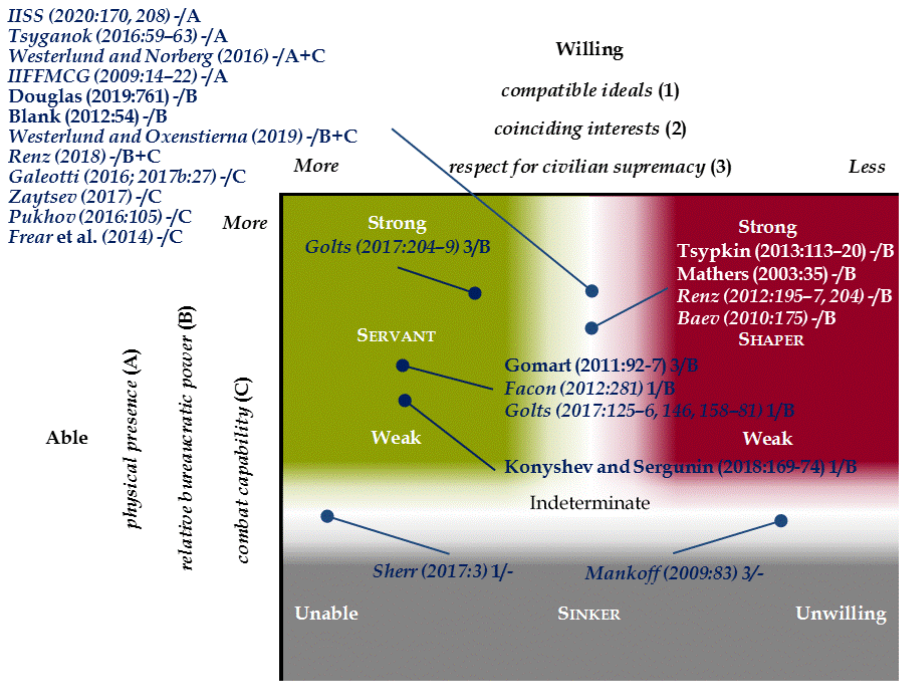
Apart from Russia's combat deployments, military units have increasingly intimidated Russia's near and distant neighbours during the later Putin era. Also in this way, the increased readiness and combat capability have contributed to a larger role of the Armed Forces in Russian foreign policy. Russian combat aircraft and naval vessels have since 2014 routinely penetrated the airspace or territorial waters mainly of European states, according to Galeotti (2016). In 2015, the Secretary General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization stated that Russia had 'significantly increased the scale number and range of provocative flights by nuclear capable bombers across much of the globe. From Japan to Gibraltar. From Crete to California. And from the Baltic sea to the Black Sea' (Stoltenberg 2015). There have also been a number of incidents where Russian fighter aircraft have deliberately flown very close to Western aircraft or warships, not least in the Baltic and Black Sea areas, as Frear *et al.* (2014), and Zaytsev (2017) point out.

Having established the positions of the literature regarding both military willingness and ability, I can now draw conclusions on the role of the military in foreign affairs during the later Putin era.

5.4 A Servant during the later Putin era

In the later Putin era (2009–2019), the military once more has come to play the role of a Servant in Russian international relations, the Civil-Military Relations literature and complementary sources indicate. Konyshev and Sergunin (2018:176) as well as Charap (2016:1–2) assert that, since 2014, the tactical objectives of military campaigns abroad have been driven by policy missions, i.e. there have been no purely military goals.

Figure 5-1. The role of the military in later Putin era foreign policy, according to the literature.



Note: Figure assembled by author. Positions are approximate. Complementary sources that are not primarily focused on civil-military relations are in italics. In the figure, the sources Kjellén and Dahlqvist (2019), Norberg and Goliath (2019), and Westerlund (2019) are collected under the common reference Westerlund and Oxenstierna (2019).

Both military willingness and ability to influence foreign policy decision-making have increased, the literature indicates. Figure 5-1 illustrates the approximate positions taken in the literature. The significant changes in comparison to the early Putin and Yeltsin eras are that civilian and military interests coincide, and that the Armed Forces are more able to influence foreign policy decision-making.

As discussed above, the Armed Forces gained a strong physical presence abroad due to additional bases and more troops. The military's relative bureaucratic power increased – albeit under stronger presidential control – as did its combat capability.

Russia's political leadership has been able to systematically use military force to achieve its foreign policy aims, Konyshev and Sergunin (2018:176) assert. They maintain that the Kremlin used its military primarily to achieve foreign policy goals. Similarly, Charap (2016:1–2) argues that Russia's use of military force is best understood as a means in a broader coercive bargaining process related to political outcomes.

As a result, Russia strengthened its international standing during the later Putin era. 'Through its bombing campaign in Syria which began in September 2015,' Stent (2018:8) argues, 'Russia has returned to the global board of directors. It has become the go-to power in the Middle East, enjoying productive ties with Iran, the Sunni states, and with Israel. There will be no solution to the Syrian civil war without Russia.'

Having concluded the overview of the literature, the results of the report, followed by a discussion of its findings and implications are presented in the following, and last, chapter.

