

The Russian Armed Forces “New Look” Reform (2008-2013)

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Abstract

Russia-Georgia relations had been declining since Georgia first voiced its intention for NATO membership in 2005 which later escalated into a war in 2008. Despite being victorious in the 2008 Russo-Georgian Five-Day War, the shortcomings of the Russian Armed Forces that were exposed during the war had led the country towards its “New Look” military reform announced months after the war. Many International Relations scholar draw a connection between the reform and Russia’s increasing assertiveness marked by the Crimean annexation and Russia’s involvement in Syria. This piece will then try to understand how Russian military performance in the 2008 war led to Russia’s most rigorous military reform, and more importantly, how did Russia implement its “New Look” reform during 2008 until 2013. Russia had underwent far reaching efforts and goals to transform the armed forces into combat-ready forces but had also faced challenges in modernizing its weaponry system, in increasing the quality and professionalism of its forces.

Keywords: Russia; Georgia; New Look military reform; 2008 Russo-Georgian Five-Day War

Abstrak

Hubungan Rusia-Georgia telah menurun sejak Georgia pertama kali menyuarakan niatnya untuk menjadi anggota NATO pada tahun 2005 yang kemudian berujung dengan terjadinya perang pada tahun 2008. Meskipun menjadi pemenang dalam Perang Lima Hari antara Rusia dan Georgia 2008, kekurangan angkatan bersenjata Rusia yang terungkap selama perang telah membawa Rusia kepada reformasi militer "New Look" yang diumumkan beberapa bulan setelah berakhirnya perang. Banyak ahli Hubungan Internasional menghubungkan koneksi antara reformasi dan meningkatnya ketegangan yang dibuat Rusia ditandai oleh aneksasi Krimea dan keterlibatan Rusia di Suriah. Karya ini kemudian akan mencoba memahami bagaimana kinerja militer Rusia dalam perang 2008 mengarah pada reformasi militer Rusia yang paling ketat, dan yang terlebih lagi, bagaimana Rusia menerapkan reformasi "New Look" dari 2008 hingga 2013. Rusia telah melakukan upaya dan tujuan yang luas untuk mengubah angkatan bersenjata menjadi pasukan yang siap tempur tetapi juga telah menghadapi tantangan dalam memodernisasi sistem persenjataannya, berkualitas, dan dalam meningkatkan kualitas dan profesionalisme tentaranya.

Kata Kunci: Russia, Georgia; reformasi militer New Look; Perang Lima Hari antara Rusia dan Georgia 2008;

Introduction

After a series internal political turmoil, the year of 1991 marked the end of the so-called “Cold War” era as the Soviet Union collapses leading the world into a unipolar direction of United States global leadership. And from since, the former Soviet Union renamed Russian Federation has been struggling to grasp and gain more power to show its influence in the international arena marking its attempt to return its former glory as suggested by Gustav Gressel in his “Russia’s Quiet Military Revolution and What It Means for Europe” (2015: 2) that “The current Russian leadership has never accepted the post-1989 European order, including the norms, rules, and conventions agreed by the last generation of Soviet leadership.”

Further, Russia also experienced waning geopolitical situation as Georgia and Ukraine expressed their intention to join NATO on early 2000s. In specific case of Russia and Georgia, their relationship was never in a good term since the very formation of Russian Federation; the Russian saw and blamed that Georgia had played a part in the dissolution of the Soviet Union empire (Asmus, 2010, p. viii).

Their relationship is further convoluted with the issue in Abkhazia and South Ossetia along with the accession of

the newly elected “pro-American and European Union Oriented” Georgian President Mikheil Saakasvhili into office in 2004 (Cohen & Hamilton, 2011, p. vii). And on 2008, the Russia-Georgia relations was at their worst state with the 2008 Russo-Georgian Five-Day War episode which paved the way for Russia’s 2008 “New Look” Reform.

Despite being victorious in the war, the three previous military reforms are proven to be insufficient to satisfy Russia’s needs to achieve their political ends (Gayday, 2011; Gressel, 2015). The underperformed military during the five-day war has made the then Defense Minister Anatoly Serdyukov decided to commence Russian Federation most radical military reform which then led to Russia’s increasing assertiveness in recent years marked by the 2014 Crimean annexation and its involvement on Syrian’s issue since 2015 which surprised western analysts (Kofman, et al., 2017; Gressel, 2015). This article discusses the military reform from 2008-2013. This reform was started in 2008 when Russia entered the war with Georgia. The need for Russia to reform its military was to further elevate its capability to involve in a more modern war.

