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Regional peacekeepers

Regional peacekeepers: The paradox of Russian peacekeeping

Edited by John Mackinlay and Peter Cross



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The United Nations University, 53-70, Jingumae 5-chome,
Shibuya-ku, Tokyo, 150-8925, Japan
Tel: +81-3-3499-2811 Fax: +81-3-3406-7345
E-mail: sales@hq.unu.edu (general enquiries): press@hq.unu.edu
www.unu.edu

United Nations University Office in North America
2 United Nations Plaza, Room DC2-2062, New York,
NY 10017, USA
Tel: +1-212-963-6387 Fax: +1-212-371-9454
E-mail: unuona@ony.unu.edu

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List of acronyms

| | |
|---------|--|
| AFSOUTH | Allied Forces Southern Europe |
| AFV | armoured fighting vehicle |
| APC | armoured personnel carrier |
| ARRC | Allied Rapid Reaction Corps |
| ASEAN | Association of South-East Asian Nations |
| BMP | armoured personnel carrier |
| BTR | armoured personnel carrier |
| BTRD | airborne combat vehicle |
| CFL | cease-fire line |
| CinC | Commander in Chief |
| CIS | Commonwealth of Independent States |
| CISPKF | Commonwealth of Independent States peacekeeping force |
| CP | checkpoint |
| CPSU | Tajik Communist Party |
| CSCE | Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe |
| DMR | Dnestr Moldovan Republic |
| ECOMOG | Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (Liberia and Sierra Leone) |
| ECOWAS | Economic Community of West African States |
| EU | European Union |
| FRAGOS | fragmentary orders |
| FSS | former Soviet space |
| FSU | former Soviet Union |
| FWF | former warring factions |
| GMO | Group of Military Observers (Georgia) |

| | |
|---------|---|
| HWSS | heavy weapons storage site |
| ICRC | International Committee of the Red Cross |
| IDP | internally displaced person |
| IFOR | Implementation Force |
| IOM | International Organization for Migration |
| JCC | Joint Control Commission (Georgia and Moldova) |
| JMC | Joint Military Command (Moldova) |
| JPKF | Joint Peacekeeping Force (Georgia) |
| KFOR | Kosovo Stabilization Force |
| KGB | former Soviet Bureau for State Security |
| KNB | Tajik KGB – succeeded the KGB |
| LNO | liaison officer |
| MASSR | Moldovan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic |
| MFA | Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Russia) |
| MFO | Multinational Force and Observers (Sinai) |
| MIA | Ministry of Internal Affairs (Russia/Georgia) |
| MINURSO | UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara |
| MND(N) | Multi-National Division (North) |
| MoD | Ministry of Defence (Russia) |
| MRD | Motor Rifle Division |
| MSSR | Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic |
| NATO | North Atlantic Treaty Organization |
| NCO | non-commissioned officer |
| NGO | non-governmental organization |
| NIS | newly independent states |
| NMD | national missile defence |
| NPFL | National Patriotic Front of Liberia |
| OGRF | Operational Group of Russian Forces |
| ONUMOZ | UN Operation in Mozambique |
| OOTW | operations other than war |
| OPCON | operational control |
| OSCE | Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe |
| PfP | Partnership for Peace |
| PKF | peacekeeping force |
| PSA | production-sharing agreement |
| RPG | rocket-propelled grenade |
| RSAB | Russian Separate Airborne Brigade |
| RSFSR | Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic |
| RWZ | restricted weapons zone |
| SACEUR | Supreme Allied Commander – Europe |
| SAM | surface to air missile |
| SCR | Security Council Resolution |
| SFOR | Stabilization Force |
| SG | Secretary-General |
| SHAPE | Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe |
| SSR | Soviet Socialist Republic |

| | |
|----------|---|
| SZ | secure zone |
| TACON | tactical control |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNDP | UN Development Programme |
| UNHCR | Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees |
| UNIDIR | UN Institute for Disarmament Research |
| UNIKOM | UN Iraq-Kuwait Observation Mission |
| UNMOT | UN Mission of Observers in Tajikistan |
| UNOMIG | United Nations Mission in Georgia |
| UNPROFOR | UN Protection Force |
| UNTAC | UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia |
| UNTSO | UN Truce Supervision Organization |
| US | United States |
| USSR | Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics |
| UTO | United Tajik Opposition |
| WEU | Western European Union |
| WTO | World Trade Organization |
| ZGRV | Trans-Caucasian Group of Russian Troops |

Introduction

John Mackinlay

Defining peacekeeping

When peacekeeping became part of our language as a result of the UN's initiatives in the Eastern Mediterranean, it described a monolithic activity. A peacekeeping initiative implied that a number of conditions existed¹ at strategic and local levels which would become the prerequisites for the deployment of a UN force. In the former Arab–Israeli war zones such as Gaza, Suez, the Sinai peninsula, and the Golan, the UN forces deployed for this purpose would very often be the only international organization at the interface of the opposing armies. The site of their interpositional responsibilities, sometimes known as a separation zone, would have been in the very recent past the scene of an intense battle. After the sound of gunfire had died away and the dust of passing armoured columns had finally settled, the inheritors of the battlefield were the UN peacekeepers. The opposed armies would have moved apart, beyond gun range and mutual vision, leaving a vacuum, a bare strip of land containing only abandoned equipment, minefields, wrecked vehicles, and the corpses of the soldiers involved in the recent fighting. In some cases the last act of the battle, now enclosed within the boundaries of the separation zone, remained frozen in time for several decades. Tanks would be left poised at their positions, abandoned ammunition limbers with shells lying fused ready for action beside their guns, while far away in Geneva

and New York the opposed parties argued over the settlement. During the decades which followed, long after the urge for battle had grown cold and the armies involved had withdrawn to a safe distance, the UN's observers and peacekeepers continued to be, in a symbolic sense, the guarantors of the peace process and in a real sense the custodians of the interface. Peacekeeping, and more importantly the verity that underpins the word in our language, is derived from this experience. Its military continuity is underwritten by the relays of international peacekeepers who, contingent after contingent, undertook these tasks in the Golan, Sinai, and in Cyprus. The experience became processed into the institutional memory of these forces through their training and in the conceptualization of their operations from the 1950s to the present day. During the Cold War it was therefore this buffer zone experience that epitomized peacekeeping and not the isolated intervention operations such as the Congo or supervising the transfer of power in the case of Irian Jaya, which were relatively short in their comparative duration and erased from the institutional memory of the United Nations except as case studies.²

By the 1980s the effects of *perestroika* brought the United Nations into contact with a much wider spectrum of conflict. The peacekeepers' experiences in the Clauswitzian context of "old wars" between states were largely overtaken by the incidence of "new wars"³ within states. New wars were in many cases less intensive in their war-fighting element, but in other ways more complicated and less defined in time and space. In the new wars of the 1990s there tended to be no front lines. Combatants were not from vertically organized state armies but more often civilians, in some cases children, carrying arms and operating in loosely formed militias and factions. The violence was pervasive. In addition to the armed bands it also gripped the civil population, causing massive displacement and migration and civilian casualties. The UN peacekeepers were no longer the lone custodians of the battlefield. The area of conflict was poorly defined and the mass of the civil population continued to subsist there, often with the assistance of a host of other international organizations. The purpose of the peacekeeping forces had also changed. They were no longer the symbolic guarantors of a viable truce between two opposed armies. Their task had become more proactive: they now had to take military action to improve the situation in the conflict zone. Their tasks were to contain the spread of violence, to disarm, to demobilize, to stabilize the area of the conflict, and to allow the humanitarian agencies to attend to the civil population. As a consequence they now found themselves working alongside an array of civil organizations, including UN agencies, international and local non-governmental organizations, and the ICRC, as well as peacekeepers and monitors from regional peacekeeping forces.

In the conflict zone the proliferation of armed groups and the massive disturbances among the population were complicated by the multifaceted nature of the response. In a very short space of time the monolithic nature of peacekeeping had expanded with nuclear energy to become a multifaceted network of loosely controlled interests. The command structures became horizontal, and the vertical control lines of conventional peacekeeping forces had largely been overwhelmed by a proliferation of smaller organizations, many of them civilian, which were also crucial to the overall success of the international intervention.

For the military, the simple tasks of the longstanding military garrisons in the old-war-style buffer zones were replaced by a more hostile and complicated environment. The peacekeeper now had to operate in the absence of a genuine peace agreement, in a tangled web of combatants whose survival interests would be confronted by a successful peace process. In military terms international peacekeeping had moved from being a relatively safe and in most cases symbolic activity to becoming a serious military operation. The consent of the parties in the dispute had become less absolute. The peacekeeper was required to be militarily effective and have the capability to use force, not simply for self-protection, but to alter the tactical situation.

Although the practice of peacekeeping had developed very swiftly between 1987 and 1995, its conceptualization took some time to catch up. Peacekeeping was becoming ill-defined; the word was freely used to describe situations which were far away in practical terms from the early experiences in the desert buffer zones. By 1995 a taxonomy of “peace-doing” words had emerged which described the growing dimensions of the peacekeeping experience.⁴ Versions of this appeared in many academic papers at that time, but more importantly it also appeared in the doctrinal manuals and military staff college resource literature of several leading troop contributors and international organizations.

Russia’s military operations in the former Soviet Union

While “peacekeeping” faced its crisis of definition in the United Nations, the Russians were opening a new salient of thought, concept, and practice with their containment operations in the former Soviet Union. As Western nations grappled with the ramifications of peacekeeping in its new, empowered, and proactive manifestation, Russian forces faced the consequences of the swift breakup of the Soviet Union. In Georgia, Moldova, and Tajikistan, the violence which erupted bore the same characteristics as the concurrent emergencies in the rest of the post-Cold War world. The front lines were ill-defined, the forces involved were

cobbled together from civilian militias, and the immediate consequences of the violence were massive civil displacements which left large elements of the population at risk, without shelter, protection, or a means of sustenance. The Russians in most cases deployed as the lead nation and backbone structure provider of a CIS force to stabilize the area and contain the violence. Each of the four principal operations in South Ossetia, Abkhazia, Moldova, and Tajikistan turned out to be unique in its manifestation in the field as well as the preceding peace overtures.

During the crisis of each intervention and in the retrospection that followed, the critical assessment of the Russian activities was varied and to some extent lacking in authority and investigative rigour. It was hard to compare the Russian military actions, which were proclaimed as “peacekeeping” operations, with any internationally accepted definition of peacekeeping. The international definitions of this activity were themselves at a major turning point in their evolution. The colossal failures brought on by following the Cold War principles of “impartiality” in Rwanda, and to a lesser extent in former Yugoslavia at Srebrenica in 1995, had seriously damaged the orthodoxy of the traditional peacekeeping pundits. The credibility of a UN Security Council which insisted on continuing to send militarily incapable forces to situations that no longer bore the prerequisite conditions of a traditional peacekeeping situation was also at stake. On the other hand the slaughter of hundreds of Somali citizens in the streets of Mogadishu by US gunship helicopters using area weapons⁵ weakened the arguments of those who advocated a forceful intervention to solve the problems of a complex emergency.⁶ Therefore, when the definition of peacekeeping itself was in a state of such confusion it was hard to say that what the Russians were doing in the former Soviet Union (FSU) during this period was, or was not, legitimate in international terms.

In the period after 1995 many analysts turned their attention towards the Russian military activities in the FSU. Most of these accounts describe particular aspects of the emergencies and do not assess Russian peacekeeping operations as a whole. Despite this volume of critical attention, the most consistent source of information throughout the period has been the UN reports. From the theatres where the UN observer missions were stationed there has been a steady flow of Secretary-General’s reports to the Security Council which have faithfully, but within the limitations of a UN report, described the conflict situation on the ground. UN Secretary-General reports in this vein are usually accompanied by maps showing the dispositions of UN organizations.⁷ The United Nations has also published generic reports which have pulled together the key events and documentation relevant to a particular emergency.⁸ The UN humanitarian and development agencies have in-

dividually published detailed accounts of the conditions of the population in these conflict areas on a periodic basis.⁹ The limitation of these reports is that their analytical conclusions tend to hold back from apportioning blame except in dire circumstances. This problem is to some extent overcome in the humanitarian aspects of the emergency by press criticisms and independently commissioned reports which can afford to take an actively critical line.¹⁰ But whatever the failures of the humanitarian relief and development community to respond effectively to the emergencies in the FSU, as far as the needs of the general researcher are concerned they have left no shortage of thorough humanitarian reportage. The volume of reports by the UN agencies is supplemented by similar reporting systems of the OSCE,¹¹ the EU, and also by the individual assessments of major international non-governmental organizations.

There have also been many political assessments of Russian activities in the FSU. Directly after the Cold War there was no shortage of academics with experience of Russia, consequently there was also no shortage of speculation and analysis on Russia's motives and its unfolding strategies in the FSU. Some of these were individual assessments published in the West from a Western vantage point,¹² and some were written from within the FSU.¹³ There were also institutionally organized publication series and projects¹⁴ which described events in Russia and the emergencies in the FSU. In-country statistics were also collated by the Federal Research Division of the Library of Congress, whose country study series¹⁵ was published to coincide with efforts to understand the emergencies. A small number of papers and books actually addressed the subject of "Russian peacekeeping".

From this brief resumé of existing sources of information it is possible to conclude that the Russian operations in the FSU have been well reported. But this is not the case. At the highest level, Russian policy, the formulation of a government approach in Moscow, and the articulation of a political view on how Russia should react to crises in the FSU are well reported. However, individual analysts, whether writing from a Russian or Western vantage point, have tended to fall back on the material emanating from Moscow to explain Russia's strategy in the FSU. There are many citations from Kozyrev, Yeltsin, and Moscow-based government institutions which act as primary sources to underpin explanations of Russian policy. At the lowest level of activity, as explained earlier, there is also a plentiful array of statistics and reports from varying non-governmental sources. These describe in great detail the events on the ground, the extent of the humanitarian disaster which was a direct consequence of the violence, and the structural resources needed to rebuild the state. Nevertheless, even with the benefit of this volume of assessment and reportage, it is still hard to gain a genuinely intrusive and

precise understanding of what is described as Russian peacekeeping. There are several reasons for this.

India's most famous airline pilot and late Prime Minister, Rajiv Ghandi, once humorously remarked that governing India was like flying a jumbo jet in which the flaps at the wing-tips were barely attached to the controls in the cockpit. The pilot might decide to alter course but the jumbo jet usually followed a path of its own choosing. In a similar way Russia's ministries had grown increasingly autonomous and less responsive to their democratically elected leaders. The once monolithic Soviet government of Russia had broken into a network of interests in which each individual nucleus of power followed policies of its own choosing. In October 1993, after the battle of the Russian White House, President Yeltsin was temporarily returned with full powers to office. As time passed, however, his health and his need to rely on his presidential administration weakened his personal ability to centralize his policy-making. The highest level of power, ostensibly held by the President and his administration, was also shared by other interest groups, many ultimately guided by their vast personal economic interests. Russia's National Security Council, which should have exercised a policy coordinating influence, was weakened by political and personal divisions and the sheer diversity of interests represented in each ministry of state. These interests became more emphasized as separate functions rather than as a part of an integrated strategy, due to the private agendas of powerful individuals within each ministry. After 1991 the organs and ministries concerned with strategic policy-making, particularly in the Caucasus and the other FSU crisis areas, were the Federal Border Services, the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Economics, the Federal Service of Counter Intelligence, and the Service of Foreign Intelligence.

If the bulk of reportage which underpinned the many assessments of Russian activities in the FSU was derived from this chaotic and divided political environment in Moscow, there seemed to be an overwhelming case for finding a collateral source of information. While it was important to understand the thinking and political intentions in Russia's cockpit, it was, under the circumstances, almost more important to see how these ideas and declarations actually manifested themselves at Russia's wing-tips.

In chaotic post-Soviet Moscow, it was sometimes hard to see which ministry was actually controlling which branch of policy. Declarations about Moscow's strategic intentions in the FSU and the concept of their realization did not always translate literally to the way Russian forces were deployed on the ground, as was found during the course of this research. If it was important to understand the real nature of Russian

peacekeeping, most of the answer was to be found in the field where the forces actually operated. That was the certainty of the situation – the declarations in Moscow were less reliable indicators of what was actually happening.

There is, however, an information gap at the ground level concerning the activities of Russian and CIS forces acting in a peace-restoring role. It is true that the United Nations and other leading international organizations have maintained excellent records on the events in each crisis zone. It is also true that for example at the HQ of UNOMIG in Sukhumi, there is an excellent understanding among UN staff, supported by maps and reports, of the Russian peace force garrison that is deployed in Abkhazia. Similarly at the OSCE HQ in Tbilisi, there is a precise and intuitive knowledge of the functions of the Russian garrison at Tskinali, South Ossetia. But neither the UN observers in Abkhazia nor the OSCE observers in South Ossetia have published this knowledge as an assessment of Russian peacekeeping. Their published official reports mainly describe local events in a characteristically neutral way and their maps show only the positions of their own observer posts.

In the case of books and papers which according to their titles concern Russian peacekeeping,¹⁶ there is not much evidence in many cases that authors had visited Russian troops on the ground to discover what CIS peacekeepers were actually doing. The majority of assessments were supported by declarations made in Moscow and in the state capitals in the crisis areas. The maps in these publications (although some had no maps) are of a very general nature and none shows how the Russian forces are deployed. A UNIDIR report¹⁷ assesses the Russian theory of peacekeeping that has been developed in Moscow. It is an interesting thesis but offers no concrete information on whether Russian peacekeepers follow these principles in the field.

The information gap described above does not lead to the conclusion that it is therefore not important for the international community to have an understanding of the real nature of Russian peacekeeping activities. It is important for the Russians that their operations in the FSU are transparent and widely understood. It is also important for policy-makers and heads of state in Western nations to have a precise knowledge of how “Russian peacekeeping” is manifested on the ground. They need to know, from the record of these contingencies so far, whether this is an option they should support. It is also important to be able to make a comparative assessment of Russian peacekeeping in the hierarchy of other regional and unilateral peace force initiatives which were deployed in the 1990s. This growing list of contingencies might now include the Indian Peace Keeping Forces in Sri Lanka, the ECOMOG troops in West Africa, NATO and PFP forces in the Balkans, and the ASEAN countries’

growing determination to contribute to regional crises, most recently in East Timor.

The purpose of this book is therefore to explain the practicalities of Russian peacekeeping – its purpose is not to supply a definitive description of the entire peacekeeping process in Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Moldova, and Tajikistan. The accounts focus on the operational procedures, doctrine, and military approach in several different theatres. It is not so important to show how a peace process ended or some cases failed to end – it is more important to describe how Russian forces behaved in these situations. Throughout the authors' investigation of these contingencies, the overriding question was how do these operations fit into the hierarchy of international peace forces and the spectrum of military actions ranging from peacekeeping to cruder forms of subjugation? The bulk of the interviews and sources are therefore contemporary to that period. The authors have concentrated on the most active period of the peacekeeping presence, particularly in Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Tajikistan, where in most cases the peacekeepers established themselves as a regime to control and monitor the violence in the initial phase of stabilization. As the military presence subdued the conflict, reducing the physical tension and gradually encouraging a more relaxed interaction between communities, the epicentre of the dispute moved off the streets into a political and negotiating phase in which the significance of the military peace force and its controlling mechanisms became diminished. This book does not seek to explain these latter stages of the process, by which time the military presence begins to take on a more symbolic value because the interaction has become political. But in addition to operational accounts from the field, there are chapters on Chechnya, Bosnia, and peacekeeping under Putin which are written from a higher, national vantage point. The purpose of these chapters is to describe the other dimensions of Russian military action which fall into the low-level, other-than-war operational category. The chapter on Chechnya provides a perspective of Russia's approach to stabilization operations within its own borders, where international intervention and advice is neither accepted nor expected. In stark contrast, the account of the operations in Bosnia shows how Russian forces cope with the possibility of intense public scrutiny as part of an international force and also how Russia was sensitively accommodated into the vertical structures of an essentially NATO command. The exposure of Russian troops to a Western military system, which for decades had been seen as the enemy, also changed the perceptions of both parties. There is evidence that the peacekeeping experience, particularly in Bosnia, has lodged a germ of reappraisal into the slow-moving Russian military culture. The chapter on Putin's peacekeeping is an attempt to describe these changes. Unfortunately, each

chapter seems to provide a disparate view of the same subject. This does not represent a failure of the authors' forensic processes, but serves to emphasize the complexity of the Russian military system. Some elements of the picture do reappear consistently to provide an emerging image of a Russian peacekeeping culture.

It is not possible at this stage to offer more than a working definition of Russian peacekeeping. In the Conclusion a robust and hopefully more substantiated definition can be supported with the evidence from the chapters. For the purposes of the initial analysis "Russian peacekeeping" refers to the use of military forces to stabilize a crisis area which, in the case of the studies described here, occurs in the territories of the FSU. The significance of Russian peacekeeping is that it is a uniquely Russian approach to a Russian problem. Lynch and Kremenyuk¹⁸ maintain that the Russians had legitimate residual responsibilities towards their former Soviet states. This continuing paternal interest comprises liabilities as well as long-term benefits. For the Russians an important question seemed to be whether the international community would at best support Russian actions in this vein or at least condone them by their unwillingness to protest. If, for example, the international community acquiesced to the British actions to restore internal security in its former dependencies in the Gulf and South Asia, why should it not also react with a similar passive approval towards the Russians? Part of the answer lay in the precise nature of Russian peacekeeping. As long as Russian efforts to restore law and order were reasonably humane and effective, the international community might condone or at least remain silent. In particular it needed to be reassured by the comparatively civil conduct of the Russian garrisons if it was to remain muted on the questions of the strategic benefits to Russia derived from maintaining its long-term presence in these areas. Russian peacekeeping therefore, in the context of this book, does not refer to the use of Russian counter-insurgency techniques within Russian territory. In the case of Chechnya, Russia has demonstrated that it would continue to use old-fashioned Stalinist tactics to maintain law and order on its own territory regardless of international protest. Neither does Russian peacekeeping refer to the conduct of Russian contingents as part of an international peacekeeping force. In this case the Russians follow the current international norms of peacekeeping and their behaviour is severely constrained and not uniquely Russian. The working definition of Russian peacekeeping is therefore the use of Russian and CIS military units to act as peace forces to restore and maintain security in crisis areas within the FSU.

This book emphasizes the conclusions of its four main case studies on Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Moldova, and Tajikistan. The purpose of these particular chapters is to explain the complicated nature of each crisis and

show how the Russian intervention was, or was not, designed primarily to contain the situation and maintain a workable degree of peace and order. The operational assessments of Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Moldova, and Tajikistan describe the circumstances of the conflict prior to the peace force intervention. The dispositions of the Russian/CIS peace forces are shown in as much detail as possible with the use of maps made up from operational data. In some cases this information has been taken during interviews with Russian, UN, and OSCE staff officers in the field who were sometimes very happy to give map information to the authors. In the case of Tajikistan, Andres Serrano, the author of Chapter 6, was himself a UN official in Dushanbe at the time of writing and therefore, besides being a primary source of much of what is described in his chapter, was well placed to meet the key actors and understand their positions. In the sections on South Ossetia, Abkhazia, and Tajikistan, the authors explain the *modus operandi* of the CIS peacekeepers and some of the international organizations also operating in the area. In their conclusions the reports try to assess the motives of the interventions and make some judgements about whether their activities on the ground were consistent with their declared intentions. These operational assessments are put into perspective by three important additional chapters. In Chapter 1 Domitilla Sagramoso explains the legacy of past operational experiences in Russia's approach towards peacekeeping. Two key Moscow ministries, Foreign Affairs and Defence, were to influence and in some cases obstruct the development of a peacekeeping doctrine. In Chapter 2 Jacob Kipp and Tarn Warren add to this perspective by showing how an orthodox peacekeeping approach also began to develop quite strongly from the experiences of the Russian Airborne Brigade, which became part of an international peacekeeping force in Bosnia. In Chapter 4 Tim Thomas contemplates the Russian experience in Chechnya as another dimension of the peacekeeping perspective. His account describes the reluctance of Moscow's most powerful inner cabinet of advisers to resort to the use of armed forces in the less aggressive option to stabilize the violence in Chechnya and keep the peace while a settlement could be found.

Notes

1. The prerequisites were established as principles:
 - the consent of all parties to the dispute
 - non-use of force by the peacekeepers
 - voluntary contributions by non-aligned or neutral nations
 - impartiality
 - control by the UN Secretary-General.

- Cited in O. Ramsbotham and T. Woodhouse, *Encyclopedia of International Peacekeeping Operations*, Oxford: ABC-CLIO, 1999, p. xi.
2. Major-General Rickhye Indarjit, former military adviser to UN Secretary-General, "Problems of international peacekeeping", lecture given at RUSI, London, 29 September 1976.
 3. "New wars" as defined by M. Kaldor, *New and Old Wars, Organised Violence in a Global Era*, Oxford: Polity Press, 1999.
 4. The list of new peace words included:
 - peacemaking – a process of diplomacy to end disputes that led to conflict
 - peacebuilding – the diplomatic action and rebuilding of infrastructures which avoid a collapsing state returning to a state of conflict
 - preventive diplomacy – actions taken to prevent violence
 - peace enforcement – the use of force, or the threat to use force, to enforce compliance with an accepted resolution
 - peace support operations – an overall term which included peacekeeping and peace enforcement but now implied a more proactive and holistic approach.
 Ramsbotham and Woodhouse, note 1 above.
 5. The use of area weapons, or indiscriminate fire support such as artillery and mortar fire, was regarded as acting against the principle of using minimum force. This caveat predated the concept of peacekeeping by several decades and became accepted in British practice after the incident at Amritsar bazaar in 1919. It was possible to return incoming fire by an indiscriminate weapon system with fire from the security forces' own similar system, but not to use indiscriminate weapons against civilian rioters.
 6. A complex emergency in this context is defined as a humanitarian disaster that occurs in a conflict zone and is complicated by or results from the conflicting interests of warring parties in the area. See J. Mackinlay (ed.), *A Guide to Peace Support Operations*, Providence: Watson Institute, Brown University, 1996.
 7. See for example *Secretary-General's Report Concerning the Situation in Abkhazia*, S/1996/507, New York: United Nations, 1 July 1996.
 8. See for example UN Department of Public Information report *The United Nations and the Situation in Georgia*, reference paper, Tbilisi: UNDP, April 1995.
 9. See for example UN Development Report, *Georgia 1996*, Tbilisi: UNDP, 1996.
 10. See for example N. MacFarlane, L. Minear, and S. Shenfield, *Armed Conflict In Georgia: A Case Study in Humanitarian Action and Peacekeeping*, Providence: Watson Institute Occasional Paper No. 21, 1996.
 11. See for example *OSCE Survey of Long-term Missions and Other OSCE Field Activities*, Vienna: OSCE, 12 February 1996.
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Russian peacekeeping policies

Domitilla Sagramoso

Introduction

The end of the Cold War and the improvement in East-West relations increased the opportunities to resolve local and regional conflicts throughout the world. Growing Western-Soviet collaboration and the willingness of the USA to use the United Nations to legitimize its actions in the Gulf War created great expectations about the potential role of the United Nations in conflict resolution.¹ In the early 1990s, the United Nations was increasingly regarded as the instrument for the settlement of civil conflicts, and as result UN peace forces were deployed in Africa, Latin America, Asia, and Europe. Moreover, the role of UN peacekeeping operations was expanded. Besides the traditional tasks of overseeing the disengagement of forces, UN peacekeeping forces were entrusted with assisting in the implementation of peace settlements, delivering humanitarian aid, monitoring elections, verifying human rights, and repatriating refugees. Russian peacekeeping activities, however, developed outside the UN framework. Although Russian armed forces became heavily involved in conflict resolution activities throughout the former Soviet space, the international community doubted the underlying intentions of Russian peacekeeping operations. Contrary to the principles of traditional peacekeeping, Russian forces in the former Soviet space used military force to suppress the fighting, separate the warring factions, and impose peace. Moreover, the lack of an explicit consent by some of the

parties to the conflict raised serious doubts as to the truly impartial nature of Russia's involvement. Russian operations tended to ignore traditional UN peacekeeping principles of consent, impartiality, and minimum use of force. The development of the former Soviet space (FSS) as an area of vital interest to Russia created the impression that Russia's operations were primarily intended to restore Russia's influence over the region and fulfil the country's own security objectives. Consequently, Russia's operations in the FSS failed to obtain UN legal endorsement and international financial support.

Meanwhile, in 1993, beyond these developments in Russia, the international community was experiencing a collapse of confidence in its expectations of the United Nations as an instrument of conflict resolution. Despite the optimism of the early 1990s, the miscarriages in former Yugoslavia, Somalia, and Rwanda showed that the traditional peacekeeping approach could not be successfully applied in the complex and dangerous environment of inter-communal violence. The UN Secretary-General's upbeat 1992 manifesto *An Agenda for Peace*, which advocated a militarily stronger United Nations, capable of enforcing cease-fires and underwriting peace processes, was superseded by a guarded and more realistic document, the *Supplement to an Agenda for Peace*.² In the field, the deployment of UN forces fell from 76,000 in September 1994 to around 20,000 by the end of 1995. Although the pace of events around the world, particularly in the Balkans, continued to dictate the need for more muscular peacekeeping interventions, the United Nations proved institutionally incapable of providing militarily effective peacekeeping forces. As a result, troops and command structures for these contingencies were provided by regional organizations such as ECOWAS in West Africa and NATO in the Balkans. In Bosnia, NATO deployed 60,000 troops under Dayton's enforcement mandate, accompanied by combat aircraft, tank regiments, and supporting artillery, thus providing the coalition peacekeepers with the capability to use force on a massive scale. The peacekeeping doctrines of the leading contributors, principally the British, began to reflect a more bullish military approach, no longer entirely reliant on the traditional interpretations of minimum force and total consent.

The evolution of UN peacekeeping operations towards more assertive types of intervention brought UN experiences closer to Russian practices. However, as the following chapters indicate, major differences persisted between Russian peacekeeping operations and UN peacekeeping and peace enforcement activities. Although both Russian and UN operations pursued similar objectives – stabilization of the conflict area – they differed in their methods and their results. Whereas UN operations were authorized by a Security Council mandate, which provided them with legitimacy, objectives, and rules of engagement, Russian operations took

place in a less constrained legal setting. Legitimacy remained dubious, mandates were broadly defined, and rules of engagement were never clearly spelled out. Russian military commanders had room to improvise and this resulted in the infringement of international peacekeeping codes of conduct. Moreover, the dominant role of Russian forces in all CIS military operations often resulted in the restoration of Russia's influence over the regions concerned, leading in certain cases to the creation of "informal empires", especially in Tajikistan.

Two key factors distinguish Russia's peacekeeping operations: Soviet/Russian lack of experience in traditional UN peacekeeping operations, and the proximity of conflicts to Russian territory. During the Cold War, Russian peacekeeping experience was limited to the participation of a few dozen military observers in the UNTSO operation in Egypt and Syria. Their presence was largely symbolic and had no impact on Soviet military thinking.³ Russia's greater involvement in UN peacekeeping began only in the early 1990s, and even then Russia provided only military observers and no peacekeeping forces. Only in 1992 did Russia for the first time send ground troops to participate in UN peacekeeping operations, in this case to the former Yugoslavia. Hence, Russia failed to develop any practical UN peacekeeping experience which could be utilized during conflicts in the former Soviet space. The principles enshrined in traditional UN peacekeeping were alien to the Soviet/Russian general staff. As a result, peacekeeping operations were conducted on the basis of previous Soviet experiences in low-intensity conflicts. The Afghan war provided the prototype for Russian peacekeeping operations and doctrine.

The proximity of post Cold-War conflicts to Russian territory also influenced the conduct of Russia's peacekeeping operations. Violence on the periphery of the Russian Federation was perceived as a direct threat to the country's security. On the one hand, the absence of any sort of intra-CIS border controls increased the risk of the spread of conflicts into Russian territory. On the other hand, ethnic conflicts in the CIS created the danger of an outbreak of secessionist violence inside the Russian Federation, given the large number of ethnic minorities inhabiting the Russian territory. Such perceived threats to security determined the assertive character of Russia's peacekeeping operations in the former Soviet space. Whereas Western involvement in the former Yugoslavia, for example, had been primarily humanitarian, Russia's involvement in the CIS was ostensibly aimed at stopping the violence and guaranteeing Russia's security.

Russia's participation in peacekeeping operations was further complicated by the tendency of the Russian military establishment to view the entire former Soviet space as part of a single political entity, and by the

direct involvement of locally based CIS/Russian military units in support of a particular warring side. The Russian military behaved in the CIS as if operations were being conducted within Russia's own territory, and exploited the presence of Russian forces to fulfil Russia's strategic objectives in the region. Such behaviour resulted in a tendency to favour peace enforcement over traditional peacekeeping operations. This trend was reinforced by the Russian military war-fighting tradition, which emphasized firepower and the use of overwhelming force, and showed little concern for both civilian and military casualties.

Russia's approaches to military conflicts in the former Soviet space

The end of the Soviet Union severely exacerbated secessionist conflicts along the periphery of the Russian Federation. As republics gained independence from the Soviet Union, military conflicts broke out over the fate of Nagorno-Karabagh, Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Transdniestria, and civil war erupted in Tajikistan. Despite the direct threat posed by these conflicts to Russia's security, the government's initial responses turned out to be very limited. The disintegration of former Soviet security structures and the lack of effective Russian control over CIS military units located in the conflict areas severely limited Moscow's ability to contain the various crises. The Russian Foreign Ministry, used to dealing with the international system, lacked the right expertise to handle the complexities of post-Soviet disintegration and therefore focused primarily on minimizing the negative impact of conflicts on Russia's security. Russian military institutions, undergoing a transitional phase after the collapse of the Soviet Union, also failed to react effectively. However, once the Russian Ministry of Defence was set up, the involvement of Russian forces became more assertive.

The Foreign Ministry's response

During the winter of 1991–1992, the new leadership in the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) concentrated most of its efforts in developing relations with Western countries and transforming the previous East–West confrontation into real partnership. Although at this early stage relations with the former Soviet states were certainly not neglected, most of Russia's foreign policy activities concerning the area were centred on preserving a common economic and military space and dividing the former Soviet assets. Little attention was paid to the conflicts that

erupted along Russia's southern borders, except for the short and unsuccessful mediation efforts conducted by Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev to solve the dispute over Nagorno-Karabagh in mid-February 1992. However, during the spring of 1992, as conflicts escalated and sporadic violence turned into open fighting, especially in South Ossetia, Moldova, and Nagorno-Karabagh, the MFA turned its attention to the affected regions and offered its mediation services. Endowed with strong "anti-imperialist" views, the Foreign Ministry at first tried to resolve these conflicts through peaceful negotiations, and vehemently opposed the use of force to restore peace. In an interview with *Nezavisimaya gazeta* on 1 April 1992, Kozyrev remarked, "the resolution of these conflicts is complex, slow and should not be carried out by forceful means, as some in Russia would like", and he categorically ruled out the change of international borders by force.⁴ However, Kozyrev's views were vehemently opposed by many nationalist-restorationist figures such as Vice-President Aleksandr Rutskoi and Supreme Soviet Chairman Ruslan Khasbulatov, who instead argued in favour of Russia's active and forceful intervention to protect the rights of Russian and other ethnic minorities such as the Ossets in Georgia, who found themselves entangled in ethnic conflicts in the FSS. But Kozyrev insisted that force had to be used only in accordance with international law, and with the support of the UN Security Council.⁵

These views were not shared by the Russian Defence Ministry. As conflicts escalated in the spring of 1992, and local Russian armed forces found themselves involved in the conflict, the Russian Ministry of Defence (MoD) increasingly supported the intervention of Russian armed forces to bring violence to an end. The MoD's active involvement in stopping the violence, as well as the controversial participation of local officers in support of secessionist movements, brought the military into direct confrontation with the Foreign Ministry. Kozyrev openly talked about the existence of a "party of war" eager to support secessionist movements and ready to use force to solve ethnic conflicts before diplomatic efforts were exhausted.⁶ However, Kozyrev's diplomatic efforts failed to settle the conflicts peacefully. As conflicts in South Ossetia and Transdniestria turned into bloody fighting in the spring of 1992, causing casualties among the local ethnic Russian population, the Foreign Ministry's diplomatic approach became the subject of strong criticism from both nationalists and previous allies in the democratic camp.⁷

In view of this domestic criticism, and faced with a growing escalation of violence beyond Russia's borders, the Foreign Ministry and the Russian President began conducting more assertive mediation efforts. Russia's mediation and peace enforcement operations eventually resulted in a cessation of violence and the introduction of Russian peace-

keepers in Transdniestria and South Ossetia. The Foreign Ministry's growing support for a proactive policy was reflected in Kozyrev's draft foreign policy guidelines, presented to the Russian parliament in December 1992.⁸ The document envisaged the "carefully considered application of economic and military force" to protect the lives of Russians threatened by ethnic conflicts in the near abroad. However, according to the Foreign Minister, these practices had to be carried out "not in the Yugoslav version, but within the framework of international law".⁹ Although the CIS was regarded as the only institution capable of settling and preventing conflicts in the CIS space, the Foreign Ministry also showed a readiness to involve the United Nations and the CSCE in mediation activities in the FSS, the former being actively involved in Abkhazia and the latter in Nagorno-Karabagh. Despite Kozyrev's attempts to resolve conflicts through mediation, the Russian Defence Ministry managed to impose its own line of policy. Not only was violence brought to an end with the use of Russian troops, but Russian forces often got heavily involved in the conflict by supporting one of the sides, as in Tajikistan and to a lesser extent in Abkhazia.

The aggressive use of force by the Defence Ministry during 1993 coincided with a change of line at the Foreign Ministry. Although the MFA continued to press for a political resolution of military conflicts, it increasingly argued in favour of a stronger Russian military presence, albeit in the form of peacekeeping in the areas of tension throughout the FSS. The initial change of tone in Russian rhetoric occurred as early as February 1993. Speaking at the Civic Union Forum, President Yeltsin emphasised Russia's special responsibility for stopping the violence in the former Soviet space and demanded that the United Nations grant Russia special powers to become the guarantor of peace and stability in the regions of the former USSR.¹⁰ Although Yeltsin's assertive language was primarily motivated by a desire to win the support of centrist forces in the forthcoming Eighth Congress of People's Deputies, it indicated a change of policy within the Russian leadership. In the spring of 1993, the Russian military became directly involved in Abkhazia, and Russia developed close military ties with the Rahkmonov regime in Tajikistan. In the summer of 1993, the MFA made diplomatic efforts to bring about a settlement in Nagorno-Karabagh by appointing Vladimir Kazimirov as special envoy to the region. Russia also took an important step towards creating an effective peacekeeping force within the CIS. In April 1993 the basic provisions of the Russian Federation's Foreign Policy Concept identified armed conflicts in states adjacent to the Russian Federation as major threats to Russian security and attached particular importance to the development and improvement of a peacekeeping mechanism within the CIS framework.¹¹ The Russian Foreign Ministry also engaged in

active diplomatic efforts to obtain UN and CSCE mandates for Russian peacekeeping operations in the CIS. In March 1993 the Russian government presented a document to the United Nations that discussed Moscow's role in peacekeeping operations in the former Soviet Union, as well as a draft declaration which proposed that the United Nations should authorize regional organizations such as the CIS to manage peacekeeping operations.

The Russian Foreign Ministry also tried to have the CIS recognized internationally as the authoritative organization responsible for carrying out peacekeeping operations on CIS territory.¹² In the summer of 1993, Kozyrev asked the CSCE to grant Russian forces CSCE status. However, Russian diplomats failed to obtain either a UN or a CSCE mandate for Russia's peacekeeping operations in the CIS, or recognition for the CIS as the sole organization responsible for CIS peacekeeping.¹³ In view of these results, the Russian Foreign and Defence Ministries began focusing primarily on obtaining UN financial support for Russia's peacekeeping operations. The importance of an international mandate was downplayed. The Russians insisted that they regarded a UN or CSCE mandate as merely an instrument of efficiency rather than legitimacy.¹⁴ According to Russian officials, Russia did not need international legitimacy because its peacekeeping operations were being conducted both at the request of the parties and with a CIS mandate. Furthermore, in Russia's view, operations were legitimized by Chapter VIII of the UN Charter, which sets out the basis for regional organizations to maintain peace and stability in their areas.¹⁵ However, the UN Charter specified that regional organizations could take enforcement action only with the authorization of the UN Security Council.

The summer of 1993 saw a substantial escalation of military violence in the former Soviet space, which led to the increased involvement of Russian peacekeeping forces in Tajikistan and the intensification of mediation efforts in Abkhazia and Nagorno-Karabagh. As a result, stabilizing the areas of the former Soviet Union became a priority of Russia's foreign policy, and started to be perceived by the MFA as an exclusive prerogative of Russia.¹⁶ Writing in *Nezavisimaya gazeta* in September 1993, Kozyrev mentioned Russia's historical duty to provide stability to the areas of the former Soviet Union. "This is not a 'neo-imperialistic' space," he wrote, "but a unique geopolitical one in which no one is going to keep the peace for Russia."¹⁷ According to Kozyrev, Russia's peacekeeping operations were aimed not only at stopping the violence but also at keeping Russia's influence in those areas, and at making sure that the vacuum created by the wars was not filled by "hostile" powers.¹⁸ Kozyrev recognized the important role played by the United Nations and the CSCE in the resolution of these conflicts, but emphasized the leading role

of Russia. "It would be a mistake to ignore the role of the UN and the CSCE [in this sphere], but the other extreme would be to hand it over to these organisations. This is an area of Russian interests. Moreover, the UN and the CSCE do not have today, neither the strength, nor the means to carry out these operations."¹⁹ Kozyrev, however, insisted that the use of force had to be conducted in accordance with the UN Charter and international law norms.²⁰

The arrival of Primakov at the Foreign Ministry did not significantly alter Russia's approach towards peacekeeping operations in the former Soviet states. Although Russian-led peacekeeping forces had managed to "freeze" conflicts along Russia's southern periphery, the threat of a resurgence of violence remained. Armed tension and violence near Russia's borders continued to be perceived as *the* main threat to Russia's security, as indicated in the National Security Concept of the Russian Federation, adopted in December 1997.²¹ However, Primakov gave renewed emphasis to the resolution of conflicts, and under his direction the Foreign Ministry managed to regain the upper hand over the Ministry of Defence. Primakov managed to restore the balance between political and military tools, as it became clear that the MoD's assertive approach had resulted in Russia's entanglement in intractable conflicts. Primakov instead tried to pave the way for the resolution of the Tajik civil war and the Moldovan conflict through various rounds of negotiations. Primakov's appointment as Prime Minister following the August 1998 crisis again powerfully reinforced the position of the MFA in Russian foreign policy-making, and peacekeeping policy in particular.

The Defence Ministry's approach

Whereas the Russian Foreign Ministry viewed peacekeeping operations as distinct from other forms of warfare, with the underlying aim of the settlement of the conflict, the Defence Ministry, although aware of the specific nature of peace operations, gave precedence to military methods to solve conflicts in the CIS. As other chapters in this book will illustrate, Russia's peacekeeping operations in the CIS area were characterized by the use of high levels of force to suppress the fighting and impose peace, and by the existence of broad mandates, unclear rules of engagement, and lack of consent of the parties. Such an assertive approach to peacekeeping, which raised serious doubts as to the true nature of Russia's operations in the CIS, was determined by a series of factors: the disintegration of the former Soviet armed forces and the absence of effective political control over military formations located beyond Russia's borders; the impact of the collapse of the Soviet Union on Russia's

security perceptions; and the severe crisis experienced by the Russian armed forces, reflected in manpower deficiencies and a decline in combat readiness.

The collapse of the Soviet Union dealt a severe blow to the integrity and discipline of the Soviet armed forces. Although initially placed under CIS jurisdiction, the armed forces lacked effective political control and a clear sense of belonging. As a result, some former Soviet military units located in areas of tension got involved in the violent conflicts that erupted along the Russian periphery. While certain Russian units decided to participate on a local, case-by-case basis, others were drawn into the conflict by indigenous military and paramilitary organizations, which attacked Russian barracks and bases in order to obtain weapons and ammunition. As violence escalated, especially during the spring of 1992, the initial calls for a disengagement of Russian forces from the zones of tension were replaced by calls for intervention to stop the violence and bring to an end the involvement of Russian units in the fighting. The Transdniester conflict is particularly enlightening in this respect. Faced with the heavy involvement of units of the 14th Army in support of the Transdniester separatists, Moscow sent General Lebed to take charge of the 14th Army, restore discipline among its ranks, and put an end to the fighting. Russian peacekeeping operations, moreover, developed in a highly explosive environment which represented a direct threat to Russian security. The proximity of the conflicts to Russian territory created the risk of a spread of the conflict into Russia and the proliferation of weapons, drugs, and refugees in neighbouring regions. The Russian general staff and the MoD expressed concern over the escalation of tension into armed conflicts and wars directly touching upon Russia's security interests.²² The May 1992 draft military doctrine called for active military intervention in the former Soviet space if mediation failed. As a result, peacekeeping operations acquired a highly assertive character, often resembling low-intensity conflicts, which involved high levels of force.

Although initially conceived as instruments for the settlement of conflicts and the enhancement of Russian security, Russian peacekeeping operations also fulfilled the role of forwarding Russia's strategic interests by securing a Russian military presence in the former Soviet space. The unexpected collapse of the Soviet Union and the emergence in its place of 15 newly independent states created an entirely new geo-political environment. The new Russian state, although still large, lost an important part of its territory in the strategically vital areas of Eastern Europe and Transcaucasia. During the Cold War, Soviet defence planning was based on the forward deployment of high-readiness units along the Soviet strategic frontiers, located mostly in the non-Russian republics.²³ The loss of Eastern Europe and the Transcaucasian republics dealt a severe blow to

this forward-based strategy. The Moscow military district, for example, became a frontier district. However, it had hardly any combat-ready troops. The largest, best-equipped, and best-trained forces were located beyond Russia's borders, especially in Ukraine and Belarus. Moreover, the collapse of the Soviet Union severely disrupted the existing air-defence and early-warning systems, significantly eroding the defensive capacity of the new state.

Despite the thaw in East-West relations and the development of a partnership with the USA and Western Europe, Russian military strategists continued to reason in terms of a major threat against Russia coming from NATO. The May 1992 draft military doctrine stipulated that "states (or a coalition of states) aspiring to world hegemony" represented a major threat to the country.²⁴ Consequently, Russian strategists believed that the defence of Russian territory could best be achieved by developing close bilateral military cooperation with the newly independent states, retaining control over Soviet military assets located in the former Soviet space, jointly patrolling CIS external borders, and keeping the peace in the FSS with Russian forces. The Russian military establishment strongly rejected the presence of foreign troops in peacekeeping operations in the CIS. Russian first deputy chief of the general staff, Mikhail Kolesnikov, openly expressed his opposition to the involvement of foreign, in particular NATO, troops, even under UN mandate, as peacekeepers in the CIS. Kolesnikov was particularly concerned that NATO might intervene in the former Soviet space "under the pretext of guaranteeing 'international control' over the nuclear potential of the former USSR".²⁵ Russia's peacekeeping operations were therefore conceived as instruments for forwarding Russia's presence in the FSS.

Peacekeeping operations were also affected by the disintegration of the military institutions during the late 1980s and early 1990s. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the negative impact of economic reform over defence spending severely worsened the crisis already experienced by the Russian armed forces. The forces faced serious manpower shortages, which were linked to the decline in conscription that began in the late 1980s. Moreover, the officer corps, already shattered by a loss of status and overall disorientation, had to face severe financial difficulties. Officers' salaries, when paid, fell dramatically compared to other professional activities paid by the state. The situation was made worse by the re-deployment of over 600,000 troops from Eastern Europe, which faced severe housing and job shortages, and resulted in an excess of middle-level and high-rank officers. The human and financial difficulties experienced by the armed forces negatively affected the combat readiness of the troops. The shortage of specialists, maintenance personnel, and junior officers reduced the combat capabilities of the troops. The crisis

experienced by the military placed severe constraints on the deployment of peacekeeping forces in the CIS. Although during the period 1992–1994 the MoD made use of forces already deployed in conflict zones, financial problems prevented the development of a coherent peacekeeping training and organizational programme and led to tensions between the various Russian forces on the ground. Reduced finances and the impact of the unsuccessful Chechen campaign undermined the sustainability of ongoing operations even further during 1994–1996, and led to retrenchment of Russian peacekeeping operations in 1996–1999.

The development of a Russian peacekeeping doctrine

Despite Russia's active involvement in peacekeeping operations in the former Soviet states, the Russian Ministry of Defence failed to develop a coherent written doctrine on peacekeeping operations or a peacekeeping manual to guide Russian operations on the ground. However, the conduct of Russia's peacekeeping operations and various CIS and Russian military documents provide an insight into Russian views on peacekeeping operations within the CIS states.

The nature of peacekeeping operations

Relevant official documentation seems to indicate that the Russian MoD comprehended the distinct nature of peacekeeping activities, as opposed to warfare. Both CIS and non-CIS peacekeeping operations were understood as being primarily aimed at disengaging the warring factions and creating the right conditions for a political settlement, as opposed to defeating the enemy's forces. For example, the May 1992 draft Russian military doctrine defined peacekeeping forces as "major temporary groupings intended to disengage opposing sides and promote the resolution of conflicts within the CIS by political means".²⁶ The Russian military doctrine, adopted in November 1993, similarly noted that during the conduct of peacekeeping operations carried out by a decision of the UN Security Council or in accordance with international obligations in regions adjacent to the Russian Federation, the armed forces would be involved in separating armed groups, delivering humanitarian aid, and blockading the area of conflict in order "to create conditions for a political settlement of the armed conflict".²⁷ The doctrine also noted that in armed conflicts and local wars, the main aim of the armed forces was to "to localise the seat of tensions and stop hostilities at the earliest possible stage in the interest of creating conditions for a peaceful settlement of the conflict".²⁸ Moreover, the military doctrine envisaged for the first time

that regular Russian armed forces would conduct not only “standard” operations but also “non-standard” operations, such as peacekeeping.²⁹

In theory, from a doctrinal point of view, therefore, Russia’s operations did not differ much from Western (US, UK, NATO, Nordic) peacekeeping concepts as far as the objective is concerned.³⁰ The West interpreted peacekeeping operations as a wide range of activities – election monitoring, provision of humanitarian relief, assistance in the settlement of a conflict, patrolling of a cease-fire – aimed at supporting peace in violent conflicts. However, whereas Western peacekeeping concepts tended to emphasize the humanitarian character of peacekeeping operations as well as the need to interact with civilian structures, Russian operations tended to follow narrower state interests.³¹ For example, the 1993 military doctrine added to the quote above that the settlement of local conflicts had to suit the interests of the Russian Federation. Whereas Western peacekeeping doctrine emphasized the need to reach reconciliation among the sides for the operation to be called a success, the Russian military tended to stress the importance of bringing about a quick termination of hostilities.³² Although the reaching of a political settlement was seen as a necessary next step, it was not conceived as part of the military peacekeeping operation. Despite the failure to advance in the resolution of conflicts, all peacekeeping operations, with the exception of Tajikistan, were in essence considered successful.

Although the dominant view within the MoD recognized the importance of successful diplomatic and political efforts as a complement to peacekeeping operations, various senior military officers put forward the view that peacekeeping operations had to be conducted in an assertive way, and disregarded the political aspect of peacekeeping activities.³³ Officers such as General Alexander Lebed, General Makhmud Gareev, and Lieutenant-Colonel G. Zhilin, and prominent military scholars such as Colonel-General Eduard Vorobyev, tended to portray peacekeeping operations as a form of combat activity rather than a military-political undertaking. They drew their views from experiences in the Afghan war, and argued in favour of a highly robust mandate which involved peace enforcement operations and entailed a high use of force.³⁴ General Vorobyev, for example, argued that Russian mobile forces should be used for peacekeeping operations. Their task should be “to extinguish a military conflagration at its very beginning without allowing the flames of war to spread”.³⁵ Although these last views failed to become dominant, they seem to have had some impact on Russian peacekeeping doctrine and practice. For example, the May 1995 Russian Federal Law which regulated the sending of military and civilian personnel to participate in peace support operations (hereafter Federal Law on Peacekeeping), defined peace support operations as “operations in support of peace and

other measures, envisaged by the UN Security Council ... and by regional organisations ... intended to eliminate a threat to peace, an infringement to peace or an act of aggression".³⁶ No reference was made to the need to create the conditions to reach a political settlement. However, the law made an explicit distinction between coercive operations involving the use of force and non-coercive operations, the former requiring the explicit approval of the UN Security Council.³⁷

The January 1996 Concept on Preventing and Settling Conflicts on the Territory of the CIS again emphasized the political aspect of peacekeeping operations. "Peacekeeping operations", the document read, "shall be political actions, limited in time and designated to maintain peace between the conflicting sides and held with the use of military, police and civilian personnel specially trained for that purpose."³⁸ The document, however, was the result of a compromise among the various signatory states, and therefore only partially reflected Russian views on peacekeeping. Nevertheless, the latest Russian military doctrine, published in October 1999 and approved by the Russian Security Council in February 2000, followed a similar line, and almost totally replicated the views of the earlier 1993 doctrine. Russian armed forces involved in peacekeeping operations would be responsible for separating the warring parties, delivering humanitarian aid, and blockading the zone of conflict in order to create the preconditions for a political settlement. As far as local wars in the Russian periphery were concerned, the aim of Russian armed forces was to localize the seat of tension, neutralize the aggressor at the earliest possible stage, prevent the escalation of military actions, and create the conditions for a cease-fire and a regulation of the conflict on conditions suiting the interests of the Russian Federation.³⁹ However, instead of "stopping the hostilities", the new text talked about "neutralising the aggressor", thus emphasizing the notion of the "use of force" rather than "separation of the warring factions" in local wars. Despite a renewed emphasis on the use of force in local wars, what transpires from Russian official documentation seems to be an understanding of the distinct nature of peacekeeping, at least as far as the objective pursued is concerned.

However, the conduct of Russia's operations on the ground has not always reflected the doctrinal view. Russia's initial peacekeeping operations, especially in Transdniestria and South Ossetia during the spring of 1992, seem to have been primarily aimed at stopping the violence and restoring order rather than conducting active military actions against an identified enemy. Although Russian forces located in the areas of tension provided military support to a particular side of the conflict during the early stages of hostilities, they did so on an individual, case-by-case basis, and not as part of a Moscow-devised strategy. Once the decision to in-

tervene in the conflict was taken by the Russian leadership, all efforts were conducted to stop the hostilities and create the conditions for a political resolution of the conflict. However, during late 1992 and early 1993 the Russian leadership, particularly the Russian MoD, began perceiving peacekeeping operations as part of an overall strategy aimed at promoting stability in the post-Soviet space as well as expanding Russia's influence in the region. Although Russian leaders called the operations "peacekeeping", the strategic objective was no longer restricted to bringing hostilities to an end but also involved forwarding Russia's interests. Moreover, the Russian leadership ruled out the participation of non-CIS forces in peacekeeping operations in the former Soviet states, and engaged in war-fighting activities.

In Abkhazia, for example, the Russian military provided active support to Abkhaz separatist forces during their fight against the Georgian government. Instead of contributing to an end to hostilities, this exacerbated the fighting and eventually allowed Russia to fulfil its objectives in a strategically vital region. Once sent to the region, however, Russian peacekeeping forces reverted to the original aim of maintaining a cease-fire in order to allow for a peaceful settlement of the dispute. The various peacekeeping mandates clearly spelled out that the task of the force was "to promote the full-scale settlement of the conflict in Abkhazia".⁴⁰ In Tajikistan, Russia became involved in the conflict by providing military support to the pro-communist forces led by Emomali Rahkmonov as well as by patrolling the Tajik-Afghan border. The "peacekeeping" operation was clearly aimed at "stabilizing the situation" inside Tajikistan and along the Tajik-Afghan border.⁴¹ As a result, the operation resembled more an attempt to defeat the enemy – the Tajik *mujahideen* – by conducting counter-insurgency operations and low-intensity warfare, rather than to bring about a cessation of hostilities and create the conditions for a political settlement.

The mandate and rules of engagement

Despite the limited experience of Russian troops in UN peacekeeping operations, the first peacekeeping documentation, adopted within a CIS context in the spring of 1992, spelled out the duties and tasks of CIS peacekeeping forces along traditional UN lines. The documents envisaged the deployment of peacekeeping forces only if the warring parties requested CIS assistance, and only after a cease-fire agreement had been reached among the parties and hostilities had stopped. Peacekeeping forces were expected to conduct traditional functions, such as separating forces, monitoring the compliance of cease-fire agreements, providing humanitarian aid, and creating the requisite conditions for a peaceful

settlement of disputes. Forces were expected to maintain their own impartiality, avoid involvement in direct military clashes, and use force only in self-defence.⁴² However, the conduct of Russian peacekeeping operations on the ground did not follow such a pattern. In the initial stages of their involvement, Russian forces often used war-fighting techniques to achieve a favourable tactical position before handing over to a peacekeeping regime. Russian forces frequently sided with one of the warring factions, particularly in Tajikistan and Abkhazia. Such involvement violated the principle of impartiality, especially when the consent of the parties was in doubt. Moreover, troops from the warring parties became part of the peacekeeping forces, which were in all cases dominated by Russian units.

As indicated by Eduard Vorobyev and Andrei Raevsky, Russian activities in the former Soviet space were only constrained by the lack of available means, the resolve of the command in Moscow, political infighting, and indecisiveness.⁴³ Moreover, the mandates of all operations remained extremely broad, contained little information on the rules of engagement, were often agreed long after peacekeeping forces reached the area, and were rarely updated to satisfy the new requirements. Often, the broad nature of the mandates and the absence of clearly spelled rules of engagement implied the conduct of more robust forms of peace enforcement. For example, CIS peacekeeping forces in Abkhazia were expected not only to guarantee and monitor strict compliance by the parties to the cease-fire agreement and create the conditions for the safe return of refugees, they were also required to “restore peace and preclude the resumption of hostilities”.⁴⁴ Similarly, the CIS mandate for peacekeeping forces in Tajikistan stipulated that forces would “contribute to the stabilisation of the situation on the Tajik-Afghan border” and create the conditions for dialogue among the parties, besides assisting in the delivery of humanitarian aid.⁴⁵ Such broad tasks left the door open to very assertive operations which could result in counter-insurgency warfare, as happened in Tajikistan.

