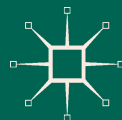


PUBLIC CONTROL OF ARMED FORCES IN THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

Nadja Douglas



Public Control of Armed Forces in the Russian Federation

“This highly-unique book project deals with relations between civic actors and state power structures in post-Soviet Russia, a critical case where Putin’s neo-authoritarian rule has left little room for civil society to perform its critical role as a check on the power of the military (and the use of the military by the state to control society). These are weighty and important issues, and Russia is perhaps an extreme example, but—given its power and behavior in the international arena—one which is nevertheless critical for analysis. This is a book that I and all other experts in the field need to have in our libraries.”

—**Christopher Marsh**, *Professor of National Security and Strategic Studies,
US Army School of Advanced Military Studies.*

Nadja Douglas

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To all courageous activists in Russia and elsewhere who are persistent in their struggle against militarism.

This monograph was accepted as a doctoral dissertation by the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of Humboldt University Berlin in 2016.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AGS	Alternative Civilian Service (in Russian: <i>Al'ternativnaya Grazhdanskaya Sluzhba</i>)
CoC	Code of Conduct (OSCE)
CoE	Council of Europe
CMR	Civil-Military Relations
CSM	Committee of Soldiers' Mothers (general term)
CSMR	Committee of Soldiers' Mothers of Russia (Moscow-based umbrella organisation of nation-wide committees that separated in 1996 with leaders from the current UCSMR, see below)
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
ECtHR	European Court of Human Rights
FTP	Federal Target Programme
FSC	Forum for Security Cooperation (OSCE)
HRC	Human Rights Commissioner
MoD	Ministry of Defence
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
ONK	Public Monitoring Commissions (in Russian: <i>Obshchestvennaya Nablyudatel'naya Komissiya</i>)
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PACE	Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe
PC	Public Chamber
PCB	Public Consultative Body
SMR	Society–Military relations
SMSP	Soldiers' Mothers of St. Petersburg
SPS	Union of Right Forces (in Russian: <i>Soyuz Pravikh Sil'</i>)
SSG	Security Sector Governance

SVOP	Council on Foreign and Defence Policy (in Russian: <i>Sovet po Vneshnei Oboronnoi Politike</i>)
SZGD	Stenographs of State Duma parliamentary session (in Russian: <i>Stenogrammy Zasedanii Gosudarstvennoi Dumy</i>)
SZRF	Collection of legal documents of the Russian Federation (in Russian: <i>Sobranie Zakonadatel'stva Rossiiskoi Federatsii</i>)
UCSMR	Union of Committees of Soldiers' Mothers of Russia (founded after the 1996 separation from the original CSMR, see above)
YHRM/MPD	Youth Human Rights Movement (in Russian: <i>Molodezhnoe Pravozaщhitnoe Dvizhenie</i>)

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EDITORIAL NOTE

The transliteration throughout the text is based on the British Standard scheme for the transliteration of Cyrillic characters. Diacritical marks used in Russian have been omitted, except for soft signs and hard signs. Commonly known names are spelled in their popular form (e.g. Yeltsin instead of El'tsin).

All translations from Russian (as well as German and French) are by the author.

All references regarding online sources and websites, unless otherwise indicated, were accessed and checked in January 2017.

Introduction

“Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past”

(Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon*, 1852, First chapter).

In the context of war and conflict in Ukraine and the Middle East, the Russian political leadership over a period of less than 2 years has twice obtained the approval of the Russian Federation Council to use military force on foreign territory.¹ This is less a sign of strong parliamentary control powers held by the Russian legislature than an indicator of the resurgence of Russia as an international military power and security actor.