The 2008 Russo-Georgian Five-Day War

The relationship between Russia and Georgia including the breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia is a convoluted string of relationship. Both Abkhazia and South Ossetia are internationally recognized parts of Georgia, but the series of separatist movements in the early years if its formation led to the 1992-1993 Russia-sponsored agreements to put peacekeepers in South Ossetia consisting of equal number of peacekeepers from each party while in Abkhazia, the agreements made it possible for Russia to enjoy the role as the sole peacekeeping force (Cohen & Hamilton, 2011).

In August 2008, a war broke out between the Russian Federation and Georgia which lasted for five days from 7 August until the conflicting parties reached a ceasefire agreement sponsored by the French government. While the Russian side justified their military operations as an act against Georgian aggression towards South Ossetia and Abkhazia, the Georgian stood on their justification that their operation was to uphold constitutional integrity and sovereignty.

The 2008 Russo-Georgian War played a significant role towards the 2008 “New Look” reform, and this piece will

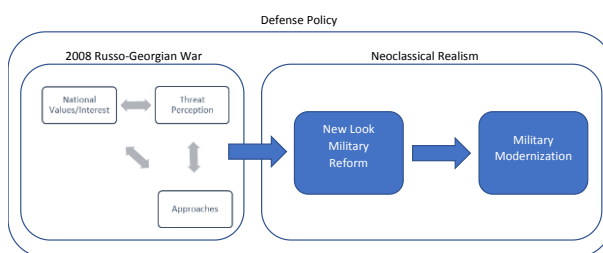
then try to draw the connection between the 2008 war with the creation of the 2008 “New Look” reform using specific theories and concepts. Neoclassical Realism school of thought will be the main foundation in which the theory will justify Russia’s action to undergo military reform as a mean to achieve such objective in general sense. Gideon Rose (1998) described the school believes that a state’s place in International system regarding its relative material power capabilities primarily drives the scope and ambition of a state’s foreign policy. However, the influence of a state’s relative power capabilities in international system to the making of foreign policy is indirect in nature and complicated due to the pressure from systemic level that will be translated through intervening variables at the unit level, such as: the decision makers’ perception and the strengths of a country’s state apparatus and its relation to the surrounding society.

In more specific to this case, then, the concept of threat perception is used to determine the driving forces of the reformation as the intervening variable that affect the decision makers’ perception and will further used to describe the series of events happening in 2008. The threat perception is also utilized to explain Russia’s decision to wage war on Georgia

noting the waning geopolitical influence in the region as Georgia is making their way into NATO membership. At the same time, the authors believe that Russo-Georgian War also serves as an assessment for Russian military capabilities assessment that drives the decision for defense modernization, hence the “New Look” reform, The 2008 conflict has made Russia realize of the capabilities of its own military with negative critics coming from international community to strengthened the idea that defense modernization is needed (Adamsky, 2014; Gressel, 2015).

The connection between theories and concepts are drawn as illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1. The structure of the framework



Russia's Threat Perception for the 2008 Russo-Georgian War

Threat perception focuses on reacting to action by perceiving it as a threat in a form of policy and that threat perception can differ much from actor to

actor based on each respective policy-making process. Raymond Cohen (1978) suggests steps and countermeasures may be taken into effect as a result of a threat that has been perceived even when the opposition has no ill-intentioned actions towards the former. Raymond Cohen's conceptualization of threat perception requires a state of “crisis” to which a threat then can be formulated through ‘observation’ stage – which indications are received – and ‘appraisal’ stage – which these indications are evaluated and defined as threats. The observation stage involves “the selection of cues for attention from a universe of contemporary events” while the appraisal stage involves “the selection of explanations for these signals from a universe of possibilities” (p.95).

The first cue observed was the moment when Georgia expressed their intention to join NATO in 2005 under President Mikheil Saakhasvhili and further irritate Russia by persistently negotiating for withdrawal of Russian military bases since 2004 and ended up with Russia withdrawing their troops and handover of an Armor Repair Plant. In February 14, 2005, both NATO and Georgia signed an agreement on “the appointment of Partnership for Peace (PfP) liaison officer”, and the discussion between both parties

continued afterwards. Further, their 2005 National Security Concept explicitly antagonize Russia as a “threat” to Georgia that may contribute to potential spillover of conflicts.

