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**RUSSIA'S MONROE DOCTRINE:  
PEACEKEEPING, PEACEMAKING OR IMPERIAL OUTREACH?\***

Preface – March 2014

*A Part of the Peace*, a 1994 volume in the Public Policy Series of the Norman Patterson School of International Affairs at Carleton University in Ottawa, Canada recounts various instances of international interventions and peacekeeping. This essay is one contribution.

The most interesting, perhaps, is the story of how the Russian Federation regrouped on the ruins of the Soviet Union, and re-defined itself on familiar grounds of tsarist and Soviet historical legacies. These include a claim to special and exclusive interests in the former Soviet territory now labeled *blizhnee zarubezh'e* (*near abroad*), as well as the right to “protect” there the Russians who lost their privileged status and became a “national minority”. Specifically the protection singled out the right of the Federation to intervene on diaspora’s behalf. With the formation of a new national Russian armed forces the military doctrine expressly provides for such an intervention.

In a vigorous debate over the policy in the early 90s, political elites voiced support across the whole political spectrum. President Boris Yeltsin and foreign minister, Andrei Kozyrev, the so-called “liberals”, promoted the policy. It aided the resolution of conflicts in the various hot spots, mostly in the “soft underbelly” of the area. To adapt to changing circumstances the policy was labeled as “peacekeeping” and claimed America’s 19<sup>th</sup> Century Monroe Doctrine as a model. In contrast to the strictly neutral stance of the Western type peacekeeping, the Russian version openly favored Russian national interests. Under Vladimir Putin eventually the camouflage was dropped and the process became more brutal.

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Chechenya, which declared independence, was invaded twice and practically obliterated with great ferocity; the support in the Gorno-Karabagh dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan was selectively extended or withdrawn to adversaries; Georgia was invaded and its two autonomies “liberated”.

Results of the Caucasus operations were summarized by defense minister, General Grachev: “Russia intends to keep three military bases in Georgia and five military bases in the Caucasus as a whole, with a total troop strength of 23,000”.

From the very day of the Soviet Union collapse, the key conflict of the post-Soviet space has been played within the Commonwealth of Independent States, (est. 1991 by Russia, Ukraine and Belarus). Two major actors, the Federation and the Ukraine, have very different perceptions of the purpose of the organization. For the Federation, and its friends, it is an organization designed to reestablish the Russian Empire. For the Ukraine and its allies, it is an instrument to facilitate amicable divorce. Both sides agree on one point. Simply put – to quote professor Roman Szporluk of Harvard: – “Without Ukraine Russia can never again be a great power”.

Now – 2014 – we are witnessing an attempt to take another step towards President Putin’s ultimate goal.

## Preface – 1994

Nationalism has filled the vacuum left by the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, thus restoring the “normal” historical pattern that had been interrupted, for most of the century, by an effort to build a regional and ultimately global political system on a basis of a supra-national identity. The collapse led to the break-up of the Warsaw Pact regional security system and to the disintegration of multi-ethnic communist states. The demise of the Soviet imperial system was a replay of the earlier disintegration of European dynastic systems (after World War One), and Western colonial empires (after World War Two), thus proving once again that nationalism has been the dominant world force of the twentieth century and promises to remain so on the threshold of the twenty-first.

The break-up of the Soviet Union left a complex legacy of destabilization. All of the successor states still have sizeable minorities, some indigenous and some immigrant. Some twenty-five million Russians now stranded outside Russia form crucial minorities in the new states and look to Moscow for protection<sup>1</sup>. Minority separatism that had

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<sup>1</sup> Twenty-five million ethnic Russians lived outside the Russian Federation at the time of the last population census in 1989. *Narodnoe Khozjaistvo SSSR v 1990 g. Statisticheskii Iezhgodnik*, (Moscow: *Finansy i Statistika*,

been generated in the process of Soviet disintegration continues, while at the same time the successor states are engaged in a vigorous effort of nation-building which on the one hand threatens the national and civil rights of the minorities within, and on the other encourages irredentism among co-nationals outside.

The Russian Federation is very much in the forefront on both counts. Almost 18 percent of its population consists of non-Russians<sup>2</sup> who agitate for greater autonomy, if not outright independence. The Russians, on the other hand, have rediscovered nationalism and push for national integration – a process that includes efforts at internal recentralization, a defence of the rights of their stranded brethren, and a search for an identity on which to build a new Russia. Inevitably the search leads back to imperial Russia. The imperial component is thus an inextricable part of the new identity. The origins of the Russian identity and of the Russian state are traced directly to medieval Kiev (now the capital of new Ukraine), and to the fifteenth-century conquest of Kazan (now the capital of Tatarstan). Conceptually they transcend, respectively, the Russian ethnic markers and the area of ethnic Russian territorial settlement. The very name of the country, *Rossia*, denotes a broader identity than that implied by the word *Rus*, referring to the latter, just as an adjective *russkii* describes an ethnic Russian attribute, in contrast to an adjective *rossiiskii*, which applies to a socio-political attribute of the Russian state and society.

The recovery by the Russians of their historic identity has shaped their perceptions of new Russia's role and interests, perceptions which appear to be shared by the whole otherwise fragmented Russian political spectrum. Above all, these perceptions have shaped the policies towards the “near abroad” (*blizhnee zarubezh'e*), a term coined to describe the successor states which used to be an integral part of imperial Russia/ Soviet Union, as well as the policies towards East Central Europe, only recently a part of the Soviet security system and traditionally a zone of imperial Russia's westward expansion. Russian perceptions and policies towards the states which formerly were a part of the imperial heritage, and a new policy of peacekeeping designed for their implementation, are the subject of this chapter.

Following an initial period of uncertainty, and a debate over the direction of foreign policy within the newly created Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), a new “activist” policy emerged on the political, military, and economic fronts. First, the new

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1991), Gosudarstvennyi Komitet SSSR po Statistike, p. 81. By 1994 the number was undoubtedly reduced, but not substantially. Moreover, as applied by Moscow, the definition varied: it meant, variously, ethnic Russians, and/or Russian speakers and culturally Russified communities.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

policy claims “near abroad” as Russia’s exclusive sphere of influence by virtue of past imperial heritage and Russia’s status as a great power. Second, it legitimizes Russia’s interference, by force if necessary, in support of this assumption, specifically focusing on the protection of Russian minorities. Both preclude interference by interested third parties – this has been of particular importance in the case of the Islamic southern crescent but it applies also to the Western periphery and implicitly to East Central Europe – and make the support for the leaders in the periphery contingent on their responsiveness to Russian interests. In practice, the latter requirement has meant support for communist incumbents as against newly emergent nationalist forces and forces for political liberalization. Nationalists and liberals both generate instability and are unwilling to follow Moscow’s lead.

Russian spokesmen have compared the policy to the United States’ “Monroe Doctrine” and have promoted it in the international arena as „peacekeeping.” The former Soviet periphery has been racked by ethnic conflicts, and Russia’s preoccupation with the maintenance of stability there has endowed its “peacekeeping” with some legitimacy internationally. This tends to obscure the frankly partisan nature of the exercise, which once again seeks to subordinate the nations of the periphery to Russian hegemony.

## 1. The Legacies and Conflict Potential

Many of the conflicts dividing the peoples of the former USSR date to the pre-Soviet period. The non-Russians harbour resentment towards the Russians because of their hegemonial role and colonization policies in the imperial and the Soviet periods, and have themselves been divided for centuries by conflicts engendered by conquests, migrations, economic rivalries, and ethnicity and culture. Each region has had its own historical antagonisms, with the worst case scenario at the southern rim where the ethnic mosaic has been the most complex and the conflicts fed on religious struggle between Islam and Christianity. Tribal warfare and fierce resistance to colonization have been characteristic of the peoples of the North Caucasus; Georgian Muslim minorities have long resisted Georgian efforts at assimilation, and the Armenian struggle with the Turks (represented locally by Azeri Turks of Azerbaijan) has lasted for centuries. In Central Asia the successive invasions by nomadic Turks left residual antagonisms between the nomads and agricultural settlers, especially on the borderline between the Turkish and the Iranian area of settlement, and have metamorphosed in modern times into clan and region-based conflicts.

Historical conflicts were submerged but not eradicated in the Soviet period. Some were aggravated and new ones were added in the wake of Soviet policies. Boundary delimitation of Soviet republics generally conformed to the settlement patterns of their titular groups, each of which was encouraged to develop a “national” (albeit Soviet) identity and culture. But residual minorities remained and new immigrant minorities were added by migration flows encouraged by economic and “internationalization” policies, and as a result of mass-scale deportations of “enemies of the people.” The main result was the influx into the periphery of large numbers of Russians. Most cities and industrial centres acquired a multi-ethnic character, but the countryside has retained the indigenous ethnic colouration.

The new states are entangled in the inherited centralized web of public administration, economic management, fiscal institutions and practices, and the economic division of labour, with residual vertical networks converging on Moscow. This has meant lopsided development and economic dependence on Russia, fiscal policies still determined by the centre, and infrastructures dominated by the former cadre with ties to Moscow and loyalties to the old networks. The division of economic assets between Russia, which holds most central assets, and others has been a major problem next to the division of military assets and the negotiations over the return to Russia of strategic nuclear weapons held by Ukraine, Belarus, and Kazakhstan.

Pre-Soviet and Soviet legacies are mixed together in popular attitudes – a mixture that enhances the potential for ethnic and political conflict and contributes little to the future of democracy. Pre-Soviet communal conflicts and ethnic antagonisms have resurfaced, their intensity enhanced by years of official emphasis on „fraternal love” and adulation for the Russian “elder brother.” Neither the Soviet nor traditional political cultures have been noted for participatory values and behaviour, and the years of Soviet socialization served to reinforce authoritarian elements of the traditional cultures. Pluralism has emerged, but even in the best of circumstances the prospects for development of working democracies are at best long-range. New democratic institutions are poorly absorbed, and authoritarian models feature prominently in political behaviour.

The focus of conflict and potential destabilization in Soviet successor states has been at the junction of two powerful trends working at cross-purposes: the integrative nation-building by each newly sovereign state starting with Russia, and the self-assertion of the minorities fired by an example of luckier predecessors or, in the case of Russian minorities, incensed over the loss of privileged status. By its very nature, nation-building puts the titular nation in primary position. For the non-Russians the need to emphasize

their primacy has been heightened by the years of second-class status; the Russians, on the other hand, glory in the rebirth of their national identity, liberated finally from ideological and Soviet shackles. National integration has been a priority task also in the economic sense because of the need to reduce dependency on the others, especially on Russia. But nation-building and national integration automatically threaten the rights and equal status of the minorities. This situation has acquired explosive dimensions in many successor states because of a lack of tolerance and a violent political culture, hostile stereotypes, and past antagonisms.