While Russia’s foreign and defence policy strategies and military capabilities are discussed widely in the international press these days, little is known about the internal dimension of Russia’s military power and society–military relations more specifically. There are substantial concerns about Russia returning to both a state of external militarisation (rise of the military budget by 5.9% from 2015 to 2016, according to SIPRI²) and internal militarisation fostering nationalism and militarised patriotism (see Le Huérou and Sieca-Kozłowski 2008; Sperling 2009; Sieca-Kozłowski 2010). Russia’s re-militarisation is, however, not a singular and isolated phenomenon. The general resurgence of military power for national and international crisis management is evident.

In this context, a tendency can be observed to recall the 1975 Helsinki Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) and its first basket, which commits to disarmament and confidence-building. The Helsinki Agreement was built on the acknowledgement that security and stability between states are not threatened only by imbalances of armaments and aggressive military doctrines, but also by a lack of confidence and trust in each other's internal military control capacities. For the first time, internal affairs, such as the relationship between citizen and state, became subject to international negotiations between states.

One of the consequences of the Helsinki Conference was that in many countries, both East and West of the divide, Helsinki Groups were founded. These organisations reported not only the human rights situation and violations in their respective countries, but also fostered the creation of a network of transnational civil societies which, among other things, demanded transparency and accountability in matters of security and defence.³ Thus, "proposals for new security approaches by states were paralleled by a new emphasis on the transnational role of citizens" (Kaldor 2003, 61). In fact, numerous agreements and international norms to which states have subscribed later in the framework of the CSCE and subsequently OSCE have been and continue to be referenced by local civic rights groups in Eastern Europe and Russia as an instrument to remind their governments about their commitments. One of these documents, adopted in 1994 at the OSCE Budapest Summit, is the Code of Conduct on Politico–Military Aspects of Security (CoC). This agreement is still considered to be a cornerstone for the governance of armed forces in democratic societies. It includes principles for the democratic political control of armed forces.⁴ However, the provisions and norms stipulated by the OSCE CoC are still far from being implemented. In fact, among Western states different views prevail concerning the requirements that should be met by a "democratic understanding" of civilian control. Comparative studies (see for example Wagner and Peters 2011) have shown that in a majority of contemporary democracies, oversight of the armed forces and decision-making on the use and deployment of military power remains weak and in fact an executive prerogative.

Even if executives formally control the armed forces to the extent that the risk of military intervention in state politics is contained, abuses within the armed forces' structure and maladministration of

military force by decision-making elites can still undermine civilian control. In the extreme case, actors on the institutional level are not even aware of this. This indicates that taking into account other problems in the relationship between civilians and the military is paramount. This book argues that the engagement of citizens deserves further attention. Affected individuals, interest and advocacy groups, civic experts, journalists, social rights movements and society at large, through the power of public opinion, play an increasingly important role in matters of security and defence today. Some activities involve soldier rights protection and PTSD⁵ support groups, others for example anti-war protests, yet others the monitoring of decision-making processes on the use of force by civilian experts. I will subsume these very diverse practices, which nevertheless have a lot in common, under the label “public control”. This form of control and oversight of armed forces represents a significant compensation mechanism or “corrective” for deficient control on the institutional level. It entails an understanding of control as a mechanism for checking deviations from the norm. Such deviations are likely to occur in any state, regardless of its governmental system. While past research on the problematic issue of civilian control concentrated mainly on the analysis of consolidated “Western” democracies and states in “transition”, the aim of this book is to shed light on the phenomenon of civilian and specifically public control of armed forces in an authoritarian context.

Russian society–military relations and in particular the state of the Russian armed forces have the potential to elucidate this problematical issue: Continuous incidents of serious abuses and human rights violations, especially against conscripts, stagnating military reforms, repressive recruitment procedures, forced labour and an annual peacetime death rate of 3% (Peredruk 2013) are just a few indicators that illustrate the results of a dysfunctional system of institutional control.

Various groups of civic activists in Russia have in the past attempted to oppose the strong Russian military lobby and political decision-making directed towards the use of armed force. Today’s military operations have gained in complexity and are therefore less unambiguous in terms of their political and military consequences and implications than, for example, military operations in Chechnya or South Ossetia in the past. Therefore, it has become more difficult for civic activists today to exercise public oversight, demonstrate their resistance, investigate military deployments and shed light on the individual fate of conscripts and contractors who are being sent to combat zones.

