

# THE INFLUENCE OF INTEREST GROUPS ON THE MILITARY POLICY SUSTAINABILITY IN RUSSIA (2007 – 2012)

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## **Abstract**

The security status-quo in Russia from 2007 to 2012 is often described as the period of "Serdyukov reforms". During these six years Russian armed forces faced unprecedented changes that affected their structural, economic, social and ideological elements. However, despite the outstanding political and financial support for the defense minister, Anatoliy Serdyukov, from Vladimir Putin and Dmitrii Medvedev, not all aims were fulfilled and some changes were rolled back. This research examines the role of interest groups in the sustainability of the military policy of that period. Using the theoretical framework of minimum winning coalitions in the policy process of non-democratic state, the research shows that the reformers faced formal and informal resistance from mobilized interest groups which they could not overcome considering the existing political and administrative limitations of the period. Ultimately this process led to the resignation of the defense minister and stopped further radical changes in the contemporary Russian armed forces.

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## Table of Contents

<i>Introduction</i> .....	1
Theoretical framework and hypotheses.....	3
Scientific relevance and methodology .....	4
<i>Chapter 1. Intersecting Interest Groups, Reform Sustainability, Political Economy and Institutions</i> .....	8
1.1 Definitions and Functions: from Theory to Policy Practice.....	8
1.2 Reform Sustainability: Evidence from Russia.....	11
1.3 The Russian Political Economic System: Actors or Institutions? .....	13
1.4 Russian Political Institutions: Stability vs Effectiveness .....	16
<i>Chapter 2. The Policy Cycle of the Serdyukov Reform: Looking for Sustainability</i> .....	19
2.1 Agenda Setting and Policy Formulation.....	19
2.2 Policy Legitimation .....	23
2.3 Policy Implementation, Evaluation and Termination .....	26
<i>Conclusion</i> .....	35
<i>Appendix</i> .....	38
Appendix 1. Interview Table.....	38
Appendix 2. Female Leadership in MoD during Serdyukov period .....	39
<i>References</i> .....	40

## List of Figures

Figure 1. Military threats perception and attitudes towards the armed forces (percentage of positive answers).....	21
Figure 2. Serdyukov's Coalition of Reformers .....	25
Figure 3. Structural reforms timeline .....	28

## List of Tables

Table 1. Interest Groups Coalitions in the Military Policy.....	32
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## Introduction

Why some policies are sustainable and succeed in fulfilling their goals and others are not is one of the core questions of political science and public policy as an academic discipline. Indeed, any policy is a complex social phenomenon consisting of several levels and stages from problem framing to policy evaluation. Therefore, ensuring policy sustainability, especially after radical changes, is a challenging task for the government. Strategically policy-makers have two distinct approaches to reforms. They may push for their proposal regardless of interest groups and political opposition, or they may include interest groups in the decision-making process. The former needs sufficient state autonomy (Skocpol 1985), meaning the possibility of the state to implement decisions regardless of the society and/or interest groups. The latter makes stakeholders interested in policy continuation, and the final policy proposal itself implicitly secures the state's capacity for its implementation in exchange for the achievement of socially desired goals (Skocpol 1995). However, these are the ideally opposite strategies, but in practice the policy is a constantly changing mixture of coercive implementation and agreements with interest groups.

This is why the aim of this research is to evaluate the interest groups influence on military policy sustainability. According to Huntington (1957), military policy formulation differs from one polity to another, because of the variations in military elite autonomy. Moreover, military expertise is needed in formulation of effective and efficient defence policies (Avant 2007). Therefore, military agencies (armed forces, defence industries, security councils) could affect government's policies, sometimes leading to unexpected results and policy failures, even despite low level of military autonomy. Contemporary academic literature has focused on the participation of the military in politics and threats to democratic development (Geddes, Frantz, and Wright 2014), but how various military related interest group can influence the development of policies has been largely left under-researched. This dearth of research is even more surprising in the case of the radical change in military autonomy expressed in a new military reform dictated by the civilian authorities



after years of the military's monopoly on its own development. This uncovered perspective in the literature becomes more compelling in the case of contemporary Russia when its armed forces faced perhaps the most radical change since the disintegration of the Soviet Union. The research question therefore is as follows: how did interest groups influence the military reform in Russia in the 2007-2012 period?

The case of Russia's military reform is worth examination for several reasons. First of all, as I mentioned above, starting from 2007 Russia's military policy has dramatically changed for the first time since the disintegration of the Soviet Union. However, the initial plan of the reform was not implemented, even despite the influence of the war in Georgia in 2008. The reform caused massive criticism and finally led to the resignation of the Defense minister in 2012. However, some decisions were not reversed even after the Minister's resignation. Secondly, I consider the defence sector as the core part of the state's *raison d'être*. The state initially appeared and continued its existence for the security of its citizens exercising power over its enemies and population (Hay, Lister, and Marsh 2006). Despite being dedicated to the protection of the groups of nobility for the largest part of the history of humanity, its function of the external defence has remained the same over the years. As Tilly and Ardant claimed "wars make states and states make wars" (1975), the military as a part of the state's defence sector paradoxically plays an important role in state making and state disintegration far beyond wartime. History shows that the military policies could be ineffective, inefficient or sometimes lead to unexpected results, such as the disintegration of the armed forces, that in turn may contribute to the state failure, for instance, recent *coup d'états* in Mali, Yemeni and Turkey. Thus, being the core function of the state, successful military policy is important for the state's social-economic development and security of its citizens.

The 2007-2012 period was chosen for two reasons. First, six years passed since the Defense minister resignation and this time lag is enough to evaluate the real policy outcomes. Moreover, the sensitivity of the topic becomes less over time making its analysis easier and more productive.

Second, in the examined period the radical changes that were implemented were instrumental in shaping the whole structure of the contemporary armed forces in Russia. Consequently, such extensive reforms as the Russian military reform of 2007-2012 give plenty of data for the policy research.

### ***Theoretical framework and hypotheses***

It is worthwhile to analyze the level of influence of interest groups on the various stages of the policy cycle through the theoretical framework of the minimum winning coalitions. The theory of the minimum winning coalition explains why politicians tend to form coalitions as small as sufficient to win the election and form the government (Riker 1962). However, this approach can be also applied to policy making in non-democratic states. Since the formation of the government is not the question of public political debate in authoritarian states, a shift of political, administrative, and fiscal interests occurs and affects the formation of internal factions and appointments inside the state. Despite the black box character of the important decision-making processes in non-democratic countries, the policy process itself can still be described using the policy cycle model (Starodubtsev 2016). Interest groups affect the policy on each stage of the policy cycle: from the agenda setting stage to policy evaluation. However, the composition of coalitions is different at various times and at different policy stages. For instance, the agenda setting may be unilaterally captured by the autocrat after a significant malfunction in the state system, for example, after mass protests, military defeat, or an economic crisis. By contrast, the policy evaluation may involve numerous groups that try to influence the decision for the next policy cycle in their own way. Therefore, the state autonomy is different during the policy cycle's stages because of the autocratic top-down decision-making, institutional constraints, policy-makers' mistakes, information asymmetry and the constitution of actors on each stage of the cycle. However, when the decision is made and delegated, policy-makers are responsible for its successful implementation and should be interested in creating a coalition of actors that is sufficient enough to achieve the

expected results, but without an overspending of the limited resources delegated for the task. Thus, to ensure the success of the military policy, decision-makers should support the formation of a sufficient coalition of stakeholders in and outside the government that will protect or at least will not undermine the policy process at any stage of the policy cycle. Therefore, my main hypotheses are:

- The 2007-2012 military policy unsustainability was caused by the absence of sufficient coalition of actors for the reform on each stage of the policy cycle.
- The reform was highly radical and implemented abruptly, which mobilized various interest groups to oppose changes and defend the status-quo.