The status of Russian minorities in non-Russian states has been the pivot of the minority question in relations between Russia and the “near abroad.” In some of the successor states they now form between one-fourth and one-third of the population, as in the cases of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, and Latvia and Estonia. Most Russian immigrants have no other permanent home; many had been there for generations, and have no place to return to in the Russian Federation. In some regions of the new states, as in northern Kazakhstan, eastern Ukraine, or shore and urban centres of Latvia and Estonia, resident Russians living in compact communities vastly outnumber titular population. Substantial numbers voted for the independence of their countries of residence, but they became disillusioned over the loss of privileged status, economic decline, and alleged mistreatment. Fear of ethnic disturbances, especially in Central Asia and the Caucasus, had driven some of them back to Russia, where no provisions were made for their resettlement, thereby contributing to their militancy. Post-independence problems have driven many towards radical right-wing nationalism, which has been particularly virulent in the Russian communities of Latvia and Estonia.

The minorities problem also affects national communities other than the Russians. Minorities within the Russian Federation have negotiated substantial autonomy; ethnic republics declared sovereignty<sup>3</sup>, and two of them, Chechenya and Tatarstan, declared independence. But since the 1993 April referenda, the October coup, and December elections, Moscow’s policy has emphasized recentralization, and conflicts have re-emerged. Some of the “peacekeeping” has been within the Federation, as in the case of the conflict between the Ingush and the Ossetins. Minorities in other successor states have been equally restless, contributing to actual and potential hot spots.

A number of contentious issues have emerged in the relations between Russia and other successor states. One has been the language question. All the new states adopted

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<sup>3</sup> In the Soviet and post-Soviet context the term “sovereignty” implied control over resources and policies, and the primacy of national over federal laws, but did not call for a separation.

their titular languages as new official languages. But few Russians and other immigrants in the former republics had bothered to learn local languages; their inability to function in the new official medium has caused hardship and generated hatred and resentment. The language question remains largely unresolved throughout the area.

The issue of citizenship and the exercise of political and civil rights connected with it also remains unresolved. Most successor states granted citizenship to all permanent residents at the time of independence. Latvia and Estonia, the two exceptions, excluded all immigrants who came after 1940, the year of the Soviet invasion. This greatly aggravated communal relations and put both governments under intense pressure from Russia, made easier by the continued presence in both states of Russian forces. Russia is promoting dual citizenship for the Russians in the “near abroad”, who were given an option to take the Federation’s citizenship within three years. But the host states have been unwilling for the Russians to combine Russian and local citizenship, fearing an incipient fifth column.

Boundaries also represent a problem in the context of divided national communities, of which there were three basic types: contiguous communities (i.e., those cut off from the mother country); the communities divided between two or more states; and enclaves. Drawn arbitrarily in the Stalinist period, the boundaries nonetheless have become “sacred” at independence, and thus inviolable (a phenomenon that has been typical also of the post-colonial Third World), precluding negotiated adjustments in the case of divided communities. It is not accidental, therefore, that all active hot spots which have erupted on the former Soviet periphery, and many more potential ones, have been related in one way or another to the status, treatment, and ambitions of the minorities.

## **2. Russia’s New Policy**

The Commonwealth of Independent States was established in December 1991 by Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus as the Soviet Union collapsed. But the CIS could not get off the ground because of a fundamental disagreement between its two key members, Russia and Ukraine, over the very nature of the organization. Russia, the initiator, wanted to maintain the association in order to safeguard its influence and interests in the former Soviet area. Ukraine was deeply distrustful of Russian motives and accepted the organization only as a framework for an amicable divorce. The built-in imbalance between Russia, which had half of the population and a lion’s share of economic and military

assets, and the others was at the heart of the disagreement. Simple logic indicated that Russia's weight in the organization could not but lead to a new hegemony.

Four of the former republics, the three Baltic states and Georgia, refused to join. The remainder, a total of ten in addition to Russia, divided along the Russia/ Ukraine axis. Six – Belarus, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Armenia – were not ready to stand alone in the period of transition, and were willing to follow Russia for security and economic reasons. The first five were ready to stay in the Union in 1991, while Armenia, battling Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh, needed Russian support. The other three, Moldova, Azerbaijan, and Turkmenistan, shared Ukraine's viewpoint.

Internal divisions made for little progress either on economic or military fronts in the first year of CIS existence, and the division of assets and contentious issues remained unresolved, except by bilateral agreements. Of hundreds of CIS agreements concluded, few were signed and even fewer were ratified and implemented. Trade and fiscal coordination suffered because of economic crisis. Maintenance of joint forces proved impossible and member states proceeded to build their own national armies<sup>4</sup>.

Russia's decision to create its own national army was a turning point in the country's military thinking and a prelude to enshrining "peacekeeping" as a centrepiece of Russian policy in the "near abroad." Military and political thinking converged by mid-1993 and a consensus emerged on a new policy. The resulting initiatives and the synchronization of the political and military aspects may well lead to a revitalization of the CIS as an instrument of Russia's neo-imperialist policy.

### 3. Political Context

The 1992 debate over Russian foreign policy has usually been portrayed as the debate between President Yeltsin's pro-Western "liberals", and the "nationalist right" centred on Parliament (the same Parliament that was forcibly disbanded by the president in October 1993). In retrospect, and in application specifically to the policy towards the "near abroad", it appears that the differences were more apparent than real, and had more to do with the instrumentalities and scope than with the content of the policy.

In the first place, the struggle for power between the president and Parliament led to a polarization of views. But some of the government's most vocal critics came from the democratic side of the spectrum, while some of the outspoken "liberals," such as

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<sup>4</sup> Ann Sheehy, *The CIS: A Progress Report*, RFE/RL Research Report 1, No. 28, September 25, 1992, pp. 1-6.

the foreign minister, Andrei Kozyrev, and the president himself, promoted ideas similar to those advocated by the nationalists. In the second place, the liberal tone in foreign policy seems to have been tailored specifically for Western consumption, or at least with an eye to Western reaction. Once it became clear that the West, in particular the United States, was ready to recognize Russia's great power status and its "legitimate" strategic interests in the former Soviet imperial zone, the liberal camouflage of the "near abroad" policy has been dropped.

A milestone here was Russia's automatic accession to the Soviet Union's permanent seat on the UN Security Council with no questions raised by the Bush administration, as well as Secretary Warren Christopher's November 4, 1993, assurance to the U.S. Congress' Foreign Relations Committee, that the new Russian military doctrine, which explicitly authorizes Russian military intervention in Soviet successor states, does not violate the „crucial principle" of respect for these states' sovereignty and territorial integrity<sup>5</sup>. Another milestone has been the Western governments' acquiescence to Russia's veto of NATO membership for East Central Europe, as well as their blindness to Ukraine's desperate pleas for security guarantees in exchange for giving up nuclear weapons. The message received by Russia was that it has a green light to pursue its imperial interests in the "near abroad" unfettered. By extension the same applies also to East Central Europe.

President Yeltsin's first assessment of Russia's relations with other union republics after the failed August 1991 coup was that they had the right to independence but that Russia's borders may have to be modified to include contiguous Russian population. The border modification demand was muted later, because of the need to keep Ukraine in the proposed commonwealth and because of the general sensitivity of the issue. But the president's attitudes may be gauged by his decision to send troops to stop Chechnya's unilateral declaration of independence (within the Federation) in the fall of 1991. This action was not supported by Russia's Supreme Soviet, which was then in a non-interventionist mood, and the troops were withdrawn, as were the troops (in March 1992) from Nagorno-Karabakh that had been sent there by Gorbachev. The "withdrawal" mood then was reflected also in Yeltsin's March 1992 concessions to the Federation's ethnic republics.

At that stage Russian foreign policy, then identified both with President Yeltsin and Foreign Minister Kozyrev, was based on close cooperation with the West and a strong emphasis on the protection of human rights and the prevention of aggression, with

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<sup>5</sup> *Christopher Spells out New Priorities*, "New York Times", November 5, 1993, p. A8.

Russia behaving as a „good guy” in the international arena. In relations with the former Soviet republics, the policy proceeded from an assumption of their equal status and stressed negotiations as the means to resolve outstanding issues. The concern over the rights of Russian minorities, for example, was handled by means of „delegations” set up to conduct negotiations in each former republic, and by invoking Western support in cases of alleged abuses, as in the Baltic states. Only in cases of failure could a question of military force be raised “before the international community,” according to a deputy minister of foreign affairs interviewed in June 1992<sup>6</sup>.

The largely conservative Russian Parliament became sharply critical of Yeltsin’s “West-subservient liberal” policy, which in the eyes of most deputies abandoned Russia’s national interests. A document prepared in June 1992 by the then chairman of the parliamentary Joint Committee on International Affairs and Foreign Economic Relations, Yevgeny Ambartsumov, criticized the Foreign Ministry for having no “integral conception of foreign policy” for the “near abroad” and charted an alternative scenario. Its main points are worth quoting, because they actually provide a blueprint for the new policy as it was adopted in 1993-94 by the very officials who were then the targets of criticism [relevant points are italicized].

“As the internationally recognized legal successor to the USSR, the Russian Federation should base its foreign policy on a doctrine *declaring the entire geopolitical space of the former Union to be the sphere of its vital interests* (like the U.S.’s Monroe Doctrine in Latin America) and should strive to achieve understanding and recognition from the world community of its special interests in this space. Russia should also strive to achieve from the world community recognition of its role *as political and military guarantor of stability in the entire former space of the USSR*. It should strive to achieve support from the Group of Seven countries for these functions of Russia’s, up to and including *foreign currency subsidies for quick-reaction forces* (Russian „blue helmets”)...

In subsequent agreements on the CIS and bilateral agreements, it is necessary to... (make)... special provisions for *Russia’s right to defend the lives and dignity of Russians in the nearby foreign countries*. And it is mandatory to *make special stipulation for the status of Russian troops in the CIS countries*<sup>7</sup>.

The declaration claims the area of the former Soviet Union as Russia’s sphere of influence and claims for Russia the right to act as a gendarme protecting Russian minorities

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<sup>6</sup> F. Shelov-Kovedyayev, interviewed by “Izvestia”, June 26, 1992, p. 6. Translated in the “Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press” XLIV, No. 26, 1992, pp. 20-21.

<sup>7</sup> Cited by Konstantin Eggert, *Russia in the Role of 'Eurasian Gendarme'?*, “Izvestia”, August 7, 1992, p. 6, translated in *ibid.*, No. 32, 1992, pp. 4-5.

there under a label of peacekeeping. It even includes an idea that the West should pay for such operations. All of these points have now emerged in the mainstream of Russian foreign policy.

