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Russia's New Politburo?

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On paper, the powers and responsibilities of Russia's Security Council (SC) are vast, but in practice Boris Yel'tsin jealously guarded his authority over the security services. During his tenure, the various "organs" were within the president's sole purview, the sphere upon which no one else should encroach. Thus, the security ministries were not subordinate to the government, nor were they subject to judicial or legislative oversight.

Institutionally, the SC secretary could amass substantial unchecked power. Yel'tsin, however, never let this happen. He used the Security Council as political necessity dictated, but never allowed it to become a genuinely autonomous institution. Vladimir Putin seems to have adopted a different approach. He has placed close allies, first Sergei Ivanov, then Vladimir B. Rushailo, in the secretary position, and has sought to broaden the structure of the SC. It remains to be seen if Putin feels secure enough to allow the SC to develop as a substantive institution and pursue meaningful progress on the national security agenda.

The Ten Secretaries

In July 1991, Yel'tsin issued a decree establishing a commission that would recommend the structure and duties of a Security Council (*Sovet Bezopasnosti*), to be chaired by Deputy Prime Minister Yuri B. Skokov. The following April, this man was appointed as the first secretary of the new council, which received the task of formulating domestic,

foreign, and defense policies, i.e., preparing presidential decisions of a national security nature.(2)

Depending on his relationship with the president, the Security Council secretary may become the second most important personage in Russia or just another functionary without access to the top of the pyramid.(3) Yel'tsin would use the Security Council to fulfill a particularly important task (e.g., start and end the Chechen war) but then shuffle the cadres before the council could become a challenger to his authority.

The original council had a staff limited to 80 individuals, among whom about 20 came from the military. Most of the others were drawn from the former CPSU Central Committee apparatus or the military-industrial complex, in both of which Skokov had previously worked as a trusted Communist Party *apparatchik* (rising to deputy prime minister of the Russian republic). During July 1992, another Yel'tsin decree assigned to the Security Council secretary the task of coordinating the work of executive organs as well as implementing presidential national security directives.(4) The increased responsibility, however, would not translate into increased status for Skokov. Having opposed Yel'tsin's plans to introduce presidential rule during an October 1992 SC discussion, Skokov was passed over for prime minister two months later. He was fired the following May, after refusing to countersign a presidential decree introducing a state of emergency and dissolving parliament. Skokov's attempt to usurp external policy-making from the foreign affairs ministry with his own foreign policy concept also failed. Yel'tsin apparently never intended for the Security Council, and especially its secretary, to become powerful in their own right. Yel'tsin made sure that this situation, where the SC secretary attempts to thwart presidential authority over "the organs," would never recur.

Skokov was succeeded by the commanding officer for the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) armed forces, Air Marshal Yevgeni I. Shaposhnikov, who had served as Soviet defense minister after the failed August 1991 coup attempt. Two weeks after Yel'tsin had appointed Marshal Shaposhnikov as SC secretary, he

personally selected Lt. General Valeri L. Manilov as deputy secretary. This man had always served as a deputy commanding officer for political affairs (*politruk*) in the armed forces, i.e., as watchdog over the political reliability of combat officers. Obviously, Shaposhnikov did not have the full confidence of Yel'tsin. Although he did expand the staff to 150 individuals,(5) Shaposhnikov's appointment never was approved by the Supreme Soviet, and his tenure lasted less than two months. The appointment of a career armed forces officer would have suggested that the SC might be concentrating on military affairs rather than national security in the broader meaning of that term. Marshal Shaposhnikov had envisaged the SC as the center for coordination of all national security policies. To implement this concept effectively, cooperation of the defense minister, Army Gen. Pavel S. Grachev, as well as the interior minister, Col. Gen. Viktor F. Yerin, would have been necessary. This he did not achieve. The Supreme Soviet's refusal to confirm his appointment forced Shaposhnikov to resign.

Under its first two secretaries, the SC had functioned on the basis of collegiality. This condition ended with the appointment of then First Deputy Premier Oleg I. Lobov as secretary. He immediately began to recruit mid-level officials from the State Economic Planning Commission (*Gosplan*), where he had worked, and, thus, concentrated on the economy, with total staff increasing to around 300. In contrast to his predecessors, Lobov had strong support from the military-industrial complex, hence, his emphasis on economic security. Meanwhile, dissolution of the parliament by force in October 1993 reaffirmed Yel'tsin's dominance over the Security Council, which became even more pronounced. Yel'tsin strengthened the SC's power by listing it in the constitution as an official government organ. That document only states that the president "forms and leads the Security Council of the Russian Federation." But almost immediately, Yel'tsin created a counterweight. On 6 January 1994, Yel'tsin appointed an assistant for national security affairs in the person of Yuri M. Baturin, who was given oversight for the power "organs" (defense, interior, security, intelligence). Two months later, Baturin also became chairman of the commission on senior military and general officer ranks.

