Tearing Up Empire: The Military Breakup of the Soviet Union

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The dissolution of empire involves multiple facets. While forming national identity and declaring political sovereignty bring about the proud sense of liberation, physically tearing up the imperial economic and military system causes substantial dislocation. Such torturing experiences might pressure some nations to step backward from their initial separatist positions, while at the same time propel others to be more determined in leaving as fast as possible. To understand such a variation, this article probes the military breakup of the Soviet Union in the aftermath of 1991. Drawing data from the newspaper *Krasnaya Zvezda* of the Soviet/Russian Ministry of Defense, it identifies three reactions to the empire's military breakup: quitting the empire at any cost and build up national armies from scratch; seizing former empire's forces on territory to build national armed forces as fast; refusing to build national military and attempting to stay within the unified imperial system. This article argues that such trifurcation was driven by multiple factors including the availability of local military expertise and economic resources, a society's security situation at the moment of imperial disintegration, the access to resources from external world, as well as leading elites' subjective judgement. This article highlights the neglected perspective of empire's technical disintegration.

The Disintegration of Empire

The end of empire is not only a political process but also a technical one. Whereas political separation looks like a pleasant liberation and a decision achieved overnight by small circles of elites, technically tearing up an empire is much more difficult and prolonged, which involved massive socio-economic dislocations that affected individuals' everyday life and often rendered state apparatus dysfunctional. The term "technical division" here refers to a long list of elements: the process of partitioning former imperial legacies, physical as well as organizational; the process of cutting off the mutual dependence between various former imperial parts; the process of dismantling the centralized coordinative/command system. The issue of technical division is largely particular to modern empires that seek penetration into population and have engineered firm integration during their existence (for the distinction between ancient and modern empires, see Hall 2017).

The process of technical division might see diverse reactions. Deterred by the brutal discord, some nations stepped back, softening their previous positions for secession and instead showing interests in staying within the former imperial framework. However, the same technical barrier might impel other nations to follow a converse logic, making them more determined to pass transitional torturing at any costs and as soon as possible.

This identified bifurcation is understudied by existing scholarship. First and foremost, the technical facet of imperial death receives far less attention than the political facet does. Research

on the rise of nationalism, especially large-N analyses, for the convenience of coding and comparing, tends to oversimplify the complex process of transition down to the announcement of the foundation of nation-states (for example, Wimmer and Min 2006), while classic case studies focus on the long-term factors that led empires to decline and fall – they usually trace history only till the moment of political end (the abdication of the monarchy, the death of the last emperor, the setback of the imperial capital, signature of treaty on partition, etc.) and simply assume that the history afterward is the one of nation-state (Barkey 2008; Eisenstadt 1967; Kennedy 1989). The dislocation caused by technical separation is also neglected in the way of being presented as a prolonged, gradual, and thus invisible process (Tilly 1994).

Sociology of colonialism, probing post-colonial contexts, is more concerned with the technical barrier of imperial disintegration. It demonstrates that newly independent states might either continue to be affected by the social structures left by former colonial states (Kohli 2004; Mahoney 2010) or arduously struggle to break such path dependency and clear up colonial vestiges (Durham 1993; Mann 2005). However, these literatures do not explain why certain nation-states were much more determined than others to break up their technical dependence on the former empire even though the practical difficulty was tremendous. From the side of nationalism studies, it has been argued that nation-state takes shape only step by step, but the periodization either ends up with the mass mobilization and the seizure of power (Hroch 1985) or neglects the technical facet that allows the new state to function (Brubaker 1996). Therefore, a more precise subject needs to be define so that various paths of quitting empire or seizing imperial legacies could be identified and compared.

The political economy of empire offers more insights. Nations tend to exit from empire when they see larger economic opportunities in a changed world system. Core abandons empire when the elite has come to view imperial rule as illegitimate or feel the cost of maintaining an empire unaffordable. A new geopolitical order might render small nations' conventional dependency on their imperial metropolitan no more necessary, and so on (Darwin 1991; Doyle 1986). Yet, these accounts, first, thinks of the disintegration of empire as a smooth and peaceful process, where the dependency on the old empire could be replaced by new resources through a seamless transition, which is not true. Its structuralist scheme also underestimates the importance of the discretion of elites. As this article will demonstrate, at the moment of separation, it is very difficult for leading elites to gain the correct knowledge of the technical interlocking, which leads to misjudgements and zigzags.

This article, in the light of Michael Mann's (1986) theory of four sources of social power (ideological, political, economic, and military), highlights the military dimension, which is crucial to the establishment and consolidation of a full-fledged nation-state. Whereas nationalist cultural identity and political organization can be developed outside of existing imperial legacies, the military has to be drawn either from existing imperial framework or from powerful external resources, as it involves expertise, professional personnel, technology, and economic resources, all of which take a long time to take shape. Equally important, military capacity is vital to Nationalist elites that have uniformly been pursuing separation might from this point on diverge upon the substantial issue of military state-building.

The Soviet Union

The Soviet Union is a unique and appropriate case to explore the technical disintegration of empire. On one hand, unlike the German, the Japanese, the Ottoman, the Hapsburg, and older empires such as Rome and Byzantium that died of external intrusion, the Soviet Union disintegrated out of internal impetus from bottom (although the process was never free of the external interferences). On the other hand, the breakup was also completed fast – the technical disintegration was thus a torturing process rather than a gradual one. The decisions of ending the Soviet Union were made by a few leaders in the final months of 1991 (Plokhy 2014). Before that, although there had been prevailing nationalist movements (mostly in non-Russian peripheries), they were confined to founding political organizations and sometimes making skirmishes at certain disputed areas (*goriachie tochki*). The empire's technical disintegration, such as economic and military infrastructure, had not yet started. Therefore, the breakup of the Soviet Union was a brutal process of tearing up a well-engineered empire overnight – and this process had to be promoted by the former members themselves rather than external occupiers.