Lack of control over the state border of Georgia with the Russian Federation along the perimeters of Abkhazia and the former Autonomous District of South Ossetia exacerbates the above-mentioned threat [spillover of conflicts from neighboring countries] and creates further obstacles to deal efficiently with the problem. ... In addition, the Russian Federation’s military presence on the territory of Georgia would be a risk factor to the stability of the country in certain circumstances. (Parliament of Georgia, National Security Concept, 2005).

Raymond Cohen (1978) suggested that to appraise the degree of importance of such an observed event is to look in the argument put forward by observers to justify and to reason out the consequences of the threatening cue. Responding to NATO’s April 2-4, 2008 Bucharest Summit that concluded not to offer Georgia a Membership Action Plan (MAP) but assured the Georgian side a special communique that they would grant membership once the requirements were met (NATO, 2008), Russian Armed Forces Chief of Staff General Yuri Baluyevsky

said “Russia will take steps aimed at ensuring its interests along its borders, these will not only be military steps, but also steps of a different nature,” while Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said “Moscow will do everything it can to prevent the two countries [Georgia and Ukraine], run by pro-Western governments, from becoming NATO members.” (Shchedrov, Lowe, Brunnstrom, & Mchedlishvili, 2008).

It is then clear that Moscow saw this issue as a serious matter that requires serious measures. On April 2008, the then-President Vladimir Putin (succeeded by Dmitry Medvedev on May 7, 2008) after a meeting of Russia-NATO Council, while saying that the country’s relationship with NATO is improving, at the same time also emphasized that there are serious obstacles to the development of their relations (Kremlin, 2008).

Threat perception may influence other state’s interest and may further affect approaches directed to other states. in the case of the 2008 Russo-Georgian War, the existence of threat perception perceived when Georgia express their effort for NATO membership and their decision to use force in South Ossetia influences the formation of Russia’s national interest in the form of their geopolitical goal which

consequently gave birth to the approach to reach the goals and deter the threats by the means of waging war with Georgia. President Dmitry Medvedev on August 11:

On the night of August 7–8, Georgia committed an act of military aggression directed primarily against the people of South Ossetia and the Russian peacekeeping brigade deployed in this region. ... Several thousand people have become victims of the ensuing humanitarian disaster, and a large number of them are our fellow citizens. ... As I have said, my duty as President right from the outset was to protect our fellow citizens and not let the crimes committed against civilians and peacekeepers go unpunished. Russia wants to end this barbarity against the Ossetian people and against our citizens as soon as possible. (Kremlin, 2008)

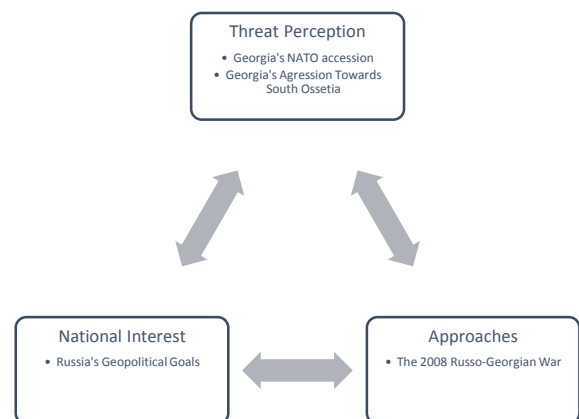
Further, during the Press Statement Following Negotiations with French President Nicolas Sarkozy (August 12, 2008) and asked about whether there was any possibility for Russia to react different to Georgia's aggression, President Dmitry Medvedev responded:

If there had been any possibility for Russia to make a different response to Georgian aggression against South Ossetia we would have done so. There was no other option. Faced with the killing of several thousand citizens the state had to take the appropriate course of action. When international law is violated the state and the entire

international community must take the appropriate action and not make the kind of half-hearted response that is regrettably common in the world today. (Kremlin, 2008)

The relationship between the three variables is as illustrated in the figure below.