On 25 November 1994, the Security Council gave Yel'tsin its unanimous support for the invasion of Chechnya. Less than two weeks later, some 55,000 Russian troops marched into that mini-state to disarm an estimated 3,000 armed Chechens. Yel'tsin insisted that the above vote take place *before* any discussion. It's clear from a variety of sources that Yel'tsin reached the decision before the meeting was held. However, through the formality of the SC, its members shared the responsibility for the president's decision.(6) Those who subsequently voiced reservations included Justice Minister Yuri K. Kalmykov, foreign intelligence chief Yevgeni M. Primakov, and Foreign Minister Andrei V. Kozyrev.(7)

Lobov's attempts to strengthen his own influence were affected adversely by the war in Chechnya. His last mistake involved personal support for the "party of war" during the 1996 presidential election campaign. Hence Lobov reverted to deputy premier. He was succeeded as SC secretary by Lieutenant General Aleksandr I. Lebed'. The former paratrooper, a popular and flamboyant figure, had come in third during the first round of the presidential election. An endorsement by Lebed' was needed to bolster Yel'tsin's chances against communist candidate Gennady Zyuganov in the run-off race. This support was rewarded with the SC secretary position.(8) In his new office, Lebed' carried out Yel'tsin's campaign promise: to end the war in Chechnya. Thereby Lebed' accepted the responsibility for the cease-fire signed at Khasavyurt, Dagestan, in August 1996 just as the SC had accepted the responsibility for the invasion.

To counter Lebed's growing popularity, President Yel'tsin established a Defense Council under Baturin. It functioned as a new control mechanism formalizing Baturin's authority over the power ministries. These moves undercut SC power. In October 1996, after only 133 days on the job, Lebed' was dismissed for insubordination to Yel'tsin, who did not want him as his successor.(9) When he learned that Yel'tsin would have heart surgery, Lebed' urged the president to transfer his executive powers to him before the operation. The general was fired by the president on national television.

The next SC secretary, Ivan P. Rybkin, had been the first speaker of the State Duma. His appointment sent a signal that the Security Council's purview would be demilitarized. Rybkin had served as an adviser to financial tycoon Boris A. Berezovsky. As the Chechnya problem continued to fester, the latter became SC deputy secretary. This allowed Berezovsky to secure his financial interests, e.g., transit of oil from the Caspian Sea across Chechnya. In this period, Baturin managed military reform while the Security Council began to emphasize domestic security over international affairs and commenced work on a new security policy concept. Then Rybkin signaled that the SC would undergo a demilitarization and perhaps become more open in its activities.

In March 1998, Rybkin(10) in turn was succeeded by Andrei A. Kokoshin as a move possibly to weaken Berezovsky's influence within the circle of advisers around Yel'tsin. At this point, the SC absorbed the Defense Council, where Kokoshin had replaced Baturin. The first deputy defense minister in 1992, Kokoshin became the sole defense intellectual to serve as SC secretary. Prior to that, he had been the principal military inspector and secretary of the Defense Council. Kokoshin brought his former staff with him, which capped the SC to some 200 persons. However, the SC no longer dealt with Chechnya and was charged with reforming the armed forces.

Kokoshin's successor, Col. General Bordyuzha, former director of the Federal Border Service, received a concurrent appointment as head of the presidential administration in the Kremlin. Yel'tsin began attending SC meetings less frequently and, hence, the prestige of this organization declined. Bordyuzha cut the number of SC staffers back to 175 individuals. Bordyuzha, seen as an ally of Primakov, was removed at roughly the same time as Primakov's other important ally, Prosecutor General Yuri I. Skuratov. Conflicts with Yel'tsin's older daughter, Tatyana Dyachenko (in charge of public relations for the Kremlin), led to both men's dismissals during the spring of 1999. In this period the influence of the SC had continued to decline.

