

## Russian Officers Against Military Reforms

Russia has had a tumultuous last century, going from communist to superpower followed by disintegration and a return to regional power in the last decade. Throughout all the changes, the military has been an important part of their successes. The Red Army was based on a mass mobilization method, with conscripts providing the majority of manpower. During peacetime, after World War II, there were a large number of “skeleton” units that consisted solely of officers; during wartime those units would be filled with conscripts.<sup>1</sup> Officers therefore needed to have technical training to bring technical experience to their units. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Russian military went through a period of neglect with various half-hearted attempts at reform. It wasn't until 2008 that Dmitry Medvedev, as president, and Vladimir Putin, as prime minister, made a serious attempt at reform to a smaller, more efficient and rapidly deployable force with Anatoliy Serdyukov at the helm of the Defense Ministry.<sup>2</sup> The reforms experienced backlash from a variety of sources, especially military officers, and the reform's goals were reduced. In 2012 Serdyukov was ousted, replaced by Army general Sergei Shoigu who continued some reforms, albeit at a slower rate, and scaled back on others. It was difficult for Russia to reform its military because of the officers' political power. They often opposed the reforms for reasons spanning from ideological to financial. The officers' arguments against reform have affected how far-reaching the reforms have been, allowing the improvement in technology to continue mostly unabated, but slowing the transition from a conscript to a professional army and slowing the institutionalization of non-commissioned officers (NCOs), thus dramatically walking back from the planned abandonment of the mass mobilization style of warfare.

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<sup>1</sup> Golts, “The Russian Army Suffers Deficit in Officers.”

<sup>2</sup> Herspring, “Russian Military Reform and Anatoly Serdyukov.”

The mass mobilization army of the USSR was heavily reliant on technical officers and conscripts. Conscripts, usually recruited at age 18 or 19, served in the Soviet military at first for three years, then only two years starting in 1967. They were not taught a trade and were not fully utilized, despite increasing education among the conscripts, as an increasing percentage were high school graduates.<sup>3</sup> As the conscripts were only in the military for a short period of time, technical skills may not have seemed a worthwhile investment to military leaders. Officers did anything remotely technical.<sup>4</sup> Training for Soviet officers was often more than the American equivalents; however, a limited number of resources meant more funds went to supporting the officers than the conscripts.<sup>5</sup> The large number of technical officers caused the Soviet Union to have more officers than Western countries, since in Western nations at this time NCOs usually performed many of the same duties as lower level officers in the USSR. In the West, a large selling point for military recruits was (and still is) the ability to learn a trade, which meant fewer officers were necessary for the technical duties.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, in the late Soviet era, officers often commanded skeleton units that would be filled up in times of mass mobilization. The conscripts would be added to the units to complete them, then be sent to battle. In theory, this allowed for a smaller standing army during peacetime that would be quickly mobilized for war. However, another great war did not occur, so the officers were unused, untrained, and had no experience actually commanding soldiers.<sup>7</sup>

From the late Soviet Union through the mid-2000s, the Soviet then Russian military was largely neglected. When Gorbachev came to power, he did not know much about the military

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<sup>3</sup> Lucas, "Soviet Strategic Rocket Forces: An Analysis," 17.

<sup>4</sup> Thornton, "Military Organizations and Change," 463.

<sup>5</sup> Lucas, "Soviet Strategic Rocket Forces: An Analysis," 21.

<sup>6</sup> Douglas, "Civil-Military Relations in Russia."