### ***Scientific relevance and methodology***

This research fits into the broad category of literature on the post-Soviet modernization attempts in Russia. The post-Soviet history of Russia is usually described in public discourse as the composition of two periods. The nineteen-nineties were the period of *libii devynostie* (the wild nineties) when the state power was weak and the policy process was dominated by various non-state actors (Volkov 2002). The second period chronologically began after Vladimir Putin came to power and started to build “the power vertical”, meaning the centralization of state powers and increasing the state capacity and autonomy. This idea was welcomed among the public and Putin’s approval rating remained high for all his years in power (Reuters 2013). However, while the trust in Putin himself and his policies was rising from 2000 to 2008, the role of democratic institutions in Russia was declining. This process gradually closed the political system making any external pressure on the policy process harder (Sakwa 2010). Still, centralization of power and authoritarian backlash did not make the policy process more sustainable. Numerous structural and institutional obstacles, interest groups, as well as the neo-patrimonial nature of administrative and political relationships negatively affected policy outcomes (Starodubtsev 2010; Gel’man 2016). Although enjoying unquestionable political support, Russian decision-makers still need to consider various

actors that are interested in the status-quo or specific policy outcomes. Thus, the influence of interest groups is an essential problem to consider during the policy-process in Russia. This research provides an analysis of the Russian military policy from the public policy perspective and through the lenses of minimum winning coalitions and interest groups behaviour. It contributes to the field of studies on the Russian military (Herspring and McDermott 2010; Barabanov 2011; Bartles 2011; Giles 2012; Golts 2017), the armed forces as an institution (Avant 2007; Geddes, Frantz, and Wright 2014; Herspring and McDermott 2010; Tichý 2014), the intersection of the military with political development (Skocpol 1995; Grossman and Kim 1996; Drazen 2002; Galston 2008; Sakwa 2010; Robinson 2017) and elite formation in Russia (Kryshtanovskaya and White 2003; Renz 2006; Rivera and Rivera 2014).

I understand policy sustainability to be the frequency of changes in the originally approved official policy. The policy is unsustainable if it cannot maintain the decisions being made by policy-makers. Conceptually I connect the term “sustainability” with the “policy feasibility” concept. Galston (2008) analysed the feasibility of policy before the decisions’ implementation trying to look ahead for its perspective on implementation. However, here I use sustainability as an ad-hoc derivative of feasibility. If the policy is initially unfeasible it will be unsustainable. However, I do not provide here any numerical measure of this concept that would otherwise be needed for the quantitative analysis. This is a qualitative case-study and I provide qualitative evaluation of military reform unsustainability and the reasons for it from the interest groups’ influence perspective.

To gather information about the interest groups and their methods to influence the policy, I conducted 11 expert semi-structured interviews. The main advantage of this method is that it helps to reach people with specific, not public information. Each interview took about an hour, was recorded and transcribed. Participants were chosen based on the self-picking strategy and two recommendations. All in all 21 connections were established, one person declined due to the sensitivity of the topic, nine others did not respond. Confidentiality was guaranteed to the

interviewees in order to avoid self-censorship. The sample consists of scholars, insider journalists and former policy-makers (including former military officers, State Duma members and independent advisors) who took part in the reform process or witnessed the decision-making process (appendix 1). One researcher suddenly could not participate in the survey and sent his extensive answers via email. However, there is one disadvantage of the conducted data collecting process – it excluded currently serving officers and soldiers, as well as bureaucrats of the Ministry of Defense, limiting the depth of analysis. The collected data was coded in the Nvivo software. I apply the term “expert” to people who took part in the analyzed policy-process as advisors, analysts or journalists (the MoD press-pool) or specialize in the security sector reform and were published in peer-reviewed journals. In addition to the interviews, I use secondary sources and documents for the complex analysis of the background information and policy specifics, as well as for the triangulation of the data provided in the interview. To analyze the data, I use content analysis with the inductive logic of constructing arguments. Krippendorff (1980) defines content analysis as “a method of inquiry into symbolic meaning of messages”. To make the analysis reliable I conducted first cycle structural coding of the transcripts and transformed data into 17 codes that were created beforehand to make the data analysis easier. Structural coding is “a question-based code” that helps researchers to disintegrate the collected data to a number of categories and have easier access to the information related to the research question (Saldana 2009). Although I am not using interpretative research techniques to see the symbolism of messages, content analysis is an effective tool to have replicable inferences.

The research is organized as follows. The first chapter provides a theoretical review of the concept of interest groups and its empirical intersection with the notion of policies sustainability. The chapter also discusses the role of political economic system and political institutions of Russia in framing interest groups behavior and the conditions for the sustainability of policies. The second chapter analyzes the Serdyukov military reform through the framework of the minimum winning coalitions on each stage of the policy cycle. Finally, the conclusion comes where the answer for the

research question is given and hypotheses are discussed using the data taken from the empirical analysis.

# Chapter 1. Intersecting Interest Groups, Reform Sustainability, Political Economy and Institutions<sup>1</sup>

Any change of status-quo in any social interaction affects at least two or more people. Interests emerge in partnerships and exist up to the supranational level of governance. However, in order to influence any social process involving more than two people, specific actors with private interests may try to cooperate, build coalitions, persuade third-parties or undermine opposition's activities and leadership. Therefore, bearers of interests in public policy processes should form formal or informal groups with shared core values and goals. In addition, the groups should have access to the existing political and/or administrative institutions and know how to use them to influence the policy process (Galston 2008). This is why it is important to consider the existing structural and institutional environment that affect interest groups' strategies and ways of influencing the policy process. This interstate distinction can affect the definition of what constitutes the notion of "interest groups".

This chapter is organized as follows. Firstly, the functions and appropriate definition of the interest groups considering different political and economic environments are explored. Secondly, I discuss the concept of policy sustainability and actions that policy-makers do to make their policies sustainable. Thirdly, theoretical explanation is given to interest groups presence is essential for the Russian political economic system and what functions they have. Finally, I analyze Russian political institutions that form the behavior of policy-makers, interest groups and the military and provide some empirical examples of policy practice from the interest groups perspectives.

## ***1.1 Definitions and Functions: from Theory to Policy Practice***

The traditional definition of interest groups considers them as formal organizations which are separated from governments but act in close cooperation with them in order to pursue their own

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<sup>1</sup> The ideas written in this chapter were partly presented in the final paper for "Institutions and Actors in Public Policy" course led by professor Uwe Puetter. Written permission was given and can be accessed by the personal request.

organizational interests (Wilson 1990). Consistent with this definition, their general aim is to build a bridge between the government and underrepresented groups in society that struggle over the limited amount of resources. Therefore, according to Wilson (1990), there are several normative concerns that arise in interest groups studies.

First of all, there is a longstanding discussion about the negative effects of “the minority groups” influence on the majoritarian decision-making process (Rousseau 1968; Wilson 1990). This negative normativity comes from the notion of “the general will” that should form the policy process (Rousseau 1968). This comes from the theory of republicanism that contends that politics and their policies should be constructed by and represent the majority of the people and that interest groups representing numerous minorities threaten the policies based on the needs of majority. By contrast, Tocqueville (2006) and Dahl (1956) saw the importance of minority representation against the majoritarian policy oppression in the interest groups influence. Interest groups urge politicians to consider the needs of underrepresented minorities in their policies. Finally, interest groups constitute the pluralism of positions and ideas in policy-making. Ideally this helps to spread the costs and benefits of a change equally among the covered groups of society (Wilson 1990).

Interest groups are often defined as non-state actors that use formal and informal channels, such as public campaigns, protests, lobbying, funding political campaigns, to influence the government (Edwards 2014). However, this research is a case-study of an undemocratic political system that limits any unauthorized, third-party influence on the political and administrative systems. In fact, in this system there are only two ways to exert influence: to be included into the official (quasi-)state structure or continue influencing as in a democratic state but facing legal and political consequences of the undemocratic environment. I assume, however, that in the case of the defense industry and a military reform interest groups are very unlikely to be external and all of them have structural or personal connections with the state. Therefore, I define interest groups as formal and



informal groups of actors that affect the policy process using the available channels of influence in order to get the desired outcomes of the policy.

Research on interest groups behavior show that the dynamics of groups' activities are positively correlated with the expansion of the government, its regulations and centralization of power (Galston 2008). First, theoretical concerns about policy based on the general will were confirmed by difficulties with the aggregation of actors' interests in order to pass legislations important for the society, for example, in the pharmaceutical, arms safety and education sectors. This was caused by the numerical extension of individual coalitions or formalized interest groups that gained power to veto or subsequently change the preliminary decision through lobbying, public campaigns, advocacy and/or illegal behavior (Galston 2008). Secondly, the termination of ineffective regulations became harder. Interest groups enjoyed private benefits from these technocratically ineffective regulations and used resources, power and positions to sustain the status-quo (Galston 2008). Finally, the government failing to achieve the goals demanded by the public consequently faced less public support and low level of trust in state institutions, as a result of the effective actions of interest groups that limited state autonomy to implement decisions in compliance with its constituencies' desires (Galston 2008).