Since his appointment as FSB director in the summer of 1998, Vladimir V. Putin had the ear of the "tsar."(11) After Putin was made SC secretary in March 1999, the body's

prestige increased dramatically. Under the new secretary, the SC commenced intensive work on various national security concepts and doctrines. Putin is reputed to have told his former colleagues that the FSB (former KGB) now had a foothold in the Kremlin. After he had been named prime minister on 9 August 1999, he held both positions for three months, allowing him to amass more power over the security services than any previous prime minister.

The subsequent SC secretary, Sergei B. Ivanov,(12) had served as Putin's deputy in the FSB. Ivanov completed work on several doctrines and concepts begun under his predecessor. In November 2000, his rank as lieutenant general in the foreign intelligence service was revoked, anticipating that he would become the first "civilian" defense minister on 28 March 2001. Both Putin and Ivanov studied at Leningrad State University, entered the KGB, and served abroad; the former in East Germany and the latter in Sweden. From this point on, foreign policy was being formulated by the Security Council and then implemented by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Oversight for military reform was again transferred to SC purview, obviously with more authority than Kokoshin ever had.

The days of the special services did not end, however. The current SC secretary is Vladimir B. Rushailo, a colonel general and career police officer, who had served as minister for internal affairs. It is possible that the SC will decline in importance under this man, another close associate of Putin who was instrumental in the presidential campaign. His entire career had been concentrated on the struggle against domestic crime. Such a background does not suggest a dynamic personality who would be capable of making recommendations on high-level national security policies to the president of Russia.(13)

Rushailo's appointment was completely unexpected. Given his background, emphasis is likely to be focused on the struggle against domestic crime and terrorism. Hence, international affairs will be concentrated in the hands of Putin, with advice from Defense Minister Ivanov rather than the foreign minister or the SC, which again has been

saddled with responsibility for the war in Chechnya. It is worth noting that a majority of the SC secretaries has come from the armed forces, the KGB/FSB, and uniformed police-especially the most recent four individuals.

Under Putin, the SC underwent an important alteration. The seven super-administrative districts were established by decree on 13 May 2000. All seven presidential representatives are *ex officio* members of the Security Council. This also portends a decline in the influence of the Security Council from the most important policy-making body in the diplomatic and national defense areas to a resurrected political bureau of the former ruling Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Mikhail S. Gorbachëv's last politburo(14) included eight regular members plus fifteen *ex-officio* CPSU leaders from the constituent republics. Only the former voted. The parallel is striking!

Modus Operandi

Formally established by presidential decree no. 547 on 3 June 1992, the Security Council's principal tasks were enumerated at that time. Preparation of presidential decisions takes place through the six inter-agency commissions. These are organized along functional lines. Initially, there had been 10 such commissions.

The secretary bears personal responsibility for all SC activities. He interacts with other governmental ministers and agencies, and his oral reports to the Russian president take place on a weekly basis. This routine allows him to influence all decisions of a national security nature, if he has the intellectual capacity to do so.

The following basic tasks, assigned to the SC, appear in federal legislation "On Security": (15)

assessing internal and external threats and their sources

preparing scientifically based prognoses about changes in domestic and foreign security considerations

developing and coordinating federal programs to safeguard Russian Federation (RF) security

analyzing and processing information concerning preservation of RF security

informing the SC about implementing its decisions

organizing scientific research on RF security

preparing SC decisions and proposals for presidential decrees about security

preparing analytical information materials for the president

The third consecutive secretary published an article about the above activities. According to Oleg Lobov, the SC had become the lead consultative-coordinating organ in the field of national security. Its main tasks included

implementation of presidential functions in domestic, foreign, and military security policies;

preservation of Russia's sovereignty;

support for sociopolitical stability in society; and

defense of citizens' rights and freedoms(16)

Recommendations are voted on and passed by simple majority among the five permanent SC members and the chairman (who certainly has veto power), the nineteen

regular members having only a consultative voice but no vote. Meetings of the council, which at times may be of an extraordinary nature, take place at least once a month. They are chaired by President Putin. He has the decisive vote, as suggested above.

The basic working organs are the six inter-agency commissions. (See chart.) These may be of a temporary nature, established for a limited period of time. Chaired by senior professional staff members of the SC apparatus, they represent the working level of this organization.

The SC secretary is also a permanent member of the council, with responsibility for planning the work schedule and for preparation of projects and documentation required by other SC members on current and anticipated future issues. He is the basic coordinator as well as link between the SC and executive/legislative branches of the government.