<sup>7</sup> Golts, "The Russian Army Suffers Deficit in Officers."

because he had little background in defense and military affairs. He decreased its funding to better provide for other organizations, but then blamed it when the military could not act effectively in nationality clashes in Tbilisi, Baku, and Vilnius.<sup>8</sup> Yeltsin followed and promised the military better pay and housing, but he did not provide the organization, stability and predictability it desired. Putin then inherited a “military in shambles,” and he won its respect by letting it run wars the way it wanted.<sup>9</sup> Putin increased the defense budget, but that did not improve the military’s effectiveness. He ordered an audit, which determined that 40% of the defense budget was being stolen, so Putin brought in Anatoliy Serdyukov as Defense Minister in 2007.<sup>10</sup>

Serdyukov was an outsider and civilian, as designed. He had no personal connections with the military, which meant he would not have favorites in intramilitary arguments. He would also be unable to use the military in politics due to his unfamiliarity and lack of connections, and, of course, he was reliant on Putin and Medvedev to stay in power, which taken together meant Serdyukov could not advance the military’s interest over Putin’s.<sup>11</sup> Serdyukov had been the director of the Federal Tax Service from 2004 to his appointment to the Defense Ministry in 2007.<sup>12</sup> With him, he brought inspectors who had no connection to the military to try to reduce the theft of funds.<sup>13</sup> By putting a civilian in charge of the Defense Ministry, Putin and Medvedev gave more power to the executive, taking power away from the General Staff.<sup>14</sup> Then, the invasion of Georgia in August 2008 showed how weak the Russian military was, despite Russia

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<sup>8</sup> Larrabee, “Gorbachev and the Soviet Military,” 1005; Herspring, “Russian Military Reform and Anatoly Serdyukov.”

<sup>9</sup> Herspring, “Russian Military Reform and Anatoly Serdyukov.”

<sup>10</sup> Herspring, “Russian Military Reform and Anatoly Serdyukov.”

<sup>11</sup> Shamiev, “Against a Bitter Pill.”

<sup>12</sup> Bryce-Rogers, “Russian Military Reform in the Aftermath of the 2008 Russia-Georgia War,” 345.

<sup>13</sup> Bryce-Rogers, 347.

<sup>14</sup> Bryce-Rogers, 345.

winning.<sup>15</sup> The failures during the August War motivated the leadership to reform the military, with the reforms starting in September-October 2008.<sup>16</sup> Additionally, the reforms came just after Putin left the presidency, so he could avoid blame for problems in implementation.<sup>17</sup> The August War exposed three major weaknesses in the Russian military: outdated technology and equipment, ineffective command and control, and insufficient personnel.<sup>18</sup> Of particular note were the officers of the skeleton units who were recruited for the war. Some simply refused to fight because they had never led soldiers before.<sup>19</sup>

The main tenants of the reforms in 2008 were to shrink the armed forces from 1.2 million to 1 million people by 2012, eliminate 200,000 officer positions (of 355,000) by 2015 to make the military less top-heavy, eliminate under-strength units until all units were fully manned and at permanent battle-readiness, streamline the command structure by replacing the divisional structure with flexible brigades under four strategic territorial commands, improve training and enhance the military education system, modernize weapons systems, and reduce conscription to one year instead of two years.<sup>20</sup> The military was top-heavy with officers, lacked mid-level leadership, and had an overreliance on conscripts at the bottom.<sup>21</sup> Ideally, officers would better be able to delegate their duties. An NCO corps was established to increase mid-level leadership. The NCOs and shorter conscript service were also intended to reduce hazing, which had been a major issue.<sup>22</sup> In 2011, the desired number of officers was revised upward to 220,000 officers after pushback from the military establishment.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Kofman, "The August War, Ten Years On."

<sup>16</sup> Nichol, "Russian Military Reform and Defense Policy."

<sup>17</sup> Shamiev, "Against a Bitter Pill."

<sup>18</sup> Bryce-Rogers, "Russian Military Reform in the Aftermath of the 2008 Russia-Georgia War," 350–51.

<sup>19</sup> Bryce-Rogers, 352–53; Golts, "The Russian Army Suffers Deficit in Officers."

<sup>20</sup> Bryce-Rogers, "Russian Military Reform in the Aftermath of the 2008 Russia-Georgia War," 355.

<sup>21</sup> Bryce-Rogers, 358.

<sup>22</sup> Bryce-Rogers, 359.

<sup>23</sup> Bryce-Rogers, 358.

