



MILITARY REFORM

- ANALYSIS
Military Reform in Russia 2
By Bettina Renz, Nottingham and Rod Thornton, Hewler
- ANALYSIS
Russia's Conscription Problem 5
By Rod Thornton, Hewler
- OPINION POLL
Attitudes Towards Military Reform and Conscription 8

Military Reform in Russia

By Bettina Renz, Nottingham and Rod Thornton, Hewler

Abstract

The Russian military is currently undergoing a modernization process. It is long overdue. After the end of the Cold War, the armed forces received little investment and any changes made were mostly minor. The main effort went into the replacing of conscripts with professional service personnel. Little new equipment was procured and structures and outlook remained wedded to Cold War philosophies. This all changed, however, with the war against Georgia in 2008. It was the Russian failures seen in this conflict that began the current, well-financed modernization drive. This process is, though, not without its problems.

Russia's post-Cold War political leaders and senior military officers were well aware, ever since the Soviet Union broke up in 1991, that the country's armed forces were in urgent need of radical reform. Changes were made, but they only resulted in minor alterations. Fundamental transformation only occurred after the war with Georgia in 2008. The poor performance of the Russian armed forces in that conflict brought home the fact that reform was needed and since then serious attempts have been made to create a Russian military fit for the 21st century. Using new funding that has now pushed Russia into the top three of the world's defence spenders, the armed forces are now undergoing a process of change that will leave them smaller, more deployable and, it is hoped, more effective in contemporary conflict situations. In this article we take stock of what has and has not been achieved over the past four years. We conclude that whilst substantial changes have been achieved in an impressively short time-scale, significant hurdles have still yet to be overcome. In the meantime, an incomplete reform process has left the Russian conventional armed forces weakened, with significant implications for Russia's strategic posture.

The Ground Forces

The Russian ground forces' performance in the conflict with Georgia received severe domestic criticism. The 58th Army was seen to be slow to react—despite the fact that many of its units had been on exercise not far from the Georgian border when hostilities broke out. Once engaged in combat, moreover, operational efficiency was hindered by command-and-control failures, a lack of coordination and an inability to direct precision-guided munitions. The technologies to enable all three were lacking in the army. The ground forces' structure was also ill-suited to the conduct of the type of modern warfare characterised by the conflict with Georgia. The traditional Russian division (c. 10,000 personnel) lacked the flexibility to cope with the demands of a fast-moving conflict scenario. Such large divisions might well have been suited to the type of large-scale opera-

tions seen in the World Wars and which were later envisaged as likely by both sides in the Cold War. But post-1989, western militaries soon realised that the division was too unwieldy a formation for the types of expeditionary operations they were now being called upon to conduct. Instead of dividing their armies into divisions, the armies of the likes of the US and UK began to adopt a smaller formation as the standard building-block—the brigade.

In Russia, too, the recognition that the division had outlived its usefulness was appreciated. But no reforms were made until the experience with Georgia painfully demonstrated just how necessary they actually were. Thus just after the war President Dimitri Medvedev announced a programme to completely overhaul the ground forces' structure; including replacing all of its divisions with what were called permanent-readiness brigades. Some 83 brigades have now been created out of the 203 old divisions (few of which were ever fully manned). And although encouraging noises were being made within only a few months about how these new brigades were beginning to operate, it was difficult to see how such radical structural changes could have become embedded so quickly. Even manning these brigades was proving difficult. Such problems still persist to this day with the so-called 'permanent-readiness' formations: they cannot really be 'ready' for operations if, for instance, they do not have their full troop complements.

The Air Force

The Russian air force's performance in the Georgian War also did not escape criticism. The operational effectiveness of any modern air force relies on two elements in particular: skilled personnel and cutting-edge technologies. Russia's air force has few of either. The post-Georgia plans for the long-overdue modernization of the air force thus concentrated on introducing better-trained personnel—within a more streamlined organization—and new equipment. The personnel aspects could be dealt with more easily than those related to equip-

ment. The air force could not suddenly replace many hundreds of Soviet-era aircraft with newer models. But progress is being made—even though the 1500 or so ‘new’ aircraft (including 350 front-line combat aircraft) that will gradually be introduced by 2020 are really no more than upgraded models of machines first seen in the 1980s and 1990s. Even this move, though, should improve the current figures indicating that only 40 to 60 per cent of aircraft in most regiments are actually combat-capable. It has also been decided to overhaul and extend the lives of some squadrons of Tu-95 and Tu-160 strategic bombers. More significantly in terms of genuinely ‘new’ aircraft, the air force is expected to begin taking delivery before 2020 of the Sukhoi T-50. This is described (perhaps optimistically) as a genuine ‘fifth-generation’ fighter.

It is questionable, though, whether these ambitious plans for the air force are completely realistic. In economic terms, and in terms of the Russian defence industry’s capacity to make good on the orders, there seems to be something of a disconnect between aspiration and the actual capacity to deliver.

The Navy

For much of the post-Soviet era, the Russian navy struggled to put even one reasonably sized surface vessel to sea. Indeed, besides the few ballistic-missile submarines (SSBNs) that it managed to keep on patrol for deterrence purposes, Russia had no real operational navy to speak of throughout the 1990s and early 2000s. What building programmes there were during this period tended to concentrate either on SSBNs or on small patrol craft. The effect of such cost-cutting was that the navy came to adopt only two rather divergent maritime roles: that of nuclear deterrence and coastal protection force.

In recent years, however, the navy has been given a new emphasis. Russian politicians, particularly current president, Vladimir Putin, have come to appreciate the idea of the power-projection capability that naval units can generate. Many larger ships have now been overhauled and refitted and some new destroyers and frigates launched. Making use of such vessels, Russian flotillas began to be sent, in the later 2000s, on blue-water voyages to the likes of South America, India and the Far East, and to take part in anti-piracy operations off the coast of Somalia. The navy does, however, lack the overseas bases that would further enhance its long-range capabilities. It can currently only make use of Tartus in Syria. Negotiations are, though, ongoing in relation to re-establishing former Soviet bases in places such as Yemen (Aden) and Vietnam (Cam Ranh Bay).

