

The approaches to foreign policy decision-making in international crisis conditions

Serhii Shaptala * 1 A

*Corresponding author: ¹ Research Fellow of the Research Department, e-mail: smokliak@ukr.net, ORCID: 0000-0002-0348-4050

^A Military-Diplomatic Academy named after Yevgeny Bereznyak, Kyiv, Ukraine

Received: December 10, 2021 | **Revised:** December 25, 2021 | **Accepted:** December 30, 2021

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.6802724

Abstract

The article deals with theoretical approaches and practices in foreign policy decision-making in international crisis conditions. It defines the basic decision-making stages and their contents.

Key words: foreign policy, foreign policy decisions, decision-making, international crisis, conflict.

Introduction

International crises usually occur in certain periods. They can be short lasting, lasting, and long lasting. Crises involving armed violence are extremely dangerous. Border conflicts, local and regional armed conflicts, intergovernmental and coalition wars bring disruption into the arranged coordination between countries. The level of national security and its components (military, economic, informational, public security etc.) in the crisis region drastically decreases and the level of social intensity simultaneously increases.

In modern globalized society, even not directly involved in the zone of conflict countries feel conflict's consequences, primarily economic and social. Therefore, the countries interested in resolving the crisis, actively seek for the decision to minimize crises consequences as well as

mechanisms to deal with existing crisis in the countries directly involved in it.

Since late 2021 the Russian Federation has been massing its forces along the border with Ukraine from its own and Byelorussian territories. Accelerated massing of forces by Russia can lead to the formation of strike groups capable of conducting large-scale military operations on the territory of our country. Therefore, Ukraine, the US, Great Britain, the EU countries as well as the leading world powers take actions for preparing and operational foreign policy decision-making aimed at prevention of armed conflict escalation between Russia and Ukraine. Otherwise, the above-mentioned countries are involved into foreign policy decision-making in international crisis conditions.

Material and methods

The approaches to the command decision-making at the international level were under the research of national and foreign scholars. The peculiarities of decision-making in the area of international relations in certain aspects have been studied by D. Dhtyarov and A. Dehtyarov [1], Zh. Panchenko [2], Yu. Sedlyar [3]. Much attention to this issue was paid by V. Holovchenko [4], M. Matsyakh [5], O.

Kotlyarenko [6], O. Durman [7]. However, the research of the decision-making theory in the area of foreign relations, which is in constant evolution, requires further studies.

Despite the scholars' attention to this issue, the substantial analysis of the main approaches to the command decision-making has not been done yet. The available works on these issues require systematization and deeper analysis.

The aim of the article is to study theoretical approaches and practices in foreign policy decision-making in international crisis

conditions as well as to define the basic decision-making stages and their contents.

Results and discussion

Time to respond quickly in international crisis conditions is one of the crucial indicators that should be kept to a minimum. Therefore, foreign policy decision-making is always limited in time. In such conditions, the algorithm of political decision-making has its own characteristics. To define them, it is necessary to study the theory of foreign policy decision-making, the main terms and definitions that will be used in this article.

In particular, in the theory of foreign policy decision-making the essence of foreign policy is reduced to the analysis of the decision-making process in the field of foreign relations [8]. The process of foreign policy decision-making is a dynamic dimension of systematic analysis of foreign policy. Foreign policy research without taking this process into account may be incomplete, as it is the “filter” of the most important (from the point of view of a person / persons involved into making decisions) factors that determine the peculiarities of foreign policy.

In modern scientific works there are different views on the place of decisions in the system of public administration and politics. For example, the so-called ‘broad’ and ‘narrow’ approaches are distinguished. The ‘broad’ approach assumes that the decision generally coincides with the management as a specific type of human activity. That is, any management is an a priori decision, or a set of interrelated decisions. Proponents of the ‘narrow’ approach note that decision-making is only a phase of the management process, and not the most important.

At the same time, the very concept ‘decision’ has several interpretations. This concept is interpreted as a process, an act of choice, and a result of choice. Some scholars believe that all the above mentioned define this concept [9].

In our opinion, the decision-making process includes the stages from collecting and processing the information necessary for

making a decision, to bringing the management decision to the object of management and control over its implementation.

