

# PETER THE GREAT: THE CREATION OF THE EMPIRE

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## THE ROLE OF THE CULTURAL CONTEXT IN THE RUSSIAN MILITARY REVOLUTION\*

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This article examines military transformations in Russia between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries within the framework of the Military Revolution concept. This concept, introduced by the British historian Michael Roberts in 1955, was originally used to link changes in the purely military sphere (the introduction of gunpowder and the increased number of troops) with changes in state structures in western European countries. However, the concept can also be used to describe modernisation processes in non-European countries. Some historians have pointed out that military reforms often led to a holistic transformation of the socio-economic system. Others, including those dealing with the Military Revolution in Russia, focus primarily on the role of economic, social, and educational backwardness, which resulted in the construction of a modern military system and state different from that found in the West. This article attempts to complement this historical perspective by highlighting the importance of the cultural context in Russia's military modernisation. It explores the traditional cultural narrative – rooted in Orthodoxy and a patrimonial socio-political system – which resulted in the emergence of specific beliefs about waging war and achieving victory, as well as practices which differed from those in the West. As a result, it is argued that the introduction of similar technological and organisational solutions in the state of the tsars was accompanied not only by different political and socio-economic conditions, but also by different values, which were reflected in the various ways of reforming the troops and their subsequent use on the battlefield.

*Keywords:* concept of “military revolution”, history of Russia, cultural context, cultural narrative

Рассматривается процесс военной трансформации в России в XVI–XVIII вв. в рамках концепции «военной революции». Эта концепция, введенная в научный оборот британским историком Майклом Робертсом

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в 1955 г., первоначально использовалась для того, чтобы связать изменения в сугубо военной сфере, связанные с изобретением пороха и увеличением числа вооруженных сил, с изменениями в государственных структурах в странах Западной Европы. Однако эта концепция также может быть использована для описания процессов модернизации в неевропейских странах. Некоторые историки отмечают, что военные реформы часто приводят к целостному преобразованию социально-экономической системы в соответствии с европейской моделью. Другие исследователи, в том числе те, которые занимаются проблемой военной революции в России, сосредоточены прежде всего на роли экономической, социальной и образовательной отсталости, которая привела к созданию современной военной системы и современного государства, отличного от того, что было на Западе. Автор предпринимает попытку дополнить эту историческую перспективу, подчеркивая важность культурного контекста в анализе военной модернизации в России. Поэтому статья базируется главным образом на вторичных источниках с использованием культурной перспективы для анализа исторических процессов. В ней исследуется традиционный культурный нарратив, основанный на православии и патримониальной общественно-политической системе, который привел к появлению определенных убеждений о ведении войны, достижении победы, о военных методах, которые отличались от подобных практик на Западе. Автор допускает, что внедрение подобных технологических и организационных решений в ходе процесса «военной революции» в России сопровождалось не только разными политическими и социально-экономическими условиями, но и определенными ценностями, которые были отражены в различных способах реформирования войск и их последующего использования в сражениях.

*Ключевые слова:* концепция «военной революции», история России, культурный контекст, культурный нарратив

The concept of the Military Revolution was introduced by the British historian Michael Roberts [Roberts, 1956; Roberts, 1995] in a 1955 lecture at Queen's University in Belfast. His idea was to link changes in the purely military sphere (the introduction of gunpowder and the increased number of troops) with changes in state structures that occurred in Europe from the mid-sixteenth to the mid-seventeenth centuries, namely the development of the central state apparatus, administration, bureaucracy, and the fiscal system. In his concept, the transformation of military technology resulted in the birth of the modern state. Roberts' thesis has been widely discussed by historians. The main allegations concern the legitimacy of the term "revolution" [Parker, 1995], the chronological and geographical scope of the original model [Duffy, 1980; Maroń; McNeill; Parker, 1976; Parker, 1988], and Roberts' overestimation of the role of technology in the transformation [Adams; Black; DeVries]. Despite this criticism, the Military Revolution remains one of the most important and most frequently used historiographical concepts for comprehensively describing transformations in the

war system in the early modern period [cf. Jacob, Visoni-Alonzo; Rogers; Parker, 1995].