Criticism came not only from the Parliament but also from democratic circles. Writing in 1992 Professor Andranik Migranyan, director of the CIS Centre of the Institute of International Economics and Political Research of the Russian Academy of Sciences, strongly endorsed Russia's imperial role, and made policy recommendations which foreshadowed some of the later policies. He not only stressed that *de jure* and *de facto* Russia was called upon to play a special role in the entire geopolitical space of the former Soviet Union, but advocated reincorporation of ethno-territorial entities which used to be parts of imperial Russia but were now cut off and asking for Russia's protection, such as Ossetia, Karabakh, the Crimea, and the Dniester region. He also invoked the familiar "hands-off" attitude: no unfriendly alliances by the successor states either with each other or with a third country, and no Western or international interference into Russian geopolitical space, should be tolerated by Russia.

In assessing relations with former republics, Migranyan suggested working for a federal arrangement with Kazakhstan and Belarus, and advocated vigilance in safeguarding Russian interests in Ukraine and a return of, or at the least a special status for, Crimea. In relations with the Baltic states, Russia's access to the Baltic and protection of the rights of the Russians there should be assured. Russia should not and could not withdraw from Transcaucasus, because a vacuum there would lead to incursions by Iran and Turkey, with potentially dangerous consequences for Central Asia and the Turks of the Russian Federation. Migranyan also invoked the Monroe Doctrine to justify the proposed policy in terms understandable to the West<sup>8</sup>.

The conflict between the president and Parliament was not resolved until October 1993 when the Parliament was disbanded and its leaders arrested. Thus the war of words continued until late 1993, although the shape of the new policy which reflected Parliament's main demands began to emerge earlier. Russia's need for "peacekeeping" in its own backyard was raised by President Yeltsin in a speech to the Civic Union in February 1993 in which he stressed Russia's special responsibility for the prevention of conflicts on the territory of the former Soviet Union, and announced that he

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<sup>8</sup> *Real and Illusory Guidelines in Foreign Policy*, "Rossiiskaya Gazeta", August 4, 1992, p. 7, translated in *ibid.*, pp. 1-4 in 1994, Migranyan was a member of Yeltsin's presidential council.

would seek authorization by the United Nations and other international organizations to grant Russia “special powers as guarantor of peace and security” there<sup>9</sup>.

Shortly thereafter an article appeared by Sergei Stankevich, one of Yeltsin’s influential advisors, elaborating the thinking behind the “special relationship”. Stankevich talked of the need for Russian foreign policy to have a „mission” and about bridging a gap between Russia’s “Atlanticism” and “Eurasianism”. “Our state grew strong as a unique historical and cultural amalgam of Slav and Turkic, Orthodox and Muslim components” said Stankevich, but the relations between the two components were “on a brink of a fateful conflict” and an “arc of crisis . . . from the Transcaucasus through North Caucasus toward the Volga region [was] progressively taking shape”, with the dominant Near and Middle Eastern powers showing a new interest in Soviet Muslims. Russia’s special relationship with the states of the CIS should be strengthened in pursuit of the country’s long-term strategic interests; but the policy towards CIS partners should differentiate “between those which use the CIS merely as a means of dividing up the Union inheritance prior to a ‘definitive’ parting, and those for whom the Commonwealth is a fundamental historical choice”. Finally Stankevich pointed out that a given state’s attitude towards the Russian heritage and Russian population was “a most important criterion” in the determination of Russian policy, and rejected any charges of „an imperial syndrome”, since “such a policy has nothing in common with imperialism. On the contrary, it is for Russia a legitimate and natural aspiration to erase conflict and harmonize relations on the territory of the former USSR. Furthermore, Russia will invariably take the part of the undeservedly insulted and unjustly prosecuted”<sup>10</sup>.

A search for international authorization of Russian peacekeeping has been vigorously pursued by Andrei Kozyrev. In March Russia presented a document to the United Nations which pointed out the dangers of regional conflicts for world peace and stability, outlined Russia’s peacekeeping operations in the area of the former Soviet Union, and pointed out the utility of regional organizations for peacekeeping purposes, suggesting that the CIS was just the kind of an organization the UN Charter envisaged for the purpose. Vigorous protests by Ukraine, Moldova, and the Baltic states were countered by an assertion that Russia’s aims were predominantly humanitarian and that it had no neo-imperialist designs. Parallel to these initiatives, President Yeltsin appealed to

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<sup>9</sup> Cited in Susanne Crow, *Russia Asserts Its Strategic Agenda*, RFE/RL Research Report 2, No. 50, December 17, 1993, pp. 1-8.

<sup>10</sup> Sergei Stankevich, *Russia in Search of Itself*, “The National Interest”, Summer 1992, p. 50 and passim. This is an abbreviated version of an article from “Nezavisimaya Gazeta”, March 28, 1992. Stankevich was dismissed by the president after the December 1993 elections.

CIS leaders to develop joint mechanisms for peacekeeping throughout the commonwealth, stressing Russia's special role but denying any ambitions to resume the leadership<sup>11</sup>.

By September Kozyrev again pressed the Russian peacekeeping case in the UN General Assembly. He defended the right of the states which had vital interests in an area to engage in peacekeeping there, thus departing from the conventional wisdom that peacekeepers should be neutral. He asked for international support for Russia in its efforts to keep peace in the former Soviet periphery, warning that „the threat of ethnic violence today is no less serious than the nuclear threat was yesterday, especially in the former Soviet republics”<sup>12</sup>. Russia's vigorous promotion of activist and partisan peacekeeping stood in marked contrast to the position of Western democracies taking a minimalist and neutrality-based approach.

After October 1993 the government's rhetoric became measurably tougher. It stressed Russia's special role in the „near abroad,” claimed the imperial heritage, linked Russian peacekeeping operations (as well as the withdrawal of the Russian troops from Latvia and Estonia) to the treatment of Russian minorities and Russian language rights, and denied the right of interference to third parties. Although the CSCE's mediation efforts in Russia's periphery were officially applauded, they were resisted *de facto* either by Russia (we can take care of the problem)<sup>13</sup>, or by Russia's clients of the moment.

An invocation of the imperial heritage became standard fare for the „liberal” foreign minister. In an oft-quoted interview with “Izvestiia” on October 8, 1993, Kozyrev pointed out that Russia's interest in dealing effectively with regional conflicts in the former Soviet Union stemmed from the desire not to lose “geopolitical positions that took centuries to conquer” and in an interview of November 24 with “Nezavisimaja Gazeta”, he said that by undertaking peacekeeping, and maintaining military bases in conflict zones, Russia had found the best compromise between two impossible options that faced it after the Soviet collapse: trying to keep the USSR together by force, or a total withdrawal. The latter would have been an “unwarranted loss” because „the periphery has been under Russian influence for centuries”<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> Susanne Crow, *Russia Asserts Its Strategic Agenda*, *ibid.*, pp. 2-4.

<sup>12</sup> Paul Lewis in the “New York Times”, September 29, 1993, p. all.

<sup>13</sup> In a conversation with the Swedish foreign minister, for example, October 19 in Moscow, Kozyrev stressed Russia's readiness to take care of the conflicts on its periphery. Expressing satisfaction with the CSCE willingness to mediate in the Caucasus, he nonetheless insisted that Russia will itself deal with Georgia's problems. Suzanne Crow in RFE/RL News Briefs October 18-22, 1993, October 20, p. 4.

<sup>14</sup> Suzanne Crow in *ibid.*, October 4-8, 1993, October 8, p. 7, November 22-26 and November 12, p. 9.

In November it was reported that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was apparently upgrading its work with former Soviet republics and members of the bloc to accommodate Russia's strengthening commitment to the policy of reasserting its influence in the former Soviet geopolitical space<sup>15</sup>. In January 1994 Kozyrev told a meeting of Russian ambassadors to the „near abroad” that Russian soldiers must remain there to prevent forces hostile to Russia from moving into the existing security vacuum. “We should not withdraw from those regions which have been the sphere of Russian interest for centuries”. A report that the statement applied also to the Baltic republics was later denied by the Foreign Ministry<sup>16</sup>.

Addressing the first joint session of the newly elected parliament on February 24, 1994, President Yeltsin strongly reaffirmed the government's commitment to the restoration of a strong Russian state the interests of which transcend the Federation's present borders:

“A strong and powerful Russian state is the most reliable and real guarantor of stability on the entire territory of the former Soviet Union... It is our duty to make the year 1994 the year of close attention to the problems of the people of Russian extraction living in neighboring states. When it comes to violations of the lawful rights of people of Russia, this is not an exclusive internal affair of some country, but also our national affair, an affair of our state”<sup>17</sup>.

The message sounded ominous in Ukraine, Moldova, the Baltic states, and other former Soviet republics and caused serious concern in East Central Europe. In the domestic context, however, it seemed moderate, in comparison with the views of Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, the leader of the ultra-nationalist Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), the second largest party, after Russia's Choice, in the new Duma, and the largest opposition party. In his electoral campaign Zhirinovskiy predicted that successor states will be reintegrated into Russia after “begging on their knees” to be readmitted. His wilder oratory envisages a reincarnated empire extending from Finland and Poland to Alaska, and “a vast drive to Russia's predestined borders on the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea”<sup>18</sup>. His more sober views, however, are not that far apart from the official policy. He says that he would be satisfied with the “borders of 1990”, at least for the time being. At the same time, a presidential spokesman talked of a future political and

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., November 27, 1993.

<sup>16</sup> *Newsbriefs*, “Ukrainian Weekly”, January 23, 1994, p. 2.

<sup>17</sup> Celestine Bohlen, *Yeltsin Urges Foes to Join in New Amity*, “New York Times”, February 25, 1994.

<sup>18</sup> Serge Schmemman, *Muscovite with Bravado*, “New York Times”, December 14, 1993, pp. A1, A16 and passim.

economic union, once a “few prickly nationalist weeds” are uprooted<sup>19</sup>. In a gesture reflecting the new mood, Russian- language television and radio, heard throughout the former Soviet Union, decided in March 1994 to drop the practice of pronouncing place names according to new official languages, returning instead to the old Russian pronunciation (for example, Belorussia instead of Belarus)<sup>20</sup>.

The strength of Zhirinovsky, and hence the danger of his views, lies not in the Duma, which has few powers under the new constitution, but in his constituency, which is broadly based. He capitalizes on the sense of utter humiliation brought about by the Soviet collapse, and on the hardships suffered by the people caught in the chaos of reform. He appeals to the unemployed young, the poverty-stricken seniors, the dispossessed, and the humiliated. The military figure prominently in the latter category. According to President Yeltsin, one-third of the military personnel voted for the LDP in the December elections; but the percentage was reported to have been higher in the elite forces<sup>21</sup>. More militant Russian minorities in the „near abroad” also voted heavily for the LDP: 32 percent in Latvia, and 48 percent in Estonia<sup>22</sup>. Zhirinovsky came third in the presidential elections of 1991, when he was relatively unknown, and he is gearing up to contest the presidency again in the next elections scheduled for 1996.