Speaking about Russia, before the analyzed period of the military reform, Russia enjoyed a boom in oil prices that caused the expansion of government and stipulated economic growth. Large oil revenues allowed the government of that period to invest in social welfare system, infrastructure and state-owned enterprises in order to retain the political stability and economic growth. However, the Financial crisis of 2008 that affected Russia in 2009 and the deflation of oil prices forced the government to reduce spending. Moreover, these economic factors coincided with the period of the military reform with large financial spending for the rearmament program and structural changes in the armed forces. Therefore, interest groups were likely to be mobilized by both the changes in the military policy and world economic and financial indicators.

## ***1.2 Reform Sustainability: Evidence from Russia***

Policy unsustainability is a situation when the state experiences high-rate of policy change usually in opposing directions, and there are three scenarios of interest groups activities that can in fact influence it (Breunig and Koski 2018). First, there is the “capture” scenario when policy makers enjoy low attention from a small number of groups involved in the policy process. In fact, it means that policy-makers successfully created a closed environment for a small number of groups with stable relations and rational aim to secure the status-quo and thus avoiding to elevate the policy onto the public agenda. Changes in this scenario are usually driven by the long-term aims and current group setup safely limiting excessive attention and avoiding mobilizing events (Breunig and Koski 2018). For example, this strategy is observed with stable tax policies that are technically complex limiting excessive attention from the public, but small ongoing changes are being done by experts of the responsible state agency.

By contrast, there is the “deadlock” system when there is a pluralism of interest groups with high share of rent and level of attention to the policy issues. This type of interest groups setup causes constant battle over resources and positions, but perfect competition does not allow any single group to monopolistically make major changes. Thus, the policy domain is driven by constant small achievements and losses of groups, which foster policy sustainability (Breunig and Koski 2018). The budgeting process in stable party systems is an example for the “deadlock” scenario, where numerous MPs and interest groups influence the budget lines to get additional funds, but the core spending remain stable. However, in the case of a military reform it is not clear whether policy-makers could really establish the deadlock scenario due to the sensitivity of military information, the large number of security-related state agencies involved, and the lack of market competition in the sectors.

However, the worst-case scenario for the volatility of policies is the “lability” setup. This is the mid-case level where there is not enough pluralism to ensure the policy stability, but there is already

a high level of attention from the involved groups. In this scenario groups cannot achieve their strategic goals but have to use tactical and changing measures in order to achieve the desired short-term aims. However, due to the inability of any group to secure the status-quo or of policy-makers to create the perfect competition, the policy suffers from frequent changes and therefore, high level of volatility (Breunig and Koski 2018).

Thus, one of the problems that was likely to cause the unsustainability of military reform in Russia is the failure to ensure the capture setup of interest groups behavior. Policy makers, for instance, the defense minister, are rationally interested in the effective implementation of their decisions with minimum constraints on the decision-making process that large coalitions imply. Therefore, policy makers need to form small coalitions within the government structure that are sufficient to ensure the effective implementation and minimum spread of resources for its activity. This process in Russia's politics was empirically analyzed by several scholars (Kryshtanovskaya and White 2003; Renz 2006; Rivera and Rivera 2014). When Putin came to power politicians and scholars were very interested in his human resource policy. There were a lot of speculations about whether former KGB officer would form his government mostly including security specialists and people with military experience. The debate was largely started by Krystanovskaya and White (2003), who warned about the "militarization" of Russia, and Renz (2006), who argued that there was in fact no militarization, but rather a coalition building for effective ruling. However, recently D.V. Rivera and S.W. Rivera (2014) were concerned about the validity of the previous findings because of the limitations of the studies on the Russian elite and the difficulties with operationalization of key terms: *siloviki*, elite and militarization. They show that although Russia's top administrative elite and close circle of Vladimir Putin are indeed very militarized and comprised of people with security experience, but in other structures of the government and ruling forces the rate of militarization is lower (Rivera and Rivera 2014). However, the Renz argument (2006) of Putin's need to build ruling coalitions for policy reasons is still valid. This process is not easy as it seems at first sight because in a non-democratic system of governance and with weak power sharing institutions

trustworthiness is identified as the main criterion of elite formation (Sakwa 2010). Therefore, in general, extensive reforms become increasingly personalized depending on the position of policy-makers in the elite system and their relationships with other influential actors, that in turn affect the sustainability of policies.

### ***1.3 The Russian Political Economic System: Actors or Institutions?***

The level of policy volatility can be analyzed through the lense of actors' behavior. Some groups can take part in "predation" that is an essential part of rent-seeking behavior in all political and economic systems (Drazen 2002). This is a risky enterprise that requires much larger possible gains than costs of predation (Grossman and Kim 1996). Considering the existing economic power of rival actors, the system knows tree equilibriums of predation: "nonaggressive equilibrium", "part-time predation equilibrium" and "pure predation equilibrium" (Grossman and Kim 1997). However, the research on predatory behavior described economic agents in open market economies because working institutions limit the use of political or administrative power in the redistribution attempts of companies' property rights (Drazen 2002). Economic actors cannot use coercive judicial, political or any other administrative powers for redistribution.

Another picture emerges when economic agents are closely associated with the state that lacks civil society control and disputes cannot be mediated by the judicial system. Therefore, their aggressive predatory behavior is rather associated with companies' connections with the state structures and political elite rather than the market power. Companies penetrating the state structure or (quasi-) state-owned enterprises that are originally in better position than traditional market companies can use political and administrative tools for predation. A vivid example of this market-state collaboration is the case of absorption of former private oil company "Yukos" by the state-owned company "Rosneft" (Myers and Kramer 2007). After the arrest of Yukos founder, Mikhail Khodorkovsky, the company went bankrupt and was bought by Rosneft. The bankruptcy was caused by the decision of the Federal Tax Service that had accused Yukos of tax evasion and frozen

all Yukos's accounts that the company could not pay for the debts. Incidentally, the Federal Tax Service of that time was headed by Anatoliy Serdyukov, who later became the defense minister in the analyzed period. The Permanent Court of Arbitration in the Hague considered the Yukos bankruptcy case as a "devious and calculated expropriation" and ordered the Russian government to pay around \$50 billions to the former Yukos shareholders (Kramer 2015). Therefore, in economies with heavy influence of the state or closed political systems, market powers or government agencies can use state powers for predatory aims. However, this should be analyzed on a case by case basis. Tollison (2003) notes economic actors get incentives to invest resources in business-state relations from the "political order" in which they exist. This argument supports the findings of research on the institutional determinants of economic growth conducted by Przeworski and Limongi (1993). The study shows no evidence of democratic or authoritarian regimes inclination to economic growth. Nevertheless, political institutions affect the behavior of political and economic agents that cause economic development.

Political economic research on interest groups behavior suggests that the most successful groups are relatively small compared to the size of their target (Drazen 2002). Usually the costs of influence are fixed, while the share of resources gained per each member of the group is dependent on its size. Therefore, it is rational to have a small but active and effective group to maximize personal benefits. However, the size of groups involved should be sufficiently enough to break through the institutional barriers and actions of the rival groups. This argument continues the logic of Olson (1971), who claimed that individuals can act according to the common goal of either small groups or large groups with coercive apparatus or positive selective incentives. Moreover, he showed that in fact small groups tend to exploit the large one as in some terms the state or the ministry does. Consequently, actors with already established access to the public institutions or insider groups have comparative advantages over the others. Their costs of influence are lower therefore they can afford to be smaller in size or even establish symbiotic mutually beneficial relations with state institutions.

The lobbying activity of these groups is what Olson claims (1971) as a “by-product” of their existence, because they perform other beneficial functions for their members in addition to the state functions, and lobbying is needed for sustaining their work. For example, these groups can be outsourced agencies with state functions, state companies, individual bureaucrats, elected politicians with strong ties with their unified and stable constituency. Furthermore, they can possess objective political and economic importance for the state – city-forming factories, exclusive defense industry enterprises or important infrastructural sites. Finally, this type of groups can unequally share the resources achieved benefitting the top-management and discriminating ordinary workers who could have been unconsciously involved in lobbying. However, the costs of failures and any losses are usually spread equally because of the organizational formation of the interest group. Factories that failed to get additional subsidies, outsourced agencies that do not get contracts or Parliamentary backbenchers defeated in debates – the costs of these losses are spread among workers, members or even other organizations affiliated with these groups.