Finally, the navy currently only has one carrier, the *Admiral Kuznetsov* that is old and unreliable. Thus Rus-

sia has little ability to project actual combat power to overseas shores. With the idea of correcting this in mind, in 2007 a number of Russian admirals began to talk about laying down *six* new aircraft carriers. Such a building programme is, though, viewed as unrealistic. Even if an aircraft carrier or two was to be built in the coming years this still leaves a capabilities gap in the meantime. To partially plug this gap, the Russian Defence Ministry has decided—in a current feature of Moscow’s arms procurement policy—to look abroad. A 1.9 billion US dollar contract has been signed to buy three or four *Mistral*-class amphibious assault ships (LHDs) from France. Again, it was Georgia and the naval failures in that war which also provided the catalyst for this order, as at the time, the navy did not even have the class of vessel that could put troops ashore from the Black Sea in a combat situation.

The Defence Industry

Ambitious talk about the scope of Russian military modernization has, of course, to be mindful of economic reality. But even if Russia’s economy does remain capable of providing the requisite funding for some of the more ambitious plans, the country’s defence industrial base is not currently capable of producing the necessary sophisticated technologies. For this industry itself cannot suddenly overcome the years of under-investment and mismanagement to now produce the cutting-edge military systems demanded by politicians and senior military officers alike. The likes of LHDs are incapable, for example, of being built in Russian shipyards.

After the Georgian war, Medvedev stated that reform of the defence industrial sector would become a focus of his attention as the then new president. There is, however, no quick-fix solution. New factories and machine-tools are needed as, indeed, are new personnel: more than 90 per cent of the sector’s workforce is now aged over 50. A career in the defence industry is today not as attractive to bright young Russian science and engineering graduates as it was to their Soviet forebears.

Looking abroad is again an option to overcome the sector’s deficiencies. And the likes of sniper rifles (Britain), drone aircraft (Israel) and armoured personnel carriers (Italy) have been purchased (with no little attendant domestic controversy). Indeed, development of the T-50 itself requires Indian technological assistance. Such a reliance on foreign weapons assistance is seen only as a temporary measure. It is hoped that Russia’s defence industry can skip a generation of development by taking western technologies and copying/reverse-engineering them to produce indigenous Russian variants. Of course, Russia is not able to import the really high-end systems, such as those associated with command-and-

control systems, since foreign manufacturers treat them as sensitive technologies and not for sale abroad.

Nuclear Triad

The Soviet Union, as with other major nuclear powers of the Cold War era, relied for deterrence on a nuclear triad. Nuclear weapons could be delivered by air-, land- or sea-based systems. But Moscow's triad started to break down once the Soviet Union ceased to exist. Air-delivered and silo-based weapons became especially vulnerable to a lack of investment. Emphasis thus fell on developing the relatively cost-effective truck-mounted Topol-M ICBM and keeping enough SSBNs at sea to maintain a credible deterrent. New SSBNs are being built—but painfully slowly. While one new such vessel has just become operational, there are currently only about 10 of the older SSBNs left and most of these are under repair. An additional problem has been with the *Bulava* missile that is designed to be launched from the new SSBNs. This is still undergoing tests. Early firings of this missile were producing a failure rate of more than 50 per cent and whether or not the *Bulava* will ever become operational is open to debate.

Senior Russian political and military figures are already nervous about not having enough nuclear weapons to maintain a deterrence capability. And they become ever more nervous the closer the United States comes to fielding its much vaunted Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) shield. Hence Moscow's diplomats are doing everything possible to thwart the development of this shield by protesting long and hard about the establishing of BMD-linked facilities in Poland and the Czech Republic.

Kremlin concerns over the weakness of its nuclear deterrent means that it was more than pleased with the START agreement of March 2010. The limits imposed

favour the Russian side in that it is not being asked to cut any of its own warheads or delivery systems. This is because the numbers of both in its triad are below the negotiated caps—only the US side has to bring down its numbers. Additionally, and importantly, the new START agreement means that Russia does not have to lower the number of its tactical nuclear weapons. It has many more of these than the US. These are prized and important assets to Moscow. And they become even more prized when it is borne in mind that Russia feels militarily vulnerable in the midst of its current reform process.

Conclusion

As it undergoes this reform process, the Russian military is in a state of flux. It is weaker. There are many senior figures in Moscow now who appear to lack confidence in the armed forces' ability to deter aggression (Georgia was not 'deterred!'). This mindset can have two results. Either Russia tries to avoid any military confrontation by energetic diplomacy or it tries an opposing tack: making aggressive noises in order to deter any future aggression against it. In November 2011, Chief of the General Staff Nikolai Makarov did warn of the potential for even local conflicts escalating into full-scale war with the possibility of tactical nuclear weapons being used. Such 'rocket-rattling' does not mean that Russia has necessarily lowered its nuclear threshold. It does indicate, however, the vulnerability that the country feels. If faced with an adversary who might be able to exploit the current weakness of its conventional forces as they undergo reform, Russia might feel it has a legitimate recourse to the nuclear option—even in 'small wars'. For the Kremlin, resorting to tactical nuclear weapons in such conflict scenarios might be seen as a necessity, and not a choice.