There are extensive studies on the military power of the post-Soviet space, most of which focus on the formation of defense policies of the successor states (for example, Clark 1994; Danopoulos and Zirker 1996; Parrott 2015). One relevant literature is Beissinger's four-category typology of the security options of the post-Soviet states: Central Asian countries relied on Russia; Baltics drove the Russian forces out and then turned to the NATO for protection; Belarus and Ukraine initially wanted to separate out but eventually returned to the joint CIS defense; Transcaucasia relied on homegrown para-military (1997: 174-75).

This article builds its thesis on more solid and systematic empirical work. It draws data primarily from *Krasnaya Zvezda* (cited as KZ throughout the text), the organ of the Soviet/CIS/Russian Ministry of Defense. In the year 1992 and 1993, this newspaper offers detailed information on how former Soviet states quitted or refused to quit the unified military system. In addition, a useful supplemental material is the documentary collection edited by the *Krasnaya Zvezda*, *Nesakrushimaya i legendarnaya* (Dobrokhotov 1994), which includes broader sources regarding the disintegration of the military – some from republics other than Russia.

Based on the rich historical data, this article identifies three patterns of dealing imperial military legacies: (a) quitting: separating from the Soviet military without carrying away forces; building national armies from stretch (b) seizing: occupying and controlling the Soviet forces on territory to establish national military; (c) remaining: preserving the Soviet military and not seeking to possess national army.

Quitting

The Baltic countries fell into a vacuum of defense. Latvia was determined to build up its national militia alone. It proclaimed that the Latvian officer corps would only include Latvian citizens that spoke fluent Latvian (KZ, 1992171-10), and that by June 1993 all servicemen without citizenship would be expelled (KZ 1993, 120/21-33). This claim was followed up with a state-led campaign called "Chekistkii sindrom" to purge former Soviet agents from the newly independent Ministries of Security and Interior (KZ 1992, 132-5). The decision of resolute and fast separation was made on the historical lesson that Russian soldiers on Latvian territory attempted to help the

Bolshevik seize local power in 1917 (22/23-5), but also with the hope that a new national army not would break away from the traditions of the former Soviet military such as "dedovshchina" (abusing new recruits) (57/58-22).

At technical levels such a big-bang-style transition caused huge difficulties – like most non-Russian nations, Latvians did not account for a significant part of the former Soviet armed forces – if any, largely in supportive branches – and thus lacked the military facilities and capacities to build an army fast (Rakowska-Harmstone 1990: 84). Weapons were in extreme shortage. Toward the end of 1993, after two years of transition, in the national militia every three soldiers had only one grenadier to share (KZ, 1993: 289-27). Nor did Latvia possess its own military academies. An expedient plan was passed to build crash schools to create commanders of company-platoon levels, with all trainees selected from the rank-and-file of border service and motorized infantry (171-10). Such a severe lack of qualified officers led to dysfunction. Over the entire year of 1993 ten military men died because of improper operations of weapon system (KZ 1993, 264-17), while more than 30 rifles and 2500 bullets were stolen (KZ 1993, 289-27). Accused of rampant alcoholism, within the border service on average one of every ten had to be expelled (57/58-22).

Latvia had attempted to capture some assets from the Soviet legacies but did not succeed. The proposal to purchase warships from the Baltic Fleet was rejected by Russian Navy, given the reason that as a small polity Latvia did not need that many equipment and its marine defense should remain in coordination with Russia's navy (1993, 48-7). This position did not make effects but rather pushed Latvia further into the side of the West. In January 1993 Latvia reached an agreement with the US government, according to which the Michigan State National Guard was to be in charge of transforming the Latvian national militia into a regular troop (1993, 22/23-28). The Russian Baltic Fleet would soon see that the Latvian navy was starting shooting training in the same water across the marine border.

Estonia was more aggressive in its efforts of breaking dependency from Russia. After outlawing the service of "individuals without citizenship" (1992, 13-22), the Minister of Defense openly claimed that the former Soviet military pensioners on Estonian territory should be expelled too on the ground that 70% of this populace carried arms and might constitute a threat to Estonia's security (1993, 57/58-28). In order to drive out the former Soviet forces as fast as possible, Estonia used more coercion than other Baltic states. The supplies to former Soviet forces in Estonia was stopped in January 1992, with the reason that Moscow did not deliver Tallinn grain seeds as promised (1992, 6-11). This harsh measure put the Soviet troops to the extreme difficult situation of enduring the winter without sufficient fuels (1992, 11-24). The Estonian state also closed many facilities of the Baltic Fleet bases and put major roads toward these bases into customary surveillance (1993, 99-2). It also rejected the previously sanctioned request of the Russian Anti-Aircraft forces for adding new barracks (14/15-26). The Estonian parliament, in contrast Latvia's that allowed sale, passed the law to nationalize Russian officers' apartments without compensation (1992, 274-30) and authorized policemen to use force in case of resistance (1993, 132-17). Moreover, attacks on Soviet troops were permitted and conducted by para-military national organizations, which led to massive defection – it was reported that a unit of 250 men only had 20 still in service, as all living facilities such as shower, kitchen, and heat had been destructed (1992, 4-10). As security of military men had become a question, the Baltic military district claimed that withdrawal would be completed by the end of 1992 (157-15; 223-

39). Moreover, like Lativa, Estonia received substantial aids from the West: Israel offered 50 million of US dollars; Sweden and Finland promised to train Estonian officers; France and Germany delivered uniforms and communication facilities, etc. (1993, 28/29-27). Estonia also invited Swedish to train officers at Tallinn (1993, 22/23-36). It envisaged that such difficulties would be overcome soon – if accepted by NATO, Estonia would only need to spend 3.3% of its budget on defense.