The self-perception of Russian civil society organisations (CSOs)⁶ engaged in the field of soldier rights protection and military monitoring is well suited for an analysis through the prism of advocacy and contentious politics. Undeniably, conscripts and conscientious objectors⁷ alike are one of the most disenfranchised and vulnerable groups of individuals in Russian society. Therefore, as will be shown in the course of this book, the notion of “public control of armed forces” in the Russian context has come to mean and be equated with the “protection” and the “defence” of these groups’ human and civic rights against arbitrary state power. To this end, a network of grassroots⁸ organisations emerged in the 1990s/early 2000s throughout the country, among them Committees of Soldiers’ Mothers (CSMs)⁹ but also various civic and human rights organisations, as well as advocacy networks dedicated to helping young men and their families to protect their rights and to have a vigilant eye on the Russian military organisation. Thus, from the Second Chechen War onwards¹⁰ violations within the military became more public, the impunity of military institutions was challenged, efforts to humanise the armed forces increased and demands for the introduction of an alternative civilian service (AGS) became louder.

Today, Russian civic activism faces a severe crisis. As will be explained later on, a variety of factors related to the geopolitical context and increasing internal repression that came along with vexatious legislation (the most emblematic being the Foreign Agent Act, in force since 2012) and decreasing financial support from abroad were responsible for the loss of much momentum. Many of the CSOs active in the politico-military sphere have ceased to exist, but those which continue are well known among human rights defenders in Russia and dreaded by local *siloviki* (officials of the state power structures). Despite adverse circumstances, surprisingly, many activists remain engaged in the field and new initiatives still emerge, albeit on a lesser scale.

Civic activism in the military realm is part of what is generally labelled as “society-military relations” (SMR). These relations have experienced major transformations in the course of the last two decades.

1.1 CHANGING SOCIETY-MILITARY RELATIONS

During the post-Cold War era, the military has changed in nature, with a tendency to turn into smaller and more professional, versatile, all-volunteer forces. At the same time, the civilian side has grown more sceptical and

aware of the powerfulness of the state. In fact, in times of accelerated social change (including societal emancipation¹¹ and transnationalisation¹²), along with general socio-economic changes, there are growing demands for transparency, accountability and participation, also with regard to the military sphere. This confronts contemporary policy-makers and military leaders with new problems of legitimation. Regardless of the nature of the political system (consolidated democracy, “transition” state or autocracy), military and political elites dread the engagement of civilians and in particular of CSOs in the security and defence realm, since they still regard this sphere as an exclusive domain of state power.

Parallel to emerging real-world challenges, scholarly debates also took up a new way of thinking. Starting with paradigmatic changes in the early 1990s when constructivist approaches found entry into sociological military research (see Buzan et al. 1998), a different perception of security, evolving from a nation-and military-centred into a more human-centred notion, began to take root. The changing character of the security sector and the awareness of an interconnectedness between security and governance led to academic discourses on “security sector governance” (Hänggi 2003), focusing on how the state’s security institutions operate and relate not only to state institutions but also to other actors beneath and beyond the state level.

This book challenges prevailing concepts in the literature that focus on a realist vision of civil–military relations (CMR), stressing national interests and the maximisation of power. From a critical perspective, it will reflect upon the underlying interest constellation that is served by traditional research on CMR. The principal aim is hence to outline the need for research in which individuals and groups affected by the military are no longer objectivised and marginalised in the debate, but play the key part. Thus the focus will shift away from the more visible issues of politico–military interaction to the more latent issues of society–military relations, more precisely to the interests, needs and demands of societal actors within this relationship.