This concept has also been used by researchers to describe transformations outside western Europe, including in Russia. It was in Russia – “the earliest of the non-western countries to undergo that crisis of self-confidence” [Pipes, p. 112] – where military modernisation according to the European model began in the mid-sixteenth century [Paul; Poe, 1996]. This lasted throughout the seventeenth century and culminated in the reforms of Peter the Great (1672–1725) [Кутищев, с. 5]. The aim of this article is not to trace in detail the Russian military reforms between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries – this topic has already been explored by both Russian and western researchers [e. g. Волков; Кутищев; Пенской, 2004; Пенской, 2008; Duffy, 1981; Hellie; Keep; Paul; Poe, 1996; Poe, 1998] – but to highlight the importance of the cultural context for military modernisation and warfare.

This article presents the ideas of western researchers such as Marshall Poe, Michael C. Paul, and William C. Fuller regarding the Military Revolution in Russia. These historians tend to focus primarily on the role of economic, social, and educational backwardness, which resulted in the construction of a modern military system and state very different from that found in western European countries. However, it is also important to study the Russian “mental matrix” (*ментальная матрица*) [Гребеньков, 2009b, с. 178] that shaped specific cultural narratives about waging war and achieving victory, as well as practices of war that differed from those in the West. This article attempts to compliment the historical perspective by highlighting the importance of the cultural context of military modernisation in Russia.

### **Military Revolution in the State of the Tsars**

According to some researchers, the military changes taking place in western Europe between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries were a lever for European progress. They not only led to the formation of a modern state and society, but also ensured that European powers dominated the rest of the world. This “rest of the world” was unable to reform their military systems by themselves and needed impetus from the West to begin the transformation [Parker, 1988; Guilmartin; cf.: Frost, 1996, p. 154]. David B. Ralston – a historian studying modernising military reforms in Russia, the Ottoman Empire, Egypt, China, and Japan – claims that the introduction of European-style military techniques and institutions into non-western countries between 1600 and 1914 was a significant first step in the Europeanisation of those societies [Ralston]. Military reformers from the non-European world realised that “western civilisation had discovered the secrets of power and wealth which one had to acquire if one wished successfully to compete with it” [Pipes, p. 112]. However, copying weapons collected from the battlefield was insufficient, as Geoffrey Parker notes [Parker, 2005]. It was necessary to reconstruct the entire socio-econom-

ic structure that lay at the heart of western innovation for the reform to be effective. Changes related to the creation of modern state institutions, a fiscal system, industry, and the training of officials able to manage the recruitment, supply, and equipment of rapidly growing armed forces through bureaucratic procedures were followed by cultural transformation, led by the introduction of secular education, liberal values, and rational measures of governance.

Nevertheless, it is difficult to imagine the possibility of transplanting western solutions anywhere else without adaptations. Ernest Gellner suggests that “imitative industrialisation” cannot be treated like “original industrialisation”, simply because “we can never repeat the original event, which was perpetrated by men who knew not what they did, an unawareness which was of the very essence of the event” [Gellner, p. 19]. Likewise, in the case of military modernisation, the original ideas could be interpreted in all kinds of diverse ways, depending on the beliefs and needs of various social groups. Borrowed technical solutions had to be incorporated into existing organisational structures, and new values and ideas adapted to traditional cultural narratives. Therefore, when analysing military transformation in Russia between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, one should be aware that the reforms introduced by subsequent Russian rulers were not merely passive imitations of European solutions [cf. Володина, Ланкин; Кутищев; Stone, p. X–XI], due to the different political, social, and economic conditions, as well as different beliefs and values.

Studies on military modernisation in Russia mainly focus on the reforms made by Peter the Great at the beginning of the eighteenth century, which constituted a peculiar “magical” border between the “non-European” and “European” phases of Russian history [cf. Frost, 2002, s. 295; Кутищев, с. 5]. However, Peter was not the first Russian ruler to undertake military reforms, such as an attempt to create a standing army and equip it with modern firearms and artillery. According to Michael C. Paul [Paul, p. 11; cf. Омаров, Магомедов], military transformation was initiated in Russia in the mid-sixteenth century, and in some respects it was “similar to the Military Revolution that Roberts and Parker argued occurred in the West”. In both cases, the changes were related to the introduction of gunpowder weapons, a shift to infantry-based armies, and the rebuilding the fortresses to incorporate artillery and withstand artillery attacks. Alongside these, Russia’s military and political organisation became increasingly centralised, with an increasingly specialised bureaucracy [Poe, 1996].

