The Consequences of the Military Revolution in Muscovy: A Comparative Perspective

MARSHALL POE

Harvard University

What has been called the early modern military revolution may be described most simply as the replacement of small cavalry forces by huge gunpowder infantry armies.¹ The revolution was a diffusionary process with a relatively well-understood chronology and geography. The innovations at its core began in northern Italy in the later fifteenth century and spread throughout central, northern, and eastern Europe in the three centuries that followed. Seen in this way, it was a unique and unitary phenomenon. Thus we speak of the military revolution, an episode in world history, instead of several different revolutions in the constituent parts of Europe. Nonetheless, the course and impact of the revolution were different in the regions it eventually affected.

This essay will compare the consequences of early modern military reform in Muscovy and the West. The topic has several merits. First, most scholars studying the military revolution and state building concentrate on Western Europe, paying little or no attention to developments east of the Elbe.² This is surprising because there is a large literature on the Muscovite army, much of which is available in languages other than Russian. Second, where we find comparative treatments of Old Russia, they often share a set of traditional though dubious assumptions about the nature of Muscovite history and society: that Muscovy was genetically related to Kievan Rus’; that Mongol domi-


² See, for example, J. R. Hale’s War and Society in Renaissance Europe, 1450–1620 (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1985) which, despite its title, devotes not a page to Muscovy.

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nation truncated Russian development; that autocracy was a Mongol import; that Muscovy was ruled like a patrimonial estate; that the tsar’s rule was unfettered by “intermediary bodies.” This essay will attempt to introduce recent research into the discussion of Muscovy’s place in the process of early modern military reform. Finally, the particular interpretation of the course and results of the military revolution in Muscovy implied in the comparative literature—that Muscovy is an archetypical example of a despotic state imposing its will on a supine society—is questionable. This essay will argue that the court was not despotic and society not supine and that this way of looking at the problem misses a fundamental point, namely, that the military reforms brought a social and cultural revolution to Muscovy.

A complete and detailed comparison of the impact of military reform in Muscovy and the states of the West is far beyond the scope of this discussion. Our aim here will be to provide a schematic overview of the chief consequences of the reform. Pursuant to this goal, the first section below sketches an ideal-typical Western model of the general consequences of the military reforms and argues that the military revolution had four chief results: constitutional conflict, the dislocation and creation of new classes, the regimentation of the army and society, and the rise of technicality in the culture of rule. These changes were neither solely the result of military reform nor the only alterations caused by the introduction of the new-style forces. The claim made here is less forceful: that the reforms contributed to the mutations specified and that these mutations were among the most general and important. The second section compares the Western model to the Muscovite case. The main argument here is that while the military reform brought little change to Muscovy’s political system, the arrival of the new army transformed class composition, social divisions, and culture (at least among the service classes).

THE MILITARY REVOLUTION AND ITS CONSEQUENCES IN THE WEST

The introduction of new-style forces in the major kingdoms of the early modern West had four major consequences. Let us begin with constitutional conflict. The political impact of the military revolution in Western Europe manifested itself in terms of heightened tension between reform-minded cen-

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tral authorities and the two classes that bore the brunt of the military innovations: the nobility and urban commoners. The root of the problem was fiscal. In medieval European government, military outlays were minimal because the crown was not solely responsible for raising heavy cavalry armies: Knights were obliged to come to the field ready for battle and generally served without monetary remuneration. In contrast, Renaissance courts assumed a much more active role in raising expansive new-model forces, thereby increasing their financial burden. However resourceful the military reformers might be—debasing currency, selling offices, farming out monopolies—they would sometimes be forced to petition their peers and subjects for funds or the rights to raise them, which frequently resulted in conflict. The existence of representative institutions—parliaments, cortes, Landtagen, états généraux—facilitated the maturation of fiscal discord into constitutional crises. Though similarities among these bodies should not be overstated, it seems obvious that whatever their particular roles, they all served as fora for the articulation of political conflict at a very high level. Certainly national politics could be carried on outside of representative bodies, for example in urban and peasant revolts, but the high assemblies were in a sense regular conduits for national affairs. They amplified issues that would have been diffused if they had remained in the localities.

