

MISREADING MOSCOW
TOWARD A NEW INTERPRETATION OF
RUSSIAN PEACEKEEPING IN THE EARLY 1990s

Master of Arts in Law and Diplomacy Thesis

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Introduction

Since the early 1990s, the topic of Russian peacekeeping has received a certain amount of academic attention, much of it negative. The analyses of Russia's peacekeeping come in two forms. First, in terms of ideology and regional politics, the Russian Federation has been accused of neo-imperialism and of using its peacekeeping forces to dominate the states of the so-called "near abroad."¹ Second, Russia has come under fire for the mechanics of its peacekeeping operations and the ways in which Russian peacekeeping breaks from the UN standard in terms of consent, impartiality and the use of force.²

Many of the criticisms that have been leveled against Russian peacekeeping techniques have a basis in fact and will be addressed in this paper, but an analysis of the primary documents and the debate which went on in the Russian Federation during the mid-1990s reveals a much more complex picture than simply that of a post-imperial actor bent on regional hegemony. The story of Russian peacekeeping is as much about the disarray and uncertainty of the immediate post-Soviet years and about institutional pressures within the Russian Federation as it is about Russian dominance in the post-Soviet space. Moreover, the Russian government demonstrated a degree of self-awareness regarding its peacekeeping measures, and worked to remedy those aspects which were found lacking.

In this paper I will place the Russian peacekeeping experience within general trends in UN peace support operations, evaluate the efficacy and shortcomings of Russian peacekeeping efforts and examine the factors which influenced Russian peacekeeping. This paper will not be a

¹ See M. Evangelista, 'Historical Legacies and the Politics of Intervention in the Former Soviet Union', in Michael Brown (ed.) *International Dimensions of Internal Conflict* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996).; Also, J. Bugajski, *Cold Peace : Russia's New Imperialism* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2004).; and T. McNeill, 'Humanitarian Intervention and Peacekeeping in the Former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe', *International Political Science Review*, 18 (1997), pp. 95-113.

² See M. R. C. Finch, 'The Strange Case of Russian Peacekeeping Operations in the Near Abroad 1992-1994', Foreign Military Studies Office (ed.) (1996). Also, S. Crow, 'The Theory and Practice of Peacekeeping in the Former USSR', *RFE/RL Research Report*, 1 (1992), pp. 31-36.

comprehensive look at Russian peacekeeping over the past 15 years. Instead, it will focus on the three peacekeeping missions that were established in 1992 and in early 1993. These have been chosen for their diversity (two were separatist conflicts, the third was an ideological civil war) and for the fact that they are the missions which draw the most flak for their perceived incompatibility with UN standards. Russia's peacekeeping efforts outside the CIS, and the missions established after 1993, have not been singled out for as much criticism and therefore do not require the same degree of examination.

It should also be stated that my purpose in writing this paper is not to exculpate the Russian peacekeeping efforts from all criticism. Rather, my purpose is merely to raise the possibility that commentators have failed to give adequate weight to the novelty of the peacekeeping endeavor in the Russian experience and to the chaotic situation in which the Russian Federation found itself in 1992-93.

Part I: Background

The Evolution of Peace Support: 1945 - Present

Although the actual words “peacekeeping” or “peace support operations” do not appear anywhere in the founding documents of the United Nations, the maintenance of international peace and security has always been one of the foremost concerns of that body and is reflected in the UN Charter. This document charges the Security Council with “primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security” and lays out in detail the specific tools which the Security Council can employ to discharge this duty.³ Chapters VI, VII, VIII and XII of the Charter list these tools, including the pacific settlement of disputes through mediation and negotiation (Article 33), blockade and interruption of trade (Article 41) and the enforcement action (Article 42).

Despite the legal basis laid out in the Charter, the United Nations rarely used coercive tools in defense of peace and security for the first 40 years of its existence. From its earliest days, however, the UN was involved in peace support in the form of non-coercive tools, mainly civilian and military observer missions. These missions were typically minimalist, operating only once the guns had been silenced and the principal parties had agreed to meet in hotels and resorts far away from the battle fields. The ‘observers’ in these missions tended to occupy lonely outposts and to be armed only with a notebook and possibly a telephone. Peacekeepers in this tradition did not so much physically ‘keep’ the peace as they observed ceasefires and troop withdrawals for parties that had reached a negotiated solution to their conflict.

Only in the late 1950s did UN peacekeeping become a slightly more active affair, with the first armed peacekeeping mission (UNEF I) in 1956 and the first ‘peace enforcement’

³United Nations, 'Charter of the United Nations', (1945).

mission (ONUC) carried out in the Congo from 1960-1964.⁴ It was during these early days of peacekeeping that Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld, together with General Assembly President Lester Pearson, laid out what they considered to be valuable guidelines for peacekeeping missions. These were: consent, non-use of force except in self defense, voluntary contributions of contingents from small, neutral countries to participate in the force, impartiality, and control of the peacekeeping operations by the Secretary General.⁵ Over time, consent, impartiality and non-use of force came to be seen as the hallmarks of traditional peacekeeping and later became the standard for measuring traditional peacekeeping against more aggressive forms of peace support.⁶

Following the initial enthusiasm for peacekeeping that marked the late 1950s and early 1960s, UN peacekeeping saw a lull for a period of 14 years. From 1974-1988 only two missions were established (UNDOF and UNIFIL), both in the Middle East and both with purely observatory duties. The United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) was established in 1978 and was unfortunately rather ineffective in its mandate, failing to deter an Israeli invasion in 1982 and suffering 256 fatalities to date.⁷ UNIFIL was somewhat unique for the fact that, unlike most peacekeeping operations set up at the time, it was established without the full

⁴ J. Boulden, *Peace Enforcement : The United Nations experience in Congo, Somalia, and Bosnia* (Westport: Praeger, 2001). Note: While ONUC is routinely cited as the first UN peace enforcement mission, there is some scholarly difference of opinion on this issue. See T. Findlay, *The Use of Force in UN Peace Operations* (Solna, Sweden: Oxford University Press, 2002).

⁵ W. Hansen, O. Ramsbothen and T. Woodhouse, 'Hawks and Doves: Peacekeeping and Conflict Management', in David Bloomfield, Martina Fischer and Beatrix Schmelzle (eds.) *Berghof Handbook for Conflict Transformation* (Berlin: Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management, 2004).

⁶ W. J. Durch, 'Keeping the Peace: Politics and Lessons of the 1990s', in William J. Durch (ed.) *UN Peacekeeping, American Policy and the Uncivil Wars of the 1990s* (1996), pp. 1-34.

⁷ On 19 April, 1979, Major Saad Haddad of the Lebanese Army ordered shelling of all UNIFIL areas. Eight peacekeepers were injured. On 18 April, 1996, the UN compound at Qana, Lebanon was struck by 13 howitzer shells. 100 civilians were killed and 4 peacekeepers were wounded.

consent of any of the parties concerned and by the fact that the area where the force was being established was virtually ungoverned.⁸

The nature of United Nations peacekeeping underwent a sea change during the years immediately following the end of the Cold War. From 1988-1994, the number of peacekeeping missions increased dramatically. The increase was twofold in origin; it was the result of both a new necessity for peacekeeping missions and the optimism which characterized international relations at the time. First, the late 1980s and early 1990s were characterized by upswing in so-called 'new wars' within the former USSR and in countries formerly subsidized by Soviet largesse.⁹ From Tajikistan and Yugoslavia to Sierra Leone and Mozambique, these new wars were characterized by violent intra-state conflict which often manifested along ethnic, religious or tribal lines. From 1989-1992, 82 armed conflicts were recorded in 60 locations worldwide.¹⁰ During this period, two conflict trends were evident, an increase in so-called 'minor armed conflicts' (those with less than 1,000 battlefield deaths) and a marked increase in conflicts occurring in the European theater.¹¹ These conflicts, particularly in the era of 24-hours news and the internet, created a public demand for governments and inter-governmental organizations to act.¹²

The increase in peacekeeping operations would not have been possible had it not been for the optimism which dominated this period. Both the United States and the United Nations saw this period as a new dawn for international cooperation, particularly in the afterglow of the US-

⁸ M. Ghali, 'United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon', in William J. Durch (ed.) *The Evolution of UN Peacekeeping* (New York: St. Martin's PRes, 1993), pp. 181-205.

⁹ M. Kaldor, *New and Old Wars, Organized Violence in a Global Era* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1999).

¹⁰ P. Wallensteen and K. Axell, 'Armed Conflict at the End of the Cold War, 1989-93', *Journal of Peace Research*, 30 (1993).

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid Durch, 'Keeping the Peace: Politics and Lessons of the 1990s', in ((1996)

led enforcement action against Iraq in 1991¹³ and the early successes brokering peace in Namibia and Central America.¹⁴ No longer would the UN be held captive to Cold War stalemates between the US and the USSR. At last, the United Nations would be able to fulfill its early promise – derailed by 30 years of great power wrangling. Boutros Boutros-Ghali’s seminal 1992 document, *An Agenda for Peace*, is emblematic of the optimism of the time. Boutros-Ghali writes of the Cold War as an “immense ideological barrier that for decades gave rise to distrust and hostility”¹⁵ and compares the fall of the USSR to the surge of decolonization which attended the establishment of the United Nations. *An Agenda for Peace* is not an entirely optimistic document, it speaks frankly of the challenges facing the world in the era of globalization and new wars, but the overall tenor is one of hope and cooperation.

Neither the optimism of *Agenda for Peace* nor the spirit of international cooperation so evident in the early 1990s could prepare the United Nations for the challenges of that era. One of the defining characteristics of the wars of the early 1990s was their level of violence and their impact on civilians. The intra-state and ethnic nature of these wars meant that civilians were not only being affected by conflict – they were being targeted.¹⁶ It was during this period that the phrase ‘ethnic cleansing’ entered the world’s vocabulary. At the same time, developments in communications technology and the advent of the internet meant that these horrors would no longer be contained behind state lines. Instead the images were broadcast to the world and the world began to demand action. In addition, the conflicts of the early 1990s refused to be contained to one state. Refugee flows and the nature of boundaries imposed during the colonial

¹³ Ibid Durch. (1996)

¹⁴ Boulden (2001)

¹⁵ United Nations, 'An Agenda for Peace: Preventative Diplomacy, Peacemaking and Peacekeeping', *A/47/277 - S/24111* (1992).

¹⁶ Ibid Kaldor (1999).

era meant that many of these conflicts threatened to spill over into neighboring countries and to destabilize regional security. It was as a reaction to these factors that the UN entered a new era of peacekeeping operations. International pressure, civilian casualties and a threat to international security meant that the UN could no longer hope that its peace makers and diplomats could persuade warring parties to come to a negotiated solution.

Only a few months after the publication of the *Agenda for Peace*, the secretary general published an article in *Foreign Affairs* whereby he clarified his position on how the international community could better deal with the threats of the 1990s. Here he wrote about the need for civilian involvement in peacekeeping missions and for quicker deployments once a situation has been deemed a threat to peace and security. A more revolutionary argument is made later in the paper, when he suggests that ‘peace enforcement’ units may be necessary for those situation where parties sign ceasefires but fail to respect them. In these cases, the secretary general recommends the deployment of peace enforcement units, which he argues might operate, “without the express consent of the two parties” and which might “use force to ensure respect for the ceasefire.”¹⁷ For the first time since ONUC, the UN would have to engage in ‘peace enforcement.’ That is, they would need to forcibly bring a halt to conflicts through the threat of force. This was a major shift for the United Nations, and one whose effects were soon seen in the UN missions to Somalia and Bosnia.

The other major shift in UN peace operations which was seen at the end of the Cold War was the rise in multi-dimensional peacekeeping operations. Boutros-Ghali’s *Agenda for Peace* introduced a new concept to the peace support lexicon – that of peace building, defined as “action to identify and support structures and solidify peace to avoid a relapse into conflict.”

¹⁷ B. Boutros-Ghali, 'Empowering the United Nations: Historic Opportunities to Strengthen World Body', *Foreign Affairs*, Winter 1992-93 (1992), p. 89.

Peace building activities include democratic elections, institutional reforms, disarmament, demilitarization and economic development. Although peace-making, peacekeeping and peace building were originally seen as sequential operations, the intra-state and messy nature of conflicts in the mid-1990s meant that peacekeepers were encouraged to begin peacebuilding efforts much earlier in the process.¹⁸ The 1995 *Supplement to an Agenda for Peace* touches on this fact in Paragraph 53, acknowledging that economic, social, humanitarian and human right activities “may initially have to be entrusted to, or at least coordinated by, a multifunctional peace-keeping operation” but should be handed over to relevant programmes and offices of the UN as soon as possible.¹⁹ Essentially, this shift toward peace building as part of peacekeeping meant that peacekeepers were responsible for significantly more complex responsibilities in the 1990s than ever before.

The Role of Regional Organizations in UN Peacekeeping

The legal basis for regional organizations to take action in the maintenance of international peace and security lies in Chapter VIII of the UN Charter. Article 52 gives regional organizations or agencies the right to deal with “such matters relating to the maintenance of international peace and security as are appropriate for regional action” and Article 53 discusses the phenomenon of enforcement action by regional organizations. Chapter VIII reasserts the primacy of the Security Council in the maintenance of peace and security by mandating that any actions undertaken under Article 53 be taken with the approval of the Security Council, but it is important to note that this stricture does not apply to collective defense organizations which undertake an operation in self-defense. The Charter leaves open the question of which

¹⁸ R. Dwan and S. Wiharta, 'Multilateral Peace Missions: Challenges of Peace-Building', in *SIPRI Yearbook 2005* (Stockholm: Almquist & Wiksell 2005), pp. 139-168.

¹⁹ United Nations, 'Supplement to an Agenda for Peace: Position Paper of the Secretary-General on the Occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the United Nations', *A/50/60 - S/1995/1* (1995).

organizations qualify as “regional organizations or agencies”, but in most cases the UN has recognized regional arrangements as Chapter VIII organizations when granting them observer status. However, as Christine Gray points out, the question of whether an organization is explicitly recognized as a Chapter VIII organization is somewhat moot, as several peacekeeping operations have been undertaken by ad hoc arrangements of states without legal challenge to their Chapter VIII status.²⁰ Further, the status of the organization is not the most important factor, it is the type of action which may or may not draw the attention of the Security Council. An act of collective self-defense does not require prior approval from the Security Council, but any coercive military action taken outside the strictures of self-defense would require approval. In the same way, consent-based peacekeeping does not require Security Council approval, as it falls under Chapter VI of the Charter, which provides for “resort to regional agencies or arrangements” as a first resort for situations which may prove a threat to peace and security.

There are several strong arguments for the involvement of regional organizations in peacekeeping efforts. Since the end of the Cold War, the UN has put a greater emphasis on democratization of UN activities and has moved away from the great power politics which dominated the Cold War era. Also, as peace operations have become not only more numerous but more complex, there is a need for broader and deeper participation on the part of organizations other than the UN Security Council. Finally, the use of regional organizations in peacekeeping efforts could help to alleviate some of the criticisms which have been leveled against UN peacekeeping efforts, such as a lack of familiarity with the conflict region and a poor understanding of the causes and possible remedies of a conflict.²¹ The premise is that a regional

²⁰ C. Gray, 'Regional Peacekeeping and Enforcement Action', in *International Law and the Use of Force* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 283-327.

²¹ A. Acharya, 'Regional Organizations and UN Peacekeeping', in Ramesh Thakur and Carlyle A. Thayer (eds.) *A crisis of expectations : UN peacekeeping in the 1990s* (Westview Press, 1995), pp. 207-222.

organization, with its specific linguistic, historical and cultural knowledge, might be better able to intervene in a helpful manner than an organization without those sensitivities.

While regional organizations have participated in peacekeeping efforts since the early days of peacekeeping (OAS in Cuba 1962, OAS in the Dominican Republic 1965, Arab League in Lebanon 1976-83), the real boom in so-called “sub-contracted” peacekeeping operations came in the mid-1990s. In the *Agenda for Peace*, the Secretary General addressed the issue of cooperation with regional organizations and arrangements, lamenting that the Cold War inhibited the use of these organizations for the purpose intended, and sounding an optimistic note on the prospects that regional organizations and the United Nations could work together to democratize the maintenance of peace and security. *Agenda for Peace* was published in 1992, at which point the UN had already seen a significant upswing in the number of resolutions that referred to regional organizations in their text.²² The 1990s saw several successful regional peacekeeping operations (ECOMOG in Liberia 1990-1997, EU in Macedonia 2003-present) carried out by regional organizations. The same period saw the fruition of the Secretary General’s prediction that the UN would embark on joint deployments with regional organizations. As will be discussed in more detail below, this is exactly what occurred with the Russian-led peacekeeping mission to Abkhazia and the UN Observer Mission to monitor the peacekeepers (UNOMIG).

