

THE RUSSIAN ARMY HISTORY

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Modern Russian military history begins with Peter the Great, who established the Imperial Russian Army. For the first time, under Peter the armed forces were staffed by recruits from the peasantry, whose twenty-five-year obligation made them professional soldiers and sailors devoted to service because they had been liberated from serfdom-together with all their offspring-in the bargain. Officers were nobles called to an equally rigorous lifetime service. Under Peter Russia had the largest standing army in Europe, and elements of the military system he introduced lasted until 1917. Under Catherine II the Russian Empire expanded to the west, the south, and the east, and wars were fought with the Ottoman Empire (1768-74 and 1787-92) and Poland (1794-95). Under Tsar Nicholas I Russia became known as the "gendarme of Europe," an archconservative defender of monarchies against the forces of liberation that had begun to sweep Europe in the previous century.

The imperial army and navy disintegrated after the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. Although the Bolsheviks quickly signed a peace treaty with Germany, there was soon a need for a military force to defend the new state against the anticommunist Whites. In April 1918 the Red Army was established when the Soviet government announced compulsory military service for peasants and workers. The army's chief organizer was Leon Trotsky, the new nation's first commissar of war. Trotsky's initial officer cadre was made up of about 50,000 former tsarist officers. When the Civil War ended in 1921, General Mikhail Tukhachevskiy led an extensive program of reorganization and equipment modernization; he also established several military schools. By the mid-1930s, training schools and academies had turned out a generation of young officers and noncommissioned officers with strong political indoctrination, thus ensuring the ideological loyalty of the entire armed forces. Beginning in 1931, Tukhachevskiy began a large-scale rearmament program based on the industrial development of the five-year plans and the armed forces and their supplies of equipment were enlarged greatly as the shadow of war began falling over Europe in the mid-1930s. In 1937 the purges instigated by Joseph V. Stalin reached the army. Tukhachevskiy now first deputy commissar of war was executed for treason together with seven top generals. As many as 30,000 other officers were imprisoned or dismissed, leaving the Red Army without experienced commanders at the end of the 1930s. By the end of World War II, the Soviet armed forces had swelled to about 11.4 million officers and soldiers. At that point, this force was recognized as the most powerful military in the world. In 1946 the Red Army was redesignated as the Soviet army.

In the 1970s, the Soviet Union began to modernize its conventional warfare and power projection capabilities. At the same time, it became more involved than ever before in regional conflicts and local wars. It disappeared entirely by 1991, when the Warsaw Pact alliance dissolved. As a result, by 1994 all Soviet/Russian troops had been withdrawn from territory west of Ukraine and Belarus, as well as from the three Baltic States, which achieved independence in 1991. Together with the end of the Soviet Union as a state, the events of that period set the military on a bewildering search for a new identity and a new doctrine. As the Soviet Union dissolved there were some efforts made to keep the Soviet Armed Forces together as a single military for the new Commonwealth of Independent States. The last

Minister of Defense of Soviet Union, Marshal Yevgeny Shaposhnikov was appointed supreme commander of the CIS Armed Forces in December 1991. Boris Yeltsin signed a decree on the formation of a Russian Ministry of Defense on 7 May 1992, bringing the Russian Ground Forces into existence along with the other parts of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation.

The primary responsibilities of the Ground Forces are the protection of the state border, combat land, the security of occupied territories, and the defeat of enemy troops. The Ground Forces must be able to achieve these goals both in nuclear war and non-nuclear war, especially without the use of weapons of mass destruction. Furthermore, they must be capable of protecting the national interests of Russia within the framework of its international obligations. The Main Command of the Ground Forces is officially tasked with the following objectives:

- The training of troops for combat, on the basis of tasks determined by the Armed Forces' General Staff.
- The improvement of troops' structure and composition, and the optimization of their numbers, including for special troops.
- The development of military theory and practice.
- The development and introduction of training field manual.

The ground forces organizationally consist of the military districts (Moscow Military District, Leningrad, North Caucasus, Volga-Ural, Siberian and Far Eastern), eight army headquarters, one army corps headquarters (the 68th in the Far East), tank divisions, motorized rifle divisions, artillery divisions, fortified districts, individual military units, military establishments, enterprises and organizations. The current Siberian Military District was formed by the amalgamation of the Siberian and Transbaikal Military Districts in 1998, and the Volga and Urals Military Districts were amalgamated in 2001. The branches of service include motorized rifles, tanks, artillery and rocket forces, troop air defense, special corps (reconnaissance, signals, radio electronic warfare, engineering, radiation, chemical and biological protection, technical, support, automobile and the protection of the rear), military units and logistical establishments.

The armed forces chain of command prescribed in the military doctrine clearly establishes central government control of the military. The president of the Russian Federation is the commander in chief. The Government (called a council of ministers or cabinet in other countries) is responsible for maintaining the armed forces at the appropriate level of readiness. Direct leadership of the armed forces is vested in the Ministry of Defense; the General Staff exercises operational control. Executive authority over the military lies in the office of the president of the Russian Federation. The State Duma exercises legislative authority through the Government. The minister of defense exercises operational authority, and the General Staff implements instructions and orders. The minister of defense is the nominal commander of all the armed forces, serving under the president of the Russian Federation. In this capacity, the minister exercises day-to-day authority over the armed forces. The Ministry of Defense is managed by a collegium of three first deputy ministers, six deputy ministers, and a chief military inspector, who together form the principal staff and advisory board of the minister of defense. The executive body of the Ministry of Defense is the General Staff. It is commanded by the chief of the General Staff. The most secret of the General Staff directorates is the Main Intelligence Directorate (MID), which has been an important and closely guarded element of national security since its establishment in the 1920s. The GRU system delivers detailed information on the capabilities of Russia's most likely military adversaries to the General Staff and to political leaders.

The historical tradition of military command is considerably different in Russia. The tsars were educated as officers, and they regularly wore military uniforms and carried military

rank. Stalin always wore a military uniform, and he assumed the title *generalissimo*. Even General Secretary Leonid I. Brezhnev (in office 1964-82) appointed himself General of the Army, and he encouraged portraits of himself in full uniform. By tradition dating back to the tsars, the minister of defense normally is a uniformed officer. The State Duma also seats a large number of deputies who are active-duty military officers-another tradition that began in the Russian imperial era. These combinations of military and civilian authority ensure that military concerns are considered at the highest levels of the Russian government. They also demonstrate that strict subordination of the military to civilian authority in the Western sense is neither a tradition nor a concern in Russia. The independent Russia inherited the ranks of the Soviet Union, although the insignia and uniform was altered a little.