A second result of the military revolution in the West was class displacement and creation. The superiority of infantry after the introduction of pikes and shoulder-arms diminished the relative importance of heavy cavalry. Since cavalry was the traditional mode of aristocratic combat, this led to a decline in the military significance of the traditional feudal nobility. As a consequence, the basic justification for the privileges enjoyed by the titled elite, that is, martial service to the king, was called into question. The nobility had to seek other means for maintaining its privileges. Many nobles entered royal offices; others became officers in the new-model forces; some simply removed themselves from service. As the military reform transformed the old cavalry nobility, it created two new classes of state servitors—professional soldiers and administrators. The former appeared first in the form of mercenary units.

4 On the old order and the fiscal impact of the new forces, see the arguments and literature reviewed in Downing, The Military Revolution, 74.
6 Ibid. Downing, The Military Revolution, explores this in great detail.
and (a bit later) conscripts. In either case the ranks were filled by men of plebeian origins, while the officer corp was increasingly occupied by aristocrats. The latter became more numerous and specialized as the court evolved into a central bureaucracy. Since education (and especially literacy) was required for court administrative service, those who worked in offices tended to be recruited from the lower nobility, townsmen, and the clergy.

Let us turn now to regimentation. The medieval society of estates was transfigured by the introduction of the new forces. On the one hand, the line between “those who fought” and everyone else was blurred by increases in the size of armies. In place of this dichotomous system, new forms of hierarchical order based on a mix of heredity and merit were forged. In the first fifty years of the seventeenth century the concept of rank was introduced into European armies. The tiny cavalry horde—an assembly of high-born peers—neither needed nor could bear a strict chain of command. In the new armies such structures were a necessity if any sort of order was to be achieved. What is perhaps more significant is the way in which modern military style—strict regulation of functions and levels of command—was transferred into the arena of civil government. European societies, crowded with the irregularities that came of a millennium without strong central authority, came to be seen by rulers as messy and unresponsive. All right angles and order, the new-model forces presented themselves as a solution to the problem of social irregularity. Almost everywhere we see increased social regulation. In the most extreme cases (the German states and Sweden), vast systems of military and civil ranks were outlined in turgid legal compendia, the products of a fetishistic love of order and an unrealistic faith in rationality.

Finally, the introduction of gunpowder forces changed the culture of military service. Under the old-style military, combat was the exclusive province of lords, duty was occasional, and mores were governed by chivalry. Little was required in the way of technical training for those who served. Logistics were comparatively uncomplicated: Equipping and mustering the tiny forces at, say, Agincourt must have been a relatively simple affair. War did not require the crown to make great demands on the country. Indeed, contact between state and society related to war was infrequent: Few war-taxes were collected; few conscripts were mustered. Every indication is that the nobility was content to leave society to its own devices and, indeed, insisted as a point of honor that contact be held to a minimum. When masses of armed foot soldiers were introduced, the cultures of service, supply, and extraction were altered. Forces were in part democratized, service became

continual and was regulated by written codes. Chivalry became an elegiac fact, as in Shakespeare, or an object of parody, as in Cervantes. Written systems of ranks were introduced and eventually spread to society. The “three orders” were replaced by a plurality of places, ranks, and statuses all arranged neatly in codes, statutes, and Ordnungen. Logistics were transformed. Organizational skills were expanded and refined in the emergent military bureaucracies of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The new army required extensive written planning, communication, and record keeping simply to get it in the field and prevent mutiny for lack of pay. Finally, the state increasingly entered the daily lives of citizens as tax collector and policeman, and both armed not only with force but with written instruments to record obligations and regulate behavior. All these cultural changes might be summarized as an increase in technicality. Complicated weaponry and tactics transformed soldiering; new, rationalized administrative structures re-worked systems of stratification; and regulation and penetration changed the nature of relations between state and society.