Origins of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) as a Regional Organization

Given the important peacekeeping tasks that were being assigned to regional organizations in the mid-1990s, it is no surprise that the newly-formed Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) hustled to receive UN recognition as early as 1993. Before it could feasibly apply for a UN blessing, however, the organization needed to overcome some serious

²² Ibid.

birthing pains. The CIS was set up in December 1991; just four months after the attempted August coup brought down Gorbachev and solidified the demise of the USSR. The original CIS agreement was signed in Minsk by Russia, Belarus and Ukraine and pledged cooperation “in the sphere of foreign policy” and in “ensuring international peace and security, implementing effective measures to reduce arms and military expenditures.”²³ Some commentators have postulated that the Russian leadership saw the CIS as a first step toward creating a new federation led by the Russians rather than as a loose association of sovereign nations.²⁴ While such a federation never came to pass, discussion of creating a Russian-led supranational organization permeated Russian politics for years after the fall of the USSR.²⁵ An analysis conducted one year after the formation of the organization reported that the CIS was “still an amorphous body that had not yet adopted a charter.”²⁶ In the first 12 months, the organization lost one member and had held only eight meetings. Although the CIS was conceived as a foreign policy and defense organization, only six of the eleven member states signed the collective security pact at the Tashkent summit in May 1992 and although several CIS states signed an agreement to create a multi-national peacekeeping force, Russia was the only country to have committed troops to peacekeeping as of January 1993.²⁷

Despite the early struggles and inefficiency, the CIS as an organization began to gain traction in 1993 and 1994. Both Georgia and Azerbaijan signed on in 1993, and Moldova

²³ 'Agreement on the Establishment of the Commonwealth of Independent States', (1991). Signed on 8 December, 1991 in Minsk, Belarus.

²⁴M. Smith, 'Pax Russica: Russia's Monroe Doctrine', *Whitehall Paper Series 1993* (London: Royal United Services Institute for Defence Studies, 1993).

²⁵ As late as 1994, member of the Russian Presidential Council Andranik Migranyan continued to claim that the Transcaucasus (Azerbaijan, Georgia, Armenia) would be federated into the Russian Federation. See 'Migranyan: Near Abroad is Vital to Russia - II', *Nezavisima Gazeta*, January 18 1994.

²⁶ A. Sheehy, 'The CIS: A Shaky Edifice', *RFE/RL Research Report*, 2 (1993), pp. 37-40.

²⁷ Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Moldova, Armenia and Turkmenistan signed onto the Minsk Agreement at Alma Ata on December 21, 1991. Moldova was a partial member until 1994. Georgia did not sign at Alma Ata but joined in 1993, as did Azerbaijan.

converted from partial to full membership. It was during this period that Russia made a significant effort to obtain a UN blessing for the CIS. In October 1993, on behalf of the CIS nations, Kazakhstan asked the United Nations to recognize CIS defense forces in Tajikistan as UN peacekeeping forces.²⁸ At the December 1993 CIS summit meeting in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, members signed an agreement to request that the UN grant the CIS the status of an international organization. In February 1994 Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev wrote to the Secretary General requesting that the CIS be granted observer status at the UN General Assembly.²⁹ These requests came to partial fruition on March 24, 1994, when the CIS was granted observer status at the UN.³⁰

The news was not all good from the United Nations. In April 1994, the Secretary General arrived in Moscow and met with President Yeltsin, Foreign Minister Kozyrev and Defense Minister Pavel Grachev. At that meeting, Boutros-Ghali informed the Russians that the UN Security Council would likely not permit the CIS peacekeepers to take up the “blue helmets” of official UN peacekeeping forces, and stated that if the Council were to approve an official peacekeeping mission in the CIS, Russian troops could only account for 20% - 30% of the troops.³¹ This statement provoked strong sentiments from the Russian government, representatives of which had long argued that Russia was single-handedly taking both financial and practical responsibility for ensuring peace and security on the territory of the former USSR.³² Soon after the meeting with Boutros-Ghali, the Russian Ministry of Defense and the

²⁸ 'Initiative to Recognize CIS Defense Forces as UN Peacekeeping Forces in Tajikistan', *Izvestia*, October 7 1993. See UN Security Council Document S/26610

²⁹ S. Crow, 'Russia Promotes the CIS as an International Organization', *RFE/RL Research Report*, 3 (1994), pp. 33-38.

³⁰ United Nations General Assembly Resolution A/RES/48/237. 24 March, 1994

³¹ M. Karpov, 'Boutros-Ghali Thanked by All', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, April 5 1994.

³² A. Kozyrev, 'For all practical purposes, Russia has been alone in shouldering the burden of real peacekeeping in conflicts along its periphery', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, September 22 1993.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs released a joint statement at the United Nations stating that they viewed Russian peacekeeping in the CIS as completely within the bounds of the UN Charter.³³ In a newspaper interview, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov elaborated on that document, comparing the CIS peacekeeping missions to the ECOMOG intervention in Liberia.³⁴ The comparison with the ECOMOG mission was not completely apt, as Lavrov in all likelihood understood, as that mission was undertaken as a Chapter VIII mission, while the CIS peacekeeping missions were established under bilateral treaties with the countries in question. However, as addressed above, the formation of peacekeeping missions under bilateral agreement does not require Security Council's approval. Therefore, it seems that Russia's pursuit of the Security Council's blessing was rooted more in the desire for financial support and legitimacy than in international law.

³³ V. Abarinov, 'Russia Doesn't Need Authorization to be Peacekeeper in CIS', *Sevodnya*, April 6 1994. Note: Lavrov may have been confused, as ECOMOG never received UNSC approval of its mission in Liberia. However, ECOMOG did receive post hoc congratulations from the Council for its performance in Liberia. S/RES/1071 (1996)

³⁴ Ibid.

Part II: Case Studies in Russian/CIS Peacekeeping

Russian Peacekeeping 1973-1991

During the Soviet period, Russian forces participated on a limited basis in international peace support operations. In 1973, 36 Russian military officers became military observers in the UN Truce Supervision Organization in the Middle East, a peacekeeping mission which had been in operation since 1948. The deployment of Soviet troops was the result a cooperative agreement reached by the United States and the Soviet Union in response to the 1973 Arab-Israeli War.³⁵ At that time, it was determined that Soviet and American participation would be exactly equal, with 36 peacekeepers apiece.³⁶ Until 1991, this was the only peace support mission in which the USSR participated. As the USSR was crumbling, however, the Soviets sent a small military observer contingent to participate in the UN Iraq-Kuwait Observer Mission (UNIKOM), the UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO), and the UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC), where 200 Russian civilians and military personnel were deployed.³⁷

After the fall of the USSR, the Russian Federation assumed the Soviet Union's position on the United Nations Security Council and a new era of Russian peacekeeping was born. Unlike UN peacekeeping, which evolved gradually over time, Russian/CIS peacekeeping expanded very quickly. In December 1991, Russia had no peacekeeping missions within the former USSR. By September 1992, Russia had 950 men in South Ossetia, 900 men in the former Yugoslavia and 2,750 men in Transdnistria.³⁸ Further, by January 1993, Russia had added

³⁵ M. Yermolaev, 'Russia's International Peacekeeping and Conflict Management in the Post-Soviet Environment', *CISCMS Monograph 44: Boundaries of Peace Support Operations* (2000).

³⁶ Major William Claytor (USMC), 'United Nations Truce Supervision Organization: History and US Marine Involvement', (1990). available at www.globalsecurity.org.

³⁷ V. Skorsyrev, 'UN Operation in Cambodia Will Cost Russia \$190 Million', *Izvestia*, Nov. 10 1992.

³⁸ V. Livotkin, 'General Staff on Role of Peace Forces', *Izvestiya*, September 2 1992.

another 1,000 peacekeeping troops in Abkhazia and 5,500 “internal peacekeepers” to monitor the conflict between Ingushetia and North Ossetia in the North Caucasus.³⁹ This amazing spike in peacekeeping efforts has much to do with the chaotic state of many former Soviet states in the days immediately following the collapse of the old regime.

Within one year of the fall of the USSR, five serious wars had broken out on the territory of the former USSR. The roots of each of these conflicts lay in Soviet nationality and linguistic policies, and most of the conflicts had been brewing since the late 1980s.⁴⁰ In Tajikistan, South Ossetia, Abkhazia, Transdnistria and Nagorno-Karabakh, bloody internecine struggles threatened the stability of the region, and all of the conflicts except the last pitted Russophones against the governments of newly independent states. Below, I will account for three of the five conflicts which emerged in the first years after the fall of the USSR. These accounts are not meant to be fully comprehensive, but merely to set the stage for a more sophisticated accounting of the efficacy and extenuating circumstance surrounding the Russian peacekeeping strategy. However, because linguistic and ethnic intricacies of the conflicts wound up playing an important part in the Russian response, they are laid out in detail. These conflicts will be presented in the order of the Russian response, as it is difficult in some cases to determine when the conflicts really began.

³⁹ E. Teague, 'Russians Outside Russia and Russian Security Policy', in Leon and Kenneth M. Jensen Aron (ed.) *The Emergence of Russian Foreign Policy* (Washington: US Institute for Peace Press, 1994).

⁴⁰ There are two basic schools of thought regarding the unquestioned upswing in nationalism during the 1990s. The first, exemplified, by Philip Roeder, argues that ethnic nationalism emerged in the USSR in every decade since the death of Stalin. The other school of thought, and the one which gained the most traction in the mid-1990s, is that Yeltsin's *glasnost* policies had a democratizing effect that prompted political revolution in the form of nationalist identity politics. See P. Roeder, 'Soviet Federalism and Ethnic Mobilization', *World Politics*, 43 (1991).; G. Lapidus, 'From democratization to disintegration: the impact of perestroika on the nationalist question', in Gail Lapidus, Victor Zaslavsky and Philip Goldman (eds.) *From Union to Commonwealth: Nationalism and Separatism in Soviet Republics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992).; R. Laba "How Yeltsin's Exploitation of Ethnic Nationalism Brought Down an Empire." *Transitions* 2 (12) 1996.

South Ossetia (Georgia)

A small country of 5 million located at the nexus of Europe and Asia, Georgia had an unusually profound impact on Soviet history. Joseph Djugashvili (better known as Stalin) was born in Gori and Lavrenty Beria, who briefly succeeded Stalin and who has been credited with overseeing Stalin's Great Purge of the 1930s, hailed from the Mingrelia region of western Georgia. Considering the rarity of non-Russians ascending to the highest ranks of Soviet power, it is striking that another Georgian, Eduard Shevardnadze, became Soviet Minister of Foreign Affairs in 1985. Despite the unusually high number of Georgians in Soviet politics, Georgia's relationship with the USSR was troubled, and Georgian national mythology to this day emphasizes the brutality of the Red Army's invasion in 1921 and the subsequent crackdown on Georgian nationalism.⁴¹ It was due to this history of animosity as well as Georgia's strategic location on the Black Sea that the Soviet Army chose to base a large number of troops on Georgian soil. As of June 1 1992, Russia had approximately 20,000 ground troops located in Georgia.⁴² Bases were located in Sakhumi (Abkhazia), Batumi, Akhalkalaki and Vaziani, with a large headquarters located on acres of prime real estate in downtown Tbilisi.⁴³

During the days of *glasnost* and growing nationalism in Georgia, the country produced a new leader – Zviad Gamsakhurdia. Gamsakhurdia called upon the historical animosities felt by the Georgian people and rose quickly through the ranks of Georgian government. Gamsakhurdia's popularity hit record levels after the events of April 1989, when the Soviet

⁴¹ M. Salinas, 'Republic of Georgia: Historical Background', Forced Migration Online (ed.) (2005). Note: The Georgian government will soon be opening a museum of Soviet occupation on the outskirts of Tbilisi. The museum will chronicle Soviet repression of Georgia, with a focus on the purges of the 1920s and 30s.

⁴² E. Fuller, 'Paramilitary Forces Dominate Fighting in Transcaucasus', *RFE/RL Research Report*, 2 (1993), pp. 74-82.

⁴³ The headquarters in Tbilisi are to this day staffed by Russian troops, although in nowhere near the numbers of the Soviet period. Many Georgians consider their presence an affront to their own sovereignty and accuse the Russian soldiers of willfully disrespecting Georgia by lounging outside in their undershirts.

garrison headquartered in Tbilisi, acting on orders from Moscow, opened fire on a group of Georgian nationalists protesting on the steps of the Georgian parliament and killed 21 civilians.⁴⁴ In November 1990, Gamsakhurdia assumed the post of Chairman of the Supreme Soviet of the Georgian SSR and a year later became the first elected president of Georgia. Although Gamsakhurdia was deposed in a violent coup just months after being elected president, his strongly anti-Russian policies and intense Georgian nationalism had a powerful impact on the regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, both historically loyal to Moscow.⁴⁵

As an autonomous oblast during the Soviet period, South Ossetia had its own regional parliament and oblast governor, but was subject to all of the laws and regulations of the Georgian SSR.⁴⁶ In 1989, rising nationalism around the former USSR and concerns about a Georgian initiative to mandate Georgian language in schools led to the birth of a nationalist movement within South Ossetia. The initial goal of this movement was not independence from Georgia, but re-classification as an Autonomous Region, which would guarantee South Ossetian language and culture rights. Refusal by the Georgian SSR to contemplate this re-classification led the South Ossetian parliament to call for unification with North Ossetia in November 1989. The Georgian government's response was to bus thousands of Georgians into Tskhinvali for a rally. Clashes between Georgians and Ossetians at this event further radicalized both sides.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ J. Mackinlay and E. Sharov, 'Russian Peacekeeping Operations in Georgia', in John Mackinlay and Peter Cross (ed.) *Regional Peacekeepers: The Paradox of Russian Peacekeeping* (Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 2003), pp. 13-33.

⁴⁵ Gamsakhurdia was ousted in January 1992 by his own National Guard after supporting the December coup against Yeltsin. After three months of fighting in the streets of Tbilisi, Gamsakhurdia and his men fled to Chechnya. In 1994 he returned to Georgia and launched a civil war against president Eduard Shevardnadze before dying in mysterious circumstances later that year.

⁴⁶ This is in contrast to Georgia's other separatist region, Abkhazia, which was an autonomous republic during the Soviet period, allowing it significantly greater freedoms in the realm of governance.

⁴⁷ S. E. Cornell, 'Autonomy and Conflict: Ethnoterritoriality and Separatism in the South Caucasus - Cases in Georgia', *Peace and Conflict Research* (Uppsala, Sweden: Uppsala University, 2002), p. 248.

In September 1990, the South Ossetian parliament declared its full independence within the USSR, effectively declaring itself a constituent republic on par with Georgia or Russia. The Georgian SSR responded by canceling South Ossetia's autonomous status and splitting it into two regions, a purely declarative gesture that did nothing to change the situation on the ground. The Georgian government also declared a state of emergency in the region and sent troops in January 1991. Urban fighting destroyed Tskhinvali, but the understaffed and poorly trained Georgian troops were unable to secure a victory. Relying largely on an unorganized citizen's militia, the Georgian side reportedly committed numerous human rights violations in the breakaway region.⁴⁸

There were some attempts to mitigate the conflict during the Soviet period, including a decree from Yeltsin in January 1991 which mandated the removal of all troops except for those of the Soviet Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) and which invalidated both the Ossetian declaration of independence and the Georgian revocation of South Ossetia's autonomous status.⁴⁹ The first ceasefire in the conflict was reached in late January 1991, and a proto-peacekeeping force of Georgian and South Ossetian police was established under the supervision of Soviet MVD internal troops. That ceasefire was violated within days and the threat of widespread participation from North Ossetian "volunteers" prompted Yeltsin to meet with Gamsakhurdia in March 1991 and sign a protocol calling for the removal of Soviet troops from the territory of the "former South Ossetian Autonomous Province."⁵⁰ Neither the January nor the

⁴⁸ 'Bloodshed in the Caucasus: Violations of Humanitarian Law and Human Rights in the Georgia-South Ossetia Conflict', Helsinki Watch (ed.) (New York, NY: 1992).

⁴⁹ B. Yeltsin, 'Decree of the President of the USSR: On Certain Legislative Acts Adopted In December 1990 in the Georgian SSR', (Kremlin: 1991). Current Digest of Post-Soviet Press. Volume 3(1) 1991 p. 10

⁵⁰ The wording of this protocol caused an uproar in South Ossetia, as it was interpreted as a Russian endorsement of the Georgian decision to abolish the autonomous oblast. After returning to Moscow, Yeltsin sent a telegram to Gamsakhurdia expressing concern over the interpretation of the document. See O. Vasilyeva, 'Yeltsin's Visit to the Caucasus', *Kommersant*, March 23 1991.

March 1991 declarations were implemented in full, in part because neither the Russians nor the Georgians had complete control over the movements of their troops.⁵¹ Sporadic fighting continued through the year and the collapse of the USSR in December 1991 only led to an escalation of the violence due to the uncertain legal status of autonomous regions in the case of independence for their republics.⁵² Over the course of the fighting, over 1,000 civilians were killed and roughly 60,000 ethnic Ossetes were driven from their homes outside of South Ossetia, while roughly 10,000 ethnic Georgians fled the conflict zone.⁵³

Even once the USSR had collapsed, the Russian Federation had several incentives to intervene in the South Ossetian conflict. First, the Ossetes had declared a desire to join the Russian Federation in January 1992.⁵⁴ If they did so, the Ossetes of South Ossetia would join the Ossetes of North Ossetia-Alania, a loyal and constituent oblast of the Russian Federation which is about 53% ethnic Ossete.⁵⁵ As will be discussed in detail below, there was intense pressure on the Russian government to intervene on behalf of Russian-speaking and Russian-sympathizing groups on the territory of the former USSR. Second, South Ossetia lies at the north of Georgia, encompassing the Caucasus Mountains and the Georgian border with Chechnya. As the Russians were facing their own separatist issues in the Caucasus, they were understandably less than excited about the prospect of having a chaotic war occurring on their southern flank.