About the Authors

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Suggested Reading

- Roger McDermott, Bertil Nygren and Carolina Vendil Pallin, *The Russian Armed Forces in Transition: Economic, Geopolitical and Institutional Uncertainties*, London: Routledge, 2012.
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Russia's Conscription Problem

By Rod Thornton, Hewler

Abstract

The attempts by Russian politicians to end conscription in the country have proved problematic. After the Cold War ended, a plan was put in place to ensure that the armed forces would be completely manned by professional, contract personnel. But not enough young men have volunteered to join the military to make this possible and conscripts are still being used. The issue now, though, is that there is also a shortage of conscripts. A supposed million-strong military actually has a strength of only 800,000. The army is especially short of troops. Some difficult political decisions lie ahead for the Russian government in terms of trying to alleviate this problem.

Ever since the end of the Cold War, Russia's political leadership has been trying to end the institution of conscription. Not only is it deeply unpopular within the country and a system that keeps many young men from working productively in the economy, it is also, in military terms, an outmoded concept. Modern military organizations cannot operate effectively if they employ ill-trained and ill-motivated conscripts. But efforts to end conscription in Russia have proved problematic. Such efforts have resulted in a situation today where: a) a large proportion of Russian males are still being asked to serve against their will; b) Russia has a military that is grossly undermanned, and c) its army is currently incapable of operational deployment in any numbers.

President Boris Yeltsin originally initiated a scheme whereby 'professionization' of the military was supposed to lead to the ending of conscription. That is, Russia would have a smaller military manned purely by men on long-service contracts and paid a proper salary. Conscripts would no longer be necessary. These *kontraktniki*—long-service, well-trained professionals—were also needed from the point of view of military efficiency. Mass armies of short-service conscripts belonged to a different era: modern militaries demand the use of high-tech weapons and the employment of sophisticated command-and-control systems which act as force multipliers. Such force multipliers mean that a mass army no longer has any real purpose on a modern battlefield.

Yeltsin's plans, though, were less than successful. Firstly, there was the fact that few young Russian men were willing to serve voluntarily in a military that was infamous for its bully/hazing practices. Secondly, the incentives to serve were few. Salaries were low and accommodation rudimentary. Yeltsin's government never put enough money into the project—in terms of both pay and of building new accommodation—to make it work. Conscription still had to be maintained in order to ensure that manning levels in the military were kept up.

Subsequently, upon coming to power, Vladimir Putin had also tried to end conscription. His plan,

involving significantly more investment, was to gradually increase the number of *kontraktniki* serving while at the same time reducing the term of conscript service. This term (for the army) had stood at two years since 1966. In 2007 it was reduced down to 18 months and, a few months later, to just one year. This was naturally a popular move within the country. It was not, though, to the liking of the military itself.

The senior ranks of Russia's armed forces have, in the main, been less than enthusiastic. At heart, it is a simple formula for them: mass—more men to command—means more command appointments and thus more officers and, in particular, more generals are needed. Any move towards a smaller military—professional or not—would mean generals losing their jobs. Moreover, the loss of jobs would also mean the loss, in many cases, of the ability to make a great deal of money by engaging in the corrupt practices that abound within the military. It is estimated that about 20% of all Russian defence spending (the third largest in the world) ends up in the pockets of individuals.

Many of the officers who would lose their jobs in a professionalized military were part of the mobilization system. If conscription was to end then so would the mass-mobilization military. Such a military is one that relies on the ability to recall—at a time of crisis—those conscripts who have completed their service. In the Soviet Union, the mobilization concept could theoretically produce a military of some 20 million men. These would be recalled to cadre units. These are 'skeleton' units at bases all around the country manned, in peacetime, by only a few officers and conscripts. But on any mobilization order they would be there ready to accept back their quota of recalled conscripts who would fill out the unit. The downside of such a system is that it relies on a huge number of officers who have nothing much to do other than to man bases and maintain equipment. Unless world war is likely to break out then this cadre system is grossly inefficient and very costly. Putin and Dimitri Medvedev (in their roles, variously,

as president and prime minister) wanted to be rid of it. A professional military would produce only a small number of reservists capable of being recalled, meaning that there would be no need to have these hundreds of cadre units. The hundreds of thousands of officers who manned these units could be made redundant, the bases closed and money saved. But these officers represented a powerful constituency; not least because a good few thousand of them were generals with considerable institutional clout.

Senior ranks in the armed forces thus tended to throw spanners in the works of moves towards the establishment of a smaller, more professional military with few cadre units. Thus both Putin and Medvedev have had to choose their defence minister and the officer in overall command of the military—the chief of the general staff—carefully. Anatoly Serdyukov was brought in as defence minister in 2007. He had come from the Tax Ministry and, as such, was perceived to have the skills necessary to bring the foot-dragging generals into line. He was an administrator of high quality but also one skilled at rooting out corrupt practices. It was the uncovering of such practices that could lead to recalcitrant generals either being sacked or leveraged into coming into line with political wishes.

In terms of the head of the military, an officer was chosen who was not part of the conservative, Moscow-based general staff clique. General Nikolay Makarov was brought in from command of the Siberian Military District. As an ‘outsider’ and without a power base in Moscow, he was seen to be amenable to the bidding of his political masters and not to those of the generals around him.

Serdyukov and Makarov in tandem have proved to be reasonably successful in terms of military reform. The number of officers, for instance, has been substantially reduced. Some 200,000 were made redundant as the cadre system was wound down. Almost immediately, though, 70,000 of these were then taken back when it

was realised that the military could not actually operate without them!

Overall, though, the plans of Putin and Medvedev were still being thwarted by the same problem that Yeltsin faced: not enough professionals being recruited. The lack of them in the military meant that conscripts were still needed in order to maintain what both politicians and generals did agree on—the need for a million-strong military (the US military, by comparison, has 1.5 million active service personnel). However, because the term of conscript service had been halved by Putin in 2007 this meant that, in order to maintain a military of such a size, *twice* the number of conscripts had to be called up. The numbers being conscripted every

year had to rise from about 250,000 up to 500,000 or so. In 2009, some 625,000 men were actually called up! (A figure made possible by bringing in that pool of men who had, for years, been avoiding service. But once this pool had been drained, however, there was no more ‘slack’ in the system). It has since proven impossible to conscript the numbers necessary. Moreover, while conscription is now less onerous in terms of its length of

service, it is coming to affect more young men given the need to increase numbers. Many exemptions have been removed (such as doctors, men with young families, etc) and activities verging on press-ganging have been employed. Such moves however have only served to increase the unpopularity of conscription in the country.