During his weekly sessions with the president, the SC secretary reports on the most important problems that require personal intervention by the chief of state. The intention here is to alert the president in advance regarding the development of crisis situations as well as key problems in the national security field. The SC may also be at the receiving end of this process, e.g., when Boris Yel'tsin asked it to prepare a concept for the 1996 national budget.

It is apparent from the foregoing that the use to which the Security Council has been applied has varied, depending upon the incumbent secretary. The last three of these men had served in the KGB/FSB or the uniformed police. All of them shared the same *Weltanschauung*, namely an outlook that had been shaped throughout their earlier careers.

The National Security Concept

A general document with this title was intended to include economic, ecological, social, defense information, and other security assessments. Central would be the place and role of Russia in the contemporary world, including its national interests, parameters for guaranteeing security, and freedom to develop both society as well as individuals. Never before had such a task been undertaken.

Toward the end of December 1997, President Yel'tsin signed decree no. 1300, titled "National Security Concept of the Russian People,"(17) having been produced by a team under the fifth consecutive SC secretary, Ivan P. Rybkin.

Work on a new national security concept probably began when Putin served in the above capacity and was completed by his successor, Lt. General (in the foreign intelligence service) Sergei B. Ivanov. Approved by presidential decree on 10 January 2000,(18) it repeats the same two main global trends: (1) a unipolar world, supported by the United States; and (2) a multipolar world, espoused by Russia. The first is based allegedly on unilateral solutions and the use of military force, regardless of international law.

Specific threats to Russia are perceived as originating because of its weakened scientific research and development (R & D) capability, increased dependence on foreign technology, and deteriorating defense posture. Information warfare is being waged to expel Russia from its own internal and external information markets. NATO's use of force, outside of its area of responsibility and without UN permission, could lead to global destabilization. Foreign special services are increasing their activities against Russia. Reforms of the military and defense industry are being delayed, with equipment stocks at impermissibly low levels. Social problems also lead to a weakening of military security.

Threats to Russia's national security are listed as follows: (1) a weakened R & D; (2) scientific brain drain; (3) separatism; (4) international terrorism; (5) NATO expansion; (6) foreign special services; and (7) delays in reforming the armed forces and defense industry.

Tasks envisaged by the currently applicable national security concept include identifying the above threats and removing them, ensuring security of borders, improving the economy, overcoming science and technology dependence on foreign sources, strengthening the system of state power, et al.

The New Military Doctrine

The next major document produced by the Security Council was approved by presidential decree on 21 April 2000.⁽¹⁹⁾ It begins with an assessment of the politico-military situation facing Russia, as follows:

decline in the threat of a large-scale, including nuclear, war;

strengthening of regional power centers, ethnic and regional extremism, and separatism;

spread of local wars and armed conflict; and

proliferation of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction.

Next, the main threats to Russian military security were identified as follows:

territorial claims;

ignoring Russian interests;

armed conflict close to CIS borders;

expansion of foreign blocs and alliances;

stationing of troops close to CIS borders;

armed provocation versus Russian military located on foreign soil;

hostile information operations;

discrimination against Russian citizens in foreign countries; and

international terrorism.

To safeguard military security, the new doctrine proclaims that Russia will strengthen the CIS alliance; give preference to nonmilitary means when facing military threats; observe arms control treaties (the RF is ready for further reductions of nuclear weapons bilaterally with the United States); and promote expansion of confidence-building measures.

"The Russian Federation will not use nuclear weapons against any signatory to the Nonproliferation Treaty that does not possess such arms, except for an attack by such a state against the Russian Federation."

The new military doctrine has classified military operations into four basic categories:

large-scale (regional) war to protect Russia and its allies;

local wars to neutralize the aggressor;

internal armed conflicts to liquidate illegal armed formations; and

peacekeeping [Russian word is *miro-tvorchestvo*, or "peace-making," which implies the use of force]

The introduction to this document repeats the description of two contradictory international trends from the National Security Concept: (1) toward a "unipolar" world dominated by the United States, and (2) toward a "multipolar" world based on rules of international law and favored by Russia.

The 1993 military doctrine had distinguished between dangers and threats, with the former representing a possibility of war and the latter suggesting an imminent outbreak of war. The 28 basic provisions to guarantee military security, both during peace as well as war, remain unchanged from the earlier version of the doctrine.

The conditions for use of nuclear weapons are the same as those specified above in the national security concept. First use is *not* ruled out.

