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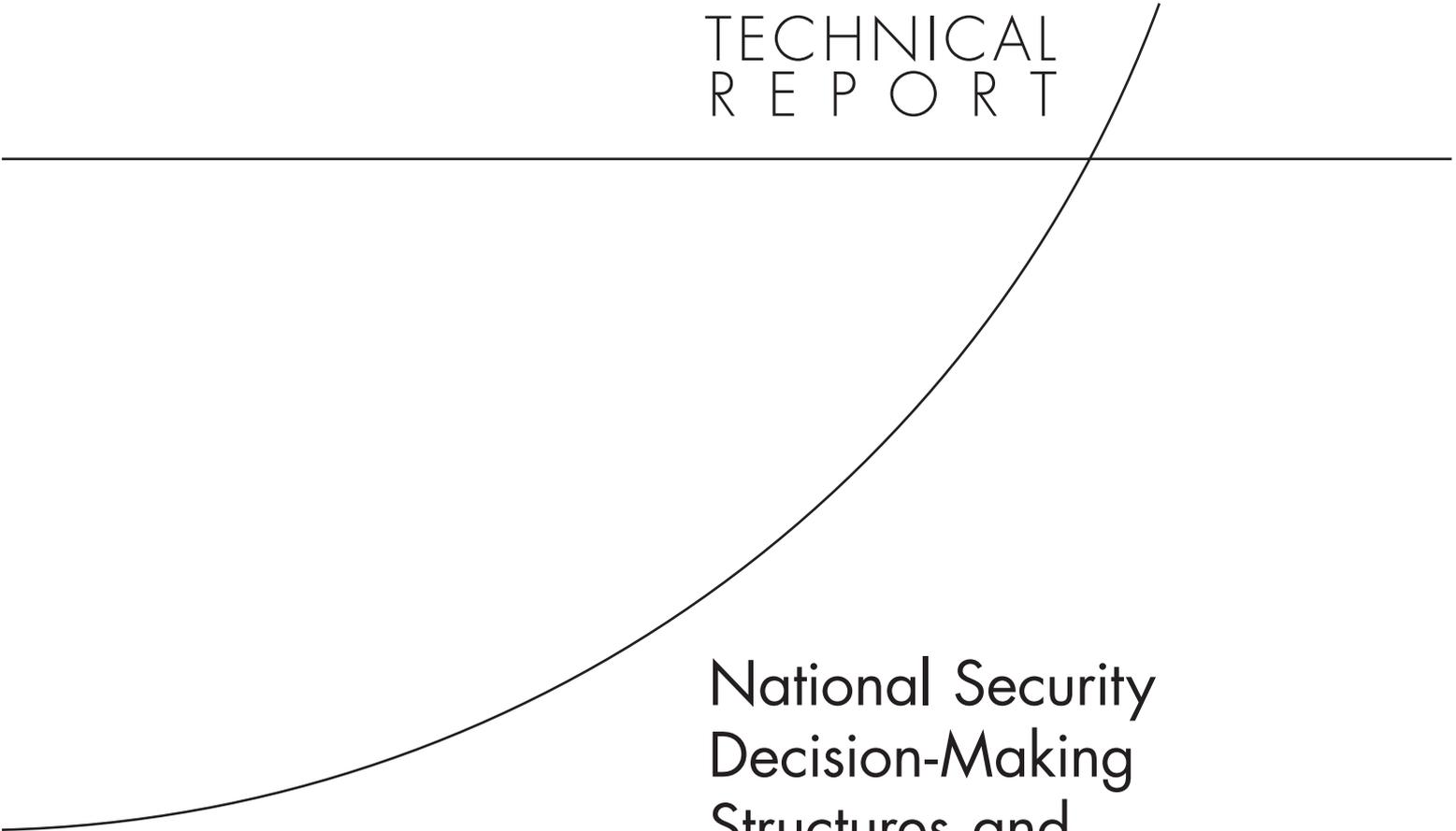
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TECHNICAL
REPORT



National Security Decision-Making Structures and Security Sector Reform

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Prepared for the
United Kingdom's Security Sector Development Advisory Team

The research described in this report was prepared for the United Kingdom's Security Sector Development Advisory Team.

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Executive Summary

This study was undertaken on behalf of the United Kingdom's Security Sector Development Advisory Team. Its aim is to act as a basis for discussion and to provide an opportunity to learn from the successes and failures of national security architectures and agencies in various countries. Drawing on the body of academic work in this field and the knowledge of RAND staff, this report: provides a definition of security sector reform (SSR); outlines the roles of national security decision-making structures; examines a number of key case-studies for their national security architectures and the experience of developing and using these; examines the lessons identified from the case-studies to support the Basis, Legitimacy, Function, Organisation, and Composition of the National Security Decision-Making Structures examined; and, finally, closes with a discussion of some of the key questions surrounding national decision-making structures:

- Centralisation of National Security Functions
- Options for Security Functions—Consolidated or Disseminated
- Joint Security Assessments vs. Individual Departmental Assessments
- Role of National Security Councils in Security Sector Reform

in order to draw out a number of key lessons to be considered in any future security sector reform activity involving national security decision-making structures.