To minimize resistance to the reforms, Serdyukov reshaped the structure of the Defense Ministry and put his connections in power, particularly civilians and women, both disliked by the military. When the Chief of General Staff attempted to resist the reforms, Serdyukov replaced him with Nikolai Makarov who was loyal to Serdyukov and to the restructuring of the military, reportedly having no ambition. The Public Council of the Defense Ministry was also used to silence complaints and bring back loyal feedback.<sup>24</sup>

Officers opposed the reforms for many reasons, from ideology to money. Many officers still viewed the West as the enemy, and NATO was a perfect target as it appeared to be encroaching on the previous Soviet sphere, despite Russia's reluctance to engage with NATO in a military conflict. Russia's goals were to avoid a large-scale war; instead, the government wanted to harass NATO and use the irritation to jockey for more power and concessions, without conducting a full-out assault that Russia would almost definitely lose. The NATO forces are large and well-equipped, so a small professional army would not be able to effectively combat it, hence the reluctance to change from mass mobilization, which provides large numbers of soldiers and the appearance of strength.<sup>25</sup> Also, officers, and even almost half of Russia's population, believed conscription was the best way to turn youths into upstanding Russian citizens and saw conscription as a social project. The social project attitude was a legacy of the Soviet times when officers and civilians alike believed the military turned boys into true soviet men. Some officers genuinely believed they were improving the quality of Russia's citizens.<sup>26</sup> Also, some officers saw the cutting of officer positions as a loss of privilege. Officer positions were reduced because the Defense Ministry had deemed them unnecessary, implying many of

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<sup>24</sup> Shamiev, "Against a Bitter Pill."

<sup>25</sup> Thornton, "Military Organizations and Change," 453.

<sup>26</sup> Thornton, 453.

the officers were useless, which was an attack on officers as an establishment and undercut their privilege.<sup>27</sup> The reforms moving away from a mass mobilization military would necessarily decrease the number of officers, since there would no longer be skeleton units to “command”. Reducing officer positions would take away jobs and housing from many officers and their families, and senior officers wanted to protect the junior officers, since personal connections were an important component of military leadership.<sup>28</sup>

From a financial viewpoint, professionalization is expensive because contract soldiers need to be paid a competitive salary, as well as be housed in desirable living conditions for both soldiers and their families. Housing was an attractive part of the contract soldier offer and was often more alluring than the pay.<sup>29</sup> Many officers also had little fiefdoms of control in their territories, and they would hire out conscripts as laborers for a fee, making money for themselves or even investing it back in the conscripts. Oftentimes, the conscripts were not doing productive training anyways, so officers saw the hiring out of conscripts as a good use of the military’s manpower, which kept the conscripts from being idle. The hiring out of conscripts was accepted to such an extent that many officers were promoted for their managerial skills of conscripts, instead of their actual military skills, although there is some overlap. Many high level officers saw conscripts as necessary to a well-run and cost effective military.<sup>30</sup> Lastly, theft of funds by officers was a huge issue in the military; before the reforms an investigation discovered 40% of defense funds were being stolen. Reforms aimed at tightening the budget and increasing the effectiveness of the military would decrease the amount officers would be able to steal.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Bryce-Rogers, “Russian Military Reform in the Aftermath of the 2008 Russia-Georgia War,” 343.

<sup>28</sup> Thornton, “Military Organizations and Change,” 454.

<sup>29</sup> Thornton, 461.

<sup>30</sup> Thornton, 454.

<sup>31</sup> Bryce-Rogers, “Russian Military Reform in the Aftermath of the 2008 Russia-Georgia War,” 343.