Figure 2. The 2008 Russo-Georgia conflict triangle of threat perception



Russia's Goal in the 2008 Russo – Georgian War

During their two years or more preparation for the 2008 operation, the Putin – Medvedev administration had come up with extensive list of interests that is translated into their geopolitical goals (Cohen & Hamilton, 2011, pp. 1-3). One of the goals was the expulsion of Georgian troops and effectively terminating Georgian sovereignty in South Ossetia and Abkhazia. In his statement of recognition to South Ossetia and Abkhazia on August 26th, 2008, President Dmitry Medvedev emphasized that:

Tbilisi made its choice during the night of August 8, 2008. Saakashvili opted for genocide to accomplish his political objectives. By doing so he himself dashed all the hopes for the peaceful coexistence of Ossetians, Abkhazians, and Georgians in a single state. (Kremlin, 2008)

Later in 2009, President Dmitry Medvedev gave a clear statement that: “Russia will never revoke its decision to recognize the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia” (Kremlin, 2009).

In addition, the goal was to also prevent Georgia’s membership to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) while also sending a strong message to other post-Soviet states, in particular; Ukraine regarding its persistence effort for NATO membership may lead to war. Vladimir Putin’s stressed that they “view the appearance of a powerful military bloc [NATO] on our borders, ... as a direct threat to the security of our country” (Kremlin, 2008) and Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov stated that “Moscow will do everything it can to prevent the two countries [Georgia and Ukraine], run by pro-Western governments, from becoming NATO members.” (Shchedrov, Lowe, Brunnstrom, & Mchedlishvili, 2008).

Further, Moscow was to also achieve their long-term strategic goal.

Increasing control over the Caucasus and take control of strategic energy pipelines and transportation corridor that connect Central Asia and Azerbaijan with the Black Sea and ocean routes overseas for oil, gas, and other commodities. The war resulted in the temporary shutdown of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan and Baku-Supsa pipeline and since, Azerbaijani oil company BP Azerbaijan had lost access to 1.6 kilometer section of the pipeline near South Ossetian Border (PwC, 2014; BBC, 2015)

Due to an agreement established in 1999 between Central Asian states and Western companies, the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline thus created allowing Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan to bypass Russian-controlled pipeline and transport its oil straight through Georgia and Turkey. Being cautious of the potential output of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline, establishing a regime over Georgia would significantly limit sovereignty and diplomatic freedom of maneuver of these Central Asian states (Cohen & Hamilton, 2011).

Further, Cohen & Hamilton (2011) emphasized that by achieving these goals, the Russian Federation will be able to reassert their sphere of influence or “sphere of privileged interests” in the post-Soviet states and beyond, “if/when necessary by

use of force” (p.3). According to them, this will shape future post-Soviet states behavior to establish a friendlier tier of diplomacy with Moscow.

The realization and awareness that the Russian armed forces is lacking combat capability and the emerging critics coming from within and outside Russia that revolve around Russia’s underperformed military during the five-days war become the necessary factors of the military reform noting that the Russian government realized that their forces at the state’s disposal were in no condition to fight in modern war (Cohen & Hamilton, 2011; Gressel, 2015). Thus, President Medvedev on 5 November 2008 told its legislature that he had ordered a new “new configuration for our country’s armed forces,” and a rearmament effort because of military shortcomings that were exposed by the August 2008 Russia-Georgia conflict (Nichol, 2011). After the 2008 Five-Day War, the government decided that scenarios involving large-scale attack against Russia are highly unlikely, instead, involvement in local conflicts in countries near Russian border is a more expected probability, thus, the abandonment of the “anachronistic” mobilization system of the Soviet Union (Gayday, 2011).

On May 12, 2009, President Dmitry Medvedev announced the issuance of “National Security Strategy of Russia” (henceforth referred to as NSS) through the year of 2020. The document encompasses the principles which became the basis for Russia’s “Military Doctrine” and foreign policy (Nichol, 2011). And on February 5, 2010, the President, in addition to the National Security Strategy, approved the new “Military Doctrine” which carries legal force as state policy and in principle dictates decisions on capabilities (Nichol, 2011).

Russia’s National Security Strategy to 2020

According to President Medvedev, the National Security Strategy is a “fundamental, system-forming document, which is aimed at the enhancement of the quality of state control.” and serves as “an umbrella document for other policies prescribing Russian state approaches to strategic and strategic issues” (Giles, 2009). Giles (2009) emphasized that the document ensures a unified-strategic-goals is pursued collaboratively from every department and minimize instances in which department priorities dominating the development of the country. Further, the NSS is the “acknowledged system of strategic priorities, goals, and measures with regards to domestic and foreign policy that will

determine the degree of national security and the level of stable, long-term development of the state” (Section I, point 3).