Putin and Medvedev have also been stymied in their attempts to create a *better* military. If the professionals are not being recruited then reliance still has to fall on the conscripts. But these are now more ill-trained than ever before. While at least some use could be made of the two-year conscript (they could, for instance, take part in at least one large annual exercise), the new one-year term means that conscripts simply do not serve long enough to gain any useful military skills. They are simply dead weight. It also means that units manned purely by professionals cannot be formed in the army because

Conscription in Russia: Facts and Figures

Military service age and obligation:

18–27 years of age for compulsory or voluntary military service; males are registered for the draft at 17 years of age; service obligation: 1 year (conscripts can only be sent to combat zones after 6 months training); reserve obligation to age 50

Note: over 60% of draft-age Russian males receive some type of deferment—generally health related—each draft cycle (2009)

Manpower available for military service:

Males age 16–49: 34,132,156

Females age 16–49: 34,985,115 (2010 est.)

Manpower fit for military service:

Males age 16–49: 20,431,035

Females age 16–49: 26,381,518 (2010 est.)

Manpower reaching militarily significant age annually:

Male: 693,843

Female: 660,359 (2010 est.)

Source: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/rs.html>

the professionals have to be spread out across all units to, basically, act as nursemaids to the conscripts.

As the situation now stands, the navy is almost completely manned by professionals and the air force has a high percentage. Both services require personnel with technical abilities that conscripts do not possess. The 210,000 troops in the FSB's Border Guards are now also all professionals. The main manning problem, though, is with the army. At the moment, the whole Russian military—which should have one million serving personnel—only has just below 800,000. Of these, 354,000 are conscripts, 180,000 are professional and 220,000 are officers (with another 40,000 officers not assigned to any unit). The shortfall is most keenly felt in the army and specifically in a lack of enlisted ranks in the Ground Forces. Around one-third of these are 'missing'. This means that many army units must be undermanned and therefore operationally useless. This fatally undermines one of the military's most successful recent reforms—turning the Ground Forces' 203 divisions into 83 smaller, but more combat-capable, brigades. These are supposedly 'permanent readiness' formations. But the fact that they are not fully manned means they cannot really be 'ready'. They would thus be largely ineffective in any near-term conflict scenario.

What are the solutions to this undermanning issue? One may be found in recruiting more professionals. This is the favoured plan. Putin has stated that he expects to see 425,000 *kontraktniki* serving by 2017. However, this seems wildly optimistic. Such statements have been made before and have proved to be well wide of the mark. The problem will always be—no matter how much money is eventually thrown at the problem—that young Russian men simply do not want to voluntarily serve in the military. The concept is an alien one.

Another solution might be to pull in more conscripts by widening the conscription net by yet further reducing deferments. But there are very few deferments left. As General Makarov recently said, 'there is no-one left to draft'. Moreover, going further down this particular line risks making conscription even more unpopular. A further answer to the manning situation may lie in clamping down on the corrupt practices that see many young men avoid conscription by bribing any number of individuals involved in the selection process. But such a move would not only cause friction with vested interests in the military who see such activities as perfectly normal, but also with many of the middle-class Russians who see it as their right to use their wealth to protect family members from the brutality of military service.

Thus, difficult political decisions remain in dealing with conscription in Russia, whilst it is proving to be an obdurate institution. The efforts made to eliminate it have left the military itself in a problematic position—it is now neither a professional nor a conscript military and the conscripts it has do not serve for long enough. It could be the case that Putin has to increase the term of conscription back to two years. This would go some way to solving the problem of poor training levels; it would also improve the mood of many conservative generals, and it would definitely help boost manning levels. But such a move would be politically dangerous at a time when Putin is already facing protests from what at the moment are limited to middle-class elements in Russia. If conscription, though, was to be made more onerous than the working-class (Putin's natural constituency) would be adding their voices of discontent. Putin may not be prepared to take the risk. In the meantime, Russia stumbles on with a military that cannot be modernized.

About the Author

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Further Reading

- Rod Thornton, *Military Modernization and the Russian Ground Forces* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Department of Defense, 2011).
- Roger McDermott, *The Reform Of Russia's Conventional Armed Forces: Problems, Challenges & Policy Implications* (Washington: Jamestown Foundation, 2011).

OPINION POLL

Attitudes Towards Military Reform and Conscription

Table 1: In Which Areas Has Vladimir Putin Had Success During His Years in Power?*

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2012	Trend
Improving the standard of living, growth of salaries and pensions	37%	29%	28%	30%	36%	43%	40%	29%	
Strengthening of Russia's international position	19%	22%	25%	32%	26%	26%	26%	25%	
Economic development of the country	21%	14%	15%	31%	35%	31%	24%	23%	
Increase in optimism and hope for a rapid improvement of the state of things in the country	27%	21%	24%	25%	27%	26%	26%	19%	
Introducing order in the country, maintaining of a quiet political situation	18%	19%	19%	23%	24%	23%	22%	19%	
Improving Russia's relations with the West	21%	26%	25%	28%	20%	22%	29%	17%	
Solving the Chechen problem	10%	10%	10%	21%	20%	18%	12%	16%	
Increasing combat efficiency and reforming the armed forces	11%	13%	9%	14%	14%	12%	11%	15%	
Creating an acceptable economic and political environment for private business	11%	8%	7%	13%	10%	12%	13%	12%	
Cooperation with the other countries of the CIS	15%	16%	16%	15%	14%	14%	19%	12%	
Curbing the oligarchs, limiting their influence	18%	15%	13%	11%	8%	9%	9%	10%	
Eliminating the danger of terrorism in the country	3%	6%	6%	10%	10%	10%	6%	9%	
Combating corruption and bribe-taking	14%	12%	8%	14%	8%	9%	9%	7%	
Defending democracy and citizens' political liberties	6%	5%	8%	8%	4%	4%	4%	5%	
Fighting crime	8%	10%	7%	9%	8%	8%	7%	5%	
Improving relations between people of different ethnicity in Russia	3%	5%	7%	5%	5%	4%	6%	5%	
Reinforcing ethics and morals in the country	2%	3%	3%	3%	3%	3%	4%	3%	
I don't see any achievements	24%	26%	28%	20%	10%	15%	17%	30%	