Despite attempts to minimize resistance, there was still pushback from a variety of interest groups (See Table 1).<sup>32</sup> Military officers were able to reduce the impact of reforms by appealing to the public, purposely slowing the reforms, and using personal influence with important people in the Defense Ministry, including Serdyukov. One example was the attempt to close and move Kolomenskoe Higher Artillery Command School. State Duma members opposed its closing, so the Defense Ministry performed an evaluation of the school. It determined the school was not given a chance for its survival, its buildings were in the expensive city center, and it would be difficult to move faculty, staff, and family members to small towns. The Defense Ministry was criticized for “‘giving away’ the military education with long history and traditions in Russia (interview RAS researcher, April 2018).” The reforms relating to this particular school were stalled and none of the schools that were also intended to experience reforms were moved or closed.<sup>33</sup>

Table 1: Interest Groups Coalitions in the Military Policy.<sup>34</sup>

Interest Groups	Reasons	Coalitions	Ways of Lobbying	Results
Active military officers	Reform's mistakes, radicality, reduction of numbers, path dependency	MoD and General Staff bureaucracy, <i>otstavniki</i> and conservative opinion-makers, LE agencies	Public reaction, poor performance for the fulfilling of the reform's goals, personal influence (General Vladimir Shamanov)	Serdyukov dismissal, reforms partly completed, except historical divisions and VDV (airborne) forces
MoD and General Staff bureaucracy	Reduction of numbers, MoD domination, lack of coordination with military, civilianization and feminization of MoD	Active military officers, <i>otstavniki</i> , conservative opinion-makers	Security Council meetings, top-brass officers, State Duma lobbying	Serdyukov dismissal, structural changes remained in place
Defense industry enterprises	Foreign arms supply, strict demands from MoD, 2008 Economic Crisis	Regional governors, city mayors, regional LE agencies	Informal influence through Sergei Chemezov and Dmitry Rogozin, emphasis on political costs of industry's shortfall	Serdyukov dismissal, arms contracts gradually suspended, important enterprises received tenders
Professional military education institutions	Reduction in size, change of programs, lack of coordination	MoD and General Staff, active military officers, conservative opinion makers	State Duma lobbying, public reaction	Complete suspension of the reform after Serdyukov's resignation, half of the universities closed or merged
Law enforcement agencies: FSB, SKR	Military police creation, legal problems with economic decisions	MoD and General Staff, active military officers	Security Council meetings, top brass LE officials	MP introduction suspended, functions changed
Ministry of Finance	Large allocations for the armament program	—	Participation in the government meetings, where the minister advocated for the reduction	No results, Minister Kudrin resigned

Note. This is a descriptive table summarizing the empirical data on the groups' activities influence during the reform process. The data were gathered from the interviews and media reports. MoD = Ministry of Defense; LE = law enforcement; SKR = Investigative Committee of Russia; FSB = Federal Security Service.

<sup>32</sup> Shamiev, “Against a Bitter Pill.”

<sup>33</sup> Shamiev.

<sup>34</sup> Shamiev.

The reforms, carrying out the largest change to the Soviet or Russian military since 1917, progressed at a steady pace until Serdyukov's ouster in late 2012. Then the pace decreased some under Shoigu, who is still the current Defense Minister. In November 2012, Serdyukov was fired as Defense Minister, supposedly because of corruption. However, Russian analysts agree it is unlikely corruption was the true reason for his downfall. He also had a fall-out with his powerful father-in-law (a close friend of Putin) after an extramarital affair. Most likely, however, opposition within the military gained enough strength to have him ousted.<sup>35</sup> Shoigu, an Army general, replaced him, representing a step away from the reforms and a concession to the military. Serdyukov had annoyed and aggravated many officers in the military establishment, and choosing an Army general to replace him meant the military would have more influence over the direction of the reforms. Shoigu was seen as a "safe pair of hands" with a reputation as a political survivor and shrewd problem solver, and was also a longstanding friend of Putin.<sup>36</sup> Throughout his tenure, Shoigu has had good interactions with the Chief of General Staff and the defense industry, allowing him to survive through the recent February 2020 government reshuffle.<sup>37</sup>

Shoigu continued many of Serdyukov's reforms, although some to a lesser extent, and stepped back from others. He tied himself to the success of his reforms he chose to pursue. Overall, the reforms improved public perception of the military, which had been very low. Quality of life for soldiers dramatically improved and hazing was decreased, although it is still

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<sup>35</sup> Bryce-Rogers, "Russian Military Reform in the Aftermath of the 2008 Russia-Georgia War," 364–65.

<sup>36</sup> McDermott, "Russia's Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu Survives Government Reshuffle."