Situation in Lithuania was in-between. It was not as aggressive as in Estonia, partly because of being deterred by Moscow's attempted use of force in January 1991. The state not only allowed Soviet officers to sell their apartments, but also offered aids to housing coastal defense defence who could not immediately leave Lithuania (1993, 48-7). The prime-minister was also in close contact with Russia to transform the former Soviet military enterprises into Russo-Lithuanian joint venture (ibid). Nonetheless, the Lithuanian army, like the other two, suffered shortage of weaponry, manpower, and insufficiency of training too. The campaign of "resisting Soviet conscription" throughout the final years of the USSR yielded backlash – now the Lithuanian youths did not want to join their own army either. The newly formed special service reported that over 80 of its 300-men group of new recruits requested to go home, to the extent that their Soviet-trained commanders considered to return them (KZ 1992, 31/32-27). In the first nine months of 1993 the army reported 143 criminal cases, out of which 43 defections, 14 robberies of weapons, and 10 severe violations of regulations (1993, 276-14). There were also attacks against local Soviet military. A division head of the Soviet coastal defense had been arrested by Lithuanian police, to rescue whom the commander of the Baltic Fleet flied to Vilnius to negotiate with local authorities (1992, 184/85-4). To deal with sporadic intrusion into their apartments, many Soviet officers requested to hold weapons with them for self-defencing (1992, 11-19).

A case similar (but significantly different) to Baltic states was Belarus. Expecting to become a neutral country like Sweden and Switzerland, it was actively promoting the withdrawal of the former Soviet military, especially the strategic nuclear forces – it planned to return all nuclear weapons to Russia by 1997 (KZ 1992, 14-9). Meanwhile, planning to confine its armed forces to the function of defense, Belarus claimed that its military would exclude large divisions and armored troops, but rather only include light grounded forces, anti-aircraft forces, and small air forces, amounting to 50,000 to 80,000 men. Such a restrained goal, in combination with the overrepresentation of Belarussian officers in the former Soviet Army, led Minsk to the over-optimistic vision that they could establish a national military independent of Russia and other former Soviet states – by May 1992 6000 Belarussian officers in service had showed interests in returning home, much larger than Minsk's demand (KZ 1992, 120/21-4). In addition, Minsk also expected to receive 757 Belarussian servicemen with rich professional experiences who were then fighting in disputed Soviet territory and would return home soon (KZ 1992, 86-31).

Unlike in the Baltic states, in Belarus there were almost neither robbery of weapons nor coerced national oaths (KZ 1992, 11-1). This is largely because Minsk was not in armed conflict with any neighbour and, more importantly, because the heavy legacy to inherit had far stretched Belarus's financial and ecological capacities – what Minsk looked for was to reduce the assets in its hands rather than seize more. The initial proposal of subordinating all Soviet forces to the jurisdiction of Belarussian Ministry of Justice provoked fierce reaction, which, as critics said, would make Belarus the most heavily militarized society of Europe (KZ 1992, 10-8). Weaponry was another

major issue. Because the former Soviet military was heavily concentrated along the western borders, Minsk had a huge reserve of weapons to destroy or transfer. For example, to complete the first stage of disarmament, it needed to destroy 2171 tanks, 167 jets, 1087 gliders, and 333 armored vehicles. This required six times more than the total expenditure paid by Britain, France, and Germany to fulfill the *Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe*, which compelled Minsk to turn on NATO states for aids (KZ 1993, 158-19).

The case on boundary was Moldova, which then had already been trapped in a civil war with the Slavic-populated Transnistria and thus pressured an urgent claim to nationalize the Soviet forces on its territory too (KZ 1992, 15-10). Like in other regions, there were openly efforts of seizure. The Command of the former Soviet Southwestern Strategic Direction was occupied and used for the headquarters of the Ministry of Defense (KZ 1992, 107-17). Militia attacks on the 14th Army in order to capture weapons prevailed, especially in the disputed Transnistria: 1370 submachine guns and 255 pistols were robbed on the day of March 16, 1992 (KZ 1992, 63-8). Such actions enabled Moldova to form an artillery regiment and a motorized-infantry battalion within a few months to deal with the conflict with Transnistria (KZ 1992, 86-14). Nonetheless, Moldova looked like more of quitting than of seizing. As it became clearer that the 14th Army could not leave soon, the new Moldovan military switched to expect to base its officer corps on Moldovan servicemen returning from the former Soviet republics. The initial estimation was that over 2750 ethnic Moldovans would be immediately available and around 1000 students of war academies would graduate and join the military later. Moldova did not expect to maintain a complex high-tech military. The air forces even raised that they could return the MIG-29 jets to Russia in exchange for helicopters, as the new republic had neither technical capacity nor air territory to maintain these expensive aircrafts. (KZ 1992, 107-17).

Seizing

Unlike the Baltic states that had no interest in retaining the Soviet forces but only sought to drive them out as soon as possible, the Caucasian (both South- and North-) republics, lacking military capacity too, strove to capture and control the former imperial armies for their own use, which was then called as “privatization”. This stance was largely a function of geopolitics: toward the end of the Soviet Union Transcaucasia had fallen into armed skirmishes and in some regions overt civil wars, and thus had been in urgent need to establish fightable armed forces. Such an aggressive approach would eventually bring certain countries, such as Georgia and Chechenia, into armed conflicts with Russia in the 2000s era.