The strategy states that globalization, characterize by increased “degree of dynamism and interdependence of events” has led nation-states to experience heightened conflicts of unequal development due to “deepening rift between rich and poor countries”. Further, the inadequacy of the current global and regional architecture “oriented towards NATO, and likewise the imperfect nature of legal instruments and mechanisms, create an ever-increasing threat to international security”. Among others, notable threats stated in the NSS include terrorism, proliferation of weapon of mass destruction, environmental issues, illicit development in the cybernetic an biological domains, existing international conflicts, new states possessing nuclear, economic crises, and the placement of Europe elements of the global missile defense system of the United States of America (Section II, point 8-12).

Regarding National defense; Russia’s strategic goals related to improving national defense consist of “preventing global and regional wars and conflicts, and likewise of realizing strategic

deterrence in the interests of ensuring the country's military security” and by ensuring military security means “developing an improving the military organization an defensive potential of the state” and strategic deterrence is realized “by means of the development of a system of military-patriotic education of Russian citizens, and likewise of military infrastructure and administration systems for the state military organizations.”

The National Security Strategy also states that the main challenge of improving national defense in the medium term is “the transition towards a qualitatively new profile for the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation while maintaining the potential of the strategic nuclear forces”, referring to the New Look reform. Several key actions stated in this regard is to improve organizational staff structure and system, increasing the number of combat-ready units, thus, improving operations and combat training and the organization of interaction among different troops and forces. Further, the strategy also emphasized the need of a clearer recruitment system across the Armed Forces, other troops, military formations and bodies and the optimal standby mechanisms are being developed.

Russia's Military Doctrine 2010

Taking account of the Russian Federation National Security Strategy to 2020 (Section I.2), the new Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation further evaluates in more specific, military dangers and military threats to the Russian Federation as well as the course of armed forces and other troops improvement. Under Section I point 8 regarding main external military dangers, the doctrine explicitly stating NATO as dangerous noting NATO's effort of establishing military infrastructure near member countries close to the border of the Russian Federation and its continuous expansion. The section also includes the creation and deployment of strategic missile defense systems, militarization of outer space, the deployment of strategic nonnuclear precision weapon systems, and terrorism, among others as threats.

Article 7 of the doctrine states that the likelihood of a large-scale war being wage against Russia has diminished, but there are growing threats of other natures; the likely scenario was participation in possible local countries of the former Soviet Union. Further, the doctrine also identifies the characteristic of the modern military conflicts under Section I point 13.

Many scholars like Gressel (2015); Boltenev et al. (2011); Nichol (2011); Barabanov et al. (2012); and Cohen & Hamilton (2011) argued that the 2008 Russo – Georgian War significantly contributed to the Russia's view of modern conflict and the issuance of this doctrine. In regards of technology, under point 15, the doctrine identifies types of technologies that will be utilized frequently and bear great significance for military actions while nuclear weapons will still serve as deterrence under point 16. And under section III point 17:

The Russian Federation's military policy is aimed at preventing an arms race, deterring and preventing military conflicts, and improving military organization, the forms and methods of the utilization of the Armed Forces and other troops, and also means of attack for the purpose of defending and safeguarding the security of the Russian Federation and also the interests of its allies. (Section III, Military Policy of the Russian Federation, Russia's Military Doctrine 2010)

And to that end, some of the key points to be achieved in connection to the improvement and development of the Armed Forces were; to ensure permanent combat-readiness of the Armed Forces and other troops, to have fast mobilization and deployment of troops, to improve the administration, structure, composition, and

strength of the components of the military organization as well as to improve military training, education, technology and research, and personnel well-being, and to have up-to-date armament and equipment of the armed forces.

The Implementations of the “New Look” Reform of The Russian Armed Forces 2008 – 2013

Prior to the “New Look” Reform, the Russian Armed Forces was mainly filled with conscripts and was designed for large scale air, land, naval war with massive mobilization of troops (Nichol, 2011). The Armed Forces maintained many skeleton-level units with diverse obsolete equipment and weaponry. Further, the Armed Forces used a very long chain of command with slow and cumbersome mobilization system and disproportionate command and control personnel and officers (Boltenkov, Gayday, Karnaukhov, Lavrov, & Tseuluiko, 2011; Barabanov, Makienko, & Pukhov, 2012). They had three previous reforms all aimed to transform the troops into combat-ready mobile forces manned mainly by professional soldiers, but were doomed to poor budget planning and weak economy (Gayday, 2011; Gressel, 2015).