Moscow finally intervened in South Ossetia in a peacekeeping capacity after a serious escalation of the violence in May 1992 when 36 Ossetian civilians were killed in a Georgian attack. The attack caused a furor in Russia, and prompted certain Russian officials to agitate for

⁵¹ Ibid. Mackinlay and Sharov (2003)

⁵² The matter of legal uncertainty in such cases was a major issue in the Nagorno-Karabakh crisis.

⁵³ See International Crisis Group, 'Georgia-South Ossetia: Refugee Return the Path to Peace', (2005). International Displacement Monitoring Centre, 'Global IDP Database: Georgia', (2003).

⁵⁴ G. Ovcharenko, 'Tskhinval's Pain - So Far No One Wants to Share It', *Pravda*, January 6 1992.

⁵⁵ *The Territories of the Russian Federation* (London, UK: Europa Publications, 2003).

acceptance of South Ossetia into the Russian Federation, despite the fact that such a move would have been a violation of the CIS Charter as well as international law.⁵⁶ Fearing further escalation, and more overt intervention on the part of the Russians, Georgian President Eduard Shevardnadze agreed to meet with a North Ossetian counterpart in Kazbegi, Georgia. At that meeting, the two agreed to a ceasefire, to form a quadrennial group of military observers (with participation from Russia, Georgia, South Ossetia and North Ossetia) and to commit joint peacekeeping forces. Unfortunately, just 8 days after the agreement at Kazbegi was signed, there was one more escalation of violence. A Russian newspaper reported that on 18 June, “three combat helicopters with Russian Air Force identification marks launched an attack on units of the Georgian National Guard” near Tskhinvali.⁵⁷

Despite that setback, the agreement made at Kazbegi eventually led to the Sochi Agreement on Settlement of the Georgian-Ossetian Conflict, which was signed by Russian President Boris Yeltsin and newly-appointed Georgian leader Eduard Shevardnadze.⁵⁸ The Sochi Agreement declared an immediate ceasefire and established the Joint Control Commission (JCC), a political tool with representation from Russia, Georgia, North and South Ossetia.⁵⁹ The JCC was tasked with guaranteeing the ceasefire, supervising the withdrawal of forces,

⁵⁶ Yelistratov, 'The Russian Parliament May Consider the Question of Annexation of South Ossetia by Russia', *Izvestia*, June 15 1992.

⁵⁷ B. Urgashvili, 'Shevardnadze Calls on World Public Not to Allow Aggression Against Georgia', *Izvestiya*, June 20 1992.

⁵⁸ After Gamsakhurdia was deposed, Shevardnadze was called from Moscow to lead Georgia as part of a “ruling troika” made up of himself, Jaba Ioseliana (former head of the notorious paramilitary organization *Mkhedrioni*) and Tengiz Kitovani (head of the Georgian National Guard).

⁵⁹ The so-called 3+1 configuration of both the JPKF and the JCC has been roundly criticized by the Georgian side. Because the territory of North Ossetia-Alania is a constituent member of the Russian Federation, it is considered problematic that both Russia and North Ossetia sit on the council, effectively giving Russia two votes. In a recent interview, then-president Shevardnadze argued that his motivation was simply to stop the fighting, and that he had not been able to negotiate from a position of strength as his predecessor, Gamsakhurdia, had lost the war. See RFE/RL Report, 'Former Georgian Leader Sheds Light on 1992 Dagomys Agreement', March 3 2006.

disbanding the armed militias and ensuring peace and security in the conflict zone.⁶⁰ The zone of conflict was defined as the area 15 miles around Tskhinvali and a security barrier corridor 14 km long across the southern boundary of the former South Ossetia Autonomous Oblast.⁶¹ Because the zone of conflict contained both Ossete and Georgian villages, the agreements also demarcated which villages would come under the authority of Tskhinvali and which would be governed by Tbilisi.

The Sochi Agreement, together with its protocols signed a month later in Vladikavkaz, also established the Joint Peacekeeping Forces (JPKF), a trilateral force with Georgian, Russian and Ossetian units. The JPKF was given a far-reaching mandate, in keeping with the overall trend toward multi-lateral peacekeeping. The peacekeeping force, made up of 500 troops from each of the three contributing countries, was tasked with the restoration of peace and the support of law and order both within and outside the conflict zone.⁶² The Vladikavkaz documents grant the JPKF the right to use “decisive measures, including the use of force” against “uncontrolled armed groups from either side of the conflict.”⁶³ Although the Sochi process granted the JPKF the right to operate both within and outside the conflict zone, it only had the right to set up checkpoints inside the conflict zone, and has rarely acted outside the peacekeeping corridor.⁶⁴ Initially, the JPKF set up 36 posts and checkpoints in the “most explosive contact areas between Georgian and Ossetian villages.”⁶⁵ In addition to the JPKF, the Sochi process established an investigatory team to look into incidents and complaints by the local population. The Group of

⁶⁰ Protocol of the Meeting of Representatives of the Parties on the Implementation of the Agreement on Principles of Settlement of the Georgian-Ossetian Conflict. Signed on 24 June in Sochi. Available at www.rrc.ge

⁶¹ Protocol #3 of the Meeting of the JCC for the Georgian-Ossetian Conflict Settlement. Signed in Vladikavkaz on 12 June 1992.

⁶² Annex to Protocol #3 of the JCC Session Dated 12 July 1992. ‘Provision on Joint Peacekeeping Forces (JPKF) and Law and Order Keeping Forces (LOKF) in the Zone of Conflict’

⁶³ Ibid. English translation by author.

⁶⁴ International Crisis Group, 'Georgia: Avoiding War in South Ossetia', (2004).

⁶⁵ Ibid. Mackinlay (2003)

Military Observers (GMO) was made up of 72 personnel and played a large role in mitigating the conflict.⁶⁶ The treaty signed at Sochi held from May 1994 to June 2004, when newly-elected Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili authorized an incursion into the conflict zone by forces assigned to the Georgian Ministry of the Interior. After a month of clashes, the Georgian forces retreated and the situation was again at a stalemate. Since then, the situation in the conflict zone has been extremely tense, with occasional outbreaks of violence in the form of gun battles, kidnappings and mortar shellings.

Transdnistria (Moldova)

The history of the conflict in Transdnistria is irrevocably bound in the history of the Russian Empire and Soviet nationalities policy. The territory which is now known as Moldova was historically known as Bessarabia and was annexed from the Ottoman Empire by the Russian Empire in 1812, only to secede and unify with Romania in 1919. Although the Russians and later the Soviets never accepted Bessarabia's union with Romania, it was recognized by major powers including the United States and the United Kingdom. The 1939 Molotov-Ribbentrop pact, most famous for its brutal division of Poland, allowed Stalin to re-annex Bessarabia. In 1940 Stalin divided Bessarabia, ceding two of its regions to Ukraine while gifting a portion of Ukraine to Bessarabia. Since the 19th century, Ukraine had contained a small autonomous region which in Soviet times had come to be called the "Moldovan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic." It was this region, also called Transdnistria, which Stalin allocated to the newly formed Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic (MSSR). During the "Great Fatherland War," from 1941-1944, the whole of the Moldovan SSR was occupied by Romanian and German troops. The occupation was particularly brutal in Transdnistria, as it was the most Russified region of

⁶⁶ Ibid. Mackinlay (2003)

the Moldovan SSR and some scholars have speculated that the fierce suspicion which is felt by many in Transnistria toward Romania is rooted in the war-time occupation.⁶⁷

After liberation, Transnistria remained within the Moldovan SSR. While western Moldova remained primarily agricultural (and lagged behind the rest of the USSR in terms of development); Transnistria was heavily industrialized during the Soviet period. Although the Soviets pursued a policy of Russification toward all of Moldova, the effects were particularly felt in Transnistria, as many of the skilled laborers who arrived from the Russian Soviet Federative Social Republic (RSFSR) settled in the industrialized left bank.⁶⁸ By the 1989 census, Transnistria was only 40% ethnic Moldovan, and 53% Russian and Ukrainian. Moreover, the region was largely Russophone and identified heavily with the USSR.⁶⁹

In the late 1980s, the rising tide of nationalism which was creeping through the rest of the Union came to Moldova. Dissent first took the form of elite rebellion, but dissatisfaction soon spread to the masses over the issue of language policy. Throughout the USSR during the time of Gorbachev's reforms, language policy emerged as an issue of debate and dissent. From the earliest days of the Soviet Union, Russian had been considered the dominant language and had become increasingly important for participation in both politics and skilled labor in the post-war years.⁷⁰ By 1987, however, there were increased calls for local language initiatives in the constituent republics of the USSR, including in Moldova.⁷¹ The conflict heated up in November

⁶⁷S. Kaufman, 'Spiraling to Ethnic War: Elites, Masses and Moscow in Moldova's Civil War', *International Security*, 21 (1996), pp. 108-138.; T. Waters, 'Russian Peacekeeping in Moldova', in John Mackinlay and Peter Cross (ed.) *Regional Peacekeepers: The Paradox of Russian Peacekeeping* (Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 2003), pp. 132-155.

⁶⁸ W. Crowther, 'The Politics of Ethno-National Mobilization: National and Reform in Soviet Moldova', *The Russian Review*, 50 (1991), pp. 183-202.; Ibid. Waters (1991)

⁶⁹ Ibid. Kaufman (1996)

⁷⁰ Ibid. Crowther (1991)

⁷¹ M. Kirkwood, 'Glasnost, the Language Question and Soviet Nationality Policy', *Soviet Studies*, 43 (1991), pp. 61-81.

1988, when a student protest against the Moldovan Communist Party's refusal to shift to the Latin alphabet resulted in 60 arrests. Soon after, the Party changed its mind, issuing a resolution in January 1989 which decreed Moldovan to be the state language and which began the transition from Cyrillic to Latin script.⁷² The law affirming Moldovan's status as the official state language passed in September of 1989, officially declaring Moldovan the main language for government and business, and shifting the alphabet to Latin, a move that had severe consequences in that it rendered a significant portion of the population illiterate.⁷³

The response in Transdniestria and in Russian-staffed factories throughout Moldova was almost instantaneous. Just weeks after the law was passed, city councils in Transdniestria voted to defy it, and factories across Moldova went on strike. Only after the USSR Supreme Soviet agreed to set up a commission to look into the sociopolitical situation in Moldova did the strikers return to work.⁷⁴ Tensions between Moldova and Transdniestria continued to mount through 1989, particularly around the language issue and a new law requiring that the pre-Soviet Moldovan tricolor flag be flown instead of the Soviet hammer and sickle.⁷⁵ In January 1990 Tiraspol held a referendum on territorial autonomy that passed with 96% approval. In September 1990, representatives from the cities and districts of the left bank of the Dnieper, as well as from the right-bank city of Bendery, proclaimed the formation of the Dnestr Moldavian SSR independent of Moldova. That move was immediately declared invalid by the Moldovan Supreme Soviet, but Transdniestria continued to behave as an autonomous unit. The first violence came in November 1990, when groups of Dniestrians blockaded bridges and roads and bridges, prompting fights with Moldovan law enforcement. Soviet newspapers reported only 3-6

⁷² E. Kondratov, 'Hearing One Another', *Izvestia*, January 31 1989.

⁷³ Ibid. Kirkwood (1991)

⁷⁴ A. Paechnik, 'Decision to Return to Work', *Pravda*, Sept. 10 1989.

⁷⁵ E. Kondratov, 'Moldova's Unity Threatened', *Izvestia*, September 3 1990.

deaths in those clashes, but they set the stage for future violence.⁷⁶ The situation stabilized somewhat through the rest of 1990 with a proclamation by Gorbachev that annulled the Dniestrians claim to have the status of a constituent republic of the USSR. However, throughout 1990 and 1991, several cities within Transdniestria began to form paramilitary organizations, a situation which pushed the breakaway region into an impossible security dilemma.⁷⁷

The tipping point toward large-scale violence came after Moldova declared its independence from the USSR in August 1991 and began to press for unification with Romania. Residents of Transdniestria did not relish “the idea of joining Hungarians, Gypsies and other beleaguered groups as minority denizens of Greater Romania.”⁷⁸ Acting partially on that fear, Transdniestria voted for independence from Moldova in December. Curiously, the referendum called for Transdniestria to assume republic status within a reconstituted USSR, a possibility which by that point had become all but impossible given that the USSR was only weeks from formal dissolution. In the same election, Igor Smirnov was elected “president” of Moldova. Facing an independent Moldova with a heavy police presence in parts of Transdniestria, Smirnov launched a series of attacks on pro-Chisinau policemen in late 1991 and early 1992.⁷⁹ Some accounts have held that the Dniestr SSR forces at times acted jointly with uniformed Soviet soldiers during this period, seizing police and administrative buildings.⁸⁰ By April, the fighting had turned into positional warfare and fewer than 10 villages on the left bank remained under the control of Chisinau.⁸¹ The largest battle between Moldovan and Dniestrian forces came in June

⁷⁶ E. Kondratov, ‘Shots Rang Out in Moldova’, *Izvestia*, November 3 1990.

⁷⁷ S. Roper, 'Regionalism in Moldova: The Case of Transnistria and Gagauzia', in James Hughes and Gwendolyn Sasse (eds.) *Ethnicity and Territory in the Former Soviet Union* (London: Frank Cass, 2002).

⁷⁸ P. Kolsto, 'Nation-Building in the Former USSR', *Journal of Democracy*, 7 (1996), pp. 118-132.

⁷⁹ Ibid. Kaufman (1996)

⁸⁰ V. Socor, 'Moldovia Builds a New State', *RFE/RL Research Report*, 1 (1992).

⁸¹ ---, 'Moldova's "Dniestr" Ulcer', *RFE/RL Research Report*, 2 (1993).

1992, when Dniestrian forces routed the Moldovan forces and began moving into right bank villages.⁸² Initial reports from the battle at Bendery claimed that a thousand lives had been lost, but later reports claimed several hundred killed in action and over 1,000 injured.⁸³

As will be discussed below, there was intense pressure on the Russian government to act in protection of Russian-speakers in Transdnistria and to prevent a “Moldovan Karabakh.” Moscow responded to this pressure by opening negotiations with Ukraine, Moldova and Romania on how to deal with the situation in Transdnistria. A meeting on 6 April had already produced a ceasefire agreement which was quickly violated, and had prompted an illuminating discussion on which troops should intervene as peacekeepers in the conflict. Ukrainian and Moldovan representatives expressed some doubt as to whether troops from the Russian 14th Army could effectively participate in the conflict as peacekeepers, and the commander of the Russian forces himself commented that he would prefer that the 14th Army be deployed only if “given such powers by the heads of all the states making up the CIS.”⁸⁴ There is little doubt that the Russian 14th Army, which numbered about 14,000 troops at independence and which had been stationed in Transdnistria since 1956, participated heavily in the training and equipping of the Dniestrian forces.⁸⁵ In January 1992, several 14th Army commanders went so far as to take up military posts within the administration of the separatist republic.⁸⁶ As will be discussed below, however, there is some doubt as to the degree to which Moscow was actually able to exert a command and control function over the 14th Army during that period, despite Yeltsin’s having formally incorporating the (majority) left-bank units into the Russian Army in April

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Kondratov, E. ‘Ministers of Four Countries Agree to Cease-Fire in Dniestr Region by 3 PM April 7.’ *Izvestia*, April 9, 1992. Translated in CDPS Vol. XLIV, No. 14

⁸⁵ V. Socor, ‘Russian Forces in Moldova’, *RFE/RL Research Report*, 1 (1992), pp. 38-43.

⁸⁶ Ibid. Waters (2003)

1992. Throughout May and June, the Moldovan government sought arrangements which would exclude the 14th Army from any peacekeeping endeavor, including asking the CSCE to implement a peace-keeping operation using Moldovan, Ukrainian, Belarusian, Romanian, Bulgarian, and Russian forces.⁸⁷ After Belarus, Ukraine and Romania decided not to participate, and once Moscow began to intimate that it would consider officially intervening to protect Russophones, President Snegur was finally convinced to accept a bilateral agreement with Yeltsin to send a trilateral peacekeeping force made up of Dniestrian, Russian and Moldovan elements. While Snegur's acceptance of the Russian forces was voluntary, it was also somewhat coerced in that the Russian-backed Dniestr Army was threatening to move south along the river and join forces with the tumultuous Gagauz region, thus threatening Kishinev's control over most of the country. While this does call into doubt the validity of Moldova's consent to the mission, it is not altogether unheard-of for a country to accept a peacekeeping mission partially out of fear that continued fighting will challenge the very existence of their side.