THE IMPACT OF THE MILITARY REVOLUTION IN MUSCOVY

The military revolution came to Muscovy in roughly three halting stages. Prior to the mid-sixteenth century, the Muscovite military was comprised of regional cavalry forces armed with cold steel. Their opponents—Tatars, Lithuanians, Poles—fought in the same way, so nothing more advanced was considered necessary. However in the second half of the sixteenth century the Russians began to encounter new-style forces in the Baltic, and the Muscovite court responded by initiating significant military reforms. Though the surviving sources do not permit a detailed reconstruction of the course of the reforms, their outline is reasonably clear. First, the court reconfigured the army itself. The regime attempted to enhance its control over command assignments by placing limits on precedence disputes (mestnichestvo) among officers that sometimes interfered with military activity. Further, the center


16 Throughout this essay court or elite (rather than the problematic nobility or aristocracy) will denote the Muscovite courtiers who ruled the empire, the so-called councilor ranks (damnye chiny). On them, see N. S. Kollmann, Kinship and Politics: the Making of the Muscovite Political System, 1375–1547 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987) and R. Crumme, Aristocrats and Servitors. The Boyar Elite in Russia, 1613–1689 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983).


18 On the rise of precedence disputes and their interference with military action, see A.
took steps to unite the traditional cavalry forces in Moscow. In 1551 a plan was formulated to grant estates to approximately 1,000 of the best cavalry servitors (deti boiarskie) in the immediate Moscow area, a reform clearly intended to create a core military force at the immediate call of, and dependent on, the center. In the third quarter of the century the court founded the Military Service Chancellery (razriadnyi prikaz), the clearing house for all military affairs and what would become the most important bureau in Muscovy. Standing gunpowder infantry units, the musketeers (strel'tsy), were introduced at mid-century. Musketeer units were armed by the crown and located in Moscow. Finally, and most significant, the system of remuneration was restructured for all military personnel. The court attempted to commute and centralize the collection of provender rents that had traditionally been granted to court-appointed officials as prebends. Both hereditary (votchiny) and prebendal (pomest'ia) estates were subjected to a military service require-

Kleimola, “Status, Place, and Politics: the Rise of Mestnichestvo during the Boiarskoie Pravlenie,” Forschungen zur osteuropaischen Geschichte, 27 (1980), 195–214. On measures to curb precedence disputes over military appointments, see A. A. Zimin, “K istorii voennykh reform 50-kh godov XVI v.,” Istoričeskie zapiski, 55 (1956), 344–48. See A. A. Zimin, ed., Tysiachniaia kniga 1550 g. i dvorovaia tetrad’ 50-kh godov XVI veka (Moscow: Izdatel’stvo Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1950), 3–19, and Zimin, “K istorii voennykh reform 50-kh godov XVI v.,” 348. As Zimin demonstrates, it is unclear whether this reform was carried out. Nonetheless, the intentions of the court are made clear by the plan itself. The date of the Military Service Chancellery’s foundation is unclear, again due to lack of sources. Many scholars have argued that a predecessor of the military office existed as early as the 1530s. See V. I. Buganov, Razriadnye knigi poslednei chetverti XV-nachala XVII v. (Moscow: Izdatel’stvo Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1962), 111; I. I. Verner, O vremeni i prichinakh obrazovaniia Moskovskikh prikazov (Moscow: Universitetskaia tipografiia, 1907), 55–56; P. B. Brown, “Muscovite Government Bureaus,” Russian History/Histoire Russe, 10.3 (1983), 324; and N. P. Likhachev, Razriadnye d’iaki XVI veka (St. Petersburg: V. S. Balashev, 1888), 80. However the evidence is far from clear. The first unassailable reference to military scribes (razriadnye d’iaki) is from 1563. See Likhachev, Razriadnye d’iaki, 458, and A. A. Zimin, “O slozhenii prikaznoi sistemy na Rusi,” Doklady i soobshchenia Instituta istorii Akademii Nauk SSSR, fasc. 3 (Moscow: Izdatel’stvo Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1945), 169–70. The phrase military office (razriadnaia izba) appears in 1566. See Zimin, “O slozhenii,” 169 (mistakenly writing 1556 for 1566) and Likhachev, Razriadnye d’iaki, 458. The term razriad was used to denote “Military Service Chancellery” for the first time in 1571. See Likhachev, Razriadnye d’iaki, 462, and Zimin “O slozhenii,” 169–70.