<sup>37</sup> McDermott.



an issue.<sup>38</sup> Shoigu’s most advocated reforms focused on improving the military’s technology: in 2011, the Russian military only had 10-15% new weapons, but as of February 2020, it had 70% new weapons.<sup>39</sup> He additionally has continued the reduction in officers, although at a slower rate, increased professionalization, and increased the use of NCOs.<sup>40</sup> By 2015, Russia’s military had more contract soldiers than conscripts, and by 2017 all sergeant positions were filled by contract soldiers, while conscripts were reserved for basic combat roles.<sup>41</sup> See Tables 2 and 3. Initially, the government had difficulty recruiting contract soldiers, but increased pay and investment in the reforms largely solved the recruitment problem.<sup>42</sup> However, Shoigu has backed away from the smaller, more flexible warfare method.

Table 2: Changes in military personnel structure from 2008 to 2017. The overall number of soldiers decreased, as well as the number of conscripts, contract soldiers, and officers. The number of contract soldiers increased.<sup>43</sup>

	<b>Year 2008</b>	<b>Year 2017</b>
Conscripts	450,000	276,000
Contract Soldiers	180,000	384,000
Warrant Officers	142,000	55,000
Officers	355,000	217,000
<b>Max Number (planned)</b>	<b>1,130,000</b>	<b>1,013,628</b>

<sup>38</sup> Radin et al., *The Future of the Russian Military*, 2019, 42; Zhabin, “More Than a Decade After Military Reform, Hazing Still Plagues the Russian Army.”

<sup>39</sup> McDermott, “Russia’s Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu Survives Government Reshuffle.”

<sup>40</sup> Lavrov, “Russian Military Reforms from Georgia to Syria”; “Giles - ASSESSING RUSSIA’S REORGANIZED AND REARMED MILITARY.Pdf,” 4.

<sup>41</sup> Lavrov, “Russian Military Reforms from Georgia to Syria.”

<sup>42</sup> Giles, “ASSESSING RUSSIA’S REORGANIZED AND REARMED MILITARY,” 4.

<sup>43</sup> Lavrov, “Russian Military Reforms from Georgia to Syria.”

Table 3: Military personnel number in 2008 compared to 2020 goals, set in 2011.<sup>44</sup>

Category of Comparison	RF Armed Forces 2008	RF Armed Forces 2020	Differences
Command & control (C <sup>2</sup> ) tiers	Military Districts – armies – divisions – regiments	Joint Strategic Commands – army corps – brigades	Decrease in levels of command
Administrative organization	6 Military Districts	4 Joint Strategic Commands (OSKs)	Decrease in number of administrative organs and increase in joint control
Types of units	Regiments and divisions	Regiments and divisions converted into 80 brigades	Decrease in types of units
Combat readiness	Low: 20% of units in permanent readiness	High: all units in permanent readiness	Increase in combat readiness by 80%
Number of units	1,890	172	Decrease in number of units of more than 90%
<b>Personnel</b>			
Total number	1.2 million	921,500	Minus 278,500
Number of officers	355,000	220,000	Minus 135,500
Number of warrant officers	142,000	--	Minus 142,000
Number of contract soldiers and NCOs	80,000	425,000	Plus 345,000
Number of conscripts	423,000	276,500	Minus 146,500
<b>Arms / Equipment</b>			
Share of modern conventional arms	10%	70%	Plus 60%
Share of modern nuclear arms	20%	70%	Plus 50%

Comparing the state of the military in 2008, the goals for 2020, and actual changes in the military by 2017 or 2020 shows many goals were met, although the areas where they were not are indicative of resistance to change. Arms/equipment goals were met, as well as most of the organizational changes other than combat readiness. The personnel goals were partially met: the number of officers and conscripts was reduced sufficiently. However, the total number of people was not quite low enough, number of contract soldiers and NCOs not large enough, and warrant officers not completely cut. The military experienced difficulty recruiting qualified contract soldiers and NCOs initially, probably contributing to the low numbers shown in Table 2, but many officers still complain of bad health, lack of motivation, and alcoholism among professional soldiers.<sup>45</sup> Although the number of officers was sufficiently reduced to the (2011) reform levels, this is likely due to the halt in acceptance to the military academies from 2009 to 2011.<sup>46</sup> The number of officers was not able to reach the initial 2008 officer quantity goals.