The NSS to 2020 and the 2010 Military Doctrine while also addressing national security and military issues, lays out the goals and the groundwork for the “New Look” reform. Thus, the goal of the 2008 Military Reform was to transform the Russian Armed Forces into mobile and well-trained armed forces and equipped with modern equipment and weapons (Barabanov, Makienko, & Pukhov, 2012). Notable changes were the introduction of the brigade system, reduction of the number, and the establishment of the new Joint Strategic Command – Military District. And to achieve such transformations, since 2008 the Ministry of Defense laid out five priorities as stated in the figure below.

Figure 3. Priorities of the 2008 Reform



(Source: Barabanov, Makienko, & Pukhov, 2012, p. 16)

Optimization of the Number of the Troops and Officers

According to Barabanov et al. (2012) one of the most apparent indications of the “New Look” reform was to make the number of the armed forces including the officer corps slimmer as well as transforming the egg-shape military rank into a more pyramid-like. The reduction of the troops allows for a more cost-efficient armed forces and to transfer more budget to other area of focus. The officer corps was reduced from 335,000 – 365,000 in 2008 to 220,000 by 2012. Warrant officers were abolished. And the number of reduced personnel as well as military ranks can be seen in the tables below.

Table 1. Approximate number of Russian Federation military personnel throughout the year

Year	Number of personnel
2008	1,200,000
2009	1,027,000
2010	1,027,000
2011	1,046,000
2012	956,000
2013	820,000
2014	910,000

(Source: Barabanov, Makienko, & Pukhov, 2012; Persson, 2016; Fernandez-Osorio, 2016)

Table 2. Number of Military Ranks in Russian Armed Forces by 2012

Ranks	2008	2012
Generals	1,107	610
Colonels	25,665	7,700

Majors	99,550	25,000
Captains	90,411	42,000
Senior Lieutenants, Lieutenants	50,975	62,000

(Source: Barabanov, Makienko, & Pukhov, 2012)

Unified Strategic Commands Establishment

To establish the idea of an integrated ground, naval, airborne, and air and defense command, the plan of creating Joint Strategic Commands (henceforth referred to as JSC) was proposed. The plan was to rearrange the existing six military districts into four military districts in which each corresponds to one JSC within the vicinity of the corresponding military districts. Under this model, service commands and combat-arm commands are transformed into combat-arm headquarters while preserving all the basic functions in organizational development, strength acquisition, and combat training (Barabanov, Makienko, & Pukhov, 2012).

Reorganizing the Armed Forces Branches and Establishing the Aerospace Defense Forces

The reform applied major reduction in the number of personnel across the armed forces as well as major restructuring of several branches of the armed forces and the reintroduction of conscripts into

service. The Strategic Rocket Forces (SRF) maintained their structure and while the branch experienced reductions at the command level, it got higher priority for procurements programs for modernizing technical equipment (Barabanov, Makienko, & Pukhov, 2012). In addition to number reduction in the Navy, the Naval Aviation forces were converted into airbases with some units were transferred to the Air Force and a Joint Commands of the Submarine Forces had been established in the Northern Pacific Fleets. According to Boltenkov (2011), 2010 was the most successful for the Navy's shipbuilding program in a decade with number of large ships entered service, many test and research program were undergoing and some proven fruitful, an several negotiations of agreements to procure new ships were successful.

In the army, the reform transformed the army from division-based units into brigades by abolishing 203 divisions into 85 brigades with 95-100 percent of compromised manning level on the basis of the available weapons and military equipment corresponding to 2,200 – 2,500 servicemen at their full strength and was aiming to decrease the mobilization time from 24 hours into an hour (Barabanov, Makienko, & Pukhov, 2012; Gayday,

2011). The Airborne Troops (henceforth referred to as VDV) retained their divisional designation and the conscripts were introduced back into VDV. The VDV aviation units were transferred to the Air Force and the surface-to-air missiles (SAM) regiments were established within the VDV unit formations to increase air defenses because the VDV relies heavily on air cover by Air Force and Air Defense and this weakness became apparent during the 2008 war that the Airborne Troops could not managed to cope with Georgian UAVs (Lavrov, Reform of the Airborne Troops, 2011).