The Yeltsin-Snegur Agreement was signed on 21 July. The agreement, together with an earlier bilateral agreement signed on 3 July, mandated a complete ceasefire, Russian recognition for Transdnistria within Moldova, and Transdnistria's right to self-determination should Moldova choose unification with Romania.⁸⁸ As with the Sochi Agreements, signed just a month earlier, the Yeltsin-Snegur Agreement established a tripartite Joint Control Commission responsible for the implementation of the peace agreement and a military observer group made up of roughly 30 officers to monitor the peacekeepers and settle disputes. Peacekeepers began arriving in the conflict zone on 29 July. The Russian contribution to the peacekeeping effort totaled 3,800 men, far outnumbering the 1,200 troops allotted to each of the other two troop-

⁸⁷ 'Moldova's Snegur Requests Peacekeeping Operation' ITAR-ITASS; 'Joint Units for Disengagement of Forces Decision' Budapest Radio; both translated in FBIS-SOV-92-133

⁸⁸ 'Text of Peace Agreement on Dniester' Translated in FBIS-SOV-92-142

contributing bodies.⁸⁹ However, in keeping with the official Russian position that peacekeeper should be volunteers, none of the original peacekeepers were drawn from the 14th Army. The peacekeeping forces set up a security zone that ran along the length of the Dniestr, 225 kilometers long and between 4 and 15 kilometers wide. Observation posts, checkpoints and two headquarters were established within the security zone and were often jointly manned by peacekeepers from the three contingents. By 4 August, the withdrawal of belligerent forces from the security zone was completed and some refugees had begun to return.⁹⁰ By a year later, over 11,000 bombs and mines had been deactivated and the peacekeepers had confiscated hundreds of weapons.⁹¹

The relative security brought about by the ceasefire and the presence of the peacekeeping troops allowed the administration of Transdniestria to become *de facto* independent, setting up its own political system and armed forces. In this way, the Transdniestrian experience mirrored that of South Ossetia and Abkhazia in that the peacekeeping efforts served to “freeze” the conflicts and to consolidate the independence of the breakaway regions. In 1993 and 1994, Russia began to unilaterally scale down the number of peacekeepers deployed in Transdniestria. Although the mission began with 3,800 men in July 1992, the numbers were reduced to 1,800 by March 1993 and to 630 men by the end of the year.⁹² The official Russian statements on the withdrawal emphasized the successful completion of the mission undertaken in 1992 as well as the extensive commitments which Russia was facing in other parts of the CIS. The announced withdrawal drew complaints from the Transdniestrian and Moldovan administrations, both of

⁸⁹ -S. L. Clark, 'Russia in a Peacekeeping Role', in Leon Aron and Kenneth M. Jensen (ed.) *The Emergence of Russian Foreign Policy* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1994), pp. 119-150.

⁹⁰ M. Gribincea, 'Rejecting a New Role for the Former 14th Russian Army', *Transition*, 2 (1996), pp. 38-40.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Y. Selivavov 'Russian Peacekeepers are Leaving Moldavia.' *Sevodnya*, December 1, 1994. Translated in CDPSP XLVI (48) p. 16; Also, N. Burbyga, 'Russia's Peacekeeping Forces in Action.' *Izvestia*, March 23, 1994.

whom expressed concerns about a renewal of violence.⁹³ Although there was not a resurgence of violence in the absence of the extra five battalions of Russian peacekeepers, the situation between Transdniestria and Moldova continued to stagnate. At the same time that the Russian peacekeepers were largely withdrawing from Moldova, the 14th Army was being downgraded as well. In April 1995, the 14th Army was re-named the Operational Group of Russian Forces in Moldova and in October of 1994 had committed to withdrawal within 3 years time. Beginning in December 1995, Moscow began to agitate for the transfer of peacekeeping activities to the auspices of the group formerly known as the 14th Army, citing the cost of bringing “trainloads of peacekeepers from Orenburg or the Volga region when they can be replaced by servicemen who are already in the operational area.”⁹⁴ Despite serious Moldovan objections, the JCC agreed on 11 June 1996 to place former units of the 14th Army in the security zone as peacekeepers.⁹⁵ Since that time, both the situation on the ground and the composition of peacekeepers has remained stable, though the legal status of Transdniestria remains undetermined. As is the case in South Ossetia, the conflict is considered “frozen,” although negotiations have been occurring regularly since the end of active fighting.

Tajikistan

The Russian peacekeeping effort in Tajikistan is distinguished from those undertaken in South Ossetia and Transdniestria in several important ways. First, the peacekeeping effort in Tajikistan had a more tangible success in that the territorial integrity of Tajikistan was preserved, the war ended and the peacekeepers withdrew. Second, Tajikistan was the only intervention

⁹³ See CDPSP, Volume XLVI, No. 48 pp. 15-17

⁹⁴ N. Prikhodko. ‘14th Army Will Become a Peacekeeping Force.’ *Nezavisimaya gazeta*. 2 December 1995. Translated in CDPSP Vol. XLVII No. 48

⁹⁵ M. Shafir, 'Part of Russian Troops in Moldova Reassigned', *RFE/RL Newslines*, June 12 1996. For Moldovan feelings on proposal, see: M. Shafir, 'Moldova, Ukraine Sign Cooperation Agreements', *RFE/RL Newslines*, December 28 1995.

which was undertaken under the auspices of the 1992 agreements on collective security and collective peacekeeping. The nature of the conflict in Tajikistan differed dramatically from those in Georgia and Moldova in that Tajikistan was a true civil war, not a separatist conflict. It is because Tajikistan is such a different conflict from the other two cases that it should yield particularly good insights into the nature of Russian peacekeeping. It can be assumed that those practices which hold true across the three cases can be considered most representative of Russian peacekeeping values, as they are the result of categorically different situations.

Tajikistan is land-locked, lying in one of the world's toughest neighborhoods to the north of Afghanistan and Pakistan and to the east of China. Ethnic Tajiks speak a language closely related to Farsi or Dari, and are distinguished by this fact from their Turkic-speaking neighbors within the former USSR. At its simplest, the Tajik civil war was fought by two sides: one made up primarily of anti-communist, pro-democracy and pro-Islamist supporters, the other made up of pro-communist forces that opposed fundamentalism and democratization. Of course, no conflict is quite that simple, and the Tajik conflict is more complex than most. Even more so than Georgia and Moldova, Tajikistan was a victim of the schizophrenic nationality policies of the early Soviet period.

From 1884-1924, the entire region of Central Asia was known as Turkistan and was marked by periodic rebellions by the local population against Russian imperialism. After the Soviets were able to bring the region under control in 1924, it was divided into separate republics as part of a Soviet policy to strengthen their influence and break up different ethnic groups within Turkistan.⁹⁶ Soviet Tajikistan was formed in 1929, cut away from the much larger Uzbekistan. The traditional centers of Persian learning and culture, Samarkand and Bukhara,

⁹⁶ N. Jawad and S. Tadjbakhsh, 'Tajikistan: A Forgotten Civil War', Minority Rights Group (ed.) (London: 1995).

were placed within Uzbekistan and the country was designed with an odd shape, two amorphous blobs connected by a thin slice of land, and sending a spiraling arm into the notoriously unmanageable Fergana Valley. Tajikistan was left with a mix of ethnic Tajiks, Uzbeks, Slavs and Pamiris (ethnic Tajiks who converted from Sunni Islam to the Ismaili faith). Due to its odd demographic makeup, its mountainous terrain (half the country lies above 3000 feet), and the tradition of identity politics in Central Asia, Soviet Tajikistan developed very well-defined regional identities. These regional groups “laid the foundation for exercising local power over extended families, with groups based on blood and geographical origins.”⁹⁷ Throughout the Soviet period, two regional factions, the Leninabadis and Kulyabis, dominated the Tajik political system through patronism and loyalty to Moscow.⁹⁸

With the uncertainty of perestroika and glasnost came a shake-up in the Tajik system and the two dominant regional groups were challenged by an alliance of liberal intellectuals and Islamic clerics from other regions. As Neumann and Solodovnik point out, however, the real struggle was not about ideology. “Rather, various ideological movements like communism, democracy and Islamism served as nests or power containers for identity-region politics.”⁹⁹ The first stages of the conflict came to a head in February 1990, when anti-government protests ended in 20 deaths. Despite this setback, the two sides were able to compromise throughout 1990 and 1991, and did manage some degree of stability.¹⁰⁰ Unfortunately, the August 1991 coup in Moscow and the attending demise of the USSR, combined with the regional aftershocks

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ I. Neumann and S. Solodovnik, 'Russian and CIS Peace Enforcement in Tajikistan', in Lena Jonson and Clive Archer (eds.) *Peacekeeping and the role of Russia in Eurasia* (Westview, 1996).

⁹⁹ Ibid. Note: Olivier Roy wrote a tremendously helpful (and brief) guide to differing interpretations of the origins of the Tajik war. See: O. Roy, 'Is the Conflict in Tajikistan a Model for Conflicts in Central Asia', in M Djalili (ed.) *Tajikistan: Trials of Independence* (St. Martin's, 1998), pp. 132-147.

¹⁰⁰ See: A. Karpov and A. Protsenko, 'Dushanbe: An Agreement has been Signed' *Izvestia*, September 30, 1991. Translated in CDPSP XLIII (39) p. 11; Also, I. Rotar and O. Panfilov, 'Sobchak-Velikhnov Mission is Successful.' *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, October 8, 1991. Translated in CDPSP XLIII (40) p. 1

of the collapse of the Najibullah government of Afghanistan in early 1992, rattled the fragile peace.¹⁰¹ Tajikistan had its first presidential elections in November 1991 and former Communist leader Rakhmon Nabiev was elected to power. Nabiev came from the politically strong region of Leninabad, and his election led to a few months of quiet in the capital. By March and April of 1992, however, the arrest of a prominent reform-minded politician led to protests in the streets of Dushanbe, with up to 100,000 anti-government protesters taking to the streets just blocks away from a group of roughly 50,000 of pro-government protesters.¹⁰² As several commentators have noted, the anti-government protesters were largely derived from two specific regional identity groups, the same groups which had seen their politicians ousted.¹⁰³ When a third group, this one made up of residents of Dushanbe who were tired of the disruptions of 2-month long protests, blockaded the city's television center at the end of April, Nabiev went to the Supreme Soviet to request emergency powers and used those powers to create a National Guard answerable only to himself.¹⁰⁴ Soon after, the Tajik National Security Committee (formerly the KGB) began handing out "large quantities of arms and ammunition" to pro-government demonstrators.¹⁰⁵ In the meantime, the Islamist factions of the Tajik opposition were receiving arms from Afghanistan. As many as 70 people were killed in the first week of May, but the creation of a coalition government stemmed the fighting briefly.

¹⁰¹ A. S. Serrano, 'CIS Peacekeeping in Tajikistan', in John Mackinlay and Peter Cross (ed.) *Regional Peacekeepers: The Paradox of Russian Peacekeeping* (Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 2003), pp. 156-182. Note: Like Tajikistan, Afghanistan had a serious North-South split and a tendency toward regionalism. The success of *mujahidin* in toppling the postcommunist regime in Afghanistan is widely considered to have inspired the Tajik opposition and to have sown the seeds of fear among the ruling elites in Tajikistan. See A. Mursaliyev 'After Kabul, Dushanbe?' *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, May 9, 1992. Translated in CDPSP XLIV (18) p. 10

¹⁰² O. Panfilov, 'USSR Flag Flies Over Ozodi Square' *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, April 29, 1992. Translated in CDPSP XLIV (17) p. 22

¹⁰³ B. Brown, 'Whither Tajikistan', *RFE/RL Research Report*, 1 (1992), pp. 1-6.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ K. Martin, 'Tajikistan: Civil War without End?', *RFE/RL Research Report*, 2 (1993) pp. 18-29

In June fighting resumed, this time in the southern regions of Kolub and Kurgan Teppe, where about 50 were killed in the first week.¹⁰⁶ The first hint of Russian involvement came in early September, when President Nabiev was forced to resign and his safety was ensured by CIS tanks and armored vehicles. There was never any adequate explanation given for the presence of those tanks or for who may have ordered their presence, but the presence of CIS troops at Nabiev's resignation did little to alter the situation.¹⁰⁷ By mid-September the situation in Tajikistan had reached all-out civil war, with regional identity groups from the south and east (the Garms, Karategins and Pamirs) fighting against groups from the north (Kulyab and Leninabad). Each side rapidly formed a 'defense force,' calling on the armaments and organization left over from the Soviet period, and on arms bought or stolen from Russian garrisons. By October, at least 300,000 people had been displaced and ethnic Russians and Uzbeks were rapidly fleeing the country.¹⁰⁸ Over the course of that first year of war, most experts believe that roughly 50,000 lives were lost and approximately 600,000 people – a tenth of the population – displaced.¹⁰⁹

Throughout 1992, Moscow became increasingly concerned about the situation on the ground in Tajikistan, particularly the threat of Tajik internal instability leading to the violation of the Tajik-Afghan border. In September the Russians had joined Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan in calling for Tajikistan to bring an end to the conflict, and, in what some commentators have called a "thinly veiled threat" to intervene, stated the right to take "all

¹⁰⁶ A. Karpov, 'There was Shooting in the Capital and Now There's Shooting in the Provinces' *Izvestia*, June 11, 1992. Translated in CDPSP XLIV (23) p. 24

¹⁰⁷ A. Karpov, 'The President of Tajikistan has Resigned' *Izvestia*, September 8, 1992. Translated in CDPSP XLIV (36) p. 9

¹⁰⁸ 'Tajikistan: The Turmoil Continues' Translated in CDPSP XLIV (37) pp. 9-11

¹⁰⁹ S. Akiner and C. Barnes, 'The Tajik Civil War: Causes and Dynamics', *Accord: Conciliation Resources*, (2001).

necessary measures” to ensure the inviolability of the border.¹¹⁰ The presence of Russian 201st Mechanized Rifle Division, a remnant of the Soviet Army, in Dushanbe gave the Russian Federation a presence on the ground, and Russian border guards had long been stationed on the 1,330 km-long Afghan-Tajik border. Although Moscow had downplayed the chances of deploying peacekeepers over the summer, the deteriorating situation on the ground prompted Russia to bolster the 201st by 1,500 men and to augment the border force by 1,000 in September 1992.¹¹¹ Throughout the conflict, the 201st was commanded by General Mukhriddin Ashurov, who has been credited with keeping the 201st relatively neutral during the conflict.¹¹² Within Dushanbe, the troops of the 201st were used to defend roads, government installations and key infrastructure such as dams. Justification for the use of Russian troops in this capacity was drawn from the Kyiv Agreement, signed in March 1992 and from a bilateral agreement signed by Moscow and Dushanbe in summer 1992. Additionally, the governments of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan released a statement in November 1992 supporting the use of the 101st to “protect civilians and vitally important facilities and assist in restoring law and order in Tajikistan.”¹¹³

In fall and winter 1992, there were attempts made to invoke the Tashkent Protocol and rally a CIS peacekeeping mission for Tajikistan. The plans were put on hold after a CIS meeting in Bishkek in October, and at the time CIS officials commented that they would only intervene directly if the legitimate government of Tajikistan appealed to the CIS heads. A day later, the

¹¹⁰ Ibid. Martin (1993) Also, ‘Nazarbaev, Akayev, Karimov and Yeltsin Write to the Leadership of Tajikistan’ *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* September 5, 1992. Translated in CDPSP XLIV (36) p. 8

¹¹¹ Ibid. Serrano (2003)

¹¹² Olivier Roy puts forth the interesting theory that Ashurov kept the 201st neutral because he was somewhat torn between his identity as a Garmi (who tended to fight on the side of the opposition) and his role as a Russian military officer.

¹¹³ I. Rotar ‘Tajikistan will have a State Council’ *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, November 6, 1992. Translated in CDPSP XLIV (45) p. 17

Kyrgyz parliament turned down a request from the leadership of Tajikistan for military assistance. The proposed Kyrgyz force would have deployed only after a cease-fire had been signed, but was defeated by an overwhelming majority of lawmakers.¹¹⁴ On October 21, Tajik Acting President Akbarsho Iskandrov approached Russia and requested the use of the 201st as a peacekeeping force. Soon after, the Tajiks appealed to the United Nations for peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance, but neither the Security Council nor the humanitarian agencies responded immediately.¹¹⁵ At the Alma-Ata conference on 5 November, the heads of three Central Asian states agreed in principle that the 201st MRB should form the basis of a collective peacekeeping effort.¹¹⁶ On 30 November, representatives from Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan met in Termez, Uzbekistan to hash out the details. At Termez, it was decided that each of the four countries would dedicate one battalion to the peacekeeping efforts. Only Kazakhstan managed to pass a bill by the end of the year authorizing troops; Kyrgyzstan and Russia waited until early 1993.