The newly independent Georgia planned to build its national forces outside of the former Soviet commonwealth – it did not attend the CIS governmental and military summit (1993, 57/58-24). However, Georgia lacked the capacity to form an army – like other Transcaucasian states, pre-communist Georgia possessed a deep tradition of para-military guards but never had held a regular army; the Soviet period did not alter this: given that there was no tradition of military service in the army, only 1260 Georgian officers were at commission of the former Soviet forces in 1992 (Jones 1996: 37). According to the Toshkent Agreement, Georgia should preserve only one grounded division, while what it needed was at least forty thousand soldiers – for example, to guard the borders that would soon been left vacant by the withdrawal of the former Soviet forces toward the end of 1994 (1993, 57/58-1).

Georgia thus had the urgent reason to be concerned with its capacity for defense, which impelled the new country to undertake aggressive tactics to capture the Soviet military assets and staff on its territory. To end the war with Abkhazia, the military was advised to add conduct landing and airborne operations. However, this went beyond the capacity of the awkward militia, which did not have professionals for such tasks – the navy was over 70% Russian who were urgent to leave while the air forces had almost no qualified pilots (Jones 1996: 37). Several aircrafts took off on October 2, 1992, but most bombs hit civilians because of pilots' poor training (KZ 1992, 235-18). Apart from territorial disputes, there were also massive political unrests, whereby militia competed to rob the Soviet military to arm themselves. Attacks on the Soviet military to capture weapons, vessels, and facilities were rampant. Skirmishes were reported at Poti marine garrison against Soviet coastal defense (KZ 1992, 14/15-16; 17-7; 34-22), in Western Georgia where the supporters for former President robbed weapons to attack supporters for the incumbent (23-24), and nationwide armed in that confrontations for legitimacy among various temporary states (12-19; 14/15-18). Because weaponry had widely proliferated before the end of the USSR, conflicts in Georgia occurred in a much more violent way, involving mutual shooting and causing severe casualties (1992, 13-21). As intrusion could happen at any time, even high-ranking commanders of the Soviet troops had to keep submachine guns under pillows when sleeping (12-29).

No matter how actively Georgia sought to build its own armed forces, because of weak military capacity it had to somewhat continue the reliance on Russia. It did not take part in partitioning the Black-Sea Fleet. Rather, Tbilisi accepted Moscow's promise that Russian navy would remain responsible for the security of Georgia's borders, shores, and vessels (KZ 1992, 184/85, 36). Georgia also requested that Russia should pay the pensions for the veterans on the Georgian territory, on the ground that these veterans used to serve in the former Soviet military (KZ 1994, 57-12). Georgia also relied upon Russia to protect its internal transportation. As the President Shevardnadze complained, the anti-governmental forces attained over 80% of their weapons by robbing on the road from Abkhazia to Eastern Georgia (KZ 1993, 237-5). The Georgian national guards were in poor discipline and unfightable, often abandoning strategic facilities (KZ 1993, 252-13). Thus, upon Tbilisi's requirement, the Russian army was to remain in Western Georgia to protect bridges and railways, assuring that the CIS and UN aids could be delivered to their assigned destinations without being intercepted by anti-governmental insurrectionists (1993, 252-13).

The other two Transcaucasian countries, Armenia and Azerbaijan, were in similar situation with Georgia: they were fighting each other for the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh territory and thus in came into urgent need of armed forces. For both sides, the easiest way was to capture the Soviet forces. On March 8, 1992 Erevan requested that all the Soviet military on its territory should swear oath to Armenia. It also planned to detain all officers as the founders of its large national army. The Soviet regiment of motorized infantry at Erevan was transformed into the National Guard. Over 300 students of the Transcaucasian Military District were called back (KZ 1992, 51-1). Special inspectors were sent to all military units for surveillance, in case of any move in discordance with the willing of Erevan government (KZ 1992, 30-19). On the side of Azerbaijan, the President signed an executive order to nationalize all Soviet troops and assets on the territory. According to the plan, the 4th Army, except for its Command headquarters, was to be completely privatized (KZ 1992, 99-20). The military on Azerbaijan territory were forbidden to transfer

weapons outward – every package, including the servicemen's personal mails were examined (KZ 1992, 99-19). Moreover, the President visited Russia's North-Western military grouping, calling for all Azerbaijani servicemen to return home (KZ 1992, 51-1).

There was coerced partition. Blocked by militia and with one division detained as hostage at Leninabad, the 7th Army was entirely transferred by Russia to Armenia with all its weapons and equipment, and immediately casted into war with Azerbaijan. The helicopter troop was sent to bombard the Azerbaijani forces, which, on its returning trip was heavily destructed by Armenian anti-air fire. The coerced entry of the helicopter troop into battle was interpreted as an effort of depriving the 7th Army of the capacity of withdrawing its important members and equipment (Dobrokhotov 1994: 374-76). A similar case was the 4th Army in Azerbaijan. Though it had been put under Russia's jurisdiction, but its return to Russia was still pending, though attacks from local militia was mounting. The 135th regiment of the 295 Motorized-Infantry Division, which had received the order of retreating, could not move at all due to the blockage of national militia (KZ 1992, 99-19). Cut off from other troops and command apparatus, this troop's morale deteriorated fast. Later, the 23rd division was entirely seized by Azerbaijani militia (ibid: 445-46).

