GENEVA CENTRE FOR THE DEMOCRATIC CONTROL OF ARMED FORCES (DCAF)

WORKING PAPER NO. 123

NATIONAL SECURITY DECISION MAKING
FORMAL VS. INFORMAL
PROCEDURES AND STRUCTURES

CASE STUDY 1 –
THE FORMER SOVIET UNION, RUSSIA AND UKRAINE

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NATIONAL SECURITY DECISION MAKING
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CASE STUDY 1 –
THE FORMER SOVIET UNION, RUSSIA AND UKRAINE[1]

Yuri Nazarkin

The current Russian security decision-making system represents a particular interest, because Russia today is at a crucial stage of its development. There are a number of factors that are shaping its system: new security dimensions and requirements, traditional and innovative approaches towards security, political interests of various groupings, economic interests of big corporations, politicians´ personal ambitions. At the same time the past experience puts a noticeable impact on the current decision-making mechanisms. That is why I am going to start with the Soviet period.

The main characteristic of this period was the absolute rule of the Communist leadership. It would not be an exaggeration to say that at that time military people were under complete civilian (not democratic!), or to be more precise, political control. However, there were certain trends, namely:

- The party control was weakening.
- The role of professional civilians was growing.
- The openness and transparency were increasing.

A key role in this evolution belonged to arms control, particularly to the SALT/START process. In the process of preparing for the SALT negotiations that began November 1969 the Politburo took a decision to establish the “Commission of the Politburo of the CPSU for the Supervision of the Negotiations on Strategic Arms Limitation in Helsinki”. Its task was to guide Soviet negotiators and prepare instructions. It

[1] Paper presented at the Workshop on "Civilians in National Security Policy and National Security Structures", held in Budapest 26-27 April 2002, organized by the ATLANTICA Centre for Defence Policy Research and Advisory Services on behalf of the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces.

consisted of heads of five agencies and was known as "the Big Five"[2]: the Defence Secretary of the Central Committee of the CPSU, the Foreign Minister, the Defence Minister, the KGB Chairman, and the Chairman of the Military Industrial Commission of the Council of Ministers. The Big Five gathered in the premises of the Central Committee Secretariat and was chaired by a Defence Secretary of the Central Committee of the CPSU.

In November 1990, following the demise of the Communist Party, the Big Five changed its subordination from the CPSU Politburo to the Defence Council. It was renamed the "Commission on the Negotiations on Arms Reductions and Security of the Defence Council attached to the President of the USSR".[3] L. Zaykov who had been the Chairman of the Commission in his capacity as the Central Committee Defence Secretary kept the chairmanship but left his post as the Central Committee Defence Secretary.

In 1974 the Big Five formed a group of experts (on the level of deputy ministers – heads of department) representing the same five agencies. It was known as "the Small Five". Its meetings were held in the General Staff, and the First Deputy Chief of the General Staff chaired them. The group prepared draft recommendations for consideration by the Big Five.

Originally the mechanism dealt only with the SALT negotiations. However, the sphere of its activities later expanded to other arms control negotiations (conventional forces in Europe, chemical weapons convention, etc.). From time to time some issues that were not directly linked with negotiations but that might have had some international repercussions and required the agreement of all the agencies concerned were also put under the scrutiny of this mechanism.

Arms control negotiations contributed, even before glasnost, to more openness in Soviet society. This process started with the involvement of civilians, particularly from the Foreign Ministry, into the decision-making mechanism. Civilians from various ministries and agencies who were involved in the negotiations or in the preparation of

[2] Aleksandr G Savel'Ev and Nikolay N. Detinov, *The Big Five. Arms Control Decision-Making in the Soviet Union,* Praeger Publishers, USA, 1995, p.16.
[3] Aleksandr G Savel'Ev and Nikolay N. Detinov, *The Big Five. Arms Control Decision-Making in the Soviet Union*, Praeger Publishers, USA, 1995, p.115.

positions had obtained access to more information. They even got the chance to have an impact upon decision-making in the field of armaments and armed forces.

This meant each side, and the Soviet side were not alone, and were interested in explaining their position to its own public. If talks were rather confidential, unilateral leaks were used. Besides, verification required the disclosure of some data, which, at least in the Soviet Union had been confidential.

Under the *glasnost* (late 1980s) the openness became full, though the confidentiality of sensitive matters was kept scrupulously.

With the elimination of the domination of the Communist party leadership the vacuum of power emerged. The absence of more democratic institutions that could fill this vacuum created great problems for the security of Russia.

Russian democratic reformers of the early 90s faced two big problems: (1) how to replace the Soviet decision-making mechanisms with something more democratic, though not less effective, and (2) how to insure the openness of the security decision-making without disclosing real secrets.

This process was not smooth. Actually, I am not sure that it has finished completely and successfully by now. The backbone of the security decision-making mechanisms was supposed to be the Security Council, though at an early stage there was no consensus on its role. Liberals believed that it should not be “a new Politburo”, but a channel for the parliamentarian control of the decision-making process. Supporters of strong state power regarded the Security Council as a coordinating body with strong authority. However, under President Yeltsyn it was just a consultative body.