The more robust character of Russian operations in the CIS area, however, did not transpire in the official documentation adopted thereafter. For example, the 1993 military doctrine stipulated that Russian armed forces involved in peacekeeping operations, whether under a UN mandate or in accordance with international obligations in regions adjacent to the Russian territory, would be assigned with traditional peacekeeping tasks, such as separating armed groups, delivering humanitarian aid, and sealing the area of conflict.⁴⁶ The 1995 Federal Law on Peacekeeping, which was designed primarily to regulate the dispatch of Russian forces to UN-sanctioned operations, also envisaged traditional peacekeeping tasks for Russian military and civilian personnel in peace-

keeping operations – monitoring of cease-fires, separating the conflicting sides, disarming military formations, and delivering humanitarian aid. Although coercive actions involving the use of military force were envisaged, they had to be carried out with the approval of the UN Security Council.⁴⁷ Similarly, the CIS concept adopted in 1996 also envisaged the conduct of peacekeeping operations very much along the lines of the first CIS peacekeeping documents. Forces would be deployed only after a cease-fire agreement was signed, and only with the explicit consent of the parties. Moreover, peacekeeping forces would remain neutral, and use force only in self-defence. Enforcement actions could only be taken with UN approval.⁴⁸ Russia's latest military documents also foresaw the conduct of peacekeeping operations very much according to UN standards. The 1999 military doctrine no longer made a distinction between UN-sanctioned and non-UN-sanctioned peacekeeping operations, and envisaged the creation of special peacekeeping formations to be trained according to UN, OSCE, and CIS standards.⁴⁹

The existing dichotomy between peacekeeping theory and practice resulted, to a great extent, from the reactive and unplanned nature of Russia's operations in the CIS, the mingling of humanitarian and security concerns in operations adjacent to Russian borders, and the lack of practical UN peacekeeping experience. Moreover, such divergence also indicated the absence of an understanding of peacekeeping operations along both traditional and non-traditional UN lines. Russian operations tended to follow a logic of their own, and this was brought to light in the official peacekeeping training programmes. The peacekeeping units under training at Totskoe in the Volga military district, for example, were equipped with light weapons, armoured personnel carriers, and soft-skinned transport vehicles. They lacked artillery, tanks, and air-defence weapons and were trained to conduct traditional peacekeeping tasks. However, peacekeepers were also expected to separate the opposing sides forcefully before a cease-fire was reached, with the use of military force, and could call on heavy weapons' support if necessary.

The legitimacy of Russian peacekeeping operations in the CIS

All Russia's peacekeeping operations within the CIS were conducted on the basis of bilateral or trilateral agreements between Russia and the leaders of the countries involved in a crisis. Two of the four peacekeeping operations – Abkhazia and Tajikistan – had a CIS mandate. However, all operations lacked a UN or OSCE mandate. During the period 1993–1994, the Russian Foreign Ministry conducted active diplomatic efforts aimed at obtaining UN and OSCE approval for Russian operations, but failed. Russia also tried to have the CIS recognized as the

authoritative regional organization responsible for carrying out peacekeeping operations within the CIS, but without any success. Despite this failure to obtain UN legitimacy for its operations, the Russian leadership argued that Russia did not need such international approval, because its operations were being conducted both at the request of the parties and on the basis of Chapter VIII of the UN Charter, which proclaimed the legitimacy of regional organizations to maintain peace in their areas. However, the legal basis of such operations remained shaky. Not all operations had a CIS mandate, and in most cases the consent of the parties involved in the conflict remained dubious. Moreover, Chapter VIII of the UN Charter allowed regional organizations only to conduct peacekeeping and not peace enforcement operations, and all operations conducted by Russia's forces had initially entailed the use of force. In Tajikistan, peacekeeping forces regularly used force to stabilize the situation along the Tajik-Afghan border.

Russia's operations were further impaired by the unwillingness of Russian leaders to grant international organizations an important role in the resolution of conflicts. Although UN and OSCE missions were present in all conflicts – either as observers or as part of a mediation team – Russia refused to grant these organizations any major peacekeeping role. Most official documents hardly ever mentioned the role of these organizations in the resolution of conflicts, and the approval of such organizations was not considered essential for the conduct of peacekeeping operations. The 1996 CIS concept envisaged only a very superficial cooperation with the United Nations and the OSCE. Cooperation was restricted to consultations, sharing of information, and assistance of the various UN and OSCE representatives in the peacekeeping missions.⁵⁰

Conclusion

Despite being confronted by conflicts of a similar nature, Russian and Western peacekeeping responses differed significantly during the 1990s. Although the West engaged in more robust forms of intervention, which tended to approach Russian practices, its involvement developed within the UN framework and remained closely monitored by UN institutions. Russian operations, in contrast, lacked international supervision, and consequently were less restrained by UN peacekeeping principles. Russian peacekeeping missions often violated the principles of consent, impartiality, and minimum use of force. Moreover, the development of the former Soviet space into an area of vital interest to Russia raised serious doubts as to the true intentions of the operations. External observers tended to interpret Russian operations in the CIS as attempts to restore

Russia's influence over adjacent regions, and consequently operations failed to obtain UN legal endorsement and financial support. The particular nature of Russian operations was determined, to a great extent, by lack of experience in UN peacekeeping operations, the proximity of the conflicts to the Russian periphery, which created a direct threat to Russian security, and the need for a quick and immediate response to the escalation of violence.

Confronted with a threat of a new kind, the Russian government, especially the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, proved unprepared to respond adequately and effectively to the conflicts that emerged along the Russian southern periphery in the early 1990s. The Russian Foreign Ministry, endowed with a strong anti-imperialist view, initially rejected any form of military intervention to stop the violence in the CIS, and instead favoured the resolution of conflicts within a diplomatic framework. As a result, the Russian Ministry of Defence took the upper hand in conflict resolution and conducted peacekeeping operations according to its own principles. Although in 1993 the Russian Foreign Ministry became more supportive of Russia's peacekeeping operations and strongly rejected the presence of foreign non-CIS contingents in peacekeeping missions in the FSS, it still viewed military interventions as elements of conflict resolution. The Ministry of Defence, instead, tended to utilize peacekeeping operations as instruments for furthering Russia's state interests along its southern periphery. Moreover, operations tended to be conducted in a highly assertive way, primarily because of the absence of traditional UN peacekeeping experience, and because of the perception that conflicts in the Russian periphery created a direct threat to Russian security and therefore required an active and effective response. Financial constraints also prevented the development of coherent peacekeeping training and organizational programmes and often undermined the sustainability of ongoing operations, leading to a retrenchment of operations during the period 1996–1999.

Although the Ministry of Defence failed to develop a coherent written peacekeeping doctrine, Russian military documents and the conduct of Russian operations in the ground provide an insight into Russian peacekeeping thinking. What transpires from Russian official documentation seems to be an understanding of the specific nature, tasks, and methodologies of peacekeeping operations, very much along UN lines. Operations are intended to bring an end to violence, and are to be conducted with the consent of the parties, avoiding involvement in direct military clashes, and using force only in self-defence. However, Russian peacekeeping practices present a very different picture. During operations in the CIS area, Russian forces used war-fighting techniques to achieve a favourable position before reverting to traditional peacekeeping prac-

tices. Moreover, local Russian military forces frequently sided with a particular warring faction, and peacekeepers often intervened without the explicit approval of the parties, thus violating the principles of impartiality and consent. In addition, Russian peacekeeping forces dominated all peacekeeping operations. Vague and broad mandates, as well as the absence of specific peacekeeping manuals, allowed theatre commanders to shape the nature of the operations on the ground. Moreover, the absence of UN or OSCE mandates and/or supervision resulted in operations diverting from international practices.

Notes

1. Mats R. Berdal, *Whither UN Peacekeeping*, Adelphi Paper No. 281, London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, October 1993, p. 9.
2. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, *An Agenda for Peace: Preventive Diplomacy, Peacemaking and Peacekeeping*, New York: UN Department of Public Information, June 1992.
3. Dmitri Trenin, "Russia", in Trevor Findlay (ed.), *Challenges for the New Peacekeepers*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996, p. 69.
4. Andrei Kozyrev, "Soiuz ostavil Rossii plokhoie vneshnepoliticheskoe nasledstvo", *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 1 April 1992, p. 3.
5. *Ibid.* Similar views were expressed by Kozyrev in an interview with *Izvestiya*: Andrei Kozyrev, "Partiya voyny nastupaet – i v Moldove, i v Gruzii, i v Rossii", *Izvestiya*, 30 June 1992, p. 2.
6. *Ibid.*
7. Sergei Stankevich, "Yavlenie derzhavy", *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 23 June 1992, p. 1. In August 1992 the Council for Defence and Foreign Policy, in its document "A Strategy for Russia", identified inter-ethnic conflicts on the periphery of the Russian Federation as a major threat to Russia's security, and called for an active policy, which should envisage the use of force, to bring violence to an end. The document expressed concern over the potential escalation of "low-intensity conflicts", leading to local wars involving Russia. Russia should not exclude the use of forces in order to stop the violence, even if the international community did not sanction such actions, the authors argued. "Strategiya dlya Rossii: Tezisy Soveta po Vneshnei i Oboronnoi Politike", *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 19 August 1992, p. 4.
8. "Vneshnyaya politika Rossii: MID predlagayet i otstaivaet", *Rossiiskie vesti*, 3 December 1992, p. 2.
9. *Ibid.*
10. Russian Television, 28 February 1993, in *FBIS-SOV-93-038*, 1 March 1993, p. 21.
11. Vladislav Chernov, "Natsional'nye interesy Rossii i ugrozy dlya ee bezopasnosti", *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 29 April 1993, pp. 1 and 3.
12. Lena Jonson, "In search of a doctrine: Russian interventionism in conflicts in its 'near abroad'", *Low Intensity Conflicts and Law Enforcement*, Vol. 5, No. 3, 1996, p. 448; Suzanne Crow, *Russia Seeks Leadership in Regional Peacekeeping*, RFE/RL Research Report, 9 April 1993, p. 29.
13. Roy Allison, "The military background and context to Russian peacekeeping", in Lena Jonson and Clive Archer (eds), *Peacekeeping and the Role of Russia in Eurasia*, Boulder, CO and Oxford: Westview, 1996, p. 10.

14. "Joint Statement by the Russian Foreign Ministry and Defence Ministry: Actions and not declarations are what is needed", *Rossiiskie vesti*, 5 April 1994, p. 3 in *FBIS-SOV-94-065*, 5 April 1994, p. 1.
15. Vladimir Abarinov, "Sergei Lavrov: 'My budem dobivat'sya mezhdunarodnoi podderzhki nashikh mirotvorcheskikh operatsii'", *Segodnya*, 16 September 1993, p. 1.
16. In his speech to the UN General Assembly, Kozyrev expressed concern over the eruption of bloody conflicts in the former Soviet Union and stated clearly Russia's particular responsibility for maintaining peace in the area. Itar-tass, 28 September 1993, in *BBC SWB*, SU/1807, B/3, 1993.
17. Andrei Kozyrev, "Rossiya fakticheski v odnochku neset bremya real'nogo mirotvorchestva v konfliktakh po perimertru svoikh granits", *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 22 September 1993, p. 1.
18. Andrei Kozyrev, "Demokratiya i mirotvorchestvo – Dve storony odnoi medali", *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 24 November 1993, pp. 1–2.
19. Igor Rotar, "Voennye dolzhny obladet' iskusstvom mirotvorchestva", *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 24 November 1993, pp. 1–2.
20. Interfax, *BBC SWB*, SU/2284, B/4-5, 20 April 1995.
21. "National Security Concept of the Russian Federation", Russian Federation President's Decree No. 1300, 17 December 1997, *Rossiiskie vesti*, RIA-Novosti Daily Review, 25 December 1997, p. 17.
22. *Voennaya Mysl'*, special edition, May 1992; "Osnovnye polozheniya voennoi doktriny Rossiiskoi Federatsii", *Izvestiya*, 18 November 1993, p. 3.
23. Richard A. Falkenrath, *Shaping Europe's Military Order: The Origins and Consequences of the CFE Treaty*, Cambridge, MA: Centre for Science and International Affairs, 1995, p. 177.
24. *Voennaya Mysl'*, note 22. Russia's primary political goal in a war unleashed against it would be to defend the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Russia and the CIS allies.
25. Pavel Felgengauer, "Voennye ozhidaiut vmeshatel'stva zapada", *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 1 August 1992, p. 1.
26. *Voennaya Mysl'*, note 22.
27. "Basic provisions of the military doctrine of the Russian Federation", *Jane's Intelligence Review*, special report, January 1994, p. 10.
28. *Izvestiya*, note 22.
29. Andrei Demurenko, "Mirotvorcheskaya Deyatel'nost' v Rossii", Moscow, 1995, unpublished paper, p. 2.
30. The establishment of a "peacekeeping" centre at Totskoe in the Volga military district, on the basis of the 27th Motor Rifle Division, also indicated an understanding by the Russian MoD of the particular nature of peacekeeping operations as a different kind of military activity which required a specific kind of training.
31. "NATO Peace Support Operations", unpublished draft, 2000, pp. 2-1, 2-11; *Peace Support Operations*, Joint Warfare Publications 3-50, 1998, p. 1-1.
32. "Sharpening the weapons of peace: The development of a common military doctrine for peace support operations", in *Peace Support Operations*, *ibid.*, Appendix 1, p. 8.
33. The dominant view within the MoD was upheld by Pavel Grachev, then Minister of Defence, Lieutenant-General V. Dubynin, previously Chief of the General Staff, Lieutenant-General Anatoly Shapovalov, then First Deputy Commander of the Volga military district and responsible for the peacekeeping training programme, and Boris Gromov, previously Deputy Defence Minister.
34. Dov Lynch, *Peacekeeping in Russian Security Policy*, London: RIIA and Macmillan, 2000, pp. 98–100.
35. E. Vorobyev, "What kind of mobile forces do we need?", *Voennaya Mysl'*, 1993, No. 2,

- p. 13; A. Raevsky and E. Vorobyev, *Russian Approaches to Peacekeeping Operations*, Research Paper No. 28, New York and Geneva: UNIDIR, 1994, pp. 31–32.
36. “Federal’nyi Zakon: O poriadke predostableniya Rossiiskoi Federatsii voennogo i grazhdanskogo personala dlya uchastiya v deyatelnosti po podderzhaniiu ili vostanovleniiu mezhdunarodnogo mira i bezopasnosti”, Moscow: Kremlin, 26 May 1995, pp. 1–2.
 37. *Ibid.*, p. 1. Russian scholars, such as Aleksandr Nikitin, argued that the distinction between coercive and non-coercive actions rested on the consent of the parties involved. However, this does not seem to be the case. For example, when discussing the mandate of the multilateral protection force which was sent to Albania in 1997, the Russian delegation at the OSCE clearly expressed the need to obtain UN Security Council approval for the conduct of enforcement actions: “While considering the question of the multinational protection force in Albania, the Russian side assumes that any operation envisaging the use of an element of compulsion or force must be sanctioned by the UN Security Council.” Fabrizio Pagani, “Mandato e status della forza multinazionale di protezione”, in Andrea de Guttry and Fabrizio Pagani (eds), *La Crisi Albanese del 1997*, Milan: Franco Angeli, 1999, p. 84.
 38. CIS Concept on Preventing and Settling Conflicts on the Territory of the CIS, 1996.
 39. “Voennaya Doktrina Rossiiskoi Federatsii”, *RIA-Novosti*, October 1999, p. 15.
 40. On the Use of the Collective Peace-Keeping Force in the Georgian-Abkhaz Conflict Zone, June-August 1994 (GET); “The mandate of the collective peace-keeping forces in the conflict zone in Abkhazia, Georgia, 26 May 1995”, *Military News Bulletin*, No. 7, July 1995, p. 6.
 41. “Agreement on collective peacemaking forces and joint measures on their material and technical supply, 24 September 1993”, *Military News Bulletin*, No. 10, October 1993, p. 1; “Decision on additional measures to stabilise the situation on the Tajik-Afghan border and decision on the term of stay, composition and tasks of the joint peace-keeping forces in the Republic of Tajikistan, 15 April 1994”, *Military News Bulletin*, No. 6, June 1994, p. 13.
 42. Agreement on Groups of Military Observers and Joint Peacekeeping Forces of the CIS, 20 March 1992; Protocol on the Status of Group of Military Observers and Collective Forces in Support of Peace in the CIS, 15 May 1992.
 43. Raevsky and Vorobyev, note 35, p. 5.
 44. *Military News Bulletin*, note 40.
 45. *Military News Bulletin*, No. 6, note 41, p. 1.
 46. *Jane’s Intelligence Review*, note 27, p. 8. The doctrine also envisaged the intervention of Russian armed forces in local wars in territories adjacent to the Russian Federation. Although operations could involve a broader use of force, from light weapons to air bombardment, they were not called peacekeeping.
 47. Federal’nyi Zakon, note 36, p. 1.
 48. “Kontseptsiya predotvrashcheniya i uregulirovaniya konfliktov na territorii gosudarstv – Uchastnikov Sodruzhestva Nezavisimyykh Gosudarstv”, *Diplomaticheskii vestnik*, No. 2, February 1996, p. 40.
 49. Voennaya Doktrina Rossiiskoi Federatsii, note 39, pp. 17–18.
 50. *Diplomaticheskii vestnik*, note 48.

The Russian Separate Airborne Brigade – Peacekeeping in Bosnia-Herzegovina

*Jacob W. Kipp and Tarn Warren*¹

Introduction

The conflict in the Balkans during the 1990s prompted an international response in the form of a peacekeeping operation that saw the former Cold War adversaries, NATO and Russia, operating alongside one another to stabilize the ethno-political conflicts in the region. Russian peacekeepers from the Russian Separate Airborne Brigade (RSAB) were engaged as part of the implementation of the Dayton Accords of 21 November 1995. Under a unique command and control arrangement the brigade has functioned as part of NATO's Multi-National Division (North) (MND(N)), composed of a US division headquarters, two US army brigades, the NordPol Brigade, and the Turkish Brigade. The relationship has endured and continues to function despite being strained by the deterioration of NATO-Russian relations during the Kosovo crisis, the NATO air campaign against Yugoslavia, and the subsequent “dash” of 200 RSAB soldiers for the airfield at Pristina, Kosovo. This chapter will place this experience in the context of Russian peacekeeping in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina under UNPROFOR, examine the origins of the IFOR (Implementation Force) arrangement, and assess the role and performance of the Russian Brigade in IFOR/SFOR (Stabilization Force).

NATO and Russian commanders have judged the military-to-military cooperation within MND(N) a success and view it as a model for future cooperation in peace operations. General George Joulwan, Supreme Al-

lied Commander – Europe (SACEUR), noted the fact that this cooperation overcame five decades of Cold War confrontation and built a basis for a professional partnership and mutual respect: “During IFOR our forces patrolled together, trained together, and shared the risks. They learned from one another and came to respect one another.”² Colonel-General Leontiy Shevtsov, who served as SACEUR’s Deputy for Russian Forces, noted the political content of peacekeeping operations and recommended the IFOR experience in the preparation of coalition forces for such operations.³ General Joulwan stressed the importance of a successful US-Russian relationship from the outset of IFOR. General Shevtsov has suggested that “patience and loyalty” within the command arrangement contributed to the success of the mission.⁴ Major-General William Nash, commander of the US First Armor Division, fostered a close working relationship with Colonel Alexander Lentsov, commander of the RSAB, and between Lentsov and his American counterparts. Those serving with the Russian brigade in the field have been equally positive. Lieutenant-Colonel Tom Wilhelm, who served as a liaison officer with the RSAB, stressed their professionalism and teamwork.⁵

Russian peacemaking operations: The precursors

The success of the RSAB’s participation in Bosnia-Herzegovina came against a daunting backdrop of economic and political reforms in Russia. These measures deconstructed the Soviet system but prevailed over the deepening social, economic, and political crises within Russia and the instability on the periphery as ethno-national conflicts turned into armed struggles. The Russian military found itself in an internal crisis as it tried to reinvent itself out of the Soviet military system. Radical reductions in the size of the force went hand in hand with ambiguous efforts at reform. In the autumn of 1993 the military found itself in the midst of a political confrontation between President Yeltsin and the Russian parliament, much to the dissatisfaction of many officers who opposed involvement in domestic politics and considered the army’s role was to protect the nation from foreign attack. Pavel Baev captured the army’s deteriorating situation when he described it as a “time of troubles”, a reference that tied the current crisis to that of the Muscovite state in the early seventeenth century.⁶ The Russian armed forces faced downsizing, large cuts in defence spending, reduced training, and declining morale.

By 1995 the Russian army was involved in a military intervention in Chechnya.⁷ Russia’s military intervention followed the collapse of a covert operation to overthrow the Dudayev government in Chechnya involving a Russian-backed, Russian-financed, and Russian-armed Chechen

opposition. However, the Russian government sought to portray the military intervention as a peace operation designed to separate the warring sides and end the fighting. When this intervention ended in disaster it also saw the end of the Yeltsin government's experiment with Russian "peacemaking" (*mirotvorchestvo*) in the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union.

After 1991, Russian interventions in Georgia, Moldova, and Tajikistan, which in due course were manifested as peacekeeping operations, also took on a distinct national cast. Colonel-General Eduard Vorobyev, then head of the Ministry of Defence's Directorate of Peacemaking Operations, explained this approach as conditioned by the fact that Russia had "been and remains the only power capable of separating the hostile sides [in the FSU crisis zones] and bringing them to a negotiating table".⁸ In practice, this meant that the Russian-led CIS provided the mandate for such operations. Only then did Russia and the participating CIS members inform the UN Security Council and the OSCE of the decision. Vorobyev described Russia's role as that of "an authoritative umpire" and noted that, in practice, "no international organisation or group of states will take the place of our peacemaking efforts on the territory of the former Soviet Union".⁹ The umpire could make no claim to impartiality since its own interests were directly at stake in the intervention. This led to suggestions that Russian peacemaking was part of a strategy of enhancing Russian power in its sphere of influence in the near abroad.¹⁰

Part of the problem with Russia's peacemaking efforts were that they arose out of the explosion of ethno-national conflicts and demanded ad hoc responses to escalating crises. Moreover, the Russian military initially did not possess forces that were trained to conduct peace operations. Composite units of volunteers were raised among airborne units and sent to the hotspots. The Ministry of Defence created the Directorate of Peacemaking Operations and designated specific motorized rifle divisions, which were to be trained to provide the core force. But the crises developed too rapidly, and it was difficult to meet these expanding demands. Moreover, peace operations were not particularly popular within Russian society. Russian peacemaking operations in the near abroad were a heavy burden on the already overstrained state treasury. As General Vorobyev remarked, "the reality is that Russia has not received a single rouble for peacekeeping activity".¹¹ In reviewing this experience, Colonel Andrei Demurenko of the Russian army has noted certain critical problems with this experience and compared it unfavourably to UN-mandated international peacekeeping, especially the absence of an internationally sanctioned mandate from the appropriate civilian organizations to engage in conflict resolution.¹² In the account in Timothy Thomas's chapter in this volume on Chechnya, the command of the

military intervention in Chechnya was offered to General Vorobyev and he declined, a logical and tragic culmination of this distinctly Russian approach to peace operations.¹³ Vorobyev, to his credit, understood that solving the Chechen problem would involve a major military campaign. When Minister of Defence Pavel Grachev refused to delay the operation in order to complete adequate preparations, Vorobyev declined command.¹⁴

Russia and the Yugoslav crisis: UNPROFOR in Croatia

Russian forces were also involved in UN-sanctioned peacekeeping missions. Some of these involved traditional UN observers:

- UNTSO (UN Truce Supervision Organization – 16 Russian participants)
- UNIKOM (UN Iraq-Kuwait Observation Mission – 15)
- MINURSO (UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara – 30).

Russia also provided a nominal presence for two other UN peacekeeping missions:

- UNTAC (UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia – 3)
- ONUMOZ (UN Operation in Mozambique – 19).

The largest contingent of Russian peacekeepers operating under UN mandate in 1995 was the First Airborne Battalion, of the 554th, which had initially deployed as part of UNPROFOR (UN Protection Force) to Klissa, Croatia, and had had a nominal presence (21) in Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina, in April 1992. In February 1994, as a result of the growing confrontation caused by NATO's actions against Serb forces around the Bosnian capital, a second battalion, the 629th, deployed to Sarajevo.¹⁵

The choice of airborne battalions for these missions was a reflection of their élite status in the Russian military. Organized in 1930 by Mikhail Tukhachevsky as part of the Red Army's efforts to build an armed force to conduct deep operations, the airborne had served with distinction in the Great Patriotic War, had taken a leading role in the fighting in Afghanistan and Chechnya, and was the combat arm with which its former commander, Minister Pavel Grachev, identified. Their logo displays the slogan "No one but us!"

The first Russian experience with UN-mandated peace enforcement operations was UNPROFOR in Croatia.¹⁶ This deployment was part of a negotiated cease-fire, with the consent of the warring parties, and under the mantle of impartiality. The operative mandate was UN Security Council Resolution No. 743 and the decree of the Supreme Soviet of the Russian Federation No. 2462 of 6 March 1992.

Russian involvement was seen as necessary to enhance its standing as a major power committed to the establishment of peace and stability in post-Cold War Europe. The UNPROFOR commitment came at a time when the Yeltsin government was actively seeking a strategic partnership with the West. The commitment of Russian forces to UNPROFOR was in keeping with Russia's position as a permanent member of the UN Security Council. The intervention in Croatia also suited this goal. However, the eruption of war in Bosnia-Herzegovina created a dilemma for Russian policy. As pressure mounted for NATO to take a more direct role in the conflict and engage in the use of force to compel the Bosnian Serbs to accept a settlement that retained the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Russia became more committed to UN-led or OSCE-led peacekeeping and to bringing about a negotiated settlement. Having troops on the ground placed Russia in the same position as other European governments, notably Britain and France, which were also uneasy with the Clinton administration's proposal to lift the arms embargo on the warring parties and strike at Serb targets.¹⁷ On the other hand, the disintegration of Yugoslavia and the onset of open warfare in Slovenia and then Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina raised serious questions regarding stability in the Balkans, a region of traditional interest. A significant part of Russian society sympathized with the Orthodox Serbs, who were seen as Russia's traditional allies in the Balkans.¹⁸ This led to serious problems when a Russian battalion was deployed to the "UN Protected Area" in East Slavonia (eastern Croatia) under the Vance Plan, because the Croat population saw the Russian troops as allies of the Serbs of East Slavonia.¹⁹

The battalion deployed under the Vance Plan was composed of volunteers and prepared at the Airborne School in Ryazan. It consisted of five rifle companies and a headquarters company and operated in East Slavonia. Deployed after a cease-fire between the Croatian government and the Serbian forces loyal to the government in Knin, the UN Security Council mandate for UNPROFOR in Croatia called for the demilitarization of the protected areas and the protection of the local population from armed attacks.²⁰ The Russian battalion was "operationally subordinate" to the UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali and operated in conjunction with a Belgian battalion in the same area. The Russian government retained responsibility for military discipline and undertook its financial support. The battalion's functions included:

- monitoring the observance of cease-fires and the maintenance of public order as agreed upon by the conflicting sides;
- military control of the buffer zone;
- patrolling the main routes and maintaining watch over the control/checkpoints in its area of responsibility;

- guarding the headquarters of the “East” sector;
- rendering assistance to refugees and halting forced expulsion of the indigenous population.²¹

The situation on the ground proved difficult because both sides had not renounced recourse to violence. Only the core of the military settlement was achieved: the separation of Croatian and Yugoslav units. But no zone of separation existed in the protected areas and so frequent exchanges of fire and ambushes occurred.²² Between the 1992 deployment and December 1993, the Russian battalion suffered two dead and 19 wounded.²³ The Russians emphasized the positive role of their presence for the local Serb population, who saw the troops as protectors. At the same time, a close relationship developed between one Russian commander of the sector, Colonel A. Khomchenkov, and Zhel’ko Arkan, the commander of the notorious “Tigers”, a paramilitary formation noted for its ruthless ethnic cleansing and its unwillingness to accept subordination to the Yugoslav armed forces. This led to protests in the Croat mass media that UNPROFOR was an instrument of Russian policy and explicitly pro-Serb.²⁴

Accusations of corruption, however, were not confined to Croatian sources. On 11 April 1995, the United Nations announced that Russian General-Major Alexander Perelyakin had been dismissed from his post as a UN peacekeeping commander in a Serbian-held sector of Croatia. Continuing complaints from a Belgian battalion commander under his “Sector East” command centred upon smuggling, profiteering, corruption, negligence, and collaboration with local Serb militias. A former Russian battalion commander of the sector, Colonel Viktor Loginov, remained in the area and formed a “trading company” with Arkan.²⁵ Russian troops were also accused of selling UNPROFOR fuel to both Muslims and Serbs on several occasions. Russian peacekeepers brought the virus of corruption that was spreading among the demoralized and impoverished armed forces with them.

At the same time accusations of bias and criminal activities among peacekeepers were not confined to the Russian contingent. In 1993 Bosnian officials levelled similar charges of bias and corruption against French and Ukrainian peacekeepers in Sarajevo.²⁶ In October 1994 a scandal broke over the disappearance of arms, equipment, and supplies among the 1,200-man Bangladeshi contingent deployed around Bihac. While news accounts blamed both Serb and Muslim forces for blocking relief convoys, no one seemed able to explain how only one soldier out of four had a weapon.²⁷ In December 1995 Bangladeshi peacekeepers in Velika Kladusa handed over to 200 Bosniak “raiders” food, fuel, and nine armoured vehicles.²⁸ Against the backdrop of news reports of other scandals involving UN peacekeepers, the Russian problems under

UNPROFOR were neither unique nor especially flagrant. Often the charges against the Russian battalion in East Slavonia were matters of misunderstanding.²⁹ The most severe charge involves some of the Russian leadership having a close and illegal collaboration with Arkan. The Russian press responded to the charges against Russian peacekeepers in Croatia with their own charges that the campaign was part of a US-NATO effort to remove the Russian forces and create an opportunity for the Croatian military to eliminate the Serbian enclaves.³⁰ Despite these problems, the Russian Airborne Battalion in East Slavonia continued to execute its mission to the end of the UN mandate in 1998. General-Lieutenant Nikolai Staskov, the Deputy Commander of Russian Airborne Forces for Peacekeeping, considered it “one of the more successful models of a UN operation”.³¹

Despite the problems, Russian tactical conduct on the ground displayed sufficient impartiality to sustain the military portion of the settlement, even in the face of stagnation of the political process of a negotiated settlement between the sides. By November 1994 the total Russian deployment with UNPROFOR had grown to 1,462 soldiers, 36 police, and five observers.³²

Russian peacekeepers and the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina

The growth of the Russian presence in UNPROFOR was the direct result of the decision to deploy a second Russian airborne battalion to Sarajevo in February 1994, thus exposing the Russian peacekeepers to the volatile situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina quickly disintegrated into a three-sided contest – the Muslim-led government forces, Serb forces, and Croat forces. Seizing the arms stocks in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Serb forces enjoyed initial military successes, seizing territory and cleansing it of Muslims and Croats. Unlike Croatia, where former US Secretary of State Cyrus Vance had been able to arrange a cease-fire between the warring factions, UNPROFOR’s presence had come in the aftermath of the outbreak of fighting in 1992 and with ethnic cleansing still in progress. UNPROFOR’s mandates in Bosnia-Herzegovina would expand over the next three years as the international community sought to use peacekeeping forces to achieve a set of conflicting and often mutually exclusive goals, with diminishing prospects of success on the ground.

The international community, through the United Nations, sought to take on an expanding set of tasks in the midst of an ongoing civil war. Over time, the Security Council’s mandates charged UNPROFOR with seeking to limit the conflict, embargo arms deliveries, impose economic

sanctions on Milosevich's Yugoslavia, impose a no-fly zone over Bosnia, prevent ethnic cleansing, provide and protect safe havens, police the concentration of artillery around Sarajevo, and ameliorate the conditions of refugees and civilian populations. In this context, in support of the UN-imposed no-fly zone, NATO emerged as a subordinate but active player in the management of the Bosnian conflict and became a key element in the debate over the use of force to impose peace in Bosnia. The various UN mandates passed by the Security Council appeared to be an impressive list, but UNPROFOR lacked the means and proved unable to fulfil those mandates and contain the conflict or put an end to the ethnic cleansing. Trapped in a situation that seemed to demand a peacekeeper's impartiality and a peace-enforcer's determination, UNPROFOR had to deal with an ongoing war. As Susan Woodward has pointed out, the fragile peace in Croatia and the battlefields of Bosnia-Herzegovina were linked for the combatants, the United Nations, and the international community. "The contradiction was embedded in all Security Council resolutions after May 1992, which emphasised the humanitarian mission and principle of consent while simultaneously attempting to support the Bosnia government leadership's sovereignty ... It led to conflicts and tensions between UNPROFOR and the different forums of major power management ..."³³

The Russian presence in Sarajevo was a manifestation of both the deepening crisis in Bosnia and the Yeltsin government's perception that such a presence was one way by which Russia could ensure the protection of Russian interests and act as a check upon those forces, notably the Clinton administration, which sought to make compulsion against Serbian forces a more active element in the resolution of the conflict.

The Russian deployment coincided with a period of rising concern among the international community in the aftermath of the mortar attack on the market-place in Sarajevo, which left 58 civilians dead and 142 wounded, and growing calls to protect the Muslim population from the threat of attacks there and in other isolated areas. The North Atlantic Council, at the request of the UN Secretary-General, gave the Bosnian Serb forces 10 days to regroup and place their heavy weapons within range of Sarajevo under UNPROFOR control. It also called upon the Muslim-led government of Bosnia-Herzegovina to do the same with its weapons within Sarajevo, and to refrain from attacks on Serb positions from its positions in Sarajevo.³⁴

Russia was particularly hostile to the threat of the use of NATO air power against the Serbs. On 10 February 1994, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated that NATO's plan for both the Serbs and the Muslims to place the heavy weapons deployed in the Sarajevo area under UN control or to withdraw them from the area was close to the Russian

position. Russia called for a meeting of the UN Security Council and warned that there were grave dangers associated with “a one-sided ultimatum to the Bosnian Serbs, who are being threatened by air strikes”.³⁵ Its good offices with the Serbian authorities in Bosnia-Herzegovina led to the opening of Tuzla airport for humanitarian flights.³⁶ On 28 February 1994, NATO mounted its first military engagement when aircraft enforcing the no-fly zone as part of Operation Deny Flight shot down four Bosnian Serb warplanes, originating out of Banja Luka. Russia supported the expansion of the UN “safe havens” in the spring of 1994 and joined with the USA and the European Union to seek a political settlement. The UN’s report on UNPROFOR’s activities describes the events of that spring in the following terms:

Following the introduction of a heavy-weapon exclusion zone, the involvement of NATO and the redeployment of a Russian UNPROFOR contingent from Sector East to Sarajevo, it became necessary for the Governments of France, Germany, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and the United States to become more deeply involved in the peace process.³⁷

The Russian government was uneasy about the increased role for NATO in the conflict and continued to see that role as part of a campaign against the Bosnian Serbs. Subsequent limited NATO air strikes in support of UNPROFOR in August, September, and November 1994 underscored this concern.

Thus, the Russian battalion in Sarajevo occupied a key position geographically and politically. On the ground in Sarajevo the airborne troops occupied 12 checkpoints/observation posts between Serbian and Muslim positions on a one-kilometre stretch extending along Ostrel’sk Street to the Zheleznichar sports stadium, deep in the city. In August and September sniping incidents and exchanges of fire between the opposing sides became frequent. The Muslim government accused the Russian forces of taking the Serb side in these exchanges of fire. The Russian command in turn accused the government of staging provocations. The Russian press reported that two *desantniki* were wounded in one such incident in 1994.³⁸ UNPROFOR requested and got NATO air strikes against Serb heavy weapons operating in the exclusion zone around Sarajevo.³⁹ By late 1994 the Russian battalion in Sarajevo was caught up in the general crisis of the UNPROFOR mission. In late September 1994 the UN Security Council extended UNPROFOR’s mandate to 31 March 1995.

The situation had turned sharply towards intervention in the spring of 1994. US diplomacy led by Richard C. Holbrooke, Assistant Secretary of State for European and Canadian Affairs, brought about an end to fight-

ing between the Croats and Muslims and led to the creation of the Croat-Muslim Federation in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The push toward intervention also brought to life new efforts through the five-power Contact Group (the USA, Russia, Germany, France, and Great Britain) to seek a common approach to a solution to the conflict, which culminated in the peace proposal of 13 May 1995. Although there were clearly distinct national interests involved in each power's position, they shared a common recognition of the need to bring the fighting in Bosnia to an end. There was also an increasing recognition that UNPROFOR was an insufficient instrument for the peace enforcement mission, and during the winter of 1994–1995 it appeared that the national contingents of UNPROFOR would have to withdraw from Bosnia while fighting was still under way. In late May 1995 France threatened to pull out of UNPROFOR.

The combination of military and political developments in the spring and summer of 1995 created the conditions for a negotiated settlement under the Dayton Accords. Internal and external events, which included NATO air strikes around Pale, the fall of Srebrenica in July, and the Croatian army's conquest and occupation of West Slavonia and then Krajina, put great pressure on the Serbs. There was an increasing determination to use NATO forces in an active peace enforcement role against the Serbs in Bosnia, which culminated in powerful air strikes against Serbian forces in defence of UN-mandated safe havens in late August and early September.⁴⁰

In August and September 1995, in response to Bosnian Serb shelling of Sarajevo, NATO air and naval forces launched a series of air strikes on key Bosnian Serb army installations. These targets included command and control systems (command points and communications nodes), air-defence systems, logistics, transport lines, and infrastructure. The air strikes, although lasting only a few days, provided proof of the powers' will to intervene effectively and brought rapid movement on the diplomatic front. Russian press reports credited NATO with the precision application of air power against strictly military targets and noted few instances of collateral damage and civilian casualties.⁴¹ A cease-fire was achieved, and the process of setting up direct negotiations among the Croatian, Bosnian, and Yugoslav governments, acting as the representatives of the Bosnian Serbs, began.

There was a considerable increase in tension within the international community over the fast pace of events in Bosnia in the autumn of 1995. The ethnic cleansing that had marked the Croatian advance into Krajina and West Slavonia aroused Russian public opinion – Russians feared that worse was in store for the Serbs in Bosnia-Herzegovina.⁴² Serious tensions existed between Washington and Moscow over the nature of NATO's role after the air strikes. Colonel Andrei Demurenko of the

Russian armed forces, then serving on the UNPROFOR staff in Sarajevo, reported that there was little probability that Serb forces fired the mortar rounds into Sarajevo's market area, and Russian media were quick to condemn that action as a provocation designed to justify NATO's air strikes.⁴³ Demurenko later noted with frustration what he saw as the inherent NATO bias against the Serbs. "Both sides are noted for the brutality of their actions, but as soon as the Serbs violate the armistice, the United Nations sanctions bombing strikes; but when the armistice is violated by the Muslims, it confines itself to severe protests."⁴⁴ The Yeltsin government feared unilateral action by NATO at the expense of Russian interests in the Balkans and faced a wave of anti-American sentiment in Russian society, especially from "Red/Brown" forces who depicted the Yeltsin government as a tool of foreign interests. An RPG round was fired at the American embassy in Moscow without loss of life. The Clinton administration for its part judged Russian participation in the NATO-led peace operation vital to its success. In this context the close working relationship forged between Secretary of Defense William Perry and his Russian counterpart, General Pavel Grachev, proved invaluable.

The Dayton Accords and the General Framework Agreement

During November 1995 negotiations were conducted among the three states (Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia – for the Croats of Bosnia-Herzegovina – and Yugoslavia – for the "Serbian Republic") under US sponsorship in Dayton, Ohio. These negotiations took place under the observation of representatives of the Contact Group and the European Union. On 23 November the parties initialled the General Framework Agreement and set the stage for the final signing of the agreement in Paris on 14 December 1995. The Dayton Accords, with UN Security Council Resolution 1031, mandated the execution of the civilian and military tasks provided for in the agreement. NATO conducted the actual deployment of IFOR to Bosnia, for which it had been preparing under various contingency plans for several years.

The basic mission of IFOR was to provide for the implementation of the military aspects of the peace settlement in Bosnia-Herzegovina (Annex 1-A of the Dayton Accords). In addition, because of the rapid withdrawal of UNPROFOR, IFOR's tasks also included the creation of secure conditions for performance of all other tasks by civilian organizations in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The military aspects of the peace settlement, as set forth in the Accords' Annex 1-A, reflected in detail the basic tasks of the peace en-

forcement force in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Pursuant to the peace accord, IFOR's basic military tasks included:

- separating the warring parties;
- assuring a cease-fire;
- monitoring the withdrawal of troops and weapons to their designated zones;
- creating stable and secure conditions for the activity of the civilian organizations in fulfilment of the tasks called for in the Dayton Accords.⁴⁵

During implementation of the Dayton Accords, IFOR was to devote primary attention to performing a number of tasks relating to the halting of military actions in Bosnia-Herzegovina, including:

- achieving a long-term halt to the military activities;
- establishing a zone of separation along the coordinated line of cease-fire, approximately two kilometres deep on either side;
- providing the immediate liberation and hand-over of combatants and civilians detained in connection with the conflict, as well as the liberation and hand-over of any prisoners being detained (within 30 days);
- providing for the withdrawal of all the warring parties' forces to beyond the zone of separation;
- liberating territory transferred from one state formation, existing within the framework of Bosnia-Herzegovina, to another;
- providing for the withdrawal of heavy weapons (over a 120-day period) to collection areas and other points designated by the IFOR command;
- disarming and dispersing all armed civilian formations, except for authorized police forces;
- resolving the issue of demobilizing the armed formations that could not be placed in collection areas (barracks).⁴⁶

During preparation for the operation, special attention was devoted to:

- monitoring the implementation of the treaty (along the 1,075-km line of separation and in the zone of separation in an area of 4,300 square kilometres);
- checking that the troops of the former warring factions (FWF) were located in specially designated areas (more than 700 locations);
- checking the anti-aircraft weapons storage areas and monitoring the elimination of fortified facilities;
- establishing the facts of violations of the cease-fire and armistice and investigating them.

In addition, a great many tasks were also to be performed in:

- the mine-clearing process;
- transport issues (maintaining approximately 5,000 km of roads in passable condition);

- providing the security of bridges and tunnels;
- setting up control of the airspace over Bosnia-Herzegovina, as well as control over basic movement along land routes;
- monitoring the implementation of sanctions;
- providing for the security, freedom of movement, and placement of the civilian population;
- taking sanitation and epidemiological measures to prevent infectious illness and epidemics in the conflict region.⁴⁷

The tasks for implementation of the civilian aspects of the peace accords consisted primarily of:

- creating the conditions necessary for the work of humanitarian organizations operating in Bosnia-Herzegovina;
- assisting in the withdrawal of those UN forces that did not receive an IFOR mandate;
- assisting the UNHCR and other international organizations in their humanitarian tasks operating in the conflict zone pursuant to the peace treaty and assisting them in their movement through the conflict zone;
- creating the necessary conditions for the holding of free and fair elections;
- helping refugees and persons forcibly interned to return to their previous locations;
- creating the conditions for negotiations and other measures for peaceful conflict settlement;
- establishing law and order, as well as the normal operation of state institutions;
- providing security for official visits at all levels;
- helping establish normal contacts between the populations of the warring parties.

The interpretation of IFOR's exact role in support of these tasks became a source of dispute between the civilian negotiators of the Dayton Accords and the military multinational commanders entrusted with the execution of the mission.⁴⁸

NATO operational planning for IFOR

Detailed planning for the IFOR operation in Bosnia-Herzegovina was accomplished according to the military aspects of the General Framework Agreement, signed in Paris on 14 December 1995. The basic planning document for IFOR was SACEUR's Operations Plan 10405. It consists of a set of combat documents written by the SACEUR's staff based on the authority to conduct the operation as granted by UN Security Council Resolution 1031 of 15 December 1995. The actions of the Rus-

sian contingent are reflected in the “Plan for the Participation of the Russian Peacekeeping Contingent in the UN Operation in Bosnia-Herzegovina”. All plans reflected the general principles for the conduct of the operation, the primary and secondary military missions, the assessment of the degree of risk, the procedure for conducting the operation, the concept of the operation, the missions of subordinate commanders, coordination measures for tactical missions, logistics procedures, and command and control. Further, the operation plan annexes provided detailed coverage of command and control, reconnaissance, intelligence exchange, force protection, employment of aviation and naval forces, communications, and information, military-legal, logistics, medical, and transportation support.

The plan involved military units from 14 NATO countries (excluding Iceland and Luxembourg) and 10 non-NATO countries. Subsequently, the composition of the peace operations force was redefined and confirmed in the operation plan (Number 10405); military contingents then included a total 36 countries (15 NATO countries, excluding Iceland, and 21 non-NATO countries). The total number of ground forces implementing the accords was approximately 84,000, not counting support services units located outside Bosnia-Herzegovina. Of these, approximately 71,000 personnel were from NATO countries and 12,000 from non-NATO countries.

The zone of conduct of the operation was bounded by land and air borders of part of the former Yugoslavia (Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, and Macedonia), the international waters and airspace of the Adriatic and Ionian Seas, and by the territorial waters of Albania, Croatia, and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. In addition, it included the territory and airspace of the NATO countries of southern Europe, as well as certain other zones and routes. The length of the operation was determined by the peacekeeping mandate and was calculated not to exceed 12 months. The operation was planned in five stages.

- Stage 1 – Readyng and deploying the advance units of IFOR to the conflict zone. This stage included all the actions to specify the number of troops, their combat training, and the preparation and deployment of advance forces. The deployment of advance forces was a key element in the first stage.
- Stage 2 – Insertion of IFOR and deployment to the assigned areas in the conflict zone.
- Stage 3 – Execution of the mission.
- Stage 4 – Transition to peace. The goal was for IFOR to take complete control of the lines of separation of the warring parties and the zones of separation of their armed formations, and organize the restoration of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

- Stage 5 – Withdrawal of IFOR. IFOR was to hand over remaining tasks to the appropriate international civilian organizations. IFOR was to withdraw from the conflict zone.

The plan called for the combined peace operation forces to be deployed as a group of ground, naval, and air components under the operational command of CinC Allied Forces Southern Europe (AFSOUTH).

The ground forces component of the peace operation force was included in the multinational divisions: “North”, based on the US First Armor Division; “Southwest”, based on the British 3rd Mechanized Division; and “Southeast”, based on France’s 6th Light Armoured Division. In addition, a combat support group, including the special operations forces of the Allied Forces Southern Europe (forward command post in Sarajevo) was constituted. Operational reserves, outside the boundaries of the operation, were created and readied for possible deployment.

The chain of command originated with SACEUR. Command of the peace operation force came under Allied Forces Southern Europe, which had the following tasks:

- exercise operational-tactical control of subordinate ground, air, and naval groupings of armed forces from both NATO and non-NATO countries;
- support the protection, self-defence, and freedom of movement of IFOR;
- determine the assembly and storage points for the former warring factions’ heavy weapons moved away from the line of contact, as well as the location for their personnel;
- when necessary, compel the warring parties to halt armed clashes;
- control demarcation lines and zones of separation in accordance with the Dayton Accords;
- provide security for the withdrawal of the UN peacekeeping contingent;
- create joint military commissions and coordination bodies with civilian organizations;
- provide close air support for the UN peacekeeping forces, including in the region of Eastern Slavonia, Baraniya, and Western Srem, based on the appropriate UN Security Council resolutions;
- assist the UNHCR and other international humanitarian organizations;
- monitor the actions of the sides to mark and clear minefields, neutralize and remove obstacles, and prevent the laying of new minefields or obstacles;
- control movement along the road between Sarajevo and Gorazde;
- control radar emissions, particularly anti-air-defence systems in the operation zone, and, if necessary, suppress them with radio-electronic warfare assets;
- control the airspace over Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Agreements stipulated the participation of non-NATO countries, limiting them to one-quarter of the total number of troops from NATO countries and comprising no more than one single tactical unit subordinated to a higher command (for example, a battalion as part of a brigade, a brigade as part of a division). To the greatest extent possible, existing NATO standards for troop training and combat employment were applied to the non-NATO contingents.

Non-NATO countries participated in the operational planning. They provided representatives proportional to the number of troops designated for the peace operation force. Responsibility for logistics, finance, and other types of support for the national contingents would remain with the national commands but would be coordinated by SACEUR, according to the terms of the agreement.

In keeping with the principle of unity of command, SACEUR had full operational control. Non-NATO forces and assets were integrated into the NATO structure. The chain of command and control ran from SACEUR to the IFOR commander, down to the commanders of the IFOR components (commander of the ARRC, commander of the naval task and support forces for Allied Forces Southern Europe), and then to the subordinate troops. Close cooperation with staff organizations and parallel planning made it possible to coordinate strategic, operational, and tactical plans swiftly.

Negotiating Russian participation in IFOR

NATO and the Russian Federation agreed on principles and organizational procedures to integrate the Russian contingent. During the period between the signing of the Dayton Accords and the General Framework Agreement in Paris, US and Russian defence officials conducted intense negotiations over the command and control arrangements for the Russian forces, the size and nature of the Russian contingent, and the area of their deployment. The Russians did not want to be subordinated to the NATO chain of command, while US officials were insistent upon the establishment of unity of command. In the final analysis General Joulwan devised a unique command arrangement under which Russian forces could serve in Task Force Eagle inside the First Armor Division's headquarters as part of Multi-National Division (North). They were to be commanded by General Joulwan, as SACEUR, and through his Deputy for Russian Forces, Colonel-General Leontiy Shevtsov. This operation control arrangement bypassed the ARRC commander, Admiral Leighton Smith. Secretary Perry, Minister Grachev, General Joulwan, and General Shevtsov initialled what became the OPCON/TACON (operational control/tactical control) arrangement for the participation of the Russian

Separate Airborne Brigade with General Nash's First Armor Division in Multi-National Division (North).

Under this command and control arrangement for the Russian brigade Russian authorities exercise national command of the brigade for administration, good order, and discipline. SACEUR exercises OPCON (*operativnoe upravlenie*) of the Russian brigade through the Deputy SACEUR for Russian Forces. The Russian brigade is subordinate for TACON (*takticheskoe vaziemodeystvie*), however, to the MND(N). While this gives the Commander MND(N) the responsibility for setting priorities within the Russian brigade sector, he does not have *de jure* authority to assign missions to the Russian brigade. In fact, the Commander MND(N) regularly assigns missions and tasks to the Russian brigade through daily and mission FRAGOS (fragmentary orders/*chashtnyy boevoy prikaz*). This arrangement provides for the Russian commander to clear any task given to the brigade with the Deputy SACEUR for Russian Forces in Mons or with the Ministry of Defence in Moscow. In practice, over five years of combined operations the succession of Russian brigade commanders very rarely refused to execute a mission or task issued to them. These rare cases arose when the Russian brigade commander interpreted the mission or task to involve a conflict with the rules of engagement established by his national government.

The second issue crucial to the integration of the Russians was the size and nature of the force to be deployed. Initially, Minister Grachev agreed in principle to participate in the operation but left the actual size of the force and the specific mission open. Press reports spoke of an initial commitment that would be small and confined to the specialized task of mine removal. However, the success of "Peacekeeper I" and "Peacekeeper II" exercises had a positive impact on the Perry-Grachev conversations and led to a revision of the commitment to a brigade-size force drawn from Russian airborne forces.

The third issue concerned the area of deployment. This proved the most intense part of the negotiations. Initially, the Russians had proposed that their brigade be deployed near Brcko in a position where they could watch over the Posavina Corridor.⁴⁹ Given the unresolved status of Brcko in the Dayton Accords and the strategic importance of the Posavina Corridor, that deployment did not meet with great enthusiasm from the NATO high command. Russian observers warned against any attempt to marginalize the brigade's role. The Russian media reported that "Changes in the areas of responsibility in northern Bosnia, mapped out at a high level, would injure Russian interests."⁵⁰ Colonel Andrei Demurenko even spoke of a NATO intent to give the brigade a "phantom role" in the operation. General George Joulwan came up with an alternative deployment in the same region of Bosnia-Herzegovina, but

one that would put Russian forces between two US brigades of the First Armor Division and place Russian forces in an area around Uglevik, occupied by both Muslims and Serbs. Joulwan stressed the importance of the appearance and existence of impartiality in the actions of the peacekeepers. This proposal, as embodied in what Joulwan labelled the “Da/Nyet map”, was agreed to by the Russians and became the basis for the Russian Separate Airborne Brigade’s deployment.⁵¹ The Russian press reported favourably on the relationship between Joulwan and Colonel-General Shevtsov, his Deputy for Russian Forces, noting the “particular respect and deference” extended to him and his staff at Mons.⁵² SACEUR intended that this relationship would also exist in MND(N), into which the Russian Separate Airborne Brigade was deploying.

Deployment of the Russian Separate Airborne Brigade

In November 1995 the Russian Ministry of Defence tasked its airborne forces with the formation of a separate airborne brigade. Personnel were recruited from the 98th and 96th Guards Airborne Divisions stationed near Ivanova and Pskov, and began pre-deployment orientation and training. This training was quite intensive and involved three distinct sets of activities: training of individual soldiers for peacekeeping operations in the theatre, combat training of subunits and command and staff map exercises, and ground reconnaissance of the deployment area by the command group. Personnel were chosen for the brigade from among servicemen who had served in the armed forces for at least six months.⁵³

On 5 January 1996 the Russian Separate Airborne Brigade was activated. The brigade, under the command of Colonel Lentsov, deployed to Bosnia in accordance with the following directives: UN Security Council Resolution 1031 of 15 December 1995; Presidential Decree of the Russian Federation of 14 February 1996; Decree of the Russian Federation Council 772-1 SF of 2 January 1996; and the Instruction of the Ministry of Defence #312/1OZsh of 9 January 1996.

Deployment of the Russian force began slightly later than that of the main NATO force (12 January 1996). The Russians moved by air and rail (75 air-transport flights and 11 trains). The military air-transport flights arrived at Tuzla, and the trains at Bijelina. By Transfer-of-Authority Day plus 45, 2 February 1996, the Russian brigade completed its deployment and began carrying out its assigned security task in the controlled region. The success of the deployment of the Russian contingent was due in large part to successful cooperation with the movement-control elements.

The team of Russian officers doing the operational-strategic planning coordinated closely with the Mobility Coordination Centre at SHAPE. In

addition, at the fifth Joint Tactical Air Command in Vicenza, Italy, a team of four Russian officers from the general staff of the Russian Federation's armed forces worked out the details of the movement. During the deployment, liaison teams working on the staff of the American division accomplished direct coordination between the receiving division and the Russian brigade. The US division commander, Major-General Nash, and the commander of the Russian brigade, Colonel Lentsov, established a close working relationship under the unique OPCON and TACON arrangement established for the Russian Separate Airborne Brigade. General Nash spoke of four "reasons" behind the success of the US-Russian military relationship in Bosnia:

- we had common strategic goals;
- we were professional soldiers;
- as a result of the Cold War, we knew a lot about each other and were able to use that knowledge;
- the senior leaders were insistent about making the partnership work – both Ministers of Defence (Perry and Grachev) were very supportive but did not try to meddle or try to help too much.⁵⁴

Nash also stressed the importance of the positive professional relationship which developed between American and Russian commanders. The news that a Russian brigade would be included in the First Armor Division's area of operations came as something of a surprise to the division planners. Brigadier-General Stan Cherrie was surprised. "And my first reaction when I heard it in the plan was 'the Russians?' I just couldn't believe that we had come that far in that small time."⁵⁵ General Nash gave priority attention to the integration of the Russian brigade. When Lentsov visited the First Armor Division headquarters in Germany, "We opened all doors for him, allowing him to talk with soldiers and commanders. We tried to impress him that he was a full member of the division team. We did not speak about the Bosnia mission for the first 36 hours."⁵⁶

During the deployment itself one of the most crucial relationships was that which developed between the American brigade commanders (Colonels Greg Fontenot and John Batiste) and Colonel Lentsov. Colonel Fontenot, the commander of one of the neighbouring US brigades on the flanks of the Russian brigade, spoke of the special relationship that developed between himself and the Russian brigade commanders, Colonel Lentsov and his successor Colonel Sergei Generalov. Speaking of the Russian brigade commander, Fontenot stated: "Lentsov was a soldier of unparalleled skills in his home field and without interest in political intrigue either for his own advancement or for some hidden agenda. I found him an honest, forthright soldier and enjoyed being in his company."⁵⁷ These relations were of critical importance to sustaining unity

of effort under the special OPCON and TACON arrangement that governed the relationship between Multi-National Division (North) and the Russian brigade. General Nash observed, "The development of these personal relations are an absolute prerequisite in building trust and confidence among a multi-coalition force."⁵⁸

Colonel Lentsov commanded a brigade composed of two manoeuvre battalions. The headquarters for the brigade, which was large by American standards, included the command group and staff. The brigade brought its own combat support (reconnaissance team, signal company, combat engineer company, NBC defence platoon and support units headquarters company, repair company, motor transport company, logistic support company, military police platoon, and bakery). Each battalion included a battalion headquarters, three airborne companies, self-propelled artillery battery, SAM platoon, and combat and logistic support subunits. The brigade was equipped with BMD-1, BMD-2, BTR-80, and BTRD airborne combat vehicles, 2S9 self-propelled guns, and Ural trucks. The brigade's total strength was 1,340 personnel.⁵⁹ The brigade headquarters was located at Uglevik, with the 1st Battalion's command post at Priboi and the 2nd Battalion's command post at Simin Han near Tuzla. The total area of its sector was about 1,750 square kilometres and about 75 km on the line of separation between Serb and Bosnian Federation forces.⁶⁰ The Separate Airborne Brigade was a well-trained unit; its personnel were also very well compensated for their service in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Officers drew a salary of \$1,000 per month and non-commissioned officers and the contract volunteers up to \$840 per month.⁶¹ Like the rest of the Russian military, the brigade has experienced periods when pay was delayed because of the fiscal crisis that affected the Russian government.