Robbery and attack were rampant too. Both sides sought to nationalize the motorized-infantry regiment stationed at Nagorno-Karabakh. Massive robbery of weapons therefore followed (KZ 1992, 35-5). A commonly used strategy was to find an "insider", who either purposively left some arsenals unguarded to be seized by militia, or led his soldiers to an agreed place, putting all weapons on ground, and left (1992, 27-11). Robbery also occurred to the Soviet military that was on the way of withdrawal. Although orders had been issued by the CIS Command to retreat from disputed areas to avoid involvements in civil wars, it was reported that many Soviet border posts were blocked on their way out and robbed – seven tanks were robbed in Azerbaijan, with all their staff detained as hostages (1992, 12-23; 63-16). Two huge arsenals in Armenia were robbed empty, with over 330 carriages of ammunition lost. In Azerbaijan, the largest arsenal was seized on February 23, with 728 carriages of artillery shells, 245 rocket shells, and 131 shooting ammunitions taken away. The entire Transcaucasian military district hence lost most of its reserve. Consequently, the military became defenseless on the way back to Russia – within one regiment (the 366th Motorized-Infantry) reportedly over 180 soldiers were missing because of violent attacks (Dobrokhotov 1994: 350-53).

The most aggressive case of "partition" was Ukraine. Unlike in Moldova, Tadzhikistan, and Transcaucasia, there was no urgent practical need to establish national armed forces – Ukraine was not faced with any invasion or territorial disputes at the moment of independence. However, Kiev claimed a resolute rejection of joining the CIS unified command, which compelled Russia to build its own national army too. Kiev then aggressively sought to seize as many former Soviet assets as it could. The vision was that the new Ukrainian military should include all forces of the former Kiev, Transcarpathian, Odessa Military Districts and a significant proportion of the Black-Sea Fleet (Black and Duke 1993: 101). Moreover, Ukraine claimed to possess all sanatoriums on its territory. This provoked mounting protests from other Soviet successors: most Soviet military sanatoriums and hospitals, including the only cerebral-palsy institute, were located in Ukraine, while Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kirgizstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan did not have any sanatoriums (KZ 1992, 17-4).

One of the most resistance-provoking measures initiated by Ukraine was coerced oath. This was interpreted as a retaliation to Russia's proposal of retaining a Warsaw-Pact-style CIS army as well as a tactic to create posts for ethnic Ukrainians after a significant compression of regular forces (Black and Duke 1993: 101-02). Military staff of all ranks who refused to swear oaths to Ukraine were expelled or removed from their positions, including the commanders of the three military districts (KZ 1992, 22-8), political commissars of the road-building troops (18-17), and provost of the Nakhimov Naval Academy (198-20). Because of refusing oath, the Marine-Corps battalion at Sevastopol port was transferred to an airport (KZ 1992, 99-3), while many pilots lost their allocations of housing and were removed from training plan of flight (KZ 1992, 36-20). The commander of the Black-Sea Fleet, after rejecting stating loyalty to Ukraine, was threatened that all electronic communication with outside would be cut off (KZ 1993, 211-12).

Coerced oath led to massive unrests both inside and outside of Ukraine. Afraid of missing positions in the new national Army, thousands of Ukrainian soldiers left their units back home. To accommodate such a huge exodus the Ukrainian defense had to build up special barracks at suburb of Kiev (KZ 1992 13-19). In the Fast-Eastern military district, 2000 Ukrainians requested to return home, which caused drilling paralyzed (KZ 1992, 29-23). Within Ukraine, over 350 Russian soldiers escaped to Rostov on Don, where the headquarters of the North-Caucasian military district were located, asking to "be arrested by the real fatherland" (KZ 1992, 14/15-14). On February 18, 1992 six pilots, tired of coerced choosing side, defected and landed in an airport close to Moscow, with their jets remarked by Soviet red flag (Dobrokhotov 1994: 318-19). At the Black-Sea Fleet, the coerced oath caused a high proportion of absence: 48% of sailors and officers did not attend drilling (KZ 1992, 10-22). Voluntary organizations of non-Ukrainian officers mushroomed, on the ground that a second oath was unnecessary because the so-called Ukrainian military did not have anything distinct from the Soviet (KZ 1992 5-8). By November 1991 there had been 6000 deserts, most of whom would later gain amnesty from Russian President because they mostly deserted to avoid coerced oaths. Among the deserters that the Moscow Center of Rehabilitation had accepted, a significant proportion was from the troops on Ukraine (KZ 1992, 18-10).

Apart from coerced oaths, Ukraine also mobilized executive measures to maximize its portion of the former Soviet legacies. This brought it into conflict with Russia and the former Soviet Command, which deemed that Ukraine neither needed nor could afford the military assets it requested to possess (Dobrokhotov 1994: 264-66). Openly seizure was common. A shipyard was occupied in early 1992, where the warships of the Black-Sea Fleet were mended (KZ 1992, 274-7). The parts of the 14th Army stationed on Ukraine were clamed to be in the jurisdiction of the Ukrainian Ministry of Defense overnight (KZ 1992, 31/32-22). Kiev also sought to divide the Navy in an "accounting" manner – calculating Ukraine's "historical investment" into the Navy and hence decide how many assets it should gain (KZ 1992, 29-27). There were more concealed tactics too. The Ministry of Defense required naval veterans to report their cash revenues and return all parts that were in discordance with Ukrainian laws – this policy was interpreted as a trick to drive naval officers from the Black-Sea Fleet into the Ukrainian Navy (KZ 1993, 108-09). When negotiating with Moscow on splitting the cost for a joint fleet, Kiev insisted that finance should go through Ukrainian State Bank, which, many Russian officers worried, would increase the effect of the black market and damage the living standards of fleet staff (KZ 1993,

34/35-8). Ukraine also refused to approve any of the four candidates to the joint Black-Sea Fleet, which made the negotiation pending (KZ 1993, 9/10-35).