It was noted earlier that many liberal politicians regretted the break-up of the Soviet federation. This attitude was widely shared by the political centre, and by the communists who made a strong showing, coming in as the second strongest opposition party in the Duma<sup>23</sup>. Individual voices critical of the drive towards a re-assertion of Russia's imperial interests continue to be heard in the press and in academic circles<sup>24</sup>, but it is clear that the policy finds firm support across Russia's entire political spectrum. It is an open question, however, to what extent the support reflects the views of the

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<sup>19</sup> Vyacheslav Kostikov, September 1993, quoted in Elizabeth Teague, *The CIS: An Unpredictable Future*, RFE/RL Research Report 3, No. 1, 1994, p. 10.

<sup>20</sup> “Ottawa Citizen”, March 15, 1994, p. A9.

<sup>21</sup> Such as the Strategic Rocket Forces, the two Guards divisions stationed in Moscow and in the Moscow military districts. The figures were not considered to be reliable, however. See John Leppingwell in RFE/RL News Briefs, December 11-24, 1993, December 23, pp. 7-8.

<sup>22</sup> Saulius Girnius in RFE/RL News Briefs, December 14, 1993, p. 14.

<sup>23</sup> See Alexander Rahr, *The Implications of Russia's Parliamentary Elections*, pp. 32-37, RFE/RL Research Report 3, No. 1, January 7, 1994.

<sup>24</sup> Yuri N. Afanasyev, a historian and rector of the Russian State University for the Humanities, condemns the new “great power ideology” and warns that “Imperial ambitions will bring Russia to total ruin”. See *Russia's Vicious Circle*, “New York Times”, February 28, 1994, Op-Ed page, and his forthcoming article in “Foreign Affairs”. Melor Sturua, a political columnist for “Izvestiia”, called Russia's claim to historical geopolitical space “nothing less than an abbreviated version of the Brezhnev Doctrine”. *Ibid.*, October 27, 1993, p. A23.

population at large, apart from Zhirinovsky's militants. Public opinion surveys have shown basic indifference to foreign policy questions.

#### 4. Military Context

Arguably the military establishment and professional cadre were hit the hardest, in psychological and material sense, by the collapse of the Soviet system. The trauma started with the withdrawal from Afghanistan, and was maximized by subsequent blows to military morale and prestige: Gorbachev's military retrenchment which drastically reduced the resources available to the Soviet armed forces, cut their numbers, and scaled down their mission; the withdrawal from and the "loss" of Eastern Europe; and finally the break-up of the Soviet Union, the break-up of the forces, and partial withdrawal from the "near abroad". Military prestige sunk to the bottom, superpower status was lost, and the conscription base largely disappeared, leaving few Indians and too many chiefs. Living conditions, especially for the troops withdrawn from Eastern Europe, were un-supportable; and jobs, housing, and medical care were not available for the veterans, the retired, and the mustered out.

The shocks generated anger and resentment, nostalgia for the better past, and internal debates between traditionalists and the *Afgantsy* (Afghan veterans), the junior and the senior cadre, the Russians and the non-Russians, over the future shape and mission of the forces. As new national armies were created, most non-Russian officers opted for service in their own countries<sup>25</sup>. The ambiguity of the legal status of Soviet armies stranded in the "near abroad" became a bone of contention between Moscow and new national governments. Of the Russian cadre, some left the service, voluntarily or otherwise; some joined new national armies, largely for economic reasons. Local commanders proceeded to do "their own thing", that is, they built their own fiefdoms, meddled in local politics, and trafficked in arms, contributing to the general chaos<sup>26</sup>.

At the same time, however, the military gained unprecedented political influence. First, political instability made military support the crucial variable in political infighting. Yeltsin won the confrontation of August 1991 because the military supported the new

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<sup>25</sup> The effect was not as drastic as might have been expected, considering that approximately 80 percent of the officer cadre was ethnic Russian. New armies, on the other hand, suffered from a shortage of officers and NCOs, and hired many Russians to fill the jobs.

<sup>26</sup> For an overall assessment as of mid-1992, see chapters on *Russia in Post-Soviet Armies*, Special Issue, Post-Soviet Armies, RFE/RL Research Report 2, No. 25 (June 18, 1993), especially John W.R. Leppingwell, *Is the Military Disintegrating from Within?*, pp. 9-16.

Russia rather than the Soviet status quo; and he won again in the confrontation of October 1993 thanks to (rather reluctant) military support, thus incurring heavy political debts to the generals who backed him. Second, the government has become increasingly dependent on the military-industrial complex reincarnated in an alliance between the “industrialists’ lobby” and the military “patriots”. Third, the demise of the ruling Communist party broke the civilian fetters constraining top cadre’s political ambitions<sup>27</sup>. In the context of Yeltsin’s indebtedness to the armed forces, and his dependence on the centre-right constituency, the conversion to a neo-imperial outlook by some of government “liberals” might have been the function of politics rather than inclination.

A new hard-line military policy began to take shape with the decision of May 7, 1992, to create a new Russian Army, and the appointment, on May 18, of General of the Army Pavel Grachev, a paratrooper, an Afghan veteran, and a Yeltsin supporter in 1991 and 1993, to the post of minister of defence. Grachev leap-frogged over several more senior generals, and his appointment definitively ended speculation that a new minister of defence may be a civilian. Shortly, five out of six deputy minister slots were filled by the *Afgantsy*, young and militantly nationalist, including ex-commanders of forces in Afghanistan, Poland, and the Baltic military district.

The new military doctrine, long under discussion, emerged by mid-1993 and was approved in November. It was an activist doctrine designed explicitly to protect Russian nationals and Russian interests in the “near abroad” and implicitly to project Russia’s interests regionally and globally, and it was very much the product of the new military establishment<sup>28</sup>. The new main-threat perception was in local wars and regional conflicts. Accordingly, the new doctrine authorized military action in the “near abroad” to defend Russian communities there, to combat insurgencies, and to stop local conflicts-acting, in effect, as peacemakers in Russia’s interest. It also authorized domestic military intervention in the specific circumstances of a threat by force to constitutional order, attacks on chemical or nuclear installations, and hostilities by nationalist or separatist groups<sup>29</sup>.

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<sup>27</sup> See Stephen Foye, *Post-Soviet Russia: Politics and the New Russian Army*, *ibid.*, 1, No. 33 (August 21, 1992), pp. 5-12.

<sup>28</sup> This and the following four paragraphs analyzing the doctrine are largely based on two seminar reports by the Center For Naval Analyses (CNA) in Alexandria, Virginia. Seminar Report (July 1993) was based on discussion with Colonel General Vladimir Dworkin, head of the (formerly secret) Main Institute of the Armed Forces of the Russian Ministry of Defence dealing with Strategic Rocket Forces, and Dr Alexei Arbatov, head of the Centre for Geopolitical and Military Forecasting; CNA Seminar Report (November 1993), was based on the in-house discussion of Dworkin-Arbatov presentations.

<sup>29</sup> Reported in “New York Times”, November 3, 1993.

In a global context, the doctrine rejected the “no first use” of nuclear weapons (which at any rate was always largely declaratory, according to Russian spokesmen<sup>30</sup>), authorizing their use against other nuclear powers, or non-nuclear states with nuclear allies. The return to reliance on nuclear arms was justified by the loss of quantitative conventional superiority *vis-a-vis* NATO, by the development of new conventional technologies demonstrated during Desert Storm, and by the nuclear potential of aspiring members of the “nuclear club.” **Thus in preparing for war it was assumed that Russia would use nuclear forces, that it might have to use them first, and that it would use tactical nuclear weapons, especially against states with mass land armies, such as China** [Emphasis added in 2014].

Rejecting even a nominal role for the CIS command, in May 1993 Russia claimed exclusive control over the Strategic Rocket Forces (SRF) and insisted on the withdrawal of all nuclear weapons from the three new nuclear states and fellow CIS members, Ukraine, Belarus, and Kazakhstan. War planning was for “one-and-a-half-war” and there was no designated enemy. In a “one war” scenario, China was seen as a principal threat, and NATO would become one if “it extends eastward toward Russia’s border”. States aspiring to nuclear status represented a potential threat. A „half-war” operations would focus on “peacekeeping” reflecting the doctrine’s preoccupation with the “near abroad” and to carry out outside operations under international auspices.

In line with the new mission and reduced capabilities (it was estimated that Russian forces’ actual strength was sliding below the projected one and a half million, and that most units were at half-strength<sup>31</sup>), Russian forces were being drastically reduced and restructured, with special emphasis on defence and rapid deployment capabilities needed for the fulfilment of the new mission. Mobility and speed were the primary aim. The reform envisaged three basic force components: Constant Readiness Troops (CRT), mobile Rapid Deployment Forces (RDF), and Strategic Reserves.

The CRT’s mission is to react in local conflicts. Most were to be stationed in the North Caucasus Military District, the seat of a newly established army headquarters, and presumably in forward military bases negotiated with interested CIS members. The preoccupation with Transcaucasus as a “new frontline area” was reflected also in Russia’s efforts to raise the limits imposed by the 1990 treaty on conventional forces in Europe (CFE) on the forces stationed there. The RDF were to be more centrally located

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<sup>30</sup> The discussion with General Dworkin and Alexei Arbatov revealed that real control of nuclear weapons always was and still is “with the central command of the Strategic Forces and the General Staff”, and not with the politicians, as assumed in the West. See CNA Seminar Report (July 1993).

<sup>31</sup> Michael R. Gordon, *As Its World View Narrows*, “New York Times”, November 28, 1993, pp. A1 and A10.

but highly mobile to reinforce CRT's operations. Strategic Reserves were to be maintained in case of a broader conflict<sup>32</sup>.

Plans for command structure changes envisaged four to six geographic strategic commands replacing the military districts as basic operational divisions, with the districts converted into territorial mobilization units. At the lower level, corps and brigades were to replace divisions and armies as the basic units<sup>33</sup>. New forces were projected to include a much greater share of volunteers, reflecting both new emphasis on professionalism and high rates of draft evasion. More women were admitted. Contract soldiers were assured of better pay and living conditions. Approximately 110,000 volunteers were reported serving in August 1993, with the recruitment of an additional 150,000 planned for 1993, and a further 150,000 for 1994<sup>34</sup>.