In essence, the regime was rapidly assuming the role of bursar to the expanding and reformed army. Taxes rose accordingly. In preparation for the Smolensk War (1632–34), the court embarked on a second reform effort. Western captains and mercenary units were recruited (not for the first time) to train and fight with the old-style cavalry and musketeers. The government issued weapons, supplies, and cash to the new units. A third and decisive effort at creating new-model forces was undertaken around the Thirteen Years War (1654–67). Again the court recruited Western captains, instructed them to train Russian soldiers, and placed them in command positions. To fill the ranks of the new army, the court began to draft soldiers directly out of the peasant and tax-paying communities. Further, the center took active measures to force cavalrmen into the new units. Finally, older and militarily unreliable musketeers were removed from field duty and made into a sort of garrison force.

How do the consequences of the military reform in Muscovy compare to those experienced in the West? We will begin with constitutional conflict. The Muscovite court indeed faced a certain amount of opposition to the introduction of new-model forces. Hellie has argued convincingly that the gentry offered resistance that was both active (in supporting the Moscow riots of 1648) and passive (in failing to enter new-model units) to military reforms in the seventeenth century. Further, there is some evidence that the mass of tax-paying people (tiaglye liudi) and serfs (krest'iane) was recalcitrant. All rose in revolt against government policies that included taxation to support the new army. These broad similarities aside, the court faced far less political

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23 Universal service according to graded landholding schedules is prescribed in the edict on “provender rents and service.” See Polnoe sobranie Russkikh letopisei, vol. 13, 269. See Hellie, Enserfment, 36ff. The effect of the reform can perhaps be seen in the appearance (Kashira, 1556) of regional muster records (desiatnya) which list servitors according to rank and land entitlements. See M. G. Krotov, “K istorii sostavleniia desiaten (vtoraia polovina XVI v.)” in Issledovaniia po istochnikovedeniu istorii SSSR do oktiabr'skogo perioda, ed. V. I. Buganov (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1984), 56–72.


25 On introduction of the new-model forces in the seventeenth century, see Chernov, Vosruchennye sily, 133–98; Hellie, Enserfment, 167–201; Keep, Soldiers of the Tsar, 80–94.

26 Hellie, Enserfment, 136-9, 225, and 247.

27 Ibid., 224, on petitions and absenteeism.

28 Throughout this essay, gentry refers to the landed middle-ranking servitors (dvoriane and deti boiar'skie) who made up the bulk of the traditional cavalry host. On them, see N. Pavlov-Sil'vanskii, Gosudarevy sluzhilye liudi. Proizkhodzenie russkogo dvorianstva (St. Petersburg: Gosudarstvennaia tipografiia, 1898); V. I. Novitskii, Vybornoe i bol'shoe dvorianstvo XVI-XVII vekov (Kiev: Tip. 1-i Kievsk. arteli pechat. dela, 1915); A. A. Novosel'skii, “Praviaschtie gruppy v sluzhilom ‘gorode’ XVII v.” Uchenye zapiski RANION, 5 (1929), 315–35; Hellie, Enserfment and Military Change, 21–47; Keep, Soldiers of the Tsar, 13–55: V. Kivelson, “Community and State: the Political Culture of Seventeenth-Century Muscovy and the Provincial Gentry of the Vladimir-Suzdal’ Region” (Ph.D. disser., History Department, Stanford University, 1987); and C. B. Stevens, Soldiers on the Steppes. Army Reform and Social Change in Early Modern Russia (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1995).
resistance to the new forces than did Western governments. The reason, which
has been widely misunderstood, has to do with a subtle combination of
strength on the part of the Moscow elite and consensus between that elite and
its servitors. As is often pointed out, the tsar dealt with his minions from a
position of relative strength. Both the gentry and townspeople were dependent
on the crown. The elite had successfully monopolized cultural capital and
economic resources among the service classes. The sons of the provincial
gentry had no choice but to seek careers in service: They were mandated by
the law to do so and, in marked contrast to the West, could not seek social
approbation in any other statusascriptive context. Moreover, the court
granted estates, prebends, and salaries only in exchange for service. And even
after conditional service estates (pomes‘ia) became heritable in the seven-
teenth century, the custom of partible inheritance made it impossible for
gentry families to collect significant economic resources.29 The situation of
townspeople was similar. Small and relatively poor, the Muscovite merchantry
was bound in a caste system of the government’s creation in towns that
government officials controlled. Like all other groups, the traders existed in
large measure to serve the court,30 although they did so either by paying taxes
(in the case of small artisans and traders) or by collecting government duties
and managing court enterprises (in the case of wealthy merchants).