Sometimes the representative of interest groups’ directly involved in lobbying can be directly repressed by other groups or by the automatic decision of law-enforcement agencies. Usually these can be done under the cover of a fight with rent-seeking behavior. However, scholars usually distinguish between rent-seeking and interest groups activities. The concept of rent-seeking implies legal and illegal actions to extract resources for personal use from the decisions and actions of the government (Krueger 1974). However, in countries with closed political systems, as Russia is, it is difficult to detect the illegal rent-seeking. Due to the lack of independent information, controlled law-enforcement and poor governance cases of corruption are hard to identify. As Sakwa (2010) shows Russian law-enforcement agencies are mobilized against the cases of high-ranking corruption only when it is sanctioned by Kremlin. Therefore, in this research there is no need to distinguish these concepts because both illegal rent-seeking and interest groups influence has a similar aim to get resources someone needs. I assume that in closed political and administrative systems with controlled security agencies public criminal cases against high-ranking officials or top

businessmen should be cases of struggles over power and/or economic assets redistribution that in fact constitute the tragedy of interest groups behavior in undemocratic states: sometimes they can prosecute or be prosecuted themselves.

#### ***1.4 Russian Political Institutions: Stability vs Effectiveness***

The disintegration of the Soviet Union was followed by the privatization of formerly state-owned enterprises. This process created a small group of extra-rich owners that were suddenly called *oligarchs* in public discourse. In 1990s they controlled more than 50% of the national income and their political, media and financial support led to the victory of Boris Yeltsin against communist Genadii Zyuganov on presidential election in 1996 (Gel'man 2015).

When Vladimir Putin came to power almost all businessmen were embedded into the state structure (absorption of Yukos by the state-owned oil company Rosneft), put in jail (Mikhail Khodorkovsky, Yukos founder) or forced to emigrate (Boris Berezovsky). There are widely known *shashlik*-agreements (BBQ agreements) that informally institutionalized “economic stability in the expense of political loyalty” deal of Vladimir Putin with oligarchs (Gel'man 2015). This process started the creation of the so-called dual structure (“two parallel system”) of Russia. Official and public sphere is regulated by formal rules, legislations and laws, while intra-elite and internal political negotiations are based on informal agreements, power relations, informal cash-flows and coalition-building (Sakwa 2010).

Intra-elite system sustains on informal factions (clans) that has constantly changing variety of autonomy and power. These groups have six common characteristics (Sakwa 2010). The first and the most important property is that they are completely informal, there are no written agreements between their members or other groups. Their unity is formed by personal connections (family ties, friendships, colleague relations) or intragovernmental relations. Secondly, at least some representatives of these groups possess administrative or political influence that gives abilities to defend their interests against other groups and influence the policy process. For instance, Oleg

Feoktistov, the former head of the security service of state-owned oil company Rosneft, who was the author of ex-economic development minister bribery accusation, served as an FSB officer before coming to Rosneft. An operation against Alexei Ulyukaev, former economic development minister, was conducted by acting FSB officers under informal coordination of Feoktistov (Taktarov 2017). Thirdly, the groups share different ideological values that allow to distinguish them one from another. Some groups are conservative statist, others are more prone to economic liberalism. Fourthly, despite groups' structural and ideological differences all of them have one shared rational goal of increasing their political and administrative power. Then, the groups are symbolically located in a horizontal network of power relations besides their subordination to Kremlin. Finally, the factions mobilize situationally and do not show constant power struggle as political parties or politicians in democracies (Sakwa 2010).

Putin himself works in this system as an arbitrator that builds the neo-patrimonial character of power relations in Russia (Lynch 2005; Robinson 2017). Russian neo-patrimonialism divides the state into formal and informal structures in terms of dual structure of the state, where informal relations and the use of state resources are used to ensure the loyalty of clients to patron and to provide effective welfare benefits and security for the society (Robinson 2017). The clashes of these two structures limit the development of state autonomy and state capacity. Moreover, Russia featured negative sides of both democracies and dictatorships during the Medvedev term, because of the nature of electoral authoritarian regimes (Gel'man 2016). They have political busyness-cycles, coalitions of rent-seeking interest groups, politically affected state-controlled economy, and neo-patrimonial policies. All these negative sides negatively affect the likelihood of successful modernization attempts. Medvedev period did not change this system despite his attempts to pursue the development agenda (Gel'man 2016). His ideas for institutional reform and state capacity building questioned Putin's personal system of management and thereby had not found supporters in the elite (Robinson 2017). Therefore, the Russian political institutions form a system



in which paradoxically poor governance is an important factor of the political stability and loyalty to the regime.

However, despite all these limitations any country cannot live without reforms. Country's leadership may try to innovate or to transfer policies from other states applying them to the existing challenges. The military reform analyzed here is one of the examples of how electoral authoritarian countries can pursue unpopular reforms. The end of Putin's term and the appointment of Dmitrii Medvedev as the president of Russia with Putin as a prime-minister created fortunate environment for Putin to implement the radical military reform avoiding the blame for its obvious implementation drawbacks.

## Chapter 2. The Policy Cycle of the Serdyukov Reform: Looking for Sustainability

The Russian Military reform of 2007 – 2012 period was widely named as “Serdyukov Reforms”. Anatoliy Serdyukov was appointed a defense minister in February 2007. Despite Serdyukov appointment at the beginning of 2007 the reform was initiated in the second part of 2008 (Dvorkin and Arbatov 2013). However, the reform itself is not the product of the defense minister solely. As I show below, the ideas were presented long before, but they were not initiated.

This chapter is organized as the policy cycle scheme. First, there is the analysis of the agenda setting and policy formulation stages. Second, the policy legitimation stage is described as both the preparatory and the complementary instrument of the policy. Finally, the stages of implementation, evaluation and termination of policies are analyzed and the general conclusion for the chapter is given.

### *2.1 Agenda Setting and Policy Formulation*

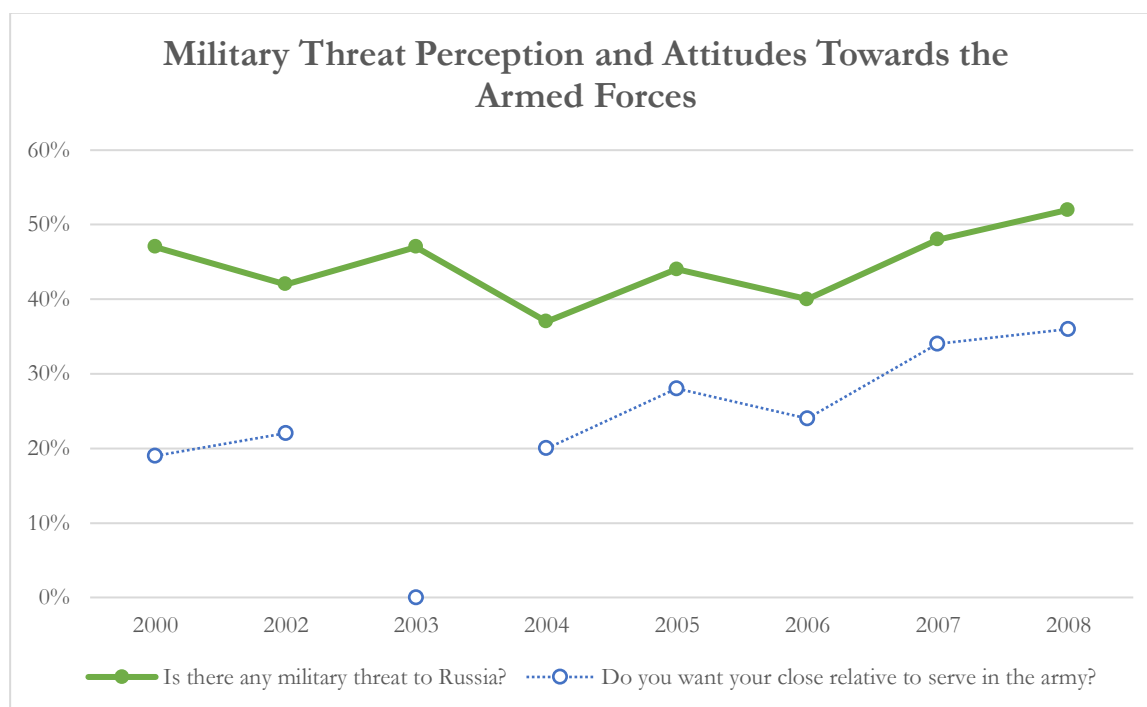
Russian Emperor of the late XIX century Alexander III once told that “Russia has only two allies, her army and fleet” (Luhn 2017). However, these allies were in poor condition when Serdyukov came to power. In fact, the military reform was in the passive agenda of the Russian government since the first war in Chechnya. However, several attempts to make the army better did not fulfil their goals, and bureaucratic ineffectiveness fueled the cumulative underperformance of the army and public irritation. For instance, Russian human rights defenders confirmed in 2004 that there were around 250 military suicides that year<sup>2</sup>. Most of them were caused by *dedovshina* (hazing), depressive atmosphere in the army, lack of control and limits of funds. One of the most critical public response since the submarine “Kursk” drowning was provoked by the case of Private Sychev in Chelyabinsk. On New Year’s eve a sergeant woke Sychev up at night and forced him to squat