A commentary in the Russian press, citing military specialists, expressed alarm over the aggressive nature of the doctrine and new political power acquired by the military. Reflecting on the domestic situation, a retired colonel was quoted as saying that "today no one has any doubts that it is the army which controls the situation in the country . . . what has begun is an era of order which will be brought about by us, the military". In the same vein, an officer of the General Staff noted that "power ministries" (defence and internal security) have never been closer "to the helm of political power". Turning to the "near abroad", a retired major-general commented that the more Russian military bases that are placed there, "the more quickly will the single economic and military union be restored". The same commentator also noted the doctrine's implied warning to the former bloc countries: "Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and even Ukraine, dreaming of entering into NATO, must understand that if they do this, it will instantaneously make them targets of Russia's SRF with all the consequences arising therefrom". A retired lieutenant-general opined that the hawks have won in the internal military debate<sup>35</sup>. A journalist quoted General Grachev at an internal briefing stating that "a decision had been made not to pull back to Russia's borders but to maintain old Soviet borders, especially in Central Asia and the Northern Caucasus"<sup>36</sup>.

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<sup>32</sup> This and the paragraph above are based on *Russia, The Military Balance 1993-1994*, London: Brassey's Ltd., 1993, p. 95.

<sup>33</sup> John W.R. Leppingwell, *Restructuring the Russian Military*, Special Issue: Post-Soviet Armies, RFE/RL Research Report, June 18, 1993, pp. 17-32.

<sup>34</sup> Stephen Foye in RFE/RL News Briefs, August 30-September 3, 1993, September 1, p. 4.

<sup>35</sup> Alexander Zhilin, *Military policy and a war of politicians*, "Moscow News", No. 48, November 26, 1993, p. 3.

<sup>36</sup> Pavel Felgengauer, correspondent for *Sevodnya*, as reported in Steven Erlanger, *Troops in Ex-Soviet Lands*, "New York Times", November 30, 1993, pp. A1 and A12.

The warnings seem well taken. At the same time the doctrine and its implementation have to be measured against the dimensions of the real situation, namely Russia's social and economic crisis, international constraints (such as they are), and the resistance, open and covert, of the target states.

## 5. Peacekeeping in Action: domestic and the "near abroad"<sup>37</sup>

When the CIS was formed it was decided to convert the Soviet armed forces (SAF) into joint military forces under CIS command. But because the organization failed to develop either political control agencies or an apparatus for coordination of the activities of the member states, the one viable channel of political control was the personal relationship between President Yeltsin and Marshal Evgenii Shaposhnikov (another of Yeltsin's August 1991 supporters) the new commander-in-chief of the joint forces.

This only reinforced the perception that the forces were in fact run by and for the Russians, and led to Ukraine's decision to establish a national Ukrainian army on the basis of the military forces stationed on Ukrainian territory; Moldova and Azerbaijan followed suit, and eventually the others. The division was formalized at the February 1992 summit, which agreed to divide the SAF into three components: the Strategic Rocket Forces which were to remain under the joint CIS command, General Purpose Forces (also under the joint command), and national armies of member states.

Two fateful decisions were taken in May 1993. The first was to create a national Russian army. The second was to create a regional security system under CIS auspices that would be subordinated to Russia's policy and interests: the Tashkent Collective Security Treaty. Together they changed the character of the CIS. When Russia's national army was established, General Grachev took over the old Soviet Defence Ministry and the General Staff from Marshall Shaposhnikov, while Shaposhnikov and the Joint Command moved to the old and empty Warsaw Pact headquarters, where they remained, a command without an army. Russia's position from the beginning was to oppose the formation of CIS forces in peacetime, and to claim exclusive control over nuclear forces under the Lisbon START I Protocol. The claim was disputed by the three CIS members; Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and Belarus, which inherited 10,6 and 4 percent of the Strategic Rocket Forces, respectively. The question of the status of the nuclear forces (which

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<sup>37</sup> This section is based largely on two articles by Stephen Foye, *The Soviet Legacy*, RFE/RL Research Report, Special Issue: Post-Soviet Armies 2, No. 25, June 18, 1993, pp. 1-9, and *The Armed Forces of the CIS*, *ibid.* 3, No. 1, January 7, 1994, pp. 18-21; Dmitry Trenin, 'Blue Helmets' for the CIS, "New Times International", May 1993, pp. 14-17; *The Military Balance 1993-1994*, *ibid.* and RFE/RL News Briefs, 1994, *passim*.

included also naval and air components), led to an open conflict between Russia and Ukraine – still unresolved in the spring of 1994 – and seriously weakened the organization. Belarus and Kazakhstan agreed to submit their nuclear weapons to Russia, but have been dragging their feet on the implementation.

The May 1993 CIS collective security treaty signed in Tashkent provided an umbrella for the new security arrangements, but only six out of eleven CIS members, all in dire need of Russian support and protection, signed the treaty (Armenia and all Central Asian republics except Turkmenistan). The SRF were excluded from under the CIS jurisdiction, as already noted. The status of the General Purpose Forces was unclear, and was regulated by bilateral treaties. The joint forces were mostly stationed in the conflict zones of Transcaucasus and Central Asia; some were under joint Russian-national command (Turkmenistan); in the four other Central Asian republics they were under national command. There were also Russian forces in the area, under Russian command, such as the notorious 14th Army in Moldova, the 4th and 7th Armies in the Transcaucasus, and the 201st Motor Rifle Division in Tajikistan. These were the forces which were engaged in “peacekeeping”. As shall be seen below, some were specifically designated as peacekeeping contingents under UN criteria and were officially, if not necessarily in practice, multinational in composition. Others claimed peacekeeping status but were really engaged in Russia’s peacemaking.

In addition to different perceptions of the nature of the strategic and joint forces, differences emerged between the Russian Defence Ministry and the CIS command, supported by CIS members, over a proposed new security system. Shaposhnikov and CIS members favoured a NATO-like structure, while the Russian Defence Ministry pressed for arrangements resembling the Warsaw Pact. By mid-1993, Russian pressure and intransigence intensified, based on a perception in Russian political and military circles that the CIS command was “a fig leaf that Moscow can no longer afford and ... may not need”<sup>38</sup>.

At the June 15 Moscow meeting of the CIS defence ministers a decision was taken to abolish the CIS joint military command. Its replacement, on a temporary basis, was the chief of the joint staff for coordinating military cooperation between CIS states, with reduced staff and limited duties. The decision was apparently passed unanimously (shades of recent history!). The details of future arrangements were hazy<sup>39</sup>, probably because Ukraine continued to resist, even though other recalcitrant CIS members were

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<sup>38</sup> Stephen Foye, *The Soviet Legacy*, *ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>39</sup> Alexander Zhilin, *The CIS Army Starts from Scratch*, “Moscow News”, No. 36, September 3, 1993, p. 3.

brought back to heel thanks to a year of energetic Russian “peacekeeping”, as shall be seen below. A Western observer described the June 15 decision as „the penultimate nail in the CIS’s military coffin”<sup>40</sup>. Indications were that the future of the organization would be shaped along the lines familiar to the students of the Warsaw Pact.

Peacekeeping was a part of CIS security arrangements under Shaposhnikov. An agreement on peacekeeping (signed by all CIS members except Turkmenistan) was concluded in March 1992. But initially the peacekeeping capacity of the former Soviet forces was limited, and there were differences in the perceptions of the nature and utility of peacekeeping, as well as a reluctance to get involved in the ethnic conflicts of the former periphery, although contingents were sent to Moldova and to South Ossetia and, internationally, to the former Yugoslavia<sup>41</sup>. At the same time there is evidence that from the beginning there were elements in Moscow directly fomenting separatist pro-Moscow movements in the autonomous units of the national republics in order to subvert the latter’s drive for independence<sup>42</sup>.

It was only with the change in Russia’s military leadership and an emergence of a coordinated Russian foreign and military policy that peacekeeping was adopted as a preferred instrument for the restoration of Russia’s hegemony in the „near abroad.” By the end of 1993 the Russian army had a peacekeeping division in specialized training, one regiment of which was monitoring a ceasefire in the Dniester republic, while a battalion was peacekeeping in Ossetia<sup>43</sup>. In addition, regular and border forces were deployed for “peacekeeping” in Central Asia and Transcaucasus.

The new emphasis on peacekeeping, in early 1994, was reflected in the attention paid to it by political and military leaders. The army’s holiday was celebrated by President Yeltsin by praising military personnel for their peacekeeping operations in trouble spots, and by Defence Minister Grachev stressing the troops’ contribution in preventing further bloodshed in Moldova, Ossetia, Abkhazia, and Tajikistan. Grachev disclosed that some sixteen thousand Russian peacekeepers served in the “near and far abroad”. At another occasion the minister of defence described the peacekeeping in the former

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<sup>40</sup> *The Military Balance 1993-1994*, *ibid.*, p. 93.

<sup>41</sup> See Suzanne Crow, *The Theory and Practice of Peacekeeping in the Former USSR*, pp. 31-36, and *Russian Peacekeeping: Defence, Diplomacy, or Imperialism?*, pp. 37-40, RFE/RL Research Report 11, No. 37, September 18, 1992.

<sup>42</sup> The KGB was instrumental in organizing the drive for autonomy in Abkhazia and South Ossetia in order first to prevent and then to subvert Georgia’s independence. See Svetlana Chervonnaya, *The Technology of the Abkhazian War*, “Moscow News”, No. 24, October 15, 1993, pp. 1-4. See also *Military Balance 1993-1994*, *ibid.*, p. 93.

<sup>43</sup> John W.R. Leppingwell, *Restructuring the Russian Military*, p. 20.

Soviet space as necessary for the protection of Russian lives there, in the absence of other security safeguards. The chorus of praise would be incomplete without Foreign Minister Kozyrev, who, for his part, emphasized international legitimacy of Russian peacekeeping operations. According to Kozyrev, they were “now traditional” in terms of UN practice because they were “carried out in the territory of neighbouring countries where Russia has serious economic and other interests”, a somewhat novel interpretation of UN usages. But Kozyrev diverged somewhat from the general Russian tune by welcoming the presence of UN or CSCE observers – an anathema for the military – and speaking of Russia’s desire for “serious help”. The invitation was hedged, however, by saying that the “right moment” for foreign observers to come was after a cease-fire, when they could be a “third force” supporting Russian troops<sup>44</sup>.

The instrumental value of a Russian military presence and peacekeeping in 1993-94 for Russian neo-imperial interests is best illustrated by analyzing the sequence of events in the now largely pacified hot spots.