The Russian Separate Airborne Brigade's missions

The Dayton Accords defined IFOR's basic mission and set the initial priorities that would govern the employment of forces on the ground. Primary emphasis was placed upon execution of the stated and implied military tasks, according to the brigade's national rules of engagement. The brigade assisted in the fulfilment of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia-Herzegovina "without use of force, except for instances necessitated by fulfilment of the multinational forces' mandate". It monitored the selective marking of the coordinated cease-fire line, the disengagement zone of the sides, and the line between the Croat-Muslim Federation and the Republika Srpska and their disengagement zone. It observed compliance and ensured the accomplishment by all sides of the military aspects of the peace agreement, which in-

cluded ensuring implementing the agreements on cease-fire zones and disengagement zones; ensuring a cessation of military operations; and ensuring the removal, confiscation, or redeployment of specific forces (arms) and the termination of any actions representing a threat to the execution of their missions or a threat to the other side.⁶² Upon its arrival the Russian brigade took an active part in the execution of the military provision of the Dayton Accords, in what General Nash described as a very intensive period of activity. "This simultaneous deployment and employment of the force was the most difficult task."⁶³ The Russian brigade made a valuable contribution to the successful execution of the military tasks, which were completed in 120 days. Military-to-military relations in support of the military aspects of the Dayton Accords continued and developed during IFOR and SFOR. Joint patrols became a common feature of MND(N) operations. Joint training and orientation visits expanded until the Kosovo crisis of March 1999.

Once the military provisions of the Dayton Accords were executed, it fell to IFOR to sustain the peace in Bosnia-Herzegovina and to assist in the execution of the civil provisions of the accords. The Russian brigade was also tasked with giving assistance to UNHCR and other international organizations in their provision of humanitarian aid; to ensure the safety and freedom of movement of the civilian population; to exercise supervision over the marking and clearing of minefields; and to assist other international organizations in creating conditions for performance of their missions within the scope of the peace settlement, including the conduct of free and fair elections.⁶⁴

Both Russian and American participants in IFOR/SFOR agree that, in comparison to the military aspects of the Dayton Accords, the tasks associated with the civilian mission proved most difficult and caused the greatest strain in relations between MND(N) and the Russian brigade. Nash observed that problems in this area were a product of initial disorganization and a lack of coordination above the division level. Here political questions and issues of subordination hampered effective cooperation. At best, one might with a strenuous effort at consultation and coordination achieve unity of effort among the military, international organizations, and non-governmental organizations. Unity of command was out of the question. So long as the primary interest was the execution and enforcement of the military conditions of the Dayton Accords, US-NATO and Russian military-to-military cooperation was quite successful. When the balance shifted towards assistance in enforcement of the civil tasks of the Dayton Accords, differences emerged in the rules of engagement and in the interpretation of peacekeeping.

With the transition to SFOR the size of the force deployed in Bosnia-Herzegovina was cut initially in half, and the number has continued to

decline. At the same time the missions of the force underwent an important change. In addition to deterring and preventing the resumption of hostilities among the former warring factions and consolidating the gains achieved by IFOR, SFOR was also to “promote a climate in which the peace process could continue to move forward; and provide selective support to civilian organizations within its capabilities”.⁶⁵ This shift in emphasis reflected dissatisfaction with the role IFOR had played in these areas and placed greater emphasis upon military support for the execution of the civil aspects of the Dayton Accords. Richard Holbrooke had been particularly vocal in his criticism of IFOR’s lack of action in support of civil authorities, particularly during the hand-over of Serb areas of Sarajevo to the Bosnian Federation authorities in March 1996. Holbrooke saw the mass exodus of Serbs from the city, complete with the burning of their apartments, as the work of Serbian hard-liners, aimed at the very core of the Dayton Accords. Holbrooke, amongst others in the Clinton administration, began to preach a more active, interventionist role for IFOR in direct support of the civil authorities which lacked the means to enforce their will.⁶⁶ The Russians for their part viewed the conflict differently. Historical experience and ethnic and religious ties tended to elicit sympathy for the Serbs as the historic allies of Russia – they were fellow Slavs and shared the Orthodox confession. Moreover, the Russians looked on Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Balkans in general as a cauldron of ethnic tensions that exploded quickly and violently as a result of economic crisis and political disintegration. This was the same danger facing Russia itself, and the management of such a conflict was a matter of long-term adjustment. General-Lieutenant Nikolai Staskov remarked that there were real dangers associated with forcing a solution. “There is so much hatred that it’s impossible to unite [people] quickly. Later on this unification process will probably work, but right now, to try to achieve it forcibly, from a position of power, as is now being tried, in my opinion, cannot be realised.”⁶⁷

These tensions over the role of SFOR in support of the civil annexes of the Dayton Accords did not initially appear to challenge either NATO or Russia’s commitment to further cooperation. Indeed, the success of IFOR was an important element in the successful negotiation of the NATO-Russia Founding Act of 27 May 1997. This document committed NATO and Russia to “explore the further development of a concept for joint Russia-NATO peacekeeping operations” and looked to the lessons learned in Bosnia-Herzegovina as the basis for “the establishment of Combined Joint Task Forces”.⁶⁸ This high point, however, was followed by a deterioration of Russia’s relations with NATO over the issue of NATO expansion and calls for a wider role for NATO in out-of-area operations in support of “humanitarian intervention”. As one corre-

spondent described the situation, “misunderstandings” were hindering cooperation. He noted a particular problem over NATO’s role in the growing crisis in Kosovo.

When NATO diplomats began informal consultations over the possible use of peacekeeping troops to defuse the crisis in Kosovo, French and German diplomats were interested in involving the Russians. US officials, however, argued that the alliance first needed to sort out its position before bringing the Russians into the discussion.⁶⁹

The low point in NATO-Russia relations came in the spring of 1999, when NATO mounted an air campaign to compel the Milosevic government to curtail attacks on the Albanian population in Kosovo and to accept a NATO-mandated peace enforcement deployment. The Yeltsin government broke off the OPCON arrangement and called the Deputy SACEUR for Russian Forces and his staff home, and the Russian brigade in Bosnia-Herzegovina terminated the TACON arrangement with MND(N). Over the next two months of the bombing campaign the Russian brigade operated in a military limbo in relation to SFOR.

While Russia’s special representative, Viktor Chernomyrdin, played a leading role with President Martti Ahtisaari of Finland in negotiating the agreement that ended the fighting and Russia voted in the Security Council for the UN mandate to authorize the deployment of KFOR under NATO leadership, the issue of Russia’s role in that force remained unresolved. And so in the midst of negotiations over the Russian role, on 11 June, 200 troops and vehicles from the RSAB carried out a march manoeuvre from Ugelvik, through Serbia, to Pristina.⁷⁰ While this unilateral action almost led to a NATO-Russian military confrontation and brought on a sustained effort to deny Russia overflight rights through Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria, it did not lead to a collapse of Russian involvement in SFOR. Indeed, over the following year the OPCON relationship at Mons and the TACON relationship with MND(N) were re-established. That the relationship between MND(N) and the Russian Separate Airborne Brigade survived this strain is a tribute to the degree of interoperability that had been achieved over the preceding three years.

Interoperability and liaison

Liaison officers (LNOs) ensured both communication and understanding. A Russian team served at the division headquarters in Tuzla and an American team deployed with the Russian brigade at Ugelvik. The American LNOs were drawn from foreign area officers with command of the Russian language and familiar with Russia’s culture, society, and

military. Liaison officers coordinated and resolved issues and served as sounding boards for complaints. They ensured that the commander's intent was clear and clarified the meaning of concepts. Colonel Fontenot noted the importance of sharing information to the success of the mission. "The greatest impediment to the exchange of information was not suspicion or policy, it was language and culture."⁷¹ Both Nash and Fontenot stressed the LNOs' contribution to the mission's success and felt that they did not have enough of them.

There were, however, profound differences in their military cultures. The First Armor Division and the follow-on divisions that deployed to MND(N) were the product of a military system transformed into a professional volunteer force in the wake of Viet Nam and were highly confident in their capabilities in the aftermath of the victory in Desert Storm. The Russian military inherited both the pride of the Soviet army and many of its problems. A conscript force, the Russian army was in the process of adapting to a new order at home and was engaged in a difficult civil war in Chechnya. The airborne were the unchallenged élite of the Russian army. Airborne units had fought with distinction in Afghanistan and had been deployed to the many "hotspots" that had erupted during the last years of the Soviet Union and the first years of the Russian Federation. Their motto, "No one but us!", reflected their *esprit de corps*. Russian and American soldiers shared views on many professional questions regarding the operational and tactical conduct of the mission under IFOR/SFOR, but they differed fundamentally on their assessment of NATO and its role. The Americans generally viewed NATO as precisely the right organization to organize and conduct a multinational mission of this nature. Russian veterans of IFOR/SFOR retained their suspicion of NATO and would have preferred operations of this type to be conducted under an OSCE mandate.⁷²

In Bosnia-Herzegovina the differences in military culture were manifest in many areas. American officers were taken aback by the attention that the brigade staff paid to map preparation as part of operational planning. The Russians found the flow of paperwork from MND(N) overwhelming. Under the conditions of deployment to Bosnia-Herzegovina, the First Armor Division imposed a very strict force protection regime covering individual soldiers and movement. The Russians, based on their operational experience elsewhere, kept their force protection regime low, except when they anticipated a crisis associated with the brigade's mission. The Russians joked that the American soldiers were "Ninja Turtles" in their flak jackets and helmets and said that their own force protection came from their "*telnashki*", blue-and-white striped T-shirts that were the mark of the airborne. During patrolling and other activities, the Americans engaged in a steady flow of information on the situation. The

Russian practice was to limit reporting to significant developments in the situation. In the Russian military the important actors in the chain of command are the commander and chief of staff – they did not immediately grasp the importance of the deputy division commander in the American chain of command. Americans with their tendency towards a “proactive” posture had a difficult time in accepting the Russian “reactive” stance. It fell to the Russian and US LNOs to make commanders aware of these differences and to find ways to prevent them from undermining the execution of the mission. As one LNO observed, “staff work and process of coordination and integration were new horizons”. The objective was “to find a solution which could be incorporated into the Russian way of doing business”.⁷³

Conclusion

For almost five years the Russian Separate Airborne Brigade has operated in Bosnia-Herzegovina as part of IFOR/SFOR. It has performed the missions and tasks that arose from the Dayton Accords and acted in keeping with its national rules of engagement. The brigade has operated effectively under the unique OPCON and TACON arrangement that defined its command and control system. This success is in large measure a product of the military professionalism that marked the relations between MND(N) and the Russian brigade. Close personal ties served to support cooperation. These ties have been renewed and deepened through successive rotations of troops and have survived political differences over the execution of the civil aspects of the Dayton Accords and the major crisis of NATO-Russia relations over Kosovo.

The USA and NATO saw major advantages in having Russian participation in the execution of the Dayton Accords, both in terms of impartiality in their execution and in terms of keeping Russia engaged as a partner in creating the new security architecture for Europe. The Russian government for its part viewed Russian participation as a confirmation of its role as a great power and as both a protection of Russian interests in the Balkans and a lever for guiding its evolving relationship with NATO. In spite of disappointment on both sides with the evolution of this arrangement – Russia did not stop NATO expansion or future out-of-area operations and NATO did not gain Russia’s endorsement for further expansion or for NATO-mandated peace operations – the overall geopolitical situation in the Balkans has kept both sides engaged in managing ethno-national conflict in the region. In this context the successful integration of the Russian Separate Airborne Brigade into MND(N) still provides the best example of military-to-military cooperation between

former Cold War adversaries in managing Europe's conflicts, even as it underscores the continuing disagreements over the appropriate pace and direction of conflict resolution.

Notes

1. The views expressed in this chapter are those of the authors and should not be construed to represent the views of the US Department of Defense or the Department of the Army.
2. George A. Joulwan, "Foreword", in Jacob W. Kipp (ed.), *Lessons and Conclusions on the Execution of IFOR Operations and Prospects for a Future Combined Security System: The Peace and Stability of Europe after IFOR. A Joint US/Russian Research Project of the Foreign Military Studies Office (FMSO), Center for Army Lessons Learned, U. S. Army Combined Arms Center, Ft. Leavenworth, KS, and the Center for Military Strategic Studies (CMSS), General Staff of the Armed Forces, Moscow, Ft Leavenworth, KS: FMSO Special Study No. 99-4, 1999, p. ii.*
3. Leontiy Shevtsov, "IFOR's Russian forces", *NATO's Sixteen Nations*, Vol. 41, No. 2, 1996, p. 24.
4. Interview with Colonel-General Leontiy Pavlovich Shevtsov, Moscow, 8 December 1997.
5. Tom Wilhelm, "With the Russian brigade in Bosnia: Military teamwork and the success of IFOR", *European Security*, Vol. 6, No 2, Summer 1997, p. 47.
6. Pavel Baev, *The Russian Army in a Time of Troubles*, Oslo and London: Peace Research Institute/Sage, 1996.
7. On the Chechen war and its origins see Anatol Lieven, *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998; Carlotta Gall and Thomas de Waal, *Chechnya: Calamity of the Caucasus*, New York: New York University Press, 1998.
8. Colonel-General Eduard Vorobyev, "On Russia's conceptual approach to peacekeeping", in *Peacekeeping: Translated Texts of Three Oral Presentations Given by Members of the Russian Federation Armed Forces*, Ft Leavenworth, KS: Foreign Military Studies Office, 1994.
9. *Ibid.*
10. Raymond C. Finch III, *The Strange Case of Russian Peacekeeping Operations in the Near Abroad, 1992–1994*, Ft Leavenworth, KS: Foreign Military Studies Office, 1996 <<http://call.army.mil/call/fmso/fmsopubs/fmsopubs.htm#Russia>>.
11. Vorobyev, note 8.
12. Andrei Demurenko, "Rossiiskaya model' mirotvorchstva", *NG Military Review*, 2 August 1997 <<http://udb.eastview.com/97/NGA/01/data/v005-24.htm>>.
13. The renewal of the Russian military intervention in Chechnya in 1999 as result of Chechen fighters' raids into Dagestan was never presented as a peace operation. The Yeltsin and Putin governments have instead depicted it as an armed intervention against bandits and terrorists and defined the operational objective as the re-establishment of Russia's territorial integrity and sovereignty in the region.
14. Lieven, note 7, pp. 280–281.
15. Nikolay Staskov, "Russian assault force in the Balkans: Organization and fulfilment of peacemaking missions by a Russian separate airborne brigade as part of multinational forces in Bosnia-Herzegovina", *Armeyskiy Sbornik*, No. 9, September 1997, pp. 8–11.

16. Colonel Vladimir I. Krysenko, "Military aspects of peacekeeping and the participation of Russian armed forces in UN peacekeeping operations and in areas of armed conflict on the territory of the CIS and Russia; Logistics support of peacekeeping operations", in *Peacekeeping: Translated Texts*, note 8.
17. Susan Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy: Chaos and Dissolution after the Cold War*, Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1995, pp. 306–309.
18. For more on the Russian domestic and foreign policy debate during the Yugoslav crisis, leading up to the decision to support UNPROFOR, see E. Y. Gus'kova (ed.), *Yugoslaviya v ogne: Dokumenty, fakty, kommentarii*, Moscow: Fond Yugoslavyanskikh issledovaniy i sotrudnichestva "Slavyanskaya letopis'", 1992; E. Y. Gus'kova (ed.), *Yugoslavskiy krizis i Rossiya: Dokumenty, fakty i kommentarii (1990–1993)*, Moscow: Fond Yugoslavyanskikh issledovaniy i sotrudnichestva "Slavyanskaya letopis'", 1993.
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22. Andrew Bair, "What happened in Yugoslavia? Lessons for future peacekeepers", *European Security*, Vol. 3, No. 2, Summer 1994, pp. 345–346.
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24. Sidorov, note 19.
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28. "UN base looted", *BOSNEWS Digest*, No. 481, 27 November 1995 <www.hri.org/news/agencies/bosnet/95-11-27.bos.html>; "Bosnian Serb leader accepts Dayton Agreement", *New York Times*, 11 November 1995 <www.nando.net/newsroom/nt/1125dayton.html>.
29. Regarding one such incident see Foreign Press Bureau Zagreb International Press Centre, *Daily Bulletin*, 6 July 1994. In early July 1994 Russian troops at a checkpoint near Nemetin stopped four Osijek city sanitation trucks heading towards the city dump at Sarvas. The Croat truck drivers responded by dumping the garbage at the checkpoint. The Russian troops said they acted on the basis of their mandate to protect all persons residing in their zone from fear of armed attack. They noted specific health and security concerns in this particular case. The Croat garbage men said that they had been making the same run for over two years without incident. While the Croat press treated the incident as evidence of Russian bias in favour of the Serbs of Sarvas, the problem was quickly resolved by negotiations between the Russian command and the Croat army.
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31. Transcript of interview with General-Lieutenant Nikolai Staskov, the Deputy Commander of Russian Airborne Troops (VDV) for Peacekeeping, Moscow, 9 December 1998.
32. United Nations, note 20.
33. Woodward, note 17, p. 328.
34. United Nations, note 20.
35. *Ibid.*

36. *Ibid.*
37. *Ibid.*
38. Sergei Sidorov, "Tysyacha i odna Saraevskaya noch'", *Krasnaya zvezda*, 30 December 1994.
39. United Nations, note 20.
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41. Igor Rotar, "City of snipers. Reportage from Muslim and Serb Sarajevo", *Izvestiya*, 29 September 1995, p. 4.
42. Yelena Guskova, "NATO starts a war in the Balkans", *Krasnaya zvezda*, 1 September 1995, p. 3.
43. *Ibid.*
44. Rotar, note 41.
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51. National Defense University Library, *The General George A. Joulwan Papers*, unpublished documents.
52. Pavel Feldengauer, "Partners", *Segodnya*, 25 January 1996, p. 2.
53. Staskov, note 15, p. 8.
54. Comments made by Major-General William Nash during teleconference, Army War College – Combined Arms Center, 15 December 1997.
55. Transcript of interview with Brigadier-General Stanley Cherrie, Ft Leavenworth, 19 December 1997.
56. Nash, note 54.
57. Transcript of interview with Colonel Gregory Fontenot, Ft Leavenworth, 16 December 1997.
58. Nash, note 54.
59. Staskov, note 15, pp. 8–9; "The Russian Separate Airborne Brigade command interview" <[http://tfeagle.army.mil/RSAB per cent20Interview per cent20\(En\).html](http://tfeagle.army.mil/RSAB%20Interview%20(En).html)>.
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62. *Ibid.*
63. Nash, note 54.
64. Staskov, note 15, pp. 8–9; "The Russian Separate Airborne Brigade Command Interview", note 59.
65. Larry K. Wentz (ed.), *Lessons from Bosnia: The IFOR Experience*, Washington, DC: National Defense University, Institute for National Strategic Studies, 1997 <http://call.army.mil/call/spc_prod/ccrp/lessons/bosch02.htm>.
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68. The NATO-Russia Founding Act, Paris, 17 May 1997.
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Russian peacekeeping operations in Georgia

John Mackinlay and Evgenii Sharov

This chapter describes two separate peacekeeping operations, one in South Ossetia, which deployed in July 1992, and one in Abkhazia, which deployed after the Moscow Agreement was signed in May 1994. Although these operations are distinct in their style, and in the train of local events that led to their deployment, the overarching circumstances of Georgia's decline are common to both of them. This chapter is therefore organized in three parts which recognize this common background. The first part is a generalist view of Georgia. It explains how the embryonic Black Sea nation acquired the attributes of statehood that in due course helped to hold it together, but at the same time how its society became deeply divided in a way that would tear it apart when the overarching structures of the communist regime were removed. The second part describes the peacekeeping operation in South Ossetia, and the final part details the peacekeeping operation in Abkhazia.

The collapsing Georgian state

Georgia claims a territorial and cultural identity that is as defined and longstanding as any successful European state. The Neolithic origins of its modern people can be traced as far back as the fifth millennium BC. Sited at the crossroads between several powerful empires, it was to be expected that the original Georgian tribes would be augmented by mi-

grating communities which also settled in the area. Over the period of their gradual development as a nation, several ethnically different tribes moved into the area. The disparity of ethnic groups was to some extent mitigated by the continuity of nearly 1,000 years of Bagratid rulers. From 800 AD until the late eighteenth century a succession of Bagrationi families held the territories together, along with the communities which had become identified with them.¹ Territorially, the eastern corner of the Black Sea has been identified as Georgian land for over 1,000 years. The Black Sea coastline to the west and the Caucasus Mountains to the north maintain the physical continuity of this space. The Georgian territory's southern and eastern borders changed between the twelfth-century Georgian Empire and the Ottoman annexation 400 years later. Nevertheless, the position of the Georgian population at the elbow of the Black Sea coast and its attachment to that particular territory remained fairly constant. Although the Georgians were exposed to the cultural influences of the more powerful civilizations to their north and south, their language and religion have developed independently. Despite 70 years of intensive Soviet domination, the Georgians have maintained their unique alphabet and their particular interpretation of the Christian religion within the Georgian Orthodox Church. Traditionally, non-orthodox religions have also been tolerated.

As early as 1773, Georgia acceded to the need for protection within the Russian Empire as an annexed state and materially accepted the consequent loss of its independent status. The next hundred years of development saw a gradual transfer of power and wealth from the traditional ruling families to a new urban class of merchants and manufacturers. By 1900 the population had started to shift from the rural communities into the urban areas. The Georgian working classes became more articulate, assertive, and politicized. Georgian intellectuals began to reappraise their national identity and question the influence of other communities, including the Armenians and the Russians. Georgia was changing, along with many other countries in Europe, from its traditional rural origins to becoming a more metropolitan society.

Georgia's assimilation into the Soviet Union following the Red Army invasion in 1921 was not so much a traumatizing cultural and political subordination as a continuation of an existing relationship of a protectorate state and its imperial master. During 70 years of Soviet domination, the Georgian communist élite established a pervasive influence in the running of the state. Although the party system may have improved and altered the state's wealth and lifestyle, its Georgian functionaries remained intensely traditionalist in their social organization and outlook. Throughout the system officials were corrupt, chauvinistic, and remained socially anchored to male cliques linked by their families, clans, and vil-

lages, and less by professions and leisure interests. Even within Georgian society itself there was a tension between the metropolitan element of the population, which was ethnically heterogeneous and broadly informed by democratic and internationalist ideas, and the powerfully organized traditionalists.²

So by 1980, although Georgia had the appearance and many of the attributes of statehood, it also had fissures which could divide the population, and cultural and social tendencies that might act centrifugally in a weakened state. Under the strong and pervasive control of the communist system, these vulnerabilities were held in check. The Moscow government recognized the unique ethnic communities in Georgia, the South Ossetians, Adjarians, and Abkhazians, as “titular nations”.³ Moscow used this direct linkage to its farthest territories manipulatively as a controlling device through which it could, if necessary, undermine any nationally independent behaviour by officials in their dominion states. In this way ethnic disparities were emphasized and at times exacerbated for use as a controlling device. As long as Moscow’s centralizing system of power remained intact, there was no danger of an irretrievable breakdown. In the event of its central power becoming relaxed or ineffective, however, the fissures that were encouraged by the “divide and rule” system would become fatally disabling.

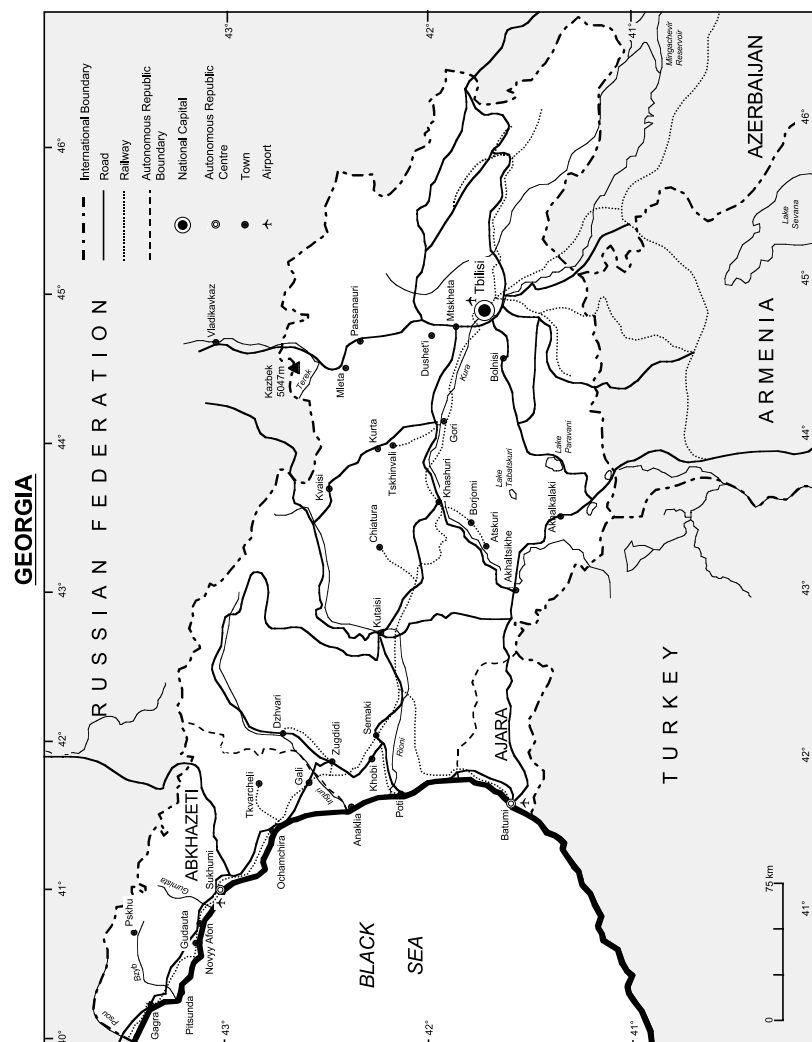
In the 1980s Moscow’s grip began to relax. By 1988 Russia was seized by the events of its own collapsing power and grew less disposed, and less able, to control its dominion states. Several reactive areas of nationalist activity developed in response to this absence of authority. *Perestroika* had widened the limits of what could be discussed in public. Discussions about nationalism lead to discussions about independence.⁴ At state level Georgian nationalism, which had never retreated very far from the surface even in the most repressive moments of the communist regime, began to flourish. Georgians campaigned openly to throw off the Russian control and advocated Georgian independence. Meanwhile, at a lower level within Georgia, the “titular nations” of South Ossetians, Abkhazians, and Adjarians, and even the Mingrelians,⁵ began to assess their new position. Moscow’s relaxation of control had also allowed them greater freedom to act in their own interests within the framework of a large and now ineffective regime. The threat for them, however, seemed to be that the space left by Moscow’s collapse was likely to be filled by a more immediate and unattractive assertion of Georgian authority.

An important factor in this rapidly changing situation was the presence and disposition of the Soviet garrisons in Georgia. These forces were deployed in barrack areas centred on Sukhumi, Batumi, Akhalkalaki, and Vaziani, with a large HQ in Tbilisi. They comprised naval, air force, and armoured units and, fortuitously, they were stationed in, or close to,

the potentially disaffected areas of Georgia. The bases at Sukhumi and nearby Gudauta were going to have a considerable bearing on the outcome of the Abkhazian uprising. The Adjarians skilfully used the Russian presence in and around Batumi as a device to check Georgian efforts to reimpose their authority in what became a “shadow state”⁶ within Georgian territory.

Traditionally the ultimate exercise of Soviet authority, especially in a local disturbance and uprising, rested on the forbidding presence of the Soviet forces and the awful possibility of their violent intervention. It now mattered enormously how these garrisons would behave in the dilemma of loyalties that faced them. Although the Georgian nation had some attributes of statehood, it nevertheless lacked one crucially important constituent – its own effective armed forces. In the surge of nationalist excitement that was to grip Tbilisi, this vitally disabling omission was obscured by the pantomime presence of the Georgian National Guard. However, the weakness of the National Guard and the vacuum of authority that was beginning to emerge did not escape the attention of the separatist movements beyond the capital. At a very local level, far from Moscow’s interdictions, several factors moved the Russian military units in favour of their local communities. Soviet forces were deeply demoralized by events in Russia⁷ and were therefore less inclined to become involved in any local violent imposition of authority. The shrill anti-Russian rhetoric of the Georgian nationalists turned them away from the Georgian camp. In some cases local separatists had developed useful economic relationships with nearby Soviet military commanders.⁸ Although Soviet garrisons in Georgia were not actively helping the separatist forces at this stage, their low morale, poor discipline, absence of accountability, and reaction to Georgian antagonism were crucially important in future events. In the late 1980s the prevailing witticism in Soviet barracks in Georgia was “we don’t want to fight; here – take my weapon, you can fight each other”.⁹ Consequently it was possible for separatist movements to see that the coast was clear for their greater autonomy and also to arm themselves from the corrupt and demoralized Soviet soldiers. The passage of arms from a Soviet garrison also benefited the South Ossetians, who took advantage of a Soviet engineer regiment stationed in the their area.¹⁰

The growing pressure and tension on the cohesion of the Georgian state were precipitated by the rising power and provocative behaviour of the nationalists, who coalesced around the figure of Zviad Gamsakhurdia. In 1988 the South Ossetians began to articulate their desire for greater union with the North Ossetians.¹¹ This movement was condemned by Gamsakhurdia as a hostile, Russian-inspired, fifth column within the Georgian state. In 1989 he organized thousands of Georgians



to rally at a “meeting of peaceful reconciliation” by driving in buses and cars to the South Ossetian town of Tskhinvali. Ossetian roadblocks prevented them from reaching their destination and several were injured in the violence that followed. In March 1989 the Abkhazians held a mass meeting at Lhkny in Abkhazia¹² to demand the recognition of their autonomous status. In April Soviet troops, on orders from Moscow, brutally suppressed a demonstration by Georgians in which 21 were killed. Armed clashes between the Georgian National Guard and local Abkhazian forces followed in July. After his success in the 1990 presidential elections, Zviad Gamsakhurdia’s meteoric rise to power continued to raise tensions between Georgia and Moscow and between the Georgian state and its autonomous communities. In August 1999 he supported the coup against Gorbachev. His unequivocal anti-Russian activities made him enemies, both within the residual communist structures in Georgia and more widely in the Moscow executive government, which had survived the coup. When the implications of the coup’s failure were understood in Tbilisi, an important element of the National Guard turned against him and in March 1992 Gamsakhurdia fled.

In Moscow the significance of Georgian autonomy was forced to the attention of the Russian general staff by the breakdown of law and order in Georgia and Gamsakhurdia’s virulent stand against Gorbachev during the coup in Moscow. According to Pavel Baev the Russian reactions were driven not so much by “imperialistic” ambitions within the officer corps as by the very real risk of the disintegration of the Russian armed forces.¹³ For the general staff two important conclusions seemed to emerge from these events. Firstly, the direct intervention of Soviet troops to restore their authority was extremely counterproductive. For example, in April 1989 when the Soviet garrison suppressed demonstrations in Tbilisi, killing 21 Georgians, Gamsakhurdia gained the enormous popularity which gave him the necessary momentum for success as a presidential candidate. Intervention to restore Russian influence would therefore have to be exercised in a more oblique manner, perhaps through an intervention to “suppress” or “manage” the growing violence between Georgia and its breakaway communities. Secondly, with the increasingly inevitable prospect of Georgian secession, it was clear that Russia still had important strategic reasons to remain in the region.

Russian interests in the Caucasus region

Throughout the period of the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the emergencies that followed in Georgia, the Russians demonstrated an interest in maintaining a presence in the region. The theories and rationale underpinning policy in Moscow are explained in Chapter 1. Locally on

the ground there were small, but less speculative and rather more substantive, indicators of a continuing Russian interest in the region. These are now discussed in order of priority.

Strategic borders

The presence of Russian border guard units on the Georgian-Turkish and Georgian-Azerbaijan borders in effect confirmed their significance as strategic frontiers for Moscow rather than as the state borders of Georgia. Russian interests have remained extensive and pervasive in the twilight zone between Russia's internationally recognized state boundaries and the strategic borders indicated by the effective presence of her border guards. For Russia's strategic purposes it was essential that these interests remained within territory over which Russian forces and instruments continue to exercise a dominating influence. For military purposes it was essential that Russia remained in a position to protect the Caucasian borders with Turkey as far forward as possible, and not on the north Caucasian watershed where the internationally recognized border now runs.

Black Sea access

After 1991, Russia's ability to control its strategic and economic interests in the Black Sea region were greatly diminished through both the geographic reductions in access to the Black Sea and the splitting up of the Black Sea fleet. Russia's presence in Abkhazia and the controlling instruments provided by the Russian garrison significantly increased their access beyond their internationally recognized Black Sea frontage. This area also included important capital and cultural interests.

Land routes

The ability to move large amounts of military logistics by road and rail were vital to the operational conduct and capability of the Russian garrisons in Georgia and Armenia. A priority for the Russians was to repair the sections of the railway through Abkhazia that had been damaged during the 1993 offensive and to reopen the road bridges to re-establish a land route. The Caspian oil carriage that ran through Georgian territory, in some cases using the bulk rail systems and terminating in Novvy Afon and Batumi, was another important Russian economic interest in this region, focusing, with many others, on the north-west corner of the Georgian littoral.

Economic interests

Russia's economic interests in the region are also largely located in Georgia and Abkhazia. Much of Russia's capital investment in industrial

installations was destroyed in the madness of the brief 1992–1993 civil war within Abkhazia – the landscape of gutted factories speaks for itself. The installations, which could easily have been resuscitated in the late 1990s, are now no longer economically viable due to increasing competition from a rapidly changing Black Sea economic region. The residual capital investments, which remained relatively untouched by the conflict and altered economic factors, were the seaside sanatoriums. Besides the capital investment, these resorts still exercised a considerable cultural significance as the traditional Russian leisure access to the Black Sea.

At lower levels the citrus fruit exported to Russian markets from Abkhazia, and to a lesser extent West Georgia, continued to pass through Russian wholesale and excise arrangements. Without effective government and policing, West Georgia and Abkhazia became centres for black-market activity and for trafficking stolen cargoes, weapons, and drugs. Circumstantial evidence pointed to the possibility that the unchallenged presence of Russian military organizations in Abkhazia allowed individual interests based in Moscow to benefit from this traffic.

Military garrisons

The military bases in Batumi, Vazani, Akhalkalagi, and Gudauta continued to underpin Russia's strategic presence in the region. Russian oil transit and transcaucasian communications, described above, were focused in the Abkhazian coastal area with only a nominal Abkhazian presence to impede their maintenance and oversight by the Russian authorities.

Public statements

Russia's continued maintenance of these interests was later confirmed by public and private declaration. In November 1996 Konstantin Zatulin, the director of the Institute of the Near Abroad, was appointed to represent the MFA team in negotiations with Abkhazia. In an interview with *Pravda* on 5 November 1996 he emphasized that a Russian presence in the region was an assurance of the "well-being of the last Black Sea region left to us". Although, according to him, Abkhazia could not become part of the Russian Federation, a continued (military) presence ensured it would be a zone of "economic well-being" where Russians would continue to invest and own property. He felt that having lost hundreds of kilometres of the Black Sea coastline, Russia's continuing access to the 530 kilometres of coastline in Abkhazia was not regarded as a burden. Zatulin also hinted strongly that a continued Russian presence in Abkhazia acted as a guarantee of Georgia's respect for Abkhazia's "special rights". It was not clear from his statement to what extent these special rights were also Russian interests, but the linkage was implied

throughout his statements. Similar linkage has been expressed in a separate communication to Georgian officials. In this, the Russians viewed their “peacekeeping and mediatory” presence as linked, this time in the manner of a *quid pro quo* for:

- Russian access to facilitate a “joint” protection of boundaries, referring to the southern Georgian borders
- continued Russian military bases on Georgian territory
- trading preferences that would promote Russian imports over those of competitors (mainly Turkish)
- providing for future commercial preferences, including a single currency and credit systems.

De facto assumption of protectorate status

In several ways the Russians demonstrated a protector-protectorate relationship towards Abkhazia that compromised their own status as guarantors of an impartial peace process. Russian actions related more to the day-to-day formalities, or lack thereof, that governed the relationship between states rather than to their conduct as peacekeepers. At a diplomatic level Russia appeared to have reimposed a protectorate status in several ways. At the Abkhazian ports it was Russian border guards, not Abkhazian officials, who had the final control over the passage of goods and people. Although Sukhumi was closed by a Georgian government resolution which was reinforced by a CIS agreement that embargoed all imports and exports by this means, Russian military cargoes continued to move through this Black Sea access point. The Abkhazian leader Vladislav Ardzimba confirmed that Abkhazian citizens were being recruited into Russian border guard services. In the summer months Russian personnel from the CISPKF and their families continued to make use of the Abkhazian Black Sea sanatoriums, a resumption of a legacy of the Soviet era. A protectorate status was also evident in Russia’s trade relations with Abkhazia, which reverted to being a Russian rouble zone. Despite Georgian pleas to curtail Russian bilateral trading activities in Abkhazia, importers purchased the Abkhazian citrus crops for the Russian domestic market, an activity that had been explicitly approved by a Russian government resolution signed by Prime Minister Chernomyrdin. In 1995, an estimated 1,500 tonnes of citrus was exported through Russia by this means, amounting to a considerable loss of revenue to the Georgia/Abkhazia state or substate. Without regulating instruments, transfers of capital and payments for exports were made without record or taxation. According to Georgian sources large amounts of Russian roubles entered the Caucasian economic region by this means. Not all of the money was for trading purposes, and some of these transactions supported the government and armed forces of Abkhazia.

Russian peacekeeping operations in South Ossetia

Russian peacekeeping operations in South Ossetia are considered the most successful on the territory of the former Soviet Union in terms of stabilizing the conflict, the peacekeepers' effectiveness, and the facilitation of interactive negotiations between the opposite sides. Russian peacekeeping in South Ossetia can also be regarded as a post-Soviet blueprint for the Moldavian conflict. This section shows that Russia, in terms of the structure of the conflict resolution and peacekeeping mission, became the ultimate arbiter between the conflicting sides, creating secondary roles for international organizations like the OSCE. Russian peacekeeping activity in South Ossetia was different to the UN concept of traditional peacekeeping, but it could be considered a classical Russian approach to crisis management in post-Soviet space. There are similarities with conflict settlement and peacekeeping activity in Moldova and Abkhazia. The logic of Russian involvement follows this pattern:

- imposing the presence of Soviet/Russian troops in the region in inter-ethnic conflict and subordinating the control of the operation to Moscow
- creating a military balance between the parties to the conflict by supplying arms to the favoured side
- establishing a Russian presence as arbiter-mediator that emphasized the role of Moscow and the benefits of Russian interests
- the creation of trilateral peacekeeping forces under Russian supervision.

The purpose of this section is to explain the Russian operation in South Ossetia from the local, tactical level. There is previous research describing the political thinking and policy development in Moscow and this is referred to in Chapter 1. This section describes what actually took place in South Ossetia. It begins with a short description of the territory, followed by a narrative of the events causing the conflict and describing how ex-Soviet troops in the region became a factor in the inter-ethnic conflict. Finally, the trilateral peacekeeping operations will be explained, along with the role and activities of the OSCE mission to Georgia.

Geography and population of South Ossetia

South Ossetia plays a strategically important transit role for economic cooperation and communication between Georgia and Russia. It comprises the central north-eastern part of the territory of Georgia, measures 3,900 square kilometres, and is located on the southern slopes of the Great Caucasian Range. Its territory is mainly mountainous with some agricultural plains in the valleys. In the north, South Ossetia borders

Russia, more precisely the autonomous republic of North Ossetia-Alania, which is part of the Russian Federation and ethnically similar to South Ossetia. The main transport route between Georgia and Russia runs from Tskhinvali to Vladicaucasus, through the Rocksby Pass and the border tunnel. South Ossetia has a common southern boundary with the internal Georgian administrative region of Gori and joins the key transport route connecting the eastern and western regions of Georgia.

The 1989 USSR Census shows that the majority of Ossetians live in the North Caucasus (335,000 in North Ossetia-Alania), and in Georgia there are 164,000, of whom 65,000 live in South Ossetia. The Ossetians are one of the most ancient Caucasian peoples. The Ossetian language stems from the Iranian group of Indo-European languages and its written version was formed in the nineteenth century, based on the Russian alphabet. The Georgian language, on the other hand, belongs to the Caucasian languages of the Kartvelian group.¹⁴ In spite of the language differences, Georgians living in South Ossetia speak Ossetian and many Ossetians speak Georgian. Georgians and Ossetians have no religious differences, with the majority of the Ossetian population being orthodox with a minority Muslim community. Despite differences, Georgians and Ossetians have lived peacefully together and intermarriage is common. For centuries the Ossetians and Georgians were allies during numerous invasions.

The majority of South Ossetians live in towns and in the mountain villages, while the Georgian population in South Ossetia live mainly on the plains. Farming of crops and livestock is the main occupation.¹⁵ There were several large industrial enterprises in action before the conflict, but post-conflict production is difficult as much of the industrial infrastructure was destroyed during the conflict. The South Ossetian autonomous *oblast*, with its administrative centre in Tskhinvali, was formed as part of the Georgian Soviet Republic in 1922 at the same time as the Abkhazian and Adjara autonomous republics were formed.

Conflict causes

Although the Georgian and Ossetian peoples are united by a long period of friendship (Stalin's mother was Ossetian and his father Georgian), the Georgian-Ossetian relationship hangs on its history. It is important to know who were the first to settle in the land and to whom it belonged historically. The peoples of the Caucasus safeguard their identity, the everyday traditions of their people, and relations between ethnic groups. An attempt to alter this delicate balance can have serious consequences. When Moscow's Communist Party organs started losing their central control over the Soviet republics, the nationalism of the republics became

the main threat to the Soviet regime. It also challenged the rights of national minorities within those republics. After the nationalist government came to power in Georgia and declared its independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, it was not automatically recognized by Moscow. Soviet troops in the region remained the only legitimate Moscow-oriented power and force structure. At the same time the Georgian government demanded the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Georgian territory and the hand-over of their arms and property. Meanwhile, in Tbilisi, Zviad Gamsakhurdia and his supporters aimed to create a unitary Georgian state under the slogan "Georgia for the Georgians!". This policy discriminated against the ethnic minorities and provoked countermeasures from the separatist nationalism of the minority leaders in the former autonomous republics. They reacted by making political efforts to separate from Georgia by altering their administrative-political status to the level of an independent republic or by joining the rump of the USSR/Russian Federation.¹⁶

The breakdown of the relations between Tbilisi and the leadership of South Ossetia was exacerbated by several key events. In August 1989 the Supreme Council of Georgia, the Georgian parliament, adopted Georgian as the main language for the whole of the republic. This diminished the importance of the national minority languages and confronted the people's sense of nationality. As a result South Ossetia made unilateral attempts to change its status to an autonomous republic in autumn 1990. Gamsakhurdia reacted by organizing what he called "a peaceful meeting of reconciliation", causing the first serious inter-ethnic collisions and the beginning of the arming of the Ossetian population. Later, in August 1990, when the Supreme Council of Georgia accepted the law limiting the rights of autonomies, South Ossetia proclaimed its independence. Meanwhile Gamsakhurdia's coalition won the parliamentary elections in Georgia and in December 1990 abolished South Ossetia's status as an autonomous *oblast*, a final procedural block to its striving for independence. The confrontation in Tskhinvali of several thousand Georgian National Guardsmen on 5 January 1991 led to conflict with the Ossetian self-defence troops, and later this violence developed into the inter-ethnic war.

Tskhinvali and the space between the Georgian and Ossetian villages were transformed into an area of armed conflict. In addition to military measures, Georgia imposed an economic blockade on South Ossetia by installing control points on the roads connecting South Ossetia with the outside world. This caused an immediate stoppage in their food and power supplies and impacted on the lives of the local people. In response the South Ossetians blockaded the Georgian villages in their area. In the violence that followed the Georgian National Guard showed little disci-

pline, with its commanders and soldiers often acting in their own interests. A similar situation prevailed on the South Ossetian side.¹⁷ A lack of control over the armed forces persisted through the first half of 1992 and aggravated the conflict, causing the repeated breakdown of cease-fire agreements.

At a higher level, relations between Tbilisi and Moscow also impacted on events. Because Georgia had declared its independence and demanded Soviet troop withdrawal, Moscow had to react to this initiative which threatened to disintegrate the USSR further. The Soviet military became the only representative of Moscow's power, because the other instruments of control in Georgia, the Georgian KGB and the Ministry of Interior Affairs, had been nationalized. The Georgian Communist Party oriented to Moscow had lost influence, and nationalists had come into power with the agenda of building a new unified Georgia. Under these circumstances the Soviet troops in Georgia became the natural allies of the South Ossetians, who saw Moscow and the local Soviet military leaders as their defenders. The Georgian nationalists exacerbated the poor morale and psychological condition of Soviet-Russian units in Georgia. Political control of the Soviet armed forces, traditionally supervised by the Central Committee of the Communist Party, was lost. On a wider scale the transformation of the Soviet army to a Russian national force had begun and the KGB structures, which had also monitored the loyalty of the population and imposed civilian control over the military, were in a state of turbulent change. The former Soviet armed forces stationed outside Russia were subordinated to Moscow's central command, the former Ministry of Defence of the USSR. But in many cases they were now neither Soviet nor Russian – they were independent super-national military powers without subordination to any particular state. These forces started to act without civil or political control from the Communist Party, especially after the August coup in Moscow when the communist structures were widely proscribed. Nevertheless the immediate Russian interest was to re-subordinate the former Soviet armed forces units in the republics. According to Georgian officials¹⁸ the Russian forces were not just observers in the South Ossetian confrontation. They began supplying weapons and assisting the local South Ossetian units. There is no documented evidence as to whether they acted independently or on orders from Moscow, or that they were acting in accordance with a strategic plan for maintaining a long-term Russian presence in the region. Nevertheless, the need to subjugate Georgia in both South Ossetia and Abkhazia fitted perfectly into the Russian political and strategic interests for that region. Russia's reactions to Georgia's independence can therefore be presented as a deliberate strategic manipulation to achieve the following goals:

- increase the Soviet – and later the Russian – influence on Georgia's internal affairs
- exploitation of a Moscow-oriented separatist regime in South Ossetia to enable a Russian influence on the internal and political structures of Georgia
- continued possession of the key transport arteries connecting Georgia and Russia
- continued maintenance of Russian garrisons in the area
- ability to foster inter-ethnic conflicts in other Georgian regions where Russian interests need to be safeguarded
- long-term legalizing effect on the presence of military bases by their connection to the open-ended peace forces organized by the Russian negotiating processes.

There were attempts to regulate the conflict before the collapse of the USSR. As Chairman of the Supreme Soviet of the Russian Federal Republic, Boris Yeltsin met Gamsakhurdia in Kazbegi in March 1991. At this negotiation they established a Russian-Georgian Joint Commission of Ministries of Internal Affairs (MIA) to study the situation in the region with a view to restoring order and disarming all illegal forces on the territory of South Ossetia. Both sides agreed to conform to the Soviet Union's Ministry of Defence proposal to withdraw Soviet units from the area. They were to be replaced by MIA units, which would assist in the separation of forces. The arrival of the MIA troops failed to control the conflict; the Russians were accused by the South Ossetians of conniving with the Georgians and by the Georgians of transferring arms to the South Ossetians. The situation was also complicated by the involvement of outside parties. The Confederation of Mountain Peoples of the Caucasus, a conservative, pro-Russian political federation of north Caucasian ethnic groups, offered South Ossetia military assistance. In addition conservative forces led by the Chairman of the Russian parliament, Ruslan Khasbulatov, also attempted to interfere by supporting the South Ossetians, and some Russian politicians in Moscow emerged with statements on the possibility of including South Ossetia in a Russian Federation.¹⁹ During the conflict South Ossetian authorities held a referendum which showed, it is claimed, that 99 per cent of the Ossetian population wanted to join a Russian Federation and unite with North Ossetia.²⁰

During the conflict more than 1,000 civilians were murdered.²¹ Georgian and Ossetian civilians fled from Tskhinvali, and the total number of displaced people was between 70,000 and 100,000.²² This displacement left Georgian houses ruined in Ossetian villages and saw Ossetian homes abandoned in Georgian villages. The refugees from both sides had to occupy their ethnic opponents' houses. At the same time there was much evidence of villages with a dominating Georgian population protecting

Ossetians from the ruthless behaviour of Georgian paramilitary groups and Ossetians doing the same for the isolated Georgians. The intensity of the violence gradually reduced after the end of Gamsakhurdia's regime and with the calming influence of Eduard Shevardnadze in March 1992. This change of leadership in Tbilisi encouraged a more pragmatic approach by the Georgians, who recognized the inevitability of Russian involvement in the peace process. As a result a cease-fire was agreed at Sochi that opened the way for a long-term, trilateral peace process.

Assessment of the Sochi Agreement of 24 June 1992

The Sochi cease-fire came a result of a serious escalation in the violence. The lack of control of the armed forces on both sides led to the deaths of 36 Ossetian civilians, including women and children, who were killed in buses and cars on a secondary road near Tskhinvali on 20 May 1992. This incident threatened to bring Russia, especially North Ossetia-Alania, directly into the conflict on the side of the South Ossetians. In June 1992 Ruslan Khasbulatov, the Chairman of the Supreme Soviet of Russia, described the Georgian actions in South Ossetia as genocide and put pressure on Russia to consider the South Ossetian request to join the Russian Federation.²³ Shortly after the Ossetians were seen using heavy weapons with Russian identification marks, which was interpreted as an additional measure of Russian support for their war effort. To prevent further escalation Shevardnadze met the Chairman of the Supreme Soviet of North Ossetia, A. Galazov, at Kazbegi on 10 June 1992. Both sides agreed on a cease-fire, to form a quadrilateral group of military observers, and to send joint peacekeeping forces to stabilize the conflict. The Kazbegi meeting became the basis for the Georgian and Russian Presidents signing the Sochi Agreement on the Settlement of the Georgian-Ossetian Conflict on 24 June 1992. According to this agreement both parties were to observe a complete cease-fire and withdraw their forces to create a corridor separating the two sides in the conflict area. The Russian forces at Tskhinvali were to act as neutrals and Russia's 37 Field Engineer Regiment and 292 Helicopter Regiment were to withdraw.

As a result of the Sochi process the Joint Control Commission (JCC) was created – its purpose was to guarantee the cease-fire, withdraw armed forces, disband self-defence units, and ensure a security regime in the conflict zone. More generally it was to maintain peace, coordinate joint activities to stabilize the situation, explore political settlement of the conflict, reconstruct the economy of the damaged areas, and return the refugees and displaced. In effect the JCC became the political mechanism to regulate the conflict and supervise the peacekeeping forces. The JCC succeeded in:

- creating a cease-fire and separating the conflicting parties
- withdrawing the Russian units from the conflict zone
- securing the area of conflict
- building confidence among the parties.

However it failed to:

- define the political status of South Ossetia
- return refugees and the displaced
- disarm the local population of both sides.

Defining the political status of South Ossetia and returning refugees depended on the political will of the leaders on both sides. The possession of arms by civilians was also a major obstacle to restoring peace and normality to the area. The danger of more armed confrontations between ethnic groups continued to exist. South Ossetia still had tanks and artillery. Former armed units of South Ossetia were partly reorganized as a national guard and took part as the Ossetian peacekeeping battalion. After the cease-fire South Ossetia withdrew its heavy weapons and hid them in the mountains to the north of the conflict zone. In 1994 it was estimated that South Ossetia still held a number of weapons systems in Djava and Mskhlebi, as detailed in Table 3.1.

In the period following the conflict, South Ossetia started to make a determined effort to vest itself with the symbols of an independent state. By 1996 it had created its own president and parliament, with ministries for defence and other administrative functions. However, the international community did not recognize it as an independent republic. Although the administration of the region was focused on Tskhinvali, the Georgian villages in South Ossetia subordinated themselves directly to the Georgian administrative-territorial region of Gori. In addition each village had a local administration and militia. The administration of these villages was financed from the Georgian budget. The Georgian villages in the conflict area ignored the South Ossetian executive and did not take part in local elections.

Table 3.1 South Ossetian weapons stocks in 1994

| | |
|-----------------------------------|----|
| T-54 tanks | 2 |
| BMP-1 armoured personnel carriers | 1 |
| BMP-2 | 3 |
| BTR-70 | 15 |
| KShM | 3 |
| D-44 artillery guns | 11 |
| AGS-17 | 2 |
| 100 mm guns | 2 |
| BM-21 multiple rocket launchers | 6 |

The peacekeeping operation in South Ossetia

The JCC led the peace process, monitored the peacekeeping forces, and attempted to solve political and economic problems, as well as to restore the economy and encourage the return of the displaced and refugees. It was not designed to be a permanent mission. It comprised Russia (North Ossetian representatives were part of the Russian delegation), Georgia, South Ossetia, and the OSCE, which was regarded as a “participant of another kind”. The Russian representative was always chairman, which gave Russia the power of ultimate arbiter and the overwhelming influence in the decision-making process. Although the OSCE took part in meetings they did not influence the decision-making process.²⁴ The questions of the political status of South Ossetia, refugees, and the economy of the area continued to be discussed at the highest political level between Tbilisi and Moscow. This raised the possibility of a political settlement at the presidential level on both sides. Ostensibly the OSCE acted as mediators, but in real terms Russia had, and still has, the biggest influence in the process of conflict regulation at the local level. Since Sochi, there has been progress in stabilizing the conflict which has led to a reduction of peacekeeping forces in the conflict zone, and the agreement has been manifested by a gradual reduction of the Joint Peacekeeping Force’s (JPKF) posts and checkpoints, with troops returning to their barracks in Tskhinvali and Georgia.

The key documents regulating the JPKF are:

- The Sochi Agreement of 24 June 1992, which defined the principles of the conflict resolution process and acts as the basis for the JCC, the JPKF, and the joint groups of military observers;
- “The Regulations in Joint Forces on Safeguarding Peace and Maintenance of Law and Order in the Area of Conflict”, 24 June 1992, which set out the structure of the subordination of the peacekeeping forces, their financing, and their powers;
- “The Decisions of JCC on Creating a Joint Group of Military Observers”, 4 July 1992, which define the tasks of the observers;
- “The Decision of JCC on Joint Forces on Maintenance of Peace”, 6 December 1994, which defines the task of the Russian battalion as the guarantor of stability in the conflict zone;
- “Regulations on Basic Principles of Military Contingent Activities and Groups of Military Observers for Normalization of the Situation in the Area of the Georgian–Ossetian Conflict”, 6 December 1994, which act as the mandate for the forces in the area.

According to Major-General Valentin Nikolaev, the commander of the JPKF, the most important of these documents are the first two in the list above: the Sochi Agreement and “Regulations”, both of 24 June 1992.²⁵

Table 3.2 JPKF forces in spring 1997

| | Established strength | Held strength |
|------------------|----------------------|---------------|
| Officers | 180 | 168 |
| Warrant officers | 59 | 59 |
| Other ranks | 1,796 | 1,480 |
| Totals | 2,035 | 1,707 |

The structure of the peacekeeping force was unique due to the involvement of the parties to the conflict in the peacekeeping activities themselves. The key element of the force was the Russian battalion. The JPKF comprised a joint headquarters and three motorized infantry battalions: Russian, Georgian, and Ossetian. The total personnel for the JPKF in spring 1997 were as shown in Table 3.2.

The JPKF consisted of a battalion from each of the contributing parties; typically these units had distinctive characteristics.

The Russian battalion was a motorized infantry battalion of Leningrad 45 Peacekeeping Motorized Infantry Division from the former Leningrad military district. It was at full strength in terms of personnel and equipment, totalling 550 all ranks. According to the JPKF commander the Russian battalion occupied the most important places, which were principally the key roads approaching Tskhinvali,²⁶ and Russian officers held all the key positions in the joint PKF staff structures. It was highly significant within the Russian armed forces that, at the time of the authors' interviews with the JPKF commander, the units of the South Ossetia garrison did not possess any special army manual that regulated the Russian conduct of peacekeeping operations. This meant that despite the proclaimed existence of a formal peacekeeping doctrine, in reality units actually engaged in operations made their own hand-to-mouth arrangements for interpreting the needs of the situation and trained accordingly.²⁷ Russian peacekeeping training was therefore designed at battalion level. The Russian MoD financed the Russian battalion and the Minister of Defence, who was also the Chief of the General Staff of the Russian Federation, controlled its activities. The battalion was supplied with food and equipment from the base at Vladikavkaz and had no direct connection to the Russian forces based in Georgia. The battalion was rotated as a unit every six months.²⁸

The Georgian battalion was a motorized infantry battalion from the infantry regiment deployed in Akhaltsikhi. This regiment had four special battalions assigned to peacekeeping activities. The Georgian battalion that was deployed from this regiment to South Ossetia was fully equipped but lacked sufficient communications for its special role. The

battalion was also weak in its combat training due to a lack of ammunition and fuel.²⁹

The Ossetian battalion was formed under the guidance of the Ministry for Extraordinary Situations of North Ossetia-Alania. Initially the peacekeeping forces of North Ossetia deployed to the conflict, but they returned to North Ossetia after the first six months due to logistic and cash-flow problems. The Ossetian battalion numbered about 550 all ranks. Because many were locally conscripted, at least 50 troops had participated in the initial conflict, thus violating the terms of the Sochi Agreement which stipulated that the personnel for the Ossetian peacekeeping battalion had to come from the north to ensure their neutrality in the previous conflict. However, because of a lack of funds and recruiting difficulties in the north it was difficult to sustain a force recruited from outside the area and it was necessary to recruit locally.³⁰ Nevertheless, the Ministry for Extraordinary Situations of North Ossetia financed the battalion. The turnover of manpower was maintained by a trickle-posting system that allows the battalion to remain *in situ* in the operation zone. The officers were non-professional servicemen and recruited from both North and South Ossetians who had some university education. There did not appear to be any formal peacekeeping training system. The battalion was under-equipped in its weapon scales, fuel, and ammunition. The Ministry of Defence of South Ossetia provided its logistics and food was purchased locally.³¹ The headquarters of the Russian and Ossetian battalions were co-located in adjacent barracks and in 1999 were still in the same juxtaposition.

