

The Great Russian Restoration: The Military Establishment Factor

Description

by [Rolo Slavski](#) via [The Occidental Observer](#)

I have resisted the urge to write much about the actual war in Ukraine up to this point for several reasons.

First, I am not a military expert, although I have spoken to several retired military men to get their take on the situation since the start of the conflict. This is made easier by the fact that I come from a military family.

Secondly, I saw Russian military dominance and victory a foregone conclusion and still do. This was always a war for the Russian politicians to lose, not for the Ukrainian military to win.

Thirdly, I do not believe that anyone has any real inside information on Russian troop movements and strategic goals. The Ministry of Defense has kept a very tight lid on that sort of thing. Therefore, all we really have to work with is speculation based on Telegram and Twitter videos and reports from embedded journalists. Or, we rely on the reports of Western intelligence agencies, which do not have a good track record.

We should instead consider Putin's goals going into this war. The most obvious factor to consider is the fact that Putin has no political future should he fail to achieve his objectives in Ukraine. One way or the other, he needs a victory of some sort or another to hang his hat on. This is perhaps the best metric that we have for figuring out what Putin's intentions are in Ukraine and since this series of essays is focused on internal changes occurring in Russia as a result of the showdown with the West, we should consider what exactly Russian civil society is demanding from Putin.

First and foremost, the so-called "Atlanticist" faction, which seems to be a euphemism for Jews and their puppets as far as I can tell, did NOT want Putin to intervene in Ukraine. He did so anyway. And he did the same in Crimea, Syria and Georgia. Now, many of the most prominent Atlanticists have fled the country. In other words, there is no proof whatsoever that Putin is willing to bend to their demands when it comes to Russia's security and so, we can safely disregard the opinions and demands of these people and their supporters in Moscow and St. Petersburg because it is quite clear that Putin has already done so.

The largest block in society is what we can broadly call the "Patriots." They come in all ideological shades and stripes — some are red flag-waving Communist nostalgists, others prefer the black, yellow and white aesthetics of the Russian Empire. Most simply fly the red, white and blue of Russia and have no ideology to speak of other than what we can understand as generic patriotism. They all support the military operation in Ukraine, but they have various goals that they want the intervention to achieve. These people make up 80+% of Russian society and we know this because Putin's approval rating has soared into the 80s because of the military intervention. The hardliners want an incorporation of the entire territory of Ukraine into the Russian Federation, but are willing to settle for everything east of the

Dniepr. The majority of patriotic Russians just want a victory in Ukraine, and have no idea of what exactly that will entail. Liberating the Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) and the Luhansk People's Republic (LNR) and reincorporating them into Russia while giving the Ukrainian army, the "Nats-bats" (mercenary "nationalist" militias), and Zelensky a good thrashing is good enough for them. Russia's official stated goals in this conflict are just that, simply phrased another way: the "de-nazification" and "de-militarization" of Ukraine and the liberation of Donetsk and Lugansk. To achieve this limited victory, all Putin has left to do is to dislodge the Ukrainian army in the East, where they were massing up to attack the DNR and where they are hunkered down in their fortified positions now.

But let's examine the military operation in greater detail for a moment. If we're going to speculate on Russia's military plans and objectives, we have to focus on the facts and not on the narratives that we can spin based off these facts. For example, we know for a fact that the Russian army reached Kiev within the first three days of the conflict. Now, was this a feint or part of a psychological operation to get Kiev to surrender, or an attempt to prevent a planned Ukrainian offensive on Donbass by splitting the Ukrainian army or the first stage in a preparation to storm the capital and cut the head off the snake? Here, we can only speculate.

We can also add to our speculations that there may have been an attempt to activate Russian assets within the city and take it from within. Russian bloggers are speculating that this was the Russian plan for Kharkiv, which failed to materialize for one reason or another. In fact, there are rumors that Kharkiv's officials feigned surrender only to lure Russian troops in and then open fire on them, leading to a similar repeat of the Grozny ambush during the Chechen wars. I hesitate to hang my hat on this claim, but it strikes me as having a ring of truth to it. After all, what was the Russian plan for taking the cities if they refuse to bomb and then storm them into submission? Clearly, negotiating with the officials and activating sleeper agents within the cities would be a far more cost-effective method of taking these cities. If that is the case, Russian spooks and diplomats failed spectacularly in Kharkiv, Kiev, and Mariupole.

More facts: the Russian military plowed through the Ukrainian in-field defenses and parked themselves outside these cities or simply went around them. No immediate storming occurred. While they surrounded these cities and continued their targeted destruction of the Ukrainian military, a bloodbath began in these cities targeted at Russia-sympathizers and officials who spoke up about entering negotiations or surrendering ending up being assassinated by the SBU and the "Nats-bats."