## 6. The Caucasus

Enough has been said already about the Caucasus area to underscore its crucial importance to Russia as well as its politically and militarily volatile character. It has had the dubious distinction of harbouring three out of the five hot spots: the Armenian-Azerbaijani war over Nagorno-Karabakh; the conflicts attendant at Georgia’s national integration; and separatism and warfare in North Caucasus.

The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict was the first to erupt in February 1988, reflecting the desire of the Armenian population of the enclave (the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Province, NKAO) in Azerbaijan to join Armenia, from which it has been divided by a relatively narrow Azeri-populated territory. This extremely complex struggle involved the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan, three rounds of fighting and high casualties and “ethnic cleansing” on both sides (with one million displaced Azeris and half a million displaced Armenians, and up to twenty thousand military and civilian casualties)<sup>45</sup>, covert and overt Russian military intervention which ran the gamut from a hands-off policy, to support first for Armenia

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<sup>44</sup> Suzanne Crow and Stephen Foye, in RFE/RL Daily Report, No. 38, February 24, 1994.

<sup>45</sup> Estimated by UN sources. *Caucasus City Falls to Armenian Forces*, “New York Times”, August 24, 1993, p. A7 and passim.

then for Azerbaijan, to an imposition of a Pax Russica, and efforts at mediation by the border states Turkey and Iran, the UN, NATO, and CSCE<sup>46</sup>.

First clashes between Armenia and Azerbaijan came over NKAO's February 1988 declaration of intent to join Armenia, followed by three days of massacre of Armenians in the town of Sumgait near Baku. There are indications that the riots might have been manipulated by the KGB; at any rate, the upshot was the Soviet military occupation of Azerbaijan, as well as Yerevan, the capital of Armenia, and NKAO, which stymied the political momentum of Azeri nationalist Popular Front, and was of assistance to the Armenians.

The second round came after the collapse of the Soviet Union, with a January 1992 Armenian attack (formally from NKAO but aided and abetted by Armenia) to open up a corridor between the enclave and Armenia. Azeri appeal for Russian military assistance was turned down, and Russian troops were in fact withdrawn on February 28 from Nagorno-Karabakh on the orders of Marshal Shaposhnikov. Numerous reports indicated the troops' involvement on the Armenian side, including elements of the 4th and the 7th Russian armies and paratroops. Since the CIS joint command denied any such involvement, it might therefore have been the local commanders' private initiative. Militarily, the result of the action was the opening up of the Lachin corridor between NKAO and Armenia. Politically, the Azeri defeat resulted in a change of government, with the nationalist Popular Front under Abulfaz Elchibey coming to power in March 1992. The new government took Azerbaijan out of the CIS. The Armenian victory was followed by efforts at international mediation and negotiations of numerous ceasefires neither one of which lasted.

The third round came in April 1993, with another Armenian offensive. By August the Armenians opened two new corridors between NKAO and Armenia – in the north (by taking Kelbajar) and in the south (by taking Fizuli), evicting Azeris from the area in between. Again numerous reports indicated Russian military support for Armenia. Rapid Armenian advances, ethnic cleansing, and high human losses caused great international concern, especially in Turkey and Iran (a substantial Azeri minority lives across the border in Iran), both of which issued warnings. The late Turkish president Turgut Ozal accused Russia of interfering<sup>47</sup>. A CSCE meeting in Rome authorized sending a one thousand strong peacekeeping contingent once a ceasefire was arranged.

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<sup>46</sup> Coverage in the NKAO section is based on the reports in "New York Time's", "Ottawa Citizen", RFE/RL Research Reports and News Briefs and Robert V. Barylski, *The Caucasus, Central Asia and Near Abroad Syndrome, Conclusion*, "Central Asia Monitor", No. 5, 1993, pp. 21-28.

<sup>47</sup> *Turk says Russia is Tangled in Caucasus War*, "New York Times", April 15, 1993, p. A9.

The Azeri disaster in the third round resulted in the overthrow of Elchibey's nationalist government by a military coup in favour of Haidar Aliiev, a former member of the Brezhnev Politbureau who, since the Soviet collapse, was a parliamentary leader of Nakhichevan, an Azeri enclave in Armenia on the border with Iran. With Azerbaijan facing imminent disintegration, Aliiev turned to Moscow seeking reconciliation and assistance. A round of Moscow-sponsored negotiations followed. In late October Russia threw its support behind Azerbaijan. On October 25 Russia demanded a stop to the Armenian offensive, and the following day Azerbaijan rejoined the CIS. A rumoured undercover deployment of Russian troops saved the Azeri army from collapse, and prevented further Armenian penetration. On February 18, 1994, a ceasefire was signed in Moscow between Azerbaijan and Armenia, mediated by General Grachev. It allowed the Armenians to keep the Lachin corridor, but not the 1993 gains, and it opened the way for the stationing of Russian troops on the borders with Turkey and Iran and the establishment of Russian military bases in Azerbaijan and Armenia.

In Georgia a similar sequence of events took place. Conflicts had been generated there both by separatist aspirations of the Muslim minorities and by the rivalry between factions contending for the leadership of an independent Georgia. Georgia's nationalists spearheaded the drive for independence and, gaining power in the elections of the fall of 1990 under Zviad Gamsakhurdia, refused to join the CIS when it was established. Moscow's response was to foment separatist aspirations of the Abkhazians in the Abkhaz Autonomous Republic and the Ossetins in South Ossetia. In 1989 the Abkhaz demanded a union republic status (even though ethnic Abkhaz constituted only 17 per cent of the population) and secession from Georgia. They allied themselves in the next two years with the Muslims of North Caucasus (in the Russian Federation), organized in the Confederation of the Mountain Peoples against Georgia<sup>48</sup>.

An Abkhaz challenge in August 1992 was met by force by the Georgians, led at this point by Eduard Shevardnadze, the former Soviet foreign minister and previously first secretary of Georgia's Communist party. In the resulting struggle the Abkhaz won, forcing the Georgian population, along with Georgian troops, out of Abkhazia. The Georgians and independent observers credit the Abkhaz victory solely to Russian military assistance. "My conviction is that the plan for the occupation of Sukhumi [Abkhaz capital] has been drawn up in Russian headquarters"<sup>49</sup>, Shevardnadze was quoted as saying on September 28, 1993.

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<sup>48</sup> Svetlana Chervonnaya, *Technology of the Abkhazian War*, *ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> *Georgian Leader Charges Atrocity*, "New York Times", September 29, 1993, p. A9.

These allegations were vigorously denied by Moscow. With Georgian forces in retreat, Shevardnadze's ousted nationalist rival, Gamsakhurdia, decided to stage a comeback, scoring impressive successes. Pushed to the wall, Shevardnadze appealed to Moscow for help, and in a change of front, Russian troops came to his rescue. But the price was steep and deeply resented in Georgia.

Shevardnadze joined the two other Transcaucasian leaders in Moscow for a round of peace talks in early October, which resulted in a comprehensive peace settlement on Russian terms. On October 8 he signed the statement declaring Georgia's entry into the CIS, followed by the status-of-forces agreement which legitimized the presence of the Russian forces already in the country and authorized the stationing of additional Russian troops and the use of the Poti Black Sea naval base. A Russian-Georgian Friendship Treaty, signed in Tbilisi on February 3, 1994, allows Russia to maintain three military bases in Georgia after 1995, and provides for the Russian military to train and supply the Georgian army, as well as to station troops on the Turkish border.

There was talk also of Georgia coming back into the ruble zone. For his part Shevardnadze has tried to dilute the weight of the Russian presence by negotiating with the West. On a March 1994 visit to Washington, he extracted an American promise of economic help and of a peacekeeping force to be sent to Georgia to "help in the civil war". The latter was hedged by so many conditions that implementation did not seem likely; it was seen by American officials nonetheless as having a potential to go "a long way toward lessening Russia's influence" in the region<sup>50</sup>.

The Muslim peoples of North Caucasus regard the Russian change of front as a betrayal, and continue to agitate for greater autonomy. These include the Abkhaz (who asked for a Russian peacekeeping force to be deployed there to defend them from the Georgians), the Ossetins (an officially multiethnic but *de facto* Russian peacekeeping contingent has been in South Ossetia since July 1992), Chechenya (which unilaterally declared independence), Ingushetiya (in conflict with the Ossetins over the recovery of their former area of settlement), and Daghestan. Moscow sees the Russian military presence in the region both as a safeguard against Muslim regional powers and against the Muslims of the Caucasus turning against the Russian Federation<sup>51</sup>.

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<sup>50</sup> Steven Greenhouse, *Georgian Asks U.S. to Back Peace Force*, "New York Times", March 8, 1994, p. A10.

<sup>51</sup> Robert V. Baryliski, *Caucasus*, Part I, "Central Asia Monitor" No 4, 1993, pp. 31-37 and Ludmila Leontyeva, *Where Do Russia's Southern Borders Pass?*, "Moscow News", No. 46, November 12, 1993, p. 12. Except for the Abkhaz and South Ossetia, the others (including North Ossetia) are located in the Russian Federation. The Chechen and the Ingush were deported to Central Asia in World War Two, and were allowed to return only after Stalin's death. In the meantime the Ossetins took over Ingush property and have been unwilling to give it back. This has led to fighting and eventually Russian peacekeeping.

The gain, for Russia, of the 1993 peacemaking in the Caucasus region has been the return to the “family” of two of the stray sheep, however unwillingly, as well as the re-establishment there of a commanding military presence. General Grachev was quoted as saying that „Russia intends to keep three military bases in Georgia and five military bases in the Caucasus as a whole, with a total troop strength of 23,000.” Their task, under the CIS security treaty, will be to “protect the region against outside threat”<sup>52</sup>. The importance to Russia of the Caucasus region was underscored by Moscow’s request of October 1993 to other signatories of the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty for an upward revision of the limits imposed by the treaty on flank deployment of weapons in the region. It is improbable that other CFE signatories will comply with this request.

## 7. Central Asia

Central Asia is another frontier which Russia considers vital for several reasons. Strategically it borders on China and the Islamic world. Its Muslim population is vulnerable to the influence both of fundamentalist Islam (of which Iran is the fountainhead) and Pan-Turkic ideas emanating from Turkey, which extends to the Muslim population within the Russian Federation. The region’s natural resources are rich and largely unexplored: Kazakh and Turkmen oil and gas are the prime example. In the Soviet period Central Asia was in many ways considered a provincial backwater and an economic burden. This view persisted through the last days of the Soviet Union and new Russia’s first year of independence, particularly since Central Asian political leaders, both old and new, felt too dependent on Russia to strike out on their own. But the situation and perceptions had changed on both sides by the end of 1992. The Russians woke up to the dangers of foreign penetration through the soft southern underbelly, and Central Asians took new foreign and economic policy initiatives.