The commander of the JPKF could have a fairly strong grip on the behaviour and professionalism of the Russian and South Ossetian battalions. But his injunctions to the Georgian battalion had to be delivered with diplomacy. The JPKF commander was responsible for:

- planning for peace and stability in the area of conflict;
- organizing JPKF activities;
- keeping in touch with local legal bodies on both sides;
- coordination between battalions;
- liaison with local forces and official bodies;
- organizing training for JPKF battalions.³²

The JPKF's main task was to prevent the resumption of the armed conflict between Georgians and Ossetians. The system of control over the conflict zone required the deployment of posts and checkpoints in the most explosive contact areas between the Georgian and Ossetian villages. The object was to restore a normal way of life for the population, prevent tension between the sides, ensure normal transport through the area, carry out selective roadblocks for the control of arms, explosives, and drugs, and observe the mood of the local population. There was also

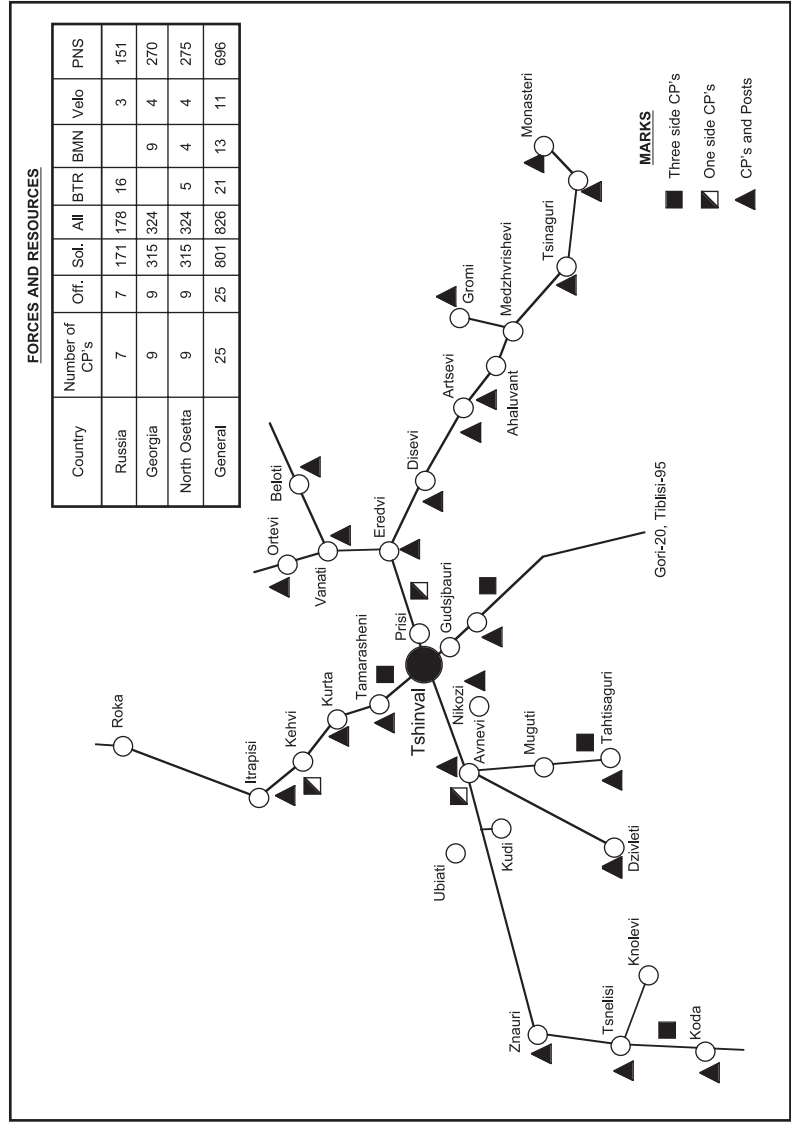


Figure 3.2 Location of forces of trilateral pact (taken from a Russian military map)

Table 3.3 Violent crime statistics for South Ossetia, 1996

| | Georgians | Ossetians |
|--------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Killed | 6 | 19 |
| Injured | 8 | 6 |
| Hostages | 2 | 2 |
| Attacks on checkpoints | 14 | – |
| Armed hijack of vehicles | 1 | 3 |
| Bomb attacks on targets | 3 | 6 |
| Theft of vehicles | 8 | 14 |

a curfew enforcement role in Tskhinvali from 10pm to 5am, which was enforced in cooperation with the local authorities. These actions had a stabilizing effect on the area.

In 1997 the JPKF reduced the number of posts from 39 to 16. The main reduction of posts took place in the Georgian and Ossetian battalions. This downscaling of duties was mirrored by a reduction of strength in both battalions. General Nikolayev maintained in 1997 that these reductions were the result of a normalization in the conflict zone and the establishment of local law enforcement units, which could keep order themselves. In effect the military functions were being transferred to the police with the full agreement of the three key participants in the JPKF.³³ This claim was probably accurate, but in a later visit to the area it was revealed that there were other factors at work and that the soldiers at the checkpoints had been exploiting their authority to extort petty “taxes” from travellers in the form of food, firewood, small amounts of money, etc. This had begun to stress the relationship between the garrison and the local people and in 1999 Major-General Yevgenii Churaev removed most of the roadblocks to ease this situation.

Nevertheless after the provisions of the Sochi Agreement took effect, violations continued, but on a greatly reduced scale. They were criminally but not politically motivated, and mainly caused by harsh economic conditions. Common incidents involved cattle theft, car theft, robbery, and smuggling. The violence was exacerbated by the large number of unregistered small-arms on both sides of the local population. The statistics for 1996 were as shown in Table 3.3.³⁴

Trilateral observer teams (see below) were deployed on 428 occasions in 1996 to investigate incidents and 678 vehicles were stopped for violating the curfew.

Three-sided military observer teams

The three-sided Group of Military Observers (GMO) was created by the Sochi Agreement and played a significant role. The GMO consisted of 72

personnel and six armoured vehicles with drivers. Their job was to investigate incidents and complaints from the local population. The military observers acted as mediators to defuse tension. The presence of a three-sided military team, which could converse in all three languages of the parties to the dispute, helped to solve hot incidents on the ground by “talking down” the situation and acting as a buffer between the local protagonists. The trilateral nature of the teams anticipated objections of partiality and reassured the minorities, who might otherwise have felt threatened. In 1996 the observer teams were called out to 428 incidents. The GMO was subordinated to the commander of the JPKF but each observer was also subordinated to his own national commander. In the field the GMO teams acted independently and had more power than local commanders of national posts. This empowered them to release vehicles or detainees if they saw fit in a particular situation, against the wishes of a national checkpoint commander.

The liaison between battalions was limited to senior military commanders. The JPKF commander, senior military commanders, and military observers interacted when local conflicts between Georgians and Ossetians took place. But there was no interaction between Russian, Georgian, and Ossetian posts and checkpoints and they had no technical means by which to communicate with one another.

The OSCE mission to Georgia

After Sochi and the intervention of peacekeepers in South Ossetia, the Georgians asked the OSCE to send observers to the area. This request was granted and an OSCE mission was established by mutual agreement of all the parties on 6 November 1992. The mission consisted of eight diplomats and eight officers from 12 countries. Its general purpose was to improve the relationship between the parties and promote nation-building activities – including respect for human rights and good governance. In particular the OSCE’s mission in the South Ossetian peacekeeping operation was to:

- make recommendations on the future definition of the political status of South Ossetia;
- gather information on the military situation;
- investigate violations of the cease-fire and the various agreements which regulated the operations of the peace forces in South Ossetia;
- facilitate cooperation among the parties;
- establish contact with local authorities and population;
- maintain a visible OSCE presence in the area;
- liaise with the UN mission in Abkhazia.³⁵

The conflict zone was monitored twice weekly and included OSCE par-

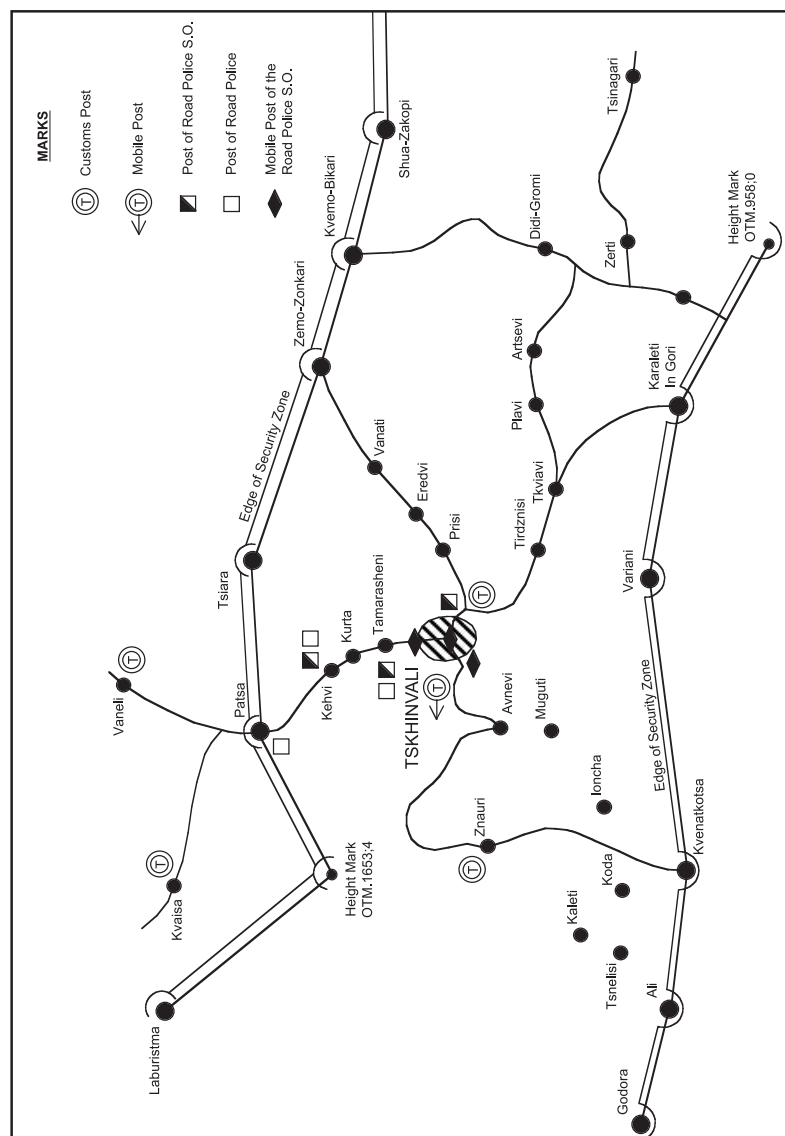


Figure 3.3 South Ossetia: Location of customs posts and posts of road police (taken from a Russian military map)

ticipation in the weekly meetings at JPKF HQ where the situation was analysed and reviewed. As a rule two members of the mission, a military officer and a diplomat, participated in monitoring and their report was transmitted to all parties concerned. The OSCE range of contacts included the leaders in South Ossetia, international organizations, and NGOs working in South Ossetia. The OSCE also attended weekly meetings at the Georgian MoD and at the HQ for the Trans-Caucasian Group of Russian Troops (ZGRV) in Tbilisi.

Conclusion

Unfortunately Russian peacekeeping's underlying strategy is arcane and many faceted; after taking a full account of the Russian intervention in South Ossetia, a strong sense of paradox remains. At the grand strategic level Russia had strong motives to manipulate the South Ossetian conflict so as to create an opportunity to deploy a garrison to Tskhinvali on a permanent basis. The importance of this area has since been underlined by the resurgence of the conflict in Chechnya. Russian strategists see a need to maintain a strategic frontier at the Armenian-Turkish borders and not along the watershed of the Caucasus Mountains.³⁶ This forward deployment allows them space in which to resolve the problems of their own emerging nationhood. However, despite these strong circumstantial motives and the deployment of a Russian force to South Ossetia to translate them into military reality, the Russian garrison has failed to organize itself or behave in a way that would confirm a grand strategic conspiracy. James Gow³⁷ maintains that it is enough for the Russians to be there and that in effect the garrison in Ossetia serves its strategic purpose as a presence and a foothold. Yet continued observation of this Russian foothold indicates that its usefulness for any purpose other than peacekeeping is severely constrained. Although a Russian commands the peacekeeping force and although Russian staff officers dominate its function, the force itself is narrowly organized to fulfil its role in South Ossetia and has no competence beyond acting as a gendarme in a very small area around Tskhinvali. Its communications are static, its vehicle fleet is small, and its weapon configuration and support facilities would not allow it to campaign beyond its immediate area. More important than any of the above, its trilateral integration and co-location at Tskhinvali impose a high degree of transparency.

Conspiracy theorists also have to acknowledge that in real, local terms the Russian intervention has been successful. In May 1992 the conflict in South Ossetia was on the brink of escalating into a larger, cross-border confrontation involving the North Ossetians and the Confederation of Caucasian Mountain Peoples. The Russian initiative succeeded in stabi-

lizing the area and fostering a gradual return to normality. The failure to resolve the question of South Ossetia's independent status supports a conspiracy theory, but the cynicism that this implies is out of step with the sincerity of Russian behaviour on the ground.

In November 1999 the authors returned to South Ossetia and visited the garrison and its commander, Major-General Yevgenii Churaev. During a series of extended interviews Churaev described various improvements to the function of the peacekeeping force. Training prior to deployment had improved and now included sessions on the history and culture of the region, but there was still no recognition of a general Russian peacekeeping doctrine. In the Tskhinvali garrison area General Churaev manifested a "new"³⁸ approach to Russian peacekeeping. He demonstrated an acute understanding of the need to improve the dialogue and *modus operandi* between the three peacekeeping battalions, and had organized inter-battalion training tests and competitions to achieve this. He also understood the importance of local goodwill, which would amount to their consent for his presence. To this effect he periodically organized football matches between a garrison team comprising players from the Russian, Georgian, and Ossetian battalions and the Tskhinvali team. Perhaps this seems a small detail on the canvas of grand strategy, but it is a significant change of approach for a Russian overseas garrison. He also organized folk-singing concerts involving Russian, Georgian, and Ossetian troops performing alongside local artistes. Churaev combined his flair for the hearts-and-minds campaign with a strong reputation for being hard on local corruption. The OSCE observers confirm this very positive account of a "new" manifestation of Russian peacekeeping.³⁹

The above account of the Russian intervention in South Ossetia seems to reinforce a sense of paradox, therefore. The grand strategic motive is evident, the action to translate it into reality has been taken, but on the ground its manifestation seems to be connected to a different impulse. The instruments displayed on the ground are the wrong instruments to promote a strategic presence.

Russian peacekeeping in Abkhazia

This part concerns Russia's role in Abkhazia after the collapse of the Soviet Union, and its purpose is to address the central propositions of the book in the Abkhazian context of peace support operations. In particular the section sets out to scrutinize the activities of the Russian peacekeeping forces to see whether these operations had the characteristics of an expansionist policy to restore Russia's strategic frontiers in the Caucasus or were part of a genuine effort to maintain peace and security. As

military operations, did they correspond to a standard definition of international peace operations that would be acceptable to a wider international community? The assessment begins with a chronology of the recent conflict that is designed to show the circumstances in which peace agreements were made and how Russian forces were deployed in an interpositional role. The CIS peacekeeping force at the Inguri River is described in detail to show its real military nature, with a view to assessing its actual purpose, capability, impartiality, and effectiveness. To reach a definitive conclusion, it is important to show the linkages between the Russian peacekeeping presence and the Russian strategic and economic interests in the area of concern. It has not been possible to do this. The section therefore concludes on an equivocal note.

Events leading to the deployment of the CIS peacekeeping forces

After 1918 the Abkhazian people's efforts to remain nationally distinct were thwarted by two formidable Georgians, Stalin and Beria. Under this regime the Georgian authorities successfully diluted Abkhazian autonomy through the forced movement of populations⁴⁰ into the Abkhazian region. It was in the late 1980s, during the Gorbachev and Shevardnadze era in Moscow, that Abkhazian nationalism significantly re-emerged. As the Soviet Union's influence began to diminish, Abkhazian efforts to achieve independence were increasingly directed towards Tbilisi. These tensions were fuelled by Gorbachev's messages of *glasnost*. As Soviet structures moved towards their final collapse, Zviad Gamsakhurdia began to gain influence as a political force to resist the break-up of Georgia. Elected President in 1990, he had brought Georgia into a highly destructive civil war by 1992. Meanwhile, in Abkhazia, an equally determined figure, Vladislav Ardzimba, had already moved into a position of power that would place him at the centre of events. Ardzimba entered politics in 1989 as a People's Deputy to the USSR Supreme Soviet, and by 1990 had become the Chairman of the Abkhazian Supreme Soviet.⁴¹ From this position Ardzimba directed the Abkhazians towards independence.⁴² It was Gamsakhurdia's nationalist platform above all that provided Ardzimba with a *cause célèbre* as a nationalist leader. The rising conflict in South Ossetia seemed to emphasize the Georgian desire for one nation at the expense of its minorities. Gamsakhurdia's overthrow by the Georgian military in February 1992 and his replacement by Shevardnadze did not relieve Georgia's problems. Nationalist uprisings in South Ossetia were followed by coup attempts in Tbilisi and rising tensions between Abkhazia and Georgia. In the spread of inter-communal violence and political power struggles that had engulfed Georgia, it was the Abkhazian-Georgian civil war which led directly to the Moscow

Agreement that in turn provided for the presence of UN observers and CIS peacekeeping forces.

The Abkhazian–Georgian conflict began in earnest in August 1992 when Georgian National Guard units, which had deployed ostensibly to rescue a kidnapped Minister of the Interior,⁴³ attacked the Abkhazian parliament, bombarding Sukhumi and throwing back Abkhazian forces. Once secure in Sukhumi, Georgian land forces burned down the Abkhazian parliament buildings, looting and destroying much of the town. However, initial Georgian successes and excesses led to a wider involvement by the Russians and the Confederation of Mountain Peoples of the Caucasus against Georgia. This was to have far-reaching results. The Russians employed the 345th Airborne Regiment to protect its 12,000 nationals in the immediate area of the conflict. This unit had a particular significance; at a later stage of the conflict, still fighting on the side of the Abkhazians, the 345th Airborne Battalion was to become closely linked to its forward base in the town of Gudauta. The Gudauta Battalion, as it was known, was deployed at the Georgian–Abkhazian interface until 1996. Russia’s earliest actions as a peacemaker at the Georgian–Abkhazian interface were manifested on 3 September 1992 with a short-lived cease-fire agreement close to the north-west borders of former Georgia.

Reinforced by Russian equipment and assisted by Russian helicopters, SU 25 bombers, and military units,⁴⁴ the Abkhazians resumed conflict in October 1992, successfully establishing an enclave on the north-west border area around the town of Gagra and moving east as far as the Gunista River, between Novyy Afon and Sukhumi. The front line remained here and the Russians, once again acting as peace brokers, arranged a second cease-fire on 27 July 1993. After the Georgians had withdrawn 80 per cent of their armed forces under the terms of the agreement, the Abkhazians attacked again, pushing eastwards to the area of the Inguri River by September 1993.

During the late summer months of 1993, Abkhazian and Russian forces retook Sukhumi and the territory as far as the Inguri River that now, more or less, marks the provisional Abkhazian border. Up to 200,000 people,⁴⁵ the non-Abkhazian element of the population, fled from their houses and properties along the Sukhumi-Gali axis. To the north, in the Kodori Valley, the Svan people also fled in the face of the Abkhazian advance. A third Russian attempt at mediation on 16 September was overturned by the Abkhazians, who continued their advance to secure the remaining territory they regarded as Abkhazian along the banks of the Inguri River.

Although it can be crossed by wading or using elementary flotation equipment, as a feature defended by military units the Inguri River pro-

vides something of an obstacle. The Abkhazian forces had now reached the line purported to be their border and had no wish to go further. The Georgians for their part had left the area very swiftly in disarray, and did not have the military determination or means to return across the Inguri in the face of an Abkhazian force substantially reinforced by Russian assets. Although the interim truces were evaded on both sides during the process of achieving the Moscow Agreement, in general the Inguri River remained the alignment of the interface. The prevailing impasse, the general exhaustion of the parties involved, and the growing determination by politicians on both sides to achieve peace all contributed to a more fruitful environment for peace negotiations.

The Moscow Agreement

The political agreements which led to the long-term deployment of international observers and peacekeepers to the Inguri River cease-fire line followed a confusing and tortuous path. Two separate strands of activity contributed to the confusion. In the conflict zone there were constant military efforts to improve tactical positions on both sides before the situation was frozen by a long-term cease-fire agreement. At a removed political level Georgian and Abkhazian representatives met with increasing frequency to hammer out the basic requirements for a durable cease-fire. At times the return to violence on the ground seemed to make the negotiations irrelevant, but political pressures continued to increase from the United Nations, friends of Georgia, and the Russian Federation. From May 1993 the frequency of the meetings increased. The venues shifted from Geneva to New York and finally to Moscow. Meanwhile, between Sukhumi and the Inguri River the final stages of the Abkhazian/Russian advance continued as one cease-fire after another was overturned. While political pressure on the parties mounted, the urge to go on fighting was diminished by mutual exhaustion and the physical barrier of the Inguri River that now separated them.

When the negotiations began to take precedence over the military initiatives in the conflict area, the possibility of a long-term agreement hinged more and more on a few key political issues. The return of displaced people was the first significant step towards a more general agreement. This provided for the right to return under conditions of complete safety, freedom, and dignity to the areas where the displaced had lived prior to the hostilities. The integrity of Georgian borders remained a matter of intractable disagreement which was fundamental to the existence of Abkhazia as a separate state. With the likelihood of peace there was also the question of how to supervise and police the conditions of a final agreement. The UN Secretary-General was consid-

ering two options: the first was to establish a traditional UN peace-keeping force of some 2,500 to carry out a separation of forces and create the conditions for a general return of the displaced population; the second was for a non-UN force provided by interested member states, including the Russian Federation. The latter option would require a sizeable UN observer presence to ensure fair play in view of the likely Russian involvement.

The Moscow Agreement was signed on 14 May 1994, and provided for the following conditions:

- a durable cease-fire between Georgian and Abkhazian forces;
- a security zone (SZ) in which no armed forces or heavy military equipment from either Georgia or Abkhazia would be allowed;
- a restricted weapons zone (RWZ) in which no heavy military equipment would be allowed;
- heavy weapons storage sites (HWSSs), primarily at Ochamchira and Senaki;
- the Abkhazian and Georgian civil authorities to be responsible for the maintenance of law and order on their respective sides of the cease-fire lines within the SZ and RWZ;
- the deployment of a CIS peacekeeping force (CISPKF) on both sides of the Inguri River and cease-fire line to the SZ and RWZ to:
 - maintain the cease-fire
 - promote safe conditions for the return of the displaced
 - implement the conditions of the Moscow Agreement
 - pursue comprehensive political settlement
 - supervise the withdrawal of heavy weapons to designated storage sites;
- deployment of UNAMIG (United Nations Mission in Georgia) observers to monitor the implementation of the agreement;
- the establishment of a coordinating commission to discuss mutual requirements including energy, transport, communications, and the ecology.

The situation in the security zone

The shape of the CISPKF security zone is dictated by the Black Sea coast to the west, the impassable Caucasus Mountains to the east and north, and by the final alignment of the October 1993 cease-fire line. The cease-fire line is not always consistent with the Abkhazian version of the border line. From the Black Sea coast the cease-fire line follows the Inguri River between the towns of Gali to the north and Zugdidi to the south, following what appears to be the alleged Abkhazian border. At CISPKF checkpoint number 206, however, the cease-fire line turns north. Because

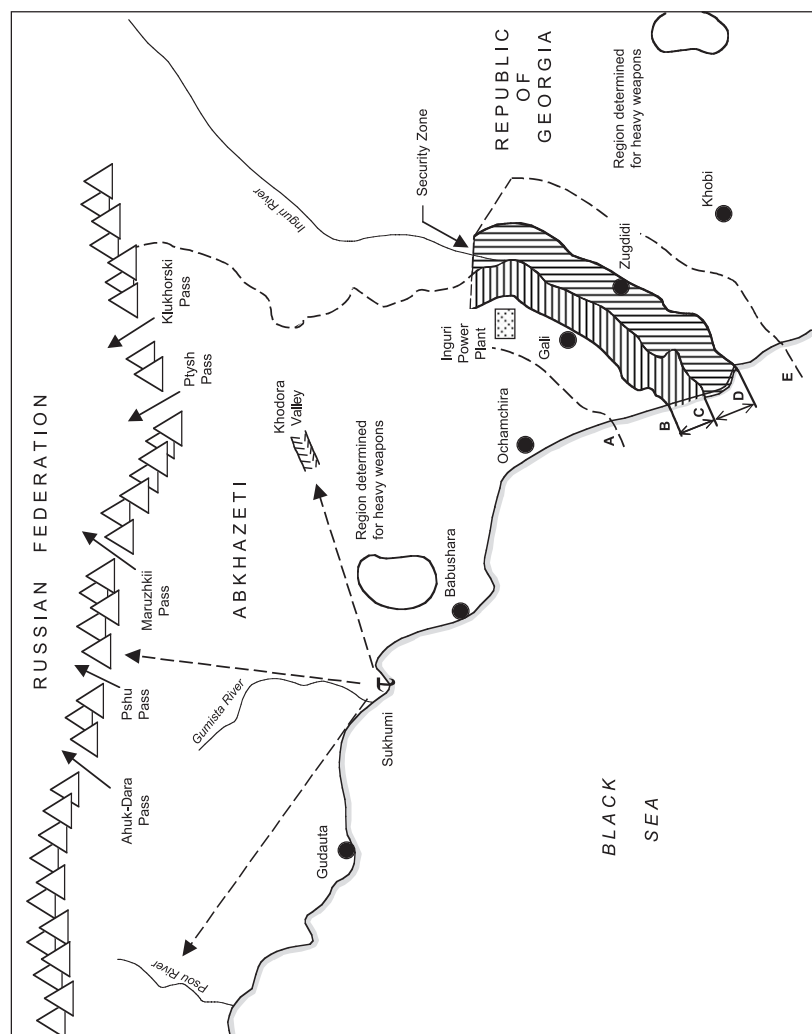


Figure 3.4 Map of the cease-fire lines (translation of Russian version)

the northern and southern edges of the security zone and the restricted weapons zone must reflect the path of the cease-fire line, they also bend northward in an arbitrary manner crossing natural features and routes. The northern edge of the RWZ runs from Ochamchira, following the rail and road north-west to Tchvarcheli before bending abruptly northwards to reflect the curve of the cease-fire line. The southern edge of the RWZ starting at Poti follows a similar northward curve via Senaki.

Inside the SZ and RWZ the landscape varies. In the coastal areas the low-lying country is largely undrained and covered with trees and scrub. The coastal lowlands are largely impassable except by foot and only by following established routes. Towards the edge of the Caucasus range the coastal plain is better drained and more accessible, with a network of local tracks and routes connecting villages and adjoining farmland. From north to south an international railway and road run through the SZ and RWZ. Part of the railway has been destroyed and the road bridges on the M27 trunk route were also destroyed, but limited transit was possible over temporary bridges. From a military point of view the coastal, low-lying areas were recognized as partisan infiltration routes but unsuitable for cross-country vehicles. A strong military advance, in either direction, through the SZ and RWZ would have required the M27 road as an axis for heavy AFVs and logistic resupply. Partisan forces on foot could pass through the low-lying coastal areas following areas of natural cover.

According to interagency reports more than 250,000 people fled their homes in order to avoid hostilities in Abkhazia at some time between 1992 and 1994. Some of this number became more or less permanently "displaced" in other regions of Georgia and some have become refugees in foreign countries. The population statistics for Abkhazia show that in 1989 ethnic Abkhazians comprised only 17.8 per cent of the total population of Abkhazia (Table 3.4). The Abkhazian ethnic element of the population was also unevenly spread across the area (Table 3.5).⁴⁶

In 1992–1993 the Abkhazian forces advancing towards the Inguri

Table 3.4 The Abkhazian population, 1989

| Ethnic group | % |
|--------------|------|
| Abkhazians | 17.8 |
| Georgians | 45.7 |
| Greeks | 2.8 |
| Russians | 14.3 |
| Ukrainians | 2.2 |
| Armenians | 14.6 |
| Remainder | 1.1 |

Table 3.5 Population distribution in Abkhazia

| Area | Georgian % | Abkhazian % |
|----------------------|------------|-------------|
| Ochamchira district | 42.2 | 36.7 |
| Gali district | 93.8 | 0.8 |
| Tchvarcheli district | 23.4 | 42.3 |
| Sukhumi region | 44.4 | 5.1 |

River and the Kodori Valley threatened the non-Abkhazian population. The majority of the local inhabitants at the cease-fire line in the defined area of the SZ and RWZ were Georgian, while the Kodori Valley was inhabited largely by Svans. After the 1992–1993 exodus from Abkhazia, the Abkhazian percentage of the population increased from 17 per cent to 65 per cent.⁴⁷ The overall number of people displaced mainly by violence in Abkhazia in 1996 who are still in Georgia was estimated at 250,000. They were sheltered in hotels, schools, hospitals, dormitories, summer camps, and factories.⁴⁸ The loss of their homes, farms, and means of livelihood was a source of deep resentment. In the SZ and RWZ many properties and farms have been left deserted by their Georgian owners. At the cease-fire line some returned to recover what produce they could from their plantations. However, their private accommodation remained deserted.

Assessment of the situation facing the CISPKF

Of the tasks arising out of the Moscow Agreement the maintenance of security at the hostile interface posed the greatest immediate challenge. To some extent the successful withdrawal of combat forces by both the Georgians and the Abkhazians was an important first step in achieving this. In addition the Russian forces' changed status, from warring party alongside the Abkhazian forces to peacekeeper, greatly discouraged the Abkhazian forces from any further hostile advances. At the same time the Russian presence on the Inguri River also discouraged the Georgians from attempting to regain strips of territory in a post-settlement show of force. With their powerful presence, the Russians possessed an overwhelming capacity to prevent a resumption of war. But the post-conflict withdrawal of regular military units did not remove the deep-seated motivation for revenge nor prevent attempts to continue hostilities by other means. The violence decreased in intensity from conventional conflict to partisan hit-and-run terror tactics. There were two threats to the northern communities, or the Abkhazian side of the cease-fire line. The first might come from partisan groups based in Georgia, moving on foot

across the wild, low-lying areas adjacent to the coast to sabotage Abkhazian government installations and attack Abkhazian officials around Gali and Ochamchira where the Georgians had been in the majority. The second might come from within Abkhazia itself. In the latter case there were several reasons for expecting a high degree of residual violence in the area. The SZ and RWZ had been a conflict zone for more than two years, weapons were still easy to find, and after the atrocities by both sides violence was endemic: there were scores to settle. In the absence of an effective police force the Russian peacekeepers had to act as policemen as well as peace guarantors. The question was to what extent they had the sensitivity and inclination to perform this complex role.

Although on the face of it the Moscow Agreement seemed to have removed the instruments of violence from the zone of confrontation between the two sides, there were other factors that might continue to threaten stability. At a lower level there were the knock-on effects of tackling the problems of population resettlement and sovereignty. At Gali and Ochamchira on the Abkhazian side of the cease-fire line the majority of the Georgian communities had fled in face of the late 1993 Abkhazian advance. This *de facto* "ethnic cleansing" of the Georgian population was to be a significant source of aggression in due course. Under the quadripartite resettlement agreement future returnees were to be protected from harassment, including extortion and threats to life and property. On returning to their original homes they would have their "moveable and immoveable properties" returned to them. Where this was not possible they were to receive appropriate compensation for their loss. In the air-conditioned meeting rooms of Geneva and New York these concepts no doubt seemed plausible and had met with widespread approval. However, in the Inguri River cease-fire area they were likely to be the source of further violence. In the wake of hostilities and in the absence of effective local authorities, lawlessness, looting, and even shooting incidents were a daily event and the prospect of reintroducing the Georgian returnees could add a further dimension to this violence. There were therefore plenty of reasons why the Russians might actively impede their return. A reinstatement of the Georgian population at the border would undermine the recently established Abkhazian majority, created only by virtue of the Georgian exodus. The complete return of up to 200,000 Georgians to Abkhazia would completely reverse the current population and voting majority enjoyed by the Abkhazians after the massive exodus in 1993. Resettlement was therefore also likely to be resisted by the Abkhazian allies. What were the Russian peacekeepers to do? The Moscow Agreement stated a strong implementation role for the CISPKF, yet if resettlement took place it was certain to act as a catalyst to further intercommunal violence.

Organization of the CISP KF in Georgia/Abkhazia

By 1997, when this study began, the CISP KF was commanded at the operational level by Major-General Babenkov and his chief of staff, Brigadier-General Tikhonov, from his HQ in the Sukhumi sanatorium. Although mandated for 2,500 men, in reality its current strength was less than half that amount. The force was split between a Northern Operations Group on the Abkhazian side of the CFL and a Southern Operations Group on the Georgian side of the CFL (Table 3.6).⁴⁹

The Northern Operations Group

The Northern Operations Group was commanded by a full colonel, designated as a deputy force commander, from the Northern Operations Group HQ at Gali. Within the Gali sector there were two infantry battalions, an engineer company, a mortar company, a helicopter platoon, and a reconnaissance platoon.

- The Gudauta Battalion was an airborne battalion of the 345th Airborne Regiment, 7th Airborne Division. Their connection to the Abkhazian town of Gudauta dated back to their involvement on the Abkhazian side of the civil war in 1992–1993. The Gudauta Battalion was the most professional of the four infantry units in the CISP KF. In the Gali area they were deployed to seven checkpoints, with an average strength of an officer with 15–20 men and three or four armoured personnel carriers with a good cross-country capability. The Gudauta

Table 3.6 The 1997 deployment of the CIS forces at the CFL

| Unit | Location | Established strength |
|------------------------------|----------------|-----------------------|
| Northern Operations Group HQ | Gali | 20 |
| Volga Battalion | Chuburkhindzhi | 363 |
| Gudautu Battalion (elements) | Gali | 110 |
| Engineer company | Chuburkhindzhi | 26 |
| Mortar company | Gali | 35 |
| Reconnaissance platoon | Gali | 11 |
| Helicopter platoon | Gali | Not known |
| Southern Operations Group HQ | Urta | 20 |
| Batumi Battalion | Urta | 260 |
| Armenian Battalion | Potso Etreri | 260 |
| Tank section | Unknown | 4 x T72 |
| Kodori Valley | | |
| Gudauta Battalion | Unknown | About 1 rifle company |
| Russian border guards | | |
| Section | Kulevi | 11 |
| Section | Okhalkalu | 11 |

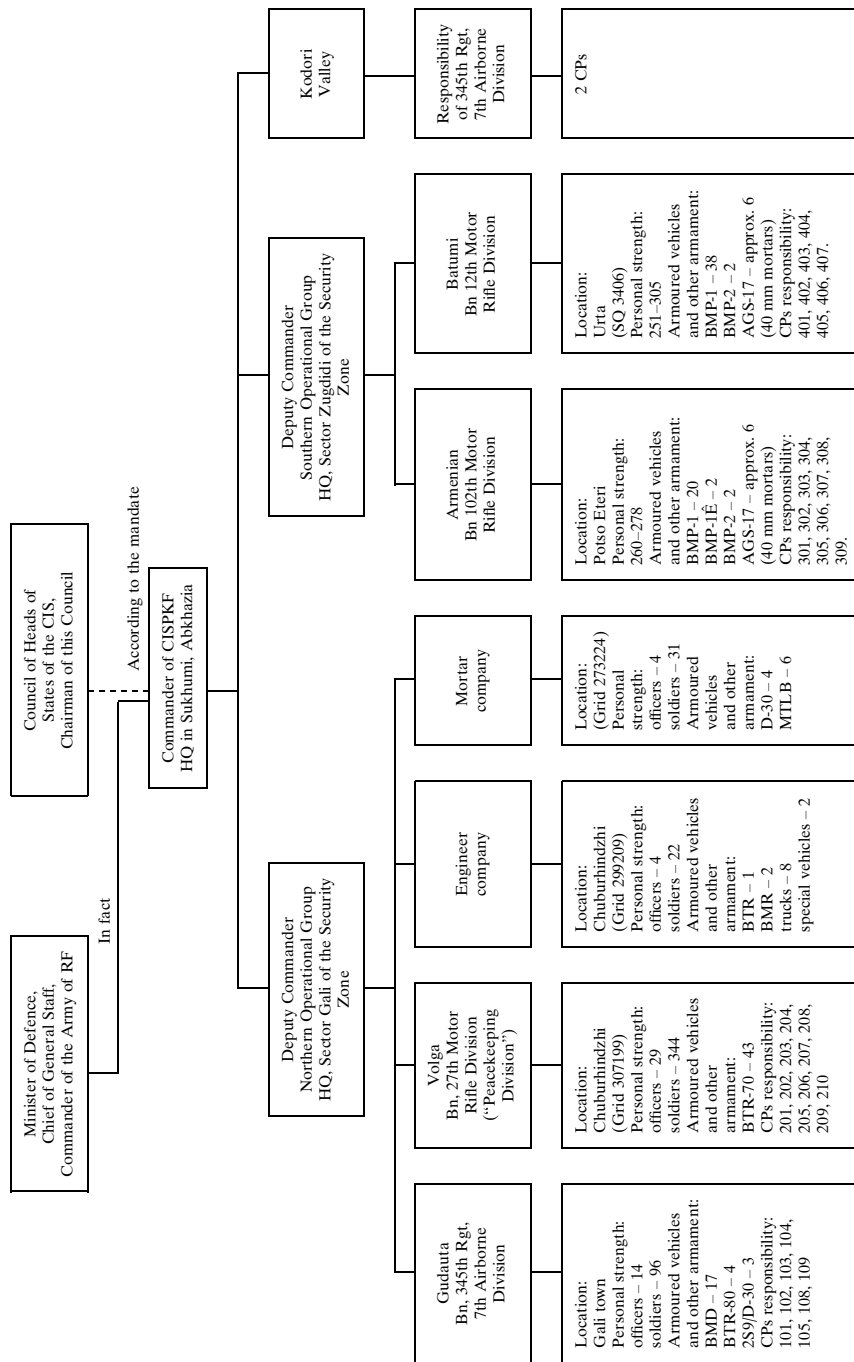


Figure 3.5 Subordination, structure, and organization of the CISPKF in Abkhazia, Republic of Georgia

Battalion also provided a reconnaissance platoon and the heliborne anti-terrorist troops based at Gali, which was a rapid reaction force in the Northern Operations Group. As the best-trained unit it was logical that this battalion was deployed in the area where the highest threat to security prevailed and most of the terrorist attacks had occurred.

- The Volga Battalion was part of the 27 Guards Motor Rifle Division from Totskoye, Russia, otherwise known in the Russian army as the “peacekeeping” division. The same division took part in the peace-keeping operations in Transdnistria, Moldova in 1994–1996. They were deployed to 10 checkpoints at approximately one-kilometre intervals along a local road that runs parallel to the Inguri River cease-fire line before turning north at CP 206. The deployment of this battalion indicated that it was primarily responsible for observing the CFL facing southwards. In particular it deployed to the crossing points on the Inguri River. To reduce the freedom of uncontrolled movement across the Inguri River most of the bridges were destroyed. The main crossing area was at the bridge carrying the M27.
- The engineer company was located north of Gali close to the M27, but was controlled by force HQ at Sukhumi. It had a range of plant vehicles for armoured vehicle recovery and route improvement. There were also eight bomb disposal personnel.
- The mortar company was equipped with four 122 mm howitzer-type heavy mortars. They were located in the field close to the M27 just south of Gali. Although they had a powerful capability to deliver high-explosive mortar bombs against distant targets, they were primarily used for illuminating the area around Gali by night.
- The helicopter platoon was assigned, in addition to the aircraft, airborne troops of the Gudauta Battalion in Gali. In the heliborne role their tasks were to observe the area and conduct logistic resupply and anti-terrorist operations. These included the swift deployment of ambushes and patrols and maintaining a rapid reaction reserve, especially to respond to terrorist attacks around Gali.
- The reconnaissance platoon was based in Gali town and comprised 11 men.

The Southern Operations Group

The Southern Operations Group was also commanded by a full colonel, designated as a deputy force commander, from the Southern Operations Group HQ at Urta and commanded through HQ Transcaucasus MD in Tbilisi. Within the Zugdidi sector there were two infantry battalions and a tank platoon. The Russian border troops also operated in this area but seemed to be independent of the CISPKF.

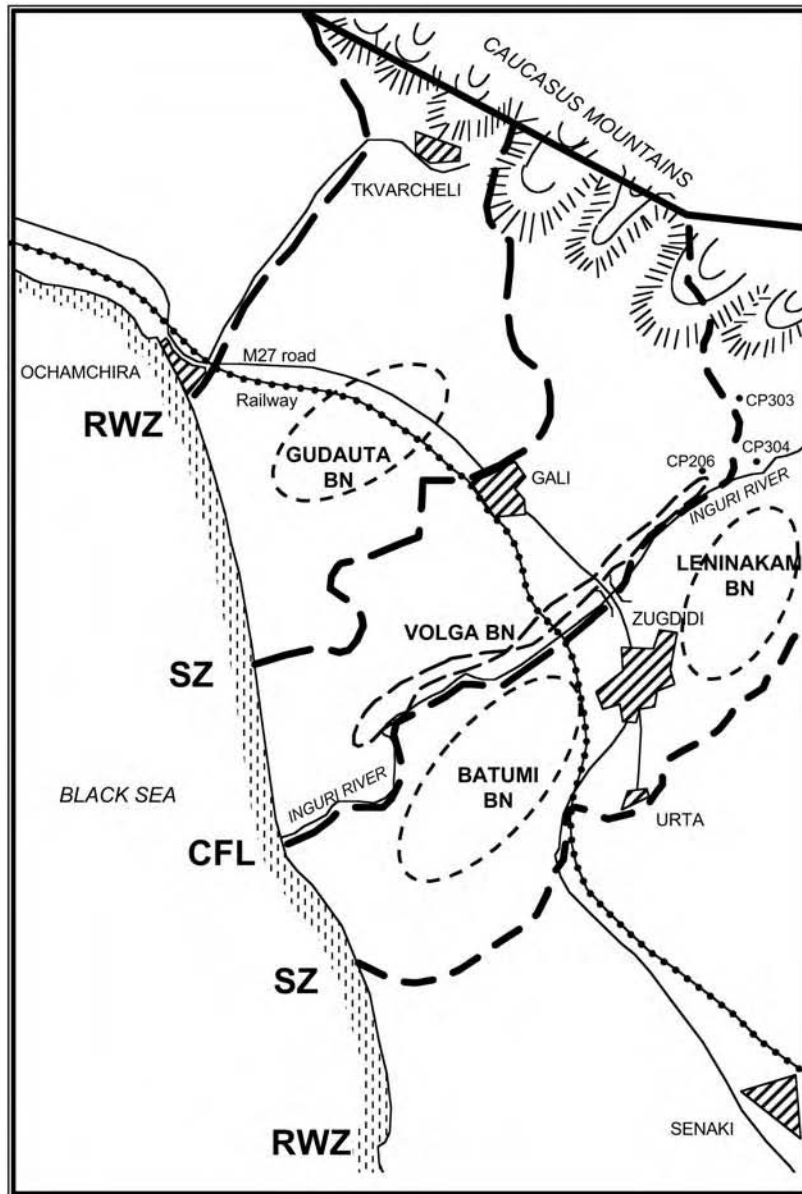


Figure 3.6 CISPKF deployment area at the cease-fire line

- The Batumi (or Urta) Battalion was a motor rifle battalion from the 12th Motor Rifle Division. It was equipped with BMP amphibious armoured personnel carriers. Its three rifle companies were deployed to seven checkpoints on the south side of the Inguri River opposite the Volga Battalion. In contrast to the linear formation of the Volga Battalion's checkpoints, the Batumi Battalion deployed their checkpoints in an irregular pattern arranged in depth and with an important southward-facing role west of Zugdidi. More than 65 per cent of the Batumi Battalion were recruited in the Adjara district in Georgia. Adjara is characteristically hostile to the central Georgian government.
- The Armenian (or Leninakan) Battalion was a motor rifle battalion from the 102nd Motor Rifle Division. It was equipped with BMPs, and its three rifle companies were deployed to nine checkpoints along the Inguri River to the area east of Zugdidi. It was deployed in an irregular pattern of CPs similar to the Batumi Battalion, arranged in depth and with an important southward-facing role. More than 65 per cent of the Armenian Battalion was composed of Armenians. As a significant national minority, the ethnic Armenians characteristically also felt a degree of resentment towards Georgians, who were regarded as the domineering majority by the ethnic minorities in Georgia. This factor may be the basis for a degree of antipathy between the Armenian battalions and local Georgian communities.
- The tank section (location unknown, but in any case mobile) was shown as subordinated to the Southern Operations Group.

Russian border troops

Two detachments of Russian border guards were deployed within the restricted areas designated by the Moscow Agreement. A party of eight men under an NCO with a ship-tracking radar vehicle were at Kulevi close to the point where the CFL meets the Black Sea coast. A second party was based at Ockalkalu on the coast to the south. Their task was to monitor shipping in general and to check vessels actually landing in their immediate area. These detachments did not appear to fall under the aegis of the CISPKF. Their task in this area did not appear to include monitoring the Abkhazian-Georgian boundary. Their presence was therefore consistent with the Russian view of their strategic land border at the Georgian-Turkish interface and not Russia's internationally recognized frontiers.

The UN Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG)

The UN presence at the Georgian-Abkhazian interface was influenced more by the vagaries of the conflict than any real determination by the

international community to intervene effectively. The first serious efforts to organize observers in July 1993 were thwarted to some extent by the lack of international conviction, but mainly by the resumption of violence. In his report dated 1 July 1993, the UN Secretary-General recommended the deployment of a 50-strong observer group to Sukhumi and Ochamchira to discourage an escalation of violence, investigate violations, and offer their good offices and inter-party communications as a confidence-building measure. However, within a few days violence resumed and “given the serious deterioration in the military situation” the SG felt it would not be wise to proceed with an actual deployment.⁵⁰

The next proposal was made after the Sochi ceasefire agreement on 27 July. Once again events overtook the assumptions that underpinned the safety and viability of the UN observers and the plan was abandoned.⁵¹ Nevertheless a small token group of observers was deployed in August 1993 under UN Security Council Resolution (SCR) 854, which was increased to 50 under UN SCR 892 in December 1993. International interest resumed in March 1994 with renewed cease-fire negotiations. In his report the UN SG urged the international community not to abandon their efforts to act between the Georgian and Abkhazian forces, but nevertheless conceded that any initiative would be dependent on a readiness by the parties to move towards a peaceful settlement. In spring 1994 increasingly successful negotiations in Geneva and New York opened the prospect of a workable truce and an agreement for the return of refugees.

Three options to deploy a more effective observer mission were outlined in the Secretary-General’s 3 May 1994 report.⁵² Option 1 was to establish a traditional UN peacekeeping force to demonstrate international commitment and possibly to spur the parties to agree to a settlement. Option 2 was to authorize the deployment of a Russian/CIS peacekeeping force in anticipation of a lack of international response to provide the necessary international observers. Option 3 was to do nothing until the parties agreed to a durable cease-fire that could underwrite a traditional UN deployment. In the event the conditions for a UN peacekeeping force did not materialize, and the Moscow Agreement provided for a CIS peacekeeping force with UNOMIG acting as their internationally appointed referees. The scale and operational character of the UN observer mission had been suggested in the Secretary-General’s 6 June report.⁵³ By July 1994 the proposal was to strengthen the existing observers to 136 in number. Their tasks were to:

- monitor and verify the implementation of the Moscow Agreement
- observe the operations of the CISPKE within the framework of the Moscow Agreement
- verify the withdrawal of the heavy weapons and forces under the terms of the Moscow Agreement
- investigate violations.

UNOMIG's deployment to some extent mirrored that of the CISP KF's concept of operations in the security zone. Although the UN head of mission moved regularly between his offices in Sukhumi and Tbilisi, the commander and HQ of the military observers were based in Sukhumi. By 1996 the mission had three sector HQs at Sukhumi, Gali, and Zugdidi. UNOMIG patrols operated from the three sector HQs and from five additional team site bases. Linkage between the CISP KF and UNOMIG took place at four levels: force HQs, sector zone HQs, between individual patrols, and at checkpoints. On the first two levels cooperation was ensured through regular weekly meetings and daily operational contacts. There were quadripartite meetings each Saturday between UNOMIG represented at the sector level, the Georgian military forces, the Abkhazian military forces, and the CISP KF represented at group command level. At patrol and checkpoint level there were regular exchanges of patrol programmes and local information. CISP KF junior commanders in many cases had established personal relationships with their opposite numbers in UNOMIG.

In its first 1993–1994 incarnation UNOMIG was a small, reactive mission. Its lack of effectiveness was a partial reflection of an equal lack of commitment by the international community to adopt a more positive approach. This, and the turbulent circumstances of the Abkhazian-Georgian conflict, imposed a modest and undemonstrative role on UNOMIG. After the Moscow Agreement, its strength was doubled and the international community required a more aggressively investigative observer mission to raise the alarm should the CISP KF use its presence in Abkhazia, a zone of vital Russian interest, in a manipulative or self-interested manner.

As a rule UNOMIG observers were experienced military officers with at least one previous mission in a peacekeeping environment. Man to man they compared favourably with their Russian counterparts, who were younger and generally had little experience of peacekeeping or operations with international forces. However, these individual strengths were offset by UNOMIG's day-to-day reliance on the CISP KF in several vital respects. For example, in the Gali sector where the terrorist threat was greatest, UNOMIG relied on the CISP KF to secure the routes and keep them clear of mines. In cases where this had not been possible UNOMIG's access was denied. Although access denial by the Russians had probably been due to genuine security reasons, it is possible to infer that the Russians could also deny access to sites where a UNOMIG observer presence was considered undesirable because there may have been Russian interests at work. During the local elections in autumn 1996 a heightening of local terrorist attacks was anticipated, and Russian armed forces protected UNOMIG personnel and installations. These

actions included providing a BMP (armoured personnel carrier) escort from Gali to Ochamchira, another BMP stationed beside the sector HQ buildings at Gali, and Russian anti-sniper sentries in the UN compound. However altruistically motivated, these actions were bound to send signals of UN and Russian collusion to the Georgian parties. Furthermore, in the event of further threats to security they encouraged a dependence on the Russian presence for the safety of the UN monitors whose job it was to scrutinize Russian activities.

Despite UNOMIG's tactical dependency on Russian security, there was a reassuring degree of experience, awareness, and realistic impartiality at the UN observer level which was unlikely to be undermined by their reliance on the Russians. When Russian security advice closed access roads in the Gali district, observers from team site bases continued to patrol on foot. Rather than reducing their effectiveness this reaction greatly enhanced the level of personal contact between the observers on foot and the local farmers. As a result of foot patrolling and the increased opportunity for personal contact, the Georgian sense of hospitality drew the patrols into many private houses, where it was possible for UN observers to gain greater insight into local attitudes towards the peace process. At a personal level the cooperation between UNOMIG and CISPKF officers had been improving. UN observers were entering Russian compounds with greater facility than before, and this display of Russian openness tended to indicate that at tactical level they had little to hide. The most commonly expressed reservation of UN observers towards the Russians concerned their antagonistic behaviour towards the Georgian checkpoints.

The conclusions reached in the study were that UNOMIG was probably a reliable observer of Russian activities at the Georgian-Abkhazian interface. If its overall task was to sound the alarm when Russian peacekeepers began to use their military presence to pursue their national interests, then UNOMIG was well positioned to do this at a tactical level. Despite the observers' inability to protect themselves and the consequent reliance on Russian security, there was sufficient awareness and skill on an individual level to overcome any suggestions of a lack of objectivity or Russian-induced "blindness".

Assessment of peacekeeping forces in Abkhazia

In general terms the presence of Russian peacekeeping forces which were not part of an authorized UN organization in former Soviet Union territory evinced two different responses. There was a "conspiracy theory" response, which maintained that Russian peacekeeping deployments were part of a carefully orchestrated Russian plan to foment se-

cessionist disturbances in selected FSU states where important strategic interests remained. Russian peacekeeping forces were then deployed to the conflict area ostensibly to contain the violence, but their real purpose has been to reassert Russian trusteeship over an area of vital strategic interest. On the other hand the “superpower obligation” theory argued that secessionist conflicts were self-generated and that the Russian return to the conflict zone in the guise of peacekeepers was in response to residual Russian obligations, which were coincidentally in the region being threatened by the conflict. These obligations – or interests – included the Russian element of the local population, Russian strategic borders, and the protection of Russian property and capital investments. In the case of Abkhazia it is hard to show with overwhelming conviction that the Russian presence followed either the “conspiracy” or the “obligations” theory. At the strategic level the diffusion of interested ministries and political factions in Moscow could not be linked directly to the presence and activities of the CISP KF in Abkhazia, except for the Ministry of Defence (see Figure 3.5). At the operational level within Abkhazia it was not possible to identify a linkage between the presence and activities of the CISP KF and the promotion of Russian interests in the immediate vicinity of Sukhumi, Gudauta, and at the Inguri River interface. At the tactical level the evident partiality of the Russian peacekeepers for the Abkhazian interests compromised their credibility, but on its own that did not provide sufficient evidence to explain their presence as part of a strategic conspiracy to reimpose themselves in the region.

The Russian peacekeepers compromised their impartiality in several ways. By joining the Abkhazian side during the early stages of the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict, the Russians altered the course of the war and succeeded in putting Abkhazia into a strong enough position to become a separate entity from Georgia. The displacement of 200,000 Georgians from Abkhazia artificially created an Abkhazian majority. The sense of Russian partiality for the Abkhazian side of the dispute continues. Russian military units, such as the Gudauta Battalion, which fought with the Abkhazians against the Georgians, continue to be part of the peacekeeping force.

It is tactically significant that the peacekeeping force itself was deployed in a southward-facing posture, as though protecting Abkhazia from a future Georgian attack. Although there were two infantry battalions on each side of the Inguri River, it could be argued that the battalions that were inherently hostile to the Georgians were deployed on the south or Georgian side facing the Georgians rather than the Abkhazians. The tank elements were also deployed on the south side, where in an emergency they could act as a south-facing screen force. Furthermore, the mortar base-plate positions were on the north side of the overall po-

sition where they could be protected and still cover the approaches to the southern tactical area. However, it can also be argued that this interpretation of the southern-facing Russian force simply addressed the realities of the situation. It was true that the Russian military forces designated as the CISPKF faced south not to repel a main-force Georgian attack but to address the more immediate problems of the terrorist threat, which all parties have recognized. According to UN sources at least eight partisan groups were based in the Gali region to disrupt Abkhazian interests and attack officials.⁵⁴ Additional terrorist infiltration came from groups operating from the Georgian side of the CFL. The latter were in some cases making use of concentrations of IDPs – for example, the IDPs trained for infiltration operations at Torsa, an installation in west Georgia. It was for these reasons that the Russian position faced south and it was to provide constant illumination in the tactical areas of interest that the mortar base plates were in the north. The same logic supported the presence of the Gudauta Battalion, the strongest of the four battalions deployed, at the area most threatened in Gali. In the context of a traditional UN peacekeeping deployment, Russian impartiality was compromised; however, in the context of a regional peace enforcement operation in Abkhazia, it is questionable whether the traditional UN concept of impartiality had the same significance. Partial or impartial, the Russians claimed they were providing the basic conditions for peaceful coexistence.

The failure to allow the displaced Georgian element of the population to return to the Abkhazian side could be seen as an additional reason to doubt Russia's credibility as a genuine peacekeeper. The quadripartite agreement of 4 April 1994 explicitly provided for the return of IDPs, but a year later the UN SG reported that the organized repatriation of refugees and displaced persons to Abkhazia "remains at a standstill".⁵⁵ It can be argued that the supervised and controlled return of the Georgian element of the population would restore a Georgian majority to the Abkhazian territory. A subsequent election in Abkhazia might provide for a majority government that urged for its restoration as part of Georgia. It could be alleged that the Russians impeded this return as it might lead to the end of their continued presence. Russian General Vasiliy Yakushev argued that the CISPKF should not be regarded as the implementers of a plan to return the displaced population.⁵⁶ In some cases local farmers within the restricted zone had returned under their own arrangements; Yakushev's chief concern was that the Russian peacekeepers only operated in the Gali and Zugdidi districts, but the Georgian displaced had returned to a much wider area, to Sukhumi and beyond. He could not guarantee their safety and he did not see himself becoming a diplomatic facilitator for the returnee process.

The day-to-day activities of the Russian peacekeepers also demon-

strated the equivocal nature of their presence. Within the restricted zones each battalion occupied a number of checkpoints in the field. These were, more or less, located at the key crossing points and routes throughout the area. At the checkpoints the Russian soldiers monitored the traffic of people and vehicles, ostensibly to prevent any movement of war materials or personnel that would contravene the Moscow Agreement. Generally speaking the monitoring duties were carried out without much imagination and at a fairly low professional standard. The Russian conscripts did not appear to be sufficiently motivated or professionally effective and inquisitive. They failed to exploit the checkpoints as an interface with local people where, through casual conversation, they could have gauged local feeling and also made themselves more acceptable. (The use of checkpoints for confidence-building and as an access to gossip, local attitudes, and casual intelligence-gathering had already been established as a commonly used technique in other peacekeeping and internal security operations.) Being static, unimaginatively manned, and widely known, the Russian checkpoints were easily circumnavigated by terrorist parties on foot.