Be this as it may, the argument to autocracy and class dependence is one-
sided. It assumes that conflict between the court and its servitors is somehow
natural and should be widespread. Autocracy is taken as evidence of the
state’s victory over society. But there is some indication that over the entire
period of the reform there existed a broad and stable consensus between the
elite and its service classes.31 Comparison with the Western case is instructive
in this regard. Western nobilities often were torn apart by confessional strife.
The Muscovite boyars successfully resisted any incursion of confessional
reform; and even granting that religious division appeared (in the form of Old
Belief), issues of faith never divided the Old Russian governing classes.
Thus, Muscovy experienced no French Religious Wars. Further, in the West

29 Muscovy had a sort of private property. See G. Weickhardt, “The Pre-Petrine Law of
V. Kivelson, “The Effects of Partible Inheritance: Gentry Families and the State in Muscovy,”

30 On the merchants and urban classes in general, see H.-J. Torke, Die staatsbedingte Gesell-
schaft im Moskauer Reich. Zar und Zemlja in der altirussischen Herrschaftsverfassung 1613–
1668 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1974); R. Hellie, “The Stratification of Muscovite Society: the Towns-
men,” Russian History/Histoire Russe, 5:2 (1978), 11975; J. M. Hittle, The Service City. The
State and Townspeople in Russia, 16001800 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979);
P. Bushkovitch, The Merchants of Moscow; 15801650 (Cambridge: Cambridge University
Press, 1980).

31 On consensus among the court elite, see H. Riuss, Adel und Adelsoppositionen in Moskauer
Staat (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1975); Kollmann, Kinship and Politics, 14952 and 184; and Crum-
mey, Aristocrats and Servitors, 3464.
the crown and estates were often split on issues bound up with the funding and use of the new-model forces. Although both the Old Russian gentry and townsmen did express dissatisfaction with certain aspects of the reform in the seventeenth century, there was little systematic resistance from the provinces to government policy. Hence, Muscovy suffered no Fronde or English Civil War. It is sometimes argued that the potential for religious and political resistance existed but that it could not develop because Muscovy was without intermediary bodies, these having been suppressed by the "despotic" state. But in fact Muscovy had several of the mechanisms that proved conducive to the expression of institutionalized conflict in the West, that is, local corporations, national estates, and a tradition of customary limitations on sovereign action. It is true that none were as well elaborated as in the West, but this may be because the stimulus that led to their enhanced development in Western kingdoms—resistance to the crown—was not very powerful in Muscovy. It is interesting to note that when serious division did appear within the Muscovite governing classes as a result of the dynastic crises in the Time of Troubles, precisely these institutions, and particularly the Assembly of the Land (zemskii sobor), were invigorated. But some decades after the Troubles had ended and consensus had re-emerged, they became unnecessary for the purposes of rule and disappeared.

Let us now turn to class displacement and creation. As in the West, the introduction of new-formation military units made the old-style cavalry obsolete, though somewhat later (in the mid-seventeenth century). The proportion of archers on horseback in the Muscovite army declined steadily during the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as the old cavalry was replaced by Western-style forces. As in the West, this brought significant