The incumbent Central Asian political leaders recognize their continued dependence on and the need for the Russian security umbrella. Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan joined the CIS as it was created and signed the Tashkent Collective Security Treaty. Turkmenistan made its own security arrangements with Russia. Neither had ambitions to develop national armies and have only now begun to do so under Russian

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<sup>52</sup> Celestine Bohlen, *Russia and Georgia Sign Military Cooperation Treaty*, “New York Times”, February 4, 1994. Other sources used in this section were Raymond Bonner, *Pact with Russia Bedevils Georgian*, *ibid.*, December 9, 1993; Robert V. Baryliski, *Caucasus*, Part I, *ibid.*, pp. 35-37; Akaki Mikadze, *CIS Worse than Slavery?*, “Moscow News”, No. 42, October 15, 1993, p. 4.

prodding Central Asians recognize their economic dependence on Russia; at the same time they have all pursued policies to develop economic and political contacts among themselves, with regional powers and with the West. In January 1994 the two largest, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, joined by Kyrgyzstan, agreed to create a common market by the year 2000<sup>53</sup>. All but Tajikistan have established their own currency. In 1992 the five Central Asian states plus Azerbaijan and Afghanistan joined the Economic Cooperation Organization, newly established by Turkey, Iran, and Pakistan. Along with other former Soviet republics all five joined the CSCE. Individually each has been developing closer relations with Turkey and Iran, and reaching out to the West – Kazakhstan in particular – on the economic and political front.

The perception in Moscow is that politically and economically Central Asia may be slipping out of Russia's exclusive grasp. The perceived danger to Russian interests represented by the Islamic political forces, secular nationalism, and democratic liberalism has contributed to greater Russian interest, tougher policies in the region, and the concern over Russian minorities living there. In November 1993 Kozyrev made a tour of the area, pressing hard for dual citizenship and closer cooperation.

Central Asia's hot spot has been Tajikistan. With Islamic penetration in the background, the Tajik civil war has involved a range of regional and local issues: internal diversity – ethnic and clan-based – a contest between the old and the new forces, and the ties, by Tajik groups, with elements across the Afghan border. It started when the formation of a national government (built on an alliance between liberal democrats, secular nationalists, and Islamic revivalists) was contested by the ousted communist *nomenklatura*. Each side had support in specific regions of the country. The communists won because of Russian military help, and have been maintained in power by the Russian troops and Russian border guards, while the opposition fled – the religious elements to Afghanistan, the secular democratic and nationalist intelligentsia to Moscow. By the end of 1993 it was estimated that the losses in the Tajik civil war amounted to some twenty-five thousand casualties with much greater numbers of displaced civilian refugees.

The Russian military presence and operations in Tajikistan have been based on a bilateral treaty concluded under the CIS collective security arrangements and are explicitly designated as peacekeeping, by Russia and the other Central Asian signatories. The Russian contingent (under Russian command) consists of the 201st Motorized Rifles Division (at full strength and consisting entirely of volunteers) and a division

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<sup>53</sup> *News and Comments*, "Central Asia Monitor" No. 1, 1994, p. 2.

of Border Guards stationed on the Tajik-Afghan border, with troops in almost daily combat. According to General Boris Pyankov, commander-in-chief of the peacekeeping forces in Tajikistan speaking on December 22, 1993, the promised Uzbek, Kazakh, and Kyrgyz contingents have yet to materialize, the funding problems have not been resolved, and so far the UN and CSCE have not agreed to designate the forces as a peacekeeping mission, because of the questions raised by the United States of Russian neutrality<sup>54</sup>. By the end of 1993 Tajikistan received 70 percent of its budget from Russia; it was the only one among Central Asian states to join the ruble zone and to subordinate its fiscal policies to Russia in exchange for military assistance, becoming in fact a Russian client state. At the same time new security agreements were signed. Russia and the four states agreed to set up a "coalition" peacekeeping force in Tajikistan, and the signatory states of the CIS Collective Security Treaty signed an agreement to set up a common air defence system and to develop joint forces<sup>55</sup>.

Turkmenia preferred to stay outside the CIS system but, as noted earlier, has concluded separate military arrangements with Russia. An agreement of July 1992 provided for Russia's defence of Turkmenistan (with the costs of the 108,000 Russian troops stationed there to be paid by Turkmenistan), for the joint command over the Russian forces and for Russian officers to build up and train the Turkmen army. Another agreement of military cooperation was signed on September 2, 1993; it allows Russian citizens to carry out their military service in Turkmenistan, and Turkmen officers to be trained in Russia, and provides for Russian military bases in Turkmenistan. A follow-up agreement of December 23 allows for the deployment of Russian border guards along the Turkmen border with Iran and Afghanistan; an accord on dual citizenship for Russians resident in Turkmenistan was signed at the same time<sup>56</sup>. Turkmenistan, so far, is the only former Soviet republic which signed a dual citizenship agreement.

With the conclusion of these agreements the Grachev postulate of stationing Russian troops along the entire southern borders of the former Soviet Union was carried out, and a new joint defence system under the CIS began to take shape.

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<sup>54</sup> RFE/RL News Briefs, December 11-24, 1993, esp. Suzanne Crow, December 23, p. 12.

<sup>55</sup> Robert V. Baryl'ski, *Caucasus, Conclusions*, ibid., pp. 24-27; Steven Erlanger, *Troops in Ex-Soviet Lands*, "New York Times", November 30, 1993, pp. A1 and A12; *News and Comments*, "Central Asia Monitor", No. 5, 1993, pp. 1-2 and 7.

<sup>56</sup> Robert V. Baryl'ski, *Caucasus, Conclusions*, ibid., p. 35; *News and Comments*, "Central Asia Monitor", No. 5, 1993, p. 3 and *Russia Agrees to Patrol Turkmenistan Borders*, "New York Times", December 24, 1993.

## 8. Moldova's Dniester Republic

The western hot spot, currently quiescent but not resolved, erupted in March 1992, when a region of Moldova, located on the left bank of the Dniester and populated primarily by ethnic Russians, declared independence as the "Dniester republic". The break came over Moldova's professed desire to join Romania. (Moldova is the former Romanian Bessarabia that had been annexed by the Soviet Union during World War Two; the trans-Dniester region, on the other hand, was a part of the USSR in the inter-war period). In the struggle which ensued, the ex-Soviet 14th Army fought with the Dniester rebels against Moldova. The Russian government and military high command disclaimed any knowledge of the action but offered peacekeeping services instead, to be performed by the very same 14th Army. The offer was rejected by Moldova, negotiations proceeded in the CIS, and the fighting continued. By early July CIS members agreed to send a peacekeeping force composed of Russian (not the 14th Army), Moldovan, Ukrainian, Belarussian, Romanian, and Bulgarian contingents. But within a week the last three opted out, while Moldova, frightened by Russian threats, appealed to the CSCE. The UN/CSCE were unable and/ or unwilling to act, and in the circumstances Moldova had no choice but to accept Russian peacekeeping. An agreement between the Moldovan and Russian presidents provided for a Russian, Moldovan, and Dniester peacekeeping force, while recognizing the formal autonomy of the Dniester region, thus institutionalizing the partition. The Russian contingent (an additional two thousand troops) arrived by the end of July, but the 14th Army stayed on and an uneasy peace has prevailed since<sup>57</sup>.

Moldova continued its efforts to "internationalize" the dispute and to achieve the withdrawal of Russian forces through 1993, the more so because the Russian Federation openly supported the Dniester republic, and the 14th Army helped in the creation of a Dniester army which, with a strength of eight thousand, doubled the size of the Russian forces there. Bilateral negotiations with Russia over troop withdrawal brought no results, and Russia refused to accept the presence of, or inspection by, a CSCE mission in the disputed territory as requested by the Moldovans. These actions placed Russian demands for a UN peacekeeping mandate in a doubtful light. At the same time strong Russian pressure was brought to bear on Moldova to return to the CIS. Customs duties and excise taxes were imposed on Moldovan agricultural exports to Russia on

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<sup>57</sup> Suzanne Crow, *The Theory and Practice of Peacekeeping in the Former USSR*, RFE/RL Research Report 1, No. 37, September 18, 1992, pp. 31-36.

August 1. The duties priced Moldova out of the Russian market and made payments for the imports of Russian raw materials and fuel impossible. The customs duties were partly rescinded at the end of December when the Moldovan government promised to rejoin CIS economic and political structures after Moldova's 1994 elections<sup>58</sup>.

By the beginning of 1994 it was clear that Moldova, along with the Transcaucasian and Central Asian republics and Belarus<sup>59</sup> had been drawn back into the Russian orbit. The main showdown as the year progressed promised to be with Ukraine, over outstanding issues of territorial claims, division of nuclear and other assets, and Russian minority rights<sup>60</sup>. The relations with the Baltic republics also promised to be tense because of the problem of Russian minorities and the continued, if reduced, presence there of the Russian troops.

## 9. International Peacekeeping

Russian participation in international peacekeeping began with two contingents sent to the former Yugoslavia early in 1992. At the time it was a matter of prestige, influence, and commitment to the prevention of aggression. Justifying the action before Parliament, President Yeltsin also mentioned that the experience gained would be helpful in dealing with the Federation's domestic problems<sup>61</sup>. The decision to participate in an international operation, which in the Russian popular mind was designed to stop the Serbs in their efforts to rebuild the Serbian state, did not win popularity contests in Russian nationalist circles. First, it was seen as a betrayal, by the "traitors" Yeltsin and Kozyrev, of the traditions of Russian-Serb friendship and anti-Muslim struggle. Second, it had an uncomfortable domestic relevance – namely, defending the rights of break-away republics.

The two contingents of Russian peacekeepers of approximately twelve hundred men, one stationed in Krajina and the other in Bosnia, were generally welcomed by the

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<sup>58</sup> Vladimir Socor, *Moldova: Democracy Advances, Independence at Risk*, RFE/RL Research Report 3, No. 1, January 7, 1994, pp. 47-50.

<sup>59</sup> Belarus joined the military and economic union under the CIS in December and the reform pro-independence president, Stanislav Shushkevich, was ousted by Parliament in January. The leader of the opposition described the removal as "a creeping communist coup aimed at eliminating Belarussian statehood", while his deputy said: "Now the last stage of the reconstitution of the Russian empire will begin". Steven Erlanger, *Belarus Says Aide's Ouster Won't Stop Reform*, "New York Times", January 28, 1994.

<sup>60</sup> In the candid opinion of two military specialists (General Dworkin and Dr Alexei Arbatov), **a showdown with Ukraine is coming, with or without a nuclear dimension, it's inevitable**. CNA Seminar Report, July 9, 1993.