The Russian peacekeeping garrison took advantage of its privileged position *vis-à-vis* the local people to take petty bribes and commit minor acts of extortion. It is alleged that for a small amount of money, food, or liquor a sentry could be persuaded not to open a car boot concealing contraband or, for example, to allow materials to pass freely away from a looted site. Russian peacekeepers had also been accused of stealing food and using their amphibious vehicles as ferries for hire across the Inguri River. It can be argued that these activities were not serious enough to jeopardize the Russians' overall status as peace guarantors within the context of their agreed role. They were simply the low-level activities of a poorly disciplined force, which in some instances had not been paid or provisioned for extended periods. Given these circumstances most soldiers could be expected to behave as badly – if not worse. This behaviour has to some extent compromised the Russian credibility as a third-party force in Abkhazia. Since the elections in autumn 1996, the Russian peacekeepers' field activities have improved. In November 1996 UNOMIG⁵⁷ described a highly active CISPKE programme that included:

- a heightened state of 70 per cent CISPKE readiness
- nightly illumination of terrorist approach routes in Gali sector
- CISPKE ambushes
- CISPKE foot patrols
- deployment of airborne and foot-mobile rapid reaction teams
- provision of CISPKE security for polling stations.

It is assessed that this increase in effective activity may have partially restored the Russians' credibility.

It can be argued that the professionalism and impartiality of the Russian peacekeepers were irrelevant; it was not what they did that was important, but simply by being in Abkhazia they achieved their purpose. To support this argument it could be shown that the Russians in Abkhazia had a comparatively free hand to pursue their interests. Beyond the restricted zones UNOMIG had no mandate to monitor the CISPKE, and it was outside the area of the UN aegis, beyond the immediate environs of the Inguri River, that Russia's main strategic interests lay. This left Russia free to follow its interests: free to operate from the port of Sukhumi contrary to the express wishes of the Georgian parliament, free to continue using the Black Sea resorts, and free to import the citrus harvest back to Russia at a net loss to the Georgian and Abkhazian governments. Russian garrisons continued to move and travel in their self-administering activities and Abkhazia has returned to the rouble currency. It was these factors that seemed to indicate a Russian trusteeship of the Abkhazian territory.

To some extent UNOMIG's largely uncritical presence in the same area disarms the accusation of *de facto* Russian trusteeship. UNOMIG was also free to move in some of these areas; if the Russians were seriously abusing their privileged position beyond the level of petty corruption, UNOMIG's main task would be to raise the alarm through the UN SG's periodic reports. This they had not done. A reason for UNOMIG's caution in this respect was that they themselves relied on Russian cooperation at the operational level. In emergencies the Russians had provided their close protection. The Russians had also opened their doors and facilitated UNOMIG's day-to-day movement. To what extent could UNOMIG afford to jeopardize this carefully fostered relationship if, strictly speaking, they were not mandated to comment on the development of Russia's strategic presence in Abkhazia?

Conclusions on Russian peacekeeping in Georgia

The paradox of Russian peacekeeping in South Ossetia and Abkhazia is that at the grand strategic level there is circumstantial evidence that Russia behaved with manipulative self-interest, and yet at a local tactical level there is a sense of sincerity and good intent about their conduct. In Georgia the central question relates to the Russian motives for their peacekeeping presence. On the one hand it can be argued that the Russian peacekeeping operation is a fig-leaf, a device that masks a number of barely concealed strategic interests, and conveniently provides an internationally acceptable reason for Russian troops to continue to be stationed in Georgia where they exercise a pervasive influence on Georgian

affairs. Russian strategic and economic interests are considerable, and the position of their new peacekeeping garrisons in Abkhazia and South Ossetia is coincidentally where many of these interests converge. On the other hand it can be argued that the Russian presence is essentially altruistic and part of the former superpower's burden.⁵⁸ The problem with the conspiracy theory was that it implied a sequence of orchestrations that was too elaborately cunning to match up to the clumsy realities of the Russian presence, which was manifestly ad hoc and at times self-defeating. Strong Russian interests are undeniable, but there seemed to be no system whereby they could be coordinated in the manner suggested by a conspiracy theory. Their residual interest in a former dependency could also be interpreted as humane. There was a sizeable Russian population in Georgia and Russian capital investments. If these could be protected and at the same time a degree of personal security restored to what had become a conflict area, was that not an acceptable reason for a continuing Russian interpositional presence? It can be argued that it amounts to no more than the continuing British and French presence in their former colonies, a long-term obligation that any responsible power must exercise when law and order fail in a newly created state that was once a dependency. This chapter finds that there is no clear-cut answer to this central question. The issues that surround the Russian activities in Georgia are extremely complicated and there are many facets to the problem. Russian policy-making and its execution were no longer monolithic. While one arm or ministry appeared to behave in a sinister or cynical manner, another appeared to act with humane sincerity.

Notes

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4. Nordia, note 2.
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23. Sammut and Cvetkovski, note 11, p. 28.
24. Interview at the OSCE Mission HQ in Tbilisi, April 1997.
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26. *Ibid.*
27. This situation was still the case in November 1999. Confirmed by interview with Major-General Churaev, Commander JPKF, in Tskhinvali, 31 October 1999.
28. *Ibid.*
29. Interview with Colonel Gurgenidze in Tbilisi, April 1997.
30. Interview with commander of the Ossetian Battalion in Tskhinvali, April 1997.
31. *Ibid.*
32. Major-General Nikolaev, note 25.
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The Russian armed forces in Chechnya, 1994

*Timothy Thomas*¹

Introduction

From December 1994 to August 1996 Russia's armed forces participated in combat operations within its borders against Chechen forces.² At the time of the crisis Russian President Boris Yeltsin relied on an inner circle of hard-line advisers who were more influential than the Russian Security Council. As a result, valuable advice from other civilian and military departments dealing with crisis management or peacekeeping alternatives did not reach the President's desk, preventing Yeltsin from considering peacekeeping as a means to end the tension. This was unfortunate, since there was an opportunity to implement a peacekeeping operation in Chechnya, and several ways to do it.

This chapter will discuss the contextual setting for the Chechen conflict, the decision-making process that led to the intervention in Chechnya, and the peacekeeping options that were developed but never made it to Yeltsin's desk. Clearly, this conflict might never have occurred or, at a minimum, could have developed quite differently if peace options, in the style of the "Russian peacekeeping" forces deployed in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, had been pursued.

Background issues

The Russian Republic of Chechnya is located in the south-western part of Russia near the north-western end of the Caspian Sea (see Figure 4.1).



Figure 4.1 (Courtesy of the General Libraries. The University of Texas at Austin.)

From a Russian point of view Chechnya is of vital concern, for it is the gateway to the remainder of the Caucasus. In addition, Chechnya is near the Caspian Sea, an area of particular interest to Russia. Here Russia must protect geo-strategic, geo-political, economic, and ecological interests.

Geo-strategic interests

Russia wants to remain strong in the area and wield power within, and control over, the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), thereby ensuring the security of its southern flank. States of concern here are those CIS members noted above plus Georgia and Armenia. Russia sees as its greatest danger the potential expansion of Chechen authority into Dagestan at Russia's expense, thereby severely restricting Russia's direct access to the Caspian Sea, with only Astrakhan remaining.

Geo-political interests

Maintaining Russian influence within the space of the former Soviet Union directly determines the future of Russian statehood. Problems in the north Caucasian autonomous Russian republics of Chechnya, Karachaevo-Cherkessia, Kabardino-Balkaria, and North Ossetia-Ingushetia, and growing religious pressures from the Wahhabis, among other groups, make this area more important to Russia than the CIS in terms of interests and stability.

Economic interests

Russia wants to ensure that cash flows in the form of Western capital will continue to come from Central Asian and Siberian oilfields, and are not redirected out of Russia and into the Caspian region. Russia can compete on a level playing field with Kazakhstan and other Caspian oil investors with the proper production-sharing agreement (PSA) legislation in place. Another economic concern, which is also a geo-strategic, geo-political, and ecological concern, is the sovereignty rights to the body of water itself. The bottom and outer edges of the Caspian are divided one way, the column of water over these divisions in another.

Ecological interests

Developing safe ecological norms for the exploitation of both hydrocarbons and fishing resources, and especially the protection of the Caspian sturgeon stock that produces 80–90 per cent of the world's caviar, are paramount concerns. This requirement is especially acute due to the

severe meteorological conditions and the strong and unpredictable storms that occur in the north Caspian Sea region.

Russia's peacekeeping options in Chechnya

Chechnya declared its independence from the Soviet Union in October 1991 when it was a semi-autonomous republic. Chechen President Dzhokhar Dudayev maintained that his semi-autonomous republic had the right to declare independence from Russia, an action that Russia viewed as illegal. Later, in the spring of 1993, Dudayev dissolved the Chechen parliament, and in June 1993 his presidential guard clashed with those protesting the parliament's dissolution and killed nearly 50 people. By the latter half of 1993 opposition to Dudayev developed and initiated a small-scale guerrilla war. In the spring of 1994 the Dudayev opposition called upon Russia to support it and help establish constitutional order.

At this stage of developments between Russia and Chechnya it is possible to identify three relatively peaceful options for a solution. In the first option, the opposition movement to Dudayev offered Russia an excellent opportunity to conduct a peace operation. Had Russia seized the moment, moved into Chechnya, and inserted its forces between the opposition movement and Dudayev's forces, large-scale conflict might never have occurred. The "Russian peacekeeping" opportunity in this scenario would not necessarily have conformed to international standards because Russia was not an impartial observer. President Yeltsin's security services were already helping the opposition movement with both overt and covert support, and the Russian government was clearly anti-Dudayev. Nevertheless, Russia had already conducted several "creative peacekeeping operations" of this nature in other areas of the Caucasus. The only difference this time was that the conflict was occurring inside Russia. The second peacekeeping option was to allow the opposition to attempt to settle the score with Dudayev peacefully, without Russian participation. This would have required a strong personality capable of wresting control from Dudayev. Demographic conditions might have aided this option. Chechen society is divided into formations of clans and tribes that were further subdivided geographically into the northern section of Chechnya and the southern mountain regions. Northern Chechens, perhaps because of their common border with Russia, were more accommodating to Russia's armed forces, and it is here that the opposition movement to Dudayev grew. Allowing the Chechens to settle their scores with one another without Russian intervention was therefore an option, but Russia apparently was unwilling to gamble on the fact that Dudayev might win. A possible third option was to use a

peace operation, with or without Russian participation, which would also have satisfied public opinion. ITAR-TASS, the official Russian news organization, reported that people all over Russia wanted the conflict in Chechnya between Dudayev and the opposition to be settled by peaceful means. At this point Russia did consider a peacekeeping option. In January 1993 Deputy Prime Minister Sergei Shakhrai went to Grozny and developed a document with the Speaker of the Chechen parliament, Hussein Akhmadov, and others that formed the basis of a treaty between Moscow and Chechnya. The document was called "On the delimitation and mutual delegation of powers". It treated both sides as equal partners, and noted the need for maintaining a single economic, defence, information, and cultural space. The next day, however, Dudayev nullified the document, saying the meeting took place without his approval.³

Other events in early 1994 continued to push Russia further and further away from considering the peacekeeping option. In February 1994 the Russian Duma called for negotiations with the Chechen opposition and denounced Dudayev. In July Yeltsin's titular chief of staff, Sergei Filatov, met with Umar Avturkhanov, head of an opposition group and more importantly head of the Chechen Provisional Council. The catalyst for the Avturkhanov-Filatov meeting was a Chechen hijacking in the neighbouring region, an action that had been occurring with regularity over the past six months. The Russian government declared its unofficial approval of the Chechen Provincial Council, armed it, and simultaneously accused Dudayev of seizing power via a *coup d'état*.⁴

In August President Yeltsin addressed the nation and stated that Russia must avoid intervening in the Chechen conflict with force. Other documents from the security services also advised against intervention. On 25 August, the Provisional Council was officially recognised by Moscow as the sole legitimate government of Chechnya. Moscow provided the council with technical, financial, and military support. This development ignored the other opposition groups in Chechnya, most notably those of the Government of National Confidence set up by former Chechen Prime Minister Yaragi Mamadayev, and that of former Russian Prime Minister Ruslan Khasbulatov.⁵

Khasbulatov's case was particularly interesting. He had returned to Chechnya in August 1994 to set up a "peacekeeping group" to disarm both Dudayev and the opposition forces. Had he been successful, Khasbulatov would have accomplished the second peacekeeping option listed above, allowing the Chechens to settle this score themselves without Russian intervention. This move was also calculated to increase Khasbulatov's popularity, which was already high. He was the one Chechen who enjoyed the same degree of support as Dudayev. Avturkhanov did not possess family roots in Chechnya nor achievements of note. Khasbulatov

owed his popularity to both family roots and the famous confrontation with Yeltsin. As one of the leaders of the Duma who refused to leave the Russian White House in September and October 1993, causing Yeltsin to order tank commanders to fire on and storm the building, he was put in prison. Released a few months later, Khasbulatov stated that the peace-keeping plan he had in mind had already worked in Asia and Europe, and that he was the friend of anyone who wanted to preserve humanity in Chechnya.⁶ His peace plan involved settling the conflict without Russian involvement, and the Yeltsin administration did not like this option.

President Yeltsin's team then set out to marginalize Khasbulatov, which was understandable in light of the events of October 1993. Yet this was probably a mistake, since Khasbulatov's popularity outweighed that of Avturkhanov. Yeltsin's former enemy represented the President's only real hope for a peaceful conclusion to the confrontation. However, Yeltsin was unable to compromise his hatred of Khasbulatov and did nothing to support him. On 3 October, Moscow began to deploy its helicopter gunships in operational support of the Chechen opposition forces, and the slide towards war increased dramatically. Eventually, on 4 December 1994, just before the Russian intervention in Chechnya, Khasbulatov recognized that all was lost and left Chechnya.

Rejection of the Chechnya peacekeeping proposals

Before Russian combat activities against Dudayev began in December 1994, a few analysts and legislators placed the peacekeeping option on the table for discussion in Moscow once again. If successful, a peacekeeping operation would have given Yeltsin two advantages: he could have stabilized the region without resort to all-out combat, and he could have encouraged the development of a compromise government in Chechnya. But Yeltsin never agreed to meet personally with Dudayev to discuss such options, although he did send Defence Minister Pavel Grachev to do so on his behalf. Dudayev, however, during his discussion with Grachev, understood that Yeltsin had already decided on the military option.

There also appears to be some evidence that the Yeltsin team developed a set of fake documents to legitimize their operation and ensure that peace options were not realistic. Carlotta Gall and Thomas de Waal, for example, in their highly interesting account of the conflict,⁷ noted that on 28 November an appeal was drafted (by one of Yeltsin's advisers) "from the leaders of the North Caucasus" to Yeltsin. The appeal asked him "swiftly to stop the bloody conflict in Chechnya and take all measures for the imposition of constitutional order". Gall and de Waal believe the draft was a blatant device to legitimize the coming invasion.

Ingush President Ruslan Aushev refused to sign. That evening, Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin met with the three main “power ministers”, Defence, Security, and the Interior, which controls the police and national guard functions in Russia. On 29 November, the following day, Aushev called Yeltsin and told him his information for making a decision was incomplete. Yeltsin replied that it was complete, and that was the end of the discussion. Yeltsin did not appear interested in anything but the use of force.

Before the Security Council met Yeltsin also gave an unconditional surrender ultimatum to the Chechens, saying they had 48 hours to disarm.⁸ A short time later, Security Council Secretary Oleg Lobov reportedly noted that “we need a small victorious war to raise the President’s ratings”. In a similar fashion, President Clinton nearly two months earlier had experienced an increase in his popularity with the success of his military campaign in Haiti. Many analysts believe that Yeltsin, with a presidential election only 18 months away, looked for the same success. This could explain the President’s preference for a popular but more warlike option over his willingness to use peacekeeping. Defence Minister Grachev assured Yeltsin that the conflict would be brief and victorious, and the President believed his defence leadership.

The speed with which decisions were made after the failed “black operation” (described later in this chapter) seemed to indicate that success was only hours away and a long-term peacekeeping operation was not needed. Yeltsin’s impatience with Dudayev and wrong belief in a quick victory were encouraged by poor intelligence, which indicated that only a small show of military force would be enough to take Grozny. It was reported to the President that only two or three hours of military pressure, not even military force, would be enough to change the situation radically, a message delivered by then security force chief Sergei Stepashin. These events continued to place bureaucratic politics and personal gain ahead of consideration for any peacekeeping option. It also ignored the earlier lessons in Georgia and Moldova that there were no quick victories, only long-drawn-out peacekeeping cease-fires.

Several ideas and options opposing the invasion were sent to Yeltsin from the Kremlin’s Analytical Centre in November and earlier, but apparently none was seen by the President,⁹ indicating that inside officials had control over what the President saw, and that his options were thus very limited. Yeltsin’s advisers were not the same liberals who had started the reform process in 1991. By November 1994, his closest advisers were a group of hard-liners who saw intervention as a better option than negotiation. As a result, Yeltsin was probably poorly informed about the objectives and courses of action available to him, and the consequences of the operation. According to Gall and de Waal this was the:

key to the start of the Chechen war – not in oil or a radical change in the situation on the ground, but in a shift in the balance of Kremlin politics combined with poor intelligence from Chechnya. The hawks would have approved of a military intervention in Chechnya as their way of remaking Yeltsin in their own image and stealing the rhetoric of the nationalist opposition...Yeltsin would enter the lists for the 1996 presidential elections as a tough ruler whose flirtation with Western liberalism was finally over.¹⁰

Peacekeeping options were supported by members of President Yeltsin's advisory group, but not the influential ones. Russian political and military planning for a peacekeeping initiative was most actively advanced by Vice-Premier Sergei Shakhrai and the peacekeeping department of the Russian general staff, respectively. Shakhrai advanced the idea of a peacekeeping exercise in which Russian forces would intervene between the two sides (pro- and anti-Dudayev). Such an operation would envision Russian forces serving as "forcible peacekeepers" who would disarm the two conflicting sides.

Peace operations conducted between Russia and members of the CIS did not offer an alternative approach. As one Russian officer explained, "we send the airborne into an area, they knock heads and separate the sides, and then we calm the participants".¹¹ What President Yeltsin had decided to support was a military intervention to divide Chechnya into two parts, a southern and a northern group, but without Dudayev as a future leader of either group. "Consensus" would be imposed, not offered for acceptance or rejection. The recent history of Chechnya indicated that there appeared to be fertile ground for hope that an anti-Dudayev group, if properly supported, could unseat the unpopular Dudayev.

However, the opposition was not united and there had even been large-scale battles in the summer and autumn of 1994 between warlords in the countryside. Russia appeared to be covertly providing arms to one or more of these groups. The four most influential opposition groups were the Provisional Council, headed by Umar Avturkhanov and located in the Nadterechnyi region north-west of Grozny; the Urus-Martan group headed by Beslan Gantemirov; the Argun's group headed by Ruslan Labazanov, located due east of Grozny; and the Tolstoi-Yurt group headed by former Supreme Soviet Speaker Ruslan Khasbulatov (Urus-Martan, Argun, and Tolstoi-Yurt are all cities in Chechnya). Moscow supported Avturkhanov more than the others, most likely because he was willing to sign the Federation Treaty giving up the goal of Chechen independence. These groups, however, were never able to overcome personal animosities and suspicions and unite in the summer and autumn of 1994 while fighting against Dudayev's forces. In the second Chechen war, started in 1999, the Russians enlisted the support of Gantemirov and

his band of Chechen loyalists. Gantemirov's forces played a large role in winning the battle for Grozny in January 2000.

Vice-Premier Shakhrai believed it would take two to three years to settle events in Chechnya. A most important step in his plan would occur after Dudayev's illegal formations were disarmed and local self-ruling bodies had been created. He planned to create a legitimate popular chamber by having populated centres nominate one or two people to the body. The chamber would prepare documents to elect power bodies, and would hold a referendum on a Chechen constitution. Until these bodies were established, Russian Government Decree No. 1411, "On the Territorial Administration of Federal Executive Organs in the Chechen Republic", would enforce order through cooperation with and help from more than 20 Russian ministries. Shakhrai also apparently planned to divide the territory of Chechnya into sections and to allow different factions to control each one, as the following report indicates:

Elements of Russian political planning for Chechnya continue to emerge. Dmitri Oreshkin, head of the Russian Academy of Sciences' Mercator analytical group and seemingly involved in the planning, told NTV on 18 December of a possible division of Chechnya in three parts: the south-eastern highlands, composing one-quarter to one-third of Chechnya's territory and into which the resistance forces would be pushed; the central lowlands, including Grozny and other industrial towns, to be defended by Russian troops against expected guerrilla attacks; and the northern Nadterechnyi Raion (with its Cossack minority and an influential pro-Moscow Chechen group) which "is expected to gravitate toward Russia".¹²

Although the Chechens would be reluctant to give up their arms voluntarily, constrained by cultural attitudes and centuries of arms-bearing traditions, if this plan had worked Russian forces could have participated in their disarmament without recourse to the bombing or the invasion of Grozny. In the long term, however, Russian efforts may have been sabotaged by Chechen guerrilla tactics.

The Russian military were never able to advance their plans for peacekeeping to the level of the Security Council. In early December the peacekeeping department offered two options for consideration by the general staff's operations department. They were to divide Chechnya into sectors, or to divide Chechnya into zones of responsibility. The first plan envisaged inviting other countries, most likely from Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries, to serve as monitors for particular sectors of the country. The second plan would utilize Russian forces to separate Chechnya into two zones of responsibility, either northern and southern, or pro- and anti-Dudayev zones.¹³ But Yeltsin and his inner circle had already decided what to do, setting in motion an entirely

different set of military activities and priorities. Initially, Defence Minister Grachev appointed Colonel-General Eduard Vorobyev, the ground forces peacekeeping representative to the US-Russian Totsk peacekeeping exercise in September 1994, to command operations on the ground in Chechnya in December 1994. It is not known whether Grachev had second thoughts, or wanted to impose a CIS peacekeeping model on Chechnya. In any case, when faced with the intervention scenario, Vorobyev resigned, stating the force was unprepared and undermanned for such an operation. Thus the Russian military was never able to push its peacekeeping plan high enough up the chain of command to receive serious consideration. This prevented the military from declaring their force as peacekeepers, from entering Chechnya peacefully without loud international protest, and from achieving the disarmament of the Chechen side without bloodshed.

Peacekeeping and Russian military doctrine

Peacekeeping operations were a relatively new phenomenon for the Russian military at the time of the Chechen conflict. Peacekeeping was only a small part of the military culture of Russia, such as when Russia supported UN peacekeeping missions. Many Russian officers involved in the planning of the intervention probably did not understand the opportunities offered by peace operations, nor the nuances of peace activities or the employment options or rationale for the use of peacekeeping troops. This may have forced the hand of the general staff in the direction of an intervention scenario. Even in Russia's General Staff Academy, lectures on peacekeeping were not offered in 1994, according to retired colonel Andrei Demurenko, who had served in the general staff's peacekeeping department at the time of the intervention. This meant senior leaders possessed little theory and no explanation of how to conduct a peace operation. However, there were joint peace operations being developed and run between Russian and US peacekeepers in which Demurenko and others participated. But these were conducted by the peacekeeping department of the Russian general staff and may not have been considered as a serious option for internal problems. Yet a peace operation was more important for an operation inside Russian borders because it should have been important to keep the level of casualties to an absolute minimum.

Writing a few years later about Russian peace operations in a manual entitled *Peacekeeping Operations: General Missions, Methods, Phases*,¹⁴ Colonel Demurenko offered his own ideas on Russian peace operations all over the CIS and in Chechnya. The manual consisted of five chapters:

general terminology of peace support and peacekeeping operations; documents of peacekeeping operations; peacekeeping means; training for peacekeeping operations; and some links with OOTW. Demurenko listed Chechnya as an example of a peace enforcement mission, however, and not peacekeeping.

From a contemporary Western point of view, it would have been impossible to declare Chechnya as a peacekeeping operation. A US document published in February 1999 defines peacekeeping as:

Military operations undertaken with the consent of all major parties to a dispute, designed to monitor and facilitate implementation of an agreement (cease-fire, truce, or other such agreement) and support diplomatic efforts to reach a long-term political settlement. Also called PK.¹⁵

There was no consent from Chechen President Dudayev for the intervention, although consent and support for Russia's actions were available from the opposition groups that Russia had been supporting.

When the Russian intervention began, the country had no formal peacekeeping logic to follow. It was not until March 1995 that a formal law on the use of peacekeeping forces was developed by the Russian Duma, and it dealt only with the peacekeeping operations of Russian forces as part of a UN force. Another indication that the Russian leadership did not understand the constitutional position of their armed forces in an internal security scenario was the fact that in February 1995 a highly placed Russian security official asked a US researcher for the legal basis behind the use of American forces and the National Guard within the borders of the USA.¹⁶ With no peacekeeping law in place at the time of the intervention, with a decision-making process controlled by insiders, and with little idea how to use force legally within the country, it is no surprise that staff efforts to develop and implement a peacekeeping option for Chechnya went unheeded.

When discussing Russian peacekeeping theory as a component of international peacekeeping operations in 1997, Colonel Demurenko, together with Dr Alexander Nikitin, defined peacekeeping as:

Various types of activity carried out to resolve conflict; prevent conflict escalation; halt or prevent military actions; uphold law and order in a conflict zone; conduct humanitarian actions; restore social and political institutions whose functioning has been disrupted by the conflict; and restore basic conditions for daily living.¹⁷

It is unknown if this definition and understanding were available at the time of the intervention into Chechnya, especially since the area was

declared a “zone of armed conflict”. There were three aspects of this definition that could have supported the Chechnya operation as a peacekeeping activity: resolving conflict, for example the battles between Chechen President Dzhokhar Dudayev’s people and the Chechen opposition to him; upholding law and order in a conflict zone where Dudayev had been declared a criminal who was stealing Russian natural resources (oil) and products meant for other regions of the Caucasus by robbing trains, supporting drug running, etc.; and restoring social and political institutions disrupted by conflict such as the governmental institutions of Russian authority in Chechnya that Dudayev had declared null and void. Russians were apparently persecuted and driven out of Chechnya by Dudayev’s officials, and Dudayev declared the area independent from Russia – a move the Russian government did not recognize. However, it is possible that this 1997 explanation of peacekeeping was most likely unavailable for use during the operation in 1994–1995. Furthermore it is more relevant to Russian thinking about international peacekeeping operations, not domestic operations.

Why the use of force and not peacekeeping measures?

At the beginning of the confrontation between Russia and Chechnya, most Chechens supported Russia’s view and wanted to replace President Dudayev, whose government was viewed by many as corrupt. After the fighting began, however, many Chechens switched to support Dudayev’s cause, not because they believed in him and his regime but because of the indiscriminate bombing of the capital city of Grozny and other cities by the Russian air force. Such actions helped turn the local population against all Russian forces. This enabled a small force of Chechen regulars and guerrillas eventually to confront and win against a Russian force that was hastily assembled and unprepared for the types of specialized combat that ensued – combat in cities, on the plains, and in the mountains.

A series of unique events and a Russian-specific decision-making process drove the Russian decision to intervene with force in Chechnya. All of these factors negatively affected the peacekeeping option for Chechnya. First, the split of Yugoslavia along ethnic lines was still fresh in the minds of Russian policy-makers. This affected how policy-makers viewed demands for sovereignty or independence, centre-periphery relations, and especially the national (ethnic) loyalties that were replacing communism. Second, the problem area under consideration was in a very sensitive region of border, economic, religious, and ethnic concerns, marked by a troubled history working against compromise. Third, civil-military relations were still under development in Moscow and, as a result, the

accompanying national security infrastructure was still in transition and unprepared for such an occasion. Fourth, as a great power still undergoing dramatic change, outside powers were less willing and enthusiastic to offer options or put pressure on Yeltsin. The unexpected consequences of the USSR's break-up, such as the fear of further internal disintegration, required silent acquiescence. Fifth, this was an internal conflict, the type of conflict for which national security decision-making is not normally prepared. This fact also worked against international intervention. Finally, the Russian decision to use force was unable to free itself from a decision-making tradition based on "executive fiat" and personal influence, the Soviet-style Politburo decision-making. Anatol Lieven described it as a "tendency for orders and decisions to be made 'by telephone', that is to say personally and informally as personified by Yeltsin's inner circle, rather than by regular, formal and legal means".¹⁸ This came at the expense of bureaucratic politics and pluralism. It is the latter two issues that deserve particular attention, for they highlight the probable causes as to why an opportunity to employ a peacekeeping operation was missed.

At the time of the intervention into Chechnya, Russia did not have the equivalent of a national security strategy, called military policy in the past and today termed the "Concept of National Security of the Russian Federation". This document came into being only in late 1997, and was approved in December 1999.¹⁹ Further, Russia did not have a formal peacekeeping law at the time of the intervention. Such a law did not appear until 26 March 1995, and it only dealt with peacekeeping outside the borders of Russia. Therefore Russia's use of peacekeeping forces was ill-defined, and its *vital interests* were not officially declared in any state document at the time. Undoubtedly, vital interests were under discussion and existed in an unofficial status. For example, the Chairman of the Duma Defence Committee at the time of the intervention into Chechnya, Sergei Yushenkov, listed the government's *declared objectives* as follows: to defend the territorial integrity of Russia; to disarm so-called bandit formations; to defend human rights; and to re-establish constitutional order or, more precisely, to establish a new constitutional order.²⁰ But these objectives and stated vital interests were not formally declared anywhere except in a "transitional" military doctrine statement from 1993.²¹

The transitional doctrine served as the guiding document behind the training and use of Russia's armed forces at the time of the intervention. The doctrine made it clear in the opening paragraph that it was a *document of the transitional period*, when statehood was being established, democratic reforms implemented, and a new system of international relations was being shaped. A new draft doctrine appeared five years later in October 1999.

Russian specialists define military doctrine as a system of officially accepted fundamental views on the prevention of war, defence development, preparation of the country and the armed forces for defending the homeland, and methods of training and conducting armed combat in the repulsion of aggression and in local conflicts. The 1993 doctrine noted that the Russian Federation required armed forces and other troops to terminate armed conflicts and any unlawful armed violence on the state border, or within the bounds of the territory of the Russian Federation, that threatened its vitally important interests.²² As regards the North Caucasus military district, within which Chechnya lay, there were a series of interests vital to Russia. Most notable were oil transport routes and pipelines, transportation networks in the Caucasus region, and regional stability issues (ethnic, religious, etc.). Military leaders undoubtedly had a theatre campaign plan for the Caucasus region as a whole that would utilize the military doctrine's guidance and safeguard these threatened vital interests.²³

Utilizing the transitional doctrine's sketchy guidance, and in the absence of a formal decision-making procedure in place, it was difficult to comprehend or follow the actual decision-making process for the use of force in Chechnya. However, a study of events based on media reports, personal interviews, and the existing infrastructure (limited though it was) does offer a basis for analysis. The facts demonstrated an overabundance of power in the hands of a few individuals, and decisions by officials with little or no public accountability. With few options for a peaceful solution and limited accountability, it is easier to understand why President Yeltsin made the decision to intervene with force and not utilize any peacekeeping plans in Chechnya.

Inner-circle decision-making for Chechnya

Several internal factors played key roles in the Russian decision to use force and not peacekeeping measures in Chechnya. First, President Yeltsin was not aligned with any political movement, which forced him to rely on his closest associates for decisions. These individuals, dubbed his "inner circle", had considerably more weight than the advisers to the US President. Without any party affiliation to support him or offer alternatives, the inner circle played a key role in decision-making. Yeltsin also had less accountability to the Duma for his actions as a result. Reliance on an inner circle removed the need to foster unanimity among the agents of executive and legislative power. It allowed Yeltsin and the Security Council to establish a very truncated legislative basis for decisions (formed around presidential decrees). Some analysts believed that Yelt-

sin's inner circle was behind a consensus suggesting that the President was losing strength in his bid for re-election (due to the defection of some political forces in 1994 that earlier supported him). A quick victory in Chechnya would prove his resolve and reinvigorate his domestic image. This line of reasoning all but ruled out a peacekeeping operation. Yeltsin had pushed through a constitution that was imperial in design to offset these shortcomings. The constitution kept strong institutions (such as the power ministries/agencies) weak by constantly changing key leaders, and kept his position strong, even domineering. This method, however, ensured that institutional knowledge for decision-making was limited and perhaps even unreliable.

The formal and official channel for decision-making, the Security Council, played a rubber-stamp role for Yeltsin's decisions due to the influence of the inner circle. The Russian Security Council was not an independent decision-making organ but only an advisory body to the President, implementing decisions only after the President signed a decree. According to Russian analyst Emil Payin, who served on President Yeltsin's Advisory Council, the "decisive" Security Council votes were those of the President, Security Council Secretary, Prime Minister, Speaker of the Federation Council, and Speaker of the State Duma. Others, in an advisory role, included various governmental ministers. There was no place on the Security Council for the Chief of the General Staff, the brain of the armed forces whose duties resemble those of the US Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Under the Russian system, there was no way for a professional general staff peacekeeping option to reach the Kremlin unless Minister of Defence Pavel Grachev delivered the message himself. Grachev, however, was intent on ending the conflict with two airborne regiments in a few hours, a bit of bravado he was later to regret.

In this way the Russian Security Council appeared merely to endorse the decisions of influential opinion-makers close to President Yeltsin. One report noted that an analytical centre belonging to Presidential Security Service Chief General Alexander Korzhakov, who had no role on the Security Council or relation to military power, explored options for resolving the situation by force. The report implied that his non-professional analysis influenced President Yeltsin.²⁴ Reports at the time by influential figures, even from such highly placed persons as Foreign Minister Kozyrev, noted that military officials (and in particular Grachev) had promised a quick victory and the end of military actions by about 20 December.

While the Kremlin did not appear to be in the midst of a huge internal battle over whether to use force or not, the case was quite different for the military. Here, there were serious disagreements among senior mili-

tary professionals over the correct course to take in Chechnya. For example, the professional opinion of Minister of Defence Grachev may have been at odds with that of the Chief of the General Staff regarding the initial operation.²⁵ Yeltsin most likely influenced Grachev's opinion by telling him what decision had been made, and asking him merely to endorse it. The general staff, on the other hand, realized that winter was at hand and thus starting an operation at that moment was not a good idea. But the President's immediate entourage pushed for an unrealistic execution of the plan, ignoring the time required to prepare and implement the plan, and under what conditions. Yeltsin's inner circle was not composed of military experts, and it showed.

Another report²⁶ noted that decisions regarding the use of force were made in writing (most likely after President Yeltsin had informed members of his decision) at a meeting of the Security Council with the participation of the two Speakers of both parliamentary chambers, Ivan Rybkin (Duma Speaker) and Vladimir Shumeiko (Federation Council Chairman). Security Council advisers who offered a professional yet dissenting opinion were generally ignored, analyst Payin noted, with some, such as Justice Minister Yuri Kalmykov, resigning in protest. There appeared to be little room for discussion of the operation's pros and cons. Perhaps for this reason so many important and highly placed general officers in the Russian armed forces complained openly in the Duma about the planned use of force. As one US writer on the Chechen war noted:

On 29 November Yeltsin firmly backed the use of force and demanded a unanimous vote in favour at the Security Council ... it [the decision] exposed the lack of any proper decision-making mechanisms in the Kremlin. The Security Council merely endorsed a decision taken privately by Yeltsin and a few advisers and there was no mechanism for dissenters to register their objections.²⁷

The Russian security system failed to use available methodologies for handling a crisis within its borders. These included the declaration of martial law or a state of emergency. In hindsight, a state of emergency decree for Chechnya and neighbouring territories was essential but never implemented. Perhaps President Yeltsin simply lacked the will or desire to declare a "state of emergency" (still not used in the area to this day) for the region. Or perhaps the Yeltsin administration felt that the Federation Council would not approve such a decision. It was speculated that Yeltsin did not want to make the decision because of potential political ramifications and consequent damage to his re-election campaign. Or, expecting a military action of short duration, Yeltsin may have considered such an action as inappropriate. As one US expert on Russia, Gail Lapidus, has noted:

Whether President Yeltsin's action violated the constitution was controversial. Yeltsin declared neither martial law nor a state of emergency, nor did he officially notify the Federal Assembly or seek the approval of the Federation Council, as the use of regular troops would normally require. The decision was issued in the form of several executive decrees, including one in the name of the Security Council, a body whose authority had not yet been defined, and was defended on the grounds that it was the president's responsibility "to restore constitutional order" in Chechnya.²⁸

Undoubtedly the absence of a formal, defined decision-making infrastructure played a key role.

Instead of opting for a martial law or a state of emergency strategy, President Yeltsin authorized covert action in November 1994. The Federal Security Service organized and ran a "black operation" in Chechnya. This operation included an attempt by the Chechen opposition to unseat Dudayev, or neutralize him, and take back control of the country through a simple intervention into the capital, Grozny. However, the operation was a complete failure. Dudayev's forces routed the opposition elements and exposed Russian complicity (Russian officers had participated in the attack) and lies (Defence Minister Grachev initially denied any involvement by the armed forces, only to have the Chechens provide bodies and documents from the dead or captured soldiers). The opposition had also used tanks as a part of its military plan, escalating the conflict and almost guaranteeing that it was now beyond the reach of a quick peace plan. With the failure of the "black operation" went any chance of using a state of emergency contingency. Instead, the area was declared a "zone of armed conflict", which is a region in which there currently are, or have been, military actions, as well as regions where a real threat could arise. This designation authorized the President to use his armed forces within the country, although it appears the 1993 military doctrine also authorized this use. Thus, Yeltsin tried to reinforce failure with the intervention in December, and became entrapped in the ensuing struggle. His inner circle had badly miscalculated the outcome of the operation and wrongly informed the President about probable success.

Finally, the transitional state of the Russian national security decision-making process mentioned above (for example, there were five Security Council Secretaries in the years 1993–1999, and the institution itself has undergone continuous change and even competition at one point with a "defence council" concept) apparently led to further confusion among politicians and military figures over how and when properly to use force within the country. This immature and developing political-military infrastructure was still working out the proper relationships between the President and the power ministers, and the latter's relation to the Secu-

rity Council, when the intervention occurred. Additionally, the power ministries were fighting over turf and budget issues, and were defending themselves against charges of corruption and other scandals at the top. The description of the Security Council's decision to use force offered by Payin and Popov indicated not only a lack of established procedures but also a forced top-down procedure based on directives and not discussion.²⁹ It also indicated that political authorities were still using an ineffective interagency network that relied too heavily on Soviet-era techniques of limited information-sharing and input into the final decision process. Unfortunately, individual influence and access appeared to be still as important, or more so, than bureaucratic politics.

Conclusion

This discussion has highlighted the manner in which the decision-making structures worked, or did not work, in Chechnya for Russian decision-makers, and why a decision to use force, instead of peacekeeping measures, was taken. The resulting operation did not stabilize the region or resolve the conflict, but only made the situation more volatile, with the consequences of its failure continuing to impact in Dagestan and Chechnya. In the future these consequences may also impact elsewhere in Russia. It is unfortunate that other options were not analysed by the Yeltsin team before entering Chechnya in 1994, for there were options available from both the President's advisory group and also from the military. Russia must find a better way to maintain its traditional strategic frontiers and interests, especially in areas such as the Caspian Sea region.

The West did nothing to stop the conflict in Chechnya, since this was an internal affair of the Russian Federation. Before the international community will intervene to help Russia under such scenarios, Russia will have to help itself by passing new laws for the use of force inside its country and laws authorizing the declaration of emergency actions. Russia has passed an international peacekeeping law, and needs to continue working in this direction.

One of the first military analytical accounts of crisis management and decision-making that addressed the Chechen crisis was written in 1996 by Major-General Gennadiy Nikolayevich Borzenkov. This is a well-documented account of the flawed decision-making process which should become a basis for future reform.³⁰

A civilian analysis of the decision-making process was best summarized by a member of President Yeltsin's Presidential Council and Presidential Analytical Council, Emil Payin. He noted that:

It is possible to discern one very important underlying trend – the absence not only of a system for making key decisions on vital matters of national security, but the lack of an established political tradition of civilized and democratic interaction between high-ranking policymakers. There is no code of conduct or established set of norms to discipline risky “improvisation” on the part of the leadership and an incompetent bureaucracy on the part of government functionaries. Under these circumstances intuition and improvisation dominated the decision-making process.³¹

Army General Anatoliy Kulikov (former head of all Russian forces in Chechnya and now a Duma representative) added another recommendation. He stated that the law should define the status of an insurgent territory as well as the functions of the power ministries operating there. Such a law would help legalize the actions of the military in an area, although it must be based on the constitution and take into consideration the status of the Chechen Republic, according to Kulikov.³² However, even legislation must be imbedded in a strict and detailed national security decision-making infrastructure that has several components still under discussion in Russia.

It will probably take another two or three years for lawmakers to develop proper legislation. Elements of the national security process (a policy, military doctrine, formalization of roles of advisers and decision-makers, etc.) are under development. However, the peculiarities of the Russian system and the reliance on Soviet techniques, combined with the uncertainty over the future direction of the country, help explain the ruthless, all-out efforts to win a political election in Russia. However, the freedom to reform the system effectively relies on the liberalization of key areas of Russia’s decision-making process.

Notes

1. The views expressed in this chapter are those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of the US Department of Defense.
2. The two Russian interventions in Chechnya during the 1990s cannot be categorized as peacekeeping in the international definition of “peacekeeping”, nor in the Russian version that is defined in this volume. This chapter on Chechnya therefore explains a different facet of the Russian peacekeeping paradox. Its purpose is not to describe the ground-level details of the operations in Chechnya but to assess the political and cultural forces in Moscow’s decision-making bureaucracy that acted against the consideration of a peacekeeping solution. It shows how key Russian officials had no genuine intuition of the advantages and international expectations of a peace force intervention, and how a traditional Soviet bureaucracy managed to prevent even the possibility of its consideration.
3. Carlotta Gall and Thomas de Waal, *Chechnya: Calamity in the Caucasus*, New York: New York University Press, 1998, p. 118.

4. Anatol Lieven, *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power*, New York: Yale University Press, 1998, pp. 86–88.
5. *Ibid.*, pp. 88, 89.
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 90, 91.
7. Gall and de Waal, note 1, pp. 161–167.
8. *Ibid.*
9. Author's interview with Emil Payin, February 1995.
10. Gall and de Waal, note 3, p. 165.
11. Author's discussion with a Russian officer of the peacekeeping department of the general staff at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 11–17 December 1993.
12. Vladimir Socor, RL/RFFE Inc., via Sovset, 22 December 1994.
13. Author's discussion with a Russian officer in Moscow, January 1999.
14. *Peacekeeping Operations: General Missions, Methods, Phases*, Sarajevo: United Nations Protection Force.
15. US Joint Pub 3-07.3, Government Printing Office, 12 February 1999, p. GL-8.
16. Author's discussion with a Russian Security Council official at Staraya Ploschad, Moscow, February 1995.
17. Andrei Demurenko and Alexander Nikitin, *Basic Terminology and Concepts in International Peacekeeping Operations: An Analytical Review*, Foreign Military Studies Office Special Study, September 1998, p. 6.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 95.
19. "Russian Federation national security blueprint", Presidential Edict No. 1,300 dated 17 December 1997, *Rossikaya gazeta*, 26 December 1997, pp. 4–5.
20. S. N. Yushenkov, *Voina v chechne i problemy rossiiskoi gosudarstvennosti i demokratii*, Moscow: Semetei, 1995, p. 15.
21. "The basic provisions of the military doctrine of the Russian Federation", *Rossiyskiye vesti*, 18 November 1993.
22. *Ibid.*, pp. 1, 2.
23. Russia's *vital interests* can now be found in the 1997 national security concept. The security concept also motivated the initiation of further discussion on a new military doctrine in the winter and spring of 1998. The fundamental tenets on using the armed forces and other troops are stated more precisely. They explain how the Russian Federation, guided by its vital interests and acting in accordance with existing international and national legal norms, considers the use of its armed forces and other troops legitimate for the following purposes:

... to put a stop to any illegal armed violence directed against state sovereignty and the constitutional system, the country's territorial integrity, and the rights, freedoms, and legal interests of the citizens of Russia, society and the state, and facilities of the Russian Federation *on the territory of the country* and beyond its borders, including in the world's oceans and outer space ...
24. Emil A. Payin and Arkady A. Popov, "Chechnya", in Jeremy R. Azrael and Emil Payin (eds), *US and Russian Policymaking with Respect to the Use of Force*, Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 1996, pp. 26–27.
25. Oleg Vladynkin, "General staff warned, Grachev disregarded", *Obshchaia gazeta*, 11–17 December 1997, as cited in Gail Lapidus, "Contested sovereignty: The tragedy of Chechnya", *International Security*, Vol. 23, No. 1, Summer 1998, pp. 19–20, footnote 27.
26. Payin and Popov, note 24, p. 28.
27. Gall and de Waal, note 3, pp. 166–167.
28. Lapidus, note 25, p. 14, footnote 27.

29. Payin and Popov, note 24.
30. Gennadiy Nikolayevich Borzenkov, "The Security Council has no right to decide the country's fate; The mechanism for resolving crisis situations must include several components", *Nezavisimoye voyennoye obozreniye* (supplement to *Nezavisimaya gazeta*), 24 February 1996, No. 4, p. 2.
31. Payin and Popov, note 24, p. 28.
32. Comments made by General Kulikov while visiting and lecturing at the Marshall Center, Garmisch, Germany, July 1998.

Russian peacekeeping in Moldova: Source of stability or neo-imperialist threat?

Trevor Waters

Introduction

Conflict in Moldova quickened with the nationalist ferment over matters of language, culture, and identity which consumed the Soviet republic in 1989 and surfaced with the secession of Gagauzia and Transdniestria in 1990. Civil war, continuing difficulties with territorial separatism, ethno-linguistic strife, Romanian irredentism, and Great-Russian chauvinism number among the most important security concerns that have plagued the Republic of Moldova since its declaration of independence on 27 August 1991. At the turn of the century, while there are no immediate external threats, the strengthening of the country's independence, the restoration of its territorial integrity, and the removal of the Russian military presence from Moldovan soil remain the republic's major national security goals.

The present account of Russian peacekeeping in a little-known post-Soviet borderland (the so-called "forgotten republic")¹ begins with an introduction to Moldova and the Moldovans, which also serves to outline the historical, geographical, political, ideological, socio-cultural, and ethnic factors which form the background to the conflict. Despite the evident artificiality of isolating such factors under separate headings, it hardly needs emphasizing that in the real world of social, political, and military affairs they are frequently mutually reinforcing. Their combined impact and influence on attitudes, mindset, public opinion, and policy-making,

though often subtle and diffuse, are great indeed. The second section reflects briefly on the strategic significance of Moldova, reviews developments in the Russian military presence there, outlines Moldova's policy on neutrality and NATO, and also chronicles the course of the conflict. A third section offers a summary and discussion of the Agreement on the Principles for a Peaceful Settlement of the Armed Conflict in the Dnestr Region of the Republic of Moldova, signed in Moscow on 21 July 1992 by Presidents Mircea Snegur and Boris Yeltsin. Developments, including force reductions, in Russian peacekeeping in Transdniestria must be viewed within the context of the October 1994 accord on withdrawal of Russia's 14th Army, the transfer of the peacekeeping function to the Operational Group of Russian Forces (formerly the 14th Army), and Moscow's determination to secure a military base within Moldova. The chapter suggests that Russian peacekeeping in Moldova is not so much a source of regional stability as rather more a neo-imperialist threat that has prolonged the conflict and, in so doing, blocked the strengthening of Moldova's independence and the restoration of its territorial integrity.

Borderland Moldova and the roots of the conflict

History and geography

Moldovans and Romanians have always spoken of "Moldova", while in the West – until the 1990s – we usually called the territory by its Russian and Latin name "Moldavia". "Dnestr" (or variants "Dniester", "Dniestr") is the Russian designation for the river the Moldovans and Romanians known as the "Nistru". From the Moldovan/Romanian standpoint the region to the east across the Nistru is, of course, "Transnistria" (anglicized as Transdniestria) which is known, however, in Russian as *pridnestrov'ye*, or "the land on the Dnestr". The unrecognized separatist state in eastern Moldova is called the Dnestr Moldovan Republic (DMR).

Founded by the Romanians in 1359, at the height of its power under Stefan cel Mare (the Great, 1457–1504), the independent principality of Moldova extended from the Carpathian Mountains and the forests of Bucovina in the west and north to the Danube and Dnestr Rivers and the Black Sea. By the mid-sixteenth century, however, Moldova, like the Romanian principality of Wallachia, had become a vassal state of the Ottoman Porte. Moldova first came under Russian rule in 1812 when Alexander I annexed the eastern half of the principality (a conquest that Romanian historian Nicolae Iorga later decried as "the rape of Bessarabia"),² while the subsequent unification of the western half of the prin-

cipality (which retained the name of Moldova) with Wallachia in 1859 under Prince Alexandru Cuza marked the birth of the modern Romanian state.

Bessarabia (the Russian designation for the territory between the Dneestr and the Prut, derived from the erstwhile Romanian ruling house of Basarab) remained Russian from its liberation from the Turks in 1812 until 1918, when it proclaimed its independence from the collapsing Tsarist empire as the Democratic Republic of Moldova, and was united with Romania. Bessarabia remained a province of "Greater Romania" throughout the inter-war period, but control of the interfluvial region – the "Bessarabian question" – continued to be a source of tension between Moscow and Bucharest.

The secret protocols of the 1939 Molotov-Ribbentrop non-aggression pact allowed the Soviet Union to annex the eastern half of the Romanian province of Moldova in 1940, and the annexation was confirmed in the 1947 peace treaty between the USSR and Romania. In accordance with Stalin's "divide-and-rule" nationalities policy, two of the three regions of the annexed territory, Northern Bucovina in the north and Southern Bessarabia in the south, were transferred to Ukraine (and now form Chernovtsy *oblast* and the southern part of Odessa *oblast* respectively). A strip of land along the eastern (or left) bank of the Dneestr/Nistru (Transdnistria) was detached from Ukraine, however, and added to the central region of the annexed territory to become (in 1940–1944) the Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic (MSSR) and the sovereign Republic of Moldova in 1991. Part of the legacy of this shifting borderland between Romania and Russia is that Moldova has never existed as an independent state within its present frontiers, which significantly include territory east of the Dneestr that has never belonged to the Moldo-Romanian space. Moreover, fragments of the mediaeval principality of Moldova currently lie in three separate states and constitute the Romanian province of Moldova, parts of Chernovtsy and Odessa *oblasts* in Ukraine, and the bulk of the territory of the Republic of Moldova (less Transdnistria).

In 1990, the Popular Front of Moldova made strident calls for the reintegration of the "historic Moldovan lands" of Northern Bucovina and Southern Bessarabia, while Ukraine flatly rejected what it regarded as irredentist pretensions. In November 1994, however, Moldova and Ukraine signed an agreement which stipulated that the two sides have no territorial claims on each other. Moldova is the only former Soviet republic that potentially constitutes an object of foreign irredentism – a fact that has seriously complicated Romanian-Moldovan relations throughout the 1990s.

As suggested earlier, the sliver of land along the eastern bank of the Dneestr, which constitutes 12 per cent of Moldova's territory and provides

the focus for the continuing confrontation, has never been considered part of the traditional Moldovan lands, although it has always contained a sizeable Moldovan population. (Indeed, the Dnestr River is generally thought to be the eastern border of the Romanian ethno-cultural space.) Prior to the revolution in 1917 the left-bank Dnestr territory belonged to the Tsarist empire. It subsequently became the western part of the Moldovan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (MASSR, capital Balta, later Tiraspol) – a Moldovan “homeland” in Ukraine known as “Bessarabia in miniature” – which the Soviets established in 1924 to put pressure on Romania and buttress their claim to Bessarabia. In Transdnistria, then, unlike in western Moldova, sovietization, and with it Russification, for instance the use of the Cyrillic alphabet, was enforced for more than 70 years. Indeed, since the region formed a border area until the Second World War and was thus ideologically vulnerable, in part because of ethno-linguistic ties with Romania across the Dnestr, sovietization was enforced with especial vigilance and vigour. Bright lights burned permanently in Soviet Tiraspol to impress the Bessarabian peasants under the Romanian landlord-capitalist yoke across the river!³

When the Romanian army – an ally of Nazi Germany – advanced into the Soviet Union during the Second World War it was wholly determined to destroy communism in Transdnistria. Excess zeal in pursuing this aim resulted in brutality and atrocities which linger in the Transdnistrian folk memory, reinforcing fear and suspicion of Romania to this day.

Post-war economic policy sought to develop western Moldova as an agricultural area, while industrialization – often of a defence-related nature – was concentrated mainly in Transdnistria, where 17 per cent of the MSSR’s total population provided almost 90 per cent of the republic’s energy and more than one-third of its industrial production.⁴ Moldovan agricultural development had not, of course, been subject to the Soviet collectivization disasters of the 1920s and 1930s, and the local peasantry on the west bank adapted well to the relatively painless collectivization of the post-war period. As was the case throughout the Soviet Union, the peasants were allowed to engage in small-scale private enterprise farming. A successful, entrepreneurial peasant farming outlook and mentality survived better than elsewhere in Soviet territory and forms an important element in the mindset of the population in western Moldova today. Agriculture in Soviet Moldova was, on the whole, efficient, productive, and successful – in sharp contrast to most other parts of the Soviet Union – and some of the best talent took up agricultural management as a career.

Urbanized and heavily industrialized, Transdnistria consists of five *rayony* (or districts) and the capital city of Tiraspol.⁵ It has a mixed population of 40.1 per cent Moldovans (the largest single ethnic group),

28.3 per cent Ukrainians, and 25.5 per cent Russians, according to the last USSR Census in 1989. Until the 1960s Moldovans made up the absolute majority on the left bank, but their proportion declined as a result of the centrally promoted immigration of skilled labour, particularly from the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR), into the cities to man the factories. Many of today's left-bank inhabitants emigrated from remote areas of Russia during the 1980s, including DMR "President" Igor Smirnov, who came from Siberia in 1985. Opposite the city of Tiraspol, where the Russians are concentrated and form a majority of the population, on the right bank of the Dnestr is the town of Tighina (Bendery), an important junction linked by rail and road bridges. Bendery, too, was industrialized and populated by Russian workers following the Second World War, and has become a DMR enclave on the right bank of the river.

Politics and ideology

The confrontation on the Dnestr is essentially a political struggle. In Moldovan eyes, the political and ideological forces that underpinned the abortive coup of August 1991, *viz.* hard-line communism, Russian nationalism, the military-industrial complex, and the determination to preserve the union state, have retained a power base in the heavily militarized region and Russified industrial centres on the left bank. Troops of what has now become the Operational Group of Russian Forces in the Dnestr Region of the Republic of Moldova (OGRF), commanded by Russian officers with a political axe to grind, so the Moldovans say, furthered and continue to further the cause of local Russian or other non-indigenous factions in a former Soviet republic against the properly constituted state authorities of the newly independent host country. In short, the Russian military actively supported an armed insurgency whose aim was to establish on the territory of an internationally recognized sovereign state a Soviet-style outpost, the so-called DMR, in a post-Soviet world.

The highly sovietized population of Transdnistria, reinforced by a Russian industrialized workforce, suspicious of the peasant free-market mentality of the right bank, alarmed by the restoration of the Latin alphabet, by the declaration that Moldovan (i.e. Romanian) was to be the official language of the republic, and by the adoption of a version of the Romanian tricolour as the Moldovan flag, and fearful of the possibility of unification of the new state with Romania, naturally enough saw matters very differently.

On 2 September 1990 Transdnistria declared its secession from Moldova. This left-bank refuge for the "Socialist choice" enthusiastically

hailed the attempted coup in August 1991 while, from the very beginning, western Moldova resolutely defied the *putsch*, vigorously supported RSFSR President Yeltsin's democratic stand, and resisted peacefully, yet successfully, military attempts to impose the junta's state of emergency.

The DMR has subsequently played host to numerous representatives of Russia's red-brown (communist-nationalist) ideological forces, including hundreds of Cossack mercenaries determined to "defend their blood brothers" and to "hold the frontier of the Russian state", together with a string of virulently nationalistic demagogues like Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, Sergei Baburin, Albert Makashov, and Viktor Alksnis, the last of whom described the DMR as the base from which the Soviet Union's restoration would begin.⁶ Makashov was one of the principal leaders of the Moscow October 1993 insurgency (in which Baburin and Alksnis were also implicated), while Zhirinovskiy (leader of the misnamed Russian Liberal Democratic Party, which has secured an alarmingly high percentage of the vote in Russian elections) has spoken of transforming Moldova into a Russian *guberniya*, or province. *Sovetskaya Rossiya* has described the DMR as "an island of Soviet power" and "a frontier of Russia".⁷

*The ethnic factor*⁸

The total population of Moldova is 4,367,000, of whom 754,000 live in the capital city, Chisinau. The largest ethnic group, the Moldovans themselves, number 2,800,000 (or 65 per cent of the total population). Of the three other major ethnic groups, the 600,000 Ukrainians (14 per cent) come second, with 560,000 Russians (13 per cent) in third place, followed by the 153,000 Gagauzi (who constitute 3.5 per cent of the population but are concentrated in the southern corner of Moldova, along the border with Ukraine). Bulgarians account for 2 per cent of the total population. Seventy per cent of Moldova's Russians live in western Moldova, and 30 per cent in the DMR. The ethnic mix in the DMR consists of 40.1 per cent Moldovans, 28.3 per cent Ukrainians, 25.5 per cent Russians, and various other minor national groups.

The Gagauzi are Turkic-speaking Orthodox Christians whose ancestors fled Ottoman rule in north-east Bulgaria during and after the Russo-Turkish war of 1806–1812. There have never, therefore, been any grounds for religious tension between them and the indigenous population. Most of the refugees settled in Bessarabia, which became Russian territory in 1812. Some 140,000 of Moldova's 153,000 Gagauzi are concentrated in south-western Moldova.

The DMR Russians, it must be emphasized, form but a minority in what they regard as their "little piece of Russia". Indeed, numerically

speaking, they constitute a minority within a minority, for they represent only 30 per cent of Moldova's total Russian population and only 25 per cent of the total population of the left bank. However, given their strong-arm military backing and the *de facto* partition of Moldova, some 170,000 DMR Russians continue to be in a position to constrain severely the social and political choices of the Transdnistrian Moldovan and Ukrainian majority ethnic groups, whom they have now effectively isolated from the Moldovan heartland and from the political process in Chisinau.