The measure that aroused widespread panic was the claim to create a "pure" Ukrainian army, which was not attempted in other republics pursuing "national armed forces" – neither Azerbaijan nor Moldova had the plans of replacing servicemen of other nationalities immediately. Kiev's Ministry of Defense claimed that by June 1992 all non-Ukrainian military men had to leave (KZ 1992, 36-10). Those who remained, as the chairman of the Military Social Insurance Commission said, would cease to be covered by the national welfare system (KZ 1992, 14-8). At the school level, non-Ukrainian students of the military academies, such as Simferopol Academy of Military Architecture and Kharkov Air-Forces Engineering Academy, were required to look for jobs by themselves outside of the military (KZ 1992, 34-15; 51-13).

Remaining

Russian Federation, together with most Central Asian states, represented the third model. These states had sought to preserve a unified CIS military, on the ground that this approach would be the most economic and could keep dislocation to minimum. As the "legal" successor to the Soviet Union, for a lengthy period Russia, preoccupied with achieving political separation from the USSR, even had never considered of any plan of division, which led many CIS states to suspect that Moscow was pursuing a revived imperial ambition through its advocacy for a WP-style (Black and Duke 1993: 101). Russia's "one-army" advocation persisted, until Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, and Transcaucasian states had completed their foundations of national armies.

In Moscow's vision, dividing the armed forces was to be catastrophic, no less destructive than any defeat in history. The Baltic Fleet would have to abandon its centuries-built bases Riga, Tallinn, Lienpai, and return to the small and crowded Kroonstad and Kaliningrad, where fleet staff and their families would have to share living facilities with the Soviet troops retreating from Eastern Europe. Allowing the three countries to build their own navies also meant Russia and other CIS militaries would lose the high-quality manpower, the "natural sailors", they previously had drawn from the Baltic nations (KZ 1993, 48-7). In Caspian Sea, as the Caspian Flotilla was to be divided with Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, and Kazakhstan, Russia lost the major base at Baku altogether with most port estates (KZ 1992, 251-3). The Caspian flotilla, like the Black-Sea Fleet, almost ceased drilling as they were undergoing a radical process of national partition and manpower losses (KZ 1993, 276-29).

A realm that was affected by military division along national lines was conscription. Moscow was now seeing backlash from its earlier advocacy of nationalism. Just within Moscow military district, nearly 200 of the 5000 new conscripts, non-Russians, refused to swear oaths (KZ 1992, 31/32-25). The disintegration of unified welfare system aroused a massive exodus to the former Soviet republics where the national social insurance was rumored as better than elsewhere – for example, by the end of January over 2000 servicemen had requested to transfer to Belarus (KZ 1992, 22-24). The tendency of national division even had the tendency of spread within the Russian Federation. To demonstrate the inviolability of national sovereignty, the Republic of Tatarstan officially refused conscription, which made Tatars the bulk of the desserts in 1992 and 1993. Later the republic made concession, agreeing to recover conscription, but insisted that

Tartar soldiers could only serve locally or nearby, put differently, not be sent to "hot spots" (KZ 1993, 211-4). Because new conscripts did not arrive, the entire CIS region had to postpone the period of retirement (KZ 1992, 75-27).

The disintegration of the CIS unified framework compelled fundamentally reconstructing many arrangements within Russia, which entailed huge expenditure and brought about massive social dislocation. Formerly second-line military districts, such as Leningrad, Moscow, and North-Caucasia, were to become border ones, a process which involved large-scale transfers of existing units and the abolishment of many. The 75th Motorized-infantry division, for example, which was to be disbanded due to border change, sent delegates to Moscow for negotiations. Not receiving satisfactory replies, they threatened with self-disbandment and transferring all shooting weapons to local militia (KZ 1992, 171-17). In Russia's hinterland like Ural and Volga, military districts were to be restored for the use of strategic mobilization as well as to accommodate the hundreds of thousands of troops that were to return from former peripheries (KZ 1993, 107-28; 274-36). The Siberian military district, within two years since the end of 1991, had received over 100 military units that returned from former Soviet peripheries (KZ 1993, 289-18).

Moscow sought to preserve the unified CIS army also because it felt difficult to create a distinct Russian military culture. This was a mission which Russia, from the Tsarist to the Soviet period, had had little experiences of. The work of inventing tradition was tough. As it remained unclear by October 1993 which political party would be able to hold power, the top-echelon command dared only keeps words ambiguous, such as "Invisible Multinational Russia" "honor and duty", which was reminiscent of the Provisional Government and the Whites in the aftermath of the Romanov's downfall who had no clear programs (KZ 1992, 223-2). There were positive attempts, though. During this time of uncertainty, military historians started nationalizing imperial history. The history of the Russian Air Forces, for example, was for the first time traced back to pre-1917 period up to the 18th century, to show that Russia had a tradition of high-tech branch that far predated the Soviet one (KZ 1992, 184/185-29). More radical proposals were raised by Russian ultra-nationalists, suggesting that the military should recover its tradition of Eastern Christianity – establishing religious libraries, consecrating weapons and facilities, bringing back Tsarist military songs, and replacing Soviet red star with Orthodox cross (Dobrokhotov 1994: 313-14). This plan went against the reality that the post-Soviet Russian army remained multiethnic and thus proved practically difficult to achieve. Moreover, the Russian army had no experiences of integrating multiple religions in the army (especially Muslim). Balancing religious professing and military training was a new topic too – in this regard, the former Soviet army was much less skillful than the US military. Though the Lenin Military-Political Academy had been transformed into the "Armed Forces Humanities Academy" (KZ 1992, 107-25), the Soviet training system would need a long time to gain the expertise of teaching Orthodox classics – faculties had been trained to teach atheism since 1917 (KZ, 1992, 36-22).