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<sup>2</sup> For the history of the hazing problem in the Russian army see in Russian: (RIA Novosti 2006).

and beat him in the legs for more than three hours for “being a bad soldier” (Myers 2006). As a result, Sychev’s legs and genitals were amputated some days after the crime. However, the defense minister Sergei Ivanov three weeks after the case and boiling public reaction said: “I think nothing serious happened. Otherwise, I would have certainly known about it.” (Myers 2006). All such cases affected the attitudes of Russians towards the armed forces (figure 1). The graph shows that Russians attitudes towards the army were closely correlated with the perception of the military threat existence ( $r = 0.91$ , excluding 2003 for the dotted line) before the Georgian war and the reform process. However, despite the positive trend the general attitudes towards the armed forces were negative. They can be extrapolated from the question of willingness of people to see their relatives serving in the armed forces. Considering this data with the fact of mandatory military service in Russia I argue that Russians perceived armed forces badly as an institution before the reform started. This point of view does not contradict with the direct data on Russians’ evaluation of armed forces: 51%, 60% and 44% of views were negative or very negative about the state of armed forces in 2005, 2006 and 2007 respectively (FOM 2018).

Figure 1. Military threats perception and attitudes towards the armed forces (percentage of positive answers).



*Note: the data was taken from the Levada-center polls (Levada-center 2008). No data for 2003 in the dotted line.*

Thus, when Anatoliy Serdyukov became the defense minister in February 2007, a year before Vladimir Putin would step out, there were objective social demand for changes in the army waiting for a lagged policy response. Moreover, think-tanks had already come out with their policy proposals in 2004. The ideas for the reform, whose main author was former GRU officer Vitaliy Shlyukov<sup>3</sup>, were created by The Council on Foreign and Defense Policy (SVOP) and presented in 2004. SVOP ideas were rigorously analyzed by General Kvashnin, the General Staff chief from 1997 to 2004. “He underlined our proposals with red and blue pencils: blue – he agreed, red – he disagreed” – one of the experts claimed. However, the final report was publicly rejected by the MoD and some statements were even called provocative (interviews with a retired general and SVOP members, April 2018).

<sup>3</sup> Vitaliy Shlyukov was a well-known Soviet spymaster with specialization in foreign armed forces development. In 80s he was accused of spying and spent 2 years in Switzerland’s prison. After the fall of USSR he became a public expert and founded The Council on Foreign and Defense Policy (SVOP). He openly supported Serdyukov reform and suddenly passed away in 2011 (RIA Novosti 2011b)

Putin gave a speech in Munich famous for its reactive and aggressive rhetoric towards the West a day after he signed the decree for Serdyukov appointment as a defense minister in February 2007. He openly criticized unipolar world with the US “political, economic and humanitarian” dominance. Putin blamed NATO for its expansion in the former Warsaw agreement countries and criticized its member-states for a violation of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (Newton and Thompson 2010). In July 2007 Russia suspended its obligations under the treaty on the plea of self-defense against NATO member-states (Kramer and Shanker 2007). This rhetoric coincided with the evaluation of the existed disadvantages of the military system and unofficial preparation of the reform. The discussions about the upcoming reform among the elite were since 2004, but the reform was gradually postponed in order to focus on social policy first and redistribute resources to that sector (interview with former State Duma member and retired officer, April 2007). Moreover, some military experts had already knew about the preparation of a draft of full-scale reform in May 2008 (interview with Russian military journalist, April 2018).

Although, despite working on the policy proposals and having obvious social demand for changes, the trigger for the reform was the August War with Georgia in 2008. Despite the defeat of Georgian forces, Russian ineffective five-tier command-and-control system, lack of coordination and deployment problems caused much criticism (Barabanov 2011). All experts considered the Russian operations in Georgia as problematic, the armed forces showed their inability to mobilize and respond quickly and effectively for even comparatively small Georgian military threat. “Our Air Forces lost more planes from friendly fire of our own ground forces, than Georgian attacks. This war uncovered the disadvantages of what was done with the army” – said retired Major General and former General Staff officer. Interviewees also claimed that the Georgian war showed the discrepancy of the official patriotic discourse and the objective outcomes of the Five-Day war that changed the reform’s program (interview with RAN researcher, April 2018). Thus, Putin and Medvedev ordered to improve the performance and combat readiness of the Russian army on the

Security Council meeting in late August. That is when the government finally announced changes in the Russian army (interview with insider journalist, April 2018).

Thus, the Serdyukov military reform was in fact planned long before his approval. Numerous problems within the army were not solved by minor changes and budget allocations, making the agenda about the armed forces increasingly problematic. Officially the reform started after the Georgia war, but in fact the policy formulation stage was ongoing before the war. There is no evidence that Serdyukov knew about the burden that he would need to take, but his outstanding support by Putin was first confirmed when Zubkov, his father-in-law, became the prime minister of Russia in September 2007. According to the Russian laws, administrative servicemen cannot have their close relatives in subordination. Therefore, Serdyukov wrote the letter of resignation, but Putin denied to accept it (Zaitseva 2007), and in October 2008 the Minister Serdyukov publicly presented the first plan of the reform.

## ***2.2 Policy Legitimation***

Policy legitimation is a stage of the policy cycle, where policy-makers try identify the policy's supporters and opponents and form the coalition for a reform (Cairney 2011). In the case of Russia, the first thing to do was to find the defense minister who would not oppose the reform goals and would be effective as a policy-makers This man was Anatoliy Serdyukov.

Anatoliy Serdyukov has a long but not very public history in the Russian political system. From 1984 to 1985 he served for 9 months as driver in communication battalion of 85<sup>th</sup> motor-rifle regiment of the Soviet Army and then joined for a year and half officer courses. Serdyukov's administrative career became in 2000 after he married Yulia Pohlebenina, the daughter of Viktor Zubkov, Vladimir Putin's personal assistant in Saint Petersburg (Nikolsky et al. 2012).

From 2000 to 2007 Serdyukov served in the Federal Tax Service and became its head in 2004 (Nikolsky et al. 2012). For Putin Serdyukov's loyalty and professionalism was confirmed by the

criminal case of Yukos oil-company that led to its bankruptcy. According to Yukos's lawyers and Serdyukov's colleagues, he acted as a strongman, who allowed Igor Sechin, Vladimir Putin's assistant and the head of the board of directors of state-owned company Rosneft, to absorb Yukos by Rosneft without any interference from his side (Bartles 2011; Nikolsky et al. 2012). Serdyukov also managed to centralize administrative processes of taxes refunds and fought against tax-evasion schemes (Nikolsky et al. 2012). "He was absolutely loyal, had no political, administrative ambitions" – former State Duma member described Serdyukov (interview in April 2018). Additionally, Serdyukov was a man of his father-in-law and Putin's assistant Viktor Zubkov, who himself became the prime minister in September 2007. Moreover, Serdyukov did not have any personal connections with the army, separating himself from the traditional intramilitary clashes. This was important considering formal command chain and loss of direct subordination of the army to Putin when he would become the prime minister (interview with military policy researcher, April 2018). Thus, on February 15, 2007 Putin signed the decree appointing Serdyukov as a defense minister, a year before Dmitry Medvedev became the president of Russia. However, the official appointment was right before the February 23, the Defender of the Fatherland Day, and it was very surprising. An insider journalist claimed "an hour before the Collegium of the Ministry of Defense general Baluevsky (the General Staff chief) started to receive congratulations for his appointment – it was the typical Putin's style". Thereby, the first block for a coalition was put in place, next came the MoD and the General Staff.

Serdyukov started with reshaping the structure of the MoD. The newly created departments or restructured offices were managed by women and civilians from the Federal Tax Service that military officers could not accept. Serdyukov transferred his fellow colleagues from the Federal Tax Service to the Ministry of Defense, most of whom were women without military knowledge (Pavlova 2012). 71% of these people were assigned for financial or material support offices of MoD, 20% handled administrative tasks and 8% led press-service and MoD TV channel (appendix 2).

