

ROLE OF PARLIAMENTS IN ARMS CONTROL, DISARMAMENT AND NON-PROLIFERATION – A VIEW FROM RUSSIA

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First of all I would like to thank the organizers of the seminar for their kind invitation and for the opportunity to speak before such a distinguished audience on a subject, which is of great importance to the international community. It goes without saying that being a member of an NGO I will be expressing here my own opinions and not necessarily those of any official Russian body.

Russia as a successor of the USSR remains committed to the strengthening of nuclear non-proliferation regime and the process of nuclear disarmament as well as to the gradual movement towards the objective of final nuclear disarmament in accordance with article VI of NPT. It is evident that in Russia, which is proclaimed by the Constitution a democratic federative law-governed state, a key role in preparing and taking decisions in these crucial areas should belong to the Parliament as a supreme representative of the people.

Since in view of many Russian independent experts the situation around this issue is not yet up to modern requirements, it would be worthwhile to start by reviewing it in a historical context.

As it is known, the predecessor of the actual Russian Federal Assembly (Parliament) – the Supreme Soviet of the USSR traditionally acted as a kind of a rubber-stamping machine since all important decisions in internal and external policy were taken by the Central Committee of the Communist Party, the real highest authority in the country. While these decisions were ideologically predetermined this does not necessarily mean they were predominantly biased because their preparation was supervised by a highly competent professional staff in the specialized departments of the Central Committee assisted by experts from outside institutions like for example the “Institute for the USA and Canadian Studies”.

Thereby this decision making process related in particular to the defense policy and military budgets was opaque so that the rank and file people could not influence it in any way. But the Soviet people were not showing signs of discontent with such a practice because for more than 40 years after the end of the Great Patriotic War our country was living in an atmosphere of a “besieged fortress” due to the world confrontation of two political systems. Nevertheless one would hardly

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blame the people for such a stance since in 1941-1945 war Soviet Union lost 10 million military and 18 million civilians and its population was ready to endure any economic hardships and political restraints in order to assure the national security at any price and to avoid the repetition of the atrocities of the war. One should also add to this reasoning another political and psychological factor: the USSR had to catch up with the USA in the nuclear race since my country was having 4 years' lag in developing and testing a nuclear weapon. No surprise that an agency responsible for fulfilling this task with a mysterious name "Ministry for Medium Machine Building" was having practically unlimited budgets which were neither discussed in the Parliament nor announced publicly.

The situation started changing slowly with the beginning of negotiations on NPT in the middle of the 1960s with the USSR finally becoming in 1968 a depository state of the Treaty together with the USA and the UK. It is important to note that for the first time in the Soviet history a document of this kind was reviewed and ratified by the Parliament. Moreover, the scientific community and the press scrutinized it, which was also something new.

Later on came numerous Soviet-American negotiations on arms control agreements (SALT-1, SALT-2, ABM Treaty), which gave additional impetus to enhancing the role of the Parliament and civil expertise. At the same time the remnants of the Cold War were still remaining.

The most salient example of absurdity is the story around the 1979 SALT-2 Treaty which contained an annex with enumeration of different types of strategic armaments of each side. Corresponding Russian data which constituted a state secret at that time was transmitted to Washington by a special Politbureau decision and published by Americans together with the text of the Treaty but the Russian text of the annex was not made public in the USSR and appeared later only as a UN document, Russian being an official language of this organization.

START-1 and New START Treaties were also reviewed and ratified by the Russian State Duma. But this was not the case for some other Russian-American arms control agreements, which by the decision of the government did not require ratification and entered into force upon signature due to the specificity of the moment.

First of all, one should mention two fundamental documents:

- 1992 Agreement between the United States of America and the Russian Federation concerning the safe and secure transportation, storage and destruction of weapons and prevention of weapons' proliferation... (so called CTR Agreement which played an important role in assisting Russia in safe and secure reduction of its nuclear stockpile from 30 thousand to 6 thousand warheads under START-1 Treaty).
- 1993 Russian-US HEU Agreement, which allowed for blending down to low enriched uranium (LEU) of 500 tons of Russian highly enriched uranium (HEU) extracted from nuclear weapons. This LEU will be used until 2013 by American nuclear power plants for the annual production of about 10% of the electricity in the USA.

The negative moment with these agreements which are crucial for the national security was that they became known to the State Duma only post factum when it was too late to introduce amendments, which some of the deputies would like to have.

Apparently further repetition of such a scenario seems to be excluded with the adoption in 1995 of the Federal Law on International Agreements of the Russian Federation which stipulates mandatory ratification of the international treaties related to defense, disarmament and arms control.

Reviewing the annual budgetary requests should be considered as one of the most valid instruments of the Parliament's control over Russian military policy including a nuclear one. But its effectiveness depends on the completeness of the information provided by the Ministry of Defense and the State Corporation ROSATOM responsible for managing the nuclear military complex, as well as on the availability in the Parliament of civil deputies who are experts in the nuclear field but not lobbyists of the MOD interests.

Some Russian experts including an internationally recognized political scientist Alexei Arbatov who was recently himself a deputy to the State Duma consider that at the actual stage the military budgetary requests presented to the Parliament by the Government have too general a character, are not sufficiently transparent, contain too much restricted information and thus hamper the adequate analysis of the documents. There is also an impediment for the formation of an independent civil expertise on military and nuclear issues – a shortage of information from the MOD and ROSATOM, which are still reluctant to expand their lists of publicly available data.

Summing up, one may conclude that notwithstanding certain progress in the recent years, there is still no full-fledged parliamentary control in Russia over the military organization including the formation of budgets for armed forces and military nuclear complex. One may hope that the situation would substantially improve with the adoption of a special Law on civilian control over the military organization, which allegedly is under consideration in the State Duma.

It seems also that under these circumstances an independent civil expertise gains a special importance. Taking it into account should be a sine qua non condition for the authorities during the process of decision-making in the sphere of the national security. Fortunately the existing sources of the required knowledge such as the Institute of World Economy and International Relations, the Institute for the US and Canadian Studies, PIR Center, Center for Energy and Security Studies, Center for Arms Control, Energy and Environmental Studies have lately intensified their activities and continue to demonstrate a real professionalism.

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