Western researchers emphasise that the modernising changes in the tsarist state ran along different lines than western Europe. These differences were associated with other geographical, geopolitical, and demographic conditions, as well as different socio-political systems [Frost, 1996; Poe, 1996; Paul; cf. Hellie; Keep; Fuller]. According to Michael C. Paul, who traced the factors that delayed “the Military Revolution in Russia and gave it a unique character when it finally did come”, among the most important was “the great poverty of Russia, both absolutely and relative to the nations

of Western Europe where the Military Revolution began” [Paul, p. 13]. The poor soil and growing conditions in the Russian heartland, as well as a relatively small population, made it difficult for the Muscovite government to procure the resources to pay, equip, and feed the mass infantry armies that developed during the Military Revolution [cf. Pipes]. William C. Fuller, in his book on “the impact of ‘backwardness’ – in its several senses – upon Russian military policies and strategy” noted that poverty, along with geography, helped to explain why Russia was under-governed and consequently found it difficult to mobilise the human and material resources necessary to wage war [Fuller, p. XVII–XVIII]. Marshall Poe, another historian who deals with military transformations in pre-Petrine Russia, claimed that Russian society was “profoundly primitive” compared to the nations of western Europe [Poe, 1996; Poe, 1998]. A relatively simple governmental structure and undeveloped infrastructure made it much more difficult to create a mechanism for collecting taxes in order to secure funds for financing military changes and an effective army management system. These difficulties were further exacerbated by the low level of education and training among Muscovy’s bureaucrats and troops.

Another issue that challenges the thesis of “innate Russian backwardness” [Paul, 2004, p. 36] is the nature of the state’s main military threats. As John Keep noted, “in many respects, the pre-Petrine armed forces were reasonably well-adapted to the relatively limited tasks they faced” [Keep, p. 14; cf. Poe, 1996]. According to Paul, “large masses of slow-moving infantry were not suited to fighting on the steppe frontier [Paul, p. 37]. Gunpowder weapons had not been perfected to the extent that they could be effectively fired from horseback. Cannons were totally useless against the fast-moving Tatar cavalry”. Even when Moscow’s forces encountered an enemy from the West, as in 1558, when Ivan IV launched his war against Livonia to seize the ports along the Baltic, the Russian state responded well to this new dual challenge [Parker, 1988, p. 354–355; cf. Fuller, p. 29, 94–98; Кутищев, c. 58]. Additionally, as Paul concludes, in spite of many hardships and obstacles, “Russia was never conquered or carved up by Western powers in the way Africa and Southeast Asia later were, but also... Russia was able to expand to take up one-sixth of the world’s land-mass” [Paul, p. 45].

The difficulties arising from both geopolitical challenges and an inefficient socio-economic system remained during the reforms of Peter and his successors. As in previous centuries, the greatest obstacles to the creation of effective mechanisms based on discipline and calculation were financial shortages, preventing the regular payment of officials, officers, and soldiers, and the terrible state of education, in part due to the population’s reluctance to obtain formal education [cf. Paul, p. 34; cf. Miakinkov, p. 43]. Problems with the financing of the armed forces and wars were a concern not only for economically backward Russia, but were a widespread nuisance for all contemporary powers. Nevertheless, as Fuller notes, in Russia, the “military economy was guaranteed to produce total logistical failures on a regular and ongoing basis” [Fuller, p. 64]. The author describes in detail both the

problems with supplying Russian troops with uniforms, shoes, and even muskets, as well as logistical and transport problems as the bane of Russian commanders to the twentieth century [cf. Pintner, p. 360]. Despite this, as in previous centuries, the military system created by Peter and his successors was effective enough to deal with external and internal challenges and led to the successful territorial development of Russia. According to Fuller [Fuller, p. 83; cf. Adamsky, p. 42], this was possible thanks to the advantages of the autocratic political system and the institution of serfdom, which were used to generate great military power.

However, the extraordinary human and material effort that characterised the Russian military campaigns was achievable not only thanks to political practices, but also the beliefs supporting them. For centuries, Russian rulers thought that regular remuneration for their officials and soldiers was not necessary, since they could be forced to serve. Despite enormous progress in educating Russian society and the elite's access to western European intellectual currents, the autocratic political system and an economy based on the exploitation of millions of serfs were rarely publicly criticised. Similarly, the authorities' belief that they could dispose of their subjects in any way they liked without considering their needs was not questioned. This was expressed, for example, in the eighteenth-century idea of forcibly housing soldiers returning from the front or the nineteenth-century project of military settlements [cf. Keep, ch. V].