<sup>44</sup> Haas and Solheim, *Russia's Military Reforms Victory after Twenty Years of Failure?*, 30.

<sup>45</sup> Bieri and Grätz, "Russia's Military Reform: Progress and Hurdles," 3; Giles, "ASSESSING RUSSIA'S REORGANIZED AND REARMED MILITARY," 4.

<sup>46</sup> Golts, "The Russian Army Suffers Deficit in Officers."

Additionally, warrant officers, conscripts who had received little specialized training, were supposed to be completely eliminated and replaced by new professional NCOs, but they were not able to be fully abolished, probably due to the difficulty recruiting NCOs initially.<sup>47</sup> Permanent readiness for all units, which was not achieved, is contradictory with a mass mobilization military. It is noteworthy that the reforms the military had difficulty completing were the ones most closely related to the officers or the new warfare method of a smaller, more efficient, effective and professional force. The personnel and style of warfare changes were the changes the officers were most likely to oppose because it directly attacked their vision of the ideal Russian military and their paychecks. Their vision was based on NATO or the West being the most important enemy, conscription being a social project, and officers being privileged and protecting the junior officers from job and housing losses. Their paychecks were affected because the changes were attempting minimize the hiring out of conscript soldiers and stealing of defense funds. Despite the progress with reforms, mass mobilization was never truly abandoned.

In 2017, previously dismissed officers started being recruited back into service. Defense Ministry leaders claimed they needed 16,000 new lieutenants per year in 2017, but in 2012 Serdyukov's subordinates believed the military only needed 8,500. Serdyukov had halted acceptance to military academies from 2009 to 2011 because there was such a glut in junior officers they were even used as NCOs soon after the reforms, but the military academy acceptance halt still does not fully explain the yearly need for more junior officers. Serdyukov wanted greater efficiency and rapid deployment capabilities; mass mobilization was rejected, and the goal was to win local conflicts in the post-Soviet space. But now, Russia is coming into conflict with NATO, which is better in almost every metric. Russia is not able to directly

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<sup>47</sup> Nichol, "Russian Military Reform and Defense Policy," 6.

compete with America or NATO, but it can engage in indirect warfare that hassles the US in proxy wars, insurgent groups, and political warfare.<sup>48</sup> Therefore, a conclusion apparently made by senior leadership is Russia must return to the inefficient and cumbersome mass mobilization method, which was explicitly abandoned by Serdyukov. Mass mobilization is in preparation for a larger conflict or for being, as Kofman argues, a “major thorn in the side of the United States and hoping that over time, the United States will be irritated enough, or exhausted enough, to be willing to close out the competition and negotiate.”<sup>49</sup> In February 2017, Shoigu announced the creation of four new divisions, but the total number of people in the armed forces only increased by 10,000, indicating the development of skeleton units and requiring many lieutenants. The creation of skeleton units explains the increased need for junior officers.<sup>50</sup> Golts argues skeleton units are appropriate to improve military power on paper but are “useless for increasing the country’s military might in reality.”<sup>51</sup>

The reforms have made the Russian military more effective, as seen by its actions in Crimea, eastern Ukraine, and Syria. The increased number of professional soldiers meant zero conscripts were sent to Crimea, eastern Ukraine, or Syria, in accordance with the Russian government’s goals, which had been unable to happen in the 2008 August War. Russia is able to conduct small and medium sized military operations using only professional soldiers, who are more experienced, effective, and better disciplined, accomplishing many of the goals of the 2008 reforms, despite taking longer than planned.<sup>52</sup> However, not all units are fully professionalized, and even the contract soldier units are not continuously combat ready. They “are ready for

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<sup>48</sup> Trudolyubov, “Guns, Butter, and Russia’s Enduring Military Power.”