When Russia finally did authorize a peacekeeping force in January 1993, the focus of the peacekeeping mission had shifted. Not only was there no ceasefire (a requisite which laid out at the Termez conference), but Russia announced that its troops would be deployed along the Tajik-Afghan border as a measure to stop the infiltration of Afghan *mujahadin*.¹¹⁷ Unlike South Ossetia and Transdnistria, this peacekeeping effort had no element of enforcement, or even of traditional peacekeeping. The Russian forces would not separate the combatants; they would

¹¹⁴ Protests on the part of mothers and arguments that the Kyrgyz army was itself still “in diapers” apparently played a large role in the decision not to authorize a battalion of peacekeeping troops to deploy for Tajikistan, although the official rationale given by parliament focused on the internal nature of the conflict. See CDPSP XLIV (42) p. 20

¹¹⁵ On 22 January 1993, the UN agreed to provide “urgent humanitarian aid to Tajikistan” through a donor campaign and the provision of funds to build houses for 40,000 refugees. See ‘UN Ready to Provide Aid,’ January 22, 1993 in FBIS-SOV-93-015

¹¹⁶ Ibid Rotar (1992)

¹¹⁷ ‘CIS to Deploy Battalions Along Tajik-Afghan Border’ Radio Moscow. February 9, 1993. In FBIS-SOV-93-026 p. 4

simply secure the border so that the conflict would not spill over into neighboring states. Of course, this decision had its own effect on the course of the war. While the 201st continued to secure the capital, and CIS forces guarded the border, the government of Tajikistan was able to beat the opposition into a retreat. The fighting shifted from all-out civil war to a low-intensity conflict, with pockets of fighting in the regions. By mid-May, the Russians were openly debating whether to stay in Tajikistan, considering the relative calm on the ground, and the need for Russian peacekeepers in other parts of the CIS. All debate on the subject stopped in mid-July 1993, when 24 Slavic peacekeepers were killed while guarding the border.¹¹⁸ Russian border guards retaliated by attacking Afghan villages near the Tajik border with rockets and fixed-wing aircraft, killing a number of civilians.¹¹⁹ This engagement redoubled Russia's commitment to staying in Tajikistan, as well as its insistence on substantive participation from its Central Asian partners. In September 1993 the other Central Asian states finally committed fully to deploying a multi-national force to Tajikistan. In October of that year, both Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan deployed a battalion each to the border zone, and Uzbekistan sent a company to the eastern border. By January 1994, the collective peacekeeping force (CPF) consisted of roughly 10,000 troops, including the core of the 201st MRD.¹²⁰

The situation within Tajikistan gradually improved through the end of 1993 and the beginning of 1994 as the government was able to consolidate its control over larger areas of the country. Although skirmishes continued, peace negotiations began as early as spring 1994, as the United Nations became increasingly involved in brokering an end to the conflict in

¹¹⁸ Ibid Serrano (2003)

¹¹⁹ Ibid Jawad and Tadjbakhsh (1995); Ibid Serrano (2003); For a more in-depth look at the politics of Russia's response, see J. Sherr, 'Escalation of the Tajikistan Conflict', *Jane's Intelligence Review*, 5 (1993).

¹²⁰ D. Lynch, *Russian peacekeeping strategies in the CIS : the cases of Moldova, Georgia and Tajikistan* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000).

Tajikistan.¹²¹ Several early rounds of peace talks between the government and the opposition failed, but a ceasefire was signed in September 1994 in Tehran. The ceasefire was repeatedly violated, but cooperation between the UN, OSCE and Russia nurtured a peace process which stretched into 1997, when the General Agreement on the Establishment of Peace and National Accord in Tajikistan was signed in Moscow in June 1997.¹²² The 1997 agreement called for a power-sharing agreement between the government and the opposition which was implemented by 2000. Since the end of hostilities, Russia has decreased its military presence within Tajikistan. Russia completed the withdrawal of its peacekeepers and border guards in June 2005, although it continues to base the 201st RMD in Dushanbe.¹²³

¹²¹ In November 1993, the Secretary General named Ramiro Piriz-Ballon of Uruguay to be his personal envoy to Tajikistan. Piriz-Ballon became involved in political negotiations, while the OSCE handled institution-building. See Jawad and Tadjbakhsh (1995)

¹²² For the text of the agreement, see UN General Assembly document A/52/219

¹²³ On October 17 2004, Vladimir Putin inaugurated the newly-legal Russian military base in Tajikistan based on a 1999 deal with Tajik president Imomali Rakhmanov. Russian troop strength is set at 5,000 troops, the largest detachment in the former Soviet Union. See V. Socor, 'Russian Army Base in Tajikistan Legalized; Border Troops to Withdraw ', *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, 1 (2004).

Part III: Evaluation of Russian Peacekeeping – 2 Standards

There have been numerous valid criticisms lodged against Russian peacekeeping methods and practices. Even based on the three case studies detailed above, it is possible to pick out many instances where Russian and CIS practice conflicted with even the most basic standards of peacekeeping as established by Dag Hammarskjöld and Lester Pearson in the earliest days of peace support operations. In this section I will lay out two standards for peace support: First, a look at the standards which Russia set for itself within the CIS. This survey will be based on internal Russian documents as well as the peacekeeping protocols which were set up in 1992 and 1993, as the missions themselves were being established. Second, I will sketch the state of global peacekeeping circa 1992, when Russia began most of its missions. The need to look at the issue of evaluation from the perspective of 1992 is crucial, as many of the criticisms which Russia has endured for its peacekeeping practices have been written – from the perspective of the late 1990s and early 2000s, when the world had learned much from Somalia, Bosnia, Kosovo and other much-studied peacekeeping missions. I will end this section by looking at how Russian/CIS peacekeeping stands up to each of the aforementioned standards.

Russian/CIS Peacekeeping Standards

As of 1992, there were only a handful of documents which can be considered to contain guiding principles for Russian/CIS peacekeeping. The first was the Agreement on Groups of Forces and of Collective Peacekeeping Forces of the CIS Member States (known as the Kyiv Agreement), signed in March 1992. Article 1 of the Kyiv Agreement defines CIS peacekeeping forces as “created for the purpose of providing each other with assistance, on the basis of mutual agreement, in settling and preventing conflicts on the territory of any member” of the CIS.¹²⁴

¹²⁴ ‘TAR Releases Kyiv Agreement’ ITAR-TASS 23 March 1992. Translated in FBIS-SOV-92-057

With regard to consent, Article 2 states that peacekeeping activities will be carried out “only in the event of a request being made by all the conflicting sides and also on the condition that agreement is reached between them on a cessation of fire and of other hostile actions before the peacekeeping group is sent.” Article 3 provides for the voluntary nature of contributions to a peacekeeping force and Article 5 deals with neutrality, stating that the states parties “undertake to strictly observe the peacemaking, neutral, and impartial status of the peacekeeping group, and to prevent involvement of those serving in it in direct military clashes in the interests of any of the conflicting parties.” Interestingly, Article 6 of the Kyiv Agreement provides for the participation of CIS peacekeepers in peacekeeping missions outside the Commonwealth.¹²⁵ Essentially, the Kyiv Agreement calls for peacekeeping missions to take place only where there is a peace to keep and for peacekeepers to ensure neutrality and stay out of armed combat. The Kyiv Agreement was signed by 10 of the 11 CIS member states.

The next major step in defining and delimiting CIS peacekeeping was the Protocol on Temporary Rule of Setting up and Operation and Groups of Military Observers and Collective Peace-Keeping Forces in the Zones of Conflicts among States and in the CIS Member-States (known as the Tashkent Protocol), signed on 16 July 1992. The Tashkent Protocol is considered particularly important because it enumerates the exact responsibilities which CIS peacekeepers could be expected to carry out. Included among those duties are the following: monitoring implementation of the conditions of armistice, separation of conflicting parties, creation of humanitarian corridors, creation of conditions for negotiations and other peacemaking activities, restoration of rule of law, fact-finding regarding violations of the ceasefire, promotion of human rights, prevention of trafficking in arms, humanitarian assistance, and securing safe transport of

¹²⁵ Russia has participated in peacekeeping outside the CIS (Balkans 1992-present, Mozambique 1992-1994, Rwanda 1993-1996), but the CIS has not committed joint troops outside the borders of the former USSR.

humanitarian aid. Notably missing from this list are the activities of demilitarization and disarmament. The Protocol also lays out the circumstances under which force might be used, including protection of the peacekeepers themselves, repelling military attacks and protection of the civilian population.¹²⁶ The Tashkent Protocol was signed by seven of the eleven CIS member states, including Tajikistan, Moldova, Armenia, and Russia. At the Bishkek summit a few months later, the same seven signatories to the Tashkent Protocol agreed that the CIS Joint Armed Forces would have operational command for forces once they were committed to a peace support operation.¹²⁷ This particular structure has yet to be put into effect, as the forces in Tajikistan (the only true CIS peace support operation) operated under national command.

Beyond the documents which were being produced for the CIS, the other source for evaluation of Russian peacekeeping standards comes from the Russian Federation itself. Until early 1992, Russia did not have a military doctrine of its own. When the Soviet Union first dissolved, there was initially an assumption that the armed forces would remain unified and it wasn't until May 1992 that Russia gave up that dream and established its own Ministry of Defense. The impetus for the Russian decision came from a variety of sources. First, Ukraine and Armenia both stated a strong desire to set up their own national armies. In December 1991 Ukrainian president Leonid Kravchuk had nationalized the all-purpose Soviet forces within his country, and had soon after instituted a Ukraine-specific military oath. More dramatically, by spring 1992 conflicts had sprung up throughout the periphery of the former USSR, one of which involved troops from two CIS countries (Armenia and Azerbaijan). In the face of such obstacles, Russia decided to create its own military doctrine.¹²⁸ The 1992 draft military doctrine defined

¹²⁶ K. Korkelia, 'CIS Peacekeeping Operations in the Context of the International Legal Order', *Democratic Institutions Fellowship Program*, (1998).

¹²⁷ J. M. Greene, 'The Peacekeeping Doctrines of the CIS', *Jane's Intelligence Review*, 5 (1993), p. 156.

¹²⁸ P. Baev, 'Russian Military Thinking and the 'Near Abroad'', *Jane's Intelligence Review*, 6 (1994).

peacekeeping forces as “major temporary groupings intended to disengage opposing sides and promote the resolution of conflicts within the CIS by political means.”¹²⁹ This point of view is very much in keeping with the sentiments of the Kyiv Agreement, with a focus on facilitating political solutions to conflicts where a ceasefire had been signed. Reaction to the draft doctrine was mixed. As Dov Lynch points out, many Russian officers responded negatively to the document, arguing that the most serious threats to Russia’s national security lay within the former USSR. These officers argued for an assertive policy toward the Caucasus and Central Asia. Colonel-General Igor Rodinov argued at the time that, “Russia’s new military doctrine must devote vastly more attention to interpreting the conduct of local wars, low-intensity conflicts and military actions to restore stability within the country.”¹³⁰

As of summer 1992, when the peacekeeping missions in South Ossetia and Transdniestria were established, the above documents were the only guiding principles with which Russian peacekeepers had to work. By a year later, when the CIS peacekeeping effort in Tajikistan was coming together, the Russian government was on the cusp of adopting its first permanent military doctrine. The 1993 military doctrine guided Russian military affairs until 1999, and its peacekeeping strictures did not differ substantially from the May 1992 draft doctrine. The 1993 military doctrine stated that the Russian armed forces should be available to “carry out peacekeeping operations by decision of the UN Security Council or in accordance with international obligations of the Russian Federation.”¹³¹ Additionally, the 1993 document reiterated the main tasks which the peacekeepers could be assigned. Among those was separation of the armed groups, delivering humanitarian aid to the civilian population, and

¹²⁹ D. Sagramoso, 'Russian Peacekeeping Policies', in John Mackinlay and Peter Cross (ed.) *Regional Peacekeepers: The Paradox of Russian Peacekeeping* (Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 2003), pp. 13-33.

¹³⁰ Ibid Lynch (2000)

¹³¹ ‘Basic Provisions of the Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation’ Translated by Jane’s Intelligence Review, January 1, 1993.

effecting a blockade of the conflict region in order to ensure the fulfillment of sanctions approved by the international community. Finally, the document stated that the fulfillment of those and other tasks must be designed to create the conditions for political settlement to the armed conflict. Of course, as will be discussed below, the actions of the peacekeeping forces were not always in keeping with the strictures described above, but the existence of such regulations provides a starting place for evaluation of the Russian and CIS peace support efforts.

Practice and Standards in UN Peacekeeping circa 1992

The United Nations and the international community at large learned much about peace support during the 1990s. After Somalia, Bosnia, East Timor, Kosovo, Angola, Liberia and a whole host of other missions, the literature on peacekeeping proliferated significantly. The UN itself has released several high-level documents that deal with peacekeeping in the past 14 years, all of which draw on the lessons of the 1990s.¹³² In order to understand the context of Russian peacekeeping in 1992-93, however, it is necessary to leave behind all those lessons learned and focus on what was known at the time when Russia established its peacekeeping efforts in the CIS.

William Durch's comprehensive book on the evolution of UN peacekeeping, published in 1993, provide a critical anchor to examine the thinking around UN peacekeeping circa 1992. Durch draws a thick line between peacekeeping and peace enforcement, and argues that peacekeeping requires the full consent of the host government for the presence of UN forces.¹³³ He explains that the functions of peacekeeping missions can range from uncovering the facts of a

¹³² Supplement to the Agenda for Peace (1995), Comprehensive Report on Lessons Learned from the United Nations Operation in Somalia (1995) Multi-Disciplinary Peacekeeping: Lessons from Recent Experience (1999), Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations (2000), Report of the Secretary-General's High Level Panel on Threats Challenges and Change (2005)

¹³³ W. J. Durch, 'Introduction', in William J. Durch (ed.) *The Evolution of UN Peacekeeping* (New York: St. Martin's PRes, 1993), pp. 1-11.

conflict to transitional administration of countries. Sensibly, he contends that armed peacekeepers must use force to defuse, rather than escalate, violence. Durch uses the word peacekeeping very narrowly and describes it as “a confidence-building measure...a means for nations or factions who are tired of war, but wary of one another, to live in relative peace and eventual comity.”¹³⁴ Durch is wary of the involvement of UN peacekeepers in domestic (intra-state) conflicts, describing it as a “potential political minefield for the Organization.” He warns that changing field conditions might force the UN to coercively enforce a settlement, taking the mission into the realm of peace enforcement, which he describes as “an operation with completely different political, financial, and operational requirements which the UN is not yet prepared to meet.”¹³⁵

All in all, Durch’s approach speaks to a cautious and conservative view of peacekeeping. His points – that full consent should be the norm, that a ceasefire should be in place and that force should be used only as a last resort – are very similar to those laid out by the Russian Federation in the draft military doctrine and the CIS documents of 1992. However, neither the draft military doctrine nor Durch’s book reflected the realities of the conflicts faced by the international community in the 1990s.

Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali’s *Agenda for Peace*, released in June 1992, takes a more proactive approach to peacekeeping than Durch’s book. The *Agenda* also differentiates between peacekeeping and peace enforcement, but has a broader conception of the former, which is defined as “the deployment of a United Nations presence to the field, hitherto with the consent of all parties concerned, normally involving United Nations military and/or

¹³⁴ Ibid Durch (1993) p. 4

¹³⁵ Ibid Durch (1993) p. 11

police personnel and frequently civilians as well.”¹³⁶ The single modifier “hitherto,” with respect to consent signals a dramatic shift in how the UN looked at peacekeeping during this period. While Durch argued that full consent was necessary to keep peacekeeping from slipping into peace enforcement, Boutros-Ghali doesn’t seem to think so. The difference is a significant one, as it implies that a mission might viably be considered peacekeeping by 1992 standards even if full consent is not present.

With regard to the use of force, the *Agenda* suggests that enforcement action might have a larger place in a post-Cold War world than it had in the past, but stops short of calling for peacekeeping forces to be prepared to carry out peace enforcement, despite the fact that experience in Croatia had recently shown that the line between the two concepts was not particularly clear.¹³⁷ Importantly, the *Agenda* calls for a larger role for regional organizations in peacekeeping endeavors. This suggestion was both practical and idealistic. Increased participation from regional organizations would take some of the pressure off the already overstretched United Nations while helping to increase the level of participation by states in their own regions. While the *Agenda* does not specifically name the CIS, neither does it define exactly what type of regional organization might be tasked with carrying out peacekeeping activities.

When taken as a whole, the *Agenda* does an admirable job of identifying and predicting the salient issues which would haunt peacekeeping in the 1990s. It addresses intra-state conflict and the necessity for a blurred line between peacemaking and peacekeeping. It also looks into the dearth of funds and personnel and calls for greater participation in peacekeeping by UN member states. Most importantly, it calls for clear mandates and for impartiality by the

¹³⁶ Ibid United Nations (1992) paragraph 20

¹³⁷ R. Higgins, 'The New United Nations and the Former Yugoslavia', *International Affairs*, 69 (1993), pp. 465-483.

Organization and those carrying out its missions. Unfortunately, the issue of mandates is one that would come up again and again throughout the 1990s, as it became clear that peacekeeping and peace enforcement were often intertwined. In the end, the *Agenda* was not a dictate; it was a series of suggestions, and the success or failure of those suggestions lay in the hands of member states with their own agendas and their own constituencies. As a result, many of the suggestions were not implemented. As some have commented, “if support for Agenda had been sustained, some of the ensuing disasters, such as Somalia, Bosnia and Rwanda, may possibly have turned out differently.”¹³⁸ Despite this fact, the *Agenda* represents the state of the discourse on peacekeeping at the time that Russia was establishing its missions in South Ossetia, Transdnistria and Tajikistan. In short, the trend was toward a greater use of force, a slightly diminished necessity for consent, and clear mandates with adequate resources for their implementation.

Evaluation of Russian/CIS Peacekeeping

There are many ways in which Russian peacekeeping fell short of the standards described above. The basic tenets of the Kyiv Agreement and of the Russian draft military doctrine were broken regularly. Force was used extensively, Russian troops usually favored a particular side, and political solutions were rarely reached. Moreover, the mandates of the forces were often totally unclear, or were disregarded soon after being signed. Below is a short accounting of what went wrong and what went right.