The Russian soldier – previously a serf peasant – was not accustomed to opposing his superiors. He retained a fatalistic reconciliation with his fate and a passive expectation of a better future. “Illiterate, religious and with strong ties to the land, he was the perfect subject for the Russian army” [Miakinkov, p. 40; cf. Keep, p. 207]. At the same time, the recruitment system introduced by Peter the Great and improved in the following decades, combined with the unusually long period of service, resulted in the development of a specific “regimental identity”, based on common values and the similarity of life experiences. As noted by Russian historians Tatyana Volodina and Nikita Lankin, a recruit separated from his family could find a new, or even his only, family in the regiment [Володина, Ланкин, с. 74]. These “family” relationships, which were a transposition of a patriarchal relationship based on obedience to elders, were expressed in military language, where comrades were described as “brothers” and commanders as “fathers”. A cultural narrative based on the values promoted by Orthodoxy, including patience, humility, and piety, imposed unconditional obedience to elders and perpetuated an attitude of fatalistic, passive endurance and loyal service. The values of self-sacrifice and patient suffering were also promoted by the Orthodox Church, hence, as Valeri Grebenkov notes, “dedication to others in the name of fulfilling their own duties is a characteristic feature of Russian warriors” [Гребеньков, 2009b, с. 197; Кутищев, с. 28].

Additionally, the behaviour and mentality of Russian soldiers was shaped by deeply internalised collectivism. Collectivism was associated with the folk forms of community and institutions of social life transferred into the

Russian army. It is worth mentioning here the soldiers “artel” (*солдатские артели*), unique in the history of European armies: these were egalitarian and self-governing associations serving the organization and supply of soldiers. In conditions where the state did not provide the military with food, materials, or sufficient money to function, soldiers spontaneously established this institution to improve their quality of life [Володина, Подрезов, с. 102]. The artel managed both the regiment’s common property, which allowed for the purchase of necessary goods such as food or horses, and soldiers’ private money. Soldiers’ artels were an institution that increased group cohesion and allowed for the formation of a separate regimental identity and a unified corporate system [Володина, Ланкин, с. 77]. The artel helped the soldiers to function efficiently in circumstances of a malfunctioning central system of state supply and distinguished the soldiers from the peasants among whom they lived on a daily basis. It also prevented desertions, as in such a situation the soldier would lose his life savings [Володина, Подрезов, с. 102].

At the same time, as John Bushnell has noted, an artel could serve as “an emblematic example of the deep-seated tensions between modern and traditional elements in Russian society” [Bushnell, p. 391]. On the one hand, soldiers’ artels came from a premodern folk institution and were an expression of the durability of traditional Russian forms of community. On the other, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the Russian state would not have been able to maintain a modern standing army without artels [Ibid.].

Due the durability of traditional social institutions, the key role of Orthodoxy as a state ideology, and cultural narratives emphasising the value of endurance, self-restraint, and moral and physical fortitude, the modernization of the Russian army followed a unique trajectory, and western institutions had to be adapted to native socio-cultural conditions. It also resulted in the emergence of the strategic belief that “battles are won by men, spiritual power, and psychological factors, and not by machines, technology, or any other material component” [Adamsky, p. 56]. The following generations of Russian commanders adhered to this belief in the correct way to achieve military victory. Thus, the introduction of similar technological and organisational solutions as part of the Military Revolution was accompanied not only by different political and socio-economic conditions, but also by different values, which was reflected in the various ways of reforming the troops and their subsequent use on the battlefield.