The main transformations in the Air Force were the restructure of the Air Force from regimental air army structure into air bases units. The air armies were replaced with four independent Air Force and Air Defense Commands, Long Range Aviation, and Military Transport Aviation. The airbases also include the previously independent airfield logistics, communications, and radar battalions making a single chain of command within the airbase. The current target across the Air Force is 100 flight hours to allow aerial refueling training for frontline aviation (Lavrov, Reform of the Russian Air Force, 2011). The Aerospace Defense Force (ASD) was established to replace the Space

Force and to incorporate several components of the Air Defense from the Air Force (Barabanov, Makienko, & Pukhov, 2012).

The ASD forces were to be comprised of the Space Command and Missile Defense Command. The main idea behind the creation of this new forces according to Nichol (2011) was that the Russian leadership put heavy concerns of a US or NATO-led attack noting that Russia forecasted by 2020 the Western will have 80,000 cruise missiles including 2,000 with nuclear capabilities (p.13). Consequently, a fast warning attack to the leadership in case of an initiation of an attack will be very crucial. The typical “New Look” units are shown in the table below (note that the table only show the “typical” configurations, the real configurations may vary based on the units).

Reforming Military Education Systems

The main concern in reforming the military education system was to have a greater centralization. The planning for 2012 was to establish 10 “system-wide” schools which comprises of three military training and research centers, six military academies, and one military university. These new centers will be established on a territorial basis rather than on service principle and will comprise of the

combination of the existing military schools and military institutions that existed in 2008 (Barabanov, Makienko, & Pukhov, 2012). With most of the armed forces filled with conscripts, and the one-year term of service introduced in 2007 further emphasized the need for advanced training and supervision by a professional corps of non-commissioned officers (NCOs) and remained a serious issue, thus the trainings were also focused on producing NCOs (Nichol, 2011).

Conscription and Enlistment

Since the establishment of the 2004-2007 federal program, the focus of the military leadership and the defense ministry was to slowly replace conscripts with contract soldier, but the trend was reversed in 2008 – 2010 due to economic restraints of maintaining professional soldier. Further the federal program also failed to meet the target of having 400,000 professional soldiers with only about 190,000 professional troops by early 2009 along with the diminishing quality of the contingent (Gayday, 2011; Nichol, 2011; Barabanov, Makienko, & Pukhov, 2012). With further economic restrictions, contract soldiers in 2010 was down to 110,000, and the funding was being shifted to procure weapons and to boost the salaries of remaining contract soldiers (Nichol, 2011).

But later, in 2011 the trend reversed, by the end of that year, it was planned that eventually the armed forces will be filled with 220,000 officers, 425,000 contract soldiers, and 350,000 conscripts by 2017. It was assumed that the trend went back taking into account the low quality of conscripts and that the MoD was getting political supports. Steps to increase military prestige to attract more contract soldier were also taken place such as salary increase and provide housing benefits.

Rearmament

At the end of 2010 President Medvedev approved the latest State Armament Program (*Gosudarstvennaya Programma Vooruzheniya*, hereafter, GPV) for the years of 2011 to 2020. The program set out a very ambitious goal laying out the plan for weapon an equipment procurement, research and development and the creation of a new system with a budget of 20 trillion rubles (Cooper J. , 2016). The aim of the program was to drastically increase the share of modern armaments held by the armed forces from 15 percent in 2010 to 70 percent in 2020 (Cooper J. , 2016; Barabanov, Lavrov, & Tseluiko, 2010; Nichol, 2011). But Barabanov et al. (2012) and Cooper (2016) argued that the 70 percent “modern”

armaments does not necessarily needs to be “modern”.

Barabanov et al. (2012) and Cooper (2016) also agreed that the most weapon modernization procurement was heavily focused for the Ground Force and the Navy while the Air Force and got relatively strong renewal rate. Prior to the approval of the 2010 GPV massive procurement were also taken place for the Air Force. With the budget of 20 trillion rubles, the priority taken was to also establish the Aerospace Defense Forces and to improve the Strategic Rocket Forces, purchase of fifth-generation fighter aircraft for the Air Force; ships and submarines for the Navy; and air-defense systems. Nevertheless, the purchase of conventional weapons also starts off with high volume of purchases like command, control, communications, computer, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (C4ISR) systems, and increased mobility of troops (Barabanov, Makienko, & Pukhov, 2012; Nichol, 2011).

The program also keeping the research and development budget at the very least 10 percent. The figure went to 20 percent in 2011 and plummeted to 18 percent in 2012 (Barabanov, Lavrov, & Tseluiko, 2010). Thus, to ensure smooth procurement agenda, several efforts to

make sure the yearly State Defense Order (hereafter, GOZ) run well were made such as disciplining the defense industry and provide full funding for several eligible contracts.