1.2 PREVIOUS RESEARCH AND THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS

The existing consensus in the democratisation and transition literature regarding civilian control of the military as a necessary condition for democracy (see for example Dahl 1971; O’Donnell and Schmitter

1986; Diamond 1999) is the normative starting point from where this book engages in an analysis of the theoretical relevance of civilian and, moreover, public control of armed forces for contemporary societies. Most of the traditional studies in the field of CMR are state—and executive-centred, thus concentrating on the exclusive power-bargaining between military officials and policy-makers (see Huntington 1957; Finer 1962; Desch 1999; Feaver 2003; concerning Russia: Herspring 1996; Taylor 2003; Betz 2004). In this respect, the nexus between military coups, political systems and culture has been adequately researched. Several authors today argue that civilian control cannot simply be defined as the absence or prevention of coups (see for example Croissant et al. 2011, 77). As Taylor pertinently states, “the problem [...] is not *whether* the army is under civilian control, but *whose* control” (Taylor 2003, 338, emphasis in original).

In accordance with the “second-generation criteria” for CMR and civilian control as its normative core (see Cottey et al. 2002), a transformation from the state—and institutional-based to an actor—and practice-based notion of control in the literature is taking place. In agreement with this approach, the book shifts the focus from the traditional institutional mechanisms of civilian control, including legal and normative acts to regulate security and defence politics, to a level of capacity and implementation of civilian and public control by agents on the ground. Moreover, there will be a shift in focus from the abundant research on civilian control in consolidated democracies and “transition” states to an authoritarian context, examining more closely the correlation between dysfunctional civilian control and the dismantling of democratic structures. Attention will also be drawn to the specificities of civic activism in authoritarian contexts (see also Cavatorta 2013) and the phenomenon of cooptation of civic actors and their inclusion in institution-building processes by autocratic states for the purpose of containing civil society and ensuring the survival of the regime (see among others Gandhi and Przeworski 2007).

In lieu of applying a holistic approach to CMR—as commonly done—it is worth concentrating on certain partial aspects, such as the role of the different actors in this relationship and their discourse, behaviour and motives. In particular, the role of civilians and society at large in the controlling and monitoring of the military has long been disregarded. Accordingly, the amount of research and literature in this subfield of CMR theory is still relatively slim. The marginal attention “public control” of

armed forces has attracted so far reflects either the belief that it is not the role of civilians and non-state actors to oversee the military or that they lack the democratic legitimation to do so (see also Chap. 3). As a consequence, there remains an identifiable gap in the collection of data and empirical analysis of grassroots activism in the politico–military sphere, notably with regard to common social practices and actor motivations. There is also limited research that analyses the reasons behind failures to install institutional mechanisms of democratic civilian control and the efforts of societal actors to compensate for these deficiencies. Neither have public and societal initiatives in the Russian Federation that resist militarist legacies and traditions in the country been adequately studied from this angle. This book seeks to close some of these lacunae and in addition overcome the general shortcoming of many Western studies on Russia that ignore the abundant Russian (-speaking) literature or are not aware of the existence of parallel scholarly debates in Russia.

Grassroots activism in the politico–military sphere inevitably goes through periods of contestation with ruling elites. As will be argued, it therefore seems appropriate to open up CMR theory to the abundant research on social movements. Key aspects here are opportunity structures and, more generally, political contexts. In accordance with Tilly and Tarrow, I argue that only by overcoming the already imprecise boundary between institutionalised and non-institutionalised politics can we gain a better understanding of the dynamics of contentious politics (Tilly and Tarrow 2007, 124) as one of many underlying aspects of the relationship between civilians and state power structures.