In effect, those who prepared the latest version of the military doctrine refused to admit that Russia is no longer a superpower, nor can they shed the fear of nonexistent foreign threats. Only military power can ensure their security and allay a paranoid view of the world.

Information Security Doctrine

A third important document emanating from the SC is the Information Security Doctrine, (20) approved by Putin on 12 September 2000. Henceforth, the 26 pages of legislation provide the government with power to decide what is "socially significant" and required to "protect society from distorted and inaccurate information." The term "independent Russian press" does not appear in the text.

Divided into ten sections, the new doctrine states that "freedom of information is guaranteed and censorship prohibited." One threat to Russia's information security is the allegedly increasing dependence of public life on "foreign information structures." Who will decide what is significant and accurate? Obviously, the "properly qualified agencies" of government.(21)

Apart from instituting a tight system of control over the mass media, the new information security concept establishes censorship, which can result in blocking independent sources of information. The government's communications intelligence agency (FAPSI) will prevent the spread of disinformation throughout the seven super-administrative districts established by Putin's decree of 13 May 2000. All of these presidential representatives are ex officio members of the Security Council.

Notes:

1. A senior fellow at the Hoover Institution, Stanford University, Richard Staar is a student of Russian affairs. The author wishes to thank Molly Molloy, Slavic Reference Librarian at the Hoover Institution, for her research contributions to this article.
2. Aleksei Mukhin, *Spetssluzhby Rossii i bol'shaya polityka* (Moscow: Tsentr, 2000), pp. 71-79.
3. Carolina Vendit, "The Russian Security Council," *European Security*, vol. 10 (summer 2001), pp. 78-82; London.
4. Yuri V. Skokov, "My povernuli reformu," *Pravda*, 27 July 1993, p. 1.
5. Yevgeni I Shaposhnikov, *Vybor* (Moscow: PIK, 1995), pp. 256-284.
6. Yevgeni Primakov, *Vosem mesyatsev plus* (Moscow: Mysl, 2001) p. 92, and Yuri Baturin, et. al., *Epokha Yel'tsina* (Moscow: Varginus, 2001) pp. 597-598.

7. Valeri Vyzhutovich, "Mezhdu SB i politburo...," *Izvestiya*, 16 February 1995, p. 4. All decisions were made "by consensus," according to SC deputy secretary V. L. Manilov, who had been interviewed for this article.
8. Richard F. Staar, "Security Council," in *The New Military in Russia* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1996), pp. 37-42.
9. Unfortunately, Lebed' does not discuss these events in his book, *Ideologiya zdravogo smysla* (Moscow: Rus'-Fil'm, 1997), pp. 5-7.
10. Ivan P. Rybkin, *K bezopasnosti-cherez soglasie i doverie* (Moscow: Sofrino, 1997; 78 pp.).
11. Baturin, Yuri, *op.cit.*, p. 782.
12. Valeri Aleksin, "Glavnoe ugrozy bezopasnosti Rossii-vnutrennie," *Nezavisimoe voennoe obozrenie*, no. 12 (7-13 April 2000), pp. 1 and 3; interview with Ivanov.
13. Oleg I. Lobov, "Sovet Bezopasnosti Rossii i natsional'nye interesy strany," *Mezhdunarodnaya zhizn'*, no. 10 (October 1995), pp. 13-22, at p. 16.
14. Central Intelligence Agency, Directorate of Intelligence, *Directory of Soviet Officials* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, September 1990), pp. 149-151.
15. Cited by Valeri L. Manilov, *Bezopasnost' v epokhu partnerstva* (Moscow: Terra, 1999), pp. 162-163.
16. Oleg Lobov, *op. cit.*
17. See *Perspective*, vol. 8, no. 3 (January-February 1998), pp. 4-8.

18. "Kontsepsiya natsional'noi bezopasnosti R.F.," <http://www.scrf.gov.ru/Documents/Decree/2000/24-1.html> (17 pp.).
19. "Voennaya doktrina R.F.," <http://www.scrf.gov.ru/Documents/Decree/2000/706-1.html> (21 pp.).
20. "Doktrina informatsionnoi bezopasnosti R.F.," <http://www.scrf.gov.ru/Documents/Decree/2000/09-09.html> (26 pp.).
21. Svetlana Babaeva, "Opasnaya li informatsiya," *Izvestiya*, 13 September 2000, p. 3.

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