The DMR Russians have never lost an opportunity to play the ethnic card for all that it is worth. Presenting themselves as an unfortunate minority whose human rights were being trampled underfoot by Chisinau's repressive policies of enforced Romanianization and desovietization, they have fuelled ultra-nationalist sentiments in Russia, and prevailed upon Moscow to adopt a robust posture with regard to the protection of Russian interests abroad. They have, of course, succeeded in securing Moscow's "protection" with the help of Russian peacekeeping forces and the OGRF.

It is instructive to recall that in Moldova (as throughout the former Soviet Union), administration, the education system, and the media greatly favoured the Russian population. Moldovan and Ukrainian schools and publications were far fewer than proportional representation of their populations would entail. Of Moldova's 600,000 Ukrainians, only 52,000 claim to be fully proficient in Ukrainian, while 220,000 say they no longer know their native tongue. Facilities for Ukrainians in the DMR are very poor, and today most Ukrainians there speak Russian.

For all the inflammatory nationalistic and pan-Slavic rhetoric that still emanates from Tiraspol (and still finds echoes in certain circles in Moscow), and for all the provocative manipulation of the ethnic card and of human rights issues, in general inter-ethnic relations in Moldova at large have not been adversely affected. More than 70 per cent of Moldova's Slavic population reside in western Moldova and do not appear to feel threatened to any significant extent following Moldovan independence. With few exceptions this Slavic majority is strongly in favour of Moldova's territorial integrity and the reintegration of Transdnistria, and has not sided with the DMR Russians in any way.

Military and paramilitary forces on both sides, including the combat elements that fought in the 1992 civil war, are ethnically mixed. Casualty figures correctly reflect the ethnic mix of the populations in question and thus provide further grim evidence that the conflict is not an inter-ethnic dispute. On the left bank, for example, Moldovan casualties predominate, followed by Ukrainians and Russians. However, a great many Russians and Ukrainians – some of whom served with distinction – were killed or injured fighting for the Moldovan central government cause.

A “Transnistrian people” as such does not, of course, exist and the Moldovan civil war has not split the population of Moldova along ethnic lines.

Pan-Romanianism or two separate states?

For nearly half a century of communist dictatorship following annexation, the border was sealed between Soviet Moldova and Romania. Despite the genuine ethno-linguistic links between Romanians and the majority of Moldovans, the Soviets enforced the notion (which is by no means wholly a fiction) of a separate Moldovan “people” and “language” (as distinct from Romanians and Romanian). In an address to the Romanian parliament in February 1991 (on the first official visit to Romania by any leader from Soviet Moldova since its annexation), the then President Snegur strongly affirmed the common Moldovan-Romanian identity, noting that “We have the same history and speak the same language”, and referred to “Romanians on both sides of the River Prut”. In June 1991 the Romanian parliament vehemently denounced the Soviet annexation of Bessarabia and Northern Bucovina, describing the territories as “sacred Romanian lands”. The Romanian Foreign Minister subsequently referred to the “evanescence” of Romania’s borders with Bessarabia and Northern Bucovina.

Following cultural Romanianization and the eventual independence of Moldova, there was a general expectation, especially in Romania, though also to some extent in Moldova (despite Chisinau’s doctrine of “two independent Romanian states”), that the two countries should and would unite. The underlying feeling at the time was that the Romanians wanted their country (which they, at least, saw as having been dismembered by the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact) to be reunited. The Moldovans, however, after their initial, and perhaps injudicious, acquiescence to the idea during their first stirrings of national self-awareness, clearly no longer shared the Romanians’ enthusiasm. In January 1993 four senior parliamentarians, all moderate advocates of unification with Romania, were forced to resign their posts.⁹ Throughout 1993 Moldova continued to distance itself from Romania and abandoned its notion of “two independent Romanian states”. Throughout the 1990s Moldova strived to establish a truly independent, multi-ethnic state and there has been no desire to trade a Russian “big brother” for a Romanian one. Opinion polls have consistently revealed that less than 10 per cent of Moldova’s population support unification with Romania.

In June 1994 Moldova dropped the Romanian national anthem “Romanian, Awake!” which it had borrowed in 1991, at which time eventual unification with Romania was envisaged. Chisinau has repeatedly re-

proached the Romanian government for its unwillingness to come to terms with the idea of real independence for the Republic of Moldova: Romania should let Moldova “be master in its own home” and “strictly respect the right of Moldova’s people to determine their own future”.

Moldovan-Romanian treaty negotiations started as long ago as 1992. Given the special nature of their historical, socio-cultural, and ethno-linguistic affinities, Moldovan-Romanian relations are very close, yet also rather delicate. A basic bilateral treaty was initialled in Chisinau by Moldovan and Romanian Foreign Ministers in April 2000 and awaits approval by the two countries’ Presidents and legislatures.¹⁰

Moldovan national identity and the language issue

Under Gorbachev, *demokratizatsiya* led to demands outside RSFSR for derussification and thus to strengthening the official role and status of the titular republican language. This manifestly challenged the privileged position of local Russians and russophones in those republics (who were often regarded as occupiers, colonizers, or tools of Moscow). There was a backlash among russophones, especially where jobs were threatened. The ensuing conflict was exploited both by republican nationalists and by communist opponents of reform, thus politicizing the language issue. Enshrining the titular language as the official language was closely bound up with the idea of establishing and maintaining full independence when republics became independent. By this time, however, Russian and russophone minorities had become identified with opposition to democracy and independence. Finding themselves treated as second-class (and probably disloyal) citizens, they turned to Moscow for help. This only served to confirm the suspicion and mistrust of the newly independent states. Issues of language and national identity fuelled the series of conflicts which led to the break-up of the USSR.

On 31 August 1989, in a highly charged atmosphere of rallies, strikes, and demonstrations, Moldova followed the example of the Baltic republics and passed a law that declared the language of the titular nation to be the official language of the republic. The new language laws also implicitly recognized the identity of Moldovan and Romanian, and restored the Latin alphabet. (Following their annexation of Moldova in 1940, the Soviets insisted that Moldovan, written in Cyrillic script, was a different language from Romanian in order to promote the idea that Moldovans and Romanians are separate nations.) So important was the adoption of the language laws within the context of the flowering of a non-Soviet Moldovan national identity that 31 August, Language Day, was subsequently declared a national holiday, and 31 August Street is today one of the main thoroughfares in Chisinau, the Moldovan capital.

Despite the fact that the law provided for Russian to be the language of inter-ethnic communication within the MSSR, 100,000 ethnic Russians went on strike in support of retaining only Russian as the official language. The language reform was also unpopular with the Ukrainians and Gagauzi, who now had to study a third language, Moldovan/Romanian. Indeed, language was the trigger for secession in Transdnistria and Gagauzia. Questions of language and national identity remained highly divisive into the mid-1990s. The issue of what to call the language (glottonym) was hotly debated prior to the adoption of Moldova's new, post-Soviet constitution (1994), which defines the state language as "Moldovan", rather than "Moldovan (Romanian)" or "Moldovan which is identical to Romanian", the other options considered. In March and April 1995, thousands of students took to the streets chanting "Romanian is the official language".

Local autonomy in Gagauz Yeri: From territorial separatism to self-determination

The self-styled Republic of Gagauzia proclaimed its independence from Moldova in August 1990. A 600-strong force of irregulars – the so-called Bugeac Battalion (who were supported militarily and politically by the DMR separatists) – was formed to protect the interests of the breakaway republic. To this end the paramilitaries seized weapons and conducted occasional armed raids on government installations in southern Moldova. Following delicate and protracted negotiations between Chisinau and Komrat (the capital of the unrecognized republic), Moldova accorded a "special juridical status" to Gagauz Yeri (the Gagauz Land) in January 1995. Moldova's creation of an autonomous territorial unit as a form of self-determination for the Gagauzi and a constituent part of the Republic of Moldova – the first move of its kind by an East European state – has been praised as a potential model for resolving ethnic disputes in post-communist Europe. A referendum was held to determine which villages would join Gagauz Yeri. Georgi Tabunshchik, an ethnic Gagauz, was elected to the post of *bashkan* (or governor), and there were elections to the legislative body for the region.

In June 1995, after the elections, the then Prime Minister Andrei Sangheli declared an end to the conflict between the Gagauz separatists and Moldova. The Bugeac Battalion was formally disbanded, an amnesty was granted for the handover of weapons, and the paramilitaries were incorporated into the specially created so-called "Military Unit 1045" of the Interior Ministry's carabineer forces.¹¹

It was to take some while, as Vasile Uzun, the *bashkan*'s first deputy emphasized at the time, "for the rule of law to replace the rule of the

gun”.¹² Gagauz Yeri remains an economically backward area whose agricultural yield is particularly susceptible to Moldova’s recurrent droughts. But Moldova has “solved the Gagauz problem”, as the Turkish Defence Minister has put it, in so far at least that instability in the region no longer represents a threat to the integrity of the state.

Moldova’s strategic significance and security concerns: The Russian army, neutrality, and NATO

The strategic significance of Moldova

A distinction may be drawn between Moldova’s global strategic significance and its regional strategic significance. During the Cold War the territory of Moldova – in peacetime – formed part of the Soviet Union’s Odessa military district. In the event of war it would have been mobilized to provide support for a strategic offensive operation in the southwestern theatre of military operations against the Balkans, Greece, and Turkey, with the Suez Canal and the North African coast as its second strategic objective. The headquarters for this strategic axis was located in Chisinau (Kishinev). With the end of the Cold War, the collapse of communism, and the demise of the Soviet Union, Moldova has lost its global strategic significance. It is interesting to note, however, that General Lebed, commander-in-chief of Russian forces in the DMR (1992–1995), has described the Dnestr area as “the key to the Balkans”, observing that “if Russia withdraws from this little piece of land, it will lose that key and its influence in the region”.¹³

*The Russian army in Moldova: Support for Transdnistrian separatism*¹⁴

Based in Moldova since 1956, the Soviet 14th (Guards) Army, headquartered in Tiraspol, was transferred to the CIS armed forces in January 1992. President Yeltsin’s decree of 1 April 1992 subsequently placed what remained of the 14th Army under Russian jurisdiction.

The Transdnistrian separatists proclaimed the Moldovan Dnestr Soviet Socialist Republic on 2 September 1990. In the same month, Mircea Snegur was appointed to the newly created office of President and suspended military conscription in Moldova. In March 1991 the Moldovan government boycotted the Union Treaty referendum, but the 14th Army was used as a coercive tool to persuade people to vote. In August, Snegur openly opposed the coup against Gorbachev, while the leaders of the Dnestr (and Gagauz) “Republics”, together with the 14th Army, welcomed it.



Figure 5.1 Republic of Moldova

The first battalion of the Dnestr Soviet Socialist Republican Guard became fully operational in September 1991, and from then on there were covert transfers of weapons from the 14th Army to the Republican Guard, which was trained by army officers on military bases. Guard and workers' detachments embarked on a gradual takeover of Moldovan police stations, local soviets, administrative bodies, radio stations, and

newspaper offices on the left bank. Unlawfully, but under the threat of force, the Republican Guard insisted that these institutions switch from Moldovan to DMR subordination. Seven Moldovan policemen were killed and more than 20 wounded while three Dnestr guardsmen were killed and three wounded in November and December 1991. The Moldovan leadership launched the first of many appeals to the United Nations and governments and parliaments abroad regarding the 14th Army support for Transdnistriian separatism.

In early 1992, the 14th Army commander, Lieutenant-General Gennadiy Yakovlev, was appointed head of the DMR's newly established Directorate for Defence and Security, while Colonel Stefan Chitac, an ethnic Moldovan and the 14th Army's former chief of staff, became the Defence Minister of the DMR. Many other 14th Army officers and soldiers switched from Soviet to Dnestr allegiance, plagued as they were in the military-political chaos of late 1991 and early 1992 with problems with the military oath, with loyalty and identity. "Between three fires", the 14th Army was based in Ukraine, Moldova, and Transdnistria and all three announced their intention of forming their own national armed forces – the soldiers asked: "Who are we, whom are we subordinate to, what state are we defending?"¹⁵

The 14th Army continued to provide training and weapons to the Dnestr Guard and support their continuing takeover of left-bank administrative bodies and their establishment of a bridgehead in Bendery on the right bank. The Soviet military high command was slow to react, and slower still to discipline and condemn. Yakovlev's support of the "creeping *putsch*" was said to be "his own business", and Moldovans were cautioned to "very carefully distinguish between the Soviet Army and people merely dressed in the uniform of the Soviet Army and carrying weapons".¹⁶ Meanwhile fighting on the Dnestr had cost more than 100 lives, the separatists mined or destroyed bridges, and hundreds of Cossack irregulars arrived in Tiraspol to "protect the Slavs". In late March 1992, the Moldovan government declared a state of emergency and Snegur vowed to "liquidate and disarm" the Dnestr militia: inexperienced Moldovan Interior Ministry troops launch their first unsuccessful large offensive against the separatists in Bendery. Cease-fires were established and broken. By mid-May, the 14th Army was clearly involved in the conflict, ostensibly to stop the fighting and protect soldiers' families, but more often than not openly assisting the Dnestr separatists.

Moscow equivocated and prevaricated with respect to the 14th Army's involvement in the 1992 conflict, which culminated in the battle for Bendery (20–21 June) that was, in fact, won by the Dnestr insurgents with substantial armoured support from the 14th Army. The Russian

army was said to have remained neutral, to have disobeyed orders, to have intervened as a local initiative, and to have been ordered to make a show of force, to defend Russian-speaking areas, and to take retaliatory action against Moldova for committing crimes against Russians.¹⁷

By late June 1992, when General Alexander Lebed was appointed army commander, Russian combat power in Moldova consisted essentially of one somewhat under-strength and under-equipped motor rifle division: the 59th Motor Rifle Division. Lebed accused Moldova of being a “fascist state”, said its leaders were “war criminals”, he called the Defence Minister a “cannibal”, referred to Moldovans as “oxen” and “sheep”, and described his army as “belonging to the Dnestr people”.¹⁸ Lebed predicted the end of Moldova’s independence and its return to a reconstituted union, and declared that the 14th Army would remain in Moldova indefinitely. Russia’s 14th Army continued throughout 1993 and beyond to recruit residents of Moldova’s Transdnistrian region in violation of international law.

In October 1994, Moldova and Russia concluded an agreement for the withdrawal of the 14th Army from Moldova over a period of three years,¹⁹ which for DMR “President” Smirnov was “unacceptable”, and for Lebed a “crime”. However, the withdrawal was to be synchronized with the settlement of the conflict in Transdnistria. Moreover, from 1994 onwards Russia had sought vigorously to make its *de facto* military base in Transdnistria *de jure* – a move that Moldova has so far been able firmly to resist.²⁰

Following Defence Minister Grachev’s April 1995 directive on the reorganization of the 14th Army and Yeltsin’s June decree on removing Lebed from military service, Major-General Valeriy Yevnevich was appointed commander-in-chief of the renamed OGRF in the Dnestr region of the Republic of Moldova.²¹ All members of the OGRF must now hold Russian citizenship. There are hardly any delays over pay.

At the OSCE Istanbul summit in November 1999, Russia again undertook to withdraw the OGRF, including the huge stockpiles of munitions (40,000 tonnes – some 2,500 trainloads of ammunition plus 500 trainloads of explosives) located near Colbasnya, by the end of 2002. By the turn of the century the overall strength of OGRF had already been reduced to about 2,500 men.

National defence and civil war

Following the June 1990 declaration on state sovereignty, on 27 August 1991 the Republic of Moldova proclaimed independence and, by September, President Mircea Snegur had already signed the decree that was

to lead to the establishment of national armed forces. In addition to the national army, which is charged with ensuring the military security of the republic, there are also the frontier troops of the Ministry of National Security and the Interior Ministry's lightly armed carabineer forces for the maintenance of public order. 1992 witnessed the establishment of the Ministry of Defence, the appointment of the first Moldovan Defence Minister, and the passing of defence legislation.

Unhappily, the same year also saw the outbreak of a full-scale local civil war with Transnistrian separatists strongly supported by elements of Russia's highly politicized 14th Army. Whether under the Soviet, Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), or Russian flag, throughout 1990–1991 and subsequently the 14th Army covertly provided the Transnistrian separatists with weapons, training facilities, personnel, finance, and moral and administrative support; occasionally such transfers included whole subunits from the 14th Army. This provided a traumatic baptism of fire for the nascent armed forces of the republic: some 500 people were killed and many more wounded, while refugees perhaps numbered 100,000, though exact figures remain unclear.²² Since late July 1992 the Moldovan army has been deployed on peacekeeping duties – highly significantly – on the territory of the republic itself.

Partnership for Peace, neutrality, and NATO

On 16 March 1994, Moldova became the twelfth state (and fifth former Soviet republic) to enrol in NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP) programme. (The DMR leadership deplored the fact that Tiraspol had not been consulted.) At the signing ceremony in Brussels, President Snegur highlighted his country's policy of neutrality,²³ pointing out that Moldova did not belong to the military structures of the CIS, and elected – unlike most of the earlier signatories – not to raise the possibility of eventual NATO membership. Snegur also said, however, that Moldova's participation in the PfP programme would help to strengthen the territorial integrity, political independence, and national security of his country; moreover, the main obstacle to a settlement of the conflict between Moldova and Transnistria was the presence of Russia's 14th Army on Moldovan territory.²⁴

The new constitution adopted by parliament on 28 July 1994 proclaims Moldova a neutral, sovereign, independent, and indivisible state, with equal rights for all minorities.²⁵ Article 11, in particular, stipulates that "The Republic of Moldova declares its permanent neutrality [and] does not admit the stationing of foreign military units on its territory." The provisions of Article 11 are reiterated in the foreign policy concept adopted by parliament in February 1995:

The Republic of Moldova is pursuing a policy of permanent neutrality, having undertaken not to participate in armed conflicts, in political, military or economic alliances having the aim of preparing for war, not to utilise its territory for the stationing of foreign military bases, and not to possess nuclear weapons, nor to manufacture or test them.²⁶

On 5 May 1995 parliament adopted a national security concept which yet again emphasized that “Moldova is a demilitarised state and it will not permit the deployment of foreign troops or military bases on its territory and maintains relations of friendship and partnership with all countries.”²⁷ On 6 June 1995 parliament adopted the military doctrine which “is determined by foreign and domestic policy, by the constitutional declaration of permanent neutrality, [and] has an exclusively defensive character”.²⁸

Moldova has never regarded NATO enlargement in any way as a threat to its security, nor has it raised objections to eventual Romanian or even Ukrainian membership. Chisinau has always insisted that enlargement should not take place to the detriment of Russia, or without taking Russia’s interests into account when admitting new members. Indeed, the importance of a special relationship between NATO and Russia, and between NATO and Ukraine, has been underscored. Chisinau has stressed that NATO enlargement must not create tensions nor draw new dividing lines in Europe, but should lead to the consolidation of stability and security on the continent. Moreover, an enlarging NATO must provide security guarantees to neutral countries such as Moldova. Chisinau regards cooperation with NATO primarily as a means to support Moldova’s efforts to re-establish territorial integrity and to promote the withdrawal of Russian troops. Tiraspol, by contrast, points to NATO “expansion” as an additional justification for both the region’s separatist course and the continued presence of Russian troops in Transdniestria.

The 21 July 1992 Dnestr peace agreement²⁹ and Russian peacekeeping in Moldova

Having failed to secure any UN (or indeed any CIS) involvement in a peacekeeping role,³⁰ President Snegur was finally constrained by Moscow to accept what was essentially a Russian peacekeeping force. (Snegur had appealed for a CIS peacekeeping force at the Moscow summit on 6 July 1992. This was to be the first CIS peacekeeping task: Moldovan, Russian, Belarussian, and Ukrainian troops, but not the 14th Army, were to be deployed.) The Yeltsin-Snegur agreement on 21 July 1992 provided for a cease-fire, the creation of a security zone on both sides of the Nistru River, and the deployment of a joint Russian/Moldovan/DMR peace-

keeping force under the day-to-day supervision of a trilateral Joint Control Commission (JCC). It also provided for the “strict neutrality” of Russia’s 14th Army, the removal of the economic blockade, and the return of refugees. The city of Bendery was subject to a special security regime. Originally the peacekeeping forces comprised six Russian battalions (3,800 men), three Moldovan battalions (1,200 men), and three DMR battalions (1,200 men).³¹

A political body, the JCC is responsible for the implementation of the peace agreement. The JCC is made up of 18 members in all, six each from Moldova, Russia, and the Dnestr region, and includes in each case a representative from the government, the MFA, MoD, MIA, from the state security authorities, and a special representative to coordinate political aspects of the settlement process. The JCC meets weekly and all decisions are made by consensus.

Peacekeeping forces were deployed on the Dnestr from 29 July to 4 August 1992 and the JCC determined the area of the security zone between the belligerent parties. With an overall length of 225 kilometres and a width of between four and 15 kilometres, the security zone along the Dnestr was divided into three sectors: Northern (Ribnita), Central (Dubasari), and Southern (Tighina/Bendery). Observation posts, some of which were jointly manned (Moldova/Russia, DMR/Russia, and Moldova/DMR/Russia), some mobile jointly manned checkpoints, and two headquarters (at Bendery and Dubasari) were established in the security zone. These forces stand guard on important and vulnerable installations, undertake mobile patrols, and maintain checkpoints.

On 30 July 1992, the JCC established a Joint Military Command (JMC) to ensure direct control over the peacekeeping forces, together with a general staff. On 3 August, a 30-strong group of military observers was formed (10 each from Moldova, Russia, and the DMR) to ensure the monitoring of the security zone.

The withdrawal of belligerent forces from the security zone was completed by 4 August; roads were opened, mine-clearing operations were commenced, and refugees started returning to their homes. Illegally held weapons were confiscated from the civilian population, and “third-force” activity by armed bands subsided.³²

JCC declarations concerning the implementation of the peace agreement emphasized the key role played by the JMC as a source of stability in what had been a zone of conflict. “Everyone is sick of war,”³³ said General Lebed, and the end of hostilities gave the impression that Moldova’s acceptance of Russian-dominated peacekeeping forces in Transnistria was a significant step towards the successful resolution of the conflict. By 21 July 1993 (one year after the signing of the peace agreement) peacekeeping sappers had largely completed mine-clearing oper-

ations – more than 11,000 mines and bombs were deactivated. Over 600 illegally held weapons were confiscated, as well as more than 1,000 grenades and 100,000 rounds of ammunition. However, Chisinau's hopes for a speedy settlement of the conflict and a rapid withdrawal of Russian arms proved to be illusory.³⁴

As early as September 1992, Moldova publicly challenged the impartiality of the Russian peacekeepers, charging them with allowing the DMR separatists to maintain men and material in the security zone. Following a decree by DMR President Igor Smirnov on "Organisational Measures for Securing the DMR State Border" (14 December 1992), DMR border troops³⁵ were introduced into the security zone in areas controlled by Russian peacekeeping forces, who, in violation of the peace agreement, turned a blind eye. This was not a trifling matter. In all, during the period August 1992 to December 1994, the DMR, with the connivance of the Russian peacekeeping forces, was able to introduce into the security zone three motorized brigades, a border guard detachment, and a number of Cossack detachments – a total of more than 3,500 men³⁶ (about one-third of the strength of the Moldovan armed forces). The DMR, for its part, was able to continue to create and consolidate the structures of an independent "state" (government departments, armed forces, border guards, banking system, etc.) under the protection of the peacekeepers. The acid comment of one analyst may be instructive: "The case of Moldova is proof that the Russians pretend to maintain peace while the West pretends to monitor it."³⁷

The end of 1994 had, broadly speaking, achieved the political goals of Russia's peacekeeping operation: the establishment of a Russian outpost that would ensure that Moldova remained within Russia's sphere of influence and the continued partition of the Moldovan state. In November, citing reasons of cost and relative stability, but nonetheless in violation of the 1992 agreement, Russia reduced its peacekeeping force from 3,800 to 630 men.³⁸

Peacekeeping in 1992, it will be remembered, was a fundamentally new task for the Russian army. Moreover, the Russian army in 1992 was "The USSR Armed Forces, but without hands, without legs, and without other important organs which have been chopped off during the course of the sovereignisation of the former Union republics."³⁹ It is hardly surprising, then, that Russian peacekeeping did not get off to the very best of starts. Colonel Anatoliy Sidyakin of Russia's newly created peacekeeping division in the Volga military district tells of a nerve-racking beginning with military districts ridding themselves of fugitives, misfits, poorly trained, and ill-disciplined personnel among the "best of the best" in the quotas they send forward to man the peacekeeping division.⁴⁰

Things had improved somewhat some months later, as an interview

with Lieutenant-General A. A. Shapovalov, the first deputy commander-in-chief of the Volga military district, revealed.⁴¹ The new peacekeeping division was formed on the basis of the 27th Guards Motor Rifle Division that was previously garrisoned in East Germany as part of the 8th Guards Army. The main force of the division consisted of three motor rifle regiments equipped with BTR-70 armoured personnel carriers, motor vehicles, and light weapons only (i.e. no artillery, tanks, or air-defence weapons). The general lamented the limitations of the BTR-70 APC, including high fuel consumption and poor performance in mud or in mountains; he would like to see the BTR-70s replaced by tracked vehicles, preferably BMPs.

Typical tasks for the division included the separation of opposing armed formations to distances laid down by a special joint commission, the pursuit, arrest, or destruction by fire of groups and individuals in breach of these regulations, and manning checkpoints on routes and corridors. The work of elements of the 433rd Motor Rifle Regiment in Moldova was given as an example of these duties and the regiment was commended for its success.

Soldiers in Moldova are serving on a two-month contract and every month of service is reckoned as three. In addition to their normal pay they receive a supplement of from 8,000 to 12,000 roubles a month, depending on rank. Service in Moldova is therefore popular and many volunteer to stay for longer than two months. The general would like to see the standard tour extended to six months because of the high costs of frequent moves of personnel and equipment. There continue to be problems in obtaining suitably qualified recruits, especially drivers.

Moscow has claimed a special status as peacekeeper (or, indeed, peacemaker) in Russia's "near abroad" and hailed the Russian army, including the peacekeeping forces deployed in Moldova since early August 1992, as the guarantor of regional peace and stability. However, had it not been for Russia's active support for the Transdniestrian separatists, it is highly unlikely that the conflict would have ever escalated to full-scale, local civil war. In Moldova (as elsewhere in the former Soviet space) Russia arguably helped to create the very conflict its peacekeeping operations seek to resolve.⁴² Russian peacekeeping in Moldova can be seen as an instrument of unilateral interference in a separatist conflict in order to further Moscow's neo-imperialist interests, and probably with the ultimate aim of forcing the newly independent state to accept a Russian military base upon its territory.⁴³

Russian peacekeeping forces in Moldova allowed Transdniestrian separatists to build up armed forces and consolidate illegal state structures. By the end of 1994, when Russia unilaterally decided to reduce its peacekeeping forces substantially (a violation of the 1992 agreement),

Table 5.1 14th Army/OGRF men and equipment, 1993–2001

| Date | Personnel | MBT | ACV | Arty | CSH |
|--------------|-----------|-----|-----|------|-----|
| January 1993 | 9,225 | 124 | 181 | 133 | 12 |
| January 1994 | 7,708 | 121 | 175 | 129 | 7 |
| January 1995 | 6,356 | 120 | 166 | 129 | 9 |
| January 1996 | 6,529 | 120 | 130 | 129 | 9 |
| January 1997 | 4,923 | 119 | 129 | 129 | 9 |
| January 1998 | 2,824 | 119 | 129 | 129 | 7 |
| January 1999 | 2,620 | 117 | 133 | 128 | 7 |
| January 2000 | 2,346 | 108 | 131 | 125 | 7 |
| January 2001 | 2,571 | 108 | 131 | 125 | 7 |

MBT – main battle tanks

ACV – armoured combat vehicles

Arty – artillery

CSH – combat support helicopters

Source: Conventional Forces in Europe Information Exchange

the political aim of the peacekeeping operation – to ensure that Moldova remained within the Russian sphere of influence – had largely been achieved. When the Operational Group of Russian Forces (successor formation to the highly politicized 14th Army) took over peacekeeping tasks in 1996, the separatists' position in negotiations with Moldova was strengthened with regard to settlement of the conflict and the establishment of a special status for Transdniestria.

Moscow's insistence on the principle of “synchronization” in the October 1994 troop withdrawal agreement⁴⁴ (i.e. the linkage of troop withdrawal with the settlement of the conflict) has ensured that the separatists reject every proposal made by Chisinau regarding a special status for Transdniestria within Moldova.⁴⁵ Thus the conflict continued and the troops and equipment remain (see Table 5.1).

The 1994 agreement provides for the complete withdrawal of the army and its equipment within three years of the agreement's entry into force. When Russia was admitted to the Council of Europe in January 1996, it undertook to ratify within six months the army withdrawal agreement – which, to date, the Duma has failed to do. It is, of course, the same Russian state Duma that periodically declares Transdniestria to be a zone of Russian special strategic interest.

Despite the 1994 accord on Russian military withdrawal, despite the 1997 Moscow memorandum between Moldova and Transdniestria committing the two sides to existence within a “common state”, despite the 1998 Odessa agreements on demilitarization and confidence-building measures,⁴⁶ and despite the OSCE Istanbul summit in 1999,⁴⁷ the Russian army remains in Transdniestria and the DMR leadership loses no

opportunity to consolidate and confirm the structures of an independent state. When Igor Smirnov was re-elected in December 1996 for another five-year term as DMR "President", he vowed, "We will strengthen the independence achieved through such difficulties and defended with blood", and added, "Transnistria exists in fact; it is a reality". At the same time Smirnov also said, "We will categorically insist that the Russian peacekeeping force and formations of the former 14th brigade remain in the region . . . The Russian army stopped the bloodshed and must stay here."⁴⁸ It was with great military pomp and ceremony five years on that the breakaway republic celebrated its tenth anniversary on Independence Day, 2 September 2000.⁴⁹

It seems highly likely that for good, old-fashioned geo-political reasons Moscow will continue to pursue the policy of equivocation and prevarication that has characterized its military involvement in Transnistria since the creation of an independent Moldovan state in 1991. In one guise or another – OGRF, peacekeepers, or military bases – there will almost certainly be a Russian military presence in Moldova as the Dnestr conflict smoulders on for quite some time to come.

Notes

1. Even when it outpaced the other CIS countries with regard to political democratization, inter-ethnic accord, and macroeconomic reforms, Moldova remained "the forgotten republic" that it had been in Soviet times. The country was barely noticed in 1991–1995, despite the fact that western financial institutions singled it out as a "regional example" for its economic reforms. Moldova also remained largely anonymous as it became the first CIS country to gain admission as a full member of the Council of Europe and as it pioneered a model of ethnic-territorial autonomy (for the Gagauz) while also granting substantial concessions to Russians and other minorities.

Jamestown Foundation, *The Fortnight in Review*, Vol. II, No. 3, 7 February 1997, cited on title page of *Nationalities Papers. Moldova: The Forgotten Republic*, Vol. 26, No. 1, March 1998.
2. Charles King, *The Moldovans: Romania, Russia and the Politics of Culture*, Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 2000, p. 32. Professor King's admirable study is the first and, as yet, only English-language book to offer a complete account of Moldova and the Moldovans.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 56.
4. See, for example, Vasile Nedelciuc, *Respublika Moldova*, Chisinau: Universitas, 1992, p. 97; Gottfried Hanne, "Der Transnistrien – Konflikt: Ursachen, entwicklungsbedingungen und perspektiven einer regulierung", *BIOst*, No. 42/1998, p. 10.
5. See *Atlas of Dniester Moldavian Republic*, Tiraspol: Dniester State Corporative Shevchenko, T. G. University, 1997 for data on Tiraspol and DMR.
6. See Vladimir Socor, "Creeping putsch in eastern Moldova", *RFE/RL Research Report*, 17 January 1992, pp. 8–13; Stephen Bowers, "The partition of Moldova", *Jane's Intelligence Review*, October 1993, pp. 435–437.

7. See Vladimir Socor, "Dniester involvement in the Moscow rebellion", *RFE/RL Research Report*, 19 November 1993, pp. 25–32.
8. Numerical data are based on the most recent (Soviet) 1989 Census, still the most reliable figures available. There were hopes, unlikely to be fulfilled because of lack of funds, of conducting a census in 2001.
9. See Vladimir Socor, "Moldova: Another major setback for pro-Romanian forces", *RFE/RL Research Report*, 26 February 1993, pp. 15–21.
10. See V. G. Baleanu, *In the Shadow of Russia: Romania's Relations with Moldova and Ukraine*, Camberley, UK: Conflict Studies Research Centre Paper G85, November 2000.
11. Author interview with of Police Colonel Ilie Stamat, Comrat, July 1996.
12. Author interview with Vasile Uzun, Comrat, July 1996.
13. Interview with Lebed in *Izvestiya*, 26 February 1993, and on Russian TV, 16 March 1993.
14. See, *inter alia*, Michael Orr, "14th Army and the crisis in Moldova", *Jane's Intelligence Review*, June 1992, pp. 247–250; Vladimir Socor, "Russian forces in Moldova", *RFE/RL Research Report*, 28 August 1992, pp. 38–42; Vladimir Socor, "Russia's Fourteenth Army and the insurgency in Eastern Moldova", *RFE/RL Research Report*, 11 September 1992, pp. 41–48; Stephen Bowers, "The crisis in Moldova", *Jane's Intelligence Review*, November 1992, pp. 483–486; Vladimir Socor, "Russia's army in Moldova: There to stay?", *RFE/RL Research Report*, 18 June 1993, pp. 42–49.
15. See *Krasnaya zvezda*, 8 February 1992.
16. Orr, note 14.
17. See Socor, "Russia's Fourteenth Army and the insurgency in Eastern Moldova", note 14. Also "We are directing the actions of 14 Army, albeit not continually and not altogether firmly; it still remains neutral in an extremely grave situation", General M. Kolesnikov, First Deputy Chief of the Russian general staff in an interview with Pavel Felgengauer in *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 3 July 1992.
18. See *Sovetskaya Rossiya*, 7 July 1992, and Socor, "Russia's army in Moldova: There to stay?", note 14.
19. See *Diplomaticheskii Vestnik*, No. 21/22, November 1994, pp. 46–51 for the Russian-language text. Mihai Gribincea, *Trupele Ruse in Republica Moldova: Factor Stabilizator sau Sursa de Pericol*, Chisinau: Civitas, 1998, contains as an annex the text in Moldovan/Romanian.
20. See Mihai Gribincea, "Challenging Moscow's doctrine on military bases", *Transition*, 20 October 1995, pp. 4–8.
21. See Trevor Waters, "Moldova: Continuing recipe for instability", *Jane's Intelligence Review*, September 1996, pp. 398–401.
22. Moldovan government sources reported as at 1 July 1992 231 dead, 845 wounded, and 33,046 refugees who sought shelter on the right bank: Vasile Nedelciuc, *The Republic of Moldova*, Chisinau: Parliament of the Republic of Moldova, 1992. In a later, amplified, Russian edition of the book (*Respublika Moldova*, 1992), Nedelciuc reports as at 15 August 1992 320 dead, 1,180 wounded, and some 108,000 refugees, of whom 51,000 sought safety on the right bank while 57,000 fled to Ukraine. On the Transdnistrian side, "The results of Moldova's military aggression against the DMR from 1 March – 29 June 1992" are given in one study as 657 dead, more than 3,000 wounded, 14 missing without trace, 13,814 evacuees, and some 100,000 refugees. N. V. Babilunga and B. G. Bomesenko, *Bendery: Rasstrelyannyye nepokorennyye*, Tiraspol: T. G. Shevchenko Transdnistrian State Corporative University, 1993.
23. On 6 March 1994, a sociological poll showed that 95 per cent of the poll participants (i.e. 75 per cent of those on the electoral roll) were in favour of Moldova developing as an

independent sovereign state that would forge mutually advantageous bilateral relations with all the countries of the world, and implement a policy of neutrality. Mayak Radio, Moscow, 5 March and 10 March 1994. Snegur delayed signing up to PfP until the results of the decisive national poll were available; as he left for Brussels he observed, "The people have decided that we should promote a policy of neutrality." Romanian Radio, Bucharest, 13 March 1994.

24. ITAR-TASS World Service, Moscow, 16 March 1994.
25. The new constitution superseded the constitution adopted in 1977 when the republic was part of the Soviet Union; the new basic law came into force on 27 August 1994, i.e. on the third anniversary of the republic's proclamation of independence.
26. *Kontseptsiya vneshney politiki respubliki moldova*, adopted by Parliamentary Resolution No 368-X11, 8 February 1995.
27. Interfax, Moscow, 5 May 1995.
28. See General Provisions section, *Doctrina militara a Republicii Moldova (Voyennaya doktrina respubliki moldova)*, adopted by Parliamentary Resolution No 482-X111, 6 June 1995. A summary of the doctrine together with analysis and comment is offered in Trevor Waters, "The Republic of Moldova: Armed forces and military doctrine", *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, Vol. II, No. 2, June 1998, pp. 80–97.
29. Soglasheniye "o printsipakh mirnogo uregulirovaniya konflikta v pridnestrovskom regione respubliki moldova" (Agreement on the principles for a peaceful settlement of the armed conflict in the Transdnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova), signed in Moscow on 21 July 1992 by Presidents Mircea Snegur and Boris Yeltsin.
30. See "Official declarations on the conflict" in Nedelciuc, note 22, pp. 119–142.
31. See J. M. Greene, "Russia's 'peacekeeping' doctrine: The CIS, Russia, and the general staff", unpublished paper, Brussels: NATO/SHAPE, February 1993. See also J. M. Greene, "The peacekeeping doctrines of the CIS", *Jane's Intelligence Review*, April 1993, pp. 156–159.
32. For initial deployment and operations of the Russian peacekeeping forces see, *inter alia*, S. Shevtsov and A. Kurbatov, "Interview with General Lebed", *Sovetskaya Rossiya*, 4 August 1992; "Communique on the Russian-Moldovan intergovernmental meeting", *Rossiyskaya gazeta*, 8 August 1992; P. Felgengauer, "Russian peacekeepers in a trap", *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 11 August 1992; "Dnestr: A farewell to arms?", *Sovetskaya Rossiya*, 13 August 1992.
33. See *Sovetskaya Rossiya*, 4 August 1992.
34. In late August 1992 Moldovan Defence Minister General Creanga had expressed the hope that "with some luck" Russia's 14th Army would be withdrawn by mid-1993. See Summary of World Broadcasts, SU/1469, B4, 26 August 1992.
35. A presidential decree (11 September 1992) had created a DMR border unit with the aim of "enhancing the safety of republican borders and citizens living on its territory". The DMR established a customs service shortly thereafter. ITAR-TASS, Moscow, 11 September 1992.
36. Mihai Gribincea, "Rejecting a new role for the former 14th Russian Army", *Transition*, Vol. 2, No. 6, 22 March 1996, pp. 38–40.
37. Jonathan Eyal, quoted in Gribincea, *ibid.*, p. 39.
38. See Gribincea, *ibid.*; Anthony Kellett, "Soviet and Russian peacekeeping 1948–1988: Historical overview and assessment", *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 2, June 1999, p. 18.
39. See Lieutenant-Colonel Anatoliy Dokuchayev, "Russia's military might will meet the level of real military danger", *Krasnaya zvezda*, 21 November 1992.
40. See Lieutenant-Colonel Oleg Bedula, "Division of special designation", *Krasnaya zvezda*, 4 November 1992.

41. See "Volga lads try on blue helmets", *Voyennyy Vestnik*, April 1993.
42. Some remarks by Alexei Arbatov are instructive here.

Much of the tension and conflict in Russia's relations with other republics stems from Moscow's ambivalence on a basic issue: territorial integrity. There are strong groups in the Russian elite and in the foreign policy and security bureaucracies that do not want to recognize the viability of other former Soviet republics as sovereign states. They have been willing to use local separatist movements and the Russian military presence in Estonia, Latvia, Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, and Kazakhstan to dismember those states, or to subjugate them to Russian dominance.

Alexei Arbatov, Abram Chayes, Antonia Handler Chayes, and Lara Olson (eds), *Managing Conflict in the Former Soviet Union: Russian and American Perspectives*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997, p. 433.

43. Gribincea, note 20, gives details of Russia's proposals up to the end of 1995 for establishing military bases *de jure* in Moldova. But the military base issue has by no means gone away, and last featured in the run-up to Moldova's February 2001 parliamentary elections. Moscow has continued to put pressure on Moldova regarding military basing rights by foot-dragging in the matter of the 14th Army's withdrawal.
44. See Article 2 of the Agreement.
45. Some remarks by Gottfried Hanne are instructive here.

The talks held between Chisinau and Tiraspol since the spring of 1993 have, even with the involvement of the CSCE/OSCE as of mid-1994, brought no striking success to date. Despite concessions on the part of the Moldovan government (which went even as far as conceding autonomous republic status) and active mediation by the OSCE, Russia, and more recently Ukraine, little progress has been made. The main reason for this is the uncompromising stance of the DMR leadership, which, despite the elimination of all its major arguments (Romanianisation, military threat, etc.) continues to insist on separate statehood (Moldova as a confederation of two independent states). This stance has now ceased to be in any way related to domestic policy developments within Moldova or to the interests of the Russian-speaking population. Its interest in maintaining a permanent military presence in the Moldavian region prevents the Russian leadership from withdrawing its 14th Army, ... the presence of which remains a political, military and symbolic guarantee of the continued existence of the DMR.

Hanne, note 4, pp. 40–41.

46. See Appendix 3 for the Moscow memorandum and Odessa agreement.
47. In June 2000, the OSCE Ambassador to Moldova, William Hill, stated: "Since the Istanbul document was signed, there has been absolutely no progress on fulfilling the commitments ... The situation, unfortunately, has been frozen." In late November 2000, Ambassador Hill said that it would be "very difficult" for Russia to complete its pull-out by the end of 2002. See *SIPRI Yearbook 2001*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001, pp. 558–560.
48. Summary of World Broadcasts, SU 2804, D/8, 30 December 1996.
49. Article 11 of the DMR constitution (adopted following a referendum in December 1995) states that "Armed Forces are created for the defence of the sovereignty and independence of the DMR".

CIS peacekeeping in Tajikistan

Andres Smith Serrano

Introduction

The civil war in Tajikistan has, on the scale of Russian peacekeeping and peace enforcement activities, been the most costly in military terms, inflicting as many as 50,000 civil and military fatal casualties by 1997. It was also the least rewarding in terms of results. The military involvement of approximately 25,000 troops has probably contributed substantially to keeping an unstable peace. The peacekeeping operation lacked impartiality and an operational peacekeeping doctrine. It was characterized by an aggressive and asymmetrical approach to the conflicting parties. This placed the CIS operation in Tajikistan in a different category to the internationally accepted definition of traditional peacekeeping.

Of all the CIS peacekeeping and peace enforcement activities, the one in this mountainous Central Asian republic has been the largest and the most violent. The military engagement has equalled the proportion of casualties in the area. According to the CIS commander-in-chief General Zavarzin,¹ there were 25,000 “peacekeepers from Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan present in Tajikistan”. Former Prime Minister Abdumalik Abdullojonov estimated² that 30,000 people died in the climax of the civil war in 1992–1993. A further 70,000–100,000 citizens migrated from Tajikistan to Afghanistan and 50,000 within the republic. As of May 1997 approximately 60 to 70 per cent have returned.³ All in all, from 1992 to 1997 hundreds of thousands of people – some sources

estimate even half a million citizens out of an overall population of 5.4 million⁴ – may been displaced since independence on 9 September 1991.

Historically, the Republic of Tajikistan was situated between the five ancient empires of Asia: Russia to the north, Turkey to the west, Persia and India to the south, and China to the south-east. The area that presently makes up Tajikistan has been part of the Russian empire since 1868. Tajikistan took its place inside the Soviet Union following the turmoil of the Russian revolution and the civil war in which Khujand (later Leninabad), as an old centre of exile for enemies of the Tsarist state, played the role of regional mainstay for the new Bolshevik power. For over a century Russia has wielded a measure of control over this part of the world.

Geographically, 50 per cent of Tajikistan is situated in the Pamir foothills. The other half of the country lies above 3,000 metres, and most of this land is to be found in the Gorniy-Badakhshan region stretching up into the Pamir Mountains and bordering on the Chinese People's Republic and Afghanistan. Gorniy-Badakhshan is separated from Pakistan by the contested Afghan Wakhan Corridor. The valleys alone, comprising some 22 per cent of the country, are permanently inhabited. A number of Tajiks reside outside the Republic of Tajikistan. Of Afghanistan's 3 million Persian speakers, most identify themselves as Tajiks, and according to official Uzbek figures⁵ there are some 730,000 Tajiks living in Uzbekistan, mainly in Samarkand, Bukhara, and Khiva, but this figure has fallen from an estimated 930,000 in 1989.⁶ Tajik ethnographers, on the other hand,⁷ maintain that the last number may be closer to 3 million, depending on how one separates Uzbeks from Tajiks.

In the Tajik lowlands and border areas there are large numbers of Uzbeks – in Kurgan-Tube, more than 33 per cent declare themselves to be of this ethnicity.⁸ Incidents of ethnic cleansing of Tajiks by Uzbeks have been known to take place. A recurrent theme and outcry from the government and intelligentsia in Tashkent is that Tajiks are “just personalized Uzbeks”,⁹ Turkic peoples who have succumbed to Persian cultural pressures and have taken on “foreign” ways. It goes without saying that such rhetoric and theories emanating from a 21-million-strong neighbouring state are hardly popular with ethnic Tajiks, and especially not among those who are intent on further Tajik nation-building.

Uzbek politicians, in their own nation-building exercises, often invoked the Bukhara Khanate, which ruled some of the area around present Tajikistan from the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries. However, it made little sense to talk about “nations” in this area before Stalin forced nationhood on the indigenous population as an organizing principle in the 1920s and 1930s. The majority in the two towns of Samarkand and Bukhara were Persian-speaking, for speaking a variant of Persian was the



Figure 6.1 Tajikistan

principal criterion used in the creation of the Tajik state. In the 1920s, Stalin created a Persian wedge in a predominately Turkish Turkestan. At the same time he disrupted the continuity of Persian-speaking peoples from the Gulf to Sinkiang by creating a large Uzbekistan at the expense of a dwarfed Tajikistan. The very fact that Tajikistan was located inside Uzbekistan may, however, serve as a precedent for Uzbek pretensions in the area. So may the fact that the Uzbek capital, Tashkent, served as an organizational hub for the entire Soviet Central Asia, housing the Turkestan military district headquarters with its massive installations in the Ferghana Valley.

The origins of the Tajik war

Over the last two centuries, the idea that a group of people who share a common language and culture should also embrace Tajik ethnicity has grown so strong that politics has been entirely dominated by issues of nationalism. The idea of the nation clashed with the existence of multiple loyalties. In Tajikistan, the concept of nationhood never sprouted deep roots. The tension between the imposed and idealized idea of a Tajik “nation”, on the one hand, and the unrelenting importance of competing Tajik regional identities such as Pamiri, Kulyabi, Leninabadi, and Gharmi, on the other, was one of the two dramas of Tajik politics. The other drama was partly a result of the instability resulting from the first, and had to do with the way outside powers like the Russian Federation, Uzbekistan, and Afghan-based warlords took advantage of Tajikistan’s civil war to enhance their own presence in the country.

Although a Tajik nation existed on paper, the efforts of Tajik “nation-builders” – politicians who sought to streamline disparate dialects, variations of Islam, and other cultural mores into a more easily governable whole – had not proceeded very far. A key example was Gorniy-Badakhshan, a region that formed an autonomous district inside the former Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic and vainly tried to increase its autonomy in 1991–1993. It is useful here to point out that the term Gorniy-Badakhshan is “state-speak”, and is a useful definition to include Pamiri, Vanji, Yazgulemi, Shugnani, Darwazi, Wakhi, and other groups associated mainly with their valleys rather than a region or state. “Pamiri” is also an epithet that comes into use in contexts that include people from outside the geographic limits of Gorniy-Badakhshan. In local contexts, the 200,000 “Pamiri” are Shugnani and Wakhi (residing in the south and central areas), Yazgulemi and Darwazi (in the northern part), and Iskhassimi (in the south). They speak eastern Iranian languages that are separate and individually defined from Iranian and from each other. In

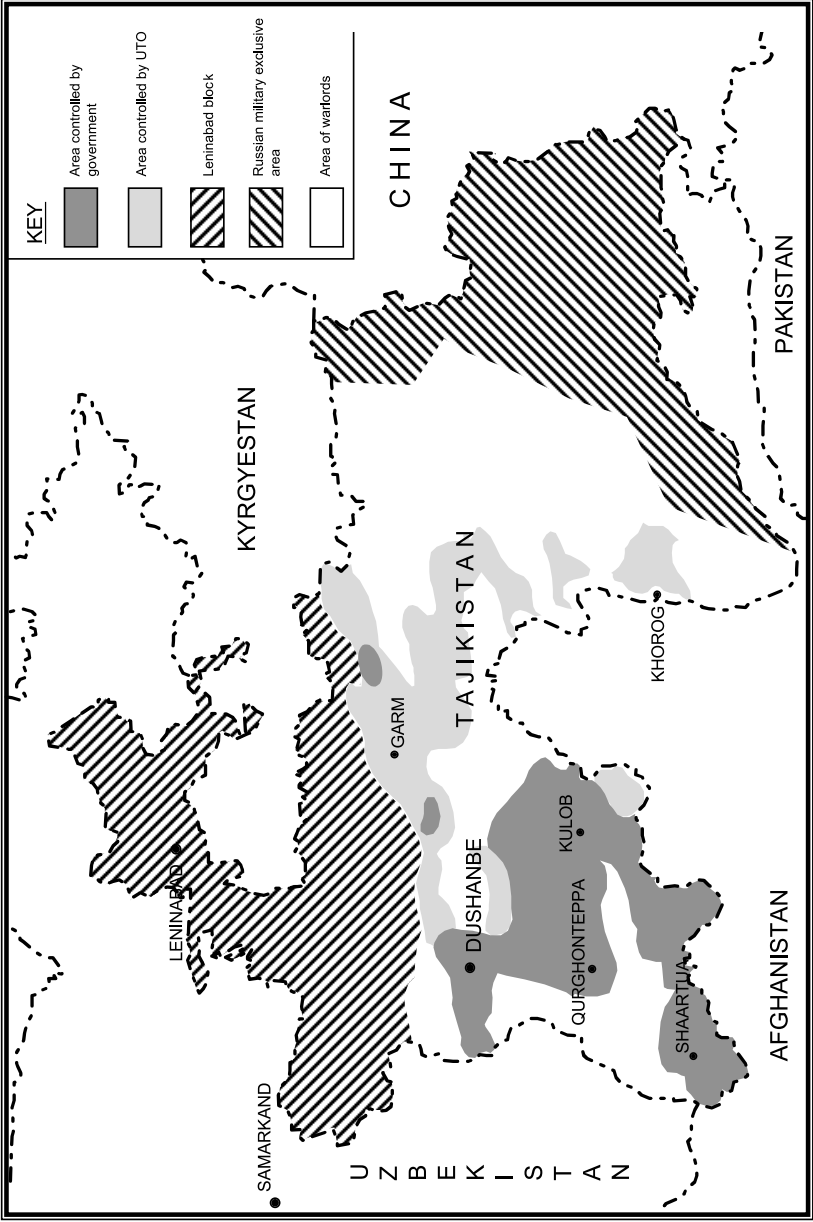


Figure 6.2 Deployment of forces and areas held in Tajikistan

addition to language and territory, a diacritic that often comes into play is religion – all these groups are Ismaili Shiites, and not Hanafi Sunni as are the majority of Tajiks.

The situation, then, was that in the hierarchy of identities in this part of the world, the Tajik national identity was weaker than the more established nation-states. This does not imply that a Tajik identity did not exist – it did, and it came into play when talk and business turned to relations with neighbouring Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, or Pushtun Afghanistan. However, whereas for example in Poland the Polish identity was strong enough to forge the Polish schisms together in a conflict, in Tajikistan the regional identity of people such as the Khujandi in the Leninabad region would in some cases drive them to join forces with Uzbeks against their fellow Tajiks from other regions. Thus, the fragility of the Tajik nation and the tenuous grip of the state on its society were the main factors that made local politics more medieval than modern.

The main identity was regional, but the regions did not coincide with the Tajik administrative regions. “Identity regionalism” was a loose translation of the local term “*mahalgaroī*”. There were few references as to its inception but, for centuries, mountain ranges hampered communications between valleys, which imposed a social organization of valley communities. One proposition is that the regional pattern formed into a new constellation during the 1920s and 1930s, as part of the military resistance against the Soviets during the Basmachi rebellion. Whereas Basmachi referred to the resistance *per se*, *mahalgaroī* referred to specific local armed alliances and laid the foundation for exercising local power over extended families, with groups based on blood and geographical origins.

The six main identity regions, or groupings, are Kulyab, Gharmi, Gorniy-Badakhshan (Pamiri), Kurgan-Tyube, Leninabad, and Hissar. The population keep their regional identification when they move to the capital, Dushanbe, and other centres, such as Tursunzade, Kurgan-Tyube, or Khujand, so that on the élite level, representatives of these groups may be found in any larger town. Thus, although these identity regions are territorially based, they are sometimes inaccurately referred to as “clans”. They consist of a core of key élite families, and a host of other families who may be blood relatives or simply hangers-on for economic or political reasons. One loose parallel that might shed some light on this structure is the phenomenon of the traditional Italian-American Mafia family, which often has a core biological family, but which in its extension is amorphous and the family is symbolic rather than strictly biological.

The infighting between the different identity regions has led to different power constellations between them. In Brezhnev’s time, the Leninabad drew on good relations with Uzbeks and Russians as well as sup-

port from the Kulyabi in order to hold sway inside the Tajik Communist Party (CPSU). Leninabadi and Kulyabi used their control of the political apparatus to channel economic investment from Moscow to their own regions at the expense of others, which further strengthened their power *vis-à-vis* the other identity regions, which in turn further strengthened resentment towards the Leninabadi and Kulyabi among the other *mahalgaroi*.

From the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan on 25 December 1979 onwards, the religious fissures inside the country provided an opportunity for the Pamiri to strengthen their hand. Gorniy-Badahkshani are Ismaili Muslims, as are a number of people in Afghanistan. Religious affiliations inside Afghanistan played a role in determining who opposed and who fought the government. Generally, Afghan Ismailites supported the communist government brought to power by Moscow, and so their brothers in faith across the border in the Tajik SSR received a new card to play in their local power struggles inside Tajikistan itself. This strengthened the standing of Tajikistan's Ismaili Pamiri inside Tajikistan's Ministry of Internal Affairs and the KGB. Pamiri and Gharmi also held another power card inasmuch as they were strongly represented in the Tajik cultural intelligentsia.

With *perestroika*, the other identity regions saw an opportunity to challenge the status quo that lay in the hands of Leninabadi and Kulyabi. They organized themselves in various organizations, three of which were especially important. The Rebirth Movement (Rastokhez) was dominated by Gharmi, Pamiri, and other Tajik intellectuals interested in further nation-building. The Islamic Renaissance Party was also dominated by Gharmi. The Democratic Party was dominated by Pamiri, as was the Lali (Ruby) of Badakhshan, an organization advocating autonomy for this region.

During the last years of *perestroika* the Soviet Union saw a power struggle erupt between two groups: the Leninabadi, the Kulyabi, and the Hissari on the one hand ("the communists", reorganized in a new People's Front), and the Gharmi and the Pamiri on the other ("the opposition"). Since liberal intellectuals and Muslim elders made up the leadership of the opposition, the latter camp was often referred to as an alliance of democrats and Islamists. It was not, however basically, a struggle of ideas. Various ideological movements like communism, democracy, and Islam served as focal points for identity-region politics.

Initially, it seemed as if Tajikistan could emerge from the Soviet implosion with a government consisting of representatives from a variety of regions. Indeed, in 1991 and 1992 uneasy compromises were made, and a balance reigned. In administrative regional terms Tajikistan was considered to have a fairly functional multiparty system in 1990 and 1991. It had

a complex mechanism of alliances interlocked by interests that needed a joint political goal and economic success to mature into multiparty democracy. However, the cumulative effects of two major events that took place beyond Tajikistan – the implosion of the Soviet Union during August–December 1991 and the collapse of the Najibullah government in Kabul in March–April 1992 – altered the fragile balance within the state.

After the November 1991 presidential election, when the former Communist Party leader and Leninabadi, Rakhmon Nabiyev, won, Leninabadi and Kulyabi, the “communists”, sought to eliminate political oppositions within the Supreme Soviet (parliament) and the Central Committee (government). As a consequence anti-communist demonstrators began the siege of parliament in late March 1992, followed by a counter-demonstration organized by the government in front of the presidential palace on the main street, Rudaki (Lenin) Street. The prospects of civil war increased when the successor to the Tajik KGB – the KNB – began to distribute large quantities of weapons and ammunition to the pro-government demonstrators, the “communists”, on 3 May 1992. However, Nabiyev was forced to form a coalition government on 6 May 1992 in which 11 of the 24 ministries went to Pamiri- and Gharimi-based opposition parties, “the Islamic-democratic” group. These Islamic, democratic, single-issue, and nationalist parties or interest groups had been demonstrating in Dushanbe since late March. This compromise did not satisfy the aspirations of either side, as both saw politics as a zero-sum game rather than a compromise towards a transitional power-sharing mechanism. Leninabadi and Kulyabi reacted to violence in the countryside and sit-in demonstrations in Dushanbe by using their contacts with the armed forces and their access to weapons to arm their followers indiscriminately. The opposition availed themselves of similar opportunities through their contacts in Afghanistan, and locally through a corrupt military administration. Now aroused and armed, a full-scale civil war erupted. Fighting began in earnest in May 1992. During the summer of 1992, the southern part of the country, particularly Kurgan-Tyube, was devastated by fighting between armed groups; as of July 1997 this fighting had not ceased despite efforts to stop it by all the adjacent states, the international community, the United Nations, and other international actors.