changes to the lives of the provincial servitors—the Muscovite cavalrmen lost their traditional military role. But the Muscovite gentry either did not or was not allowed to abandon state service completely for reasons already discussed. The average cavalryman needed government service to maintain his class privileges and was in any case probably too poor to do without subsidies from the crown. Given this dependence, the court needed only to threaten the gentry with a reduction of status and wealth to press it into new-formation military service. The reformed cavalrmen were joined by two new classes of servitors: paid soldiers and administrators. Unlike in the West, however, both groups were created very rapidly and almost ex nihilo by state fiat. Prior to the Livonian war, the Muscovite court had never commanded large infantry formations or a sizable staff of administrators. The elite was thus compelled to raise a European-style army and to create an administrative class to see to its upkeep. Beginning in the second half of the sixteenth century, the court began to levy a considerable number of musketeers, primarily from the urban population. In the 1630s the elite began to draft new-model soldiers and hire foreigners to train them. Over the same period, approximately 1550 to 1630, we see an appreciable increase in the number of chancelleries (prikazy) and the number of secretaries (d’iaki and pod’iachie).
The third consequence of military reform noted above was social regimentation and stratification. Early modern Russia offers an extreme case of rapid, thorough-going social division. Muscovy moved from a relatively simple society marked by slight internal division in the fourteenth century to one with many functional groups and hierarchical boundaries in the seventeenth. In every sector of society—the court (gosudarev dvor and moskovskii spisok), church (patriarsii dvor), government administration (prikazy and prikaznye izby), provincial gentry (sluzhilye liudi po otechestvu serving on the gorodovoi spisok, or provincial list), lower service classes (sluzhilye liudi po priboru), merchants (gosti), townspeople (posadskie liudi), and peasants—the court imposed classificatory systems that designated the type of service to be performed by members of the groups in question. In theory, everyone served and had a role. The Consiliar Lawcode (Soborne Ulozhenie) of 1649 describes all this in painstaking detail. The basic difference between Muscovite and Western stratification lies precisely in the role played by the court. Under the relatively lax control of medieval governments, Western societies developed considerable regional, functional, and hierarchical boundaries. The importance of economic developments in this process, especially the growth of national and international commerce, has long been emphasized. When Western kings embarked on programs of military reform, they added new forms of complexity to the mixture and often faced resistance from pre-existing groups. In Muscovy there was little of this spontaneous social development: Early Muscovite society, overwhelmingly rural and largely isolated from the commercial and cultural influence of the West, was very simple. As is often noted, the lack of organized social interests in society afforded the Muscovite elite significant though hardly unlimited political authority. It is less often mentioned that the relative weakness of social groups also reduced the power of the Muscovite court. Western monarchs were able to use already organized estates, towns, and corporations as vehicles to mobilize support and resources. Muscovite society contained few such groups. As a consequence the Muscovite elite had to create organized groups in society to respond to its needs. Important for us is the fact that these needs were often military, so that it is only a slight exaggeration to say that the history of Muscovite stratification is the history of the government’s attempts to raise

45 The partial exceptions of Novgorod and Pskov—neither of which were Muscovite prior to the later fifteenth century—must be noted. Significantly, both cities had close ties to the lively Baltic trade. The simplicity of Muscovite society has been described in many places, most notably in D. H. Kaiser, The Growth of the Law in Medieval Russia (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), which uses law as an index of social complexity and finds Muscovy to be comparatively simple.
competitive armies and to mobilize resources in society to support them. This end is clearly reflected in the most basic Muscovite social divisions. At the highest level, the Russian populace was divided according to the kind of resources that various groups controlled and the kind of state-service they were to render. Most hereditary military servitors (sluzhilye liudi po otechestvu) controlled peasant labor and were burdened with martial and administrative duties, while contract military servitors (sluzhilye liudi po priboru) received cash and commercial concessions; taxpayers (tiaglye liudi) either engaged in urban trades and paid government duties or were serfs (krest’iane), in which case they labored for the gentry; non-taxpayers (netiaglye liudi)—especially slaves—controlled no resources and served their owners, who in turn served the tsar.

Finally, let us review the broader cultural effects of the military reforms in Muscovy. The military revolution in the West was accompanied by a movement toward technicality in the culture of state activity. The same was true in Muscovy. The new-model units used relatively complicated arms (increasingly of Russian manufacture) and tactics, and they were drilled according to written procedures; administrative and logistical activity grew more complex and became thoroughly literate; service obligations within and outside the army were recorded and regulated as never before. However, the introduction of technicality had a much more profound impact on Muscovite culture than it did in the West. Prior to the coming of the new armies, the court itself was a rather unsophisticated operation, a fact reflected in the relative poverty and simplicity of government documents. Among those that the elite and its minions issued we find legal cases (pravye gramoty), tax-assessment edicts (kormlenye and zhalovannye gramoty), local government charters (ustavnye, gubnye, and zemskie gramoty), land registers (pistsovye knigi), diplomatic paper (stateinye spiski), and books of elite geneology and res gestae (rodoslovnye and razriadnye knigi). Of personnel lists, muster...