The most valid criticism of Russian peacekeeping regards the partiality of Russian forces that were stationed in the conflict zones during the time of active hostilities. The most egregious examples of partiality on the part of the Russian troops are related to the conflict in

¹³⁸ United Nations Association of the United Kingdom, 'An Agenda for Peace Ten Years On', Global Policy Forum (ed.) (2002).

Transdnistria. It is common knowledge that Russian forces from the 14th Army armed, equipped and at times even fought alongside separatist elements during the active phase of the conflict. More egregiously, commanders of the 14th Army accepted cabinet-level posts within the administration of the breakaway republic of Transdnistria, and were allowed to briefly keep both those posts and their command within the Russian Army. Lieutenant-General Gennadii Yakovlev commanded the 14th Army until accepting the post of chief of defense for Transdnistria and the commander of the Tiraspol garrison became commandant of the Transdnistrian police and internal security.¹³⁹ Even once the active fighting was over, the conduct of Russian peacekeepers in Transdnistria was called into question. General Aleksandr Lebed, the outspoken and popular Afghan war hero who was tapped to lead the 14th Army in June 1992, repeatedly referred to the government of Moldova as “fascist” and predicted the end of Moldova’s independence.¹⁴⁰ In September 1993, Lebed was elected to the Dneistrian parliament. Lebed was never censured for his remarks or his actions, but did eventually tone down his rhetoric, and in February 1994, he denounced the Dniester regime as “criminal” and “a bunch of adventurists come to power by exploiting people’s natural desire for freedom.”¹⁴¹ Finally, according to some commentators, a Russian policy of turning a blind eye to infringements of the demilitarized zone by the Dneistrian side allowed the introduction of three

¹³⁹ Ibid Socor (August 1992)

¹⁴⁰ V. Socor, 'Russia's Army in Moldova: There to Stay?' *RFE/RL Research Report*, 2 (1993), pp. 42-49. Note: In an interesting twist, Lebed was an officer with the 106th Guards in Tbilisi in 1989 and participated in the violent crackdown on independence protesters which launched the democratization movement in Georgia. See note 44

¹⁴¹ M. Galeotti, 'General Lebed - The Voice of Russia's Soldiers', *Jane's Intelligence Review*, 7 (1995). Note: Lebed resigned his commission in 1995 and ran for president in 1996. He won 15% of the primary vote, but withdrew in favor of Yeltsin. Widely considered a viable candidate to challenge Vladimir Putin in 2004, Lebed was killed in a helicopter accident in 2002.

brigades, a border-guard detachment and several Cossack detachments of forces loyal to the Transnistrian side, a total of more than 3,500 people.¹⁴²

Russian forces were also accused of equipping both the separatist elements in South Ossetia and the pro-communist forces in Tajikistan. The situation in Georgia is relatively straight-forward – there is an excellent chance that Russian forces acting either autonomously or with tacit approval from Moscow equipped both Abkhazian and South Ossetian separatist forces. This accusation has been made by both Georgian and international observers and had not been seriously refuted by the Russian Federation.¹⁴³ The Tajik case is a little less clear cut. Although there is little dispute that Russian weapons and equipment fell into the hands of pro-communist Tajiks, the method of transfer is debated. Opposition forces apparently accused Russia and the CIS of supplying the pro-communist fighters with weapons during the conflict. Knowledgeable observers point out, however, that the claim is only partially true. Some commanders did sell their weapons to pro-communist forces, but others were simply surrounded and forced to give up their equipment.¹⁴⁴ Given the state of the Russian military at the time, it is difficult to know whether the Russian forces gave up their weapons out of sympathy, greed or fear. Either way, the case of the 201st MRD in Tajikistan is clearly the only case where the Russian forces maintained a semblance of neutrality in a conflict zone.

Beyond the activities of individual soldiers and groups thereof, there are legitimate points to be made regarding the conduct and tactics of Russian peacekeeping. Although both the Kyiv Agreement and the 1992 draft military doctrine stressed the importance of peacekeeping as a measure for the promotion of a political solution, the Russian peacekeeping efforts which began

¹⁴² Ibid Gribincea (1996)

¹⁴³ E. Fuller, 'Russia's Diplomatic Offensive in the Transcaucasus', *RFE/RL Research Report*, 2 (1993), pp. 30-34. Ibid Clark (2003); Interview with David Akhobadze, Deputy Minister for Conflict Resolution, 28 June 2005. Tbilisi, Georgia

¹⁴⁴ Ibid Martin (1993)

in 1992 looked more like peace enforcement than traditional peacekeeping. Even before the United Nations had begun its own move toward more robust peacekeeping, the Russians were intervening in conflicts which where full-blown fighting was still taking place, and were imposing a peace on warring parties. To an extent, this fact had to do with the presence of Russian military forces in and near the conflict zones, remnants of Soviet forces left over in the months following the collapse of the USSR. Moreover, the willingness of the Russian military to intervene in conflicts before a ceasefire had been signed probably reflected Russian concerns regarding the prospect for spillover into other parts of the former USSR. Because the CIS had no internal borders at the time, spillover was a real concern, as was the threat that one of the conflicting countries would lose control of its borders. It is worth noting that three of the conflicts of the early 1990s were occurring directly on Russia's border. Both South Ossetia and Abkhazia border the Russian Federation, and the Tajik civil war raged in the northern part of the country for years.

A more damning argument regarding Russian peacekeeping tactics is the accusation that the Russians allowed conflicts to go on longer than necessary in order to allow one side to gain a tactical advantage.¹⁴⁵ This accusation holds some truth, particularly in the case of Transdniestria. Russia had been actively involved in the Transdniestrian conflict from the early stages, and had been involved in discussions regarding the commitment of peacekeepers since March 1992. In early June, however, Moldovan President Mircea Snegur commented that he had sent Yeltsin three "urgent telegrams" and stated that he was perplexed by the Russian president's long silence.¹⁴⁶ It may not be a coincidence that Yeltsin was silent through the early days of June

¹⁴⁵ Ibid Sagramoso (2003)

¹⁴⁶ A. Tago 'Snegur Has Now Sent Three Urgent Telegrams to Yeltsin' *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, June 3, 1992. Translated in CDPSP XLIV (22) p. 20

1992, as it was during this period that the Dniestrian forces were making their most dramatic gains, consolidating the entire left bank of the river and taking control of the bridges which connected the separatist republic to the rest of Moldova. Once that territory was secure, Russia moved quickly to pressure the Moldovan president to accept a Russian peacekeeping force. It is of course impossible to know the inner workings of Yeltsin's mind, nor the discussions which occurred during that period, but the timing could lead to some suspicion regarding Russian timing.

In a conflict which was not discussed above, Russian timing was again seen as rather suspect. The Abkhaz conflict was in many ways very similar to that of South Ossetia. An ethnic group which had a great degree of autonomy within Georgia during the Soviet period, the Abkhaz became concerned about growing nationalism among ethnic Georgians after fall of the USSR and declared independence from Georgia in early 1992. After falling to Georgian forces in July of that year, the Abkhaz aligned themselves with a North Caucasian pro-Russian group which included a young Shamil Basayev.¹⁴⁷ With assistance from elements of the Russian military as well as the North Caucasians, the Abkhaz were able to push the front line closer to the capital of Sukhumi before the Russians brokered a ceasefire in July 1993.¹⁴⁸ Under the terms of the ceasefire, Georgia withdrew a significant portion of its troops from the battlefield. It was at this point that the Abkhaz, again fortified with Russian equipment, attacked and pushed the rest of the way to the Inguri River, the boundary of the area traditionally considered Abkhazian. To this day, the boundary remains at the Inguri River and the area has become a *de facto* Russian

¹⁴⁷ Basayev would later parlay his military experience in the Abkhaz conflict into a leadership post within the Chechen independence movement. Basayev became a hero in the doomed 1994 battle for Grozny, and was later named Commander of the Chechen Armed Forces. In 1998 he briefly became Prime Minister of Chechnya, and later led the pan-Islamist forces against the Russian Federation in the second Chechen war.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid Macinlay and Sharov (2003)

territory, a situation which is rather convenient for the Russians given the extremely advantageous geo-strategic position of Abkhazia.

The final issue which has been raised regarding Russian peacekeeping is that of consent. The CIS protocols on peacekeeping dictate that all parties to the conflict must consent to the presence of a CIS peacekeeping force. This standard was not respected when choosing to deploy troops to Tajikistan, but in the other two case studies noted above, there was consent by the conflicting parties to allow Russian peacekeepers. Of course, in each of these cases, the hosting states (Georgia and Moldova) had few options for peacekeeping. Having appealed to the UN Security Council and to the CSCE and been rebuffed, the Russians were the next best option for Snegur and Shevardnadze. Interestingly, there was one case in which consent was denied to Russian peacekeepers. In November 1993 Russia had a plan to deploy peacekeepers to Nagorno-Karabakh, the breakaway region from Azerbaijan which was being supported by Armenia. The plan envisioned Russian forces taking on the tasks of traditional peacekeeping, acting as a separating force between ethnic Armenians in Karabakh and their Azeri neighbors, a plan which would have allowed the Armenian military to withdraw.¹⁴⁹ However, in January 1994 the Azeris rejected the Russian peacekeeping proposal, arguing that no agreement could be reached until Armenia withdrew from the territory which it was occupying in Azerbaijan.¹⁵⁰ Based on the Azeri rejection, Moscow did not commit troops to Karabakh, despite the strong desire within Russia to support Armenia by doing so.

One factor which has not been broadly discussed in the dialogue on Russian peacekeeping is the degree to which Russia understood that it had a problem with its peacekeeping tactics. Despite Kozyrev's insistence in front of the UN General Assembly that

¹⁴⁹ R. Allison, 'Peacekeeping in the Soviet Successor States', *Chaillot Papers* (Institute for Security Studies of WEU, 1994).

¹⁵⁰ *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, February 2 1992. CDPSP XLVI (4) p. 25

there was no reason to stop troops who had participated in the conflict from acting as peacekeepers, the lack of impartiality on the part of Russian troops was openly acknowledged in the Russian media and the government moved quickly to set up designated peacekeeping forces.¹⁵¹ The 27th MRD was relocated from the German Democratic Republic to the Volga region in 1992, and soon after began training as a designated peacekeeping force. By 1994, the 27th MRD had participated in several peacekeeping missions, mostly within Tajikistan. In 1994, the Russians allocated another division, the 45th MRD, which began its training as a designated peacekeeping force. Not surprisingly, most of the Russian mobile forces designated for peacekeeping tasks were deployed across Russia's southern flank, where the Russian Federation meets Transcaucasia and Central Asia.

Andreas Serrano points out that Russia made an attempt in autumn 1993 to align its peacekeeping policies with that of Europe by requesting a UN blessing for their peacekeeping force in Tajikistan. Even after that diplomatic effort met a humiliating end, Russia continued to pursue ties with NATO and early 1994 began meeting with NATO representatives for talks which would culminate in the 1997 Paris Agreements. In March 1994 the CIS created a Standing Consultative Commission on Peacekeeping Activity which was tasked with coordinating CIS peacekeeping with the CSCE, NATO, UN, EU and others.¹⁵² While these steps would have been better taken in the earliest days of Russia's peacekeeping efforts, the fact that Yeltsin and his cabinet made an effort to coordinate and cooperate with the Western organizations deserves more credit than has been given.¹⁵³

¹⁵¹ 'Within Executive Branch Make Contradictory Decisions: Russian Troops are not Neutral.' *Izvestia*, September 29, 1993. CDPSP XLV (39) p. 19

¹⁵² Ibid Serrano (2003) p. 172

¹⁵³ For a comprehensive accounting of the lessons learned in Russian peacekeeping, from the Russian point of view, see A. Raevsky and I. Vorobyev, 'Russian Approaches to Peacekeeping Operations', UNIDIR (ed.) *Research Paper #28* (Geneva: 1994).

Part IV: The Factors Affecting Russian Peacekeeping

As detailed above, Russian peacekeeping cannot be considered either completely successful or completely within the bounds of even its own doctrine regarding peace support operations. Russia routinely used large amounts of force, often sided with one party to the conflict, and failed to promote a peace that could lead to political settlement. None of these accusations can be considered in doubt and all have been recast many times by scholars of international law and post-Soviet affairs.¹⁵⁴ However, it is impossible to miss the fact that the most critical wave of literature surrounding Russian peacekeeping came long after the fighting had stopped (1998 and later), and was written at a time when the world had learned much about peacekeeping, peace enforcement and all the activities which go into peace support operations.

Moreover, the evaluations come at a time when the states of the former USSR have, by and large, begun to emerge from the dark days which surrounded the collapse of the USSR. Russia is a G8 nation, the Baltic States have joined the European Union and Ukraine is being considered for EU status in the not so distant future. The countries of the former USSR have achieved relative stability and have begun to differentiate themselves from one another to a far greater degree than during the Soviet period. The region did not dissolve into a bubbling mass of ethnic hatred and nationalistic war, and most of the countries maintained territorial integrity (the exceptions are, of course, Moldova, Georgia and Azerbaijan). Of course, all of this progress was unknowable from the vantage point of 1992, and it is unreasonable to come to any conclusions regarding the motivations and methods of Russian peacekeeping without first looking back at the state of the Russian Federation and of the entire territory of the former USSR at the time. Below I will do just that – evaluate some of the factors which informed Russia’s peacekeeping and the

¹⁵⁴ See notes 1, 2

possible role which these factors played in shaping the Russian peacekeeping efforts in the ‘near abroad.’

Government Politics: The Struggle to Shape Foreign Policy

It should come as no surprise that internal politics within the Russian Federation were in a state of disarray after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Entering 1992, the Soviet Union had only recently dissolved, and the aftershocks of the August putsch attempt were still reverberating throughout Russian society. As the country began its difficult transition from authoritarianism to democracy and from a planned economy to a free market, there were an almost unlimited number of tasks which the Russian government was forced to undertake. One of the most pressing endeavors involved the re-imagining of Russian foreign policy in light of the country’s new circumstances. Would Russia pursue a “Monroe doctrine” for the former USSR or would it practice a more conciliatory path and seek out new alliances with Western states? Throughout 1992 and 1993, the struggle to control the outcome of that question raged within Russia. The two sides in this debate were represented by the “internationalists” or “Atlanticists” on one side and the “derzhavniks” or “Eurasianists” on the other. The internationalists were mainly congregated at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and were personified by Minister of Foreign Affairs Andrei Kozyrev. The derzhavniks were less centralized. Some, such as Andranik Migranyan and Yuri Skokov, were in parliament. Others, such as Vice-President Aleksandr Rutskoi and presidential foreign policy advisor Sergei Stankevich, were in the Kremlin.

Coming into 1992, the internationalists were clearly dominant. Yeltsin had come to power with a group of reformers who were guided by a pro-Western bias and a desire for a peaceful foreign policy. From August 1991 to mid-1992, Kozyrev and Yeltsin pursued extremely pro-Western policies which included participation in the CSCE and asking the West

for assistance in its political and economic reforms.¹⁵⁵ The policies of the internationalists called for a policy of “good neighborliness” toward the states of the CIS, but did not advocate a proactive approach in the politics of those states.¹⁵⁶ As Leon Aron details, however, spring 1992 brought three consecutive international crises which challenged the primacy of the internationalists. First, the flare-up of the Transdniestrian issue and the role of the 14th Army in that conflict put Russia on the defensive. Next, the perceived persecution of ethnic Russians in Latvia and Estonia put pressure on the Russian administration to take a hard line with the Baltics. Finally, Russia’s decision to back the UN Security Council’s resolution imposing sanctions on Serbia was extremely unpopular within the Russian Federation. Serbians were fellow Slavs and were primarily Orthodox, and were fighting against Catholics and Muslims, two groups who lacked significant representation in Russia. Aron credits the siege of Sarajevo with turning the tide of public opinion within Russia against the internationalists and against the UN as a mechanism for conflict resolution.¹⁵⁷ At that same time that Yeltsin’s foreign policy was coming under fire, his economic policies were also being heatedly debated in the media and in parliament. As early as April 1992, president of the Supreme Soviet Ruslan Khatsbulatov was calling for Yeltsin’s resignation over economic issues, and demanding that Russia abandon the so-called “Sachs-Gaidar Program.”¹⁵⁸

The conflict between Yeltsin (and Kozyrev) and parliament simmered through the summer, only to erupt onto the front pages in August when parliamentarian Andranik Migranyan

¹⁵⁵ McFaul, 'A Precarious Peace: Domestic Politics in the Making of Russian Foreign Policy', *International Security*, 22 (1997), pp. 5-35. A. Arbatov, 'Russia's Foreign Policy Alternatives', *International Security*, 18 (1993), pp. 5-43.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid Baev (1994)

¹⁵⁷ L. Aron, 'The Emergent Priorities of Russian Foreign Policy', in Leon Aron and Kenneth M. Jensen (ed.) *The Emergence of Russian Foreign Policy* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1994), pp. 17-34. For Russian commentary on the situation in Yugoslavia in 1992, see 'Russian Volunteers, Not Diplomats, Help Serbs' December 6 1992. Translated in CDPSP XLIV (49) p. 17

¹⁵⁸ 'Parliament, Yeltsin Forces Jockey for Power.' Translated in CDPSP XLIV (11) p. 6

published an article entitled “A Call for an Assertive Russian Foreign Policy.” The piece accused the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of misunderstanding the situation in the CIS, and of abandoning Russian-speakers outside of Russia. He went on to criticize the concessions which Kozyrev had made to the West by writing, “Only a madman would want to return to total confrontation with the West and the Cold War. But one cannot fail to see that Russia’s national and state interests cannot constantly coincide with the interests of the West, let alone the US.”¹⁵⁹ Migranyan was joined by several other prominent parliamentarians in calling for a more assertive foreign policy, and in suggesting that the whole of the former USSR be considered a “zone of vital interest” for the Russian Federation.¹⁶⁰

In September, peacekeeping became a topic for major discussion after Yeltsin met with Secretary General Boutros-Ghali and with President Bush to discuss multilateral peacekeeping. The newspaper *Pravda* quoted General John Galvin of NATO as commenting that Russia was not in any position to carry out any serious military operation on a large scale. While that may have been the case, *Pravda* responded with the following: “Judging from its first tests (in South Ossetia and Dniestr region), the former Soviet army is itself capable of carrying out peacekeeping functions within the former Union. We aren’t so helpless as to be unable to sort out our own affairs without foreign tutelage.”¹⁶¹ This example serves to underscore the intense feelings of anger which certain factions of the Russian government felt at the West’s patronizing attitude.