### **Technology and Spirit: Cultural War Narratives**

The Military Revolution in western European countries covered not only changes in military, socio-economic, and political systems, but also profound transformations in the norms, ideas, and values accompanying wars [cf.: Olzacka, roz. 4]. The end of medieval culture marked the end of thinking about war as “God’s judgment”. New political and military ideals gained a more secular dimension. This was partially a result of the Enlightenment, which led to “the emergence of a new mentality, new values, new beliefs

favouring an active, rational, dynamic, methodical lifestyle” [Flis, s. 257; cf. Zafirovski, p. 144]. As Max Weber argued, the application of calculation and methodical reasoning lead to disenchantment (*die Entzauberung der Welt*), allowing the secularisation and rationalisation of all spheres of life, including those related to the use of violence [Weber]. According to René Moelker [Moelker, p. 388], the transformation of war in the West was inextricably linked to the technological paradigm of control, containing the following elements: “(1) the optimistic belief that the world can be created by humans; (2) the application of scientific models to all areas of life (rationalisation and secularisation); (3) belief in progress in technological, economic, and social areas; and (4) belief in the technological factor as the ‘prime mover’”. Technological development in this sense can also be associated with the concept of constant progress and desire for a better life. “Technology raises the expectation that the future will be sunny, and that technology will solve our present problems”, Moelker noted [Ibid., p. 386]. It was during the Military Revolution in western European countries that the conviction crystallised that wars were won using advanced technology, improved organisation, economic prosperity, and the application of the efficiency criterion, which had replaced tradition and moral and religious strictures.

Belief in the power of technology and continuous progress, which had accompanied Europeans since the Enlightenment, had not fallen on fertile ground in Russia. Although Russians had used western military solutions since the mid-sixteenth century, the borrowing process was accompanied by a large dose of ambivalence and uncertainty. “Unholy Europe” (*нечестивая Европа*) [Кутищев, с. 15] was both admired for its organisational efficiency and technological superiority and despised for its spiritual shortcomings. The dichotomy between the rationalist, atomised, formal, and soulless “logical and technical” civilisation of Europe and spiritual, true, integral, supra-individual, and Orthodox Russian civilisation appears in the writings of the Slavophiles in the nineteenth century [cf.: Walicki, ch. 6]. According to Slavophiles such as Ivan Kireyevsky (1806–1856) and Aleksey Khomyakov (1804–1860), Europe’s advantages in technology, the organisation of the state, and collective life, as well as the material well-being of individuals, was false and untrue given Russia’s spiritual supremacy. Alain Besançon [Besançon, s. 1208] sums up their opinion as follows: “The West has chosen an easier path for purely external development, and therefore it seems that it has outdone Russia in science and technology, while Russia has chosen a difficult path of internal development, that is, deep moral development, the highest in absolute perspective”.

This cultural opposition was revealed in patterns of thinking about war and how to achieve victories. Acceptance of the technical superiority of European troops was accompanied by an unwavering belief in the low quality of the ideas defended by western soldiers, as well as their lack of spiritual strength. Belief in the “superiority of moral factor over material” [Гребеньков, 2009b, с. 199] was reflected in the writings of eminent eighteenth-century Russian commanders, such as Aleksandr Suvorov



(1730–1800) and Pyotr Rumyantsev (1725–1796). Suvorov produced the most celebrated Russian military classic of the imperial period, the *Science of Victory* (*Наука побеждать*), and played a huge role in the “up-bringing” of his soldiers, instilling a fighting spirit in their souls and minds [Гребеньков, 2009а, с. 565]. His writings, permeated by the Christian spirit, clearly indicated the need for self-sacrifice on the altar of the Motherland: “Умирай за дом Богородицы, за Матушку, за Пресветлейший Дом!” (Die for the kingdom of the Virgin Mary, for the mother, for the Holy Kingdom of God!) [цит. по: Коротких, с. 11]. However, religion was a tool not only for legitimising conflicts, but also for raising the superstitious peasant recruits and strengthening their loyalty. For example, Suvorov prepared a prayer book and a special catechism for his soldiers, and also made sure that they found time for prayer.

The belief that wars were won not by advanced, soulless technology but by the spirit and moral strength of fighting men was also reflected in the training of new recruits. Line troops were subjected to intensive drills, but, unlike western European practices, much more attention was paid to fighting with melee weapons [Miakinkov, p. 89]. This belief was also expressed in Suvorov’s best-known catchphrase “Пуля дура, штык молодец!” (“The bullet is a fool, but the bayonet is a fine fellow”). As Miakinkov [Ibid.] notes, “with this crude phrase, Suvorov was able to drive a clear wedge between the human and technological elements in war. His obvious implication was that the human or moral element, represented by the bayonet and the hand that wields it, triumphs over its material, or technological counterpart, the bullet. Moreover, with his brilliant victories won at the tip of bayonet charges, Suvorov could prove the dominance of the human element on the battlefield”.