At this juncture it is worthwhile to highlight that all Russian security structures (Defence Ministry, Ministry of Interior, security services, etc.) were always, both in the Soviet past and in the post-Soviet period, directly subordinate to the top ruler (General Secretary/President). Though their chiefs were members of the Government, they reported directly to the General Secretary/President and not to the Prime Minister. It means that there is a necessity to have a powerful body that would coordinate all security structures, prepare Presidential decisions in the field of

security and control their implementation. Does the Security Council play such a role now or do any other institutions carry out these functions? It is not clear for me.

There was one interesting phenomenon that emerged in early 90s that was aimed at the broadening of the civilian control of the national security structures and at increasing openness. It was the elaboration and adoption of conceptual documents. In 1993-2001 twelve such documents were adopted[4]. They are:

- Foreign Policy Concept. The Foreign Ministry reported it to the President in November 1992, but the President did not approve it.
- Outlines of the Foreign Policy Concept. It was elaborated under the auspices of the Security Council and adopted by the President in April 1993.
- Outlines of the Military Doctrine. Adopted on November 2, 1993.
- National Security Concept. Adopted on December 17, 1997
- State Strategy of Economic Security. Adopted on April 29, 1996.
- National Security Concept. It replaced the 1997 NSC on January 10, 2000.
- Concept of State Policy on International Scientific and Technical Cooperation. Adopted (by the Government) on January 20, 2000.
- Military Doctrine. Replaced 1993 Outlines of the MD on April 21, 2000.
- Foreign Policy Concept. Replaced the 1993 Outlines of FP on June 28, 2000.
- Information Security Doctrine. Adopted on September 9, 2000.
- Concept of Cooperation with Adjacent Countries. Adopted (by the Government) on February 13, 2001.
- Naval Doctrine. Adopted on July 27, 2001.

Formally these documents are not directives but they constitute a conceptual basis for practical directives. All of them were being elaborated with a different degree of participation of the public. Civilians participated even in the elaboration of the military and naval doctrines. Thus, the adoption of the conceptual documents served to both foster better understanding and identify new interests, priorities and means in the field of security. It also represented a more democratic way of shaping security policy of Russia in accordance with new and changing realities.

[4] At present a draft doctrine on ecological security is under elaboration.

One of the first steps undertaken by the Security Council of the Russian Federation was the establishment of an interagency ad hoc working group for the elaboration of a national security concept. It included experts from the Foreign Ministry, Defence Ministry and General Staff, ministries and state committees dealing with economic and financial matters, intelligence and counterintelligence services.

Having started from zero (this kind of experience did not exist in the Soviet Union), the group elaborated a methodology and gained experience that was also used for other conceptual documents. Depending on the nature of the conceptual document, its makeup varied. However, basic provisions of each included:

- Analysis of the existing situation and prospects;
- Assessment of threats and challenges;
- Formulation of vital interests;
- Basic directions to meet threats and challenges and to safeguard vital interests; and
- Conclusions/recommendations on ways and means.

The elaboration of the National Security Concept (NSC) started in 1992. It passed through several stages: 1) the preparation of the first draft by the staff of the Security Council with the participation of experts from the Defence, Interior and Foreign Ministries, Intelligence and counterintelligence, economic agencies; 2) the involvement of parliamentarians; 3) discussions at special conferences with the participation of theoreticians from various Academies; 4) broad public discussion in mass media; 5) the finalization of the draft in the Security Council; 6) presidential approval.

It would be logical to adopt first the National Security Concept as a comprehensive basis and then, proceeding from its assessments and forecasts, to elaborate and adopt other, more specific concepts and doctrines. However, the reality introduced itself into this logic.

The process of the elaboration of a national security concept, though it started from the very first days of the existence of the new Russia, dragged on for years. This happened because of the comprehensive and complicated nature of the document,

and diversities of views on the subject. Profoundly contradictory approaches to the future development of the country were behind this diversity.

Primarily it was necessary to define what kind of a country Russia was going to be both politically and economically. Was it going to be democratic, authoritarian or with elements of each? What kind of economy would prevail in Russia – market economy or not, with weak or strong state regulation? What would be the role and share of private property, etc.? At that time the situation in Russia was so unsteady that answers to these questions required time. It was clear that Russia was much weaker than the Soviet Union and that it was continuing to weaken. But how long would this negative trend last? Whatever were the political views and wishful thinking of those who participated in the elaboration of the concept, they should have agreed among themselves on realistic prospects for Russia. It was an extremely difficult task.

In the meantime, the immediate requirements of policy-making urged conceptual approaches first of all in the field of foreign policy and defence. That is why, without interrupting the work on a national security concept, the Security Council established two other working groups that worked in parallel on a foreign policy concept and a military doctrine. These groups used for their respective documents those assessments, which had been already elaborated for a national security concept.

The working group on foreign policy consisted of experts from the Security Council staff, the Foreign Ministry, the Defence Ministry and the General Staff, the Foreign Trade Ministry, the Ministry of Justice, the Intelligence Service, and the Committee on CIS affairs formed a working group for the elaboration of a draft. Besides those agencies, the Foreign Relations and Defence Committees of the Supreme Soviet were invited to participate in the group, though their participation was rather limited.