6 Conclusion

I have traced the development of the Armed Forces' role in Putin's foreign policy, with reference to the military's role during previous eras in Soviet-Russian history. The results of the analysis, summarised below, lead to the two main findings that 1) *the military has become a Servant in Russian foreign policy under Putin*; and that 2) *the currently strong political control over the military is not necessarily a stable condition*. I develop the main findings of the report and their implications in the second section of this final chapter.

6.1 Results of the analysis

The ideal-type role of the Russian military changed from indeterminate in the early Putin era, to that of a Servant in Russian foreign policy during the later Putin era, the Civil-Military Relations literature and complementary sources reveal.

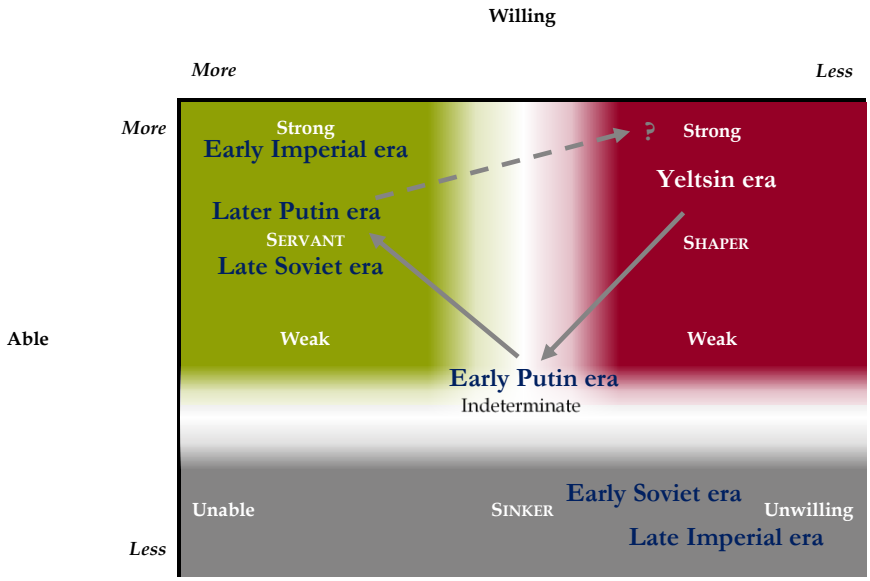
In comparison to previous periods, the military's role under Putin first shifted from a fairly strong Shaper under Yeltsin, to a position in-between those of earlier periods during the early Putin era (2000–2008). In the later Putin era (2009–2019), its role further shifted, closer to that of the Red Army during the late Soviet era, as Figure 6-1 illustrates. However, this remains a tentative result, since the Civil-Military Relations literature regarding the role of the military in Russian foreign policy is scarce, in particular regarding the later Putin era.

As indicated by the literature, increased military willingness, as well as ability to influence foreign policy decision-making, resulted in shifts in the role of the Armed Forces in foreign policy under Putin.

During the early era, the military's willingness to respect civilian preferences increased somewhat, while its ability diminished. The latter was mainly due to a still unreformed military organisation, and the fact that Putin gradually increased his power during his first two presidential terms. Still, the Armed Forces continued to influence foreign policy in Russia's vicinity through its involvement in post-Soviet Eurasian conflicts, as discussed above. Military willingness increased, due to more compatible ideals. As in the Yeltsin era and the late Imperial era, however, there was a significant conflict of interest between civilian and military leaders in the early Putin era.

Throughout the later Putin era, the military's willingness to abide the politicians' wishes continued to increase. The literature, though scarce, depicts military and civilian ideals as more compatible. The lack of discussion of conflicting interests, except during the years following the launch of the reform of the Armed Forces, as well as of military insubordination, also indicates a more willing military.

Figure 6-1 Ideal-type roles of the military in Imperial, Soviet, and Russian foreign policy, and a potential trajectory.



Note: Trajectory of the development of the role of the military in Russian foreign policy under the Putin era illustrated by arrows. The dashed arrow illustrates a possible future trajectory.

More importantly, the Russian military's ability to influence foreign policy visibly improved. Complementary sources show that the military campaigns in Georgia, Ukraine and Syria, strengthened the Armed Forces' physical presence. Furthermore, the reform measures and the campaigns – as well as the repeated intimidating use of military force towards other states – improved military combat capability.

Civilian control over the military solely rests with Putin, the literature shows. The president seems to have strengthened his grip on foreign policy formulation and further concentrated political power over the military to himself personally. Civilian control in any wider meaning, i.e. institutionalized and encompassing a larger segment of society, is still absent in Russia.

However, the conclusions regarding the role of the Russian military in foreign affairs rest on a far from solid academic foundation. Since the creation of the Russian Federation, a few dozens of studies have explicitly addressed modern Russian civil-military relations issues. As Renz (2012:198) notes, the bulk of analyses of civil-military relations in post-Soviet Russia have focused on political

questions of civilian control. As pointed out, only Vendil Pallin (2008), Konyshev and Sergunin (2018), and Renz (2018) explicitly study the role of the military in foreign policy. In addition, Stewart and Zhukov (2009) explore military and civilian élite views on foreign policy issues. In particular, for the later Putin era, I have had to rely on complementary literature to describe the role of the military in Russian foreign policy. Some aspects of the military's influence on foreign policy have not been discussed by the literature, such as the Collective Security Treaty Organization encompassing several former Soviet republics and in which the Russian Ministry of Defence is a dominant actor.