¹⁵⁹ A. Mingranyan, 'A Call for an Assertive Russian Foreign Policy - Part I', *Rossiskaya Gazeta*, August 4 1992. Translated in CDPSP XLIV (32) p. 1

¹⁶⁰ ‘Ambartsumov: Russia Should Be Power in All of Old USSR’ *Izvestia*, August 4 1992. Translated in CDPSP XLIV (32) p. 3; ‘Parliament, Ministry Clash over Foreign Policy’ *Izvestia* July 24 1992. Translated in CDPSP XLIV (30) p. 1

¹⁶¹ ‘Diplomacy that Raises Questions’ *Pravda*, September 8 1992. Translated in CDPSP XLIV (36) p. 20

All of these pressures led to a break in the Yeltsin-Kozyrev bond in October 1992, when Yeltsin rebuked the Foreign Ministry for failing to protect Russian minorities abroad and halted troop withdrawals from the Baltic States.¹⁶² At the time, Yeltsin's sudden about-face on troop withdrawals was interpreted as an effort to appear tough on the domestic stage, a move that necessitated sidelining Kozyrev.¹⁶³ The effects of these moves upon Kozyrev were seen in December 1992, when he addressed the CSCE in Stockholm. Kozyrev shocked his audience with bellicose remarks regarding the role of Russia in the CIS and the inapplicability of CSCE norms on the territory of the former USSR, stating that Russia was willing to use all necessary means to protect its interests in the CIS. An hour after the speech, Kozyrev dismissed his statements as a parody of what *could* happen to Russian foreign policy, but international observers were left confused.¹⁶⁴

It is indicative of the chaos which plagued Russian politics at the time that Russia's draft foreign policy concept, first publicized in December 1992, promotes an active Russian role in the near abroad. The document, put out by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, stressed the importance of defending the external borders of the CIS, and insisted that Russia had "special interests" in the former USSR which should be recognized by the world community.¹⁶⁵ The discrepancy between Kozyrev's position and that put forth by his own ministry was the result of Kozyrev's having handed off responsibility for the CIS to a young deputy minister, Fedor Shelov-Kovediaev. After Kozyrev was again criticized by Yeltsin in February for his handling of foreign affairs *vis a vis* the near abroad, he began moving closer to the middle of the political

¹⁶² P. Baev and P. Kolsto, 'Russian Minorities in the Former Soviet Union', *PRIO*, (1997).

¹⁶³ V. Portnikov, 'President's Baltic Move – Are Domestic Political Priorities Moving to the Forefront?' *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* November 3, 1993. Translated in CDPSP XLIV (44) p. 15

¹⁶⁴ V. Zviglyanich, 'A Man from the Soviet Apparatus to Guide Russia's Foreign Policy', *Prism - Jamestown Foundation*, 2 (1996).

¹⁶⁵ R. Donaldson, *The Foreign Policy of Russia: Changing Systems, Enduring Interests* (New York, London: M.E. Sharpe, 1998).

spectrum, advancing Russia's "special rights and responsibilities in the former USSR" and deploring US bombing of Iraq.¹⁶⁶ The foreign policy concept first put forward by Shelov-Kovadiaev was ratified by Yeltsin in 1993, and reflected a shift away from the pro-Western policies of 1992.

Kozyrev's move to the center was a necessary gesture for Yeltsin, who nonetheless struggled with an uncooperative parliament until the constitutional crisis (and narrowly-averted civil war) of September-October 1993. When the history of the Transdniestrian and Ossetian conflicts are superimposed upon the history of Yeltsin's battles with his own government, it becomes clear that the political situation in Russia was extremely tenuous at the very point in time that the peacekeeping missions were being established. The effects of this bureaucratic infighting can be seen in the juxtaposition between the very reasonable peacekeeping guidelines put out by Kozyrev in 1992 and the not-so-reasonable peacekeeping practice carried out by a military largely loyal to the more conservative factions of government.

Domestic Pressures

Beyond bureaucratic infighting which was occurring as the peacekeeping missions were being established, there was an intense social pressure being brought to bear on the Russian government regarding the huge numbers of ethnic Russians living outside the Russian Federation. As of 1989, roughly 18.5% of ethnic Russians lived outside the Russian SSR.¹⁶⁷ Most of the ethnic Russians were living in Ukraine and Kazakhstan, but all successor states had significant Russian minorities, who were treated with varying degrees of acceptance by the titular nationalities of those states. Ethnic Russians had been living on the territory of Ukraine

¹⁶⁶ Ibid Baev (1994); R. Freedman, 'Russian Foreign Policy in the Middle East: The Kozyrev Legacy', *Caspian Crossroads*, 1 (1996).

¹⁶⁷ New World Demographics, *The First Book of Demographics of the Former Soviet Union 1951-1990* (Maryland: 1992).

for hundreds of years and were well-integrated into the society. In a study carried out in 1993, 25% of Ukrainians considered themselves simultaneously Russian and Ukrainian.¹⁶⁸ On the other hand, relations were significantly more strained in the Baltic States, where the Russian presence was largely seen as occupation, and in Central Asia, where ethnic Slavs had been imported during the Soviet period to take jobs in technical and administrative professions.¹⁶⁹

With animosity against Russian imperialism growing at the end of the Soviet period, newspapers and civic groups within Russia began to agitate for protection of ethnic Russians living outside the Russian Federation. Soon after, it became clear that the Estonia and Latvia would be pursuing particularly strict nationality and linguistic policies which the Russians considered prejudicial.¹⁷⁰ In early spring 1992, Sergei Stankevich, Yeltsin's advisor for policy issues, published an article in the newspaper *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* in which he argued that nationalist forces, "driven by paranoid ideas of historical or national vengeance," had victimized Russian citizens in Estonia and Latvia.¹⁷¹ Stankevich argued that Russia's first priority in relations with states of the 'near abroad' should be protection of the Russian population and the Russian heritage, which he defined as including graves, monuments, schools and museums. Furthermore, he urged Russia to take a tougher tone on that issue with the Baltic States. In May 1992, as it was submitting its application for admission, the Russians presented the CSCE with a "Memorandum on Human Rights Violations in the Baltic Countries." In July the Russian

¹⁶⁸ P. Pirie, 'National Identity and Politics in Southern and Eastern Ukraine', *Europe-Asia Studies*, 48 (1996).

¹⁶⁹ R. Menon, 'In the Shadow of the Bear: Security in Post-Soviet Central Asia', *International Security*, 20 (1995), pp. 149-181. Also, W. R. Brubaker, 'Citizenship Struggles in Soviet Successor States', *International Migration Review*, 26 (1992), pp. 269-291.

¹⁷⁰ In February 1992, Estonia enacted a citizenship law which gave the "foreigners" less than six months to learn Estonian or risk being deprived of their citizenship rights. Under the Estonian definition, a foreigner was any person who did not have Estonian citizenship as of 1940, the year of Soviet occupation. Most ethnic Russians did not meet the deadline and therefore were not eligible to vote in the parliamentary elections. At the time, Russians comprised over 25% of the population of Estonia. See L. Levitsky 'Estonia Divided into Citizens and Foreigners' in *Izvetia* February 27, 1992. Translated in CDPSP XLIV (8) p. 19; Also, D. Bungs, S. Girinius and R. Kionka, 'Citizenship Legislation in the Baltic States', *RFE/RL Research Report*, 1 (1992), pp. 38-40.

¹⁷¹ S. Stankevich 'Russia in Search of Itself' Translated in *The National Interest*. 20 (1992) pp. 47-51

parliament released two strongly-worded documents condemning the actions of Latvia and Estonia, and calling for economic restrictions against the latter state. However, these documents were seen as primarily a way for parliamentarians to curry favor Russian audiences who had become concerned about the plight of ethnic Russians outside of Russia.¹⁷² Despite these efforts, and a CSCE evaluation mission launched in late 1992 to evaluate Estonia's citizenship laws, the Estonian laws were eventually found to be in keeping with Western European standards.¹⁷³

With the Baltic situation out of their control, the Russian press seized upon the situations in the South Ossetia and Transdnistria as an example of ethnic Russians and Russophones being persecuted in successor states. As early as 1991, certain right-wing Russian newspapers were advocating military action in defense of Russians living in Moldova. The newspaper *Den* (Day) argued that, "Our army has an obligation to defend its people against foreign intervention, and should immediately throw the Kishinev bandits back across the Dniester. If this is not done, the army is not worthy of its name."¹⁷⁴ By April, Russian Vice-President Aleksandr Rutskoi was calling for action by the 14th Army, recounting stories of the murder of a pregnant woman by Moldovan forces and of Russian peasant workers being killed on their way to the fields.¹⁷⁵ The pressure on the Russian government to act increased throughout spring and summer 1992, and the draft military doctrine released in May reflected the Russian government's preoccupation with ethnic Russians outside of Russia. The document assigns the following role to the armed forces of the Russian Federation: "the defense of the rights and interests of citizens of Russia and

¹⁷² V. Portnikov 'Russian Parliament Defends Ethnic Russians in the Baltics – Whom Will This Help?' *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* July 19, 1992. Translated in CDPSP XLIV (29) p. 19

¹⁷³ K. Huber, 'Averting Inter-Ethnic Conflict: An Analysis of the CSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities in Estonia', Carter Center (ed.) *Working Paper Series* (Atlanta: 1994).

¹⁷⁴ Quoted in P. Kolsto, 'The New Russian Diaspora: Minority Protection in the Soviet Successor States', *Journal of Peace Research*, 30 (1993), pp. 197-217.

¹⁷⁵ The Sixth Congress of Russian Federation People's Deputies, Second Meeting 6 April 1992. Translated in CDPSP XLIV (14) p. 3

people linked with it ethnically and culturally abroad.”¹⁷⁶ In the heat of the Transdnestrian conflict, Russian defense minister Pavel Grachev vowed to protect Russian citizens in Moldova, and even after Russia had committed peacekeeping troops, there were policy-makers calling for more action.¹⁷⁷ In June, Vice-President Rutskoi commented graphically on the Ossetian situation: “For how long must we tolerate everything that is going on in relation to the Russophone population in other republics...understand no one is entitled to say, today I am sovereign and tomorrow I will begin to knife, kill and shoot people.”¹⁷⁸ The media coverage was incessant, and hyperbolic. Accounts of refugees fleeing Dniestr, Latvia, and Chechnya filled the papers and often contained dramatic stories of late-night escapes from war-torn lands.¹⁷⁹

There is no way to gauge the impact of the media and political pressure which was brought to bear on the government with regard to ethnic Russians and Russophones outside the Russian Federation. To an extent, the debate over the fate of Russians outside of Russia was only one skirmish in the larger battle between pro-Western and more traditional factions within Russian government. Certainly, Yeltsin was forced to take a more aggressive stance on the issue as the year went on, and his criticisms of Kozyrev at the end of the year specifically mentioned the situation in the Baltics. More than political wrangling, however, the debate within Russia, and the pressure on Yeltsin to protect Russians and Russophones outside of Russia’s borders, reflected a deep confusion within the country about what it meant to be Russian. Was it a linguistic affiliation, cultural tradition or ethnic ties?¹⁸⁰ At the time, that question was still being determined, and the roiling debate which surrounded that discussion cannot but have had an

¹⁷⁶ Ibid Allison (1994)

¹⁷⁷ ‘Interview with Russian Defense Minister Pavel Grachov’ *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* June 9, 1992. Translated in CDPSP XLIV (23) p. 20; Military and Security Notes, *RFE/RL Research Report* 1(1992).

¹⁷⁸ Quoted in M. Smith (1993)

¹⁷⁹ ‘A Line of People with Tear-Stained Eyes’ *Izvestia* August 11, 1992.

¹⁸⁰ For an excellent analysis of how Russians dealt with this question, see V. Tolz, ‘Forging the Nation: National Identity and Nation Building in Post-Communist Russia’, *Europe-Asia Studies*, 60 (1998), pp. 993-1022.

effect on Yeltsin's thinking in determining whether to proactively engage the CIS. Further, the media storm and the sensationalistic coverage of ethnic Russians being persecuted by their neighbors likely influenced the military and had some impact on their attitudes toward ethnic Moldovans, Georgians and others.

Capacity for Peacekeeping: Experience and Interpretation

As noted above, Russia had almost no experience with peace support missions prior to 1991. Beyond nominal participation as military observers in UNIFIL, the Soviets had shunned international peacekeeping efforts during the Cold War. While the Americans, the British and others had learned from their peacekeeping experiences in the Korea, Congo, Cyprus and the Middle East, the Russians had no practical experience in managing a large-scale peace support operation. What Russia did have in spades was experience participating in low-intensity conflict. Russia's only major military engagement prior to the end of the Cold War was the ill-fated excursion into Afghanistan, and most of the of the high-level and even junior officers associated with the conflicts in Dniestr, Tajikistan and South Ossetia were veterans of that campaign. Aleksandr Lebed, who led the 14th Army in Moldova from 1992-95, fought in Afghanistan from 1981-82 and Pavel Grachev and Minister of Defense under Yeltsin, led the 103rd Airborne troops in Afghanistan in the last years of the war. Although it is impossible to speculate about the experiences of these men in Afghanistan, the tactics used in that campaign can give some insight regarding the experiences which Russian troops and officers carried with them into their peacekeeping missions. Major Robert Cassidy explains the tactics used by the Soviets in Afghanistan: "The methods and weapons employed — deliberate destruction of villages, high altitude carpet bombing, napalm, fragmentation bombs, and the use of booby-trapped toys — testify to the intent of the Soviet military's effort to terrorize the Afghan civilian

population.”¹⁸¹ The Soviet experience in Afghanistan was bloody and unfulfilling, not to mention long. The tactics used by both sides were brutal, and the subsequent retreat by the Soviets badly damaged the morale of the Soviet Army. Additionally, the war in Afghanistan, and the crimes committed there by Soviet soldiers, had the effect of diminishing the credibility of the military within Russian society.¹⁸² For an institution which had previously been revered by Soviet society due its role in delivering the motherland from German invasion, the loss of credibility was a tremendous blow. It would be hubris to presume to understand how the Afghanistan experience affected Grachev, Lebed and others, but the sheer fact that Russia’s most recent military experience was a humiliating and bloody defeat must be considered when looking at the why the Russian military pursued the policies which it did in 1992-93.

Even beyond Russia’s lack of experience with peacekeeping, there was another factor at work. Russia’s interpretation of peacekeeping was somewhat out of synch with that of the West, a fact that can be seen both in their language and their behaviour. During the Soviet period, the Russian word *mirotvorchestvo* (literally peace making) was interpreted as first-world domination of less-developed states, a bourgeois, classist activity.¹⁸³ Once the Cold War ended, the Russians began using the word to mean peacekeeping in the sense of peace support operations which include peacemaking, peacekeeping and peace enforcement, but the nuance in Russian tends to lend itself toward a coercive interpretation. As of 1992, the Russians did not differentiate between the various aspects of peacekeeping, and it was not until several Russian officers spent time in the United States that Russia began to draw distinct linguistic lines around peacemaking,

¹⁸¹ R. M. Cassidy, 'Russia in Afghanistan and Chechnya: Military Strategic Culture and the Paradoxes of Asymmetric Conflict', *US Army War College*, (2003).

¹⁸² R. Reuveny and A. Prakash, 'The Afghanistan War and the Breakdown of the Soviet Union', *Review of International Studies*, 25 (1999), pp. 693-708.

¹⁸³ W. Gottlieb, 'World Affairs through Soviet Eyes', *Soviet Studies*, 3 (1952), pp. 318-330.; Ibid Neumann and Solodvik (1996)

peacekeeping and peace enforcement.¹⁸⁴ The lack of either tactical or linguistic clarity around peacekeeping activities most likely had an impact on how Russian officers and soldiers pursued their activities in the CIS.

Capacity for Peacekeeping: The State of the Armed Forces

The state of the armed forces at the time in which the peacekeeping missions were being established is a critical component in any discussion of Russian peacekeeping and has important implications for how Russian peacekeeping is evaluated. First, the lack of crucial resources such as equipment and conscripted soldiers had an impact on how and when Russia chose to intervene in conflict zones. Moreover, the significant breakdown in the command and control capacity of the Russian government during this period provokes a question of to what extent Russian peacekeeping efforts were even parts of a unified endeavor. This question is particularly salient when applied to the 14th Army in Moldova, which evidence suggests was acting at least partially of its own volition.