In order to study these contentious relations and interactions between institutions/structures of the state and collective action/agency (by civilians), this book sets off from an approach to advocacy and claim making in the politico–military sphere that is both structure and actor-centred, resulting in a combination of several theoretical perspectives. They all inform the three empirical chapters. In brief, a historical institutionalist approach (Mahoney and Thelen 2010) determines the underlying definition of “institution” for this book and lays the ground for the outline of a historical trajectory of institutionalised mechanisms of “public” and “people’s” control in Russia since Soviet times. Social practice theory (Giddens 2007 [1984]) serves as a framework for the analysis of narratives of activists on the grassroots level regarding ongoing “practices” of public control and their routinisation and potential for institutionalisation in the context of structural constraints. Finally, contentious politics

(McAdam et al. 2001) provides a theoretical lens for a case study that deals with the contestation between civic activists and the military lobby concerning the genesis of the Russian alternative civilian service law between 2000 and 2006. The objective is to analyse the impact civic activism exerted at the time on the legislative process, policy-making and public opinion.

One of the principal objectives of this book is to revise the core concept of civilian control and apply it to a concrete case study. The intention is to disaggregate the processes of civilian control into their component mechanisms in order to enhance not only the theoretical understanding of this phenomenon but also to better capture contemporary empirical realities, such as the growing relevance and emancipation of societal actors. This expanded model of civilian control is constructed as an “ideal-type”, conceived as a complex of principles and practices derived from international norms and conventions that base provisions on empirical evidence and data from participating states and from existing concepts in the literature.¹³ The need for this stems from: (1) the call in the relevant literature for a “new research agenda in civil–military relations” (see among others Forster 2002); (2) the reasoning that there is a research gap with regard to a systematic analysis of civilian and public control reconciling structure and agency orientations; and (3) the conduciveness of applying this expanded model to an authoritarian context and thereby contributing to research dedicated to the consequences of dysfunctional civilian control for CMR and the regression of democracy.

1.3 KEY ASSUMPTIONS AND OBJECT OF INQUIRY

It follows from the above that the central argument of this book addresses the shortcomings in both the theoretical conceptualisation and the empirical application of civilian and public control of armed forces. There are three underlying assumptions: First, as existing research confirms (see Chap. 4 for details), parliamentary powers with regard to the control of the armed forces and military-related decision-making processes are often underdeveloped, irrespective of the political system and the ruling political regime that exercises the control. In other words, existing institutional prerequisites for civilian and, moreover, democratic control are in many states insufficient today. The second assumption holds that an emancipation and transnationalisation process of societal actors takes place in many public spheres, including the politico–military

sphere (see Chap. 2). The third assumption postulates that an intensified interaction between civic activists and state power structures in the context of public control does not remain without consequences. This assumption holds that certain forms of collective action in the politico–military sphere have the potential to become a permanent component of the system of political interest mediation; in other words, they become institutionalised,¹⁴ irrespective of whether this is viewed as a positive or negative development.

Hence, the object of inquiry is twofold and addresses four principal questions: On the theoretical level, (1) what is civilian control of armed forces and what are the role and objective of its public subtype? On the empirical level, (2) Why and how did public control emerge historically in the specific Russian case? (3) How does it function on the ground and what is its prevalent form in post-Soviet Russia? and (4) Under what conditions can it be effective—what impact can public control have on policy-making?

1.4 WHY RUSSIA?

The Russian case promises to render valuable insights on the significance of public control in a state, where institutional mechanisms of democratic control are deficient or even absent. Moreover, it illustrates well how a few committed civic activists seek to compensate for the absence of control on the institutional level.

Despite being aware of the limitations of its generalisation potential, Russia has been chosen as a case study since it can be considered to some extent an “extreme case” (Gerring 2007, 101–102). It features a highly militarised society¹⁵ where conditions for civic activism are adverse, since the patronising state either represses or seeks to co-opt independent forms of societal engagement.

Notwithstanding the unfavourable circumstances of a generally weak civil society sector, a marginalised but resilient segment of CSOs, dedicated to monitoring of the armed forces and the protection of the rights of servicemen,¹⁶ (still) exists in Russia. This provides for an interesting puzzle. What is more, public control is not a new phenomenon in the post-Soviet space. Despite having imported the concept of “civilian control” from the existing CMR literature, the notion of “public control” was not prescribed by social science theories alone. The interview partners and actors on the ground have themselves shaped the notion

of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'*. In fact, control and verification have always played an important part in public life in Russia. The societal and official discourses on “civilian” (*grazhdanskii*) and “public” (*obshchestvennyi*)¹⁷ control can be traced back to Soviet times. However, they seem to have reached new heights in recent years. Starting with Vladimir Putin’s second presidency in 2004, new institutions, known as public consultative bodies (PCBs), have been created, with an agenda that is driven by very specific ideas of political culture, the state and the role of and participation by citizens.

1.5 RECRUITMENT AND CONSCRIPTION AS SPECIAL FOCUS

The importance of protecting and defending the rights of conscripts and servicepeople in Russian society has already been raised. Young men in Russia are by law¹⁸ obliged to perform military service. 300,000 conscripts between the age of 18 and 27 are drafted every year to serve in one of the branches of the huge Russian military apparatus. Since 2004, legislation has provided for the possibility to opt for an AGS to replace military service¹⁹; however, information about it is deliberately not disseminated in education facilities or the media and, therefore, this possibility is little known to the public.

Conscription, however, remains highly unpopular in Russian society. Most opinion poll respondents do not want to serve or see their relatives serve due to the military’s reputation for abuse.²⁰ In other words, the Russian population’s attitude towards conscription and the army in general is highly ambivalent. In the words of Betz and Plekhanov: “Public attitudes to the army are a jumble of traditional respect, fear, sympathy, and indifference” (2004, 168). The recruitment process and conscription experience are perceived by many as a “rite of passage” but in reality are likely to be harmful to young men. What is more, due to their military service obligations, many cannot fulfil their educational aims or pursue their preferred career. Therefore, many conscripts actively try to avoid the draft.²¹

Recruitment and conscription hence represent a sort of “gate-keeper” for civilians to get an insight into the inner life of the military organisation. It can be considered a policy field or issue of contestation between conscripts (as one of the most vulnerable groups in society), societal actors (that act on their behalf) and the military, or the authorities in charge of recruitment. The emphasis on the organisation of recruitment

and the handling of conscription processes represents not only an instructive analytical entry point, but also helps to narrow down the research in the vast field of SMR. For this reason, a special emphasis was placed on the issues of recruitment and conscription.

1.6 METHODOLOGICAL ASPECTS

The aim of this book is to study how social phenomena outside of formal state institutions influence and affect formal politics. More specifically, it seeks to prove the relevance of grassroots activism in society-state-military relations for policy analysis and political decision-making. Consequently, the data on social phenomena will be interpreted in the light of its policy relevance and the consequences for the political system concerned. Therefore, both political science and sociological approaches are combined in order to look closely at the relationship between state power structures and civic activists. The choice of methods is interdisciplinary, combining various social sciences methods, namely qualitative-interpretative analysis of interview narratives (Chaps. 6, 7), ethnographic methods (such as participant observation as a supplement to the interview material, Chaps. 7, 8), structuring content analysis of primary political and legal texts (Chaps. 5, 8) and case-oriented process tracing for the analysis of data over time (Chap. 8).²²

44 interviews were conducted in the Russian Federation between October 2012 and November 2014.²³ The main objective was to draw a rich portrait of civic activism “from below” in the politico-military sphere in Russian provinces. Thus, the sampling of organisations and interview partners was not limited to a study of organisations and initiatives active in federal level politics in Moscow and St. Petersburg. One of the main reasons is that actors in the federal cities are used to contact with Western organisations, are frequently interviewed by Western researchers and, therefore, are exposed to and influenced by Western concepts. Much of the substantial Western research deals with the two biggest Russian cities, whereas the situation in the regions still remains fairly underexposed.