46 This is V. O. Kliuchevskii’s famous formulation. See “Istoriia soslovii v Rossii,” in Sochineniia, 9 vols. (Moscow: Mysl’, 1990), vol. 6:353.
47 For a general treatment, see Pavlov-Sil’vanskii, Gosudarevy sluzhilye liudi.
48 See Hittle, The Service City, 21–76.
49 See R. Hellie, Slavery in Russia, 1450–1725 (Chicago and London, 1982).
51 See Hellie, Enserfment, 167–8, on the translation of Western drill manuals.
54 Reviews of the history of Muscovite government documentation are available in Vodov, “Zarozhdenie kantseliarii Moskovskikh kniiazei,” and Poe, “Elite Service Registry in Muscovy.”
55 On the early use of legal documents, see Kaiser, The Growth of the Law in Medieval Russia. The paucity of Muscovite documents of all types to the mid-sixteenth century is well-known. The best treatment of the meager documentary legacy of early Muscovy remains L. V. Cherepnin,
records, and pay registers we encounter almost nothing. There were few scribes. The grand prince’s scriptorium was tiny and undifferentiated. Neither the clergy nor merchantry could provide large pools of literate administrators. All this points to the fact that the Muscovite court was relatively unprepared for the technical burden brought by the incorporation of the new armies. Despite this difficulty, the Muscovite elite succeeded in creating a subtle, powerful, and above all, literate administrative system very rapidly. By 1650, the extent of government documentary production had grown tremendously. Documentary registers (zapisnye knigi) recorded incoming and outgoing paper throughout the institutions of the central and local administration. Service registers of various sorts traced the movement, disposition, and rank of tens of thousands of servitors throughout the far-flung empire. Land registers (pistsovye and perepisnye knigi) were used to record ownership, resolve legal disputes, and of course collect taxes. As a consequence of extensive record keeping, the administrative arm of the state developed: The number of scribes grew; the scriptorium, heretofore organized in only the most rudimentary fashion, was divided into chancelleries; political officials increasingly gained expertise as administrators. And the coming of


57Alef cites the following figures concerning the number of state scribes (d’iaki) at court: 1470s: 14 d’iaki; 1480s: 10 d’iaki; 1490s: 17 d’iaki; and 1500–05: 20 d’iaki. See Alef, The Origins of Muscovite Autocracy, 273. Alef’s data is drawn from A. A. Zimin, “D’iacheskii apparat v Rossii vtoroi poloviny XV—pervoi treti XVI v.,” Istoriicheskie zapiski, 87 (1971), 219–86.


61 Ibid., 52–53.


63 In 1626 there were 623 chancellery people (prikaznye liudi) serving in Moscow. By 1698 there were 2,739. In the 1640s, 774 secretaries and under-secretaries were employed in the provincial offices; in the 1690s, there were over 1,900. See Demidova, Sluzhilaia biurokratia, 23 and 37.

64 In 1650 there were no chancelleries (prikazy); in 1626 there were forty-four; and in 1698 there were fifty-five, each with a more or less distinct territorial or functional sphere of activity. See Demidova, Sluzhilaia biurokratia, 23.

administrative complexity to Muscovy had a significant impact on Old Russian culture, particularly among the Moscow elite. Documentation furthered social stratification by allowing the state to formulate and promulgate elaborate classificatory schemes, as we see in the massive Ulozhenie of 1649. Further, documentation changed the character of personal identity. After the arrival of administrative paper, the state could “fix” social position with written instruments. Finally, the habit of reading and writing was introduced to the elite, opening the wider world of literary art for the first time.