In the following century, the prescription “give us money and we will create a new army”, which was so popular in the West, was questioned by Russian thinkers because “in the spiritual sphere money [is] dead”, and it was the spirit that determined victories [Гребеньков, 2009b, с. 199]. The nineteenth-century general Mikhail Dragomirov (1830–1905) clearly emphasised that in a choice between two soldiers – one, poorly equipped but infused with the idea of self-sacrifice, and the other, armed with the best weapon but devoid of spirit – he would choose the first [Там же]. Dragomirov argued in a work published posthumously in 1906 that “the bullet and the bayonet do not exclude but supplement each other: the first paves the way for the second. This mutual relationship remains the same no matter how far the perfection of firearms is carried” [cited in: Pintner, p. 367]. In his opinion, modern weapons had to be handled by people hardened and full of ideas; otherwise they remained dead, soulless, and worthless.

This conviction proved to be very persistent, despite subsequent modernisation of military technologies and the organisation of the army. For example, at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the priority of the moral factor over the material was clearly expressed by the philos-

opher Evgeny Trubetskoy: “It is not the strength of armaments alone that decides fate of the battles, but the spiritual force that directs the weapon and without which it is dead” [цит. по: Гребеньков, 2009b, с. 161]. Dmitry Milyutin, the great reformer of the imperial army and the last field marshal of imperial Russia (1816–1912), also emphasised the importance of the spiritual factor in warfare [Pintner, p. 361–362].

Attaching importance to the spiritual strength of the troops would not have seemed strange, especially in the era of revolutionary wars. Also, the combination of Christian ideas and rituals with military activity was not unique, especially in the context of medieval Europe. Nevertheless, in western Europe, the modern Military Revolution marked the end of “medieval” war culture, and secularization and rationalization contributed significantly to changing the vision of war. This does not mean that referring to religious symbolism and legitimacy was no longer relevant. Rapidly developing secular political, scientific, and technical thought, however, meant that thinking about war was “disenchanted” and directed towards a practical quest for the most effective means of conducting it [Olzacka, s. 183].

In Russia, where the secularization of culture only began in the second half of the seventeenth century, the assimilation of the rational elements needed to build modern military institutions was fraught with challenges and tension. At the same time, Orthodoxy shaped a specific “religious patriotism” that was not discredited by cultural secularisation [Paszkievicz, s. 243; Miakinkov, p. 40]. The great sacrifices and martyrdoms made in the service of Mother Russia have always been a reason for great pride and glory. According to one researcher, the sacrificial love of Russians for their homeland can be equated with love for the Saviour: “The defence of the Russian land was for our ancestors a defence of faith, while suffering and sacrifice for the homeland – suffering and sacrifice in Christ” [Гребеньков, 2008, с. 270]. Orthodoxy was not only the official ideology of the Russian state, but also shaped the understanding of the world as an arena for the struggle between good and evil, divine and devilish principles. Hence, the military’s mission was defined by the religious perspective as defending the Orthodox faith and resisting evil in all its manifestations [Володина, Ланкин, с. 76].

As many Russian researchers emphasize, Orthodoxy played a large role in the creation of Russian war culture (*военная культура*) [Гребеньков, 2008; Гребеньков, 2009a; Ермоченко; Коротких; Белоусов]. According to Igor Belousov [Белоусов, с. 57–58], the national military school (*национальная военная школа*) – distinguished by religiosity, patriotism, loyalty, and fidelity – was developed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries on the basis of Orthodox values and traditions. In the works of western military researchers, the terms “the Russian way of war” and “the Russian art of war” are also most often understood as beliefs about the role of the spirit and moral strength of fighting men in achieving victory [Childs, p. 129; Pintner, p. 374; Fuller, p. 166; Miakinkov, p. 104–106; Adamsky, p. 44].

Although commanders in every army are aware of the role of morale in winning victories, in the Russian army it was more closely related to ideas and spirit than to external conditions. Therefore, Russian commanders paid less attention to technological and organizational development than in the West. Technical perfection did not seem to be as important to Russian commanders as to western European politicians and military personnel because of the different approach to the value of an individual's life. The fascination with technology – as Dima Adamsky emphasises – is often fuelled by a reluctance to sacrifice people, because high-tech weapons can be used as a substitute for vulnerable soldiers. In the Russian military tradition, which preferred the attack of strong individuals over the use of machines, such problems were rarely considered [Adamsky, p. 44]. Commanders easily sent large masses to fight, and did not count the losses [Childs, p. 129; cf. Fuller].