* Sorted by the results of the latest polls

Source: representative opinion polls by Levada Center from 2004 to 24th-27th February 2012, <http://www.levada.ru/print/12-03-2012/ros-siyane-o-edinoi-rossii-i-narodnom-fronte-politzaklyuchennykh-i-imidzhe-v-putina>

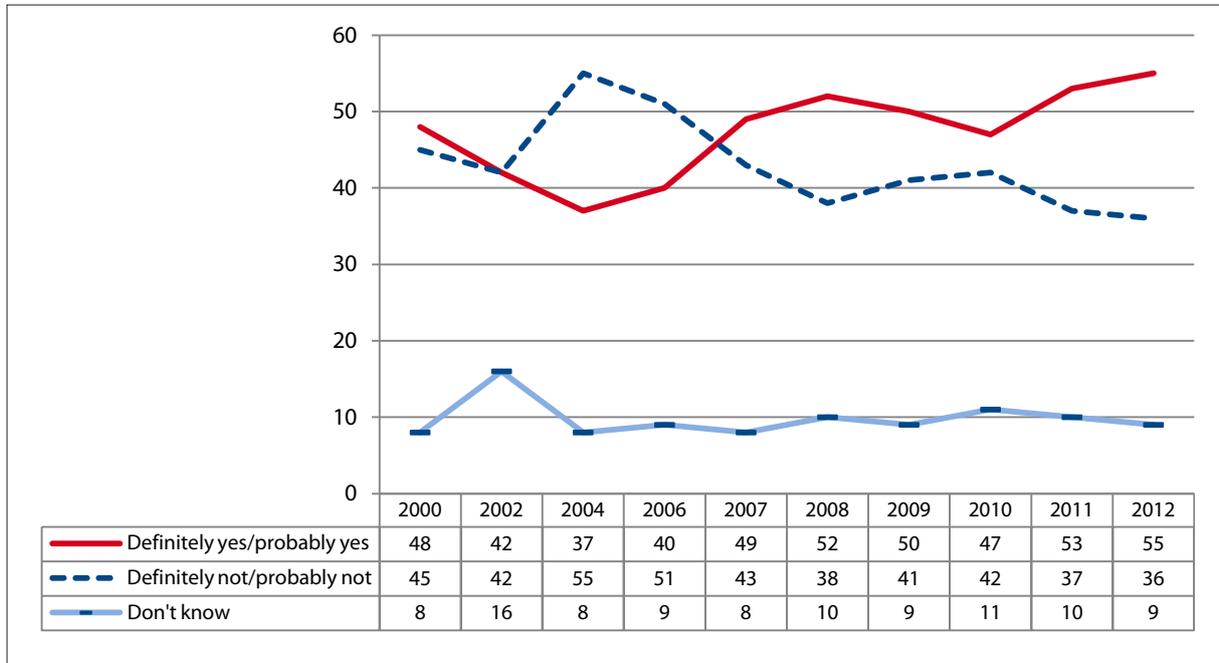
Table 2: ... And In Which Areas Have Putin's Actions Been Least Successful?*

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2012	Trend
Combating corruption and bribe-taking	19%	14%	16%	20%	18%	23%	24%	38%	
Improving the standard of living, growth of salaries and pensions	21%	21%	20%	19%	17%	13%	13%	21%	
Curbing the oligarchs, limiting their influence	19%	14%	16%	20%	18%	23%	24%	20%	
Reinforcing ethics and morals in the country	7%	5%	5%	10%	6%	6%	4%	15%	
Economic development of the country	18%	19%	16%	11%	8%	12%	12%	14%	
Fighting crime	28%	27%	28%	33%	32%	35%	37%	13%	
Solving the Chechen problem	25%	20%	18%	23%	17%	19%	18%	10%	
Introducing order in the country, maintaining of a quiet political situation	10%	7%	8%	6%	4%	6%	6%	7%	
Creating an acceptable economic and political environment for private business	4%	4%	4%	6%	3%	5%	5%	7%	
Improving relations between people of different ethnicity in Russia	3%	3%	4%	4%	3%	3%	2%	7%	
Eliminating the danger of terrorism in the country	3%	3%	2%	3%	3%	3%	3%	6%	
Increasing combat efficiency and reforming the armed forces	34%	27%	18%	13%	7%	9%	10%	5%	
Increase in optimism and hope for a rapid improvement of the state of things in the country	6%	6%	7%	6%	4%	5%	4%	5%	
Cooperation with the other countries of the CIS	24%	15%	9%	7%	4%	4%	9%	5%	
Strengthening of Russia's international position	3%	1%	3%	3%	3%	3%	3%	4%	
Improving Russia's relations with the West	3%	3%	4%	4%	3%	3%	3%	4%	
Defending democracy and citizens' political liberties	6%	5%	6%	4%	3%	5%	4%	3%	
I don't see any failures	13%	13%	16%	22%	14%	16%	16%	6%	

