

different regions of Russia are characterized by varying levels of freedom of expression, and this variability calls for further cross-sectional investigation.

OLENA NEDOZHOGINA

PhD candidate

University of Tartu/University of Melbourne

Nadja Douglas, *Public Control of Armed Forces in the Russian Federation*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. 2017. 361 pp.

This study is devoted to the social specifics of the relationship between civilian and military actors in Russia, one of the determining factors of Russia's path towards its "sovereign democracy" model. These relations are influenced by societal attitudes and security/defense policies, as well as regime development. Rising to the challenge of tackling such a complex topic, this book is a really comprehensive work, providing a thorough and contemporary examination of the field and the various central questions within it. In particular, it offers up-to-date theoretical (Part I) and empirical (Part II) analyses of civil-military relations within key political-social contexts of Russia's "sovereign democracy."

To achieve this quite ambitious goal, the study is structured in a somewhat classical style. The author builds up her narrative in brief and readable chapters, each based on either a historical precept, a social axiom, or a political law. The chapters elaborate a wide range of issues.

The first chapter, which serves as a classical/typical introduction to the study, proposes a basic framework for the analysis of civil-military relations. Here Douglas also sets the findings of her research in the context of their consequences for some background theory revision.

Chapter 2, "Looking at the 'Bigger Picture,'" focuses on interdependent philosophical and praxeological approaches to contemporary Russian practices related to armed forces control. It

provides a thorough analysis of the key problematics and issues, not (only) critiquing classical theories (mostly for being Western-oriented), but also bringing the analysis forward to the present-day Russian realities.

Chapter 3, “Different Understandings of Civilian Control,” is based on the concept of “control” (“*kontrol*”), a term which has a narrower meaning in Russian than in English. Examining the concept of *kontrol*, both in its normative and ideological specifics, can be used to foster a deeper understanding of the whole political dynamics that shape civil-military relations in Russia. Discussing both scientific and analytical studies from Russia and abroad, this book illustrates the wide-ranging relationships between society and politics in Russia.

Chapter 4, “Revising the Framework of Civilian Control,” indirectly sums up the theoretical block of the book. Concurrently, “hard security” issues took center stage in formally peacetime Russian life to a degree that they had previously done only during the Cold War. Due to that powerful military-industrial bureaucracies and their political allies competed to gain larger shares of growing security and defense outlays. While the role of the society, and the civil society as its capstone, somehow misestimates.

Part II, “Empirical Case—Post-Soviet Russia,” examines the different stages experienced by civil-military relations in Russia before taking the current “sovereign democracy” form. Efforts to establish and consolidate “objective” (in the classical Huntingtonian sense) democratic control over the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation have passed through a number of distinct stages. The socio-political relationships have changed over decades (from the 1990s to the 2010s), and those changes have affected the way Moscow understands power and society, and the distinctions between the military and the civilian, war and peace, etc.

Chapter 5, “Institutionalised Forms of Civilian Control,” deals with some serious gaps in those socio-political spheres, as well as analyzing efforts to promote general democratic consolidation through the strengthening of civilian institutions. To a certain degree, the rising level of institutionalized *kontrol* in Russia correlates with a lack of real influence. The problem, as vividly described in the study, has its roots in a lack of authority, as well as in the urgent need for

serious institutional reforms in order to secure military subordination. Meanwhile the Kremlin tends to use the military actively as a tool to reinforce its power.

Chapter 6, “Heterogenous Landscape of Grassroots Initiatives,” emphasizes the primacy of general democratic development factors in establishing civilian control of the military in Russia.

Chapter 7, “Public Control of Armed Forces as Social Practice,” brings us toward a kind of paradox. On the one hand, the social practices have produced a considerable number of arguments in favor of control, but have focused too heavily on causal factors that influence civil–military relations. On the other hand, when it comes to questions of *kontrol’*, not enough attention is paid to the military doctrine and defense strategies, which are analyzed rather sporadically by some independent experts. Ultimately, this leads to the civil society’s inability to exert influence over the military-political leadership.

Chapter 8 is entitled “Tracing the Impact of Civic Activism on Military Legislation (AGS Law).” The legal base developed in Russia formally enables civilians to monitor and direct the implementation of decisions delegated to the military, and to punish military misbehavior. But due to such factors as the absolute non-transparency of the security sector as a result of the secrecy regime (“*sekretnost*”), the effectiveness of the legal mechanisms of civil activities is low.

Overall, this study leads us to conclude that it seems a doubtful luxury for a nation like Russia to not worry or know much about its military. For a state as geopolitically ambitious and geoeconomically weak as the Russian Federation, this is a perverse situation.

Examining a range of vital issues that dot Russia’s social and political landscape, the book makes for highly comprehensive and worthwhile reading for academic scholars and profile experts, as well as for Western military and political decision-makers seeking to better understand their Russian opponents.

OLEKSII POLTORAKOV

Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv