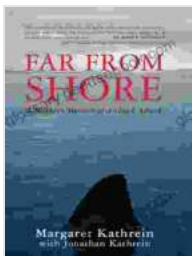


# Public Control of Armed Forces in the Russian Federation: A Detailed Examination

Public control of armed forces is a critical aspect of ensuring democratic governance and preventing the military from becoming an autonomous force posing a threat to civilian authority. In the Russian Federation, the need for effective public control over the armed forces has been recognized since the early days of its establishment, and several mechanisms have been implemented to achieve this goal. This article provides a detailed examination of public control mechanisms over armed forces in the Russian Federation, exploring their historical background, legal framework, civilian oversight bodies, parliamentary control, and the role of non-governmental organizations.



## Public Control of Armed Forces in the Russian Federation by Sharon Sala

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## **Historical Background**

The concept of public control over armed forces has deep roots in Russian history. During the imperial era, the military was largely autonomous, and the emperor exercised supreme command. However, after the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917, the new Soviet government established a system of political control over the armed forces through the creation of the Revolutionary Military Council. This council was tasked with ensuring the loyalty of the military to the Communist Party and the government.

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Russian Federation inherited a vast and powerful military. The need to ensure civilian control over these forces was recognized as a priority by the new democratic government. In the early 1990s, a series of reforms were introduced to establish mechanisms for public control, including the creation of civilian oversight bodies, the strengthening of parliamentary oversight, and the promotion of the role of non-governmental organizations.

## **Legal Framework**

The legal framework for public control of armed forces in the Russian Federation is primarily based on the Constitution of the Russian Federation, adopted in 1993. The Constitution establishes the President as the Supreme Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, responsible for ensuring the defense and security of the state. The President is also responsible for appointing and dismissing the Minister of Defense and other senior military officials.

In addition to the Constitution, several federal laws govern public control over armed forces. These laws include the Federal Law on Defense, the Federal Law on Military Service, and the Federal Law on Public Control

over Military Activities. These laws establish the principles and procedures for civilian oversight, parliamentary control, and the role of non-governmental organizations in public control.

## **Civilian Oversight Bodies**

Several civilian oversight bodies have been established in the Russian Federation to monitor military activities and ensure compliance with the law. These bodies include:

- **The Public Council under the Ministry of Defense:** This council is composed of representatives from various sectors of society, including human rights organizations, veterans' associations, and academic institutions. The council advises the Minister of Defense on issues related to military policy, personnel, and arms control.
- **The Commission on Military Ethics:** This commission is responsible for promoting ethical behavior within the armed forces and investigating allegations of misconduct. The commission is composed of military and civilian experts, and its recommendations are considered by the Minister of Defense.
- **The Military Prosecutor's Office:** This office is responsible for investigating and prosecuting crimes committed by military personnel. The Military Prosecutor's Office is independent from the Ministry of Defense and reports directly to the Prosecutor General of the Russian Federation.

## **Parliamentary Control**

The Russian parliament, the Federal Assembly, also plays a significant role in public control of armed forces. The Federal Law on Defense requires the

government to submit an annual report to the Federal Assembly on the state of the armed forces and the implementation of military policy. The Federal Assembly also has the right to conduct hearings on military issues and to summon military officials to testify.

In addition, the Federal Assembly has the power to approve or reject the appointment of the Minister of Defense and other senior military officials. This power gives the parliament a significant influence over the military leadership and the direction of military policy.

### **The Role of Non-Governmental Organizations**

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) play a vital role in public control of armed forces by monitoring military activities, advocating for transparency and accountability, and providing legal assistance to military personnel and their families. Several NGOs in the Russian Federation are actively involved in public control, including:

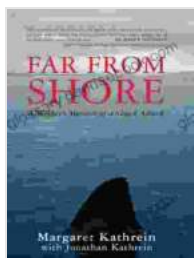
- **The Russian Human Rights Council:** This council is a non-governmental advisory body that provides recommendations to the President and the government on human rights issues, including the rights of military personnel.
- **The Committee of Soldiers' Mothers of Russia:** This organization provides legal assistance to military personnel and their families, and advocates for the rights of conscripts and against military hazing.
- **The Russian Anti-War Movement:** This organization campaigns against war and militarism, and advocates for the peaceful resolution of conflicts.

## Challenges and Prospects

Despite the establishment of various mechanisms for public control, the Russian armed forces continue to face challenges in ensuring transparency and accountability. These challenges include a lack of access to military information, a reluctance on the part of the military to cooperate with civilian oversight bodies, and the prevalence of corruption within the military hierarchy.

To address these challenges, further reforms are needed to strengthen public control mechanisms and to increase the transparency and accountability of the armed forces. Public awareness of the importance of public control is also crucial for ensuring the long-term effectiveness of these mechanisms.

Public control of armed forces is a fundamental pillar of democratic governance in the Russian Federation. The mechanisms established to achieve this goal include civilian oversight bodies, parliamentary control, and the role of non-governmental organizations. While challenges remain, the existing framework has contributed to increasing transparency and accountability within the Russian armed forces. Continued efforts to strengthen these mechanisms and to promote public awareness are essential for ensuring the continued effectiveness of public control over armed forces in the Russian Federation.



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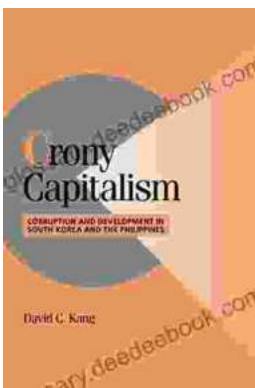
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