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Using Force of Arms to Provide Domestic Security¹

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The Russian Committee for the Defense of Peace, the Russian Center for Political and International Studies and the US Foreign Military Studies Office brought together a number of Russian and international specialists in Moscow (31 May-3 Jun) to exchange opinions and perspectives about issues of the "non-traditional" use of military force and "operations other than war." This article--which addresses the use of military means to ensure domestic security--was written in preparation for these exchanges and has benefitted from the discussions. It is aimed at assessing and understanding new factors in the theory and practice of peacekeeping.

The situation in Europe and in Russia today is much more complex than it was a year ago. Unfortunately, armed forces are increasingly being utilized for non-traditional operations. I refer to the recent actions of NATO aircraft in the Balkans, the operations of Russia's joint federal forces in Chechnya and the actions of the military contingents in Tajikistan.

As a representative of the Internal Troops, and as a practitioner rather than a theoretician, I must say that we read with great interest the theoretical documents on the problems of peacekeeping, the materials from previous conferences, the concepts of the multi-national operations of the second generation, and the NATO peacekeeping doctrine.

The Internal Troops of Russia is a state institution which came together historically in our vast and multi-national country. They are part of the forces that maintain domestic security. Over the last 20 years the missions of these troops have naturally undergone change. Since 1988 their most important missions have been those involving "hot spots" and areas of ethno-national conflicts.

If you juxtapose the experience of the Internal Troops with the peacekeeping views of the world community, you reach a fairly obvious conclusion: these are links in the same chain, and they have a common nature.

I will try to illustrate this point.

One of the conclusions of last year's conference was that there were two experimental, rapidly changing types of operations, both of which were essentially "peacekeeping" in nature, and that these types of operations were evolving in similar directions. The two types were a) classic operations under the aegis of the UN and b) operations on the territory of the former Soviet Union (FSU). The use of the term "non-traditional operations" in the title of today's seminar, as opposed to the former "peacemaking" or "peacekeeping" operations, attests to the essential commonality of all types of non-traditional operations.

NATO doctrine notes the great diversity of peacekeeping activities. Despite these clear differences between the specific forms of peacekeeping, these operations all have one essential element in common. They all involve a non-traditional application of military force.

Armies are created for the conduct of war. Both by virtue of their direct function and by their essential nature, armed forces ready themselves to achieve victory by destroying the enemy. As an officer of the Internal Troops, I will not go into a discussion of defense questions. I will say only that given today's high standards, when the means of armed combat, i.e., the armed combat of nations and their coalitions, have been developed to such an extent as to make that combat suicidal, it is now especially clear that the traditional use of military force is barbaric.

It is from this standpoint that one can define non-traditional operations, first and foremost, as a civilized use of armed forces.

What does "civilized use" mean, and is it possible?

The Internal Troops, whose intended function is inside the country, personify this civilized use of force.

In regions of ethno-national conflict the Troops have done the following:

- provided systematic measures for handling emergencies and curfew situations;
- prevented weapons and armed units from getting into or out of the Chechen Republic last year;
- separated the potential positions of the hostile parties in Northern and Southern Ossetia;
- maintained the conditions of the cease-fire in Nagorno-Karabakh;
- protected lawful civilian authorities in Dushanbe in 1990;
- guarded Turk-Meskhetins in the Fergan Valley in 1989;
- protected strategic facilities in conflict regions;
- disarmed illegal armed units, and;
- escorted humanitarian aid and refugee convoys in Northern Ossetia in 1992.

The Troops have done many other things as well, both at the stage where no force was used to regulate conflicts and also at the force stage, as was appropriate to the formats of peacemaking, peacekeeping and post-conflict activities.

In this process, the Troops sustain losses and use their weapons in accordance with the law:

- to protect citizens from life-threatening attacks;

- for self-defense;
- to free hostages and to recover stolen armaments, cargoes and combat hardware;
- to detain armed persons caught in the act of committing crimes against the lives of citizens;
- to repel armed attacks on military posts and military trains, and;
- to suppress the resistance of armed groups who refuse to obey lawful requirements to halt illegal activities and to surrender their arms and hardware.

At the same time, the Troops do not engage in battle with an enemy, and there is no "enemy" in their training.

Service personnel in particular feel the specific nature of the Internal Troops. My personal observation, after temporary duty trips to Armenia and Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, Northern Ossetia, Ingushetia and Chechnya, having seen the hatred of some as well as the tears of joy and gratitude of others, is that I feel empathy for everyone--and I emphasize, everyone--who has fallen victim to harm. The most difficult part of our trips is seeing peoples' pain. But stopping that pain provides our motivation. Many officers, warrant officers and soldiers are now able to say of themselves in the words of our poet, Maximilian Voloshin: "I did everything to stop our brothers from destroying themselves, from killing one another."

Helping someone who has fallen victim to harm is man's sacred duty. So don't think me a science fiction writer if I look into the future and believe that a combined armed force of the countries of the world will ultimately be the "internal forces" of the people of one planet.