<sup>61</sup> Suzanne Crow, *Russian Peacekeeping*, *ibid.*, pp. 39-40.

local Serbs. But even more welcome were Russian volunteers who came to fight in the Serbian cause. Late in 1992 there were two detachments of such volunteers, one fighting in Bosnia and another in Herzegovina. In addition, individual military specialists served in Serbian units – at least one or two in every unit, according to Serbian commanders interviewed by a Russian paper. With recruiting centres in Moscow and St. Petersburg, there was no evidence of official sponsorship for the volunteers, but strong support for the Serbian cause was noted among recently retired Russian officers<sup>62</sup>.

A new perception of the value of international peacekeeping came with the success of the Russian “peacekeeping” in the “near abroad” coupled with accumulated frustrations of being treated as a junior partner in international forums. The latter was particularly galling in the case of Bosnia – the Balkans have traditionally been Russia’s sphere of interest – where the peacekeeping has been run pretty much as a joint NATO-UN operation, which effectively left out the Russians. Matters came to a head over the February 1994 air strikes ultimatum to Bosnia’s Serbs over the shelling of Sarajevo; the Russians were opposed, but have had no say in the decision.

In a brilliant tour de force which was a surprise to their Western partners, the Russians at one stroke took the allies off the hook in the matter of enforcing the air strikes, made the Sarajevo ceasefire stick thanks to their influence over the Serbs, and injected themselves back into the policy making as a senior partner. Domestically the move has helped to rehabilitate the image of the government in the eyes of nationalists, with Foreign Minister Kozyrev and particularly the deputy minister, Vitaly Churkin, as the main heroes of the initiative. An additional Russian contingent sent to help in maintaining the ceasefire was greeted by the local Serbs with great enthusiasm, raising some Western doubts of Russian neutrality<sup>63</sup>. But the peace held and probable Western casualties were avoided, so everyone but the Muslims were pleased. The Serbs’ face was saved and their territorial gains in Bosnia were secured. Last but not least, by using the traditional Russian-Serbian friendship the Russians turned a liability into an asset and introduced a novel idea into Western peacekeeping – namely, that interested parties not only can but should participate.

The move was an important step also in Russia’s new quest for great power status. Acting effectively as one evoked the treatment desired. In the aftermath, the United States agreed to admit Russia to the discussions of the Bosnian problem (“the first time

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<sup>62</sup> Lyudmila Telen, *Yugoslavia: the Russians Have Come* and Igor Nekrasov, *As Told by Yuri Bebyayev*, “Moscow News Weekly”, No. 49, 1992, p. 12.

<sup>63</sup> “New York Times”, February 16-22, 1994, *passim*.

that the United States agreed to include Russia in such discussions”<sup>64</sup>) and agreed to a joint sponsorship of a conference on the crisis. Entering the Bosnian conflict, Russia has taken the first step towards acceptance as an equal partner in a new concert of Europe. Peacemaking may also be the lever to bring Russia back into great powers councils in the Middle East and in East Asia, as it has offered peacekeeping services in the Israeli-Palestinian crisis and, most recently, in offering to defuse the gathering confrontation with North Korea.

## Conclusions

“Peacemaking’ has become a central element in Russia’s foreign policy” stated Andrei Kozyrev, Russia’s foreign minister, at a Geneva conference on the protection of war victims on August 31, 1993<sup>65</sup>. It is not clear whether the substitution of “peacemaking” for “peacekeeping” was intentional; it might have been because he then pointed out that Russian actions in Moldova and Ossetia stopped the bloodshed, while Western efforts in the former Yugoslavia did not. But even if unintentional, the word substitution underscores the difference between the UN and the Russian style of peacekeeping. The UN peacekeeping requires strict neutrality on the part of the participating contingents; it is not undertaken unless a ceasefire is already in place, and is limited to separating the belligerents and maintaining the ceasefire; it precludes active military interference except in self-defence. The Russian peacekeeping has actually served national interests. It allows (requires) military intervention to stop the fighting and/ or to achieve peacekeepers’ political/ strategic objectives; and it allows for the use of force in peace maintenance. United Nations’ peacekeeping cannot be undertaken without an international mandate; Russian peacekeeping has been mostly undertaken unilaterally, sometimes co-opting partners for greater credibility, and an international mandate has been sought in some, but not all, cases.

In short, Russia’s peacekeeping is really peacemaking, and it has been an instrument of national policy in Russia’s quest for the restoration of its great power status and the dominant role in its historical geostrategic space. The goals and the perceptions have been clearly articulated by Foreign Minister Kozyrev, in a symbolic gauntlet thrown to the United States on the pages of the “New York Times”<sup>66</sup>.

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<sup>64</sup> Douglas Jake, *Serbs Compliance Cheers US Aids*, *ibid.*, February 21, 1994, p. A6.

<sup>65</sup> RFE/RL News Briefs, August 30-September 3, 1993; and Suzanne Crow, September 1, 1993, p. 4.

<sup>66</sup> Andrei Kozyrev, *Don't Threaten Us*, “New York Times”, March 18, 1994, p. A29.

“We, Russian democrats” he argues, are engaged in „the transformation of the volatile post-Communist orbit into a stable, democratic order” (obviously assuming Russia’s automatic succession rights to the post-communist orbit), but “have met fierce political – even armed – resistance”. Here he refers, presumably, to the efforts of the “near abroad” to maintain independence and to East Central Europe’s objections to Russia’s exercising its veto power on their behalf. “Sadly”, continues Kozyrev, “in these confused days we are neither understood nor adequately supported by our natural friends and allies in the West. Even at this critical moment... we hear Western threats to reduce economic cooperation with Russia”. These “suggest an almost maniacal desire to see only one leading power – the United States of America”. This is “unrealistic”, argues Kozyrev, because it would only lead to power exhaustion by the United States, which cannot alone resolve all of the world’s problems. “Besides, even at this difficult stage of our transition, Russia remains a superpower” and cannot be treated as a junior partner. What should we do “about the chauvinistic new banners that flap in the Washington wind?” laments Russia’s foreign minister, not realizing perhaps that the same question, substituting Moscow for Washington, is increasingly being asked in Western capitals. But, he proceeds, pragmatic politicians on both sides see the “mature” partnership between Russia and the West in terms of realpolitik, based on “two premises.” First, that “Russia is destined to be a great power” and second, that “partnerships like ours cannot negate a firm, even aggressive, policy of defending one’s own national interests”.

If the above genuinely represents the thinking of Russia’s leading “liberal democrat”, the prospects for future international cooperation, let alone independent democratic development in the Soviet successor states and ex-Soviet bloc countries, are not encouraging. One marvels at the hutzpah of the claims, in one breath, to democracy and imperial expansion, and to a superpower status for a country in economic and political chaos. One marvels even more at the Western tacit approval of Russian imperial pretensions conditioned, no doubt, by the years of Soviet propaganda as much as by the immediate convenience of having Russia take care of the troublesome conflicts at its periphery that otherwise might have required Western intervention. But there is no doubt that the Russian policy, in operation for barely a year, has been successful. The question is whether it can be, or should be, sustained.

In the “near abroad” Russian peacemaking has stopped most of the open conflicts by the judicious use of military power. The price for the new states involved has been the acceptance of the Russian umbrella. The gain for Russia has been the extension,

except for the hard-pressed Ukraine and the Baltic states, of its political influence and military control across the former “inner empire”. Russia’s Monroe Doctrine – that is, its right to the former imperial heritage – has been clearly articulated and has claimed legitimacy, in the eyes of the international community, by its ostensibly humanitarian purpose of peace maintenance and by its very effectiveness.

A similar claim to the former communist East Central Europe has been implied but not explicitly articulated. But all of the arguments based on Russia’s traditional geopolitical space, national interest, and great power status are highly elastic and well suited to accommodate the “outer empire,” including the Balkans. The first steps in this direction – the veto on the inclusion in NATO of the former Warsaw Pact states and Russia’s entry into the Bosnian crisis – have been accepted by the West. Unless Russia again collapses from within, it is only a matter of time before the “outer empire” is also claimed as Russia’s rightful heritage.

The policy has succeeded also in the international context. It has revived the concept of Russia as a great power to the applause of the believers in bipolarity and political realists who like to divide the world into spheres of influence. By a fait accompli, Russia established its right to pursue national interests within its own self-proclaimed domain without asking for international approval and excluding international interference and participation. Pax Russica does carry the benefits of stabilization. But stability based on coercion does not offer long-range solution to unresolved conflicts. Nationalism cannot be eradicated and, once tasted, independence can never be forgotten. The age of empires, moreover, has passed, and a second try, at the end of a century, to rebuild an empire which collapsed at its beginning only promises to repeat past disasters, probably on an accelerated timetable.

Russia does have legitimate national interests that have to be accommodated; so do other Soviet successor states, and the states of East Central Europe. Exclusive national claims to geopolitical space carry the seeds of their own destruction, because they mean the suppression of the rights of others who dwell in this space. The road to peace and accommodation of the many issues that divide post-communist states leads through negotiations based on equity and requires mutual compromises. It calls for the development of economic relations and resources based on reciprocity and mutual benefit. Most important, it needs a security umbrella which is not the instrument of a single power and would-be hegemon. Such conditions can be created only in an internationalized environment. They already exist and function, however imperfectly, in Western Europe. The beginning of the resolution of the problems of the former East bloc,

including Russia, would be to bring the members closer under the European umbrella and to include them within the existing cooperation, conflict resolution, and security mechanisms. Cutting them out opens the way for reincarnation of the imperial Russian system, with all that it implies. In the words of a Russian historian, “Imperial ambition will bring Russia to total ruin. The Soviet empire collapsed because it could not support so many territories, and all attempts to revive that policy are doomed to fail”<sup>67</sup>.

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<sup>67</sup> Yuri N. Afanasyev, *Russia, s Vicious Circle*, *ibid.*

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Teresa Rakowska-Harmstone

### **Russia's Monroe Doctrine: Peacekeeping, Peacemaking or Imperial Outreach?**

#### **Abstract**

The article discusses the important changes in the Russian foreign policy doctrines that occurred in the beginnings of the 1990s, after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The Author argues that the officially claimed devotion to peacemaking and peacekeeping are in fact manifestations of the Russian imperial outreach. The model of international relations promoted by Moscow in fact resembles the American 19<sup>th</sup> century Monroe Doctrine. Thus, the foreign policy doctrine and the potential national conflicts in the post-Soviet territory may become triggers for Russian actions aiming at restoring the Russian Empire.

**Keywords:** *Russia, Ukraine, Soviet Union, Baltics, Transnistria, Caucasus, Central Asia, foreign policy, geopolitics of Russia, conflicts*