The principal focus of my research was on three cities: Perm’, Voronezh and Murmansk. For different reasons, these three cities attract a greater density of societal activists. The Perm’ Krai, for example, has traditionally been a more liberal federal subject, due to the

former governor Oleg Chirkunov (2005–2012) who was relatively sympathetic to CSOs in the region (however, this has apparently changed since Viktor Basargin took over in 2012 who was then followed by Maksim Reshetnikov as acting governor in February 2017). Voronezh in turn is a university city where many young people live. Finally, Murmansk Oblast⁷ is part of the sample, since it remains one of the most militarised regions of the Russian Federation due to the continued existence of the Northern Fleet and the Atomic Submarine Fleet as well as a highly protected border with Norway. As a result, numerous military units with many soldiers and conscripts are stationed in the region. Due to a few highly engaged, mainly young, activists, it seemed that objecting to military service and instead opting for the alternative civilian service is more normal in Murmansk than in other Russian cities.

Interview partners were questioned about their past and ongoing activities, how they started to get involved in their work and what motivated them. Furthermore, they were encouraged to explain their mission, goals, methods, short-term tactics and long-term strategies. Emphasis was laid on problems they face, resources and financing, relations with state power structures and other CSOs and the perceived impact or changes that result from their work. Differentiating among knowledge levels, motives and cognitive behaviour in the narratives of interview partners allowed for a “translation” of data obtained from narratives into meaningful social categories.²⁴ Narratives were analysed and clustered according to four dimensions: motives and rationales, means and methods, limitations and legal framework.

In addition to interview material, other data was used, such as newspaper articles and media sources, “grey literature” (reports, public information provided both by authorities and societal organisations, educational material), and data from public opinion polls carried out mainly by Levada and VTsIOM, regarding public attitudes towards the armed forces and conscription. For the analysis in Chap. 5, primary political and legal documentation and secondary literature were used. The process-tracing analysis in Chap. 8 demanded in addition a substantial number of primary records, such as stenographs from parliamentary readings and hearings as well as media reports on the legislative process relating to the AGS law during the period between 2000 and 2006. The “Integrum” database, which provides access to a wide range of Russian and CIS newspaper archives and full text coverage of press and media items since the beginning of the 1990s, was essential for this research.

For the coding of primary data, such as interview transcripts and stenographs of parliamentary sessions, the computer-assisted qualitative data analysis (CAQDA) programme Atlas.ti was used.

The research was conducted in a challenging environment. It is evident that conscription and the military in general are sensitive topics. This is particularly true in Russia, where the military is omnipresent in almost every sphere of public life: from nursery schools to universities, politics and cultural life (bearing in mind the high number of military-related national holidays). The military is still a male-dominated sphere and is often treated as a self-evident topic that is avoided, especially in conversations with foreigners.

1.7 PLAN OF THE BOOK

The conceptual part of this book begins with the “bigger picture” of contemporary armed forces control (Chap. 2) followed by an overview and comparison of existing understandings of civilian and public control in Russia and the West (Chap. 3). Chapter 4 presents the expanded framework of civilian control of the book. The subsequent empirical part covers the case study on post-Soviet Russia. As indicated earlier, the empirical chapters seek to inform and answer the above-formulated questions and hence are clustered corresponding to the outline of the assumptions. The purpose of Chap. 5 is to deal with institutional predispositions and settings in post-Soviet Russia. It delineates the emergence and trajectory of institutionalised forms of control since Soviet times and the creation of new, ideologically oriented institutions to monitor state structures. Chapter 6 provides an overview of the heterogeneous landscape of societal initiatives in Russia, with an emphasis on grassroots activism in the politico–military sphere. Chapter 7 then sheds light on agency aspects and the social practices of monitoring and control of the armed forces by local grassroots activists. Chapter 8 is dedicated to the study of a “sub-case” that illustrates the process and strategies of political contestation between collective societal actors and the authorities concerning the genesis of the Russian AGS law. The concluding part (Chap. 9) ties together both theoretical and empirical findings from each chapter, notably in light of the validity of the expanded framework of civilian and public control. This is followed by an attempt to draw a more comprehensive picture of the role of society in the control of state