

Imperfect equilibrium

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Résumé ou extrait : "Despite years of attempts to improve its military capabilities, Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 revealed a crippling lack of skill, discipline and equipment. Non-material factors, in particular the power struggle between military and civilian leaderships, have hindered reform of its armed forces: with officers dominating defense policy, the Kremlin has struggled to implement the necessary changes. Kirill Shamiev explores the political reasons behind Russia's poor military preparedness for the war in Ukraine. He demonstrates how a seemingly obedient military has frequently blocked civilian reforms, taking advantage of weak oversight mechanisms. The Kremlin's efforts to centralise control and make the armed forces personally accountable to President Vladimir Putin harmed

institutional learning, cementing a conservative civil–military status quo. While this protected the military from civil society interference and ensured Putin’s autocratic rule, it ultimately limited the pace and scope of change. Analysing three cases of reform between 2000 and 2021, *Imperfect Equilibrium* offers critical insights into the relationship between civilian control and military effectiveness in Russia. Drawing on extensive qualitative and quantitative evidence—including interviews, parliamentary speeches, media reports and surveys—it shows how unchecked autonomy can undermine military development, even in authoritarian contexts."

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