CONCLUSION: THE MILITARY REVOLUTION AND SOCIAL CHANGE

The following table summarizes the differential impact of the military revolution in the West and Muscovy (see Table 1). The severity of consequences has been ranked high, moderate, and low. In contrast to the Western case in which they brought political conflict, in Muscovy the military reforms spurred instead significant changes in what we might broadly term the socio-cultural sphere. In order to support the new forces, the state was compelled to alter substantively the shape of society: New classes had to be created, new systems of social classification forged, and the techniques of literate organization introduced. This crucial point has been systematically missed with significant consequences in the comparative literature on constitutional and military development.

For reasons that go beyond the scope of this essay, comparative analyses of European constitutional development have long focused on the “peculiarity” of Russian political culture. In such treatments Muscovy plays a specific role as the “despotic” counter-instance to the “limited” regimes in the West. Western monarchs were checked by corporations and their subjects’ rights were protected by law. In contrast, the tsar, we are told, virtually owned the realm and his subjects were slaves. According to this argument the result of autocracy and servility was constitutional immutability, a trope familiar from the older literature of “Asiatic despotism.” When this understanding of Muscovite society is applied to the comparative study of the military reforms in Old Russia, the outcome is predictable. In the context of the military revolution, Muscovy is

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The Consequences of the Military Revolution in Muscovy and the West

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Constitutional Conflict</th>
<th>Class Change</th>
<th>Regimentation</th>
<th>Cultural Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muscovy</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

seen as an instance in which a powerful state succeeded in introducing new forces while avoiding "progressive" constitutional conflict.67 This essay has argued that such a mode of explanation is found wanting on two grounds. First, it presupposes that the Muscovite court and its service classes were in conflict. With some notable exceptions, the elite seems to have enjoyed widespread support among those who served it. Second, Muscovy does not fit the "despotic state-gelatinous society" model very well because Old Russian society had versions of all the "intermediary bodies" so important to constitutional development in the West. It must be allowed that they did not become well-elaborated institutions for opposition to the crown, but they did not do so precisely because such institutions, in the absence of significant opposition among the governing classes, never had the opportunity to develop in this direction.

In any event, the concentration on politics directs attention away from an important aspect of the Muscovite experience with military reform. The Muscovite case implies not so much that a despotic state can impose itself on society but that the level of socio-cultural complexity was an important independent variable in the process of early modern military reform. It is easy to see how this factor operated in Muscovy. Under increasing military pressure, the Muscovite elite set about importing Western military technologies. To support the new forces (as well as older, expanded ones), the boyars had to build a machinery of state far larger and more complicated than anything they had ever experienced or desired. Yet, unlike their Western competitors, they had few resources with which to accomplish this goal. The forest society that they ruled was profoundly primitive: It offered an antiquated cavalry and a tiny group of scribes with which the elite had to construct a new-model army and administration, possessed few organized social interests on which the center could call for aid, and contained almost no members with the skills necessary to manage a large, gunpowder army. Beginning in the mid-sixteenth century,

67 This argument is implied in several comparative treatments, notably Hintze, “The Formation of States and Constitutional Development”; Bendix, Kings or People, 115–23; Anderson, Lineages, 328–41. The most complete rendition is found in Downing, The Military Revolution, 38–44.
the court began to cultivate resources in each of these military-administrative, social, and technical areas. The process was painstaking but had dramatic results. First, the autocratic state, if not autocratic political culture, was born. What had in 1450 been a tiny collection of warriors managing a protection operation in the forests and on the trade routes of northeastern Rus' became by 1650 a large administrative system ruling a huge empire. Second, the military reforms introduced the germs of modern social complexity into the context of traditional Muscovite society. In 1450, Muscovy comprised three classes, two of which were completely uncoordinated: a small elite (including clerics), a tiny merchanty, and a huge peasantry. By 1650, the elite included an administrative class and commanded a class of professional soldiers. The townsmen and peasants had been organized for state service. And finally, Old Russian culture—illiterate, isolated, and tradition-bound—began to move into a new era. Literacy in particular changed cultural patterns, tastes, and (more speculatively) habits of the mind. In short, in the course of a century under the impact of the military reforms, Muscovite state and society ceased to be medieval and set on the road to modernity.