At the beginning of June 2008, the General Staff chief general Baluevsky was replaced by general Makarov. This change was awaited and rumors came two month before the appointment (Radio Svoboda 2008). Baluevsky was against radical changes and publicly criticized Serdyukov's and even Putin's decisions (interviews with journalists, RAN researchers, April 2018). For instance, he criticized the leave from the INF Treaty and was against the relocation of the Navy Headquarters to Saint Petersburg (Kozlov 2008). Before becoming the chief of the General Staff Makarov was appointed to the General Staff's armament office head position. Makarov as a very loyal and executive person. "The reform fell on him, he did not promise anything, he was a calm, complaisant person, he had no ambitions. If there was Baluevsky or a man like Mahmud Gareyev, that would be the end" – said of the military experts. Interviewees also claimed that besides being loyal he knew the regional structure of the armed forces and was able to implement the delegated tasks (interviews with SVOP members, retired major general, April 2018)

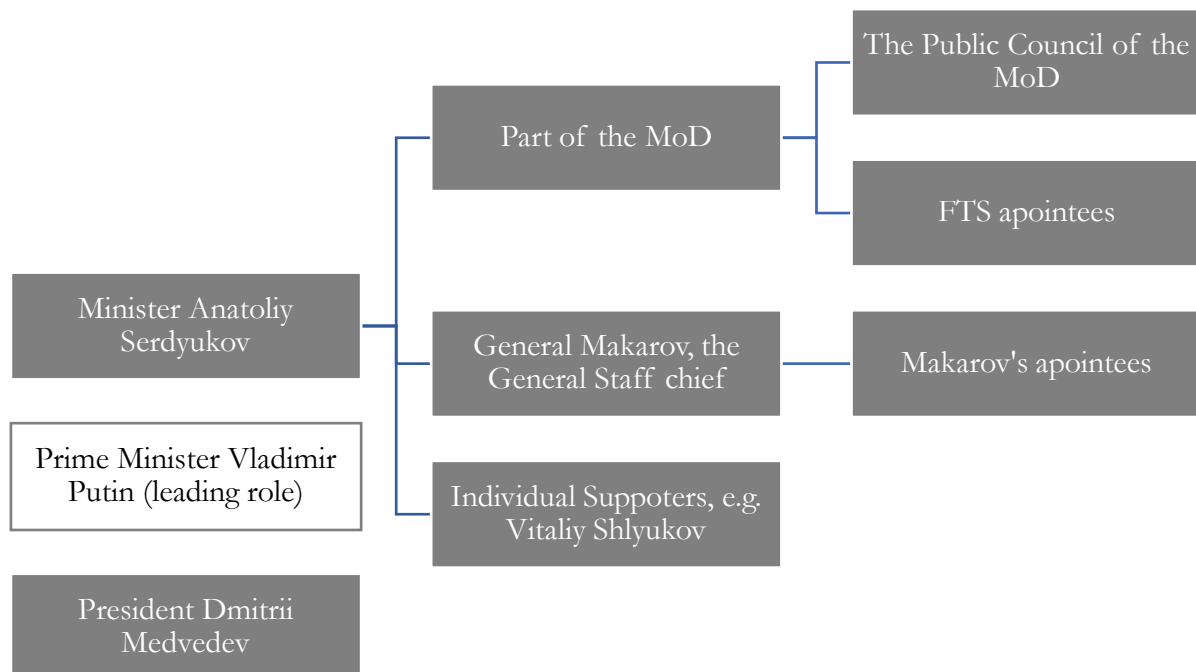


Figure 2. Serdyukov's Coalition of Reformers



Finally, Serdyukov relied on the Public Council of the MoD and his PR service. The Public Council was an instrument of communication with former military elite, leaders of opinion and media. The MoD also tried to shut down public complaints organizing meetings and conferences for experts and State Duma members (interview with former State Duma member, April 2018). Despite these groups did not have access to the decision-making process they were important opinion makers. “We raised the issue on the Security Committee (of State Duma) but in order to stop our complaints, Serdyukov organized a huge presentation in the Ministry as the joint meeting of Security and Defense Committees of Duma, with a film, beautiful folders, a nice banquet” – former State Duma member told.

Thus, the preparatory part of the policy legitimation stage was conducted before the war with Georgia: the MoD was restructured and filled with Serdyukov’s clients, the General Staff got a new chief. However, this stage had been ongoing during the reform, Serdyukov changed servicemen in the MoD (appendix 2) as well as organized PR-campaigns against negative public reactions. The coalition also involved the Public Council of the MoD that worked as formal coalition of non-military opinion makers (interview with RAN researcher, April 2018).

### ***2.3 Policy Implementation, Evaluation and Termination***

During the implementation stage the government supplies and orders the responsible agencies to implement the policy. At the same time interest groups evaluate the first intermediate results in order to influence the policy process. If they succeed, the policy can be terminated or modified giving benefits to the lobbying group (Cairney 2011). These three constant processes are intersected, this is why they are given together in this section.

Serdyukov military reform was based on several core ideas (Dvorkin and Arbatov 2013; Barabanov 2011; Golts 2017). First of all, the reform dismantled the so-called “cadre compounds”, reduced in active service size military compounds that were supposed to be the second defense line in case of a full-scale war. This involved the change in material provision services. The MoD radically

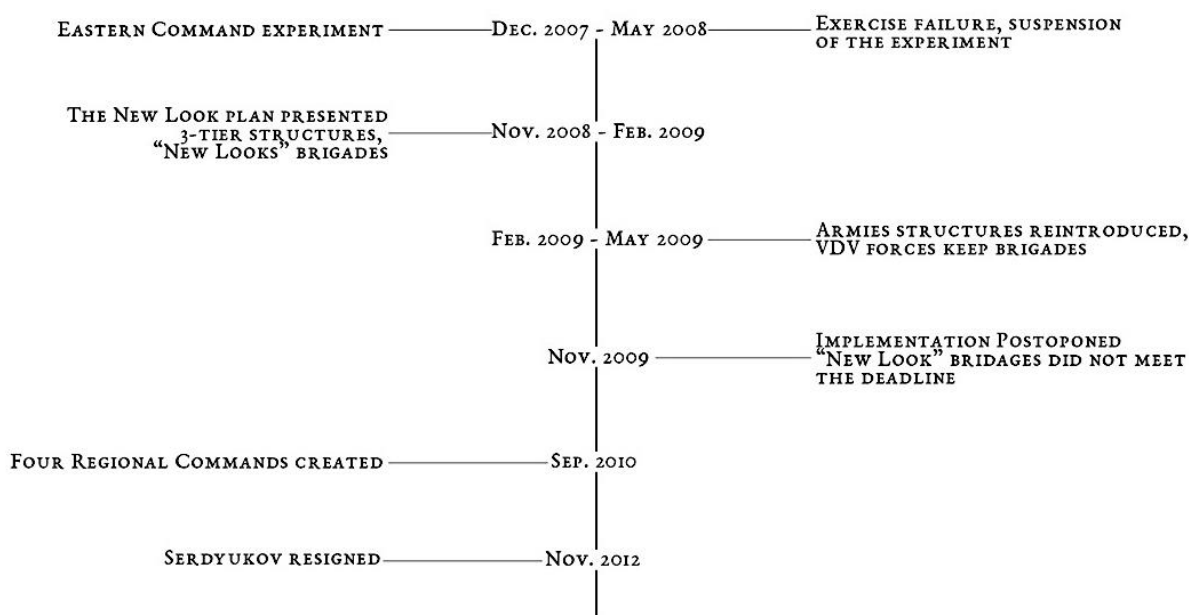
reduced the number of bases, military towns, garrisons, real property, and lands. Old and large strategic storage bases of military weaponry and machinery were closed, and new bases of storage and repair appeared afterwards (Dvorkin and Arbatov 2013).

The reform forced thousands of officers to resign because of the disbandment of their units and regiments, and the formation of the new army's skeleton based on sergeants and junior commanders. The MoD literally sent to the regional commands percentiles of staff of each rank to be dismissed from the service. The reduction lacked research on needed functions that consequently created an inadequate system of command-and-control. Young officers refused to be promoted because they knew that their salaries would remain the same, but the workload would increase largely. Moreover, while one refused to be promoted, other junior officers were paradoxically downgraded to sergeants' positions at the beginning (interview with retired major general, April 2018). However, the MoD had not achieved the plan for the sergeants' recruitment. Additionally, combat exercises were radically intensified combined with the gradual increase of wages for military personnel (in 2020 an average military salary should be 20% higher than in the civilian job sector). However, salaries were increased gradually, but the workload for active command officers increased immediately (Golts 2017).