At the pragmatic level, Russia's pursuit of a unified defense indicated its entrenched distrust of the new CIS states' capacity in safeguarding the former Soviet borders – though having become foreign, these borders remained vital to Russia's security. After abolishing customs with Belarus, Moscow urged Minsk to undertake valid measures to guarantee the border with Poland and the Baltic, not making it a passageway for smuggling and espionage (KZ 1993, 289-4). Moscow was

also concerned with Transcaucasian borders with Turkey and the broad Middle East, which since the Soviet period had been a passageway for drug smuggling. If the border became broken, not only Moscow and Petersburg but also the entire former Soviet region would have to pay far more to counteract drug crimes (KZ 1992, 14/15-15). In Central Asia, Moscow initiated to help Almaty to build border forces to strengthen its border control as the latter was approaching a visa-free regime with Iran and Pakistan (KZ 1993 48-29). In comparison, the border of Tadzhikistan and Afghanistan was a source of severe insecurity, where real hot war was already ongoing. To block the penetration of Afghanistan guerrilla forces into Russia through Central Asia, Russia needed to keep military Tadzhikistan and Uzbekistan within a unified framework (KZ 1993, 174-35).

Preserving a unified military would ease Russia's adaptation to the post-Cold-War international order. According to the *Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe*, the CIS states had to gain every piece of weapon for their national armies from a significantly compressed Soviet arsenal, which entailed complicated work of balancing between complying the treaty and meeting the demands for territorial defense (KZ 1993, 264-8). Because the treaty was signed by the Soviet Union, there was no existing agreement on how the successor states should jointly fulfill it. If the imperial legacies were to divided according to territorial and demographic sizes, Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus would in total account for over 80%, which made defense forces insufficient for the remaining CIS states (Dobrokhotov 1994: 316-18). In this situation, a unified military that could move freely across former Soviet states, as Russia expected, would make coordination much easier.

Russia's advocacy for a unified military was not only a top-echelon plan, but also heard loud resonance from the rank-and-file. According to a sociological survey conducted by the All-Army Officer Assembly in January 1992, 71% officers consented on preserving a unified military (Dobrokhotov 1994: 305-06). Similarly, a survey conducted later by the Armed Forces' Research Center of Psychology and Sociology reported that over 67% officers were for a unified CIS army in parallel with each republic's national forces – only 8% consented a radical division alongside national lines (KZ 1992, 36-1). These results were not surprising. The seventy years of Soviet rule had successfully created an imperial cosmopolitan military mind. Many officers, regardless of ethnic roots, had been trained or served in multiple former Soviet republics and cultivated attachments to the territories they stayed on. International and inter-ethnic marriages were very common too, which made the division of the Soviet military a brutal process of tearing up families (KZ 1992, 23-17). The imperial identity was also associated with the Soviet army's entrenched apolitical professionalism (Odom 1998; Taylor 2003) – many officers were against division alongside nationality lines on the ground that it would allow nationalist politicians to seize armed forces and put the entire CIS into bloody civil war, like in 1917 (KZ 1992, 86-10). After the foundation of the "All-Army Officer Assembly", the top-echelon reiterated that this institution was confined to only offer consultation and coordination, not allowed to become a separate political organ that involved in any side of political strife (KZ 1993, 198-15).

Russia's resistance of national partition largely stemmed from the concern that Moscow would absorb the most social, economic, and political costs of such a brutal breakup. In other countries, the advocacy for a unified army was more from the dilemma that the successor rulers were in urgent need of using the Soviet armed forces to fight burning oppositions from outside. Among

Central Asian countries, Tadzhikistan was the most determined advocator for a unified CIS military. A civil war was already going. The defeated oppositions escaped to Afghanistan and built guerilla bases, while the domestic regime was faced with the challenge of Islamic terrorists. Lacking resources and capacity to maintain regular military, Dushanbe deemed that the regime would not be able survive without the help of other Soviet partners. Dushanbe, the only case apart from Russia, explicitly promised, that it would not establish a separate national army (KZ 1992, 6-14; 12-19). The President acknowledged that Tadzhikistan lacked the economic conditions to support a national army, while at the same time criticized that the pursuit of national military was "seizing the assets (the CIS states) could not afford to maintain" (KZ 1992, 157-28). Such position was reasonable. The radical change of the former Soviet defense was creating uncertainty and panics, which undermined the forces Tadzhikistan was relying on. For example, the 201st motorized-infantry division, the major force of peace-making, was lapsing into a severe shortage of manpower. The transition into a contract system was arousing widespread panic. Not given clear accounts for the length of service, many conscripted soldiers simply refused to set off and did not arrive as planned (KZ 1993, 132-25).

Central Asian countries were not a monolithic bloc as usually oversimplified, although they were commonly the weakest among the former Soviet states in managing military. A unique case was Uzbekistan. Uzbekistan was almost the first to echo the Ukrainian model, claiming that all Soviet forces be transformed into its national military. At the moment of announcing this decision, it seized two training schools on its territory and made them the basis of the Uzbek Ministry of Interior (KZ 1992, 12-28) – in response, Russia removed Uzbekistan from the list of countries where its armed forces would remain (KZ 1992, 107-29). Later, however, Uzbekistan switched radically to the other extreme – supporting a unified military, and, supporting a Warsaw-Pact style CIS command, through which Russia would continue to dominate in the way that the Soviet Union dominated its Eastern European satellites. This was against other countries' (Kazakhstan, Kirgizstan, Armenia, and even Tadzhikistan) plan of a NATO-style alliance (KZ 1993, 48-9). To display its support for Russia, in January 1993 Uzbekistan sent 5000 elite soldiers to serve in Russia's Western Military District, in the hope that they could learn the skills of managing military. This won Russia's appreciation, as the Western Military District was the one that suffered the most severe shortage of manpower (KZ 1992, 22/23-25).