Let us consider two main approaches to foreign policy decision-making process understanding: normative-prescriptive and descriptive-explicative. These approaches are based on opposite ways of understanding the problem: the first is focused on building formal, normatively optimized models; the second is to create empirically sound models of foreign policy decision-making process real practices (aimed at revealing the deep motivation of the subject that makes a decision).

From the point of view of a normative-prescriptive approach, foreign policy decisions are considered as phenomena that can be described using a theoretical model. Foreign policy is optimized through formal rules (norms) and procedures, and the main subject of research is ‘alternatives of choice’ associated with the construction of formal algorithms. Thus, the decision-making, for example, to provide the party of the conflict with lethal weapons, is formulated as a multifactorial task of group choice with the construction of a matrix of preferences.

If the criteria on which the provision or non-provision of lethal weapons depends are clearly defined, and a hierarchy of preferences is established, the development of the optimal decision will be reduced to information processing. From the point of view of the regulatory approach, making the best decision will depend on a strict compliance with all procedures prescribed by law. With such an analytical approach, the process of foreign policy decision-making (particularly in international crisis conditions) can be described using a formalized and consistent model, according to which the production of an effective final product requires strict following of all the procedures. The advantage of this approach is that it enables to streamline the

foreign policy process, clearly define the criteria, calculate preferences, determine the cost of alternative solutions. However, it should be noted that it involves a complete abstraction from the “imperfect political practice”, which is influenced by values, attitudes, emotions, stereotypes [10].

The descriptive-explicit approach is especially popular with behaviorists, who pay attention not only to formalized norms and procedures, but also to informal factors. When making decisions in crisis conditions, along with quantitative information, the following factors are assessed: values, individual motivation, socio-cultural stereotypes [10]. The key idea for behaviorists is interpreting the decision-making process as a study of human behavior, governed by psychological mechanisms such as stimuli and motives, attitudes and reactions, values and guidelines. Thus, the behaviorist model attempts to combine macroanalysis of the role of social institutions, interests and values with the assessment of behavior psychological parameters of involved in decision-making individuals, such as irrational motives and emotions, perceptions and attitudes [9].

According to the theory of foreign policy decisions, experts distinguish between two levels of their development – individual and bureaucratic. If in the first case the key role belongs to the decision-maker, in the second – the foreign policy decision is the result of complex interaction of bureaucratic structures. The operational model is characterized by a relative autonomy, according to which the process of foreign policy decision-making is understood as a sequence of phases / operations [8].

The foundations of the operational model were laid by Harvard University professor G. Allison in his monograph *The Essence of Solution* (1971), who was the first to apply this approach to foreign policy analysis. The scholar viewed the government as “a set of relatively free organizations, each of which operates within certain procedures and norms”. Decision-making is understood as the result of joint practical interaction of organizations (agencies)

that operate in accordance with established behavior standards.

Thus, the emphasis in the decision-making process is shifted to “organizational logic” (procedures, regulations), complex interaction between government agencies, stereotypes of organizational culture. The key element of the analysis should be the joint aggregate interaction of agencies and the specific activities of each of them. Within this framework Allison interprets the situation around the Caribbean crisis of 1962. In his opinion, even in acute international conflicts, decisions are made in accordance with clear organizational procedures, which largely determine the logic of state behavior on the world stage [8].

Decision-making in a crisis period is characterized by a high pace of stages, because prompt response to decision-making can reduce the negative effects of the crisis. As we are inclined to a “broad” interpretation of the concept of managerial decision-making, it is necessary to explore the decision-making process, which is structurally complex and contains several stages.

1. *Collection and processing of information required for decision-making.* It is necessary to point out the features of this stage:

- a) management decisions are often made in conditions of uncertainty;
- b) in real management there is usually a lack of information.

The main reason for the lack of information support is the need for rapid decision-making, which is caused by the high dynamics of the military-political process. A quickly made decision can often be insufficiently justified. An adequate decision requires a maximum of information. However, this means increasing the time for its collection, processing and analysis. At the same time the work with information is continuous. You can always clarify certain details of the managed process, collect and analyze additional data and more. But the longer this “necessary” work lasts, the more unnecessary it becomes, as time barriers are broken and the relevance of the decision is lost.