As a result, the Security Council interagency working group elaborated “Outlines of the Foreign Policy Concept”. It was called “Outlines” in order to emphasise the preliminary nature of the document that was suggested prior to the adoption of a national security concept. It was adopted by the Security Council and approved by the President in April 1993.

Partly due to the inertia of secrecy, partly in order to be more outspoken and business like in its assessments the group suggested, and the Security Council Secretary agreed, to publish a detailed narrative, instead of the whole text of the Outlines. Only its narration was published in the Nezavisimaya Gazeta.[5] The whole text was published a few years later when the work at its new version started.

The first Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation that was adopted half a year later also was titled, for the same reasons, “Outlines”. Upon Presidential approval, the text of the document was published, with minor technical omissions. It had been elaborated by another ad hoc working group under the auspices of the Security Council, with the participation of the staff of the Security Council, the Defence Ministry, the General Staff, and other ministries and concerned agencies.

The preparation of the second Military Doctrine (adopted January 2000) was much more open. It passed similar stages as the NSC. The original draft was published,[6] widely discussed, numerous suggestions were considered in the Security Council and in ministries and agencies concerned, and then the amended draft was adopted by the Security Council and approved by the President.

The most sensitive issue for both military doctrines was the use of armed forces in internal conflicts. It was in the focus of inter-agency discussions, as well as of public debates. The 1993 Outlines permitted the use of armed forces in internal conflicts on a limited scale with big reservations. The 2000 Doctrine took into account the experience of the two wars in Chechnya and formulated the tasks of the armed forces in internal conflicts as having a leading role.

In accordance with the 1993 Outlines, “in order to assist interior authorities and interior forces of the Ministry of Interior in localizing and arranging blockade of a region of a conflict, suppressing armed clashes and disjoining conflicting sides, as well as in protecting strategic facilities some detachments of the armed forces and of

[5] V. Chernov, a deputy chief of the Strategic Security Directorate of the Security Council: “National Interests and Threats to Its Security. Boris Yeltsin approved the Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation”, Nezavisimaya Gazeta, 30 April 1993.
[6] Krasnaya Zvezda, 9 October 1999.

other forces of the Russian Federation might be used as it is provided for by the legislation."[7]

In contrast to this, the 2000 Doctrine assigns a leading role to the armed forces (not to "some detachments") in internal conflicts, with a full-scale mandate:
"Basic missions of the armed forces of the Russian Federation and other forces…in internal armed conflicts are:

- Defeat and elimination of illegal armed units, bandit and terrorist groups and organisations, destruction of their bases, training centres, depots, communications;
- Restoration of law and order;
- Safeguarding of public security and stability;
- Maintenance of state of emergency in a region of a conflict;
- Localization and blockade of a region of a conflict;
- Suppression of armed clashes and disconnection of conflicting sides;
- Expropriation of weapons from population in a region of a conflict; and
- Safeguarding of law and order in adjacent regions."[8]

In 1992-93 the work at conceptual documents (a national security concept, a foreign policy concept and a military doctrine) was conducted in a closed manner, without publicity. Later it was to become more and more open and public.

The elaboration of concepts and doctrines facilitated the involvement of the public into shaping the Russian security policy. Discussions in the mass media on subjects of future concepts and presentations by NGOs on their own draft concepts have had an impact upon future conceptual documents. Among NGOs, the Council on Foreign and Defence Policy plays a special role. As far as it consists of experts with different political views, the Council is able to elaborate recommendations that reflect not only experts´ knowledge but also their different political approaches.

A new period has begun with Putin´s Presidency. There is no doubt that all Putin´s reforms are built upon the achievements and failures of his predecessors, the

[7] Krasnaya Zvezda, 3 November 1993.
[8] Website of the Foreign Ministry www.mid.ru.

practices and institutions of the previous periods, as well as the Russian mindset and traditions.

In recent years some positive developments in this field can be observed (public discussions on military reform and military doctrines as well as on arms control issues, mixed military/civilian conferences, etc.). However, it is not clear what is going on in the current Russian security decision-making mechanisms. Speaking on this subject, Deputy Chair of the Duma Defence Committee A. Arbatov said recently: "If earlier everything was more or less clear, but the decision-making process was badly arranged, now this mechanisms works but it is hidden from outsiders."[9]

[9] A. Arbatov's interview with Nezavisimaya Gazeta, 7 February 2002.

Established in 2000 on the initiative of the Swiss government, the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF), encourages and supports States and non-State governed institutions in their efforts to strengthen democratic and civilian control of armed and security forces, and promotes international cooperation within this field, initially targeting the Euro-Atlantic regions.

The Centre collects information, undertakes research and engages in networking activities in order to identify problems, to establish lessons learned and to propose the best practices in the field of democratic control of armed forces and civil-military relations. The Centre provides its expertise and support to all interested parties, in particular governments, parliaments, military authorities, international organisations, non-governmental organisations, academic circles.

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