Security sector reform

Security sector reform (SSR) is a complex process. Narrowly defined, it can encompass institutions and organisations established to deal with external or internal threats to the security of the State and its citizens. At a minimum, therefore, the security sector includes military and paramilitary forces, the intelligence services, national and local police services, border, customs and coast guards. However, it is increasingly understood that SSR is broader than these institutions.

Security sector reform more broadly defined has political, military, economic, policing, juridical, communications, financial, foreign policy, and intelligence components, all of which are interrelated. Developing countries need sufficient stability to foster growth – and they need effective and sustainable economic growth to support continued security and stability. Moreover, in developing countries particularly, NGOs, human rights organisations and international bodies may also play significant roles in the development of the security sector.

The Need for National Security Decision-Making Structures

One solution to this challenge is the creation of overarching (or centralised) structures that consolidate and co-ordinate various aspects of national security decision-making; effective security sector reform demands co-ordinated action and the integration of a wide range of security-related policy, legislative, structural and oversight issues. These centralised structures may be called upon to co-ordinate policy, to implement policy, or simply to assess and advise – high-level political commitment and awareness are crucial to this process – but *their role is always to bring the disparate parts of the security agenda together*. They are, thus, a crucial component of security sector transformations, both as the target of change (or creation) and the drivers of change. Moreover,

given the interdependence of security and economic factors, the way in which a country structures its national decision-making can have a direct impact not only on what are traditionally thought of as security concerns, but also on the broader, but no less crucial, socio-economic development of a country.

Roles of National Security Decision-Making Structures

National security decision-making structures¹ can perform a variety of roles.

- **Joint Assessment** on which to base policy and decision-making
- **Resource Allocation** to deal with national security threats
- **Oversight** responsible for managing national security is an important function within all democratic systems
- **Security Priorities** reflecting the varying national security needs of individual countries
- **Emergency Co-ordination** among bodies responsible for responding to emergencies, natural or otherwise

This study examines five case-studies – Canada, Sierra Leone, South Africa, the United Kingdom, and the United States – that describe how various countries have chosen to structure their national security decision-making, and how these choices reflect their national security needs.

Some general conclusions regarding the options available for structuring national security decision-making are included below.

Basis for the National Security Decision-Making Structure

Increasingly, developed countries such as the UK or the US view the most immediate threats to their national security in terms centred around the national well-being and stability of society – against both externally-originating threats such as international terrorism and the proliferation of WMD, and internally-originating ones such as natural disasters or radical violence against society (including domestic terrorism). Developing and – in particular – post-conflict countries are typically far more concerned with socio-economic issues such as poverty and food scarcity, and the potential these have to lead to social tensions and widespread instability. Given this link between security and development, in many developing countries, therefore, the role of the NSC is superseded by other institutions, which focus on development, security, and security sector reform, but not on overall co-ordination of security policy at the head-of-government level.

Legitimacy of the National Security Decision-Making Structure

For an NSC to have legitimacy, it should have a legislative basis and high-level support. It should also be both transparent and accountable.

Function of the National Security Decision-Making Structure

National Security Councils can function in either an advisory or executive role. They will also likely play a co-ordinating role within government. It is worth noting that effective co-ordination mechanisms can often exist despite the absence of an effective NSC structure. In some cases, countries may find that structures of this sort meet their needs better than a more centralised approach.

¹ For the purposes of this report, we shall use the generic term National Security Council (NSC) as a short-hand to refer to national security decision-making structures. This does not imply any preference for the NSC structure over other forms of national security decision-making body.

Organisation of the National Security Decision-Making Structure

In many countries, national security decisions are handled through networks of committees before reaching higher-level decision-making fora such as the NSC or the Cabinet. This hierarchical structure helps to focus resources, ensuring that more minor issues are dealt with at a lower level, without detracting from more significant issues requiring higher-level decisions. The same efforts at integration of intelligence and assessments is also underway. In general, centralising national security decision-making can contribute to more effective response to threats. However, this centralising process can be undermined by a lack of trust in the central structures established for this purpose. This is particularly apparent in developing countries, and is linked to the issues of building public confidence, trust and accountability in authority structures.

Composition of the National Security Decision-Making Structure

It is critical for NSCs to have a balance between military and civilian influence. Intelligence and security services must also be integrated effectively to support effective decision-making.

Predictably, there is no ‘one size fits all’ approach. However, there are generic aspects of the different models that may provide useful examples or lessons for other countries in the process of developing or reforming an NSC-type system.