So: were the Russians planning on taking all of these cities but failed because their sleeper cells were poorly prepared/neutralized? Or was the Ministry of Defense and Putin telling the truth when they said that they weren't interested in taking territory or these cities but simply in knocking out Ukraine's military potential and liberating the DNR and LNR?

Choose your own narrative as you see fit or wait until the dust settles. Either way, we simply don't know the answer yet.

Back on the home front, Putin hasn't even called up Russia's reserves. Young men are NOT being drafted to go fight in the Ukraine. Again, this is another fact. What does it tell us? That the war is not popular? Hardly. Not only do we have the polls to prove that the war is, in fact, popular, but we have Western media lamenting the fact that this is the case. Why then not call up the reserves? Perhaps because they were deemed unnecessary for the goals of the operation. This indicates that the goals of the operation were limited, does it not?

And now a few words on the Russian Ministry of Defense.

We can start with Anatoly Serdukov, the former minister of defense. Serdukov was one probably one of the least qualified ministers of defense in Russian history. He was widely reviled and hated by the officer corps in the military and his replacement with Sergei Shoigu was seen as a much-awaited step in the right direction. In the 90s, Serdukov was a furniture salesman (fine, a general director) in St. Petersburg and it was widely believed in military circles that he was as corrupt as they came. For example, his significant other got caught with millions of dollars in her bank account. There was also regular run-of-the-mill corruption associated with his five-year reign which ended in 2012, such as the use of military resources to build roads to oligarchs' villas and the like. I suppose one could make the argument that there was no proof of direct embezzlement, but he ended up getting sacked for involvement in corruption all the same. The silver lining was that no one in the West could take Russia seriously with him at the helm, and so NATO relaxed. It was around this time that President Obama declared Russia a regional power and declared that a pivot to China was the path forward for ensuring US hegemony in the world. Russian patriots believe that Serdukov was partially to blame for this insulting demotion from superpower status. Most notably, the army during this period was drastically cut as part of a money-saving campaign that was branded as an anti-corruption effort.

With Sergei Shoigu taking over in 2012, Russia slowly began reinvesting in the military. Shoigu, like many other Russian public figures, was considered a legacy of the Yeltsin kakistocracy that once ruled the country. That being said, he demonstrated actual competence during his time in political office and his time at the Ministry of Emergencies — a rare trait in the Russian government over the last 30 years, to be sure. All that being said, he is not, strictly speaking what the military circles would consider to be a true-blue military man. There are rumors circulating now that he is about to be sacked, which are largely the result of him having dropped out of the public eye since March 11 of this year. Shoigu is widely known as a media enthusiast who enjoys putting himself in front of the cameras, which also lends credence to the rumors. I was hesitant to bring them up or give them any credence, but these rumors aren't being promoted solely by the Ukrainians and Russian Liberals, but by Russian military men, who would like to see him replaced with one of their people, and ideally, a man with actual combat experience from either the Afghanistan or Chechen campaigns.

Firing Shoigu would be bad PR for the Kremlin now, but in terms of improving Russia's military capabilities and continuing Russia's move away from the legacy of the 90s, it's really not the worst thing that could happen — in fact, military circles would rejoice at the news. This is also partially why the military experts and veteran officers have been so critical of the war effort so far. Russian military people believe that this war is being fought with political considerations in mind, and not as a strict military operation. Clausewitz once famously said that war is a continuation of politics by other means and that has certainly been the Kremlin's approach to this operation. But now, having exhausted the possibility of taking Ukraine without any major bloodshed through other, more political methods

involving diplomacy or subterfuge, the only way forward is to fall back on old-fashioned military force. The Russian army has abandoned Kiev and several other cities and is concentrating in Donbass to surround and destroy the hunkered down Ukrainian army. This is not exactly good news for Russia's foreign policy and her political ambitions. Tens of thousands of Ukrainian soldiers are going to die now. Civilians will die as well. Relations with Ukraine will never be the same.

But, internally, this is not the worst possible outcome by any means because what the politicians bungled, the military men are being called in to fix now. This will translate into an increased share of power and prestige for the Russian military establishment within the country. A deeply conservative, militaristic and "old-school" faction is about to start flexing its muscles in Russian society now. This is not too dissimilar to the situation that existed in Tsarist Russia and the USSR, where the military was very much involved in politics and formed a hardcore conservative bulwark in society. This is simply a part of Russia's pre-Yeltsin political tradition. In contrast, in much of the West, the military simply doesn't have much to do with internal politics as an institution. But, in many other nations in the world, the military either significantly influences politics or simply runs the country outright. Remember: Post-Soviet Russia was run by a coalition of the office of the Presidency, the Federal Security Service, and the Oligarchs. If all goes well, the power vacuum caused by the shutdown of many oligarchs in recent months will be filled by the military.

Any genuine Russian restoration will have to involve the restoration of the prestige of the military — its reintegration into political life and its re-elevation within civil society. Much depends on the success of the Russian offensive in the Donbass.