* Sorted by the results of the latest polls

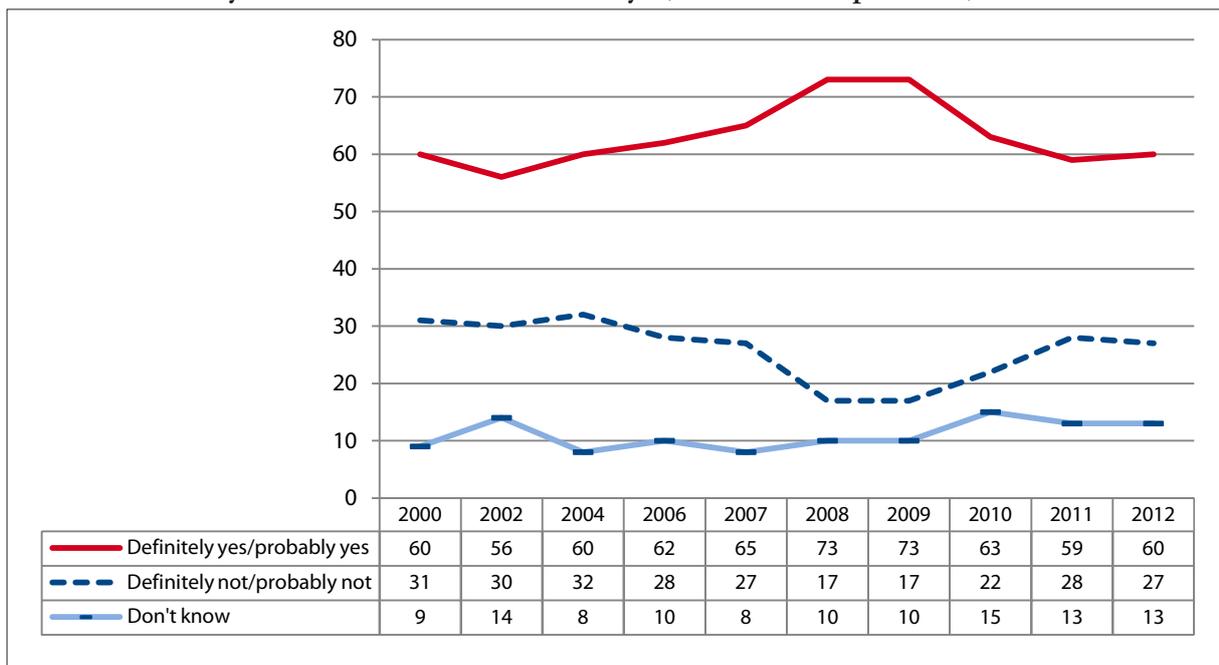
Source: representative opinion polls by Levada Center from 2004 to 24th-27th February 2012, <http://www.levada.ru/print/12-03-2012/ros-siyano-o-edinoi-rossii-i-narodnom-fronte-politzaklyuchennykh-i-imidzhe-v-putina>

Figure 1: In Your Opinion, Do Other Countries at Present Pose a Military Threat to Russia? (Percent of Respondents)



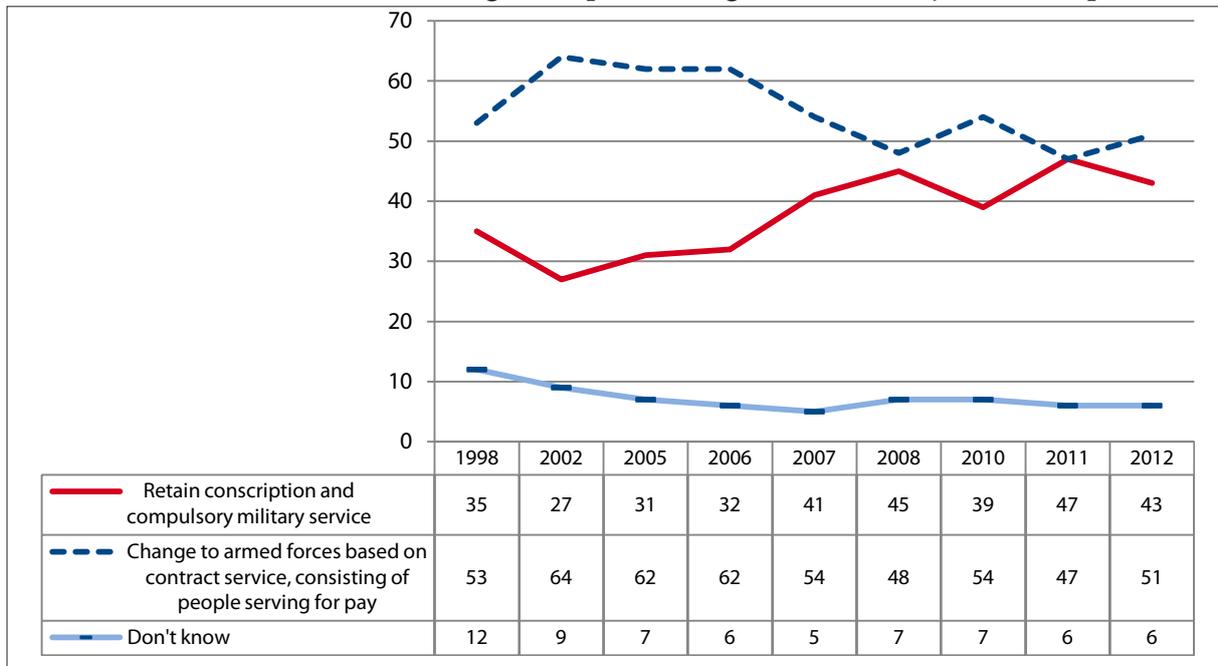
Source: representative opinion polls by Levada Center 2000–2012, latest polls 27–30 January 2012, <http://www.levada.ru/20-02-2012/rossiyane-ob-armii>