It is clear that the optimal time of accumulation of information and the relevance

of management decisions do not coincide, which necessitates the search for a compromise. A brave leader makes decisions in a shorter time on the basis of limited intelligence, a timid one – when intelligence is the most complete and reveals the maximum possible goals and plans of the conflicting parties. However, in this case, the time to make the optimal decision is lost, and the existing at that time decision will already have a lower efficiency. A smart leader makes a decision when the decision remains relevant and at the same time informationally prepared.

Any decision made is characterized by positive and negative consequences of its practical implementation. The degree of unacceptability of consequences is called the loss. The loss function is usually converted into a risk function, which reflects the dependence of losses on the decision made. The best decision is the one that minimizes risk, narrows the range of problems related to the personality of the manager, who must be determined, competent, able to involve the management consulting professionals.

For example, the adoption of preventive measures in 2022 by the United States, Great Britain and the leading countries of the European Union (providing military assistance to Ukraine, agreeing on a draft package of critical economic and political sanctions for Russia) can be attributed to prompt and prejudicial decisions. However, the attempts to obtain full information about the Kremlin's plans related to the military conflict against Ukraine may be a waste of time. There may be a situation when we have to make decisions aimed at eliminating the consequences of the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

2. *Development of options and selection of the optimal management decision (development of criteria for the effectiveness of management decisions).* Usually the criterion performs the following functions:

a) achieving the goal of management (the optimal solution is the one that most fully ensures the achievement of the goal);

b) minimization of losses, risks and resources (human, material, financial, etc.);

c) compliance with the planned deadlines for the program.

It should be emphasized that the choice of the optimal management decision is often a specific procedure of the governing body, which may consist of several persons (bodies, departments), each of which tries to implement not only common interests but also their own. Or: the actions of each participant involved in decision-making are transformed under the influence of his personal interests. As a result, the problems of this stage include the developing a correct and clear criterion for the effectiveness of the decision for participants in the process of its adoption; ensuring clarity and democracy of the decision-making procedure, namely: guaranteeing non-insistence on one of the options and deterring lobbying, i.e. eliminating the attempts to subjectively implement a decision; the ability of the leader to complete the democratic decision-making process and take responsibility for its implementation; normative registration of the accepted decision as an order, instruction, etc.

The positions and interests of other states that are indirectly involved in resolving the conflict must be taken into account when developing options and choosing the optimal management decision. For example, the inconsistency of positions between Germany and the United States concerning the use of certain levers of pressure on Russia to prevent the invasion of Ukraine weakens their common position on the settlement of the conflict.

3. *Preliminary verification (evaluation) of the effectiveness of the decision.* This stage is especially important for complex and super-complex systems, as mistakes in decision-making can cause great losses. Taking into consideration that the system's response to a decision may be ambiguous and even threatening its stability, it is imperative to test the effectiveness of the decision. The following methods of verification can be used: imaginary modeling and experimentation to show how the components of the decision affect the object and what consequences it may cause; business or simulation games, when the situation can be reproduced using automated systems; situation analysis or the

case study method, which is a type of analytical activity and is based on the description of the situation and detailed analysis of this description, which also makes it possible to explore all the aspects of the situation; application of management experiment, which tests the effectiveness of management decisions in conditions of limited space and time.

For example, the controlled spread of information about the Kremlin's countermeasures makes it possible to assess its response and adjust the draft management decision accordingly.

4. *Bringing management decisions to the object of management* involves the development of orders, directives, instructions, scenarios, regulations. It depends on this stage how completely and effectively the decision will be implemented in practice.

The main requirements that arise at this stage are as follows: the language of the made decision must be clear to its executors; acceptability of the decision and the degree of ordinary performers' participation in its implementation. This is important because the decision can violate the status of subordinates, deprive them of some privileges, break the usual rhythm of work, cause covert or overt sabotage.