Russia and CIS involvement in the conflict

The Russian Federation justifies its activities and involvement in “independent” Tajikistan under the principles of Chapter V of the Charter of

the United Nations, and under multilateral and bilateral agreements within the CIS. Two major problems immediately present themselves. First, the Russian term used to refer to UN, as well as to CIS, peace-restoring activities in this regard is *mirotvorchestvo*. The latest Russian dictionaries translate this as “peacemaker”, based on the word *mirotvorets*. In Soviet terms, when a “struggle for peace” was also seen as a class struggle, there was little opportunity or urge to utilize a Soviet version of international peacekeeping. It was only with a change in Soviet attitudes towards the United Nations under the *perestroika* years that this attitude also changed. *Mirotvorchestvo* is therefore a word that has taken on a new meaning in recent years. It is used both to denote consciousness-raising and educational activities related to peace-building, where it substitutes a Leninist term *bop ba za mir* – struggle for peace – and to refer to the international concepts of peacekeeping, peace enforcement, and peace-building.

The lack of linguistic specificity indicates the very broad-gauge Russian conceptual approach to peacekeeping. By contrast the French, Dutch, British, Scandinavian, and US militaries have drawn on years of experience of peacekeeping to conduct a taxonomic debate about which operations should be classified as peacekeeping and which as peace enforcing. In the years following the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the implosion of the USSR, Russia – as a newcomer to the field – had not evolved a similar debate. There nevertheless existed a blurred haziness about what peacekeeping was generally considered to be in the UN English-speaking parlance. The second major problem was the immediate contradiction between invoking Article 51 of the UN Charter on the one hand, and calling an operation a peacekeeping one on the other.¹⁰ Peacekeeping operations were mainly aimed at conflict containment. The UN-focused debate in the 1990s, which had mainly been about how partial and robust the peace force might be, now implied a role beyond peacekeeping towards peace enforcement. Peace enforcement could lead to low-intensity conflict and traditional war fighting, where the umpire gave up umpiring and became a regular player, if not the decisive one. Russia had at no time tried to resolve this contradiction between the broad Russian use of *mirotvorchestvo* (peacekeeping) for all conflicts that were not traditional wars or low-intensity operations on the one hand, and the more constrained UN-defined peacekeeping on the other. Russia could perhaps have avoided this contradiction by justifying the border guards’ operations as a case of the use of force under Article 51, and the operation in the interior of the 201st Motor Rifle Division based in Dushanbe, and related detachments, as a peacekeeping one. If Russia and the CIS had attempted such a procedure the question of whether the latter operation could have been characterized as peacekeeping would have rested

squarely on the question of partiality and in principle it would have been possible to refer to it as peacekeeping in the UN sense. However, as Russia and the CIS never attempted to disentangle these two aspects of the situation, either in theory or in practice, it was impossible to refer to it as UN-defined peacekeeping. For this reason Moscow has managed to obtain cooperation from international institutions where questions of negotiations between the warring parties are concerned but has not received the international endorsement it had hoped for, in particular from the United Nations.

As the situation in Tajikistan destabilized, the Russian ministries and the media cited the Tashkent Treaty on Collective Security of May 1992, which was a response to the implosion of the USSR, as a possible response to the prevailing situation in Tajikistan. This treaty was one of the two pillars of Russian security policy towards the successor states of Central Asia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. The second pillar was the bilateral treaties with all the above countries, save Tajikistan, which were concluded during the summer of 1992.

The principle of combining bilateral treaties with an overall multilateral one was well tested, and was the formal framework for the USSR's relations with other members of the Warsaw Pact until its dissolution on 1 April 1991. Initially problems of internal instability were delegated to the government in Tajikistan to resolve, yet there were also references to the need for the Tajik authorities to introduce an emergency regime in the southern border areas. On 3 September 1992, the Presidents of the Russian Federation, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan issued a communiqué where they termed the fighting taking place in Tajikistan a danger to the "entire Commonwealth of Independent States" and stated their intention of intervening if the hostilities would not cease.¹¹ Apart from restoring internal order, the reason given for intervention was the large-scale smuggling of drugs and weapons from the south, i.e. Afghanistan.

The forces at hand for the task were, firstly, the old 201st Motor Rifle Division, which was still based in Dushanbe. Secondly, there were the border guards along the 1,330 km Tajik-Afghan border, who in Soviet times had been the Fourth Directory of the KGB. However, after the break-up of the KGB in the immediacy of the collapse of the USSR in March 1992, the Directory of Border Forces that normally reported to the Interior Ministry was divided into more manageable units for the new government in Moscow. When these units were reinforced with an extra 1,050 troops during the first fortnight of September 1992, the Iranian government issued a formal protest of foreign interference in a "sovereign state". At the time Tajikistan had no regular army to protect key

public installations, consequently on 19 September acting Supreme Soviet Chairman and head of state Akbarsho Iskanderov, a Pamiri, called on the CIS troops to assist his Interior Ministry troops. This they did with a determined show of strength. The Chairman also wanted the CIS units to put down the intense fighting in Kurgan-Tyube and the Vashksh Valley, but the CIS high command (Stavka) did not respond to these calls on the basis of "maintaining its impartiality". On the contrary, the 201st Motor Rifle Division was reputed to have equipped Kulyabi forces of the Popular Front loyal to Nabiyev with four T-72 tanks and six BTR-80 APCs (armoured personnel carriers), which were immediately used in the decisive confrontations and subsequent subjugation of Kurgan-Tyube. The commander of the 201st MRD maintained that they were taken from the barracks by the Popular Front, apparently "at gun-point".¹² Be that as it may, Russia certainly rebuffed Iskanderov's attempts to buy heavy weapons and equipment. At the end of September, 1,550 additional troops were sent from Ferghana to assist those already there, and CIS units took over the security and guarding of Dushanbe international and military airport. At a summit in the Kyrgyz capital Bishkek, it was agreed that defending the external border of the CIS was a common concern, that a CIS peacekeeping force should be sent as soon as a "legitimate authority" in Tajikistan requested one, and that CIS units already there should remain on active duty until further notice. With direct backing from the Uzbek military, headed by a Russian general, an attempt was made to remove Iskanderov from power. He held out until 16 November, when the Kulyabi Emomali Rahkmonov, who was the Chairman of the Supreme Soviet, was installed. Heavy fighting continued through 1992, with Uzbekistan's military high command intermittently involved in Kulyabi fighting activities.

It would be wrong to put Uzbekistan's engagement down to offensive pretensions only. The Uzbek President, Islam Karimov, fought down his own array of opposition "democrats" and Muslim leaders, and was wary of the possibility that Tajik Islamists might bring their message to Uzbekistan from the east. President Karimov's anxiety about ethnic and religious spill-over made him pursue two different strategies. First, as the violence and the war escalated, he tried to seal off Uzbekistan from all contact with Tajikistan. Tajik-language schools were closed, aircraft were denied landing rights, and overland transport was severely restricted. However, as it became obvious that Tajikistan was disintegrating, President Karimov switched to a strategy of active involvement in the conflict.

Whereas Uzbekistan had clearly followed its own agenda, it had also been coincidentally following the Russian interests. The crucial event leading to Iskanderov's fall was the meeting of Russian Foreign Affairs Minister Andrei Kozyrev with the Central Asian members of the collec-

tive defence treaty, minus Tajikistan, in Almaty on 4 November 1992. Here it was decided that the 201st Motor Rifle Division should remain in Tajikistan and pursue peacekeeping operations until they could be replaced by a CIS force (i.e. with token detachments from Central Asian states); that a state council consisting of Tajikistan's different factions should be formed; that an "Almaty Committee" to bring about peace should be formed, consisting of representatives of the Presidents of Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and the Russian Federation; and that a corresponding committee consisting of deputy Foreign Ministers should supervise complementary humanitarian work. It was decided that battalions from Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, as well as a mobile regiment, should link up with the 201st MRD to form the combined CIS peacekeeping force. These forces only took up positions in 1994 in the Gorniy-Badahkshan area; before that Russian and Uzbek forces made up the force deployed in Hissar, the Vashksh Valley, and the eastern Khatlon area (predominantly Uzbek). A decision to deploy another four motorized infantry battalions was never implemented. The Russian and Uzbek leaderships found Iskanderov lacking legitimacy, having failed to step down as head of state after the result of a vote of no confidence in the national assembly in October 1992. But this was not the reason why Russia failed to respond to calls to support Iskanderov's government, and ended up supporting the Leninabadi and Kulyabi instead. Less than a year after the implosion of the USSR, and in an atmosphere of deep division about Russia's place and role in the world, this choice was an important part of the overall debate about the nature of Russian foreign policy between the "Atlanticist" school of thought and the "Eurasian" school – with the latter gaining the upper hand. Those who argued that Russia should assert itself and give priority to what later came to be known as the "near abroad" could point to a number of reasons why it was better to support Moscow's traditional dependants in Tajikistan, the Leninabadi and the Kulyabi. This necessitated a strong stance against what was perceived as the Islamic tendencies of the Iskanderov regime, in particular the Tajik Youth Movement of Abdugaffor Ruhoni and the Islamic Revival Movement under Dr Said Abdullo Nuri. If Islam were allowed to encroach further on the territory of the CIS, it would have a domino effect not only in the rest of Central Asia and the Caucasus, but also inside the Russian Federation in the north Caucasus and the Volga-Ural areas where there was unrest in Tatarstan in 1993–1994. Unless the Islamic thrust from the south could be stopped along the mountainous Tajik-Afghan border, the next line of defence that, in Moscow's view, could be held militarily with ease would be the vast northern desert of Kazakhstan. This would leave 25 million ethnic Russians stranded in the south "at the mercy of the Mullahs".¹³ It was seen as politically and

Table 6.1 The CIS mission: Russian troops involved in peace operations in Tajikistan

| Year | Airborne 'Speznats' | Army | Border forces | Total |
|------|---------------------|---------------------|--------------------|--------|
| 1992 | 200 | 8,000 | 2,000 | 10,200 |
| 1993 | 500 | 15,000 ^a | 2,500 ^b | 18,000 |
| 1994 | 500 | 18,000 | 2,500 | 21,000 |
| 1995 | 500 | 20,500 | 3,000 | 24,000 |
| 1996 | 700 | 22,500 | 3,500 | 26,700 |
| 1997 | 700 | 24,500 | 4,100 | 29,300 |

^a End of the professionalization of the Russian army in Tajikistan.

^b Extensions of two- to three-year contracts for local recruitment, so-called "contract soldiers".

economically costly if large sections of the ethnic Russian minority, particularly the specialized professionals amongst the 315,000 Russian ethnic minority in Tajikistan, should flee to the Russian Federation where housing and jobs were already extremely scarce. As events developed, the vast majority of ethnic Russians left in any case, and by May 1997 only 18,000 non-military Russians remained, mainly pensioners and children. There was also the issue of maintaining a reputation for standing by Moscow's traditional supporters in time of need after the "abandonment" of Iraq during the Gulf War in January 1992.

The case for supporting Iskanderov rested on his having an Islamic following and something approaching a democratic power base. There was also a general orientation towards Russian non-interference in the affairs of other former Soviet republics in order not to strain resources and lose the goodwill of the "Group of Seven" (the USA, Japan, Germany, France, Italy, Britain, and Canada) that were to provide financial aid to the post-Cold War structural casualties. However, these considerations were brushed aside. Moscow's decision to support the Leninabadi and the Kulyabi was also an important nail in the coffin for the "Atlantist" school of Russian diplomacy, headed by Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev, soon to be replaced by a more "Eurasian" Yevgeni Primakov after the Chechen fiasco in 1995.

The CIS peacekeepers find a role

The Tajikistan operation increased in importance during the summer of 1993. The civil war had reduced in intensity from a war to a low-intensity conflict. The opposition, now known as the United Tajik Opposition (UTO), was withdrawing via the Karategin Valley to the intractable in-

terior of Gorniy-Badahkshan and northern Afghanistan, while maintaining strongholds in the Hissar Valley, Kofarnikon, and even in Dushanbe itself. The question as to whether there was a need to perpetuate the CIS peacekeeping operation arose. At this crucial period, on 13 July 1993, a border force detachment manned by 47 Russian soldiers was overrun by UTO fighters in the Kulyab area and 24 Slavs were killed and another 18 were wounded. About 200 Kulyabi villagers and 60 opposition were also killed. This proved to be the turning point in the military involvement for Russia and the CIS in the Tajik conflict; from this date onwards a CIS/Russian withdrawal was out of the question and the main political objective was to legitimize their presence in the eyes of the international community. Ideally they sought a UN sanction for their role as genuine peacekeepers, to consolidate a "friendly regime in Dushanbe", and prevent the collapse of the fragile and inept Tajik security forces.

So far the Russian involvement had ignored the 80 minor border incidents that had taken place since December 1992. Nevertheless, these attacks, particularly those that had taken place since the collapse of the Najibullah regime in Kabul in March 1992, and the spectacular successes of the Taleban in reaching the Tajik-Afghan border in June 1997, confirmed the perception in the Russian power ministries of an Islamic threat "spilling" out of Afghanistan. In fact some observers contemplated a low-intensity Russian-Afghan war fought over southern Tajikistan and northern Afghanistan.¹⁴

In July 1993 the decision-makers in Moscow increased the Russian presence in Tajikistan. Afghan territory was bombed with rockets and Sukhoi-24 fixed-wing aircraft from bases in Termez and Ferghana for two weeks in July/August. Russian Minister of Security Victor Barannikov was dispatched to the border on a well-publicized inspection tour, which included Russian parliamentarians (who have become regular visitors to the Tajik-Afghan border to confirm their patriotic and orthodox credentials for the domestic Russian audience). Upon his return, he delivered a report that exposed personnel shortages, blatant corruption, and deficient organization. His report was so devastating that it cost him his job and, after brief excerpts were leaked to the media, the document was declared "top secret" and buried.¹⁵ Troop security was tightened after September 1993, and the Russian military was given an influx of cash of 35 billion roubles in the autumn budget after the parliamentary storming in Moscow. An internal report of the Russian military in Dushanbe decided¹⁶ that the 13 July attack was the work of a "loose cannon" commander and not a prelude to a full-sized military attack by the UTO. This assurance did not remove the need to maintain and reinforce the contingent along the border, because a badly manned border service invited stray attacks. It was not hard to imagine that a border manned ex-

clusively by a far-off and enfeebled government in Dushanbe would serve as a guarantee for further attacks. The situation served to legitimize a further Russian and CIS presence through the CIS. In August 1993, in a speech labelled the "Monroviski Doctrine" by the Western press, President Yeltsin went as far as saying that the border of Tajikistan was essentially the border of Russia. Thus, manning the Tajik-Afghan border was seen not only as a question of defending the CIS and the "near abroad", but also of defending Russia itself.

In May 1992, Tajikistan had joined the other Central Asian states and Russia in signing the Tashkent Treaty on Collective Security. As a signatory, Tajikistan was eligible for military assistance from the other members if the situation was assessed as a threat from "external aggression". In mid-July 1992 a working protocol for CIS peacekeeping was signed. It called upon its signatories to train special military contingents and groups of military-police observers for operations within the CIS. However, this decision was signed only by the Central Asian states, Moldova, Armenia, and Russia – that is, not by the CIS membership in its entirety. In the autumn of 1992 the signatories of the Tashkent Treaty decided to give the high command of the CIS joint armed forces the responsibility for the command, preparation, and training of peacekeepers. By the summer of 1993 all these plans were abandoned due to a lack of funds and the high command was dissolved and replaced by a council. Thus, Russia and the CIS stood without any CIS infrastructure with which to engage the situation that had arisen along the Tajik-Afghan border. The situation was legitimized by pointing to the CIS Minsk agreement of January and the bilateral treaty between Russia and Tajikistan signed on 23 May 1993. This now provided the legal framework for the CIS peacekeeping presence on the Tajik-Afghan border.

At the Russia-Central Asian summit on 7 August 1993, Moscow applied strong pressure on Almaty, Bishkek, and Tashkent to decide on a multilateral force in Tajikistan. A formal agreement to that effect was signed in September 1993, with Turkmenistan abstaining yet again. There was a strong emphasis on border defence, and the agreement also envisioned multilateral control over collective peacekeeping forces and a six-month peacekeeping tenure. At the request of the Tajik government this was duly renewed every six months up to June 1997, with strong objections from the Central Asian partners.

Russian troops provided the bulk of the CIS peacekeeping forces and Russia maintained the command. With the US/UN mission in Haiti in mind, Russia tried, to no avail, to parallel US policy in the Caribbean and Central America with Russian policy in Central Asia. Nevertheless, the overall size of the peacekeeping forces on the ground, including the personnel from the 201st Motor Rifle Division and the border forces, came

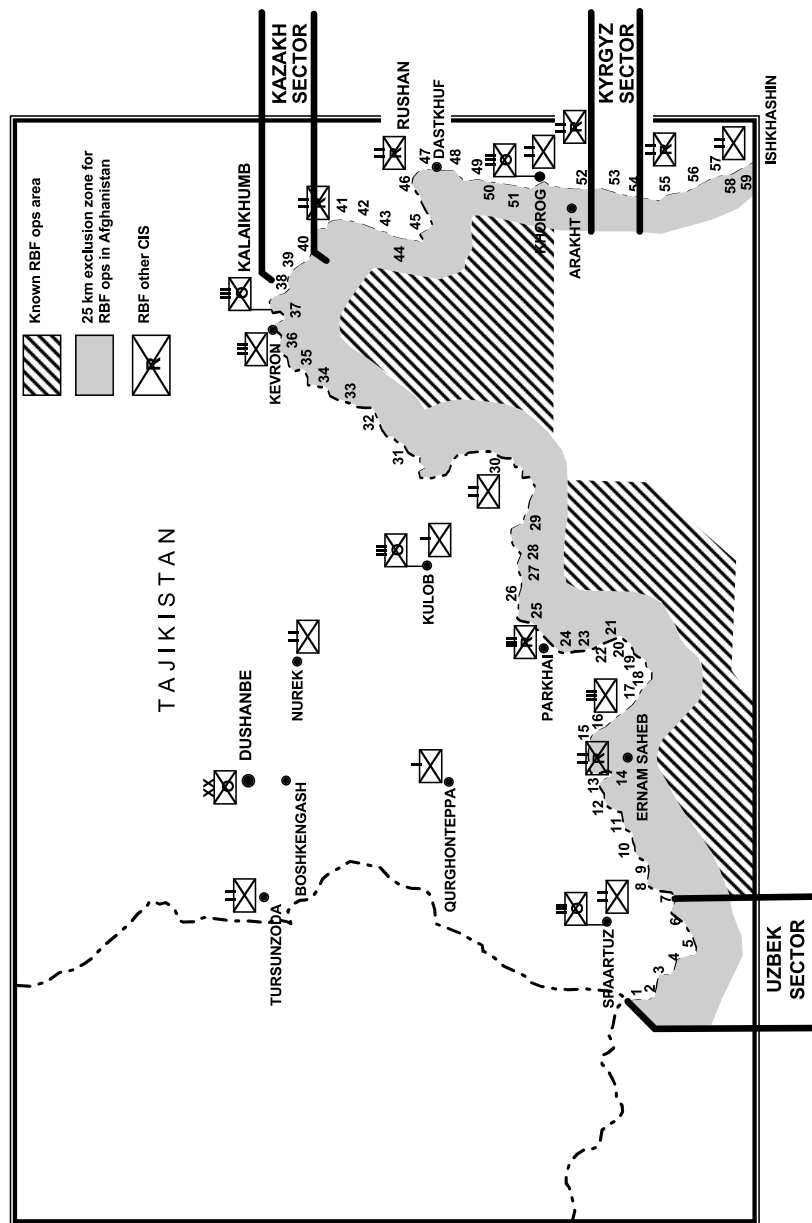


Figure 6.3 RBF border deployment

to about 25,000 – reaching its peak of 28,000 in April 1997.¹⁷ Yet, in the Tajik case, the multilateralist principle was reinforced by the six-party Ashgabat Memorandum on the Cooperation and Protection of External Borders, signed in December 1993.¹⁸ Special regard for “the unstable situation on some parts of the external borders of the undersigned parties in Central Asia” was stressed, with recommendations to solve the problem. The mandate was formally extended in April 1994 and then again during October 1994 and April 1995.

International involvement

During the autumn of 1993, Russia tried to align its peacekeeping in Tajikistan legally with its course towards greater integration and cooperation with European institutions such as NATO, the OSCE, the Council of Europe, and others. In September 1993, Kazakhstan and Russia asked the United Nations to give the 25,000-strong CIS forces in Tajikistan a mandate to operate as a UN peacekeeping force. Nothing came of this initiative, and subsequent feelers towards the United Nations and the CSCE, later the OSCE, met with humiliating failure for Russian diplomacy.

Early 1994 was crucial for defining the future relationships between Russia and NATO which were to culminate in the Paris Agreements of 27 May 1997, with the details of the Partnership for Peace programme having to be aligned with Russia’s behaviour and record in local conflicts along its periphery. These were the reasons why a Standing Consultative Commission on Peacekeeping Activity was established under the CIS Council of Foreign Ministers in March 1994. It was stated that part of the function of the consultative commission was the “arrangement of plans for practical co-operation between the CIS and the CSCE (OSCE), NATO, UN, EU, WEU in the field of peacekeeping activity”,¹⁹ albeit that the commission has faced the passive ambivalence of its counterparts and has been a weak instrument for legitimizing Russian activity in local conflicts with the international community.

Moscow’s attempts to establish the CIS as a regional partner of the United Nations in peace operations were partly prompted by the contractual relationship between NATO and the United Nations on the Bosnian conflict. But from the US, British, and French perspective it appeared to be part of Russia’s broader attempt to establish the CIS as a European security organization on a par with NATO. This did not appeal to these three veto members of the Security Council and was dropped from the agenda. If the United Nations had adopted Russia’s and Uzbekistan’s suggestion, furthermore, then that could also have been per-

ceived as another step in the direction of formalizing Russia's special status within the CIS, as the USA has in NATO.

The United Nations did not remain inactive. By 1994 the UN High Commissioner for Refugees was involved on the humanitarian side and, following several fact-finding missions, the UN Secretary-General appointed Ambassador Ramiro Piriz-Ballon as his personal envoy to Tajikistan. Piriz-Ballon was able to set up negotiations between the main parties, the government and the UTO, initially on subsidiary levels in Moscow in April 1994 and in Tehran in June 1994. In September 1994, the United Nations finally succeeded in organizing a high-level meeting in Islamabad. The three parties managed to agree on a temporary cease-fire and to put out a joint communiqué. From 1994 to 1997 all parties repeatedly breached the cease-fire, but both main parties continued the dialogue.

The United Nations, together with the CSCE, were ambivalent about the government's political timing to hold presidential elections – they encouraged a democratic process, but without basic guarantees could not endorse it and thus legitimize the regime. Consequently on 6 November 1994, the expected victory of Emomali Rahkmonov was not recognized by any international organization except the CIS, adding a further blow to the legitimacy of the Dushanbe regime, which looked more and more like a Russian protectorate. The presidential election demonstrated that, with the weight of activity moving from the interior to the border, the political situation had lost its impetus. First the UTO declined to participate, which showed that the Pamiri and Gharmi may have been subdued militarily outside their own regions, but that they could only in a limited degree be engaged politically in all Tajik activities. In the autumn of 1993, the Pamiri made a deal with the Kulyabi, brokered by the Leninabadi and the Russians, under which they acknowledged the formal authority and sovereignty of Dushanbe. In exchange they agreed that the Tajik troops "Popular Front" should not be transferred to Gorniy-Badakhshan and that only Russian border forces would man the border and oversee the transfer of aid by the international community. The Aga Khan Foundation should also resume its activities and expand unhindered into the autonomous region. The food and medical situation remained dismal and the distribution based on sectarian and political allegiances and religious affiliations. Only the Aga Khan Ismailites received adequate aid. The CIS peace enforcement efforts and the international community's gradual penetration into Tajikistan in the winter of 1994–1995 through to 1997 had not managed to reconstruct a functioning multiregional political arena following the violent civil war.

The second political fact demonstrated by the election was that rifts and cracks between the Russian/Uzbek-brokered coalition of Leninabadi

and Kulyabi, the “winners” of the civil war, were widening. This culminated in the spring of 1996 with the creation of the Leninabad bloc under defeated presidential candidate Abdullojonov. In 1997 they claimed to be a “third force” in Tajik politics and demanded a separate seat at the UN-sponsored inter-Tajik talks. The winner of the election was the Kulyabi head of state and Speaker of parliament Emomali Rahkmonov. The defeated opponent was the above-mentioned Leninabadi businessman Abdumalik Abdullojonov. Abdullojonov was Prime Minister before he was removed by Rahkmonov himself and sent as ambassador to Moscow. The elections, which according to the CSCE (OSCE), EU, Helsinki Watch, and the United Nations “were marred by a climate of fear and flagrant fraud”, demonstrated the further political turmoil in the country. They also confirmed that the civil war and its aftermath had propelled the Kulyabi, who used to be the junior partners in the traditional power alliance with the Leninabadi, into the “top of the league” of competing regional identity groups. Armed skirmishes between the two were already reported between 1993 and 1997, in the Khujand, Tursunzade, and Dushanbe areas, and no one could rule out the possibility that extended armed force would be used regularly as a way of settling scores between Leninabadi and Kulyabi in the future. Kulyabi controlled the armed services, and seized a number of Leninabadi-controlled enterprises in the south and implanted political posts in the north. This was met with popular discontent. Public demonstrations took place in the Ura-Tyube and Khujand areas in 1996–1997, and the Leninabadi political and business community turned towards Tashkent for the supply of basic services and goods from 1994–1996 and became completely self-sufficient from Dushanbe, producing 75 per cent of Tajikistan’s GNP, a fact resented by the Kulyabi.

The CIS peace enforcement operation in the interior had achieved little as an inter-ethnic stabilizing force. Political violence continued to be a regular fact of political life in Tajikistan, and after several UN-related hostage crises and other incidents involving kidnappings and hijackings in 1996–1997, the trend was towards the gradual escalation of such incidents. The peace enforcement’s effectiveness in the interior rested squarely on claims that the civil war would have flared up again without these forces. The troops that were now established in Tajikistan under the name of peacekeeping sometimes acted partially. At times Russians and Uzbeks let their connections with their traditional allies influence their attitude, political preferences, and courses of action. Peace was elusive, with continuing skirmishes between the military victors of the civil war, the escalation of activities of UTO groups inside southern Tajikistan and the Karategin Valley, and the proliferation of “freelance”

groups, which did not claim allegiance either to the government or the UTO, in the country from 1995 to 1997. It could be argued that the CIS and Russian presence had prevented even greater bloodshed and reduced the level of violence while the UN-sponsored inter-Tajik dialogue was under way. But the CIS peace enforcement was not scrupulous and symmetrical in its application, and in the long term acted against the interests of the Pamiri and Gharmi. It was clear from the UTO field commanders in Karategin, such as Mullo Abdullo and Mirzokhudja Nizomov, that they preferred to deal with CIS units rather than the government troops, in particular those from the Ministry of Interior. Nevertheless, a form of stability was maintained.

Assessment of CIS peacekeeping forces on the Tajik-Afghan border

The military tactics used by the CIS peace enforcement forces along the border have been described by the Russian general staff²⁰ as similar to those used by the Soviet army in Afghanistan and the Caucasus. In the case of Tajikistan results were better, as the opposition was much weaker and the terrain favoured defensive tactics. The operations involved a reliance on base camps, forward deployment of combat helicopters, and counter-insurgency involving local collaboration. Several general problems existed:

- the poor motivation of the Slavic component of the units and the poor training of the locally recruited ones;
- the mountainous terrain, which favoured static tactical defence and favoured guerrilla activity over regular armed forces which were not suitably trained in search-and-destroy operations;
- specifying the right equipment and tactics for use against irregulars, as local veterans²¹ favoured a counter-insurgency type response to the UTO infiltration while the high command²² instructed them to hold the line due to a lack of trained personnel and financial resources;
- the insecurity and high cost of communications lines;
- the problem of guarding base camps in the rear from harassment and sabotages;
- the dangers of escalating this kind of violence as experienced in the Caucasus and Afghanistan due to all of the above, hence locally sanctioned agreements with opposite Afghan commanders to control the level of violence;
- the rampant corruption at all levels, nepotism and lack of discipline due to bad working and living conditions, lack of regular pay, flour-

ishing weapons and narcotics rackets, and the new personal security business sector to protect local potentates, all of which undermine loyalty and promote negligence.

The possibility that peace enforcement operations on the border would quell the attacks seemed slim, since there was little chance that things would change radically in the forces themselves. However, renewed Taliban offensives in Afghanistan, which followed the capture of Kabul in September 1996, produced a slight reform and reinforcement of the border forces. From the autumn of 1996 to June 1997, over 3,500 reinforcements, bonus pay (on paper but not in practice), the consolidation of Kalaikhumb as the main C31 location in Tajikistan, and improved communications and medivac facilities seemed to improve morale and effectiveness in the first two quarters of 1997.²³ Different warlords would probably continue to balance each other by making new temporary alliances in the Afghan provinces not subjected to the Taliban. During May and June 1997 the CIS employed active "defence tactics" across the border combined with a "Maginot Line" strategy²⁴ on the northern bank of the River Oxus (Pyanj). The fact is that the border forces were unable to seal the border with Afghanistan²⁵ but maintained the level of violence against sporadic guerrilla activities and deterred a major conventional offensive against Tajikistan from Afghanistan, which was Moscow's political objective.²⁶

Given the recent military history of the relative strength of regular troops and guerrilla troops along the border it seemed unlikely that the border could be sealed entirely without reinforcements – a major objective of the Russian Ministry of Defence²⁷ and the Border Forces Directorate.²⁸ Thus physical attempts to seal the border were thwarted among other things by the political failure to sustain confidence-building measures in the interior by the government and the UTO; the defeated UTO crossed the border to enrol support with which both to attack the border itself, but mainly the Kulyabi-held regions in the interior, and to assert their presence in their regional heartlands.

In June 1997, the external borders of the CIS were the major concern. However, since trouble along its internal CIS borders might also further weaken Tajikistan and thus aggravate the general situation in Central Asia, Tajikistan's border with Uzbekistan also constituted a trouble spot which usually flared up during critical phases of the inter-Tajik dialogue (in January/February 1996 and 1997, autumn 1995, and June 1995). The Leninabadi living on the Tajikistan side in 1992 threatened to secede from Tajikistan and perhaps link up with Uzbekistan, a hidden threat often implied by Leninabadi politicians of the "bloc" if ignored in the Tajik political spectrum. As long as Russia and the CIS maintain their present military presence in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, and President

Islam Karimov continues to abide by the fixed-borders policy abrogated and agreed at Tashkent in 1992, this might not happen.

However, Tajikistan's prospects of remaining a sovereign state continued to be bleak. Since Leninabad could only be reached from Dushanbe by air all year round and by road for four months a year through a mountain pass at 3,335 metres, its threat to secede was not a realistic one. The rest of the country was deeply divided, with the government holding on to parts of Dushanbe, the Hissar Valley, and areas of Kurgan-Tyube and Kulyab, comprising approximately 15–20 per cent of Tajik territory and 40 per cent of the population. The UTO controlled areas next to Dushanbe and neighbourhoods of the capital, parts of the Karategin and Vaksh Valleys in the central region of Darwaz/Tavildara, and the Pamirs, around 55–60 per cent of the territory and 25 per cent of the population, and the rest was in the hands of "freelancers". Thus, the secession of Leninabad would have been a mortal blow to the government and incited other regions to secede, such as the Pamirs. Since none of the remaining parts would have been viable political undertakings, this "domino effect" would invite Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, and Kyrgyzstan (there is a 30,000 Kyrgyz minority on the Murghab Plateau) to feast on the political corpse, and Tajikistan might have disappeared altogether. Thus the situation along the Uzbek-Tajik border was yet another example of how stabilization of the interior was a necessary component to guarantee safe borders to the fragile political structure known as Tajikistan.

This was also a valid argument for Moscow to maintain its forces in place, despite the hopelessness of sealing the border with Afghanistan. Russia, and perhaps even China, Pakistan, and India,²⁹ could not ignore the collapse of Tajikistan. Rather, their activities would have increased as disintegration could spread to the whole of Central Asia, with Tajikistan at the weakest point in a web of hostilities from which the great powers might not be easily disentangled. Two factors were of immediate interest. First, the different powers began considering Tajikistan's rich uranium, gold, and platinum resources. The Murghab military and intelligence installations had also provided Russia with an Asian power status up to June 1997. Second, the fear of regional and ethnic tensions spreading from Tajikistan and Afghanistan and destabilizing the oil- and gas-rich Caspian Basin was shared by Iran.³⁰

The Pakistani government³¹ was known to furnish the Tajik exiles with cash, training, and weapons.³² Pakistan's major interest in the country was, however, to do with its interest in Afghanistan – to create a stable but weak hinterland under its control through the Taleban in order to channel the energy resources of Central Asia through the port of Karachi. Its interest in Afghanistan was basically concerned in the long term with border security with China and India, mainly the latter.

Questions about the success of the CIS peacekeeping forces must be posed against this background of geo-politics, available resources, and above all whether the Tajik civil war would have escalated if the CIS forces had been absent.

Conclusions

The only issue where the Russian military and political views on the role of the CIS essentially coincided was the conflict in Tajikistan. As traditional inter-clan controversies in the country escalated to fully fledged civil war in the summer and autumn of 1992, the Russian military, although reluctant to get involved, found it impossible to withdraw from two key functions: protecting the “external” border with Afghanistan, and maintaining security in the capital Dushanbe. While the former was justified by the Tashkent Treaty on Collective Security, the latter was never formally recognized but performed *de facto* by the 201st Motor Rifle Division permanently based in Dushanbe. It can hardly be said that Russia masterminded the return of former communists to power, but it is undeniable that the direct involvement of the 201st MRD on the side of the Kulyabi and Leninabadi clans (due mostly to the indigenous roots of many officers) contributed to their victory in 1993.

As prospects of drowning in an Afghan-type quagmire became clear for the military strategists in Moscow, especially after border clashes in June–July 1993 had claimed heavy losses among Russian troops, the general staff began to press if not for withdrawal then for burden sharing. At that point the Foreign Ministry vigorously entered the game and developed a “conceptual” background for the statement by President Yeltsin that Tajikistan’s southern border was in effect Russia’s southern border. The rationale for this statement as clarified by the deputy Foreign Minister was remarkably simple: there was no other “dam” to stop the tide of instability and terrorism fuelled by Islamic fundamentalism. It was not possible to apply the “Russians abroad” issue since nearly the whole Russian community had fled from Tajikistan. A natural consequence of this statement was the Agreement on Collective Peacekeeping Forces signed on 24 September 1993 by Russia and four Central Asian states – Turkmenistan abstained from any binding commitments – inside the CIS framework. This agreement formally established the joint command of the collective peacekeeping forces and authorized it to implement the decisions taken by the heads of the respective states regarding the use of these forces. What were and are particularly interesting about this agreement are two last-minute editorial changes.

The first one was introduced on the initiative of the President of

Kazakhstan, who insisted on using the term “peacekeeping” instead of “collective defence forces”, though the latter definition actually gave a better idea of the real purpose of the operation. The second editorial change was made by Russian Foreign Ministry officials who, in preparing the final draft for signature, deleted all mention of Tajikistan from the text. Thus the agreement, which to all intents and purposes was occasioned by one particular case of conflict, acquired a broader context and could be interpreted to apply to the CIS in general.

As for the Russian military, their interests were focused on Appendix 2 of the agreement, which specified that Russia would provide 50 per cent of the collective forces and Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan were expected to come up with other half. The Russian Defence Ministry immediately proposed to reorganize the 201st MRD into a multinational corps, but this plan was effectively sabotaged by Russia’s partners, in that the battalions from the Central Asian states simply never arrived. The situation was reviewed at the next CIS summit in Moscow on 15 April 1994, and new decisions were taken for the mandate of the collective peacekeeping terms and on additional measures to stabilize the situations on the Tajik-Afghan border. Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan, however, remained reluctant to provide any troops except for some border posts, and this only apparently under extreme pressure from Moscow.

It may well be that in real terms political pressure from Russia on these states was not as strong as the defence establishment would like one to believe, since it was their own security interests that were most affected by the ongoing conflict. Firm insistence from Moscow, perhaps supported by the threat to withdraw its troops, would have certainly produced the desired effect. The commanders of the collective forces and the CIS co-ordination staff were frustrated not so much about the failure of burden-sharing as about the insufficient efforts by Russia, up to the Primakov “offensive” in spring 1997, to find a political settlement to the conflict in Tajikistan.

Tajikistan was, in fact, becoming instrumental to Russia in securing the support of the Central Asian states in the CIS, thereby transforming this organization into the legal cover for Russia’s activities in the “near abroad”. The deal behind the scenes was straightforward enough: Russia would contrive to carry the burden in Tajikistan, and the Central Asian states would give *carte blanche* to Moscow in any intervention in the Caucasus – which was then (from 1993 to late 1994) the prime target of Russia’s aspirations, namely the oil/gas resources of the Caspian Sea and the pipeline to the Russian heartland.

The CIS summit held in Moscow in April 1994 revealed some contours of this deal, as the decisions relating to Tajikistan were accompanied by a statement on the conflict in Abkhazia which outlined the possibility of

organizing a peacekeeping operation if the UN Security Council should prove unable to take any decision on this issue. This remarkably vague provision was interpreted by Russia as a valid “entry ticket”; a peacekeeping operation was then launched in June 1994. Even more striking, the UN Security Council was officially informed that the CIS had provided a proper mandate for this operation, while in fact a mid-ranking official had been sent on a tour of CIS countries to collect the signatures of the various presidents on the decisions issued by President Boris Yeltsin. After several postponements, a meeting of the council of the CIS leaders – the only body that would authorize action – finally took place in Moscow in October 1994, and duly issued the required mandate. At the same time the UN-sponsored cease-fire between Tajik sides was finalized in Tehran. This cease-fire agreement was the basis for the deployment of the UN observer mission after UN Security Council Resolution 963 of December 1994 giving UNMOT its mandate.

The end result of Russia’s diplomatic manoeuvres was a mixed blessing by the end of 1994: on the one hand, the CIS was now transformed into a “fig-leaf” for Russia’s aspirations, but on the other hand, bleak prospects for any burden-sharing with neighbours in conducting peacekeeping remained – even for operations in their best interests. The legitimacy of the CIS operations would be also be permanently in doubt, as the UN Security Council did not provide it with a mandate and created a mission of its own, albeit limited to that of observer. In this situation, the Russian military leadership, particularly the general staff, turned to the option of channelling real security cooperation through bilateral relations with a few key allies. By the beginning of 1995 Russia’s strategic allies were Belarus, Georgia, and Kazakhstan. Tajikistan was regarded as a “protectorate” rather than an ally in a marginal scenario for Russian security interests, at this stage focused primarily on the Caucasus; the Chechnya campaign began in December 1994. The concept of “common military strategic space”, while meaningful if viewed from Moscow, actually made very little sense to other CIS member states, since their security interests lie miles apart (the example of Moldova and Kyrgyzstan seems convincing). Russia thus opted for regional security structures under the mantle of the CIS in Central Asia and the Caucasus, which Moscow could influence through Kazakhstan and Georgia, giving Almaty and Tbilisi – and only them – reliable security guarantees.

Russia’s dominance in the CIS was strong enough in 1995 to guarantee that both the organization and its member states would remain silent about the war in Chechnya, regarding it as an internal affair of the Russian Federation. With the sustainability of the CIS operation in this low-intensity conflict in Tajikistan guaranteed, Moscow’s attention has concentrated on the Caucasus, i.e. Chechnya and Georgia. The CIS Tajik

operation has thus become mainly a border control mission along the Tajik-Afghan border, and maintaining a low profile in current Tajik internal politics as the Rahkmanov regime integrates the moderate elements of the UTO into the government.

Notes

1. General Zavarzin, Commander of CIS forces, Tajikistan, interviewed by the author in Tajikistan, May 1996.
2. Minister Abdumalik Abdullojonov, interviewed by the author in Tajikistan, December 1995.
3. Annual Report 1997 by the International Organization for Migration and UNHCR.
4. Statistics from the UN Secretary-General's report to the Security Council, June 1997 and the UN Vienna donors' meeting position paper drafted by the author to assist the peace process in Tajikistan, October 1997.
5. Uzbek Ministry of Finance, interviewed by the author, February 1997.
6. According to the last USSR Census in 1989.
7. Tajik academics Dr Mashadadov and Dr Mirzoyev (Tajik Academy of Sciences), interviewed several times by the author between March 1995 and May 1997.
8. According to a regional survey by James Stewart of CARE in June 1996.
9. *History of Central Asia/A History of the Uzbeks*, Tashkent: Uzbek Academy of Sciences, July 1996.
10. Article 51 is about self-defence of vital national interests against the aggressor.
11. Turkmenistan was the only successor Central Asian state that kept its distance from the undertaking, ostensibly thinking that its petroleum- and gas-based economy gave it enough leeway to stay aloof of the military involvement of the others.
12. *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 15 October 1997.
13. Internal paper by Karaganov Institute of Europe Moscow for a seminar held in November 1993.
14. Interviews by the author with Colonel Cherednichenko in the operational area, May 1997.
15. *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 15–18 August 1993 and 27 June 1997.
16. Interview with General Tarasenko, Khorog, September 1996 and excerpts in *Segodnya*, 9 May 1997.
17. *Itogi*, 3 May 1997.
18. *Diplomaticheski Vestnik*, January–March 1994.
19. *Vestnik*, October 1994.
20. *Krasnaya zvezda*, 9 May 1996 and 9 May 1997.
21. General Pavel Tarasenko, commander of border forces in Tajikistan, interviewed by the author, Khorog, October 1996.
22. General Nikolayev, commander of border forces CIS, interviewed by the author, May 1997.
23. Tarasenko, note 16.
24. *Krasnaya zvezda*, 9 May 1997.
25. Barnett R. Rubin, "The fragmentation of Afghanistan 1996", *Krasnaya zvezda*, 11 May 1997.
26. Yevgeni Primakov, *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 22 September 1996.
27. Rodionov address quoted in *Krasnaya zvezda*, 28 June 1997.
28. Nikolayev, note 22.

29. Author interviews with HE Muttu Kumar, Ambassador of India and Tajik Prime Minister Azimov and deputy Prime Minister Pigai in Dushanbe, May and June 1997.
30. Interviews with HE Ambassador Belov of Russian Federation, Dushanbe, May/June 1997.
31. Interview with RBF Lieutenant-Colonel Priakhin, February 1997; Ahmed Rashid, "The Taleban phenomenon", *The Nation*, Pakistan, 27 October 1996.
32. The Rizvon brothers were the main actors of the several hostage crises at the turn of 1996–1997. They were reputedly militarily trained near Peshawar, Pakistan several times during the 1992–1996 period.

The evolution of Russian peacekeeping under President Putin

Dmitry Polikanov

Introduction

Summer 2001 marks the second year of Vladimir Putin's actual rule. These 24 months have been characterized by dramatic changes in Russian domestic and foreign policy which can generally be named a triumph of the national-interest-driven system of power. These transformations have been reflected in a number of conceptual documents adopted mainly in 2000, such as the national security concept, the military doctrine, and the foreign policy concept.

Russia's strategy has become more assertive, diversified, and realistic than before. Under the circumstances, Russia had to adapt to new realities its relations with the FSU nations and with the West, which led to the emergence of new approaches towards regional and international security.

This sweeping change certainly had an impact on one of the elements of Russian policy – peacekeeping and peace support operations, which, to a certain extent, serve as Moscow's business card in interaction with the global environment. Peacekeeping, which makes up one of the components of the Russian great-power status, is becoming one of the areas of interest for the new Russian leadership. Obviously, certain economic difficulties and crumbling military reform do not allow Russia to be substantially engaged in peace operations worldwide, but Moscow does its best to use this powerful instrument to pursue its policy in the near

abroad (within the framework of old and new structures emerging on the post-Soviet territory) and in some geo-politically vital areas, such as the Balkans. Russian peacekeeping units are also involved in many UN missions, as military observers, troops, and civilian personnel.

The major purpose of this chapter is to study the evolution of Russian peacekeeping under President Putin in comparison to the Yeltsin era, and to analyse the transformation of approaches towards peacekeeping, its objectives, and functional meaning for the Russian élite. Another goal will be to demonstrate how Russia learns from international post-Cold War practices and what the prospects for convergence are.

New trends in foreign and security policy

Russian foreign and security policy depends on a combination of complex factors and for a long time has been reflecting a complicated strategic consensus of different élite groups and their permanent tactical rivalry. This is why one should not overestimate various Russian concepts vigorously adopted in 2000, which, to a large extent, serve as a disguise for this competition and are aimed at creating some semblance of common goals and coherence. In mid-2001 the situation started changing, and the policy has become more personalized. President Putin continues the process of the centralization of power, increasingly becoming the sole generator and implementer of foreign policy missions.

What, in this context, are the major characteristics of Russian foreign policy today and how crucial are they for peacekeeping – since the latter is obviously a political rather than purely military mechanism? The President makes decisions based on the advice of the Russian Foreign Ministry (formally the supreme body for coordination of foreign policy under a 1996 presidential decree¹), the RF Security Council, and the MoD. The 1994 governmental resolution concerning the establishment of the inter-agency commission for coordination of Russian peacekeeping activities also stated that the body was co-chaired by the deputy Foreign Minister and deputy Defence Minister.

Firstly, one has to note that geo-political approaches continue to dominate over geo-economic issues. For Russian decision-makers the problems of security (NMD, NATO enlargement, or counter-terrorist activities) are more important than accession to the WTO, or promotion of the interests of Russian businesses on the global market. This geo-political mentality predetermines Russia's overwhelming attention to some regions and security problems which do not deserve this, and makes Moscow get involved in some dubious operations beyond its borders.

Secondly, one of the declared features of the new Russian course is

pragmatism. This notion contains two substantive elements. Russian policy should be free of any ideology, be rational, and meet Russia's national interests. One of the economic equivalents of this political pragmatism is the *economization* of foreign policy repeatedly proclaimed by President Putin and other Russian leaders, something which has to date not been very successful. The second element of pragmatism is the realistic assessment of resources available to Moscow, so that Russian diplomacy may not again be reduced to the rhetoric and empty threats that it was during Yeltsin's rule.

Thirdly, one can speak about diversification and commitment to the concept of a multipolar world. Present-day Russia is attempting to restore relations with the former Soviet allies, trying to be open to the West and to the East, and to play on differences between world powers, rather than to be affiliated with the USA (like during Andrei Kozyrev's tenure of office) or India, China, and the Middle East (as under Foreign Minister Yevgeni Primakov).

Fourthly, Russian foreign and security policy depends strongly on domestic politics and more than before serves the Kremlin's activities at home. Vladimir Putin works more than his predecessor on re-election and has to take into account fluctuations of public opinion.

Fifthly, Moscow is still concerned about its status. For Putin and his team, the issue of status seems more important than for Yeltsin, who also tried to preserve Russia's great-power posture. High status on the global arena helps Putin to promote his ideas and ensure public backing of his reforms at home, since he appears to be a defender of Russian national interests and a person respected by world leaders. An eloquent example is a loud PR campaign concerning Russia's participation in the recent G-8 summit in Genoa.

Sixthly, one has to admit that Russian policy is quite reactive. Russia has so far failed to put forward or implement any significant global ideas, although Putin has set forth and promoted some interesting initiatives (his initiative on peaceful nuclear energy uses at the UN Millennium Summit, or the global system of control of missile launches). Moscow mostly reacts to crises rather than working to prevent them, albeit international practices nowadays focus mostly on prevention.

Finally, structural issues are decisive for Russian policy. The Russian Federation remains the country where institutions and their corporate interests are more important than the interests of the personalities (even if they head these institutions). This high level of bureaucracy and institutionalization also affects the fate of peacekeeping. Even if one takes the Defence Ministry, there are certain units and many individuals interested in developing peacekeeping, but there is no corporate interest in these activities.

There are some geographical issues, as well. Russian policy today is characterized by growing Eurocentrism, for the rapprochement with Europe has become a new grand idea of the Russian leadership. It is accounted for by the desire to reduce Russia's dependence on the USA and by the sound economic basis of these relationships (both with individual members of the EU and the Union as such).

Another priority is relations with the NIS, which Moscow maintains to ensure stability and predictability on its borders, to reserve potential markets for Russian exports (which may increase as a result of general economic growth), and to gain some benefits for domestic politics (e.g. the sensitive issue of the rights of the Russian-speaking population in the NIS). Russia seems to abandon amorphous CIS mechanisms and to try to replace them with new bilateral and multilateral structures (the renewed Collective Security Treaty, the Eurasian Economic Community, the Russian-Belarusian Union), instead of seeking overall consensus that does not yield specific results. Military-strategic matters (peace support operations, combating terrorism and illicit drug-trafficking, etc.) make up the core of this cooperation.

What does all this mean for Russia's commitments in the area of peacekeeping? With respect to NATO, Moscow is ready to develop businesslike relations without illusions, aimed at enhancing transparency and forging partnership. Peace support operations remain one of the functionally meaningful and tangible elements of Russian-NATO cooperation, whose successes may be used to pursue other political goals. This also partly helps Moscow to maintain its status in European and global affairs. One can hardly predict the developments after the 2002 Prague summit (should NATO decide to enlarge), but peacekeeping may remain the only silk thread connecting the two partners in case of fierce Russian response.

As far as CIS nations are concerned, the new foreign policy course means more emphasis on the security agenda and more realistic Russian commitments on the basis of available resources. Moscow strives to preserve its presence in the FSU zone, although with a reduced military component and enhanced military-technical cooperation (e.g. proposals to sell material to the near abroad at Russian domestic prices). More attention is paid to the development of new multilateral and bilateral structures. Russia also makes attempts at burden-sharing (see the section on the anti-terrorist forces of the Collective Security Treaty below).

Finally, participation in UN peacekeeping operations will continue to be an important mechanism for maintaining Russian great-power status. Russia's scarce resources will impede its involvement, but Moscow may finally realize the financial attractiveness of this participation and even-

tually follow Ukraine's example. A prerequisite for such change would be the emergence of a governmental structure having a bureaucratic interest in developing peacekeeping (most likely the Defence Ministry). Taking into account that there is a growing trend in the United Nations to delegate powers to regional security organizations, Russia should continue to strive for the full recognition of the CIS as a regional organization with the right to conduct peacekeeping operations.²

This brief overview of the new features in Russian foreign and security policy implies some changes in the Russian perception of peacekeeping operations. These modifications can easily be seen after studying the experience of Yeltsin's rule.

Yeltsin's troubled legacy

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia had to face numerous security challenges, most of which originated in neighbouring states. Newly independent countries lacked adequate institutions of peaceful conflict resolution; post-Soviet élites strived to maintain power in their hands by all means and were not ready for power-sharing and the fair distribution of wealth in society. The territory of the former USSR became a hotbed of instability and armed conflicts, many of which could spill over to Russia (in the form of refugees, crime, and drug-trafficking).

Under these circumstances, Russia had to take on the burden of peacekeeping and enforcement operations, which did not always comply with the established international standards and practices. Russia has always given a broader interpretation to the mission of peacekeepers – the forces were regarded as a tool to maintain Russian security (e.g. in the early 1990s where active involvement in the situation in Tajikistan was accounted for by apprehensions of the domino theory – Moscow feared the quick successive collapse of the post-Soviet regimes in the region under Islamic pressure) and to spread Russian influence in the newly independent states.³ Moreover, a mandate for operation was not that important for Russian peacekeepers in the CIS, who preferred clear orders from the force commanders. Political control of the CIS bodies over the latter was quite symbolic. Some missions were deployed on the basis of bilateral agreements (sometimes informal) and were later legitimized by the decision of the CIS governing bodies or the United Nations (e.g. the mission in Abkhazia).

Russia, with its overwhelming military might relative to the other FSU states, became one of the driving forces for peacekeeping in the post-

Soviet environment. However, at an early stage, Moscow paid too much attention to the military component of the operations and did not undertake sufficient diplomatic and political efforts for settlement. One of the major mistakes was a firm belief that a strong military presence and robust force may be the only way to mitigate the violence. Besides this the Russians were sure that the Russian army was so large that the peacekeeping operations would not be extremely costly.⁴

One has to note that peacekeeping operations with Russian involvement normally began when there was violent conflict, so Moscow had to use its armed forces to stop the hostilities. This (combined with the aforementioned shortcoming of Russian peacekeeping) often resulted in numerous accusations of neo-imperialism and lack of impartiality, which had a negative impact on Russia's image in the world arena. Moscow's unwillingness to allow the engagement of international organizations in the CIS and defiant behaviour (Russia claimed that no international consent was required for its peacekeeping operations in the CIS and the UN mandate was only needed for enforcement operations)⁵ only aggravated the apprehensions of the world community.

It is worth noting that Russia had to conduct its operations by differentiating between the warring parties, dividing them into pro-Russian and anti-Russian. Moscow tended, implicitly or openly, to back one of the parties in the conflict and strived to ensure maximum protection for Russian minorities. However, sometimes for political reasons the policy of the Kremlin was less consistent (e.g. the Russian forces saved the allegedly anti-Russian Georgian government from total defeat in 1993). Taking Moscow's perception of peacekeeping as an instrument of power projection into account, Russian involvement in conflicts on the part of pro-Russian forces pursued the goal of blackmailing anti-Russian regimes (in Moldova and Georgia) and coercing them into more cooperation.

The aforementioned factors made Russia carry the major burden of operations in the CIS and prevented Moscow from forming a fully fledged model of multilateral interaction in peacekeeping. As a result, some operations (e.g. in Abkhazia and Tajikistan) became Russian unilateral security commitments, which were occasionally supported by the activities of UN observers. The absence of efficient multilateral mechanisms was caused by deliberate Russian policies in the CIS. Moscow encouraged weakness among the integration institutions, in order to avoid the emergence of any alternative decision-making centres whose decisions would be legally binding. In this way, Moscow attempted to preserve maximum room to manoeuvre if anti-Russian sentiments got out of control.

Nonetheless, one may regard Russia's peacekeeping experience in the CIS as relatively successful. After all, Moscow has managed to stop

violence and bloodshed in Transdniestria and South Ossetia, contains conflicts in Abkhazia and Tajikistan, and was ready to get involved in peacekeeping in Nagorno Karabakh (1,500–2,000 troops).

Russia's participation in international peacekeeping was even more successful. Russian military observers, civilian personnel, and police were involved in UN operations around the world and have a good record of cooperation with NATO in the Balkans. Another Russian contribution was the work of training centres for UN peacekeepers. Since 1980 the centre in Solnechnogorsk has been training 35 officers per year. In 1993 the facility was expanded to provide training for 100 military observers per year.⁶ The training is conducted two or three times a year for a period of two months for Russian servicemen and up to one month for foreigners. It consists of lectures, seminars, practical studies, and tactical exercises.

International peacekeeping operations have replaced the Soviet institution of military advisers and a united group of forces in the countries of the communist bloc. It has always been quite profitable for the Russian military to serve abroad, but since the demise of the Soviet Union and the withdrawal of Russian troops from Eastern Europe the chances to earn some extra money have diminished. Russia's involvement in UN and NATO peacekeeping facilitated the restoration of the system with all its positive and negative (bribes, corruption, and nepotism) aspects. Moreover, even in CIS operations Russian officers and soldiers earn more money than at home.

Thus, the key conclusion concerning Russian peacekeeping during the Yeltsin rule would be its non-traditional character. Peacekeeping in the CIS was mainly used to maintain Russian security, both by ensuring military presence and by suppressing violence that erupted in the former Soviet republics after the collapse of the empire. These operations were conducted outside of some internationally recognized norms, without clear mandates giving detailed descriptions of powers and responsibilities of the force commanders. Russia failed to establish effective mechanisms for multilateral interaction and had to carry the financial and political burden of these missions, not all of which were in the national interest. But one has to emphasize that the parallel process of Russian integration into global peacekeeping practices was taking place in the 1990s. As a permanent member of the UN Security Council, Russia participated with zeal in UN peace missions in order to maintain its great-power status when other capabilities were diminishing.

The analysis of new trends in Russian foreign policy and Yeltsin's legacy helps to demonstrate the evolution of the Kremlin's attitude towards peacekeeping nowadays, when the Russian Federation starts thinking and behaving anew.

Peacekeeping under President Putin

In recent years, Russian political thinking has had three primary approaches towards peacekeeping. These attitudes reflect the debate on the usefulness of this foreign and defence policy instrument.

During the last period of Yeltsin's rule Russia began to review its attitude towards peacekeeping operations in the CIS and in the world. Russia has always been hesitant about the degree of its involvement and its cost-efficiency. Obviously, some engagement was advisable for reasons of political expediency, but some in the Russian military, as well as some diplomats, believed that Moscow could benefit financially by cooperating with the United Nations.⁷

This hesitation evolved when the Kremlin began to regard peacekeeping as an effective but costly instrument. Moscow started to think about exit strategies, especially as far as CIS operations were concerned. Russia could not afford to carry the burden of peacekeeping given the military reforms and the complicated economic situation. Besides, peacekeeping caused certain political collisions, one of which was the debate on the advisability of cooperation with NATO and the degree of subordination to NATO commanders. Some top Russian military officers, including then Defence Minister Igor Sergeyev, argued that:

NATO thinks that Russia has to put up with the status of "a partner in the [peacekeeping] operation carried out by the alliance" ... We do not agree with this point of view, because it limits the possibilities of Russia, depriving it of its own independent policy aimed at stabilizing the situation in the region.⁸

Another reason for the apprehensions of the Russian leadership was weariness of public opinion. The Russian public became more and more indifferent even to the problems of the CIS and it was quite difficult to explain the usefulness of Russian involvement in such distant areas as Sierra Leone, especially in 2000, when the intense conflict in Chechnya was still continuing.⁹ According to General Andrei Nikolayev, Chair of the Duma's Defence Committee:

The peacekeeping forces do not accomplish the task of maintaining security of civilian population. They, in fact, protect only themselves. The Russian society becomes more and more sure that Russian military presence in the Balkans does not fulfil its mission. We regard this joint presence in Yugoslavia as a failure and not an achievement. This is a deadlock, failure of NATO and Russia.¹⁰

Bearing in mind Putin's sensitivity to domestic politics mentioned above, it is understandable why Russian authorities began to curb military presence overseas.