Why am I certain that these troops will be preserved?

The use of force in order to guarantee domestic security is inherently paradoxical. The plan actually is to use force, a threat to human life, in order to protect the most fundamental and the deepest of human rights--the right to life.

This is a significant contradiction. To a large extent it defines the dual nature of non-traditional military operations and their complexity, which those of us in the Internal Troops encounter daily. On the other hand, this paradoxality, or more accurately, this dialectic, of the "civilized force factor," attests to its viability, since there is an objective need for non-traditional operations involving the use of armed forces.

That need is the following.

The strife and crises in the development of our complex, diverse world are to be expected. This is a dialectic. It is pointless to have simplicity and uniformity as a goal, because these are unattainable and would mean the end of progress, and actually, the end of everything. Extremism is a primitive, simplified approach to problems, a desire to solve them with a single blow, cutting the Gordian knot. This is precisely why extremism is so popular, attractive and very much alive.

The main conclusion which we can draw from recent history is the following. We will have to learn to live under conditions of continuous and intense contradictions and also to live in a civilized way, resolving these contradictions with as little bloodshed as possible.

This is why countering and preventing extremism, and alleviating its consequences, are now among the most important of human and international challenges. We cannot eliminate poverty and preserve the environment without safeguarding peace not only on the planet as a whole, but also in each of its regions.

Extremism is often accompanied by, and even equivalent to, force. Therefore, as a crisis develops, there comes a point when armed force must be used in order to create conditions which will permit a civilized resolution of the crisis.

Therein lies the real foundation of non-traditional operations. Therein lies the essential unity of the actions of the UN blue helmets in Yugoslavia, of the military contingents performing peacekeeping actions on the territory of the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), and of the Russian Interior Ministry's Internal Troops in the Northern Caucasus.

Before highlighting the types of non-traditional operations, it is necessary to define how they differ qualitatively from traditional operations and also how non-traditional operations are all inherently related and have a common goal. The goal is to stop someone, who is blinded by hatred, from becoming a murderer--to stop an extremist, but not an enemy.

Various factors form the basis for classifying the types of non-traditional operations: are the armed forces involved multi-national; is the conflict itself multi-national or domestic; how intense is the use of force (ranging from no use of force whatsoever in preventing conflicts, to such a level of force that peacekeeping takes on the character of combat, as has become the case in Chechnya). Thus, in form, non-traditional operations may very closely approach traditional operations--but only in form. In essence, the important distinction of non-traditional operations remains--there is no enemy. Peacekeeping forces cannot be trained for, and must not conduct, a war of annihilation.

This circumstance explains the relatively low intensity of the combat actions in Chechnya. As the federal troops carry out their mission to disarm illegal armed formations, these federal troops are constantly negotiating both at the field-commander level and also at the highest level in order to reduce the number of casualties. Even when Dudaev's commanders take the initiative and seek negotiations, not because they are sincere, but only because they have sustained losses, lost control and want to win time to restore the combat readiness of their units, even then, we must agree to these negotiations, because we must take advantage of even a hypothetical opportunity to reduce the losses of soldiers, militants and civilians. After all, these people are all citizens of our country.

I will note here in passing that only mercenaries are hated by our troops. Further, many of our officers count former classmates among the Chechen field commanders.

The reaction to the use of force is never unanimous, and it never will be. Everyone is aware of the criticism of Russian peacemaking operations and the actions of federal forces in Chechnya. Assessments of NATO actions in the Balkans are also not unanimous.

A bitterly humorous statement commonly heard in Russia of late is, "why do we want what is best but end up with what we've always had."

Without elaborating I will just quote the adage, "it looked smooth on paper, but we forgot about the ravines." The casualties and the destruction are not the result of bloodthirstiness on the part of the troops or the politicians. Rather, they are the consequences of the complexity of the problems the troops and politicians are facing, problems which have no simple solutions.

I offer one thought in conclusion.

The fact that the theoreticians and practitioners, both of countries that are well-off and countries that are in crisis situations, are combining their efforts in the area of peacekeeping only confirms the universality of the problem and gives hope for its solution.

Based on the foregoing, the future of NATO lies not so much in a defensive alliance as it does in being transformed into an effective tool for peacekeeping, into the "Internal Troops of Europe," I would say.

Recently, I had occasion to hear a very old and very wise toast. "Be vigilant in happiness and steadfast in misfortune."

The fortunate West will have to "be vigilant." It is very important not to overlook this vital need for a qualitative rather than a quantitative change in the alliance--a change which is worrying so many.

The East will have to remain "steadfast in misfortune." I believe we will endure. It won't be the first time.

ENDNOTES:

1. Text of an oral presentation given at a jointly sponsored US/Russian international workshop entitled "Non-Traditional Operations Involving the Use of Armed Forces: Russian and International Experience", May 31-June 2, 1995, Moscow. [BACK](#)

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