Then, six former military districts were integrated into four joint strategic commands. This change was tested in December 2007, when the MoD created the experimental Eastern Regional Command, the predecessor of the future structural reform. Though the experiment had not pass the exercises and was cancelled in May 2008, followed by general Baluevsky resignation (interview with military journalist, April 2018). The policy coincided with the change in Space, Strategic Missile and Airborne forces. For instance, Strategic Missile Forces were downgraded to the military branch meaning that the position of the headquarters' operational command head became reserved for colonel ranks, but this officer must teach and control divisions' and brigades' commanders who are generals (interview with retired major general, April 2018).

Ground forces five-tier structure (military district – army – corps – division – regiment) was changed to the three-tier structure (operational command – brigade – battalion). However, the reform faced opposition from VDV (airborne) and Strategic Missile Forces. VDV cancelled the disbandment of division right before general Shamanov, well-known commander during the Chechnya war, was assigned as its chief (Soloviev 2009). Later general Shamanov claimed that VDV forces are always combat-ready, therefore, structural reforms are not needed in his forces (Litovkin 2012). The simplified timeline of the structural reform is presented on the figure below (figure 3).

*Figure 3. Structural reforms timeline*



The reduction of numbers also affected the MoD and the General Staff. The reform drastically decreased the staff size of the General Staff and Ministry of Defense, decentralizing their functions to the Joint Strategic Commands and outsourcing non-combat, supportive services (food supplies, cleaning) to private agencies (Dvorkin and Arbatov 2013). The irritation of MoD servicemen with the new appointments was fueled by almost five-fold reduction of the MoD central structures, from 51 thousand to 13.4 thousand people (Giles 2012), while around 3000 positions were reserved for civilian servicemen in 2012 (Rosstat 2012), not counting special government agencies and state-owned enterprises. Moreover, the reform reduced the size and functions of GRU (Main

Intelligence Agency) of the General Staff (Ermolin 2011). As a result, thousands of officers lost their jobs, including colonels and generals. These HR decisions and structural changes created the so-called *otstavniki* (retired officers) group who then became one of the most active critics of Serdyukov in public sphere.

The unprecedented full-scale state program of rearmament up to 2020 for almost \$800 billion was launched. This program complemented to the change in MoD style of relations with the defense industry. Serdyukov and generals openly criticized the defense industry for not being able to provide modern weaponry in an established period (Golts 2017). Consequently, the MoD decided to buy some parts of equipment abroad and make foreign companies to localize their industries in Russia. Russia bought well-known Mistral-class amphibious assault ship, Italian vehicles, small arms and miscellaneous devices for IT, communication, intelligence and special operations infrastructures (interview with independent analyst, April 2018). Moreover, the deals with France and Italy were parts of bilateral positive relations of Putin with Nicola Sarkozy and Silvio Berlusconi (interviews with foreign policy expert, insider journalist, RAN researcher, April 2018). Additionally, the rearmament program caused a conflict with the Ministry of Finance that led to the Alexei Kudrin, finance minister, resignation. Kudrin advocated for the reduction of the program because of the financial limitations (Travin 2011). The main author of the program was general Vladimir Popovkin who was the head of the armament office in the MoD: “Medvedev signed it on December 31, 2010, Kudrin discovered this later, he expected to have a few meetings to advocate for a 200\$ billion reduction. So Kudrin phoned Popovkin, and asked one question – Vladimir, for what? Popovkin answered, the decision was made by the Supreme Commander, Putin suggested, I agreed and Medvedev signed” (interview with insider journalist, April 2018). However, the Putin’s decision to go for the third term shackled the relationships with the Western countries and some companies decided to halt their agreements. The last foreign company, German Rheinmetall, stopped the construction of the training center for spec-ops forces in Monino, Nizhny Novgorod region, after the events in Crimea (interview with independent analyst, April 2018).

While the defense industry could not follow the new standards, some cities with two million workers were completely dependent on them. For instance, Uralvagonzavod factories, main tank production facilities, were unable to produce modernized tanks for the MoD, but they could not be closed because of the social commitments to citizens of Tomsk, Nizhny Tagil and Chelyabinsk. Thus, industrial directors, city mayors and regional governors tried to lobby for government tenders and Serdyukov resignation (interviews with insider journalist, independent analyst, April 2018). The conflict even involved Sergei Chemezov, former KGB general and Rostehnologii director (main defense industry consortium), who was Putin's colleague in socialist Germany in 1980s (interview insider journalist, 2018). Moreover, the change of financial structure inside the army took away the powers of regional commanders to unilaterally control their budgets. Since 2008 most payments should be verified in Moscow (Golts 2017).

In addition, Serdyukov decided to create the military police service in the armed forces in 2009. However, after several attempts, it was created only in 2014 after the resignation of the minister. Initially the military police should have substitute the law-enforcement and search functions of the Prosecutor's office, the Investigative Committee and FSB and become subordinate to the deputy defense minister (Herspring and McDermott 2010). However, the initiative caused much criticism in other security services, among high officers and faces difficulties in implementation (Vashenko 2016). FSB was against the idea, because initially it should have disturbed the work of counterintelligence service in the army (interviews with insider journalist, April 2018).

Finally, the reform aimed to radically change the system of the military education. It was planned to be multistage. Till 2013 the MoD planned to finish the reduction and "optimization" of its numbers. Then, to 2020 the end of the qualitative part of the reform was scheduled (Goremykin 2009). However, the first part was not completed – after 5 years of the reform, 35 military educational institutions still exist (Ministerstvo oborony Rossijskoj Federacii 2016), while Serdyukov faced resignation in November 2012. The MoD planned to create 10 military

universities out of 65 existed educational institutions (Herspring and McDermott 2010). This 6.5-fold reduction affected military professors, cadets and their families from Saint Petersburg to Vladivostok. All experts agreed that the military education vitally required to be reformed because of the long-standing problems in teaching and military science. Cadets were often busy with different kind of tours of duty and other extracurricular activities, including two months for The Victory Day annual parade preparation, while some professors translated foreign literature and published them as their own research (all interviews with experts, April 2018). The MoD once had a meeting about the disbandment of Kolomenskoe Higher Artillery Command School. The MoD gave a list of criteria to State Duma members and asked if they could find any criterion to save the school, they would help him to do it. However, it was not possible, because the limits of its development had not given any chance for its survival (interviews with former MoD member, April 2018). At the same time those institutions were usually located in the city centers, and their buildings and territories especially in Moscow and other big cities were extremely expensive and possessed market value (interviews with RAN researchers, Queen's University fellow, April 2018). Combined with the difficulties of moving faculty, staff and their family members from big cities to small towns the MoD was criticized for “giving-away” the military education with long history and traditions in Russia (interview RAN researcher, April 2018).

Table 1. Interest Groups Coalitions in the Military Policy

Interest Groups Coalitions in the Military Policy				
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 Shamanov)	Serdyukov dismissal, structural and numerical 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 commanders, civilianization and womenization of MoD	Active military officers, <i>otstavniki</i> , conservative opinion-makers	Security Council meetings, top-brass officers, State Duma lobbying	Serdyukov dismissal, MoD was reformed and reduced in numbers
Defense enterprises	industry Foreign arms supply, strict demands from MoD, 2008 Economic Crisis	-	Regional governors, city mayors, regional LE agencies, Sergey Chemezov and Dmitrii Rogozin	Serdyukov dismissal, foreign arms contracts gradually suspended, important enterprises received tenders
Military institutions	education 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, half of universities closed or united
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	Military police introduction suspended, functions changed
Ministry of Finance	Large allocations for the armament program	-	Alexei Kudrin	No results, Alexei Kudrin resigned

Thus, the Serdyukov military reform was a mixture of sustainable and unsustainable policies. It would be invalid to claim that unsustainability was caused exclusively by the interest groups activities. The policies faced poor planning and performance of the bureaucracy, and independent political factors such as the influence of international politics were also in place. Thus, the sustainability of military policies of Serdyukov's reform can be listed as follows (from least sustainable to fully sustainable):

- a) The introduction of the military police;
- b) The introduction of professional sergeants' cadres;
- c) Military education reform;
- d) The structural reform;
- e) The new rearmament policy;
- f) The reduction of numbers;
- g) The new payment scheme;

Some decisions were not abolished, while Serdyukov remained in power, but were rejected sometime after he was dismissed (table 1). For instance, the military education reform stopped in December 2012, a month after Serdyukov's resignation. The structural reform was also reversed next year, the defense industry got its rearmament contracts, the military police was introduced with changed and reduced functions (interviews with RAN researcher, April 2018). However, even though Serdyukov remained in power from 2007 to 2012, the introduction of the military police, professionals sergeants' cadres and the structural reform were unsustainable and faced opposition. The military police creation faced opposition from the law-enforcement agencies (interview with insider journalist, April 2018). These findings coincide with reports<sup>4</sup> about the attempts to formally integrate the MP into the security structure of Russia. The military education reform faced severe criticism in public sphere. Radical reduction and unification of educational institutions raised State

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<sup>4</sup> For full-text reports see *Rossiskaia Gazeta*, *Nezavisimoe Voennoe Obozrenie*, *Krasnaia Zvezda* websites.



