

“Other Studies of the Extent of Elite Militarization under Putin”

Appendix to David W. Rivera and Sharon Werning Rivera,

“Is Russia a Militocracy? Conceptual Issues and Extant Findings Regarding Elite Militarization,”

Post-Soviet Affairs 30, No. 1 (2014): 27-40.

The first of these studies is co-authored by Henry Gaffney, Ken Gause, and Dmitry Gorenburg of the CNA Corporation and analyzes “those officials identified as closest to Putin—that is, those involved in decisions at the top.”¹ Specifically, drawing from “the *Putin Encyclopedia* and other sources,” the authors compiled biographies of “the 61 individuals who are involved in the government and are on the list of the 100 most influential individuals in Russian politics.” Of this group, they find that “20, or one-third, either currently have positions in the security services or had positions associated with the security services.”²

While Gaffney et al. should be commended for undertaking an independent examination of this prominent issue, problems with their coding rules greatly undermine the import of their findings. The first of these problems is that the set of force structures that they use to identify siloviki is very idiosyncratic and seems to be ad hoc. On the one hand, they exclude “regular military officers” from the ranks of siloviki³—a decision that stands in contradiction to the definitions employed in both Kryshstanovskaya and White’s and our work. On the other hand, they include several individuals who previously worked in positions—for example, “Soviet foreign trade missions”—that reflect a background more in economics than security. Similarly, they justify coding an individual who worked as a representative of a company in East Germany and later spent eight years in the Sovintersport Foreign Trade Association as a silovik with the

¹ Henry Gaffney, Ken Gause, and Dmitry Gorenburg, *Russian Leadership Decision-Making under Vladimir Putin: The Issues of Energy, Technology Transfer, and Non-Proliferation* (Alexandria, VA: CNA Corporation, May 2007), p. 161.

² Ibid., pp. 162-64.

³ Ibid., p. 162.

argument that “[w]hether that makes him part of the security services is not clear, but these organizations sound like convenient covers.”⁴

The second and even more significant problem with their analyses is revealed by their statement that some of those they have identified as siloviki—in fact, *fully 11 of the 20*—“currently have positions in the security services.” That is, they regard the individuals heading Russia’s various force structures—i.e., holding cabinet-level positions in the government—as siloviki even if their careers prior to assuming these posts were exclusively civilian. (In this regard, they themselves note that one such individual, Sergei Shoigu, “had no association with the security services until he took over as Minister of Emergency Situations in 1991.”⁵) Yet this is an obvious misapplication of the concept of a silovik as it has been defined in the literature: one becomes a “force man” via employment wearing epaulettes and not a (perhaps brief) stint in high politics. Put differently, a force structure can be headed by either a silovik or a life-long civilian.

The second study that presents estimates of the extent of elite militarization under Putin is authored by Eberhard Schneider. After describing Putin’s ascension to the presidency as signifying “that the FSB had seized the top position in the state,” Schneider lists a wide-ranging set of institutions—from the Presidential Administration at the top to commercial companies and social organizations at the bottom—in which “Putin has placed former KGB or FSB staff.” After an even more lengthy discussion of specific positions in which Putin has placed “his people,” he asserts that “there is a risk that the FSB, because of its deepening interpenetration with all spheres of life, is becoming a state within the state and one that increasingly pursues its own policy.”⁶

⁴ Ibid., p. 165.

⁵ Ibid., p. 164.

⁶ Eberhard Schneider, “The Russian Federal Security Service under President Putin,” pp. 45-48 in Stephen White, ed., *Politics and the Ruling Group in Putin’s Russia* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

While Schneider, like Gaffney et al., is to be applauded for undertaking an empirical analysis of the professional backgrounds of office-holders and other elites, his analyses nevertheless fail to offer a firm basis for reaching any conclusions about the extent of elite militarization during the Putin presidency. This is the case for several reasons. First, Schneider's description of his research methodology is limited to the statement that he conducted a "detailed analysis of the biographies of officials in federal and regional key positions...."⁷ In other words, the sources that he utilized to provide this biographical information are not revealed, nor are the coding rules that he used to analyze it.

Second, Schneider's claims about FSB infiltration of various organizations are generally not accompanied by figures on the number of civilians in such positions, yet the absence of such information makes it impossible to compute the percentages of siloviki in the many institutions that he lists. Third and perhaps most significantly, in two of the instances in which it is possible to compute such percentages, Schneider's data actually undercut his thesis since they equate to very low levels of military-security representation. For instance, Schneider writes: "In the State Duma there were 16 deputies in 2007 with a KGB/FSB connection, beginning with the chairman of the State Duma and chairman of the ruling party 'United Russia.' In the parliamentary group of this party there are 12 more deputies with FSB connections, among them the first deputy chairman." In other words, Schneider's findings actually indicate that only 28 of the 450 members of the Duma—or 6.2%—are former KGB/FSB personnel. Similarly, he reports that "eight out of 178 members of the Council of the Federation have an FSB background, among them the chairman of the foreign affairs committee and the deputy chairmen of the defence and security committees."⁸ Those eight siloviki equate to a mere 4.5% of the members of Russia's upper house of parliament.

The third effort at estimating the extent of elite militarization is a short article published in 2007 by Oleg Roldugin, a journalist for the newspaper *Sobesednik*. In "How to Become a

⁷ Ibid., p. 45.

⁸ Ibid., pp. 46-47.

Minister,” Roldugin writes that his newspaper had gathered “fresh data” on the “golden hundred” of prominent civil servants—“key figures in the Kremlin administration, ministries, and agencies.” According to these data, “14% of bureaucrats officially hail from the security organs (including Vladimir Putin and his likely successor Sergei Ivanov), and they are clustered, as a rule, in the power ministries....Six percent of bureaucrats had work experience in other kinds of domestic law enforcement, another 10% served in the armed forces, and 9% worked in the prosecutor’s office.” After accounting for the fact that some individuals had served in more than one force structure, Roldugin concludes that “the sum total of ‘overt siloviki’ in power falls just under 30%.”⁹ Sadly, however, not much stock can be put in this finding due to the fact that its author reports virtually no information about how it was calculated. In particular, the familiar questions regarding both the sources from which biographical information about these hundred individuals was gathered and the procedures that were used to identify siloviki are left completely unaddressed.

In conclusion, one thing worth noting is that *all three of the aforementioned studies find the percentage of siloviki in the political elite to be considerably lower than do Kryshtanovskaya and White*. Specifically, whereas the latter report military-security representation in January 2008 to have been 67% in the national leadership and 40% in the government, both Gaffney et al.’s and Roldugin’s analyses of rather similar samples in 2007 place it at only 33% and 30%, respectively. Similarly, whereas Kryshtanovskaya and White report military-security representation in 2008 to have been 17% in the upper house and 14% in the lower house of parliament, Schneider’s data for that year estimate the representation of former KGB/FSB personnel in those institutions to have been merely 4.5% and 6.2%, respectively. Nonetheless, as has been discussed above, all three of these studies suffer from methodological deficiencies that make it inadvisable to put much faith in any of their various estimates of military-security representation.

⁹ Oleg Roldugin, “Kak stat’ ministrom” [How to Become a Minister], *Sobesednik*, May 7, 2007.