According to Nichol (2011), the doctrine emphasized on the consolidating domestic weapon production, but domestic industries were deemed to be lacking the technology, thus the MoD decided to have several technologies imported to boost technology transfer and to create production series later. The decision creates arguments between the industries and the ministry, but the decision was also taken to increase the domestic defense industries competitiveness, price reduction and boost research and development.

Challenges in the Implementation of the “New Look” Reform 2008 – 2013

According to Nichol (2011), the reform faced several political hindrances. He explained that due to the course of the reform have been decided within a restricted circle of senior official, it damages military morale. Thus, the discontent was followed by high-profile resignations by generals and series of protests and demonstrations involving

veterans in 2010 and 2011 which demanded Serdyukov resignation. Civilian had also conducted economically related demonstration and it is possible to recur on a larger scale. Several attempts to relieve the discontent according to Nichol (2011) were promises to increase officers’ salaries and pensions while also keeping defense budget as secretive as possible. Further there are also oppositions that still support to retain the mass mobilization army of the Soviet era.

Further, Russia also faced economic challenges as adequate funding will be needed that will put burden on the relatively small and weak Russian economy (Barabanov, Lavrov, & Tseluiko, 2010). maintaining the budget under 4 percent of the GDP will be crucial as higher level of share will have detrimental effect on Russia’s economy. Further, Nichol (2011) explained that the extra funding coming from the reduction of troops and officers will not be felt in the near-term budgetary because the extra funding will be directed to pensions and mandated housing effectively reduce the availability to boost salaries thus contract soldier increasement hindered. Further, inflation in the price charged by defense industries continues to erode the value of increased procurement budgets and corruptions were reported

within the state defense order (GOZ). Eradicating corruption and inflation will be significant elements of the reform and have positive consequence for the overall economy (Nichol, 2011).

Further, the failure of the 2010 GOZ also reflected the tension between the MoD and the defense industries mismanagement and inefficiency in the MoD and defense industries led to only 30 percent of weapons delivery in 2010 by defense industries (Nichol, 2011). The President handled the situation through firing or disciplining various MoD officials and defense industries heads. Thus, cooperation with defense industries will be very crucial.

Russia is also facing demographical crisis to which the number of men that reach induction age was declining with Russia also facing “demographic valley” because of a sharp birth rate decline during the collapse of the Soviet Union and the number is expected to plummet (Barabanov, Makienko, & Pukhov, 2012). It was assumed that approximately there will be 700,000 men with qualified age, but with deferments and exemptions the number fell to 550,000 while with the reduction of the term of service for conscripts to one year introduced in 2007, the number of conscripts needed increased

substantially (Barabanov, Makienko, & Pukhov, 2012; Nichol, 2011).

Conclusion

The 2008 Military Reform rooted from the combination of waning geopolitical situation and deteriorating relationship with Georgia and other post-Soviet states in 2005 along with the declining military capability of the Russian Armed Forces. The 2008 August Georgian aggression towards South Ossetia resulted in the involvement of the Russian Armed Forces in the conflicting area thus, the Russo–Georgian Five-Day War. But, the Russian military performance during the war received mixed reviews but for sure, the shortcomings of the Russian armed forces performance revealed during the war led to the announcement of the 2008 “New Look” Military Reform in the following months.

The reform was aimed to transform the Russian Armed Forces from mass mobilization forces for large-scale war into permanent combat ready forces with high mobilization and equipped with modern weapon and equipment. The reform had planned far-reaching efforts and goals including, massive restructuring of the Armed Forces, substantial reduction on the number of the troops, the creation of new

military districts and Joint Strategic Command, reforming military education and training as well as the drafting system for officer, conscripts, and contract soldiers, along with extensive armament plan. But the reform was not a smooth ride along the road, the reform had faced challenges in carrying out the ambitious weapons modernization program, in conscripting enough quality troops, and in boosting the number of professional soldiers. But the reform has been successful in changing the old system into what they proclaimed to be fully staffed brigades along with establishing a more modern Joint Strategic Commands – Military Districts to support full integration of the Armed Forces element for operational purposes. Consequently, the effect of the reform can be seen from Russia's Crimea annexation in 2014 and involvement in Syrian soil from 2015.

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