An in-between case was Kazakhstan. Eventually moving to establish its national army as other states had undertaken this route, Kazakhstan consistently preferred a unified CIS military and a lengthy period for transition. Such breathing space seemed necessary as there were only no more than 3000 Kazak officers across the entire Soviet Union (Clark 1994: 180) and many rank-and-file units had been reporting severe shortages of experienced officers caused by national division (KZ 1992, 35-20). Given such a starting point, nationalizing facilities on its territory would be meaningless. Nazarbayev claimed that Russian, Ukrainian, and Belarussian officers were the most welcome to stay and promised that the government would help them obtain double-citizenships (KZ 1993, 132-30; 289-25). Staying with a unified CIS military also involved political consideration. In terms of peace-making, Almaty thought it would be less disputing to work together with Russia and other Slavic states. Rather, a Kazak-dominated intervention into an Islamic country such as Tadzhikistan would be interpreted as hostility to the entire Muslim world and the ambition to establish a greater Central Asian empire (KZ 1996, 274, 31; 286-17).

On the other side, however, Kazakhstan was restrained, not committed to restore a Soviet Union. While Moscow showed interest in establishing bilateral military alliance, Almaty insisted that such alliance must incorporate other CIS states, so that Kazakhstan would not become a little brother that faces Russia solely (KZ 1992, 11-11). Almaty possessed leverages. Kazakhstan was one of the four Soviet states that stored strategic nuclear weapons and the one that claimed no interest in retaining these dangerous assets (KZ 1993, 57/58-14) – by March 1994 all strategic bombers had returned to Russia (KZ 1994, 46-18). Because of this position, Almaty was actively approached by the West, which was afraid of nuclear proliferation and eager to help to undergo the transitional period. Kazakhstan was thus the only Central Asian state that at the beginning of 1992 that had been maintaining close contact with the United States (KZ 1992, 12-12). After signing the Treaty on Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapon, Almaty started receiving substantial financial support from the US (KZ 1993, 289-3).

Conclusion

This article, tracking the military breakup of the Soviet Union based on the newspaper *Krasnaya Zvezda* from 1992 to 1993, identifies three paths by which new nation-states quitted empire. The first, represented by the Baltic states and in a lesser sense Belarus and Moldova, sought to first exit from the former imperial defense and then establish independent national militaries that consisted of their respective ethnic majorities, which was the closest to the ideal-type of nation-state. The second path, represented by the Transcaucasian states and Ukraine, sought to realize immediate military independence too but counted on achieving this through seizing the former imperial armed forces on their territories. To deal with ethnic diversity, these states resorted to coerced oaths. The third path, Russia and Central Asian states, especially Tadzhikistan and Uzbekistan, were unwilling to establish their own national armies, but rather attempted to preserve the former imperial military system. This path manifested the technical difficulties of tearing up a long-established empire after political division had been declared.

When nuancing each path, this article shows that such trifurcation was shaped by many factors – not any single factor could explain all variations. One was the threat of warfare emerging in the course of imperial collapse. The nation-states that had been under civil wars or border skirmishes tended to seek to possess fightable armed forces as fast as possible and were accordingly less concerned with the ideal-type principle of nation-state – although Ukraine did not confirm this model. Conversely, states that were not facing obvious external threats could tolerate a lengthy period of military vacuum and waited their national forces to slowly grow. In this regard an exception was Moldova, which was in fighting but soon switched to build ethnic Moldovan military. This was explainable in that its enemy was the Russian 14th Army at Transnistria.

A second factor was the technical capacity of holding a national army, which derived from history – how deeply and extensively a country's nationals had engaged in the former Soviet military. Empire is hierarchy. Some nations were better included in its political-military power than others. Whereas in 1988 the proportion of Baltic and Transcaucasian soldiers accounted for 37% (Dobrokhotov 1994: 40), the officer corps remained overwhelmingly (97%) Slavic and Tartar. In terms of branches, border services were staffed by Slavic, while troops of Interior were heavily Asian, who were regarded as indifferent in ethnic tensions in Russia proper and could exert repression firmly (Alexiev and Wimbush 1988: 139-40). Therefore, nations that had rich

military experiences, such as Belarus, were confident to hold independent armies, those nations, which possessed minimal professionals and economic resources at the moment at Soviet collapse, tended to simply stay within a unified military system. Of course, there was elite's discretion. Due to unfamiliarity with the military, political elite tended to underestimate the interlocking within the former Soviet armed forces, which soon brought about concession or discord.

A third factor was geopolitics, more precisely, more of the state elites' self-perception of their opportunities in the post-Soviet world system. States that expected to receive aids from the outside, either the US, the NATO, Turkey, or Romania, were more determined to quit the empire. Usually these states were the small ones and thus thought they could be more easily "fed" or incorporated by new patrons or allies. Nonetheless, such expectations, even to be realized, would take a prolonged process. The Baltic states did receive aids from Sweden and Germany, but at a very unsystematic way (Parrott 2015: 117).

The ruling regime of an empire might collapse overnight, while tearing up the empire itself is much more difficult. The dislocation that erupted in the course of breaking up long-existing technical relations often compelled separating nations to step backward or provoked the core nation to retrieve empire – this occurred in 1917. The Soviet Union had never gained the opportunity to completely restore, but its breakup involved similar zigzags.

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