Nevertheless, the analytical tool has facilitated reaching a conclusion on the role of the military according to the literature. Even though most sources only discuss one of the variables of willingness and ability, it is possible to discern shifts in the aggregated position. The use of three proxy variables for each main variable contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the shift in positions regarding willingness and ability, and consequently of shifts in roles.

It seems that the proxy variables do not overlap, but their mutual relations need closer study. Analysis of sources that express divergent positions for the proxy variables of a main variable challenges the categorisation of a particular author's combined view, but may enrich the analysis of the literature. For instance, Herspring (2013) and Golts (2017) indicate both intermediate relative bureaucratic power, and low combat capability (see Figure 4 1).

A severe challenge to the use of the analytical tool would arise if a source were to indicate divergent positions regarding several of the proxy variables of both willingness and ability. An example would be if Golts or Herspring also had indicated that civilian and military interests were in conflict, while respect for civilian supremacy was high. It is difficult to combine these in a non-arbitrary way, which undermines the validity of the combined positions. The question then arises of how the policymaker can use both sources to meaningful effect.

6.2 Main findings of the report

Based on the overview of the existent Civil-Military Relations literature, the study arrives at two main findings, with two implications each, for security policy and future research.

The first main finding is that the role of the Russian military has shifted over the course of Putin's two decades in power. There has been a transition from being a fairly strong Shaper of foreign affairs during the Yeltsin era, via an indeterminate role in the early Putin era (2000–2008) to a role as a Servant in the later Putin era (2008–2019). The alignment of civilian and military values, as well as increasing presidential control, seem to have turned the military into a tool in Russian foreign policy – much like during the late Soviet era.

One implication of this is that *currently any use of Russian military force towards other states reflects the intentional will of the political leadership in Russia*, and not that of its military. When, for instance, the Russian military attacks civilian targets in Syria, flies or sails perilously close to the aircraft or naval vessels of other states, and when military intelligence officers use nerve agents for assassination attempts abroad, it is not rogue military elements who are acting. We should instead, presume that the military is faithfully carrying out political orders. Together with the radically improved capabilities of the Armed Forces, another implication is that *the Russian president has a more reliable military instrument at his disposal for shaping international relations*.

The second main-finding is that, even though the military may currently be under firm civilian control, this is not necessarily a stable condition. The overview of the literature shows that civil-military relations have taken a particular form in Russia. In Putin's Russia, civilian oversight of the armed forces is more or less synonymous with presidential administrative and financial control.

One implication of this, is that the room for military involvement in politics is significant, when the supreme leader's hold on power is weak. Already, a weakening of the Putin regime, or of Putin himself, could lead to the Armed Forces' gravitating towards the role of a Shaper in Russian foreign policy, due to a lack of civilian checks, balances and oversight. More ominously, in light of Russian history, *we can expect the military to assume the role of a strong Shaper of foreign policy, in the event of a new period of large-scale sociodemographic stress*. In contrast to the Yeltsin era, the Russian military is now considerably more combat-capable. Initially, widespread political turmoil probably will negatively affect civilian control to a greater degree than the military's combat capability and its physical presence abroad. Figure 6-1 above illustrates this potential trajectory with a dashed arrow.

This matters to policy-makers, in particular in Europe. As noted above, Stewart and Zhukov (2009:336) points out that senior officers are more inclined to the use of force as a foreign policy instrument. Furthermore, Rivera *et al.* (2020:21) find that that the military élite views cooperation with the European Union and the US as significantly less desirable than do civilian respondents.

A second implication of the finding that civilian control is not a stable condition in Russia is that *the development of the role of the military in Russian foreign policy is an important factor to consider when assessing future Russian military power* or use of military force in international relations. Additional research, regarding civilian control over the military during Russian military campaigns abroad in the later Putin era, would further contribute to our understanding of the role of the military in Russian foreign policy.

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The Russian military has evolved from the role of a Shaper of foreign policy under Boris Yeltsin's presidency, to the role of a loyal Servant under Vladimir Putin's reign. This means that Russian use of military force towards other states currently reflects the intentional will of the political leadership. Together with the radically improved capabilities of the Armed Forces, another implication is that the Russian president has a more reliable military instrument at his disposal for shaping international relations.

However, the current strong political control over the military is not necessarily a stable condition. In the event of political turmoil in Russian society, we can expect the military assume the role of a strong Shaper of foreign policy. A second implication is that the development of the role of the military in Russian foreign policy is an important factor to consider when assessing future Russian military power or use of military force in international relations.

This report provides an overview of the role that the Civil-Military Relations literature and complementary sources assign to the Armed Forces since 2000, when Putin came to power. It also suggests an analytical tool, based on the three ideal-type roles and on Civil-Military Relations literature findings regarding the Soviet Union and Imperial Russia.

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