The decline of Soviet military strength did not begin with the collapse of the Soviet Union. Rather, the Soviet military had been slowly losing men, equipment and efficacy throughout the 1980s. Draft evasion, increased deferment opportunities and unfavorable demographic trends all took their toll, as did the general unpopularity of the armed forces in the years after the military withdrew from Afghanistan. Soviet forces were undermanned by more than 300,000 troops in 1991.¹⁸⁵ The breakup of the USSR only compounded the situation. As of January 1992, “approximately one-half of all combat aircraft, tanks and armored vehicles, over two-thirds of artillery, one-fourth of warships and 44 percent of the former USSR’s armed forces

¹⁸⁴ A. Dumurenko and A. Nitkin, 'Basic Terminology and Concepts in International Peacekeeping Operations: An Analytical Review', *Low Intensity Conflict and Law Enforcement*, 6 (1997).

¹⁸⁵ S. Foye, 'The Soviet Armed Forces: Things Fall Apart', *RFE/RL Research Report*, 1 (1992), pp. 15-18.

were outside Russia's borders."¹⁸⁶ Even as Russia began to withdraw its troops from the German Democratic Republic and from the Baltic States, it ran into complications when it had no place to house the returning troops and no money to build new barracks (as of December 1992, over 120,000 returned officers were without proper housing).¹⁸⁷ In the spring 1992 call-ups for compulsory military service, Russian defense experts estimated that almost 18,000 eligible young men evaded the draft, and that the needs of the Russian military for that year were only 21% met.¹⁸⁸ Moreover, the quality of the draftees during that period was widely considered sub-par. An estimated 20 percent had criminal records and only 76% had completed secondary education.¹⁸⁹ In fall of that year, the Russian military took stock of its troops and found that it had almost no combat-ready reserves.¹⁹⁰ This was after two peacekeeping missions had already been deployed and a third was looming imminent. A high-ranking military official during this period commented that the Russia armed forces were "the USSR Armed Forces, but without hands, without legs, and without other important organs that have been chopped off during the course of the sovereignization of the former Union republics."¹⁹¹ With few officers, less than half of its equipment, and sub-par foot soldiers, it is no wonder that the Russian peacekeeping efforts seemed chaotic at the beginning. It is also less than surprising that the Russians chose to use the forces already in the field (the 14th Army in Moldova, the 201st MRB in Tajikistan) rather than shipping new troops from Moscow to the conflict zone.

¹⁸⁶ S. Rogov 'We Need our Own NATO' *Moskovskiy Novosti*. January 12 1002. Translated in FBIS-SOV-92-015

¹⁸⁷ 'Airborne Assault Forces win Skirmish with Local Bureaucracy' *Izvestia*, February 11 1993. Translated in CDPSP XLV (7) p. 31; J. Lepingwell, 'Is the Military Disintegrating from Within?' *RFE/RL Research Report*, 2 (1993).

¹⁸⁸ V. Livitkin, 'Army Hopes for Help from Lawmakers – And Women' *Izvestia*, October 16 1992. CDPSP XLIV (42) p. 26

¹⁸⁹ Ibid Lynch (2000) p. 65

¹⁹⁰ Ibid Allison (1994) p. 9

¹⁹¹ Lt-Col Anatoliy Dukuchayev, quoted in Waters (2003)

The other major constraint on the military's ability to respond to crisis situations was the cost of peacekeeping. In September 1992, Colonel General Viktor Dubynin stated that the Russian peacekeeping missions in South Ossetia, Transdniestria and Yugoslavia were costing 2.2 million rubles a day (\$12,000) and that the military had spent 190 million rubles to date on peacekeeping.¹⁹² In March 1994, the Russian Ministry of Defense claimed that Russian peacekeeping operations had cost 2.5 billion rubles in 1992 and 26 billion rubles in 1993.¹⁹³ The budget for peacekeeping was funded directly out of the Defense Ministry's budget, and shortfalls meant that Russian peacekeepers were often poorly paid, if they were paid at all. Unpaid peacekeepers often resorted to illegal activities such as selling their equipment, extortion, and participation in the Central Asian drug trade.¹⁹⁴

Just as the decline in the strength of the military did not originate with the collapse of the USSR, civilian control over the military had been in decline since the late Soviet period. Conservative Russian officers, fed up with the situation both at home and abroad, moved to strengthen their position within the armed forces in 1991, and were able to co-opt the agenda of the First All-Army Party Conference in May 1991.¹⁹⁵ Although the officer corps did not participate extensively in the failed August putsch, some commentators have suggested that the officers would have joined the coup had its organizers been better organized.¹⁹⁶ Even after Gorbachev resigned and Yeltsin came to power, there was conflict between the government and

¹⁹² 'General Staff on Role of Peace Forces' *Izvestia*, September 2 1992. FBIS-SOV-92-173. Note: while \$12,000/day may not seem exorbitant compared to the US military's expenditures of roughly \$170 million/day in Iraq, but for the time and place it was a significant sum.

¹⁹³ Ibid Lynch (2000) p. 67

¹⁹⁴ For an excellent (if unsympathetic) account of Russian peacekeepers behaving badly *outside* the CIS, see G. Turbiville, *Mafia in Uniform: The Criminalization of the Russian Armed Forces* (Ft. Leavenworth, KS: 1995).

¹⁹⁵ Ibid Foye (Jan. 1992)

¹⁹⁶ Ibid Foye (Jan. 1992)

the military, particularly after Yeltsin was unable to preserve an all-Union Army.¹⁹⁷ The conservative voices within the armed forces were hostile toward Yeltsin's first defense minister, Evgenii Shaposhnikov, both due to his lack of service with in the ground forces (he was an airman in the Soviet air force) and because he had resigned early on from the Communist party.¹⁹⁸ Shaposhnikov was replaced by Pavel Grachev in May 1992 in what proved to be a turning point for the Russian military. Although Grachev backed Yeltsin through several crises, his experience as an officer in Afghanistan and his conservative tendencies set the tone for the entire military. Throughout spring and summer, Yeltsin appeased the armed forces by appointed hawkish young generals, many of whom shared the experience of having served in Afghanistan.¹⁹⁹ The path which Yeltsin pursued was one of loosening political control over the military, a dangerous step during a tenuous transition from authoritarianism to democracy.²⁰⁰

It should not be surprising, given the political and social upheaval which characterized early 1992, that the former Soviet forces stationed outside the Russian Federation were not always under the complete control of Moscow. Command and control problems were common, particularly as the successor states to the USSR attempted to sort out which troops would be nationalized and which belonged to Russia. With the Soviet infrastructure crumbling already, it was possible for groups of soldiers to act relatively autonomously. By far the most autonomous of the Russian fighting forces was the 14th Army and there is much doubt as to the degree to which Moscow was able to control that force. As Vladimir Socor pointed out at the time, the 14th Army was loyal to Russia, but not to Yeltsin. The Russified cities of Transdnistria were

¹⁹⁷ S. Foye, 'Russia's Fragmented Army Drawn into the Political Fray', *RFE/RL Research Report*, 2 (1993), pp. 1-8.

¹⁹⁸ ---, 'Post-Soviet Russia: Politics and the New Russian Army', *RFE/RL Research Report*, 1 (1992), pp. 5-12.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid Foye (August 1992) p. 11

²⁰⁰ On Yeltsin's loosening of political controls over the military, see Arbatov, 'Russia's Foreign Policy Alternatives'.

hostile to reforms and supported the August coup, and the 14th Army was “a favorite of ultranationalist and procommunist circles.”²⁰¹

In March 1992, despite Moscow’s promises that the 14th Army would remain neutral, a group of officers and warrant officers stationed in Moldova released a statement stating that they did not intend to remain indifferent and would be forced to take arms and defend the people of Transdnistria if the situation in Moldova approached war. Moreover, they cited the neutrality of Russian forces stationed in Azerbaijan as a negative force in Transcaucasia and stated that they had “no intention of helping to turn the land on the banks of the Dniestr into a ‘Moldovan Karabakh.’”²⁰² During the bulk of the fighting in May and June 1992, elements of the 14th Army participated in the conflict with the tacit approval of their superiors based in Transdnistria. Major General Yurii Netchaev, who commanded the 14th at the time, excused the actions of these soldiers by arguing that they were pushed into action by “constant slanders in the Moldovan press.”²⁰³ Netchaev’s dismissal and Lebed’s arrival in June did little to bring the 14th Army under Moscow’s control. In fact, as noted above, Lebed’s insubordination to Yeltsin and his outright hostile attitude toward Moldovans went unpunished by Moscow. The nebulous command and control which Moscow was able to exert upon the 14th Army was summed by General Mikhail Kolesnikov, who was quoted on July 3, 1992 as saying, “We are directing the actions of the 14th Army, albeit not continually and not altogether firmly;”²⁰⁴

²⁰¹ Ibid Socor (August 1992)

²⁰² K. Eggert ‘Ceasefire on the Dnestr – A Respite for Kishinev’ *Izvestia* March 18, 1992. CDPSP XLIV (11) p. 19

²⁰³ V. Socor, ‘Russia’s Fourteenth Army and the Insurgency in Eastern Moldova’, *RFE/RL Research Report*, 1 (1992), pp. 41-48.

²⁰⁴ Quoted in Waters (2003)

The International Community

As noted above, Yeltsin and his staff began 1992 with a certain amount of optimism regarding the role which organizations such the UN and the CSCE could play in maintaining world order. According to a speech given by hard-liner Andranik Migranyan, the Russian Federation was initially uninterested in projecting power outside its own borders, and actively sought to engage the international community in the CIS.²⁰⁵ This account is backed up by the scant attention which Kozyrev paid to CIS affairs, and the handing off of responsibility for that region to a junior deputy minister. The turning point for the Russian government, according to Leon Aron, was the siege of Sarajevo. Aron writes, “the sight of the international community’s impotence – its inability to enforce the new world order or to contain, much less settle, a savage ethnic conflict of a type that is Russia’s recurrent nightmare – led the internationalists to reexamine their hopes regarding the ability of the United States and its allies to restore a just peace anywhere.”²⁰⁶ It would be hard to underestimate how intensely the Russian populace felt about what was perceived as Western prejudice against the Serbs. The overarching message in the Russian press, put forward by Russian politicians, was that the conflict in the former Yugoslavia was the result of inter-ethnic tensions rather than Serb aggression and UN sanctions against Serbia were perceived as terrifically unfair.²⁰⁷

Similarly, the Russian leadership was initially very positive about involvement with the CSCE. That enthusiasm appears to have waned over the course of 1992, however, as the CSCE moved to expel Serbia from the organization and as it failed to act on behalf of Russian

²⁰⁵ A. Migranyan at the US Institute for Peace in March 1993, quoted in Aron (1994)

²⁰⁶ Ibid Aron (1994)

²⁰⁷ A. Edemskii, 'Russian Perspectives', in Alex Danchev and Thomas Halverson (eds.) *International Perspectives on the Yugoslav Crisis* (New York: St. Martin's, 1996).

minorities in the Baltics.²⁰⁸ A larger disappointment for the Russians was the failure of the CSCE's Minsk Group to resolve the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh. The CSCE had begun working on the Karabakh issue in January 1992 and sent an observer mission in February. The organization's willingness to intervene in this conflict, and its initial unwillingness to get involved in South Ossetia or Transdniestria, stemmed from "fairly high level Western interest in the Karabakh conflict" and was propelled by American demands that the CSCE work to bring the warring sides to the table.²⁰⁹ The failure of the CSCE to gain the trust of either of the parties, or to move the conflict resolution forward in a significant manner, contributed to the sense in Russia that the organization would not be effective in the post-Cold War era.

Further Russian disillusionment with the international community came in February and March 1993, when Russia made a concerted effort to gain the support of the United Nations for its peacekeeping missions in the former Soviet Union. In March, the Russian government presented a document to the United Nations General Assembly discussing Russia's participation in peacekeeping operations and on the same day, Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov held a news conference in New York whereby he sought international support for Russia's peacekeeping missions.²¹⁰ Later that month, Yeltsin followed up on Lavrov's efforts, appealing to the leaders of the CIS and commenting on the need for international organizations such as the UN and the CSCE to directly support CIS peacekeeping.²¹¹ The Russian message was hammered home by Kozyrev in his address to the UN General Assembly in September 1993.²¹² Kozyrev began by lauding the success of UN peacekeeping efforts in Cambodia and the Middle

²⁰⁸ 'CSCE Confronts Numerous Problems on Eve of Summit,' *Izvestia* July 7 1992. CDPSP CLIV (27) p. 22

²⁰⁹ M. Mooradian, 'Mediation Efforts in the Karabakh Conflict', *ICAR Newsletter*, 6 (1994), pp. 4-6.

²¹⁰ S. Crow, 'Russia Seeks Leadership in Regional Peacekeeping', *RFE/RL Research Report*, 2 (1993), pp. 28-32.

²¹¹ *Ibid* Crow (1993)

²¹² A. Kozyrev, Address to the United Nations General Assembly on 29 September 1993. A/48/PV.6

East, but lamented that peaceful solutions to the Bosnian, Abkhazian and Karabakh conflicts had not yet been found. With regard to Abkhazia and Karabakh, Kozyrev requested “much more active assistance for our peacemaking efforts, not in words, but in deeds.” He clarified that this meant a mandate for consensual operations, and closer ties between the CIS and the United Nations. Kozyrev also suggested that “creative solutions,” such as the participation of contingents of the conflicting parties themselves in the peacekeeping efforts, were necessary due to the overload of peacekeeping operations faced by the United Nations. Russian frustration with the lack of response from either the General Assembly or the Security Council was expressed by Russia’s Deputy Minister of Defense in January 1994: “Peace, no matter how valuable it is, cannot be supported indefinitely by Russian soldiers’ bayonets. There have to be clear prospects for getting out of this confrontation, and the CSCE in Europe and the UN must contribute to this work. But that just isn’t happening.”²¹³ As noted above, Secretary General Boutros-Ghali visited Russia in April 1994 and made it clear that the Security Council would not be granting ‘blue helmets’ to Russian peacekeepers in the CIS.

The most active components of the Russian peacekeeping efforts detailed in this paper were completed well before Russia requested either monetary compensation or official status for its missions, so the lack of cooperation with the United Nations cannot account for why Russian peacekeeping was flawed in its early stages. Russian frustration with the lack of action on the part of the UN Security Council and the CSCE can possibly account, however, for the slow pace of progress since that time. The question is worth asking: Had the UN and the CSCE been more involved in offering both technical and financial assistance to the Russian peacekeeping efforts in the early 1990s, would the conflicts in Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Moldova still be frozen?

²¹³ Col. Gen. Georgy Kondratyev quoted in *Izvestia*, January 19 1992. CDPSP XLVI (4) p. 25

That is, if Russia hadn't been forced to take sole responsibility for controlling these conflicts, would Moscow have had a stronger incentive to cooperate with the international community to reach a political solution to the separatist regions? That question cannot be answered here, but is worth further investigation.

Part V: Conclusions

From the vantage point of 2006, it is difficult not to view Russian peacekeeping through a cynical lens. It has now been fourteen years since conflict broke out in the CIS, and South Ossetia, Abkhazia and Transdnistria remain as far from political solutions as they did in 1993. Since coming to power in 2000, Russian President Vladimir Putin has pursued a policy of “passportization” of those living in the separatist regions, and has vowed to protect, by force if necessary, Russian citizens living in Georgia and Moldova. The Russian Federation is closer to war with Georgia than it has been in years, and the Russian Navy has taken up what appears to be permanent residence in the Abkhaz port of Sukhumi. With this knowledge, it is admittedly difficult to separate the early days of Russian peacekeeping from its present-day incarnation.

Similarly, it is impossible to know exactly what Yeltsin, Kozyrev, Lebed and others were thinking back in 1992. Perhaps they *were* thinking about securing Russian dominance in the region, or perhaps they were honestly worried about the threat to peace and security; it is impossible to say. However, it *is* possible to know the circumstances which surrounded their decisions. The Union had collapsed, the army was acting at least partially of its own volition, the right wing was plotting a coup, and wars were breaking out at a record pace. Throughout all of this, the Russian government was struggling to define itself both in terms of ideology and structure, and to determine its relationship to the 25 million ethnic Russians who were living outside its boundaries.

When Russia turned to the United Nations for assistance, it found that the General Assembly, Security Council and the UN humanitarian organizations were overwhelmed by the wars in Yugoslavia, Sierra Leone and other places. The CSCE was uninterested in becoming actively involved in the post-Soviet space and only massive pressure from the United States

motivated that organization to become involved in Nagorno-Karabakh, a conflict which also remains frozen to this day.

In short, the Russian Federation was forced to carry out an activity with which it had little experience and for which it was dramatically unprepared, with little help from the international community. So Russia carried out peacekeeping in the CIS using the doctrine, the troops and the strategies which were available at the time. When those doctrines and troops proved ineffective or overly coercive, Russia moved to adopt new doctrine and to train new troops. This seems to be as much as could have been asked at the time, and should be viewed for what it was; the best response which could have been expected for the time and the place.

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