Conclusions

Political decision-making is a complex dynamic process, its hypercomplex structure creates a large-scale problem for building adequate theoretical models. There is still no holistic concept of political decision-making processes (including the decisions in foreign relations system). This requires further development of relevant theory and practice, in particular in the system of intelligence agencies of Ukraine.

Decisive factors influencing the effectiveness of foreign policy decisions in international crisis

A well-thought-out decision must be supported by subordinates, consolidate their status, and expand their freedom of activity.

5. *Control over the implementation of management decisions* is mainly the final stage of the management cycle, although additional stages are quite acceptable – *internal (structural, functional, resource) correction of the management entity on the achieved results, as well as replenishment of own information resources with positive and negative results of management act.*

Thus, political decision-making in the context of international conflict is the result of multi-stage complex interactions between many participants in this process. Each leader chooses his model of making and implementing political decisions.

The process of their adoption depends on a large number of individuals, structures, human, material and financial resources, as well as a range of subjective and objective factors. A special role in this is played by intelligence agencies, which provide intelligence to political process subjects involved in foreign policy decision-making. Scientific research on this topic is extremely important for the formation of clear and logical theory for state foreign policy.

conditions are time and information. Therefore, the intelligence agencies of Ukraine play a key role in providing government authorities with intelligence in times of crisis.

Prospects for further research It is advisable to specify the particular influence of the intelligence body of the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine on the process of state foreign policy decision-making; to determine the common and different in the information support of state decisions by the legally defined intelligence agencies of Ukraine.

References

1. Degterev D., Degterev A. (2011). Teoriya yhr y mezhdunarodnye otnoshenyya [Game theory and international relations]. *The world economy and international relations*. 2011. No. 2. P. 79–89.
2. Panchenko. Zh. O. (2013). Teoriya pryynyattya politychnykh rishen' u mizhnarodnykh vidnosynakh: osnovni metodolohichni pidkhody ta kontseptual'ni modeli. [Theory of political decision-making in international

- relations: main methodological approaches and conceptual models]. *Problems of international relations*. 2013. Issue 7. P. 143–145.
3. Sedlyar, Yu. O. (2010). Evolyutsiya analizu zovnishn'oyi polityky yak naukovoho napryamu [Evolution of foreign policy analysis as a scientific direction]. *Actual problems of international relations*. 2010. Issue 93. Part II. P. 43–50.
 4. Golovchenko V. I. (2013). Pryynyattya zovnishn'opolitychnykh rishen' v SSHA: teoriya y praktyka. Making foreign policy decisions in the USA: theory and practice. *Actual problems of international relations*. 2013. Issue 116. Part I. S. 15–22.
 5. Matsyakh M. (2016). Naukovi doslidzhennya protsesu pryynyattya rishen' u sferi zovnishn'oyi polityky derzhavy. [Scientific studies of the decision-making process in the field of foreign policy of the state]. Bulletin of Lviv University. *International relations series*. 2016. Issue 38. P. 89–96.
 6. Kotlyarenko O. P. (2020). Viys'kovo-pravova refleksiya Ukrainy na zbroynu ahresiyu Rosiys'koyi Federatsiyi. [Military-legal reflection of Ukraine on the armed aggression of the Russian Federation]. *Legal scientific electronic journal*. 2020. No. 4. P. 169.
 7. Durman O.L. Stratehuvannya pry formuvanni zovnishn'oyi polityky Ukrainy. [Strategizing in the formation of foreign policy of Ukraine]. Public administration: improvement and development. No. 3/2021. P. 57–62.
 8. Tsygankov P. A. Teoryya mezhdunarodnykh otnoshenyy : uchebnoe posobyie. [Theory of international relations: textbook]. Moscow: Gardariki. 2003. 590 p.
 9. Zhovkva I. I. (2012). Pryynyattya zovnishn'opolitychnykh rishen' yak nauka. [Making foreign policy decisions as a science]. *Political problems of international relations*. Issue 111 (Part I). 2012. pp. 37–42.
 10. Sedlyar Yu.O. Analiz ta prohnozuvannya zovnishn'oyi polityky: navchal'nyy posibnyk. [Analysis and forecasting of foreign policy: a study guide]. Mykolaiv: Publishing house of ChSU named after P. Graves. 2010.