Perhaps more than any other aspect of Muscovite life, accountability within the central bureaucracy best projects the stereotype of the seventeenth-century Russians as archetypal “control freaks.” But the Russian elite on the whole looked upon such concentration of power tolerantly and fostered it, and conferred upon the Razriad the awesome responsibility of acting as bureaucratic coordinator, especially during wartime. This function emerges most singularly during the Thirteen Years’ War (1654-67), Muscovy’s longest seventeenth-century conflict.

The seventeenth-century Russian “power elite” attached enormous importance to the centralization of its multi-phase, military efforts, and relied heavily upon the Military Chancellery to implement this strategy and even more so during wartime. The Thirteen Years’ War illustrates more completely than any other Muscovite conflict the variety of controls the Military Chancellery exerted over other chancelleries in time of war. The sheer duration and intensity of this conflict permitted the Military Chancellery to exercise a leverage over other prikazy that it did not wield earlier, and this study will investigate that theme through examining selected topics of the Military Chancellery’s itemization of military personnel; military finance; trial cases; prisoner-of-war interrogation; and medicine, the harvest, and construction.  

1. Military Chancellery personnel I discuss in “With All Deliberate Speed: the Officialdom of the Seventeenth-Century Muscovite Military Chancellery (Razriad),” Russian History, 28, nos. 1-4 (Spring-Summer-Fall-Winter 2001), 000-00; the Military Chancellery and the Boyar Duma I analyze in “Military Planning and High-Level Decision-Making in Seventeenth-Century Russia: the Roles of the Military Chancellery (Razriad) and the Boyar Duma,” Forschungen zur osteuropäischen Geschichte, 58, no. 1 (2002): 1-22; relations between members of the bureaucratic elite as these interactions affected the Razriad I describe in “Peering Into a Muscovite Turf-War (How Do We Even Know It’s There?): Boyar Miloslavskii and the Auditing Chancellery,” Russian History 25, nos. 1-2 (Spring-Summer 1998): 141-53; and the highly significant connection between the Razriad and the frontier, military districts (razriady) I treat in an unpublished book manuscript, “The Military Districts (Razriady) of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries and the Muscovite Origins of Peter the Great’s Provincial Administrative (Guberniia) Reform.”
Background

The Military Chancellery directed other bureaus, and assigned the central and provincial state secretaries and clerks. By the late sixteenth century, the Military Chancellery already had gained control over all military men and military chancelleries,2 and routinely allocated men and supplies and even commanded generals in the field.3 Yet the Razriad took upon itself responsibilities ranging beyond those that were purely military, resembling somewhat the Prussian Generalkriegskommissariat that came into existence in the mid-seventeenth century.4 The two hold the distinction of introducing more wide-ranging change than any early modern bureaucratic organ in Western Eurasia.

Over time, the regime’s utilization of the Razriad as a spigot for its various plans arguably brought about what Tim McDaniel, in his comparative study of Persia and Russia, has cited as a “state-monopolistic social structure.”5 But yet subject-object relations need to be placed into perspective. The Razriad, aside from the influence of its chief tribunal members in the Boyar Duma, was an initiator in policy matters as its state secretaries and clerks went about making day-to-day decisions and writing them up in documents. Over a period of time, minor, even trivial changes, did become cumulative and conspicuously influential. For example, it was Military Chancellery personnel’s constant inputting of data over decades into frontier administrative and military structures that conferred upon them a momentum that more and more shaped the Moscow service class and its destinies.

In 1564, the Razriad was the sole military bureaucracy among the twelve existing chancelleries, but by 1582 there was a total of six military chancelleries, including the Razriad itself, among the twenty-seven chancelleries