Figure 2: In Your Opinion, Is Our Army Capable of Defending Russia in the Case of a Real Military Threat From Another Country? (Percent of Respondents)



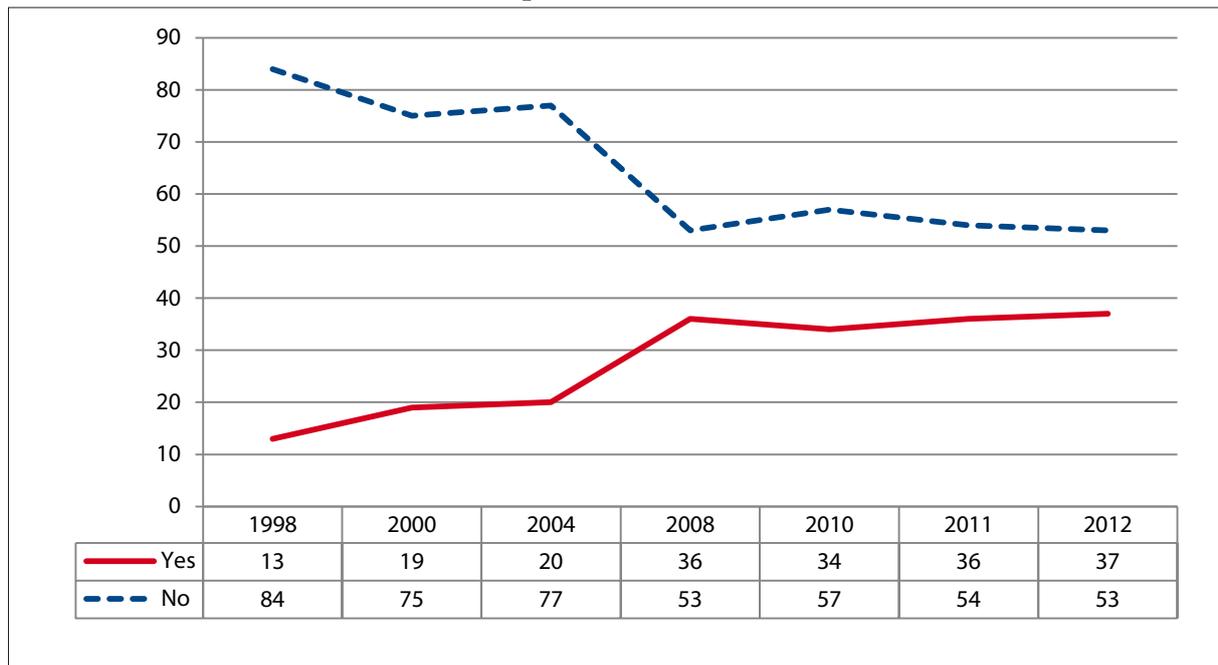
Source: representative opinion polls by Levada Center 2000–2012, latest polls 27–30 January 2012, <http://www.levada.ru/20-02-2012/rossiyane-ob-armii>

Figure 3: What Is Your Personal Opinion, Should We Retain Conscription for Young Men Liable to Military Service, or Do You Think We Should Change to Armed Forces Based on Contract Service, Consisting of People Wishing to Serve for Pay? (% of Respondents)



Source: representative opinion polls by Levada Center 2000–2012, latest polls 27–30 January 2012, <http://www.levada.ru/20-02-2012/rossiyane-ob-armii>

Figure 4: Would You Want Your Son, Brother, or Other Close Male Relative to Serve in the Armed Forces? (Percent of Respondents)



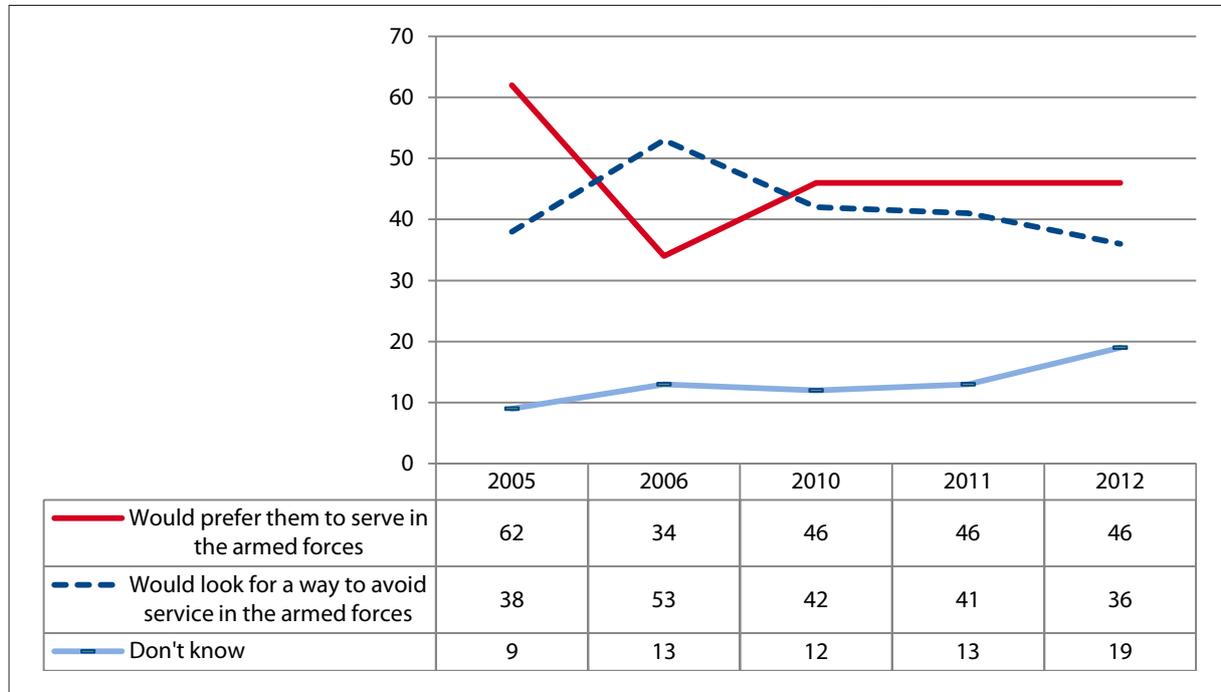
Source: representative opinion polls by Levada Center 2000–2012, latest polls 27–30 January 2012, <http://www.levada.ru/20-02-2012/rossiyane-ob-armii>