In the West, the “wars of the revolution”, followed by the “wars of the nations”, [Howard] started a process in which each citizen was obliged to conform to the principles of individual heroism and service in the name of the homeland. In Russia, more important was the collective pride in the strength and achievements of the state, which was associated with the willingness to sacrifice. As one Russian historian emphasises: “Characteristic for the Russian army and fleet is not heroism as something special, exceeding the rules, but heroism being the norm in combat circumstances, mass heroism, a concept hardly understood by Europeans” [Балаев, с. 15; Кутищев, с. 231].

As a result, the model of victory developed in the state of the tsars differed from western Europe. Despite the introduction of similar technological and organisational solutions, the beliefs of Russian rulers, officials, commanders, officers, and ordinary soldiers about the source of military success and how to pursue it differed significantly from those that existed in western societies and armies. As Eugene Miakinkov notes, “outwardly European-looking, the Russian army had retained much of the sociocultural character that set it apart from the French *sans-culottes*, the Prussian automatons, or the British redcoats” [Miakinkov, p. 42].

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When tracing the changes that took place in Russian military developments between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, one must admit that Russia underwent a Military Revolution. As in the West, the transformations included not only technical and tactical innovations related to the increasingly massive use of gunpowder and firearms, but also the creation of an administrative apparatus capable of mobilising material and human resources for the needs of war. There were also social transformations aimed at balancing the traditional military class with new forces, who were absolutely subordinate to the state. As in the West, the main – victorious – subject of the Military Revolution was the state, which was made increasingly

stronger, increasingly centralised, and increasingly able to impose a monopoly on all layers of society through possession of the means of violence and the legal and moral possibility of using them.

However, the trajectory of the Russian Military Revolution differed significantly from the trajectories of western European countries. This was related – as researchers note – to economic, social or educational backwardness. However, one should not forget the different cultural context – the “mental matrix” – which influenced the activities not only of military reformers, but also of commanders, officers, and soldiers. Belief in the power of technology and continuous progress in this field, which accompanied Europeans from the Enlightenment, was less successful in Russia. Despite the efforts of a significant part of the elite, the rationalisation of the state, politics, and violence encountered significant challenges. A patrimonial mentality and traditional power relations made it difficult to introduce impersonal bureaucratic procedures and the cold calculation of profits and losses. The durability of traditional forms of community and collective ways of life was reflected in the ways in which the military operated and in the daily lives of soldiers. In Russia, an army that was disciplined, regularly supplied, trained, and equipped in a standardised way had problems functioning, despite the fact that it was an object of desire for subsequent Russian rulers. It is also important that the Russians had never attached much importance to technological and organisational finesse, which can be explained by the specificity of their war culture, in which value was primarily found in the strength of the spirit and not the despised cunning of the human mind. Additionally, the attitude towards individual lives, which was very different from that in western Europe, allowed Russian commanders to demand greater subordination and effort from their soldiers, and also permitted the social acceptance of much larger losses.

As a result, Russia’s “Europeanisation” – even in the military sphere – was very superficial. The western names of institutions and offices were accompanied by a traditional Russian mentality. According to the opinion of the French writer and traveller Astolphe de Custine, Peter the Great introduced western civilisation to Russia using eastern despotism, and he used the tactics of European armies to conduct Asian-style politics [Гребеньков, 2009b, c. 154]. Although this may be too harsh an opinion, this statement draws attention to the fact that rapid and radical modernisation can bring quick results in terms of organisation and institutions, but it stops at the level of the values, beliefs, and practices of everyday life. “Longue durée” structures such as these are less susceptible to manipulation and impossible to create without harmonised, spontaneous development. An analysis of Russia’s case shows that the spread of western institutions and ways of organising collective life was not necessarily accompanied by uncritical acceptance of western values. The axionormative and symbolic sphere accompanying wars was not radically transformed, unlike obsolete military equipment, which could be quickly replaced, or the organisation of the armed forces, which could be modified with a single edict from the

ruler. Similarly organised and armed troops do not necessarily behave in a similar way, a phenomenon which can be explained and understood by an analysis of military modernisation that takes into account the importance of the cultural context.

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