A newer issue is the advisability of peace operations for the status of the President and the country. This accounted for Russia's engagement in the UN mission in Sierra Leone, for a new round of Russian activities in the CIS (e.g. revival of the Collective Security Treaty), and for Russia's endorsement of the mechanisms to enhance UN peacekeeping capabilities (Moscow's share of the UN peacekeeping budget was 1.8 per cent in 2000).¹¹ The Russian leadership also realizes that the vacuum left after the withdrawal of Russian forces will immediately be filled by NATO, which is actively engaged in peacekeeping training with the FSU states.

Russia has no specific peacekeeping doctrine, but there is a certain legal basis for Russia's extra-territorial military operations, which has also changed during the last decade. The legal framework comprises:

- Article 102 of the Russian Constitution (12 December 1993)
- Federal Law "On Defence" (31 May 1996)
- Federal Law "On the Procedure of Allocation of Military and Civilian Personnel for Participation in Peacekeeping and Peacemaking" (23 June 1995)
- Presidential Decree No. 637 "On the Establishment of a Special Military Contingent in the Armed Forces for Participation in Peacekeeping and Peacemaking Activity" (2 May 1996; invalid since 25 May 1999)
- Governmental Resolution No. 1251 "The Statute of Special Military Contingent in the Armed Forces for Participation in Peacekeeping and Peacemaking Activity" (19 October 1996)
- Presidential Decree No. 649-c "On Military Units of the Armed Forces Accomplishing State Missions of Joint Civilian and Military Nature, Special Military Contingent Performing Peacemaking Tasks" (25 May 1999; classified).
- National Security Concept of the Russian Federation (10 January 2000)
- Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation (21 April 2000)
- Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation (28 June 2000).

Political decisions on sending a contingent for operations outside Russia are taken by the President with the consent of the Federation Council. The President submits the proposal to the Council with a detailed description of the mission and contingent (its mandate). The 1995 law provides for the following functions of peacekeepers and peacemakers (both military and civilian):

- observation and control of compliance with cease-fire agreements;
- disengagement of conflicting parties;
- disarmament and disbandment of their units;
- engineer works;
- assistance of refugees;
- rendering medical and other humanitarian assistance;

- police functions and other activities to ensure the security of the population and respect for human rights;
 - international enforcement actions in accordance with the UN Charter.
- Other forms of Russia's involvement in peacemaking may be supply of food, medicine, and other humanitarian assistance, communications, transport, and other logistical resources.

The 2000 military doctrine provides for Russian participation in peacekeeping and peacemaking operations and charges the troops with disengaging the warring parties; stabilization of the situation; and ensuring conditions for a fair peace settlement. The Russian armed forces involved in peacekeeping and peacemaking should be able to perform the following missions:

- disengagement of armed groups of the warring parties;
- secure conditions for delivery of humanitarian aid to civilians and the evacuation of civilians from the zone of conflict;
- blockade of the area of conflict to ensure compliance with the international sanctions;
- create prerequisites for political settlement.¹²

The doctrine maintains that specially designated units trained under specialized programmes and in accordance with the UN, OSCE, and CIS standards should conduct these operations. The main operational directorate of the general staff carries out appropriate planning and strategic control, whereas respective commanders of the armed services execute command and control of the forces.

A special issue is funding. According to the 1995 law and the 1996 decree, the training and equipping of military contingents are covered by the defence budget. Maintenance costs for military personnel during the operation should be specified in the special line in the federal budget. The training expenses, the participation of civilian personnel, and the cost of food, medical, and other humanitarian supplies, communications, and transport, etc. are specified in the federal budget with a special line under the section "international activity".

This has, however, been a problem for a long time. The provision about a special line for peacekeeping was not implemented until 1998, when the budget for the first time contained a special line in the "international activity" section (expended by the Ministry of Finance). But nothing was specified in the "national defence" section. Since 1999, information about the defence budget has been classified, so it is impossible to verify whether the special line in the defence budget emerged or not. According to the military, only a couple of years ago Russia introduced a special paragraph in the federal budget for peacekeeping, while previously the operations had been carried out totally at the expense of the Defence Ministry.¹³

A special funding procedure exists for UN peacekeepers. For instance, Russian peacekeepers in Sierra Leone work as MoD specialists sent abroad for providing military and other assistance. They get their regular salary, additional wages as military specialists abroad (the head of the group earns \$1,386 per month), and a 20 per cent bonus for special conditions of service. According to the appropriate governmental resolution, this funding in 2000 was provided from the Defence Ministry.¹⁴ These expenses are covered later from the UN reimbursement. This is another indication that peacekeeping has replaced the system of Soviet military advisers.

The status of the military has also changed. If in 1996 the peacekeeping and peacemaking units were in the organization of the armed forces, in 1999 (according to the classified presidential decree) they were withdrawn from this structure. This change reflects their diminishing status.

The peacekeeping and peacemaking operations involve only professionals, who undergo special training and conduct military service under contract. In 1999, when the decision on Russia's participation in Kosovo was taken, the President asked the government to prepare amendments to the law "On Military Service and Conscription". The amendments should have allowed conscripted soldiers to sign up to become professional "contract" soldiers after six months of service instead of 12 months (as was provided by the law). However, these changes were made only in early 2001.¹⁵ The amendments also enabled reservists to sign up as contract soldiers for a duration of six to 12 months to participate in peacekeeping and peacemaking operations. For a better psychological climate, rotation of peacekeeping personnel occurs every six months. In some missions, this term was prolonged to one year (a way out of this was to send the peacekeepers on a long annual vacation after six months).¹⁶

The decree of 1996 provided for 17 motor rifle battalions and four airborne battalions within the armed forces charged with peacekeeping missions. In 1997 it was decided to take the units of the divisions in the Privolzhsky military district and the Leningradsky military district. As a result, the practical implementation of peacekeeping missions involved two divisions – 27th Division in the Privolzhsky military district and 201st Division deployed in Tajikistan – one brigade from the Leningradsky military district, and four battalions of airborne troops. The total strength was about 22,000 people, of whom approximately 11,000 were involved in operations in 1999.¹⁷

By 2001 the number of peacekeepers had been reduced to 17,000, of whom 7,000 are currently deployed in the field. Structural changes were made: in Transnistria, the peacekeepers from the Privolzhsky and Leningradsky districts were first replaced by units of the disbanded 14th

Army (in 1996) and then by units from the Moscow military district; in Abkhazia and South Ossetia the missions are now accomplished by troops of the North Caucasian military district.¹⁸

The 201st Motor Rifle Division in Tajikistan no longer conducts peacekeeping duties. It is deployed in the country in accordance with the interstate agreement and is involved in law enforcement and anti-terrorist activities.¹⁹ One battalion of this division is also attached to the counter-terrorist rapid deployment forces established in late May 2001 within the framework of the Collective Security Treaty. The Yerevan summit of Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Armenia, and Belarus decided to have this force to provide protection in three directions – Central Asia, the Caucasus (targeting at Nagorno Karabakh), and the West (with Belarus).²⁰ In case of Armenia and Belarus,²¹ the forces are formed on the basis of bilateral agreements (e.g. a Russian military base in Armenia and some Armenian units). The battalions of Central Asian nations and Russia are deployed at their regular bases and in a case of emergency would rapidly be relocated to the required place. Their headquarters are situated in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. In July 2001, the aforementioned Central Asian states and Russia started organizational procedures for the establishment of headquarters and conducting military exercises.

As far as the CIS is concerned, the major burden for peacekeeping rests on the shoulders of motor rifle divisions (Transdnistria, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia). The airborne troops make up the bulk of Russian forces in Bosnia and Kosovo. In accordance with the 1997 presidential directive, the airborne troops should be the core of peacekeeping forces in peacetime. By late 2000, about 15 per cent of Russian airborne troops (with a total strength of 37,500) were involved in peacekeeping operations (the situation is changing today, as discussed below).²²

Moscow's contribution to UN peacekeeping is made up of 314 Russian military observers, troops, and police:²³ 113 troops are deployed in Sierra Leone; civilian police units work in Bosnia and Kosovo; and military observers are mostly engaged in UN missions in Africa (the Democratic Republic of Congo, Western Sahara, Sierra Leone, and Ethiopia-Eritrea).²⁴

As mentioned above, there are certain structures within the Defence Ministry that are interested in promoting Russia's peacekeeping activities. They assume that this is an important way of pursuing Russian military and political interests. Besides, this is one of the methods to get extra-budgetary funding and to cover the costs at the UN's expense. Peacekeeping and peace support operations enable the Russian military to do a "real job" and to get combat training. Some top military assume that expanded engagement in peacekeeping will help to avoid personnel

reductions. Russian “blue helmets” make up the élite of the armed forces (as is the case of the 201st Motor Rifle Division – recognized as the best Russian division in 1998) and can hardly be subject to reduction.

Their opponents speak about the high costs of peacekeeping. In 1992–1998 Russia spent about 1.2 billion roubles on peacekeeping operations. The Defence Ministry was significantly irritated by this fact, since its shrinking budget was not sufficient for some other vital tasks, such as modernizing and re-equipping the armed forces. Besides, the leadership of the Russian Defence Ministry is not interested in international peacekeeping, for UN reimbursements only partly go to the defence budget (according to the 2000 budget, 75 per cent was for covering maintenance costs; 10 per cent was for implementation of the federal programme of the Federal Agency for Governmental Communication and Information; and 15 per cent was for implementation of the federal programme for providing housing for the military).²⁵ Before 2000 the situation was even worse – the money went to the federal budget, rather than directly to defence accounts, and was expended in correspondence with federal interests.

For example, monthly wages to the Russian military in Kosovo amount to \$4 million and nearly the same amount is spent on logistical support – fuel, food, maintenance of the airstrip in Slatina, and medical support of the hospital in Kosovo Pole. Total costs for maintaining the Black Sea fleet, peacekeepers in the Balkans, Georgia, and Moldova, the 201st Motor Rifle Division in Tajikistan, and other military facilities abroad total approximately \$50 million per month. Thus, overseas presence accounts for 5 per cent of the defence budget, while its strength makes up only 1 per cent of the Russian army.²⁶

Arrears in payments have meant that Russian peacekeepers have run out of fuel or other necessary supplies, impeding the implementation of their missions. For instance, according to Lieutenant-General Sergei Korobko, commander of the peacekeeping forces in Abkhazia, in September 2000 peacekeepers only received their June wages.²⁷ In July 2001 the Federation Council passed a special address to the President to solve the problem of funding for Russian peacekeepers in Kosovo (the arrears in wages in 2000–2001 were about five to six months).²⁸ In fact, the 2000 budget provided for the use of funds earned for participation in UN operations and available to the Foreign Ministry (366 million roubles) to pay for the costs of forces in Kosovo and Bosnia, and reflects them under the section on “international activity”.²⁹

These financial problems have forced the Russian leadership to reduce their military presence overseas. Moscow has withdrawn some units from Bosnia, and conducts intense dialogue with Georgia and Moldova concerning withdrawal of Russian troops (in accordance with the Russian

commitments, this redeployment should be completed by 2001 and 2002 respectively, although there are some delays). The Defence Ministry is fulfilling plans to reduce the airborne troops and strives to release them from peacekeeping duties by 2005.³⁰ The ministry plans to replace them with motor rifle units, albeit such replacement would also be quite costly and the valuable peacekeeping experience of airborne troops may be lost.

The reactive nature of Russian foreign policy and the absence of a national interest in peacekeeping hamper the efforts to develop the appropriate concept and guidelines for peacekeepers. There is no national peacekeeping doctrine – major documents were approved five and more years ago. The Russian language still lacks many terms that are widely used in modern international practices.

In the long run, the absence of large-scale and thorough consideration of issues pertaining to peacekeeping operations on post-Soviet territory, as well as the relative loss of interest in this foreign policy tool, may result in Russia's diminishing role in this area. Moscow still continues to have a decisive impact on peacekeeping missions in the FSU states, but this happens mostly because of inertia. For instance, Russia's political role in the Georgia-Abkhazia conflict has been reduced, and soon Moscow may lose leading positions in this operation. As far as Transdniestria is concerned, after the changes in the Moldavian leadership the Kremlin is less willing to exert pressure on Chisinau through military presence and tends to force the Transdniestrian leadership to seek political settlement. As the peace process in Nagorno Karabakh develops, Russia may finally be forced out and be replaced by a NATO presence (e.g. Turkish troops) near its borders. In Central Asia, one can hardly assume that Russia will be replaced totally, but its political role in the peace process may be slightly eroded.

Meanwhile, the potential for international peacekeeping at Russia's expense is also limited. Moscow plans to fund on its own no more than one or two peace operations beyond the CIS borders. Currently Russia is already engaged in two – Bosnia and Kosovo – so in case of any emergency Moscow will have to think about cancelling one of these missions to carry out an operation in other parts of the world.

Thus, at present, Russia faces two contradictory trends. On the one hand, Moscow is limiting its involvement in peacekeeping operations within the CIS and beyond, due to budgetary and force constraints. The lack of appropriate institutions, coordination, and doctrine also makes the fate of Russian peacekeeping gloomy. Dire predictions are strengthened with increasing public indifference and certain bewilderment concerning the advisability of peace operations. On the other hand, the pragmatism of the new Russian authorities implies that Russia should

continue to use this tool to expand its influence in the post-Soviet zone and to maintain its great-power status. Moreover, the presence of Russian peacekeepers is sometimes seen as a guarantee against biased approaches (like it was in Kosovo) and helps to mitigate tensions.

Under these circumstances, it would be useful to study the lessons learned, to make some recommendations, and to assess the future of Russian peacekeeping in the next few years.

Lessons learned and policy recommendations

During the past decade the Russian military and politicians have learned some important lessons, such as the need for special training for peacekeepers and the advisability of more interaction with international actors and humanitarian organizations. The political control of force commanders is also growing, as they get under Russia's unilateral command and control. Moscow also realizes that military activities should be supported by diplomatic and political efforts, which have become more intense and concerted in recent years.

The need to scale down peacekeeping and military presence due to the high costs of operations is another reality. In fact, the Kremlin nowadays places more emphasis on an economic presence, e.g. by expanding military-technical cooperation and preferential arms and *matériel* supplies to the FSU nations. The usefulness of this policy is also ambiguous, for when the NIS complete modernizing their armies at low cost, they may again turn their backs on Russia.

Russia has finally embraced multilateralism in the CIS, but on new ground (a restored Collective Security Treaty, the Eurasian Economic Community, the Shanghai Six). Moscow understands that even a symbolic contribution from other parties to the Collective Security Treaty for peacekeeping in the CIS is essential and would help to avoid political blackmail and accusations of imperialist ambitions. This was one of the reasons for the May 2001 agreements in Yerevan to establish anti-terrorist rapid deployment contingents. Moscow may also benefit from the positive experience of joint patrolling in Transdniestria, when former belligerents were involved in trilateral operations – this helped to build confidence and to avoid demonization.

Nowadays Russia pays more attention to human rights and other international obligations and provides special training for soldiers in this area. A vivid example was a military exercise in winter 2001. According to the US military attaché in Moscow, Christopher Tome, it was clear that Russia's consciousness on human rights had been raised by what its troops had witnessed and experienced alongside Western peacekeepers

in the Balkans.³¹ Respect for human life in the Russian army has also increased, as was demonstrated by the Russian response to the depleted uranium scandal and to the death of a Russian peacekeeper in Kosovo in April 2001. Both stories got broad media coverage and the Russian leadership behaved responsibly and well (unlike the first war in Chechnya in 1994–1996, when Moscow showed no respect for casualties).

The training of Russian peacekeepers takes anything from one to five months. The course does not provide for basic English-language training for the military. There are training centres at the 27th Division base and at the former 14th Army in Transdnistria, and there are plans to establish this type of centre on the disbanded base in Gudauta (Abkhazia). Russian airborne troops have the 245th Training Centre for peacekeepers in Ryazan. The Russian military work out educational materials and guides for peacekeepers, albeit the best conceptual document of this kind is still the manual of the CIS collective peacekeeping forces – a stillborn child of the agonizing Soviet army.

The Ministry of the Interior organizes the best system of training. Candidates for civilian police units are examined for English-language proficiency, get special training in accordance with international practices, and are sometimes specially trained in conformity with requirements by the force commander. The appropriate instruction also regulates the powers and responsibilities of the Russian police commanders and units of the Ministry of the Interior.³²

In fact, interaction with NATO in Bosnia and Kosovo was an important precedent which helped the former adversaries realize that they could deal with one another.³³ Many myths were dissipated, and NATO and Russia succeeded in setting up an efficient mechanism for cooperation. The Russian units have a special chain of command (dual-key principle), and orders from the mission commander (particularly those concerning the use of force) are to be confirmed by the appropriate Russian authorities. At the same time, measures are taken to avoid the violation of the principle of integrated command in peacekeeping operations.

But one has to note that the Russian military regard the joint operations with NATO in the Balkans not as a rule, but more as an exception. It is believed that if Russia were stronger it would play a “more adequate role” and cooperation would take on a different, “fairer” form.³⁴ Besides, NATO seems to be less willing to make compromises, whereas Russia, in the eyes of the military, concedes a lot and takes a more flexible position.

According to the Russian Foreign Ministry, Russia has repeatedly emphasized that NATO states did not clearly and fully comply with the mandates and regulations concerning the use of force. Another point of concern was inadequate reporting to the Security Council. Progress reports submitted to the Security Council are short and victorious, they

rarely contain recommendations to enhance the efficiency of such operations. Such failures are also evident in Kosovo, since KFOR cannot provide adequate security for Serbs and other national minorities in the region to protect them from Albanian extremists.³⁵

Nonetheless, it is also evident for Moscow that cooperation with NATO should be continued. It will contribute to the work of the Permanent Joint Council, which is functionally empty and whose peacekeeping group is the only efficient expert panel. This rapprochement will also facilitate the formulation of joint responses to common security challenges, as stated both in the Russian national security concept and in the alliance's strategic concept. In the long run, parties may even think about establishing a joint military unit (like the US-Russian brigade proposed by Madeleine Albright some time ago). Obviously, NATO peacekeeping operations in the territory of the CIS will cause an immediate negative reaction from Moscow in the near future, so the aforementioned experience of cooperation may facilitate the development of patterns that may accommodate Russia's concerns.

There are some other things Russia could do to enhance its peacekeeping capabilities. First of all, Moscow should finally elaborate and approve the national concept of peacekeeping and adopt appropriate manuals for the military. The doctrine should combine both positive Russian experience in the CIS and international peace practices. Some legal basis for Russian peace missions was developed in the mid-1990s and certain efforts are now under way to codify this legislation, but these endeavours must be intensified.

Secondly, Russia should learn from other states that use peacekeeping to promote their economic interests. It is not only a matter of exporting blue helmets for UN operations, as Bangladesh, Nigeria, India, Jordan, Kenya, Ghana, and even Ukraine do. In fact, it would be reasonable to raise the interest of the Russian Defence Ministry by making amendments to the legislation such that 100 per cent of the compensations go directly to MoD accounts. This would encourage the emergence of a corporate interest within this institution, which would be essential for the future of Russian peacekeeping. Signing the memorandum of understanding with the United Nations concerning Moscow's participation in the stand-by arrangements system could facilitate Russia's involvement.

Russia should also open the market of UN subcontractors for itself – the international community spends lots of money on related goods and services, whereas the interests of Russian businesses are not always defended. Moscow may also expand its peacekeeping training, which may become an additional source of income for the educational facilities of the Russian Defence Ministry. Moreover, given the lack of funding to conduct expensive military exercises, the MoD could benefit from

peacekeeping missions, providing the soldiers and officers with real war experiences. Peacekeeping operations may also serve as testing grounds for Russian armaments and may demonstrate to potential customers the advantages of Russian weapons and *matériel*.

Thirdly, one should not forget the political benefits of peacekeeping, especially its civilian components. Concentrated humanitarian assistance to certain states (instead of scattered and hectic humanitarian efforts), where it would be crucial, may significantly increase Russia's cultural influence and political weight and facilitate the activities of Russian diplomats. In this connection, Russia's aid to Rwanda and Sierra Leone was quite justifiable and useful. Russian skilled civilian personnel, who may be supplied to cover the UN shortage of relevant specialists for field missions, could also benefit from participation in multilateral operations. Moscow could also provide cheaper equipment, technologies, and software for early-warning centres for conflict prevention.

Notes

1. Presidential Decree No. 375 "On Coordinating Role of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Pursuing Single Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation", 12 March 1996.
2. In accordance with the UN General Assembly resolution of 24 March 1994, the CIS was recognized as a region, but with reservations precluding it from the right to conduct independent regional peacekeeping operations. See A. Nikitin, *Mirotvorcheskiye operatsii: kontseptsii i praktika (Peacekeeping and Peace Enforcement Operations: The Concepts and Practice)*, Moscow: Public Science Foundation and Center for Political and International Studies, Nauchnye doklady (Scientific Reports) No. 117, 2000, p. 23.
3. Alexei Lebedev, "Russia and international peacekeeping", *Russian Security*, Vol. 5, No. 10, May 2001, p. 3.
4. Pavel Baev, "Peace operations and the Russian Federation", in *Prague to Pretoria: Towards a Global Consensus on the Military Doctrine of Peace Support Operations*, Prague: Institute of International Relations, 2000, p. 80.
5. Alexander Nikitin, Yury Fedorov, and Andrei Demurenko, *Mirotvorcheskiye operatsii v SNG (Peacekeeping Operations in the CIS)*, Moscow: Public Science Foundation and Center for Political and International Studies, Nauchnye doklady (Scientific Reports) No. 65, 1998, p. 78.
6. UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations Training Unit, December 1998, <www.un.org>.
7. Interview with a senior official of the Russian Foreign Ministry on terms of anonymity, 26 March 2000.
8. *Krasnaya zvezda*, 25 March 2000.
9. Even in 1999 the public was reluctant to support peace operations because of their costs. When Prime Minister Sergei Stepashin said that the Russian presence in Kosovo would cost \$150 million, 55 per cent of Russians regarded those costs as unjustifiable. And it is noteworthy that the opinion of proponents of different politicians (from communists to liberals) coincided. *Fond Obzhestvennoye Mneniye*, 30 June 1999, <www.fom.ru>.

10. Press Service of the State Duma of the Russian Federation, 7 June 2001.
11. Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 27 March 2000.
12. "The military doctrine of the Russian Federation", *Rossiyskaya gazeta*, 22 April 2000.
13. *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 16 September 2000.
14. Governmental Resolution No. 983, 21 December 2000.
15. Federal Law "On Making Amendments to the Law on Military Service and Conscription", 12 February 2001.
16. *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, note 13.
17. Interview with senior Russian military experts involved in elaborating the concept of peacekeeping operations for the main operational directorate of the general staff, 26 July 2001.
18. Interview with senior officer of the Russian general staff, 3 August 2001.
19. Reuters, 21 June 2000.
20. <www.polit.ru>, 25 May 2001.
21. The problem with Belarus is its constitution prohibits deploying forces beyond its national territory. However, theoretically, one may assume that Minsk may undertake some legal measures if the security situation demands this. Interview with a top official of the Collective Security Council, 31 August 2001.
22. *Nezavisimoye voennoye obozreniye*, No. 45, 1 December 2000.
23. *Monthly Summary of Military and Civilian Police Contribution to United Nations Operations*, UN Department of Public Information, June 2001, p. 5 <www.un.org>.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 11.
25. Law "On the Federal Budget for 2000", 31 December 1999.
26. *Nezavisimoye voennoye obozreniye*, No. 26, 20 July 2001.
27. *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, note 13.
28. Address of the Federation Council of the Russian Federation to the President of the Russian Federation in conjunction with the unsatisfactory funding for military units of the armed forces involved in international peacekeeping operations, No. 292-SF, 20 July 2001.
29. Law "On the Federal Budget for 2000", note 25. This amendment was introduced by Law 145-FZ of 25 December 2000.
30. *Nezavisimoye voennoye obozreniye*, note 22.
31. *Moscow Times*, 1 February 2001.
32. Order by the Ministry of Interior No. 914, 30 August 2000.
33. According to a former KFOR commander, Russian soldiers were well trained and disciplined, and it was a real pleasure to work with them. International conference on "Peace Support Operations – Lessons Learned and Future Perspectives", Center for International Studies, Swiss Federal Institute of Technology, Zurich, 8–9 February 2001.
34. Interview with senior Russian military experts, 26 July 2001.
35. Interview with an official of the Russian Foreign Ministry on terms of anonymity, 16 May 2001.

Conclusion: The paradox of Russian peacekeeping

John Mackinlay

Defining Russian peacekeeping

The concept of a new strategic era after the Cold War has barely been accepted, and no enduring conceptualization has so far emerged which puts into perspective the new patterns of violence and our globalized responses to them. Nevertheless, by the end of the 1990s many nations and some regional organizations had developed a culture of response that was increasingly comprehensive and multifaceted. In Ignatieff's interpretation of this condition, there are rich, safe nations which largely do not experience humanitarian breakdowns and conflict, and there are poor, violent nations which do.¹ The culture of response that was developing involved interventions by the rich and safe into the territories of the poor and violent. In the case of a major emergency, intervention might include the organization of humanitarian assistance, the deployment of an international military force, and the activities of the media which could bring a distant and often richly endowed public into virtual proximity with these events. So in the new strategic era, in greater numbers than ever before, it became the destiny of poor and violent nations to suffer tragedy, and the obligation of the rich and safe to respond. Russia exists at the cusp of this crude delineation. In the global order of nations it is not rich and safe, and has itself suffered violence within its borders. Nevertheless when violence has erupted in its own former Soviet space, Russia has acted in the role of a rich, safe nation.

Its response has been quintessentially Russian; a Russian answer to a Russian problem, narrowly unilateral in its underlying motives and distinct in its practical manifestation from any regional or international responses to other emergencies. The compulsion to intervene in the FSU has been urged on, not just by the temporal needs of security and economics, but also by deeper Russian passions, aroused by threats to ethnicity, culture, and national self-image. For example, the reasons to intervene in Abkhazia could be presented as narrowly economic and strategic, but there was also a strong, less publicly articulated compulsion to regain a foothold on the Black Sea coastline, which had for so long been part of Russia's cultural heritage. In Tajikistan and Moldova, in addition to the political and security rationale for intervention there were, before so many of them left, also the residual Russian expatriate communities whose fate could have such an emotive impact on the Russian electorate.

As well as the peculiarly Russian motives for intervention, there were also peculiarly Russian reasons why their style of intervention was, for practical reasons, more likely to succeed in stabilizing a conflict area. The landscape of the crisis bore the familiar structures and appearance of a long-term Russian presence. The local organizations and government would continue to reproduce the structures and nomenclature of the previous regime. In each conflict zone that was studied in this project, there were Russian garrisons close by whose long-term presence may have had significantly negative ramifications in the events leading up to the crisis but which, nevertheless, also offered an essential launching pad for the security and success of the intervening Russian peace force. The Russian language was widely comprehended, if not always popular, and the Russian cultural approach was understood, having been endured for over 70 years. The Russians were the devil that local people knew, whereas a massive, English-speaking, international intervention in the same scenario would have to operate on a different basis, produce different reactions, incite different antipathies, and represent an altogether different culture of response.

In strictly military terms the Russian peace interventions in the FSU therefore derived huge benefit from the residual influence of the Soviet military system. The intricate system of multiple posts, trilaterally organized and supported logistically, in the Moldovan and South Ossetian security zones could not have easily succeeded with a UN or Western-led multinational response. A small international force equipped with a multitude of communications systems, weapons, and vehicles from every arms manufacturer in the world would have spent much of its creative efforts overcoming logistical problems; whereas the sheer scale of the former Soviet army system and its logistics was overwhelming and, in practical terms, more pervasive than the NATO culture. It provided each

of these forces, and the local battalions and CIS units which were organized with them, with a common military *modus vivendi* for their day-to-day operations, a common communications system, and a single military command language which was widely spoken within the force. The former Soviet system could be extended to include the provision of air support and sophisticated repair facilities from local garrisons.

The exclusively Russian nature of the military force also extended to its adaptation of peacekeeping doctrine. Ostensibly there was an official doctrine which, in concept, followed the international tenets of peacekeeping. In Chapter 1 Sagramoso describes the development of such a peacekeeping doctrine in Moscow and the manner in which it borrowed some of its foundations from the universally accepted principles of traditional peacekeeping. This doctrine was part of the public face of Russian peacekeeping, and in Chapter 2 Kipp and Warren describe how the Russian Airborne Brigade, as part of an international peace force in Bosnia, adopted conventional international peacekeeping practices into their *modus operandi*. However, within the CIS it is possible to argue that the consent-based doctrines derived from traditional peacekeeping were less likely to be appropriate, and it was to be expected, therefore, that in those situations peace forces would require a more proactive concept. Consequently, in each case the Russian peacekeeping garrison tended to develop its own idiosyncratic approach to the unique circumstances around them. It was also to be expected that the informal codes of conduct they developed were derived from their common Soviet army culture, from the experiences of their own service in Afghanistan, and as part of a massive continental army system in Central Europe. The result in every case was an essentially Russian answer to the problem. The author's intuitive assessment in this respect was confirmed in Abkhazia, where Sharov and Mackinlay's interview with the Russian force commander at the Sukhumi HQ² indicated that his doctrine was not influenced by Moscow-drafted texts or international principles. He had, he said, assessed his local circumstances and responded appropriately. Similarly, in South Ossetia, Sharov and Mackinlay's interview with the Russian force commander at Tschinvali³ revealed he had never seen Colonel Demurenko's peacekeeping texts⁴ and, like General Berisovich Yurchenko in Sukhumi, he had responded to local circumstances without being consciously influenced by the golden rules of peacekeeping⁵ which were the start point of every international doctrine.

Although the case studies of South Ossetia, Abkhazia, Moldova, and Tajikistan were unique in their local circumstances, each shared a degree of common day-to-day experience. From these accounts there emerges an increasingly Russian way of peacekeeping peculiar to the contingencies in the FSU, which has a narrow application that could not be

translated easily to an international force scenario. A rather different approach is required by the Russian national contingents and individual observer teams, which are still part of Russia's growing contribution to the international forces worldwide that are described in Chapter 2. Although these "export models" largely follow international doctrine and norms of behaviour, an unreconstructed Soviet approach still prevails in some cases and has led to a clash of peace force cultures with other contingents. Kipp and Warren describe allegations of a lapse of personal conduct in a Russian peacekeeping contingent in Croatia and Bosnia. The significance of these incidents is that for the Russian battalions, transparency and accountability in an international force are much greater than in a domestic environment. In a sense the incidents were also symptomatic of the close proximity of two fundamentally different systems, the authoritarian practices of an outgoing Soviet regime on the one hand and the over-zealous accountability of a European citizenry on the other. The problem for the Russian forces is that in peacekeeping operations in their domestic FSU environment, what is corruption to the West is sometimes a necessary survival expedient that is endemic to the situation. In the author's experience in Abkhazia, unpaid and under-rated soldiers used their presence at roadblocks and checkpoints as an opportunity to levy a "tax" on the local people passing through their control. This was also true, according to the force commander himself, of the peacekeeping force in South Ossetia.⁶ Very often the purpose of this extortion was not self-enrichment, although there were some notable exceptions to this rule, but it was primarily driven by the need to find food and firewood for another day's garrison duty. In a resigned way, both the troops and the locals seemed to accept this situation. But in Bosnia, as part of an international force, the Russian contingent had to adapt itself to fit into acceptable international standards. The Russian way of peacekeeping in the FSU does not imply or condone the manner in which Russian forces deal with insurgency and civil disturbance on their own national territory. The 1995 and 1999 Russian operations in Chechnya demonstrated an approach which is not related to the ethics of peacekeeping. Operations in Chechnya have been characterized by the absolute use of force, the hammer-and-anvil tactics of guerrilla eradication, the proscription of free news coverage, and the exclusion of most international agencies.

Russian peacekeeping is therefore an essentially Russian response to the challenges of the new strategic era. It is not a transferable operational technique and has only been used to deal with emergencies arising in former Soviet space. Russian peacekeeping operations are regulated in each case by locally formulated procedures and are not based on recognized international doctrine. Even in its practical manifestation in the

FSU it did not seem to follow a generally accepted Russian doctrine. The uniformity, to the extent there is much uniformity, of Russian peacekeeping forces is derived more from the common experience, equipment, and procedures of the former Soviet army.

The characteristics of Russian peacekeeping

The decision to become involved in a potential crisis area within the FSU in most cases was circumstantially reinforced by the presence of well-defined Russian interests. These have been discussed in greater detail in the case study chapters (Chapters 3, 5, and 6). In Abkhazia the interests were boldly identifiable: the converging communication arteries, the oil-bearing railways, the access to Russian garrisons, the maintenance of strategic frontiers, and the cultural desire to keep a Black Sea foothold in Georgia. In South Ossetia the Russian national interest was less well defined. There was a need to secure the Caucasus in depth so that this mountain range did not become a genuine international frontier. There was also a zero-sum antagonism towards the seceding nationalist government of Georgia which was served by promoting the South Ossetian cause against them. In Moldova there were the Russian expatriate population, the 14th Army, and the Colbansa arsenals. Beyond these obvious reasons lay the less-defined potential of Moldova's prosperity and the possibility of a continuing client relationship with Russia. There was also Russia's manipulative use of the arsenals in Moldova to maintain a westward-facing strategic outpost beyond her international frontiers. In Tajikistan there was the fear of a revolutionary Islamic movement overwhelming what Russia regarded as a strategic frontier.

In each case, once national interest had spurred on the decision to intervene, the Russians used their presence in the crisis area manipulatively. Some maintain that the armed involvement phase at the beginning of each Russian peacekeeping operation was in its effect to create a favourable situation which could be controlled and manipulated, and later become enshrined in the form of some sort of official agreement.⁷ For example, in the case of Georgia, the pressures of this unequal relationship compelled Shevardnadze reluctantly to join the CIS in 1993. Similar pressured bargaining took place in Moldova and Tajikistan. According to this thesis the long-term strategy was not to recreate the Soviet Union but at least to create a sphere of influence in which a Russian regime was not only pre-eminent but almost acceptable.⁸ At the outset, from a strategic vantage point, the Russian intervention in each case satisfied narrow national interests and could not be interpreted as a response to a humanitarian crisis.

Against the backdrop of a strong national agenda, the initial Russian military presence in each theatre was usually to promote leverage or bargaining power against the host nation. This was most emphasized in the Georgian narrative. The initial Russian presence in South Ossetia was not overt, but nevertheless was achieved through third parties and by making available powerful weapon systems to an otherwise unarmed resistance movement. By contrast in Abkhazia the Russian presence was much more evident – units on the ground and in the air fought alongside the Abkhazian separatists. By acting in this manner in the initial phases of what would later become a peacekeeping operation, the Russians had deliberately tossed aside the international norms of peacekeeping, in particular the need to act impartially and with the consent of all parties to the conflict. Circumstantial evidence could be used to show that this disregard for international norms was Moscow's intention. According to Kosyrev,⁹ "the classical standards with which the UN approached peacekeeping operations" were no longer appropriate and the Russians had nothing to learn from the international organizations. However, it could also be shown that the supply of weapons to separatists and the use of Russian aircraft to assist their war aims against Georgian forces were in some cases spurred on by individual avarice at a local level and were not strategic policy decisions. In either case the impact on the ground was to stigmatize Russian troops as being inextricably part of the conflict.

Up to this stage the routines of Russian peacekeeping have little in common with international peacekeeping. The imperatives of national interest, military intervention, and the manipulation of the tactical situation to achieve what Lynch describes as an extortionate agreement¹⁰ with the host government all satisfy an intensely national agenda. In the stages so far the linkage between Russia's actions on the ground and a stated or implicit national interest is starkly evident. However, at this point the linkage is less easy to identify and the logic of national interest is confused. In each of the case studies the Russians press for, and in the end after several breakdowns achieve, a secure cease-fire, truce, or agreement. Except in the case of Tajikistan, this action brings to an end the active, manipulative phase of the conflict. There may have been violent incidents, but now they are limited in their scope and duration. These agreements also signal a new and more ambiguous phase in the Russian presence. Ostensibly their purpose has been to arrange a cessation of hostilities and guarantee, or legally underwrite, a lasting Russian presence to oversee these agreements. But at this point what has up to now been a clearly defined act of national interest becomes confused by the impositions and obligations of acting as an interpositional guarantor. In each case the Russian forces on the ground have moved, at least in practical terms, away from their original position of self-interest and

found themselves making compromises. These compromises were a necessary process to achieve a viable degree of credibility in the crisis zone, first of all as the guarantor of a peace process with the parties of the conflict and second with the international community whose assistance they now desired. But the real and probably unintended effect of the compromises was to diminish the capability of the Russian garrisons as instruments of a Russian national policy. As discussed in Chapter 3, some commentators have argued that it is enough for the Russians to be there. But this suggestion fails to understand that their growing military weakness, transparency, and the increasing liability of acting as the local forces of order have altered the nature of the Russian peacekeeping forces in Moldova and Georgia. It is not enough just to be there if the nature and competence of the force has altered so that it cannot exploit its presence.

The compromises which the Russian intervention forces were obliged to make varied in each case. In generic terms they can be categorized as compromises of transparency, accountability, and a diminished manoeuvre capability. The last category was less of a compromise than the result of the long-term degradation of garrison duty overseas and underfunding. The need for transparency was an absolute prerequisite if the Russians were to make a believable metamorphosis from national intervention force to impartial truce guarantors. Transparency in every case meant the introduction of a monitoring mission: UNOMIG to Abkhazia, the OSCE missions to South Ossetia and Moldova, and UNMOT to Tajikistan. Transparency was also increased by the presence of humanitarian agencies whose executives could penetrate with varying degrees of freedom into the conflict zone and the displaced communities around it. With freedom of movement came the media, in some cases bringing TV coverage of the peacekeeping arrangements, and fact-finding missions. Accountability was in principle achieved by the inclusion of other nations' armed forces into the security zones in each conflict area. The principle of a trilateral or multilateral presence at the interface between the opposed parties became another prerequisite of the metamorphosis from Russian intervention to Russian peacekeeping. In the case of Ossetia the trilaterally manned security zone gave the Georgians and the South Ossetians a foothold in the force and an opportunity to monitor each other's activities. Their presence in the security zone and the integration of their staff in the chain of command diminish the possibility for the Russian element to act unilaterally or in a clandestine manner. A similar trilateral structure was established in Moldova, where the drafters of the joint forces instruction used the Ossetian plan as a blueprint. In Abkhazia on the ground the reality of a CIS presence is fictional. The interpositional force is overwhelmingly Russian and so is the controlling staff. However, this autonomy is offset by a strong independent monitor-

ing presence provided by the United Nations. This has been sufficiently pervasive to see much of the Russian activity in the separation zone and beyond, although in Abkhazia itself the Russian forces are less closely observed. In Tajikistan a genuinely integrated CIS force mans the border territory, and there has been a UN observer mission based in Dushanbe.

A definition: in the context of this study, Russian peacekeeping therefore refers to peace force operations in the FSU. The forces are distinct from international peacekeeping and other Russian responses to domestic contingencies in a number of important ways.

- The deployments take place within the FSU where strong national interests have also been identified.
- Prior to taking on a peacekeeping role, Russian military units in the conflict zone may have intervened partially to assist one of the parties involved in the conflict.
- The start of the peacekeeping stage of the Russian involvement is marked by an agreement which describes a settlement process and provides for a long-term Russian presence in the conflict area.
- The Russian peacekeeping forces are deployed in a stabilizing role, which in military terms is tactically distinct from an intervention or manoeuvre posture.
- The peacekeeping process is monitored by a UN or OSCE observer mission.
- The peacekeeping forces share the restricted security zone in the conflict area with other national forces and international agencies.
- Doctrine does not consciously follow international peacekeeping norms, but in most cases its provisions lead to similar ideals.
- So far Russian peacekeeping forces have remained in the conflict zones where they have initially intervened.

Assessment of Russian peacekeeping forces

In 1982 President Carter deployed a US military contingent to the Sinai Peninsula as the structural backbone of an 11-nation monitoring force, the Multinational Force and Observers (MFO) in Sinai. The rationale and deployment of that force are not relevant to this analysis, nevertheless it is significant that, at the time of the Cold War, analysts saw this deployment as an American device to gain an important strategic foothold in the Red Sea. On the face of it this interpretation relied on emphasizing the permanent presence of a US airborne battalion, a helicopter support force, and full logistics with a HQ at the Red Sea port of Sharm el Sheik. However, what this analysis failed to see was that the US military assets were increasingly deployed and commanded in a fashion

that would have made it impossible to use them in any other function but as the parent structure of an observer mission. The half-truth assertion that “it was enough for them to be there” was palpably ridiculous in the harsh environment of the Sinai desert, where a unit within an integrated force could not act unilaterally because it needed the support of so many other elements of the force to survive. Moreover, it would have required a military and diplomatic *volte face* of epic dimensions for the US unit in the Sinai to have transformed itself into a useful national tool with a tactical manoeuvre capability. There are interesting similarities between the US contingent in Sinai and the Russian peacekeepers in the FSU, once the latter had transformed themselves to a peacekeeping role. Although in the case of the Russians their autonomy was greater and their assets less dispersed than the US contingent, for the Russian contingents to revert to a national military role would also require a major *volte face* with military and diplomatic consequences far beyond the conflict zone. Reversion to a national role is therefore a hard option to take for the Russians once they have committed themselves to changing to a peacekeeping force. This is particularly true of South Ossetia and Moldova. In Abkhazia it would be possible for the CISPKF based in Sukhumi to regroup for a different role but this could not be achieved swiftly, secretly, or without loud recriminations throughout the international system. In Tajikistan the Russian contingent was more autonomous and self-sufficient. A reversion to a strictly national role would have hardly altered its disposition. But a military task that went wildly beyond the forces’ present duties would have to reconcile itself with the presence of a genuinely constituted CIS force which is also in the same area and bound by the same treaty obligations.

It emerges from this assessment of the case studies that Russian peacekeeping operations in the FSU have well-defined characteristics which set them apart from all other forms of international peacekeeping. It cannot be argued with much conviction that there are similarities to the Nigerian-led ECOMOG forces in West Africa. In Liberia, which is the nearest example to a Russian peacekeeping model, ECOMOG began their operations as an intervention force against Charles Taylor’s NPFL faction, which was seen as a threat to Nigerian interests. After several attempts to secure a peace process, a workable peace settlement was agreed which involved the ECOMOG forces as the guarantors of the process. This obliged the Nigerians to alter their profile from interventionists to impartial peace guarantors. However, here the similarity ends. After the peace process had completed its initial stages and the elections had been held, the ECOMOG forces left; the Russian and CIS forces have, in every case, stayed on.

By now the question facing the international community must be: do

the Russians stay on because it allows them to continue to maintain their sphere of influence along the former strategic frontiers, or because a continuing stalemate of local interests and the dependency on the Russian garrison to hold the peace together have made it impossible for them to leave? The answer to this question depends very much on where it is being asked. In the example of the US role as part of the MFO in the Sinai, it would be possible for an analyst in Washington, looking at the map of the world with chauvinistic satisfaction, to interpret the American presence marked at Sharm el Sheik as a strategically significant base. But a closer inspection of the US battalion on the ground would show that the reality of the situation was that the battalion was irretrievably committed to the MFO in a way that would make it impossible for it to carry out any other mission. From Washington, if one wished to see it that way, the US battalion could be presented as a significant strategic presence, but in the Sinai it was just part of a peacekeeping mission.

In the same way, in Moscow it could seem to officials at the MoD and MFA that the Russian peacekeeping garrisons in Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Moldova fulfil a strategic plan. In principle it may *seem* that they maintain a military presence which could be activated to provide Russian with a military capability in an area of strategic importance. However, when the Moscow defence official's view is tested against reality, the transparency, dispersion, and accountability of the Russian forces would make it hard, if not impossible, to convert the Russian presence into an effective military instrument that could be used for national purposes. The MFA official might argue that the presence of Russian forces on the territory of a dependent state, at the interface of a potential conflict area, gives the Russians a continuing manipulative power over the dependant host state. This would have been true prior to entering into an effective agreement which now underwrites the presence of the Russian garrison. But when the Russians signed the peace agreements, in each case they traded in a considerable element of their scope for manipulating the situation. They could not make the change from interventionist to peace guarantor and still hold on to all their options for manipulation. They needed to have a new credibility to match their new interpositional role.

The paradox of Russian peacekeeping is the difference between the intent of the intervention and the reality of its outcome on the ground. So far, much attention has been focused on the intent without understanding the implications of the outcome – in particular the disarming effects on a military intervention when it changes from manipulator to peace guarantor. The intent to achieve a national objective by exerting pressure and assisting local communities against a host state could be judged as manipulative and deceitful behaviour. However, on the ground Russian forces involved in the peacekeeping agreements are in every case per-

forming a role that is essential to local security. Even the experienced observers from the United Nations and OSCE do not impugn the basic desire of the Russian forces in the conflict zone to contain the violence and impose a workable degree of law and order. The attitude of the intervention forces does not seem to match the self-serving nature of the intent. Morally the intent invites censure but the outcome does not, and as a consequence making judgements about Russian peacekeeping is hedged about with equivocation and uncertainties. It is better to be aware of the paradox than to rely on false certainty.

Notes

1. M. Ignatieff, *The Warrior's Honor*, London: Vintage, 1990, see the Introduction.
2. Interview with Major-General Berisovich Yurchenko. Commander of CISPKF Abkhazia, Sukhumi HQ, 8 December 1996.
3. Interview with Major-General Churaev, Commander of South Ossetian PKF, at his HQ in Tschinvali, 1 December 1999.
4. Colonel A. V. Demurenko, *Peace-keeping Operations of Russia in Former Yugoslavia*; this is a draft version of his peacekeeping text which became part of the Russian doctrine.
5. The golden rules of peacekeeping refer to the Hammarskjold/Pearson manifesto 1952, see Introduction, note 1.
6. Major-General Churaev, note 3. He candidly said that the presence of peacekeeping troops manning checkpoints in the separation zone was irritating local people because they were being mildly extorted each time they passed through a roadblock, which could make a journey to the market an expensive affair. He had therefore reduced the number of checkpoints on the roads. Churaev to his credit also backed up this order by improving the rationing system for his troops so that they had no reason to continue to forage except for their personal enrichment, which he punished.
7. D. Lynch, *Russian Peacekeeping Strategies in the CIS*, London: Royal Institute of International Affairs/Macmillan, 1999, pp. 26–28.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 28.
9. Andrei Kosyrev in *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, September 1993, as cited by D. Lynch, *Conflict in Abkhazia*, RIIA Discussion Paper No. 77, London: Royal Institute for International Affairs, 1998, p. 6.
10. Lynch, note 7.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Data on Russian peacekeeping casualties in Moldova

| Period of time | Killed | Wounded |
|--------------------------------|--------|---------|
| Up to 25 May 1995 ¹ | 18 | 25 |
| 1992–1999 ² | 24 | 25 |

¹ See Anthony Kellett, “Soviet and Russian peacekeeping 1948–1998: Historical overview and assessment”, *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 2, June 1999, p. 19.

² See V. A. Zolotarev (ed.), *Rossiya (SSSR) v lokal'nykh voynakh i voyennyykh konfliktakh vtoroy poloviny XX veka*, Moscow, 2000, p. 386.

Appendix 2 – Data on posts of the joint peacekeeping forces

- Forty-two posts were established in 1992.¹
- By mid-1999 the number of posts had been reduced to 17.²
- As a result of the 1998 Odessa agreement on demilitarization and confidence-building measures, the number of posts was further reduced to 12, details of which are given below.³

No. 1: Trilateral post located at Molovata Noua. One Russian officer plus three NCOs; two Moldovan NCOs; two DMR NCOs. Total strength eight plus one armoured personnel carrier.

No. 2: Russian post at Cocieri with one officer and three men.

No. 3: DMR post located north of Dubasari with one officer and four men.

No. 4: Trilateral post at Dubasari. One Russian officer plus three men; two Moldovan NCOs; two DMR NCOs. Total strength eight plus one armoured personnel carrier.

No. 5: Trilateral post south of Dubasari. Two Russian officers plus six men; four Moldovan NCOs; four DMR NCOs. Total strength 16 plus two armoured personnel carriers.

No. 6: Russian/DMR bilateral post at Dorotcaia. One DMR officer plus two men; two Russian NCOs. Total strength five men.

No. 7: Trilateral post at Vadul lui Voda. Two Russian officers plus six men; four Moldovan NCOs; four DMR NCOs. Total strength 16 plus two armoured personnel carriers.

No. 8: Russian/Moldovan bilateral post at Varnita. One Russian officer plus four men; three Moldovan NCOs. Total strength eight plus one armoured personnel carrier.

No. 9: Russian post in Bendery with one officer plus four men and one armoured personnel carrier.

No. 10: Russian/Moldovan bilateral post at Farladeni. One Russian officer plus four men; three Moldovan NCOs. Total strength eight plus one armoured personnel carrier.

No. 11: Russian/Moldovan bilateral post at Bendery. One Russian officer plus four men; three Moldovan NCOs. Total strength eight plus one armoured personnel carrier.

No. 12: Trilateral post at Gura Bacului. Two Russian officers plus six men; four Moldovan NCOs; four DMR NCOs. Total strength 16 plus two armoured personnel carriers.

Appendix 3 – The OSCE Mission to Moldova (extracts from OSCE Handbook)

The Mission to Moldova was established on 4 February 1993 and started to work in Chisinau on 25 April 1993. It opened a branch office in Tiraspol on 13 February 1995. Its authorised strength is eight staff members.

The mandate of the Mission is to facilitate the establishment of a comprehensive political framework for dialogue and negotiations and assist the parties to the conflict in pursuing negotiations on a lasting political settlement of the conflict, consolidating the independence and sovereignty of the Republic of Moldova, and reaching an understanding on a special status for the Transnistrian region. It gathers and provides information on the situation, including the military situation, in the region, investigates specific incidents and assesses their political implications. It has also been working to encourage the implementation of an agreement on the complete withdrawal of Russian troops from the country, and it monitors the activities of the Joint Tripartite peacekeeping force made up of Moldovan, Transnistrian and Russian units. On 20 July 1994 it reached an

agreement with the Joint Control Commission (JCC – the body overseeing the security zone established between Transnistria and Moldova) under which it was authorised to move freely within the security zone, so as to investigate specific incidents and to attend meetings of the Commission. The agreement was renewed in September 1997. On the basis of principles of co-operation with the JCC agreed upon in 1996 and endorsed periodically since then, the Mission has attempted to facilitate the peacekeeping operations supervised by the JCC. The Mission's contributions have included behind-the-scenes mediation when the work of the JCC became deadlocked, the development of new rules of procedure for JCC meetings, and consultations with the Joint Military Command and with peacekeeping units in the field.

...

One of the Mission's most important and challenging tasks is to provide advice and expertise on the definition of a special status of the Transnistrian region. It has elaborated proposals on a special status for Transnistria that have been considered by the parties concerned as a basis for the negotiating process. Although no final and comprehensive settlement has yet been reached, meetings between the President of Moldova and the leader of Transnistria resulted, on 5 July 1995, in a confidence-building agreement on the non-use of force and economic pressure. The agreement was signed by the two parties as well as by the Russian mediator and the head of the OSCE mission. The OSCE Secretariat is the depository of the agreement.

On 8 May 1997 the presidents of Moldova, Russia and Ukraine along with the Transnistrian leader and the OSCE Chairman-in-Office signed, in Moscow, a "Memorandum on the Basis for Normalisation of Relations between the Republic of Moldova and Transnistria", in which the two parties to the conflict stated that their aim was the consolidation and immediate definition of their relations, the definition of the status of Transnistria, and the division and delegation of competencies.

In 1998 the work of the Mission received praise from all sides, who expressed the hope that the OSCE would continue its active involvement. The Mission was represented at the Odessa high-level meeting on Moldova (19–20 March 1998) during which the parties negotiated a text on "Measures of Confidence and the Development of Contacts" and a "Protocol on Several Priority Steps to Activate the Political Settlement of the Transnistrian Problem". An agreement on Russian military property in Eastern Moldova was also accepted.

The Mission continues to assist the parties at all stages of their negotiations.

Notes

1. Anthony Kellett "Soviet and Russian peacekeeping 1948–1998: Historical overview and assessment", *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 2, June 1999, p. 19.
2. *Ibid.*; V. A. Zolotarev (ed.), *Rossiia (SSSR) v lokal'nykh voynakh i voyennykh konfliktakh vtoroy poloviny XX veka*, Moscow, 2000, p. 386.
3. Information provided by OSCE Mission to Moldova, February 2001.

Contributors

Dr Domitilla Sagramoso is a research fellow at the Centre for Defence Studies (CDS), King's College, London. At the CDS she is conducting research on the proliferation of small-arms and light weapons in the Caucasus, the Balkans, and the European Union (EU), as well as on Russian foreign and security policies, and Russia's relations with the EU. She obtained a PhD at the School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University College, London in 1999. Her thesis focused on Russia's economic and military policies towards the former Soviet states during the Yeltsin era. Her latest publication, *The Proliferation of Illegal Small Arms and Light Weapons in and around the European Union: Instability, Organised Crime, and Terrorist Groups* was published by Saferworld in June 2001 to coincide with the UN Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects.

Jacob W. Kipp is a senior analyst with the Foreign Military Studies Office (FMSO) of the US Army Training and Doctrine Command at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Dr Kipp graduated from Shippensburg State College in 1964 and received his PhD in Russian history from the Pennsylvania State University in 1970. He joined the History Department at Kansas State University in 1971 and taught there until 1985, when he joined the Soviet Army Studies Office (SASO) at Fort Leavenworth. SASO became FMSO in 1991. Dr Kipp also holds the rank of adjunct professor of history with the University of Kansas.

Tarn D. Warren is a major in the US Army serving on active duty. He has an MA in Russian and East European studies from the University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas, and is a graduate of the George C. Marshall European

Center for Security Studies, Garmisch, Germany. In 1998, Major Warren served a tour in Bosnia-Herzegovina as a liaison officer with the Russian Separate Airborne Brigade (RSAB) as part of the SFOR peacekeeping forces. While living, working, and training with the RSAB, he gained valuable insights of Russian peacekeeping methods and policies. He is currently stationed at Fort Drum, New York, as part of the 10th Mountain Division (LI) and is preparing to deploy to the Republic of Georgia as a UN military observer.

Evgenii Sharov is a senior consultant of the Department of International Law, National Institute for Strategic Studies, Kyiv, Ukraine. He was born in Ukraine in 1966 and is a Ukrainian citizen. He has worked as a lawyer and researcher in the Institute of World Economy and International Relations (IMEMO), Ukrainian Academy of Sciences, researching international security and nuclear disarmament issues. In 1993 he started to work for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine as second and later first secretary, dealing with issues of arms control and disarmament, conflicts and peacekeeping, crises management, and OSCE issues. In 1994 he was one of the first Ukrainian students to graduate from the College of Strategy and Defense Economies, George C. Marshall Center for Security Studies, Garmisch, Germany. Since 1996 he has been actively involved in issues related to the conflicts and peacekeeping in the CIS, particularly focusing on Transdniestrian, Abkhastian, and South Ossetian conflicts. In 1996 Mr Sharov started to work at the National Institute for Strategic Studies, Department of Military Policy. Since

1996 he has been actively involved in the UNU project on "Russian peacekeeping". Continuing to study the issues of peacekeeping and conflict management in the CIS at the institute, he made many field research visits to the conflict zones in Moldova and Georgia as well as to the UN and OSCE HQs and their field missions. In June 2000 Mr Sharov graduated with an MA in national security affairs from the Department of National Security Affairs, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, California. In July 2001 he graduated from Senior Course 98, NATO Defense College, Rome, Italy. He has taken part in numerous international conferences, training courses, and meetings related to peacekeeping and conflict management.

Timothy L. Thomas is an analyst at the Foreign Military Studies Office (FMSO) at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. He retired from the US Army as a lieutenant-colonel in the summer of 1993. Mr Thomas received a BSc from West Point and an MA from the University of Southern California. He was a US Army foreign area officer who specialized in Soviet/Russian studies. His military assignments included serving as the director of Soviet studies at the US Army Russian Institute (USARI) in Garmisch, Germany; as an inspector of Soviet tactical operations under the CSCE; and as a Brigade S-2 and company commander in the 82nd Airborne Division. Mr Thomas has done extensive research and publishing in the areas of peacekeeping, information, war, and political-military affairs. He is the assistant editor of the journal *European Security*; an adjunct professor at the US Army's

Eurasian Institute; and is a member of two Russian organizations, the Academy of International Information and the Academy of Natural Sciences.

Trevor Waters is a senior analyst at the Conflict Studies Research Centre, Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst, UK. He is the author of a wide variety of articles in several English-language journals, military publications, and books, and has written extensively on Moldova. His work has also been published in Bulgarian, Russian, Romanian, Slovak, and Ukrainian publications. He served for more than 20 years in the UK Volunteer Reserve forces.

Andres Smith Serrano is currently working for the UN Special Mission for Afghanistan (UNSMIA). He has studied at the University of Keele (1982), King's College, London (1985), and Leningrad Polytechnic (1988), and attended the Spanish Diplomatic School in 1992. Mr Serrano worked as an assistant at the London bureau of *El Pais* (1983–1986), he lectured at the Royal Britannia Naval College (1989–1991), and was defence analyst for *El Pais* from 1991 to 1993 before joining the Spanish Ministry of

Defence as an analyst for Eastern/Central Europe from 1993 to 1995. He also participated in the UN Mission of Observers to Tajikistan (UNMOT) in 1995–1997.

Dmitry V. Polikanov is a research associate of the PIR-Center for Policy Studies in Russia and senior research associate of the Institute for African Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences. He holds an honours university degree in international relations and a doctorate in political science. His primary areas of research are conflict management and resolution, international and regional security, and global problems. He is the author of several books and publications in Russian and in English.

John Mackinlay began his career in the British Army. In 1994 he was UK professor at the Marshall Center (US European Command, Garmisch) and in 1997–1998 was principal lecturer at the Joint Services Command and Staff Course. He has published extensively and lectured at NATO, staff colleges, universities, and in the United Nations. He is now a lecturer at the War Studies Department of King's College, London.

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