<sup>49</sup> Golts, “The Russian Army Suffers Deficit in Officers”; Trudolyubov, “Guns, Butter, and Russia’s Enduring Military Power.”

<sup>50</sup> Golts, “The Russian Army Suffers Deficit in Officers.”

<sup>51</sup> Golts.

<sup>52</sup> Lavrov, “Russian Military Reforms from Georgia to Syria,” 3.

immediate action at best” according to Lavrov.<sup>53</sup> Additionally, pay for contract soldiers is not planned to increase as much as inflation for the next few years, so becoming a contract soldier will be less desirable, making the military unable to further reduce its number of conscripts.<sup>54</sup> Overall, the reforms have produced better personnel, a new command and control system, modern communication equipment, improved situational awareness, and more precision weapons in all branches, making the Russian military a formidable regional power, but still not a global one, according to military sources from the West (but not solely the US).<sup>55</sup> The Russian military struggles with recruiting qualified personnel, balancing the budget and finances, and dealing with sanctions and restrictions that limit access to financial resources.<sup>56</sup> The last few years have also seen a stagnation in Russia’s economy. Aware of the issues of the late Soviet Union that helped contribute to the collapse of the USSR where defense spending was continued despite an economic downturn, the Russian government has decreased military spending. Despite cuts, the Russian military budget is very large, equivalent to about \$150 to \$180 billion using purchasing power parity according to Kofman, although still much smaller than the United States’.<sup>57</sup>

The Soviet military was based on mass mobilization. It had skeleton units that would be filled out by conscripts and mainly staffed by officers. Conscripts were suddenly recruited and thrown into battle, therefore officers needed to have all technical skills. By the end of the USSR,

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<sup>53</sup> Lavrov, 3–4.

<sup>54</sup> Lavrov, 4.

<sup>55</sup> Bieri and Grätz, “Russia’s Military Reform: Progress and Hurdles”; Bryce-Rogers, “Russian Military Reform in the Aftermath of the 2008 Russia-Georgia War”; Giles, “ASSESSING RUSSIA’S REORGANIZED AND REARMED MILITARY”; Golts, “The Russian Army Suffers Deficit in Officers”; Gorenburg, “Russia’s Military Modernization Plans”; Haas and Solheim, *Russia’s Military Reforms Victory after Twenty Years of Failure?*; Lavrov, “Russian Military Reforms from Georgia to Syria”; McDermott, “Does Russia Have a Gerasimov Doctrine?”; Radin et al., “The Future of the Russian Military,” 2019; Trenin, “The Revival of the Russian Military”; Trudolyubov, “Guns, Butter, and Russia’s Enduring Military Power.”

<sup>56</sup> Lavrov, “Russian Military Reforms from Georgia to Syria,” 24–25.

<sup>57</sup> Trudolyubov, “Guns, Butter, and Russia’s Enduring Military Power.”

the military was in decline, and it was further neglected after the crumbling of the Soviet Union. The 2008 reforms aimed to move away from mass mobilization toward a smaller, more efficient professional force with troops in a constant state of readiness. After Serdyukov was removed from power, Shoigu continued the procurement of new technology for the military, but he slowed the personnel changes, and eventually reversed the decision to move away from mass mobilization. Serdyukov, a civilian, was replaced by Shoigu, an Army general, which was indicative of the military's resistance to the reforms and the need to replace Serdyukov with someone who could work better with both the military and defense industry. The replacement helped slow the pace of reforms and abandoned the primary goal behind them. The reforms have dramatically improved Russia's military, as seen by its actions in Crimea, Ukraine and Syria and improved its standing on the world stage. Of all the reforms implemented by Putin over the past 20 years, the military reform has arguably been only successful reform that actually produced tangible improvements.<sup>58</sup> It remains to be seen whether the move back to mass mobilization produces the increase in respect and status hoped for by Russia.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Trudolyubov.

<sup>59</sup> Golts, "The Russian Army Suffers Deficit in Officers"; Trudolyubov, "Guns, Butter, and Russia's Enduring Military Power."