Duma negative attention that the MoD tried to block by public hearings and conferences (interview with former State Duma member, April 2018). Despite facing harsh criticism, the reform was abolished only after the dismissal of Serdyukov. However, the reform fell for public pressure and reversed the dismissal of the historical well-known divisions (Tamanskaia, Kantemirovskaiia) (interview with RAN researchers, journalists, April 2018). The structural reform faced bureaucratic incapacities in reaching the deadlines, as well as it was blocked by VDV and Strategic Missiles Forces. According to the public data, VDV restructuring was blocked by general Shamanov, closed to Putin military officer, well-known for his command in Chechnya war (Soloviev 2009).

## Conclusion

The aim of the present research was to evaluate the interest groups influence the military reform in Russia in the 2007-2012 period. To achieve the aim the military reform was analyzed through the framework of minimum winning coalitions on each stage of the policy cycle. It was shown that inside the Serdyukov reform there was a variation of policies' sustainability and the ways the interest groups influenced them.

In order to come to conclusion, it was important to come up, at first, with theoretical understanding of interest groups' functions and forms in non-democratic context. Then, the discussion about the role of Russian political and economic institutions, top elite formation in neo-patrimonial system of governance in the sustainability of policies was provided. Finally, the military reform was examined through the minimum winning coalition framework on each stage of the policy cycle.

This analysis has shown that influence of interest groups depended on their structural role in the state system. Military bureaucracy, the Ministry of Finance used official meetings and other procedural events, as well as their personal status and connections to influence the policy process. Active and retired officers raised negative public awareness about the reform using media and State Duma members attention. The toughest opposition came from the defence industry that was supported by regional governors, city mayors and the close circle of Putin. Federal Security Service and other law-enforcement services opposing the military police introduction used formal procedures of bills reconciliation and the Security Council meetings. The military education reform was prevented from being fully implemented immediately after Serdyukov's dismissal.

The first hypothesis, claimed that 2007-2012 military policy unsustainability was caused by the absence of sufficient coalition of actors for the reform, is confirmed. The initial coalition of reformers was too small and consisted of top-brass actors and ideological supporters in the Public Council. The minimum winning coalition was truly minimum and "the winning" was largely caused

by the political and administrative system of Russia, in which Serdyukov had *carte blanche* for changes.

The second hypothesis, claimed that the reform was highly radical and implemented abruptly, which mobilized various interest groups to oppose changes and defend the status-quo, is also confirmed. The reform caused the mobilization of interest groups on each stage of the policy cycle from the agenda setting to evaluation and in each part of the reform program. Speaking in Breunig and Koski terms (2018), policy-makers failed to create the capture system of relations limiting unauthorized attention of interest groups and consequently ensuring the policies' sustainability.

Thus, it is possible to conclude that the unsustainability of the military reform of 2007-2012 in Russia is due to the radical nature of the reform; the political economic and administrative systems; and the general strategy chosen by the decision-makers. However, the reform was objectively needed for improving the performance of the military and the change in the attitudes of the society towards the armed forces. The political burden of the reform felt on Minister Serdyukov despite the support of Putin and Medvedev. As Goltz (2017) noted, someone should have played the role of Egor Gaidar for the Russian armed forces implementing radical reforms despite their harsh reputational consequences. However, even though there were criminal allegations towards Anatoliy Serdyukov and his team members, Serdyukov was proved innocent and is employed now in the state-owned defense industry. This fact coincides with assumption that criminal cases against high-ranking officials in Russia are instrumental to the power and resource struggles and their aim was to dismiss the undesirable official.

The findings have some implications for policy-making in non-democratic states. They suggest that even a complete political support from the autocratic leader cannot save policy-makers and their policies from the influence of other actors. And second, policy-makers should rather consider building a broader coalition of actors or focus on building of constraints or incentives against mobilization of groups than abruptly implementing changes.

The thesis makes several contributions to the current literature. First, it enriches the studies of modernization in non-democratic states elucidating it from the perspective of the armed forces reform. Second, it contributes to the field of interest groups research providing the analysis of their influence on the military reform. It gives empirical evidence to the “by-product” theory (Olson 1971) of the interest groups influence that states organizations are more successful in lobbying if it is their side-activity and they can provide selective benefits for their lobbyists.

However, the research has some limitations. First, it does not give evidence for a wide generalizability of findings, because of the single case nature of the thesis. Second, it lacks the strict evidence for causality that should be proved with specific methods of causal inferences.

These limitations lay the groundwork for future analysis of the same topic, but with either small and medium-n sample sizes, or the process-tracing of a single case. Qualitative comparative analysis or statistical research can solve the problem of generalizability, while process-tracing of some policies of the analyzed reform will give crucial evidence for valid and replicable causal inferences.

## Appendix

### *Appendix 1. Interview Table*

N	Interviewee	Status	Source	Format	Recording
1	Queen's University Research Fellow, Center for International and Defense Policy	Conducted	Email	Structured	Written
2	Journalist in a newspaper, MoD press-pool	Conducted	In person	Semi-structured	Recorded
3	Higher School of Economics professor, Council for Foreign and Defense Policy member	Conducted	In person	Semi-structured	Recorded
4	Former State Duma member	Conducted	In person	Semi-structured	Recorded
5	(Soviet) Russian military journalist	Conducted	In person	Semi-structured	Recorded
6	Major General, Russian Academy of Science member, Council for Foreign and Defense Policy member	Conducted	In person	Semi-structured	Recorded
7	Political Scientist, independent analyst, former PIR-center and Russian Academy of Science member	Conducted	In person	Semi-structured	Recorded
8	Anti-corruption lawyer, Anti-Corruption Foundation	Conducted	Skype	Semi-structured	Recorded
9	Higher School of Economics associate professor, "Foreign Policy" agency analyst	Conducted	In person	Semi-structured	Recorded
10	Russian Academy of Science leading research fellow, Doctor in Political Science (Doktor Nayk)	Conducted	In person	Semi-structured	Recorded
11	PhD in History, Russian Academy of Science leading research fellow	Conducted	In person	Semi-structured	Recorded
12	Full member of Russian Academy of Science	Rejection	-	-	-

## *Appendix 2. Female Leadership in MoD during Serdyukov period*

<i>Female Leadership in MoD during Serdyukov period</i>		
<b>Name</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Type of Service</b>
Ekaterina Priezhveva	2008-2010 – advisor for social sphere; 2010 – head of education department	Administrative
Olga Harchenko	Head of housing department	Material
Tatyana Shevtsova	Vice minister for financial affairs	Financial
Elena Kozlova	Vice minister for medical and financial inspection	Financial
Nadezhda Sinikova	Head of “rosoboronpostavka” (defensive arms delivery unit)	Material
Elena Kalnaya	Head of minister’s apparatus	Administrative
Irina Kovalchuk	Press-secretary, lieutenant colonel	Press
Olga Vasileva	Head of financial provision office	Financial
Anna Kondrateva	Head of financial planning office	Financial
Darya Morozova	Head of goszakaz office (state order unit)	Material
Alla Yashina	Head of military production price formation department	Financial
Marina Balakireva	Head of legal department	Administrative
Marina Chubkina	Head of central administrative office of “Spetsstroy” agency (main building agency)	Material
Tatyana Zavyalova	Advisor for the creation of media “Zvezda”	Press
Vera Chistova.	Vice minister for financial and economic work	Financial
Evgeniya Vasileva	Head of property relations department	Financial
Olga Stepanova	Advisor of “Rosoboronpostavka”	Material
Elena Knyazeva	Vice head of main international military cooperation directorate, colonel, later – major general	Administrative
Elena Chufyiryova	Head of sanatorium and resort provision department	Material
Tamara Fraltsova	2009-2010 – head of military education department; 2010-2013 – vice head of main HR office	Administrative
Olga Loschenova	Head of “Unified Account Center” of mod (wages agency)	Financial
Lyudmila Vorobeva	Head of “Rosoboronzakaz” (defensive arms ordering unit)	Financial
Larisa Egorina	Head of “Rosoboronstroy”	Material
Source: (Pavlova 2012; “Zhenskii Polk Ministra Serdyukova” 2012; Grigorieva 2017)		

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