Table 3: Respondents Who Did Not Want Their Close Relatives to Serve in the Armed Forces Gave the Following Reasons (Several Answers Possible)

	1998	2000	2004	2008	2010	2011	2012	Trend
“Dedovshchina” [hazing by conscripts who have served for more than one year], relations contrary to regulations, violence in the armed forces	40%	34%	42%	34%	37%	29%	31%	
Death/wounding in conflicts such as the Chechen war	30%	48%	42%	21%	23%	23%	21%	
Deprivation of rights and humiliation of military personnel by officers and commanders	20%	18%	23%	15%	13%	15%	15%	
Hard conditions of life, bad food, and dangers to health	21%	27%	24%	10%	11%	14%	14%	
Disintegration of the armed forces, irresponsible policies of the authorities in relation to the armed forces	25%	21%	21%	6%	8%	10%	10%	
Moral decay, drunkenness, and drug addiction	19%	15%	13%	10%	10%	10%	10%	
Years spent in the armed forces are lost time	11%	8%	9%	6%	7%	5%	8%	
Criminalization of the armed forces, involvement of military personnel in crimes	15%	12%	10%	5%	7%	7%	7%	
Other reasons	3%	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	
Wouldn't want a relative to serve, but cannot indicate the reasons	7%	6%	3%	5%	5%	3%	5%	
Cannot say if they want a relative to serve or not	3%	6%	3%	11%	9%	10%	10%	

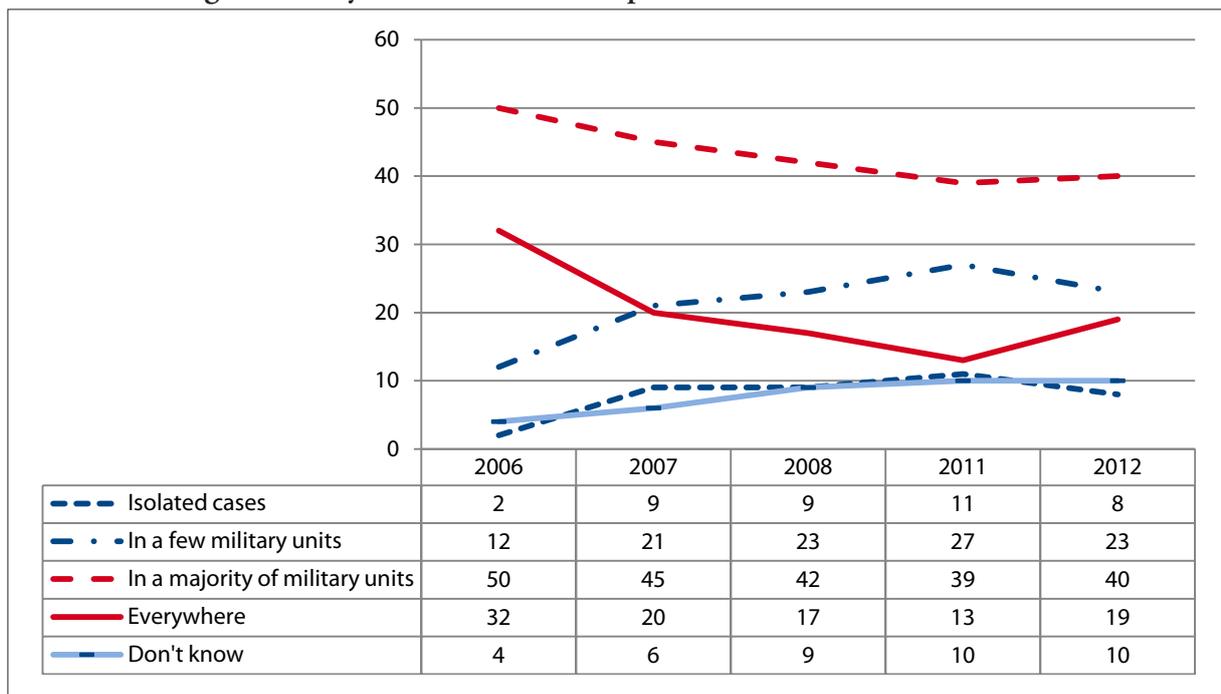
Source: representative opinion polls by Levada Center 2000–2012, latest polls 27–30 January 2012, <http://www.levada.ru/20-02-2012/rossiyane-ob-armii>

Figure 5: If a Member of Your Family Were Liable to Military Service, Would You Prefer Them to Serve in the Armed Forces, Or Would You Look for a Way to Avoid Military Service?



Source: representative opinion polls by Levada Center 2000–2012, latest polls 27–30 January 2012, <http://www.levada.ru/20-02-2012/rossiyane-ob-armii>

Figure 6: In Your Opinion, How Widespread Are At Present Dedovshchina and Humiliation of Young Soldiers by Officers and Conscripts Who Have Served for More Than One Year?



Source: representative opinion polls by Levada Center 2000–2012, latest polls 27–30 January 2012, <http://www.levada.ru/20-02-2012/rossiyane-ob-armii>

ABOUT THE RUSSIAN ANALYTICAL DIGEST

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